



Overview of best practices for citizen and stakeholder engagement in the implementation of soil health measures at municipal and regional levels

[REDACTED VERSION]

Alberto Matarán Ruiz et al.

Citation:

Matarán Ruiz, A., Sánchez Contreras, J., Manzanera Ruiz, R., López Medina, J. M., Fuentes-Guerra Soldevilla, R., Gámez Rodríguez, G., Torres Rodríguez, A., and Bejarano Bella, J. F. (2023). "Overview of best practices for citizen and stakeholder engagement in the implementation of soil health measures at municipal and regional levels". Deliverable D1.3. Healthy Municipal Soils, Horizon Europe.

Case studies:

Leonardo Galli (Comune Fiesole, IT), Nicola Tanini (Comune Calenzano, IT), Francesca Migliorini (University of Gastronomic Sciences, IT), Sabiha G. Zwack (University of Hohenheim, DE), Mayte Gallego (FUNDECYT, ES), Santiago Ruiz Arias (University of Granada, ES), Andrea Iglesias (University of Granada, ES).



Funded by
the European Union

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the authors only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or of the European Research Executive Agency (REA). Neither the European Union

Executive summary

Soil degradation reflects a lack of appreciation for the value of healthy soils for people and planet. Within this context, the EU Mission 'A Soil Deal for Europe' (Soil Mission) aims to lead the transition to healthy soils via sustainable soil management. This requires knowledge and awareness of the importance and value of soil health and its challenges and drivers across Europe. Municipalities and regions are at the forefront of soil management, regulation, innovation, and community-building and are thus pivotal for promoting soil health. However, engaging and activating municipalities and regions across Europe to protect and restore soil health is vital for a successful Soil Mission deployment. HuMUS is the only project implementing the EU Soil Mission that is targeting public administration at local and regional levels. In particular, this document shows a participatory biodistrict approach, the Humus Methodology, that will be applied in 34 pilot cases to support the co-implementation of solutions to protect and restore soil health at municipal and territorial (intermunicipal) scale. This participatory methodology will ensure an increased cooperation between public and private actors, such as municipal stakeholders, policymakers in charge of local and regional strategies, as well as private stakeholders and citizens. Territorial Management Agreements will be reached with key stakeholders by means of participatory diagnosis to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats around soil health that will set the basis for the co-creation of solutions for the protection and restoration of soil health will be discussed and agreed by all actors.

1. Introduction: The EU Mission “a Soil Deal For Europe” and the Project “Healthy Municipal Soils”

The responsibilities of municipal administrative bodies on soil health are not always clear, as agriculture and forestry are normally provincial, regional, or national issues. However, their role in soil management, regulation, planning, restoration, innovation, and community building is for promoting soil health. Therefore, engaging municipalities across Europe to actively protect and restore soil health is vital for the success of the Soil Mission.

HuMUS is the only project that is currently implementing the Soil Mission by targeting administrative bodies at local and also regional levels. The main aim of the HuMUS project is to facilitate the deployment of the Soil Mission across municipalities and regions by : (i) creating and experimenting with spaces for social dialogue on soil health which can be shared by European public and private actors; (ii) promoting shared understanding and co-assessment exercises of the challenges faced in process of improving soil health (biophysical and socio-economic factors); and (iii) enhancing knowledge sharing between municipalities and regions, including knowledge about the transformations required for the current S4 (Sustainable Smart Specialisation) strategies and the use of the EU funds available for this transition.

As a part of the HuMUS project, this document presents a framework and tools for the implementation of the Soil Mission in European municipalities. It provides information on a participatory organic district approach, the HuMUS methodology, that can be adapted to different scenarios to support the co-implementation of solutions to protect and restore soil health at municipal and territorial (inter-municipal) levels.

The methodology proposed enables the Soil Mission to be adapted to the social, political, cultural, and environmental needs and dynamics of different territories. Therefore, at a municipal level, the actual inhabitants of the area and the municipal institutions are the actors who can recognise the value of the soil and decide which mechanisms can be used for the improvement of soil health.

Finally, the HuMUS methodology presents a suitable framework for an ulterior development of a living lab and a soil district in the territories where it will be applied.

