

Städtebau TU Wien



THE URBAN DESIGN LAB METHODOLOGY

ADAPTIVE RESPONSES FOR DYNAMIC URBAN SITUATIONS

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1 A Practical Approach to Urban Planning

To develop collaborative, multisectoral design solutions, the Urban Design Lab (UDL) calls for a shift from rigid, conventional planning approaches to more complex, flexible ones. The success of the UDL rests on its foundation: being human-centered in the way it identifies urban problems and solutions. This foundation supports the UDL's main pillars and design principles, which revolve around elements of: co-design, community ownership and empowerment, creativity, flexibility, a "glocal" approach, *in situ* activities, empowerment, resiliency, and sustainability.

Indeed, people and their personal, native knowledge about specific, complex local situations play the main role in the UDL. While traditionally planners and urban designers devise sustainable neighborhoods, revive abandoned areas, expand cities, and plan urban regeneration projects, the UDL employs community workshops and charrettes as participatory planning tools. During these, local key actors and community members work together to create their own planning visions, scenarios, and urban strategies. The following six design principles reflect the main ideas of the UDL at a glance.

The Urban Design Lab makes everyone a co-designer

In contrast to top-down planning methods, the Urban Design Lab seeks input from a wide range of stakeholders, including local communities, experts, academic partners, and representatives from the public and private sectors. This fosters a productive dialogue between relevant stakeholders and a team of experts. As a basis for good design, the UDL uses the knowledge of people who actually inhabit the urban spaces in question and local experts. Time-consuming analysis can be shortened by asking people with relevant experience the right questions: what are the strengths or weaknesses of the planning area? How do you envision the planning area in the future? This approach helps people express their ideas and visions, transforming everyone into a co-designer.

A crucial part of every UDL process is identifying local key actors within the communities in relation to the planning area and inviting them to participate in the planning process by forming a Local Support Group (LSG). Local key actors may be community leaders, artists, presidents of sports clubs, leaders of micro-societies, directors of cultural associations, local NGOs, or others. Forming these local alliances is vital to connecting with local communities and their stories. These local allies facilitate community meetings and act as multipliers of ideas. The LSG is constantly consulted about the project and its results, building a sense of ownership of the ideas and projects developed throughout the entire four months of the planning process. Involving a wide range of stakeholders at an early stage is essential if a strong foundation for an urban transformation project is to be laid.

During this act of social negotiation, the role of the planner is redefined. As a moderator, initiator, activator, communicator, mediator, contextualizer, and a process leader, the planner receives ideas, brings them into the process and then filters, combines, and finally translates them into design solutions. As Krasny (2008) proposes, instead of "sitting up until late at night in narrow office cubicles or in spacious studio lofts, architects and planners could become the ones, who go their way of exploring the city, with an open ear and insightful eye and accompanied by the urban actors, to let this experience of urban citizenship become productive".

The UDL team is a multidisciplinary team of local and international architects, urban planners, and sociologists who lead the process on-site as moderators in the dialogue between experts and users. Experts bring their technical skills, while users contribute their local knowledge about everyday urban life. The UDL team ensures project continuity by coordinating the various phases and communicating with all the involved actors.

A local, temporary think tank

A central feature of every Urban Design Lab is that it happens on-site. The UDL team stays and works in the partner city for a period of at least four months, cooperating closely with the local planning department. Together, they form a local think tank and jointly develop ideas and solutions. Local professionals support the UDL project team in identifying the planning area, establishing contacts with community members, organizing workshops, and collecting relevant background materials and documents. It is critical that the municipality, or local governing body, is included in the decision-making process. Once the UDL team is gone, the local governing authority will implement these projects. By including academic partners and local students in the

process, the city can create opportunities to test ideas, for the students to gain real-world experience and for universities to practice local community engagement.

The UDL workspace is typically set up in a local public facility in coordination with the locality. It is located near the planning area since it is important to have easy access to both the planning material and the area of intervention to stay in close contact with the community.

Empowering a critical mass

A key aspect of the UDL is participation and empowerment of communities. While participation has become the new state-of-the-art methodology in the planning world—or at least the most recent buzzword—there is a difference between participation and empowerment. Often, participation is limited to informing the public about projects without offering them any opportunity to engage in the design process. And yes, communication is essential to ensure that citizens are informed of what is going on in their city; however, by going a step further and involving local actors in a process of co-creation, the result can be a democratic strengthening and empowerment of a community.

A fundamental part of this process is to test new ideas, which “pop up” or develop organically within the community. Even what might be considered the most far-fetched (and sometimes quite unrealistic) ideas provoke fruitful discussions and insightful dialogue within the community. By reaching out to, and with the support of a critical mass of local actors, this methodology creates a sense of ownership within the community right from the start. We believe that the concept of empowerment should be an integral part of strategic planning, urban planning, and design. Furthermore, it should be taught as a part of university curricula to make it the new standard for developing urban ideas and visions.

Local meets global

During the UDL, global knowledge meets local circumstances. Local actors share their knowledge of *in situ* experiences, and the UDL team contribute their experiences from other cities. Many cities share similar challenges as regards urban development: rapid population growth, the decay of existing neighborhoods, the revival and regeneration of abandoned central areas, and urban governance and management, among others. Moreover, in many medium-sized cities, social structures and relations between stakeholders are complex and contested. In that sense, the international UDL team acts as a neutral moderator from the outside and as a leader or facilitator of the process.

