

# Youth engagement method database



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This database contains good practices and approaches to reach and empower young people at risk of social exclusion within the context of urban development. They have been developed following a collection of practices implemented successfully in five different European contexts: Hamburg (DE), London (UK), Palermo (IT), Porto (PT), and Gothenburg (SE).

The database has been built to inspire people working with youth and includes a variety of activities that can be used with individuals or groups. The methods presented here aim to enable youths to observe and analyse their neighbourhoods, understand its resources and challenges, and get engaged in civic life.

# Introduction

Social exclusion has a major impact on young people, especially for those in disadvantaged areas. Socially excluded young people do not have access to the same resources as others and lack the opportunities and services to enable them to contribute to society. As a result, they feel that they cannot influence their community and have little or no impact on policy decisions directly affecting their life.

[CIVACT](#), an ERASMUS+ Key Action 2 project which will run from October 2018 until September 2020, will work to combat these issues and improve the social engagement of youth at risk of social exclusion across Europe. The project comprises a strong collective of partners that have previous experience working with hard-to-reach youths, district management, and social and educational projects aimed at local development: [Lawaetz Stiftung](#) (Hamburg, Germany; Lead partner), [Bond of Union](#) (Palermo, Italy), [Mapping for Change](#) (London, UK), [Young East](#) (Gothenburg, Sweden), and [APDES](#) (Porto, Portugal).

The project partners will share and test the methodologies included in this database for engaging disadvantaged young people. Youth workers in five pilot neighbourhoods will take part in occupational training to learn these engagement methods and then use their new skills and knowledge to give the young people they work with new experiences with civic engagement and the confidence and tools needed to propose changes to urban regeneration and local development in the areas in which they live.

A searchable online version of this database can be accessed at <https://civact.communitymaps.org.uk>.



## List of methods

- Go-along
- Peer methodology
- Prototyping solutions
- Sketching workshop
- Instawalks
- Youth forum
- Perception mapping
- Role play using 'personas'
- Feeling cards
- The person behind the uniform

The go-along is a modest, however more systematic and guided version, of hanging out with privileged informants. During the go-along, the interviewer accompanies the interviewee, who is commenting freely on what is observed, on a walk through specific areas. What makes the go-along technique unique is that ethnographers are able to observe their informant's spatial practices "in situ" while accessing their experiences and interpretations at the same time (Kusenbach, 2003).

The fieldworker - a facilitator - accompanies individuals on their "natural" outings (both individual and facilitator should have compatible mobility skills). By asking questions, listening, and observing, the fieldworker explore the individual's stream of experiences and practices as they move through and interact with their physical and social environment (Kusenbach, 2016). In short, the fieldworker follows individuals into a variety of settings. It's important to respect familiar environments and outings (particular day, time of the day and the routes of the regular trip). Experimental go-alongs (unfamiliar territory outings) can also be organised.

The fieldworker can provide a little direction by asking the youth to comment on whatever comes to mind while looking at and moving through places, but without interfering in the selection of the places/spaces and the content of the conversation. The mention of spaces and contents should arise from the youth and not the youth worker (Kusenbach, 2016).



## TIME TO DELIVER

1 - 1.5 hours



## N. OF PEOPLE TO ENGAGE

Individual support



## RESOURCES REQUIRED

- Mental script (unstructured)
- Audio recorder and
- Camera (if applicable)
- Notebook and pen to take notes (if both feel comfortable)
- Facilitator with good interview skills

## REFERENCES

Kusenbach, Margarethe (2003), "Street phenomenology. The go-along as ethnographic research tool", *Ethnography*, 4 (3), [pp. 455-485](#).

Kusenbach, Margarethe (2016). "The Go-along method". *Sensing the City: A Companion to Urban Anthropology*. [Volume 155 of Bauwelt Fundamente, ISSN 0522-5094](#).





A prototyping solutions workshop can be used to reflect and imagine a feasible solution to an urban issue collaboratively. It should happen after participants have explored and interacted in a selected urban area. Divided in groups, they imagine new solutions/ideas for the area that they have just explored. This method stimulates imagination and creativity among participants while giving them the opportunity to think critically about their environments.