2. The HuMUS Methodology

The HuMUS methodology is a replicable cycle of 4 stages (see Figure 1 below). The innovative organic district approach [1] coordinates public-private policy concerning food and agriculture. It offers a systemic response to societal challenges and transcends the artificial boundaries of policies, programmes, and different levels of governance by establishing bioregions as the main reference of spatial organisation [2, 3]. Soil is a key natural resource for the provision of essential ecosystem services, and its health is the foundation of the organic district approach. The International Network of Eco-Regions (INNER) [1] states that an organic district includes a territorial agreement for the sustainable management of local

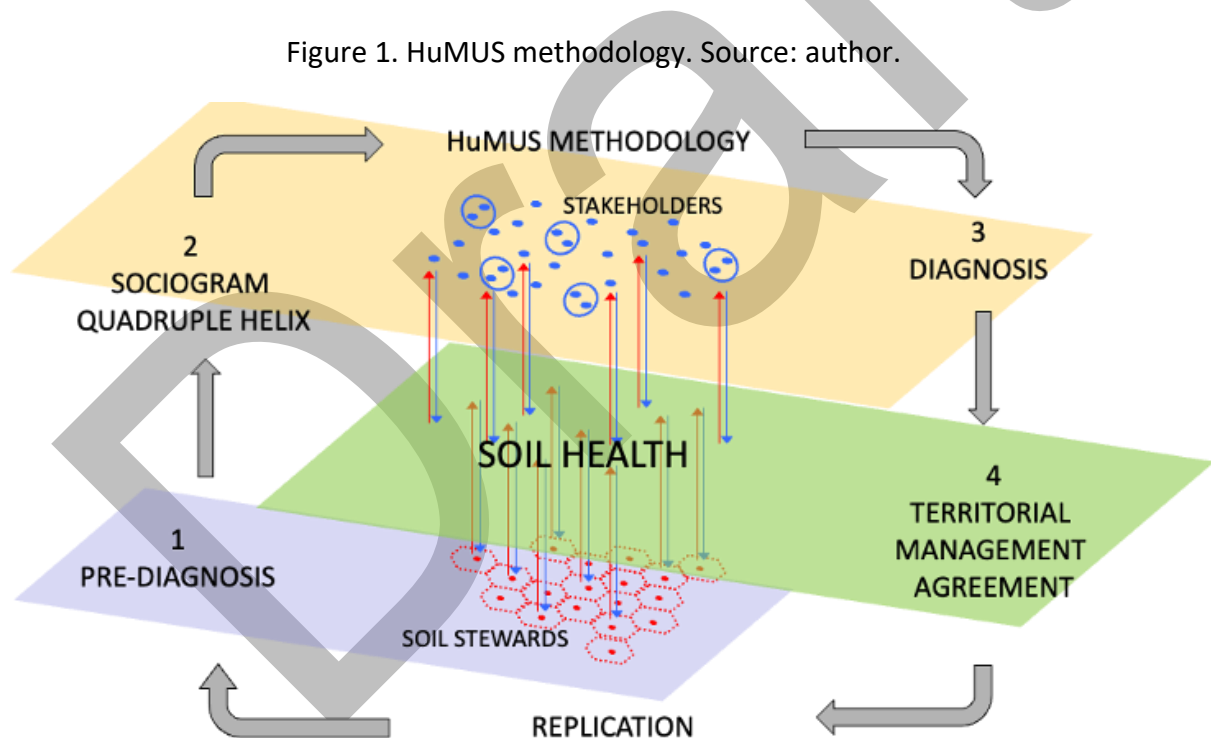
resources, based on the principles of organic agriculture and agroecology, which is the Territorial Management Agreement in the HuMUS methodology.

According to the Participatory Action Research methodology, the initial phase of the organic district approach is based on a multi-stakeholder approach, and it includes the selection of actors, citizens, and stakeholders (e.g., academia, farmers, consumers, associations, and local and regional policymakers) to create participatory groups.

These groups need to be equipped with the appropriate tools and information to make connections with decision-making bodies. These participatory groups also need to be empowered so that they can propose public and private solutions for the improvement of soil health and territorial management at local and regional levels.

Interactive spaces that promote dialogue need to be established, and existing ones need to be strengthened in every territory to generate new ideas, encourage "thinking outside the box", and identify viable solutions and specific actions for promoting soil health to develop Territorial Management Agreements. The co-design of strategies and actions to improve the protection and restoration of soil health are based on these agreements.

