

Schoolture 2024

Participatory design Guide

for school
communities



commonsspace

SPATIA
INSTITUTE FOR SPATIAL DESIGN



SCHOOLTURE



IKY
INSTITUTE FOR EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

Erasmus+
Enriching lives, opening minds.



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CONT

	Introduction	6
01	Climate Change & Climate Action	16
02	The terms of Participatory Planning	22
2.1	The concept of participation and the participatory process	23
2.2	Participatory Design	26
03	Participatory Planning & Education	32
3.1	The benefits of participatory planning in school communities	33
3.1.1	For students	34
3.1.2	For educators	39
3.1.3	For parents / guardians	40
3.1.4	For involved parties	41

ENTS

3.2 The scales and fields of participatory design in the school community 42

3.3 The tools of participatory design 44

04

Methodology & Tools 46

4.1 Προπαρασκευαστικό στάδιο 50

4.2 Recording the current situation 65

4.3 Design of proposals/solutions 84

4.4 Final consultation and communication to the community 95

Bibliography 114

INTRODUCTION

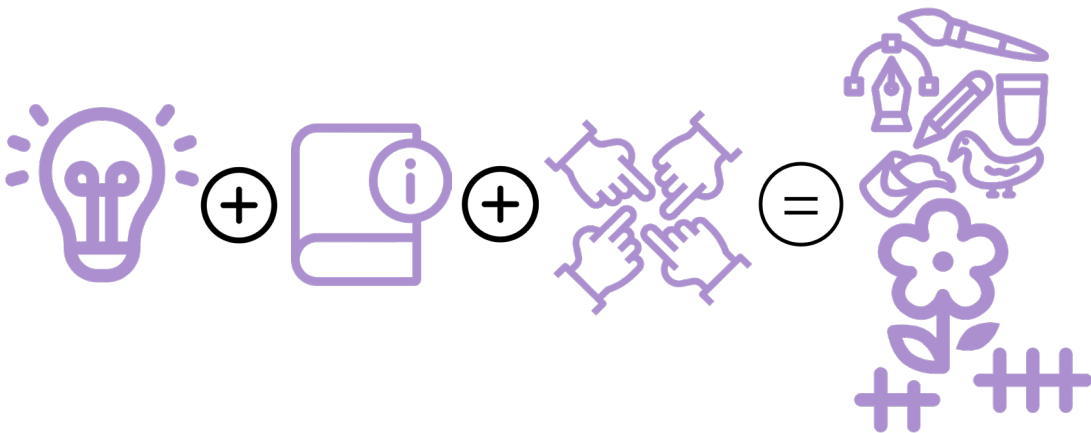
This guide was drafted from **COMMONSPACE COOP** with the contribution of **FUNDACJA ROZWOJU EDUKACJI SPATIA**, within the small scale Erasmus+ project titled “Schoolture for Climate Change” and project number 2022-2-EL01-KA210-SCH-0010859, with the funding of European Union.

What is Schoolture?

It's a project that was funded by the European Union within the KA210 - school education, Erasmus+ projects, it was coordinated with SPATIA as partners. Within the project, **two pilot programs were conducted which constituted material**, with the already **developed methodology** of commonspace for the composition of the present.

What is this Guide?

The present Guide is a short booklet that gathers the **knowledge surrounding Participatory Design**, the tools and its **methodologies** and how those can be utilized **in school environment and specifically in primary education**. It strives to constitute a user-friendly and practical guide. By following the step-by-step processes the **educators themselves can implement a participatory design program** in their classroom.



Main goals:

- To constitute a source of **inspiration for the educational communities** regarding the importance of action against climate change.
- To enrich the education sector with **experiences that come from the area of design** and other experiences from abroad.
- To introduce **primary methodologies and examples for the implementation** of a participatory design program in the school community.

It can be used by educators, parents and guardians' associations as well as any artistic, cultural, environmental or research group active with children and school communities.

And what can we design?

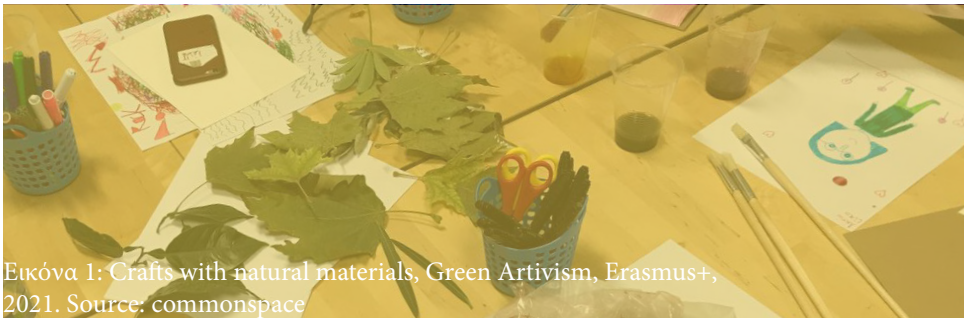
You can design anything necessary for your schooling community! It could be the classroom or the yard, a corner in the schoolyard, a neighboring space like a square or a park, the pavement outside the school and so many more. And could even be something outside the frame of the physical space, like a board game or a school activity! The steps that get analyzed in the Guide can be applied in the whole duration of the design independently of its thematic. Basic requirements include being a necessity for the program participants and being targeted at them, as well as considering climate neutrality and resilience.

The Guide has been developed with structured steps, relevant material and examples, so it supports participatory actions in schools, from the scale of urban design of the yard or the neighborhood to the co-production of cultural and environmental actions focused on adaptation in climate change through artistic approaches and practices.

Why now?

The last few years students, due their rising familiarization with social media and technology, seem to be disconnected from their physical space without understanding that their action, individually or collectively, affects the physical environment and can contribute to the management of topics such as climate change.

So, the need for educating young people around the concept but also the significance of participatory design in everyday practices has emerged. At the same time the **beneficial impact of collective processes and tools in education** has been highlighted.



Εικόνα 1: Crafts with natural materials, Green Artivism, Erasmus+, 2021. Source: commonspace

In a dialectical way, **Schoolture uses participatory tools and methodologies within the school environment for the school community to design an environment** (in terms of physical space or intangible products) with climate neutrality and/or resilience in mind. Following the implementation of two pilot projects in Greece and Poland, this Guide was developed with the main objective to fill the gap in the Primary Education curriculum regarding participation at all levels of design as well as to highlight, document and communicate the methodologies and tools of participatory design in a functional, accessible and useful way to the teachers.

A few words about the project partners:

commons**space** is a collaborative - interdisciplinary planning and design group that has worked since 2012 as a network of partners and is now a Workers' Cooperative.

The members and the wide range of collaborators of commons**space** constitute a network of experts and scientists who deal with the design of the city and public space through a variety of subjects and disciplines, combining research work and study projects.

Participatory design of public space is one of the research interests of commons**space** and is one of its core services. We take public space as a commons with cultural, artistic, social and environmental dimensions. Public space is not just a physical infrastruc-

ture for our daily activities, but a living place of social life, cultural and environmental action.

The school is a key of this social life, which is not only formed in the schoolyard, but also forms a wider community in the neighborhood, capable of collective action. In this context, the effective and creative participation of the school community in the spatial planning and the co-production of culture and environmental action in the neighborhood is useful and essential.

In recent years, commonspace has developed the participatory LAB, an active interdisciplinary community that studies, documents, learns, disseminates and applies participatory design processes for public space, with the aim of adapting cities to climate change.

It focuses on creating participatory design methodologies and tools that support climate change adaptation plans, projects and actions.

The LAB has already held two successful scientific conferences in 2021 (“Participatory Planning. Experiences, challenges & opportunities”) and in 2023 (Participatory design - Transforming the city: Public space & environment, inequalities & democracy).

It consists of:

- **professionals** involved in the planning of public space (architects, planners, land planners, agronomists, social scientists, etc.)
- **people from the public sector** who are responsible for planning, monitoring and supervising climate change adaptation projects and actions

- **scientists working on climate change issues** (in particular the urban heat island phenomenon)
- **individuals and groups actively involved in participatory public space planning**

School communities are active elements in the conversation about space and climate change and can play a vital role in the participatory LAB network. They are welcome to participate, to share their good practices and experiences, to interact, to be informed and to co-design participatory activities and workshops with the community according to their needs. See more and contact the participatory LAB here: <https://www.participatorylab.org/>

More info about commonspace here:
www.commonspace.gr



Figure 2: 2nd Scientific Conference participatory Lab 2023. Source: participatory Lab

The **SPATIA Foundation** for the Development of Education was founded in 2019 by a group of people working together in other NGOs as well as at the University of Silesia in Katowice. Our team is made up primarily of passionate people whose aim is to modernize Polish education and exchange experience with foreign entities during organized projects. SPATIA is committed to transforming education for the 21st century. We create innovative projects that champion **equality, democracy, and environmental awareness**, aiming to make learning accessible and relevant for all. Our initiatives focus on empowering students to think critically and act responsibly, fostering a sense of community and global stewardship. By reimagining educational practices, we aspire to cultivate a generation of informed leaders dedicated to creating a more just and sustainable world. The Foundation works to create modern educational tools that meet the challenges of today's world.

The SPATIA Foundation for the Development of Education:

- **Develops interdisciplinary curricula that integrate themes of equality, democracy, and environmental sustainability.** This can include project-based learning that encourages real-world problem-solving.
- **Provides professional development for educators focused on new teaching methodologies** that promote critical thinking and active participation (SPATIA Teacher Academy <https://www.facebook.com/people/Spatia-Teacher-Academy>).

- **Implements teaching methods** that accommodate diverse learning styles and backgrounds, ensuring every student feels valued and supported (see more: <https://spatia.pl/creating-spaces-for-creativity/>).
- **Supports community engagement** and creates hands-on projects that address local challenges, fostering a sense of civic responsibility.
- **Promotes European values and cooperation with European institutions** by establishing a network for international support in education.
- **Raises awareness about the importance of educational reform** and advocates for policies that support equality and environmental education.
- **Incorporates environmental education into all projects**, teaching students about sustainable practices and encouraging them to be stewards of their communities.

SPATIA's activities and projects involve:

- **Academic lecturers and teachers** at schools in all educational levels (kindergartens, primary schools, secondary schools) at home and abroad.
- **Specialists in the fields of educational projects and actions** (pedagogues, psychologists, representatives of new technologies, etc.).
- **Social activists, local authorities and residents representing local communities.**
- **School communities** (students, parents, administrative staff, other teachers).

See more and contact the SPATIA Foundation for the Development of Education here: <https://spatia.pl/home/>

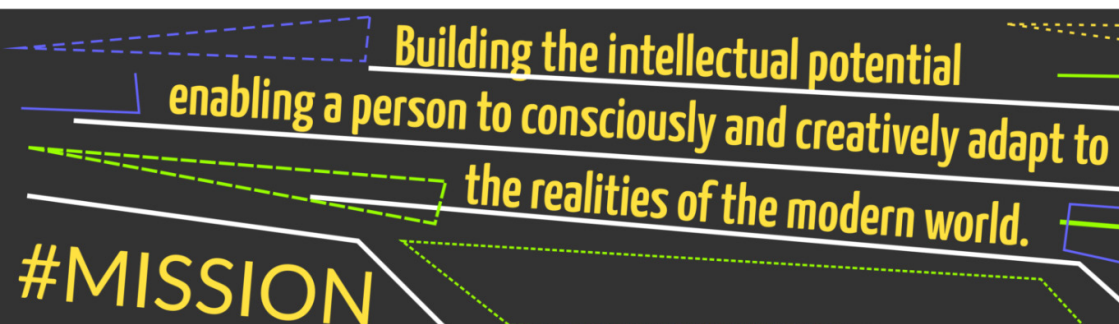


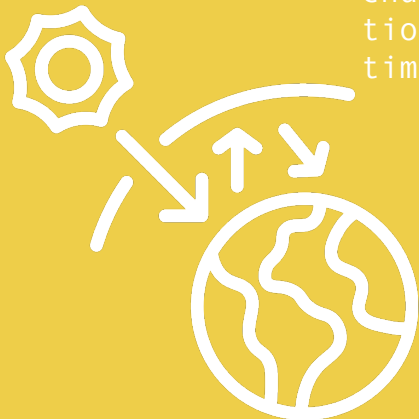
Figure 3: 2nd The vision and goal of SPATIA.
Source: <https://spatia.pl/home/>

CLIMATE CHANGE & CLIMATE ACTION

1

(The information in this chapter is extracted from the Climate Piraeus project workshops material, <https://www.climatepiraeus.gr/>).

With the term **climate change** we refer to changes in the global climate and in particular to changes in meteorological conditions that extend over a long-time scale.



Global warming

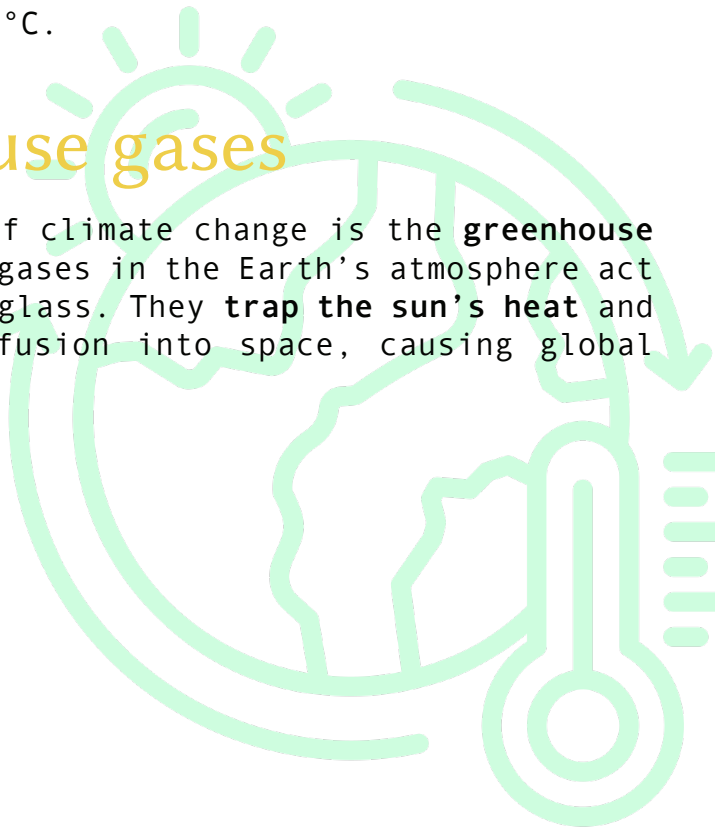
The period 2011-2020 was the **warmest decade on record**, with the global average temperature exceeding pre-industrial levels by 1.1 °C in 2019.

