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OPT-T5: PUBLIC PARTICIPATION FOR WALKABLE AND CYCLABLE NEIGHBOURHOODS

1. Short description

The module focuses on the planning of walkable and cyclable neighbourhoods through public participation. It defines neighbourhoods as both physical and social constructs, emphasising the importance of walking and cycling for enhancing quality of life and community interaction. It outlines the benefits of walkable and cyclable neighbourhoods, which include health, environmental, economic, and social advantages, while also addressing the challenges in planning such areas, including infrastructural limitations and social inequities and it discusses how public participation in the planning process can help to overcome those challenges.

Engaging citizens and local stakeholders is highlighted as crucial for understanding community needs and ensuring that planning for walkable and cyclable neighbourhoods aligns with the desires of the people living or operating in it. Various participatory approaches and tools are discussed, including surveys, focus groups, public open houses, living labs and digital tools, which facilitate effective engagement and feedback from diverse neighbourhood members. The module also points out the importance of inclusivity in the planning process, advocating for the involvement of marginalised groups and individuals with disabilities to ensure that the needs of all community members are addressed. Overall, it presents a framework for fostering community involvement in creating sustainable and accessible urban environments.

In this context, the present module aims at: i) familiarise students/learners with the concepts and benefits of Walkable and Cyclable Neighbourhoods and the challenges in the planning process, ii) present approaches of public participation in planning for Walkable and Cyclable Neighbourhoods, iii) prepare students/learners for using digital tools for PPL in pedestrian and bicycle planning.

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2. Keywords

Walkable Neighbourhoods; Cyclable Neighbourhoods; Active Transportation; Public Participation

3. Content

3.1. Introduction

The term “neighbourhood” can be defined in many ways, according to different uses and academic fields. In a very broad way, a neighborhood is “an area where people live and interact with one another” (National Geographic, Education, accessed 15 January 2025). Neighborhoods can be found mainly in cities, but also in suburban or rural areas. The concept evidently comprises both geographic factors, focusing on location, and social dimensions, emphasising human interactions. In this context, “neighbourhoods can be defined as both a district - a physical construct, describing the area in which people live, and a community - a social construct, describing the people who live there” (Briggs, 1997, 208; Galster, 2001, in Jenks and Dempsey, 2007). Additionally, the definition is contingent upon the interpretations of users or residents, such as their views on the size of the area in question and the perceived identity of the place (Jenks and Dempsey, 2007, p. 155).

Regardless of the approach used to define the term, there is common agreement on the importance of walking and cycling as key features of daily life in a neighbourhood, as they allow for the interaction with the neighborhood’s social, natural and built environment while affecting the quality of life of both travelers and the rest of the neighborhood residents and visitors.

Furthermore, the promotion of walking and cycling to cover the daily mobility needs of urban residents is a constant pursuit of policy makers (e.g. in the New EU Urban Mobility Framework) and a cornerstone in current urban planning approaches, such as in the case of the X-minute cities and the Superblocks. However, the successful implementation of walking and cycling in neighbourhoods requires infrastructure interventions in the neighbourhood’s public space and a shift in travel choices of travelers and local residents, especially in respect to mechanised transport. Thus, citizen participation in planning walkable and cyclable neighbourhoods is crucial for creating environments that truly meet the needs and desires of the community. When residents are involved in the planning process, they bring valuable local knowledge, aspirations, and perspectives that can lead to more relevant, sustainable, and supported projects. By engaging citizens in the planning process, cities can create walkable and cyclable neighbourhoods that are not only potentially functional but also embraced by those who live there (Mendhe, 2024).

3.2. Walkable and cyclable neighbourhoods

Walkability and cyclability (or bikeability) can be defined as the quality of the local built, natural and social environment in a city or area for supporting the use of walking and cycling (Litman, 2024, Silvestri et al, 2024, Tobin, M. et al, 2022).