In summary, the HuMUS participatory methodology is based on the following steps.



Preparatory activities in the HuMUS participatory methodology start by carrying out a pre-diagnosis, which is theoretical, and then a sociogram to map the actors involved in the second step is created. The third step is a participatory diagnosis to establish how soil health is being considered in the field, and this diagnosis identifies existing problems and challenges. Finally, in the fourth stage, Territorial Management Agreements are drawn up using the results of the participatory diagnosis.

3. Conclusions

Involving municipalities and stakeholders in improving soil health and deploying the Soil Mission is key. Therefore, participatory processes that are attractive, efficient, open, and flexible must be constructed. In order to make this achievable, the HuMUS methodology is a framework proposal that should be adapted to the timing and specific context of any particular municipality where it needs to be applied.

Nevertheless, that the support for and the dynamisation of these participatory processes comes from municipal authorities raises positive and negative issues that must be considered when these types of projects are being developed.

First, the negative aspects that should be considered and avoided are: limited budgets; the small scale of municipal territorial management; timing of elections; lack of experience and a lack of a culture of participation (in society, in politics, in technical areas, etc.); false participation whereby only information is provided and the opinions of citizens and stakeholders are not actually listened to in decision making; a badly developed process that could disappoint people; and finally, a lack of trust in the authorities.

Second, the positive aspects are: local authorities that the general public and stakeholders find approachable; the wideranging usefulness of actions and activities at a local scale; types of local administration that are smaller and less complicated than other options; some municipalities see participation as an opportunity; resources are sometimes available for participatory actions; the citizens of municipalities sometimes get used to being part of participatory processes and they come out in defence of them when actions are successful; tangible results (when they appear); opportunity to gain public trust.

Finally, any participatory process that leads to a Territorial Management Agreement becomes a firm foundation for the later development of a living lab and soil district for the development of soil health, as this is, above all, an agreement to take action and increase the levels of citizen awareness on soil health. In this context, both the diagnosis and the proposals approved are useful for preparatory work and identifying prospective settings for living labs and soil districts. At the same time, participatory structures, relationships between actors, and the dynamics generated by these relationships are key for the construction of the subsequent actions that lead to the co-creation of living labs and soil districts. As a result, not only does the HuMUS methodology support the deployment of the Soil Mission at the municipal level but it also contributes to the development of soil districts and to the objective of creating 100 living labs set out by the Soil Mission (since 2020, there has been a process of creating living labs in the field of agri-ecosystems).

References

Alberich, T. (2007) “La Investigación-Acción Participativa, método y práctica”. *IV Congreso Internacional sobre Investigación – Acción Participativa*. Valladolid.

Calderón, C. (2020) “Unearthing the political: differences, conflicts and power in participatory urban design”, *Journal of Urban Design*, 25:1, 50-64, DOI: [10.1080/13574809.2019.1677146](https://doi.org/10.1080/13574809.2019.1677146).

Carmona Gallego, J. (2004): “Del dicho al hecho... ¿hemos andado ese trecho?: Veinte años de lucha ciudadana por el Parque Miraflores”. En Encina, J., Rosa, M., y Ávila, M. A., *Democracias participativas e intervención social comunitaria desde Andalucía*. Sevilla. Ed. Atrapasueños.

Cruz Gallach, E. (2008): “Conflictos territoriales y movilizaciones ciudadanas: algunas reflexiones sobre las formas de gobernanza territorial actuales”. *Boletín de la AGE* nº48. pp 375-387.

DeLind, L.B., (2002): “Place, work, and civic agriculture: Common fields for cultivation”. *Agriculture and Human Values* 2002. vol. 19, pp. 217–224.

European Commission, Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, (2022), “Communication and citizen engagement initiatives in line with the Horizon Europe Mission A Soil Deal for Europe – Report on dissemination and exploitation practices in Member States and associated countries”, Publications Office of the European Union, 2022, <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2777/704413>.

Fanfani, D. and Matarán, A. (2020) “Bioregional planning and design: perspectives on a transitional century”. Springer.

