

syncity

Synergetic Cities for Europe

engage

11 methods

+

apply

10 tools

O1

Choose your urban furniture

This method facilitates interaction between practitioners (e.g. architects, urban designers) and users of a public space during a co-design workshop. It triggers the imagination of users and reveals their aspirations about the future of public spaces.

Further reading:

Sanches, Maria G. and Lois Frankel. 2010. 'Co-design in Public Spaces: An Interdisciplinary Approach to Street Furniture Development', in Durling, D., Bousbaci, R., Chen, L, Gauthier, P., Poldma, T., Roworth-Stokes, S. and E. Stolterman (eds.), *Design and Complexity — DRS International Conference 2010*, 7-9 July 2010, Montreal, Canada.

Sanders, Liz and Pieter J. Stappers. 2014. 'From Designing to Co-designing to Collective Dreaming'. *Interactions* 21(6): 24 - 33.

Sobral, Laura. 2013. 'Co-created Street Furniture as a Catalyst for Urban Culture and Public Life'. Hacking Urban Furniture Website. Retrieved 7/02 2021 from <http://www.hackingurbanfurniture.net/research/co-created-street-furniture-as-a-catalyst-forurban-culture-and-public-life/>.

Select examples of urban furniture

The first step is to explore the public space in question to identify the existing urban furniture (including its limitations) and see if additional features are needed. The second step is to reflect on the function(s) of each individual type of urban furniture (e.g. benches, bike parking, flower beds needed). Each function is related to a certain type of usage and can enhance and / or disrupt other usages. Keep in mind that introducing new urban furniture can lead to new conflicts in the public space. For instance, benches attract young people to spend time in the public space, but loud groups can disturb residents. The last step is selecting examples with different design proposals: shape (e.g. height, depth) and materials (e.g. wood, concrete). This takes into account the ergonomic characteristics, the aesthetic value and the maintenance requirements of the urban furniture. The final selection of examples should include a wide variety of designs with the same function to allow comparison.

Hold the workshop

Present the examples in a way that can be easily understood by the users of the space. Print the examples on card-type formats with a photo of the urban furniture in a real-world setting. Include the function and source (designer, city and country), and leave space for comments. Print or draw a grid on a large paper format, divided according to the different functions of the urban furniture. Divide the participants into small groups (1 - 3 people) and provide explanations and take notes. The objective is not selecting one particular object to be replicated in the public space, but gathering inspiration for designing the most appropriate urban furniture for that particular public space.

01

Cards with urban furniture from all over the world inspire passers-by to leave comments on their own wishes during a Syncity co-design workshop on Rue Dr De Meersman, Cureghem 2020.



Choose your urban furniture

An interactive method to imagine possible ways of transforming a public space with urban furniture.

WHO IS IT FOR

Users of a public space

HOW DOES IT WORK

It provides the participants with inspiring examples of urban furniture and facilitates a discussion on the most suitable solutions.

WHY, WHAT FOR

It enables people to express their aspirations about the future of a public space, and makes them visible to others.

WHO CAN DO IT AND WHAT DO YOU NEED FOR IT

Competences: skills in using a layout program (alternatively, it can be done in OpenOffice), facilitation skills.

Materials: cardboard for printing the cards (A6), a printed grid to categorise the examples (A0), pencils, sticky notes, a rigid support used as display.

AT WHAT PHASE IN A PLANNING PROCESS

After completing the site diagnostic / in the co-design phase

ESTIMATED BUDGET

€150

SYNCITY CONTACT

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► Handbook, Part II, Phase 2B and Phase 3

O2

The Urbodrom game

A moderated board game in which the players take on different roles related to a certain setting (a house, a neighbourhood, an urban planning process, etc). They negotiate to create community-driven sustainable spaces.

Further reading:

Dumit, Joseph. 2021. 'Playing with Method: Game Design as Ethnographic Research'. Huberlin website. Retrieved 17 January 2021 from <https://www.euroethno.huberlin.de/de/forschung/labore/stadt>.

* Flanagan, Mary. 2009. *Critical play: Radical game design*. Cambridge and London: MIT press.

* Law, John and John Urry. 2004. 'Enacting the Social'. *Economy and Society* 33(3): 390-410.

