



Handbook of Youth Citizen Social Science

Working with Young People and the
Local Community for Social Change



YouCount
Youth Citizen Science

YOUCOUNT DELIVERABLE NO. D.5.4

The Consortium is composed of:

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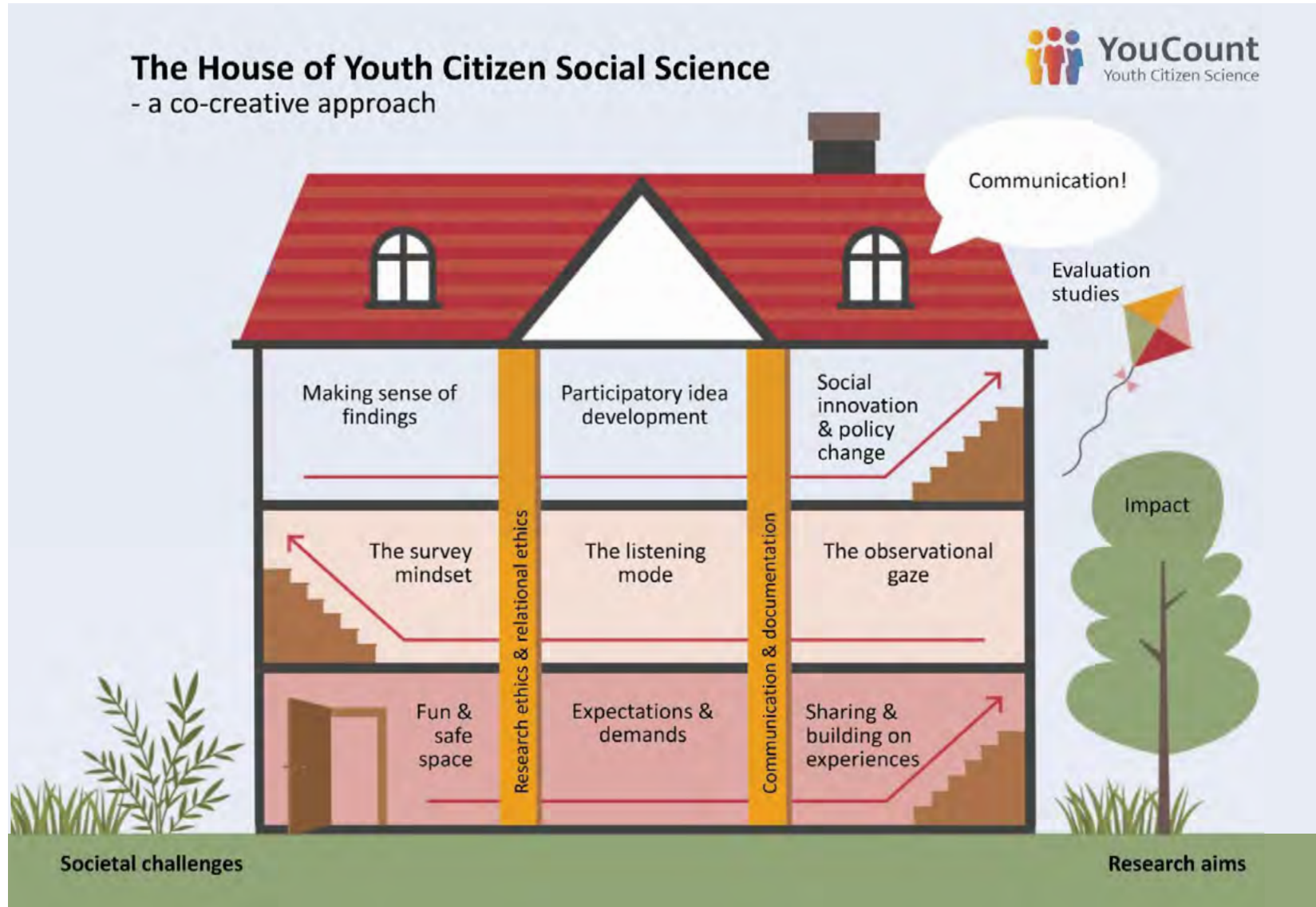
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YouCount Toolkit

Welcome to the YouCount toolkit. Here, you will find various tools that researchers in the YouCount project have developed and used with young citizen social scientists. The tools are organized according to the House of Youth Citizen Social Science - a framework for thinking, planning, and doing citizen social science research projects with a co-creative approach.

