BETTER Life

BETTER Life Summer School

Ana Sopina, PhD, 10/09/2024

Visual Methodologies and Design Thinking for Socially Engaged Research

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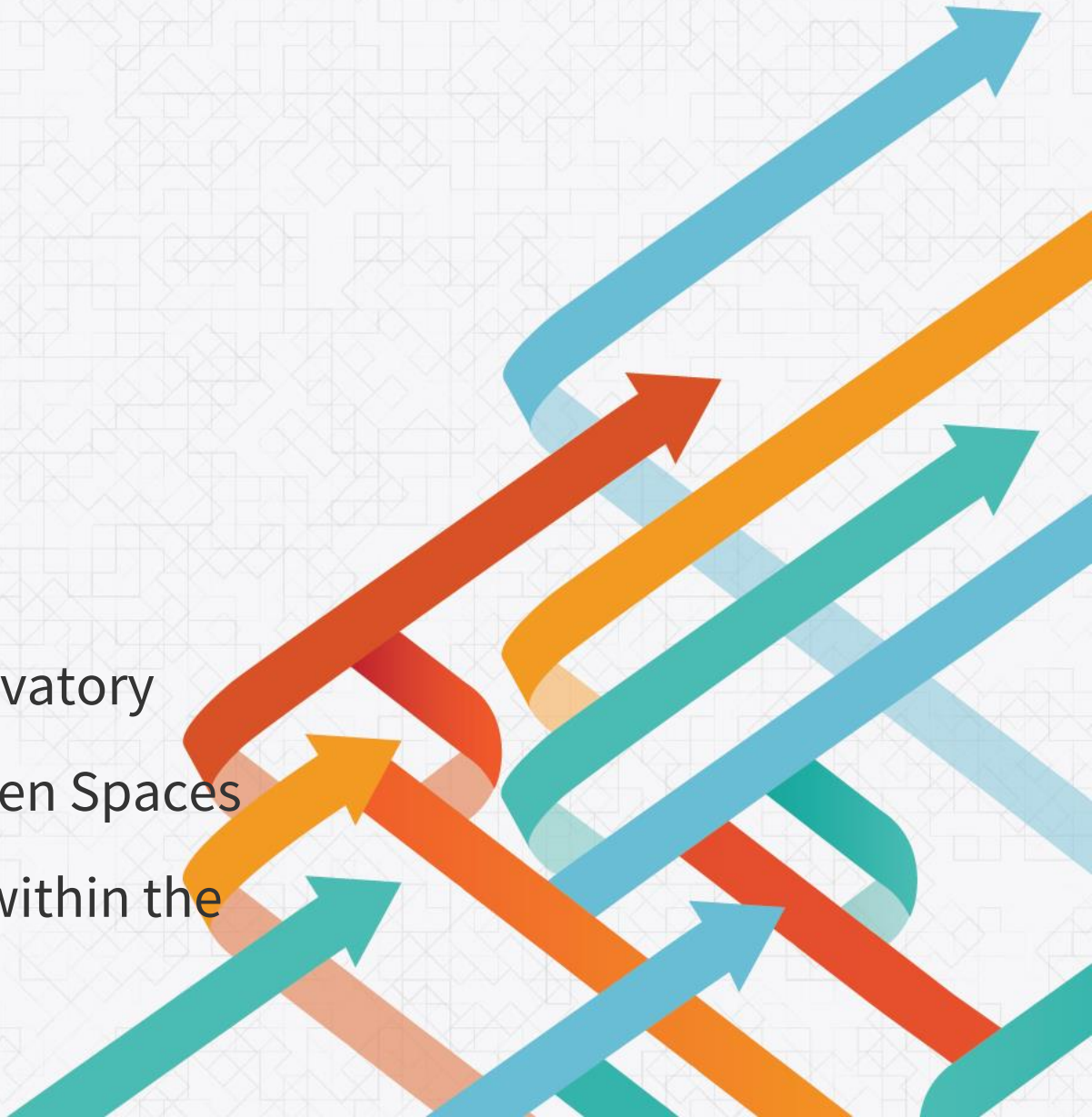

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INTRODUCTION TO THE UNICAM TOOLS FOR EMPOWERING SOCIALLY ENGAGED RESEARCH

True **interdisciplinarity research** evolves and draws knowledge from various disciplines - engaging **diverse sciences**, **knowledge from the community/non-specialists**, and various **art disciplines**.

VISUAL METHODOLOGIES + DESIGN THINKING

UNICAM team in developing BETTER Life tools:
Massimo Sargolini, Salvatore Santuccio, Samara Ferreira Crispim, Ana Sopina, Flavio Stimilli, Valentina Polci

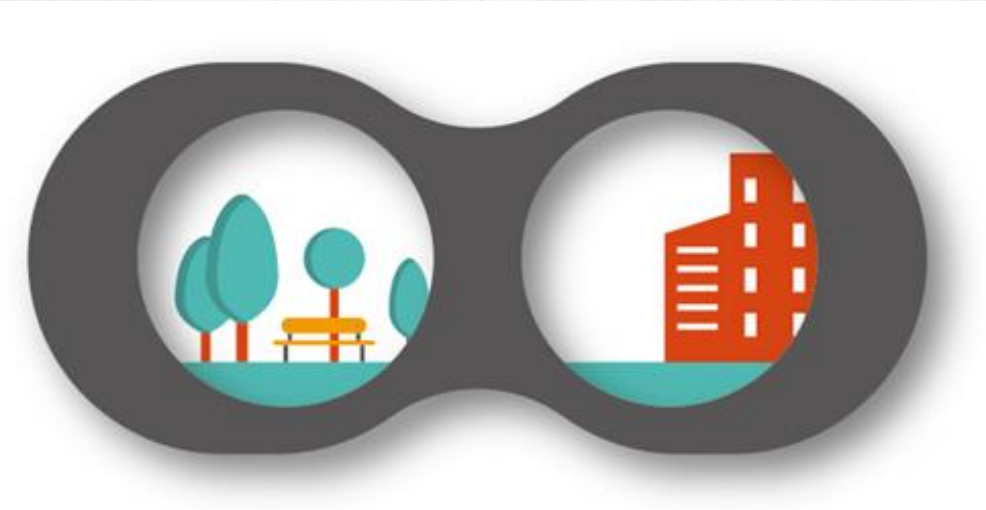
VISUAL METHODOLOGIES

Why visual methodologies?