Urbodrom is an entertaining way to approach the topic of spatial planning and a participation tool for citizens. Round by round, the players build houses, streets and parks and, on the basis of exchange with each other, develop shared ideas inspired by sustainability expertise. It also generates information which can be valuable in qualitative social research.

Prepare

- Develop the narration for your game (what if...) for the specific site / topic / area
- Define 8 – 12 roles, with one object / artefact for each role
- Create the gameboard (a hand drawn sketch on cardboard, a large printed map of the area, etc)

Play the game

- Intro: tell the narration, assign roles (each player chooses one role), kick-off the game
- Play: each participant has a go in several rounds, drawing on the board, placing buildings, objects, etc
- Document: Take pictures of the gameboard at each round and document the main statements (audio or notes)

Reflect and analyse

Develop and fill in a reflection grid related to the specific setting and aim.

Benefits

The game values each input and know-how equally. The group benefits from the negotiation experience. As the players find creative solutions together, they become aware of sustainability topics, and a sense of community is created. In this process, talking creates understanding, exchange creates empathy, and this in turn leads to shared ideas.

02

Playing the Urbodrom game with dwellers from Franz-Novy-Hof in Ottakring, Vienna, 2020.



The Urbodrom game

Urbodrom enables people to express their opinions and wishes about an urban space and to develop shared and sustainability-oriented visions in a playful and creative setting.

► For more details on the game and how to play, check the USB stick or scan the QR code on the last page of the handbook.

► Handbook, Part II, Phase 2A

WHO IS IT FOR

Residents, users of a site, urban planners, private companies, politicians etc

HOW DOES IT WORK

The players slip into different roles and build a sustainable urban space together.

WHY, WHAT FOR

It reveals people's concerns related to space, facilitates the players' access to political, social and spatial planning topics, and creates a sense of urban commons.

WHO CAN DO IT AND WHAT DO YOU NEED FOR IT

Competences: two moderators, ideally with competence in sustainability and urban planning issues

Materials: a game board, modelling clay, props for the roles, table and chairs, thick pens to write and draw

AT WHAT PHASE IN A PLANNING PROCESS

In the awareness-raising phase

ESTIMATED BUDGET

€150 – €1000, depending on whether you create your own version or get support from the Urbodrom team

SYNCITY CONTACT

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03

A method for urban areas with a high density of development plans where gentrification is likely to happen. It lets stakeholders with different types of knowledge (e. g. city planners, local residents, users) meet as equal partners and learn from each other.

Further reading:

Zask, Joëlle. 2011. *Participer: Essai sur les formes démocratiques de la participation*. Paris: Le Bord de l'eau.

Collectif Rosa Bonheur. 2019. *La Ville vue d'en-bas: Travail et production de l'espace populaire*. Editions Amsterdam.

Berger, Mathieu. 2019. *Le temps d'une politique: Chronique des contrats de quartier Bruxellois*. Brussels: Fondation CIVA Stichting.

The workshop

Do preliminary fieldwork

A workshop requires thorough urban diagnosis in order to identify all the stakeholders to be engaged. This includes mapping local and regional stakeholders and the usage patterns of the public space(s) in questions.

Define the area and the discussion stops

Demarcate the territory (based on the mental maps of the participants involved) where the tour takes place. Choose and define in advance stopping points for discussion, with the aim of highlighting areas of tension, where the actual use of space is challenged / threatened by future urban development plans.

Conduct the tour

Hold a short presentation at the beginning to clarify the objectives of the day. If possible, have a cargo bike offering refreshments and use an object (e. g. an umbrella) to symbolically mark the discussion stops. At each stop, at least two persons should present the space and its usage. Have a space where participants can gather after the tour and engage in a more informal discussion.

Benefits

It enables participants to get the user experience of a space and relate it to future real estate development plans. It allows planning experts to transform and democratise their narratives, using physical measurements rather than the conventions of architectural scale drawings. Local stakeholders can present their space-related practices in their own words and within the space in question. It ensures that communication methods used by experts (e. g. blueprints, models and presentations tools) do not “dominate” stakeholders with lay knowledge.

03

Presenting a community kitchen to urban planners and other stakeholders during a Syncity walkshop under the roof of the Abattoir in Cureghem, 2020.



The walkshop

An in-situ tour where the narratives of local stakeholders meet those of planning experts.