Unpredictability in creative processes and flexibility of the methodology

Highly complex urban areas confront planning processes with unforeseeable developments regarding time, space, people, and resources. In order to transform these dynamic urban environments, we have to think in terms of responsive, dynamic processes whose flexible rules can react to unanticipated circumstances. Every UDL process is therefore unpredictable and unique, depending as it does on participating stakeholders and local emerging topics.

At the beginning, the “where” and the “what” of the issues that the UDL will need to address are unclear. For this reason, it is crucial to have an adaptable agenda, a flexible planning methodology and clear goals; these form a framework that allows for improvisation and creativity.

Individual tools in the UDL toolbox can be combined in various ways to react appropriately to the circumstances of each situation. A strong awareness of urban challenges, social networks and urban imaginaries is required. While in twentieth century planning, the notion of innovation meant doing everything radically differently, our conception of innovation is to understand that which exists and combine it with new ideas in a sensible way. Thus innovation is the result of bringing together the existing ideas of different stakeholders in a fresh, surprising manner.

Eisinger (2012) describes urban planning creativity as “freeing oneself from common thinking patterns and practices of the discipline and era while remaining attentive to the independencies and conditions of a project”. Creative processes need to challenge taboos, discover blind spots and formulate fundamentally new questions.

Beyond the analysis of physical structures, the UDL is interested in individual and collective narrative aspects of urban space; through making, telling, and enacting stories, we learn how human beings inhabit these spaces. The UDL toolbox helps identify these stories and combines them to create entirely new narratives and redefine urban spaces.

Creating self-sustaining resilient projects maintained by the community

Every urban project results in a space of perpetual social negotiation. A key element of the UDL methodology is the continuous process of conversation, communication, finding solutions, and reformulation. Furthermore, it is a democratic, transparent planning method that trusts in people's ability to take ownership of projects. Consequently, the UDL creates dynamic solutions founded on common goals that empower a critical mass of citizens and strengthen social cohesion in the community. Urban transformation is more sustainable in the long term if users identify with, and take care of it, actively contributing through their skills to the constant improvement of the production of urban space. Our cities need passive spaces, where people can be active co-creators—ultimately resulting in communities that manage their own resources.

In conclusion, the main ideas that encapsulate the spirit of the UDL include flexibility and a people-centered approach. The design principles center around collaboration, local ownership, empowerment, flexibility, creativity, a perspective that is both global and local, sustainability, and engagement at the local level. The UDL methodology is complex, yet robust and successful inasmuch as it remains a participative planning tool through which citizens are actively engaged: they become change agents themselves and manifest their own destiny in the urban development processes that will affect their quality of life.

The Urban Design Lab Process

The Urban Design Lab involves a simple and easy to implement planning methodology that was tested in several projects throughout Latin American and Caribbean cities. It is important to reiterate that this process has been put into practice, honed, and repeatedly evaluated over the past few years in these cities. It is structured in three phases: the first two display a strong analytical approach, aiming to gather planning material through qualitative research, workshops, and a dialogue-oriented planning process; the third and final phase focuses on the elaboration of an urban strategy including concrete sub-projects and the design of an urban management strategy.

Throughout the phases of research, stakeholder dialogue, and project design, a variety of tools can be applied. These simple UDL tools are obviously not the only possible methods to engage in participatory planning. They are intended as a launching pad, or starting point, to experiment with other tools—both existing and newly developed by the participants—enabling civic engagement in participatory urban planning and design. Exploring and adjusting new tools feeds the UDL process, strengthens the assessment of potential impacts, and makes the methodology more robust.

These tools are explored in the following section, but first, let us dive a little deeper into the UDL process, and explore its phases along with their objectives, suggested activities, and desired outcomes. What follows is the UDL process as we see it today. Right through many successes and mistakes, ultimately it has always maintained a flexible, culturally-sensitive, people-focused, participative approach at its core.

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1.1 Research

During the initial, preparatory phase, the lab is set up and organized in partnership with the local municipality. The planning team arrives in the city, forms a temporary team with local planners from the municipality and familiarize themselves with the context. Throughout this phase, it is essential for planning topics, perimeter, and scope of the work to be clearly identified jointly with the municipality. Existing material is gathered and various municipal departments share their insights. Ideally, the planning team is seen as a part of the planning department of the municipality, which enables access to information and secures the full participation of local planners in the project.

Once a preliminary stakeholder map, including local actors and professionals, has been sketched, interviews are carried out in order to gain a better understanding of the local context from different perspectives and to begin identifying challenges and potentialities. The interviewees are the initial members of the Local Support Group, a group that will sit permanently throughout the duration of the planning process. A quick analysis of the interviews shows a preliminary bunch of emerging topics, which will guide us through the planning process. During this phase, research and analysis of good practices will provide insights into how other cities tackled similar challenges.

At the end of the first phase, we have identified the relevant stakeholders, are familiar with the local context and are prepared to carry out the workshops with the communities, academic sector, and other professionals.