According to Litman et al (2009), walkable and cyclable neighbourhoods are characterised by:

- Streets and public spaces, that encourage social engagement.
- Integration of compatible land uses to improve access to employment, retail, and community facilities and services
- An interconnected network of lower-speed streets, designed to provide safe and enjoyable conditions for walking, cycling, and driving, while also accommodating public transit and individuals with disabilities
- A diverse range of residential options to meet the varied housing needs of the community.
- Energy efficiency design and respect for the natural environment.

Well planned walkable and cyclable neighbourhoods present multifaceted benefits that can be categoris

ed into health, environmental, economic and social benefits:

- Health Benefits: Walkable and cyclable neighbourhoods promote increased physical activity by making walking and cycling a more convenient and appealing mode of transportation. Research indicates that residents of walkable neighbourhoods tend to engage in more walking and transit use compared to those in car-dependent areas, leading to improved overall health outcomes (Talen et al, 2013). Regular walking or cycling can significantly improve overall fitness levels and can also enhance mental well-being, reducing stress and improving mood. Other benefits expand to the field of public physical and mental health due to the environmental and social benefits presented below. Overall, the adoption of walking and cycling offers substantial health benefits by promoting physical activity and reducing chronic disease risks, while also providing significant environmental advantages through lower emissions and improved air quality. Moreover, road safety is enhanced in areas with increased presence of pedestrians and cyclists.
- Environmental Benefits: Walking and cycling generate no air pollution, no greenhouse gas emissions and minor noise pollution. An indicative example refers to Barcelona's Superblocks, a concept conceived to limit the exposure of local residents to noise. The shift towards walking and cycling can significantly mitigate climate change impacts by reducing the overall carbon footprint associated with transportation. Increased use of walking and cycling can alleviate traffic congestion, leading to more efficient urban transport systems and reduced travel times for all road users (Mansoor et al, 2022).
- Economic Value: Walkable neighbourhoods often experience higher property values due to their desirable characteristics, such as proximity to amenities and pedestrian-friendly designs. Additionally, walkable neighbourhoods can enhance local economic activity by attracting businesses and increasing foot traffic, which can lead to greater economic vitality (Talen et al, 2013).

- Social Interaction: Walkable neighbourhoods facilitate social interaction and community engagement. The design of these neighbourhoods encourages residents to spend time outdoors, interact with neighbors, and participate in community events. This fact makes neighbourhoods more vibrant and develop stronger social capital (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2016).

In conclusion, the promotion of walkable neighborhoods aligns with the broader goals of sustainability, public health, and community well-being, making them a valuable focus for urban planning and policy initiatives (Talen et al 2013).

3.3. Main challenges in planning for walkable and cyclable neighbourhoods

The challenges of planning for walkable and cyclable neighborhoods are deeply rooted in the existing frameworks of urban design and planning (Stafford et all, 2018). Effective policy-making and urban planning are crucial for creating an environment that supports and encourages walking and cycling and sustainable mobility for longer trips. The lack of supportive policies and planning can hinder the development of necessary infrastructure (Mansoor et al, 2022).

These challenges include several infrastructural, social, and procedural issues. It is essential that infrastructure design incorporates safety, comfort, and accessibility as its core principles. However, when there are infrastructure limitations, significant obstacles appear. Many areas lack the necessary physical infrastructure to support walkability, such as sidewalks, bike lanes, and pedestrian-friendly street designs. Economic factors also play a role, as the viability of developing walkable neighborhoods can be challenged by market demand and the potential increase in housing prices associated with higher-density developments (Lee et all, 2018).

Furthermore, promoting walkability and cyclability necessitates a shift in public policy and investment priorities, which can be met with resistance from those who favor traditional car-oriented planning. Implementing measures that encourage walking, such as pedestrianisation, improved public transport integration, and the upgrade of pedestrian and cycling infrastructure, requires not only financial resources but also a commitment to long-term urban sustainability goals. The complexity of these challenges underscores the importance of adopting a holistic approach to urban planning that prioritises the needs of pedestrians and cyclists and fosters a culture of active transportation within communities (Sdoukopoulos, 2016).