WHO IS IT FOR

Urban planning authorities and experts, local residents, users, community-based organisations, etc

HOW DOES IT WORK

Organise a tour in the area at stake with discussion stops where local stakeholders present the space from their point of view. Support informal discussion and exchange.

WHY, WHAT FOR

For creating common knowledge about the use of a specific site and the related urban projects

WHO CAN DO IT AND WHAT DO YOU NEED FOR IT

Competences: considerable knowledge about the usage of the chosen site, about real estate actors and ongoing urban transformation plans

Materials: refreshments, umbrella, cargo bike (optional)

AT WHAT PHASE IN A PLANNING PROCESS

After completing the site-diagnostic

ESTIMATED BUDGET

Costs of renting a space and food and beverages for the exchange after the tour

SYNCITY CONTACT

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► Handbook, Part II, Phase 2A

04

A method that encourages free thought and helps engage a larger number of people in a discussion about specific topics related to spaces they use.

Further reading:

‘Street Debate — The Word Carrier’. Retrieved 19 February 2021 from https://www.spacetwinning.eu/pdf/Guideline_for_street_debate.pdf

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‘European Street Debate: How Important is Europe for You?’ 2019. Sensibiliz’Action website. Retrieved 8 February 2021 from <http://www.sensibilization.fr/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Leaflet-How-important-is-Europe-for-you.pdf>.

*

‘To Debate: The Word Carrier’. 2019. Street Views — *Youth for Diversity. Guideline How to Raise Awareness in Diversity in the Street*, pp. 14-16. Retrieved 8 February 2021 from <http://www.sensibilization.fr/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Guideline-Street-Views-Youth-for-Diversity.pdf>.

Porte parole

Formulate relevant questions

Brainstorm on themes that might be relevant to the people in the specific area/site. Formulate questions related to the different aspects of the themes in a way that can be understood by everyone, regardless of education, age, gender or social background, etc (e. g. “Can we all live together?”, “What is important for you in the neighbourhood?”).

Test the questions, evaluate the answers

Test whether the topics and questions are appropriate or appealing for your target group: have interviewers walk in pairs in the chosen area, talk to people, document their answers. Reformulate questions that were deemed irrelevant or unappealing.

Hold the event

Write the questions on large, colourful pieces of cardboard, and place them on site together with possible answers to some of them for inspiration. If the area is large, divide it in several sub-spaces. Assign an interviewer to each of them, whose role is to make people delve deeper into the topic and relate it to their memories and emotions. The interviewer takes notes during the discussion, reads back the text to the interviewee to make sure the quote is correct, and transcribes the text again on a piece of cardboard, highlighting different opinions and perspectives or anything interesting. The more visually attractive the boards are, the more they will attract passers-by and prompt them to discuss the statements and contribute their own.

04

*“Thank you for respecting this place as if it was your home.”
One of many messages from passer-bys to other users of the square Dr. De Meersman, displayed in the frame of a Syncity Urban Living Lab.*



Porte parole

A visually attractive way to make people reflect and discuss about topics and conditions related to urban transformation.

WHO IS IT FOR

Local residents and all the users of a (public) space

HOW DOES IT WORK

Formulate questions related to a public space / neighbourhood that are relevant to its users / residents. Write them on large boards and make an “exhibition” in a public space. Carry out interviews with passers-by and add their answers to the boards to attract more people and turn the place into a social event.

WHY, WHAT FOR

It reveals a great diversity of opinions and provides a space for everyone to be heard.

WHO CAN DO IT AND WHAT DO YOU NEED FOR IT

Competences: facilitators, transcribers, interviewers
Materials: coloured card boards and pens, ropes to hang the card boards to make them visible on the site

AT WHAT PHASE IN A PLANNING PROCESS

After completing the site diagnostic, to raise awareness about local issues

ESTIMATED BUDGET

€50 – €100

SYNCITY CONTACT

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► Handbook, Part II, Phase 2A

05

The photo interview opens a dialogue with “formal experts”, as opposed to other methods where researchers decide about the relevant topics. It allows local residents and users to contribute their ideas and local knowledge to a planning process. They become active research partners.

Further reading:

Harper, Douglas. 2002. ‘Talking About Pictures: a Case for Photo Elicitation’. *Visual Studies* 17(1).

