

**ACTIVE PARTICIPATION TOOLS:**

# **A HANDBOOK FOR CIVIC ENGAGEMENT FACILITATORS**



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# INTRODUCTION

Modern societies increasingly appreciate the importance of participation – the active involvement of residents and stakeholders in decision-making processes. In an era of deepening inequalities, global crises, and the growing distance between institutions and citizens, creating spaces for dialogue and collaboration is imperative. Citizen participation has become one of the key pillars of modern public management and social life. Effective participation allows for more open, inclusive, and effective actions in various areas of life, including spatial planning, the revitalization of neglected urban areas, and the strengthening of social relations in the post-COVID era.

Not only local governments and non-governmental organizations, but also higher education institutions, schools, and cultural institutions play a key role in creating strong local communities, where solutions are developed collaboratively that best address the real needs of the community. Representatives of these organizations are not only participants in this process today, but also its natural animators. It is often in educational environments that new ideas, practices, and competencies essential for building a society based on shared decision-making, empathy, and responsibility are born.

Being convinced of the importance of educating and preparing students and school youth to be active members of participatory processes, we implemented the project HEIs as Innovative

Triggers of Sustainable Development in European Cities in Post Covid-19 era (HEIsCITI, Erasmus+ Project). The goal of HEIsCITI was to support cooperation between universities, local authorities, and residents, as well as to strengthen the role of universities and students in urban development. Another important aspect of the project was to develop tools that would be effective in developing solutions for neglected urban spaces, as well as to stimulate social life and bonds weakened by the Covid-19 pandemic.

The HEIsCITI project delivers three documents, including this Handbook. Along with: Methodology for a University course titled: Participation Management: Tools for Citizen Engagement and Community Empowerment and Active Participation Tools: A Handbook for Civic Engagement Facilitators creates a set of materials facilitating the conduct of participatory processes and education in this area. The tools to facilitate participation and the lecture and workshop scenarios presented in the Handbook are intended to inspire academic and school environments to create educational courses in this area.

# IN THE HANDBOOK WE PRESENT:

- ✓ **SELECTED TOOLS SUPPORTING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF PARTICIPATORY PROJECTS,**
- ✓ **INTRODUCTORY LECTURE SCENARIOS ON PARTICIPATION (ANNEX NO. 1),**
- ✓ **SCENARIOS FOR PARTICIPATORY WORKSHOPS ON THE CHALLENGES FACED BY COMMUNITIES IN THE POST-COVID 19 ERA, WHICH CAN BE CONDUCTED AS PART OF VARIOUS EDUCATIONAL COURSES (ANNEX NO. 2),**
- ✓ **DESCRIPTIONS OF GOOD PRACTICES – PARTICIPATORY PROCESSES CARRIED OUT IN ITALY, CROATIA AND VIETNAM (ANNEX NO. 3).**



# THE TOOLS

The tools were tested within HEIsCITI in pilot participatory processes conducted in 2024 in three countries: Poland, Lithuania, and Germany. The processes took place as part of university courses at three universities: Hochschule der Medien (Germany), Mykolas Romeris University (Lithuania), and WSB University (Poland).

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The processes were conducted over one semester of the academic year and consisted of two stages: introductory lectures, which prepared students for the theoretical aspects of the participatory process, and workshops. Introductory lectures on participation were delivered as part of the courses by academics from the above-mentioned universities and practitioners from LAMA Cooperative



Society - Social Enterprise (Italy) and Rijeka Development Agency Porin (Croatia). The workshops were moderated by university staff. The workshop program was based on two methods: Design Thinking and Problem-Based Learning. The project teams were comprised of students who worked on challenges they identified in their surroundings, in specific urban spaces identified as neglected in three cities: Cieszyn (Poland), Stuttgart (Germany), and Joniskis (Lithuania).

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Introductory lecture scenarios were developed as part of the HEIsCITI project by university representatives and practitioners and then delivered to groups of students from Germany, Lithuania, and Poland. The introductory lectures provide a good starting point, allowing participants to learn about the rules, methods, and best practices. They facilitate understanding of the process's goals, support teamwork, and facilitate working with the participatory tools presented in the next chapter.

# 1. „Citizen Engagement in the Development of Municipalities and Cities“



**A lecture covering basic issues related to residents' participation in decision-making processes at the local level. The lecture introduces the concept of participatory activities and their role in supporting civil society. The revitalization of abandoned areas – one of the most common examples of interventions requiring local community involvement – serves as a backdrop for analyzing various participatory processes, methods, and tools. Particular emphasis is placed on diagnosing problems using various participatory methods, engaging various stakeholder groups, and communicating in a way that is tailored to their needs.**

# 2. „Participation for Public Engagement“



**This lecture explains the importance of public participation for public engagement. It presents various models of participation and discusses their principles and practical applications, as well as the sociological and political aspects of citizen participation in decision-making processes. The lecture includes Arnstein and Hart's ladders of participation, Treseder's degrees of participation, Shier's paths to participation, and other recognized models. Through the accompanying case study analysis (or educational game), participants learn to recognize the level of participation in specific situations.**

# **3. „Beyond the Box: First Steps on the Path to Success“**



**It is a review of commonly used approaches and methods in innovation processes, including design thinking, particularly in problem exploration and audience understanding. It presents the main assumptions of open innovation and discusses the importance of precisely and openly formulating challenges, with an emphasis on discovering and verifying customer needs. It also outlines research methods that support effective needs exploration.**

# **4. „Embracing Resilience: Innovative Participatory Methods in the Post- COVID Era“**



**This lecture explains the importance of public participation for public engagement. It presents various models of participation and discusses their principles and practical applications, as well as the sociological and political aspects of citizen participation in decision-making processes. The lecture includes Arnstein and Hart’s ladders of participation, Treseder’s degrees of participation, Shier’s paths to participation, and other recognized models. Through the accompanying case study analysis (or educational game), participants learn to recognize the level of participation in specific situations.**

# **5. „Participation in Practice – Case Study, Tools, and Methods“**



**A presentation of a selected case study, allowing participants to learn about a set of tools that work well in participatory processes. This type of lecture also provides the opportunity to engage with a participation expert, discuss potential difficulties, collaborate with various stakeholders, define project challenges, conduct research, map stakeholders, and identify challenges and opportunities. The lecture also provides practical tips on how to conduct workshops using the World Café technique, prepare solution presentations, and develop a process communication strategy.**

**Each lecture is an invitation to conversation, collaboration, and exploration of paths that will lead to effective, practical processes. The individual lecture scripts can be found in Annex no.1**

## **SOME TIPS FOR GIVING LECTURES**

- 1.** It's worth starting by mapping participants' knowledge, asking what they associate with civic participation, what their experiences and expectations are.
- 2.** Interactive elements are stimulating – a short brainstorming session, online voting, a mind map, and a quiz will engage the group and actively begin the lecture.
- 3.** Case studies can serve as the main narrative axis – by showing specific examples, it's easier to build understanding and stimulate discussion.
- 4.** It's worth encouraging reflection and sharing one's own experiences – each participant brings something valuable.
- 5.** The lecture can be concluded with open-ended questions – these will stimulate further action and introduce the workshop.

# THE WORKSHOP SCENARIOS

Accompanying the Handbook (Annex no.2) are based on experiences from pilot processes, utilize the tools recommended in the Handbook and are ready for implementation. They can be used for educational purposes at universities and schools, as well as by institutions, organizations, and local governments planning to implement participatory processes in their communities.

The course program was shaped by the experiences of the project partners: LAMA Cooperative Society - Social Enterprise (Italy), Rijeka Development Agency Porin (Croatia), and University of DaNang (Vietnam). The partners contributed knowledge and skills and proposed toolkits, which were then tested within HEIsCITI. They also presented best practices that can inspire and enrich participatory courses and workshops conducted elsewhere in the world. These best practices help transfer theory into the context of real-world action, inspiring but also highlighting the challenges and limitations of implementing participation. Good examples from Italy, Croatia, and Vietnam are included in Annex no. 3.

The tools and scenarios presented take into account the specificities of different target groups and situations, allowing for flexible adaptation to local needs and various challenges around the world. We believe that collaboration, openness to diverse perspectives, including those of young people, and the use of modern participatory tools are the way to effect change, particularly in underserved areas requiring intervention, as well as in those requiring the rebuilding of social relationships in the post-COVID era.

# SELECTED TOOLS SUPPORTING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF PARTICI- PATORY PROJECTS

Contemporary participatory processes require not only the involvement of various social groups but also the use of appropriate working methods that foster co-creation of solutions, creativity, and critical thinking. Participatory methods encompass not only actions undertaken by the local community but also the assessment and analysis of the situation and surrounding contexts, as well as strategies for initiating and participating in social change.

There are a number of ways to participate in participatory processes. Two particularly effective and increasingly used methods are Design Thinking (DT) and Problem-Based Learning (PBL). While both methods promote active learning and collaboration, their applications in civic participation differ in their purpose, process, and expected outcomes.

# DESIGN THINKING

It's a working method that combines creativity, empathy, and an analytical approach to problem-solving. Originating from design, its versatility allows it to be applied in business, education, public administration, and the social sector. It's particularly effective in creating innovative solutions and solving ambiguous, complex problems (wicked problems). The method focuses on the user, seeking solutions that meet their needs. A key feature of the process is continuous adaptation to changing human needs and the search for better opportunities.

## DESIGN THINKING IS BASED ON THE FOLLOWING ASSUMPTIONS:

- » **User-centric:**  
the main goal is to create solutions that meet real-world needs.
- » **Team collaboration:**  
the process engages people from diverse backgrounds and fields, which fosters the generation of creative solutions.
- » **Prototyping and iteration:**  
testing and improving ideas allows for quick verification of how users evaluate the project.
- » **Flexibility:**  
the method can be applied to both small projects and complex challenges.



# PROCESS STAGES:

## Empathy

This Empathy is the time to understand the needs, emotions, and expectations of users. This phase utilizes ethnographic methods, qualitative and quantitative research (observations, interviews, surveys, data analysis), allowing us to empathize with the user's perspective.

## Idea Generation

A brainstorming phase in which participants create solutions using various heuristic methods. It is important to be open to diverse ideas and avoid criticizing them early on.

## Testing

In this phase, prototypes are tested by users. The collected opinions and comments are used to make corrections, allowing the solution to be better adapted to your needs.

## Problem Definition

Based on the collected information, a specific problem or challenge to be solved is formulated. This should reflect the actual needs of users.

## Prototyping

Involves creating quick, simple models or sketches of selected ideas, creating storyboards, and role-playing – all of which allow the user to better visualize the planned solution. Prototypes help us see how the solution might work in practice and facilitate further refinement.

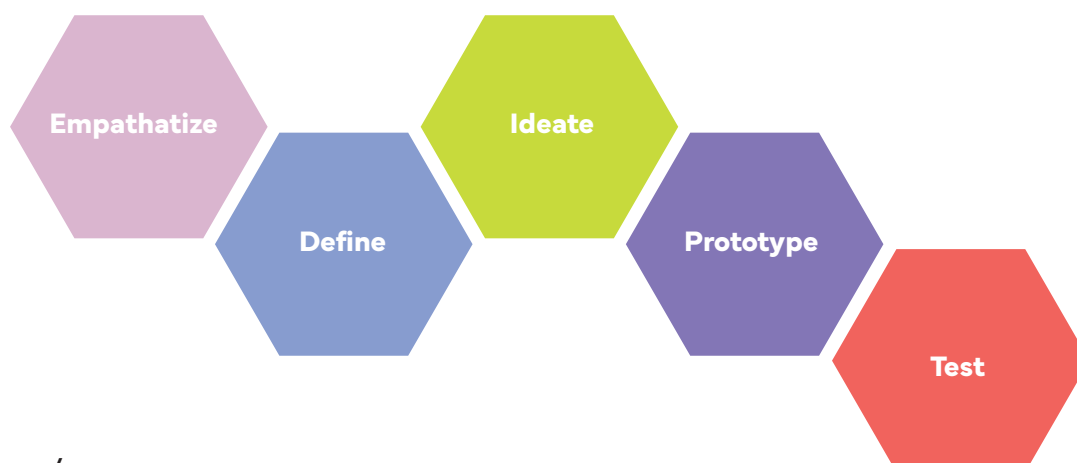


FIG. 1 / STANFORD DESIGN THINKING PROCESS

## **Problem-based Learning (PBL):**

It's a method in which the learning process focuses on solving real-world, complex problems. It's a learning-by-doing approach, a way of not only imparting knowledge but also developing key competencies for working in interdisciplinary teams. It's based on the following assumptions:

### » **Problem-Based Learning:**

Participants (students) begin by analyzing a real-world problem and then acquire the necessary knowledge and skills to solve it.

### » **Group Learning:**

Working in small teams fosters knowledge exchange, developing communication skills, and collaboration.

### » **Facilitator's Role:**

The teacher acts as a facilitator, supporting the learning process, asking questions, and motivating students without providing ready-made answers.





## **PROCESS STEPS:**

### **PROBLEM PRESENTATION:**

Participants are introduced to a real-world problem that requires a solution. Problems should be complex and require an interdisciplinary approach.

### **PROBLEM ANALYSIS:**

Students define what they know, what they need to learn, and what steps they should take to find a solution.

### **INDEPENDENT LEARNING:**

Participants seek information, investigate issues, and acquire knowledge from various sources.

### **PROBLEM SOLVING:**

Based on the knowledge gained, teams develop and present a solution.

### **REFLECTION AND DEBRIEFING:**

After the project is completed, the learning processes and outcomes are discussed.

Problem-based learning is a more comprehensive educational approach, suitable for processes requiring work on more complex problems over a longer period of time.

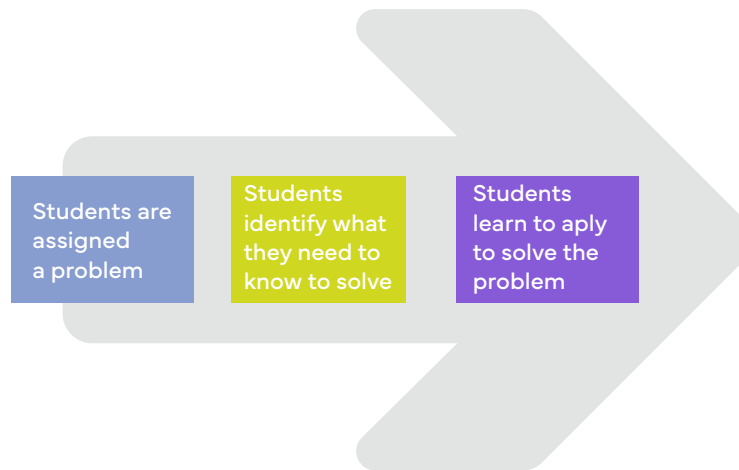


FIG. 2 / PROBLEM-BASED LEARNING  
PROCESS DIAGRAM

### WHEN IS IT BEST TO USE DESIGN THINKING?

**DT is particularly useful in the following situations:**

- » when it's necessary to understand the needs of a given community,
- » when generating solutions to problems identified by the community, for example, in planning common spaces, public services, or social activities,
- » when there's a need to consider the perspectives of people differing in age, education, background, gender, etc.,
- » in situations requiring rapid prototyping and concept testing.

### WHEN IS IT WORTH USING PROBLEM-BASED LEARNING?

**The use of PBL in participatory processes is particularly valuable when:**

- » we are committed to in-depth analysis of complex local problems,
- » creating shared knowledge and a common approach among residents based on real challenges.

# Table 1:

## Differences between Design Thinking and Problem-based Learning in participation:

Criterion	Problem-based learning	Design Thinking
Aim	Understanding and analyzing the problem	Generating and testing solutions
Work style	Reflective, investigative	Creative, iterative
The role of the participants	Researchers, problem analysts	Solution designers
Main competencies	Critical thinking, analysis, collaboration	Empathy, creativity, experimentation
Lead time	Medium or long term process	Can also be implemented in a short workshop

**BOTH METHODS REQUIRE TIME AND COMMITMENT.  
THEY SHOULD NOT BE USED WHEN:**

- » there's no time for the process; both methods require numerous meetings, time for iterations, testing, and presentations of results,
- » participants are not motivated to commit long-term,
- » the problem has already been resolved in advance,
- » process organizers are not ready to implement the results – the lack of next steps discourages participants.

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Both methods can complement each other; participants can first explore the problem using PBL and then use DT to develop and test solutions. A facilitator plays a key role in both processes. This role primarily involves supporting the process, guiding participants through the stages of problem analysis, information search, research, and solution development.

## **COMPETENCIES NECESSARY TO CONDUCT DT AND PBL PROCESSES:**

### **In the case of Design Thinking:**

- » knowledge of the method's stages,
- » ability to conduct interviews, observe, and synthesize observed information,
- » knowledge of idea generation techniques – ideation techniques, brainstorming, etc.,
- » ability to work with prototypes, test, and respond quickly to feedback,
- » ability to use visual thinking and storytelling.

### **In the case of Problem-based Learning:**

- » ability to moderate a group process based on problem analysis,
- » knowledge of PBL methodology and learning stages,
- » ability to build a climate of shared discovery,
- » ability to design exercises that support analysis and exploration (e.g., problem mapping, data analysis).

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Both methods presented above have distinctive tool sets. As part of the HEIsCITI project, we have selected those that are particularly effective when working with the challenges of neglected spaces. These were tested and verified for their usefulness and effectiveness in student learning. They derive from a collection of tools used in DT and PBL methods, as well as in participatory processes implemented by partners in Italy, Croatia, and Vietnam. Each of these tools facilitates stakeholder engagement in urban space transformation processes, fosters effective team collaboration, engages users, and develops the most optimal and tailored solutions. They also increase their sense of shared responsibility for the challenge and its solution.

## THE SELECTED TOOLS ARE:

- ✓ **Flexible** – they can be adapted to local needs and various challenges.
- ✓ **Diverse** – they can be adapted to different audiences.
- ✓ **Practical** – they were selected based on pilot processes and tests involving students, academics, local government officials, and NGOs.

# STORYTELLING



Storytelling is a method for collecting and analyzing local stories, memories, and experiences of residents. It allows for a better understanding of the cultural, emotional, and social context of a given space than statistics and „hard data.“ Harnessing the power of narrative allows for not only a better understanding of residents’ needs but also the creation of solutions that matter to them. Storytelling works through individual interviews, group discussions, or workshops. Participants share personal experiences connected to a specific place. These stories can be documented in the form of audio or video recordings, transcripts, or story maps.

## **STORYTELLING:**

- » engages emotions,
- » gives projects a more human dimension,
- » facilitates understanding of the values and needs of a given community,
- » values the knowledge of people from different generations and social groups, as well as the excluded (e.g., the elderly),
- » strengthens the sense of community.

## **LIMITATIONS OF STORYTELLING:**

- » there may be difficulties related to the analysis of the reception of the story,
- » requires good moderation of the process and gaining the trust of participants,
- » may not be suitable for „quick“ projects.

## **IT IS WORTH IT TO:**

- » combine storytelling with the creation of personas, or spatial maps,
- » stories help supplement data with real emotions and experiences,
- » document and visualize stories,
- » remember to verify whether a given story can be quoted or published.

## HOW TO USE STORYTELLING?

1. Start by defining the story's theme—what is it about?
2. Determine why you want to tell this story. What change do you want to trigger? What action, reflection, or emotion do you want to evoke in your audience?
3. Consider who you're targeting with your story. Who are your audiences? What are their needs, values, and concerns?
4. Determine the state of mind before hearing the story. Write down what your audience knows, feels, or thinks before encountering the story. What are their attitudes and what information they already possess?
5. Plan your story structure. You could use something like this:
  - » introduction: presenting the context, protagonist, problem,
  - » turning point – something happens, a challenge arises,
  - » development – actions, difficulties, decisions,
  - » ending – resolution, conclusion, transformation.
  - » determine your state after hearing the story. Record what changed in your audience after hearing the story. What did they understand, remember, feel, or do?

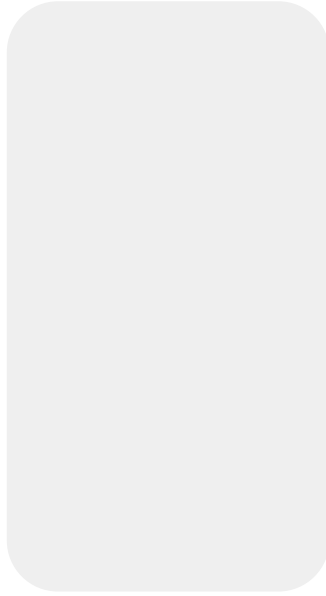
Process facilitators can also create engaging stories themselves. One key tool in planning and structuring stories is the storytelling canvas. They are used to plan and create engaging stories, helping to design understandable and memorable messages. To use them, begin by defining the story's theme, purpose, and target audience. This tool allows you to observe what your audience thinks, feels, or knows before encountering the story, as well as what they should take away from it.

### **MORE ABOUT STORYTELLING:**

- » <https://participatorystory.wordpress.com/participatory-storytelling/>
- » <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zrts348lcqk>
- » <https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1007/s11528-006-0072-7.pdf>
- » [https://www.ssoar.info/ssoar/bitstream/handle/document/90764/ssoar-ejmi-2023-2-vivek\\_et\\_al-Storytelling\\_As\\_a\\_Qualitative\\_Approach.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y](https://www.ssoar.info/ssoar/bitstream/handle/document/90764/ssoar-ejmi-2023-2-vivek_et_al-Storytelling_As_a_Qualitative_Approach.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y)
- » <https://scholar.sun.ac.za/server/api/core/bitstreams/04a680e3-66bc-4927-b627-b9be381dd2e7/content>
- » <https://www.open-access.bcu.ac.uk/5651/7/IJPM%20SEAM%2012-3%202017%20%202.%20Structuring%20%20%20Storytelling%2C%20ME%2C%20GH.pdf>

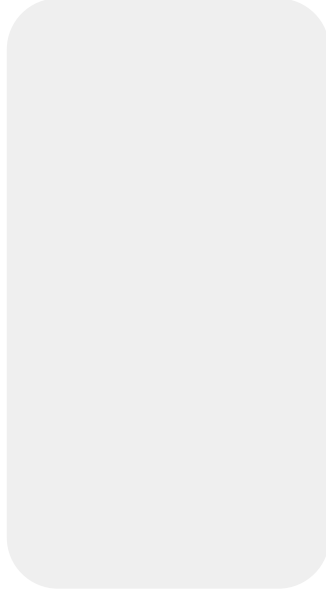
## 1 / STORY TOPIC

WHAT IS THE **MAIN TOPIC** OF YOUR STORY?



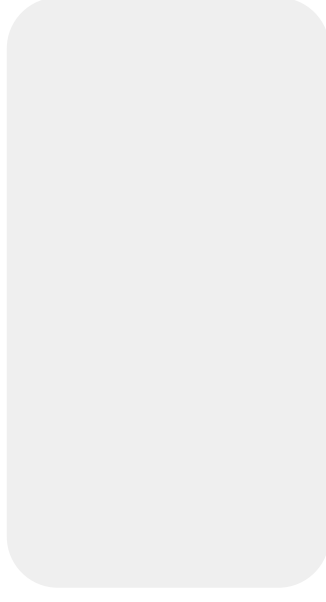
## 2 / PURPOSE

WHAT DO YOU WANT TO **ACHIEVE**? WHAT CHANGE DO YOU WANT TO CREATE IN YOUR AUDIENCE?



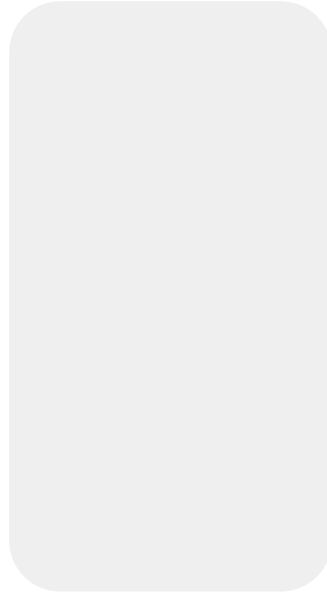
## 3 / TARGET AUDIENCE

WHO ARE THE **RECIPIENTS OF YOUR STORY**? WHAT MATTERS TO THEM?



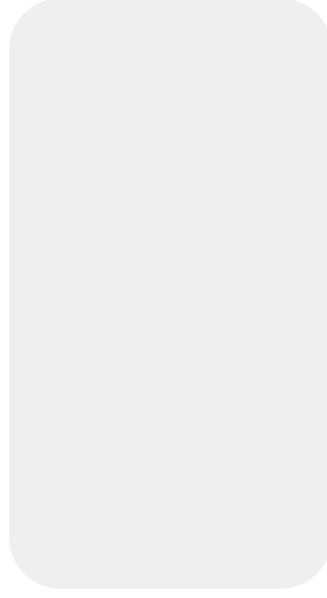
## 4 / BEFORE THE STORY

WHAT DOES YOUR AUDIENCE **KNOW, FEEL, OR THINK** BEFORE HEARING YOUR STORY?



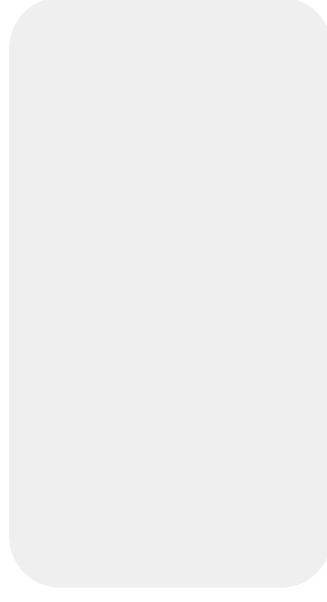
## 5 / AIM

**MAIN NARRATIVE (STORY STRUCTURE):**  
**BEGINNING** » CONTEXT, CHARACTER, SITUATION  
**TURNING POINT** » PROBLEM, CHALLENGE, CHANGE  
**DEVELOPMENT** » ACTIONS, EMOTIONS, DECISIONS  
**ENDING** » SOLUTION, TRANSFORMATION, TAKEAWAY



## 6 / AFTER STORY

WHAT SHOULD THE AUDIENCE **UNDERSTAND, FEEL, OR REMEMBER** AFTER EXPERIENCING THE STORY?



# STAKEHOLDERS MAP



A stakeholder map is a tool that allows you to identify individuals, groups, and organizations that influence or are influenced by a given project, both directly and indirectly. The map allows you to visualize the strength of relationships and the degree of involvement of individual individuals, groups, and institutions in the project. By analyzing their influence and involvement, you can better design communication activities, avoid conflicts, and strengthen collaboration within the project.

Creating a map begins with defining key stakeholders, such as residents, public institutions, non-governmental organizations, and businesses. They are then grouped according to their influence and involvement: from those who are crucial to the project to those who are merely recipients.

## **APPLICATION:**

- » identifying potential project partners, allies, or opponents,
- » preparing public consultations,
- » planning a communication strategy,
- » preventing the marginalization of disadvantaged groups (e.g., migrants, children, people with disabilities).

## **STAKEHOLDER MAP:**

- » facilitates the planning of participatory activities,
- » helps to anticipate and manage conflicts,
- » builds a more complete picture of the „social ecosystem“,
- » enhances the transparency and effectiveness of project activities.

## **TOOL LIMITATIONS:**

- » it can oversimplify complex social relationships,
- » it can be biased if created solely by one stakeholder group,
- » it requires regular updates.

## IT IS WORTH IT TO:

- » supplement the map with data from interviews or workshops with stakeholders,
- » use digital tools to create interactive maps,
- » supplement it with a map of stakeholder relationships, allowing for the identification of existing collaborations or potential conflicts.

## HOW TO USE A STAKEHOLDER MAP?

**1. Define the project goal - specify what the project is about and what impact it may have on different groups.**

**2. Identify stakeholders - list the people, groups and organizations that:**

- » can influence the project,
- » may be affected by it,
- » have knowledge, resources, or a voice in a given area.

**3. Assess stakeholder impact and engagement - for each stakeholder, determine:**

- » How much influence do they have on the project (e.g., high, medium, low)?
- » What level of involvement do they demonstrate (e.g., active, moderate, passive)?

**4. Put your stakeholders on the map**

- » Concentric circles allow you to visualize the level of involvement – place the stakeholders most closely related to the project in the central circle, and those less closely related to the project in the subsequent circles.

## 5. Update the map during the project

### 6. Based on the map:

- » identify gaps and threats (e.g., lack of representation of important groups),
- » plan meetings, consultations, and information campaigns.

## MORE ABOUT THE STAKEHOLDER MAP:

- » [https://d1wqtxts1xzle7.cloudfront.net/35090954/StakeholderMapExcerpt-libre.pdf?1413080346=&response-content-disposition=inline%3B+filename%3DKettunen\\_J\\_2014\\_The\\_stakeholder\\_map\\_in\\_h.pdf&Expires=1744627021&Signature=W50hVHq75Xb7gwrMgGk7EwtOMB6k1i-vY9j5fulPVruYag6WNR3-hCIBWiH-sEOX~KN9mmJrJijiTE~Wi3vuk-Asg~l2j6uhXcauA8jnEI4KcDp7GoAjU8wl~ytUI-8wABtLEkagshSabx8nTmHSGzuu-L3Aar1UMKZAhpXMiT3uxc554vofwIO223h8ln4z8daLRpDIIHIUh3jdLmmp3qkV8LtvP4X0eG9cHXpoJY5czGKt8F3YsrYIldi-P56aqTm1C2syYI4uv4XNQrkOg-NYyDgb4INUX4J1J7X-ZaPSilCEXJd8-m2sbCWb-BoNvMAjsPPfxsojxSW90pzpgYe~PQ\\_\\_&Key-Pair-Id=APKAJLOHF5GGSLRBV4ZA](https://d1wqtxts1xzle7.cloudfront.net/35090954/StakeholderMapExcerpt-libre.pdf?1413080346=&response-content-disposition=inline%3B+filename%3DKettunen_J_2014_The_stakeholder_map_in_h.pdf&Expires=1744627021&Signature=W50hVHq75Xb7gwrMgGk7EwtOMB6k1i-vY9j5fulPVruYag6WNR3-hCIBWiH-sEOX~KN9mmJrJijiTE~Wi3vuk-Asg~l2j6uhXcauA8jnEI4KcDp7GoAjU8wl~ytUI-8wABtLEkagshSabx8nTmHSGzuu-L3Aar1UMKZAhpXMiT3uxc554vofwIO223h8ln4z8daLRpDIIHIUh3jdLmmp3qkV8LtvP4X0eG9cHXpoJY5czGKt8F3YsrYIldi-P56aqTm1C2syYI4uv4XNQrkOg-NYyDgb4INUX4J1J7X-ZaPSilCEXJd8-m2sbCWb-BoNvMAjsPPfxsojxSW90pzpgYe~PQ__&Key-Pair-Id=APKAJLOHF5GGSLRBV4ZA)
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- » <https://www.mdpi.com/1996-1073/15/4/1592>
- » <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2212041617304989>

# STAKEHOLDERS MAP

## STAKEHOLDER MAP.

A stakeholder map is a tool that visualizes the strength of relationships and the level of involvement of various individuals, groups, and institutions in a project. The closer a stakeholder is to the center, the stronger and more direct their influence on the project – and vice versa.