Anthropogenic global warming is increasing at a rate of 0.2 °C per decade. A temperature increase of 2 °C relative to pre-industrial times is associated with severe adverse effects.

For this reason, the international community has recognized **the need to keep the temperature increase well below 2 °C** and to continue efforts to limit it to 1.5 °C.

Greenhouse gases

The main cause of climate change is the **greenhouse effect**. Certain gases in the Earth's atmosphere act like greenhouse glass. They **trap the sun's heat** and prevent its diffusion into space, causing global warming.



How climate crises affects our lives?

The climate crisis has already a direct impact on our economic activities, our cities and our daily lives. Floods, fires and very high summer temperatures are phenomena that we have been experiencing in recent years in our forests and in our homes. They are reflected in our public space, in our parks, in our monuments and in our schools, affecting the way we conduct our daily activities.

The climate crisis is one of the greatest challenges facing humanity at the moment. Information, awareness and collective action from an early age is crucial, as it fosters the creation of an environmental awareness that will accompany children throughout their lives. It equips them with tools to claim a sustainable future.

Although it concerns us all, climate change is often taught in a very theoretical way and ends up being a rather unfamiliar topic that tires pupils in schools.

Education on these issues is vital for students, as it directly affects them and influences their lives in their neighborhoods and cities. Through simple participatory practices where their personal experience is linked to theory, children can directly understand the consequences of climate change, become aware of how their environment, air quality, health and natural resources are at stake, and develop the power to claim change as future citizens.

They should therefore realize that this is a collective cause in which they have both the right and the responsibility to act.

Their involvement in participatory actions links their everyday life and public space to the impacts of the climate crisis and the prospects for adaptation and sustainability. It offers children the opportunity to acquire practical skills that will help them develop sustainable thinking and practice. From simple activities such as recycling and reducing plastic use, to more complex initiatives such as energy efficiency and sustainable consumption, children are trained to think ahead and propose solutions to problems.

Therefore, climate action in schools is not just a means of education, but a vital process that through participatory methodology can sharpen children's understanding of a multidimensional phenomenon that is directly related to the economy, architecture, urban planning, culture and their own daily lives.

What is the role of participatory design in climate action?

Participatory planning, in addition to being a democratic process that involves citizens in the design of the space in which they live and move, is also an inclusive approach that recognizes and draws on the collective knowledge and experience of the community. A community must take into account not only the needs of the people who make up the community, but also the needs of all living things and the natural resource stocks that surround it, in order to truly express itself and be able to live sustainably. Participatory action synthesizes different views and promotes cooperation between citizens, experts and local stakeholders.

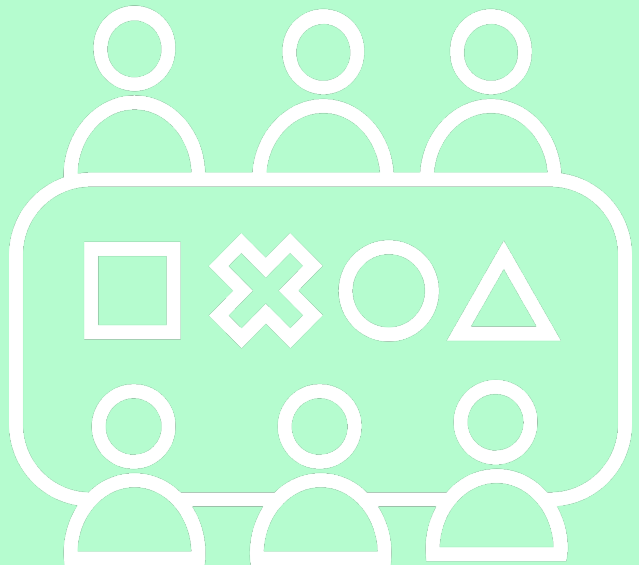
Participation is directly linked to action and response to the climate crisis as it aims at resilience and sustainability. A community that decides collectively on the management of its resources and sustainable lifestyles means that is made up of individuals who have the power to make decisions as they are aware of the responsibility of their choices and the projection into the future. Through the participatory process, individuals become active citizens and are empowered to co-produce actions that affect their future, thus enhancing collective responsibility and action in the face of environmental challenges.

The decisions taken are therefore not just imposed from «above» but are decisions taken by the community with responsibility, maturity and knowledge of the future footprint. They also manage to tailor all the solutions to the local needs of each place. An important aspect is that through collective action, the voices of vulnerable groups and future generations are heard and considered, as they are the ones who are and will be most affected by the effects of climate change. The proposals that emerge from the collective processes in this way are fairer and sustainable in the long term for social groups that would otherwise not be included.

Citizens' cooperation on issues such as natural resource management and emissions reduction is not only theoretical but can lead to practical solutions that directly improve their lives and ultimately lead to communities that are more resilient to climate change.

THE TERMS OF PARTICIPATORY PLANNING

2



2.1 The concept of participation and the participatory process

Community participation in general and participatory design specifically, are terms that although broadly used, are not to this day fully defined. The ways participation can be implemented are many and the projects of participatory design vary a lot as far as their objectives, methods, tools and results are concerned.

Participatory processes, have a long history, at least in the 20th and 21st centuries, and have been used in a wide range of issues from social research to the production of specific policies. Creighton (Creighton ,2005) defines the participatory process as the process whereby the concerns, needs and values of a social group (or the public) are incorporated into decision-making both on the part of governments in developing public policies and on the part of corporate governance. It is a two-way communication, an active interaction between society/community and policy makers in order to achieve the best possible decision-making supported by the public.

The above definition is not the only one. As participatory processes have developed with a relative multiplicity worldwide, different definitions of them have emerged. However, they all bear some important common characteristics that are found in almost all case studies:

- **The participatory process is not just about providing information to the public.** There is interaction between the decision-maker or institution and the people who want to participate.
- **When involving the public in decision-making there is a structured process for active participation.** It is not a process that happens randomly, coincidentally or without planning.
- **Participants have a significant degree of influence in decision making but not the sole say.** The final decision is made by those responsible for policy development and not by the public “unmediated”.

The International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) (<https://www.iap2.org/page/corevalues>) has formulated a set of values governing participatory processes which seem to be respected in most cases:

- **The participatory process is based on the belief that those affected by a decision have the right to participate in the decision-making process.**
- **The participatory process includes a promise/commitment that public input will influence the final decision.**
- **The participatory process promotes sustainable decisions by recognizing and communicating the needs and interests of all participants, including decision-makers.**

- The participatory process **seeks and facilitates the participation of those who may be affected by or interested** in a decision or policy.
- The participatory process **seeks the input of participants in designing** how they participate.
- The participatory process **provides participants with the information** they need to participate in a meaningful way.

iap2 public participation spectrum

developed by the international association for public participation

	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GOAL	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problems, alternatives and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decision.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public issues and concerns are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision-making in the hands of the public.
PROMISE TO THE PUBLIC	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and issues are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for direct advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advise and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.
EXAMPLE TOOLS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fact sheets • Websites • Open houses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public comment • Focus groups • Surveys • Public meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshops • Deliberate polling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Citizen Advisory committees • Consensus-building • Participatory decision-making 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Citizen juries • Ballots • Delegated decisions

Figure 4: The spectrum of public participation.

Source: International Association for Public Participation (iap2)

2.2 Participatory design

At its emergence, participatory planning was associated with citizens' movements that demanded transparency and greater participation in decisions related to public space and the city, asking that they too have a greater say in the different design outcomes than architects/urban planners.

The last decade has seen a real shift towards more democratic and participatory decision-making processes.

Among other institutions, European Union (EU) promotes and develops participatory governance by meaningfully involving relevant stakeholders in all phases of the policy cycle from the identification of the problem to policy evaluation and recognition of the added value of such engagement. This “participatory turn” is based on the various citizen and social groups' consultation/participation methods developed in the last decades. Yet, the process has been greatly enhanced by the explosion of new technologies and social networking tools over the last decade.

Nevertheless, **the idea of participation in planning and designing space started way back, in the 1950s and 1960s**, following a discussion on community engagement and the activation of the city dwellers. This period as Marcus B. Lane (Lane, 2005) puts it in his book “Public Participation in Planning: an intellectual history”, marks also “perhaps the sin-

gle most important 'revolution' in planning thought occurred in the late 1950s and 1960s". According to him it was at that time when, first in the US and then in Britain, systems or synoptic planning usurped blueprint planning. This - in his understanding - made geographers and urban planners able to work on another scale, impossible until then. It gave them the opportunity to approach the planning process from different point of views, using different data and being able to include other opinions and ideas.

After a few years, the idea of citizen participation in decision-making and planning was widely recognized. Then, **around 1970, new approaches raised.** Important was the voice of Arnstein, who provocatively claimed that "the idea of citizen participation is like eating spinach: no one disagrees with it in principle because it is good for us".(Arnstein 1969)

What Arnstein attempted to do was to present a serious critique of citizen participation as applied to many urban planning programs. In her opinion, in many of these programs the leaders, policy makers or urban planners did not really seek public participation, but only the consensus that the pretense of participation would bring. Its basic argument was that **for participation to be meaningful, there would have to be a redistribution of power.**

The following years many thinkers added to this idea of the redistribution of the power in planning. Nevertheless, there was also critique in this way of thinking about participation. Many have argued that this view was related more to a political game of interests between the place's stakeholders. What they wanted to state was that the participation to be meaningful needed a real interest of the participants to learn about the other's experience and point of view on the space at stake. The power games would not result in a real revision of the thoughts of the planners or the participants. This is when, as Healy (Healy, 1992) argues the "communicative turn" occurred. **This was a thought affected by ideas such as the discursive or dialogic democracy, that also inspired the communicative rationality idea expressed by Habermas some years earlier.** Healy explains the perspective of the communicative turn in planning by stating: "far from giving up on reason as an organizing principle for contemporary societies, we should shift perspective from an individualized, subject-oriented conception of reason to reasoning formed within inter-subjective communication".

These were just a few of the ideas on participatory planning expressed in the last decades. In recent years many have tried to give the term a more thorough definition. One example is that of Giaoutzi and Stratigea, who consider participatory planning as a "democratic process of lifelong learning, in which participants gain knowledge about themselves but also the values and views of other participants" (Giaoutzi and Stratigea, 2011).

Another definition of participatory design that goes into more detail and could be helpful to introduce someone to the subject is also the following coming from Robertson and Simonsen (2013, p. 2): **A process of investigating, understanding, reflecting upon, establishing, developing, and supporting mutual learning between multiple participants in collective “reflection- in- action”.** In participatory projects, participants typically take on two key roles: those of users and designers. Designers aim to gain a deep understanding of the users’ circumstances, while users strive to articulate their goals and needs, and learn about the technological means to achieve them.

Participation and participatory planning are, as mentioned above, broader concepts. However, there are some basic methods commonly used and some steps followed in most participatory design projects that we can identify and present. In any case, participatory design can be seen as a process in which:

- The process is structured according to the main purposes and activities of participatory design.
- Interaction is promoted between planners (and thus spatial decision-makers) and other stakeholder groups to make spatial decisions or to develop a planning proposal with the participation of all stakeholder groups.
- A combination of techniques and tools are applied.

There are also some basic elements that urban planners/architects always follow in order to organize a participatory planning process. As mentioned below, a participatory planning project:

- Is based on the belief that **those affected by decisions have the right to participate** in the decision-making process.
- Includes the promise that **the input received from citizens will influence the decision.**
- Promotes sustainable decisions **by recognizing and communicating the needs** and interests of all stakeholders.
- Facilitates the participation of **those** who are likely to be **affected by the decision or who express a heightened interest.**
- Seeks **ideas from participants to plan their own participation** (workshop structure co-consistency).
- **Provides** participants with the **information they need to engage constructively.**

Figure 5: Children working together in a Schoolture workshop, Erasmus+, 2024.
Source: commonspace



PARTICIPATORY DESIGN & EDUCATION

3



3.1 The benefits of participatory planning in school communities

As mentioned in the previous paragraph, participatory planning is not a vague concept and should not be confused with participation in general, which in any case is “de facto” done in a classroom. It is a methodology that follows specific basic steps which can, however, be enriched by various tools and methods depending on the objectives of the process. **The benefits of participatory design in the educational process vary from the implementation of participatory design in the educational process itself** (experiential learning) to the type of outcome (collective product). In any case, a school community is made up of many different subgroups and each of them enjoys different advantages.

3.1.1 For students

Participatory design is a process in which citizens are involved, democracy is strengthened, and a practical result is produced from the whole activity that can be visible and experienced in the community. Through a participatory project, students encounter the essential meaning of democracy, while performing step-by-step actions that help them to understand their role and rights as citizens, and in many cases manage to produce results that will practically improve their everyday life. Moreover, **participatory design of a public space can help to build spaces that are useful for the social groups living there,** such as a sustainable schoolyard designed by children for children, a square, a park, a cultural monument in their neighborhood, etc.

