



by being accepted to a
university (or even
where to apply to)
smoking / smoking of cigarettes
and compare life in school
with life at home

02. THE COMENSI METHOD

The COMENSI method has been developed to support those working with disadvantaged adults to reduce social exclusion through the process of engagement. It is the result of a collaboration between a team of engagement professionals working in different international contexts.

This section provides a step-by-step guide to ensure the best results and outcomes for your projects. Depending on what stage you are at, you may want to skip the first few steps but don't underestimate the importance of checking they are complete as these are the foundations upon which your engagement process will be built.

STEP 1. IDENTIFY

IDENTIFY YOUR TARGET GROUP , SPATIAL CONTEXT & SOCIAL ISSUES

This step applies to a) those who have a known concern or opportunity that could affect the community, but also to b) those who are already working with a specific group or community.

Step 1 will depend on which of these categories is most applicable.

A. Known issue: Before embarking on any project that will require engaging with a specific group(s) or audience(s), it is essential to first identify them. This will help to inform and adapt the selection of engagement methods employed, thereby offering the best chance of success (e.g. arrange a women only focus group or organise workshops outside of office working hours). Points to consider whilst identifying your target groups:

- Local context (e.g. political, social, economic, cultural, etc.)
- Resources available and resources required to reach that group (e.g. sign language interpreter, wheelchair accessible meeting space, etc.)
- Who is directly and indirectly affected by the issue/subject (e.g. planning, social isolation, etc.)
- Who could influence other groups or individuals (e.g. local priest, vlogger)

B. Known group: Conversely, if the starting point is an existing group, the first step will be to identify the issues affecting them that could provide the motivation for their engagement. This could include:

- ↳ Defining the geographical limits and administrative areas that are relevant to the group
- ↳ The nature of the relationship between people and place, perceived identity and stigmas
- ↳ Their personal perception of their neighbourhood
- ↳ Meeting places and community hubs available and accessible to use for the group's engagement

STAKEHOLDER MAPPING

GOOD PRACTICE IN BARCELONA

As part of a wider project to address odour pollution at an international level (D-Noses), a number of local pilot studies were identified in which to test the innovative bottom-up approach.

One of these pilots was Barcelona in an area around the waste treatment sites. Before any engagement was carried out, it was necessary to map all the potential stakeholders. This was an exercise led by Mapping for Change, working with partners - Ibercivis who are based in Barcelona. The activity began by placing the issue of odour pollution at the centre of the page. From there the team considered who else may be affected by or affecting the odour. Lines were drawn away from the centre to group the current and potential stakeholders.

Despite some members of the project team having worked and lived in the area for a number of years, the mapping exercise brought new and previously forgotten stakeholders to the fore and uncovered other target groups, influencers, supporters and potential inhibitors, giving a fuller picture of the situation.

This became the foundation for engagement planning, using it to identify any barriers and motivations of different groups and establishing the most effective way to communicate and engage with them. A stakeholder map is unlikely to ever be complete as new stakeholders will be discovered throughout the project. See an example of a stakeholder map in section 3.

TARGET

Those affected by odour pollution in the Forum Area

LINK

<http://dnoses.eu/>



STEP 2. ASSESS

ASSESS THE POSSIBILITIES AND LIMITATIONS OF YOUR GROUP(S) AND RESEARCH WHICH ENGAGEMENT TECHNIQUE WOULD WORK BEST

Having identified the target group(s), the next step is to understand any barriers the group members may have to participate in the project. For each barrier, consider any mitigation measures that could be introduced to overcome these barriers. For example, where formal education methods may be intimidating or unfamiliar, use a more creative and interactive method to engage that will keep participants attention and ultimately generate more interest.