### CIRCLE 1

#### KEY PARTNERS:

HERE, LIST THE MOST IMPORTANT PARTNERS FOR THE PROJECT, DIRECTLY INVOLVED IN ITS EXECUTION – DECISION-MAKERS, IMPLEMENTERS, PROJECT ORGANIZERS, AND RECIPIENTS.



### CIRCLE 2

#### ACTIVE PARTICIPANTS:

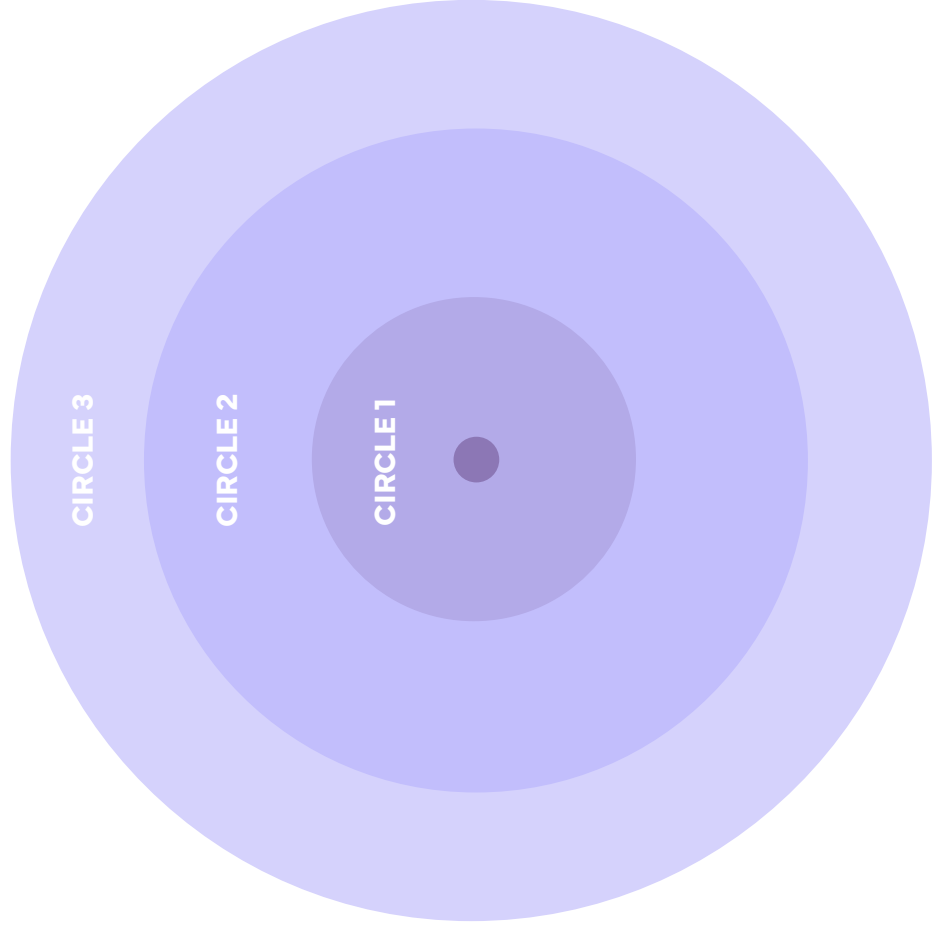
HERE, LIST THE PARTNERS SUPPORTING THE PROJECT'S IMPLEMENTATION, HAVING ACCESS TO INFORMATION, CO-PARTICIPATING IN THE EXECUTION, BUT LOOSELY CONNECTED TO THE PROJECT.



### CIRCLE 3

#### OBSERVERS / ENVIRONMENT:

HERE, LIST THE PARTNERS INTERESTED IN THE OUTCOME BUT NOT OPERATIONALLY INVOLVED, THOSE WHOM IT IS USEFUL TO INFORM, AND POSSIBLY CONSULT ABOUT THE PROJECT.



This tool, used in design processes, urban planning, and revitalization, helps visualize and analyze the connections between various elements of a process and the space in which it takes place. By collecting and visualizing information in relation to a specific physical space—e.g., a district, housing estate, building, or square—key areas for intervention can be identified. Space mapping helps understand how people perceive a given space, how they use it, and what needs or problems they have related to it. Space mapping facilitates understanding the complex interconnections within a space, allowing for more informed design decisions.



# SPATIAL MAPPING

## **THE PROCESS MAY INCLUDE:**

- » hand-drawing maps by users of the space (e.g., „how I move around the neighborhood“),
- » research walks,
- » mapping data onto digital maps,
- » analyzing the functions of places (e.g., meeting places, commercial spaces, neglected areas).

## **APPLICATIONS:**

- » spatial planning (e.g., changing the traffic system),
- » revitalization (detecting „blind spots“ and unused spaces),
- » identifying hot spots (e.g., noise, danger),
- » participatory creation of new spatial functions.

## **SPATIAL MAPPING:**

- » shows the actual use of space,
- » facilitates the visualization of qualitative data,
- » engages residents as experts who know the local space best,
- » helps in designing solutions tailored to real needs.

## **TOOL LIMITATIONS:**

- » may require technical training in the use of selected tools,
- » can be time-consuming, especially when analysing data from large areas,
- » does not take into account intangible and invisible aspects (e.g. emotions, memories).

## **IT IS WORTH IT TO:**

- » organize joint mapping sessions to build understanding of the issue among the community,
- » introduce an element of mental mapping – e.g. places where people feel safe or uncomfortable,
- » combine data from maps with other data, e.g. from observations, interviews, storytelling.

## HOW TO USE SPATIAL MAPS?

### 1. Define the purpose of the mapping

Whether you want to learn about residents' problems, identify areas for change, or perhaps gather ideas for developing a neglected space?

### 2. Select the terrain and tool - it can be:

- » physical printed map,
- » digital application (e.g., Google My Maps, Miro, Maptionnaire),
- » spatial model,
- » satellite image or orthophotomap.

### 3. Engage the users of the space – invite residents, students, local leaders, seniors, children - they know the space best.

### 4. Collect data – participants can:

- » mark problem areas on the map (e.g., dangerous intersections, lack of benches),
- » indicate emotionally significant places (e.g., memories, stories),
- » suggest changes (e.g., a new playground, a bike path).

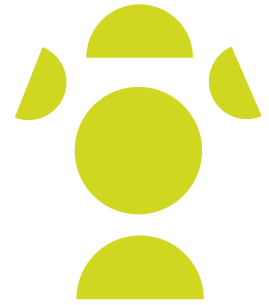
### 5. Color-code categories – for example, red for problems, green for positives, and blue for ideas. This makes it easier to analyze and communicate the data.

### 6. Analyze and summarize results – look for patterns: where do comments most frequently arise? Which groups share common needs? Where should the first actions be taken?

### 7. Implement and communicate – plan changes, consultations, and projects based on the map. It's good practice to demonstrate the results to participants – this builds trust and engagement.

## MORE ABOUT SPATIAL MAPS

- » <https://youtu.be/z7M7uIOsWvc>
- » <https://youtu.be/p-1FG3FmCYs>



A persona is a fictional profile of the end user of a designed solution, based on data collected through qualitative research. A persona represents a typical person who will use the solution. A tool called persona canvas, which consists of ready-made templates for workshop work, allows you to identify various aspects of a person's life, their motivations, ambitions, habits, concerns, and so-called „pain points“ (something that bothers them) that influence behavior. Persona templates facilitate the discovery and better understanding of audience needs and identify areas where positive change is possible. The template helps maintain a user-centric design process, aligning decisions with the actual needs of specific individuals. Several diverse personas representing different stakeholder groups are created for a single project.

# PERSONA

## **PERSONA ELEMENTS:**

- » demographic data (age, profession),
- » needs and goals,
- » typical behaviors,
- » frustrations and worries,
- » relationship with the space or service.

## **APPLICATION:**

- » designing public services,
- » designing solutions in public spaces,
- » designing activities that take diversity into account,
- » building empathy within the project team.

## **PERSONA TEMPLATE:**

- » facilitates an empathetic approach to users,
- » helps avoid designing „for everyone, meaning for no one“,
- » engages the team, allows you to get closer to the user,
- » facilitates making design decisions

## LIMITATIONS:

- » can lead to stereotyping,
- » a sample persona may not reflect the fullness and diversity of human experiences,
- » too much focus on a given persona can limit the scale of innovation of a given solution.

## IT IS WORTH IT TO:

- » create personas based on data actually obtained from surveys, observations and interviews,
- » give personas greater emotional depth, it is worth combining them with storytelling,
- » test developed projects with the participation of representatives of a given persona.

## HOW TO CREATE AND USE PERSONAS?

### 1. Gather data on users/stakeholders

Conduct interviews, observations, surveys, and workshops.

Seek information on:

- » demographics (age, profession, place of residence),
- » needs and expectations,
- » problems and barriers,
- » attitudes, habits, values,
- » level of knowledge or engagement with the topic.

## 2. Create persona profiles

Give it a name, define its age, life context, add a photo or a drawn portrait, add a description of its behavior and most important needs, e.g.:

- » Anna, 67, retired, single, uses a cane, goes to the store and pharmacy every day.
- » Maks, 16, a technical school student, cycles, and often spends time on the playground.

## 3. Use personas in the solution design process

### 4. Customize your communications and activities

Match with team-defined personas:

- » communication language,
- » access channels,
- » forms of participation (e.g., workshops for young people, telephone conversations with seniors),
- » accessibility elements (language, transportation, material formats).

## MORE ABOUT PERSONAS:

- » <https://www.utupub.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/167474/3313831.3376502.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>
- » [https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-030-49282-3\\_4](https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-030-49282-3_4)
- » <https://youtu.be/DvV7ZcRVQ4g>

# PERSONA

## PERSONA.

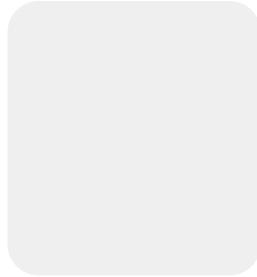
Persona helps to better understand and meet the needs of the project's target audience.

Creating realistic characters allows for more informed design decisions, tailoring solutions to the needs of specific individuals or groups, and improving communication.



PERSONA

**ADD AN IMAGE OR ILLUSTRATION THAT VISUALIZES THE PERSONA**



**NAME:** .....

**AGE:** .....

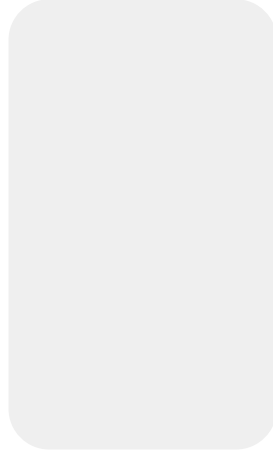
**OCCUPATION/EDUCATION:** .....

**PLACE OF RESIDENCE:** .....

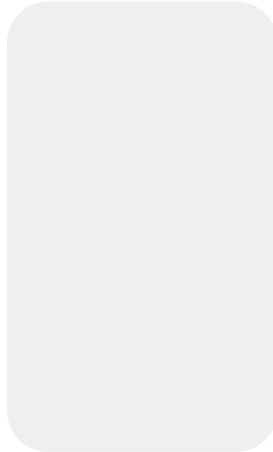


**PREFERENCES:**

**WHAT DOES THE DESCRIBED PERSONA LIKE? WHAT DOES HE/SHE VALUE? WHAT IS IMPORTANT TO HIM/HER?**

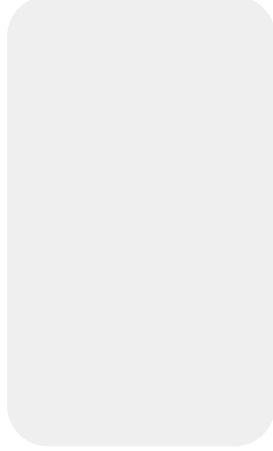


**MOTIVATIONS: WHAT MOTIVATES THE PERSONA TO TAKE ACTION?**

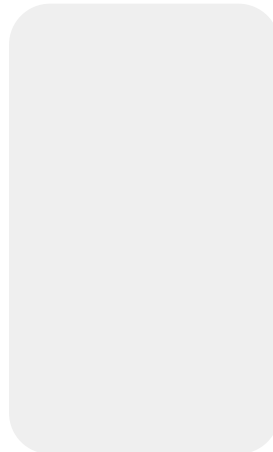


**CHALLENGES AND PROBLEMS:**

**WHAT DIFFICULTIES DOES THE PERSONA FACE, AND WHAT MIGHT DISCOURAGE HIM/HER FROM ACTING?**

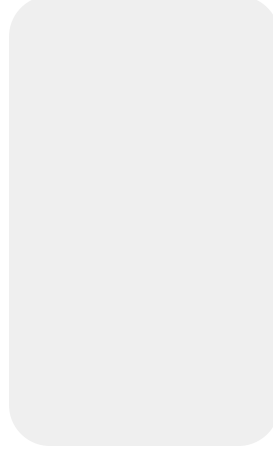


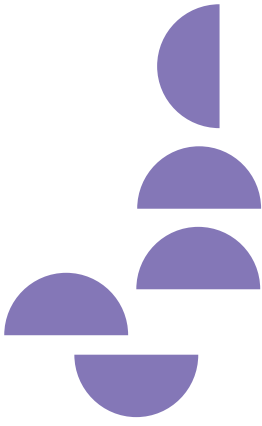
**NEEDS: WRITE DOWN THE MOST IMPORTANT GOALS THE PERSONA HAS**



**QUOTE:**

**YOU CAN ADD A SHORT QUOTE THAT EXPRESSES THE PERSONA'S KEY VALUES/MOTIVATIONS OR BEST CHARACTERIZES HIM/HER**





# DIAGNOSTIC SURVEY

A diagnostic survey is a research method used to understand the opinions, attitudes, knowledge, expectations, and needs of a specific social group. It allows for the collection of data that forms the basis for diagnosing problems, planning activities, developing strategies, and making design decisions. Opinion research is conducted using surveys or in-depth interviews. These are tools most commonly used in design, participatory, and social research processes. Surveys allow for the rapid collection of data from a large group of respondents, providing quantitative information about opinions, needs, and preferences. Their standardized format allows for comparison of responses and trend analysis. They are effective in public opinion research, market analysis, and the diagnosis of social problems.

In-depth interviews focus on a qualitative understanding of individual experiences, motivations, and expectations. Their open-ended format allows for detailed exploration of topics that are difficult to capture in a survey. They uncover hidden needs, contexts, and emotions, which is crucial in designing user-centered solutions.

Both tools are often used in conjunction, providing a comprehensive perspective on the topic being studied. This helps to accurately diagnose the situation before taking design actions.

## **APPLICATION:**

- » diagnosing the needs of local communities,
- » assessing the effectiveness of previous activities,
- » assessing the level of knowledge or attitudes (e.g., towards change, development plans, environmental measures),
- » testing ideas before implementation,
- » evaluating activities (e.g., after project completion).

## **DIAGNOSTIC SURVEY:**

- » it does not provide knowledge about facts, but knowledge about opinions about these facts,
- » surveys provide objective (numerical) data, in-depth interviews provide knowledge about emotions, aspirations, and pain points,
- » based on the collected data, solutions can be developed that are adequate to the diagnosed needs,
- » supports the transparency of the process.

## **LIMITATIONS:**

- » the risk of a low response rate in a survey,
- » the inability to capture the depth of various human emotions and motivations,
- » questionnaires prepared in a language incomprehensible to the recipient may not bring the expected results.

## IT IS WORTH IT TO:

- » prepare clear surveys containing both closed and open-ended questions,
- » conduct a pilot study to identify errors and adapt the questionnaire to the intended audience,
- » combine the survey with fieldwork (e.g., a mobile consultation point),
- » ensure respondent diversity,
- » provide respondents with a post-survey report.

**It is always necessary to ensure the ethics of the study, ask for consent to participate, ensure the anonymity of the study or storage of data in accordance with the GDPR principles, and take into account the possibility of interrupting the interview.**

## HOW TO CONDUCT A SURVEY:

1. Define the purpose of the study – what exactly do you want to investigate? What decisions do you want to base on the results? For example: „Understand why residents don't participate in consultations" or „Examine how seniors use public spaces."
2. Define your target audience—who do you want to survey? Neighborhood residents, young people, entrepreneurs, parents of school-age children?
3. Prepare the tool

4. Collect data - you can conduct the research yourself or outsource it to a regional university or a specialized agency.
5. Analyze the results - count the responses, create charts, list recurring opinions, create categories to which the responses can be assigned, identify key opinions, needs, and challenges.
6. Use the results to implement solutions.

### **IF IT IS A SURVEY, THEN:**

- » choose the method of administration (paper, online, telephone),
- » determine the minimum number of respondents,
- » ensure representativeness (e.g., different age groups, gender, background),
- » facilitate access (e.g., online form + paper version at a library or office),
- » formulate questions clearly and understandably, and choose: the type of questions (closed, open-ended, metric questions),
- » conduct a pilot study and test the survey before conducting the main study.

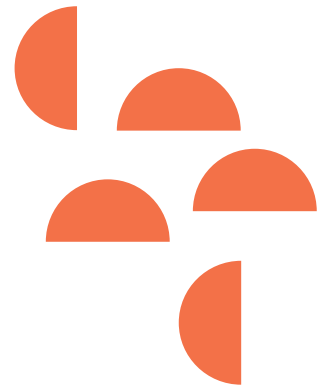
## IF IT IS AN INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE, THEN:

- » prepare, conduct preliminary research, and use it to ask for details in interviews, including people's stories, views, and values,
- » plan the structure of the questionnaire (introduction, introductory questions, in-depth and closing questions, including reflections and acknowledgements),
- » create open-ended questions (e.g., „Tell me about...“, „How do you assess...“),
- » tailor the questions to the interviewee and take into account the interviewee's professional, cultural, age, institutional, and ethnic context,
- » use supporting questions (probing questions that can deepen the answers, e.g., „Why?“, „Can you give an example?“),
- » conduct a pilot study and test the questionnaire before conducting the main study.

## MORE ABOUT SURVEY AND INTERVIEWS:

- » [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_zoIVE9PRTM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_zoIVE9PRTM)
- » <https://www.pewresearch.org/writing-survey-questions/>
- » <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/360181> [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/359596183\\_How\\_to\\_Conduct\\_an\\_Effective\\_Interview\\_A\\_Guide\\_to\\_Interview\\_Design\\_in\\_Research\\_Study495\\_Designing\\_a\\_Questionnaire\\_for\\_a\\_Research\\_Paper\\_A\\_Comprehensive\\_Guide\\_to\\_Design\\_and\\_Develop\\_an\\_Effective\\_Questionnaire](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/359596183_How_to_Conduct_an_Effective_Interview_A_Guide_to_Interview_Design_in_Research_Study495_Designing_a_Questionnaire_for_a_Research_Paper_A_Comprehensive_Guide_to_Design_and_Develop_an_Effective_Questionnaire)

# OBSERVATIONS



Observation involves the systematic and direct monitoring of human behavior, social interactions, or processes in their natural environment. It is one of the most intuitive yet effective tools in participatory, design, and social research. Observation can uncover the real needs, habits, and challenges users experience when using a given product, service, or space, even those they don't verbalize. Observation allows for understanding the context in which individuals or communities operate and the identification of behavioral patterns. It can be conducted overtly or covertly, and in various forms: notes, photographs, and video recordings. This tool helps provide an authentic picture of human behavior and interactions, and also identifies discrepancies between statements and reality, allowing for the creation of optimal solutions.

## **APPLICATION:**

- » assessing accessibility and usage patterns (where people sit, which way they walk),
- » public space design,
- » service design,
- » microbehavior analysis (e.g., older people don't sit on a bench because there are no handrails),
- » testing design ideas.

## **OBSERVATIONS:**

- » they allow for the extraction of information that cannot be examined through a diagnostic survey (e.g. body language, habits),
- » they reveal actual behaviors, choices, as well as obstacles to the use of a given space,
- » they can be conducted quickly and at a low cost.

## **LIMITATIONS:**

- » observer subjectivity,
- » difficulties in interpreting data without knowledge of the context (e.g. cultural, age),
- » ethical challenges related to, for example, observing sensitive behaviors,
- » may be incomplete – we do not see „why“, only „what“.

## IT IS WORTH IT TO:

- » use observation sheets with specific questions and journals with notes,
- » conduct observations at different times of day and under different conditions,
- » document observations visually – e.g., with photos, videos, drawings (always respecting privacy),
- » use observations to generate questions for further research,
- » collaborate on observations with a university.

## HOW TO CONDUCT OBSERVATIONS:

### 1. Define the purpose of the observation

What do you want to observe? For example: How do residents use the park? Do children play in the square? What is the pedestrian traffic like near the office?

### 2. Select observation type:

- » open (the observer is visible, not hiding),
- » hidden (the observer does not reveal their role),
- » participatory (the observer takes part in activities – e.g., as a volunteer),
- » non-participatory (the observer does not get involved, remains „outside“).

### **3. Specify the time and place of the examination**

Observe at different times of day and days of the week to spot behavior patterns and differences.

### **4. Prepare an observation sheet**

Create a simple form with questions, e.g.:

- » How many people use the space?
- » What age groups are present?
- » What are people doing?
- » Are there any barriers (e.g., architectural)?
- » How long do people stay in the space?

### **5. Make an observation**

Take notes and document behaviors, interactions, and uses of space. Pay attention to unusual phenomena, such as people avoiding a given area.

### **6. Analyze the results**

Combine observations with other data (e.g., from surveys, interviews). Look for patterns of behavior, but also for anomalies and unexpected, surprising behavior.

## **MORE ABOUT OBSERVATIONS:**

- » <https://www.scribbr.com/methodology/participant-observation/>
- » <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/1525822X231198989>
- » [https://www.youtube.com/watch?si=4p51L\\_w6umEY5jwt&embeds\\_referring\\_euri=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.bing.com%2F&embeds\\_referring\\_origin=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.bing.com&source\\_ve\\_path=Mjg2NjQsMTY0N-TA2&v=fDNYzPDIfRA&feature=youtu.be&themeRefresh=1](https://www.youtube.com/watch?si=4p51L_w6umEY5jwt&embeds_referring_euri=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.bing.com%2F&embeds_referring_origin=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.bing.com&source_ve_path=Mjg2NjQsMTY0N-TA2&v=fDNYzPDIfRA&feature=youtu.be&themeRefresh=1)



This tool allows the project team to identify challenges and barriers that may hinder the achievement of project goals (e.g., budget constraints, lack of resources, complex social relationships). Simultaneously, the team also diagnoses opportunities (available technologies, key partnerships, untapped resources). This tool is most often used early in the process, allowing for a better understanding of the situation, identifying potential courses of action, and directing them. Because the tool requires a visual representation of the identified elements, it facilitates analysis and prioritization of actions, and then builds a strategy that minimizes challenges and maximizes benefits.

# CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

## **APPLICATION:**

- » initial diagnosis of the situation (e.g., before any spatial intervention),  
Identification of priorities in action planning,
- » risk analysis in implementation planning,
- » facilitating discussions between parties representing different interests.

## **CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES:**

- » allows for accurate planning of activities,
- » enables better risk management,
- » motivates the search for solutions based on diagnosed resources and opportunities.

## **LIMITATIONS:**

- » there is a risk of ignoring „hidden“ barriers (e.g., political, cultural),
- » a poorly moderated process can lead to overly general conclusions,
- » it requires finding a balance between barriers and opportunities.

## IT IS WORTH IT TO:

- » supplement the analysis with interviews with key stakeholders,
- » visualize the results by creating a map of barriers and opportunities,
- » transform diagnosed problems into design challenges,
- » update the map of barriers and opportunities.

## HOW TO APPLY CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES?

### 1. Collect input data

Gather key insights from your research, interviews, observations, or workshops

### 2. Divide your observations into two categories:

**Challenges:** What's not working? What are the obstacles?

What needs are unmet?

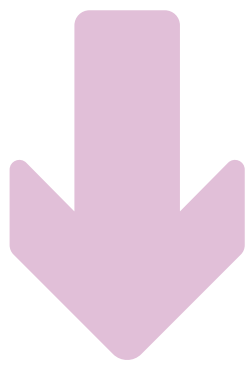
**Opportunities:** Where is the potential? What can be improved, expanded, or transformed?

Make two columns: Challenges/Opportunities and match each challenge with a possible solution

### 3. Analyze and group insights

Determine which challenges are most urgent and which can be addressed later? What can be accomplished at low cost and what requires additional funding?

# CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES



## CHALLENGES

### CHALLENGES 1

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### CHALLENGES 2

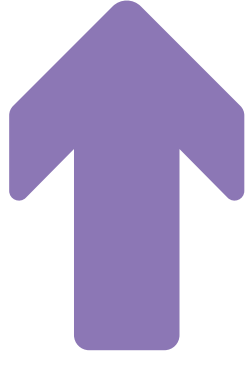
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### CHALLENGES 3

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### CHALLENGES 4

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## OPPORTUNITIES

### OPPORTUNITIES 1

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### OPPORTUNITIES 2

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### OPPORTUNITIES 3

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### OPPORTUNITIES 4

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Charrette is an interdisciplinary workshop method used in design and planning processes, particularly in urban planning and urban revitalization. Charrette fosters the gathering of diverse stakeholders – residents, experts, officials, and designers – who contribute their perspectives. It takes the form of intensive workshops, sometimes lasting several days, during which participants analyze problems, exchange ideas, and develop proposals for changes to a specific location or problem.



Charrette fosters the development of a common position and strengthens community engagement, thereby optimizing the chances of implementing solutions.

The Charrette process is iterative; the project is developed step by step, with adjustments after each session. It consists of several phases, including problem diagnosis, idea generation, development of initial concepts, and presentation of results. It is often accompanied by drawing, prototyping, and visualization. The result is a plan or design that addresses the needs of the various stakeholders.

# CHARRETTE

## **APPLICATION:**

- » urban planning,
- » transformation of public spaces,
- » functional changes to buildings/infrastructure,
- » social and infrastructural revitalization,
- » design of public services,
- » creation of local strategies.

## **CHARETTE:**

- » builds a sense of empowerment among participants,
- » integrates different perspectives at one time and place,
- » accelerates the process of concept creation, -
- » fosters collaborative learning.

## **LIMITATIONS:**

- » requires very good group preparation and good logistics,
- » requires good moderation of team work to prevent the group from being dominated by more active participants,
- » the workshop is time-consuming, and participation may be impossible for some residents.

## IT IS WORTH IT TO:

- » requires very good group preparation and good logistics,
- » requires good moderation of team work to prevent the group from being dominated by more active participants, the workshop is time-consuming, and participation may be
- » impossible for some residents.

## HOW TO ORGANIZE A CHARETTE WORKSHOP?

### 1. Preparation:

- » define the goal (e.g., what are we designing? What problem are we solving?),
- » assemble a team of experts and moderators,
- » invite stakeholders: residents, officials, designers, etc.,
- » plan the location and time (ideally at least 2-3 days).

### 2. Day 1 – Diagnosis and Inspiration:

- » organize an opening meeting and present the problem.
- » conduct a knowledge-sharing and context analysis session.
- » collect participants' opinions, needs, and concerns, and divide them into working groups.

### 2. Days 2–3 – Creation, Prototyping, and Testing:

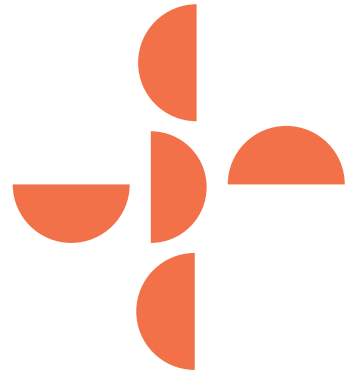
- » working in working groups, based on abstracted themes
- » (e.g., transportation, revitalization of a given area, greenery, etc.), developing potential solutions,
- » creating prototypes,
- » testing ideas and gathering community feedback,
- » presenting final concepts, discussing and agreeing on joint recommendations.

## MORE ABOUT CHARRETTE:

- » <https://participedia.net/method/2840>
- » <https://partycypacjaobywatelska.pl/en/>
- » <https://participatory.tools/tools/design-charrette/>
- » <https://www.toolshero.com/creativity/charette-procedure/>
- » [https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-94-007-7031-7\\_2](https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-94-007-7031-7_2)
- » <https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/14676370810856305/full/html>



# IDEATION METHODS



Ideation methods are numerous and are used in creative processes to support the search for innovative solutions. The most popular include brainstorming, written brainstorming (brainwriting), and the lotus method. In all of these methods, the key is to focus on the quantity and diversity of ideas, without rushing to evaluate them.

**Brainstorming** involves the free exchange of ideas within a group. The number of ideas is key, and the goal is to search for as many ideas as possible, unconstrained by patterns. The concepts created cannot be evaluated during development; the most interesting ones are selected only at the end of the process.

An alternative to traditional brainstorming is **brainwriting** – instead of sharing ideas aloud, participants write them down on paper or electronically. Typically, each participant writes down one idea and then passes it on to others, who add new ideas or expand on existing ones. This process is repeated over several rounds, allowing ideas to develop gradually and be enriched by others. Brainwriting allows for a quiet, less stressful exchange of ideas for some participants, while also fostering greater idea generation and engagement for all participants.

**The lotus method**, on the other hand, utilizes the idea of an octagonal diagram. A central theme is placed in the center, and ideas and subthemes are generated around it, which are then developed. The numerous petals of the lotus flower inspire the development of as many ideas as possible.

## **APPLICATION:**

- » solution design phase (after diagnosis),
- » creating innovative spatial concepts, product and service innovations.

## **GENERATING IDEAS:**

- » stimulates creativity and engagement,
- » provides a broad base of ideas for further development,
- » gives a sense of agency and influence on local life,
- » integrates various types of knowledge (residents, experts, academics, officials, etc.).

## **LIMITATIONS:**

- » lack of moderation and idea selection can result in chaos,
- » risk of domination by more extroverted participants,
- » too many banal or impossible-to-implement ideas may arise.

## **IT IS WORTH IT TO:**

- » establish clear criteria: for whom, what, and by when the idea should address it,
- » divide the session into several thematic rounds,
- » encourage participants to seek unconventional solutions,
- » conclude with a clustering and evaluation stage.