Another challenge for planning walkable and cyclable neighbourhoods stems from issues of social inequity. Research practices often operate in silos, examining one marginalised population at a time rather than considering the intersectionality of diverse groups. This fragmented approach results in a failure to capture the full spectrum of pedestrians' and cyclists' experiences and needs, perpetuating barriers and exclusion in the built environment. The prioritisation of the needs of dominant groups in planning processes further exacerbates this issue, leading to standardised interventions that do not address the unique challenges faced by different populations (Stafford et all, 2018).

Additionally, the absence of integrated transport systems that combine public transport with walking and cycling can limit the effectiveness of walking and cycling as viable modes of transport (Mansoor et al, 2022). These options can limit the connectivity of neighbourhoods, making it difficult for residents to access services and amenities without relying on motorised vehicles.

3.4. Public participation in planning for walkable and cyclable neighbourhoods

One of the significant obstacles faced in urban mobility planning in Europe and elsewhere in the world is the need to promote participation by meaningfully involving citizens and local stakeholders. In the context of planning for neighborhoods that prioritise walking and cycling, it seems that public engagement in the planning process is more readily achievable, given that users are directly impacted and actively participate in walking or cycling in their everyday lives (Bohler-Baedeker et al, 2014). Therefore, they serve as a valuable wellspring of ideas, possessing deep insights into their transportation challenges and are committed to realising both immediate and future enhancements (U.S. Federal Highway Administration, 2015, updated).

More specifically, the use of participatory approaches in the planning for walkable and cyclable neighbourhoods can significantly affect the efficiency of the process, as fostering community involvement in the decision-making processes can impact on main aspects of the plan development and implementation, including (Mansoor et al, 2022):

- Community Needs Assessment: Engaging the community in the planning process allows for a better understanding of local needs and preferences regarding the needed infrastructure, such as bike lanes and sidewalks. This can lead to the development of facilities that are more aligned with the actual usage patterns and desires of the community.
- Enhanced Infrastructure Design: Participatory planning can lead to the design of more effective and user-oriented infrastructure. Input from community members can help identify critical areas for improvement, such as safety concerns, accessibility and connectivity, which are essential for promoting walking and cycling.
- Increased Awareness and Advocacy: Involving community members in the planning process can raise awareness about the benefits of walkability and cyclability, leading to greater advocacy for policies that support walking and cycling. This can result in increased political support for such initiatives and funding for necessary infrastructure

Litman et al (2009) and Roughton et al (2012) also suggest that involving various stakeholders in the planning process, as well as including existing and potential users can assure long-term benefits by:

- educating officials and community members about pedestrian and cycling issues,

- establishing communication and mutual understanding between planners, technical staff and users
- addressing potential conflicts
- creating an on-going framework for pedestrian and cycling planning
- gaining support for the successful implementation of planned interventions.

To secure wide public participation all stakeholders should be identified and engaged in the planning process. Depending on their structure, location and characteristics (e.g. more residential or commercial, touristic or not), neighborhoods may include a large variety of stakeholders with different interests and perceptions.

Local residents and businesses might find pedestrian and bicycle enhancements appealing as they aim to enhance their street surroundings. Their focus could be on upgrading sidewalks and implementing traffic calming measures. Engaging these groups is crucial to pinpoint and prioritise issues and concerns in non-motorised planning (Litman et al, 2009, p. 53).

School representatives, such as parents' associations, are very interested in the topic, as schools should be safely reachable by walking and cycling, for reasons related to health, traffic congestion and parking problems around them, social connectedness and environment protection (Litman et al, 2009, National Center for Safe Routes to School, U.S., accessed 15 January 2025).