The world we live in is largely designed by adults for adults, and even the spaces and services intended for children are often shaped by adults without taking their own views and needs into account. Participatory design in schools allows children to shape processes in which they will determine the goal, the pace, and the outcomes, and express their own voice on vital issues that concern them. Through this process, children are recognized as equal partners in designing their spaces, enhancing their self-esteem and sense of responsibility for their environment. Moreover, **this experience ensures that the spaces and outcomes produced meet their real needs, making the school environment more friendly, inclusive, and suitable for their daily reality.**

More specifically, through a program that addresses their space, the children become familiar with the neighborhood, the cultural heritage, the sense that public space is a common good to be cared for, as well as the perception of the impact of climate change on the area. They realize that environmental, cultural, and social changes affect their school, their neighborhood, and their lives. Additionally, they benefit as follows:

- They **discuss and learn about their common spaces**, their neighborhood, the routes they take to and from school, and they begin to form a criterion for what makes a space pleasant or unpleasant.
- They develop **spatial thinking**. Spatial thinking has not received the same level of interest in education as reading, written communication, and computational logic, even though it is one of the fundamental elements present in other types of thinking such as mathematical or scientific. Given this, mapping and design can be used by students to approach concepts such as counting, measuring, patterns, relationships, functions, data, probabilities, etc. Spatial thinking is a cognitive process that relies on one or more representations of space. Consequently, we cannot ignore the fact that the development of spatial thinking can be facilitated using multiple “images” of space. **To approach the space, methods and tools for recording and depicting it are needed, such as participatory design methods.** Participatory design is a bottom-up approach that can contribute to the effective development of spa-

tial thinking. It includes processes and tools that offer data collection, conflict resolution, decision-making, and scheduling.

Regarding the concepts of cultural heritage and the climate crisis, the students:

- They discuss and **understand terms such as climate change, crisis, and action** through tangible everyday examples as well as through how they personally and collectively understand the impacts.
- They **meet useful or not examples** from other cities or countries.
- They **understand beyond the theoretical level the connection** of their daily lives with the culture and history of the place.
- They openly articulate their questions and collectively process them by sharing their personal experiences on these complex topics.

Additionally, they **cultivate general perceptual, social, and expressive skills**:

- They are given the opportunity to **present their ideas through** a multitude of representation and presentation techniques and methods.
- **Collectivity is being strengthened.** They learn to work collaboratively to achieve a goal.
- They encounter **new design tools and methods of spatial perception** such as floor plans, the concept of scale, the concept of mapping, and representation.

- They take an **active role in the educational process** itself by setting the pace at which they learn something.
- They participate in experiences that **sharpen their observation skills**, generating continuous questions that they share and discuss collectively.
- Through the different steps of participatory design, they **learn to record, collect data, analyze the data**, produce results, and evaluate them.
- They **learn to process literature** and research different topics.
- They develop a **sense of responsibility** for their opinions as well as the way they express them in the community.
- They participate in the **communication of the work they have done**, making themselves the “ambassadors” of the participatory processes.
- They are trained in **collective and inclusive thinking**, considering the natural environment, animals, gender issues, human rights, etc.
- They come into contact with the **concept of collective action** and the active citizen who is not indifferent to the issues that concern them.

Ultimately, through participatory processes, it is a good opportunity for students to connect with local public entities and become familiar with their roles and various services.

3.1.2 For educators

The implementation of participatory workshops in the classroom is an extremely useful tool for educators, as it significantly enhances students' interest and sense of responsibility for the learning process, while also creating strong bonds of trust between teacher and student.



Figure 6: Children working together in a Schoolture workshop, Erasmus+, 2024.
Source: commonspace

Through their participatory workshops, a deeper understanding of the needs and interests of the students is offered, allowing for better adaptation of the teaching approaches and materials of each lesson and theme. Thus, a more inclusive and empowering educational environment is being shaped.

Additionally:

- They are **learning new ways of “consultation”** with their students and new techniques for approaching them.
- They are given **useful tools** that can enrich educational methods and, in some cases, the subject itself (e.g., environmental education, visual arts, computer science, language, mathematics, etc.).
- They ultimately participate themselves in the **co-production of the results** as well as in the implementation of a new dynamic educational experience.

3.1.3 For parents / guardians

Parents or guardians actively participate in the program in supportive and parallel activities as an actively involved collective body in most participatory school programs. Their perspective on their children's needs in specific cases, such as the design of the schoolyard or the mapping of needs for urban planning infrastructure in the school's neighborhood, is deemed essential.

Many times, the parents' and guardians' association serve as a bridge of communication between educators, students, and families. Through their involvement in participatory processes, parents can better understand the needs, challenges, and capabilities of their children, while simultaneously taking an active role in their learning journey. **This collaboration strengthens the trust between the school and the family environment and creates a framework for supporting the students.** Additionally, parents feel that their opinions matter, while contributing to the creation of a more inclusive and collaborative school environment. Finally, the resources that a parent or guardian can bring through their position in the community or their work in it are utilized.

3.1.4 Other involved parties

The school community is not made up only of students, teachers, and their parents/guardians, but also includes the entire neighborhood as well as the local authorities and services. **Schools serve as central hubs—beacons—within a city and can play a pivotal role, for example, in urban planning and climate action.** All entities (individuals or not) that operate around schools or related to them can benefit from the implementation of a participatory design program, as they can offer ideas and solutions or find a platform to express their own needs, always with the aim of enhancing the educational process and the collective benefit of the school community.

3.2 The scales and fields of participatory design in the school community

The scale and theme that a participatory program will address can vary from strategic planning in the municipality to designing a schoolyard, co-producing a theatrical play, or a communication campaign for climate change.

In this guide, some of the recommended scales and actions are as follows:

- Design of a small-scale space in the school (classroom, a corner in the school, schoolyard).
- Design of a small-scale space in the neighborhood (playground, square, park, vacant urban space, pedestrian street).
- Design and co-production of an art festival or cultural event (for example, the design of a sculpture, a poster for promoting an art event, a mural, a school celebration, etc.).
- Design of a communication campaign for a cultural/environmental or other issue in the neighborhood.
- Consultation with the school community on a current issue that concerns them.
- Collective creation of some useful construction or infrastructure at school.

- Collective creation of gardens or vegetable gardens at school or in the neighborhood.
- Construction of thematic board games.
- Organization of a lesson from the selection of the subject to its implementation.

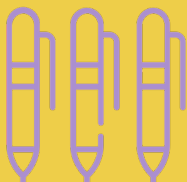
However, the methodology of participatory design consists of structured steps that can be adapted to different themes as well as to the needs of any educational activity, provided that the values of democracy, inclusion, freedom of expression, and coordination are upheld. Equally important in every educational participatory program is to take into account the environmental, social, and economic dimensions of the issue being addressed, as well as actions towards climate neutrality and sustainability.

The purpose of the guide is not to provide detailed guidance for the implementation of a specific participatory program but to enrich the existing teachers' creative palette of educational tools, with participatory tools, ideas, and methodologies. The basic methodological steps are the same in every participatory project; however, the implementation and tools used in each program can be "custom made" to the needs of the program.

3.3 The tools of participatory design

The participation of students can be achieved through a multitude of actions and processes. In this chapter, we propose **some of those that are related to the themes addressed by the guide as well as the Schoolture project**. Some of these will be described in detail in the following chapters along with the steps and application examples:

- Qualitative and quantitative Questionnaires for collecting opinions and data.
- Lectures on different topics.
- Interactive role-playing games aimed at understanding the different roles of the stakeholders involved in the design.
- Thematic walks.
- Collective mappings and the creation of mental maps (aspiration mapping, mind mapping).
- Collage of ideas or idea tree.



- Construction of a model.
- Online tools and repositories that emerged after the pandemic (e.g. Padlet, Miro).
- Drama plays / theater.
- Sensory play.
- Narration and creative writing.
- Creation of sketches and comics.
- Brainstorming, world café, voting.



METHOD OLOGY & TOOLS

4

Below, the basic methodological steps of Participatory Design are analyzed through the example of the pilot programs implemented in the year 2023-24 within the framework of the Schoolture project. Simultaneously, the tools used in these are also being developed, as an example.



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- The **basic methodological steps of a participatory program** that will be analyzed further are the following:
 - Preparatory step
 - Current situation recognition and analysis
 - Co-designing proposals/solutions/scenarios
 - Final consultation and communication

The steps

02

Current situation
recognition and
analysis

01

Preparatory stage

04

**Final consultation and
communication**

03

**Co-designing
proposals**

4.1 Preparatory stage

The preparatory stage is an introductory phase of preparation which includes:

- Stage of **communication with the school** and coordination.
- Selection of the **program topic together with the school community** (this can be pre-selected by the school or chosen later together with the entire school team that will be involved in the program).
- **Data processing** on the subject by the implementation team* (desk research).
- **Stakeholder mapping and analysis.** Mapping, potential stakeholders involved in the program and processing the possible ways of their participation, with the help of the school. This step is important because careful identification of local partners must be done. Designers must recognize all the people and stakeholders affected (directly and indirectly) by the problems to be addressed and the solutions to be implemented. At the same time, it is important to analyze and record the influence these partners have and their interest in the project, so that the degree of their influence and involvement can be determined.
- **Introduction to the subject matter** and the program that will be followed. Initial meetings with the parents' association, educators, and municipal authorities in case of their involvement.

*The implementation team for the pilot programs was commonspace & Spatia team, but the goal is for the teachers to be able to implement such a program on their own.

Example 1 – 3rd Primary School of Municipality of Zografou, Athens, Greece

In the pilot program implemented as part of the Schoolture project, during the 2023-24 school year, the following tasks were carried out at the 3rd Primary School of Zografou, which were included in the preparatory work.

1. Initial meeting with the administration and the interested teachers with the implementation team.

In this meeting, recommendations were made between the implementation team, the school administration, and the interested teachers, and the final selection of the program's topic was made. **It is important for the topic to be chosen by the school itself (or the teachers or the students) so that it addresses a specific need.** At this particular school, a pilot program for Participatory Design of a small park near the school was chosen to be implemented. This space had remained unused by the neighborhood and the school community the latest years.



Figure 7: The public space under design at the 3rd Primary School in Zografou through Schoolture, Erasmus+, 2024. Source: commonspace

2. Desk and field research

The implementation team (in this case, commonspace team) conducted a first field visit and desk research regarding its legal use, the target audience, as well as **the general history of the area and the activities of the school.**

3. Stakeholders mapping and analysis

With the help of the school administration, an initial recording of potential stakeholders was made, such as teachers, school staff, the parents' and guardians' association, municipal representatives, experts, representatives from neighboring schools, and representatives from the neighborhood (users of the space to be designed). Subsequently, **the list was analyzed according to the potential degree of involvement as well as the influence that each individual or collective body has.**

4. Participation Plan

A plan was developed in which the steps, objectives, and expected outcomes of the program are analyzed. **Additionally, the plan includes a clear implementation timeline,** as well as the process for final communication, consultation, and evaluation of the pilot application and its final results.

5. Introductory workshop with stakeholders (excluding students)

In the introductory workshop, all stakeholders on the list who had a level of involvement were invited to participate.

During the workshop, an introductory presentation of the program and the participation plan was held by the team. Next, the invited experts transferred their point of view, and finally, we proceeded with a collective mapping on a map basis where the participants recorded concerns, ideas, and potential solutions for the park's design. For this specific program, the Head of Environmental Education for Primary Education in Athens, Attica, as well as a seismologist representing the National Observatory, were invited, given that the park is legally supposed to be used as a shelter gathering area after an earthquake. Additionally, the list of parties involved was enriched by all attendees.



Figure 8: Introductory workshop with stakeholders, 3rd Primary School of Zografou, Schoolture, Erasmus+, 2024, Source: commonspace

Example 2 - The T. Kościuszko Primary School in Dąbie, Psary, Poland

The preparatory phase for the Schoolture for Climate Change project in The Tadeusz Kościuszko Primary School in Dąbie focuses on laying a strong foundation for effective implementation of the project. During this phase, we engage teachers and community stakeholders (Mayor of the Psary Municipality, Headmistress of The Tadeusz Kościuszko Primary School in Dąbie, parents of students, etc.) to gather insights and identify local climate challenges. Workshops and brainstorming sessions will foster collaboration and creativity, ensuring that the project aligns with the specific needs of each community. We will also develop tailored educational resources that integrate climate science, sustainability practices, and participation.

During the initial phase, two project meetings were organized to carry out the following tasks:

1st meeting with the principal and the educational staff of the school

- 1. Introduction** of SPATIA's project team, the project and the school's curriculum
- 2. Presentation of people willing to coordinate** the project on school premises, the school's infrastructure and a preliminary assessment of the school's needs and ideas related to the project issues
- 3. Discuss organizational details of project implementation. Based on the discussion, it was decided that:**

- The program will be implemented in the two classes of the 4th and 5th grade.
- The program will be activated around the participatory design of an underutilized space in the school yard that could be used for a rain garden, in order to raise the environmental awareness of the school community and the neighborhood.
- The precise time schedule will be delivered in the school's participation plan and will be open to additions according to the progress of the workshops.
- The necessary workshops are at least 4 per group of students from the two grades and may increase in number.
- An introductory workshop will be held with teachers, representatives of the Association of parents and guardians as well as various involved bodies of the municipality and the neighborhood.