LIMITATIONS	MITIGATION STRATEGY	POTENTIAL ENGAGEMENT TECHNIQUES
Low literacy	Use plain language and pictorial material whenever possible. Avoid spaces which could be intimidating	Perception mapping, group meetings
Visual impairment	Use alternative techniques to the visual ones, such as audio	Sensory walks
9 to 5 workers unable to attend meetings during the day	Organise evening events/activities Go to their workplace	Collecting memories Rapid appraisal
Lone parents	Organise child friendly events/activities	Personas/roleplay Urban sketches

A clear way of identifying the most appropriate engagement techniques, methods and tools to use in specific contexts is to create a table, using target groups and stages of engagement as the headers. From here, consider the selection of methods described in section 3 to decide which is most appropriate for your local framework and target. Throughout this Toolkit a selection of good practice examples have been included for inspiration.

ASSEMBLIES FOR SAVSKO NASELJE NEIGHBOURHOOD

GOOD PRACTICE IN SAVSKO NASELJE, LJUBLJANA

In 2013 **prostoRož** organized five assemblies with the local residents and members of non-government organisations. The main goals of the assemblies were getting to know the residents and their roles in the community, collecting their ideas and defining who can participate in different actions in the neighbourhood. The assemblies were held every fortnight with the main topics defined beforehand.

Each assembly had the same time frame and structure. 20 minutes at the beginning of each assembly were used for different listening and speaking exercises that ensured constructive debate in the main part of the assembly. The last 10 minutes of the assemblies were reserved for feedback from the residents and defining the goals of the next assembly.

Discussions at the assemblies were moderated, which ensured that each participant had the opportunity to express their ideas. At the third assembly the participants got divided into four work groups (traffic, greenery, social activities and street furniture).

Each group had to pick a project they would carry out in the next month and to define activities for the long term action plan. First actions included neighbourhood picnic, communal gardens, bulletin boards and proposals for improved walkways and cycle lanes in the neighbourhood.

The turnout at the assemblies was on average between 20 and 40 participants. The majority of participants were seniors. Lack of time was the main reason for lower attendance of other age groups.

TARGET

Local residents

LINK

<http://prostorož.org/en/portfolio/items/savsko-naselje-neighbourhood>



STEP 3. AGREE

AGREE A COMMON GOAL/OUTCOME AND STRATEGY WITH THE GROUP

To maintain engagement and interest throughout the process, the outcomes of the project must be relevant to the group(s) involved. Therefore, it is important to agree a clear common goal together at the outset. This step enables the group(s) to visualise the final outcome of any given process, project, action and engagement techniques you will use and will help to identify the steps needed to achieve the common goal. The steps or outcomes path may require engaging with a wider group of stakeholders, for their skills, contacts or influence so consider engaging with them at this stage to ensure 'buy-in'.

There are a number of methods (section 3) which can be used to agree on feasible and shared outcomes, such as the Open Space Technology. Using the Theory of Change and the outcomes framework will help to understand the conditions essential to achieve the goal and provide a useful basis for identifying which activities or interventions will be required.

SOCIAL IMPACT COMMUNITY-CAPACITY BUILDING PROGRAMME

GOOD PRACTICE IN PORTUGAL (LOCATIONS INVOLVING THE STAKEHOLDERS OF MORE THAN 40 DIFFERENT ORGANISATIONS' PROJECTS)

Since 2013, the capacity building programme "Social Impact Community" has engaged and built the capacity of more than 40 small organisations working in the social sector. Not focusing only in the capital, Lisbon, allows annually for staff from small towns to participate, test and learn with one of their ongoing projects or actions.

The Theory of Change method is used in the second module - right after the initial stakeholders mapping - to engage those groups of stakeholders and agree on the common goal of the project/action being tested / prototyped during the 5 months programme.

This has meant that, in some cases, the whole project has been turned upside down. Because Theory of Change is a very versatile tool, it can both turn the most usual tree of problems or logframe upside down, and analyse the 'road to change' of that given group or community. Thus, taking a step back, the group can focus on "what are the most important goals, outcomes, changes they want to achieve?" - and then make the backwards map of the road to get there. A roadmap of the intermediate outcomes or conditions required to "make it happen".

The majority of organisations working with the **Theory of Change** got useful insights from this different way of looking at their work, taking their head from the daily implementation of the activities and looking at the big picture, allowing for shared discussion and agreement. Social Impact Community programme teaches effective methods for assessing and communicating the organisation's results and outcomes, giving the staff tools for managing and monitoring impact.