Visual sensations are our **prime mean of perceiving**. Refers to the **conscious experience** of perceiving information through the sense of sight, involving the reception and processing of **visual stimuli**.

Visual information (intuitive and perceptive) are often our **first step in life sciences research** - and can also be built upon and applied as a methodological approach.

VISUAL METHODOLOGIES FOR LANDSCAPE OBSERVATORY



https://www.better-life-digital.eu/visualmethodologies/

Use of visual arts in observing landscape, metaphoric presentation of research, developing narratives of scientific results, and collaboration with community

The Visual Methodologies for Landscape Observatory guideline **converge art and science** in working and communicating on (primarily) **spatial and landscape planning**.

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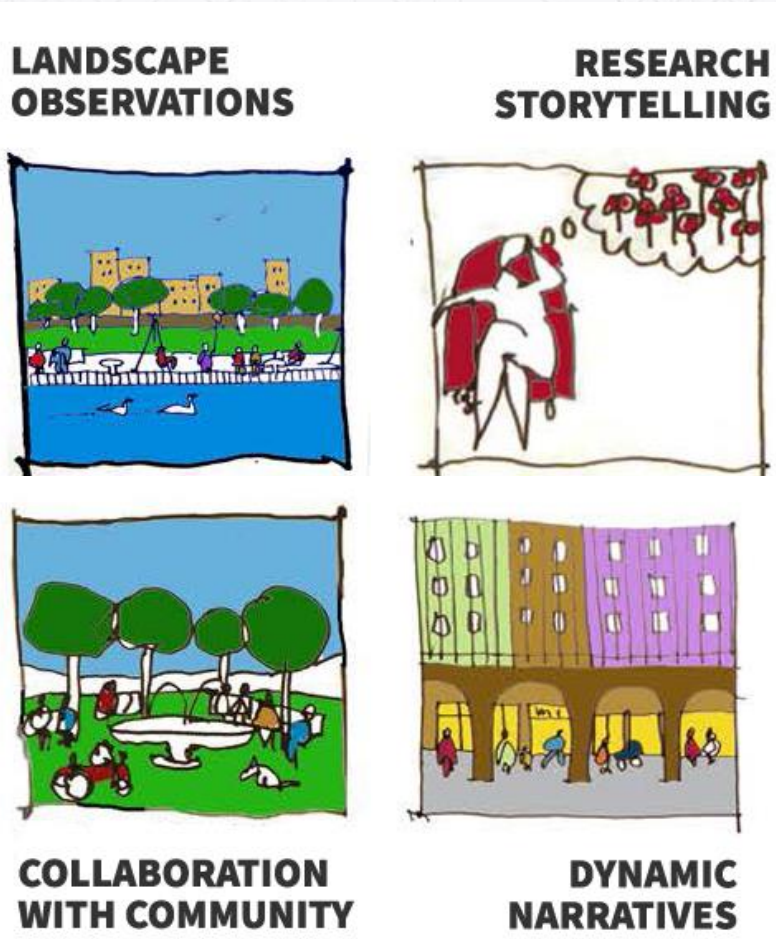
VISUAL METHODOLOGIES



Merging the **production of art** with **scientific and landscape research** is given through four complementing (4) steps to:

- **empower stakeholders to share knowledge**, ideas, and needs on landscape enhancement,
- create **a collaborative framework for contextual research and planning**,
- engage in **dynamic narratives that bridge the gap between science and society**.