* Oevermann, Ulrich. 1993. ‘Die objektive Hermeneutik als unverzichtbare methodologische Grundlage für die Analyse von Subjektivität’, in Jung, Thomas and Stefan Müller-Doohm (eds.), *Wirklichkeit im Deutungsprozess; Verhältnis Bild und Texte, Ergänzungen und Widersprüche*. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp.

* Rose, Gilian. 2016. *Visual Methodologies: An Introduction to Researching with Visual Materials*, 4th edn. London: Sage Publications Ltd.

Participatory photo interview

The opening phase

Invite residents and users to reflect on the influence or meaningfulness of a specific question or urban planning project for their own lives. Encourage them to use their own concepts, experiences, biographic or imaginary relationships to the space in question.

The photo-shooting and interview phase

Ask the participants to take photographs of the neighbourhood: for example, of places, buildings, people, social networks or local activities and businesses that relate to the specific question. Look at the photos together with the participants and ask them to provide narratives about the sites they have photographed and explain what is important and meaningful to them.

The interpretation phase

Analyse the visuals (the photographs taken) and the verbal empirical data (the interpretation of the photographs provided by the participants). Categories for codifying the visual material emerge from the empirical data of the field work conducted in the area. As for the verbal data, use various social research interpretation techniques (e.g. content analyses or hermeneutical interpretation). Follow the participants’ conceptualization of the initial question that led to their choices of pictures. Look for the habits and concerns of the people related to space. The photographer’s point of view reveals a social process within the larger context. All photos taken by participants can be seen as answers to the research or planning questions.

Communication of the results

Organise a photo exhibition and invite local authorities or policy makers too.

05

A public space in Cureghem, seen from the perspective of a social worker from a local youth organisation and taken in the course of a participatory photo interview, 2019.



Participatory photo interview

A visual method to integrate the perspective of local residents and users into urban transformation processes.

WHO IS IT FOR

Residents or users of a neighbourhood

HOW DOES IT WORK

Participants take photos of the neighbourhood, focusing on a specific question. They describe the photos they have taken to the researchers, highlighting meaningful topics. Researchers interpret both the visual and verbal data.

WHY, WHAT FOR

The method reveals the space related needs, desires and assumptions while also integrating local knowledge into the planning process.

WHO CAN DO IT AND WHAT DO YOU NEED FOR IT

Competences: a social scientist, a research assistant, a local facilitator and a translator if necessary

Materials: a photo device, a sound recording device

AT WHAT PHASE IN A PLANNING PROCESS

The field research (“listening”) phase

ESTIMATED BUDGET

The costs of the technical equipment

SYNCITY CONTACT

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► Handbook, Part II, Phase 1

While most people do not own land in the city, seed balls are a symbol for the battle for collective resources and against scarcity of land, environmental abuse and wasted opportunities.

Further reading:

Anderson, Elsa C. and Emily S. Minor. 2020. 'Assessing Four Methods for Establishing Native Plants on Urban Vacant Land'. *Ambio* 50: 695-705.

* Mikadze, Vladimir. 2015. 'Ephemeral Urban Landscapes of Guerrilla Gardeners: A Phenomenological Approach'. *Landscape Research* 40(5): 519 – 529.

Reynolds, Richard. 2008. *On Guerrilla Gardening: A Handbook for Gardening without Permission*. London: Bloomsbury.

Seeding the city

Prepare

To make seed balls you need equal parts of clay and garden soil, several packs of seeds, water, a small bowl and a large bowl. A spoon and egg cups can be helpful tools.

Make the seed balls

First, mix the different seeds in the small bowl. If possible, use local plant species (e.g. from the local seed bank) as they are likely to grow better. Once the seeds are thoroughly mixed, add the potting soil first, then the clay. Make sure that chunks are broken up, pieces of wood removed and the ingredients thoroughly mixed before you start adding water. Shape the resulting mixture into small balls and let them dry (i. e. in egg cups or on newspaper). Don't roll them – press them!

Plant the seed balls

After a day or two in the sun the seed balls dry out, ready to be thrown. The task is to seed the concrete cracks in the city wherever they appear and transform them with the support of plants (see Mikadze, 2015).