The workshop starts with the introduction of the participants and an explanation about the activity by the facilitator. The participants are then divided into groups to discuss and agree on a specific urban challenge. Participants decide together a solution to the challenge and sketch it on paper. Then they choose the materials needed for the prototype (papers, post-it, markers, lego, photos, etc.) and finally build it using a neighbourhood map in background (i.e. new playground area for the children in a neighbourhood with limited spaces for them). Participants are also requested to go more in depth and to identify the exact location, the time and budget needed to execute the solution and collect all the information necessary to make the prototype real. The workshop ends with the presentation of the prototypes to the other groups for feedback.

METHOD PROVIDED BY



## TIME TO DELIVER

2 hours



## N. OF PEOPLE TO ENGAGE

10 - 20 people



## RESOURCES REQUIRED

- Sketching materials (e.g. pen, paper, whiteboard, flipchart, etc.)
- Materials to build the prototype: paper, cardboard, glue, paint, pens, little pieces of wood, cork, etc.
- One room to accommodate the group
- Chairs and tables
- Good facilitation skills and creativity required

## EXAMPLES OF THE APPLIED METHOD, LINKS

[Prototype](#) is one of the step used in design thinking. The method was applied in the context of URBEX workshop in Palermo, read more [here](#).

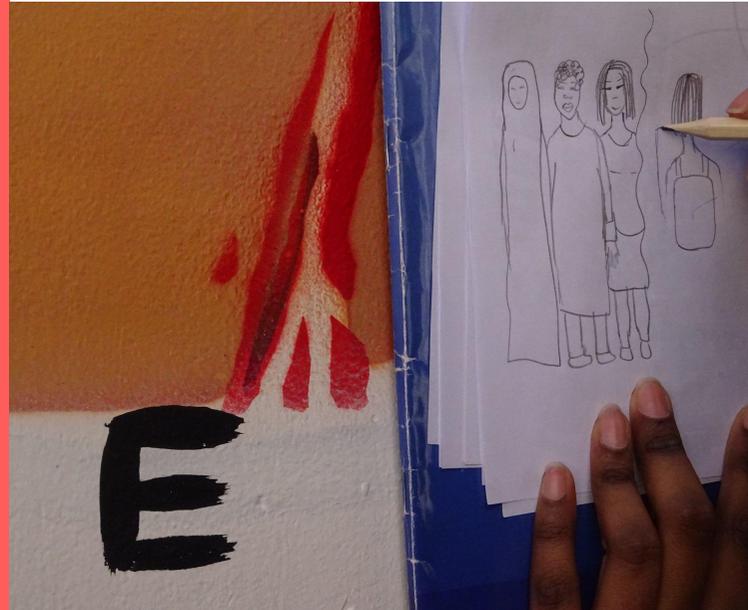


Sketching is a creative method to stimulate young people to collect data, pictures and drawings of what they see around them. They work with maps to create new symbols, signs, shapes, and colors which reflect the spirit of their neighbourhood. Each participant decides which places to map following his or her own legend. The objective is to create a small editorial product and to acquire a specific method that puts together a conceptual image with data collection (i.e. to illustrate a map by drawing, drawing a symbol, telling a story, collecting memories and images, etc.).

The workshops start with a brief presentation by the facilitator and then the participants introduce themselves. Individually, the participants start to work on the creation of their own sketchbook. The first step is the data collection, which can be information, text, images, photos, etc. while walking around the area. The data will depend on the topic of the sketchbook. For instance, if the topic is map illustration, then the data collection should be aimed at collecting visual material. While walking around, the participants sketch what they see or what they imagine rapidly and instinctively on their sketchbook. After the data collection, the participant chooses - with the support of the facilitator - a layout of the sketchbook and works on its final format and content.

The facilitator should enable the participants to interpret and synthesise their context with their sketches.