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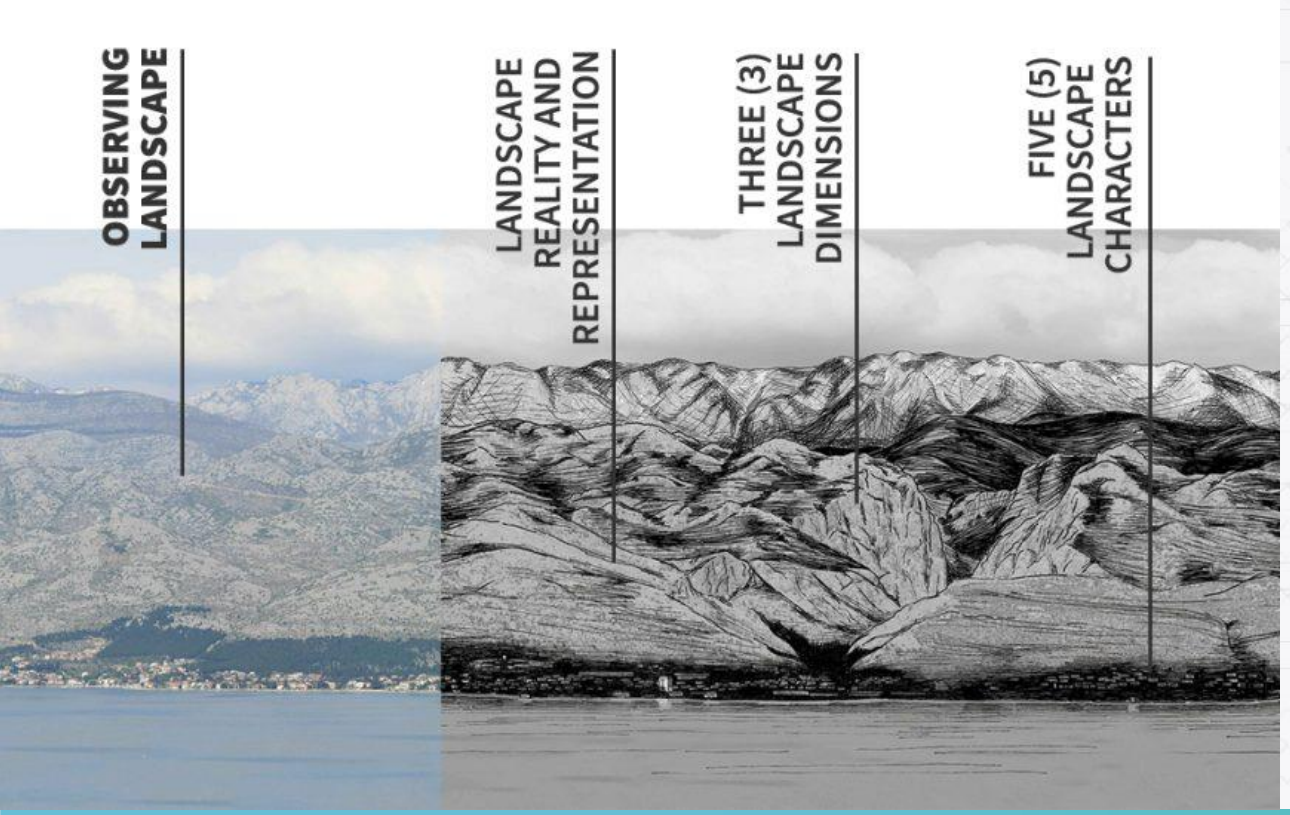
VISUAL METHODOLOGIES

LESSON 0
LANDSCAPE PERCEPTION, READING, AND OBSERVING



Foster a **deeper understanding and appreciation of inherited landscape values** that give **context** to any life sciences research:

- two (2) landscape natures **landscape reality and representation**
- three (3) landscape dimensions **spatial, societal, and symbolic landscape**
- five (5) landscape characters **physical, functional, perceptive, temporal, and holistic character of landscape**

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VISUAL METHODOLOGIES

LESSON 1
PROJECT STORYTELLING

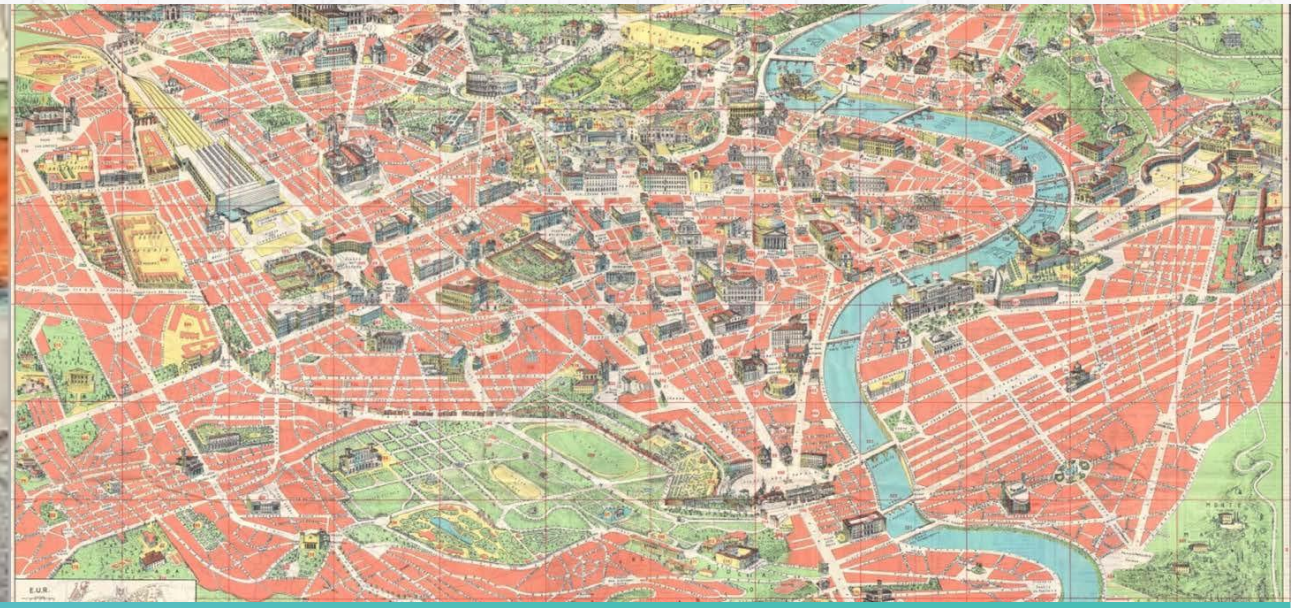
What are the **elements of representation and drawing** that can favour the ability to **transform reality by prefiguring it**.

