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Introducing Local Participation into the Pedagogical Process

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Introducing Local Participation into the Pedagogical Process

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Introduction

The textbook *Introducing Local Participation into the Pedagogical Process* was developed as part of the Recovery and Resilience Plan (RRP) pilot project entitled: Flexible Forms of Education: Green Transition and Tourism 5.0 at the Faculty of Tourism of the University of Maribor.

Tourism is created by the people and for the people, which makes it extremely important to involve various communities in tourism development planning processes. These communities may include local residents, the destination's economy or businesses, non-governmental organisations, media, local administration, and more. All can be engaged at different stages of destination development – ranging from planning a new destination, transforming an existing one, creating new visions, implementing projects, to recovery after crisis events.

This textbook was created with the aim of expanding knowledge on involving local communities in tourism planning processes. At the Faculty of Tourism of the University of Maribor, we have a long-standing practice of applying techniques for local participation within the study process. However, we wished to systematically and coherently compile this accumulated knowledge and make it available to other interested parties. This textbook on local participation is designed for students and all those wishing to further build on their knowledge of destination management. Within its pages, you will find both a theoretical foundation on local participation, including explanations of key concepts, as well as practical advice. Each chapter provides concrete guidance on how to organise participatory events and introduces methods for involving different community groups in processes and discussions. The textbook also offers numerous examples of good practice from Slovenia and abroad, which will serve as an excellent source of ideas for your own engagement and implementation of local participation.

Furthermore, recommended reading lists at the end of each chapter will help deepen your understanding of the topic. Reflection questions are included to stimulate critical thinking during lessons or individual study. Particularly useful are the worksheets at the end of the textbook. These can be used by students when conducting their own study projects that incorporate local participation, and they are also valuable for destination management practitioners working in the field.

The first edition of this textbook was evaluated with the help of students from the Faculty of Tourism of the University of Maribor, allowing us to identify areas for improvement. In this second edition, we have listened carefully to student feedback and incorporated even more real-life examples and practical applications of local participation.

We, the authors, hope that this textbook will contribute, in the spirit of sustainable tourism, to greater inclusion of diverse stakeholders in tourism development processes. We believe that collaboration among various stakeholders can enable better tourism for the future. This is especially achievable with the new generation that will manage the future of tourism development.

1 Local Participation in Tourism Planning

1.1 The Importance of Participation and Participatory Planning

Public participation is a central component element of sustainability: when people help shape their tourist destination, they develop a stronger sense of ownership and commitment to its care and preservation, which ultimately influences the sustainable development of the area (Wheeler, 2013). To fully achieve sustainability goals, development processes and outcomes must be effective and socially just (Carroll, Witten and Kearns, 2011; Mueller and Dooling, 2011). This means employing participatory planning and involving all members of society, especially marginalised groups. Mueller and Dooling (2011) emphasise the importance of planning based on existing communities rather than new residents.

Managing the participatory planning process involves creating conditions and environments conducive to constructive and positive dialogue. The outcome of the participatory planning process should be the integration of convergences between the mission of the tourist destination and the interests of the local community. Some conflicts among stakeholders may prove irresolvable within the participatory process itself. Moreover, too many disputes risks undermining the entire endeavour, thus shifting attention from the process's core objectives to the underlying causes of discord. Yet, conversely, participatory planning can foster or reinforce positive alliances grounded in the alignment of diverse interests.

Participatory processes help to clearly define problems and identify solutions from a variety of perspectives, which improves our understanding of the interconnected nature of the challenges facing society. Collaboration can also improve the implementation of decisions or policies, as these are more effective when supported by a broad coalition of stakeholders who take part in putting them into practice. Moreover, participatory approaches cultivate public trust. By openly acknowledging and engaging with conflicting claims and viewpoints, the process enhances the legitimacy and credibility of final decisions, while simultaneously encouraging active involvement from civil society.

Mueller and Dooling (2011) describe the key concepts of participation as follows:

- Cooperation among different stakeholders, including those with non-economic interests, encourages greater consideration of the natural, built, and human resources that need to be preserved.
- Involving stakeholders from various fields and with different interests offers better chances for integrated and holistic approaches to policy development that contribute to sustainability.
- Including more stakeholders affected by tourism development in policymaking can lead to a fairer distribution of benefits and costs. The idea is that participation raises awareness of tourism's impacts on all stakeholders, and this awareness should lead to fairer policies.
- Broad participation in policymaking can help democratise decision-making, empower participants, and build skills and capabilities among those involved.

The participatory approach has proven useful in cases where the following additional reasons, beyond those already mentioned, have been taken into account (Van Heck, 2003):

- *Coverage:* To reach and include stakeholders on a broader scale.
- *Efficiency:* To achieve a cost-effective design and implementation of the project. Beneficiaries will contribute more actively to the planning and execution of the project by providing ideas, labour, and/or other resources (cost-sharing), which in turn leads to the more efficient use of resources.
- *Inclusion:* The individuals involved have a say in setting goals and measures, and assist with various operations such as project management, monitoring, and evaluation. They also gain more opportunities to contribute to the project, which helps in diagnosing environmental, social, and institutional constraints and in finding feasible solutions.

- *Acceptance of innovation:* Stakeholders can develop greater responsiveness to new production methods, technologies, and services offered.
- *Sustainability:* The project achieves more and better results and impacts, leading to long-term viability and greater sustainability. By emphasising decentralisation, democratic decision-making processes, and self-help, it is possible to better address key issues such as recurring costs, cost-sharing with beneficiaries, and operation and maintenance.

Collaboration becomes essential because the complexity of organisation requires the mobilisation of the stakeholders' experience and skills to ensure effective long-term outcomes. This is especially important when the aim is to establish new ways of practice, interaction, and organisation – that is, to introduce innovative processes within a given local context. Sometimes innovative approaches or processes fail for the following reasons (Van Heck, 2003):

- difficulties in development or a lack of shared strategic visions;
- misunderstanding of the goals at lower organisational levels;
- goals becoming "moving targets";
- plans covering too much in too short a time;
- people not working according to the same specifications;
- a lack of tools and methods to foster real collaboration;
- communication problems;
- a lack of effective management and leadership;
- competition and conflicts;
- the exclusion of key stakeholders.

These problems stem partly from the complexity and scope of the project, and partly from the lack of involvement of key stakeholders in earlier planning stages. However, collaboration is a way to increase project efficiency and address these issues, because when people are genuinely interested in the development activity and are actively involved in decision-making, they are more likely to be committed, and shared goals are more likely to be achieved.

Very often, citizens or stakeholders do not participate in decision-making processes for the following reasons (Van Heck, 2003):

- *Political conditions and power structures in the country and in the project area* affect citizen participation, especially among those who distrust decision-makers.

- *Lack of funding:* there is a perception that sectors such as tourism and heritage are luxuries compared to those like education, health, employment, and defence.
- *Legislative barriers:* citizens believe that national regulations restricting or prohibiting changes or construction of infrastructure (houses, bridges, roads, etc.) limit growth.
- *Administrative barriers:* complex bureaucratic procedures hinder genuine participation and promote top-down planning carried out exclusively by experts.
- *Socio-cultural barriers:* a significant obstacle is the widespread mindset of dependency, feelings of frustration, and distrust towards officials, who are often controlled by local elites to whom key decisions are deferred.
- *Other barriers include:* exposure to non-local information, lack of awareness among local residents, the right of stakeholders to self-organisation, and a shortage of leaders and knowledge to promote their interests.

Public participation should play an important role in any good planning process to increase its effectiveness. Some typical steps to be undertaken are as follows (Van Heck, 2003):

- *Stakeholder mapping:* grouping based on different functions, capacities, and activities, including special interests and perceptions of the situation.
- *Integrated system and problem analysis*, which follows the creation of a collaborative approach involving all stakeholders.
- *Development of a shared vision*, goals, and expected outcomes.
- *Gap analysis:* to manage any identified medium- and long-term impacts, for which the necessary (especially remedial) measures must be defined, and this work must also be done with the support of a specially developed set of sustainability indicators.
- *Development of tools and solutions:* discussion and evaluation of management tools (addressing current and future pressures and factors affecting the system) and innovative solutions (including the use of new soft/hard technologies) compared to the alternatives.
- *Monitoring success/failure:* development of a set of criteria/parameters to monitor future progress, including qualitative and quantitative success relative to goals and expected outcomes.

1.2 Key Public Participation Challenges in Tourism Planning Processes

As a result of certain global trends and the increasing number of tourists, it is essential to adopt a sustainable vision that addresses key issues such as environmental, cultural, and social impacts. Regardless of the challenges or solutions, sustainable tourism management is increasingly regarded as a central agenda item rather than something that can be ignored or postponed. In this chapter, we will explore the field of public participation in tourism planning processes. We will examine in detail all the important elements, content, procedures, and methods of organising and involving the public in planning processes. To begin, let us consider some key characteristics that have recently shaped the field of sustainable and responsible tourism, where public participation plays a vital role. The findings are summarised and adapted from the CEETO Guidelines for Sustainable Tourism Development In Protected Areas (Koščak, Lapos and Primožič, 2020).

Tourist Awareness

One of the key challenges for decision-makers is reducing damage to natural and cultural heritage caused by overtourism. If tourists were to better understand natural and cultural heritage – especially in protected areas – they could contribute to reducing or preventing harmful impacts and promoting the conservation of natural and cultural heritage assets. Sustainable policies should aim to minimise damage to habitats as much as possible, and ensure that visitors disturb wildlife as little as possible.

Recommended measures include:

- Raising awareness through education (for example, quality guided tours, visitor centres offering creative tools for interpreting the natural environment, and providing information prior to arrival).
- Visitor management, including controlling the number and behaviour of visitors: spatial zoning to separate human activities from key wildlife habitats by providing refuges for animals, thereby reducing disturbance and addressing waste management issues.

Destination Planning and the Development of Sustainable Local Tourist Destinations

Tourism destination management can be viewed as a continuous and long-term process that involves products and services in the tourism sector, as well as stakeholders from protected areas. The development of local tourism and destination planning must be organised as a "creative mode of tourism implementation". Such tourism is primarily tied to communities, natural landmarks, and the identity of a particular area. From a management perspective, this is tourism that has no or minimal environmental impact, is sustainable, and ideally locally managed, with the aim of enabling tourists, communities, residents, and related groups to participate in the management process. From the viewpoint of activities and processes, this kind of tourism encourages the acquisition of knowledge through education about culture, local communities, the environment, and the ecosystem. In terms of participation, it recognises the importance of the involvement of tourists, communities, residents, and related groups (Koščak and O'Rourke, 2023).

Tourism – Your Everyday Life Is Someone Else's Adventure

The extent to which tourism can promote more sustainable and inclusive development depends, among other factors, on its capacity to take place in diverse environments, including rural or underdeveloped areas, its economic impact and thus its ability to stimulate the local economy, as well as its role in creating direct and induced employment opportunities. There is a growing trend of providing tourists with the chance to experience the everyday life of local residents during their visit to a destination. Authenticity and increased interaction with the local population ensure greater satisfaction for both parties. Tourism is thus becoming a tripartite activity involving providers, tourists, and local inhabitants. For a destination, it is crucial that the brand is inseparably woven into its everyday life, and that the brand values permeate every act of product creation or communication by all individuals present at the destination.

Local Supply Chain and Value Added

By providing products and services, tourism creates economic opportunities. The more the tourism industry sources its offerings locally, the more it will stimulate economic growth and increase opportunities for new enterprises. Locally and sustainably sourced food contributes to the economic resilience of the community, reduces environmental impacts, and can help create an authentic sense of place and culture for visitors. Food, in all its manifestations, is therefore a potentially powerful element of the destination brand.

Economic and Social Inclusion

At the local level, tourism creates new business opportunities, which is of strategic importance for reducing poverty in regions with low development levels (such as rural areas). Tourism can therefore offer a way out of poverty even for the most disadvantaged groups. Employment in tourism helps to alleviate poverty as well as economic and social exclusion, and can provide an alternative to migration to urban centres. Despite the positive effects of job creation, it is important to acknowledge that employment in tourism, even in developed economies, is often highly unstable due to the seasonal nature of work, high employee turnover, and prevalence of part-time positions.

Accessible Tourism

Accessible tourism is a rapidly growing sector that is based on the principle that tourism should be available to all, and that providers of tourism services should actively strive to improve accessibility for all individuals. An accessible tourist destination is one that offers a tourism experience grounded in its unique characteristics: it seeks to transform the tourism sector in order to boost competitiveness, create decent employment, and promote equal opportunities for all, especially the most vulnerable groups so that they can participate in and benefit from tourism activities – all in accordance with the principles of sustainable development. Inclusion can become a factor of competitiveness, both by integrating groups whose characteristics enrich the value proposition, and because the inclusion of disadvantaged groups leads to a healthier society in the medium term, which in turn provides tourism enterprises with greater opportunities for growth and success (Koščak and O'Rourke, 2021).

Climate Change

Climate change is a challenge that has existed for many years, with its effects becoming increasingly evident. Patricia Espinosa, Head of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Secretariat, presented the WTTC Sustainable Development Action Plan at the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) (2019) conference in New York in September 2019. This initiative, supported by the UNFCCC Secretariat, aims to encourage and assist the entire travel and tourism sector in adopting more decisive and ambitious measures to address climate change. According to Espinosa, the travel and tourism industry has become a global economic force, generating 10.4% of the world's gross domestic product (GDP) in 2017, while also accounting for approximately 8% of global greenhouse gas emissions contributing to climate change. On one hand, the travel industry supports local economies in generating profit; on the other, it contributes to environmental degradation. We can no longer ignore reports highlighting the destructive impact of tourism, which is largely linked to air, road, and maritime transport. While it is true that the travel industry suffers from a chronic lack of regulation by policymakers, it is equally true that tourists themselves should take some personal responsibility and reduce the amount of air travel they engage in.

Overtourism

Overtourism refers to unsustainable tourism characterised by negative impacts on the destination's environment and local community that outweigh any positive effects. In cases of overtourism, the detrimental consequences of inadequate tourism planning and insufficient regulation on destinations become apparent. The phenomenon of overtourism has had a dual effect. On the one hand, it has led to negative attitudes towards tourism, which in some instances can be detrimental for destinations. On the other hand, it has raised awareness among various stakeholders about the need for more inclusive tourism decision-making, planning, and management. As a result of overtourism, there is a growing trend towards the implementation of tourist taxes, and an increasing number of destinations recognise that the revenues generated from these taxes enable the execution of sustainable projects. Technology will play an important role in finding sustainable solutions, thus serving as a practical tool. Mobile data are already being successfully utilised to influence visitor flows at certain destinations. The ability to monitor tourism in real time can assist in managing capacities, while access to geolocation data can support the planning of visitor flows and more efficient supply chain management.

Carrying Capacity

Sustainable tourism development must include an assessment of carrying capacity. This refers to the estimate of the "maximum number of people who can simultaneously visit a tourist destination without causing unacceptable changes to the physical environment and without unacceptably diminishing the quality of experience for both visitors and residents" (Mathieson and Wall, 1982, p. 21). Factors to consider include the physical impacts of tourists, ecological impacts, perceptions of overcrowding, and the cultural and social effects on local residents. This is of vital importance if tourism is to contribute to the preservation of cultural and natural heritage through the realisation of economic value and raising awareness of local heritage (Koščak, 2012).

Safety and Protection

Safety and protection are fundamental components of the travel planning of every tourist. Safety is defined as a state in which the risk and danger to an individual are minimised. Protection is understood as the active safeguarding against threats and the provision of situations that involve no risks. For tourists, safety and protection hold even greater significance as they encounter new and unfamiliar situations during their travels. Despite significant advances in healthcare over recent centuries, infectious diseases continue to pose a major threat in modern societies. Some diseases have been successfully controlled in the past and are now confined to a limited number of geographic areas (endemic diseases), while others can rapidly spread beyond their original outbreak zones and develop into epidemics or pandemics – as demonstrated by the COVID-19 pandemic. The foremost and most important aspect of any epidemic or pandemic is human suffering and loss of life. However, the spread of a virus can also have extensive economic consequences, with tourism being one of the most vulnerable sectors. The COVID-19 pandemic severely impacted the tourism sector, and in the future a range of new policies will need to be adopted to ensure a more sustainable and coherent tourism offer in this regard (Koščak and O'Rourke, 2023).

1.3 Public Participation

All of the above, and much more besides, are reasons why contemporary planning practice can no longer avoid so-called participatory planning, in which stakeholders from the public, private, and non-governmental sectors can and must express their ideas, visions, and plans, as well as any concerns and obstacles they believe may arise from implementing a particular development scenario.

Public participation in participatory planning is a process whereby the interests, developmental challenges, concerns, needs, and values of a given destination or area are incorporated into public and corporate decision-making. It is a two-way communication and interaction process aimed at achieving better decisions that enjoy public support. Most processes involving public participation include at least the following elements (Creighton, 2005):

- Public participation relates to administrative decisions – i.e. those typically prepared or developed by public agencies (and sometimes private organisations), rather than elected officials or other public sector stakeholders.
- Public participation is not merely about providing information to the public; it rather involves meaningful interaction between the decision-making institution and the stakeholders who wish to be involved in the process.
- There is an organised process for involving the public, which is certainly not something that happens by chance or accident.

– Participants have a certain degree of influence over the decision.

The key objectives of participatory planning are (Creighton, 2005):

Objective 1: To incorporate and validate public values in corporate decisions.
Objective 2: To improve the substantive quality of decisions.
Objective 3: To resolve conflicts between opposing interests.
Objective 4: To build trust in institutions.
Objective 5: To educate and inform the public.

The primary aim of the participatory planning process is to establish an advisory body composed of key stakeholders involved in decision-making, development, and the implementation of an action plan for a given tourism area. Key venues for participation may include, for example, local forums. These forums bring together stakeholders interested in the development of tourism in the area. These include local communities, local authorities, institutes, ministries, tourism service providers, tourism associations, external experts, local guides, and others. Stakeholders and their involvement in the decision-making process are the primary driving forces behind successful sustainable tourism development. In the following section, we will present the fundamentals of public participation in decision-making processes within participatory planning and participatory democracy (Tvrdonova and Budzich-Szukala, 2008).

1.4 Fundamentals of Public Participation

Public participation in decision-making is a right of citizens in a democratic society. As citizens, we have the right to have a voice in the planning of projects, legislation, and policies that affect our lives. This also applies to co-decision-making in support systems that are crucial for maintaining the quality of our daily functioning and lives, and upon which we depend.