INNER-International Network of Eco-Regions. (2020). “Report on Organic Districts: Organic Districts Guidelines”. Edited by Bio-Distretto Cilento (IT), Agrobio (PT), Bergerie Nationale (FR), and SEAE (ES). EducEcoRegions Project.

Kabisch, N. (2019) “Transformation of urban brownfields through co-creation: the multi-functional Lene-Voigt Park in Leipzig as a case in point”. *Urban Transform* 1, 2. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s42854-019-0002-6>.

López Medina, J.M., (2012). “El diseño participativo en programas de rehabilitación de viviendas”. PhD Tesis. University of Granada.

López Medina, J.M., and Fuentes-Guerra Soldevilla, R., (2021). “Guía metodológica para la agenda urbana en la provincia de Granada”. Diputación de Granada. Granada.

Magnaghi, A., (2005). “The Urban Village: A charter for democracy and local self-sustainable development”. Zed Books. London.

Mancebo F. (2014). “Combining sustainability and social justice in the Paris metropolitan region”. In: Isenhour C, McDonogh G, Checker M, editors. *Sustainability in the Global City Myth and Practice*. Cambridge University Press.

Matarán Ruiz, A. (2013). "Participación social en la protección activa de los espacios agrarios periurbanos: un estado de la cuestión". *Boletín De La Asociación De Geógrafos Españoles*, (63). <https://doi.org/10.21138/bage.1606>.

Moragues-Faus, A. (2020). "Towards a critical governance framework: Unveiling the political and justice dimensions of urban food partnerships". *The Geographical Journal*, 186(1), 73-86. <https://doi.org/10.1111/geoj.12325>.

Passaro, A., and Randelli, F. (2022). "Spaces of Governance for Sustainable Transformation of Local Food Systems: The Case of 8 Biodistricts in Tuscany". WP No12/2022. Working Paper - Economics Università Degli Studi Firenze.

Draft

ANNEX I. BEST PRACTICE EXAMPLES

Best practice #1. Participatory Experience of Miraflores Park in Seville, Spain

Relevance to the objectives of the EU Mission “A Soil Deal for Europe”:

- 3.- Stop soil sealing and increase re-use of urban soils.
- 4.- Reduce soil pollution and enhance restoration.

Where? Macarena District, Sevilla, Spain. **When?** 1983 - 1996 (ongoing).

Who?

Comité Pro Parque Miraflores (Miraflores Park Committee), which includes citizens and neighbourhood associations, with the collaboration of Sevilla local council and the regional administration.

What?

The recuperation and preparation of an abandoned peri urban space for the creation of a park, the re-use of soil for growing small crops and gardening, and the construction of an educational space and cultural centre.

How?

For many years, different activities have been taking place, such as, assemblies, demonstrations, movements, campaigns, petition signings, occupation of buildings, green Sundays for cleaning up, the self/management construction of the park, tree planting, agroecological workshops for local people, and educational workshops for children and young people.

The constant movements and demands of the citizens’ committee finally managed to persuade the authorities to recover this space, transforming it into a public park where urban allotments and an interpretation centre focused on heritage and environmental education can now be found. Some decisions on the design of the park were agreed upon with the citizens’ committee that promoted its creation, meaning that the urban allotments that now exist within it are managed by a gardeners’ assembly.

Furthermore, the associations and the schools in the Macarena neighbourhood of Seville, which is next to the park, also take part in the management of the educational and training programmes that are centred on the values of the park, concerning agriculture, heritage elements, and gardening.

Links and references:

<https://huertalasmoreras.wordpress.com>

Maćkiewicz, B. and Puente Asuero, R. (2021) “Public versus private: Juxtaposing urban allotment gardens as multifunctional nature-based Solutions”. Insights from Seville, *Urban Forestry & Urban Greening*, Vol. 65, 127309, ISSN 1618-8667, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ufug.2021.127309>

Best practice #2. Agricultural Park of the South of Milan, IT

Relevance to the objectives of the EU Mission “A Soil Deal for Europe”:

- 3.- Stop soil sealing and increase re-use of urban soils.
- 4.- Reduce soil pollution and enhance restoration.
- 7.- Reduce the EU global footprint on soils.

Where? Milan, Italy.

When? 1990.

Who? Milan provincial government, 61 municipalities, farmers’ associations, and environmental groups.

What?