THE DREAM (impression vs vision)

Filling the challenge of **outlining a complex project/context to non-expert users**

THE MULTITASKING VIEW

Cartographies that contain **numerous information** in a clear and interesting manner

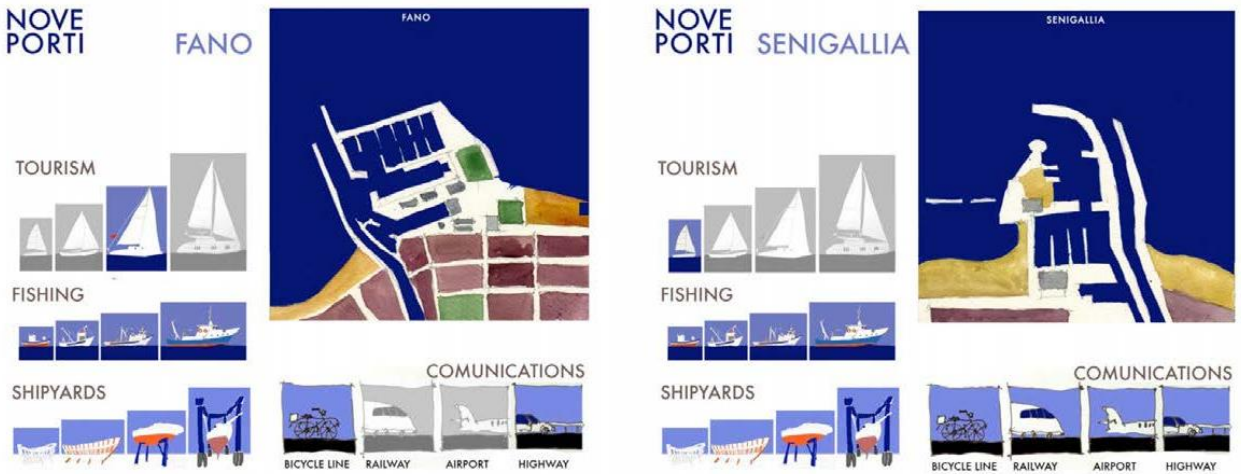


VISUAL METHODOLOGIES

LESSON 1
PROJECT STORYTELLING

CLARITY AND SYNTHESIS

Synthetic representation that is **in-depth and focused**, making the **main theme iconic**



THE PHOTOMONTAGE

Compilation of design elements to **trigger and provoke the desired impact** on viewers

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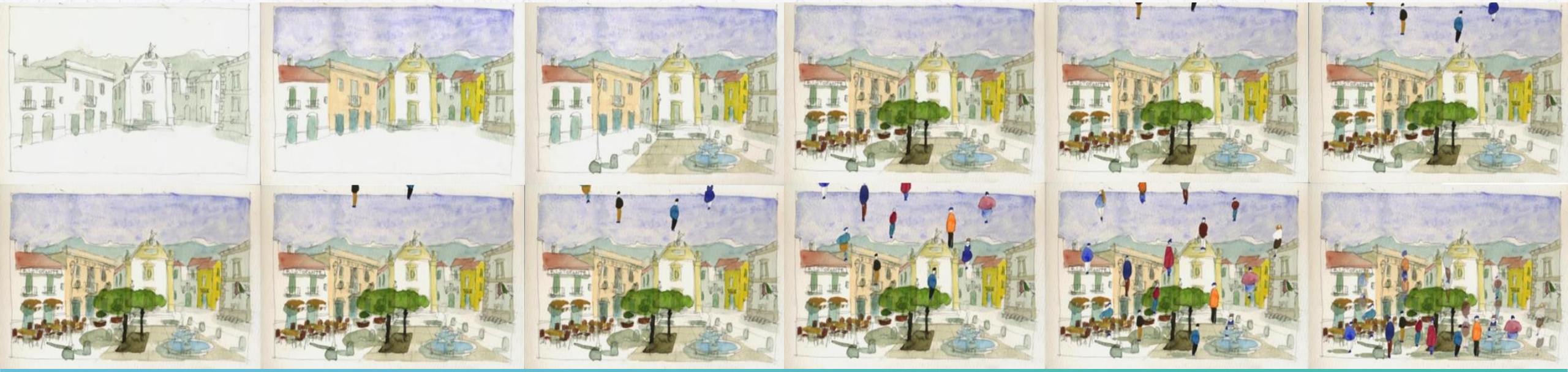
VISUAL METHODOLOGIES

LESSON 2
THE DYNAMIC TELL

Landscape is a **dynamic and multifaced entity** that is impossible to grasp into a single image but in **image sequence**.

CARTOONS

Illustrations that are very effective in **narration**, **presenting transformations**, and **project evolution**.



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VISUAL METHODOLOGIES

LESSON 2
THE DYNAMIC TELL

THE DOCUMENTARY

Filming the territory by knowing which **impressions and emotions** want to be given

THE MOVIE STORY

Cinema contains a **reservoir of landscape memory** and testimony to its transformations