Regular and potential users of walking or cycling paths and their groups (e.g. cycling groups) are key actors, as they can be a source of valuable input in almost all the stages of the planning process. For instance, current users can provide information on the problems they encounter while potential users on problems they perceive. Users are also crucial for the successful implementation of a plan, which mainly relies on the level of acceptance and engagement (Litman et al, 2009).

In addition, vulnerable users and groups not adequately represented in social life, economic opportunity and political decision-making should be accounted for. It is thus necessary to include current and potential users with a variety of demographic profiles such as age, gender, income or origine, as people with different demographic profiles (e.g. low-income population, minorities and immigrants) may have different needs or perceptions regarding issues such as safety, degree of reliance on walking or cycling for transportation or recreation etc.

The involvement of people with disabilities in the planning for walkable and cyclable neighbourhoods is also crucial for the inclusiveness of the plan. People with different disabilities (such as mobility, visual, auditory, or cognitive impairments) may have unique and diverse needs with respect to accessibility. In this context, they may offer practical insights and firsthand experiences that can lead to innovative solutions beneficial for everyone.

3.5. Priorities for public engagement and participation in planning for walkable and cyclable neighbourhoods

According to Roughton et al (2012) the key to effective public involvement is providing a wide range of activities using a variety of relevant means and techniques to ensure that all stakeholder groups will have a voice in the planning process. It is important to consider that different groups of stakeholders may have different attitudes or perceptions of participation in the commons. They also may have different levels of engagement in the neighbourhood's daily life and activities and may also need different approaches to be reached and engaged. For instance, young people are more familiar with technology than elderly people. Some people prefer to express themselves in written form, while others in oral. Some people are self-motivated to participate in public events, while others should be reached in the places they usually frequent. The involvement of immigrant populations and minorities may face language barriers, culture constraints or trust issues. In this case, representatives with an in-depth knowledge of the specific characteristics and needs of a given group should be used as links to facilitate the active participation of the group's members (BEMIS Scotland, 2015).

The first step towards an efficient participation process could be the establishment of a Citizen Advisory Committee with representation from various stakeholder groups to provide input and feedback at key moments or on key plan content (Roughton et al, 2012). The committee can also help solve future problems, negotiating solutions to conflicts, and supporting specific participation activities, such as field surveys and safety education programs (Litman et al, 2009). More specifically, according to the U.S. Federal Highway Administration (2015, updated) a Citizen Advisory Committee may be very useful in encouraging public participation in the planning process as among others:

- may constitute a forum for hearing ideas and bringing the public's ideas directly into the planning decision making process.
- is democratic and representative of opposing points of view, with equal status for each participant in presenting and deliberating views and in being heard
- reinforces commitment to participation
- helps find common ground for consensus about a solution

Table 1: Public engagement in the development of pedestrian and bicycle plans (source: Adapted from (Roughton et al, 2012, p. 38))

Panning Phase or Task	General Public	Citizen Advisory Committee
Scoping	N/A	Optional
Visioning	Essential	Essential
Goals and Objectives	Essential	Essential
Data Collection	Recommended	Recommended
Needs Analysis	Essential	Essential
Opportunities and Constraints	Recommended	Recommended

Evaluation citeria	Recommended	Essential
Network identification	Recommended	Recommended
Facility types and design guidelines	Recommended	Recommended
Developing draft recommendations	Optional	Recommended
Prioritising recommendations	Essential	Essential
Performance measures	Optional	Recommended
Monitoring and evaluation	Recommended	Essential

3.6. Tools and techniques for public participation in planning for walkable and cyclable neighbourhoods

As far as tools and techniques for public participation in the planning process are concerned, a combination of on-line and on-site methods and tools should be used to ensure that all stakeholders will have equal opportunity to get informed, express themselves and share points of view and ideas. Crucial factors for the selection and planning of the public engagement activities (and the related means and techniques) are budget, time and resources constraints. According to Roughton et al (2012), a thorough public participation process requires one third of the planning budget for public outreach, education and active engagement. This includes, among others, human resources for extensive interaction between planners, public authorities and the public, technical support for the use of digital participation tools and content creation.