# HOW TO USE EACH METHOD?

## 1. Brainstorming

### Rules:

- » Every idea is welcome – we don't judge!
- » It's the quantity of ideas that matters, not their quality.
- » Ideas can be combined and developed.
- » The moderator records all contributions.

### Course:

1. Define the problem or question (e.g., „How can we revitalize the space around the market?“)
2. Time: 10–30 minutes
3. Encourage participants to generate as many ideas as possible individually. Participants write down their ideas on sticky notes.
4. Work in teams to share and expand on their ideas.
5. Participants group and select ideas according to specific criteria (e.g., innovation, relevance to the problem, feasibility of implementation).

## 2. Brainwriting

It is similar to brainstorming, but in silence and individually, which makes the work easier and encourages more shy people to get involved.

### Rules:

- » Participants write down their ideas on cards (e.g., three ideas each).
- » The cards are circulated, with each participant adding to the others' ideas.
- » The process takes place in silence.

### Course:

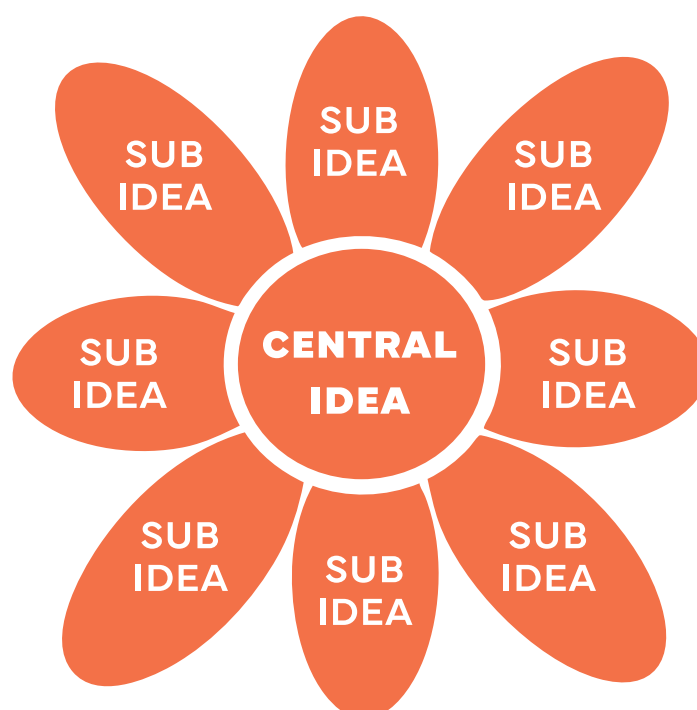
1. Each participant receives a card with a table (e.g., three columns and three rows).
2. In the first round, each participant writes down three ideas.
3. After 3–5 minutes, the card is passed on.
4. The next person adds three new ideas or expands on previous ones.
5. After several rounds, the ideas are collected and analyzed.

### 3. The lotus method

In this method, ideas are deepened and developed—one concept leads to many variations and applications. The tool is a grid with a central cell (representing the center of the flower) and eight adjacent cells (lotus petals).

### Course:

1. Enter the main topic/problem in the central cell.
2. Around it, write the first eight associations/solutions.
3. Each of the eight proposed solutions becomes the center of the next grid – the center of the flower.
4. The next eight ideas are developed around the new centers of the flower.



# Table 2:

## When to use each technique?

Technique	It works well in situations where:	Number of participants
Brainstorming	you need quick, numerous ideas	4–12
Brainwriting	you want to avoid the domination of one stakeholder group and ensure that all participants feel comfortable participating in the process	4–10
Lotus	it is necessary to obtain as many ideas as possible and organize them	1–8

Source: own study

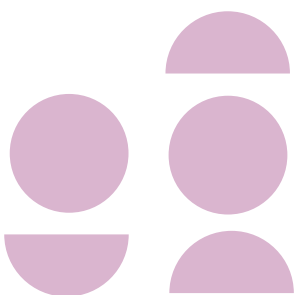
### MORE ABOUT IDEATION METHODS:

- » <https://online.visual-paradigm.com/knowledge/brainstorming/lotus-blossom-technique/>
- » <https://mindmap.guide/post/bloom-your-ideas-with-the-lotus-blossom-technique-a-powerful-approach-to-idea-expansion/>
- » <https://www.mural.co/blog/brainwriting>

# PROTOTYPING

Prototyping is the process of creating early, often imperfect, versions of products, services, or solutions that illustrate how an idea is intended to function, look, and what it requires in practice. The goal of prototyping is to quickly validate a concept, gather user feedback, identify user-reported problems, and identify opportunities for refining the solution. Prototyping allows for making adjustments early in the design process.

Prototypes can take many forms, including paper models, 3D mockups, building blocks, graphic visualizations (e.g., storyboards), and digital models. Prototyping services can also be done through staging and role-playing.



## **APPLICATION:**

- » public space design,
- » service design,
- » product design,
- » social campaigns.

## **PROTOTYPING:**

- » allows for „testing“ an idea in a real-world context,
- » reduces the risk of failure and costs,
- » increases the engagement of participants who can quickly see the results of their work,
- » teaches an iterative approach to problem-solving.

## **LIMITATIONS:**

- » requires time, materials and basic technical skills,
- » the prototype may be mistakenly perceived as the final version of the project,
- » difficulties with prototyping services and experiences.

## IT IS WORTH IT TO:

- » document and photograph the prototyping stages and user reactions,
- » ask for honest feedback – what users would change or improve,
- » give yourself time to iterate and set up several cycles of testing and improving the solution.

## HOW TO PROTOTYPE?

### 1. Choose an idea to test

Collect previously generated ideas (e.g. from brainstorming), then select 1–3 that, in the opinion of the participants, are worth developing.

### 2. Decide what type of prototype will be best, e.g.:

Collect previously generated ideas (e.g. from brainstorming), then select 1–3 that, in the opinion of the participants, are worth developing.

#### **A drawing –**

can be suitable for presenting a square plan, a user path map, or a poster.

#### **A mockup –**

for models of outdoor and indoor spaces, made from cardboard, blocks, or modeling clay.

#### **A storyboard –**

for example, a simulation of a procedure, customer service, or human behavior in a space.

#### **A digital prototype –**

for example, a mock-up of a website or application.

### **3. Make the first version of the prototype**

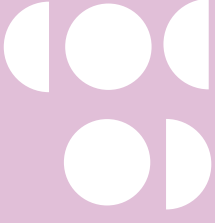
- » use simple materials (paper, markers, tape, cardboard),
- » don't expect to create a perfect model – just make it understandable.

### **4. Test the prototype with future users of the solution**

- » ask people to "use" the prototype and describe what they think and feel when they use it,
- » observe reactions, ask:  
*What would you change? What works? What is unclear?*

### **5. Collect feedback and improve the prototype**

- » take photos or jot down comments,
- » rework the prototype or create a new version based on the feedback.



## Prototype Card

### 1. Goal

What do we want to show, test, or verify?

.....

### 2. Prototype Description

What does it look like? What does it represent?

What elements does it consist of?

.....

### 3. Users / Addressees

Who is this prototype for? Who will use it?

.....

### 4. Observations During Testing

What did we notice? How did participants react?

.....

### 5. Users' Opinions and Comments

What suggestions, comments, and questions were raised?

.....

### 6. What should be improved or changed?

.....

### 7. Conclusions

Does the idea have potential? What are the next steps?

.....

## MORE ABOUT PROTOTYPING:

- » <https://blog.logrocket.com/product-management/what-is-a-prototype/>
- » <https://www.lumitex.com/blog/prototyping-methodology>

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## PRACTICAL ADVICES

- » **DON'T OVERTHINK JUST START BUILDING.** EVEN IF YOU'RE NOT SURE WHAT YOU'RE DOING, THE VERY ACT OF PICKING UP THE MATERIALS SHOULD UNLOCK YOU.
- » **DON'T SPEND TOO MUCH TIME ON ONE PROTOTYPE.** GET DOWN TO A NEW ONE AS YOU FEEL YOURSELF STARTING TO GET EMOTIONALLY ATTACHED TO YOUR CREATION. YOU'LL VERIFY THEM ALL LATER.
- » **BUILD WITH THE USER IN MIND.** WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO TEST? WHAT KIND OF BEHAVIOR?
- » **DEFINE WHAT YOU ARE TESTING** WITH A GIVEN PROTOTYPE. EACH PROTOTYPE SHOULD ANSWER A SPECIFIC QUESTION.

# SUMMARY

The ten participatory tools described above and tested in the HEIsCITI project form a set that can be used in various types of participatory processes. They are effective in designing solutions for neglected urban spaces, facilitating collaboration between users of specific places, city authorities, students, and university representatives, and supporting the strengthening of social ties in the post-pandemic era. They can also be used in educational processes aimed at preparing students and pupils for conscious and active co-creation of solutions for local communities. The use of the described tools was incorporated into specific workshop scenarios devoted to various aspects of participation (Annex No. 2).

# **Table 3:**

**Summary of features of selected participatory tools**



**The following summary of the participatory tools presented in the Handbook illustrates their purpose, application, main advantages, and potential limitations (Table No. 3).**

Tool	Purpose	Application	Advantages	Limitations / risks
Storytelling	Recognizing the needs, values, and history of the local community	Social diagnosis, strengthening the identity of the place	Facilitates emotional understanding, builds empathy and context	Difficulties in systematizing data, requires moderation and analysis of narratives
Stakeholder Map	Identification and analysis of project stakeholders	Engagement planning, conflict management, communication strategy	Facilitates understanding of the influence and needs of different groups	Ignoring hidden stakeholders, subjective impact assessment
Spatial Mapping	Analysis of space and its system elements	Spatial planning, revitalization, functional analysis	Visual representation of problems and spatial relationships	May require graphical tools, difficult in the case of symbolic spaces
Persona	Creating fictional representations of end users	User-centered design, idea testing	It makes it easier to tailor solutions to real needs	An overly simplified image may not reflect the full diversity of the target group.
Diagnostic survey	Collecting quantitative and qualitative data from the community	Diagnosis, needs monitoring, strategic planning	Combines the objectivity of numerical data with emotions and personal experiences	Low responsiveness, limitations resulting from qualitative data analysis
Observations	Observing real human behavior and interactions	Space diagnosis, user needs analysis, solution testing	Data authenticity, non-verbal information	Time-consuming, subjectivity of the observer
Challenges and Opportunities	Identifying project barriers and potential	Action planning, intervention prioritization, risk analysis	It allows you to strategically manage change and creates a realistic picture of the situation.	Can lead to "analysis paralysis" if the challenge list is not organized correctly
Charrette Workshop	Design workshops with stakeholders	Participatory spatial planning, revitalization, difficult social challenges	High group effectiveness, engaging multiple perspectives	High organizational requirements, risk of expert domination
Generating ideas	Generating many creative solutions	Early stages of designing innovative solutions	It stimulates creativity and creates various proposals.	The lack of structure can lead to chaos and difficulty in selecting valuable ideas.
Prototyping	Creating testable versions of solutions	Testing in practice, iterative improvement of ideas	Allows testing, feedback and improvement of solutions	Time-consuming, incorrect perception of the prototype as the final version, difficulties in prototyping services

It's worth remembering that the effectiveness of the proposed tools increases when they are tailored to the process participants and the local context, when they are research-based, interconnected, and when their use is accompanied by mindfulness and reflection.

**WE WISH YOU SUCCESS  
IN CONDUCTING PARTICIPATORY  
PROCESSES!**



## **Annexes**

<b>Title</b>	<b>Beyond the box: First steps first on the paths to success</b>
<b>Coordinator</b>	Magdalena Weinle & Viktoria Heinzl
<b>Duration</b>	120 minutes
<b>Goal</b>	Especially in challenge-based innovation processes a balancing act must be mastered: Challenges must be phrased as precisely as possible, but at the same time as open-ended and unbiased as can be. Our 90-minute slot will provide an overview of the common approaches and methods used in innovation processes, but will also include an urgent appeal to take the very first steps seriously. The emphasis will be on problem exploration and customer discovery.
<b>Methods</b>	Online lecture
<b>Learning outcomes</b>	Upon completion of this 120-minute online lecture, participants will be able to understand ... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the principles and key concepts of open innovation,</li> <li>- design thinking as a human-centered approach to problem-solving, incorporating empathy and creativity,</li> <li>- the key aspects of effectuation,</li> <li>- the essentiality of identifying and validating customer needs</li> <li>- and the importance of conducting effective exploration of needs through research, utilizing appropriate methodologies.</li> </ul>

**Outline of the lecture:**

**I. Theoretical input.**

1. The principles of open innovation
2. Design thinking as a human-centred approach
3. Effectuation in a nutshell
4. Customer discovery
5. Exploration of needs through research

**II. Q&A + Discussion**

**References:**

- Bason, C. (2018). *Leading Public Design: Discovering human-centered governance*. Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Blank, S. (2013). *Why the Lean Start-Up Changes Everything*. *Harvard Business Review*, 91(5), 63-72.
- Brown, T. (2008). *Design thinking*. *Harvard Business Review*, 86(6), 84-92.
- Kouprie, M., & Sleeswijk Visser, F. (2009). *A framework for empathy in design: Stepping into and out of the user's life*. *Journal of Engineering Design*, 20(5), 437-448.
- Maurya, A. (2012). *Running Lean: Iterate from Plan A to a Plan That Works*. O'Reilly Media.
- Osterwalder, A., & Pigneur, Y. (2010). *Business model generation: A handbook for visionaries, game changers, and challengers*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Sarasvathy, S. D. (2001). *Causation and effectuation: Toward a theoretical shift from economic inevitability to entrepreneurial contingency*. *Academy of Management Review*, 26(2), 243-263.

<b>Title</b>	<b>Citizen Engagement in the Development of Municipalities and Cities – the case of revitalisation in Poland</b>
<b>Coordinator</b>	Joanna Kurowska-Pysz
<b>Duration</b>	120 minutes
<b>Goal</b>	The lecture aims to increase students' knowledge and awareness of participatory and place-based approaches supporting civil society. The background for analysing various participatory processes, methods, and tools is revitalising abandoned areas, one of the most common examples of intervention requiring civil society involvement. The emphasis is on problem diagnosis using various participatory methods, engaging different stakeholder groups and providing tailor-made communication with them.
<b>Methods</b>	Online lecture, PPT presentation
<b>Learning outcomes</b>	Upon completing this 120-minute online lecture, participants will be able to understand ... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the idea of revitalisation of abandoned areas and the problems of socio-economic marginalisation of some peripheral areas,</li> <li>- the rules of keeping balance required when introducing a revitalization process in the area,</li> <li>- the key stages in the revitalization intervention development,</li> <li>- the essence of the development of participatory and place-based approaches,</li> <li>- the key stakeholders groups in revitalization processes,</li> <li>- various participatory and communication methods and tools,</li> <li>- the obstacles in the implementation of the participatory approach.</li> </ul>

#### **Outline of the lecture:**

##### **I. Theoretical input.**

1. The principles of revitalization
2. The key stages in the revitalization intervention development
3. The essence of participatory and place-based approaches
4. Variety of stakeholders and challenges in communication with them.
5. Selected participatory and communication methods and tools and their limitations.

##### **II. Q&A + Discussion**

#### **References:**

1. Onyszkiewicz, J., & Sadowski, K. (2022). Proposals for the revitalization of prefabricated building facades in terms of the principles of sustainable development and social participation. *Journal of Building Engineering*, 46, 103713.
2. Dentinho, T. P., Kopczevska, K., De Francesco, G., Pascariu, G. C., Kourtit, K., Nijkamp, P., ... & Türk, U. (2023). Sustainable Development Goals. People and Places chose what they do not have. In *Resilience and Regional Development* (pp. 169-188). Edward Elgar Publishing.
3. Ergashev, I. (2021). Civil society and youth. *Science and Education*, 2(2), 282-284.
4. Castelnovo, W., Misuraca, G., & Savoldelli, A. (2016). Smart cities governance: The need for a holistic approach to assessing urban participatory policy making. *Social Science Computer Review*, 34(6), 724-739.
5. Crosby, N., Kelly, J. M., & Schaefer, P. (2015). Citizens panels: A new approach to citizen participation. In *The Age of Direct Citizen Participation* (pp. 266-278). Routledge.
6. Hurlbert, M., & Gupta, J. (2015). The split ladder of participation: A diagnostic, strategic, and evaluation tool to assess when participation is necessary. *Environmental Science & Policy*, 50, 100-113.

<b>Title</b>	"Embracing Resilience: Innovative Participatory Methods in the Post-COVID Era"
<b>Coordinator</b>	Smart RI
<b>Duration</b>	
<b>Goal</b>	
<b>Methods</b>	
<b>Learning outcomes</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Understanding Evolving Dynamics:</b> Participants will gain insights into the shifting dynamics of community participation and collaboration in the post-COVID era, recognizing the unique challenges and opportunities presented by the pandemic.</li> <li>2. <b>Adapting Traditional Methods:</b> Learn how to adapt and evolve traditional participatory methods to suit the changing needs of communities and stakeholders in the context of ongoing global changes.</li> <li>3. <b>Innovative Tools and Technologies:</b> Explore new and innovative participatory tools and technologies that have emerged as a response to the challenges posed by the pandemic, enhancing the capacity for remote collaboration and engagement.</li> <li>4. <b>Resilience Building:</b> Discuss strategies for building resilience within communities through participatory methods, ensuring that collective decision-making processes contribute to the long-term sustainability and well-being of communities.</li> <li>5. <b>Inclusivity and Diversity:</b> Emphasize the importance of inclusivity and diversity in participatory approaches, considering how the pandemic has highlighted disparities and offering strategies to ensure equitable participation across various demographic groups.</li> <li>6. <b>Real-world Applications:</b> Examine real-world case studies where participatory methods have been successfully employed in post-COVID recovery efforts, learning from practical examples and understanding the key factors that contributed to their success.</li> <li>7. <b>Stakeholder Engagement Strategies:</b> Develop strategies for effective stakeholder engagement, considering the diverse interests and perspectives in the post-COVID world, and fostering collaboration among various stakeholders for collective impact.</li> <li>8. <b>Ethical Considerations:</b> Address ethical considerations associated with participatory methods, particularly in the digital realm, and explore ways to uphold ethical standards while embracing technological advancements in engagement.</li> <li>9. <b>Capacity Building:</b> Discuss methods for building the capacity of individuals and communities to actively participate in decision-making processes, empowering them to take ownership of their development and well-being.</li> <li>10. <b>Creating Sustainable Impact:</b> Explore how participatory methods can contribute to sustainable development goals and create a positive and lasting impact on communities, institutions, and society at large in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.</li> </ol>

**Outline of the lecture:**

**I. Introduction**

- A. Brief on the Structure of the Lecture
- B. Overview of the Post-COVID Era
- C. Significance of Participatory Methods in the Current Context

**II. Shifting Dynamics of Participation (10 minutes)**

- A. Understanding the Impact of COVID-19 on Community Dynamics
- B. Identifying Challenges and Opportunities
- C. Importance of Adapting to Change

**III. Innovations in Participatory Tools and Technologies (10 minutes)**

- A. Introduction to Emerging Technologies
- B. Case Studies on Successful Implementation
- C. Best Practices for Remote Collaboration

**IV. Building Resilience Through Participation (10 minutes)**

- A. Resilience as a Key Objective
- B. Integrating Participatory Approaches in Resilience-Building Strategies
- C. Lessons from Resilient Communities

**V. Ensuring Inclusivity and Diversity (10 minutes)**

- A. Recognizing and Addressing Disparities
- B. Strategies for Inclusive Participatory Processes
- C. Case Studies on Inclusive Engagement

**VI. Real-world Applications and Case Studies (15 minutes)**

- A. Examining Successful Post-COVID Participatory Initiatives
- B. Lessons Learned and Transferable Practices
- C. Q&A and Participant Discussion

**VII. Stakeholder Engagement Strategies (10 minutes)**

- A. Identifying Key Stakeholders
- B. Strategies for Effective Engagement
- C. Balancing Diverse Interests for Collective Impact

**VIII. Ethical Considerations in Participatory Methods (10 minutes)**

- A. Addressing Ethical Challenges
- B. Ethical Guidelines for Digital Engagement

- C. Ensuring Accountability and Transparency

#### **IX. Capacity Building for Sustainable Participation (10 minutes)**

- A. Empowering Individuals and Communities
- B. Educational Initiatives for Enhanced Participation
- C. Long-term Impact of Capacity Building

#### **X. Conclusion and Wrap-up (10 minutes)**

- A. Recap of Key Points
- B. Encouraging Continued Learning and Implementation
- C. Thanking Participants and Closing Remarks

#### **References: (APA style description)**

1. Bellacasa, M. P. (2017) *Matters of Care: Speculative Ethics in More Than Human Worlds*. Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press.
2. Dupret, K., Eschweiler, J., Umantseva, A., & Hyldkrog, R. V. B. (2022). *Mapping Innovation and Societal Engagement: - Responsible research through a care ethics perspective*. Roskilde Universitet. <https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.31722.59845>
3. ...

<b>Title</b>	Participation for public engagement
<b>Coordinator</b>	Mykolas Romeris university
<b>Duration</b>	2 academic hours
<b>Goal</b>	To introduce and discuss models of participation and their application in practice
<b>Methods</b>	Theoretical input, practical application (360 participation game or Case analysis), discussion, reflection
<b>Learning outcomes</b>	At the end of the lecture learners will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ know concept and principles of models of participation</li> <li>➤ be able to apply models of participation</li> <li>➤ reflect on learning experience</li> </ul>

#### Outline of the lecture:

##### I. Theoretical input.

Introduction: Participation in relation to collaboration.

1. Sociological and political approaches to participation.

2. Models of participation:

2.1. Arnstein/Hart/others – ‘Ladders of participation’

2.2. Treseder – ‘Degrees of participation’

2.3. Shier – ‘Pathways to Participation’

2.4. Council of Europe – ‘RMSOS Framework’

2.5. White – ‘A Typology of Interests’

2.6. Davies – Matrix of Participation

2.7. De Backer and Jans – ‘Triangle of Participation’

2.8. Council of Europe – Six-Step Mode

##### II. Practical application. Possible options:

360 participation game (Grace, Grace, 2017).

or

Case analysis (Case is provided for learners, they choose one model of participation and assess what level of participation is reflected in it).

##### III. Discussion. Take away points.

##### IV. Reflection. A small change for today.

#### References:

1. Bellacasa, M. P. (2017) *Matters of Care: Speculative Ethics in More Than Human Worlds*. Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press.
2. Dupret, K., Umantseva, A., Lazoroska, D., & Eschweiler, J. (2023). *Research collaboration for societal engagement and social innovation: Guidelines and reflections for best practices*. Roskilde Universitet.
3. Grace J., Grace P. (2017). *Participation Handbook*.

## Lecturers content formula - LAMA

<b>Title</b>	Participation in practice - study case, tools and methods
<b>Coordinator</b>	LAMA impresa sociale
<b>Duration</b>	2h
<b>Goal</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Increase students' awareness about participatory processes by presenting a real case study: Montagna Prossima</li><li>● Introduce students to the set of tools they will use during the hands-on workshop included in the HEIsCITI course</li><li>● Provide opportunities for dialogue with an expert in participatory paths with public administrations and communities</li></ul>
<b>Methods</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Introducing the speaker and the scope of the lecture</li><li>● Presentation of a real case study of participatory path conducted by LAMA near Florence, Italy (Montagna Prossima participatory process)</li><li>● Overview of the set of tools to be used by the students during the workshop in the three pilots</li><li>● Discussion (Q&amp;A)</li></ul>
<b>Learning outcomes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Increased awareness about the practice of participation in public programmes.</li><li>● Gained knowledge of the provided set of tools: how, when and why to use them in the participatory path.</li><li>● Enhanced dialogue and discussion on practical aspects related to the implementation of real participatory paths.</li></ul>

### Outline of the lecture:

#### I. Theoretical input.

Introduction on the scope of the lecture and its content

Presentation of a real case study: Montagna Prossima, the participatory path conducted by LAMA and the Municipality of Londa and San Godenzo, two little cities in the mountains surrounding Florence (Italy).

Overview of the set of tools to be used by the students during the workshop in the three pilots.

#### 1. Scenario

1.1. Frame Your Design Challenge

1.2. Secondary research tool

#### 2. Map

2.1. Stakeholder mapping

2.2. Challenges and Opportunities

#### 3. Prepare participation

3.1. Techniques of social participation (list)

3.2. Guide to participation template

#### 4. Engage communities

4.1. Communication strategy tool

#### 5. Listen & debate

5.1. Facilitation skills guide

5.2. Theory U - Level of listening

## **6. Co-design solutions**

6.1. Co-design tools and methods

6.2. Portfolio approach

## **7. Present**

7.1. Pitch template

7.2. World café technique

## **III. Discussion. Take away points**

Question and answers

## **IV. Conclusions**

**Topic:**

*Civic Engagement – how to identify target groups of stakeholders in social processes?*

**General objective of the course:**

To present to participants the importance of civic engagement in shaping and improving the local environment, as well as to develop skills and attitudes related to identifying different stakeholder groups using a stakeholder map and examining their needs.

**Course scope:**

1. Introduction to the topic of civic engagement
2. The role of civic engagement in shaping and improving the local environment
3. Factors influencing the level of social engagement in participatory processes
3. Stakeholder map as a tool for civic participation
4. Identification of different stakeholder groups based on the stakeholder map by determining their relationship with the issue under analysis (proximity).
5. Diagnosis of the needs of various stakeholder groups in the context of the analysed issue.

**Total duration of the course:**

180 minutes, including: theoretical part - 60 minutes and practical part - 120 minutes

**Learning outcomes achieved during the course:**

Areas of learning	Learning outcomes	Method of verification of learning outcomes
Knowledge	1. The student has basic knowledge of civic engagement and its role in local development.	Discussion during classes, including after the theoretical part and as part of the summary
	2. The student/pupil knows the basic factors influencing stakeholders' interest in civic participation	
	3. The student/pupil knows the principles of using a stakeholder map as a tool for civic participation	
Skills and attitudes	1. The student is able to identify the basic stakeholder groups and indicate their needs in relation to the analysed issue	Assessment of presentations made in teams as part of the exercise
	2. The student is able to assess the relationships between the basic stakeholder groups in relation to the analysed issue (proximity)	
	3. The student is able to assess and develop a simple stakeholder map	

**Lesson plan**

## I. Introduction to the topic (45 minutes)

Welcoming participants:

Presentation of the objectives and lesson plan.

Theoretical introduction to the class (text material to support the instructor)

*Civic engagement, or civic participation, is the active involvement of residents in activities that benefit their neighbourhood, community or local environment.*

*Citizen participation can take various forms, ranging from volunteering and participation in public consultations to civic initiatives aimed at solving specific local problems.*

*Civic engagement is key to building an informed society that takes responsibility for its environment and helps shape it. It is not only a way to improve the quality of life, but also to strengthen social bonds, develop a sense of community and increase the transparency of decision-making processes. Through civic engagement, people become co-creators of change, rather than passive observers or recipients of its results.*

*Civic engagement is a powerful tool for change. It strengthens the democratic foundations of societies and allows citizens to influence issues that directly affect them. By engaging in participatory activities, everyone can become an architect of their environment and the future of the community in which they live. This applies to various social and age groups, including children, teenagers and young adults. It is the younger generation that should be involved in co-designing the spaces, processes and activities that will be of great importance for their professional, social and personal future, as they concern the environment in which they will function for many years to come.*

*Promoting social participation brings with it a number of challenges that arise from both social conditions and the individual attitudes of citizens. Citizens are not always willing to get involved in social issues, sometimes there is no leader, or the issue that the local community should address is presented in a distorted light. Stimulating social engagement is in the interest of both local authorities and other local stakeholders, such as non-governmental organisations or businesses. The involvement of the whole society in participatory processes helps to develop better solutions, as it is the citizens who should play an important role in co-creating social, economic and environmental processes in their environment.*

*When developing civic participation, it is important to identify the most common factors that limit social engagement and negatively affect citizens' motivation to participate in such activities. Knowledge of these issues greatly facilitates the planning and implementation of participatory processes in a way that ensures the most engaging participation of the entire local community. These factors include, among others, those listed below.*

*A. Lack of public interest in participatory activities and lack of awareness of their impact on the life of the local community*

*Many people are unaware of the importance of their participation in decision-making processes affecting their environment. Insufficient knowledge among citizens about the possibilities of influencing local activities or a lack of conviction that their voice matters leads to passivity, which*

*can become an incentive and an excuse for strong local stakeholders to completely ignore the opinion of the local community in the future.*

#### *B. Inadequate communication with stakeholders*

*The lack of effective communication tools between authorities, public institutions, social organisations, businesses and residents can hinder the promotion and development of participation in the local community. Citizens should be effectively informed about activities that require at least their opinion to be sought and, ideally, their involvement as co-creators of change. Citizens should know their rights in this regard, but at the same time they should feel obliged to engage in discussions on local issues, which requires them to be familiar with at least the basic tools of participation. Insufficiently clear communication from the authorities or difficulties in reaching different social groups constitute significant barriers and limitations to residents' involvement in local affairs.*

#### *C. Diversity of stakeholders and their needs*

*Contemporary society is made up of several generations of citizens who are characterised by a wide variety of demographic and social characteristics and who also have different points of view, expectations and needs. These differences are often difficult to reconcile. In addition to residents, every local community has at least a few leading stakeholder groups who also want to influence various types of activities while representing their interests. These include non-governmental organisations, businesses, local authorities and public institutions, as well as various specific entities such as housing cooperatives, parishes and religious associations, informal groups and sports clubs. Differences in needs and points of view, causing conflicts of interest between residents and other stakeholders, can hinder cooperation.*

#### *D. Low motivation to act*

*The lack of quick results from participatory activities or a lack of understanding of the limitations in implementing citizens' demands can cause frustration and discourage citizens from further involvement in such projects. Local communities often lack conviction about the importance of the voice of citizens, which demotivates and reinforces passivity. Therefore, mature participation should always be preceded by effective civic education, which allows stakeholders to properly assess the real possibilities of influencing specific situations and to evaluate the time needed for the actions taken to bring results. On the other hand, a misunderstanding of the nature of social problems can lead to citizens' misconceptions about their absolute agency in this regard. In such situations, disappointment with the failure of local authorities to take social demands into account may discourage participation in future participatory activities. It is worth remembering that some decision-making processes are lengthy and often require patience, which is often difficult to accept for stakeholders expecting quick changes.*

#### *E. Social differences and communication barriers in the local community*

*We live in an increasingly diverse society, where cultural, generational and worldview differences are becoming more apparent, as are differences in the everyday lives of citizens, e.g. in lifestyle, digital competence and use of social media. All these differences, and in many cases the resulting different perspectives on various issues and the communication barriers generated by these differences, affect the level of citizen engagement in local affairs. Older generations tend to be more conservative and may be less open to new forms of participation, such as the use of social media as a channel of communication with citizens. Younger people, on the other hand, may prefer online activities, which, however, involve greater anonymity but also limit direct contact. Another barrier that may arise from multiculturalism is insufficient knowledge of the local language, which in the case of some members of the local community (e.g. migrants) may hinder communication. Differences of opinion resulting, for example, from different worldviews, which often translate into attitudes towards local issues, should always be discussed with respect for the rights of every citizen, which also requires education on the appropriate culture of public debate.*

#### *F. Lack of resources and time for participatory activities*

*Limited financial resources of local governments for comprehensive participatory activities, or lack of time for such activities, forced, for example, by the project implementation schedule or official deadlines, are often significant constraints faced by local communities wishing to have a say in matters important to them. In order to conduct participatory activities in a manner that ensures equal voice, it is necessary to ensure that all interested parties have full and equal access to public discussion. This is reflected, among other things, in the diversity of forms of participation (e.g. online and offline activities), ensuring sufficient time for citizens to exercise their right to speak, or facilitating participation in participatory activities, e.g. by removing architectural barriers.*

#### *G. Poor knowledge of participatory methods and tools among citizens*

*Not all citizens are sufficiently familiar with the methods and tools of participation that they should use to have their say in social issues. Local authorities that are keen to involve citizens in co-decision-making on key projects, initiatives, changes in local law, etc. should ensure that everyone has the opportunity to learn about the principles of social participation in a way that is accessible and understandable to them, not necessarily using specialist language or formal official documents. The most important thing is that residents feel that they are full participants in the process of co-deciding on matters that are important to them, and that any issues they do not understand can be clarified on an ongoing basis with local government representatives who are properly prepared to communicate with residents. Some participatory methods and tools, such as prototyping or storytelling, may be too complex for some groups of residents. Preparing them for use in a way that is accessible to residents and providing civic education in this area are crucial.*

*Despite these challenges, promoting social participation is essential for building sustainable and active communities. The key to overcoming any limitations and barriers in participatory processes is education, communication and the systematic building of trust between residents and other stakeholder groups and local authorities.*

#### Supplementary materials for the theoretical part (expanding knowledge):

##### 1. Project documentation, including:

Part 1 – Methodology for creating and teaching a course: Participatory approach to cities development.

part 2 – Tools for citizen engagement and community empowerment

part 3 – Guidelines and policy recommendations for local/regional authorities on: How to work with citizens.