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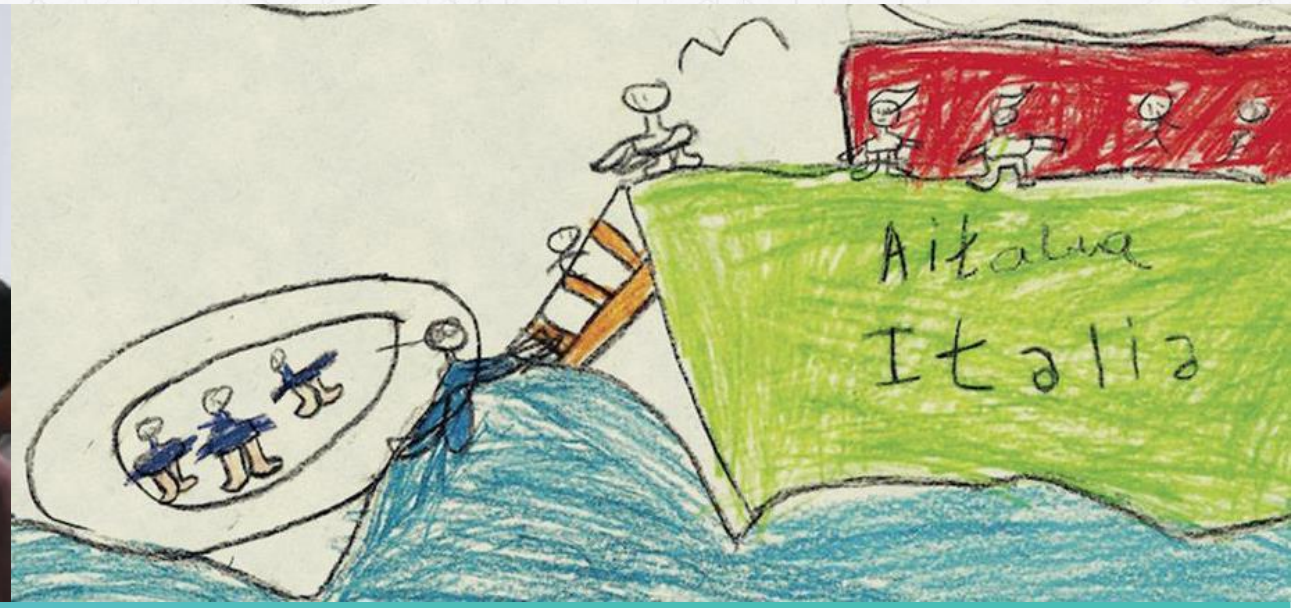
VISUAL METHODOLOGIES

LESSON 3
COLLABORATING WITH THE COMMUNITY

Learning from the community by asking direct questions, hypothesizing contrasting scenarios, and **asking preferences**.

LEARNING FROM CHILDREN

Encouraging non-experts and children to **express themselves through drawings**



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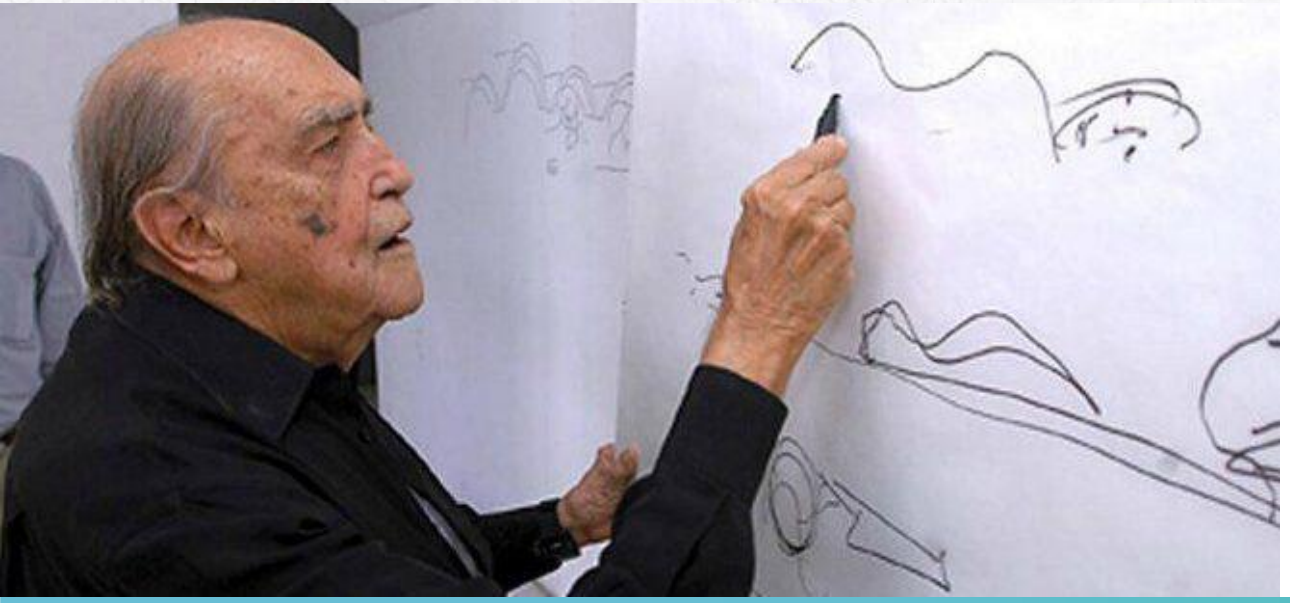
VISUAL METHODOLOGIES

COLLABORATING WITH THE COMMUNITY

COLOURS AND SYMBOLS

Use of colours and symbols to **indicate contrasting arguments** and hypothesis



PICTOGRAMS

System of representations and symbols that is **understandable** beyond the language

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VISUAL METHODOLOGIES

EMPOWERING ALL STAKEHOLDERS

GATHERING NEW KNOWLEDGE

IMPROVING PRESENTATION SKILLS

AWARENESS OF RESEARCH AS A COLLECTIVE PROCESS

Benefits of using the Tool:

- **Empowering** all stakeholders **to communicate their knowledge**, ideas, views, and needs,
- **Gathering new knowledge** as well as **gaining feedback** about research / landscape reality and representation through personal research and from all groups involved,
- **Improving presentation skills** to offer to the public a clearer idea about research topic or design choices during research implementation and project development,
- **Integrated awareness** that scientific research and/or (spatial planning) projects are **collective processes**.