Parliamentary or local elections, held every few years, are not always the most effective means of communicating our decisions on all matters that impact our work and life within the local community, except for a few rare and more politically motivated issues. It is apparent that the politicians we elect (the vast majority, with few exceptions) often lack the knowledge, sophistication, and interest necessary to address the many complex challenges involved in the development of local communities, whether rural or urban.

Public participation, especially at the local or community level, is essential in order to limit the concentration of power in the hands of public officials and private sector lobbyists. Ultimately, this is about giving true meaning to the practice of democracy. Public involvement is necessary to ensure better decision-making in the public interest and for its benefit. Public participation is a systematic, interactive process. This process, which directly affects citizens and other interested members of the public, also involves various stakeholder groups from government, business, and civil society. Public participation does not require partnership cooperation nor does it imply the need to reach consensus. At its core, public participation consists of several key activities, such as (Tvrdonova and Budzich-Szukala, 2008):

- the exchange of information regarding the proposed project, programme, policy, law, or other initiative (including relevant background or context related to the content of each activity);
- the exchange of ideas, understanding of challenges, and discussions of alternative solutions;
- identification of areas of agreement and disagreement among those involved, which are affected by the proposed decision;
- reaching the best possible, or a "good enough and compromise" solution that all parties involved and affected are willing to accept.

Public participation (sometimes also referred to as "public communication" or "participatory development planning") is not limited to the dissemination of information, but is rather the core platform for gather public opinion through appropriate techniques and subsequently using that opinion in taking relevant decisions.

If you are preparing a development concept or proposal/decision that is important for the development of a particular area or destination/region, you may face difficult questions from the public – how to implement the solution or development concept, or how to justify the challenging reasons for adopting such a decision to various interest groups in the area. Experience shows that it is not advisable to avoid publishing comprehensive information about decisions that have already been prepared. Similarly, it is not appropriate to inform citizens or the local community only once decisions have been finally adopted. This also applies to preparatory and other activities carried out by various experts and expert teams. It is always worthwhile to obtain feedback from the public before making important decisions, so that the decision reflects the needs of citizens and prevents negative reactions from them. Public perception and response to any adopted decision strongly affects both the scope and manner of its implementation (Tvrdonova and Budzich-Szukala, 2008).

Citizens have access to a range of participatory techniques (see Chapter 4), which provide opportunities to influence decisions on the proposed development concept. The fundamental rule of public participation is that the final decision on the concept or any important decision rests with the competent authority, not the public. Participatory planning is a system governed by strictly defined rules. General lack of awareness of this rule is one of the reasons for distrust among decision-makers and those who prepare and implement these concepts. They namely fear that if they begin communicating with the public, they will lose control over the process. At the same time, they do not realise that it is precisely because of public participation that decision-making materials are often improved and of higher quality (Tvrdonova and Budzich-Szukala, 2008).

1.5 Reasons for Public Participation

There are many reasons for public participation, which can be grouped as follows (Tvrdonova and Budzich-Szukala, 2008):

- legal reasons,
- socio-political needs,
- pragmatic and economic motivations.

The following sections describe the socio-political, pragmatic, and economic reasons.

1.5.1 Socio-Political Reasons

Considering a broad range of opinions can help prevent future conflicts. Timely and quality participation and involvement in the decision-making process can secure public support from citizens. There are several known benefits for authorities that systematically employ methods of participation, collaboration, and public engagement, such as:

- positive feedback from citizens who appreciate openness and transparency;
- enhanced credibility of decision-makers;
- mutual trust between authorities and citizens, improving the overall atmosphere;
- every public negotiation is an opportunity to express opinions and viewpoints.

1.5.2 Pragmatic and Economic Motivations

Effective and timely public participation accelerates the planning process and can save resources that decision-makers would otherwise need to spend later on modifications (based on citizens' demands) to an already completed project. Deciding when to involve the public as well as considering requests and proposals for changes from citizens and various interest groups can be successfully managed by establishing and maintaining ongoing dialogue with them.

Some important points of this approach include:

- The timing of public participation offers the opportunity for detailed familiarisation with the draft concept, thorough discussion with stakeholders, and the adoption of optimal solutions.
- Public participation can demonstrate that the risk of proposal rejection is too high or that implementation would cause economically unjustifiable costs.
- Inviting strong opponents to negotiations reduces the risk that they will later block the decision.
- Certain groups of citizens (non-governmental organisations - [NGOs], entrepreneurs) are valuable allies who can subsequently participate in new integrated projects related to the core idea and concept.
- We can obtain a wealth of materials, ideas, and comments that can be directly applied to the planning process, thereby improving the quality of the prepared documents.
- Local residents possess very detailed knowledge of the environment in which they live and can thus anticipate impacts on this environment or even identify ways to mitigate them. Within the public, there are always local experts (since every expert also lives somewhere) who, by participating as citizens, effectively provide professional advice free of charge.

1.6 Misunderstandings and Misconceptions about Public Participation

Misunderstanding No. 1 – It is too expensive

It is evident that, for example, organising a public hearing requires budgeting financial resources. At the outset of implementing an important decision for the local community, this can increase the overall cost of the process. On the other hand, the initial higher costs are offset by subsequent savings during the implementation phase. Thanks to public participation, the project is "locally adapted" and well designed. Promotion, which can be seen as a kind of "counterweight" to public participation, enhances social and political understanding of the proposed measures. If decisions important to the public are included from the beginning, potential protests against the project before implementation can be avoided, thereby saving resources related to legal proceedings and preventing delays in the project timeline.

Misunderstanding No. 2 – It takes too long

It is true that public participation requires sufficient time for information campaigns as well as the collection and evaluation of comments. This can result in a time delay during the initial decision-making phase. International studies show that the earlier public participation begins, the more efficient the process will proceed. Timely public involvement enables the investor to obtain additional information that can be directly used in planning activities and that might otherwise be difficult to acquire. Informing the public about a pre-prepared activity helps ensure a smooth process without raising controversy or emotions; communication prevents doubts about the project's objectives. After the initial delay, the decision-making process accelerates and the time lost is balanced out.

Misunderstanding No. 3 – It increases the risk of social protest

The fact is that public negotiations make the decision-making process transparent. Opening the planning process can, of course, also increase the risk of project rejection by an informed public. Transparency of the procedure and information may also encourage investors to make decisions that do not align with their original objectives. It is important to recognise that, in a democratic society, closed or non-transparent decision-making cannot conceal potentially contentious public administration measures or disputable investment goals. When addressing requests to ensure direct and indirect access to information for the public, it often becomes apparent that data concerning potentially controversial measures will sooner or later come out. This may occur through various channels, such as political opposition, non-governmental organisations, or the media.

1.7 Advantages and Disadvantages of Collaboration with the Local Community

Advantages	Disadvantages
Public participation reduces the likelihood of civic protests against decisions.	Providing justified reasons for the initial investment in a project requiring public participation is very important and demanding. It is necessary to create or plan a certain time

Advantages	Disadvantages
Prevents negative attitudes from environmental authorities whose opinion and consent are usually required by law. Avoids necessary project adjustments due to objections before implementation. Prevents project modifications during and after implementation.	and financial reserve for public participation already at the planning stage. • It is difficult to document the positive and concrete effects of participation. If the participation project is carried out professionally, there is likely to be no conflict that would otherwise be resolved "thanks to public participation". It is impossible to define what the situation would have been without participation, how the document would otherwise have looked, or how the public would have responded or what problems might have been perceived.

1.8 Levels or Ladder of Public Participation

There are many ways to involve people in decision-making. It is essential to distinguish between methods of public participation – for example, a sociological survey will enable a different kind of public dialogue than a public hearing, civil advisory committees, or a referendum. Specific public participation procedures differ according to the level of public control they allow. For instance, if you are preparing a public participation programme, it is crucial to first determine the level of public control. From this perspective, we distinguish the following levels (or stages) of public participation (Tvrdonova and Budzich-Szukala, 2008):

- direct democracy;
- joint decision-making and consultation with respected citizens/residents of the local community;
- formal consultation with citizens/residents of the local community;
- collection of public comments;
- information campaign;
- manipulation of public opinion.

From the typology of public involvement outlined above, it is clear that each level allows a completely different scope of public control over the prepared decisions.

1.8.1 Manipulation of Public Opinion

The lowest level of public engagement is attempts to manipulate or shape public opinion. This is used when an important decision has already been made and citizens only need to be reasonably informed of the decision or provided with essential information. This level can be understood and regarded as the most basic and primitive form of public participation. This method is employed by companies specialising in public relations and by decision-makers who wish to "prime" the public for the decision. Manipulative methods provide an important service to society by exposing the incompetence or lack of credibility of the decision-maker using them.

1.8.2 Information Campaign

A clear information campaign about the decision-making process is a basic prerequisite for any serious attempt at involving the public. This form of involvement merely provides information and does not allow for the collection of public comments or feedback. Such a campaign, based solely on information provision, should therefore only be used in cases where the issues are clear. Decision-makers use it simply to increase transparency of the ongoing decision-making process. Examples include posters, notice boards, information in local media, and so forth.

1.8.3 Collection of Public Comments

A collection of comments and opinions provides an opportunity to identify and assess likely public reactions to our plans and development decisions. The decision-maker who chooses this procedure wishes to broaden their insight into the issue, but this does not oblige them to take the comments into account in any way. Citizens or residents of the local community are invited to submit their comments and proposals without any guarantee that their ideas will be taken into account. Examples of such procedures mainly include direct interviews with citizens, surveys, and similar methods.

1.8.4 Formal Consultation with Citizens/Residents of the Local Community

Formal consultations with citizens or local residents are official negotiations between the decision-maker and the affected citizens. They differ from other levels by involving a clear commitment from the decision-maker to use the information obtained in the further planning process – that is, the decision-maker undertakes to seriously evaluate and consider all received information, opinions, and ideas. Formal public consultation is employed when a decision requires serious public debate about the planned objective, often for political or legal reasons. Methods of such consultation include public hearings and consultations with non-governmental organisations and civil initiatives.

1.8.5 Joint Decision-Making and Consultation with Respected Citizens/Residents of the Local Community

Representatives of the public participate directly in decision-making. The decision-maker engaging in this form of participation is open to frank discussion about the conceptual solution to a problem and aims to optimise the prepared decision together with the affected parties involved in the process. Through joint planning, it is possible to avoid public protests, increase the decision-maker's credibility, and gain support for implementing the decisions thus prepared. A common procedure in such cases is the establishment of a special civil advisory committee or council with a defined action plan, among other measures.

1.8.6 Direct Democracy

The decision-maker delegates the right to decide entirely into the hands of the public. Citizens primarily select decisions through various forms of voting. The most commonly used direct democracy procedure is the referendum. A formal or binding referendum is used for special situations, while a non-binding or consultative referendum can be applied in many other cases.

1.9 Stakeholder Groups

In the planning and development process, for purposes of simplicity, we say that we "involve the public". However, the public is not a homogeneous entity; it consists of numerous target groups of citizens, and each individual may be a member of multiple interest groups. For successful public participation, it is necessary to identify who may potentially be affected or concerned by the planned activity. Identifying stakeholders in the planning process is the responsibility of the decision-maker or the organiser of the development project that requires public participation. It is easier to identify the public that is directly affected by the development concept. However, it is important to recognise that other stakeholder groups and individuals in the local community may also be interested if they are indirectly affected.

1.9.1 How to Identify Stakeholder Groups?

When planning a project, the public is divided into several stakeholder groups. Each group has different characteristics – they must be treated and communicated with differently. For a general public participation project, it is advisable to focus, for example, on the following groups (Tvrdonova and Budzich-Szukala, 2008):

- residents of the area;
- institutions;
- entrepreneurs and companies;
- local personalities;
- non-governmental organisations.

Stakeholder groups can be identified using the following methods (Tvrdonova and Budzich-Szukala, 2008):

- self-identification (publishing a call such as “anyone interested is invited to participate”);
- identification by a third party – using participants who are asked whom to invite, who might be interested, or to forward the invitation to other relevant people;
- identification by organisers – based on personal experience, existing directories, and databases;
- geographic analysis;
- demographic analysis;
- historical analysis;
- consultation with local institutions;
- user analysis.

Identification of interested stakeholders should be ongoing throughout the public participation process, i.e. for each stage of the project separately. The reason is that the composition of participating stakeholders and people from the affected local community may change over time. Moreover, new objective facts may arise that were not known at the beginning of the process. There may also be more pragmatic reasons, as different stages of the planning process require different groups of citizens or stakeholders.

1.9.2 How Willing Are Citizens to Participate?

Before preparing a public participation project, it is important to recognise that not all citizens wish to express their opinions or influence decision-making in the same way or to the same extent. It is advisable to follow the principle that “*everyone has equal access to information, and it is their choice how much time and energy they dedicate to influencing the decision*”.
Organisers are often disappointed by the low turnout at public hearings, discussions, and similar events, even when these have been very well or even excellently organised. It is

crucial that organisers understand that not all invited stakeholders are equally willing to devote their time to the issue at hand.

The following text aims to help understand and categorise the public into groups based on the amount of time and energy they are willing to invest in the participation process. Of course, this is a simplified classification (Tvrdonova and Budzich-Szukala, 2008).

»Apathetic Public«

Citizens who become aware of the issue but decide not to participate in the process. Their reasons for this decision may vary. It is important to do everything possible and be confident that their decision is based on accurate information. If the information campaign is well designed, their attitude (or lack of response) can be understood as implicit consent to proceed with the process.

»Observers«

This group watches the process but does not participate actively, and generally does not provide feedback. There is thus often a tendency to "exclude" this large group from planning and informational activities, because they do not offer any responses. The reasons for this passivity may vary, such as feeling that others will adequately represent their interests. However, these people or stakeholders are an important reference, informational, and opinion point for their community, so it is necessary to ensure there is a good information channel that targets them. This is a large group with the potential to become active, especially if the process does not proceed in line with their expectations.

»People Who Need a Reminder«

These individuals are willing to participate in a way that is most convenient and comfortable for them. For example, this means they will participate in an event if the venue is close to their home. They can also be described as people who will only attend well-prepared and well-organised events. This group is the largest and the one to which we must dedicate the majority of interactive activities.

»Advisors«

This group consists of employees or volunteers from certain groups or institutions (for example, non-governmental organisations). They are willing to devote considerable time and energy to the challenges of the development issue. They have experience and are continuously involved in working groups, civil advisory and committees, and prepare various scenarios and proposals to optimise the planning and development process.

»Decision-Makers«

A citizen or stakeholder becomes a decision-maker at the moment they participate in a referendum or when a formal decision-maker delegates competencies and authority for taking decisions to them – usually as a member of an appropriate commission or working group. Such a division of the public can help us design a programme that does not enable participation to only a part of the public. We cannot allow only the "elite" to participate. An approach structured like this can lead to increased attention from excluded members of the public and a priori rejection of opponents who were not invited. Therefore, public participation must be organised so that both participation and decision-making responsibility are available to all groups of interested citizens.

SUMMARY

The process of preparing strategic development documents based on participatory planning and the facilitation of local partnerships is a highly complex task requiring a wide range of skills. This applies to facilitators working at various decision-making levels – whether very local, for example at the level of development planning in a single village, or in the case of facilitators of Local Action Groups (LAGs) in Community-Led Local Development (CLLD), operating at higher levels such as sub-regional or regional ones. Last but not least, this also applies to preparing strategic development documents at the level of a tourist destination.

From our experience, three types of skills are particularly important:

- First, the facilitator must be able to identify and encourage a broad range of local partners (from the public, private, and non-governmental sectors) to participate in local development and planning processes, and they must also know how to ensure the participation of local residents in decision-making.
- Second, the facilitator – together with their community – must be able to identify local resources and "use" them to the greatest benefit of the area, or as a development potential for the direction of strategic and planning activities.

– Thirdly, the facilitator and partners must be able to define and realise objectives aimed at achieving sustainable development and improving quality of life, which requires the ability for strategic thinking.

In this part of the textbook, we have focused on presenting the potential and importance of cross-sectoral partnerships to strengthen the capacities for local collaboration in strategic planning situations, both in the field of sustainable and responsible tourism and rural development. We have highlighted the significance of public participation in this context, the reasons for and pitfalls of public participation projects, their importance, and some techniques to increase public participation.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

- Which target groups must be invited to the planning process?
- In your opinion, what could be the greatest challenge in your project?
- How and according to what criteria will you select participants for the planning process?
- Which public participation techniques do you propose and why?
- How will you inform the public about your activities and planning processes?
- What are the key steps and activities for successful inclusion and participation of the public?
- Write down any potential problems, obstacles, and limitations in this process.
- How and according to what criteria will you identify the target group for implementing the planning process?
- How will you address differing interests within the planning group?
- How will you select the appropriate and suitable technique for a specific project or planning process?

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2 Examples of Good Practice in Collaboration With the Local Community

Examples of good practice have been selected based on two criteria. First, we present several projects from abroad that, although addressing different developmental issues and themes important for the development of tourist destinations, involved public participation and collaboration as key prerequisites and tools for their successful implementation (see Figure 1). We then provide some direct experiences from concrete public participation actions in the domestic environment, which have in one way or another influenced the further development of tourism in these destinations. The examples are summarised from the *Good Practice Handbook of the Digital Agenda for a New Tourism Approach in European Rural and Mountain Areas* (Center za razvoj Litija, d.o.o., 2014).

Figure 1: Meeting with the local community.

Example 1: Promoting the Cultural Sector through the Introduction of Information and Communication Technology in the Development Plans of Cultural Tourism, Podbeskidzie Region, Poland

The project focuses on **promoting the cultural landmarks of the Podbeskidzie region through the development of cultural tourism plans**. Local authorities, key stakeholders, and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) operating in the tourism sector collaborated during the preparatory and evaluation phases. The Regional Development Agency of Bielsko-Biała managed the Information Centre for Cultural Tourism in Cieszyn.

Objectives

The main objective of this initiative was to **improve competitiveness** by improving **access to information** for all visitors, installing signage for cultural landmarks, promoting cultural heritage to attract tourists and, where possible, extending the tourist season. Information and communication technology was also utilised in **online** presentations and the preparation of new projects.