Thus, a wide range of techniques can be combined to ensure effective and inclusive participatory planning for walkable and cyclable neighbourhoods, such as:

Surveys

Surveys are useful for identifying the viewpoints of locals on the walking and cycling environment of their neighbourhood and may help recognise specific problems and needs and prioritise interventions. Attitudinal surveys can be used to assess general attitudes (such as walking or bicycle travel patterns), while preference surveys can provide a ranking of environments and routes. Origin/destination surveys show current walking or biking patterns (Roughton et al, 2012). According to Litman et al (2009) pedestrian and bicycle travel surveys should attempt to gather information on the demographic profile of the respondents, the origin and destination of their trips, time of the trip (e.g. day of the week), conditions (such as weather, road and traffic condition), as well as purpose of trip and factors that affect the travel choice. Whenever feasible, surveys should be crafted to encompass specific user groups, including individuals using wheelchairs and senior pedestrians, especially in locations they commonly visit.

A combination of online and onsite surveys should be used to gather the maximum of information and ensure representation of all stakeholders. To this end, surveys could be distributed through community networks, during neighbourhood events or to cyclists and pedestrians as they travel along a street or path, where both paper and digital options should be offered.

Surveys, when used alone, may lack interactivity and risk spreading misinformation if not carefully crafted. Therefore, it's beneficial to pair them with other methods. For example, survey findings can fuel discussions in the citizen advisory committee or during brainstorming sessions. Additionally, while surveys often yield quantitative data, this can be complemented by the qualitative insights gained from focus groups or living labs (U.S. Federal Highway Administration, 2015, updated).

3.7. Focus groups

Focus group is an effective method to gather qualitative input from different groups of stakeholders, by engaging them in discussions based on well-prepared questions. At neighbourhood level, various focus groups should be conducted, each one with the participation of different public target audiences (e.g. youth, elderly people, minorities, people with disabilities) to ensure inclusiveness in the identification of needs, perceptions, attitudes, opinions or beliefs. Appropriate location and moderators should be chosen for each focus group to ensure that participants will feel comfortable and express themselves. To this end, meetings could be organised and hosted at venues where each target audience naturally congregates, such as schools, community and senior centers and other relevant locations. Although onsite focus groups would be generally more favoured, online meetings could also be arranged for groups more familiar with digital communication such as youth.

Walking and bicycling tours

On-site walking and cycling tours offer a dynamic and engaging method to spark interest of the public in the planning process. They serve as a demonstration of how well-designed facilities can significantly enhance the overall experience of walking and cycling and provide opportunity to highlight specific areas or infrastructures that may require attention or improvement. These tours can be tailored to suit a variety of audiences or specifically directed at targeted groups, such as the members of the advisory committee, current or potential users, local business owners, pupils and their parents etc. By engaging these diverse groups, the tours can foster a deeper understanding and appreciation of the planning process, while also collecting valuable insights and feedback from those who are directly impacted by the planning measures (Roughton et al, 2012).

3.8. Public Open Houses (or open forums)

Public Open Houses are events that aim to raise awareness, disseminate valuable information about the planning process to the community, actively seek feedback from

citizens who are interested in participating and, finally, build relationships with the community. These gatherings are typically characterised by the presentation of information on large, visually engaging boards and/or screens that capture the attention of attendees. Participants are invited to share their thoughts and comments directly with the organisers of the event or by jotting down their feedback on comment forms provided at the event. To further engage the community and encourage active participation, interactive exercises are often incorporated, such as mapping routes, dot-voting on various options, or even re-designing street cross sections. The open house is structured in a drop-in format, which offers a level of flexibility that accommodates the busy schedules of attendees better than a rigid meeting agenda Roughton et al (2012). Open houses are also convenient places to conduct onsite informal surveys, which allow for input on community interest and understanding.