Appendix – case studies

##### 2. Materials available online:

Project: Better Reykjavik, Iceland

<https://oecd-opsi.org/innovations/better-reykjavik/>

Project: Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, India

<https://swachhbharatmission.ddws.gov.in/>

Scientific article: Madej, M. (2019). Participatory budgeting in the major cities in Poland–Case study of 2018 editions. *Politics in Central Europe*, 15(2), 257-277.

DOI: 10.2478/pce-2019-0017

## **II. Question and answer session (15 minutes)**

The lecturer engages in a discussion with the participants to ensure that they understand the presented content and encourages them to ask questions and share their own opinions and experiences regarding civic engagement.

### III. Exercise (60 minutes)

#### Stakeholder map as a tool to support citizen engagement

Introduction to the exercise (text material to support the instructor, 15 minutes)

*A stakeholder map is a visual tool that allows you to identify and understand the people, groups or organisations affected by a project, e.g. because they have an impact on the project or are within the project's area of positive or negative influence. This tool allows us to understand the social structure of the project, identify the main actors and their interests, needs and potential conflicts. In order to understand how to build civic engagement using a stakeholder map, it is necessary to determine the level of relationship (proximity) between individual stakeholder groups and the process or situation under analysis.*

*Using a map as a stakeholder analysis tool can bring at least the following benefits to the participation process.*

#### *A. Understanding the diversity of stakeholders*

*The map provides a simple overview of who is or should be involved in participatory activities, from residents and local authorities to non-governmental organisations and businesses. This allows the specific characteristics and needs of each group to be taken into account in the decision-making process.*

#### *B. Facilitating communication*

*Knowledge of key stakeholders helps to select the most appropriate participatory methods and tools, taking into account the capabilities of participants (e.g. deciding on the proportion of face-to-face or online participatory activities, traditional activities and activities carried out on social media, etc.). This approach will ensure transparency and build trust between participants in the process.*

#### *C. Conflict resolution*

*Knowledge about the stakeholders involved in participatory activities allows for the identification of potential sources of misunderstanding between different groups and the early development of strategies to mitigate them and prevent problems from escalating.*

#### *D. Promoting participation*

*Developing a stakeholder map allows for a holistic view of the cross-section and specific characteristics of the target groups of participants in participatory processes, which is precisely what the map enables. With the map, different groups can be more effectively engaged in participatory processes by offering them a clear role and concrete benefits from participating in the project.*

Group work – stakeholder mapping in practice (45 minutes)

#### Tasks of the instructor:

1. Present the stakeholder map template available in the project documentation (part 2 – Tools for citizen engagement and community empowerment) to the participants and explain how the map is structured.
2. Divide participants into a maximum of three teams, which are given guidelines for specific social initiatives requiring a good understanding of stakeholders and their needs (Team A, Team B and Team C).
3. Ongoing consultation on the tasks carried out by individual teams.

#### Tasks for participants in each team:

1. Identifying all stakeholder groups affected by the issue being analysed.
2. Determining the degree of closeness (level of relationship) of individual stakeholder groups in relation to the issue being analysed and justifying this based on an analysis of the needs of these groups.
3. Developing a stakeholder map that includes all identified stakeholder groups.
4. Prepare to present the stakeholder map to other groups, taking into account the division of roles within the team.

Assumptions regarding three social initiatives requiring a good understanding of stakeholders and their needs.

#### **Team A. Revitalisation of public space**

*In one of the Polish cities, there are plans to revitalise a neglected park in order to restore it for use by residents and improve the aesthetics of the public space. The local authorities want to make the best use of the park space and propose to introduce various functions to the site, e.g. recreational, catering, exhibition, integration, etc.*

*The following stakeholder groups have been initially identified for this process:*

- residents: people who use the park as a place for recreation and relaxation;
- city authorities: decision-makers responsible for financing the project;
- environmental organisations: entities advising on sustainable revitalisation.

*It is known that residents are particularly interested in providing space for children to play and relax, environmental organisations are interested in preserving greenery, and the authorities are interested in tidying up the park and creating a catering area and car park next to it.*

#### **Team B. Organisation of cultural events**

*In a small peripheral town, depopulation is rapidly progressing and social ties are disappearing. The local authorities have proposed organising a weekend cultural event to showcase local artists.*

*The following stakeholder groups have been initially identified:*

- local authorities: mayor and councillors;
- residents: event participants;
- local businesses – potential sponsors or service providers;
- local artists – potential protagonists of the event.

*Apart from local authorities, who want to use this event to integrate the local community, the most interested parties are local artists, who hope to promote their work and gain greater recognition in the local community. Residents, on the other hand, expect to have fun and enjoy spending time with their neighbours. Local businesses expect opportunities for promotion, publicity and recognition in exchange for their support of the event.*

#### **Team C. Development of public transport**

*A new bus line is planned to be launched in a district of the city that has been excluded from transport links until now. Work is underway to determine its route, the location of stops and the purchase of buses.*

*The following stakeholder groups have been initially identified:*

- local authorities developing public transport;
- residents of the district who commute to the city centre for various purposes;
- local businesses interested in developing public transport for their employees and customers;
- environmentalists: groups promoting environmentally friendly transport solutions.

*Everyone recognises the need to develop public transport in this peripheral district, but the interests and expectations of individual stakeholder groups vary. For example, residents want as many services as possible during the day, while local businesses are interested in having stops located close to their*

*premises. environmentalists expect zero-emission buses to be purchased, and local authorities must take into account budgetary constraints that do not allow all expectations to be met.*

#### **IV. Presentation of the results of the teams carrying out the exercise (30 minutes)**

Each team presents and explains how they prepared the stakeholder map for the example analysed, justifying the degree of relationship (proximity) and the needs of the stakeholders identified. After each presentation, the other participants and the instructor may ask questions to better understand the results of each team's work. The instructor asks the participants additional questions to test their knowledge acquired during the class.

#### **V. Assessment of team work by the course instructor (15 minutes)**

The instructor should evaluate the participants' presentations based on the following criteria:

- completeness of the presentation of stakeholder groups in relation to the issue analysed
- correctness of determining the degree of relationship between individual stakeholder groups and the analysed issue (proximity)
- correct identification of the needs of individual stakeholder groups
- involvement of individual team members.

Each team receives verbal feedback from the instructor.

#### **VI. Summary (15 minutes)**

##### **Main conclusions from the class (text material to support the instructor)**

*Civic engagement, or civic participation, means the active involvement of residents in activities that benefit their community. It can take various forms (e.g. volunteering, public consultations or civic initiatives) and is crucial for building a conscious society that co-creates its environment, strengthens social bonds and improves the quality of life. Participation allows citizens to influence local issues and become co-creators of change. Selected challenges related to civic participation:*

1. *Lack of interest and awareness – citizens are often unaware of the impact of their actions on the community.*
2. *Inadequate communication – problems in the flow of information between authorities and residents hinder engagement.*
3. *Diversity of stakeholders – conflicts of interest between social groups and institutions can hinder cooperation.*
4. *Low motivation – the lack of quick results demotivates people, leading to frustration and discouragement.*
5. *Social differences and communication barriers – cultural, generational and linguistic differences can hinder social dialogue or significantly limit its effectiveness.*
6. *Lack of resources – lack of time and financial resources limits participatory activities, which is primarily a challenge for local authorities.*
7. *Poor knowledge of participatory tools – citizens often do not know how to participate effectively in decision-making processes, which can discourage them from doing so.*

*Despite these difficulties, the development of civic participation is crucial for building sustainable communities. This requires education, effective communication and trust-building between residents and local authorities. One of the first steps on this path is to define the target groups of stakeholders who should be involved in social activities and to determine the degree of their relationship (proximity) to the issue being analysed. A stakeholder map can be used for this purpose.*

*A stakeholder map is a visual tool that helps identify individuals, groups or organisations involved in a project, taking into account their influence, interests and potential conflicts. It enables the analysis*

*of relationships between stakeholders and the process, supporting the building of civic engagement. The use of stakeholder maps in social processes can bring a number of benefits, including:*

- 1. Understanding diversity: It facilitates the identification of involved groups (e.g. residents, local authorities, non-governmental organisations) and the consideration of their needs in the decision-making process.*
- 2. Facilitating communication: It helps to select appropriate participatory methods (stationary, online, traditional or using social media), which increases transparency and builds trust.*
- 3. Conflict resolution: Allows you to anticipate sources of misunderstanding and develop strategies to mitigate or prevent them.*
- 4. Promoting participation: Thanks to a holistic approach, it enables the effective engagement of target groups by offering them clear roles and benefits of participation.*

**Topic:***Non-governmental organisations as mediators in civic participation processes***General objective of the course:**

To present to participants the role and importance of non-governmental organisations in civic participation processes, with particular emphasis on their mediation tasks, as well as to develop skills and attitudes related to the use of mapping tools in project processes in order to visualise and analyse the links between different elements of the system, space or process, e.g. the relationship between stakeholders and activities supporting the process of civic participation.

**Scope of the course:**

1. Introduction to the topic of civic participation
2. The importance of non-governmental organisations in social participation
3. The role of non-governmental organisations in facilitating the process of civic participation
4. Mapping problems and relationships and designing activities to support the process of civic participation.

**Total duration of the course:**

180 minutes, including: theoretical part - 60 minutes and practical part - 120 minutes

**Learning outcomes achieved during the course:**

Areas of learning	Learning outcomes	Method of verification of learning outcomes
Knowledge	1. The student has basic knowledge of the process of civic participation and its forms	Discussion during classes, including after the theoretical part and as part of the summary
	2. The student/pupil knows the role of non-governmental organisations in participatory activities and in animating the process of civic participation	
	3. The student knows the principles of creating a map of relationships and activities supporting the process of civic participation	
Skills and attitudes	1. The student is able to identify examples of forms of civic participation	Assessment of presentations made in teams as part of the exercise
	2. The student is able to identify the benefits of non-governmental organisations' involvement in the process of civic participation	
	3. The student is able to develop a simple map of relationships and activities supporting the process of civic participation	

## Lesson plan

### I. Introduction to the topic (45 minutes)

Welcoming participants:

Presentation of the objectives and lesson plan.

Theoretical introduction to the class (text material to support the instructor)

*The process of social participation involves the active involvement of individual citizens or specific groups of stakeholders (formal and informal) in social, political and public life, which indirectly enables them to influence decisions concerning the functioning of the local community and its environment. Civic participation is a form of civic engagement that enables residents to co-create and co-decide on local issues.*

*Active participation is not passive observation, but active involvement in initiating and implementing social activities, decision-making, consultation or co-management. This can be achieved, for example, through participation in public consultations (surveys, meetings, polls), workshops and public debates, co-decision-making on public spending within the framework of a participatory budget, or other civic initiatives or social councils acting in an advisory capacity. The process of civic participation may consist, for example, in cooperation between different social groups towards a common goal, such as cooperation between residents and local organisations demanding an increase in local safety, or in the involvement of citizens in activities initiated by public authorities, such as the preparation of a revitalisation programme.*

*Thanks to the development of the civic participation process, there has been an increase in trust in the authorities and a greater willingness to introduce changes on the part of both residents and authorities. There has also been an increase in residents' sense of social responsibility for their environment, as well as the development of their managerial and social skills.*

*The process of civic participation is limited by social inequalities, lack of education, discrimination and low social awareness. That is why it is so important to ensure equal access, education and transparency of decision-making processes. Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) play an important role in these activities, performing a key function in civil society and strengthening the process of civic participation.*

*NGOs encourage citizens to engage in public and social affairs and support citizens and social groups in solving problems. An important task is to build space for dialogue between different stakeholder groups, especially where the actions address challenges that may affect the interests of different parties. Unlike government institutions, even local government or economic institutions, NGOs are independent entities and their activities often focus on socially important areas such as education, ecology, social assistance and civil rights. Three leading roles of non-governmental organisations can be identified. These are:*

- a) *citizen engagement – NGOs support local communities in co-deciding on issues important to their environment, e.g. they participate in public consultations, conduct information campaigns or undertake joint initiatives on behalf of citizens;*
- b) *assistance in solving social problems – NGOs fill the gap where public institutions cannot always reach, i.e. they support marginalised people, help the elderly, organise activities for young people, and often act as social advocates in matters that are difficult and painful for local communities, such as actions taken by authorities or economic entities;*

- c) *Influencing public policy – through educational activities, social campaigns and active participation in decision-making processes, NGOs can inspire changes in legislation or, for example, in the development strategies of local government units, and even influence the implementation of public or commercial projects.*

*Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) play a key role in engaging citizens in decision-making processes. They work for the benefit of society, representing the interests of various groups and helping to shape public policy. Their activities cover several important areas:*

- a) *mediation between citizens and the administration and authorities – NGOs organise or facilitate public consultations to gather the opinions of residents and other stakeholder groups on issues important to the community, and then forward the stakeholders' proposals to, for example, local authorities, thereby formally influencing decisions that affect these stakeholder groups and local or national regulations;*
- b) *advocacy activities – NGOs conduct social, educational and information campaigns to raise civic awareness and mobilise residents to participate actively in public life;*
- c) *monitoring the actions of authorities – NGOs monitor administrative decisions, analyse their effects and intervene in cases of, for example, civil rights violations or inefficient management of public funds;*
- d) *creating space for dialogue – NGOs organise participatory activities such as debates, meetings and workshops that enable residents to express their opinions and co-create solutions for the community;*
- e) *direct support for citizens – NGOs help residents solve local problems, e.g. social issues, by organising various initiatives and providing them with tools for effective action and cooperation with public institutions.*

*Examples of NGO activities that influence the community:*

- *Local associations caring for urban space – they organise meetings, map problems and consult with residents.*
- *Foundations supporting civil rights – they help communities develop legal and organisational solutions.*
- *Environmental organisations promoting sustainable development – initiate environmental protection campaigns, cooperating with both residents and authorities.*
- *Local organisations acting as spokespersons for the local community, e.g. during public consultations.*
- *Organisations dealing with specific issues, e.g. education of marginalised people or integration of migrants, play an important role in community life as they take action that is often insufficiently implemented by local authorities.*
- *Expert organisations specialising in social assistance, for example, play an important advisory role, e.g. during legislative work on new legal acts.*

*Non-governmental organisations not only initiate change, but also play an important role as social educators, e.g. in teaching citizens how to jointly shape the public space in which the local community lives. These activities are carried out in various fields, using different languages and different channels of communication, e.g. different activities are carried out in relation to senior citizens and others in relation to young people and students. It is important for young people to know that NGOs can be their partners in solving important local community problems and that they can benefit from the knowledge and experience of NGOs that exist to support citizens.*

*In summary, NGOs can be described as mediators in civic participation processes, as these organisations have the potential to create space for dialogue between residents and local authorities, help identify social needs and gather stakeholder opinions, and then pass them on to decision-makers. They often initiate meetings, consultations, workshops and other forms of social participation aimed*

*at finding common solutions that satisfy different stakeholder groups. One of the activities of NGOs is to support young people and students in acquiring civic competences and encouraging them to become active, e.g. through volunteering.*

#### Supplementary materials for the theoretical part (expanding knowledge):

##### 1. Project documentation, including:

Part 1 – Methodology for creating and teaching a course: Participatory approach to cities development.

part 2 – Tools for citizen engagement and community empowerment

part 3 – Guidelines and policy recommendations for local/regional authorities on: How to work with citizens.

Appendix – case studies

##### 2. Websites of the most prominent European non-governmental organisations working for civil society:

European Civic Forum (ECF)

[www.civic-forum.eu](http://www.civic-forum.eu)

Civil Society Europe (CSE)

[www.civilsocietyeurope.eu](http://www.civilsocietyeurope.eu)

People in Need (PIN)

[www.peopleinneed.net](http://www.peopleinneed.net)

European Environmental Bureau (EEB)

[www.eeb.org](http://www.eeb.org)

Friends of the Earth Europe

[www.foeeurope.org](http://www.foeeurope.org)

Greenpeace European Unit

[www.greenpeace.org/eu-unit](http://www.greenpeace.org/eu-unit)

##### 3. Scientific articles:

Dean, R. (2023). Civic participation in the datafied Society| participatory governance in the digital age: from input to oversight. *International journal of communication*, 17, 20.

Jiang, L. (2022). Facilitating EFL students' civic participation through digital multimodal composing. *Language, Culture and Curriculum*, 35(1), 102-117.

Owusu-Agyeman, Y., & Fourie-Malherbe, M. (2021). Students as partners in the promotion of civic engagement in higher education. *Studies in Higher Education*, 46(6), 1241-1255.

## II. Question and answer session (15 minutes)

The lecturer engages in a discussion with the participants to ensure that they understand the presented content and encourages them to ask questions and share their own opinions and experiences regarding examples of non-governmental organisations' involvement in the process of social participation.

## III. Exercise (60 minutes)

### Mapping problems and relationships and designing activities to support the process of civic participation

Introduction to the exercise (text material to support the instructor, 15 minutes)

*Mapping is a tool used in design processes that helps visualise and analyse the relationships between different elements of a system, space or process. Mapping allows you to identify key areas of*

*interaction, potential challenges and opportunities for optimisation. This tool allows you to create diagrams that reveal the relationships between process participants, resources, problems or goals. In the case of participatory processes in neglected spaces, spatial maps used in urban planning and revitalisation play an important role. Mapping facilitates understanding of the complexity of connections in space and enables better, more informed decisions to be made.*

*Below is an example of a map for a problem concerning the lack of public space in the city for youth meetings and activities. The analysis carried out by young people shows that the neglect of young people's needs in the design of public space is due to:*

*- a lack of social dialogue in this area and the low priority given to the needs of young people by local authorities,*

*- ineffective spatial planning in the city.*

*The young people chose a local non-governmental organisation as their spokesperson in this area, which helped them identify resources useful for solving this problem, i.e. available urban areas, youth organisations interested in organising activities for young people, and local companies supporting social initiatives.*

*Using the experience gained during their cooperation with the local non-governmental organisation, the young people prepared a map of relationships and activities supporting the process of civic participation, which would help to establish a dialogue with the local authorities.*

Table 1. Map of relationships and activities supporting the process of social participation

	Stakeholder	Role in the problem	Relationships with other stakeholders	Possible actions
1	Young people as residents and users of public space	Group affected by the lack of public space	NGOs (participation in activities, expert support for young people)	Gathering support
			Local authorities (local budget and city space administrators)	Participation in consultations
			Schools in the city (activating young people to take action)	Promotion of activities on social media
			Local companies (potential sponsors of youth activities)	Formal support for youth activities
2.	Local NGOs	Youth representative, civic participation facilitator	Residents, including young people (cooperation and representation)	Presentations to the city council
			Local authorities (consultation partner)	Designing changes in the use of space
			Local companies (partner in CSR activities)	Sponsorship of activities aimed at young people
			Schools in the city (partner in youth activities)	Presentations to the city council
3.	Local authorities	Entity deciding on the development of public space and financing related investments	NGOs (civic dialogue)	Participation in consultations
			Schools in the city (joint activities)	Use of city budget funds for youth activities
			Residents, including young people (meeting the needs of the local community)	Active participation in consultations and use of consultation findings
			Local companies (partners in CSR activities)	Public-private partnerships in activities for young people
4.	Schools in the city	Partners in activities promoting leisure activities for their students	NGOs (civic dialogue)	Preparing young people for dialogue with local authorities
			Residents, including young people (meeting the needs of the local community)	Strengthening the voice of young people vis-à-vis local authorities
			Local authorities (organisation of public consultations)	Civic education

			Local businesses (partners in CSR activities)	Public-private partnerships in activities for young people
5.	Local companies	Partners in activities that care about the quality of life of their employees' families	NGOs (civic dialogue)	Encouraging young people to cooperate with NGOs
			Local authorities (public space administrators)	Cooperation in the implementation of CSR activities for young people
			Residents, including young people (potential sponsors of activities for young people)	Formal support for youth activities, e.g. through CSR
			Schools in the city (joint activities)	Public-private partnerships in activities for young people

Source: own study

### Group work – creating a map of relationships and activities supporting the process of civic participation (45 minutes)

#### Tasks of the instructor:

1. Discuss with participants the map of relationships and activities supporting the process of civic participation using the material available in the project documentation (part 2 – Tools for citizen engagement and community empowerment) and explain the rules for creating the map.
2. Present the specifics of the map creation process to participants:
  - identifying the stakeholders in the process;
  - characterising their role in the problem;
  - establishing relationships with other stakeholders;
  - selecting possible activities to support the civic participation process.
3. Dividing participants into at least 3 teams.
4. Ongoing consultation on the tasks carried out by the team.

#### Tasks of participants in individual teams:

1. Division of roles within teams.
2. Discussion of the issues covered by the exercise.
2. Prepare a map in accordance with the specific nature of the process.
3. Preparing to present the map to other groups, taking into account the division of roles within the team.

#### Assumptions regarding the three social issues addressed by the map.

##### ***Team A. Closing a street with several schools to traffic***

*In one city, in accordance with the spatial development plan, a so-called "educational district" was created, in which a nursery, a primary school and several secondary schools were located. Unfortunately, a busy local street runs directly next to the school buildings, which has already been the site of many accidents involving pedestrians. Additional signage at crossings and traffic calming measures have not changed much. Heavy car traffic continues to pose a danger to pedestrians. Children and young people attending schools located on this street, as well as their parents and guardians, are demanding that the street be closed to car traffic, which would significantly improve public safety in the area.*

##### ***Team B. Establishment of a youth city council***

*In a small suburban town, the same local leaders have been winning elections for years, focusing primarily on issues important to their own electorate, while disregarding the problems of children and young people who do not yet have the right to vote. Young people feel neglected and believe that the local authorities do not understand their point of view on many issues concerning the local community. They believe that the town lacks a person or institution that could represent their interests and needs before the town council. Following the example of other towns, they have therefore decided*

to set up a youth town council and are convinced that this will enable them to create future local leaders among young people who will better understand the problems of their generation.

### **Team C. Creating a participatory budget for young people**

*In a small peripheral village, there is a lack of everyday initiatives aimed at young people or those that young people could plan and implement themselves. The main problem seems to be the distribution of funds from the municipal budget, where the largest expenditures are on administration, infrastructure and various types of public services, while there is a lack of projects dedicated to young people. Young people are wondering how to persuade local authorities to allocate budget funds for activities aimed at young people. After reviewing good practices from various countries, it was decided that it would be a good idea to persuade local authorities to allocate at least a small amount of money to create a participatory budget dedicated to young people.*

## **IV. Presentation of the results of the teams carrying out the exercise (30 minutes)**

Each team presents and explains how they prepared the map of relationships and activities supporting the process of civic participation. After each presentation, the other participants and the instructor can ask questions to better understand the results of each team's work. The instructor asks the participants additional questions to test their knowledge acquired during the class.

## **V. Assessment of team work by the instructor (15 minutes)**

The instructor should evaluate the participants' presentations based on the following criteria:

- completeness of the map in terms of identifying stakeholders related to the problem
- correct identification of relationships and activities supporting the process of civic participation
- involvement of individual team members.

Each team receives verbal feedback from the instructor.

## **VI. Summary (15 minutes)**

**Main conclusions from the class (text material to support the instructor)**

*The process of social participation is the active involvement of citizens or stakeholder groups in social, political and public life, allowing them to have a say in local matters. This is achieved, among other things, through active participation in consultations, debates, participatory budgeting and other initiatives.*

*Active involvement increases trust in the authorities, willingness to change, a sense of shared responsibility for the environment and develops the social and managerial skills of residents.*

*Barriers to participation stem from social inequalities, lack of education, discrimination and low social awareness. It is therefore important to ensure equal access to information, education and transparency in decision-making processes.*

*Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) play a key role in the process of civic participation by: involving citizens in various types of consultations and civic initiatives; help solve social problems and act as advocates for various social groups, as well as influence public policy through educational campaigns, participation in decision-making processes, inspiring legal changes, etc. NGOs teach citizens how to co-create public space, adapting their activities to different groups (e.g. seniors, youth). It is particularly important to support young people in acquiring civic competences and engaging in volunteering.*

*NGOs often act as mediators in civic participation processes, creating space for dialogue between residents and authorities, identifying social needs and communicating them to decision-makers.*

*They initiate and support various forms of participation, helping to build active, aware and engaged local communities.*

*One of the tools that facilitates the design and implementation of the civic participation process is mapping. It is a tool used in design processes that helps to visualise and analyse the connections between different elements of a system, space or process. It enables the identification of relationships between process participants, resources, problems or objectives, and facilitates understanding of the complexity of connections in space and better, more informed decision-making.*

**Topic:**

*Ethics, responsibility, social inclusion in decision-making processes*

**General objective of the course:**

To present to participants the role and importance of ethics, responsibility and social inclusion in decision-making processes, as well as to acquire skills in conducting workshops that facilitate decision-making using the "Challenges and Opportunities" tool, particularly in identifying key challenges and opportunities at the early stages of the design process, e.g. of public spaces or services. This helps in the final decision on whether to proceed with or abandon a project.

**Scope of classes:**

1. The ethical dimension of local government activities.
2. Responsibility for decisions made in public affairs.
3. Principles of social inclusion in decision-making processes.
4. Mapping challenges and opportunities as part of the "Challenges and Opportunities" workshop.

**Total duration of classes:**

180 minutes, including: theoretical part - 60 minutes and practical part - 120 minutes

**Learning outcomes achieved during the course:**

Areas of learning	Learning outcomes	Method of verification of learning outcomes
Knowledge	1. The student has basic knowledge of ethics and responsibility for decision-making in local government activities	Discussion during classes, including after the theoretical part and as part of the summary
	2. The student/pupil knows the basic principles of social inclusion in decision-making processes	
	3. The student/pupil knows the principles of organising and implementing the "Challenges and Opportunities" workshop and creating a map of challenges and opportunities for any local community project	
Skills and attitudes	1. The student is able to distinguish between typical ethical and unethical behaviour in local government	Assessment of group presentations as part of the exercise
	2. The student is able to identify examples of social inclusion in decision-making processes in local government and examples of projects to which they may apply	
	3. The student is able to develop a simple map of challenges and opportunities for any project concerning the local community	

## Lesson plan

### I. Introduction to the topic (45 minutes)

Welcoming participants:

Presentation of the objectives and lesson plan.

Theoretical introduction to the class (text material supporting the instructor)

*The mission of local governments is to care for the well-being of the community, which is expressed, among other things, in building lasting social trust. The key pillars on which this process is based are ethical conduct, accountability to local stakeholders and the genuine involvement of residents in decision-making processes. These three elements, intertwined, form the foundation of good governance.*

*Ethics in local government administration is a set of values and principles that set standards of conduct for officials and public servants that go beyond the minimum requirements laid down in law. Principles such as honesty, the rule of law, impartiality, professionalism, transparency and accountability should guide the conduct of those representing local government. Those who make decisions on behalf of local government should be guided by these principles, taking into account the interests of various stakeholders. An example of ethical behaviour is the fair treatment of categories of beneficiaries in the local government budgetary process, while an example of unethical behaviour in this case would be the deliberate omission of a group of stakeholders who are too weak to assert their rights.*

*High ethical standards legitimise the actions of the administration and build confidence that decisions are made in a fair, transparent and free from particular interests. An ethical approach by local government fosters trust among local stakeholders, facilitating the introduction of even difficult reforms and mobilising the community for joint action.*

*Ethics in local government is the most effective barrier to the development of corruption and nepotism, which is why many local governments formalise their ethical principles by creating internal documents regulating these issues, such as Codes of Ethics, which emphasise the servant nature of the work of civil servants towards the local community. Although these documents are not a source of generally applicable law, they play a key role in shaping the organisational culture of the office.*

*Responsibility in decision-making means taking responsibility for the consequences of one's actions. The duties of a decision-maker include gathering and analysing information, evaluating various options and their potential effects, making the final decision and implementing it, as well as monitoring the effects of the decision and making any necessary adjustments.*

*Responsibility in local government can be assessed in several dimensions. Of key importance is legal responsibility, which includes criminal responsibility (e.g. for official offences), disciplinary responsibility and financial responsibility for damage caused by unlawful actions. Equally important is political accountability to the voters who elected the local authorities and entrusted them with the management of their affairs. This form of accountability is the foundation of local self-government, ensuring that local authorities are responsive to the needs and opinions of residents.*

*Increasing attention is also being paid to managerial responsibility, related to the effective and economical management of public funds, and to social responsibility, which consists of acting in a sustainable manner and taking into account the well-being of future generations. Clearly defined and*

*effectively enforced accountability mechanisms create a sense that the authorities are not immune from punishment and that their actions are subject to scrutiny, which also strengthens citizens' trust.*

*Responsibility for decisions often has a financial dimension and involves enforcing the law, even when this is not what society wants. An example of this is a decision to withdraw a subsidy for a socially important purpose if the subsidy was obtained in violation of the law.*

*Ethics and responsibility are inextricably linked to civic participation, i.e. decision-making involvement. This is a particularly important complement to ethical and responsible actions, as it is the residents who know their needs and problems best. Involving residents in the decision-making process brings measurable benefits: it leads to better, more accurate decisions that respond to real social needs; it increases acceptance of the authorities' actions and facilitates their implementation; it builds social capital and strengthens ties and a sense of local identity. Local government activities allow for the use of a range of instruments that enable residents to have a real impact on the decision-making process. These include public consultations, which allow residents to express their opinions on planned activities, draft resolutions or development strategies. Although their outcome is often not binding, they are a valuable source of information for the authorities and a form of dialogue with the community. In this process, the "Challenges and Opportunities" tool can be used, which is useful in identifying potential barriers and factors facilitating the implementation of projects that are often the subject of consultation.*

*In summary, ethics, accountability and participatory decision-making are not just abstract concepts, but practical tools for effective public management at the local level. A local government that bases its actions on transparent ethical principles, takes real responsibility for its decisions and is able to conduct an open dialogue with its residents builds the foundations of a strong and committed community.*

#### Supplementary materials for the theoretical part (expanding knowledge):

##### 1. Project documentation, including:

Part 1 – Methodology for creating and teaching a course: Participatory approach to cities development.

part 2 – Tools for citizen engagement and community empowerment

part 3 – Guidelines and policy recommendations for local/regional authorities on: How to work with citizens.