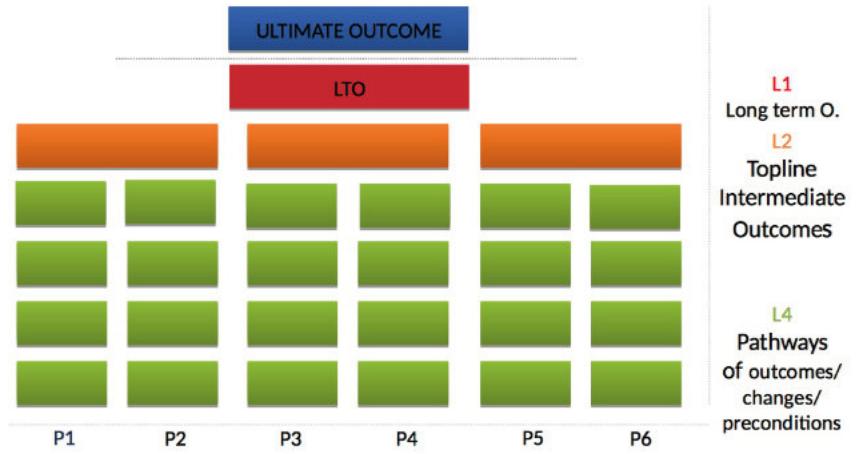
TARGET

Small local organisations and their stakeholders working in the social area (staff, beneficiaries, management, funders)

LINK

<http://impactosocial.pt>

An outcome, change or precondition



4CHANGE
Impact the social

Inspired by

ActKnowledge
Theory to Results



STEP 4. DEVELOP

DEVELOP AN ACTION PLAN WITH THE GROUP(S) USING THE APPROPRIATE ENGAGEMENT TECHNIQUE

Once a common goal has been agreed within the group(s), an action plan and timeline should be developed as a pathway to reach such a goal.

The action plan, depending on the given process, project, action and engagement techniques chosen, is a larger strategy of planned actions that may include meetings, mentoring, designing or validating the common final outcome selected.

The action plan can be devised, trialled and progressed with a target group through a series of meetings, collectively called 'local labs'. These local labs can be used to experiment with some of the techniques (to be selected from section 3) according to the stage of the engagement process.

The action plan should define the main activities and learning outcomes of each meeting along with the staff and resources required to deliver the activities. To ensure the widest engagement of the group, a calendar of events and activities should be agreed at the start according to the greatest availability within the group. The action plan could include a final activity to close the labs (such as an exhibition, a community event, etc) with the involvement of the local stakeholders and of the community.

SWITCH ON MEHRINGPLATZ

GOOD PRACTICE IN BERLIN

Switch On Mehringplatz was a one year project developed as part of the Erasmus+ program EULER.

The aim was to increase the skills and competences of the community to support informal and voluntary engagement in community initiatives.

The project delivered a series of training activities including: five public events introducing key issues regarding urban commons, activation of local actors, digital platforms, creative strategies and dissemination practices; and three workshop modules on collaborative methodologies for community empowerment and digital publishing.

The techniques for the training modules included urban reconnaissance, collaborative mapping and storytelling.

The action plan of the project was structured along two lines: “horizontally” to follow each theme, and “vertically” to explore the techniques.

Each theme was introduced by one public discussion and then explored further in three workshops dedicated to the different techniques.

By using specific techniques applied to different topics, the participants could be involved in the exploration of a single theme (i.e. urban commons) through a combination of different exercises (surveying existing urban commons, building shared maps as commons, producing collective narrations), or through a single technique, i.e. storytelling, from setting a collective narrative project through different steps for surveying, scripting and editing an audio visual project regarding a spatial context.

The final aim of the three modules was to produce content to be published in a local online atlas.