3.9. Living Labs

According to Pentzold et al (2023), living labs are envisioned as vibrant third places - spaces distinct from home or work. These labs offer a structured spatial environment, often supported by digital technologies, which simulate real-world settings, prioritising user-focused research, innovation and design. They emphasise inclusivity, actively engaging voices traditionally marginalised due to age, ability, race, gender, sexual orientation, class, culture, or other factors. This environment and methodology enable planners to explore co-design solutions, through diverse methods such as co-creation workshops, interviews, participant observation, surveys, and focus groups, allowing for the collection of a diverse set of data and information that captures many of the needs and preferences of involved stakeholders.

3.10. Digital participatory tools to support planning for walkable and cyclable neighbourhoods

Digital tools can be used to support and complement the above-mentioned approaches or can be implemented completely separately and independently to facilitate public participation in the development of walkable and cyclable neighbourhoods. Some of the main digital tools which can be applied in this context are listed below:

- Online Surveys and Polls with tools such as Google Forms, SurveyMonkey, Mentimeter and Slido allow planners to collect feedback from residents on various aspects of the neighbourhood design.
- Interactive Mapping / Participatory GIS (PGIS), with platforms /tools such as Maptionnaire, Mapbox and QGIS, which enable residents to pinpoint specific areas on a map and provide comments or suggestions and/or enable residents to contribute spatial data and insights, helping planners make more informed decisions.
- Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR) tools, such as Google Earth VR and Unity, allow users to experience proposed designs in a more immersive way, helping them understand the potential impact on their neighbourhood.

- Online Workshops and Webinars using tools such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams, and WebEx facilitate virtual meetings where residents can discuss ideas, provide feedback, and collaborate with planners in real-time.
- Social media, Online Forums and dedicated online platforms (such as Citizen OS and Adhocracy+) can be used to engage a broader audience, share updates, and collect input from the community.
- Digital Games and Simulations with tools such as Minecraft and SimCity can be used to create interactive simulations, where residents can experiment with different design options and see the potential outcomes.
- Mobile Apps, such as Commonplace and Street Bump, allow residents to report issues, suggest improvements, and participate in the planning process from their smartphones.
- Crowdsourcing Platforms, such as FixMyStreet, enable residents to report problems and suggest improvements directly to local authorities.

In order to support the inclusion of people with disabilities and accessibility for all in the participatory process, there are different digital tools which can be used, such as accessible maps, voice-over, screen readers etc.

4. Classroom discussion topics / case studies

Topics that can be discussed in the classroom include:

- The Importance of Public Participation in Urban Planning
    - Why is public participation crucial in creating walkable and cyclable neighborhoods?
    - How can community input lead to more inclusive and effective urban design?
- Benefits of Walkable and Cyclable Neighborhoods
    - Health benefits: Physical activity, reduced obesity, and mental well-being.
    - Environmental benefits: Reduced carbon emissions and pollution.
    - Economic benefits: Increased local business activity and property values.
    - Social benefits: Stronger community connections and safer streets.
- Challenges in Promoting Walkable and Cyclable Neighborhoods
    - Balancing the needs of different stakeholders (e.g., drivers, cyclists, pedestrians).
    - Addressing concerns about safety, accessibility, and convenience.
- Methods of Public Participation
    - Surveys and questionnaires: Gathering data on community preferences.

- Public meetings and workshops: Facilitating direct dialogue between planners and residents.
- Online platforms and social media: Engaging a broader audience.
- Participatory mapping: Allowing residents to identify key areas for improvement.