Location

The practice was implemented in the Bielsko-Biała area (including Żywiec and Cieszyn), covering 2,227 km² with a population of around 625,000. Since the mid-1960s, the Beskidy region has been known as a tourist destination for residents of the industrial Upper Silesia region.

Detailed Description of the Practice Context and Origin

One of the goals was to prepare **development plans for cultural tourism and promotional activities for the region**, requiring the participation of all regional tourism actors and SMEs. Such a strategy is rarely applied in rural and mountainous areas. Spatial planning is a novelty for most European regions, but can be integrated into existing national and regional planning systems. In addition to preparing a cultural tourism development plan, the practice included the establishment of **tourist information centres focused on the region's cultural heritage**. The project improved regional connectivity through new employment opportunities and social inclusion. To fully exploit the potential of regional culture, the city of Bielsko-Biała launched a project **to cover the city with modern internet infrastructure**, thereby providing local institutions and some

175,000 residents of Bielsko-Biała and its surroundings with broadband access to new information and communication technologies (the CHIRON project).

Timeline

The CHIRON project **commenced in 2005 and was completed in August 2007**. One year was dedicated primarily to partnership formation, as the project involved various actors from Central and Southern Europe.

Practice Process and Content, and Technology and Infrastructure Employed

The region is located at the tripoint of Slovakia, the Czech Republic, and Poland, representing a **blend of the cultures** of these three countries. The process of identifying the most valuable cultural heritage required extensive research, consultation, and public stakeholder participation. Based on the results of this, in addition to the cultural tourism development plan, three other initiatives were implemented:

- preparation of a ***Cultural Tourism Handbook for the Podbeskidzie Region***;
- **setting up of a website** promoting regional cultural landmarks and heritage;
- opening of a **cultural tourism information point**.

The aim was to promote unique routes featuring historic landmarks, religious architectural gems, handicrafts, artistic masterpieces, and the heritage and cultural landmarks of the region, such as the "Cultural Week in Beskid" international folklore festival. Drawing on these and other regional experiences, a **tourism cluster was developed, bringing together increasingly larger tourism and regional institutions** to boost further sectoral development.

Changes Needed for Implementation and Improvement of the Practice

The project's implementation marked the first step towards better promotion and preservation of regional cultural heritage and enhanced collaboration among various regional actors. The results demonstrated the necessity of introducing a new promotional tool – information and communication technologies. This is especially important for tangible cultural heritage exhibited in museums and other institutions. **Digitalisation of landmarks involves the creation of virtual tours** that showcase sites which are otherwise difficult to access, especially for people with disabilities.

Financial Framework

As part of the project co-financed by the **Interreg IIIB CADSES programme**, a cultural tourism development plan and a *Cultural Tourism Handbook for the Podbeskidzie Region* were prepared, and a cultural tourism information centre was established. The project budget was €133,000, 25% of which was allocated to the establishment of the cultural tourism information centre in Cieszyn.

Beneficiaries

The beneficiaries include **local and regional authorities, local tourism organisations, stakeholders from the tourism sector, travel agencies and associations, and the local community**. The centre was established in the tourist town of Cieszyn in Poland, located at the tripoint with the Czech Republic and Slovakia. Thousands of tourists visiting the town annually thus have an additional opportunity to explore the rich culture of the Beskidy region. The preparation of these plans aimed to promote cultural landmarks that are usually inaccessible to the public, such as valuable or remote examples of art and architecture. One of the objectives was also to introduce 3D optical scanning and create virtual tours to enable access to these landmarks for tourists with disabilities. This was recently realised through a project by the Bielsko-Biała district (virtual tour).

Transferability

This practice can be transferred from mountainous and rural areas to other destinations, the only condition is the adoption and integration of the **Cultural Tourism Development Plan into local strategies**. Implementing such a practice requires the **involvement of regional and local actors from the tourism sector**, as well as the integration of cultural tourism into promotional and investment activities and projects. The use of **information and communication technologies (ICT)** is also essential.

Synergy and Integration

This project, which was carried out in cooperation with international institutions from Central and Southern Europe, served to **establish connections between various organisations and institutions**. **Cultural exchange projects** were also implemented. By collaborating with regional actors and the tourism sector, we improved **regional tourism products** such as the Baskid Pass – a Polish-Slovak cross-border tourism product still under development – and established a regional tourism cluster that unites the majority of tourism stakeholders from the region.

Impacts of the Practice and Possible Results

The project was expected to **increase competitiveness** by improving access to information for cultural visitors, installing signage for cultural landmarks, and promoting cultural heritage, thereby attracting tourists and, where possible, extending the tourist season. The project positively influenced regional connectivity through **new employment opportunities and social inclusion**.

Example 2: Tourist Needs Monitoring Platform CSI Piemonte, Piedmont Region

Good practices are based on the following principles:

- it is important to understand what tourists want when they visit a particular destination;
- culture and tourism are increasingly intertwined with technology;
- technology provides many innovative ideas for tourist areas, especially mountainous and rural regions, through various experiments.

The transfer of innovation to a tourist area means applying new technologies to improve existing policies and services.

Objectives

The main objective of CSI Piemonte's good practice in the Piedmont region was to **"listen to user needs"** regarding tourist services in a specific area with the aim of **determining whether new technological solutions could increase tourist inflows**. All tourist comments on social media (the internet offers new sources of information – informal sources such as blogs, forums, etc.) and all other information were used to improve tourist services (both public and private).

Location

The **Piedmont region** covers an area of 25,399 km² and has approximately 4.3 million inhabitants. It borders France, Lombardy, Valle d'Aosta, Liguria, and Emilia-Romagna. It is the second-largest region in Italy. This good practice was implemented in the area of Turin, which participates in the Holy Shroud Exhibition event, but it also took into account data from across the entire region.

Detailed Description of the Practice: Context and Origin

The Holy Shroud Exhibition is an event in Turin, but was never considered a significant tourist phenomenon. In 2010, CSI Piemonte proposed to the Piedmont region to **collect data to better understand the tourist groups** attending the event and **their needs and demands**. The **monitoring platform** identified which areas of Piedmont and which tourist accommodations were chosen for holidays. The platform also determined where and when people talked about the Holy Shroud Exhibition", enabling integrated analysis of various information sets and highlighting the strengths and weaknesses of tourist proposals for the Piedmont area, which will be very helpful in planning and promoting future events.

Timeline

The **monitoring platform** was first implemented for the *Holy Shroud Exhibition* in Turin from 10 April to 23 May **2010**, although **data collection had already begun** in 2009 when the event's reservation system was already in place. The reservation system for the *Holy Shroud Exhibition* was developed and launched by CSI Piemonte in the last quarter of 2009. CSI Piemonte proposed using this data to develop the monitoring platform. The **project development lasted one month**, during which the methodology was created, an appropriate database was selected, and data were analysed and prepared for reporting. The platform also incorporated longstanding tourist data from Piedmont for comparative purposes.

Participating Organisations

- CSI PIEMONTE (technical assistance)
- PIEDMONT REGION (coordinator for public tourism promotion)
- COMITATO SINDONE (organiser of the *Holy Shroud Exhibition*)

The Piedmont Region, a member of the Exhibition Committee, officially entrusted CSI Piemonte with preparing the official website for the *Holy Shroud Exhibition*, the reservation system, and the monitoring platform to track the event from start to finish.

Practice Process and Content, and Technology and Infrastructure Employed

The platform enables **monitoring of various data sources**, including public tourist inflow data, emails sent to tourist offices, and discussions on tourism and cultural topics across blogs, forums, and online newspapers (both specialised and general content). To protect privacy, the system does not summarise personal data from online communications but focuses solely on textual elements (both objective and subjective) through which visitors evaluate tourist services.

The platform also **analysed implicit system data** – such as unstructured but tourism-relevant data from information systems (e.g. access to tourism websites) – and **user-generated digital content** (images, videos, selections, contacts, etc.). All these inputs contribute to the analytical methodology implemented via a technological platform called the Blogometer.

The **analysis methodology** is an interactive process of monitoring and analysing that enables **measuring the effectiveness of a company's communication strategies** from both qualitative and quantitative perspectives. The procedure consists of a series of advisory activities aimed at identifying key discussion points and analytical tools, including a semantic analysis tool that automatically extracts the main elements from conversations.

Changes Needed for Implementation and Improvement of the Practice

The platform only **"monitors" information already collected** by tourist offices and call centres. Reservations from all public and private institutions involved in the event were gathered, so no changes to public or private procedures were required. This increased awareness of the importance of **collecting information in a more standardised manner** to reduce the complexity of reporting.

The project was developed around three main pillars:

– **Data Collection:** According to the developed methodology, information can be collected using any software system. CSI Piemonte utilised some existing tools (SAS,

Oracle) to manage regional information systems. Data formats were standardised to enable integration of data from various sources into a single system.
- **Methodology:** CSI Piemonte adopted a methodology that defines rules based on data typology (to allow system readability) and "semantic" rules on how to read and interpret the data.
- **Interpretation:** The tourist needs monitoring platform also incorporated the BlogMeter tool, installed at CSI Piemonte, which produces final reports. The platform has already highlighted the areas that could be improved so as to align them with tourism standards.

Financial Framework

The establishment of the tourist needs monitoring platform and the analysis required to identify key data sources were part of a pilot project funded by the Piedmont Region and CSI Piemonte, with costs amounting to €30,000 (covering the costs of the staff used to standardise the information collected, and the costs of the staff used for data analysis). This does not include specific software costs as the tools were already selected by CSI Piemonte and made available to the project.

Beneficiaries

The Piedmont Region and all public administrations involved in tourism gained **knowledge on how to better design new tourism policies**. The platform's reports also provided **private companies with insights into which services** are better to invest in for future tourism events.

Transferability

The CSI Piemonte practice is transferable. A prerequisite is to identify **online information** (social media, forums, etc.) that need to be analysed. If the area already has other structured information (databases) related to tourism and tourist flows, this will add value to the analyses. The methodology and search engine generate reports to better inform decision-makers when making investment decisions and to design more effective policies in the future.

Synergy and Integration

This good practice was developed in the Piedmont region, where rich databases are continuously updated through the activities of various public and private entities. The tourist needs monitoring platform and methodology were also adapted to **analyse other topics**, such as smart city policies and services for the Municipality of Turin, **to assess the municipality's attractiveness and the new concept of innovative services**. **This demonstrates that the platform can be applied in any context requiring the analysis of the impressions, ratings, and opinions** expressed online by customers and citizens regarding the quality of services offered (transport, culture, health, etc.). Such information is not always easy to incorporate, as it often exists in various formats (sometimes incompatible with one another). The data must be organised to avoid duplication and errors, which requires significant time and financial resources. Data already collected by other systems (such as the Piedmont public events calendar, reservation systems for cultural events and museums, etc.) were included and interpreted to ensure a better understanding of the tourism phenomenon. These data will improve accuracy and enhance future tourism policies in the Turin area.

Impact of the Practice

Greater attention has been paid to the needs and desires of tourists, as evidenced by the **steady increase in tourist inflows** in various parts of Piedmont. One example of a positive change is related to the numerous tourist complaints that were received about the difficulty of finding information about moving around the city. **Descriptions of tourist routes and maps were thus added** to the Holy Shroud Exhibition website, **thereby improving the overall tourist experience**. As part of the CSI Piemonte practice, **tourist offices more closely monitored tourist comments** on social media during and after their visits. They also encouraged **online discussions** and **asked people** who spent their holidays in Piedmont **for suggestions**.

The good practice of CSI Piemonte demonstrated that:

- **All information is important – both structured (databases, etc.) and unstructured (documents, emails, etc.)**. Tourism promotion should be based on monitoring the needs of tourists.
- Such **information sources can be collected and analysed daily** to create a platform for monitoring tourist needs.

– The platform **can provide actionable insights** for developing new services or improving existing ones, as well as guiding tourism promotion policies. If decision-makers are aware of certain needs that have been highlighted by the platform, they can improve future policies and services.

Example 3: Campano Islands Project by Lauro Group (Naples, Italy) and Forthcrs (Greece) – University of Crete, Greece

We proposed a **combined promotion of various tourism and transport services through a dynamic B2B and B2C online search engine**. Previously, tourists were not able to plan visits to the islands in the Naples area via a single platform. While the project for Naples is ongoing, the project for Greece ended in spring 2013.

Objectives of the Practice

– **To promote tourism in an area where multiple services can be combined**, including accommodation, ferry transport, and land transport.
– **To attract individual tourists** who wish to organise their own trips.
– **To promote all types of tourism** in the area.

Location

Naples, Ischia, Capri

Detailed Description of the Practice Context and Origin – Starting Point and Motivation for the Activity

The main impetus for this project was the fact that **individual tourists were unable to book a complete trip via a single platform, including transport and accommodation**, if they wanted to visit the wider Naples area and islands. **Different transport and tourism services needed to be integrated** through a common booking platform to enable the creation of tailor-made packages sold directly online (B2C) or through travel agencies. This was a major challenge for both local businesses and a larger transport provider who took the initiative to implement this project.

Timeline

The project began in 2010. Preparations lasted more than six months. **The project became operational in summer 2012**.

Participating Organisations

- Lauro Group, the main carrier and project coordinator;
- Forthcrs, the technology provider;
- local travel agencies and hotel companies.

Practice Procedure and Content, and Technology and Infrastructure Employed

Key activities carried out included:

- **provision of information** to local businesses and stakeholders about the project's objectives and expected benefits;
- **integration** of various booking systems;
- **development** of a central booking platform;
- **entry of data** into the electronic platform;
- **training of personnel** and presentation of the platform to travel agencies and the local market.

Changes Needed for Implementation and Improvement of the Practice

Major planned changes involved **integrating the booking system with the international rail network and launching a strong marketing plan, largely based on online advertising**.

Financial Framework

Development and integration costs exceeded €150,000, 90% of which were accounted for by the costs of software development for the platform. The project has been and remains **privately funded** by Forthcrs S.A. (development) and Arcipelago Campano S.p.A. (content preparation and website integration).

Beneficiaries

Travel agencies and tourists are the primary beneficiaries, along with local businesses advertising under the destination marketing concept.

Transferability

The practice can be transferred to other locations and regions. Key conditions include strong motivation, good organisation in connecting various local players and businesses, and assuming the role of a destination marketing entity.

Synergy and Integration

The project involves cooperation with **local transport service providers (carriers) and tourism businesses**. It promotes **collaborative thinking among carriers, hotels, and travel agencies** that share a common interest and vision to promote the Naples area as a tourist destination. All these stakeholders should measure the results in order to enable continuous improvement of the practice. **The supervisory board of the main stakeholders** should be responsible for monitoring and evaluating progress and results.

Impacts of the Practice and Expected Results

The practice stimulates the local economy of the Neapolitan archipelago, but there are no tangible results yet. **The most important expected benefits are increased visitor numbers and visitor satisfaction**.

Lessons Learned from the Practice

– **Connecting local players** is very important. To achieve this, we recommend running workshops and advertising in the local media.
– **A destination brand** is a way to increase the accessibility and recognisability of rural areas. All areas are part of the destination, which should be intensively advertised.
– Although the project is not a technological innovation, **integrating multiple vendors and systems is a challenging task** and sometimes depends on commercial policies and decisions. The most effective way to promote the bringing together of different players is to organise a roundtable to present the common benefits in case of potential cooperation.

Example 4: Implementation of the Environmental Carrying Capacity Assessment at the Štrit Location in the Škocjan Municipality in the Context of the Development of the Product *Heritage Trails of Dolenjska and Bela Krajina*

In order to be included in the tourist offer, it was necessary to carry out both a physical and a social carrying capacity assessment. The environmental carrying capacity study is of crucial importance for identifying the environment and its cultural sensitivity, as well as for ensuring the sustainability of the *Heritage Trails* tourism product. More specifically, it aims to achieve the following objectives:

– to prepare a commercially successful and therefore profitable tourism product;
– to ensure the sustainability of local small businesses integrated into the local economy, which meet and pursue the "social, economic, environmental and cultural needs and objectives defined locally";
– to be environmentally responsible and design products in a way that reduces ecological impact by utilising existing structures and appropriate technology;
– to establish locally defined, locally owned, planned and monitored organisational and management structures.

The purpose of the environmental carrying capacity assessment is to ensure that tourists and day visitors interested in the *Heritage Trails* product do not have any harmful effects on the cultural or natural heritage of the destination. The goal of this assessment is to guarantee that overcrowding does not lead to visitor dissatisfaction and the local population welcomes the presence of visitors. This is particularly important if tourism is to contribute to the preservation of cultural and natural heritage, with the aim of capturing its economic value and raising awareness and responsibility among the local population. Environmental carrying capacity can be measured in various ways. In developing the *Heritage Trails* offer, the greatest attention is paid to developing the local economy and managing individual locations, as well as considering whether certain locations or areas should be excluded from the offer – primarily because an increased number of visitors could adversely affect the condition of the locations or be negatively received by the local community.

The first step in preparing the environmental carrying capacity assessment is conducting a workshop to evaluate the social carrying capacity. This needed to be done for each location proposed for inclusion in the *Heritage Trails* offer, in our case also for the Štrit location in the Municipality of Škocjan. Following a field visit and an introductory workshop with an expert in this field, data processing and entry for the selected location were carried out in accordance with the guidelines. In this way, the process of participatory planning at the destination began – that is, the process of public involvement at the selected location within the *Heritage Trails* offer.

At the workshop to evaluate the social carrying capacity, eight landowners around the lake were present. After an introductory presentation of the workshop's purpose and objectives, it became apparent that only two landowners – who already had small-scale tourist infrastructure (a café and a food and drink kiosk) – were positively inclined and supported the initiative to include the location in the wider tourism offer of the area. The remaining six were sceptical or opposed to these plans. They highlighted issues such as the unregulated state of the lake area, insufficient infrastructure, disregard for etiquette by visitors (trespassing on private property, littering of packaging waste, dumping of organic and inorganic waste on their land, disorderly parking, and so on). Since it was clear that including this location could pose a risk of further conflict and escalation, the tourism planners decided not to include this site in the Heritage Trails tourism offer.

This process demonstrated that it was essential to consult the local population during the process of selecting locations or areas of cultural and natural heritage intended for inclusion in the *Heritage Trails* product. It is important to ensure that the local impact and the opportunity to respond to tourist arrivals due to increased visitor demand for heritage tourism products are incorporated into the planning of tourism development within the local community, as well as in the marketing strategy for the local tourism offer.