TARGET

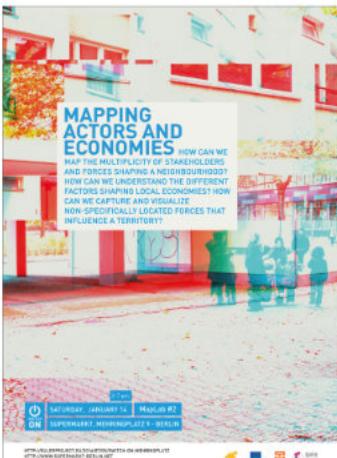
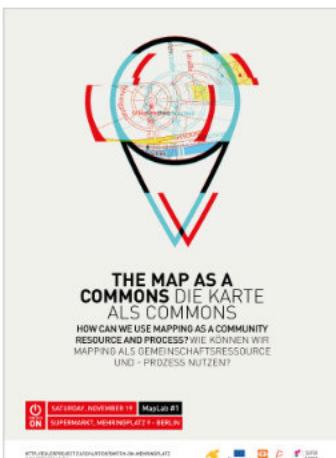
Facilitators, social workers, civil servants

LINK

<http://www.tesserae.eu/project/euler>



	PUBLIC CONVERSATION	URLAB	MAPLAB	STORYLAB
COMMONING	26 th Oct 2016 7PM Commons in Practice Conversation with Silke Helfrich	27 th Oct 2016 10AM City of Commons	19 th Nov 2016 2PM - 7PM Maps as a Commons	26 th Nov 2016 2PM - 7PM Collective Narrations
COLLABORATIVE ECONOMIES	9 th Dec 2016 7PM Platform Coops Conference on digital cooperative economies in collaboration with SUPERMARK / AGORA	10 th Dec 2016 2PM - 7PM Platform City	14 th Jan 2017 2PM - 7PM Mapping Actors and Economies	21 st Jan 2017 2PM - 7PM Place Narratives
NEIGHBOURHOOD INITIATIVES	9 th Feb 2017 7PM Activating local Knowledge Conversation on bottom up initiatives with Prinzessinengärten.	11 th Feb 2017 10AM - 5PM Spontaneous City	3 rd Mar 2017 2PM - 7PM Connecting Layers	11 th Mar 2017 2PM - 7PM Voicing People and Communities
ARTISTIC/ACTIVIST STRATEGIES	23 rd Mar 2017 7PM Strategies for change Conversation with MetroZones	25 th Mar 2017 10AM - 5PM Contested City	21 nd Apr 2017 2PM - 7PM Visualising Data	6 th May 2017 2PM - 7PM Narrative of Change
ALTERNATIVE ECONOMIES	18 th May 2017 7PM Rethinking value Trust as a currency	20 th May 2017 10AM - 5PM Possible City	16 th Jun 2017 3PM - 8PM Mehringplatz Atlas	24 th Jun 2017 2PM - 7PM Weaving Stories



STEP 5. SET

**SET, FIND OR CREATE A SPACE
TO HELP DELIVER THE ACTION PLAN
(DIGITAL COMMUNITY PLATFORM
& NEIGHBOURHOOD HUB)**

Space is an important part of working on any community based project, whether it serves as a temporary space for carrying out an action plan or as a permanent space for ongoing community engagement. Finding or creating a space will help to plan actions, test ideas, share experiences, inspire and make it possible to meet on a regular basis.

Setting a space can be achieved on two different levels - physical and/or virtual. A physical place (in the case of COMENSI - the Neighbourhood Hub) enables centrality and is usually required to activate and maintain the community dynamics. A virtual space (in the case of COMENSI - the Community Platform) can act both as an inspiration and a transparent way of sharing progress. It is also considered an extremely useful tool for community engagement.

The Neighbourhood Hub is the physical space in which to work and meet with the target group(s) during the planning process. The Hub should be a point of reference of the community and should be identified as an open and collaborative space to develop ideas and visions by the local community. The Community Platform can be used in different ways: from collecting memories (through video, interviews, photos) of the neighbourhood to collecting proposals for urban transformation. The Neighbourhood Hub can be used to introduce the practical use and application of the Digital Community Platform:

<https://community-atlas.net>

LIBRARY OF THINGS

GOOD PRACTICE IN SAVSKO NASELJE, LJUBLJANA

Library of THINGS is a new form of public service, where members can borrow various useful items such as tools, home appliances or electronics. The Library helps their users to save time, money and space by renting the items that they would only need occasionally or couldn't afford them on their own. The Library was established as a result of revitalization of the local community centre in Savsko naselje neighbourhood. Opening of the Library enabled the use of its space free of charge for various events. Anyone can organise an event as long as the event is free and open to the public.