Possible extensions

This is only one of many approaches to the challenge of appropriating both public and private spaces without coming into conflict with the law. Consider alternatives too, e.g. organise a workshop to mine the city, construct a marble run with materials the participants find on site. With an ecological-botanical ambition, seed balls may be combined with other techniques. Anderson and Minor (2008) have shown that low-cost and low-maintenance planting efforts are most supportive for urban ecosystems. Their conclusion: adopt broadcast seeding for city centres!

06

Over sixty seedballs were formed and thrown during a single afternoon in the frame of an Urban Living Lab Vienna 2020, carried out by Oikodrom.



Seeding the city

Soil mixed with seeds, kneaded and dried under the sun: an ideal way of teaching children and teens basics of botany and inspire them to intervene into their urban spaces in environmental friendly and productive ways.

► Handbook, Part II, Phase 2A

WHO IS IT FOR

Children, early teens, and everyone who likes to touch soil

HOW DOES IT WORK

It is a workshop in public space that invites to form seed balls and get informed on urban plants and eco-systems.

WHY, WHAT FOR

It is simple, fun and educative. It promotes stakeholder involvement and inspires participants to transform their urban environment.

WHO CAN DO IT AND WHAT DO YOU NEED FOR IT

Competences: supervision of children, facilitation skills

Materials: a bowl, soil, clay, water, seeds and a spoon, old newspaper or egg cups, a blanket / carpet to sit on

AT WHAT PHASE IN A PLANNING PROCESS

Mainly in the awareness raising phase, but can be used throughout the whole planning process

ESTIMATED BUDGET

Soil and clay : €5 – €20 (or found on site)

Crop and flower seeds: €2 – €10

SYNCITY CONTACT

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07

A popular method to engage stakeholders in urban planning and design and to develop a better understanding of the different types of activities encountered in the public space. The aim is to facilitate the spatialisation of users' mobility flows and set the conditions for identifying possible conflicts in the public space.

Further reading:

Carton, Linda J. and Will A. H. Thissen. 2009. 'Emerging Conflict in Collaborative Mapping: Towards a Deeper Understanding?' *Journal of Environmental Management* 90(6): 1991 – 2001.

* Huybrechts, Liesbeth, Dressen, Katrien and Selina Schepers. 2012. 'Mapping Design Practices: On Risk, Hybridity and Participation'. *PDC'12: Proceedings of the 12th Participatory Design Conference: Exploratory Papers, Workshop Descriptions, Industry Cases — Volume 2, August 2012*, pp. 29–32.

* Kesby, Mike. 2007. 'Spatialising Participatory Approaches: The Contribution of Geography to a Mature Debate'. *Environment and Planning A* 39(12): 2813 – 2831.

Collaborative mapping

Select the most suitable format

Syncity tested three versions of collaborative mapping:

- traditional (single use printed maps and hand drawing)
- whiteboard (map printed on an erasable whiteboard and hand drawing with special markers)
- online (digital drawing on a static map using an open-source programme – AWW APP).

The traditional and whiteboard versions are well suited for groups of 6–8 people and require a large space, a suitable date and time, and the creation of a group with similar interests to assure a comfortable environment that facilitates their interaction (e.g. shop keepers or members of an association). The online version works better for individual interactions, but the participants need to have digital literacy skills and equipment, and you need to explain the tools in a training session.

Hold the workshop

Ask participants to draw their resident/user experiences (e.g. crossing the street or resting), including the barriers encountered, on a geographical map of a familiar public space. Alternatively, provide them with blank paper (or sheets with a few elements already drawn on it) and ask them to develop mental maps. This allows participants to draw their own perception of space that leads to a more personal representation of space.

Benefits

Collaborative mapping allows participants to identify and visualise the most frequented areas used as passages. The facilitator and the tools provided enable the representation of local knowledge about a specific area. The act of drawing together triggers a discussion about the problems and opens up possibilities for the transformation of a public space.

07

A collaborative mapping with stakeholders in Cureghem represents usages of the public space, drawn in the frame of Syncity participatory action research, 2019.



Collaborative mapping

A method used for visually representing the users' trajectories in a defined space.

WHO IS IT FOR

Users of a particular area

HOW DOES IT WORK

Participants work together to draw mobility flows in the public space and identify potential conflicts of usage.