Example 5: Implementation of an Environmental Carrying Capacity Assessment at the Trška Gora Location near Novo Mesto as Part of the Preparation for the *Heritage Trails* of Dolenjska and Bela Krajina Project

Related to the previous example is the assessment of the physical carrying capacity for the Trška Gora location in the Municipality of Novo Mesto. Local stakeholders proposed this location as attractive and worthy of visitation. **Trška Gora** (428 m) is a hill near Novo Mesto, dotted with vineyard cottages and vineyards. The name – literally "market town mountain" – derives from the fact that it belonged to the nearby market town of Novo Mesto. Most of the estates were owned by residents of Novo Mesto. The Cistercian monastery in Stična also owned land on Trška Gora – it was gifted to them by the Patriarch of Aquileia, Peregrin, upon the monastery's foundation in 1136. The founding charter mentions *Willam Wingarten* (most likely a manor house and wine store) and the village of Bajnof (from the German word *Weinhof* – wine estate) – a name preserved to this day. At the summit stands the pilgrimage Church of the Nativity of Mary (annual blessing on the Feast of the Nativity of Our Lady, 8 September), which was commissioned in 1623 by Jakob Reinprecht, abbot of the Stična Monastery. Today, it is administered by the parish of Št. Peter – Otočec. Next to the church grow four lime trees; the largest among them, with a chest circumference of 830 cm, is also the thickest lime tree in the Dolenjska region.

From the summit, there is a beautiful view over Dolenjska, including the Krka River, Novo Mesto, and the Gorjanci Hills. Near Trška Gora lies Turn Hill, 605 metres high, which is the highest point between Trdinov vrh and Kum. Also nearby are the ruins of Hmeljniški Castle and the partially restored Old Castle (Stari grad). The region is also known for the cviček wine from Trška Gora, as mentioned by Valvasor. The destination boasts numerous natural and cultural heritage features, making it attractive to visitors.

However, a significant obstacle to including the area in the *Heritage Trails* tourism offer has been, and remains, the inadequate and too narrow road infrastructure. This limits quality access to the site, especially considering that greater marketing and promotion could cause insurmountable problems with traffic flows and vehicle encounters on the access road, both on arrival and departure. Consequently, a physical carrying capacity assessment of the environment was conducted. This process involved consultations with the responsible local public administration bodies, natural and cultural heritage protection institutes, and other stakeholders (such as the Dolenjska Tourist Association), as well as some prominent local residents. Following this discussion and the analysis of collected survey data, the responsible planner concluded that the challenges and negative impacts associated with including this location in the tourism offer were too great, and that solutions to these problems were, at that time, still too far away or unrealistic (due to the high investment required in infrastructure). Therefore, the location was not included in the *Heritage Trails* offer.

Example 6: Siting of the Ljubljana–Zagreb Motorway near Trebnje

This example illustrates the spatial planning process and siting of the Ljubljana–Zagreb motorway section Mirna Peč–Bič near Trebnje. The investor and planner, DARS motorway company, made a significant professional error by underestimating the importance and role of a social carrying capacity assessment – which must be an integral part of the planning process. In addition to gauging public opinion, planners are obliged to examine all legal, economic, spatial, and other parameters, and the consequences of siting the motorway through the area. During the municipal administration under various mayors from different political backgrounds, the local community generally communicated relatively unified responses to the various proposed routes. However, these responses were apparently insufficiently loud, articulated, or professionally substantiated for the planners at certain times. As a result, the planners likely felt they could easily ignore the opinions and feedback from the local community during the public consultation process. However, they were clearly mistaken, as a strong, expert, and interdisciplinary civil initiative formed at the local level. This group began to inform and engage the local community intensively and transparently about the entire planning process and procedures. They also organised public meetings on the topic of motorway siting, and presented all the positive and negative consequences. The planner initially intended to route the motorway through the Temenica River Valley, which would have required the river to be channelled into a new, artificial bed. The Temenica is a karst disappearing stream, which disappears underground approximately 5 km east of Trebnje, near Ponikve. It is therefore unpredictable what might happen with large volumes of water, especially during high water levels, which would flow much faster and more directly into the sink – or to use a more specific karstological term, the ponor – through the re-channelled riverbed, likely causing flooding, including to some surrounding villages and houses. This was also the professional forecast of karstologists from the Karst Research Institute in Postojna who were consulted and provided their expert opinion. Moreover, there were many other professionally substantiated reasons why the valley variant of the route was unsuitable. For example, it would have "overrun" the route of the existing H1 expressway between Ljubljana and Zagreb, required the demolition of numerous houses in some villages, and worsened the standards and traffic flows of the local road network (for instance, the former H1 is now a well-maintained and quality bypass road around Trebnje).

All the efforts and professional arguments presented by the civil initiative to the local community at meetings – supported by numerous expert opinions from reputable national institutions (such as the Karst Research Institute, Institute for the Protection of Cultural Heritage, independent traffic planners, urban planners, and spatial planners) – were ultimately accepted with overwhelming consensus and majority support from the local communities in the three most affected areas along the motorway route. Although the motorway planners ignored and circumvented the local community's opinions for almost a decade, insisting on the valley variant, they were eventually forced to accept the local community's rejection and majority opinion, and thus adopt the so-called hillside variant. In practice, this alternative proved extremely favourable, relieving the local traffic problems and producing a system that is now modern and well organised. It also enabled the development and planning of tourist infrastructure, including cycling routes, which are today much safer and appropriately integrated into the landscape. From a safety perspective, the situation is much more optimal as a detour is arranged via the H1 expressway in the event of motorway closures or accidents, so traffic does not pass through Trebnje or other local settlements along the motorway.

This case demonstrates that the opinions and perspectives of local residents and communities are equal in importance to all other technical and expert assessments of the route. It confirms that participatory planning is the only successful form of planning if the aim is to achieve sustainable and responsible development. However, it is essential to have strong and well-substantiated expert arguments, which must be obtained through the participation of professionals and institutions capable of appropriately substantiating said arguments. This requires proper management and administration of the planning process, which must respect all formal and informal requirements and practices that need to be implemented, verified, and confirmed in the form of consensus and opinions from representatives of the local community affected by a particular spatial planning intervention.

Example 7: Preparation of Guidelines for the Development of Viticulture and Tourism on Lisec in Suha Krajina

The changes occurring in rural areas are strongly reflected in winegrowing (viticultural) regions. Alongside the abandonment of agricultural activities, urbanisation is increasing, with the excessive construction of wine cellars in some places significantly altering spatial relationships. Viticulture is also closely linked to modern lifestyles, as it represents a leisure activity for many and is increasingly becoming a form of tourism, which brings its own unique changes.

The Faculty of Tourism at the University of Maribor led the preparation and development programme for the Lisec viticultural area in the Municipality of Trebnje. Various experts from interdisciplinary fields contributed their insights and guidance, co-creating development plans and sustainable development guidelines for the coming years. The work was based on the principles of participatory planning. The first activity was organising a roundtable with local residents, primarily to present the starting points for the work and to record the community's views on development. In addition to staff from the Faculty of Tourism, other experts specialising in the planning and development of viticultural areas, as well as representatives of local communities and viticultural associations, participated in the roundtable. Several issues were raised with regard to how the development of viticultural areas should proceed in the future. Participants highlighted numerous challenges facing planners of such areas in Dolenjska given the diverse structure of users with very different interests. The results clearly demonstrated that the roundtable successfully addressed the most pressing issues in the viticultural areas. Particularly emphasised were the challenges of tourism development in viticultural zones and questions about where and how tourism should develop on Lisec in the new millennium. The discussion shaped opinions and views on the future vision and the search for optimum solutions for sustainable and responsible management of the Lisec viticultural area.

The planning activity that followed was a field study, during which the development vision team visited the Lisec vineyard area, conducted site inspections, and held interviews and workshops with the owners of some buildings and wine cellars. Through this process, valuable opinions were gathered from individuals, which were considered an important part of the guidelines for the formulation of a comprehensive development perspective. Views were presented on the development of viticulture, settlement structure and spatial arrangements, the protection of cultural heritage in wine-growing areas, and coexistence among residents in these regions.

Another important part of the planning process was the organisation of a workshop to evaluate the carrying capacity of the environment, attended by 11 participants, including some members of the local association and other representatives of the local community. The purpose was to assess the community's response to a potential increase in tourist visits to the Lisec area. The workshop also served to present positive and negative experiences from other tourist destinations that, especially before the COVID-19 pandemic, faced increased visitor numbers and the phenomenon of "overtourism" – that is, excessive numbers of tourists visiting a destination.

During the workshop, participants were asked 12 questions in total (see the questionnaire in Appendix 1). Some questions were answered collectively as a group, while others (marked with !) were answered individually. The responses more or less confirmed that, at least for now, the local community is not afraid of increased visitor numbers, as the supply and demand remain relatively low. Most visits occurred during the summer months, from June to September. Before the pandemic most guests were foreigners, while during the pandemic the number of domestic tourists increased, as they used the vouchers that were issued then to stimulate the tourism sector. Guests were particularly interested in the practice of viticulture – specifically the small-scale, so-called boutique production – as well as the preserved natural environment, and the hospitality of the locals. Participants rated tourism as an economic activity that could facilitate the development of their local community with scores of between 3 and 4 on a scale from 1 to 5. Through discussions with the audience, important and useful information was obtained, which subsequently provided a foundation for preparing development guidelines in the development plan.

These are just some of the possible techniques that can be used to gather essential data in the process of preparing development and strategic guidelines for sustainable and responsible tourism development.

Appendix 1: Questions for Assessing the Social Carrying Capacity of the Environment *

1. Find out whether tourism as an activity is already present in the local community or in the area under consideration (village, etc.).
2. What advantages does tourism bring to the local community?
3. What disadvantages could tourism bring to the area?
4. Discuss with the group whether the advantages outweigh the disadvantages.
5. Ask each individual which attractions and points of interest, from a tourism perspective, they believe are available to visitors/tourists in the village/area and its surroundings. Try to reach a consensus on which attractions/points of interest the area should present to visitors/tourists. Emphasise those attractions that are related to natural and cultural heritage (the focus of the project) and do not forget to ask about events such as traditional customs, celebrations, folklore, fairs, etc., which could, in their opinion, benefit from visitors.
6. Identify and compile a list of tourist facilities (from attractions to accommodation) that the area can offer to visitors/tourists (attractions related to natural and cultural heritage, accommodation, food and drink establishments, bathrooms, tourist information centres (TICs), brochures with information, etc.).

7. Are all the facilities listed in point 6 owned by people from the area/village or by people living in the immediate vicinity?
8. Do the villagers/local residents want more tourists? Is tourism already causing dissatisfaction or anger? Could an increase in tourist numbers lead to an increase in dissatisfaction or anger?
9. How important is tourism for the development of economic activity in the area/village? Not important 1 2 3 4 5 Very important.
10. If tourist numbers were to increase by 100%, 200%, or 300% (intentionally use such dramatic increases), what changes would need to be made in the village/area?
11. Compile a list of all opportunities that group members see locally for earning income from tourism, what goods they can market, what services they can offer and charge visitors for.
12. What obstacles do the participants believe currently prevent them from greater involvement in tourism, such as offering accommodation, food and drink, local guiding, demonstrating traditional crafts and marketing them, arranging facilities for tourism needs, and establishing a tourist information centre?

* The questions were discussed at a workshop to evaluate the social carrying capacity of the environment. We recommend that local stakeholders revisit these questions after a certain period, for example two or three years, to determine whether and how local conditions and circumstances affecting development have changed, and how to address or act upon these new, altered facts.

3 Project Planning Incorporating Local Participation

Project planning is a demanding task as it involves many participants, processes, and resources. The impacts of a project's outcomes can be positive for the environment in which it is situated (for example, higher employment, infrastructure development) or negative, such as transformation of the local culture (Cooper, 2021). The project lifecycle encompasses various phases through which a project progresses – from the formulation of the project idea, preparation and planning, through to designing individual activities, procurement or acquisition of necessary resources, actual implementation, and finally verification and project conclusion (Lock, 2013). Additional elements are incorporated into these phases for larger projects, such as feasibility studies, risk assessments, and stakeholder engagement. Insufficient collaboration with different stakeholders and failure to consider their interests are key factors that can affect the successful implementation of a project and may even cause it to fail (Lock, 2013).

Projects have multiple stakeholders coming from different backgrounds and distinguished by various characteristics (Cooper, 2021). These include project clients, implementers, and funders who carry out the project with a specific purpose – usually to gain profit from the future sale or use of the project's final outcome. Another group of stakeholders includes staff, subcontractors, suppliers, and other workers, as well as future users of the project's deliverables (for example, tenants of a space). We must also consider public services such as public transport, security, cleaning, and retail, which will serve the users of the realised project. Equally important are inspectors, public administration and authorities, and organisations issuing permits/licenses. A large group of stakeholders includes civil associations and local residents, as the project affects their everyday lives (Lock, 2013). Communication and cooperation with groups of people from the local environment affected by the project is defined as local participation, or planning incorporating local participation (Slocum, Aidoo and McMahon, 2020; Cooper, 2021). In this process, we listen to the views and solutions of local communities using various participatory methods. Since we must approach this process with careful consideration and in a structured manner, it can also be defined as a project – a local participation project. When undertaking this within the broader project, we always first examine its context and structure (Tvrdonova and Budzich-Szukala, 2008). Context refers to the purpose and content of the main project we wish to communicate, along with all its characteristics (geographical location, legal frameworks, timeframe, resources and funding, environmental impacts). Structure relates to the implementation of local participation (identification of the stakeholders involved, preparation of materials, promotion, conducting meetings, reflection on insights gained, and reporting on possible actions). Therefore, before starting the local participation project, we must have a thorough understanding of the main project and carefully plan the communication with local stakeholders.

3.1 Steps for Implementing the Local Participation Project

The implementation of the local participation project proceeds according to the following steps (Tvrdonova and Budzich-Szukala, 2008):

- Assembly of the project team.
- Defining the purpose and objectives of the local participation project.
- Understanding the legislative, legal, and social context of the main project and the decisions to be taken.
- Determining stakeholder involvement in the process (which groups will be included and for what purpose).
- Selecting the working methods with the participants in the local participation project.
- Setting the local participation project timeframe.
- Determining the resources needed to carry out the local participation project.
- Securing funding for the local participation project.
- Inviting and recruiting participants from the local environment.
- Promoting the local participation event.

- Conducting the local participation event.
- Evaluating the process and results of the local participation event.
- Preparing and presenting the final report and integrating findings into the main project process.

PHASES 1–3

In order to ensure successful implementation of the local participation project, it is essential to first form an appropriate team capable of listening to different groups and understanding all aspects of the main project (see Figure 2). It is therefore recommended that the team includes a representative of the client commissioning the main project and a representative of the local community (Garrod, 2003). These are individuals who are familiar with the main project and the local environment, and who can provide answers to questions from local environment groups.

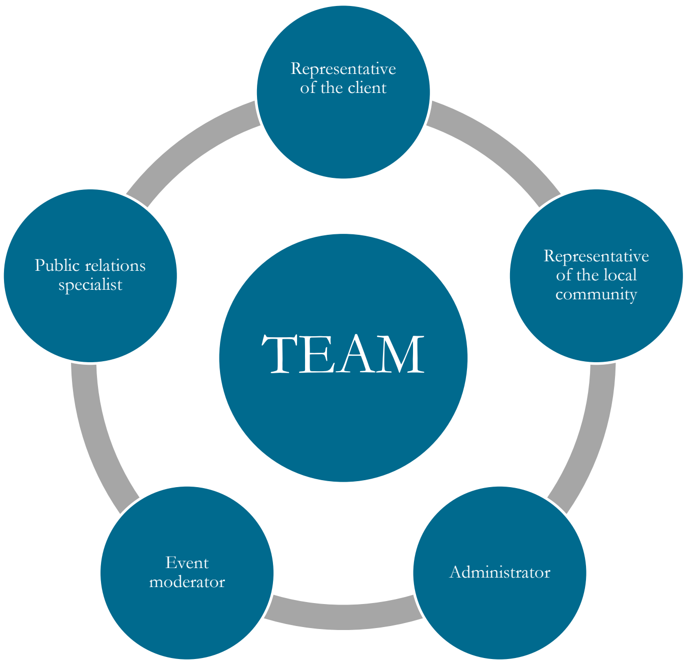

Figure 2: Project team members.

Furthermore, it is advisable that the group includes a person responsible for public relations, as their skills in listening, communicating, and managing both data and stakeholders can ensure as smooth a communication process as possible. The team also includes a moderator who is responsible for facilitating the local participation events. In addition, the team may include an individual who handles administrative matters and ensures the process runs smoothly.

All members of the project team must also discuss and agree on the purpose and objectives of the local participation process. In most cases, the purpose of such a process is to influence public opinion, the policies adopted, or legislation. The local participation process can also help to relieve any tensions among certain groups. Alternatively, the process may aim to gather ideas and solutions for challenges encountered during the implementation of the main project. Stakeholders from the local environment know their surroundings best and can serve as valuable advisors.

Once the local participation project team is selected and the project's purpose confirmed, it is crucial that team members thoroughly familiarise themselves with the legal, regulatory, and social aspects of the main project. They must review national legislation, local regulations, media reports, social media posts, posts on forums, and other sources to understand the political situation and environment that is the subject of the main project. These environments may vary, especially since large projects often cross national and cultural boundaries, so team members must consider the cultural diversity of stakeholders. They must also understand the potential consequences of the decisions that need to be taken (Tvrdonova and Budzich-Szukala, 2008).

PHASES 4–5

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, several different stakeholder groups can take part in the local participation process (see Figure 3). These groups consist of people with diverse characteristics who originate from the local environment of our project, or are somehow connected to it. Certainly, they include local residents for whom the project environment is a living space, a place for relaxation and recreation, cultural events and leisure, schooling and play for their children, shopping, socialising, employment, and more. There are also entrepreneurs and businesses operating locally, engaged in sales, services, or manufacturing, employing workers, or renting premises. Local authorities and administration form the next group, responsible for the public good and all public services in the area – ranging from municipal utilities services to administration. Various institutions operating in the area can be identified as another stakeholder group, and these include cultural, sports, educational, and research institutions (for example, museums, libraries, schools, institutes, etc.). Next are interest groups, which may be organised as non-governmental organisations (such as societies) or civil initiatives. A special group of stakeholders are influencers who may come from various spheres – they can be well-known media personalities, famous athletes, online influencers, or local dignitaries. Some influencers are easily recognisable, while others are harder to identify as they do not seek the spotlight (Garrod, 2003). Moreover, we must not forget marginalised groups, such as the elderly, youth, and people with disabilities (Slocum, Aidoo and McMahon, 2020).