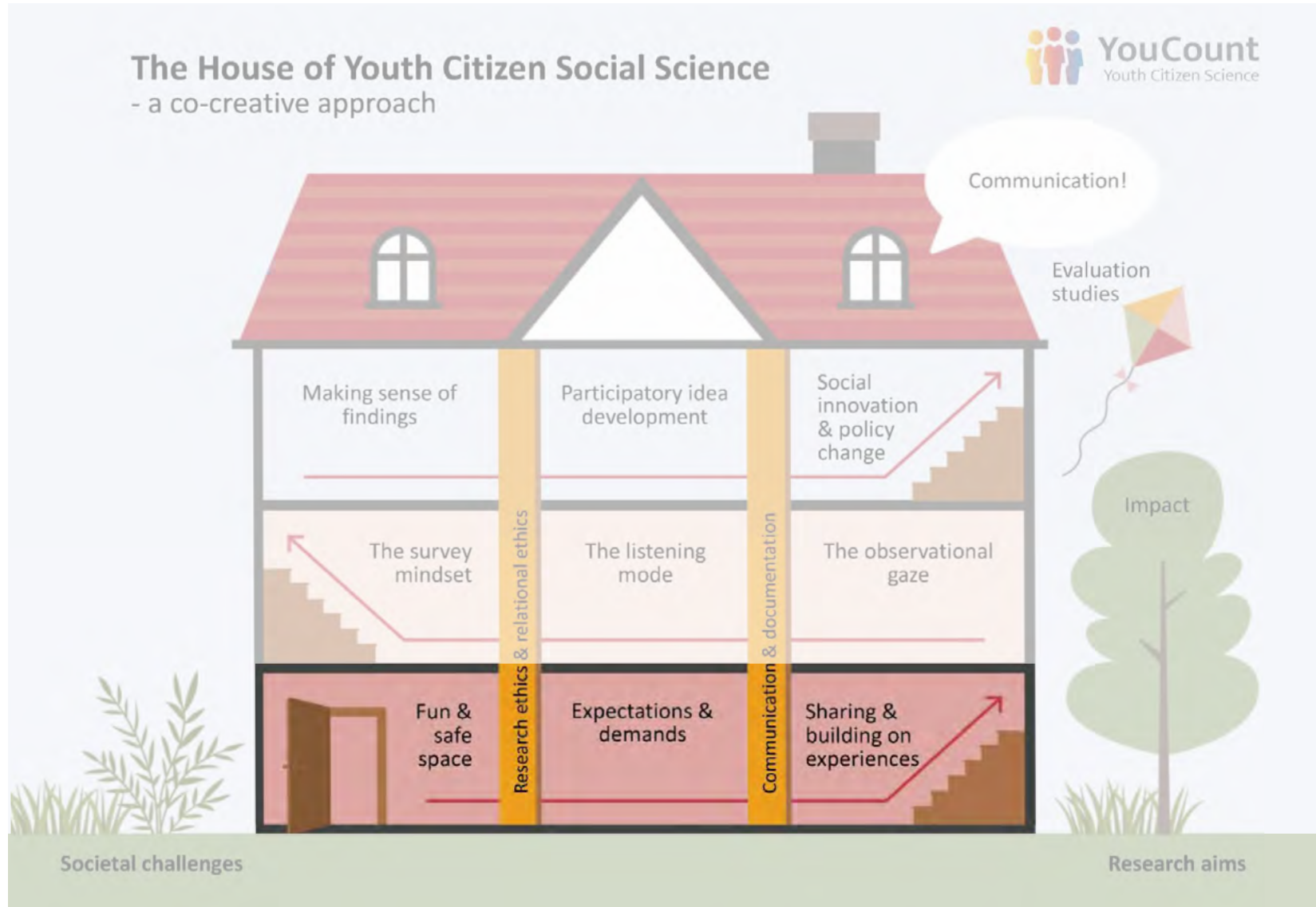
You can also find the YouCount Toolkit online and download the Tools [here](#).

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The groundfloor

How can you ensure that the social and relational aspects of teamwork are in place? In this section, you will find tools for training and building the ground floor.





Spot

Method for creating a safe space and learning about interview

Description

The spot method is developed by researchers at the Work Research Institute (AFI), Oslo Metropolitan University (OsloMet). The acronym SPLOT stands for Space, Person, Learning, Observation, and Track (Tråkk in Norwegian). Spotting requires minimal resources—just a sheet of paper and a pencil is enough. You are encouraged to write or draw symbols for places you love and share with others why these are good places for you. The goal is to engage children, youth, or adults in conversation about what is meaningful to them, and to experience mastery and influence on how they can enhance what is already good in their local environment and life in general. The form is open and combines seriousness with play. We always start with what we call a "personal spot," before moving on to more specific topics such as neighbourhood, community, school, etc.

Spotting has an equalizer effect, as everyone must draw and share with the other, the non-professional other. It's about transferring power between the expert and youth, at its best. It provides the youth with a repertoire for reflection on self, on the relation of self to spaces and places of meaning, and on arguments directed towards people in positions of power – "What can you do to make my sense of social belonging stronger, to strengthen the physical and material impact on social lives in my neighbourhood, in a positive way?"

How to use the tool

- **Individual:** Draw a small heart. Around the heart, you draw a wobbly line that surrounds the heart.
- **Individual:** Inside the wobbly form you draw and/or write the places, people and activities that make you feel good.
- **Two by two:** When everyone is finished drawing their own personal spot you interview the person sitting next to you about their spot.
- **Everyone:** What did you learn about each other? What was surprising? What did you have in common?
- **Everyone:** Make a spot-exhibition on an empty wall in the room.



Pictures from dialogue forum Norway/ Ildefluene

References / Read more

Hagen, A.L. & Osuldsen, J. (2021) Urban youth, narrative dialogues, and emotional imprints: How co-creating the 'spotting' methodology became a transformative journey into interdisciplinary collaboration i Stender, M., C. Bech-Danielsen & Hagen, A.L. (red.). Architectural Anthropology – Exploring lived space. New York: Routledge, kap.8, s.135-148.