WHY, WHAT FOR

It leads to a deeper understanding of different usages and the needs of the local community.

WHO CAN DO IT AND WHAT DO YOU NEED FOR IT

Competences: skills for using digital representation tools; facilitation skills

Materials: traditional / whiteboard version: a printed map, a white board, pens and pencils

AT WHAT PHASE IN A PLANNING PROCESS

After completing the site diagnostic and identifying the stakeholders

ESTIMATED BUDGET

Traditional version: €30 – €80

Whiteboard version: €150

SYNCITY CONTACT

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► Handbook, Part II, Phase 1

08

The walking interview

The “walking and talking” method is used for revealing the relationship between people and places, including perceptions, emotions, identification with space, performativity, usage and ways to appropriate the space.

Further reading:

Stals, Shenando, Smyth, Michael and Wijnand IJsselstein. 2014. 'Walking & Talking: Probing the Urban Lived Experience Mobile'. *NordCHI'14: Proceedings of the 8th Nordic Conference on Human-Computer Interaction: Fun, Fast, Foundational, October 2014*, pp. 737-746.

Kühl, Jana. 2016. 'Walking Interviews als Methode zur Erhebung alltäglicher Raumproduktionen'. *Europa Regional* 23(2): 35-48.

Prepare

Let the interviewee guide the walk and decide on the places to visit. The more interviewees define the path of the walk, the more you learn about their intimate relations to space and the way(s) they use and co-own space in everyday life. Alternatively, you can define the path of the walk and include places that might be barely known to the interviewees, to understand anchor points and how they perceive an unknown environment.

Who to interview

Anyone familiar with the environment, who does not have any personal relationship with the researcher and is able to walk longer distances (1 – 2 hours).

How to carry out the interview

Ask questions (on the basis of a predefined interview topic or more generally) to find places of personal significance for the interviewee within the area. Start at a quiet place. Record the interview, take photos and notes.

Focus on:

- the way spaces are perceived, used and made useful
- the construction of spaces (boundaries, visibility, invisibilities)
- the different spatial practices attributed to groups
- the way interviewees communicate their emotions during the walk: Stals et al. (2014) suggest using a scale for participants to assess their emotions once they are on site.

Analyse

Transcribe the interview and analyse the content (e.g. following the methodology of grounded theory, a variant of discourse analysis or objective hermeneutics).

08

A resident of Cureghem shares his “significant place” with Syncity researchers, Brussels, 2020.



The walking interview

This method uncovers the way people perceive practice and feel about space.

WHO IS IT FOR

Local residents and users of a certain space

HOW DOES IT WORK

Select places that might be important to the interviewee, or let him / her define the path of the walk. If the interviewee agrees, record the interview and document the tour with photos, and notes. Finally, analyse and interpretate your data.

WHY, WHAT FOR

It is low-threshold, provides a relaxed setting for an interview and stimulates associations.

WHO CAN DO IT AND WHAT DO YOU NEED FOR IT

Competences: a social scientist and a translator (if necessary)

Materials: an audio recording device, a camera and a card to note down emotions

AT WHAT PHASE IN A PLANNING PROCESS

The field research (“listening”) phase

ESTIMATED BUDGET

The costs of the technical equipment

SYNCITY CONTACT

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► Handbook, Part II, Phase 1

09

A workshop involving end users of a service, product or urban planning project, to share opinions and collaborate on solving problems with the help of a facilitator. It is an effective tool for co-creating solutions with the people who are the most affected by an issue, regardless of their education and communication skills.

Further reading:

Sanders, Liz and Pieter J. Stappers. 2012. *Convivial Toolbox: Generative Research for the Front End of Design*. Amsterdam: BIS.

Slocum-Bradley, Nikki. 2003. *Participatory Methods Toolkit: A Practitioner's Manual*. Brussels: Fondation Roi Baudouin.

Street, Penny. 1997. 'Scenario Workshops: A Participatory Approach to Sustainable Urban Living?' *Futures* 29(2): 139-158.

Atelier scenario

Develop scenarios for discussion

The first step is to define a set of scenarios with the help of urban planning/design experts. These scenarios suggest solutions to future problems, describing them in terms of social, technological and organisational arrangements. They provide a basis for discussion on how things might be, instead of definitive statements (Street, 1997).