Members of these groups vary in their level of activity within the local community, often depending on how connected they feel to it (Cooper, 2021). Many people fall within the apathetic (indifferent) public, i.e. those who do not participate in events, and within the observers group who mostly do not engage but may become active at certain points. For these groups, good information provision is crucial. The next group is more active during well-organised events – although these are people who need a reminder to attend. They are the largest group, for whom most events are organised. Advisors form the next group, primarily emerging from interest groups and actively engaging with selected topics. The final group consists of decision-makers, who are part of working groups, commissions, or participate in referenda (Tvrdonova and Budzich-Szukala, 2008). These groups are illustrated in Figure 4 where the pyramid structure also indicates that there are more people in the lower groups than in the upper ones. While the lower groups are mostly information recipients, those higher on the list are increasingly active information providers, with the top groups able to develop and manage their own projects (Slocum, Aidoo and McMahon, 2020). It is important to recognise that members of the public can belong to any of these groups and may skip levels if they are particularly interested in a topic (Kantsperger, Thees and Eckert, 2019).

Figure 3: Potential stakeholders in the local participation process.

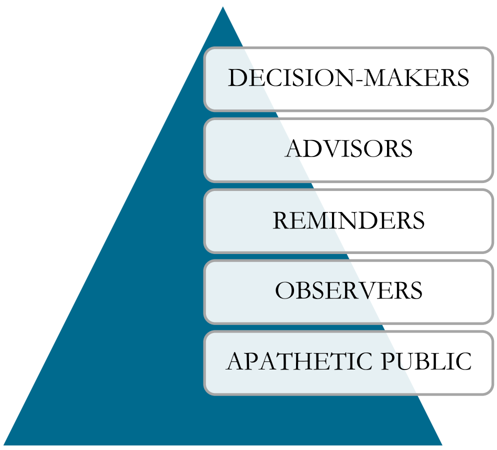

Figure 4: Levels of public activation.
Source: Adapted from Tvrdonova and Budzich-Szukala, 2008 and Kantsperger, Thees and Eckert, 2019.

The levels of active participation have also been elaborated upon by other experts. For instance, Kantsperger, Thees and Eckert (2019) and Teladia and van der Windt (2022) present "Arnstein's Ladder of Participation" with eight distinct levels, ranging from non-participation, where members passively receive information, to symbolic participation, where participants provide a slight response to activities, through to empowerment, where participants proactively engage in decision-making. For each group, appropriate activities are prepared within the project. Care must be taken to select suitable methods for working with the chosen stakeholder groups, which are presented in the following chapter.

PHASES 6–8

The project timeline is of paramount importance for the successful execution of both the main project and the local participation initiative. A Gantt chart (Figure 5) can be utilised as a tool for planning the timeframe. Local participation can be integrated into the main project's timeline right from the outset (Garrod, 2003). Planning for local participation must commence sufficiently early to allow ample time for participant recruitment, information dissemination, and event execution. Planning typically begins approximately six months prior to the scheduled events involving the local community. During this period, the team is formed, the purpose and objectives are defined, the project's thematic scope and environmental characteristics are reviewed, and participant recruitment commences.

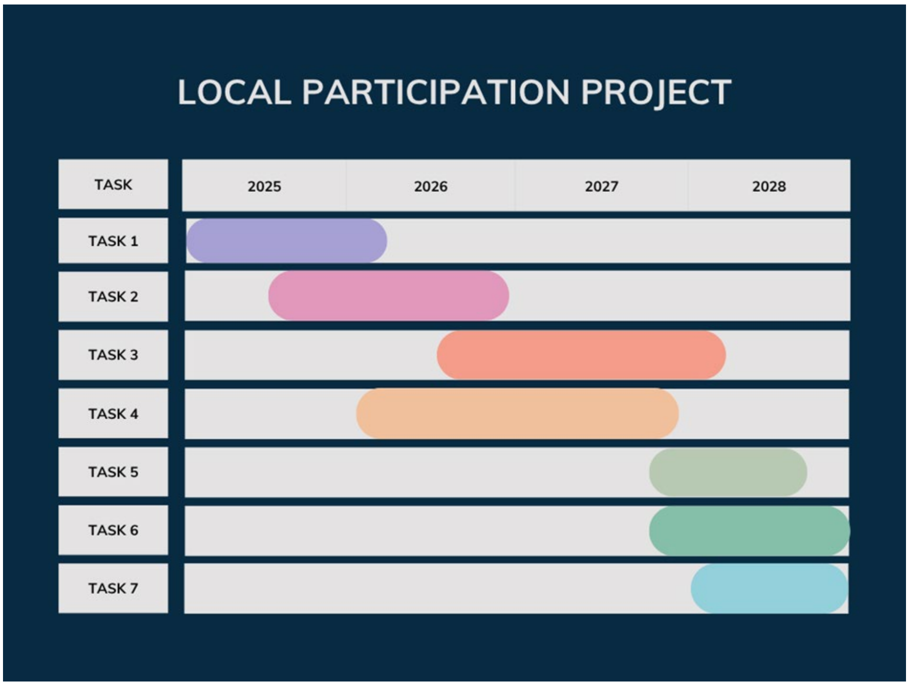

Figure 5: Example of a Gantt Chart.

When scheduling event dates, it is important to first consider any activities already taking place within the local area and listed in the local calendar. Public holidays, other major events (at schools, churches, sports and cultural events, etc.), and holidays when residents are absent from their local environment should be avoided. Furthermore, it is generally preferable to organise events during the week rather than at weekends (Tvrdonova and Budzich-Szukala, 2008). Following an event, sufficient time should be allocated within the timeline for to prepare a report and present the results.

Once the timeline is established, it is also important to consider the resources needed for the successful implementation of the local participation project. Such resources include funding, personnel, venues, and materials. The project team provides human resources, and additional individuals are integrated into the project as required. Spaces and materials for the project team's work and event implementation can be provided from existing locations or stock, or alternatively rented or purchased anew. Financial resources may be supplied by the project client or funder, but it is also possible to apply for sponsorship or donation funding.

Securing funding for the main project or the local participation project is a demanding task. Clients commissioning the project are often enthusiastic about the funders they secure, but must exercise caution. Each funder has their own interests they will seek to pursue, so project clients need to be careful about whose money they accept for project implementation. Transparency and accessibility of information are crucial, as is the alignment of funders' goals with those of the clients'. This way, stakeholders from the local community will see that intentions do not conflict and will not be negatively predisposed towards the project from the outset (Tvrdonova and Budzich-Szukala, 2008).

PHASES 9–11

Inviting and recruiting participants from the local environment can be approached in various ways (Tvrdonova and Budzich-Szukala, 2008). Methods range from traditional lists of telephone numbers and email addresses, which can be purchased from other research organisations, to general advertisements in public media calling for event participation where candidates self-identify as suitable. Personal invitations to members of specific groups are also possible and tend to be the most effective. The participant recruitment process should be conducted at least three to four months before the event, with all data collected on potential participants carefully maintained in a database, and participants regularly updated on the progress of the local participation project. The list should be continuously updated, as membership in such groups can change rapidly (Tvrdonova and Budzich-Szukala, 2008).

Recruitment is effectively part of the event promotion, which continues until the event takes place. Promotion can utilise mass media (television, radio, print media, online media), outdoor advertising (posters, leaflets), or social media. Various public relations tools can also be employed – from press releases and conferences, email communications, informing special interest groups, to organising promotional events and personal communication.

When preparing for the actual event, a sufficiently large hall, conference room, or auditorium should be secured to accommodate all participants and any potential audience (see Figure 6). The venue must have the necessary equipment (chairs, tables, computer, projector, screen, internet access, power outlets, restrooms, air conditioning, etc.) as well as additional rooms if separate activities are to be conducted. The location should be neutral and easily accessible (perhaps near the town centre, reachable by public transport or with convenient parking) and have a pleasant atmosphere. This can also be ensured by providing refreshments (hot drinks, water, snacks) at the beginning, during breaks, or at the end of the event (Tvrdonova and Budzich-Szukala, 2008).

Figure 6: Example of a well-equipped workspace.

When it comes to event implementation, various materials are also required for working with groups or individuals (see Table 1). We can use information and communication (ICT) equipment or various working materials (Tvrdonova and Budzich-Szukala, 2008).

Table 1: **Materials for conducting local participation**

ICT	WORKING MATERIALS
Computer, tablet	Paper (white, coloured) and sticky notes
Smartphone	Pencils, coloured pencils, markers
Applications (mainly for interactive participant engagement)	Posters and space for hanging posters (with thumbtacks, tape or magnets)
Projector and screen	Board and chalk
Printer or photocopier	3D models
Camera, video recorder or audio recorder	Maps
Microphone and sound system	Other didactic materials (e.g. photographs)
Wireless internet connection	

A key element in conducting local participation events is the moderator or host/facilitator of the programme. This person ensures the smooth running of the event and all content points of the programme, keeps track of the timeline, and facilitates the participation of all attendees (including quieter participants). The moderator must possess diplomatic skills to remain firm, trustworthy, and impartial, while also being respectful, adaptable, empathetic, friendly, and a good listener (Garrod, 2003; Tvrdonova and Budzich-Szukala, 2008). It is also advisable that the moderator is familiar with, or at least acquainted with, the content of the main project. Above all, their key skill is working effectively with diverse groups of people.

Content to be gathered at local participation events (Garrod, 2003) relates to the following questions:

- What is the current state of resources in the local environment?
- Who is using these resources?
- What are the current impacts of various activities on the resources?
- How well are these resources protected?
- Which resources require better protection?
- What are the opportunities for developing project activities (for example, tourism offers)?
- What wishes and concerns do local residents have regarding development in the area?
- To what extent are local communities environmentally aware?

- Are there any existing voluntary activities related to environmental monitoring?
- What is the current legislation concerning environmental planning and development?
- What past experiences does the local community have with participatory planning and management?

PHASES 12–13

An important part of every project is evaluating what has been achieved. It is therefore recommended that after each local participation event the team reviews what happened, identifies the key ideas and findings of the participants, and considers the results or unforeseen obstacles encountered (Garrod, 2003). Based on this, improvements can be made for the next event (for example, selecting a different venue, providing more working materials, improving the project presentation, or adopting a different method of work), or preparations for the final report can begin.

The final report on local participation events must align with the initially set objectives. For instance, if the aim was to influence policy, the report should be prepared for representatives of the authorities or other target groups intended to be influenced. To reach these groups, the report can also be disseminated through the media, presented at public events, conferences, on websites or social media platforms. The report is also prepared for the client and funder, as well as for all stakeholder groups interested in reading it. Participants in the local participation process should also receive the final report (Tvrdonova and Budzich-Szukala, 2008).

SUMMARY

Project management also involves managing the various stakeholder groups affected by or interested in the project. Local participation is a method of incorporating the opinions and ideas of groups originating from the local environment where the project is implemented. When undertaking a local participation project, the first step is always to consider the context of the main project and the structure of local participation. This process proceeds in 12 steps, which include forming the project team; defining the purpose and objectives of the local participation project; understanding the legislative, legal, and social context of the main project and the decisions to be taken; determining the involvement of stakeholders in the process (which groups will be included and for what purpose); selecting the method of engagement with participants in the local participation project; setting the timeline for the local participation project; identifying the resources required for implementation; securing funding for the project; recruiting participants from the local community; promoting the local participation event; conducting the event; evaluating the process and outcomes of the event; preparing and presenting the final report; and integrating the findings into the main project process.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. What are the characteristics of an effective team for the implementation of local participation?
2. Why is it important to understand the background of the project and the environment where it will be implemented?
3. How do we identify key stakeholders in the local participation process and how do we reach them?
4. What challenges might we encounter when organising local participation events?
5. What ethical dilemmas may emerge during the local participation process?

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4 Public Participation Techniques

The primary aim of the participatory planning process is to establish an advisory body composed of key stakeholders involved in decision-making, development, and the implementation of an action plan for a given tourism destination.

Key venues for participation may include local forums. These forums bring together stakeholders interested in the development of tourism in the area. These include local communities, local authorities, institutes, ministries, tourism service providers, tourism associations, external experts, SMEs, local guides, and others. Stakeholders and their involvement in the decision-making process are the primary driving forces behind successful sustainable tourism development.

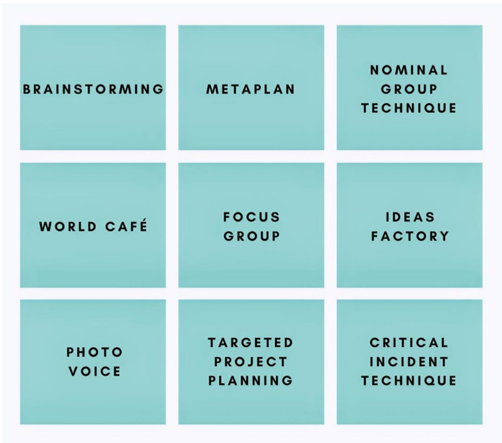

Figure 7: Some collaboration techniques.
Source: Koščak, Lapos and Primožič, 2020.

Meetings are typically facilitated by communication and group collaboration professionals (moderators) who employ various established collaboration techniques, as illustrated in Figure 7.

Regardless of the technique chosen for conducting meetings, every manager striving to establish an effective and less time-consuming participatory planning process should address the following questions:

1. Is the objective of the process clear and understandable to everyone?
2. Whose interests will be affected by the process outcomes, and who represents these interests?
3. What conflicts might the process bring about, or what alliances is it expected to forge?

To answer these questions, every manager must have a clear understanding of the level of involvement/commitment of stakeholders and the type of participatory planning process necessary to achieve the objective.

Before involving the local community in the participatory planning process, managers of the selected area must define the expected outcomes. In addition, a clear message must be crafted for potential stakeholders, bearing in mind that most of them are unfamiliar with technical or scientific terminology. Potential stakeholders will participate in the process only if the objective is clearly explained and shown to be relevant to them. When everyone understands the objective, it becomes easier to avoid confusion and unrealistic expectations.

Managing the participatory planning process requires fostering a positive and encouraging discussion. The desired outcome should be the alignment of the mission of the selected destination with the interests of the local community. Some conflicts among stakeholders may prove irresolvable within the participatory process itself. An excessive number of conflicts may jeopardise the entire procedure and divert attention from the process's objective towards the causes of conflict. Yet, conversely, the participatory planning process can foster or reinforce positive alliances grounded in the convergence of interests. By mapping explicit or latent conflicts and alliances, it is possible to anticipate obstacles and threats, as well as to highlight opportunities.

When developing a local action plan for sustainable tourism development in a destination through participatory planning, it is essential to provide guidelines and methodological tools. The flexibility of this capacity-building work plan allows managers of each selected area to tailor the participatory planning process according to their specific context, the degree of local stakeholder involvement, and the tourism monitoring needs and priorities. Below, we present some public participation techniques that we consider suitable for use in our planning practices (Tvrdonova and Budzich-Szukala, 2008).

Vision Development

The aim of defining a development vision is to encourage the community to articulate the future it wishes to achieve, for example through a development strategy. The vision development process is designed to reach a broad cross-section of the community and strives to build consensus on where they want to head in terms of development in the future, rather than focusing solely on current needs and deficiencies.

Typically, this involves a series of extensive meetings where participants are asked to define the vision and characteristics of the desired future as a collective community. The workshop should be structured so that participants "temporarily forget" their knowledge of existing problems and limitations, and speak only about the desired or target state of the community or destination. For this reason, the timeframe under discussion is usually set several years ahead (e.g. between five and 10 years), long enough for people to "embrace" the possibility of significant change. Following initial workshops and meetings, the gathered development ideas are formulated into objectives. This can be undertaken by a steering group or a working group. To maintain credibility, these goals can be presented at public meetings where they may be ratified or confirmed by interested stakeholders from the local community.

The next step is to engage the public in defining the action steps required to achieve these objectives. This can be done through a series of public meetings, workshops, or other activities. Experience has shown that vision development has been very successful in some communities, while in others the process has resulted in only a few tangible outcomes. Defining a vision does not rely on a single technique. The visioning process can be used in conjunction with any other technique described in this chapter. Its success hinges on creating high visibility and broad participation across the whole community.

Consensus Building

A consensus building conference is a public inquiry focused on a group of 10 to 30 citizens tasked with evaluating a socially contentious issue. These laypeople pose questions and concerns to a panel of experts, assess the experts' responses, and then negotiate among themselves. The outcome is a consensus statement, published in the form of a directed written report addressed, for example, to members of parliament, policymakers, and the wider public, which expresses expectations, concerns, and recommendations at the conference's conclusion. The key steps of the method are presented in Figure 8. The aim is to broaden the discussion on the given issue and to include the perspectives of non-experts before final messages or the provision of information to the public regarding the formulation of positions or the resulting policy are issued. This participatory form of consensus-seeking can utilise various working methods, such as facilitating discussions, mediation, arbitration, and more specialised techniques like dispute review committees, citizens' juries, and negotiated rule-making to reach agreements. Typically, consensus-building within the group is expected to represent almost all the different interests and aim for agreement within the committee. Sometimes the agreements reached by such groups are challenged because the group is not considered or recognised as legitimate enough to decide on behalf of the wider public, and thus the debate continues.

In particularly complex situations, a consensus conference may also be organised. Such a conference is a dialogue between experts and a panel of lay citizens. Initially, the agenda includes an educational phase, followed by three days of panel discussions open to the public. This technique therefore involves eliciting citizens' opinions and evaluating decisions on more complex technological or scientific issues. The primary purpose of a conference like this is to inform the citizen panel about the technology, its consequences, and impacts on the local environment. Based on the information received, interested stakeholder groups formulate a consensus statement on the implications of using the proposed technology. The consensus-seeking process at the conference is usually led by a steering committee of individuals or experts familiar with the technique or possessing recognised professional expertise. A consensus-seeking conference is not designed to produce a specific or concrete decision. Rather, its primary aim is to enrich public discourse and understanding of the issue by combining expert knowledge with citizens' values and interests.