METHOD PROVIDED BY



## EXAMPLES OF THE APPLIED METHOD

This method was adapted in the context of the project Youth Map 2 and Urbex (read more [here](#))



### TIME TO DELIVER

3 hours



### N. OF PEOPLE TO ENGAGE

10 - 15 people



### RESOURCES REQUIRED

- Paper (free format), pens, pencils, colours, clipboard, sketchbook stapler for the sketchbook
- One room (preferably with good light and a cozy atmosphere)
- Table and chairs
- Projector and computer
- Good facilitation and artistic skills required



An instawalk is a good method for getting youths engaged with new spaces and build soft skills such as formulating and verbalizing emotions and desires, teaching others and the targeted communication of ideas.

During an instawalk, youths walk around a selected space taking photos with their phones or digital cameras and telling stories about where they are, what they feel, and the space itself. The method can be used to engage youths with a space they are not familiar with, elicit input from them about a space they know well, or activate the youths as "peer ambassadors."

First, the youth workers select a space and organize a group of youths for an outing to a specific location. This can be a space that the youths know well (goal: getting input from the youths) or a space that is new to them (goal: engage and familiarize them with a new space, activate them as "peer ambassadors"). The youths walk around the space taking photos with their phones and telling stories about where they are, what they feel, and the space itself. This can take place alone or in teams. If in teams, the youths should switch off taking photos and taking notes. At the end of the instawalk, the youths meet and the youth worker facilitates sharing about the experience - what did they feel where? Where did they have positive and negative feelings? Can they share a story about the space? Ideally, the time should be split 50-50 between the walk and the talk.

METHOD PROVIDED BY



# INSTAWALKS

## TIME TO DELIVER

3 - 4 hours



## N. OF PEOPLE TO ENGAGE

5 - 10 people



## RESOURCES REQUIRED

- Location which takes the mobility restrictions of the participants into account
- Enough digital cameras or mobile phones for all participants/teams
- A quiet space to discuss afterwards (can be indoor or outdoor)
- Good facilitation skills needed



## EXAMPLES OF THE APPLIED METHOD

Lawaetz youth workers organized an instawalk to familiarize youths with the city hall and engage them as "peer ambassadors" for the space.



The Youth Forum is a self-organized, democratic and open format through which youths can plan and implement their own ideas in their neighbourhood. It is a direct democratic, topic-based format for engaging youths, in particular those who would otherwise not get involved.

First, the youth worker chooses a topic in cooperation with the youths. The topic may be a need that the youths have voiced or a potential change proposed by the municipal government. The youth worker researches the topic and appropriate district meetings at which to present the results, then selects fitting methods to facilitate participation (for example world café, future forum, planning for real, etc.) and schedules the meeting. For best results, the youth forum should take place at the same time on the same weekday, especially if there are multiple meetings for the same topic.

Social media (for example WhatsApp, Facebook) can be used to spread the word about the meeting. Posters and flyers or word of mouth can also be used.

At the end of the meeting, the youths protocol the results, either for continuation at the next meeting or for presentation at the appropriate district meeting (regular meetings, for example of the local planning committee, are best). Results-orientation helps ensure future engagement among the youths.

METHOD PROVIDED BY



Lawaetz-  
Stiftung



## EXAMPLES OF THE APPLIED METHOD

There is a youth forum in the Hamburg district of Wandsbek (more info in German [here](#)).



### TIME TO DELIVER

2 hours



### N. OF PEOPLE TO ENGAGE

Up to 30 participants



### RESOURCES REQUIRED

- Conference room
- Paper, pin board, markers, etc. for intermediate steps of decision-making / presenting ideas within the youth forum
- Social media to get youths interested and engaged (optional)
- Good facilitation skills required



General perception mapping is a type of participatory mapping (collective mapping of ideas, experiences and/or views). Perception maps tell a story about an area, provide a way to enable individuals to express their views and aspirations and perhaps to identify what is important to different cultural groups within a community. The activity can be carried out during workshops, focus groups, rapid appraisals (getting opinions from passers-by in a public space) or other events, both individually and in groups. It involves recording qualitative local knowledge that is not specifically about physical features in the area but aspects such as local history, memories, or feelings about spaces/places.