- A final celebration will be held to present the process and results of the project in the neighborhood. In addition to the local community and representatives of the Municipality, the final workshop and closing ceremony will be attended by project representatives from Athens, including Project Leader and the 3d Elementary School of Municipality of Zografou.
- All material will be posted on a special website / padlet repository, eTwinning project, and participatory LAB.

2nd meeting- Introductory workshop with the school community and stakeholders

The meeting was attended by all stakeholders involved: Mayor of the Psary Municipality Headmistress of the Tadeusz Kościuszko Primary School in Dąbie, President of the Management Board of Municipal Utilities Company in Psary, Teachers and Parents. As a result of participatory techniques: dialogue, walking, mapping, discussions and workshops, a framework has been outlined within which the students will design a RAIN GARDEN in the school space.

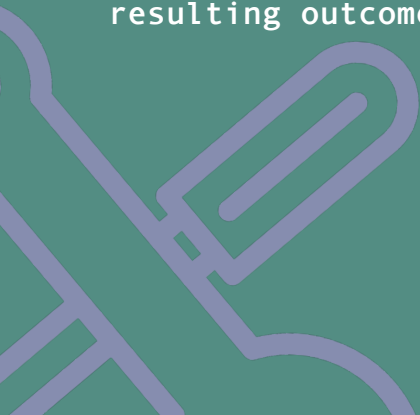
During the meeting:

- 1. Discuss the project objectives** and explain what participation is- The main aim was to show the stakeholders that Schoolture for Climate Change is an innovative Erasmus+ project, drawing on Common-space Co-op's long experience of participatory design and participatory methodologies in education.
- 2. Brief overview** of FRE SPATIA and commonspace activities and their teams.

3. **Project proposals - collection of ideas** for possible project activities. Teachers, school management and parents volunteered to create a rain garden.
4. **Discussion of the project from the perspective of the location** - discussion of possible locations for the rain garden. Walk around the school grounds to assess the potential of proposed sites. Selection of two locations for student feedback. Collective mapping.
5. Analysis of **needs/possible difficulties** and ideas for the chosen project/map of potentials of the people involved
6. Financial issues- **presentation of funding** for the rain garden, as well as a discussion on the involvement of local authorities in the co-creation of the project space
7. Questions and summary- **short discussion of what we plan in the Schoolture project** (design, implementation and evaluation).

Tools that were used

- **Stakeholders matrix:** It is a tool used to record, analyze, and categorize the stakeholders involved in or affected by a project. It helps designers and project managers understand who the stakeholders are, what their interests are, their influence, their needs, and how they can participate in the decision-making process. It functions as a table with two vertical axes. In this table, each involved group (stakeholder) is placed in two dimensions according to its Level of Influence (How much influence it has on decision-making and the outcome of the project) and its Level of Interest (How much it is affected by the project or interested in its outcome).
- **Participation plan:** It is an organized plan that describes how the involved stakeholders will participate in the participatory program. The aim is to ensure that participants will engage actively and meaningfully, that their voices will be heard, and that the process is fair and effective. A Participation Plan defines who, when, and how they will participate, as well as which tools and methods will be used to achieve participation. It includes the planning of the individual steps as well as the timeline of actions and the resulting outcomes.



- **Collective mapping:** It is a method used for collecting data and visualizing the perceptions, experiences, and suggestions of a community regarding a space, or generally, a more conceptual theme (e.g., collective mapping of a certain feeling). Through this process, the participants jointly create a map that reflects their understanding of the space or theme, incorporating their needs, problems, and desires. They can note down positive points, negative ones, and ideas or other categories of sensations and concepts, depending on the needs of the project.
- **Online repository:** Padlet (<https://padlet.com/>) is a digital participatory platform that allows users to create and share interactive boards. These boards can be used for collecting, organizing, and visualizing ideas, information, and comments from different sources in real-time. Padlet became particularly popular in education and participatory design projects, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic, as it offers an easy and visually appealing way for many people to participate simultaneously and remotely. It can be useful for data visualization and easy access to it at any time, collective brainstorming, as well as for displaying materials and information.

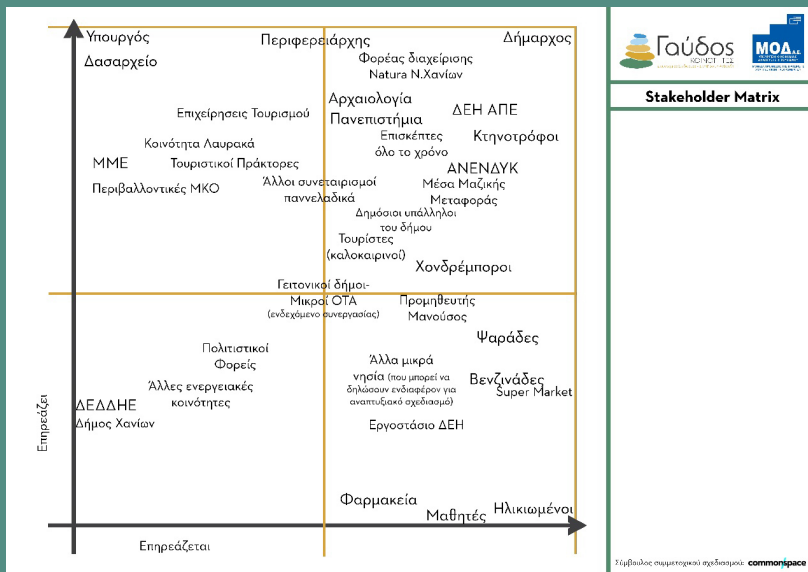


Figure 9: Example of a Stakeholder Matrix, in the context of the Gavdos Communities project, Source: commonspace



Figure 11: Example of a collective mapping of the neighbourhood, as part of the 100 Memories project, 2021-2022. Source: commonspace

Δράσεις	1-10/7/2020	11-12/7/2020	12-18/7/2020	20-30/7/2020	08/2020	19/9/2020	26/9/2020	11/2020
Ομάδα σχεδιασμού / ειδικών	Διαρκής συνεργασία							
Επικοινωνία μέσω κοινωνικών δικτύων	Περιοδικά με βάση τις ανάγκες των εκδηλώσεων							
Ανάλυση εμπλεκόμενων φορέων	Τελικό						Αναθεώρηση (εφόσον χρειαστεί)	
Εισαγωγικό εργαστήριο	Προετοιμασία	Έναρξη εργαστηρίου Συνάντηση / Περιήγηση	Ηλεκτρονική πλατφόρμα					
Σχεδιαστικό θεματικό εργαστήριο			Προετοιμασία Υλικά	Ηλεκτρονικές παρουσιάσεις & Ηλεκτρονική πλατφόρμα				
Εργαστήριο διαμόρφωση τελικής πρότασης					Προετοιμασία Σενάρια	Συνάντηση ή Ηλεκτρονική πλατφόρμα		
Παρουσίαση τελικού σχεδίου							Εκδήλωση του Δήμου	
Αποτελέσματα							X	X

Εικόνα 70. Προτεινόμενο χρονοδιάγραμμα δράσεων. Πηγή: Ιδία επεξεργασία

Figure 10: Extract from the timeline of the participatory project plan for the redevelopment of Sofoklis Venizelou, Halandri, 2020. Source: commonspace

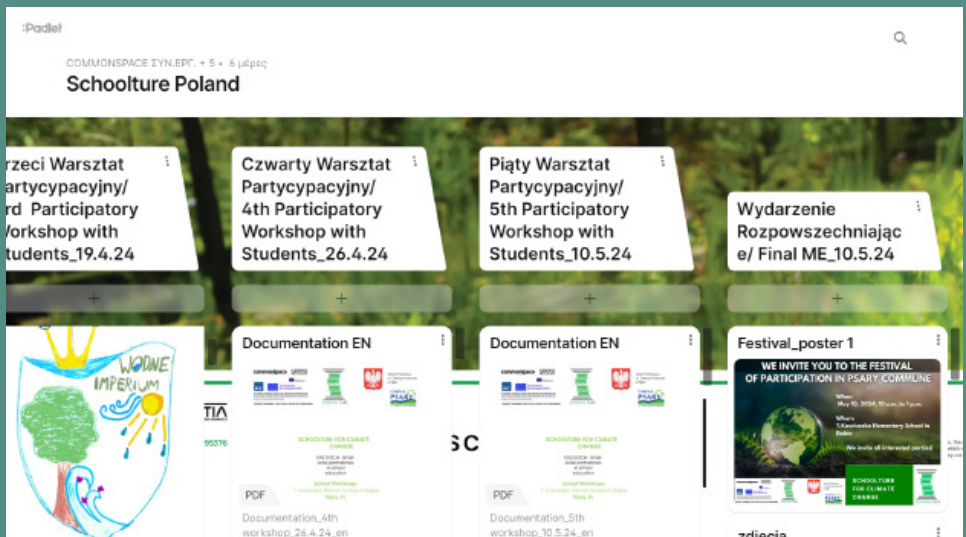


Figure 12: Example of a Padlet e-repository in the context of Schoolture, Poland, 2024 Source: commonspace-SPATIA

How to use the step?

- Initially, choose where you want to implement a participatory design program and with what topic (or if you want to choose the topic collectively with the children).
- Proceed with **map and analysis of the involved stakeholders**.
- Consider whether you will need external experts to assist you (e.g., with a special lecture - presentation).
- Conduct a **short research around the topic** (if you have chosen it) and visit the physical space (if the program concerns a physical space).
- Finally, **develop a participation plan** by setting realistic goals and a timeline. The plan should be presented to the children who will be involved and should be dynamic and re-definable at every step of the process.

ATTENTION!

By choosing the topic initially, for example, the importance of planting in the schoolyard, does not mean that you have predetermined the final outcome of the program. This will be chosen by all the involved parties, primarily the students, throughout the participatory process.

4.2 Recording the current situation

At this stage, the theme and the problem to be solved are introduced to the students. It includes the identification of the problem and the definition of the goal and the subject. At this point in the project, it is important to collectively envision, discuss, and describe the desired outcomes (in other words, “the change we want to see”). **The time-frame within which the results must be achieved and how they will be measured is also defined. The desired outcomes must be defined from the beginning of the intervention/project.**

Depending on the topic, **short theoretical lectures are given by the implementation team or invited experts**, while individual assignments are often distributed to the children to initiate their personal thinking around the subject and to gradually build the collective approach.

An important part of this step is the documentation of the local experiences and the embodied experiences of the children. We try to gather information about the location we are interested in from different perspectives. **It is important to find different ways to collect and utilize the experiences of students for the area, the problems they face, and their vision on how the outcome of the participatory program could evolve to accommodate as many different opinions and needs as possible.**

One of the most important phases of the project involves the analysis of the specific field or space or theme. At this stage, once the basic framework of the problem we want to solve and the goals we want to set are defined, the analysis dives deeper to lead us to the solutions and the design of the necessary interventions or proposals.

At this stage, the following activities can be included, which bring children into contact with the spatial dimension and encourage them to use their different senses to perceive it:

- **Participatory Walk** in the area according to the program's theme.
- **Participatory analysis of the space** through collective mapping of its positive and negative elements and initial recording of ideas.
- **Sensory mapping and charting of the problem** and the space through artistic techniques (such as mind maps, photographs, collages, videos) with the aim of describing the sense of place.

Example 1 – 3rd Primary School of Municipality of Zografou, Athens, Greece

In the pilot project implemented in the framework of the Schoolture project, in the school year 2023-24, at the 3rd Primary School of Zografou, the following tasks were implemented, which were included in the first step with the students - the recording of the current situation. Prior to the implementation of each workshop, the structure and objectives were communicated by the implementation team to the teachers involved.

1. 1st workshop with children* - recording the current situation

In the 1st workshop the team **presented shortly the Participation Plan** and introduced themselves to the pupils of the 4th grade of the school*. Then they distributed sketchbooks and drawing pencils to the children and went out to visit the physical space of the park under design. There, the children were asked to walk around the park taking time to record what they perceived from their senses (sight, touch, smell, taste, hearing) and in any way they wanted (text or sketch), in their sketchbooks. Then, they were asked to record the negatives the positives impressions and their ideas regarding the space.

Finally, they performed a **collective visualization exercise** by closing their eyes, where they were encouraged to travel through time, past and future, to the place in question. The aim of the exercise was to bond the group and to make a mental connection with the physical space. By envisioning the future of the space, the children were able to connect their own actions in the present with their effects and influence on tomorrow.

On their return to school, they split into groups and **drew a mental map** (what they remembered of the site) **of the park**. By comparing the maps, we had the opportunity to talk about the subjectivity of the space and their common or different impressions.

At the end of the workshop **an individual worksheet was distributed where the children were asked to answer in three questions**. They had to give a name to their “mission”, write a few words about their neighborhood and find a photo of another park they like. The purpose of all the individual tasks is to express the children’s individual observations and desires before gradually moving on to their collective needs and visions.

After each workshop, **the implementation team collected the results** and documented them in the online repository, where the school community had access. The purpose of this practice was to ensure good organization of the workshops, transparency, feedback, and discussion of the results with the children.



Figure 13: Snapshot of the 1st Schoolture workshop at the 3rd Primary School of Zografou, 2024. Source: commonspace

2. 2nd workshop with children - Introduction to Climate Change

In the second workshop, after a short presentation of the results and conclusions coming from the previous workshop and the individual homework, we proceeded to a collective mapping of the park on a map basis (the same of the introductory workshop with the stakeholders) on which the children recorded the problems, solutions and ideas concerning the design of the park. This was followed by a detailed presentation/lecture by a physicist of the climate crisis phenomenon and how it relates to participatory design. We also **talked about the different space concepts** (public, private and communal), the matter of inclusion and finally we voted for a potential title of their project. An individual assignment was distributed asking the students to draw polygons of use of the park, on a floor plan, and sketch one part of the park as envisioned.