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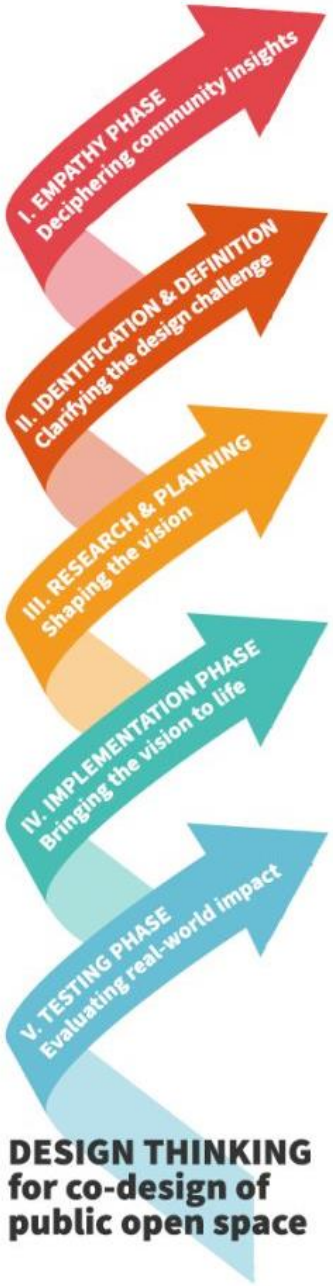
DESIGN THINKING FOR CO-DESIGN OF PUBLIC OPEN SPACES A practical guide

for the use of the Design Thinking methods for emphasizing human-centred design principles

Design Thinking toolkit is an ultimate **guide to co-designing vibrant public open spaces**. Rooted in human-centered principles, this practical toolkit **empowers users to harness the power of Design Thinking and deliver integrated solutions** that truly **reflect the needs and aspirations of local communities**.

https://www.better-life-digital.eu/designthinking/



DESIGN THINKING

Holistic approach and comprehensive methodology that **emphasises 3 core values**:

- **empathy**, **ideation**, and **iteration**

guided through **five dynamic phases** of co-design:

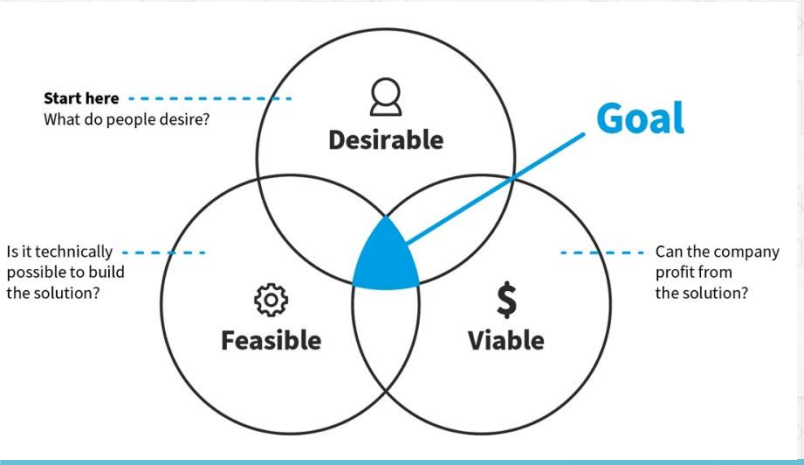
- understanding the community challenges (**empathy**),
- identifying design challenges (**identification & definition**),
- evidence-based planning (**research & planning**),
- turning ideas into tangible changes (**implementation**),
- involves the community in iterative refinements (**testing**), and concludes with a holistic review of the co-design's efficacy (**evaluation**)

DESIGN THINKING

1. EMPATHY PHASE: UNDERSTANDING COMMUNITY INSIGHTS

The cornerstone of co-designing public open spaces lies in **empathetic understanding**, ensuring the **crafted spaces genuinely address community aspirations**. Within this phase, the task is to become deeply **attuned to the perspectives and experiences of the community**.

TOOLS



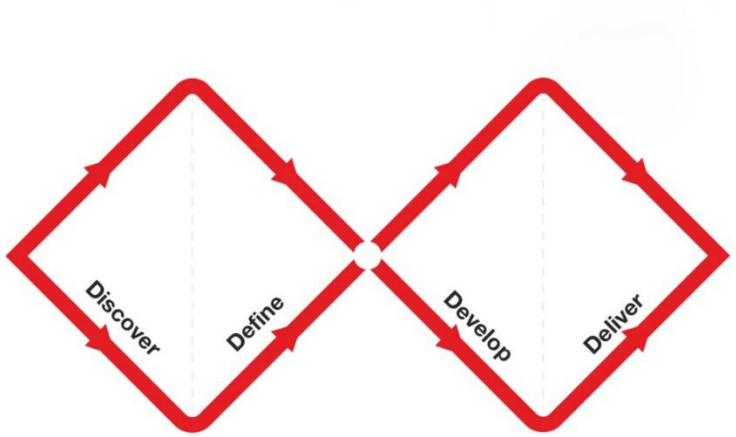
- in-depth **interviews** to gain insights into individual experiences and viewpoints
- **surveys** from a larger segment of the community to gather data on a broader scale
- interactive **participatory workshops** promote community collaboration

DESIGN THINKING

2. IDENTIFICATION & DEFINITION PHASE: CLARIFYING THE DESIGN CHALLENGES

Collaborating closely with the community to **identify and accurately define the specific challenges and opportunities** that the public open spaces present, keeping in mind the **unique urban landscape** you operate within.