Photo: Karoline Hjorth





Mini Fieldwork Challenge

Training exercise

Mini Fieldwork Challenge

Description

A mini fieldwork challenge is a tool for training young citizen scientists in conducting observations and interviews. In this tool, we have used 'hang-out spot' as the topic of investigation. For some projects, other topics might be more relevant, for example, observing a house, a bench, public symbols, etc.

Equipment: Notebooks and Polaroid cameras for documentation during the fieldwork exercise. Cardboard/large sheets of paper, markers, and post-its for summarising the exercise.



Picture of young citizen scientists during fieldwork in Norway. Photo: Young citizen scientist



Photo: Young citizen scientist Norway



How to use the tool

- Create groups of 2-3 people.
- Go out and find a hang-out spot in the neighbourhood.
- Observe the hang-out spot for five minutes (individually, no talking). Write down what you see.
- Group up and formulate 2-3 questions to ask someone based on your observations.
- Ask the questions to someone who is at the hang-out spot. Write down what you see and hear.
- After the exercise, the groups should summarise what they have seen and heard and create a cardboard presentation of their findings.
- Present and discuss: What were your questions, and why? What did you find? Was what you observed different from what you heard?



Role-playing



Photo: Susana Franco

Role-playing

Shifting perspective

Description

Role-playing is an opportunity for users to put themselves in someone else's shoes, representing specific real-life situations, interpreting and acting under a previously assigned role.

Equipment: All that is needed are human resources (more than three people), a space where the technique can be performed, and a pre-prepared script.



Photo from a rehearsal in the Spanish case

How to use the tool

- Get together with other people.
- Define the topic, the roles, and create the script. It can be something elaborate or just some general guiding points that define the situation that is going to be recreated.
- Cast the roles.
- Find a space where you can do it.
- Perform the role-playing.
- Discuss and comment on the dynamics.

Example from the Spanish case

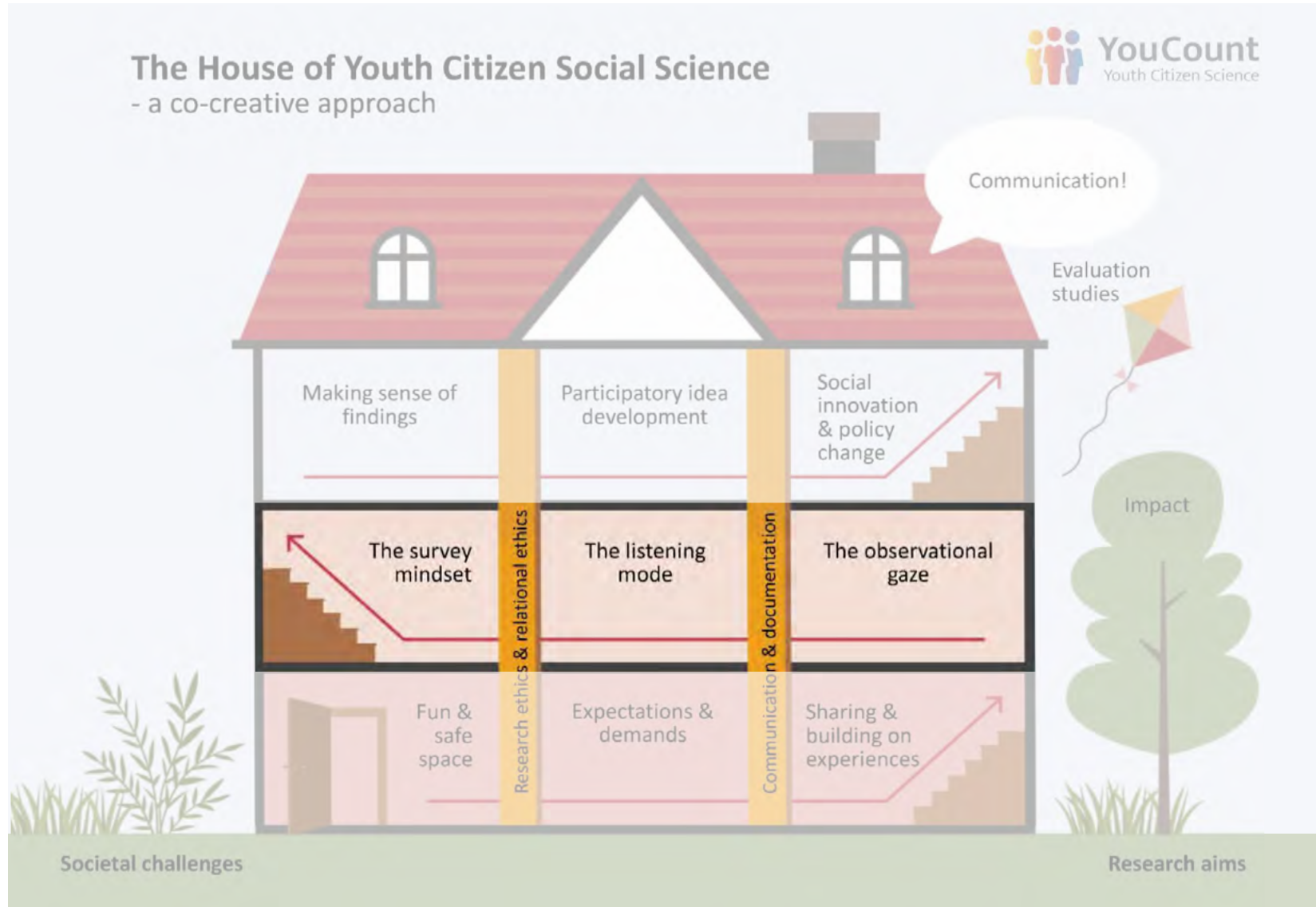
Role-playing was used as preparation for a meeting with stakeholders. Some of the young citizen scientists rehearsed their own roles, while others acted as some of the other participants (policymakers, journalists, etc.). The idea was that they could deliver with more confidence the parts that they had to explain and present during the meeting as well as test how they would react in different circumstances during the meeting (for instance, when being asked questions) so they could feel more confident.