1.1.1 Activity 1: Identification of the planning area

To-do list: Set up a process design; set up an agenda for the urban lab; define workshop format; identify planning area

Duration: One week

Stakeholders: Planning team, Local Support Group

Output: Agenda and framework for the stakeholder consultation and planning process, specified planning area, possible venue for workshops

The planning team arrives to the partner city and defines the setting for the lab together with the staff of the local municipality. The municipality prepares a temporary office and the team gets installed on site. This will be the local think tank for the next four months. The planning methodology and the planning topic, as well as the agenda and format for the workshops, are jointly discussed, defining the framework for the creative planning process to come. Together with the municipality, the exact planning perimeter is defined. The selection of the planning area is crucial in the initial process of the lab and can range from small areas of 3 hectares to large areas of up to 100 hectares. The scale of the results depends very much on the size of the planning area. The main criteria to define the planning area is the potential social impact, the feasibility of the project and implementation of the strategies and the consistency between the socio-environmental interventions in relation to the visions projected by the municipality. In this sense, it is paramount that the

expectations of the municipality be articulated. What is the expected result of the lab? What kind of impact would an intervention have on potential planning areas? Is it feasible to implement a strategy in the area considering land use regulations and urban norms? Prepare a work plan for the next four months and seek approval by the municipality.

1.1.2 Activity 2: Stakeholder mapping and the local support group

To-do list: List and regularly update important stakeholders, collect contact information

Duration: Throughout the whole planning process

Stakeholders: Planning team, Local Support Group

Output: List of relevant stakeholders (stakeholder diagram with contact information)

Together with local planning professionals, a list of important stakeholders and the first members of the Local Support Group is drafted. The Local Support Group, which will accompany the planning process through its entire duration, involves local authorities, a community made up of people who reside, work or use services in the area, NGOs, public agencies, the private sector, civil society, and anyone else who has a stake in the development of the project. This group of actors should be diverse and multidisciplinary, with representatives from the public, private, and academic sectors as well as from civil society. The stakeholders should be organized in thematic groups, such as education (academic sector, schools, etc.), public sector (government, municipality, etc.), private sector, religion, chamber of architects, NGOs, etc.

In order to organize the workshops, it is important to work closely with the Local Support Group to inform networks and, most importantly, reach out to the communities. During the planning process, it becomes crucial to contact relevant local experts who can contribute their knowledge to the project. The most important experts are the stakeholders. It is essential to map the stakeholders, to keep a database of contact details handy to easily facilitate information to the Local Support Group, to inform them about the project, the planning process and progress, and to disseminate the results.

1.1.3 Activity 3: Collection of baseline information

To-do list: Identify existing planning instruments; review existing studies and maps; analyze previous designs and ongoing urban projects; prepare digital 3D model of the planning area

Duration: One week

Stakeholders: Planning team

Output: Baseline information and planning material, digital 3D model

Important demographic, social, and geospatial information about the city, the selected neighborhood, the planning area and the communities who live in the area is collected. This information is complemented with documents related to the planning area, such as: the local territorial planning instruments; plans, programs and ongoing projects that affect the area of intervention; and relevant planning material e.g. cadaster, GIS and other planning material (for example, aerial photos of the area). In order to gain a more in-depth understanding of the planning area and of how the neighborhood emerged, during a meeting with city officials, a quick urban morphology study is drawn on a map; it can be supported by an analysis of mobility behavior, social conditions within the neighborhood, density, and real estate costs.

Please note that our basic assumption is that information that is not gained through the participatory planning process is considered to be less relevant for the intervention. Acknowledging that this might lead to incomplete or misleading information, we take great precautions when identifying project stakeholders in order to mitigate this risk. It is recommended to conceive a digital 3D planning model of the planning area at an early stage, for this will save time at the end of the project.

1.1.4 Activity 4: Collective exploration of planning area

To-do list: Analyze, visit and map the planning area

Duration: Two days

Stakeholders: Planning team, selected local experts, Local Support Group

Output: Maps, notes, and pictures of the planning area

Together with members of the municipality, various stakeholders and the local communities, the planning perimeter is explored by making walking tours. During these “walkshops” we learn about spaces and their stories, historical background, urban morphology, social and cultural significance, and many other hidden aspects that may emerge. In this process, the team actively participates in the everyday life of the neighborhood, which facilitates their understanding of the current day-to-day life in the area. Both tangible and intangible values of the planning area are explored and immediately mapped by the participants. Possible mapping topics can be problem areas, but also potential intervention areas, landmarks and heritage buildings, building ensembles, important streets, economic activities, land uses, ground floor activities, building heights, etc. This information will be relevant for the planning process. Counting trees might not have the same relevance as the mapping of emotions or potential planning interventions, so be clear about the expected result of the activity. These maps express very personal impressions, feelings, thoughts, notes, and qualitative information by the stakeholders. This will help to understand the area better and get closer to the communities.

1.1.5 Activity 5: Stakeholder interviews and analysis

To-do list: Conduct interviews and discussions; analyze the interviews; identify preliminary emerging topics

Duration: Three weeks

Stakeholders: Planning Team, Local Support Group, academic partners, selected local experts, members of the private sector

Output: Interview summaries, preliminary list of emerging topics

Based on the list of Local Support Group members, ten to twenty key stakeholders are selected for interviews. A comprehensive questionnaire—based on collected existing material and previous meetings with the local planning team—is prepared. This questionnaire should be semi-structured and adjusted for different groups of stakeholders, who will be asked about the main problems and their fears, but also about their hopes and the potential of the planning area. How do they envision the neighborhood in the next ten years? Who else should be interviewed or invited to the Local Support Group?