Appendix – case studies

##### 2. Websites of European non-governmental organisations dealing with issues of ethics and accountability in public life:

Transparency International EU

<https://transparency.eu/>

ALDA - European Association for Local Democracy

<https://www.alda-europe.eu/>

Open Government Partnership (OGP)

<https://www.opengovpartnership.org/>

Council of Europe - Centre of Expertise for Good Governance

<https://www.coe.int/en/web/good-governance>

##### 3. Academic articles:

Stander, A. (2022). Ethics in Local Government. CIGFARO Journal (Chartered Institute of Government Finance Audit and Risk Officers), 23(1), 14-20.

Svara, J. H. (2021). The ethics primer for public administrators in government and nonprofit organisations. Jones & Bartlett Learning.

Farazmand, A. (Ed.). (2023). Global encyclopedia of public administration, public policy, and governance. Springer Nature.

## II. Question and answer session (15 minutes)

The lecturer engages in a discussion with the participants to ensure that they understand the presented content and encourages them to ask questions and share their own opinions and experiences regarding examples of ethical and unethical actions, as well as examples of actions involving various types of decisions in local government, including examples of social inclusion in decision-making processes.

## III. Exercise (60 minutes)

### Social inclusion of residents in decision-making processes concerning the implementation of a public project through participation in the "Challenges and Opportunities" workshop

Introduction to the exercise (text material to support the instructor, 15 minutes)

*The "Challenges and Opportunities" workshop can be used at an early stage of projects concerning, for example, the development of public spaces or the implementation of public services. This tool is used to identify potential challenges and barriers as well as factors facilitating the implementation of various types of projects in which the local community is a stakeholder. In addition, it is desirable that the use of this tool always be combined with ethical, responsible and inclusive decision-making, the consequences of which affect the local community. The use of this tool allows for a balanced view of the project, so that different stakeholder groups can see both the factors that may hinder or limit its implementation and those that will facilitate its implementation and minimise its potential negative effects. The involvement of representatives of various stakeholder groups, representing different points of view and opinions on the implementation of the project, is an expression of the local government's responsibility for dialogue with the local community, allows for objectivity in the project preparation process and ensures the inclusiveness of this process. During the workshop, you can use the map of challenges and opportunities (Table 1).*

Table 1. Map of challenges and opportunities for the project to build a recreation area for children and young people in a city park

Area	Challenges	Opportunities
Social	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vandalism</li> <li>• Ensuring safety</li> <li>• Adaptation to the needs of different age groups and people with different needs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social and intergenerational integration</li> <li>• Promotion of an active and healthy lifestyle</li> <li>• Improving the image and attractiveness of the city</li> <li>• Increased safety in the neighbourhood</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bureaucratic barriers and formal procedures</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creation of a teen-friendly space</li> </ul>
Economic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Securing funding for the investment, as well as funds for maintenance of the area and equipment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creation of a space where jobs can be created, e.g. catering, positions for employees responsible for maintaining the space</li> <li>• Increasing the value of surrounding properties</li> </ul>
Environmental	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Divergent expectations and conflicts of interest among park users – the "environmentalists" versus the "park revitalisation supporters"</li> <li>• Investment restrictions related to natural monuments and other nature conservation companies in the park</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Possibility of introducing innovative and environmentally friendly solutions</li> <li>• Creation of an environmental education centre</li> </ul>

Source: own study

Teamwork – conducting a "Challenges and Opportunities" workshop with representatives of three stakeholder groups: students (pupils), lecturers (teachers) and administrative staff of the university (school) (45 minutes)

Tasks of the workshop leader:

1. Discuss the scenario of the "Challenges and Opportunities" workshop with participants (part 2 – Tools for citizen engagement and community empowerment) and explaining the rules for creating a map of challenges and opportunities.
2. Presenting the specifics of the workshop to participants:
  - identifying stakeholders who should be invited to participate in the workshop;
  - the role of the workshop moderator and secretary;
  - aspects related to ethics, responsibility for decisions and inclusiveness of the process that should be taken into account when organising the workshop;

- how to communicate with stakeholders in order to ensure equal access to information about the workshop and the participation of representatives of all stakeholder groups;
- how to present the workshop topic in an objective manner;
- workshop scenario;
- evaluation of the workshop results.

3. Appointment of representatives of individual stakeholder groups and a workshop moderator.

4. Ongoing consultation on the tasks carried out by the team.

#### Tasks of participants in individual teams:

1. Division of roles within the team (moderator, secretary, representatives of individual stakeholder groups).

2. Discussion of the workshop topic.

2. Preparing a map in accordance with the specific nature of the project.

3. Preparation for the presentation of the map by the moderator and secretary.

#### An example of a project that could be the subject of teamwork.

##### ***Let's liven up our library – let's create a modern learning and relaxation area***

*Our academic (school) library is currently perceived mainly as a quiet lending library, which means that it rarely attracts users in their free time. At the same time, the corridors are noisy and young people do not have a place where they can spend their breaks together in a friendly, creative atmosphere. The project involves transforming part of the library into a multifunctional zone that will become the heart of academic (school) life. The aim is to create a space that, on the one hand, continues to promote reading and, on the other, responds to the social needs of all users of the academic (school) space. The project plans to separate and equip two adjacent corners:*

- *relaxation area: comfortable pouffes, low tables and board games;*
- *quiet work area: several desks and access to electricity.*

#### **IV. Presentation of the results of the group carrying out the exercise (30 minutes)**

A group consisting of the workshop moderator and secretary and representatives of the three stakeholder groups presents and explains how the map of challenges and opportunities for the analysed project was prepared. After the presentation, there is a discussion on the optimal shape of the project, taking into account the factors identified by the individual stakeholder groups. Not only the final shape of the map is taken into account, but also the course of the workshop itself, e.g. the equal participation of representatives of each stakeholder group in the discussion. The instructor asks the participants additional questions to test their knowledge acquired during the class.

#### **V. Assessment of group work by the workshop leader (15 minutes)**

The instructor should evaluate the work of the workshop participants based on the following criteria:

- completeness of the map in terms of identifying challenges and opportunities;
- proper consideration of aspects related to ethics, responsibility for decisions and inclusiveness of the workshop;
- involvement of individual team members.

Each team receives verbal feedback from the instructor.

#### **VI. Summary (15 minutes)**

Main conclusions from the class (text material to support the instructor)

*The key to building public trust by local governments is to base their actions on three pillars: ethics, accountability and citizen participation in decision-making. These elements form the foundation of good governance.*

*Ethics in administration is a set of principles, such as honesty, impartiality and transparency, which go beyond the minimum requirements laid down by law. Ethical behaviour legitimises authority, builds confidence in its fairness and is the most effective barrier to corruption and nepotism. Many local governments formalise these standards in internal Codes of Ethics, emphasising the servant nature of public officials' work.*

*Accountability means bearing the consequences of one's decisions. It has several dimensions: legal (criminal, disciplinary), political (accountability to voters), managerial (related to the effective management of public resources) and social. Clearly defined accountability mechanisms ensure that those in power are not immune from punishment and are subject to control.*

*Decision-making participation (participation) complements the above principles. Involving residents who know their needs best leads to better and more accurate decisions, increases their acceptance and builds social capital. One of the tools for participation is public consultation, during which the "Challenges and Opportunities" workshop can be used. With the participation of various stakeholder groups, it allows for the identification of potential barriers and factors conducive to the implementation of projects.*

**Topic:***Young people as co-creators of Smart Cities***General objective of the class:**

To present to participants the role and importance of young people as a target group of stakeholders who should be involved in the development of cities as spaces that will serve them, their families, neighbours and friends for at least several decades of active professional, social and personal life. The class will also provide an opportunity to learn about the Smart City concept as a model for the development of cities of the past, the implementation of which requires the active involvement of long-term participants in this space. Participants will acquire skills and develop attitudes related to the active co-creation of public space through involvement in participatory activities in the form of active observation (research walk).

**Scope of the classes:**

1. Introduction to the topic of youth involvement in participatory processes.
2. The concept of a "smart city" and its components
3. Characteristics of young people as stakeholders in the civic participation process
4. Active observation and research walk as methods of analysing processes related to the construction of a "smart city".

**Total duration of the course:**

180 minutes, including: theoretical part - 45 minutes and practical part - 135 minutes

**Learning outcomes achieved during the class:**

Areas of learning	Learning outcomes	Method of verification of learning outcomes
Knowledge	1. The student has basic knowledge of the role of young people in participatory processes and the characteristics that distinguish young people as a stakeholder group.	Discussion during classes, including after the theoretical part and as part of the summary
	2. The student/pupil is familiar with the basic principles of the "smart city" concept	
	3. The student knows the principles of active observation and research walks	
Skills and attitudes	1. The student is able to justify the need for youth involvement in various forms of civic participation	Assessment of presentations made in teams as part of the exercise
	2. The student is able to identify the basic areas of application of the "smart city" concept in cities	
	3. The student is able to conduct simple participatory observation in the form of a research walk	

## Lesson plan

### I. Introduction to the topic (30 minutes)

Welcoming participants:

Presentation of the objectives and lesson plan.

Theoretical introduction to the class (text material to support the instructor)

*Contemporary cities are dynamic ecosystems, constantly evolving under the influence of social, technological and economic processes, as well as climate change, demographic changes and changes in the lifestyle of their inhabitants (e.g. suburbanisation). Although the key to sustainable and innovative urban development lies in the potential and involvement of all groups of residents, it is young people who will use the emerging or changing urban space for the longest time, which is why it is so important that it meets their needs and attracts them to the city. The activation of young people is therefore not seen as a gesture of goodwill or a marginal activity ensuring the fulfilment of the condition of inclusiveness, but as a strategic investment in the future and present of the urban fabric.*

*An innovative approach to urban development is based, among other things, on the development of the smart city concept as a "intelligent city". It is a vision of urban development in which modern information and communication technologies (ICT) are used to improve the quality of life of residents and other stakeholders in public spaces, increase the efficiency of municipal services and ensure sustainable development. This approach treats the city as a complex, living organism, and its goal is not so much to accumulate technology as to use it wisely to solve real problems.*

*At the heart of the smart city concept lies data integration and analysis. A city equipped with a network of sensors (e.g. monitoring traffic, air quality, bin fullness or water consumption), cameras and other devices integrated within the Internet of Things (IoT) collects vast amounts of information in real time. This data, once processed by advanced analytical systems (including artificial intelligence), becomes the basis for better decision-making, resource optimisation and the automation of many processes.*

*The concept of a smart city encompasses several key pillars that together form an integrated system:*

- *Smart Mobility involves creating an efficient, environmentally friendly and user-friendly transport system, e.g. adaptive traffic light systems that reduce traffic jams, applications integrating public transport with bike and scooter sharing services, and smart car parks indicating available spaces.*
- *Smart Environment refers to the protection of natural resources and minimising the negative impact of cities on the climate and includes, among other things, smart grids that optimise electricity consumption, pollution monitoring systems, remote meter reading and effective waste management.*
- *Intelligent management (Smart Governance) refers to the pursuit of transparent, open and efficient administration, which can be achieved, for example, through the digitisation of public services (e-services), the creation of platforms for public consultation, the provision of open*

*public data (open data) and systems that allow residents to easily report problems and communicate with the authorities.*

- *Smart Living aims to improve the quality of life in the areas of safety, health, culture and education. This area includes intelligent video surveillance systems, telecare for seniors, applications informing about cultural events and digital tools in schools.*
- *Smart People refers to strengthening civic education by investing not only in technology, but above all in conscious and active participants in urban life who are prepared to participate and co-create solutions. Young people play a special role among the target groups of urban space users.*

*The main goal of involving young people in decision-making processes is to draw on their unique perspective. Growing up in the digital age, young people bring a fresh perspective, unconventional ideas and a natural proficiency in using new technologies. It is often young people who are the first users of innovative solutions or public services in the fields of mobility, communication and ecology. The voice of young people in spatial planning can lead to the creation of more functional and attractive places, such as modern skateparks, co-working spaces or green relaxation areas, which respond to real needs and not just the ideas of older generations.*

*However, the importance of youth engagement goes far beyond innovation. Involving young people through tools such as youth city councils, participatory budgets and public consultations is fundamental to building a healthy civil society. By participating in local public life, young people learn the principles of democracy, dialogue, compromise and responsibility for their environment. They gain valuable social and leadership skills that will pay dividends in their adult lives. A city that gives young people a voice raises conscious and engaged citizens who are ready to take responsibility for the community in the future.*

*Another key aspect is the social dimension. Active participation in city life strengthens the sense of belonging and local identity. Young people who have a real impact on their neighbourhood or district feel that they are its co-hosts. This, in turn, effectively counteracts marginalisation, apathy and acts of vandalism. What is more, cities that offer young people prospects for development and opportunities for self-fulfilment become attractive places for them to live, study and work. In this way, activation becomes a tool for preventing the phenomenon of "brain drain", i.e. the migration of the most talented individuals to larger metropolitan areas.*

*In summary, it can be assumed that young people as active participants in participatory processes in cities are distinguished by such characteristics as:*

- *natural technological proficiency, resulting from growing up in a digital world and an intuitive understanding of new technologies;*
- *openness to innovation and experimentation and a willingness to try new things, which is reflected in their involvement in smart pilot programmes, e.g. new forms of micromobility and sharing economy apps (scooters, bicycles);*
- *a strong focus on sustainable development resulting from high sensitivity to environmental issues and climate change, which makes young people advocates of smart city solutions promoting green energy (smart grids), waste reduction (smart bins) and sustainable transport;*
- *expectations of immediacy and convenience (user-centric mindset), i.e. accustomed to fast, smooth and personalised services (such as Netflix or Spotify), which are transferring to public services, forcing cities to create more intuitive, user-oriented e-services (e.g. in public offices) and real-time information systems;*

- *mastery of network communication enabling instant mobilisation of groups and dissemination of information via social media, which can be used to quickly gather opinions, promote smart city initiatives and build a digital community around urban projects;*
- *creativity in the use of data and space associated with unconventional thinking, connecting the digital and physical worlds, as well as the creative use of open city data (e.g. creating air quality maps) or implementing gamification elements in public spaces to encourage pro-environmental behaviour;*
- *high requirements for transparency and clarity in public and local government policy, which is the foundation of a truly smart and democratic city;*
- *pragmatism and task-oriented thinking about specific problems and their quick resolution, bypassing bureaucratic mental barriers;*
- *a mentality of cooperation and co-creation in the spirit of teamwork and online knowledge sharing, which fosters the development of participatory formats that involve the joint creation of urban services from scratch.*
- *a long-term perspective and a sense of "stake" resulting from the awareness that the decisions made today will shape the world in which these generations will live for decades to come. This gives them a strong motivation to engage in strategic city planning, especially on issues that will determine its future resilience to crises (climate, social, economic).*

*In summary, conscious and systematic youth activation is a process in which the benefits are mutual. Young people gain a platform for development and real influence, while the city gains energy, creativity and the foundations for building a strong, democratic community. Investing in mechanisms for youth participation is not a cost, but the surest investment in a dynamic, crisis-resistant and simply better future for every urban centre.*

#### Supplementary materials for the theoretical part (expanding knowledge):

##### 1. Project documentation, including:

Part 1 – Methodology for creating and teaching a course: Participatory approach to cities development.

part 2 – Tools for citizen engagement and community empowerment

Part 3 – Guidelines and policy recommendations for local/regional authorities on: How to work with citizens.

Appendix – case studies

##### 2. Websites on smart city development and youth engagement:

UN-Habitat for Youth

[www.unhabitat.org/youth](http://www.unhabitat.org/youth)

Smart Cities Council

[www.smartcitiescouncil.com](http://www.smartcitiescouncil.com)

Cities Today

[www.cities-today.com](http://www.cities-today.com)

Child in the City Foundation

[www.childinthecity.org](http://www.childinthecity.org)

##### 3. Academic articles:

Masucci, M., Pearsall, H., & Wiig, A. (2021). The smart city conundrum for social justice: Youth perspectives on digital technologies and urban transformations. In *Smart Spaces and Places* (pp. 145-153). Routledge.

Marchesani, F., Masciarelli, F., & Doan, H. Q. (2022). Innovation in cities a driving force for knowledge flows: Exploring the relationship between high-tech firms, student mobility, and the role of youth entrepreneurship. *Cities*, 130, 103852.

Wawer, M., Grzesiuk, K., & Jegorow, D. (2022). Smart mobility in a Smart City in the context of Generation Z sustainability, use of ICT, and participation. *Energies*, 15(13), 4651.

## II. Question and answer session (15 minutes)

The lecturer engages in a discussion with the participants to ensure that they understand the presented content and encourages them to ask questions and share their own opinions and experiences regarding examples related to the implementation of the smart city concept in cities and the involvement of young people in their development.

## III. Exercise (75 minutes)

### Active observation as a method of diagnosing the needs of young people in cities

#### Introduction to the exercise (text material to support the instructor, 15 minutes)

*Observation is the systematic and direct monitoring of people's behaviour, social interactions or processes in their natural environment. Conducting an observation requires identifying a specific object, person or phenomenon that we intend to observe at a specific time and place, and then systematically recording our observations in a special observation sheet. When using the observation method, various research techniques can be used:*

- *external (non-participatory) observation: the researcher is present in the group of people being observed but does not participate in their activities, instead noting their behaviour and details in detail;*
- *participatory observation: the researcher enters the observed social environment, establishes direct relationships with the subjects and participates in the observed situations, sometimes even provoking them in order to better understand the meaning of the subjects' behaviour.*

*Well-conducted observation requires:*

- *insight, i.e. searching for relationships and dependencies between the observed phenomena;*
- *exhaustiveness, i.e. taking into account all aspects and details of a given phenomenon, which has a significant impact on the results;*
- *objectivity, i.e. complete impartiality of the observer, no previous personal experience or subjective attitude towards the subject or phenomenon being studied.*

*In the context of observing young people, the emphasis on objectivity in observation is extremely important as it teaches critical thinking, awareness of the possibility of bias and ethical research practices, which are fundamental civic competences. Participants learn to document facts rather than interpretations and to recognise their own judgements, which directly contributes to their development as responsible citizens capable of drawing conclusions based on evidence.*

*The tools used in observation are observation sheets for recording observations and, often, observation walks, which allow for better structuring of the observations, e.g. focusing them on specific locations, times of day, or interactions with selected target groups.*

*A research walk, or observation walk, is a research method that involves deliberately and systematically walking through a specific space in order to collect data on its functioning, physical characteristics, and the behaviour and interactions of the people in it. This tool allows the researcher to "immerse" themselves in the environment being studied and understand it from the perspective of direct experience, rather than just through the analysis of statistical data or maps.*

*The basis of a research walk is active, attentive observation. The researcher is not a passive passer-by, but an analyst who searches for answers to previously posed research questions in the field. Before going out into the field, the researcher defines the purpose of the study (e.g. how students use the park near the university), maps out the route of the walk and prepares documentation tools – most often a notebook, camera, voice recorder, and sometimes also a form for recording observations. During the walk, the researcher pays attention to many aspects, such as the physical characteristics of the space, people's activities, traces and ways of using the space, the atmosphere and the senses, e.g. noise, smells, sense of safety, the general mood in a given place, etc. All observations are noted, photographed or recorded on an ongoing basis. It is important that the documentation is as detailed as possible, as this allows for a later in-depth analysis of the collected material.*

### **Group work – a research walk around the site or its surroundings (60 minutes)**

#### Tasks of the instructor:

1. Discuss with participants the format of the research walk using the material available in the project documentation (part 2 – Tools for citizen engagement and community empowerment) and explain the rules for conducting observations.
2. Presenting the specifics of the active observation process during the walk to the participants:
  - where the observations are conducted;
  - who should be observed;
  - what to pay attention to;
  - what can be discussed with the people being observed.
3. Presenting the topic of the research walk to participants.
4. Ongoing consultation on the task being carried out by the team.

#### Team members' tasks:

1. Division of roles within the team (moderator, secretary, photographer, observers, interviewers, etc.).
2. Discussion of the workshop topic.
2. Conducting observations in the form of a research walk.
3. Preparing to present the conclusions from the observations.

#### An example of a project that could be the subject of an observation walk.

#### ***Sustainable academic space<sup>1</sup>***

*This walk focuses on the Smart Environment pillar. The group's task is to observe how "intelligently" the university manages resources such as waste, water and energy in the academic space. The aim is to identify inefficiencies and propose specific, often technological, improvements, while observing the behaviour of students and university staff in relation to waste production and water and energy use. The group's task is also to gather the opinions of stakeholders using the academic space on this subject. To accomplish this task, the team can divide into several smaller groups to analyse, among other things Where are the waste sorting bins located? Are they clearly marked? Are the bins often overflowing or empty?*

*Are there drinking water sources available on campus that could reduce plastic consumption?*

*What kind of lighting is used in the corridors and outside? Are the lights left on in empty rooms or during the day? Can you see any solar panels, motion sensors controlling lighting or other smart grid elements?*

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<sup>1</sup> The exercise can also apply to a well-balanced school environment.

#### IV. Presentation of the results of the exercise by the group (30 minutes)

The group presents and comments on the results of the research walk, using photos, recordings and notes, among other things. After the presentation, there is a discussion about the target sustainable academic space, taking into account the results of the observations. Not only the results of the observation walk are taken into account, but also the course of the walk itself, the equal participation of each student in the presentation, and the use of various forms of observation. The instructor asks the participants additional questions to test their knowledge acquired during the class.

#### V. Assessment of the group's work by the course instructor (15 minutes)

The lecturer should assess the work of the participants of the observation walk using the following criteria:

- the quality of the observation and the aspects of the observed problem that were taken into account;
- observation tools and methods used during the walk, e.g. photos, recordings, interviews, etc.
- the involvement of individual team members.

Each team receives verbal feedback from the instructor.

#### VI. Summary (15 minutes)

##### Main conclusions from the class (text material to support the instructor)

*Contemporary cities are subject to constant social, technological and climatic changes, but they also focus on sustainable development based on the potential of all residents, among whom young people are becoming a particularly important group. As future long-term users of urban space, young people should have a real say in how it is shaped. Engaging young people is no longer seen as a marginal gesture, but as a strategic investment in the present and future of the city, aimed at creating a space that meets their needs and encourages them to stay.*

*An innovative approach to urban development is the concept of the smart city. It uses modern information and communication technologies (ICT) and the Internet of Things (IoT) to improve quality of life, increase the efficiency of municipal services and ensure sustainable development. The foundation of a smart city is the integration and analysis of real-time data collected from a network of sensors and cameras. Processed by advanced systems, including artificial intelligence, this data allows for resource optimisation and better decision-making.*

*Young people stand out as participants in participatory processes due to a number of characteristics, such as natural technological proficiency, openness to experimentation, creativity and a user-centric mindset, which drive innovation. A strong focus on sustainable development and high expectations for transparency from authorities make them advocates for responsible urban policy. At the same time, they are characterised by pragmatism, a cooperative mindset and a long-term perspective, stemming from the awareness that they will be living with the consequences of today's decisions.*

*To study these phenomena and needs, research methods such as observation are used. This involves systematic monitoring of behaviour in a natural environment and can take the form of external observation (the observer does not participate in the activities) or participatory observation (the researcher interacts with the group being studied). Key to its success are insight, thoroughness and objectivity, i.e. impartiality and the avoidance of subjective judgements. In the context of young people, learning objective observation is a valuable lesson in critical thinking and a foundation for the development of civic competences.*

*A special observation tool is the research walk. This is a deliberate, structured passage through a specific space in order to collect data on its functioning, physical characteristics and human interactions. Equipped with documentation tools, the researcher actively analyses the environment in terms of predefined questions, paying attention to details, atmosphere and signs of use. This method allows for "immersion" in the environment under study and understanding it from the perspective of direct experience.*

*Systemic youth activation, based on understanding their unique characteristics and needs (e.g. through observation methods), is a mutually beneficial process. The city gains energy and innovation, while young people gain a platform for development and real influence, which is the surest investment in a dynamic and crisis-resistant future for any urban centre.*

**Topic:*****Building a city's resilience to crises with the involvement of the local community*****General objective of the course:**

To present to participants the nature of crisis situations that may affect cities and the principles of building urban resilience in key areas of city life, as well as to develop skills and attitudes related to the use of brainstorming to create solutions that strengthen the resilience of cities.

**Course content:**

1. Introduction to the topic of crisis situations in cities.
2. Overview of urban resilience issues.
3. The role of the local community in building urban resilience.
4. Brainstorming as a tool for generating ideas for building urban resilience through the involvement of young people.

**Total duration of the course:**

180 minutes, including: theoretical part - 60 minutes and practical part - 120 minutes

**Learning outcomes achieved during the class:**

Areas of learning	Learning outcomes	Method of verification of learning outcomes
Knowledge	1. The student has basic knowledge of crisis situations in cities	Discussion during classes, including after the theoretical part and as part of the summary
	2. The student understands the principles of building urban resilience and the areas of city activity where it can be developed.	
	3. The student knows the principles of brainstorming as a tool for generating ideas for building urban resilience through the involvement of young people.	
Skills and attitudes	1. The student is able to identify examples of crisis situations that may affect the city in which they live.	Assessment of presentations made in teams as part of the exercise
	2. The student is able to identify examples of activities that serve to build urban resilience.	
	3. The student is able to brainstorm according to the steps presented in Table 1 on topics related to building urban resilience.	

**Lesson plan**

## I. Introduction to the topic (45 minutes)

Welcoming participants:

Presentation of the objectives and lesson plan.

Theoretical introduction to the class (text material to support the teacher)

*More than half of the world's population lives in urban areas, and forecasts indicate that by 2050 this percentage will rise to almost 70%. Cities are centres of innovation, culture, economic growth and social development. At the same time, this concentration of people, infrastructure, potential and resources makes them extremely vulnerable to various types of crises, such as the global COVID-19 pandemic, which has paralysed public life and the economy. In some parts of the world, cities are also becoming arenas for terrorist attacks or armed conflicts that disrupt the stability of residents' lives and reduce their sense of security. In this context, urban resilience is becoming a key concept for the future of urban development, city management and social life.*

*Urban resilience is the ability of a city, including its residents, institutions, businesses and infrastructure systems, to survive, adapt and develop in the face of various stresses and sudden shocks, including natural disasters and states of emergency, such as power blackouts. It is important not to confuse resilience with mere endurance. A resilient city can withstand a disaster, but it struggles to return to normal afterwards. A resilient city is not only able to absorb shocks and quickly recover its basic functions, but also to learn from the crisis and transform itself in a way that makes it stronger and better prepared for future challenges. It is therefore a dynamic process that combines elements of absorption, adaptation and transformation.*

*Threats to cities can be divided into two main categories:*

*a) sudden shocks, i.e. violent, unexpected events on a large scale, such as:*

- *pandemics and epidemics: as the COVID-19 pandemic has shown, a health crisis can lead to lockdowns, overburdened healthcare systems and deep economic recession,*
- *armed conflicts and terrorist attacks: these cause direct destruction and threats to human life and health,*
- *refugee crises and social trauma: cities in many European countries have experienced this indirectly, facing the challenge of taking in millions of refugees, e.g. from Ukraine,*
- *natural disasters: flash floods, hurricanes, earthquakes and extreme heat waves;*
- *technological failures: mass power outages (blackouts), water supply system failures or cyber attacks on critical infrastructure (e.g. traffic management systems, banking).*

*b) chronic stresses: slow, long-term processes that weaken cities from within, making them more vulnerable to sudden shocks, including:*

- *climate change: gradual increase in average temperatures, more frequent droughts, water shortages,*
- *social problems: high levels of social inequality, unemployment, ageing population, housing shortages.*
- *environmental degradation: air pollution, water shortages, loss of biodiversity,*
- *economic instability: dependence on a single sector of the economy, unstable supply chains.*

*The COVID-19 pandemic was a shock, but cities with high levels of chronic tensions (e.g. with underfunded healthcare services and significant inequalities in access to care) coped much worse.*

*Building resilience is not a task for a single department of the city council. It is a process that requires a holistic approach and cooperation on many levels, such as:*

- *infrastructure and the environment, e.g. investments in so-called green and blue infrastructure (parks, green roofs, rain gardens, retention basins) help manage stormwater and mitigate the urban heat island effect; redundancy of critical systems ensures backup power and water supplies or alternative transport routes, while buildings should be designed to adapt to changing conditions,*
- *economy and supply chains, e.g. diversification of the economy and not relying on a single industry, as this creates dangerous dependence on global supply chains; it is therefore important to strengthen local entrepreneurship, support local food production (e.g. through urban agriculture) and shorten supply chains to increase the economic security of the city,*
- *management and planning, e.g. flexible and adaptive crisis management plans tailored to the nature of the potential threat, including early warning systems, regular exercises and crisis simulations, and the use of data analysis (big data) to monitor threats and model their effects,*
- *social cohesion, e.g. building trust among residents and between residents and authorities, developing cooperation at the local level and strengthening the sense of community, is able to respond much more effectively to crises. It is essential to ensure equal access to basic services (health care, education, social support) for all groups, including the most marginalised.*

*The local community plays an irreplaceable role in building the resilience of cities. Action strategies and infrastructure investments are essential, but true resilience is born at the level of the street, the housing estate and the neighbourhood. The local community is not a passive recipient of aid, but an active participant in the process of building resilience. Its role cannot be overestimated. Below are the thematic areas in which the involvement of residents is particularly needed:*

- a) local knowledge and rapid response – residents know their surroundings best, they know who needs help and where the weak points in the local infrastructure are. In the first hours of a crisis, before the organised services arrive, it is often neighbourly help that is crucial,*
- b) grassroots initiatives: the COVID-19 pandemic was the best example of how spontaneous actions, such as sewing masks, shopping for seniors, organising collections for medics or creating online support groups, demonstrated the enormous power of social capital. Similarly, in response to the refugee crisis following the invasion of Ukraine, it was citizens and local NGOs that provided the first line of assistance in many countries.*
- c) Building social capital: activities such as running community gardens, organising neighbourhood festivals or creating local activity centres strengthen interpersonal bonds. These relationships and trust pay off in times of crisis, creating a natural safety net.*

*It is the task of city authorities to support and facilitate these grassroots initiatives by providing micro-grants, making public spaces available and creating platforms for communication between residents and the authorities.*

*Young people have enormous power in building resilient cities and can get involved in these activities in many ways.*

*To be useful in this process, young people should start with education. It is important to learn about local threats, such as climate change and flood risk, and to share reliable knowledge on social media. School and university students can also get involved in volunteering, for example in aid organisations, shelters or during environmental campaigns, such as planting trees and cleaning parks.*

*Young people also have a responsibility to care for their community: helping older neighbours with shopping or using technology, organising local collections, and forming bonds that are invaluable in times of crisis.*

*Young people should be the voice of their generation, which can be expressed, for example, by joining a youth city council, participating in public consultations and co-creating solutions that will make the city greener and safer for all residents. Every initiative, no matter how small, strengthens the city's resilience and builds a better future.*

### Supplementary materials for the theoretical part (expanding knowledge):

#### 1. Project documentation, including:

Part 1 – Methodology for creating and teaching a course: Participatory approach to city development.

part 2 – Tools for citizen engagement and community empowerment

part 3 – Guidelines and policy recommendations for local/regional authorities on: How to work with citizens.