The activity starts with an introduction of the study/work, the specific context, and the objectives of the activity (exploration of social dynamics, identification of barriers to movement, planning spaces/facilities for youths, etc.). After that, and depending on the group dynamics, participants' views can be collected together on a big map or individually using smaller ones. The participants themselves can add the information to the map or they can be supported by the facilitator. Perception mapping categorises observations and comments in personal Story Maps which can then be grouped together with themes like "We wish," "We like," "We don't like," "Memories," "Environment," "Questions," and "Landmarks." The collation of shared views can then be used for further action planning or to initiate dialogue with other stakeholders.

METHOD PROVIDED BY



## SUPPORTING MATERIAL

Participatory mapping is part of the UCL Street Mobility Project Toolkit, published in 2017, available [here](#).

The method was also adapted to work with Year 4 pupils in Tower Hamlets (London) to develop personalised maps of their local area with their own likes, memories, and views on change (read [more](#)).



## TIME TO DELIVER

3 hours



## N. OF PEOPLE TO ENGAGE

1 person - big groups



## RESOURCES REQUIRED

- A suitable space - a busy public space for rapid appraisals or a meeting space with capacity for deeper engagement
- Local maps - online, paper, or both
- Post-it notes, coloured sticky dots, icons and pens
- A leaflet/presentation explaining the project
- Engagement team or person - depending on number of participants - with minimum facilitation skills
- Refreshments, if possible



# ROLE PLAY USING 'PERSONAS'

Role play is the participation of individuals or groups in simulated social situations that are intended to throw light upon the role/rule contexts governing/influencing "real" life social episodes.<sup>1</sup> Personas are user models that are represented as specific individuals. They are not real people but are based on observations of real people. The persona method is used in the fields of product and system (IT) design and is a powerful tool for communicating the needs of different types of users or groups, enhancing engagement and reality.<sup>2</sup>

Role play using 'personas' is a method based on empathy, or the capacity to place oneself in another's position, with the objective to raise awareness about specific issues. The participants should belong to a different group than the 'persona' being given.

Before the exercise, a series of personas - modelled around the users/groups whose issues are to be tackled - should be created, together with specific tasks to carry out individually or in groups. The tasks should take enough time to allow participants to understand the issue. The exercise starts when each participant chooses a persona and a task to carry out. During the exercise, participants write down/record their observations and feelings. At the end of the task, or later, participants share their views and experiences and give their feedback.

METHOD PROVIDED BY



## REFERENCES

<sup>1</sup> Cohen, L. et al, (2000), [Research Methods in Education](#). 5th Edition, Routledge Falmer, London.

<sup>2</sup> Grudin, J. & Pruitt, J. (2002) '[Personas, participatory design and product development: An infrastructure for engagement.](#)' Proc. PDC

## EXAMPLES OF THE APPLIED METHOD

'[Try It!](#)' activity organised with UCLU Disabled Students in 2015.



## TIME TO DELIVER

Half a day



## N. OF PEOPLE TO ENGAGE

Small - big groups



## RESOURCES REQUIRED

- Enough space to conduct the tasks created
- A minimum of 5 persona cards, 5 task sheets, observations sheets and pens (maps required for outdoor tasks)
- Information about the project and the objectives of the exercise
- An engagement team or person depending on number of participants (no specific facilitation skills required to conduct the activity)
- Refreshments, if possible



# “FEELING CARDS”



“Feeling cards,” inspired by non-violent communication, is a card game that can be used in groups or individually in order to promote social and emotional intelligence, foster group cohesion and connection, encourage listening and empathy skills, create better understanding in relationships, clarify goals and group vision/mission, celebrate accomplishments, improve communication, and assist in resolving conflicts.

Each card contains a word referring to a feeling. The aim is to help the players to better express their emotional states. The cards can be a useful tool to start deeper engagement processes. There is a pictorial version of the game which can be used with people with language difficulties or low literacy.

The game provides a manual which contains enough information to use the feeling cards and no training is required. However, non-violent communication offers a specific training for facilitators to improve their understanding about the game and their communication skills. The manual provides different examples of how to use the cards, both in groups and individually. These examples give you a clear picture of how to use the cards depending on purpose.