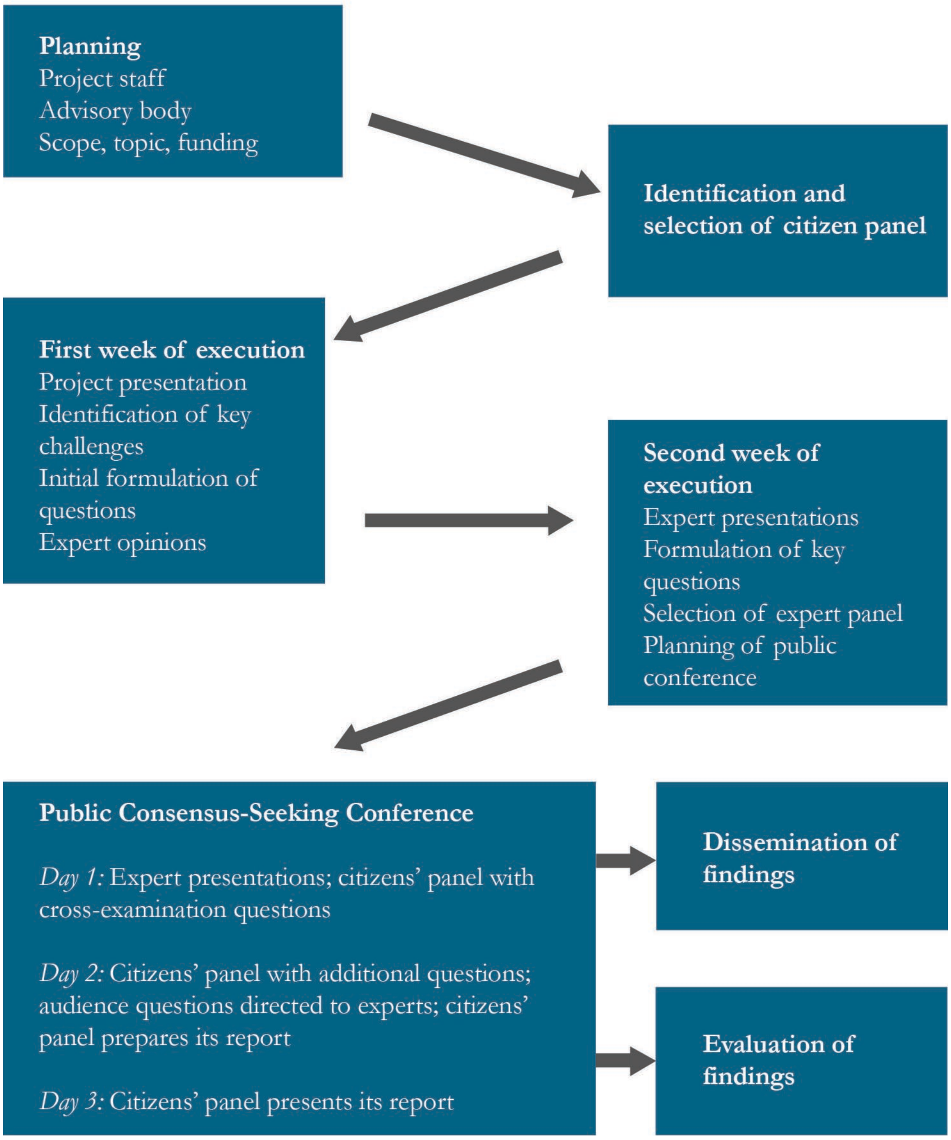

Figure 8: Key steps of the Consensus Seeking method.
Source: Tvrdonova and Budzich-Szukala, 2008.

Focus Group

Focus groups are qualitative methods that can be used as an effective quality evaluation tool. They uncover a variety of positions and opinions, comparing justifications and differing perspectives on certain phenomena. Focus groups are often used to explore issues or groups about which there is limited knowledge. They provide in-depth understanding of how participants and their experiences are similar or different and how processes have evolved, including their nature and dynamics. In a focus group, we learn how individual processes have developed, why they are as they are, and what their dynamics are.

A focus group typically consists of a structured discussion within a small group (4–12 participants) of interested stakeholders representing diverse or opposing viewpoints, facilitated by a trained moderator. This method supports understanding of different preferences and values on a given topic through structured dialogue and interactive discussion within a permissive and safe environment. In this way, a focus group can be seen as a hybrid between a focused interview and a group discussion among diverse stakeholders. Focus groups may also be conducted online. They are valuable for initial exploration of concepts or for generating creative ideas. Common uses include testing, evaluation, and programme reviews. Focus groups are particularly suitable for detecting differences in opinion by region, gender, age, or ethnicity. However, focus groups are not as effective or are less suitable for informing the wider public, answering general questions, achieving consensus, or reaching decisions.

They are widely used in market research, as well as political and sociological research and discussions. Focus groups are used to aid research work and pre-testing phases, as well as assisting discussions about past events and triangulating results obtained through other data collection methods. They are especially useful when there is interesting participant argumentation involving diverse viewpoints, as well as in processes where participants influence one another through their varied ideas and opinions during discussion.

Focus groups are typically used at four different stages (Andragoški center, 2025):

- Problem identification: A focus group can uncover important information about the nature and content of an issue even when a clear understanding of the topic has not yet been formed.
- Planning: A focus group can help identify the best approaches to address the problem.
- Implementation: A focus group can stimulate the execution of certain procedures and assist in discovering potential ways to carry out processes.
- Evaluation: A focus group should understand what happened during a process or implementation, and identify which experiences are important for future work.

Focus groups are also beneficial or useful for:

- assessing the nature and intensity of stakeholders' concerns and values regarding pressing issues;

- capturing a snapshot of public opinion when time or financial constraints prevent more comprehensive reviews or alternative analyses;
- gaining input and opinions from individuals and interest groups;
- obtaining detailed feedback and viewpoints from interested parties or customer groups regarding preliminary proposals or alternative options;
- gathering information on stakeholder needs in relation to specific topics and concepts;
- determining what additional information or changes may be necessary for further development of issues or proposals for subsequent consultation.

Advantages and Limitations of Focus Groups

Advantages:

- Focus groups help to reveal differences among people (e.g. differences between change planners and those who need to implement the changes).
- The method is well-suited for exploring complex questions regarding motivation and behaviour.
- It is useful when seeking to understand diversity.

Limitations/Challenges:

- Focus groups cannot be conducted on an entire population, but rather only on a selected sample.
- The results obtained from focus groups are qualitative in nature and cannot be generalised.
- Preparation and implementation of this method require considerable effort.

Process of Conducting Focus Groups

To conduct focus groups, some pre-prepared questions are needed to guide the group discussion. Typically, at least two focus groups are organised, often more, to gather a sufficient number of relevant opinions. Depending on whether the groups are similar in composition and on the goal of the self-evaluation, a decision is made whether to ask the same questions in each group or not. Based on this, one or more sets of questions are prepared. For one focus group, 10 to 12 questions are prepared, structured into the following categories (Andragoški center, 2025):

- **Introductory questions:** These are opening, ice-breaking questions that help the participants get acquainted with each other.
- **Transition questions:** These motivate the participants to engage with the topic under discussion and begin addressing the core subject of the focus group.
- **Key questions:** These delve into the essence of evaluating the quality of the selected area or indicator. Questions should be designed to encourage the participants to speak openly about the main theme of the self-evaluation.
- **Closing questions:** These summarise the discussion and give the participants the opportunity to add any final remarks on the topic.

Planning Cell Method

The Planning Cell method involves approximately 25 randomly selected individuals acting as public advisors for a fixed period (for example, one week), with the goal of presenting solutions to a particular planning problem or policy. The cell is managed by two process facilitators who oversee the information schedule and moderate plenary sessions. A project may include a lower or higher number of planning cells. Within each cell, the participants gather and exchange information on the problem, explore and discuss possible solutions, and evaluate their intended and unintended consequences. Experts, stakeholders, and interest groups have the opportunity to present their positions to the cell members. The final results of the cell's work are summarised as a "citizens' report", which is delivered to both the authorities and participants.

Planning cells are most effective in situations where urgent problems need to be resolved swiftly, and where there are several options with different benefits and risks. The process functions optimally when the issue is not overly controversial and has not yet polarised the views of the affected population. However, planning cells can also address highly controversial issues if the majority of participants are selected through a random process. The following criteria are presented to assess the suitability of using the Planning Cell method in specific cases. When all or most answers are positive, the choice of the Planning Cell method is appropriate:

- **Variability of options:** Do the participants have the opportunity to choose one option from several different alternatives, all of which are feasible in the given situation?
- Uniformity of exposure: Are all groups within the community or its individual areas similarly exposed to potential drawbacks of the proposed options (to avoid discrimination between affected supporters and indifferent citizens)?

- **Personal experience:** Do the participants have any experience with the issue? Do they feel competent to provide recommendations after receiving additional information about the problem and possible solutions?
- **Personal relevance:** Do the participants perceive the problem as serious enough to be willing to dedicate several days of their time to working on solutions?
- **Sponsor's seriousness and openness:** Is the sponsor willing to accept or at least carefully consider and take into account the cell's recommendations for further planning, or might there be "hidden agendas" underlying the recommendations or conclusions?

Advisory Groups and Working Groups

Besides public meetings, the most commonly used public participation technique is the so-called citizen advisory group. An advisory group is a small body, usually composed of people from the local community (typically fewer than 25), representing diverse interests, viewpoints, or development fields with interdisciplinary expertise. The role of this group is to act as an advisory body established to counsel the organisation on its development programmes or proposed measures. Some organisations use advisory groups as their primary mechanism to engage the public. Others use them in specific circumstances, for example as a supplement to other forms of public participation activities.

Advisory groups can be effective for several reasons:

- They provide cross-sampling of public opinions and concerns.
- Members have the opportunity to become informed about the issues before reaching conclusions and can better understand the consequences of decisions. As a result, the advice or opinions they offer to the organisation combine a civic perspective with a more complete understanding of the situation.
- Moreover, because personal relationships develop within the group, members gain a deeper understanding of concerns and diverse interests, fostering connections that help mitigate the impact of more extreme positions.
- Advisory groups can also serve as a communication link with the local community and its stakeholders, thereby providing opportunities to achieve consensus among groups with differing or opposing interests.

World Café

The World Café is a creative process designed to foster mutual dialogue and the exchange of knowledge, opinions, and ideas, creating a dynamic network of conversations and actions. This process creates a café-like atmosphere where participants discuss one or more questions in small groups seated at café-style tables. At regular intervals, participants move to a new table. The host of each table remains and summarises the previous conversation for the new guests. Conversations thus become enriched with ideas generated in earlier discussions with other participants at the café tables. At the end of the process, the main ideas are summarised in a plenary session and represent conclusions with the potential for further follow-up.

The World Café process is particularly useful in the following situations:

- when large groups (more than 12 people) need to be involved in a genuine dialogue process (groups of up to 1,200 participants have already been conducted);
- when there is a need to generate a certain intellectual or opinion input, share knowledge, encourage innovative thinking, and explore possibilities for action regarding real-life questions;
- when people need to engage in authentic conversation, whether meeting for the first time regarding a specific problem or already having established mutual relationships;
- when conducting in-depth exploration of key strategic challenges or opportunities;
- when deepening relationships and shared ownership of results within an existing group;
- when creating meaningful interactions between the speaker and the audience.

The World Café is less useful when:

- the group is heading towards a predetermined solution or agreement;
- the aim is to deliver one-way information;
- detailed implementation plans are being developed;
- there are fewer than 12 participants (in which case, more traditional methods such as a “circle of dialogue”, opinion consultation, or other approaches fostering genuine dialogue are preferable).

Online Dialogues and Opinion Conferences

E-participation is already an integral part of urban and spatial planning practices in many EU countries, and primarily contributes to diversifying the processes of information and consultation (Akmentina, 2022). Broader participation can be achieved by combining e-participation with subsequent consultations, illustrating the potential of hybrid and iterative participatory strategies. Similarly, self-organisation supported by information and communication technology (ICT) encourages greater transparency, accountability, and civic engagement. This is crucial for the development of civil society and proactive public involvement in planning processes.

Although there is broad consensus that e-participation should complement rather than replace traditional participatory methods, there is limited understanding of how this manifests in practice. There is also a gap in research regarding how e-participation integrates with broader processes such as urban and spatial planning or governance, and how it has influenced and transformed planning and citizen engagement practices.

In the digital age, much of this process takes place online, although local authorities must still use both traditional and digital channels to disseminate information. Digital solutions have created additional opportunities for data exchange, enabling citizens and businesses to gain quicker access to existing data and information. Moreover, the general shift towards e-government has seen e-services emerge as the most common form of e-participation. Essentially, this level of participation is regarded as passive, as public engagement or feedback is usually not typically expected. However, the significance of e-participation is likely to have increased, as access to information and data in various forms throughout processes like urban and spatial planning enables other modes of engagement.

The development of ICT, and particularly mobile technologies, has facilitated more diverse and accessible forms of feedback collection and data gathering. Today, we can use crowdsourcing or participatory sensing to collect public opinion, local knowledge, or behavioural data in both passive and active ways. Mapping and geospatial solutions, such as Geographic Information Systems (GIS) for public participation (PPGIS) and Volunteered Geographic Information (VGI), play an increasingly important role in this process, especially in spatial and urban planning. At the same time, consultations remain episodic, typically involving the collection of ideas and suggestions from the public at the beginning of the planning process, to ensure early involvement or feedback on proposed planning solutions or draft documents. However, public consultation does not mean that public preferences or concerns are considered regardless of the volume of information collected. There is little evidence to suggest that creating "lay" knowledge – for example, through participatory mapping – influences decisions about land-use planning.

4.1 Example of Participatory Planning within the CEETO Project

Following the example of the European Awareness Scenario Workshop (EASW) technique (Koščak, Lapos, and Primožič, 2020), a methodology involving five sessions of participatory activities was recommended. This approach has been successfully tested in numerous similar processes within the context of tourism destinations and the development of the CEETO project, specifically involving various partners across six European destinations or protected areas. The sequence of participatory sessions is summarised in Table 2.

Table 2: Sequence of participatory activities to achieve the objective of joint activity development

Sessions	Participatory Activities	Objectives
1	Establishment of a Forum	Community Inclusion
2	Participatory Mapping	Understanding the Territory and Information Sharing
3	Future Search	Creating a Vision of the Type of Tourism You Desire
4	Ideas Factory	Exploring Possible and Alternative Solutions
5	World Café	Defining the Action Plan

Vir: CEETO, 2020

The coordinator records the outcomes of each session. The opening session begins with a detailed presentation of the objectives, programme, and agenda of the participatory planning process. The participatory planning process coordinator maintains a process log intended for publication on social media and/or the official website of the selected destination. For an effective participatory planning process, it is recommended that the session agenda be determined collaboratively with participants. Examples of specific activities and procedures from the CEETO project include (Koščak, Lapos, and Primožič, 2020):

1st Session: Establishment of the Forum

The first step of the participatory planning procedure was forming a local forum including the managing authority of the chosen destination and stakeholders such as local municipalities, nature protection organisations or associations, community organisations, and representatives of tourism businesses.

The aim was to involve the local community and secure its commitment to the shared goals of the participatory planning process, including defining the sustainable tourism development action plan. Participants perceived the forum as a space to express their needs, interests, hopes, and concerns regarding tourism development in their territory. The aim was for the forum to become a permanent link between destination governance bodies and the local community within the scope of sustainable tourism development.

Alongside the establishment of the forum, the process required establishing a smaller operational coordination committee composed of representatives from management bodies, local authorities, and a group of experts. This committee was responsible for monitoring activities, fostering stakeholder collaboration, evaluating the results of sessions, and proposing any procedural adjustments.

2nd Session: Participatory Mapping

Participatory mapping (also known as community mapping) combines cartography with participatory methods to represent local communities' knowledge of their territory. This method is useful for identifying:

- the most valuable area(s) in terms of conservation and promotion within the destination;
- the most vulnerable area(s) threatened by tourism pressure;
- the most significant tourist flows crossing the destination.

3rd Session: Future Search Method

The Future Search method is an interactive planning activity focused on breaking down barriers between diverse and sometimes opposing interests, forming alliances, and expanding shared knowledge about common future scenarios. Participants are asked to envision a future vision. This method is useful for:

- developing a shared vision that will serve as the foundation for the entire sustainable tourism development action plan or strategy;
- illustrating the negative and positive impacts of tourist flows on the destination.

4th Session: Ideas Factory

The Ideas Factory method aims to generate a range of possible responses to a common question or problem or to seize opportunities. The ideas contributed by stakeholders with diverse experiences and skills can help shape more effective and integrated action plans. This method is useful for:

- preparing an initial list of potential measures to include in the sustainable tourism development action plan;
- defining pilot activities.

5th Session: World Café

The World Café method is designed to create an environment that encourages stakeholder collaboration, enabling them to formulate concrete measures and initiatives. This method is useful for:

- defining indicators, timeframes for implementation/monitoring, and economic resources; discussing potential public-private partnerships and all corresponding measures to be included in the sustainable tourism development action plan;
- presenting and debating technical solutions for problems that may arise.

If the World Café is conducted as a single activity, it takes place in one round where various aspects must be defined, including possible technical solutions, expected outcome-related indicators, timeframes, resources, and potential partnerships. If a destination operator needs to define multiple measures, the World Café is organised in multiple rounds.

SUMMARY

This chapter addresses tools and methods used to stimulate reflection and moderate successful partnerships, including communication skills, leadership challenges and dilemmas, animation and motivation techniques, and other techniques applied in public participation processes.

The key dilemma or the first challenge is how to achieve successful partnership. Some of our experiences are presented below:

1. Shared Vision and Mission: Defining a shared vision and mission should be the first step taken by partners. Take the time to discover what motivates each partner, define how you want your project to look, and write it down so that it can be referred to in the future if the project goes off course.

2. Meeting Needs and Expectations: Each partner has their own reasons for entering the partnership (for example, the need for capital, knowledge, or contacts). Individual needs are not always clearly expressed but are nonetheless expected to be fulfilled. If this does not happen, relationships may become strained; therefore, it is important to discuss and clarify each partner's expectations.

3. Defining and Utilising Partner Strengths: Sometimes individuals' less obvious skills are overlooked due to other factors. Identifying and harnessing these skills increases motivation and enthusiasm, which enhances the chances of success. Make a list of your abilities and ask your partners to do the same. Then consider how these skills could be used in the project.