TOOLS



- **stakeholder mapping** to gain a comprehensive view of the varied entities that have an interest in the project place
- **problem tree analysis** aids to uncover the root causes of challenges and core problems that need to be addressed
- creating a **user persona**, a fictional character that represents different segments of the community to understand different needs, preferences, and behaviours

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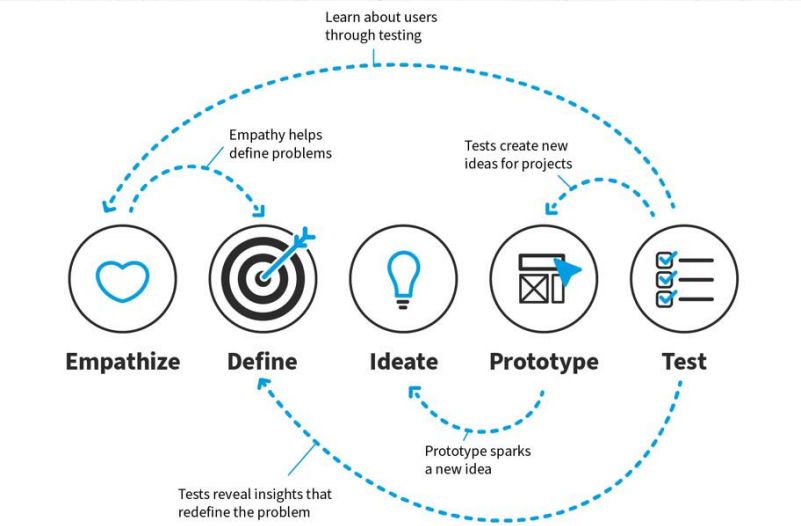
DESIGN THINKING

3. RESEARCH & PLANNING PHASE: SHAPING THE VISION

Connecting the **community and designers/planners in co-design** to deepen the understanding of the **context, cultural dynamics, and environmental factors**. This phase also entails a comprehensive plan for redesign.

TOOLS



- **context analysis** to gain insights into the broader context - history, demographics, and key characteristics
- **review of best practices** that enriches the co-design process by providing a solid knowledge base, offering proven strategies, and inspiring innovative solutions
- **collaborative planning workshops** to intergrade a common, grand vision

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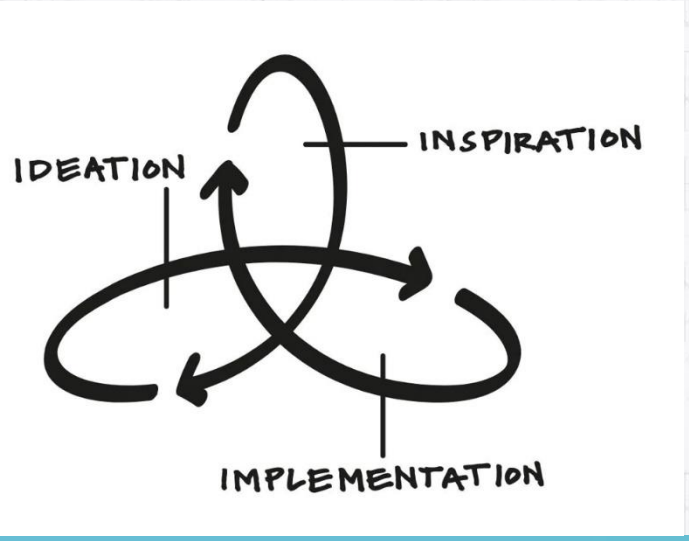
DESIGN THINKING

4. IMPLEMENTING PHASE: BRINGING THE VISION TO LIFE

Evolving community collective vision **from ideation into actuality**. This stage integrates ideas, strategies, and plans into **tangible designs and actions**.

TOOLS

- **prototyping** to materialize project scenarios in an adaptable manner as the base for implementation
- **community co-design workshops** where the community is a central figure in the design decision-making process
- **pilot projects** involve implementing small-scale, time-limited interventions in public spaces to test design concepts and derive real-time feedback



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DESIGN THINKING

5. TEST PHASE: EVALUATING REAL-WORLD IMPACT

Shows **how the implemented changes perform in reality**. Enables the community to **use and interact with the new designs** to provide feedback. The solutions are tested through a **repeated cycle of testing and refining**.

TOOLS

- **user experience surveys** collect feedback and offer data on satisfaction, ease of use, and overall impressions
- **community feedback workshops** host in-depth discussions with the community about their experiences
- **observational studies** systematically monitor the use of pilot projects and provide insights into user behaviour and patterns

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DESIGN THINKING

BEST PRACTICES SHOWCASE

Exploring three **outstanding public space projects** that embody the essence of Design Thinking.

The High Line, New York
The ideal of democratic public space

Superkilen, Copenhagen
A place to feel at home

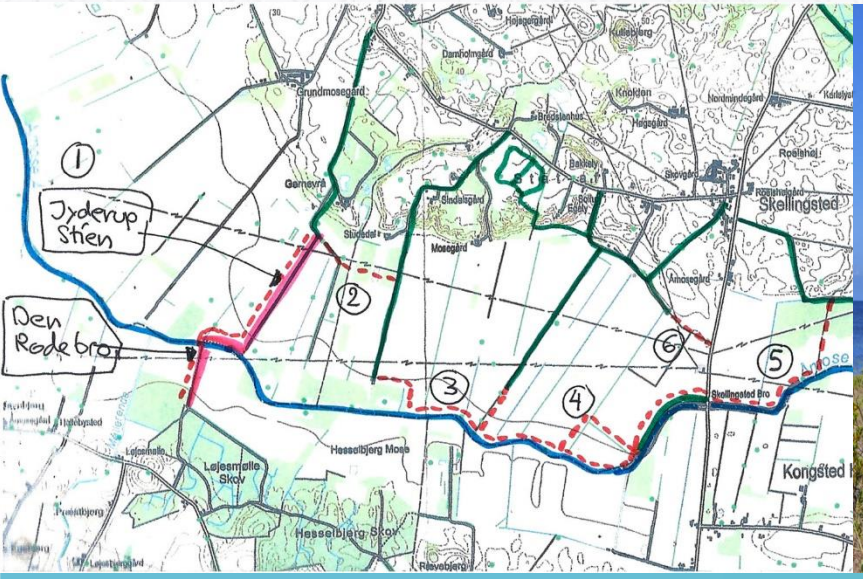
Tempelhofer Feld, Berlin
Preserving one of Berlin's most beloved open spaces