These interviews deliver a broader overview of people's needs within their personal urban environment and of their common knowledge about everyday urban life. The interviews are the most relevant source of information and the basis for the analysis and interpretation of challenges, needs and potentialities for the planned intervention. By systematizing the emerging topics, the main findings of the interviews, we get a quick overview of the most relevant topics. This material forms an input for the subsequent planning of the participatory planning and co-creation phase. Keep in mind questions can be discussed in different formats like individual interviews, worktables or open discussions.

1.1.6 Activity 6: Case studies research

To-do list: Research and analyze good practices

Duration: one week

Stakeholders: Planning team

Output: Posters displaying examples of good practice

Based on the list of preliminary emerging topics identified during the interviews, research on design-based solutions is conducted. We investigate international good practices in order to understand what kind of interventions could be relevant for the local context. The identification of design solutions that address similar issues is an opportunity to expand the range of intervention options in the area of study. They do not necessarily configure the best practices for each context, but they form an exploratory basis for the design phase.

Possible topics typically deal with a wide range of urban issues such as: affordable housing, linear parks, waterfronts, commercial districts, densification, urban centralities, inclusionary public space, and urban management, among many others. Select two international or local projects on each emerging topic and prepare a poster for each project including images of the implemented project. These posters will be discussed with the stakeholders at the workshops and with the Local Support Group in the next project phase and will inspire the workshop participants to develop new, local ideas for the planning area.

1.2 Stakeholder Dialogue

During this phase, problems and opportunities in the planning area and its surroundings are identified. This is also the start of the public engagement process and stakeholders are invited to participate in the planning dialogue, where common knowledge, perceptions, and local ideas are activated. The local situation is analyzed from different perspectives and mindsets, and a series of workshops with different focus groups are set up. Depending on project complexity, the following workshops are to be organized: a) institutional workshops engaging the Local Support Group, public sector, and private sector, b) community workshops with local key actors and communities, c) creative academic workshops including our academic partners and local key actors and, finally, d) focus groups with local and international experts.

The workshops make use of specific methodological tools in keeping with their objectives. For instance, the institutional workshop uses tools to gather information including existing development plans and infrastructure projects; the academic-creative workshop promotes an interdisciplinary space for dialogue and debate around different project scenarios; and the community workshop focuses on the relationship between local inhabitants and their environment, using tools that facilitate collective diagnoses, social cartographies, and the analysis of case studies.

1.2.1 Activity 7: Workshop preparation

To-do list: Prepare workshop inputs and materials, book and prepare workshop venue, invite stakeholders

Duration: One week

Stakeholders: Local Support Group, academic partners, local experts, private sector

Output: Workshop strategy and detailed agenda

Local workshops are a key resource and input for the Urban Design Lab. They enable constant communication with various stakeholders to address complex issues that require a comprehensive, integrative, and reflective vision. The workshops are coordinated and moderated by the professional team that act as facilitators of the planning process, and help guide a collective analysis of the local situation, the strategies, and the vision that sustains them. At the local level, identified challenges are made visible and ways to deal with them through a project approach are explored.

The main objective of the workshops is to define an urban strategy along with associated projects that respond to participatory processes. At the same time, the workshops are an opportunity to engage with various actors who directly affect the territory in order to generate a greater sense of ownership in the regeneration of their environment. Prepare guidelines and a script for the workshops, choose among the participatory workshop toolbox, with a maximum of two tools per workshop day, not exceeding three hours of workshop time in total.

1.2.2 Activity 8: Institutional workshop

To-do list: Moderate workshops, explain exercises

Duration: Two or three days

Stakeholders: Planning team, Local Support Team, academic partners, local experts, private sector

Output: Workshop report, inputs for further planning / design process

The institutional workshop is a key step in identifying and analyzing the challenges and potentialities of different elements that make up the urban landscape from the perspective of the municipality and public sector. During this activity, a common vision originating from the public sector for the future development of the territory is collectively defined. Throughout the workshop, collective diagnoses and prospective scenarios are designed and evaluated for the planning area, based on the emerging topics identified during the initial phase. In parallel, existing public initiatives, projects, programs, and ideas are recognized and mapped, further developed and included in the proposal.

As a result, not only is there a greater engagement of technical and institutional teams with the planning process, but we are able to identify themes of interest aligned with urban policy and local planning instruments. Furthermore, diagnoses and key scenarios for the subsequent development of the urban strategy will emerge. You can expect public servants (and generally the public sector) to have more time to participate in workshops, therefore intensive workshop sessions lasting two to three days are possible.

1.2.3 Activity 9: Local community workshop

To-do list: Moderate workshops, explain exercises

Duration: One or two days

Stakeholders: Planning team, Local Support Team, academic partners, local experts, private sector

Output: Workshop report, inputs for further planning / design process

The community workshop is considered the most important space to inspire reflection and promote action among local actors. In accordance with its relevance within the methodology, its purpose is for local residents and communities to define and present a common vision for the area of intervention. The vision is the main basis for guiding strategies and subprojects that can be appropriated by communities. Interaction between local actors is facilitated by the implementation of a series of key tools to obtain ideas in a creative perspective. Within the participatory process, a comprehensive diagnosis of the area of intervention is made, which then acquires a territorial dimension in social cartography. At the same time, existing projects and programs—that can be used as references and are relevant to the emerging topics identified for the area of intervention—are analyzed.