Appendix – case studies

#### 2. Websites on the issue of building urban resilience and engaging young people in these activities:

weADAPT (Stockholm Environment Institute)

<https://weadapt.org/knowledge-base/cities-and-climate-change/factsheet-for-young-people-urban-development-and-city-resilience/>

UN-Habitat for Urban Resilience:

<https://urbanresiliencehub.org/>

C40 Cities Climate Action Network – Youth Engagement

<https://www.c40.org/what-we-do/building-a-movement/youth-engagement/>

Resilient Cities Network

<https://resilientcitiesnetwork.org/category/publications/>

#### 3. Scientific articles:

Strzelecka, Elżbieta. "Concept of resilience and development of small towns and rural areas." Regional Barometer. Analyses and Forecasts 16.3 (2018): 121-130.

Stumpp, E. M. (2013). New in town? On resilience and “Resilient Cities”. Cities, 32, 164-166.

Mehmood, A. (2016). Of resilient places: planning for urban resilience. European planning studies, 24(2), 407-419.

## II. Question and answer session (15 minutes)

The instructor engages in a discussion with the participants to ensure that they understand the presented content and encourages them to ask questions and share their opinions and experiences regarding examples of non-governmental organisations' involvement in the social participation process.

## III. Exercise (60 minutes)

### Generating ideas for building urban resilience through youth engagement

Introduction to the exercise (text material to support the instructor, 15 minutes)

*Every day, you move around the city, going to school or university, meeting friends, using public transport. You surely have your own opinion on what works in the city and what needs to be changed. But how can you turn these everyday observations into real, innovative ideas? One of the most effective tools is brainstorming. This is not just a discussion, but a creative group technique aimed at generating as many ideas as possible in a short period of time.*

*When preparing a successful brainstorming session, four fundamental principles must be taken into account to ensure a safe space for creativity. These are presented below:*

- a) *No criticism or judgement: in the idea generation phase, every suggestion is worth considering. Every idea, even the most absurd, is welcome. Judgement kills creativity and discourages others from sharing their ideas.*
- b) *Quantity over quality (only at the beginning!): the goal is to collect as long a list of ideas as possible. At this stage, there is no need to consider whether something is realistic or feasible. Analysis will come later. The more ideas there are, the greater the chance of finding the best one.*
- c) *Think outside the box: encourage bold, exaggerated and even humorous ideas. Sometimes it is the craziest concept that leads to a breakthrough solution.*
- d) *Developing other people's ideas: brainstorming requires listening carefully to what others have to say. If someone's idea inspires you, develop it! This builds cooperation and leads to even better concepts.*

The steps in conducting a brainstorming session are presented in the table below.

Table 1. Steps in conducting a brainstorming session

No	Step name	Description
	Preparation and objective	Before inviting the group, formulate the problem precisely as an open question, e.g. "How can we revitalise our student club to attract more people? Prepare the space, a large board or empty wall, sticky notes and markers for everyone. Make sure the group of participants is diverse.
2	Introduction and rules	Start with a short icebreaker, presenting the purpose of the meeting and its rules: No criticism – all ideas are good. Quantity, not quality – we generate as many concepts as possible. Wild ideas – we think outside the box. Combine and develop – build on other people's ideas. The moderator's task is to ensure that these rules are followed throughout the brainstorming session.
3	Generating ideas	Set a time limit (e.g. 15-25 minutes). Encourage participants to write down one idea per piece of paper and stick it on the board. Maintain a positive energy and remind participants of the rules if the discussion gets out of hand.
4	Synthesis and grouping	After the allotted time has elapsed, read all the ideas aloud together. Ask the group to group them into thematic clusters (e.g., "Events," "Equipment," " " "Promotion"). Help them name these categories. This is a key moment for discovering patterns and main needs.
5	Prioritisation and action	Give participants votes (e.g., 3 stickers) to allocate to the most important or most realistic ideas. After voting, discuss the 1-3 highest-rated concepts. End the session with the question: "What is our first small step towards implementing this idea and who will take it?" Turn the energy of the meeting into the seeds of real action.

Source: own work

### Group work – brainstorming to generate ideas for building urban resilience through the involvement of young people (45 minutes)

#### Tasks of the facilitator:

1. Discuss with participants the brainstorming scenario as an activity for generating ideas for building urban resilience through the involvement of young people, using the material available in the project documentation (part 2 – Tools for citizen engagement and community empowerment).
2. Present the specifics of the brainstorming process to participants:
  - defining the topic of the brainstorming session;
  - selecting a brainstorming moderator;
  - establishing the group of brainstorming participants;
3. Dividing participants into at least 3 teams.
4. Ongoing consultation on the tasks carried out by the team.

#### Tasks of participants in individual teams:

1. Division of roles within teams (moderator, participants)
2. Conducting the brainstorming session.
3. Preparing for the presentation of brainstorming results.
4. Participation in the discussion of the results of the brainstorming session.

#### Examples of brainstorming topics:

1. Green transformation of our neighbourhood: How can we "green" the space around our school/university to protect us from heat waves and heavy rain?
2. Intergenerational bridge: How can we use the energy and digital skills of young people to support seniors in our neighbourhood during the crisis?
3. Second life for things: How can we organise a system at our university or school that reduces waste (food, clothes, items) and promotes local exchange?

### **IV. Presentation of the results of the teams carrying out the exercise (30 minutes)**

Each team presents and explains how the brainstorming session was conducted and its results. Then, the participants present the results of the brainstorming session, i.e. the ideas generated by individual groups, and discuss the possibilities of implementing them (steps 4 and 5 in Table 1), as well as the brainstorming session itself.

After each presentation, the other participants and the instructor can ask questions to better understand the results of each team's work. The instructor asks the participants additional questions to test their knowledge acquired during the class.

### **V. Assessment of team work by the instructor (15 minutes)**

The instructor should evaluate the participants' presentations based on the following criteria:

- evaluation of the brainstorming process,
- quality and manner of presentation of the ideas generated regarding urban resilience,
- involvement of individual team members.

Each team receives verbal feedback from the instructor.

### **VI. Summary (15 minutes)**

#### **Main conclusions from the class (text material to support the instructor)**

*Contemporary cities are centres of innovation, but also areas that are extremely vulnerable to crises. The COVID-19 pandemic, armed conflicts and natural disasters have highlighted the need to build urban resilience. This is the ability of the entire urban system (residents, institutions, infrastructure) to survive, adapt and develop in the face of threats. Resilience is more than just endurance – it is a dynamic process of shock absorption, rapid recovery and transformation to better prepare for the future.*

*Threats to cities fall into two categories. The first is sudden shocks, which are violent events such as pandemics, armed conflicts, natural disasters (floods, heat waves) or technological failures (blackouts, cyber attacks). The second category is chronic tensions, which are long-term processes that weaken a city from within, such as climate change, social inequalities, environmental degradation and economic instability. These slow stressors make cities more vulnerable to sudden shocks.*

*Building resilience requires integrated action in many areas, such as infrastructure and the environment, the economy, management and planning, and social cohesion.*

*The foundation of resilience is the active involvement of the local community, which is not a passive recipient of aid but a key actor. Its strength lies in local knowledge, the ability to respond quickly and in a neighbourly manner, and in grassroots initiatives, as demonstrated by relief efforts during the pandemic and the refugee crisis. Young people play a particularly important role, as they can get involved through education about local risks, volunteering, direct assistance in their neighbourhood (e.g. support for the elderly) and active participation in public life, e.g. in youth city councils.*

*Brainstorming is a practical tool for involving young people in generating ideas. Its aim is to generate as many solutions as possible for a specific problem. The key principles are: no criticism, focus on quantity rather than quality of ideas (in the first phase), openness to unconventional concepts and developing other people's ideas. The process consists of steps that allow creative energy to be transformed into the seeds of real change in the city.*

**Topic:**

*Revitalisation – revitalisation of degraded and abandoned urban areas through a participatory approach*

**General objective of the course:**

To present to participants the role and significance of the revitalisation process in the regeneration of degraded, peripheral, crisis-hit and abandoned areas, to develop skills and attitudes related to the use of prototyping for revitalisation projects concerning specific spaces and intended for specific users, and to deepen knowledge about social participation in revitalisation.

**Course content:**

1. Introduction to the topic of degraded areas.
2. The importance of the revitalisation process in the development of urban communities.
3. Prototyping revitalisation projects in relation to space and users
4. Deepening knowledge of social participation in revitalisation

**Total duration of the course:**

180 minutes, including: theoretical part - 60 minutes and practical part - 120 minutes

**Learning outcomes achieved during the course:**

Areas of learning	Learning outcomes	Method of verification of learning outcomes
Knowledge	1. The student has basic knowledge of degraded areas and the revitalisation process.	Discussion during classes, including after the theoretical part and as part of the summary
	2. The student understands the importance of community participation in the preparation and implementation of revitalisation projects	
	3. The student/pupil knows the principles of prototyping as a method of social participation	
Skills and attitudes	1. The student is able to identify examples of problems that a degraded area may face	Assessment of presentations made in teams as part of the exercise
	2. The student is able to identify the benefits of civic engagement in the revitalisation process	
	3. The student is able to develop a simple prototype, e.g. small architecture related to the revitalisation process of a given area	

## Lesson plan

### I. Introduction to the topic (45 minutes)

Welcoming participants:

Presentation of the objectives and lesson plan.

Theoretical introduction to the class (text material to support the instructor)

*Revitalisation is a multidimensional regeneration of public space in response to its progressive social, economic, spatial and environmental degradation and the resulting crisis phenomena. Areas where the most problems tend to accumulate are called degraded. A degraded area is a place in crisis that has lost its former potential and energy, not only in terms of dilapidated buildings or potholed roads, but also in terms of problems affecting its residents, such as unemployment, poverty and crime. Residents often feel excluded and deprived of prospects, and additionally face various challenges and deficits, such as closing businesses and disappearing jobs, lack of public space for recreation or integration, and transport exclusion. A degraded area is usually an ugly and dysfunctional area where buildings, including dwellings, are in a terrible state and utilities (water, heating) require immediate repair. It is also often a polluted area, e.g. due to former industrial activity, with a lack of greenery. On the other hand, degraded areas are not only "slums" but often also places with enormous untapped potential – historic factories, old tenement houses or neglected green areas. The process of their renewal, called revitalisation, is an opportunity to create fantastic places to live, work and spend free time. Understanding what degradation is is the first step towards consciously participating in changing your environment for the better.*

*Revitalisation aims to bring such an area out of crisis. Actions focus primarily on people and solving social problems such as unemployment and a lack of security. At the same time, the space is being renewed: buildings are being renovated, parks and playgrounds are being created, and abandoned factories are being given new functions (e.g. lofts, cultural centres).*

*The key to success is cooperation between residents, local authorities and investors. As a result, thanks to revitalisation, formerly neglected and dangerous places become attractive and vibrant parts of the city where people want to live, work and spend their free time. It is about restoring life, not just renovating walls.*

*In the long term, revitalisation should also contribute to improving conditions for economic development (e.g. new jobs), the accessibility of public infrastructure (e.g. public transport networks, roads and car parks) and improving the environment (e.g. combating so-called low emissions and illegal waste dumps).*

*The revitalisation of cities and the shift away from purely investment-oriented projects in favour of joint activities with and for residents are just some aspects of a comprehensive approach to revitalisation. The intensity and nature of the problems requiring*

*intervention may vary from city to city, as may the accumulation of various types of crisis-inducing factors, which may have different origins and produce different effects.*

*In the revitalisation process, open dialogue with the local community and all other stakeholder groups, such as investors, is particularly important and necessary. This requires the creation of an atmosphere conducive to good cooperation, both in the planning and implementation of revitalisation projects. It is important to identify the needs and expectations for revitalisation changes*

*, as well as the problems and ways of solving them, in which the entire local community should be involved. The main stakeholders in revitalisation are primarily:*

- residents of the degraded area undergoing revitalisation and people commuting to this area for education, work, leisure or shopping,
- owners and users of real estate located in the revitalisation area,
- entities conducting economic and social activities in the degraded area, including enterprises, non-governmental organisations and informal groups;
- local government units and entities related to them;
- public institutions;
- all other users of a given area or those who have an impact on its use.

Well-managed revitalisation ensures a comprehensive and integrated approach to solving identified local problems. It is a continuous activity, taking into account projects of various scales and scope, implementing a broader vision of area renewal and supporting its spatial links with the surrounding area.

Nowadays, revitalisation is not just about rebuilding or adapting buildings, but mainly about solving social problems, eliminating poverty and violence, improving housing conditions, improving the aesthetics and functionality of public spaces, as well as increasing economic attractiveness.

One example of a revitalisation objective is to help disadvantaged social groups to strengthen their ability to reintegrate into the labour market and become more involved in social affairs.

Regardless of the differences in revitalisation regulations in different European countries, local authorities are usually involved in identifying degraded areas and preparing their revitalisation. It is usually the local government that is responsible for agreeing on revitalisation objectives and preparing revitalisation projects in cooperation with all stakeholders. This responsibility includes broad social participation, which can be achieved through various methods, such as organising open meetings, research walks, thematic debates or workshops to prototype solutions that users of a given space want.

It is particularly important to ensure that all stakeholders are represented in the dialogue on the future of a degraded area through its revitalisation and that the methods of participation used are tailored to their capabilities and needs.

The main goal of public participation in revitalisation is co-decision-making, not just information sharing. Residents and other users of the space should become partners for the authorities and experts involved in revitalisation, not just passive recipients of ready-made projects. Their knowledge of everyday life in a given place, e.g. where benches are missing, which playground is dangerous, and where there is space for greening, is invaluable for creating a good revitalisation programme.

Social participation is characterised by diversity and takes place at every stage of revitalisation.

- at the stage of identifying the degraded area to be revitalised, residents and other stakeholders should help to identify the real problems and needs, which can be done, for example, through research walks, surveys, open meetings or the creation of "problem maps" and "dream maps" for the area;
- at the stage of planning revitalisation projects, the local community should participate in the design of various types of projects that serve to achieve the revitalisation objectives. This can be done through design workshops (so-called charrettes), during which residents, together with architects and officials, sketch the future appearance of streets, squares or buildings. Their opinions are also collected through formal public consultations;
- At the implementation stage of the revitalisation programme, residents and other stakeholders should participate in the implementation of projects, e.g. greening the area, creating neighbourhood groups that jointly care for the revitalised space, or participating in a committee monitoring the progress of the work.

The key to effective revitalisation is openness and accessibility of participatory activities to all interested parties. Information must be clear and communicated through various channels (online, posters, leaflets). Meetings should be held at convenient times and in places accessible to all. Thanks to participation, the revitalisation process becomes authentic, responds to the real needs of people,

*builds trust in the authorities and strengthens neighbourly ties. It is about creating a better place to live together, not just renovating infrastructure.*

#### Supplementary materials for the theoretical part (expanding knowledge):

##### 1. Project documentation, including:

Part 1 – Methodology for creating and teaching a course: Participatory approach to city development.

part 2 – Tools for citizen engagement and community empowerment

part 3 – Guidelines and policy recommendations for local/regional authorities on: How to work with citizens.

Appendix – case studies

##### 2. Websites presenting issues related to revitalisation and social participation in revitalisation:

Project for Public Spaces (PPS)

<https://www.pps.org/>

International Association for Public Participation

[https://www.ia\\_p2.org/mpage/Home](https://www.ia_p2.org/mpage/Home)

UN-Habitat | Public Space Programme

<https://unhabitat.org/topic/public-space>

World Bank | Urban Development

<https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/urbandevelopment>

##### 3. Scientific articles:

1. Onyszkiewicz, J., & Sadowski, K. (2022). Proposals for the revitalisation of prefabricated building facades in terms of the principles of sustainable development and social participation. *Journal of Building Engineering*, 46, 103713.

2. Dentinho, T. P., Kopczewska, K., De Francesco, G., Pascariu, G. C., Kourtit, K., Nijkamp, P., ... & Türk, U. (2023). Sustainable Development Goals. People and Places chose what they do not have. In *Resilience and Regional Development* (pp. 169-188). Edward Elgar Publishing.

3. Ergashev, I. (2021). Civil society and youth. *Science and Education*, 2(2), 282-284.

4. Castelnovo, W., Misuraca, G., & Savoldelli, A. (2016). Smart cities governance: The need for a holistic approach to assessing urban participatory policy making. *Social Science Computer Review*, 34(6), 724-739.

5. Crosby, N., Kelly, J. M., & Schaefer, P. (2015). Citizens panels: A new approach to citizen participation. In *The Age of Direct Citizen Participation* (pp. 266-278). Routledge.

6. Hurlbert, M., & Gupta, J. (2015). The split ladder of participation: A diagnostic, strategic, and evaluation tool to assess when participation is necessary. *Environmental Science & Policy*, 50, 100-113.

## II. Question and answer session (15 minutes)

The lecturer engages in a discussion with the participants to ensure that they understand the presented content and encourages them to ask questions and share their own opinions and experiences regarding examples of NGO involvement in the social participation process.

## III. Exercise (60 minutes)

### Prototyping

Introduction to the exercise (text material to support the instructor, 15 minutes)

*Prototyping involves creating early, often imperfect versions of products, services or solutions that allow ideas to be tested in practice. The aim of prototyping is to quickly verify concepts, identify problems and gather user feedback. Prototypes can take many forms, from paper models to digital*

versions to working versions of products. Prototyping allows for a better understanding of user needs, testing of functionality, and the introduction of improvements at an early stage of design. It is a key stage in the design process, where simplified, test versions of proposed solutions are created. In this case, it is not about the perfect end product, but about a quick and cheap model that will be used for further discussion, help in thinking and gathering opinions.

Prototyping is also used in revitalisation. Instead of reading a 100-page report on the revitalisation of a square, residents can rearrange models of benches, trees and street lamps on a mock-up. Instead of describing a complex new city app, residents can be given a simple, interactive sketch on their smartphones to test. You can also act out scenes simulating the operation of a new resident service point. Learning this way is fast and inexpensive.

The main principle of prototyping is: "Fail fast, learn cheap". It is better to discover that a promising idea has flaws at the paper sketch stage than to spend significant resources on its full programming.

A prototype is a tool for:

- testing assumptions, e.g. checking whether users of public spaces really need what is to be created and whether they understand how to use it;
- gathering feedback, e.g. by demonstrating the prototype to potential users and asking questions such as: "What do you think about it? What would you change? Is it intuitive?";
- visualising the idea, e.g. presenting residents with a model of specific spatial solutions planned by the city for the revitalised area, thus providing a tangible example instead of an abstract idea. This facilitates discussion within the team and conversations with potential investors.

The use of prototyping in revitalisation has many advantages:

- it simplifies communication – a visual, tangible prototype is understandable to everyone, regardless of their education or expert knowledge.
- it encourages people to express their opinions – people find it easier to criticise and suggest changes to a simple, "working" model than to a finished, expensive project.
- it involves different stakeholder groups – it gives a voice to people who do not feel comfortable in formal discussions, such as children, seniors or people with disabilities.
- saves time and money – errors and omissions are identified at an early, inexpensive stage of the project, rather than when the results are put into use.

Prototyping thus transforms passive participation (reading and commenting) into an active and creative process of co-creating the city.

The prototyping process should be well prepared, at least in the following areas:

- workshop space: a large, open space with tables for group work, flipcharts or large dry-erase boards, markers (different colours), sticky notes (different sizes and colours), a timer for activities, a projector and screen for presentations; optional background music during creative phases;
- prototyping materials, e.g. A4/A3 paper, cardboard sheets, scissors, glue sticks, adhesive tape, creative wire, plasticine or modelling clay (optional, for 3D concepts), LEGO bricks, recycled materials (e.g. empty boxes, toilet paper rolls, fabric scraps, bottle caps) – it is also a good idea to encourage participants to bring their own drawing materials (pencils, crayons, coloured pens), magazines, newspapers for collages/vision boards;
- preparation of the prototyping workshop moderator: familiarisation with all workshop materials and the purpose of prototyping, identification of an example of a degraded urban area that can serve as a prototyping object familiar to participants, preparation of clear instructions for each activity, preparation of group stations with materials, development of guidelines for feedback.

Group work – prototyping solutions in a public space undergoing revitalisation (45 minutes)

Tasks of the instructor:

1. Discuss with participants an example of a public space that should undergo revitalisation in terms of small architecture.
2. Presenting the specifics of the prototyping process to participants:
  - presenting a map of the area (the instructor selects a location that is or may be familiar to the participants, e.g. located in the same district as the university or school, or uses the example below)
  - setting the objectives of the revitalisation process and the target group of users of the area,
  - presentation of materials that can be used in the prototyping process;
3. Divide participants into at least 2 teams.
4. Ongoing consultation on tasks carried out by teams.

#### Tasks of individual team members:

1. Discussion on the purpose of revitalisation and the target group of the revitalisation project in the analysed space.
2. Determining the scope of the project concerning the development of small architecture in the analysed space.
3. Division of roles within the team: representatives of the target group and persons preparing a prototype solution in accordance with the needs and suggestions of this target group.
3. Preparation of a prototype of small architecture in the analysed space.
3. Preparing to present the prototype to other groups.

#### Assumptions regarding the subject of the class.

***We are revitalising the abandoned park "forgotten corner" in the city of "New Horizons", making it more user-friendly for the public.***

*The "Forgotten Corner" park is located in the city of New Horizons, a typical Polish city with a post-industrial character, struggling with the problem of degradation of public spaces.*

*The park was created in the 1970s as the green heart of a housing estate for workers at a nearby factory. After the factory closed in the 1990s, the park lost its main caretaker and sponsor. Today, despite still being located in a densely populated area, it is a neglected place, rarely visited and perceived as dangerous.*

*Infrastructure: broken benches, damaged litter bins, lack of lighting, cracked pavements.*

*Functionality: lack of areas for different age groups (children, young people, seniors), monotonous space offering no attractions.*

*Perception: residents are afraid to stay in the park after dark because it is associated with vandalism and neglect; schoolchildren and students see the potential of this place to make it a space for rest, recreation and integration after classes at a nearby school/university, but they do not really know how to revitalise it. It is certainly necessary to develop and test prototypes of small architectural elements that will help transform the "Forgotten Corner" park into a vibrant, safe and multifunctional public space dedicated to young people, but also to other users of public space.*

#### **IV. Presentation of the results of the teams carrying out the exercise (30 minutes)**

Each team presents and explains how they prepared their prototype: what needs of the target group were taken into account, what assumptions the designed solutions are based on, what the prototype looks like and what its intended use is. After each presentation, the other participants and the instructor can ask questions to better understand the results of each team's work. The instructor asks the participants additional questions to test their knowledge acquired during the class.

#### **V. Assessment of team work by the course instructor (15 minutes)**

The instructor should evaluate the presentations and prototypes prepared by the participants based on the following criteria:

- compliance of the prototype with the exercise objectives,
- creativity and originality of the prototype idea in the context of the defined target group;
- involvement of individual team members.

Each team receives verbal feedback from the instructor.

## VI. Summary (15 minutes)

### Main conclusions from the class (text material to support the instructor)

*Revitalisation is a complex and multidimensional process aimed at reviving public space and bringing it out of a state of crisis. This state, known as degradation, encompasses four key areas: social, economic, spatial and environmental. A degraded area is not just a place where buildings are falling into disrepair and roads are in terrible condition. It is primarily a space that has lost its potential, and its residents face a range of problems: unemployment, poverty, crime, and a sense of exclusion and lack of prospects. This is compounded by the closure of local businesses, the disappearance of jobs, transport exclusion and environmental pollution, often a legacy of former industry. At the same time, such places often harbour enormous untapped potential in the form of historic factories, old tenement houses and neglected green spaces.*

*A modern approach to revitalisation puts people and solving social problems first. The renewal of spaces – renovating buildings, creating parks or giving new functions to abandoned factories – is seen as a tool for achieving social goals, rather than an end in itself. The key to success is partnership and open dialogue with the local community and all other stakeholders. These include, above all, residents, property owners, local entrepreneurs, non-governmental organisations and local government units, which usually play the role of organiser of the entire process. The aim is to move from passive information provision to active co-decision-making about the future of a given place.*

*Genuine public participation should take place at every stage of revitalisation. At the diagnosis stage, residents help to identify real problems and needs, e.g. through research walks or surveys. In the planning phase, they take part in design workshops (so-called charrettes), where they work with experts to sketch out the future appearance of their neighbourhood. During the implementation stage, they can get involved in specific projects, such as joint greening of the area, setting up neighbourhood groups to look after the renovated space, or participating in a committee monitoring the progress of the work.*

*Prototyping is an effective and innovative tool for supporting participation in this sense. It involves creating early, often imperfect and inexpensive versions of proposed solutions so that they can be tested in practice. Instead of reading a hundred-page report, residents can move models of benches and trees around on a physical model of the square. Instead of imagining how a new city app will work, they can test a simple, interactive sketch. The main principle of this method is: "fail fast, learn cheaply". This allows you to test assumptions, gather valuable feedback and visualise ideas in a way that everyone can understand.*

*The use of prototyping in revitalisation has numerous advantages. First of all, it simplifies communication – a tangible model is more accessible than a technical drawing, which breaks down the barrier between experts and residents. People find it easier to criticise and suggest changes to a "working" model than to a finished, expensive project. This method effectively involves groups that are often overlooked in formal discussions, such as children, seniors and people with disabilities, in the design process. Prototyping allows errors and omissions to be identified at a very early stage, which generates huge savings in time and money. In this way, passive consultation turns into an active and creative process of co-creation, and revitalisation becomes an authentic response to the real needs of the community, building trust, strengthening neighbourhood ties and creating a better place to live for everyone.*

**Topic:**

*A city accessible to users of public spaces with special needs*

**General objective of the course:**

To introduce participants to the concept of accessibility and the basic principles of universal and inclusive design that should be applied in shaping public spaces in cities with the involvement of users of these spaces, as well as to develop skills in creating empathy maps for personas, i.e. people with special needs who will use these spaces.

**Scope of the course:**

1. Introduction to the topic of accessibility in urban spaces for people with special needs.
2. Key principles of universal design.
3. Inclusive design as a way of involving the local community in creating conditions for the use of public space by people with special needs.
4. Principles of creating an empathy map for persons with special needs in the process of universal design of public space.

**Total duration of the course:**

180 minutes, including: theoretical part - 60 minutes and practical part - 120 minutes

**Learning outcomes achieved during the course:**

Areas of learning	Learning outcomes	Method of verification of learning outcomes
Knowledge	1. The student has basic knowledge about the diversity of users of public space and understands the problems related to the accessibility of this space for people with special needs.	Discussion during classes, including after the theoretical part and as part of the summary
	2. The student understands the key principles of universal and inclusive design, particularly in the context of local community involvement in this process.	
	3. The student knows the basic principles of creating personas for the purpose of designing public spaces.	
Skills and attitudes	1. The student is able to identify examples of solutions that ensure the accessibility of public spaces for people with special needs.	Assessment of presentations made in teams as part of the exercise
	2. The student is able to explain the extent to which universal and inclusive design principles can be applied when shaping public spaces for people with special needs.	
	3. The student is able to create an example of a simplified persona with special needs in terms of using public space.	

**Lesson plan**

## I. Introduction to the topic (45 minutes)

Welcoming participants:

Presentation of the objectives and lesson plan.