Choose participants

Make sure that all stakeholders related to a certain urban transformation project or service/product design are represented in the workshop. Local associations might help with recruiting participants.

Hold the workshop

Participants scrutinize the scenarios and write their ideas and comments on posters or post-it notes. The best practice is to divide them into groups. While doing this you need to balance the various interests of different social groups (citizens, entrepreneurs, decision-makers, etc) in order to include them on an equal basis. You can either have each group reflect on a different scenario or have all groups focus on the same scenario. In the latter case, make several discussion rounds, until all the scenarios are covered. At the end, each group presents their findings to the whole audience to enable further discussion.

Benefits

It provides an opportunity for local stakeholders to affect the decision-making process. Their views and knowledge are incorporated in the design process. It helps adapting choices for a specific community while providing innovative hunches on aspects related to everyday uses and practices that could otherwise remain unknown.

09

Comparing different scenarios, in search for a better waste management solution for Chaussée de Mons in Brussels during a Syncity Urban Living Lab, 2020.



Atelier scenario

This method enables people to share their opinions and knowledge, and to solve problems in a collaborative and creative environment.

► Handbook, Part II, Phase 2B

WHO IS IT FOR

Managers and end users of a service, product or urban / architectural project

HOW DOES IT WORK

It engages participants in a reflection process on concrete urban challenges, enhances mutual learning and the exchange of experiences and facilitates collaboration.

WHY, WHAT FOR

To engage different stakeholders, agree on a common language and converge towards a shared vision / strategy.

WHO CAN DO IT AND WHAT DO YOU NEED FOR IT

Competences: a social scientist, a research assistant, a facilitator and a translator (if necessary)

Materials: flipcharts, post-its, pens, printed maps

AT WHAT PHASE IN A PLANNING PROCESS

In the phase aimed at creating solutions in a collaborative way with the affected stakeholders

ESTIMATED BUDGET

Mainly depending on the costs for renting a space with several rooms for small group work

SYNCITY CONTACT

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10

Plexhibition invites people to study their surroundings and to propose changes for chosen aspects of the environment. Instead of verbal articulation, ideas are drawn on the plexiglass. The temporary exhibition of images created stimulates conversation and debate on space.

Further reading:

Akın, Canan and N. Sezin Kıpçak. 2016. 'Art in the Age of Digital Reproduction: Reconsidering Benjamn's Aura in "Art of Bansky"'. *Journal of Communication and Computer* 13: 153-158.

* Mygind, Lærke, Hällman, Anne K. and Peter Bentsen. 2015. 'Bridging Gaps between Intentions and Realities: A Review of Participatory Exhibition Development in Museums'. *Museum Management and Curatorship* 30(2): 117- 137.

Plexhibition

Prepare

You need at least 4 to 5 plexiglass panels (6mm thick) in A4 format, ideally placed in a wooden frame, as this provides stability to the plexiglass and allows the drawer to focus his or her vision.

Facilitate

Plexhibition needs a setting based on trust and creativity. It can help to create inspiration by hanging an image painted in advance. The possibility to draw freely often attracts children to participate in the first place; invite their adult companions to join and e. g. complete the picture.

Exhibit the painted panels

Exhibit them on location; drill a hole in the centre of the panels and hang them in front of a non-transparent background. Once you have drawings hanging, more and more people will come and participate. If a picture has been comprehensively discussed and the creator agrees, it may continue to serve as an attraction and inspiration for other people. If he / she does not agree, wipe away the picture with a moist towel; the plexiglass panel is then ready to be repainted.

Overcome the temporality

Plexhibition needs documentation. Take photos and videos, but above all notes on the topics discussed. Plexhibition uses chalk pens to maintain a temporary character. If you make the images permanent (e. g. by using fixative sprays or indelible markers) you may influence the way interaction is perceived. Inspiring reflections on this can be found in Akın and Kıpçak (2016).

10

During Plexhibition testing in summer 2020 in Vienna, COVID-19 was the major topic drawn by many children and teenagers.



Plexhibition

Using chalk pens on plexiglass panels, participants imagine an urban environment they would like to live in and express their wishes by drawing.

► Handbook, Part II, Phase 2A

WHO IS IT FOR

Youngsters and everyone who prefers drawing to writing

HOW DOES IT WORK

People use a transparent plexiglass panel, hold it in front of an interesting background and augment what they see with their own drawings.