Example 2 - The T. Kościuszko Primary School in Dąbie, Psary, Poland

All the assumptions of the above stage were implemented in two workshops with students of The T. Kościuszko Primary School in Dąbie. In between the workshops, a Participation Day was also organized in which all the school's students took part.

1. The 1st workshop with the students "Record existing status"

Initially, the students and teachers introduced themselves and got to know about the project and its goals, while sketching supplies were distributed and the goal of the walk that would follow was explained. **The children met the concepts of: Public Space, Influencing and being influenced, Subjectivity of the perception of space, Sensory mapping and Mind map.** Then they went outside the school building in order to observe and record with all their senses what impressed them in the schoolyard which they explored freely. **Children's responses in relation to what I can record in a sensory mapping: Visual observation, Touch, Odors, Sounds.** In order to facilitate the children's physical connection with nature in the schoolyard, the following mindfulness techniques were used: pointing to the sky, touching the grass, making a rainbow, a figure of a tree, diaphragm breathing. The children were invited to a visualization exercise. In a big circle, with their eyes closed, they envisioned what the same place

looked like 70 years ago when their grandparents and great-grandparents walked it, and then how it will be in 30 years when the children themselves are parents and the school yard will have changed according to their own design.

The students went for a mindful walk around the schoolyard, trying to recognize and memorize odors, textures, sounds, colors, with their sketching supplies. After exploring the school yard, they had time to stop and record their impressions, regardless of character, on paper in any form they wanted (text, sketch or other). Our return to the school building was followed by an exercise in groups of 4 to 5 children. The exercise was to make a mind map (how they remember the space with words, shapes or colors) on parchment. Finally, an individual task was distributed to the children (Rice papers with the idea of the rain garden they liked).

2. The Participation Day

Participation Day at Kościuszkó Primary School in Dąbie was a vibrant celebration of student engagement and democracy. **All students took part in voting for the name of their project, reflecting their voices and choices in the process.** In addition to the voting, interactive sessions educated students about the importance of participation in decision-making and civic responsibility. The titles were suggested by the students participating in the workshop. The winning title was Water Empire. The day fostered a sense of community and empowerment, encouraging students to understand how their con-

tributions can shape their school environment and beyond. It was a memorable experience that highlighted the value of each student's voice in creating a brighter future.

3. 2nd workshop with the students

In the beginning of the workshop there was a reminder of the topic of the previous workshop and the project in general. We asked the students to comment on the Participation Day and the voting result. Then there was a presentation, which is available in the padlet repository, with topics:

- **What is public space and differences between the private or shared space?**
- **What is participatory planning?**
- **What is climate change** (causes, effects and what we can do)?

We started by dividing the students into four groups of 4-5 students. We asked them to write the definitions and specific examples of the public, shared, and private space on sticky notes and organize them under proper categories on the whiteboard. We underlined the fact that school is the public space, which means it does not belong to the principal, or the mayor, but to them and their parents. They own it and they can decide about it. They should take care of it and respect it too. During the workshop, the children were introduced to an educational film related to climate change and its consequences for people and the environment. There was also a discussion on the topic and a short knowledge test from the film with the children divided into groups.

One of the main points of the workshop was a guided conversation aimed at directing the children to find the answer to a question themselves: What does participatory planning have to do with climate change?

After the presentation, we went outside the school to see the two potential places for the rain garden. The students thought individually and discussed the pros and cons of each space in groups. The children had selected two possible locations, so an election was held where each child attending the workshop could cast their vote for one of the selected options.

The workshop ended with students painting the design of their dream rain garden in teams of 4-5. While they were doing the first draft of the rain garden, they filled out the table with: needs, ideas, challenges and notes.

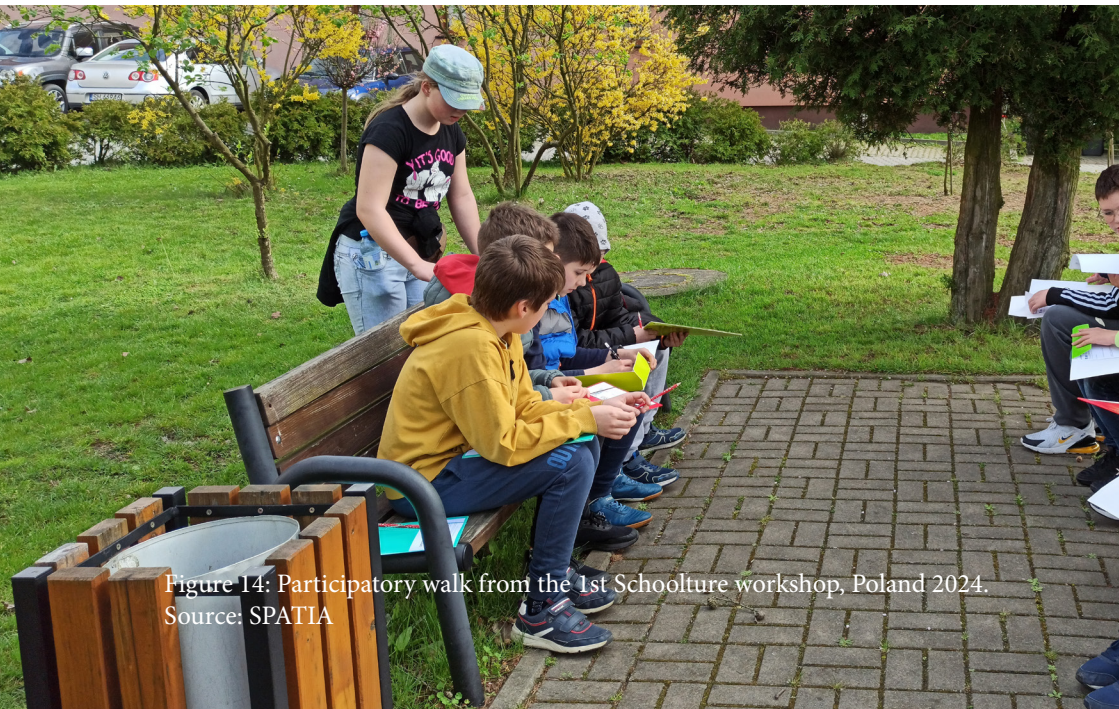


Figure 14: Participatory walk from the 1st Schoolture workshop, Poland 2024.
Source: SPATIA

Tools used

- **Participatory walk:** The participatory walk is designed to familiarize children with the concept of the space that the participatory project will deal with or with broader spatial concepts. Usually in the early stages, participants leave the classroom and visit the space they will design or talk about. It may be a walk in the schoolyard, in a neighboring park or in their wider neighborhood. They may have been asked specific questions from the outset (e.g. What I like about the space, how I imagine it in the future, what it was like in the past, what are 3 positive and 3 negative feelings it evokes in me) with the aim of trying to reflect on them and answer them on their return to class. It could also be held in a more spontaneous and free manner (e.g. they could be asked simply to sketch something that made an impression on them or photograph it or imagine something more abstract). In this way children acquire spatial thinking and sense, they become aware of how space and movement in it affects them and how they also affect it. Contact with the values of physical space is considered particularly important especially in a period when the digital world and technology often take us away from it.
- **Sketches:** Sketching is an expressive form, a code of communication, a powerful and creative tool for participatory design, especially when we want to encourage the imagination and free expression of the participants. Through the creation of sketches, participants - students, citizens or other stakeholders - can visualize their ideas, perceptions and desires for the design of a space or a process. They can visualize what they see

around them and even express what they imagine or think on a more symbolic level. We can use this technique in an introductory / brainstorming stage where children sketch initial thoughts, and throughout the steps. It is important in all cases to make it clear from the beginning that there are no right and wrong sketches and that everything is interesting and meaningful, in order not to make children take part in an artistic competition, but to encourage them to express themselves freely.

- **Ice breaking games:** Are short activities used to break ice and facilitate interaction among participants. They are commonly used in groups, in educational settings, but also in professional environments, to create a pleasant atmosphere and encourage collaboration. These games can help participants to get to know each other better, reduce awkwardness, enhance teamwork and introduce the group to the theme of the participatory project. They can for example be exercises used to introduce participants or visioning games where the group creates a story by collectively cultivating their imagination. (For example, if we are talking about a schoolyard, children may be asked to close their eyes and imagine what their yard will look like in five years after it has been redesigned. In this way they can build a collective narrative.)
- **Mind map:** A visual representation of data and ideas used to organize thoughts, visualize relationships, and facilitate the process of learning and creating. Mind maps are particularly useful in participatory design as they encourage collaboration and interaction among participants. Mental maps can be requested at an individual level and then be synthesized at the collective level. The mental map can represent anything from how the physical

space is imprinted in the participant's memory, to how they imagine the participatory project process progressing. That is, it can also have a completely diagrammatic visualization where hierarchies of objectives and relationships are depicted; images, different connections, colors and formations can be used. In commonspace, the mental map is often used to represent the participatory walk by the participants, an exercise which largely highlights the places and routes that made impressed them as well as the feeling left by the visit.

- **Lectures:** Many times, during participatory projects it is useful to organize targeted and short lectures by experts on different topics, depending on the scope of the project. (For example, lectures on climate change, bioclimatic design, neighborhood history, cultural heritage). The lectures should be concise and aim to the point, because if they become too long and monothematic, they can become boring for the children but also remove the concept of participation. Instead of following an expert, teachers can utilize educational videos (or other materials).
- **Voting:** A process used to express the opinions, preferences or decisions of a group of participants. It is one of the most basic and democratic participatory tools, as it allows all participants to actively participate in decision making and have a voice in the process. It may involve a vote to have the group make initial key decisions on the design scope or to select final solutions. In addition, a voting process at different stages of the participatory project reminds children of the importance of their opinion as well as reinforces their sense of responsibility and maturity towards the decision they are asked to make.

- **Brainstorming:** Is an extended creative process used to generate new ideas and solutions to problems. It is a tool that encourages the participation of all members of a group, promoting free expression and the cultivation of creative thinking. Brainstorming can be applied in different stages, more freely with the pop-corn method (where everyone can express themselves without waiting for their turn but can briefly formulate their idea in words and phrases) or more structured in discussion circles regarding the topic. It is usually used in the early stages of planning to discuss key concepts and make decisions leading to the final results. For example, in a project concerning the enhancement of a cultural monument in the neighborhood, students may be asked to propose different enhancement actions. Students will write their ideas on stickers or on a whiteboard and consider which of them are most attractive or feasible.
- **Collective mapping:** At this stage, collective mapping can be used to record the current state of an area or to transcribe the collective walk that has been completed. Students gather around a cartographic background and mark different points and routes according to the task at hand. (e.g. routes I take in my neighborhood, positive and negative points I noted in the schoolyard, cultural routes and points of interest near my school, warm spots I avoid in the heatwave, how climate change is reflected in my neighborhood, etc.).
- **Aspirations mapping:** It is a tool used to identify and represent the aspirations, goals and visions of a group. This map helps participants to understand and record their aspirations for the future, while identifying their values and priorities. It can be helpful at an early stage where key problems are recorded as well as how the desire and “what is the

change I want to see after the participatory project” are captured. The representation of concepts, sensations, ideas and feelings that are often difficult to be described in words is very meaningful for children as they become aware of the importance of their emotional and affective criterion.

- **Individual worksheet:** Sometimes, at the beginning of a participatory project, we start by giving individual assignments to the children, asking them for their personal ideas or to find information about the main topic. This individual exercise is a smooth way for the transition from personal perception to collective narrative. Children might feel more confident to work on the topic privately and then express themselves in the group, step by step.
- **Idea Tree:** It is a tool used to organize and visually represent ideas, and thoughts related to a specific topic in a structured way. This method is useful in participatory design as it facilitates the process of generating and grouping ideas, allowing participants to see the relationships between different concepts. For example, in an idea tree, comments and opinions can be categorized into the categories of positive, negative, and ideas when they relate to the current state of an area to be regenerated. The idea tree could be visualized in a way that represents the branches of a tree or even as a simple table of categories.
- **Floor plan:** In participatory projects involving the design of a space, children eventually draw their ideas on a simplified floor plan. It is important to be exposed to architectural and design tools that sharpen their spatial awareness. Children are also usually excited when they understand how the floor plan represents space as well as how we design in scale.