Theoretical introduction to the class (text material to support the instructor)

*Public spaces, such as parks, squares, streets, public facilities, etc., should be designed and arranged in such a way as to ensure the widest possible access for a variety of users. This is because it is in fact a space where individuals with extremely different characteristics, abilities and expectations meet and coexist. Understanding and taking into account this diversity, including people with special needs, is the foundation of designing fair, functional and socially cohesive cities.*

*Age is a fundamental dimension of diversity. Children perceive space as a playground – they need safe zones that stimulate development and encourage activity. Young people look for places to meet and engage in informal recreation, often without close adult supervision. People of working age use space mainly for transit and communication purposes, but also look for places to rest and consume. Seniors, a group of growing demographic importance, require a safe, comfortable environment with plenty of seating, free of architectural barriers and noise, and conducive to maintaining social ties.*

*The second key aspect is physical and sensory fitness. This category includes people with special needs. It is a very broad group. It includes not only people with permanent mobility impairments (using wheelchairs, walking frames, crutches, etc.), but also blind and visually impaired people, for whom tactile markings, voice messages and colour contrast are crucial. It also includes deaf and hard-of-hearing people who need clear visual information and induction loops. Special needs are not always permanent, as this group also includes people with temporary limitations: women in advanced pregnancy, parents with prams, people recovering from injury or surgery, and even tourists with heavy luggage. Each of these people encounters similar barriers – high kerbs, stairs, lack of lifts or narrow passageways.*

*Diversity also includes the spectrum of cognitive and mental abilities. People with intellectual disabilities or those on the autism spectrum may find public spaces overwhelming due to sensory overload – noise, bright lights and unpredictable stimuli. For them, it is crucial to create quiet zones, use clear, intuitive navigation and predictable, logically organised spatial solutions.*

*Diversity may also result from socio-cultural conditions and may affect, for example, tourists who do not know the language, for whom universal pictograms are the only signpost, or migrants with different cultural patterns of spending their free time.*

*Understanding the diversity of needs and perspectives of users of public space is essential in order to take them into account in the design process.*

*Public space that is safe and comfortable for a person in a wheelchair, a parent with a small child, a senior citizen or a foreigner becomes better for everyone. Investing in wide pavements, gentle kerbs, clear signage and rest areas is not a niche activity for minorities, but a universal approach to improving the quality of life in the city for all users of public space.*

*Public space is a pillar of urban infrastructure that serves a variety of social, cultural and recreational functions. It is an arena for community life, integration and exchange. One of the contemporary challenges of spatial planning is to design public space in a way that meets the needs of all its users. This is because the often-declared openness of public spaces to all is effectively undermined by real barriers that limit their use by one or more social groups.*

*Given the diversity of public space described above, the understanding of its accessibility should go far beyond referring to this issue solely in terms of removing physical barriers for persons with disabilities. Accessibility should be defined as a prerequisite for the full and equal participation of all citizens in social life. This means designing and implementing an environment free of architectural, information and communication, and digital barriers, which enables independent, safe, and comfortable use of public resources.*

*Achieving full accessibility requires the use of universal design to create products, environments, programmes and services in such a way that they can be used by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialised design. This concept is based on seven fundamental principles that guide the design process, which are discussed below:*

*Equality in use – design should be equally useful for people with different abilities, e.g. where possible, a main entrance to a building should be designed without steps, as standard for everyone, rather than a separate ramp for wheelchair users.*

*Flexibility – design should take into account a wide range of individual user preferences, e.g. in urban spaces, this could be furniture offering different options for use, such as benches with backrests and armrests.*

*Simplicity and intuitiveness – design should make it easy to understand how to use the space, regardless of the user's experience, knowledge or language skills, so it is worth designing a consistent and logical visual information system based on universal pictograms.*

*Clear information – this is key in universal design for the correct communication of essential information to all users of the space, regardless of the environmental conditions and sensory abilities of the recipient. Examples include voice and visual messages in public transport and tactile typhlographic plans.*

*Error tolerance – should be taken into account, as universal design should minimise the risk and negative consequences of accidental or unintended actions. An example of the practical implementation of this principle is the use of non-slip, even surfaces in public spaces.*

*Minimising physical effort – universal design should enable the effective and comfortable use of public spaces with minimal fatigue. Examples of the application of this condition include automatic doors, lifts and appropriately shaped ramps, which are standard solutions.*

*Dimensions and space ensuring access – in accordance with the principles of universal design, adequate size and layout of space for approach, reach and use should be ensured, regardless of the user's body size or mobility. An example of this approach are wide passageways and gates in access control areas.*

*Universal design principles are part of a broader concept of inclusive design, which recognises the diversity of human needs as a fundamental value and starting point for design activities. Its guiding principle is to design with future users in mind, not just for them, but without their involvement. Involving users at an early stage of the design process is crucial not only for identifying potential problems and optimising solutions. It also contributes to building social capital and strengthening a sense of co-ownership and responsibility for shared space. To make this possible, various advanced mechanisms of social participation, going well beyond the framework of formal public consultations, should be used in the public space design process. The aim is to establish an equal dialogue and partnership between stakeholders: designers, representatives of public administration and the local*

community. Inclusive design should be carried out using active participatory methods, including Charrette workshops, research walks, prototyping and persona creation.

### Supplementary materials for the theoretical part (expanding knowledge):

#### 1. Project documentation, including:

Part 1 – Methodology for creating and teaching a course: Participatory approach to cities development.

part 2 – Tools for citizen engagement and community empowerment

part 3 – Guidelines and policy recommendations for local/regional authorities on: How to work with citizens.

Appendix – case studies

#### 2. Websites on universal design and inclusive design:

Centre for Excellence in Universal Design (CEUD)

<https://universaldesign.ie/>

The Institute for Human Centered Design (IHCD)

<https://humancentereddesign.org/>

Inclusive Design Research Centre (IDRC)

<https://idrc.ocadu.ca/>

Microsoft Design | Inclusive Design

<https://inclusive.microsoft.design/>

CAST

<https://www.cast.org/>

#### 3. Scientific articles:

Zhang, L., Carter Jr, R. A., Greene, J. A., & Bernacki, M. L. (2024). Unraveling challenges with the implementation of universal design for learning: A systematic literature review. *Educational Psychology Review*, 36(1), 35.

Patrick, V. M., & Hollenbeck, C. R. (2021). Designing for all: Consumer response to inclusive design. *Journal of consumer psychology*, 31(2), 360-381.

## II. Question and answer session (15 minutes)

The lecturer engages in a discussion with the participants to ensure that they understand the presented content and encourages them to ask questions and share their own opinions and experiences regarding examples of diversity among users of public spaces, universal and inclusive design, and examples of active citizen participation in such activities.

## III. Exercise (60 minutes)

### Rules for creating an empathy map for a persona with special needs in the universal design of public spaces

#### Introduction to the exercise (text material to support the instructor, 15 minutes)

*The universal design process uses a fictional character called a "persona". This character represents a specific segment of public space users. It is an archetype that is given a human face and helps to understand and, above all, empathise with the perspective of the people for whom a given solution is being created, e.g. a public space development project. The key task of personas in universal design is to highlight specific needs, barriers, frustrations and goals resulting from people's diverse physical, sensory and cognitive abilities.*

*A good persona is not based on designers' assumptions, but on reliable data collected during interviews with users, observations, research walks or cooperation with organisations representing*

people with special needs. This avoids perpetuating harmful stereotypes (e.g. that all older people are infirm and do not use technology).

A persona should represent a spectrum of needs, as it embodies all users. Therefore, in practice, several different personas are often created, which together reflect a wide spectrum of human experiences. These could be, for example:

- a young parent with a pram who has to cope with a lack of lifts and ramps;
- a person on the autism spectrum who finds noise and visual chaos in public spaces overwhelming;
- a senior citizen with limited mobility and poor eyesight, who needs places to rest and clear information;
- a tourist who does not speak the language and relies solely on universal pictograms;
- a person in a wheelchair, for whom the width of passageways and the absence of thresholds are crucial.

A persona focuses on a specific context of use, and its description always includes a scenario for a specific task that the persona is trying to perform in the designed space, e.g. how John, a blind student, gets from the bus stop to the university entrance; how Anna, a mother of two small children, shops at the local market. Analysing such scenarios reveals real challenges and barriers.

It is worth remembering that giving a persona a name, a photo, creating a short biography and describing their goals and frustrations makes them no longer an anonymous user of public space, but someone whose problems the team wants to solve in real life. This is a powerful tool that brings discussions down from the level of abstract ideas to specific human needs. Instead of asking, "Is this solution compliant with the standard?", the team starts asking, "Will this solution help Mrs. Maria get to the doctor safely?"

To create truly inclusive and functional solutions, you need to step into the symbolic role of the end user. An empathy map can help with this. It is a visual, collaborative tool that allows the design team to synthesise and gain a deeper understanding of the experiences, motivations and frustrations of a specific persona. In the context of designing for people with special needs, it becomes a bridge between the technical knowledge of the designer and the living, human experience that is often overlooked. Its goal is to move away from stereotypes and focus on real problems, leading to more conscious and accurate design decisions.

The foundation of an empathy map is the persona for whom the map visualises experiences when using public space in a specific way. The map is created by filling in six key segments, answering fundamental questions.

**WHAT DOES THE PERSONA THINK?** This segment concerns the persona's silent thoughts and beliefs that they do not express aloud. These are their internal calculations, fears and hopes.

Supporting questions: What is really important to them? What do they dream about? What are they afraid of?

**WHAT DOES THE PERSONA FEEL?** This area focuses on the persona's emotional state. Emotions are the driving force behind their behaviour.

Supporting questions: What frustrates or angers her? What makes her happy? What worries her?

**WHAT DOES THE PERSONA SAY?** Quotes or paraphrases of what the persona might say in a given situation.

Supporting questions: What does she say to others? What does she ask about? What does she complain about?

*WHAT DOES THE PERSONA DO? Description of specific actions and observable behaviours of the persona.*

*Supporting questions: How does she move? How does she react to obstacles? What are her habits?*

*WHAT IS DIFFICULT FOR THE PERSONA? Description of the biggest frustrations, barriers and risks the persona faces.*

*Supporting questions: What obstacles does she encounter? What is the biggest challenge for her? What is she afraid of?*

*WHAT DOES THE PERSONA WANT? Description of the persona's needs, desires and measures of success in relation to the use of a given public space.*

*Supporting questions: What would success mean to them? What solutions would make their life easier? What do they need to achieve their goal?*

*Creating an empathy map for the persona allows you to identify specific points in the space that require intervention. Instead of abstract "designing for seniors", you can focus on solving real problems, e.g. designing "rest stops" with benches, providing barrier-free pedestrian crossings, implementing an audio information system at bus stops. This tool transforms empathy from passive compassion into an active, creative process of creating a better, more humane space for everyone.*

**Group work – creating a persona for a well-known public space and developing an empathy map for that persona (45 minutes)**

Tasks for the instructor:

1. Discuss with participants the creation of personas as an activity for universal design, using the material available in the project documentation (part 2 – Tools for citizen engagement and community empowerment).
2. Present the public space for which the personas will be created to the participants:
  - description of the public space for which personas will be created (preferably a specific space known to the group),
  - defining, together with the group, the types of personas that can be created for a given public space;
  - selection of personas that will be the subject of the exercise (at least 2)
3. Dividing participants into at least 2 teams.
4. Ongoing consultation on the tasks carried out by the team.

Tasks for participants in each team:

1. Division of roles within teams (team secretary, participants)
2. Characterising the persona and creating an empathy map for the persona
3. Preparing to present the results of the exercise
4. Participation in a discussion about the personas created and the diversity of their use of public space, based on empathy maps, discussion on how inclusive design can be applied to these personas.

**IV. Presentation of the results of the teams carrying out the exercise (30 minutes)**

Each team presents and characterises the persona they have created and presents empathy maps for that persona. After the presentation, the other participants and the instructor can ask questions to better understand the differences between the personas and relate them to the principles of universal design. The instructor asks the participants additional questions to test their knowledge acquired during the class.

## V. Assessment of team work by the instructor (15 minutes)

The instructor should evaluate the participants' presentations based on the following criteria:

- accuracy of the characteristics of the personas created,
- accuracy of the empathy maps in relation to the created personas,
- the involvement of individual team members.

Each team receives verbal feedback from the instructor.

## VI. Summary (15 minutes)

Main conclusions from the class (text material to support the instructor)

*The design of public spaces, such as parks, squares and streets, requires a fundamental understanding and consideration of the wide diversity of their users. It is in public spaces that people with different characteristics, abilities and expectations meet, and the creation of functional and sustainable cities depends on responding to these diverse needs.*

*The diversity of users manifests itself in many dimensions. Age determines different perceptions and uses of space, which often needs to accommodate, for example, playgrounds for children, meeting places for young people, as well as safe, comfortable and barrier-free areas for senior citizens. People with special needs, such as those with permanent mobility, visual or hearing impairments, but also those with time constraints, such as parents with prams or tourists with luggage, should also have equal opportunities to use this space. Barriers such as stairs or high kerbs affect them equally. The wide spectrum of cognitive diversity of public space users should also be taken into account by creating quiet zones for them and intuitive navigation for those who may find the space overwhelming for their senses.*

*To meet these challenges, it is necessary to move away from thinking about accessibility as merely the removal of physical barriers. Accessibility is a prerequisite for equal participation in social life, which is achieved through universal design. Its aim is to create solutions for everyone, without the need for subsequent adaptation. It is based on seven principles:*

- *Equality in use (e.g. threshold-free entrances instead of ramps).*
- *Flexibility (e.g. benches with backrests).*
- *Simplicity and intuitiveness (e.g. universal pictograms).*
- *Clear information (e.g. voice messages).*
- *Tolerance to error (e.g. non-slip surfaces).*
- *Minimisation of effort (e.g. lifts, automatic doors).*
- *Appropriate dimensions and space.*

*These principles are implemented through inclusive design, which involves the active participation of future users in the creative process. Advanced methods of social participation (e.g. Charrette workshops, research walks) are used to move from formal consultations to real partnerships. A key tool in this process is the persona, a fictional archetype of a user (e.g. a senior citizen with mobility problems, a parent with a pram). As a rule, several different personas are created for a given space to capture a wide range of needs and avoid stereotypes. Each persona is analysed in a specific scenario (e.g. "how does a blind student get to university?"), which helps to identify real barriers.*

*An empathy map is used to deepen the understanding of a persona. This tool visualises their experiences by analysing six areas: what the persona thinks, feels, says, does, what difficulties they encounter and what their goals are. Such an analysis allows us to move from abstract requirements to solving specific human problems.*

*Investing in universal solutions is not a niche activity for a minority, but a strategy that improves the quality of life in the city for everyone, making the shared space safer, more comfortable and truly inclusive.*

**Topic:*****Intergenerational cooperation in participatory activities*****General objective of the class:**

To present to participants the essence and value of intergenerational cooperation in participatory activities, primarily in areas such as breaking stereotypes, maintaining a balance between knowledge and experience, and the principles of intergenerational communication, as well as developing storytelling skills as a method of building dialogue between different generations in participatory processes.

**Scope of the course:**

1. Introduction to the topic of diversity, including differences between different generations of users of public space.
2. Presentation of key challenges for intergenerational cooperation, such as breaking stereotypes, maintaining a balance between knowledge and experience, and principles of intergenerational communication.
3. Principles of building dialogue between different generations in participatory processes.
4. Using storytelling in participatory activities involving representatives of different generations.

**Total duration of the course:**

180 minutes, including: theoretical part - 60 minutes and practical part - 120 minutes

**Learning outcomes achieved during the course:**

Areas of learning	Learning outcomes	Method of verification of learning outcomes
Knowledge	1. The student has basic knowledge of generational diversity and understands the problems related to differences in perception between generations, e.g. issues concerning the use of public space.	Discussion during classes, including after the theoretical part and as part of the summary
	2. The student understands the challenges of intergenerational cooperation, i.e. breaking stereotypes, maintaining a balance between knowledge and experience, and the principles of intergenerational communication.	
	3. The student knows the basic principles of storytelling as a method of social participation.	
Skills and attitudes	1. The student is able to identify examples of problems arising from differences in the perception of public space by different generations.	Assessment of presentations made in teams as part of the exercise
	2. The student/pupil is able to explain how challenges related to intergenerational cooperation can be related to social participation processes.	
	3. The student is able to design an example of a participatory activity carried out in intergenerational cooperation that uses the storytelling method for public space design.	

## Lesson plan

### I. Introduction to the topic (45 minutes)

Welcoming participants:

Presentation of the objectives and lesson plan.

Theoretical introduction to the class (text material to support the instructor)

*Generational diversity is not a problem to be solved, but a resource to be exploited. Conscious design of public spaces that not only meet the needs of different age groups, but actively encourage them to interact, is an investment in social capital and the resilience of cities. Creating places that are friendly and functional for public space users of all ages is a goal that can be pursued through dialogue, mutual respect and empathy. It is in this everyday intergenerational exchange that the true power of well-designed public space lies.*

*Public space is like a mirror that reflects society, characterised by specific dynamics, conflicts and, above all, generational diversity, i.e. the coexistence in one place and time of several generations, each representing unique experiences, values and expectations. Parks, squares and streets become an arena where these different perspectives clash, creating both the potential for building stronger bonds and the risk of deepening intergenerational divisions. Understanding these differences and managing them consciously is one of the key challenges in the development of modern cities.*

*Four generations whose characteristics illustrate intergenerational dynamics and diverse attitudes towards public space are:*

*1. Baby Boomers (born around 1946-1964) – a generation shaped by the experience of post-war reconstruction and relative stability, which values order, safety and functionality in public space above all else. For them, parks are places for peaceful walks and meetings on benches, squares serve a representative function, and streets should be clean and well organised. They use space in a routine manner, often associated with traditional forms of recreation. They value greenery, but in an orderly form, e.g. neat lawns and flower beds. They may perceive modern, avant-garde installations or informal activity zones as chaos and a waste of public money. Their involvement in local affairs often takes a formal form, e.g. through participation in neighbourhood council meetings.*

*2. Generation X (approx. 1965-1980) – people who grew up at the intersection of the analogue and digital worlds. They are pragmatic and often family-oriented. For them, public space is primarily a useful place: a well-equipped playground for children, a bike path for jogging or a park where they can spend time with their family. Unlike the Baby Boomers, they are more open to informal ways of spending their time, but still value a clear division of zones and functions. Their attitude towards space is less ideological and more practical – it should meet specific needs related to recreation and family life.*

*3. Generation Y (approx. 1981-1996) – the first generation of the digital revolution, which values experiences over possessions. For this generation, public space is a stage on which social life takes place and a backdrop for creating memories that can be shared online. They expect public space to be flexible, multifunctional and friendly for posting photos on social media. They are attracted to temporary events such as festivals, open-air cinemas and breakfast markets. A bench is not only for sitting, but also for working on a laptop, which is why access to Wi-Fi and power sockets is becoming an asset. The space they expect, according to , should be aesthetically pleasing, offer unique experiences and allow for a smooth transition between work, relaxation and social life.*

*4. Generation Z (approx. 1997-2012) – a generation fully immersed in digital reality, for whom the boundary between the online and offline worlds is fluid (so-called phygital). Public space is a meeting place for them, but also a platform for expressing themselves, their values and activism. They expect*

*authenticity, inclusivity and sustainability. Instead of a perfectly manicured lawn in a park, they prefer wild flower meadows that support biodiversity. They pay attention to whether a space is accessible to people with disabilities and safe for minorities. They are sensitive to social and environmental issues, and public space becomes a tool for them to manifest these attitudes, e.g. by organising happenings or creating murals.*

*The confrontation of such different perspectives creates tension. Seniors may complain about the noise generated by young people, while young people may feel restricted by the need for order manifested by older generations.*

*The key to transforming these conflicts into creative energy is to consciously build cooperation and dialogue based on three pillars.*

### *1. Breaking stereotypes*

*The biggest barrier is mutual, simplified perceptions, which assume, for example, that young people are demanding and cannot imagine life without smartphones, and that seniors are backward and complain about everything. An effective way to break down these stereotypes is to create opportunities for joint, purposeful action. Intergenerational community gardens, where older people share their gardening knowledge and younger people share their strength and new ideas, or workshops where grandchildren teach their grandparents how to use smartphones, build real relationships and show the value of each group.*

### *2. Balance of knowledge and experience*

*Intergenerational cooperation is about synergy, not competition. Older people have invaluable life experience and historical memory of a given place. They know what a street looked like 30 years ago and what functions it served. Younger people bring new knowledge, awareness of trends, digital literacy and a fresh perspective. Participatory processes (e.g. when designing a new square) must be structured in such a way that both perspectives are treated with equal respect. The "reverse mentoring" model, in which a younger person is an expert in one field and an older person in another, promotes partnership rather than hierarchy.*

### *3. Principles of effective intergenerational communication*

*Differences in language and communication styles are a common source of misunderstanding. To prevent them, it is worth promoting several principles, such as: active listening (focusing on understanding the other person's intentions rather than just preparing your own response), empathy and avoiding generalisations (instead of relying on general, common judgements, it is better to refer to your own individual feelings and experiences), curiosity instead of judgement (asking questions opens dialogue, while generally negating the other person's opinion closes it), a common goal (constantly reminding people of what they have in common, rather than emphasising what divides them).*

*The above assumptions indicate that building intergenerational dialogue in participatory processes must be based on partnership and mutual respect. Instead of hierarchy, we should strive for synergy, in which the life experience of seniors is as valuable as the innovative perspectives and digital knowledge of young people. Communication must be based on active listening and empathy. Generalisations and harmful stereotypes should be consciously avoided, and instead, people should speak from their own perspective. The foundation is a focus on a common, overarching goal that unites across divisions. In intergenerational dialogue in participatory processes, the role of an impartial moderator who ensures that every voice, regardless of age, is heard and given due consideration is very important. This allows potential conflicts to be transformed into opportunities for dialogue and mutual learning.*

*the role of an impartial moderator who ensures that every voice, regardless of age, is heard and given due consideration, allowing potential conflict to be transformed into creative cooperation.*

### Supplementary materials for the theoretical part (expanding knowledge):

#### 1. Project documentation, including:

Part 1 – Methodology for creating and teaching a course: Participatory approach to cities development.

part 2 – Tools for citizen engagement and community empowerment

part 3 – Guidelines and policy recommendations for local/regional authorities on: How to work with citizens.

Appendix – case studies

#### 2. Websites on intergenerational cooperation:

Generations United

<https://www.gu.org/>

The Eisner Foundation

<https://eisnerfoundation.org/>

Generations Working Together

<https://generationsworkingtogether.org/>

AGE Platform Europe – Intergenerational Solidarity

<https://www.age-platform.eu/good-practices/intergenerational-solidarity/>

#### 3. Scientific articles:

Skibiński, A., Sipa, M., & Gorzeń-Mitka, I. (2016). An intergenerational cooperation in the organisation-view from the age perspective. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 235, 412-419.

Lowenstein, A. (2010). Determinants of the complex interchange among generations: Collaboration and conflict. In *Intergenerational Solidarity: Strengthening economic and social ties* (pp. 53-80). New York: Palgrave Macmillan US.

## II. Question and answer session (15 minutes)

The lecturer engages in a discussion with the participants to ensure that they understand the presented content and encourages them to ask questions and share their own opinions and experiences regarding examples of intergenerational cooperation in participatory activities.

## III. Exercise (60 minutes)

### Storytelling as a tool for intergenerational cooperation in participatory activities.

Introduction to the exercise (text material to support the instructor, 15 minutes)

*Storytelling is a method of communication that involves presenting information, ideas or values in an engaging, narrative form rather than as dry facts and figures. Stories have a direct impact on our emotions, build bonds and make things easier to remember. A good story can convey ideas directly to the hearts and minds of the audience, bypassing the barriers of analytical scepticism.*

*Storytelling in participatory processes transforms formal meetings into authentic dialogue. It makes participants cease to be anonymous representatives of their age groups and become people with names, emotions and stories, which is the most lasting foundation for building a community and a space where everyone feels at home.*

*At the heart of effective storytelling are several key elements that make a story more appealing and understandable to the audience. These are presented below:*

*The protagonist – every good story has a protagonist with whom the audience can identify. The protagonist has a goal, dreams and faces challenges. In a social context, the protagonist can be a resident, a specific group or even an entire community.*

*Conflict and obstacle – these elements are the driving force behind the narrative. Conflict is a problem that the protagonist struggles with – it can be an architectural barrier, misunderstanding,*

*bureaucracy or the forgotten history of a place. It is the struggle against the obstacle that engages the audience's attention.*

*Structure – a story has a logical order: beginning (introduction of the protagonist and their world), development (the emergence of conflict and attempts to resolve it) and ending (resolution and the message it conveys). This structure gives the story meaning and organises emotions.*

*Message and emotions – this is a key element of the story, which serves to convey information to the audience and evoke emotions such as joy, sadness, anger or hope. These emotions make the story a personal experience for the audience, and the message it contains becomes their own truth.*

*Storytelling is an effective tool for intergenerational cooperation in participatory activities, especially those related to shaping public space, where different generations with different experiences, needs and communication styles meet. Formal debates and technical jargon often deepen these divisions. Storytelling becomes a bridge that allows dialogue to be built on a deeper, human level. Instead of arguing about the number of benches or the type of pavement, participants begin to share what these elements mean to them.*

*Storytelling can be used in many ways in participatory, intergenerational activities, such as:*

*1. Memory mapping workshops – an excellent method for starting a discussion about a specific space (e.g. a park or square). On a large map or plan of the area, representatives of different generations mark places and tell personal stories related to them.*

*By participating in the workshops, participants begin to perceive space not as a collection of objects, but as a living fabric of experiences of different generations. A senior citizen's personal story gives a place historical and sentimental value, while a teenager's story shows the contemporary potential of that place. This builds mutual respect for different ways of using the same place.*

*2. Living library of local experiences - a method in which older residents become living books and younger people can borrow them for a few minutes of conversation. The theme is stories related to life in a given neighbourhood.*

*Participation in such an activity creates a safe space for direct intergenerational dialogue. The younger generation gains unique knowledge about the history and identity of the place, while the older generation feels listened to and appreciated. It is a powerful tool for breaking down stereotypes and building bonds.*

*3. Intergenerational digital storytelling – a technique combining traditional storytelling with modern technology, making ideal use of the skills of both sides, involving young people recording the stories of older people in audio or video format, which can be enriched with old photos or music. The result can be a series of short films published on the Internet or shown at a local festival.*

*Such activities, based on real cooperation and reverse mentoring, are very effective socially. Young people teach older people about technology, and older people share their life experience with young people. Creating a tangible work together (a film, a podcast) gives enormous satisfaction and builds a sense of community.*

### **Working in groups – using storytelling as a tool for intergenerational cooperation in participatory activities (45 minutes)**

#### **Tasks of the instructor:**

1. Discuss with participants the possibilities of using storytelling in intergenerational participatory activities (part 2 – Tools for citizen engagement and community empowerment).
2. Present to participants the specifics of storytelling in the design of public spaces involving audiences of different ages:
3. Divide participants into at least 3 teams.
4. Ongoing consultation on the tasks carried out by the team.

#### **Tasks for participants in each team:**

1. Division of roles within teams (moderator, participants)

2. Developing one example of using storytelling as a tool for intergenerational cooperation in participatory activities in one of the following forms: memory mapping workshops; living library of local experiences; intergenerational digital stories.
3. Preparing to present the examples developed.
4. Participation in a discussion on the examples presented.

#### **IV. Presentation of the results of the teams carrying out the exercise (30 minutes)**

Each team presents the story they have prepared, explains its context and the generations involved, and explains how storytelling is used in this case as a tool for intergenerational cooperation in participatory activities.

After each presentation, the other participants and the instructor can ask questions to better understand the results of each team's work. The instructor asks the participants additional questions to test their knowledge acquired during the class.

#### **V. Assessment of team work by the course instructor (15 minutes)**

The instructor should evaluate the participants' presentations based on the following criteria:

- relevance of the prepared story to the problems of intergenerational cooperation in public space design,
- use of storytelling as a tool for intergenerational cooperation in participatory activities,
- the involvement of individual team members.

Each team receives verbal feedback from the instructor.

#### **VI. Summary (15 minutes)**

##### **Main conclusions from the class (text material to support the instructor)**

*The design of public spaces, such as parks and squares, must take into account generational diversity. Each generation has unique experiences and expectations, which leads to different ways of using shared space and is a potential source of conflict.*

*While the Baby Boomer generation (approx. 1946-64) values order, safety and traditional forms of recreation, expecting orderly greenery and functionality, Generation X (approx. 1965-80) are family-oriented pragmatists for whom space must be clearly defined and useful above all else. Generation Y (Millennials, approx. 1981-96), on the other hand, are experience seekers for whom space is a stage for social life, often documented online. They expect flexibility, aesthetics and access to technology (Wi-Fi). Generation Z (approx. 1997-2012) are people immersed in digital reality who treat space as a platform for self-expression and activism. They demand authenticity, inclusivity and sustainability (e.g. wild meadows instead of lawns).*

*To transform conflicts into creative energy, dialogue based on three pillars is key:*

- *breaking stereotypes: instead of relying on simplifications, opportunities for joint activities (e.g. community gardens) should be created to build real relationships,*
  - *balancing knowledge and experience - both the historical memory and life experience of older people and the digital knowledge and new perspectives of young people should be valued,*
  - *effective communication – dialogue requires active listening, empathy and avoiding generalisations in favour of speaking from one's own perspective, all in pursuit of a common goal.*
- A useful tool for building intergenerational dialogue is storytelling – a method of communication through storytelling. It transforms formal debates into authentic encounters where participants share personal experiences related to a given place. Instead of arguing about facts, they begin to understand what the space means to others.*

*Practical methods of using storytelling include:*

- memory mapping, where participants mark personal stories on a map, which builds respect for different ways of using the same place;*
- living library, where seniors act as "living books" and share their experiences, breaking down barriers and building bonds;*
- digital stories, which involve the joint creation of films or podcasts, combining the technological skills of young people with the experience of older people, creating a sense of community.*

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



**Co-funded by  
the European Union**

**BEST PRACTICE DESCRIPTION: RIJEKA, CROATIA**

Prepared by: Rijeka Development Agency Porin, Croatia, 2024



## 1. The topic of the case study

The case study focuses on **Rijeka's innovative participatory processes in urban governance and development**, highlighting three key initiatives: • **“Uključi se”/“Get involved”**: The development of active participation of residents in the community was one of the key elements of the Rijeka 2020 – European Capital of Culture programme.

- **Citizen Council**: A platform that allows citizens to actively participate in decision-making processes related to urban issues and municipal governance. Platform's origins stem from Rijeka's European Capital of Culture journey where the idea was born through the Get Involved initiative.

- **Urban Regeneration of Export Drvo**: A project focused on the revitalization of the Export Drvo site, a post-industrial area, through participatory workshops facilitated by the ReValue EU project.

- **Urban Laboratory (CEKOM Project)**: A collaborative hub established under the CEKOM project, aimed at fostering innovation and co-creation between citizens, experts, and authorities to address urban challenges and develop sustainable solutions.

These initiatives reflect Rijeka's commitment to incorporating citizen input into urban planning, creating a more inclusive and sustainable city.

## 2. Challenge addressed in the case study

The primary challenge addressed by these initiatives is the **integration of citizen participation into urban planning and development**. Historically, urban development in many cities has been top-down, often overlooking the needs and perspectives of the residents who live and work in these spaces. Rijeka faced the challenge of transforming its post-industrial areas, like Export Drvo, in a way that respects the city's historical heritage while meeting contemporary urban needs.

The challenge also included overcoming **public skepticism and disengagement**, where citizens might feel their voices are not valued in governmental processes. Additionally, the case study addresses the challenge of **bridging the gap between expert knowledge and local wisdom**, ensuring that urban development and other actions that are being carried out with the help of the participatory process, is both technically sound and socially responsive.