One idea for a role-play was to engage Social Work students so they could exchange roles with young migrants. This would involve role-playing a situation where the students, acting as migrants, went for an appointment at the local social services, attended by a young migrant. The objective was for them to experience and understand each other's perspectives.



The first floor

How can you do participatory data collection with youth? In this section, you will find tools for the three approaches 'the survey mindset,' 'the listening mode,' and 'the observational gaze'.





Data Collection Competitions

Data Collection Competitions Making research fun

Description

The data collection competition is designed to make data collection fun for both researchers and young citizen scientists.

Equipment: Notebooks for taking notes during the interviews, a Polaroid camera or a regular camera for taking pictures, post-its, and large sheets of paper to summarise the data.

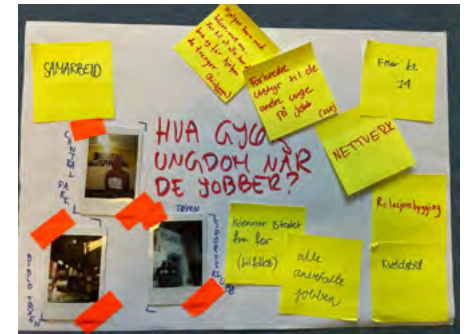


Photo of findings created by young citizen scientists in Norway.

How to use the tool

- Announce a pre-defined secret question (research question) or create a secret question together – what do we want to find out?
- Divide everyone into teams.
- Each team creates an interview guide that can address the secret question.
- Each team decides where they want to go to conduct their interviews.
- The teams conduct their research within a set time frame.
- When coming back, the teams summarise and analyse the data they have collected.
- The teams present their findings.
- Award points for the number of interviews and bonus points for creativity.

Example from Norway

In the Norwegian case, we arranged two data collection competitions with the citizen scientists. The goal was to collect data about other youths in the local area. When doing this, it was important that one of the professional researchers was part of the team. The professional researcher supported and encouraged the young citizen scientists, and they could help present the project to the people who were interviewed.





Co-creating Questionnaires



Photo: Ildfluene

Co-creating Questionnaires Participatory data collection

Description

Involving young citizen scientists in creating questionnaires ensures their views are at the heart of data collection. Their involvement helps make the questions clearer and more relevant for other young people. They should be included in all steps, from writing the questions to analysing the data. This inclusive approach goes further than usual methods that typically involve participants only in reviewing questionnaires before distribution.

Spot (see tool) can be used to explain the survey mindset: Count how many have the different categories in their spot and write it up on a large sheet/board. Then, discuss the findings with the youth.



Picture of questions for questionnaire developed by young citizen scientists in Norway,

How to use the tool

- Give a brief introduction to questionnaires as a research method. Here, you can use a survey about youth as an example. It is also possible to use spot (see above).
- Agree with the young citizen scientists on the number of questions to include in the survey.
- The young citizen scientists write questions they think are important on post-its and attach them to a large sheet of paper. Also, discuss the answer options for the various questions: yes/no, categories, or options to write in the answer.
- Discuss with the young citizen scientists what kind of background information is important to collect, such as gender, age, school, place of residence, etc.
- The young citizen scientists select which questions should be included in the final survey.
- Discuss ideas for how the survey can be distributed together with the young citizen scientists.
- Finalize the survey.
- Let the young citizen scientists test the survey and provide feedback before it is sent out.
- When the survey is complete, analyse the data together with the young citizen scientists.



Photo Walks

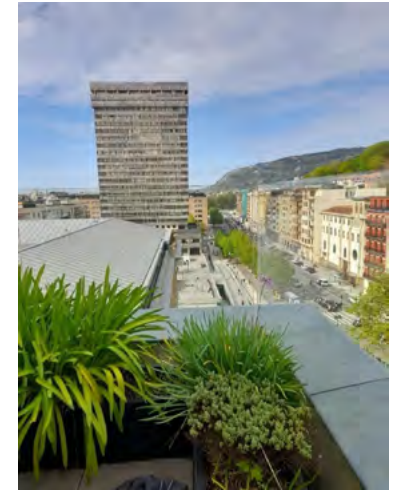
Photo Walks

Tool for observing

Description

Photo walks are group walks with the aim of photographically identify relevant spots within the city. It is also an activity that strengthens relational and community ties.