The territorial management plan for the province of Milan and 61 municipalities established the Agricultural Park of the South of Milan on 47,000 hectares of agricultural land in the southern area of the province of Milan, and it was the first known example of an experience of this type.

The objectives of the park were:

To conserve and reinforce agricultural activities, including the commercialisation of local products and the adoption of crops with high levels of environmental compatibility, in accordance with the “Code of Best Agricultural Practices” (article 1999/1257/CE), which provides examples like organic agriculture and biodynamic agriculture. To protect and recognise the value of natural, environmental, and landscape heritage; Preserve, restore and re-establish the river network; Recover and re-use the territorial networks and existing buildings, especially those which had been abandoned; Recover and recognise the value of archeological and monumental heritage assets; Establish a system of public use and acquiring land for public use, the construction of itineraries for enjoying the natural surroundings, with routes for pedestrians and cyclists, and the introduction, or improvement of different types of usage, for instance, leisure, sporting activities, and services.

How?

The governance structure of the park, in which the municipalities played an important role, included participatory instruments that generated dynamics which involved the general public, ecological groups, and especially farmers. Territorial planning, collaboration networks and short chain commercialisation strategies worked in favour of these agricultural areas set in a metropolitan context that found itself under extreme pressure from urban expansion.

Links and references:

www.cittametropolitana.mi.it/parco_agricolo_sud_milano/

Best practice #3. Organic District of Calenzano (Tuscany, Italy)

Relevance to the objectives of the EU Mission “A Soil Deal for Europe”:

- 3.- Stop soil sealing and increase re-use of urban soils.
- 6.- Improve soil structure to enhance soil biodiversity.
- 7.- Reduce the EU global footprint on soils.

Where? Calenzano, (Florence, Tuscany, Italy).

When? 2020-2021

Who?

The municipality of Calenzano in collaboration with research bodies (University of Florence and National Research Council) with the support of the Tuscany Region in accordance with the Regional Law 51/2019. Including the participation of farmers, agricultural companies, school canteens, companies in the processing and catering supply chain, and associations.

What?

The process involved the establishment of the Organic District in Calenzano is an example of a best practice in recognising the value of soil from an agricultural perspective and protecting biodiversity, as it has given rise to the creation of a shared and inter-sectoral governance instrument. The objective of the use of this instrument was to define a series of principles which established the foundations for re-designing the entire agro-environmental and food system sustainably, with multi-objective lines. The Calenzano Organic District, recognised by the Tuscany Region, is currently made up of twenty founding members and it is open to new members. The Organic District aims to achieve developments in the fields of agriculture, landscape, and territory by creating agricultural systems that are structured to be resilient to climate change, to conserve biodiversity, and to reverse the trend of soil degradation by using organic practices and sustainable agriculture.

How?

The participatory processes were carried out using a multi-stakeholder approach which applied the Quadruple Helix methodology contacting with different local actors via databases, targeted invitations and activities open to the public. The participatory process was based on a series of meetings, focus groups, thematic discussions, visits, and information exchanges between the different actors in the area. During the process, the local authorities discussed the priorities to be pursued with the different actors involved so that the agricultural and food systems in Calenzano could be steered towards sustainability and a conversion to organic farming. The participatory process was divided into two phases: two introductory meetings that were part of the pre-diagnostic phase, and the more structured diagnosis and proposal phase, comprised of seven thematic forums/meetings involving different actors and a public conference. A diverse group of actors took part in the process, around 135 participants were present, and they listened and shared the community's ideas and needs so that a common vision of the sustainable development of the territory could be built.

Links and references:

<https://www.comune.calenzano.fi.it/it/page/81626>

Best practice #4. Participatory process for sustainable forest management in Central Portugal

Relevance to the objectives of the EU Mission “A Soil Deal for Europe”:

1.- Reduce desertification.

Where? Central Portugal.

When? 1996 - 2009

Who? National Government of Portugal.

What?

The government carried out a diagnostic study that was used to identify which regions were most severely affected by desertification so that policies aimed at improving soil health could be focused on. Finally, a participatory methodology was used to generate forestry policies and Sustainable Forest Management through citizen decision-making.

How?