The inventory of the Library can be used during different workshops, which helps organisers/visitors who don't have their own equipment. The Library hosts various lectures, board game nights, swaps, as well as workshops such as knitting lessons, yoga or analogue photo printing. This way the Library of THINGS is strengthening the social life inside the neighbourhood and building stronger social networks among the locals. Since the space can be rented free of charge by anyone it benefits certain groups which are otherwise marginalised as it would be too expensive or complicated to rent similar spaces at other locations. In the last few years the Library has already hosted different groups of disadvantaged adults, since the space is equally accessible to everyone without any financial risk.

TARGET

Local residents, students, young adults, groups with fewer opportunities

LINK

<http://www.knjiznicareci.si>





COMMUNITY MAPS

GOOD PRACTICE IN SOUTHWARK, LONDON

Maps are the ideal starting point for conversations, decisions and actions that will affect your local area. Participatory maps encourage people to contribute their ideas, and bring all perspectives together onto one page.

Southwark Council commissioned Mapping for Change to support it in its pledge to build 11,000 new homes over the next thirty years. An interactive online mapping platform was used to enable residents to help the Council identify where the new homes should be built, and participate in the decision-making processes throughout the programme. The Southwark Community Map was a great success with the council going on to conduct full feasibility studies on 68% of the potential sites suggested by residents.

The engagement process and information gathering was not only pivotal in choosing sites for new homes but also alleviated the potential friction within the community where redevelopment may have been seen as gentrification of their neighbourhood.

TARGET

Local residents

LINK

<https://southwark.communitymaps.org.uk/welcome>



STEP 6. MAKE MAKE IT HAPPEN BY SUPPORTING, FEEDING AND FACILITATING

The process of carrying out the community engagement process, the action itself and implementation with the citizens of a given community, requires nurturing, facilitation and some time and attention. Meaning, that a facilitator is required to be on hand throughout the whole process, to create mechanisms that reinforce the results (either by training, mentoring or other forms of capacity building).

Key issues include maintaining contact; remembering and reiterating the common goals; researching funding to implement the ideas; or giving mentoring support for the implementation of civic actions or urban solutions. These techniques need to be supportive and flexible to allow for amendments and even reinvention if the planned actions do not achieve the desired results.

LARGO DO CANTINHO PARTICIPATORY SOLUTION FOR PUBLIC SPACE

GOOD PRACTICE IN LISBON, PORTUGAL
(NEIGHBOURHOOD/BAIRRO 2 DE MAIO, AJUDA)

In bairro 2 de Maio/ Neighbourhood 2 Maio, a BIP ZIP project called “2 de maio every day”, promoted citizenship engagement in urban regeneration, including both private housing and public spaces. Being an area of social housing with social inclusion issues and low social participation, involving the community to participate was a challenge which required the creative combination of several engagement methods. The space to regenerate during this one year project was collectively chosen through the process of a participatory urban needs assessment, achieved by door-to-door consultations and a survey. The selected space was on the confluence of the two main areas - the middle class private housing and social housing. To begin the process of participatory regeneration, an ‘ideas competition’ was promoted to students on the neighbouring campus. These ideas were then presented to the community to be validated, over several months. Engagement methods included assemblies, door-to-door consultation and a survey. The best ideas were then put to a public vote and a facilitation process was launched for the best ideas complementation. The chosen public space was successfully renewed with the joined forces of a local NGO, the municipalities, the local residents and the neighbouring campus of architecture and urbanism students.