DESIGN THINKING

PREVIOUS RESEARCH ON THE TOPIC OF INTEREST

Existing scientific **knowledge from various scientific fields** that include scientific papers, special issues of journals, research projects, documents, politics…

Conflicting landscapes – integrating sustainable tourism in nature park developments



Impact of tourism development upon environmental sustainability: **sustainable ecotourism**

Tourism for SDGs – Integrating tourism, conservation, and community development

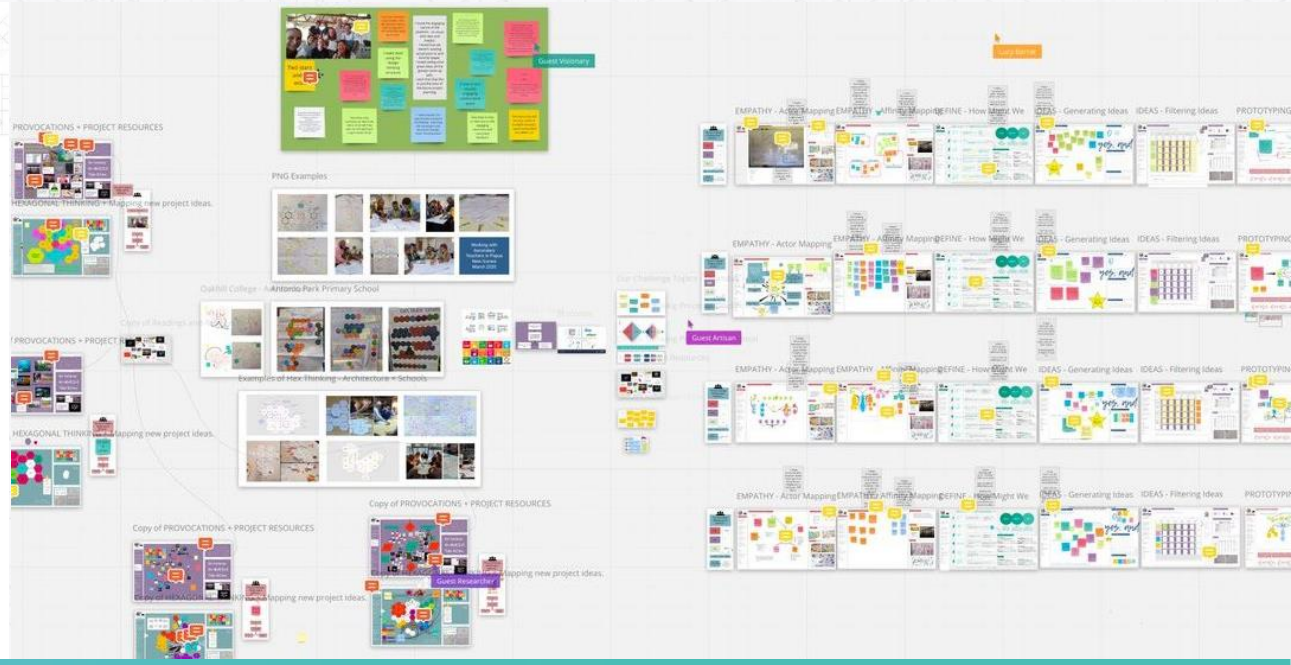
DESIGN THINKING

ACTIONABLE TOOLS TEMPLATES vs. DIGITAL TOOLS

Supporting materials and templates to facilitate and optimise co-design processes. Inspiration for own approach and/or application to digital online tools.

Paper templates

MIRO board – the virtual whiteboard tool



DESIGN THINKING

Benefits of using the Tool:

NON-TRADITIONAL PROBLEM-SOLVING

- **Versatile problem-solving method** to be applied in wide range of disciplines and challenges.

HOLISTIC APPROACH

- Acquisition of **holistic skills to identify and solve human-centered challenges**, drive innovation, and adapt to different problem-solving scenarios.

COLLABORATION WITH COMMUNITY

- Enable users to **facilitate and optimize co-design processes in close collaboration with local communities and stakeholders**: aim to positively transform the urban environment and improve the quality of urban life.

COLLECTIVE PROCESS

- Integrated awareness that **research and/or** (territory planning) **projects are collective processes**.

POSSIBLE APPLICATION OF THE UNICAM TOOLS WITHIN THE BETTER Life SUMMER SCHOOL

The tools for socially engaged research are designed and developed:

- **to raise awareness of individual research preferences,**
- **to inspire the research creativity,**
- **to enrich and enhance the diversity of research approaches**

in the ongoing and/or planned research in life sciences as well as within the BETTER Life Summer School.

https://www.better-life-digital.eu/toolkit/

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STARTING FROM THE END IS THE NEW BEGINNING!

WHAT IS DESIRED IMPACT?
EVOKE INTEREST

WHAT TO FOCUS ON?
INHERENT KNOWLEDGE

HOW TO ACHIEVE IT?
SURPRISE BY THE APPROACH

Initial (and most important) question can be:
WHAT IMPACT (ON SOCIETY) ARE WE AIMING FOR?

Approach by **starting from the end impact of the research** or/and **desired or expected contributions to the society** rather than from the scientific theory or model which is (usually)at the beginning of any research project or activity.

Which new awareness can be promoted by the research?

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