The compiled material is then systematized through an interpretative analysis that then results in the vision that will guide the main urban strategies. It is recommended that a member of the community, ideally a community leader or a recognized representative of the community, should support your workshop, be involved in its planning and running, helping to explain and “translate” assignments and goals. Do not underestimate the potential of local knowledge during this co-creation process and keep in mind that local actors know the planning area the best.

1.2.4 Activity 10: Creative academic workshop

To-do list: Moderate workshops, explain exercises

Duration: One week

Stakeholders: Planning team, Local Support Team, academic partners, local experts, private sector

Output: Workshop report, inputs for further planning / design process

After the institutional and community workshops, the creative academic workshop takes place and contributes to the definition of the urban strategy and its projects from a creative perspective. Among the inputs to start the workshop, we bring forward: previous participation processes, the interpretative analysis, and an approximation of possible project scenarios. The workshop is organized in such a way that it promotes a strongly creative approach and a critical vision regarding the various project scenarios. It aims to further develop urban design interventions included in the agreed urban strategies by integrating diverse territorial perspectives; these will facilitate spaces for debate on the improvement of urban life quality for the inhabitants of the territory concerned.

By integrating local and international academic teams with academic exchange programs, thus bridging interdisciplinary and international perspectives, a space for reflection is generated. These groups are extremely enriching; they can bring together more than forty highly-qualified, diverse, local or international academic guests. Keep in mind that in these workshops, contributions usually transcend the design of strategies to also include the prioritization of actions, as well as the assessment of mechanisms for project management and implementation strategies. Plan ahead to be able to collect these insightful ideas to assist future phases.

1.2.5 Activity 11: Development of a logical framework

To-do list: Systematize information; review and sharpen emerging topics; identify immanent potentialities; formulate transversal goals

Duration: One week

Stakeholders: Planning team

Output: Final list of emerging topics, preliminary list of project goals, sub-projects

Following the participatory workshops, all the collected material has to be reviewed, sorted, filtered, and analyzed. The preliminary list of emerging topics derived from the stakeholder interviews in Phase 1 has to be supplemented with the new inputs from the workshops. This happens with the help of a streamlined procedure in which collected statements are listed and grouped systematically according to their relevance (as communicated by the stakeholders) and subject area. Experience from past projects has shown that five to maximum ten emerging topics is an ideal number, both to summarize and work with at subsequent stages.

In the next step, project goals are identified. These goals address the emerging topics and reflect the visions and scenarios developed during the workshops. They provide useful guidance for the development of the urban strategy, constantly keeping in mind what needs to be achieved through the strategy.

In order to keep things manageable, the number of project goals should not exceed eight. However, it might be useful to define sub-goals in order to specify the goals. Once completed, the lists of emerging topics and project goals will provide the basis for the planning steps outlined in the next phase.

1.3 Project Design

Now we leave our role of planning process moderators and propose some concrete ideas—by means of drawings and designs—for the planning area concerned. Based on the common vision created during the workshops, design-based solutions are developed by the planning team. Depending on the agreed scope, the projects can be very conceptual: even simple sketches are sometimes sufficient to present an idea to the municipality and the Local Support Group. The more precise the definition of the scope, the more precise and detailed the design will be.

In some situations it is better to work out different scales, and decide together with the municipality which project should be moved forward in greater detail. It is important to include the Local Support Group in the planning process and share information about how the design is evolving. For this purpose, the proposed strategies and designs are reviewed during stakeholder feedback workshops. Feedback is essential to instill confidence in all involved stakeholders. During one or two days, the preliminary sketches and designs can be tested and improved by the inputs of the Local Support Group. The workshop can be organized in an institutional setting, including private sector meetings, and also in a public setting.

Final results are presented in a design-based report, which summarizes the outcomes of all planning activities. The report is published in print and is also digitally available on the website of the municipality. The project findings are also shared and disseminated among the media and social networks.

1.3.1 Activity 12: Development of an integral urban strategy

To-do list: Draft an urban strategy and define sub-projects

Duration: One week

Stakeholders: Planning team

Output: Final list of emerging topics, list of project goals, sub-projects

The first step in the development of an integral urban strategy is to bring together the materials derived from the workshops to formulate specific interventions in the built and social environment. Using the maps produced thanks to the information gathered from the stakeholders, their statements and visions are localized. This is done in a step-by-step process, compiling different layers on one map, which will help to identify specific areas of intervention and activities envisaged by the stakeholders. The main result is an urban strategy that encompasses the urban vision, planning goals, and main activities for the selected areas of intervention.

The urban strategy is then broken down into a compact number of sub-projects (ideally not exceeding five) that together will trigger the regeneration of the planning area. Each sub-project has its own character and responds to specific challenges and potentialities of the planning area concerned. These areas of intervention

are not isolated within the strategy but interlinked through physical, visual, social, or functional bridges. Detailed designing of the sub-projects will be done once the strategy has been approved during the collective feedback workshop (Activity 13). Try to develop the project by telling a story, which should be plausible and easy to tell.

1.3.2 Activity 13: Collective feedback workshop

To-do list: Prepare and run feedback workshop; collect and evaluate feedback on preliminary strategy and sub-projects

Duration: One day

Stakeholders: Planning team, Local Support Group, local key actors, local communities, academic partners, selected local experts, private sector

Output: Feedback on urban strategy and sub-projects

The urban strategy and the relevant sub-projects will be presented during this public workshop session to the Local Support Group, local key actors, local communities, academic partners, selected local experts, and members of the private sector. The sub-projects will not necessarily have been fully developed by the team; in some cases, rough sketches or a few maps are good enough to test the underlying ideas. The urban strategy will be assessed by the participants and they will identify which aspects should be changed or kept.