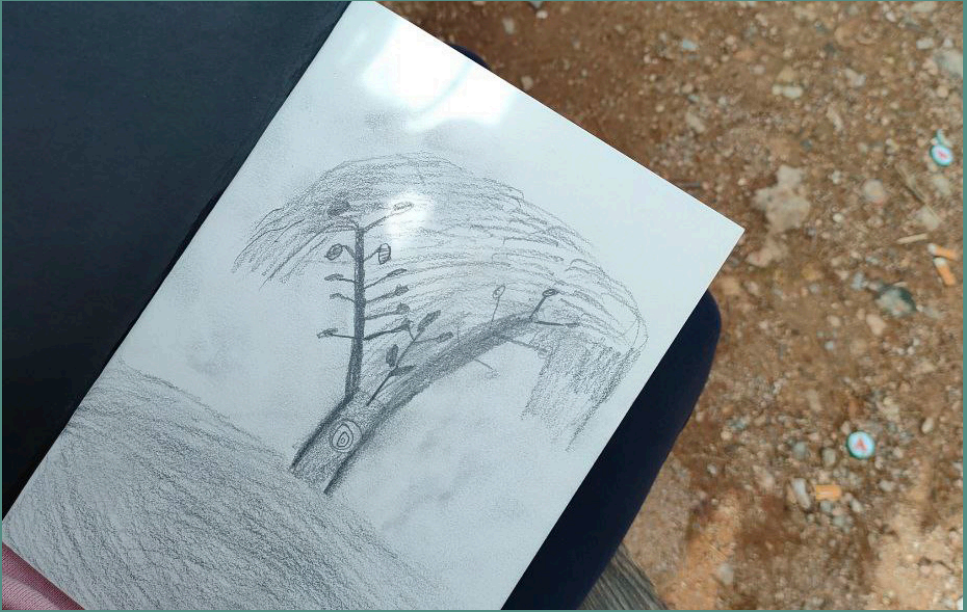


Figure 15: Sketch of a student from the participatory walk at Schoolture's 1st workshop at the 3rd Primary School in Zografou , 2024. Source: commonspace

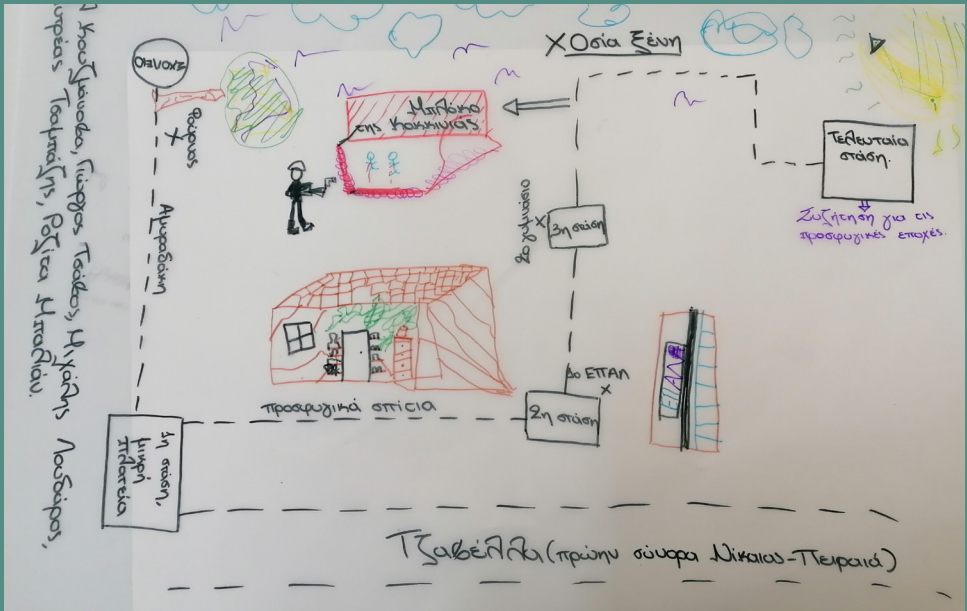


Figure 17: Example of a mental map of the walk, by students in the 100 Memories project, 2021-2022. Source: commonspace

How to use the step?

- Think about the number of workshops you will need and list their main structure and educational objectives.
- Organize a visit to the physical site.
- Prepare possible ice-breaking games that you can play.
- Prepare worksheets.
- Provide the children with the floor plan of the area or the source material (e.g. if you are about to design a board game, examples of existing board games).
- At this step, you and the children will co-decide the theme of the project (if not pre-selected) and the expected outcomes (through the brainstorming and/or brainstorming tree and voting tools).

ATTENTION!

You will need here to build on the field research you have done or have an expert to talk about your topic and its connection to the climate crisis and action.

*The educational outreach to students are not the subject of this guide, however from our years of experience, direct outreach through experiential learning, lots of questions to children and using drama play is very useful for primary school children!

*The number of workshops depends on the age of the children, the topic and the educational goals.

*Tools that were not used but could have been used are also mentioned.

4.3 Design of proposals/solutions

This step is the main phase of implementation and design of proposals and outcomes. Children are potentially divided into groups according to the needs of the project. To each group specific roles as well as specific tasks are assigned. Each group can work individually and in the end they all work together to synthesize their results towards the final goal. It is possible that in the end more than one solution will emerge which will be put under consultation in the school community or even in the wider neighborhood.

Example 1 – 3rd Primary School of Municipality of Zografou, Athens, Greece

In the pilot project implemented in the framework of the Schoolture project, in the school year 2023-24, at the 3rd Primary School of Zografou, the following tasks were implemented and included in the 2nd step of working with students - the correlation of proposals or solutions.

3rd workshop with children* - Design of space use

After the results and conclusions of the previous workshop were presented to the children, a discussion regarding their ideas was held and then they were divided into small working groups. A floorplan of the park was distributed to each group without including any information or annex. The children were asked to work together to select and place the so-called “polygons of space use/activities”. They did not have to get into the final design part yet, but they had to decide what “cores of activities” the park would have (e.g. corner for animals, corner for play, etc.).

In addition, an individual worksheet was distributed to the children where they had to redesign the “corner” they chose after using their new knowledge about climate neutrality and inclusion.

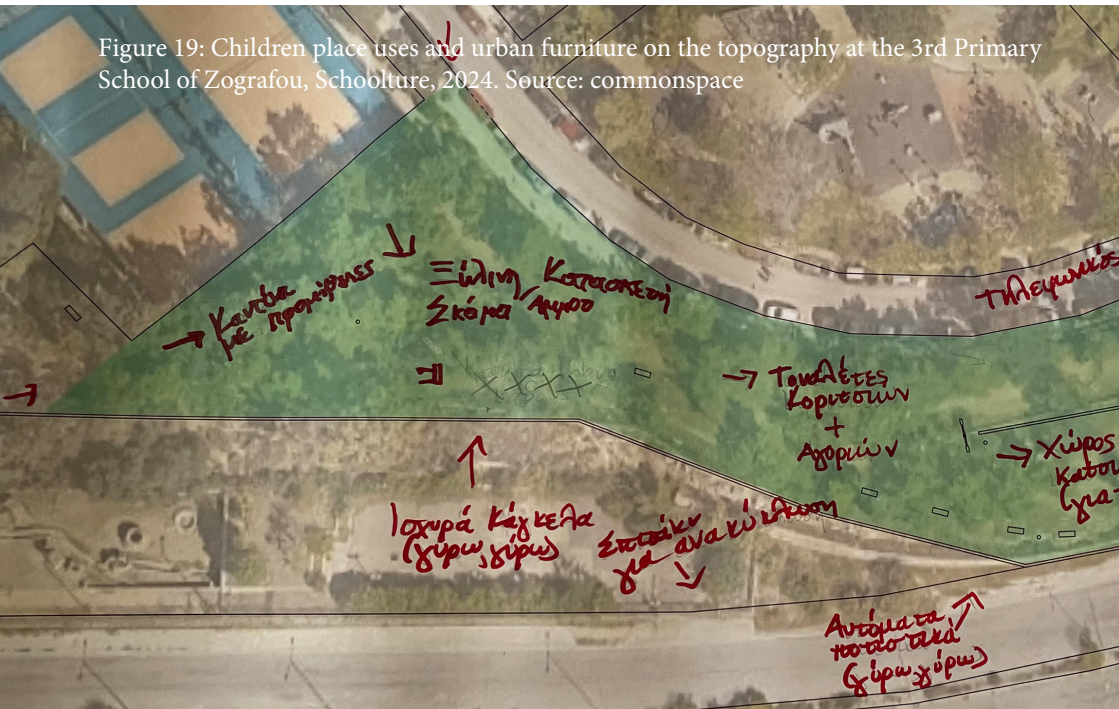


Figure 19: Children place uses and urban furniture on the topography at the 3rd Primary School of Zografou, Schoolture, 2024. Source: commonspace

4th workshop with children - Equipment and materials

The last workshop with the children included a presentation of the results of the previous one and an extensive discussion concerning the limitations in design based on law, practical use, land use and of course interest to the natural environment!

The classes were brought together and after the final selection of space uses (by the implementation team, based on the common reports from each group, i.e. the ones with the most votes and not prohibitive in terms of legislation were selected), the children were divided into mixed groups and each group was given a tablet and a floorplan of the park.

Each group had to design a polygon of use (e.g. only the play area) and could use the tablet to have access in an extensive list of possible materials and equipment consistent with sustainable urban furniture solutions.

After the group work was completed each group sent a representative to another (world café) so that they could get feedback.

Finally, each group presented their work and an attempt to connect and place all polygons coming from the groups on the floorplan, through a collective discussion.



Figure 20: Collective construction of the vegetable garden, Schoolture, Poland 2024.
Source: SPATIA

Example 2 -

The T. Kościuszko Primary School in Dąbie, Psary, Poland

1. Completion of the 3rd workshop with students “Planning of space elements & co-designing the garden logo”

Students watched a movie about how to create a rain garden. In the movie all the stages of constructing the rain garden were described and visualized. We followed the subsequent steps of building the garden by drawing them on the whiteboard, underlying all the important elements that must be considered. In groups, students created a list of essentials for creating a rain garden. Moreover, they used **collective mapping which includes needs, ideas, challenges, and notes made by the students during the previous workshop**. The film also allowed the children’s ideas about the design of the rain garden to be verified against the real technical requirements. The next elements of the workshop were: the completion of a quick survey (the students voted for specific elements and colors) and creating a rain garden logo. **The students worked in teams and were asked to include in their logo design their ideas about: Greece, Poland, Psary Municipality, the European Union, and the Water Empire**. Before they started drawing, we made a brainstorm and noted all the students’ suggestions on the whiteboard.

2. 4th workshop with students - “Masterplan”

At the beginning, the children were introduced to the activity plan for the last workshop and the closing event of the project. Then, the logo for the school’s rain garden was selected from the designs of the students taking part in the workshop. Students analyzed the results of the questionnaires that the students had completed in the previous workshop. **The elements for the rain garden were chosen democratically** (those with the highest number of votes won). In the end, **all students moved on to planning the Participation Celebration** (brainstorm method) and watched videos encouraging environmentally friendly attitudes and behavior, recorded by the children using their own creative ingenuity.

3. 5th workshop with students “Co-creating the Rain Garden”

At the beginning we **presented the plan for the workshop and outlined the final activity**. This is our last workshop - the technical work on the garden, according to our common design. Our expert in garden planning (one of the parents) reminded them about how to plant herbs, flowers and vegetables.

The students planted a few kinds of herbs in the boxes, made special labels and marked the plants with their names; they also created a sensory path according to their design. The LP talked to the students and asked about their impressions.

Tools used

- **Floor plan:** as the steps of the participatory project progress, the design of the floor plan may become more and more detailed, or the scale of the design may be reduced (e.g. from a general design at a scale of 1:200 to a detailed design of the site at 1:50). The design process can start from drawing polygons and defining activity areas and eventually move to detailed design of urban furniture and its placement.
- **List of materials:** It is useful to have research on materials, furniture and urban furnishings based on their bioclimatic function and sustainability, especially when it comes to a participatory spatial planning project. By giving the children different choices of color palettes, benches, plants, or paving materials we provide them with repositories of inspiration and choice so that they can imagine and design the final result. By further explaining what criteria and specifications all materials must adhere to in order to aim for climate neutrality and sustainability, we enhance their critical thinking and knowledge of environmental issues. Even in cases that do not involve design solutions, the relevant repositories are useful tools. (e.g. in the case of creating a board game we can compose a repository with other examples of board games, materials that can be used, etc.). In addition, children can be asked to have searched for materials for the repository from the beginning

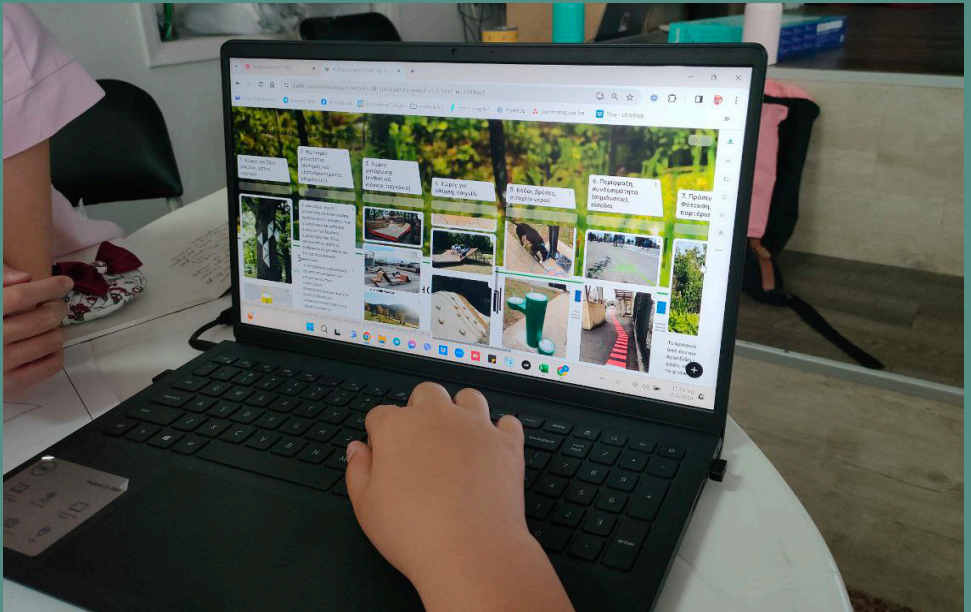


Figure 21: Repository of materials and ideas for the construction of the vegetable garden, Schoolture, Poland 2024. Source: SPATIA