- Case Studies of Successful Walkable and Cyclable Neighborhoods
- Equity and Inclusion in Urban Planning
  - Ensuring that walkable and cyclable neighborhoods serve all community members, including marginalised groups.
  - Addressing disparities in access to safe walking and cycling infrastructure.
- Future Trends in Urban Mobility
  - The impact of emerging technologies (e.g., e-bikes, scooters, autonomous vehicles) on walkable and cyclable neighborhoods.
  - The role of climate change and sustainability in shaping future urban planning.

These topics can be tailored to the specific interests and needs of the classroom, and they can be explored through discussions, group projects, guest lectures and field trips to local neighbourhoods.

5. Case study

The approach of the New European Bauhaus (NEB) policy for pedestrian and bicycle plans

The New European Bauhaus (NEB) is a creative and interdisciplinary initiative launched by the European Union to bridge the fields of art, culture, social inclusion, science, and technology. It seeks to reimagine living spaces by emphasising sustainability, aesthetics, and inclusiveness. The NEB policy encourages collaboration among designers, architects, engineers, scientists, and citizens to create innovative solutions for current societal challenges. It aims to foster a more “beautiful, sustainable, and inclusive” environment across Europe. Key planning principles of the NEB related to pedestrian and bicycle plans include (New European Bauhaus, accessed 15 January 2025 and Bilić, B., and Šmit, K. 2024):

- **Sustainability** : The use of green infrastructure and renewable energy sources to reduce carbon emissions and enhance environmental quality is promoted.
- **Social Inclusion**: Ensuring that urban spaces are accessible to all, including vulnerable populations, by creating safe and inclusive pedestrian and bicycle networks.
- **Aesthetics and Quality of Experience**: Designing pedestrian and bicycle paths that are not only functional but also visually appealing and enjoyable to use.
- **Integration with Nature**: Incorporating natural elements into urban spaces to create a harmonious balance between built and natural environments.

- **Circular Economy**: Implementing principles of circularity, such as using recycled materials in the construction of pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure.
- **Public and Social Needs**: Addressing the needs of the community by providing ample public open spaces and recreational areas.
- **Urban Reconstruction** : Continuously improving and adapting urban plans to meet the evolving needs of the community and achieve sustainable development goals.

To this end, NEB aims at engaging people at a grassroots level, focusing on neighbourhoods, and incorporating the views of various stakeholders into the process of design and implementation.

6. Assignments

The proposed assignment for this module involves the use of a digital platform called Citizen OS (https://app.citizenos.com). Citizen OS is free and open-source participation platform, which allows organisations and communities to connect individuals from diverse locations and time zones. On the Citizen OS platform, users can discuss, vote and decide collectively on various topics.

For the assignment, the educator(s) can create a scenario (imaginary or real) regarding a specific intervention related to walkable/cyclable neighbourhoods. For an on-site class, the scenario can be about a local intervention that the students may be familiar with and will probably be able to express a more detailed opinion. For an on-line class, with students in different geographical locations, the scenario can be more theoretical or abstract.

The students will have to create an account in the platform, after which they can review the information provided and share their ideas. The students should be encouraged to share their ideas in clear and detailed way, as well as view other students' ideas and comment on them, if they think they have something to comment on. Students can also respond to comments on their ideas. They should also vote for the ideas they like the best.

After the students finish sharing their ideas, the educator(s) can share the results with the classroom. They can discuss the most popular ideas, any innovative or "out-of-the-box" ideas that come up, or anything else that can provide some insights related to the module.

This exercise will help the students get to know and familiarise themselves with a digital tool that can facilitate public participation in terms of idea sharing, brainstorming, pro-con discussions and decision making. The platform can also be used to create a class group, where educators and students can discuss this module or other topics., using the platform as a digital co-working space.

7. Summary of Learning

Q1: What are some challenges neighbourhoods face when promoting walkability and cyclability?

A: Neighbourhoods can be challenged by market demand and the potential increase in housing prices associated with higher-density developments. Additionally, promoting walkability and cyclability necessitates a shift in public policy and investment priorities, which can meet resistance from those who favour traditional car-oriented planning.