This feedback process can be organized in focus groups or in large, mixed groups. A strengths and weaknesses analysis of the proposal will be conducted according to the following dimensions of sustainability: environmental, social, cultural, economic, and governance. Another tool suitable for feedback sessions is role play; this can be used to test project ideas within a broader social context. In a group work session, the pros and cons of the strategy will be evaluated. If necessary, more best practice projects will be presented at the workshop and the planned interventions will be considered within the community. Based on all results, a final strategy will be defined and visualized. Work out in real time and draw on poster feedback by participants over possible improvements to the proposal.

1.3.3 Activity 14: Communication and public intervention — el cubo

To-do list: Organize, announce and run a four-day public event

Duration: Two weeks

Stakeholders: Planning team, Local Support Group

Output: Stakeholder activation and information

Projects, strategies, and new ideas need marketing and a communication strategy, which is why we create a temporary local intervention in the planning area. By activating an important plaza or street as a public urban intervention, we seek to enter into a dialogue with the neighbors. The white cube (in Spanish: el cubo) is a 3 x 3 x 3 m simple, low-cost, wooden structure with a white PVC openable covering; it serves as a multi-purpose workshop device. The cube can be opened in any direction, you can hang posters on it, and screen movies on its surface, all at the same time if needed.

Organize a public event lasting three to five days—for example an urban film festival with films about your invention topics—during which you can show your drawings, strategies, etc. and organize discussion rounds that deal with the situation found in the planning area. Find local NGOs, cultural centers, bars, and restaurants in the neighborhood that can support your initiative. Organize a reflective dialogue on the results presented by the participatory workshops and the documentaries or movies. Reach out to the media, organize press conferences, throw a wild party, and invite people who have to say something about the place and its importance. The white cube will be an eye catcher and an important element in your project that the neighborhood will not forget.

1.3.4 Activity 15: Design of sub-projects

To-do list: Refine and finalize design of sub-projects

Duration: Six weeks

Stakeholders: Planning team, Local Support Group

Output: Final design of sub-projects

Now, the actual design of the sub-projects is being carried out. Based on the reviewed urban strategy, the rich planning material, and local inputs and impressions, up to five sub-projects will be designed. Depending on the size of the planning area, a more or less detailed design of concrete proposals and sub-projects will be developed. Besides, depending on the available workforce, not all projects can be worked out to the same depth. Therefore, in accordance with the municipality and the Local Support Group, one emblematic sub-project—one that spotlights and champions the urban strategy—will be chosen. This can be, for example, a cultural center, a social housing development or a public space intervention.

The remaining sub-projects will be designed in less detail—as complementary ideas that the municipality can further develop with local architects in the future. All sub-projects will be included in a digital 3D model visualizing the urban context of the interventions. This helps to better understand the impact of the strategic interventions and how they can contribute to improve quality of life for residents and visitors of the planning area, the affected neighborhood, and the city as a whole.

Finally, by using the multisectoral planning approach deployed by the logical framework of the Urban Design Lab, the sub-projects will be described not just as architectural interventions, but in an integral and contextualized manner.

1.3.5 Activity 16: Build a large-scale model

To-do list: Prepare a model of the planning area (e.g. scale 1:500)

Duration: One week

Stakeholders: Planning team, Local Support Group, local students

Output: Large-scale 3D model

Towards the end of the lab, build a simple, but large model of your intervention, for example 1:200 to 1:500 depending on the size of the planning area. This will be an opportunity to see the intervention in a different light. Invite the local architectural and planning school to support your efforts and build the model together with local students and professors. It is another way to engage people in the planning process and create ownership among young professionals. In only two or three days you can build one hundred hectares of intervention out of Styrofoam.

Use the time to discuss the intervention and its form with your colleagues. This will strengthen the proposed urban strategy and allows you to make last adjustments to the project. A proposal presented by using a physical model is generally easier to understand for non-experts than if it was presented using representational drawings. In this sense, a large-scale model can be an interesting contribution to the discussions producing collective feedback. The model will be exhibited together with the final drawings during the final presentation. This serves as a tool to help the general public understand the spatial context of the proposal. Do not forget to take a picture of the mayor pointing at the model.

1.3.6 Activity 17: Development of an urban governance strategy

To-do list: Draft a governance strategy, including how projects can be financed and managed

Duration: One week

Stakeholders: Planning team, Local Support Group

Output: Diagram of implementation

As a last step, a strategy dealing with how and when the projects can be implemented will be developed together with the municipality and the Local Support Group. This strategy will identify different sources of finance, ensure that the participatory process enjoys continuity, and that the stakeholders and institutions that participated in the process will be involved in the implementation of the project. To this end, community leaders and specific responsibilities have to be defined. Urban management strategies incorporate key components aiming to ensure the success of interventions. Through corporations, cooperatives, consortia, and public-private partnerships, a new form of multisectoral association may be proposed. Additionally master plans and sectoral plans may be designed, and when needed, urban planning codes may be added or modified, often demanding adjustments and the updating of land-use plans in order to facilitate the implementation of projects. Within a new framework of urban-territorial planning, projects can be set up in an integrated way.