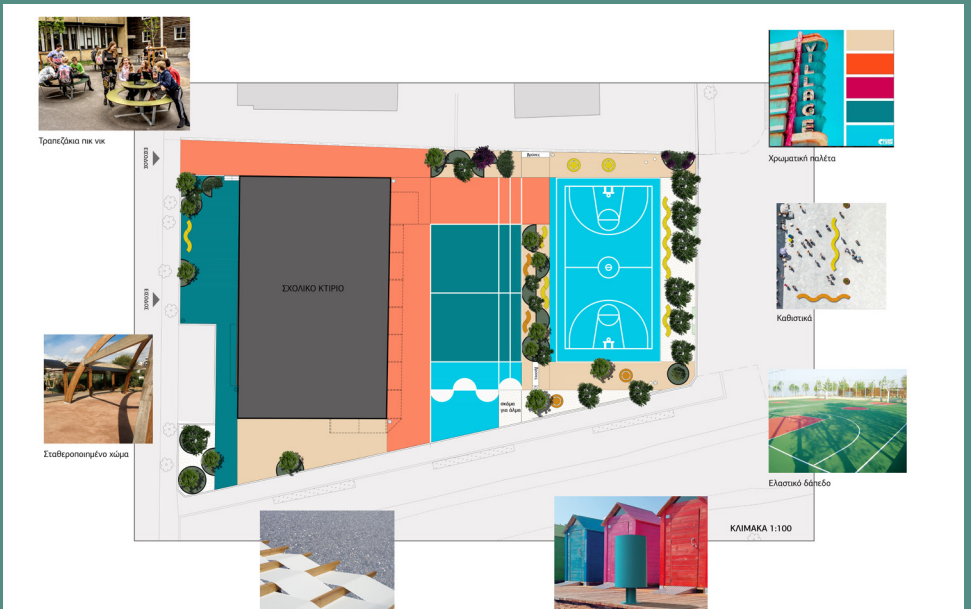


Figure 22: Plan of the schoolyard as designed by the children of the 6th High School of Halandri, Cultural Hidrant, UIA, 2020-2021 Source: commonspace

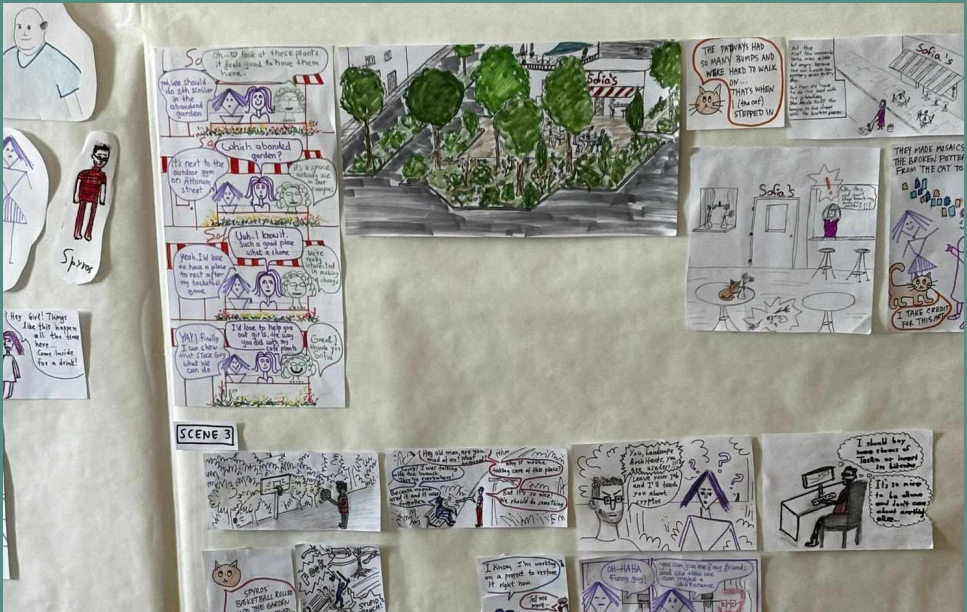


Figure 23: Collective comic about Elaionas by landscape architecture students as part of the Open Landscape Academy, Erasmus+, 2024. Source: commonspace



Figure 24: Composition with collage of a tank designed by the children of the 8th High School to be placed in their courtyard, Cultural Hidrant, UIA, 2020-2021. Source: commonspace

- **World cafe:** It is a participatory method designed to promote open discussions and knowledge sharing among participants. It is typically used in educational and professional environments to encourage collective thinking and collaboration through cycles of debate and discussion in a relaxed café setting regarding a particular theme. Suppose a school classroom is planning to upgrade its schoolyard. The organizer of the world café initially creates a welcoming and warm environment that indeed refers to a café environment and poses a central question, such as “How can we make our schoolyard more welcoming?” Participants are divided into small groups where they discuss and record their ideas. After several cycles, and answering different sub-questions, participants come back together to share the main points and suggestions that emerged.
- **Individual work/comics or sketches:** During the different stages of the participatory project we can return for a moment to the importance of personal work, assigning individual tasks to the children such as sketches, comics and other activities, with the aim of composing their final proposal again collectively, at the end. Therefore, children in a group can be assigned, for example, to create a 3d sketch representing a specific area of their yard and in the end all the sketches can be combined into a total collage representing the final image of the yard according to their design proposal.

How to use the step?

- You should have already done some **research** (you or the children) on the materials needed for the final design.
- **Give space and time for the children to design, compose and finally evaluate and reassess.**
- **Having them present their own work is an important step in empowering them** and deepening the knowledge and skills they have gained.

ATTENTION!

The composition process is time-consuming and may require more than one workshop. Each workshop cannot exceed two class hours with a break, to be productive.

4.4 Final consultation and communication to the community

At this stage the final solutions or the final generated results are shared with the whole school community for consultation.

In addition, the participatory processes are evaluated, and the participants communicate the results of the project to the wider neighborhood or community in the form of a presentation, an event or even a festival.

Example 1 – 3rd Primary School of Municipality of Zografou, Athens, Greece

In the pilot project implemented within the Schoolture project, in the school year 2023-24, at the 3rd Primary School of Zografou, the following tasks were implemented and included in the final step - the final consultation, communication and evaluation of the results.

1. Final synthesis

The experts-team members (urban architects) composed and exported the park design in a final floor plan format.

2. Communication and event design

The team organized a workshop in order to co-design the final event to communicate the project and the results of the pilot with the teaching staff.

3. Final event and consultation

All stakeholders as well as parents and guardians were invited to the final project event in the school auditorium and then in the park. After the initial greetings and presentation of the project, the children shared their evaluations of the project in a form of a short performance that they had prepared. They also presented dance performances and songs.

Then the audience and students visited the park where communication materials were exhibited and the final project was printed on a table. All visitors could comment by writing positive, negative comments or ideas.

A narration by a group of story tellers and more songs were performed and the children's individual work (the sketches) were printed on bookmarks, in a comic book format.

Finally, participation certificates and gifts were distributed to the children.

4. Participatory Design Platform

The plan was uploaded to a Participatory Design and Consultation platform developed by commonspace and remained open for consultation for one month. At

the same time, all participants in the final event were invited to contribute to the consultation, and this was communicated through the project's, the school's, and the partners' social media.

5. Final plan and results

The final plan was composed by an urban planner / architect after taking into account the consultation that was conducted both in person and online. The final plan was distributed free of charge to the municipal services and the school with the aim of being used in a future park regeneration project.



Figure 25: Final celebration/consultation at the 3rd Primary School in Zografou, Schoolture, 2024. Source: commonspace

6. Evaluation of results and program

Two different evaluation questionnaires for students and teachers were drafted and distributed, and after being answered, their conclusions were communicated with all involved parties and through social media.

Example 2 -

The T. Kościuszko Primary School in Dąbie, Psary, Poland

1. Final event

The final meeting was organized by the school's students and teachers. It consisted of two parts-formal and artistic. During the formal part, the project and its effects were summarized, certificates were handed out to those who took part in the project and foreign guests were introduced to the final results. The pupils of the school prepared dance and music performances, referring to the traditions of the region and showing their attachment to European values.

2. Discussion meeting

The closing discussion was attended by representatives of Commonsense, FRE SPATIA, as well as all stakeholders involved: Mayor of the Psary Municipality, Headmistress of the Tadeusz Kościuszko Primary School in

Dąbie, Experts: Eco-advisor of Psary Municipality, President of the Management Board of Municipal Utilities Company in Psary, Teachers, Parents and Students. Each participant referred to the results of the project, gave his or her own opinion on the cooperation during the implementation of the individual tasks, and referred to the difficulties encountered.

3. Evaluation of results and program

Two different evaluation questionnaires for students and teachers were drafted and distributed, and after being answered, their conclusions were communicated with all involved parties and through social media.



Figure 25: Final construction of the vegetable garden, Schoolture, Poland 2024.
Source: SPATIA

Tools used

- **Dance – theater – artistic presentations:** After the group produces all the results, it's time to decide how to share and present them to the community, with the aim of expanding the democratic process. Therefore, artistic expression often provides the appropriate tools for this communication. The team has the freedom to present their materials verbally, with crafts, with posters, with performances, with videos, or even to “dance” and “sing” them in a wide festive celebration.
- **Exhibition:** In many cases, the participating team jointly decides to publicize all the results of the program as well as the methodology followed through a report or a presentation that will open the process to the community. The exhibition can evolve into an open event that includes all the materials used, short performances by the participants, audiovisual material, crafts, presentations, and even interactive participatory exercises with visitors.
- **Floor plan:** The final floor plan or different final floor plans that have emerged as final scenarios can be visualized by the project team and depicted in large and clear drawings for the purpose of publicizing them to the community.

- **Consultation / Forum:** At the final stage, the final proposal or the final scenarios created by the children can be shared for public consultation by the rest of the school community or even the wider neighborhood. At this stage, a final event is organized where people gather, discuss, and deliberate on the final results, or a period may be set during which comments, objections, observations, and ideas can be submitted by the community (for example, through a forum).
- **Participatory Design Platform:** It is a participatory platform created by the commonspace & participatory LAB that provides the ability to create spatial questionnaires through simple steps by the organizer/designer/researcher. It is used in participatory spatial planning programs as well as in participatory research, with the aim of collecting data from a broad audience or targeted stakeholder groups. The user of the platform, through simple registration with their email, enters a specific link and can answer questions by placing points, lines, and polygons on an online map while commenting on them. The platform collects and exports the results, and there is also the option to publish the results to the public. At the final consultation stage, it can be used for users to vote on the plan they prefer and to submit their comments and observations. (<https://platform.participatorylab.org/enroll/category/schoolture>)

- **Social Media:** Disseminating through local media and Social Media in creative ways is an important step for the dissemination of the project's results. Many times, in fact, children, due to their familiarity with technology, have different imaginative ideas for communication.
- **Questionnaire:** In the final steps, simple questionnaires (printed or online) can be used for the evaluation of the process and the results. Additionally, the students themselves, during the final consultation and presentation to the community, may want to prepare their own questionnaires to research and gather opinions of their fellow classmates, teachers, parents and guardians, and the broader neighborhood regarding the proposals they created.

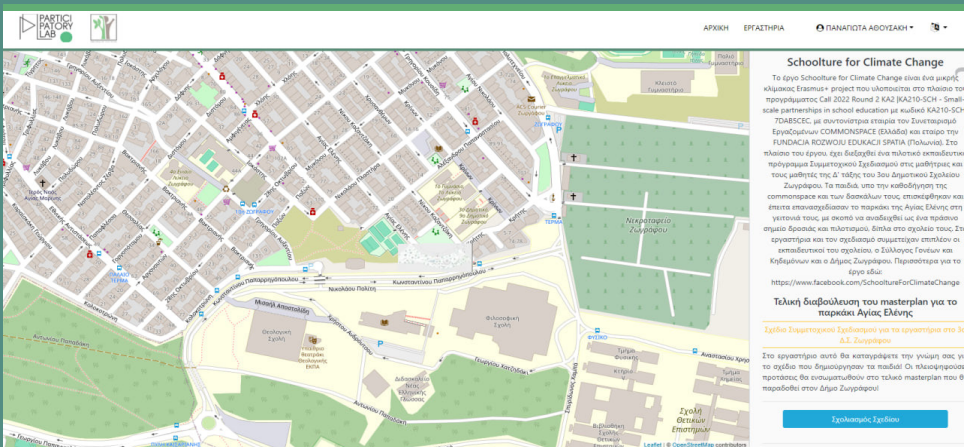


Figure 27: The participatory Lab platform used for the final consultation of the project, Schoolture, 2024. Source: commonspace



Figure 30: Mock-ups of the final exhibition of the students in Keratsini, from the project “Our stories on the street” Educational programme in the Municipality of Keratsini - Drapetsona in relation to the 100 years of the Asia Minor Catastrophe, 2022.

Source: commonspace



Figure 31: Final exhibition and celebration of the students' material on the history of their neighbourhood and refugee memory, from the projects 100 Memories.

Source: commonspace

How to use the step?

- You will need to decide whether to co-design the final event with the students or not. In any case, **communication from the students themselves about the process and results of their participatory design puts them in a mindset of advocacy, empowerment, and deepening the skills they have acquired.**
- **Organization and implementation of the event** (it can be in-person or online).
- **The final consultation plays a primary role.** It can be done in the form of voting on two different resolutions or feedback and redesign.
- Create an **evaluation questionnaire** to use for future programs.

Examples of participatory programs

In this section, different examples of participatory design implemented by commonspace in recent years are briefly mentioned with:

- **Different age groups and stakeholders,**
- **Different object,**
- **Various themes,**
- **Different scales,**
- **Different goals.**

Here are the examples (they will be included in the issue with photos and bullets).