The central challenge addressed is how to effectively integrate citizen participation into various aspects of urban planning and governance. Each initiative targets different aspects of this overarching challenge:

- **“Uključi se”/“Get involved”**: The development of active participation of residents in the community was one of the key elements of the Rijeka 2020 – European Capital of Culture programme. In that context, the the programmes under the 27 Neighbourhoods flagship and participatory programmes (Civil Initiatives, Green Wave, and Citizens' Assembly) represent the

key component of the Rijeka 2020 programme since they aim at engaging citizens, just like the Volunteering in Culture programme. The culture of volunteering in the sector of culture was recognised as an area that has to be strengthened in Rijeka. The response to this challenge included activities to attract volunteers and raise awareness of the importance of volunteer engagement in the cultural sector.

- **Citizen Council:** Addresses the need for ongoing citizen involvement in municipal governance, ensuring that citizens have a formal avenue to influence decision-making processes.
- **ReValue Workshops:** Focuses on involving citizens directly in the urban regeneration process, particularly in the transformation of historically and culturally significant sites like Export Drvo.
- **Urban Laboratory:** Tackles the challenge of creating a space where new urban solutions can be co-created and tested with active citizen participation, ensuring that innovations are responsive to the needs of the community.

### 3. Main stages in co-creation of the solution and involved actors

Each initiative followed its unique process in co-creating solutions with the involvement of various actors:

#### “Uključi se”/“Get involved”



Figure 1. Rijeka 2020 Volunteers

- **Objectives**

- o **Design and Implement a Volunteering System:** Develop a comprehensive volunteering system to support cultural activities in Rijeka, particularly in the context of the RIJEKA 2020 project.
- o **Sensitize Cultural Organizations:** Raise awareness among cultural organizations about the benefits and importance of volunteer involvement in cultural initiatives.
- o **Integrate New Volunteers:** Facilitate the integration of new volunteers into cultural projects, ensuring they are effectively matched with appropriate activities and roles.
- o **Develop Existing Volunteers:** Provide ongoing development and training programs for volunteers who are already active, enhancing their skills and engagement in cultural projects.

• **Involved Actors**



Figure 2 Rijeka 2020 Volunteers

- o **SMART Volunteer Centre:** Played a key role in designing and implementing the volunteering system, providing expertise and coordination for volunteer activities.
- o **Croatian Cultural Centre Sušak:** Collaborated in the implementation of the volunteering programme, particularly in organizing and hosting cultural events that engaged volunteers.
- o **RIJEKA 2020 Company:** Actively involved in raising awareness and training cultural organizations and their employees, ensuring alignment with the broader RIJEKA 2020 goals.
- o **Cultural Organizations from Rijeka:** Participated in the awareness-raising and training sessions, preparing to effectively integrate volunteers into their activities.
- o **Volunteers:** Both new and existing volunteers were central to the initiative, participating in development programs and contributing to cultural projects.

• **Stages**

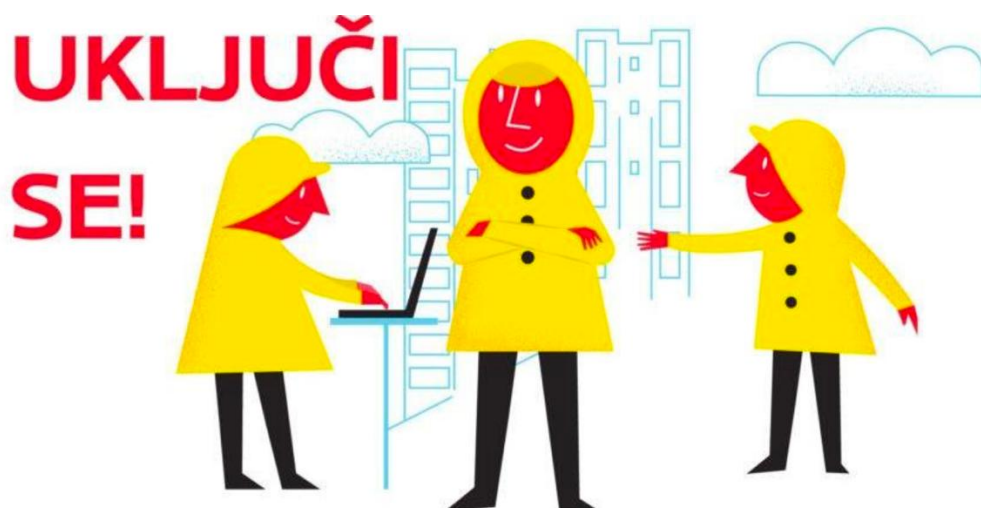


Figure 3. "Uključi se" Poster

- o **Planning and Design:** Initial consultations between the SMART Volunteer Centre, Croatian Cultural Centre Sušak, and RIJEKA 2020 to design the volunteering system, development of detailed plans for volunteer roles, training, and integration processes.
- o **Sensitization and Awareness-Raising:** Conducted 11 awareness-raising training sessions in 2018 and 2019, targeting cultural organizations and RIJEKA 2020 employees, Focus on the benefits of volunteer engagement and strategies for effectively integrating volunteers into cultural projects.
- o **Volunteer Recruitment and Integration:** Launched campaigns and activities to recruit new volunteers for cultural projects, developed and implemented processes to integrate new volunteers into ongoing activities, ensuring a smooth transition into their roles.
- o **Volunteer Development:** Provided targeted development programs for active volunteers, enhancing their skills and deepening their engagement in cultural initiatives, Continuous support and feedback mechanisms to ensure volunteers felt valued and effective in their roles.



Figure 4 Rijeka 2020 Citizen Assembly

o **Implementation and Monitoring:** Ongoing implementation of the volunteering system in cultural projects, with continuous monitoring and adjustment based on feedback from volunteers and cultural organizations, regular evaluation of the effectiveness of the volunteer program, ensuring it met the objectives set out at the beginning of the initiative.

#### **Citizen Council:**

o **Objective:** To create a formal structure where citizens can engage directly with municipal authorities on urban governance issues.

o **Involved Actors:** Citizens of Rijeka, municipal authorities, city council members, and local community leaders.

o **Stages:** Establishment of the council, regular public meetings, and integration of citizen input into municipal decisions.

#### **ReValue Workshops for Export Drvo Regeneration:**

o **Objective:** To involve citizens in the regeneration of the Export Drvo site, ensuring the project reflects community needs and preserves the area's cultural heritage.

o **Involved Actors:** Local citizens, ReValue project team, urban planners, cultural heritage experts, and Rijeka City Council.

o **Stages:** Initial public consultations, participatory workshops, collaborative design processes, and finalization of the regeneration plan.

#### **Urban Laboratory (CEKOM Project):**

o **Objective:** To establish a collaborative environment where innovative urban solutions can be developed with input from citizens and experts.

o **Involved Actors:** CEKOM project team, citizens, local businesses, academic institutions, and urban development experts.

o **Stages:** Setting up the laboratory, engaging stakeholders, conducting pilot projects, and iterating solutions based on feedback.

## **4. Implemented solutions**

The implemented solutions were a comprehensive, **multi-stakeholder participatory framework** that integrated citizen input into the urban regeneration and governance processes.

This framework included:

- **“Uključi se”/“Get involved”:** The 2018 and 2019 Get Involved campaign encouraged the citizens of Rijeka to get actively involved in the Rijeka 2020 project, propose ideas at the Civil Initiatives and Green Wave tenders, become members of the Citizens' Assembly or volunteers. Campaign activities included neighborhood tours and the promotion of civil participation, enabling direct interaction and informing about engagement opportunities. Additionally, as a part of the campaign, an information leaflet was distributed to 65,000 addresses in the city of Rijeka together with monthly utility bills. In 2018 80 project proposals were submitted to tenders, while 94 applications were submitted for participation in the Citizens' Assembly. As a result, 22 projects were approved for

2019. In the second tender, for 2020, 61 applications for the Citizens' Assembly and 61 project proposals were received, of which 12 were selected. The structure of the Citizens' Assembly mirrored the demographic structure of the population of Rijeka according to age and gender. Members of the Citizens' Assembly, 60 of them, were chosen by lottery; they later evaluated the submitted projects for Civil Initiatives and Green Wave. Before project evaluations, all members received training on methodology, project values and the role of participatory decision-making, as well as on the importance of strengthening the local community. This initiative was the idea origin for the Citizens Council action.

- **Citizens' Council:** Rijeka has also established an informal body known as the Citizens' Council, which consists of randomly selected citizens. This assembly is tasked with providing recommendations on how to improve the local self-government system and enhance citizen participation. It represents a microcosm of the city's diverse population, with members drawn from various ages, genders, and residential areas. This assembly worked closely with the City Council to ensure that the voices of ordinary citizens are heard in the decision-making process.



Figure 5 The Rijeka Citizen Council, 2023.

- **Participatory Budgeting:** The city has implemented a participatory budgeting model, allowing citizens to directly engage in the budgeting process. This includes proposing small municipal interventions, participating in the Local Partnership Programme, and engaging in [educational online budget games](#). These mechanisms empower citizens to have a direct impact on how the city's budget is allocated and spent.

- **Transparency and Open Data:** Rijeka is recognized as the most transparent and digitally advanced city in Croatia. The city administration emphasizes open communication with citizens and participatory management. Tools like the Open Data Portal provide a platform for collaboration between academia, entrepreneurs, and the local government. Additionally,

initiatives such as the "Say it out loud" section on Rijeka's web portal allow citizens to actively contribute to the quality of life in their city.

- **Urban Regeneration of Export Drvo:** The site, once an underutilized industrial area, was transformed into a vibrant cultural and community space. The design and development of this space were directly informed by the ideas and feedback gathered from the participatory workshops facilitated by the ReValue project. The regeneration project is working on preserving the industrial heritage of the site while introducing new cultural and social functions that met contemporary needs.

- **Urban Laboratory (CEKOM Project):** The Urban Laboratory functioned as a testing ground for new urban policies and practices, with a strong emphasis on participatory governance. It allowed for the continuous refinement of urban solutions based on real-time feedback from citizens and experts. The lab also acted as a model for other cities looking to implement similar participatory frameworks

## 5. Short-term and long-term results of intervention

### Short-Term Results:

- **"Uključi se"/"Get involved":** In the short term, the campaign effectively increased citizen engagement in the Rijeka 2020 project. In 2018, it resulted in the submission of 80 project proposals and 94 applications for the Citizens' Assembly. By 2019, this engagement had led to the approval of 22 projects. The following year, in 2020, the campaign continued to foster participation, with 61 applications each for the Citizens' Assembly and project proposals, ultimately selecting 12 projects for implementation. The campaign also focused on immediate training and evaluation processes, with members of the Citizens' Assembly receiving thorough training on participatory decision-making. This training was crucial for them to effectively evaluate the submitted projects, ensuring diverse and informed community input. Additionally, the campaign's outreach activities, such as neighborhood tours and the distribution of information leaflets to 65,000 addresses, significantly raised awareness about engagement opportunities, leading to heightened community involvement. A total of 5,440 citizens participated in 118 events organized through the campaign, demonstrating a strong initial connection between the community and the Rijeka 2020 project.

- **Citizen Council:** Increased transparency in governance and greater citizen trust in municipal processes.

- **ReValue Workshops:** Successfully gathered diverse community input for the Export Drvo project, leading to a design that enjoys broad public support.

- **Urban Laboratory:** Initial pilot projects demonstrated the potential of the lab as a space for innovation, attracting interest from various stakeholders.

### Long-Term Results:

- **“Uključi se”/“Get involved”**: In the long term, the campaign played a pivotal role in strengthening civil initiatives within Rijeka. It enabled informal citizen groups to apply for financial support, broadening participation beyond formally registered associations and establishing a new precedent for future participatory projects. This shift has had a lasting impact on the city’s approach to civic engagement and funding mechanisms. The cultural and social effects of the campaign were profound. The projects funded through the Civil Initiatives and Green Wave tenders contributed significantly to the city's cultural and social development. They created valuable spaces for education, entertainment, and creativity, and encouraged residents to actively shape their living environment. This has had a lasting influence on the quality and dynamics of everyday life in various neighborhoods. Furthermore, the campaign laid the groundwork for sustained civic engagement. The participatory model established through the Citizens' Assembly and the campaign’s broader initiatives fostered ongoing public participation and influence in local governance and community projects. The long-term impact includes the creation of the Citizens Council action, reflecting the campaign's success in embedding civic engagement into the city’s governance practices. Additionally, the Green Wave initiatives led to lasting environmental and urban improvements. The creation of urban oases and the promotion of environmental awareness have contributed to Rijeka’s long-term sustainability goals, enhancing public spaces and fostering a greener city.

- **Citizen Council**: A sustained culture of citizen involvement in governance, with the council continuing to influence key municipal decisions.

- **ReValue Workshops**: A regenerated Export Drvo site that serves as a model for community-driven urban development, blending cultural heritage with contemporary functionality.



Figure 6. Export Drvo Hall

- **Urban Laboratory**: The lab established itself as a critical component of Rijeka’s urban development strategy, continuously generating innovative solutions that enhance the city’s sustainability and livability.

## 6. Description of the good practice to be multiplied based on this case

- **Citizen Council:** Other municipalities can replicate this model to ensure that citizen input remains a central part of urban governance, fostering transparency and inclusivity.
- **ReValue Workshops:** The participatory approach used in the Export Drvo regeneration can serve as a template for other cities undertaking urban renewal projects, particularly those with significant cultural or historical aspects. The ReValue workshops utilize a method of an Impact Model Workshop: a gamified approach, with tools that help participants map out their resources, needs and limitations as well as opportunities for different areas of change. It being a very useful tool, SmartRi team asked ReVaule to share this practice with heiSciti. The files with the materials and process for a „impact model domino game“ have been shared with the heiSciti team on an online drive <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1tzT4oC5zyT384vu6YoiZzk8AzvoluggC?usp=sharing>. The cooperation will be useful for both projects to further develop different participatory methods.
- **Urban Laboratory (CEKOM Project):** The concept of an urban laboratory can be adopted by other cities to create spaces where new urban solutions can be co-created, tested, and refined in collaboration with citizens, ensuring that innovations are grounded in real community needs.



Figure 7 CEKOM Multifunctional device - part of the Urban Laboratory



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



**REPORT FROM STUDY VISIT  
ON GOOD PRACTICE PRESENTATION**

**Host Partner: LAMA Impresa Sociale Soc. Coop.**

**Participating Partners: WSB, MRU, SMART RI (in presence)**

**Stuttgart Media University, University of Danang  
(connected remotely)**

**Venue: Florence, Londa and San Godenzo (province of Florence)**

**Dates: 3 - 5 July 2024**

## Description of the good practice presented during the study visit

### 1. The topic of the case study

Londa and San Godenzo are two Tuscanian municipalities located in the Apennine mountains. The two municipalities, which can be easily reached from the nearby city of Florence, are access points to an important Italian National Park, namely the “Parco Nazionale delle Foreste Casentinesi, Monte Falterona e Campigna”, a place rich in biodiversity, and a source of vital ecosystem services for all the territory.

The two municipalities shared the desire to begin a process of transformation aimed at tackling issues such as depopulation and demographic ageing. For this reason, LAMA was involved so as to provide technical assistance for a systemic study and analysis of the key territorial levers able to enhance economic, cultural and social development. This study led to the design of a complex and multi-layered territorial development strategy, called “**Montagna Fiorentina**”, then financed by the Next Generation EU programme.

Deeply connected to the territorial regeneration strategy is the participatory process called “**Montagna Prossima**”. This process gave the chance to open the regeneration strategy to the direct participation and consultation of citizens in the two municipalities. The activities of Montagna Prossima participatory process aimed at facilitating people's engagement in the territorial transformation process, while presenting the new strategy and informing citizens about the participation opportunities; above all, people were invited to events for open discussion and co-design, for collecting fundamental indications to steer the practical implementation of the interventions included in the strategy.

From January to June 2023, numerous **participatory initiatives** were organised: public presentation events, thematic round tables, mobile temporary information points, co-design workshops dedicated to young people and women, and final events presenting the process' results. Each of these meetings proved to be a key moment for the expression of different voices and perspectives to orient the practical implementation of the territorial regeneration interventions.

### 2. Challenge addressed in the case study

The primary challenge for this type of initiative is that participating in a collaborative process requires significant time and effort from those involved. Therefore, it's crucial to clearly define the objective and the potential benefits for participants, from the very beginning.

Additionally, the implementation of the Montagna Fiorentina project has been greatly nourished by the inputs and contributions of the Montagna Prossima participatory process. It is vital to effectively communicate this to local communities so they recognize that their

efforts have been essential to the regeneration of their area. Furthermore, it's important to present tangible results that highlight the goals achieved, enhancing satisfaction and reinforcing the sense that the effort invested was worthwhile.

Another challenge we encountered was ensuring the inclusion of all individuals and groups, as there was a risk of excluding some from the participatory process, thereby missing the chance for them to influence decisions on territorial regeneration. In this sense, it is of paramount importance to identify key individuals and stakeholders, those who participate and remain active throughout the whole process. These individuals are crucial to the engagement process and should be recognized as key allies in spreading the message and encouraging broader participation.

### **3. Main stages in co-creation of the solution and involved actors**

The main stages of the participatory process “Montagna Prossima” were the following:

#### PHASE 1) MAPPING

The first phase of the participatory pathway involved mapping all the actors and organisations active in the area. The methodology adopted for carrying out the mapping activity was the “Snowball Sampling”, which enabled reaching an initial group of participants, later expanded through engagement activities. The objective of this phase was to engage citizens and organisations, to start sharing information regarding the ongoing process of transformation, and to encourage people to take active part in the participatory process.

#### PHASE 2) ENGAGEMENT

All mapped subjects were then involved in various initiatives:

- public events presenting the territorial regeneration strategy and all the participation opportunities, in both two municipalities;
- presentation events dedicated to young people under 35;
- interviews with active stakeholders (organisations or informal groups, for-profit and nonprofit enterprises) on the two territories.



PHASE 3) LISTEN AND DEBATE  
The third phase focused on listening, debating, and collecting needs and input. The activities included:

- 2 events with thematic roundtables for discussing the topics of TOURISM, CULTURE, WORK, LOCAL IDENTITY, and ENVIRONMENT;
- 6 temporary stations set up in different places in the two municipalities for giving information and gathering inputs from citizens to create a community map;
- 1 online communication channel for information and proposal collection.



#### PHASE 4) CO-DESIGN

The fourth phase was conducting co-design workshops with women and young people (under 35), two fundamental categories for the social, economic, and cultural regeneration of the two municipalities of Londa and San Godenzo. The co-design workshops aimed to make these target groups real protagonists of the territory's development, giving them skills and support to imagine new proposals for the regeneration of their territory. To encourage women's participation, a free babysitting service was also made available during the meetings.



#### PHASE 5) PRESENTATION

To share advancements and results, two types of dissemination activities were carried out: the publication of synthetic reports and the organisation of two final public events, one in Londa and one in San Godenzo.

Also, regular communication activities (online and offline) were implemented during the whole duration of the participatory pathway and across all the engagement activities.



#### **4. Implemented solution**

The conclusion of the Montagna Prossima participatory process has coincided with the start of the territorial strategy "Montagna Fiorentina" implementation, which thus benefited from the contributions gathered in the participatory process. In particular, here are some of the inputs from the participatory process that was fundamental for the strategy interventions:

**Visual identity and website:** The participatory approach has also been applied to the design of the visual identity and the main functions included in the web platform of "Montagna Fiorentina". <https://montagnafiorentina.com/>. Citizens were asked to draw their idea of the mountain, representing the values and emotional symbols from their personal experiences and part of the local culture. These visual elements were incorporated into the generative visual identity of Montagna Fiorentina and featured in all coordinated image materials, thereby enhancing the community's sense of belonging and connection to the project.



**Touristic experiences:** To increase the attractiveness of the territory while promoting the area's cultural heritage, local economic productions, and natural resources, the participatory process represented the opportunity to map and connect local actors (profit and non-profit organisations) capable of offering residents and visitors immersive experiences in the local cultural heritage and enjoyment of typical products and traditions, together with local communities. This process led to the creation of a catalog of touristic experiences that has been disseminated both offline and online (in the dedicated section of the [Montagna Fiorentina website](#)).

**Co-design projects follow-up:** The co-design process involved young people and women from the two municipalities, and generated a series of ideas and inputs for the Florentine Mountain interventions. We describe here how two of these ideas have already been implemented within the new strategy:

The first project seeks to respond to a need that emerged during the participatory process: the lack of accommodation facilities for visitors. The project mapped and connected those people having empty rooms or flats to be used as tourist accommodation to provide a uniform and widespread service.

The other project is the work done by a youth group proposing to create an open-air space for the aggregation and social life of young people, which could also host initiatives and events organised by them. The open-air space was then built thanks to the collaboration with students and teachers from the IUAV University of Venice.



## 5. Short-term and long-term results of intervention

In general terms, the participation in the initiatives of Montagna Prossima and the contribution to the definition of the main elements of the territorial regeneration strategy enhanced a **sense of recognition and ownership** around the project while building a stronger **sense of community**.

One of the most critical short-term impacts generated by the project was the **creation of networks and new collaborations** between local actors. This impact was stimulated through the involvement of local communities in the numerous participation initiatives organised within the Montagna Prossima participatory process. These events not only engaged citizens and informed them about the transformation process underway but also stimulated dialogue and networks between local actors and strengthened the relationship between participants and the municipal administration.

Indeed, the participation process has allowed the consolidation of the existing **dialogue between local communities and the public administration**. The Municipal Administration of both Londa and San Godenzo listened to the organisations present to learn about their needs and development proposals for the territory and also made itself available for discussion, providing helpful information and, in the case of the co-design paths, also providing technical support to make the ideas that emerged both feasible and sustainable.

In the long term, one of the main objectives of the Montagna Prossima participatory process was to activate the local community, in terms of awareness and participation in preparation for a broader process designed to have long-term continuity. In this sense, among the long-term impacts expected by the project it is important to mention:

- **counteracting the demographic outflow** and encouraging people to stay and invest in the area's potential;
- **increase in skills, and therefore employment opportunities**, with particular reference to women and young people taking part in co-design courses;
- **increase in cultural participation**, thanks to the creation of new opportunities for promoting the area, on a cultural, artistic and environmental level;
- **increase in tourist practices supporting and respecting the territory and its communities**, thanks to the engagement of local actors in the promotion and implementation of touristic experiences enhancing the local heritage.

## 6. Description of the good practice to be multiplied based on this case

The Montagna Prossima participatory process is grounded on an **innovative multilevel methodology**, which focuses on engaging and listening to people's needs, addressing territorial issues and potentiality, fostering peer exchange, cooperative learning and a collaborative approach in the design of local regeneration interventions, on the levers of culture and environment. These innovative features are not bound in time and space, thus making the methodological approach potentially replicable.

Therefore, the process's approach and general structure of the process can, therefore be adopted (and adapted) in other places with similar characteristics (rural or peri-urban contexts, small municipalities), undertaking transformation and regeneration processes. It's important, however to underline that each context presents specific challenges and opportunities that should be identified in a thorough preliminary context analysis, necessary to decline the participatory activities in the specific place duly.

Lastly, expert figures facilitating citizen participation and fostering dialogue with public administration must continuously stimulate and support the engagement process. In this sense, Universities can play a pivotal role in this, as key partners in designing, guiding, and facilitating these processes to ensure their success.

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



### **CASE STUDY**

**Title: UD's Inclusive Practices Supporting Lao and Cambodian Students in Border City Development – Including UD Campus in Kon Tum (UD-CK) and UD-University of Sciences and Education (UD-UED)**

**Authors: UD's team : Ms. Ho Long Ngoc and Ms. Le Thi Hong Oanh**

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**THE UNIVERSITY OF DANANG'S  
INCLUSIVE PRACTICES SUPPORTING LAO AND CAMBODIAN  
STUDENTS IN BORDER CITY DEVELOPMENT  
– INCLUDING UD'S CAMPUS IN KON TUM (UD-CK) AND UD-  
UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCES AND EDUCATION (UD-UED)**

## **1. The topic and background of the case**

The University of Danang (UD), a leading regional university in Central Vietnam and the Central Highlands, plays a key role in innovation and development. With 13 member and affiliated institutions—including UD Campus in Kon Tum (UD-CK) and UD-University of Sciences and Education (UD-UED)—UD offers diverse educational programs and research activities. UD has built strong international ties with over 250 global partners and actively participates in international projects such as Erasmus+, PHER, DIGITAL MOVE, and HEIsCITI. It proudly holds the distinction of being the first non-European member of the Ulysseus European University Alliance and actively contributes to networks like AUF, AUN, and UMAP. As part of its inclusive mission, UD supports Lao students—particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds and ethnic minorities—through targeted training programs. From 2016 to 2021, UD trained over 3,000 Lao students. In the 2021–2022 academic year, it welcomed 115 Lao students across various levels, with UD-CK and UD- UED playing central roles in this effort. UD-CK alone accounts for over 31% of Lao student enrollment, followed by UD-UED with more than 20%. With a strategic vision to become a national university and a regional hub for research and internationalization, UD continues to prioritize global partnerships and inclusive education as pillars for sustainable growth.

## **2. Challenge addressed in the case**

The University of Danang (UD), conducted 02 case studies through 02 study visits at UED and UD-CK.

The Central Highlands of Vietnam, Southern Laos, and Northeast Cambodia are characterized by socio-economic challenges, limited access to higher education, and underdeveloped human capital. The region's ethnic diversity and geographical remoteness posed further barriers to inclusive education and cross-border integration. The need for a locally rooted, yet internationally connected, institution that could foster sustainable development and regional cooperation became evident.

The study visit at UED and UD-CK addressed the ongoing challenge of providing equitable access to quality higher education for international students from disadvantaged areas, particularly Lao and Cambodian students. Students from provinces such as Bolykhamxay, Sekong, Champasak, Salavane, Savannakhet, Attapeu (Laos) and Battambang, Stung Treng (Cambodia) face various barriers including language differences, financial limitations, and

cultural integration. The challenge was to strengthen cross-border cooperation between Vietnamese universities and Lao provinces to ensure inclusive, sustainable, and high-quality education for these students.

### **3. Main actors and stakeholders participating in the case**

- The University of Danang (UD): Presidential board's representative (represented by Vice President Prof. Le Quang Son), Science and International Cooperation Department (Ms. Ho Long Ngoc, Ms. Le Thi Hong Oanh), serving as the speaker and organizer.

- University of Sciences and Education – UD (UD-UED) – represented by:

- o Dr. Phan Duc Tuan, Vice Rector

- o Dr. Nguyen Van Sang, Deputy Head, Department of Science and International Cooperation

- UD Campus in Kon Tum (UD-CK) – represented by MSc. Nguyen To Nhu, Deputy Director and moderator of the training program.

- Lao and Cambodian students and their families – nearly 35 students from six Lao provinces and two Cambodian provinces participated, currently studying at UD-UED and UD-CK.

- Da Nang City People's Committee – as a supporting institution, offering scholarships to Lao students and facilitating regional educational cooperation;

- Department of Foreign Affairs of Da Nang City, Da Nang City Friendship Association;

- Department of Education and Sports, Department of Foreign Affairs in Southern Lao provinces.

### **4. Participatory methods and tools used in the process of solution co-creation**

- Community-Centered Development: UD-CK was established with continuous consultation with local stakeholders and ethnic communities.

- Cross-border collaboration: Regular coordination with Lao and Cambodian provinces for student selection, support, and feedback.

- Scholarship programs tailored for disadvantaged students with financial constraints.

- Curriculum alignment with regional socio-economic demands, including agricultural, legal, pedagogical, and technological programs.
- Internships and applied research through partnerships with local farms, industry, and government bodies.
- Cultural integration programs to facilitate smoother adaptation of international students.
- Workshops and Open Discussions: The study visit featured interactive sessions, including presentations and dialogue-based discussions between university representatives, project partners, and students.
- Experience Sharing: Speakers from UD-UED and UD-CK shared best practices, personal insights, and institutional strategies that have been effective in supporting international students.
- Cross-sector Engagement: Representatives from international departments and academic leadership worked collaboratively with student participants to better understand their needs and expectations.
- Student Inclusion: Laotian and Cambodian students were not only attendees but also active contributors to the event, sharing their lived experiences and challenges, enriching the problem-solving approach.

## **5. Short-Term and Long-Term Results of the Intervention**

### **Short-Term Results:**

- Strengthened mutual understanding and trust between UD and Lao/Cambodian provinces.
- Identification of specific barriers (e.g., language, financial challenges) affecting international students.
- Reinforcement of UD-UED's scholarship policies and support strategies for disadvantaged students.
- Creation of a networking platform among stakeholders for future cooperation.
- Improved education access for ethnic minorities and disadvantaged students.
- Fostered multicultural understanding through active student engagement.

### **Long-Term Results:**

- Sustained improvement in the quality of international education offered to Lao and Cambodian students.
- Expansion of inclusive recruitment practices and diversified academic offerings.
- Establishment of UD-UED and UD-CK as models for inclusive cross-border higher education in Vietnam.
- Enhanced role of the UD system in training human resources for regional development in Southeast Asia.
- Strengthened trilateral ties between Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia through educational diplomacy.
- Contributed to the development of human capital for border provinces.
- Positioned UD-CK as a regional hub for talent development and applied research.
- Enhanced local capacity for sustainable development and innovation

## **6. Lessons Learnt and Recommendations on the Replication**

### **Lessons Learnt:**

- Locally grounded institutions can be effective platforms for international cooperation.
- Inclusive policies and financial support are key to attracting and retaining disadvantaged students.
- Academic offerings must be aligned with local economic strengths (e.g., agriculture, tourism, border trade).
- Engaging students in community development enhances learning outcomes and local impact.
- Cross-border cooperation requires both institutional commitment and political support (e.g., scholarships from local government).
- Direct engagement with students helps identify real-world barriers and tailor support effectively.
- Successful international education models need to address not just academic challenges, but also socio-cultural and economic factors.

### **Recommendations:**

- Replicate UD-CK's model in other underserved border regions to strengthen regional integration.
- Encourage bilateral and multilateral scholarship programs focused on border cooperation.
- Foster a multi-stakeholder approach in university development involving community, government, and industry.
- Invest in intercultural training for faculty and students to promote a cohesive learning environment.
- Institutions should develop a strategic framework for inclusive international education, particularly targeting students from neighboring countries with shared histories and regional ties.
- Collaboration with local authorities (such as People's Committees) is essential in mobilizing funding and policy support.
- Universities should regularly organize participatory events (e.g., study visits, workshops) to promote mutual understanding and share best practices across borders.
- Replicating institutions must ensure the provision of adequate language support, financial aid, and student services for a holistic international student experience./.