Finally, strategic urban management mechanisms are implemented, including the use of development tools to encourage urban development catering to the principles set out in the strategy. Here, elements of design and territorial planning are geared towards achieving an improved quality of life for the neighborhoods and their communities. Keep in mind that engaging local actors in the development of the urban governance strategy will not only guarantee the implementation of the project but its sustainability over time.

2 Simple Toolbox for Participative Planning and Design Workshops

We provide a simple toolbox for participatory planning and design workshops that will allow you to navigate smoothly through the entire planning process. The tools have been tested and refined in many projects and community workshops. They provide solid guidelines for stakeholder consultation in very diverse contexts.

The toolbox encompasses seven simple tools that each cover different aspects and phases of the participation process. Some deal with spatial analyses and scenarios, while others focus on the conceptual interpretation of the planning area. While not all tools have to be applied during the same workshop phase, it is possible, or even recommended, to combine several tools (at least two) in one setting. This makes it possible to gain a maximum number of insights, both into the existing situation and the visions developed by stakeholders.

It must be clear that participation is not an isolated tool for its own sake but must be directly integrated in the planning process. This makes it necessary to review, summarize, and analyze workshop outcomes carefully. Ideally, the outcomes are processed in a report documenting the main lessons learned from the consultation process. This report then will be used as a framework for further planning.

2.1 Collective brainstorming

Size of group: 4–8 persons

Required space: Workspace with tables and walls

Material: Post-it notes, flip chart, pens

Time frame: 30 min. + 15 min. reflection time

Outputs: List of dreams and visions of a possible future for the planning area

The collaborative brainstorming exercise is a fast and easy tool that helps us identify diverse stakeholders' visions for a selected planning area. The workshop opens with a simple assignment for the participants: to think about their "dream" for the selected area. This dream does not have to reflect a realistic scenario but triggers creative ideas on what the place might look like in an ideal future.

The following questions can be used to guide the assignment:

- How do you imagine this place in the future (e.g. ten years from now)?
- What would this place look like in your dreams if there were no constraints (such as budgets, regulations, etc.)?
- How can we integrate this area into the rest of the city?

The participants are given 10 minutes to think about their individual visions for the selected planning area and write down their "dreams" on Post-its. They are then asked to read out their notes to the group. The Post-its are collected on a flip chart and discussed with the whole group. The participants have about 10 more minutes

to analyze similarities and differences between the visions and group them into thematic clusters. In the end, selected participants give a brief presentation on the results of each group, which is followed by a final reflection time among the participants.

The exercise provides clear insights into the expectations and wishes of a diversity of stakeholders. These can be used by the planning team as a framework to develop an inclusive urban strategy based on local knowledge and ideas.

2.2 SWOT analysis

Size of group: 4–8 persons

Required space: Workspace with tables and walls

Material: Post-it notes, flip chart, pens

Time frame: 60 min. + 15 min. discussion time

Outputs: Collaborative diagnosis and analysis, list of potentialities/opportunities for the area

The SWOT Analysis (SWOT stands for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) is a popular tool for the rapid assessment of a given place or situation. Mostly used in economics, this tool has increasingly received attention in the field of urban planning. It allows participants (mostly residents or local stakeholders who know the selected place well) to reflect on the characteristics of a planning area from their own perspective. In turn, the planning team can work out a quick, well-grounded overview of the planning area and gain important information on local perceptions of the place.

Experience has shown that the best way to start a SWOT analysis is to focus only on the Strengths and Weaknesses of a planning area. This avoids confusion among participants—who often participate in this kind of exercise for the first time. A flip chart poster with two columns (Strengths on the left, and Weaknesses on the right) can be used. During a quick brainstorming session, participants list their thoughts and ideas, using Post-its that they pin onto the flip chart.

It is only after Strengths and Weaknesses have been brainstormed that participants are asked to reflect on Opportunities and Threats, following the same procedure.

At the end of the exercise, which normally takes around 60 minutes to complete, each group presents their posters to the other participants. The workshop ends with collective reflection on the results and a discussion.

2.3 Social cartography of perception

Size of group: Max. 30 persons

Required space: Workspace with walls

Material: stickers in four different colors, large-scale satellite image of the planning area

Time frame: 30 min. + 15 min. discussion time

Outputs: Map of potential intervention areas

Collaborative mapping is a suitable technique to find out which perceptions different stakeholders have of different places within a city or planning area. The participants work with a large-scale satellite image of the planning area and its surroundings. They are asked to use colored stickers (up to 5 per person and color) to highlight their personal perceptions of places on the satellite image, each perception representing a different color:

- Where they feel happy (e.g. green)
- Which places make them feel sad (e.g. red)
- Which places need interventions to make them more attractive (e.g. yellow)
- Which places do not need to change (e.g. blue).

Participants are asked to explain their decisions and to indicate what it is exactly that makes them happy / sad or that needs to be changed (or not) and how. The result of this exercise is a colorful map that displays the subjective impressions of the participants about places they like or dislike.

The sum of these impressions helps the planning team to identify places that need to be investigated in more detail and gives an indication of where to intervene, improve, and revitalize—and where *not* to intervene. As regard the analysis of the map, it is important for the planning team to take into consideration the different social backgrounds of the workshop participants.