TARGET

All neighbourhood inhabitants, with involvement of students

LINK

<https://www.localsapproach.org/largo-do-cantinho>



STEP 7. MONITOR

MONITORING/FOLLOWING UP AND KEEPING THE COMMUNICATION FLOWING

Monitoring the expected outcome of processes is an essential part of understanding their effectiveness. It also serves as the basis for making future decisions on their use in the community, sharing learning with others and identifying specific applications of the techniques and methods. Although this is the final step of the COMENSI method, it could be argued that this is in fact the first step. Procedures and indicators to evaluate the advancement and success of any project must be embedded at the start - without a baseline how can progress be measured? A complete Theory of Change includes measures and indicators to assess outcomes and so can be very useful to ensure these data are collected at each stage of the project. Communication can often be overlooked - especially for the outer circles of the community. However, providing feedback about the results of consultations and the progress of the project is essential to give the participants the feeling that their engagement matters and is able to produce change. Communicating to larger audiences establishes both a feedback process for the improvement of the internal capacity of a community, and fosters the transferability of practices in different contexts. Channels to disseminate and publish the results should be relevant to the target group(s) and effectively use existing resources, such as a residents newsletter or Facebook group. Combining communication with celebration events is a good strategy, so communication should include this dimension - see the best practice of two co-created community festivities.

COSTAS DA CIDADE FESTIVAL

GOOD PRACTICE IN LISBON, PORTUGAL

PRAÇA DA QUINTA DO LAVRADO (ORIENTAL AREA OF LISBON)

The Festival **Costas da Cidade** (the 'back of the city') aimed to gather artists and other local dynamics in a collaborative event designed to create a stronger sense of community around the territory of Curraleira.

The activities before the festival took place to create momentum and prepare logistics for the event. This strategy was previously co-designed and co-produced to ensure citizenship engagement and empowerment through activities such as:

1. Partially occupy the square
2. Release a preliminary program of the event
3. Map all the necessary resources
4. Map all the ideas for activities from all the partners and local actors
5. Prepare the final program

The festival was organised by two partners with complementing projects in the territory and served as a combined outcome for both. Praça da Quinta do Lavrado (the square where the festival took place) is in the border of the parishes of Beato and Penha de França. The aim was to join forces between the two territories and to strengthen institutional bonds.

TARGET

Local partners acting in the territory, local municipalities and residents of this urban area.

LINK

<https://www.facebook.com/events/pr%C3%A7a-da-quinta-do-lavrado/festival-as-costas-da-cidade/197476970928681>





MARE MEMORIA VIVA

GOOD PRACTICE IN PALERMO, ITALY
(SEASIDE NEIGHBOURHOOD OF SANT'ERASMO)

The seaside neighbourhood of Sant'Erasmo is located in an area felt as a periphery, along Palermo east coast.

The initiative was born from the need to rediscover a relationship with the sea and these places, to re-evaluate them and to give a new meaning by trying out different and new uses of these urban interstices.

The will was to start a participatory path, involving the inhabitants, traders, artists and social workers who are fond of this area in the design and implementation of a new neighbourhood feast (based on the old traditional one which is no longer organised). The feast was the conclusion of many small interventions in the public space of the pier and months of co-planning with the inhabitants.

The initiative, created by the Urban Ecomuseum "Mare Memoria Viva", involved initially other territorial associations, single citizens and, subsequently, attempted a dialogue with local institutions.

The program of the feast included workshops, artistic, musical and theatrical performances and a religious ritual at sea - requested by both the fishing and the religious communities.

The feast led to the creation of new micro relations, and opened moments of debate on the most urgent and important issues for this area. It also started the collaboration between cultural associations operating in the area, but which had not previously joined forces.

The methodology exploited the community mapping in a new method called Living Memory ("Memoria Viva").

The process started with the feast is still ongoing.

The Ecomuseum aims to nourish and renew these relationships, offering different opportunities for meeting and community growth.

TARGET

The project path addressed the inhabitants of the district, involving different targets. Merchants, fishermen and their families, young people from local associations, adults from cultural local associations, children from the Ecomuseum summer camp and from the neighbourhood.

LINK

<https://www.maremembriaviva.it/diario-di-bordo/progetto-quartieri>