Equipment: Cameras and/or mobile phones are needed (and comfortable shoes!). A space to sit down and discuss after the walk.



One of the photos taken at the photo walk



Photo: Hamza Nouali

How to use the tool

- Gather a group of 4 or more people together.
- Clarify the topic of the photo walk.
- Agree on a route through the city.
- While walking along the selected route, take the opportunity to stop, talk and, most importantly, photograph images and places that are relevant to the topic and objective.
- When the route is over, stop at a place where you can comfortably sit (a park, a cafeteria, a cultural space, etc.).
- Start showing the identified spots.
- Discuss: Which sites have been identified as relevant for the topic and why?

Example from the Spanish case

We organised a photo walk with six people aimed at recording places where we felt included or excluded. Having previously agreed on the route, once together, we started to walk along it. Along the way, each one of us began to identify and photograph different spots with our mobile phones. Once the route was completed, we decided to sit down at the terrace of a bar to have a coffee and discuss the images we had taken. Everyone showed what they had photographed, explaining why they had done so, and questions of inclusivity and exclusivity were discussed.





Field Studies By Bike



Field Studies By Bike Tool for new perspectives

Description

The field studies by bike tool are designed to bring actors into their local environment, quickly get around to different sites, and observe and talk with local stakeholders. This approach allows experiencing the neighbourhood from different angles, adding new opportunities and perspectives for reflection and discussion.

Equipment: Plan a bike-accessible route through the neighbourhood. Ideally, the route should enable participants to experience the diversity of the community. Provide notebooks and pencils for participants to take field notes during the trip and arrange meetings with local stakeholders at the various sites. It is beneficial to include a reflection break during the trip.



Photo from field studies by bike in the Danish case

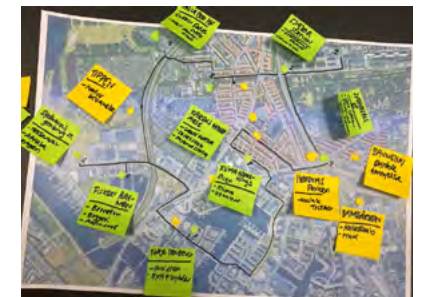


Photo from planning the field studies by bike



How to use the tool

- Figure out possible places to go in the neighbourhood by bike.
- Make a bike route mapping the places.
- Find and agree on meetings with local stakeholders in the places.
- Provide notebooks and pencils before the bike trip and prepare questions for the stakeholders.
- Bike through the neighbourhood and talk with local stakeholders.
- Encourage to take notes and pictures during the trip (to be used in an analysis).
- Allow for a reflection break halfway through the trip (preferably with hot tea, coffee, and cookies).
- Facilitate a discussion session afterwards, reflecting upon experiences in groups.

Example from the Danish case

In the Danish case, the field trip was used in a school setting to get the youths out of the classroom and observe and work with challenges from their neighbourhood. In this way, bringing new perspectives to analyse possibilities and challenges for sustainable civic engagement was possible. The students were given information about the trip beforehand and a notepad and pencils. In the class before the field trip, the co-researchers were asked to write down questions for the stakeholders they were about to meet. Due to the cold day, we provided tea, coffee, and cookies during the bike trip for the youths to warm up and discuss their preliminary findings.





Mapping

Mapping

Place-based dialogue tool

Description

The mapping tool is designed to bring dialogue and reflection around a particular area. Having a map in front of you makes associations and experiences pop up in your mind. It brings forth tacit knowledge that can be difficult in a traditional conversation without tools. Using mapping provides a tangible format where a map and some simple additional 'playing' bricks can be added to the map during the conversation. The bricks enable a conversation about challenges in specific areas and where there are untapped opportunities. Furthermore, it can be used from the beginning to the end of a project to investigate where to find potential collaboration partners and research areas or where to implement innovations.

The method only needs a printed map of the area you want to investigate or are curious about and then loose bricks, for example, emojis, post-its, stickers, etc. That can be placed and moved around on the map. It can be used between a few or more people, creating negotiation and working as a boundary object if placed between several people.



How to use the tool

- Figure out what area you want to investigate.
- Print out a map of the area.
- Think about what the aim is for the dialogue and create 'playing' bricks that support the aim.
- Consider who is going to participate and how.
- While using the tool, act as a facilitator and ask for detailed explanations regarding where the bricks are placed or what the chosen colour or mood signifies in the specific location.



Photos from two different examples using a mapping tool in the Danish case



Photovoice



Photovoice Method for giving voice and promoting active participation

Description

The Photovoice gives voice to the participants to discuss their visions about a given topic, which refers to their daily experiences and develops their competence as agents of change. In this vein, this method has the potential to promote critical thinking and dialogue about issues that are felt as relevant by the participants, with reference to their community.

Participants take photos and discuss them, eventually producing different narratives about the main topic and its impact on their community, thereby rethinking their role within it. The results of such a process can be presented during an exhibition through panels displaying the photos and captions selected as most significant by the participants. Local stakeholders and other citizens not involved in the Photovoice can be invited. Indeed, one of the main aims of the Photovoice is to enable participants to make their viewpoints visible to policymakers and the broader community, so their experiences can be included in planning social changes and improvements in their community.