The participatory methodology proposed in this example of best practice aimed to increase stakeholder participation in defining sustainable forest management, especially in fire-prone areas. The process for defining the methodology was divided into four main steps: i) defining the context, i.e. setting local context before participation and identifying the aims and potential outcomes of the use of participatory methodologies; ii) stakeholder analysis and selection, i.e. identifying participants by assessing the roles, interests, and influences of each group of stakeholders; iii) developing a participatory approach and participatory methods, i.e. defining the level of participation, the methods and techniques suitable for each step, and establishing which resources were needed and available; and iv) implementation of the participatory approach.

The participatory methodology included three steps, enabling a continuous process to be established: i) stakeholder perception survey; ii) key stakeholder workshop; iii) community workshops.

The community workshops were organised with very few financial resources and using key stakeholders (e.g. a forestry technician, administration representative, etc.) who had received training as facilitators. Although using an external, professional facilitator could have been beneficial, the creation of a group of local facilitators was very important for guaranteeing the continuity of local participation, and it was also a way in which a culture of grass-roots participation was fostered.

Links and references:

Valente, S., et al. “Sustainable Forest Management in Portugal: Transition from Global Policies to Local Participatory Strategies.” *The International Forestry Review*, vol. 17, no. 3, 2015, pp. 368–83. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43739860>

Best practice #5. Transformation of urban brownfields through co-creation: the multi-functional Lene-Voigt Park in Leipzig, DE

Relevance to the objectives of the EU Mission “A Soil Deal for Europe”:

3.- Stop soil sealing and increase re-use of urban soils.

4.- Reduce soil pollution and enhance restoration.

Where? city of Leipzig, Germany **When?** 1998 – 2004

Who?

The local council and a diverse group of actors including local residents, community groups, planners, decision makers, and researchers.

What?

This project was a co-creation process for transforming a former railway site into a 11-hectare multifunctional public park to promote new perspectives for sustainable urban regeneration strategies. It included the planning and implementation of a complete participatory process. The final design of the park included different areas each of which focused on the requirements of different users and age groups: main lawn areas for recreational purposes (quiet areas), sports areas and playgrounds (active areas) and side allotments for urban gardening activities.

How?

The participatory methodologies included local workshops, focus group discussions, semi-structured interviews, site visits, vision building, children’s camps and an international planning seminar, in which stakeholders and actors were able to openly present and discuss their needs and desires. The main aim was to address the needs of different age groups such as children and young people and local communities to give them a chance to communicate their views and expectations about a new park. It was the first time in the city of Leipzig that inner-city park areas were made available for individual or community gardening activities and it was a new approach that enabled the city to outsource green management to individual residents.

Link and references:

www.leipzig.de/freizeit-kultur-und-tourismus/parks-waelder-und-friedhoefe/parks-und-gruenanlagen/lene-voigt-park/

Kabisch, N. Transformation of urban brownfields through co-creation: the multifunctional Lene-Voigt Park in Leipzig as a case in point. *Urban Transformation*, Vol. 1, num. 2 (2019).
<https://doi.org/10.1186/s42854-019-0002-6>

Best practice #6. The participatory renewal of public spaces in La Mina neighbourhood (Barcelona, Spain)

Relevance to the objectives of the EU Mission “A Soil Deal for Europe”:

- 3.- Stop soil sealing and increase re-use of urban soils.
- 4.- Reduce soil pollution and enhance restoration.

Where? La Mina (Barcelona). **When?** 2002 – 2006

Who?

La Mina Neighbourhood Consortium (Barcelona local council and regional administration), including local residents, community leaders, civil servants, and architects.

What?

The participatory design of public spaces and the decision on investment in public space of the Transformation Plan for La Mina. This was a 10-year urban renewal plan, which included the construction of a *rambla* (a wide street with a promenade in the middle; a typical urban feature in Barcelona) running across the neighbourhood. This was conceived as a new landmark that would resolve the conflicts in existing public spaces, and act as a place where both existing and new residents could socialise. The objective was to revitalise the public life of the neighbourhood.

How?