2.4 Situation analysis

Size of group: 4–8 persons

Required space: Workspace with tables

Material: Photos of everyday urban situations in the planning area, transparent paper, colored markers

Time frame: 30 min. + 15 min. discussion time

Outputs: List of potentialities and challenges within the planning area

Situation Analysis is a tool that uses photos to analyze the perceptions of people from different backgrounds. The participants work with pictures showing everyday urban situations within the planning area. They are asked to use colored markers to highlight the aspects of the situation that they like or dislike. As with the Social Cartography of Perception technique (Tool 3), four different colors are used to express:

- What they like about the situation shown on the photo (e.g. green)
- What makes them sad about the situation (e.g. red)
- What they would change about the situation (e.g. yellow)
- What they think must stay as it is (e.g. blue).

Participants are asked to explain what it is exactly that makes them happy / sad about the picture or why the situation needs to be changed (or not) and how. This method is easy to manage, which makes it particularly suitable for vulnerable or disadvantaged groups of participants (e.g. children, elderly, alphabets, people who have difficulties reading maps). The results are briefly discussed within the group and presented to the other workshop participants.

This exercise provides valuable insights into the aspects of a city or planning area that are most appreciated by a community and into the problems that need to be addressed. As with the map of social perceptions (Tool 3), it is important for the planning team to take into consideration the different social backgrounds of the workshop participants. The outcomes of the workshop can be used as guidance for the design.

2.5 Case studies discussion

Size of group: Individual or small groups

Required space: Workspace with walls

Material: Posters of good practice examples, Post-its

Time frame: Entire workshop + 30 min. discussion time

Outputs: Portfolio of suitable, transferable good practice projects for the planning area

Experience has shown that exposing stakeholders to examples of successful projects from other cities can help to broaden their imagination as regards projects in their own city. A set of 15 to 20 “good practice” examples, selected and visualized by the planning team, is presented to the stakeholders in an exhibition setting. Each project is explained on an individual poster. Participants have time to study the posters, either in groups or alone, and ask questions if needed. They are encouraged to think about similarities between the presented cases and their own city, and find answers to the following questions:

- What do you like about this project?
- Is the solution suitable for our planning area or not?
- What are the strengths / weaknesses of the projects shown?
- How could the project be adjusted to fit into our planning area?

The answers are noted on Post-its which are pinned onto the posters. A group discussion of the results can help to generate new ideas but also to critically reflect on the transferability and suitability of certain concepts for the selected planning area.

The Case Studies Discussion is normally conducted in combination with other tools, for example the Integrated Scenarios method described below. The breaks between workshop sessions can be used to collect statements on the presented case studies. These form an important basis for the collective development of urban scenarios in the next stage.

2.6 Integral scenarios

Size of group: 4–8 persons

Required space: Workspace with tables and walls

Material: Maps of planning area and surroundings, posters, sketching paper, material to build models, pens

Time frame: 60 min. + 30 min. discussion time

Outputs: Various urban scenarios

The development of scenarios is an important tool to engage the community in the design and decision-making process. Involving the community means that the complex planning process has to be broken down into simple discussions around the needs of local people and ways to address them within the selected planning area. This approach seeks to avoid traditional top-down planning. Instead it creates a feeling of ownership among the participating stakeholders—which has been proved to increase public acceptance of the resulting design significantly. The involvement of stakeholders from diverse backgrounds further reinforces the inclusiveness of the design.

The Scenario exercise should be done in combination with at least one of the methods described above. Based on the outcomes of the preceding exercises, participants develop scenarios for the planning area in groups. The following questions can help to guide the discussions:

- What kind of elements does our urban scenario have?
- How can we respond to trends affecting the planning area?
- How can we reverse decline and let potentialities unfold?
- What type of intervention is needed to improve the area?
- How can we strengthen other dimensions of sustainability (social, economic, cultural, environmental, governmental)?

Each group presents their scenario briefly and discusses the results with the other participants. The outcome of the exercise is a scenario that reflects the views of all participating stakeholders and provides the basis for the final urban strategy.

2.7 Role play

Size of group: 4–8 persons

Required space: Workspace with tables

Material: Handouts describing roles, maps of the proposed urban strategy and sub-projects, large-scale model, posters, sketching paper, material to build models, pens

Time frame: 90 min. + 30 min. discussion

Outputs: Poster with feedback from different stakeholders

The role play is an interactive tool thanks to which ideas, visions, perceptions or existing strategies can be discussed from different perspectives. Each participant is assigned the role of a fictive stakeholder (e.g. government officer, entrepreneur, market vendor, resident (from different income groups), old person, youth, etc.) whom they will represent during the workshop. A brief description of the characters can help participants to identify with their assigned role.

The exercise can be done either during creative design workshops (e.g. in combination with other tools presented above) or during feedback workshops. It benefits feedback workshops, in that a design can be tested for its suitability for different kinds of actors, and modified according to the outcomes. For this purpose, groups of participants (ideally representing different characters) discuss the following questions:

- Are the group's and its individual members' interests represented in the proposal?
- How can the strategy be improved to increase its positive impacts on group members and decrease negative ones?
- Which other dimensions are missing in the proposal?
- Which aspects should be added to the proposal?

Maps and a 3D model of the proposed design should be provided during the workshop. The outcomes of the group discussions are summarized on a poster for each group and presented to the other participants. In the subsequent discussion round, the participants can discuss the justification and relevance of the proposed improvements.