METHOD PROVIDED BY



City of  
Gothenburg



## TIME TO DELIVER

15 min - 3 hours



## N. OF PEOPLE TO ENGAGE

1 - 5 people



## RESOURCES REQUIRED

- Cards game
- Manual
- Quiet place with tables and chairs
- Facilitator

## LINKS

Non-violent communication (NVC) is a process of communication, developed by psychologist Marshall Rosenberg that is based on compassion, authenticity, and courage. NVC is founded on language and communication skills that strengthen our ability to remain human, even under trying conditions. Find more information here:

<https://www.cnvc.org/>.



PBU is a unique collaboration between youth and uniformed forces, specifically the local police, fire department, emergency medical services, security company and ticket inspectors for trams/buses. It is a ten-week program where young people get to try out the work of the uniformed forces. The program is an opportunity for dialogue and discussions that lead to a better understanding and knowledge of each other.

The goals of PBU are to increase youth participation, reduce crime, and create good meetings which increase the understanding between youths and the different uniformed professions.

During ten weeks, one day a week the youths get to meet the different actors/organizations in their respective work environments where they get an opportunity to try some of the organization's work, for example: CPR, a staged road accident, climbing a fire ladder, trying on the different uniforms, and much more. These meetings create good dialogues and discussions that lead to better understanding and knowledge of each other. Each session is three hours long and always contains a practical part and a theoretical part that ends with a brief evaluation. After ten weeks, the youngsters get a certificate of everything they've done and learned which is signed by all of the organizations involved. The young people who have taken the course have an opportunity to stay on as ambassadors for PBU to continue to work and spread the spirit of the project.

METHOD PROVIDED BY



## THE PERSON BEHIND THE UNIFORM (PBU)



### TIME TO DELIVER

10 weeks (1 day/week)



### N. OF PEOPLE TO ENGAGE

12 people



### RESOURCES REQUIRED

- Engaged uniformed forces
- Specific programme and objectives
- Suitable spaces to conduct the activities

### MORE INFORMATION

PBU started in East Gothenburg in Autumn 2009, after a lot of hate and vandalism from youths against several uniform carriers. After repeated conversations among young people and youth workers (in East Gothenburg) about what we can do to change this behaviour, we gradually developed a model with a ten week course where the youths get to meet the uniform wearers in their work environment.



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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## IMAGES AND ICONS CREDITS

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The **Johann Daniel Lawaetz-Stiftung** (Lawaetz Foundation), founded in 1986 by the City of Hamburg, is a charitable Foundation of Private Law. The foundation is active in the field of urban development and social integration, both in Hamburg and other German states.



**Agência Piaget para o Desenvolvimento** (APDES) is a Portuguese non-profit organization, founded in 2004, that aims to improve the social integration and cohesion of communities and people in vulnerable situations (unemployed people, inmates, elderly, foster children/youth, people who use drugs, sex workers, among others). APDES goal is to strengthen access to health, employment and education, active citizenship and community participation, through the enhancement of citizens power to exercise their rights and responsibilities.



**Bond of Union** is a social cooperative, established in 2010 based in Palermo (Sicily) and operating also in Berlin. It aims to promote social development through the realisation of local and international projects with a focus on community empowerment, participative practices, culture, environment, professional training and international mobility.



**Mapping for Change** (MfC), is a social enterprise owned by University College London (UCL) and born from ongoing research since 1998 centred on participatory mapping and participatory geographic information systems. MfC specialises in working across sectors, in a participatory capacity, in the use of geospatial technologies to achieve social and environmental sustainability, with a particular focus on, but not limited to, individuals and communities from disadvantaged or marginalised groups.



The **City District East Gothenburg** provides municipal services to nearly 50,000 inhabitants. The city district is characterized by residential and socioeconomic segregation and diversity, and the area Bergsjön by social and economic deprivation. The general socioeconomic status is much lower than the city's average. An increasing number have low educational attainment, low income and poor health. The unemployment rate in the district is over 13 percent (compared to 8% in Gothenburg). Over 60 percent of the districts population has a foreign background.

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