1. Participatory design of schoolyards at 7th Elementary School of Agia Paraskevi/13th Kindergarten of Agia Paraskevi/4th High School of Agia Paraskevi



2. The project Cultural H.ID.RA.N.T. in Chalandri. Participatory workshops in schools for the Hadrian Aqueduct as a Cultural and Environmental asset in the neighborhood

<https://www.commonspace.gr/cultural-hidrants-ua>

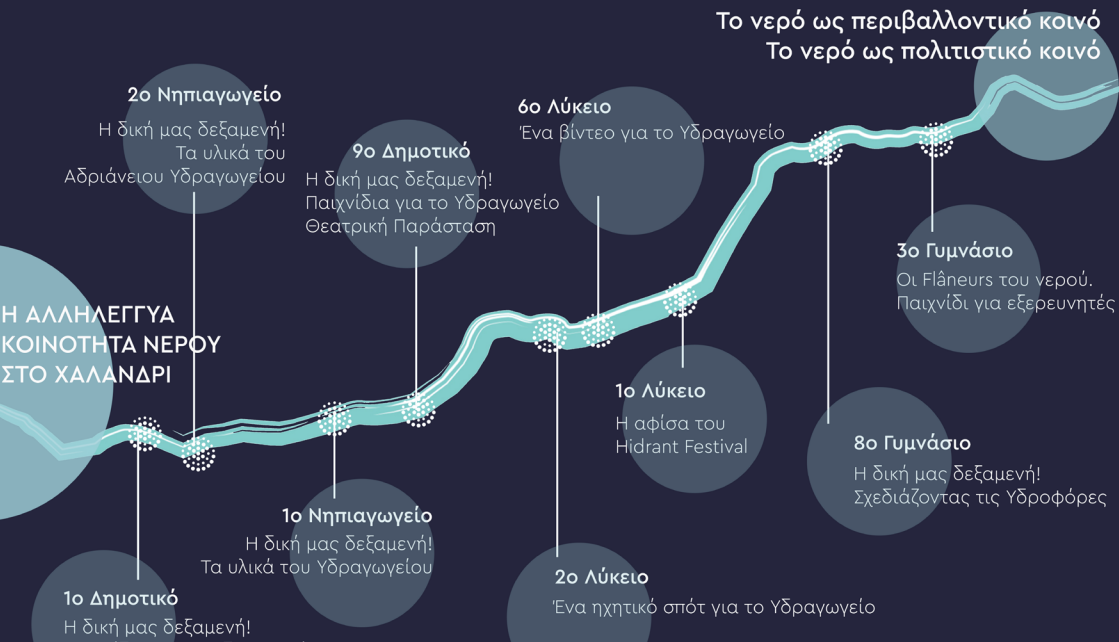
The project is entitled: “ Hidden Cultural Identities ReAppear through Networks of Water - CULTURAL H.ID.RA.N.T” Its aim is to promote the Adrianian Aqueduct as a unique monument of cultural and natural heritage for the wider region.

Η ΠΡΟΣΕΓΓΙΣΗ ΜΑΣ-ΣΥΜΜΕΤΟΧΙΚΕΣ ΔΙΑΔΙΚΑΣΙΕΣ

Στο επίκεντρο του έργου και γενικά της προσέγγισης μας είναι η προώθηση του **Συμμετοχικού Σχεδιασμού**. Η έννοια αυτή περιλαμβάνει μεθοδολογίες, εργαλεία και πρακτικές που εμπλέκουν την κοινωνία σε όλες τις φάσεις του σχεδιασμού και της υλοποίησης πολιτικών και έργων.

Τα εργαστήρια που υλοποιήθηκαν βασίζονται σε μια δημοκρατική λογική συμμετοχής των πολιτών στην λήψη αποφάσεων που αφορούν στη ζωή και την καθημερινότητά τους.

Πρόκειται για μια μέθοδο που στοχεύει στην πραγματική συμβολή τους στη διαμόρφωση θεματικών που τους αφορούν, όπως τον σχεδιασμό του δημόσιου χώρου και την πολιτιστική κληρονομιά στην γειτονιά τους.



3. 100 Memories: Participatory workshops for Collective Refugee Memory at 2nd Primary School of Nikaia - 2nd High School of Nikaia

<https://www.commonspace.gr/100memories>

2

Οι ιστορίες μας στη Νίκαια

Συμμετοχικά εκπαιδευτικά Εργαστήρια

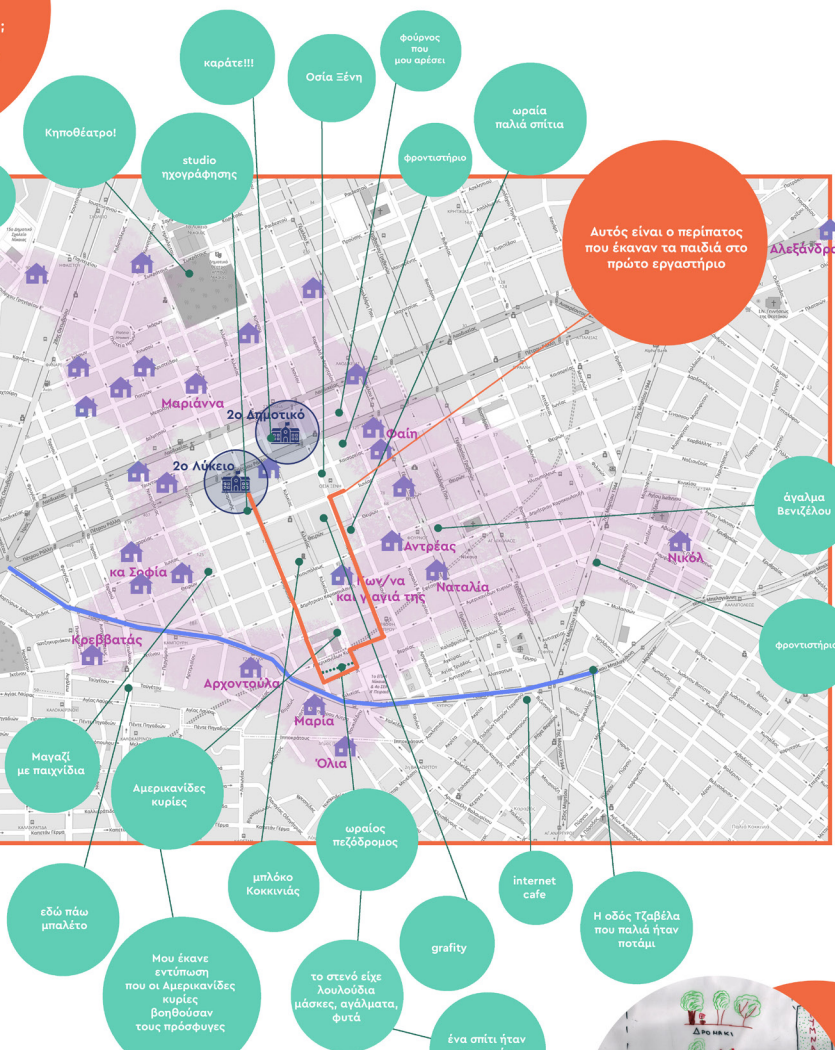
Παρατήρησε αυτόν τον χάρτη και σκέψου:
 -Πως είναι η γειτονιά σου;
 -Αυτά τα σημεία ενδιαφέροντος είναι και για σένα σημαντικά;
 -Ποια σημεία απο το παρόν και το παρελθόν συνυπάρχουν;

Αυτός είναι ο περίπατος που έκαναν τα παιδιά στο πρώτο εργαστήριο

Αυτός είναι ο συλλογικός χάρτης που δημιούργησαν τα παιδιά για τον τρόπο που βιώνουν την γειτονιά ΥΠΟΜΝΗΜΑ

- Σημεία ενδιαφέροντος
- 🏠 Σπίτια των παιδιών
- 🎓 Σχολεία

ΣΥΛΛΟΓΙΚΟΣ ΧΑΡΤΗΣ ΚΑΙ ΝΟΗΤΙΚΟΙ ΧΑΡΤΕΣ



4. “Our Stories on the Road” Educational Program in the Municipality of Keratsini - Drapetsona in relation to the 100th anniversary of the Asia Minor Catastrophe

7 schools of the Municipality of Keratsini-Drapetsona implemented a prototype and custom-made educational programme on the Asia Minor Catastrophe and how it affected the public space.

Each school, following the same pacing, completed a different program with different results:

- Making a model of refugee
- A photographic history line
- Building the edge of the city, narratives from all over Greece and the world
- A sketching travelogue
- Sketches of the neighbourhood and interviews with people
- Music of the neighbourhood then and now



5. “Shedia@CITY: From isolation to social from isolation to social inclusion”

The project “Shedia@CITY: From isolation to social inclusion” is an innovative project for the social activation of our fellow citizens from vulnerable social groups, implemented under the Active citizens fund programme with Diogenes NGO as the implementing agency and commonspace Workers’ Cooperative as a partner. The project has already had 2 successful years of implementation and will continue for one more year exclusively in School Units and in particular in pre-school and high school students.

- 1st Standard Experimental High School of Athens
- Hill School
- 21st Kindergarten of Athens
- Dorothy Snot
- 5th High School of Ilioupolis
- Moraitis School

Iceland
Liechtenstein
Norway



Active
citizens fund

Ανεξάρτητος Επιχειρηματίας
ΕΠΙΧΕΙΡΗΣΙΑΚΟ ΠΡΟΓΡΑΜΜΑ



SOLIDARITY
NOW



Εταιρεία Υποστήριξης
ΟΧΕΟ



Εταιρεία
commonspace



ΣΧΕΔΙΑ@CITY



6. «In Athens – Stories of an Invisible Athens»

<https://www.commonspace.gr/in-athens>

The project “Stories of an Invisible Athens” or “IN-ATHENS” is a project of technological and methodological innovation that refers to the highlighting of the cultural heritage of Athens and is implemented in the framework of the 2nd cycle “Research-Create-Create-Innovate” of the General Secretariat of Culture. The main objective of the project is the transformation of an archival material of exceptional historical value into a series of digital applications with the help of modern co-design tools and the collaboration of reliable partners working from different perspectives in the field of cultural heritage.



7. Climate Piraeus: Experiential educational program on the Climate Crisis and its impacts on our daily lives.

<https://www.climatepiraeus.gr/>

14 Primary Schools of the Municipality of Piraeus implemented an experiential educational programme on the Climate Crisis and its impact on our everyday life.





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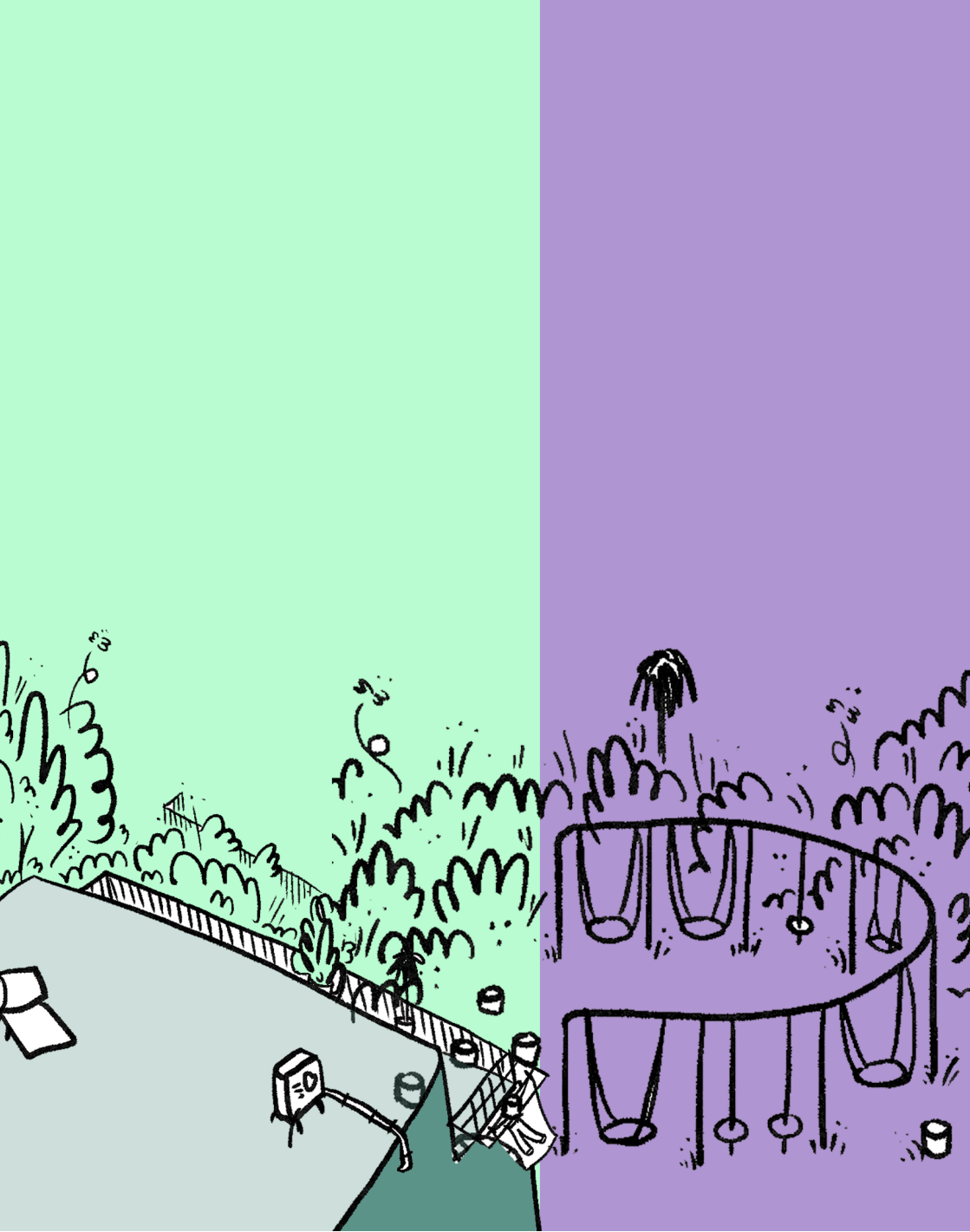
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