4. Acknowledging Partnership Limitations: In an effort to reduce costs, partners often neglect areas in which they lack expertise or interest, which can weaken the enterprise. Limitations may arise in various fields such as strategy, development, marketing, management, etc. They need to be identified and managed as early as possible to prevent loss of control, as many projects have failed due to neglect of these areas.

5. Setting Project and Individual Stakeholder Objectives: It is best to start by defining the project objectives, followed by the individual objectives of participating stakeholders, ensuring these support the project's objectives as well as the expectations and expertise of the individuals. Document everything clearly to delineate who is responsible for what.

6. Rapid Resolution of Conflicts: Conflicts and frustrations arise in every relationship. It is important to resolve them effectively so they do not undermine the strong foundations of the partnership over time. A monthly meeting dedicated to partners expressing their concerns is good preventive practice. Sometimes it is difficult to tell a partner what bothers you, and it is important to do this in a positive manner, such as by suggesting how you believe project planning or its implementation ought to proceed in the future.

7. Defining Tasks and Responsibilities in Partnerships: It is essential that the tasks and responsibilities of partners are explicitly documented to avoid incorrect assumptions about who should undertake what. Prepare a clear list outlining each partner's responsibilities, assigned tasks, and the expected outcomes. For some tasks, engaging external specialists may be necessary.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. What obstacles or limitations arose during joint group meetings?
2. How was the atmosphere within the working group?
3. What observations did the participants make with regard to the examples of good practice and practical experiences that were presented?
4. How will potential disagreements and disputes among partners or stakeholders be resolved?
5. How will you ensure that participants understand that not all the goals of every sector or individual stakeholder are relevant or interesting to others, and encourage them to focus on objectives providing mutual benefits to the partnership as a whole?

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5 Examples of the Introduction of Local Participation Into the Study Process

Within various courses at the Faculty of Tourism, students engaged with real-life cases by visiting destinations that identified development needs and offered their knowledge and innovative ideas to help address them. Recognising the importance of involving local communities, collaboration was chosen as the working approach, as tourist destination development planning stands a better chance of success when the local community is actively involved and supports implementation.

Five case studies were conducted at destinations in Slovenia and Croatia, where students applied the principles of local participation. With the support of the Recovery and Resilience Plan (RRP) project and the accompanying textbook, the aim is that the integration of local participation in the study process will increase and become more structured and deliberate. This means that we can expect the best possible results, contributing to more effective student involvement and consequently the more successful development of destinations.

5.1 Gorski Kotar Destination, Croatia

Students visited the Gorski Kotar destination multiple times during the 2017/2018 and 2018/2019 academic years. In the first year, we focused on the village of Prezid, while in the second year students examined the wider area around the town of Čabar, including the villages Plešce, Zamost, Tršće, and Mali Lug. Student work was organised in several phases.

PHASE 1: Data Preparation Prior to the Visit

The students reviewed existing strategic documents of the destination (the Local Development Strategy of the Gorski Kotar LAG 2014–2020 and the Development Strategy of Čabar Municipality 2015–2020, Gorski Kotar Project, Phase II: Report on the Environmental Carrying Capacity Assessment). They also familiarised themselves with online materials related to the destination (websites, social media) and read books, tourist brochures, and other publications connected to the area. These materials were obtained beforehand directly from the destination or from the library.

PHASE 2: Field Visit to the Destination

In the first year, during autumn 2017, students conducted a two-day visit to the village of Prezid, where they visited:

- the site planned for the model tourism-educational farm Gorski Kotar;
- the Goranski Garden;
- the Local Heritage Collection and the traditional Goranska House Vesel;
- the old fire station and a site for the production of wooden shingles for roofing;
- the site for developing the Ožbolt restaurant;
- potential locations for apartments in the centre of Prezid.

In the second year, during autumn 2018, students visited the following locations:

- Zrinski Castle – museum collection and *The Routes of the Frankopans* tourism offer, Čabar;
- the fish farm and blacksmith's workshop Urh, Čabar;
- the Čabranka spring, Čabar and the Gerovčica spring, Zamost;
- Palčava šiša, Plešce;
- Selankin mill, Zamost;
- Malinarić sawmill, Zamost;
- the miners' trail and mine – In the Footsteps of Tršće Miners, Tršće;
- the monument to Petar Klepac and the legend surrounding it, Mali Lug.

During these initial visits, the students were guided through each location by local residents, owners of the particular points of interest, or local tourist guides knowledgeable about the site. The hosts presented the content, history, and unique features of each location, while the students had the opportunity to ask additional questions and deepen their understanding, using interviews as a working method (see Figure 9). Each site was visited only by the group of students responsible for preparing the development plan for that particular location, allowing more time for thorough interviews.

Figure 9: Fieldwork in Gorski Kotar.

Figure 10: Presentation and Workshop on Local Cuisine

During the evening of the first day, students also had the opportunity to experience the local cuisine. This began with a culinary workshop (see Figure 10), where they learned how to prepare traditional local dishes, followed by a dinner at which they sampled those they had prepared, along with some additional ones.

On the second day of the field visit, an event was held attended by students, owners of the individual sites, tourist guides, and other interested local residents. This forum provided an opportunity for local inhabitants to express their views on the development of the destination. The students presented their preliminary findings and ideas, which was then followed by an open discussion where both parties could align their perspectives on the future development of the area.

PHASE 3: Individual Work

Using the information they had gathered, the students worked in groups to develop a vision for the development of individual points of interest within the destination. This process applied the principles of strategic planning and action plan preparation. The document included the following components:

- analysis of the state-of-affairs supported by a SWOT analysis;
- a long-term vision (set over a seven-year horizon) and area priorities;
- definitions of innovative measures and their performance indicators;
- proposal of methods for evaluating the achievement of the objectives.

The development plans for individual locations were consolidated into a single document, which also included a general analysis of the area and a proposed overarching long-term vision for Gorski Kotar. The students also suggested the most appropriate target markets which would be most attracted to tourism in Gorski Kotar.

PHASE 4: Follow-up Visit to the Destination – Presentation

After preparing the initial draft of the development strategy, the students revisited Gorski Kotar the following January. At the follow-up event, they presented their development proposals to local residents and other stakeholders, inviting their feedback (see Figure 11). Following a collective discussion, the proposed development strategy was aligned with input from various stakeholders and subsequently published in two monographs entitled: *Development Programme for the Integrated and Sustainable Development of the Prezid Area and Gorski Kotar* and *Development Programme for the Sustainable Development of Settlements in the Čabar Area in Gorski Kotar – Phase II*.

Figure 11: Presentation of Draft Conceptual Solutions in Gorski Kotar.

5.2 Artiče Destination, Slovenia

The village of Artiče in the Municipality of Brežice (Slovenia) boasts diverse natural and cultural assets. Representatives of the Artiče Local Community aimed to integrate these features into an attractive tourism offer to present to the broader public. In particular, they sought to highlight the Banova domačija Homestead as the most appealing point of interest in the destination (see Figure 12). They sought assistance from the Faculty of Tourism at the University of Maribor. Based on this initiative, two student groups were formed, each focusing on a specific topic. The first group prepared a feasibility study on establishing a tourism destination, while the second group developed proposals for tourism products for the destination, along with their marketing plans. The work took place during the 2020/2021 academic year, which was marked by the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, the planned field visit was cancelled and replaced by online meetings. Collaboration continued into the 2021/2022 academic year, during which students again developed tourism products, exploring new ideas and solutions.

Figure 12: The Banova domačija Homestead.

PHASE 1: Introductory Meeting

The introductory meeting involving both student groups and representatives of the Artiče Local Community took place in autumn 2020 via the MS Teams application. During this meeting, the following parties presented themselves: ž

– the Artiče Local Community (as the client and central pillar of the project);

- the Artiče Tourist Association (presentation of the destination, emphasising the Banova domačija Homestead as the principal tourism asset with the most potential);
- the Artiče Sports Association (presentation of the trim trail as a potential sports facility);
- the Kolopark Forest Pump Track in Artiče (presentation of the cycling track as a potential sports facility);
- the Artiče Primary School (presentation of water resources at the destination and water educational trails);
- the KUD Oton Župančič Artiče cultural and arts society (presentation of intangible heritage – including social sections and the local dialect);
- the INTOURS DMC company (presentation of opportunities for developing incentive tourism at the destination).

This briefing provided students with information on the general requirements of the client as well as on existing or developing tourism offers at the destination.

PHASE 2: Individual Research Work

Students then proceeded to work individually. Within each main topic, they were subdivided into smaller groups to explore each area more thoroughly and generate as many innovative ideas as possible. The students working on the feasibility study for establishing the tourism destination were divided into five groups focused on:

- area analysis;
- destination concept and development model;
- tourism offer of the proposed Artiče destination;
- aspects of the local community and local self-governance;
- potential demand for the tourism products of Artiče;
- management of the proposed Artiče tourism destination.

The second group of students worked in pairs during both academic years mentioned. They developed more than 20 proposals for tourism products for the destination, along with their corresponding marketing plans.

The students gathered information for shaping their conceptual solutions not only from the initial presentations, but also through online sources (the website of the Artiče Local Community, social media), published literature provided by Artiče Primary School, and their own research efforts. As part of their research, the students conducted electronic interviews with representatives of various organisations within the destination and the wider region. These included the local government and institutions such as the Brežice Municipality; Artiče Local Community; the Institute for Entrepreneurship, Youth and Tourism Brežice; Tourist Information Centres in Brežice, Krško and Kostanjevica na Krki; and the Posavje Museum Brežice. They also spoke with a local apartment provider and local tour guides for the Brežice Municipality. Additionally, they conducted interviews with representatives of potential visitors to the destination, including primary schools and pensioners' associations from Slovenia and Croatia. An online survey was also carried out to gather opinions and attitudes from residents of the Artiče Local Community regarding the establishment of a tourism offer.

PHASE 3: Interim Work Meetings

Both student groups held two online meetings via the MS Teams application during their work on their respective assignments. At these sessions, all students presented their progress and exchanged opinions (see Figure 13). This process helped align the feasibility study as much as possible with the proposed tourism products and marketing plans.

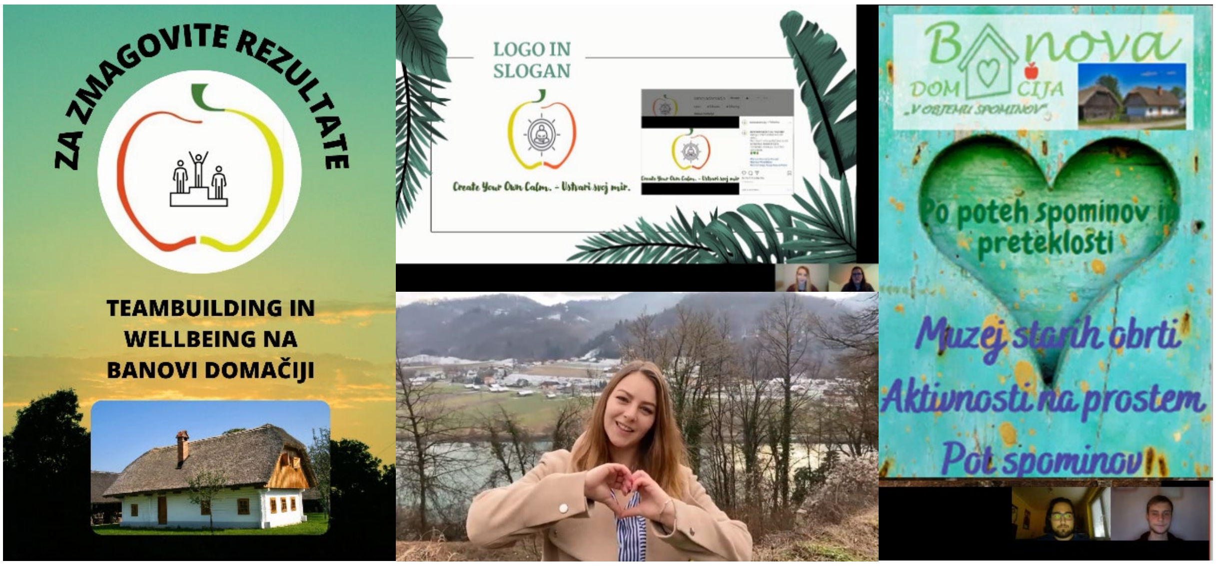

Figure 13: Conceptual solutions for the Banova domačija Homestead.

PHASE 4: Presentation of the Draft Project Solution

In the final phase, the students met once more with representatives of the Artiče Local Community in January 2021 and again in January 2022, also via MS Teams. The students presented their findings and ideas at these meetings, which were then discussed and refined with the input of the destination representatives. The finalised material was then compiled into a joint monograph entitled *Artiče Tourism Destination – Feasibility Study*. The document included the following components:

- presentation of the Artiče destination and project workflow;
- conceptual model of the tourism destination and its key stakeholders;
- SWOT analysis and summary of findings;
- destination concept and development model;
- tourism offer of the proposed Artiče destination;
- views of the local community and local government;
- potential demand for the tourism products of Artiče;
- management of the proposed Artiče tourism destination;
- introduction to marketing communication for the Banova domačija Homestead;
- marketing analysis and presentation of the state-of-affairs.
- PROPOSED TOURISM PRODUCTS AT THE BANOVA DOMAČIJA HOMESTEAD AND MARKETING PLANS (Retreat at the Banova domačija Homestead; The Banova domačija Homestead Eco Tourism Farm; Glamping at Banova; From Tenant to Master; "Tailored" at the Banova domačija Homestead; Teambuilding at the Banova domačija Homestead; Along the Paths of History and Memories; Escape to the Banova domačija Homestead; Banova Educational Trail; Experience the Pulse of Artiče and Discover the Banova domačija Homestead).

Figure 14: Event presenting the monograph on Artiče.

Among the proposed tourism products and their accompanying marketing plans, the top 11 were selected based on the feedback from the local community and faculty mentors. The monograph was presented to the broader public at an event held at the Banova domačija Homestead in May 2022 (see Figure 14). The best tourism product proposals were also recognised and rewarded at the event, with winning student teams receiving symbolic awards. During the monograph presentation, the museum collection entitled Fruit Growing Collection: *Posavje – A Fruit Growing Paradise* was officially opened at the Banova domačija Homestead. This exhibition was prepared by representatives of the Artiče Fruit Growers' Association and the Posavje Museum Brežice.

5.3 Moslavina Destination, Croatia

The Moslavina destination in Croatia was visited by students during the 2019/2020 academic year. The project was developed based on the collaboration initiative with the Vimal Academy (Association for the Development of Human Potential), which is headquartered in Moslavina. Moslavina is a micro-region that spans the counties of Zagreb, Bjelovar-Bilogora, and Sisak-Moslavina. The primary objectives of the project were to conduct an analysis and prepare a strategic plan for the development of individual tourism accommodation providers, specifically family-run agricultural businesses (OPG – *obiteljska poljoprivredna gospodarstva*), and to design an integrated tourism product for the destination. Student work was organised in several phases.

PHASE 1: Data Preparation Prior to the Visit

Initially, students familiarised themselves with the destination by studying existing strategic documents, including the Development Strategy of the Town of Popovača for the 2015–2020 Period, the Tourism Marketing Strategy and Action Plan for the Town of Kutina, and the Public Investment Programme for Public Tourism Infrastructure in the Town of Kutina. They also reviewed online materials about the destination (websites, social media), as well as books, tourist brochures, and other publications related to the destination, which were supplied by the Vimal Academy.

PHASE 2: Field Visit to the Destination

After conducting a literature review, the students embarked on a two-day field trip in autumn 2019 to the Moslavina region. There, they visited Repušnica – the reception centre of the Lonjsko polje Nature Park. At the centre, they were welcomed by the mayor of Kutina and the head of the Department for Community Activities in Kutina. The park director was also present, along with representatives from local tourism organisations including the Kutina Tourist Board, LAG Moslavina, the Moslavina Museum Kutina, and the Lonjsko polje Nature Park. Accompanied by a local guide, the students explored Lonjsko polje (see Figure 15). Under the guidance of a tourist guide, they also visited local landmarks in Kutina, Garić Grad, the nearby lake, and surrounding areas.

The research phase followed, during which students were divided into pairs and visited selected accommodation providers:

1. OPG Lonjski dvori,
2. OPG Vinarija i restoran August winery and restaurant,
3. OPG Seoski turizam Sambolek rural tourism,
4. OPG Ivica Leskarac – Klet Leskarac wine cellar,
5. OPG Lukač – Seoski turizam Zeleni put rural tourism.

Figure 15: Guided tour of Lonjsko polje.

Students stayed overnight at the chosen providers, experiencing dinner, accommodation, and breakfast first-hand to fully understand the nature of their offerings (see Figure 16). They also had the opportunity to engage in conversations with their hosts in the evening and the following morning, enabling them to obtain essential information for their subsequent work. Contact details were exchanged to allow for future communication and clarification of any queries.

Figure 16: Example of a studied family-run agricultural business (OPG) as an accommodation provider.

PHASE 3: Individual Work

Using the information they had gathered, the students worked in groups to develop a vision for the development of each accommodation provider within the destination, following principles of strategic planing and action plan preparation. The document included the following components:

- analysis of the destination supported by a SWOT analysis;
- a long-term vision (set over a five-year horizon) and area priorities;
- integrated tourism product for Moslavina;
- vision and priorities for each accommodation provider;
- definition of innovative measures and their performance indicators;
- methods for evaluating the achievement of the objectives.

The proposal for the integrated tourism product and development plans for the individual accommodation providers were compiled by the students into a joint document, which also included a general analysis of the destination and a proposed shared long-term vision for Moslavina.

PHASE 4: Follow-up Visit to the Destination – Presentation

After preparing the initial draft of the development strategy, the students revisited Moslavina the following February. At the event, they presented their development proposals to local residents and other stakeholders, inviting their feedback (see Figure 17). Based on a joint discussion, the proposed development strategy was aligned with various stakeholders and published in the first monograph titled *Development Programme for Sustainable Rural Tourism in Moslavina*. The monograph also includes reflections on the development of protected areas, such as the Lonjsko polje Nature Park, as well as a chapter on rural tourism marketing. The event and the published monograph received local media coverage, which featured news about both the students' initial field visit and the presentation of the monograph.

Figure 17: Presentation of conceptual solutions in Moslavina.