Working within a limited budget, the design process was made up of two stages. The aim of the first stage was to analyse public spaces and the public life of the neighbourhood by mapping problems and opportunities. The process included interviews, participant observation and workshops with different actors (a group teenagers from a local school, most of whom were from Roma communities; a group with leaders and members of different community-based organisations; and a group with members from a community-based women’s organisation). During the workshops, participants used group-mapping exercises and photo surveys, and discussions were facilitated that identified and analysed the problems and opportunities regarding public spaces in the neighbourhood. The second stage focused on the development of social programmes and design proposals. The design of both stages followed a series of charrette-like workshops involving different groups of residents and community-based organisations. A five-day open house event targeting a larger number of residents and users, plus civil servants and technicians was planned at the end of each stage.

Links and references:

<http://www.barrimina.cat/>

Camilo Calderon (2020) Unearthing the political: differences, conflicts and power in participatory urban design, *Journal of Urban Design*, 25:1, 50-64, DOI: [10.1080/13574809.2019.1677146](https://doi.org/10.1080/13574809.2019.1677146)

Best practice #7. Citizen-led, comprehensive land use planning in Willsboro (Adirondack Park), New York, USA

Relevance to the objectives of the EU Mission “A Soil Deal for Europe”:

3.- stop soil sealing and increase re-use of urban soils.

Where? Willsboro, New York on the limits of the Adirondack Park **When?** 2007 - 2011

Who?

The local council with the support of a research team from the University of Ohio, and the citizens and stakeholders in the area.

What?

The project applied the research methodology of participatory action to design a territorial plan for environmental conservation in this municipality that could fight against the urban growth rates that were affecting the environmental and landscape values of the area.

How?

A process of participatory action research was created that included different stages and methodologies:

- Creation of a steering committee by electing stakeholders, and defining their involvement in the process.
- Creation of a pre-diagnosis by holding sessions to listen to the members of the steering committee.
- Community survey sent by post and online.
- Interviews with experts.
- Creation of participatory mapping by using the observations provided by the general public and by using geographic information systems.
- Visioning sessions considering appreciative inquiry in four meetings and two focus groups held with the agricultural community and senior citizens.
- Definition of a comprehensive plan vision statement.
- Work sessions using geographic information systems to create environmental recommendations and recommendations for soil uses.

- Discussions on specific case studies at round table meetings with the steering committee to validate the methodology used for the participatory action research.

Links and references:

Ann H Ruzow Holland (2014) Citizen-led, comprehensive land use planning in New York’s Adirondack Park, Rural Society, 23:2, 133-150, DOI: [10.5172/rsj.2014.23.2.133](https://doi.org/10.5172/rsj.2014.23.2.133).

Best practice #8. Participatory urban planning in Kaymaklı (Turkey)

Relevance to the objectives of the EU Mission “A Soil Deal for Europe”:

- 3.- Stop soil sealing and increase re-use of urban soils.
- 4.- Reduce soil pollution and enhance restoration.
- 8.- Increase soil literacy in society.

Where? Municipality of Kaymaklı, Cappadocia region, Turkey.

When? 2004

Who?

A civic association (Beautification, Mutual Aid and Solidarity Association of Kaymaklı) in collaboration with the Municipality of Kaymaklı, with the participation of local authorities, NGOs, women’s organisations, Indigenous people, and other actors

What?

Soil pollution was detected in the area in 2004, and this seriously affected the economy of Kaymaklı. In turn, employment opportunities, especially for women, who were employed in agricultural activities, were affected.

As a result, a participatory process aimed at empowering women in the area was chosen to produce an action plan.

How?

This participatory planning process used the Normative Action Research (NAR) strategy in order to involve local women in the process.

The methodology was put into practice by firstly creating a stakeholder map.

Then, a practice-based training programme for women was developed as the main foundation for the process, and this produced collaborative action.

Finally, different urban planning workshops were developed to collectively define the opportunities and threats which could have affected the development of Kaymaklı in the future, and, in the second phase, the participants assessed the strengths and the weaknesses of Kaymaklı.

Links and references:

Anlı Ataöv, Z. Ezgi Haliloğlu Kahraman, Constructing collaborative processes through experiential learning: Participatory planning in Kaymaklı, Turkey, Habitat International, Volume 33, Issue 4, 2009, pp. 378-386, ISSN 0197-3975.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.habitatint.2008.11.001>

Best practice #9. Participatory characterisation and diagnosis for community territorial planning, Xaltepuxtla, Puebla, Mexico

Relevance to the objectives of the EU Mission “A Soil Deal for Europe”:

- 1.- Reduce desertification.
- 2.- Conserve and increase soil organic carbon stocks.