Q2: How does public participation impact the planning for walkable and cyclable neighbourhoods?

A: Public participation significantly impacts the planning process by allowing for a better understanding of local needs and preferences regarding infrastructure. Engaging the community fosters involvement in decision-making, which can lead to the design of more effective and efficient infrastructure that aligns with actual usage patterns and desires.

Q3: What are some recommended tools and techniques for public participation in planning for walkable and cyclable neighbourhoods?

A: Recommended tools and techniques for public participation include a combination of online and on-site methods, such as surveys, focus groups, and living labs. Digital tools like interactive mapping platforms can also facilitate public engagement.

Q4: What is the significance of including people with disabilities in the planning process for walkable and cyclable neighborhoods?

A: Including people with disabilities in the planning process is crucial for ensuring inclusiveness and accessibility. They can provide practical insights and firsthand experiences that lead to innovative solutions beneficial for everyone, addressing unique needs related to mobility, visual, auditory, or cognitive impairments.

Q5: What are some key factors to consider when selecting public engagement activities for planning processes?

A: Key factors to consider when selecting public engagement activities include budget, time, and resource constraints. It is essential to ensure that all stakeholders have equal opportunities to participate and express their opinions, which may require a variety of relevant means and techniques.

Quiz

Q1: What key features are emphasised in walkable and cyclable neighbourhoods?

1. High-density car parking
2. Infrastructural limitations
3. Walking and cycling opportunities
4. Limited social interaction

A: 3

Q2: Which factor does NOT contribute to the definition of a neighbourhood?

1. Social interactions
2. Geographic location
3. Economic status
4. Cultural identity

A: 3

Q3: What is a major benefit of walkable neighbourhoods?

1. Higher dependence on automobiles
2. Increased traffic congestion
3. Enhanced physical activity
4. Reduced interaction among residents

A: 3

Q4: What is considered a challenge in creating walkable and cyclable neighbourhoods?

1. Excessive public participation
2. Lack of supportive policies and planning
3. Overabundance of walking paths
4. High government investment in cycling

A: 2

Q5: How can citizen participation improve planning for neighbourhoods?

1. By minimising local knowledge input
2. By creating plans based on a top-down approach
3. By ensuring projects meet community needs
4. By ignoring residents' opinions

A: 3

Q6: Which of the following is NOT a recommended tool for public participation in planning?

1. Surveys
2. Focus groups
3. Social isolation strategies
4. Public open houses

A: 3

Q7: According to the text, whose input is crucial for inclusive planning?

1. Only local government officials
2. Only residents with high income
3. Marginalised groups, including those with disabilities

4. None of the above

A: 3

Q8: What type of neighbourhoods tend to attract higher property values?

1. Car-dependent neighbourhoods
2. Walkable neighbourhoods
3. Suburban areas with low density
4. Commercial districts solely

A: 2

Q9: In planning for walkable neighbourhoods, which of the following should be prioritised according to the text?

1. Continuous car infrastructure
2. Safety and comfort for pedestrians and cyclists
3. Only bicycle lanes
4. Maintenance of motor vehicle access

A: 2

Q10: What is the purpose of Living Labs as described in the text?

1. To bypass resident input
2. To engage marginalised voices in planning
3. To focus solely on economic development
4. To create strict regulations without feedback

A: 2

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9. Glossary

Digital tool: a website or application that enables stakeholders to engage in a project, accessed via a digital interface or otherwise relying on digital technology to function.

Stakeholder participation : Stakeholder participation refers to the process of involving individuals, groups, or organisations that have a vested interest or stake in a particular project.

The New European Bauhaus (NEB): it is a creative and interdisciplinary initiative launched by the European Union to bridge the world of art, culture, social inclusion, science, and technology. It seeks to reimagine our living spaces by emphasising sustainability, aesthetics, and inclusiveness.