Sample panel for the final exhibition from the Italian local case.



How to use the tool

You will need more than one meeting to do this.

Day 1:

- Give a short introduction to the main topic that will be addressed during the Photovoice and pose the main question about it.
- Provide participants with basic information on how to take good quality photos, and ensure everyone has a tool to take them (e.g., a camera, a smartphone). If necessary, provide participants with such a tool if they do not have one available.
- Ask participants to take 2-3 photos representing strengths and weaknesses related to the topic, and bring them printed to the next meeting.

Day 2:

- Each participant shows their photos to others and explains why those elements are significant strengths or weaknesses to them with reference to the given topic.
- Ask participants to discuss and collectively select the most meaningful photos for the group, which will be included in the panels for the final exhibition.
- Encourage participants to collaboratively decide on the shared sentences and captions to be associated with each of the selected photos.

Day 3 (and more should you need them):

- Ask participants to work together to create the panels and identify local stakeholders to invite based on their collective

References / Read more

Wang, C., & Burris, M. A. (1997). Photovoice: Concept, methodology, and use for participatory needs assessment. *Health behavior, 24*(3), 369-387. <https://doi.org/10.1177/109019819702400309>





Focus Group Sun

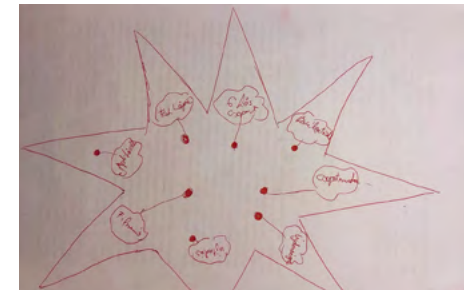
Focus Group Sun Tool for evaluation engagement

Description

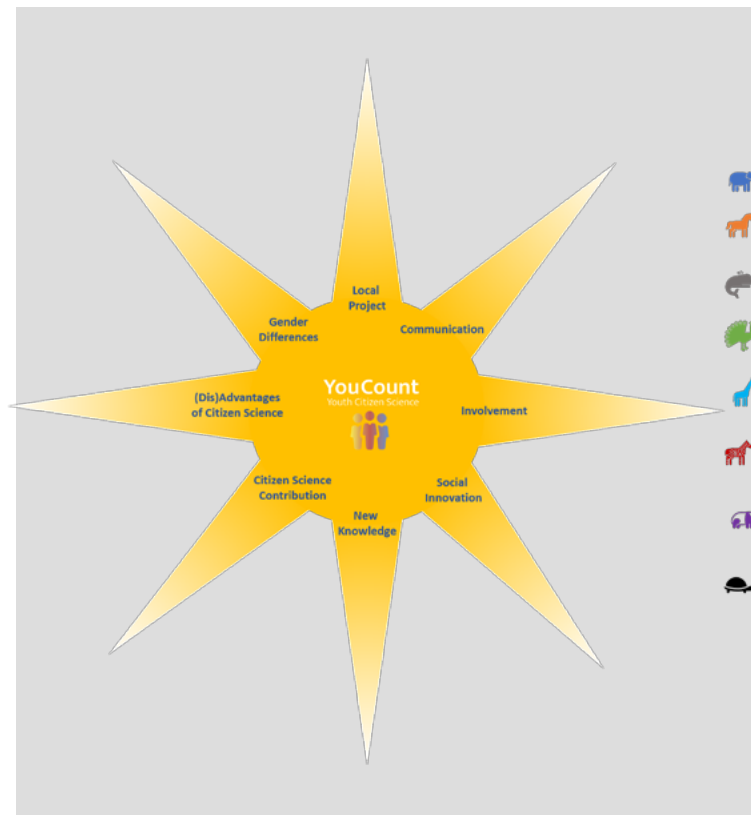
The aim of this sun is twofold: (1) to provide an overview of topics the focus group will be about (these are the headings for the sunbeams) and (2) for citizen scientists to place themselves with a different colour, shape, sticker, emoji, etc. either close to the centre (Project-ID, here: YouCount) if they think the aspect (e.g., communication) is going well or more toward the end of the end of the sunbeam if the respective aspect is not going well for them/in their opinion.

The placement can be done by giving each citizen scientist a different colour, shape, sticker, emoji, etc. to place themselves. Important: please do not use photos of them or their name, so you can take a photo at the end of the workshop and still maintain data protection and anonymity.

At the end of the focus group, everyone should have placed themselves somewhere on each sunbeam and you should have discussed every sunbeam. Feel free to jump between the sunbeams as it suits the discussion. It may be that the citizen scientists talk already about, for example, involvement, when talking about communication, so there might be natural transitions.



The above sun is an example of an offline setting; the below sun is an example of an online setting.



How to use the tool

- You can give the citizen scientists a few seconds at the beginning of the focus group to mark in a different colour, shape, sticker, emoji, etc. for any of the sunbeams that they like where they would place themselves.
- This leads to starting to discuss the respective sunbeam bullet point, and maybe even sub-bullet points, while you can ask the others to place themselves also somewhere on that sunbeam.
- You could then start by talking about the sunbeam that got the most placements.
- Don't forget to photograph/screenshot the sun at the end or even multiple times during the focus group for documentation.
- Since not everyone will have positioned themselves on that particular sunbeam, encourage those who did to explain why they chose the sunbeam they did.