5.4 Sisak and Petrinja Destinations, Croatia

Students also visited the Croatian destinations of Sisak and Petrinja. Sisak is the administrative centre of the Sisak-Moslavina County, with the town of Petrinja located nearby; both towns lie along the Kupa River. On 29 December 2020, Petrinja was struck by a powerful earthquake with a magnitude of 6.4 Mw (moment magnitude scale), 6.2 ML (local magnitude scale), or VIII (severe damage) to IX (destruction) on the European

Macroseismic Scale (see Figure 18). In the wake of this devastating earthquake, efforts were made to establish a more sustainable tourism offer and revive tourism at the destination. For this purpose, students from the Faculty of Tourism of the University of Maribor were invited to assist. They visited both destinations during the 2021/2022 academic year. Here too, the students' work was divided into several phases.

Slika 18: Devastated Petrinja.

PHASE 1: Data Preparation Prior to the Visit

Students first familiarised themselves with both destinations and reviewed existing strategic documents including: Tourism Development Strategy of the Sisak-Moslavina County for the 2014–2020 Period; Operational Plan for Cycling Tourism Development in the Sisak-Moslavina County 2017–2020; Study of Tourism Quality Management in the Sisak-Moslavina County, 2020. They also examined online materials about both destinations (websites, social networks) as well as videos and news articles published following the earthquake.

PHASE 2: Field Visit to the Destination

After conducting a literature review, students undertook a two-day field visit in autumn 2021 to the towns of Sisak and Petrinja where they visited:

- the Dutch House in Sisak and the industrial heritage of Sisak (Industrial Heritage Museum);
- Re: Think Sisak Mural Project;
- the restaurant and accommodation at the Korablja Tišinić Family-Run Agricultural Business;

- the restaurant, accommodation and outdoor entertainment provider Ivančica Kudlek Capriccia centar family-run agricultural business;
- Lončarstvo Val pottery works;
- various locations in and around Sisak and Petrinja with tourism potential.

At the museum, they were welcomed by Dr Vlatko Čakširan, Director of the City Museum of Sisak, who presented the museum's activities and invited the students to tour the exhibits (see Figure 19). Students also met with Ingrid Padjen Đurić, Director of the Sisak-Moslavina County Tourist Board, and Mirjana Lahovsky Žličarić, Director of the Sisak City Tourist Board, who presented the tourism operations, the destination's most attractive sights, and their future development aspirations.

Figure 19: Visit to the City Museum in Sisak

The mural project was presented by Alma Trauber, Director of the Striegl Gallery, after which the students, accompanied by a guide, toured the murals around the town of Sisak. Along the way, they also stopped to view other notable landmarks in the town.

The students continued their visit in the town of Petrinja, where they were welcomed by Ivanka Držaj, Director of the Petrinja City Tourist Board (see Figure 20). In addition to presenting tourism in the town, the director took the students on a tour of the devastated town centre, where they were able to witness first-hand the destructive effects of the earthquake. The town is gradually being rebuilt, but due to the vast number of damaged buildings, roads, and other infrastructure, progress is slow.

Figure 20: Tour of Petrinja with the Director of the tourist organisation.

As part of the fieldwork, students also visited several tourism providers. The first was the restaurant at the Korablja Tišinić Family-Run Agricultural Business, where they had lunch and toured the facilities and a small petting zoo. Next, they visited the outdoor entertainment provider, the Ivančica Kudlek Capriccia centar Family-Run Agricultural Business, where they participated in various team-building games. They also visited the Lončarstvo Val pottery works, viewing the potter's workshop and observing the potter at work.

At all visited locations, the students had the opportunity to speak with the owner or operator. They also collected email addresses to maintain ongoing communication with representatives of each facility.

PHASE 3: Individual Work

Using the information gathered, students worked in groups to develop a vision for the development of individual points of interest within both destinations. This process applied the principles of strategic planning and action plan preparation. The document included the following components:

- analysis of the state-of-affairs supported by a SWOT analysis;
- a long-term vision (set over an eight-year horizon) and area priorities;
- definition of innovative measures and their performance indicators;
- methods for evaluating the achievement of the objectives.

The individual points from the destinations were linked in the document with reflections on the development of cultural heritage. The document also described an example of an integrated tourism product for the combined Sisak-Petrinja destination that would connect the two locations.

PHASE 4: Presentation of the Conceptual Draft

Given the timing of the project, which was affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, students did not return to the destination for a follow-up visit. Instead, they organised an online meeting with local representatives via MS Teams. In January 2022, the students presented the first draft of the development strategy to representatives of the destination's tourist organisations. Based on the feedback received, the students refined their ideas and published the content in a monograph entitled *Development Programme for Sustainable Tourism in Sisak and Petrinja*.

WORKSHEETS FOR CONDUCTING LOCAL PARTICIPATION

1. Forming the Project Team – Which individuals will be part of your team, and what will their responsibilities be?

Person 1: ______________________________

Person 2: ______________________________

Person 3: ______________________________

(Add more persons as appropriate) ______________________________

____

____

2. Define the purpose and objectives of the Local Participation Project

Porpuse: ______________________________

____

Objectives: ______________________________

____

3. Which documents must you study before starting the process? For example, legislation, strategies, media publications... Make a list.

____

____

4. Identify stakeholder groups that will participate in the local participation process. Also specify each group's willingness to participate (e.g. observers, decision-makers…).

Group 1:

Group 2:

Group 3:

(Add more groups as appropriate)

5. Which methods will you choose to work with the participants of the local participation project, and what is the purpose of this process?

Method 1: ______________________________

Method 2: ______________________________

(Add more methods as appropriate) ______________________________

6. Create a timeline for the local participation project using a Gantt chart.

7. Identify the resources required to carry out the local participation project.

People: ______________________________

____

____

Space: ______________________________

____

____

Material: ______________________________

____

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Funding: ______________________________

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____

8. Write a plan for securing funding to carry out the local participation project.

____

____

____

____

____

9. Which stakeholder engagement methods will you select?

Method 1: ____________________

Method 2: ____________________

(Add more methods as appropriate) ____________________

10. How will you promote the local participation event?

11. Specify all parameters for organising each local participation event:

Event 1

Selected method: ______________________________

Time: ______ : ______ **Location:** ______________________________

Required material: ______________________________

____

____

____

Persons present to tun the event: ______________________________

____

____

____

Event moderator: ______________________________

Event content: ______________________________

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Event 2

Selected method: ______________________________

Time: ____:____ **Location:** ______________________________

Required material: ______________________________

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Persons present to tun the event: ______________________________

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Event moderator: ______________________________

Event content: ______________________________

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Event 3

Selected method: ____________________

Time: ___ : ___ **Location:** ____________________

Required material: ____________________

____

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Persons present to tun the event: ____________________

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____

Event moderator: ____________________

Event content: ____________________

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(Add more events as appropriate)

12. How will you evaluate the process and results of the local participation event?

13. Prepare and present the final report and advise on incorporating the findings into the core project.

Who will write the document?

Deadline for document completion?

Who will present the document?

When is the document to be presented?

Who is to be invited to the event?

Review 1

MARINA BARKIĐIJA SOTOŠEK
University of Rijeka, Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality Management

The World Tourism Organization defines sustainability as the management of resources in such a way that meets economic, social, and aesthetic needs while respecting cultural integrity, fundamental ecological processes, biodiversity, and life-supporting systems, thereby creating welfare and well-being for the entire society, while taking into account the needs of tourists and the local community. Giving a voice to local communities and involving them in the planning and decision-making processes regarding the management and future development of tourism in their area, in cooperation with other stakeholders, is the primary focus of the textbook *Introducing Local Participation Into the Pedagogical Process*. Despite the fact that sustainable development is subject to various interpretations, this textbook, with its comprehensive theoretical foundations, leaves no doubt for readers but rather opens new perspectives and broadens knowledge about sustainability and inclusiveness with regard to a wide range of local stakeholders, and in creating development plans and setting goals for the future development of destinations.

In addition to the comprehensive theoretical foundation for the concept of local participation, the textbook is treasure trove of practical advice and actionable guidelines on preparing participatory events and methods for involving diverse communities in planning processes. Each chapter offers expert and scientific literature sources with the aim of further broadening readers' knowledge, and the questions at the end of each unit encourage reflection during independent reading. A particular contribution of the textbook is the worksheets that students, as well as destination management practitioners, can use when implementing their own projects that aim to mobilise and foster local participation.

The textbook consists of five logically connected units, each playing its role in the scientific systematisation of relevant insights that are important for the subject matter. The first chapter, titled "Local Participation in Tourism Planning", explains the key challenges of public participation in tourism planning processes, outlines potential misunderstandings and misconceptions about public participation, analyses the advantages and disadvantages of cooperation with the local community, and defines levels of public participation and individual stakeholder groups. This chapter highlights the importance of cross-sectoral partnerships aimed at strengthening local cooperation during strategic planning to create sustainable and responsible tourism.

The chapter titled "Examples of Good Practice in Collaboration with the Local Community" presents examples of both international and domestic practices that have addressed various developmental aspects and themes important for the development of the tourist destinations where they were implemented. These examples emphasise public participation and cooperation as an indispensable tool for the successful achievement of objectives. A highlighted example of international practice is the project Promoting the Cultural Sector through the Introduction of ICT in the Development Plans of Cultural Tourism in the Podbeskidzie Region, Poland. The next example from the Piedmont region in Italy, relates to the project titled Tourist Needs Monitoring Platform by CSI Piemonte. The final analysed example of international practice is the result of international cooperation, and is the Campano Islands Project by the Lauro Group (Naples, Italy) and Forthcrs, University of Crete (Greece). The analysed examples of domestic practice refer to the following projects: conducting an environmental carrying capacity assessment of the Štrit location in the Municipality of Škocjan as part of the preparation of the product "Heritage Trails of Dolenjska and Bela Krajina; conducting an environmental carrying capacity assessment at the Trška Gora location near Novo mesto as part of the preparation of the Heritage Trails of Dolenjska and Bela Krajina project; setting out the route of the motorway near Trebnje; preparation of guidelines for the development of viticulture and tourism in Lisec in Suha Krajina.

Project management involves managing various stakeholder groups affected by the focal project, or stakeholders groups having a certain interest in it. The third chapter, titled "Project Planning Incorporating Local Participation", explains in detail the 12 steps in implementing local participation, which include: forming the project team; defining the purpose and objectives of the local participation project; understanding the legislative, legal, and social context of the main project and the decisions to be made; determining stakeholder involvement in the process (which groups will be involved and for what purpose); selecting the method of working with participants in the local participation project; setting the timeframe for the local participation project; identifying the resources needed to implement the local participation project; securing funding for the local participation project; inviting and recruiting participants from the local community; promoting local participation events; conducting local participation events; evaluating the process and results of the local participation events; preparing and presenting the final report, as well as integrating the main conclusions into the project implementation process. Local participation is a way to incorporate the opinions and ideas of groups from the project's local community into project implementation, while simultaneously respecting the context of the main project and the structure of the local participation itself.

Building on the theoretical premises from previous chapters, expertise, and critical analysis, the authors present new theories and proposals on how to achieve successful partnerships in the chapter titled "Public Participation Techniques". The authors list key challenges and approaches to addressing them during the implementation of successful partnerships, including: defining a shared vision and mission; fulfilling the needs and expectations of each partner; recognising and utilising partners' strengths; respecting partnership limitations; setting project objectives and individual stakeholder objectives; quickly resolving disputes; and defining partners' tasks and responsibilities. By putting forth these proposals, the authors contribute to the quality and authenticity of the textbook.

The chapter titled "Example of the Introduction of Local Participation into the Study Process" demonstrates that the authors of the textbook not only reflect on sustainability but also practice it by involving students in collaboration with the local community. As part of various courses at the Faculty of Tourism, students visit destinations undergoing tourism development and propose innovative ideas for further growth. The final chapter of the textbook presents five destinations in Slovenia and Croatia that the authors visited with students, applying the principles of local participation. The Croatian destinations where students actively participated in the development process and conceptual solutions were Gorski Kotar, Moslavina, Sisak, and Petrinja, while in Slovenia they visited the Artiče destination. For each destination visited, the synergy between the academic and local communities is thoroughly explained, including the methods of cooperation and stakeholder involvement. The final outcomes and benefits resulting from the collaboration among the stakeholders involved in these destinations are also presented.

The textbook *Introducing Local Participation into the Pedagogical Process* contributes to the development of knowledge as well as raising awareness of the necessity of involving local communities in tourism planning processes. Just as the world is passed on to new generations, this compilation of systematised knowledge can now be handed on to both current and future tourism creators who respect the principles of sustainability, inclusiveness, and collaboration. Beyond students, this textbook provides comprehensive guidelines to various institutions, individuals, entrepreneurs, and all interested stakeholders who wish to advance their knowledge of destination management.

Thanks to the dedicated work of the authors who selflessly poured their knowledge and experience into this textbook, and thanks to the project realised at the Faculty of Tourism of the University of Maribor, titled the Recovery and Resilience Plan (RRP): Flexible Forms of Education: Green Transition and Tourism 5.0, the level of local participation in the study process will certainly increase in the future, making it even more advanced and effective. The ultimate result of this work will undoubtedly be visible in more productive student engagement, more successful destination development, and more sustainable tourism development in the future.

After finishing the textbook, every reader will surely have realised the authors' main message: that improved well-being is measured by the improvement in the quality of life of individuals and the overall population, rather than by simple increases in the quantity of material goods or energy produced and consumed.

Review 2

BORIS PREVOLŠEK
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The textbook addresses current issues concerning the importance of integrating local participation into the pedagogical process. It not only highlights the significance of involving diverse communities in tourism development planning, but also offers a comprehensive and practical insight into these crucial topics.

The first chapter is extensive and thoroughly examines the various challenges, opportunities, and characteristics of public participation in tourism planning processes. The authors begin by emphasising key challenges associated with public involvement in tourism planning. They provide readers with a fundamental understanding of local participation by outlining the basics of public involvement and analysing the reasons for such involvement. This chapter also includes an in-depth review of common misconceptions and myths surrounding public participation. Importantly, the authors offer a realistic insight into the subject, enabling readers to relate more effectively to practical realities. The analysis of the advantages and disadvantages of working with local communities further enhances the quality of the chapter, as it highlights not only the positive aspects but also the challenges that may arise.

In the second chapter, the authors present a detailed analysis of specific case studies from Slovenia and abroad, which further underscores the textbook's practical value.

The third chapter focuses on the operational aspects of project implementation. It provides readers with a step-by-step guide to conducting local participation projects, offering concrete guidelines for planning and execution. This chapter demonstrates a high degree of practical relevance, essential for both students and professionals in the field of tourism.

In the fourth chapter, the authors discuss various stakeholder engagement techniques and the importance of participatory planning. They then illustrate these concepts through a practical example of the CEETO project, which incorporates the tested participatory planning method EASW (Extended Arnstein's Ladder Workshop).

The final, fifth chapter further emphasises the textbook's practical value through an analysis of case studies. The authors, together with students, visited various destinations in Slovenia and Croatia, applying the principles of local participation to contribute their knowledge and innovative ideas. This approach adds considerable weight and usability to the textbook. Further value is added by the recommended readings, reflection questions, and worksheets at the end of each chapter, offering students and practitioners supplementary materials and tools to deepen their understanding and application of the covered topics.

INTRODUCING PUBLIC PARTICIPATION METHODS INTO THE PEDAGOGICAL PROCESS

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The textbook "Introducing Public Participation Methods into the Pedagogical Process" highlights the importance of the involvement of different communities in tourism development planning processes. In the introductory part, the very concept of public participation in tourism planning processes is presented. The reasons and levels of public involvement in development processes are explained. The textbook also presents examples of good practices of cooperation with the local community from abroad and Slovenia. The textbook then focuses on the public involvement process itself, where the individual steps of participation are described. Next, concrete advice is given regarding the organisation of events where the public are involved. In particular, public participation techniques, which can be used in cooperation with various stakeholders, are highlighted. At the end, the textbook presents examples of the inclusion of local participation in the study process at the Faculty of Tourism of the University of Maribor. It provides a draft work plan for future examples of the inclusion of cooperation with communities in the study process.

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UVAJANJE LOKALNE PARTICIPACIJE V PEDAGOŠKI PROCES

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Učbenik »Uvajanje lokalne participacije v pedagoški proces« izpostavlja pomen vključenosti različnih skupnosti v procese načrtovanja razvoja turizma. V uvodnem delu je predstavljen pojem lokalna participacija oziroma sodelovanje javnosti pri načrtovalskih procesih v turizmu. Pojasnjeni so razlogi in stopnje vključevanja javnosti v razvojne procese. Učbenik nadalje predstavi primere dobrih praks sodelovanja z lokalno skupnostjo iz tujine in Slovenije. Nato se učbenik osredotoči na postopek vključevanja javnosti, pri čemer so opisani posamezni koraki sodelovanja ter podani konkretni nasveti glede organizacije participativnih dogodkov. Še posebej so izpostavljene tehnike javne participacije, ki jih lahko uporabimo pri sodelovanju z različnimi deležniki. Učbenik na koncu predstavi primere vključevanja lokalne participacije v študijski proces na Fakulteti za turizem Univerze v Mariboru ter poda osnutek delovnega načrta za prihodnje primere vključevanja sodelovanja s skupnostmi v študijski proces.

Ključne besede:
lokalna participacija,
načrtovanje turizma,
sodelovanje,
deležniki,
tehnike javne participacije

Univerzitetna založba
Univerze v Mariboru

University of Maribor

Faculty of Tourism

Thanks to the dedicated work of the authors who selflessly poured their knowledge and experience into this textbook, and thanks to the project realised at the Faculty of Tourism of the University of Maribor, titled the Recovery and Resilience Plan (RRP): Flexible Forms of Education: Green Transition and Tourism 5.0, the level of local participation in the study process will certainly increase in the future, making it even more advanced and effective. The ultimate result of this work will undoubtedly be visible in more productive student engagement, more successful destination development, and more sustainable tourism development in the future.

After finishing the textbook, every reader will surely have realised the authors' main message: that improved well-being is measured by the improvement in the quality of life of individuals and the overall population, rather than by simple increases in the quantity of material goods or energy produced and consumed.

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The textbook addresses current issues concerning the importance of integrating local participation into the pedagogical process. It not only highlights the significance of involving diverse communities in tourism development planning, but also offers a comprehensive and practical insight into these crucial topics.

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