WHY, WHAT FOR

It is a creative and simple way to express desired change or spatial associations. The panels can be re-used. The method works best when the cityscape may be altered (e. g. brownfields).

WHO CAN DO IT AND WHAT YOU NEED FOR IT

Competences: skills and tools to cut plexiglass and construct wooden frames for it; facilitator skills

Materials: plexiglass, wood, chalk pens, a moist sponge

AT WHAT PHASE IN A PLANNING PROCESS

Best used in the awareness-raising phase

ESTIMATED BUDGET

Plexiglass panels incl. wooden frame: up to €40
chalk pens: €3 – €5, Cleaning sponge: €1

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11

Architectural models are artefacts that represent public space as close to reality as possible. They are ideally built together with the local community. Compared to maps, drawings or images, architectural models are time-consuming to build, but they are the most effective way to communicate.

Further reading:

Andersen, Pernille V. K. and Wafa S. Mosleh. 2020. 'Conflicts in Co-design: Engaging with Tangible Artefacts in Multi-stakeholder Collaboration'. *CoDesign*: 1–20.

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Glackin, Stephen and Maria R. Dionisio. 2016. "“Deep engagement” and Urban Regeneration: Tea, Trust, and the Quest for Co-design at Precinct Scale". *Land Use Policy* 52: 363–373.

*

Sanders, Liz and Pieter J. Stappers. 2018. 'Co-creation and the New Landscapes of Design'. *CoDesign* 4(1): 5–18.

Architectural model

Build the model

Create the model together with the local community in an open construction workshop in the neighbourhood, if possible. This is a great way to attract and engage passers-by. Contact local associations; they might provide you with recycled materials. The model should be customisable, robust, light and modular (e.g. use light wood and/or cardboard). Use geographical databases (e.g. OpenStreetMap, Google Satellite images) and on-site observations to identify the dimensions of the space and its representative elements.

Balance abstraction vs. reality

Architectural models can be too abstract for the users of public spaces. Therefore, you need to find the right balance between an abstract and a realistic representation of space. The aim is to show the existing situation and elaborate scenarios for improvement.

Cinema sets that present the public space as defined by facades (since there is no need to represent entire houses) are a great source of inspiration. Integrating familiar, easily-recognisable objects (e.g. miniature cars) and items from public space will make your model realistic. This will trigger the imagination of the participants and allow them to adopt a critical stance.

Use the model in the co-design process

During a co-design workshop, the model facilitates a well-focused debate (Andersen & Mosleh, 2020; Glackin & Dionisio, 2016) and helps participants to visualise and discuss conflicting activities occurring in the public space. Consequently objects (e.g. cars, benches and trees) in the model should be moveable, to allow changes. If possible, carry out several co-design workshops in the same public space.

11

The architectural model used on location during a Syncity co-design workshop on Rue Dr De Meersman, Brussels 2020.



Architectural model

An artefact used for facilitating debate about public space during a co-design workshop.

WHO IS IT FOR

Users of a public space

HOW DOES IT WORK

The model built together with the local community enhances interaction with passers-by in a public space.

WHY, WHAT FOR

It helps people visualise their aspirations and concerns related to a public space.

WHO CAN DO IT AND WHAT DO YOU NEED FOR IT

Competences: skills for handling basic construction tools; facilitation skills

Materials: a space for the workshop, light wood / cardboard, a printed map of the public space, whiteboard; plaster and paint to create urban furniture (for children)

AT WHAT PHASE IN A PLANNING PROCESS

After completing the site-diagnostic / at the start of the co-design phase

ESTIMATED BUDGET

€200 – €500

SYNCITY CONTACT

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► Handbook, Part II, Phase 2B and Phase 3

These methods and tools were compiled
in the frame of the Syncity project.

www.syncity4.eu

Practical support for everyone who wants
to make urban change more just and green:

- 11 methods to engage: hands-on, public space oriented, with short instruction manuals on cards. How does each method work, what is the result, what budget, competences and material do you need?
- 10 tools to apply: do the sustainability self-check, build and further develop the Kju:Ti source code to facilitate easy going participation, use the commoning matrix to find out who can develop commons in a neighbourhood, and much more.