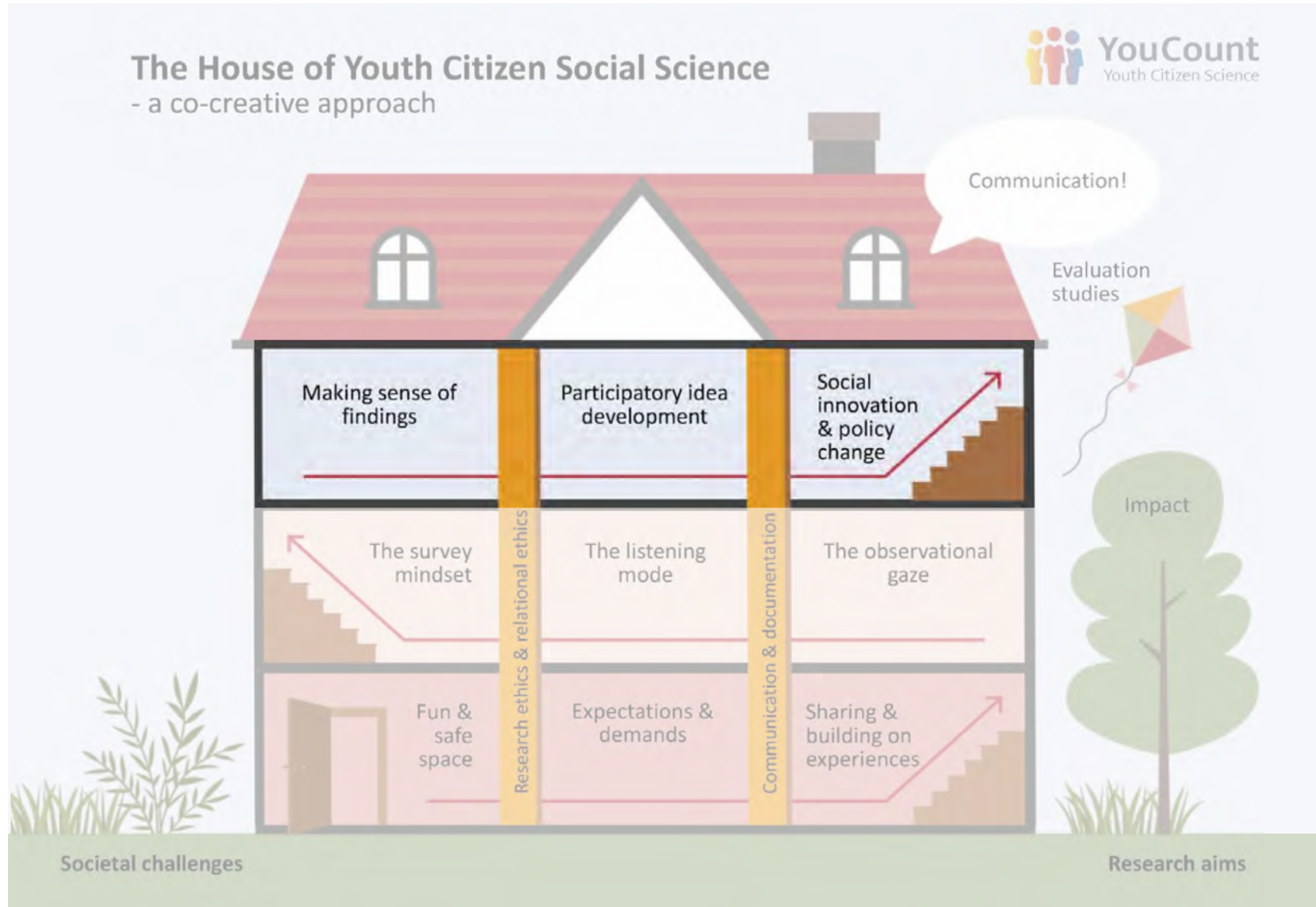
Read more

Saumer, M., Dietrich, I., and Matthes, J. (2023). D4.1 Cross-Case Evaluation Methodology, Analysis and Outcomes. Doi.10.5281/zenodo.10409684



The second floor

How do we reach for social innovations and policy change with youth? In this section you will find tools for working collaboratively to make sense of findings and to develop ideas together.





Association Cards

Association Cards Tool for Wondering

Description

The association card tool is designed to facilitate collective conversations about abstract phenomena, experiences, feelings, expectations, and dreams.

Equipment: Print out a collection of images with both abstract and concrete motifs in A5 format, along with post-its. The exercise can also be conducted digitally, for which we recommend using the image database Pixlr and the collaborative whiteboard Jamboard (free).



Photo from workshop in the Norwegian case

How to use the tool

- Spread the cards out on a table or on the floor.
- Attach the post-its to the cards and hang the cards on the wall.
- Give everyone a task, for example, "Find a picture that expresses how it feels when you are socially included"
- Take turns asking: What have the participants chosen and why? Are there similarities or significant variations in the selection? Has anyone chosen the same picture but with different keywords?
- Allow everyone to pick one or more pictures each. It's important that everyone, including facilitators, participates in the exercise.
- Discuss: How can these abstract phenomena be transformed into physical forms or concrete wishes and needs?
- Ask everyone to write a post-it with three keywords that describe or explain why they chose that particular card.

Example from the Norwegian case

In the Norwegian case, we used association cards to facilitate a collective exploration of embodied experiences related to social inclusion. The goal was to develop a shared understanding of the concept among the young co-researchers and the researchers. To answer the question, 'How does it feel to be socially included?' all participants selected one or two photos that best captured the feeling they experience when socially included. Everyone shared their picture and thoughts in smaller groups and created 'spots' (see tool), on which they wrote or drew specific locations where they had experienced social inclusion. Afterwards, they collectively summarised their discussions, delved into what it means to be socially included, and addressed the question, 'What is social inclusion?'



Photo: Karoline Hjorth





Design Thinking

Tool and a strategic approach to address challenges

Design Thinking

Read more

Design Thinking for Educators Toolkit by IDEO,

Available at: <https://page.ideo.com/design-thinking-edu-toolkit>

Description

Anchored in empathy, Design Thinking encourages individuals to immerse themselves in others' experiences, thereby understanding and solving challenges from alternative perspectives. The overarching goal of using the method with youth was to equip them with the tools to respond innovatively to the multifaceted challenges of social belonging in a rural area. The method unfolds across six distinct stages (understand-observe-perspective taking-imagine-prototype-test), each meticulously designed with a specific focus and lasting a certain time period. Application of the method may take from several months to one day, depending on the formulated challenge.



How to use the tool

- **Formulate the challenge:** The challenge formulation is a pivotal process that starts with the question "How could we...", followed by a verb indicating the necessary action, the specific problem situation or area of activity, and keywords describing the contextual reasons for change.
- **Stage One - "Understand":** Participants embark on a comprehensive analysis of the challenge. The focus is on gathering existing information through secondary data analysis.
- **Stage Two - "Observe":** Participants delve into understanding the feelings, thoughts, and experiences of those connected to the challenge. Empathy takes the central stage. The aim is to gain a profound understanding of individuals' lives, values, thoughts, and emotions within the challenge area.
- **Stage Three - "Perspective-taking":** The stage focuses on the challenge from the perspective of the service user or the object in question. Teams then decide which information will be used to develop solutions, ultimately formulating a user-centric "point of view" that encapsulates the user, statement, and need. It ends in creating a detailed "Persona".
- **Stage Four - "Imagine" (or "Ideate and Propose"):** The goal here is to generate a range of ideas that can be further developed to solve the problem.
- **Stage Five - "Prototype":** Teams select a specific challenge area that aligns with the user's needs and embark on creating a tangible representation of the solution. Prototyping helps refine and clarify abstract ideas.
- **Stage Six - "Test":** Testing provides valuable insights for developers and users, fostering empathy toward the user. Teams present their prototype to potential users in a format of their choice. This phase ensures that the proposed solution is closely aligned with the real user's needs and preferences before moving forward with implementation. Gathering feedback from the other participant groups helps finalise the solution before starting to implement it.

Example from the Lithuanian case

In the **Lithuanian case**, the Design Thinking methodology was used in the Dialogue Forum activities. The formulated challenge *How could we encourage young people to get involved in social activities in their local communities in an age of individualism and information technology?* in a one-day programme resulted in the solutions of engaging in the reg organization and establishing a local chapter in one of Panevėžys district towns and participating in the youth centre's and cultural centre's activities.





Living Lab



Living Lab

Method for creating a safe space

Description

The social living labs are very promising in revealing the social innovation dynamics. The idea of living lab as social innovation dwells on the idea of open innovation network comprising diverse actors, activities, and resources (Leminen, Nystrom & Westerlund, 2020). As discussed in academic literature, living labs involve a group of end-users in generating products, services or policies (Hughes, Foth, Mallan 2019). Dekker, Contreras & Meijer (2020 p.1210) argue that key to living labs is that the process can take spontaneous turns and yield unexpected results, meanwhile, the end-result of the process is not fixed at the beginning. Social living labs are a good platform for informed learning and appear as an educational innovation responsive to local community needs.

How to use the tool

- **Initial stage** - Select the idea/ topic of the living lab, create a group of stakeholders from different levels of governance and invite them to participate in the living lab to share their views, information and knowledge about the topic.
- **Exploration** - engaging the stakeholders in live discussion, moderating their approaches to the selected topic.
- **Evaluation** – assessing the experience and knowledge using the data collected in the previous stages.



Example from the Lithuanian case

The living labs organized in the framework of the YounCount project had the preliminary results expectations to encourage the partnerships of the stakeholders and increase the involvement of young citizen scientists in the local community. The expected outcome was that during the living lab, the stakeholders strengthened community ties and increased mutual cooperation. During the living lab discussion, young citizen scientists were recognized by policymakers as having specialized knowledge from a user perspective and this encouraged them to involve youth in local decision making processes as their experiences and preferences can become part of the decision that is being taken.