Where? Xaltepuxtla, Puebla, México. **When?** 2012

Who? University of Chapingo, local, and state government, with the participation of farmers and community leaders.

What?

The participatory process was developed to define a community territorial planning strategy that considered the important role played by farmers in reducing the impacts of human activity on this territory. Another objective of this process was to define agroforestry projects that have triggered change by providing an alternative to traditional ornamental production systems that have ceased to be profitable.

How?

It was carried out using the PAR methodology, based on the methodological plan proposed in the basic manual for the CONAFOR Community Territorial Plan (2007), which was made up of three stages:

1. Characterisation-diagnosis carried out using a bibliographical review, field trips, semi-structured interviews, and participatory workshops that considered the history of the community, maps of the land, natural resources available; problems and possible solutions, including an analysis of Strengths, Opportunities, Weaknesses and Threats (SWOT).
2. Outlook, participatory workshops were used to outline the situation regarding trends and how this linked to the situation defined in the diagnosis, as well as where a strategic setting with possible future alternatives could be added.
3. Proposal making: Proposals were created to generate agricultural plans and projects for triggering changes. This was mainly achieved by holding workshops with farmers.

Links and references:

Valencia Trejo, G. M., Álvarez Sánchez, M. E., Gómez Díaz, J. D., & Cetina Alcalá, V. M. (2020). Caracterización y diagnóstico participativo para el ordenamiento territorial comunitario con enfoque diagnóstico participativo para el ordenamiento territorial comunitario con enfoque agroforestal en Xaltepuxtla, Puebla, México. *AgroProductividad*, 13 (5) <https://doi.org/10.32854/agrop.vi.1535>

Best practice #10. Participatory practice in the context of local agenda 21: a case study in Leicester, UK

Relevance to the objectives of the EU Mission “A Soil Deal for Europe”:

3.- Stop soil sealing and increase re-use of urban soils.

Where? Leicester, UK.

When? 1994-1995.

Who?

Leicester City Council, an NGO (Environ), Monfort University, and a private company (Leicester Promotions), with the participation of citizens, stakeholders, and experts.

What?

Develop a local Agenda 21 to address key questions on the built environment, economy and work, energy, landscape and ecology, society and community, transport, waste, and pollution. This required elements that had not been brought to light when the initial environmental assessment of the city was developed. The first step of the participatory process was the identification of the need for community input involving a broad cross-section of the city’s population. The second step concerned a broadening of the approach to give more emphasis to social and economic factors, and the third step identified the need for a long term vision and action plans to support these approaches.

How?

The participatory methodology involved three elements: a snapshot questionnaire that was a short questionnaire asking people for their views on what they most liked about Leicester and the issues that most affected their quality of life. A representative neighbourhood survey of 100 randomly selected residents with a sample framework chosen to ensure that a representative cross-section of Leicester’s population was included. Finally, visioning work was carried out with targeted groups that were asked to think about Leicester in terms of what they would really like to change rather than on what they thought they could change.

The public consultation process in Leicester was a major exercise; nearly 2000 individuals and over 100 organisations expressed their views on the city and its future.

Links and references:

Wild, A. and Marshall, R. (1999), Participatory practice in the context of Local Agenda 21: a case study evaluation of experience in three English local authorities. *Sust. Dev.*, 7: 151-162. [https://doi.org/10.1002/\(SICI\)1099-1719\(199908\)7:3<151::AID-SD111>3.0.CO;2-0](https://doi.org/10.1002/(SICI)1099-1719(199908)7:3<151::AID-SD111>3.0.CO;2-0)

Best practice #11. Organic District of Fiesole (Tuscany, Italy)

Relevance to the objectives of the EU Mission "A Soil Deal for Europe":

- 3.- Stop soil sealing and increase re-use of urban soils
- 4.- Reduce soil pollution and enhance restoration.
- 7.- Reduce the EU global footprint on soils.

Where? Fiesole, Tuscany, Italy.

When? 2016 - 2021.

Who?

A group of citizens with the ulterior participation of local authorities, academia and researchers, farmers, business, environmentalist groups, citizen organisations, and social movements.

What?

The idea of establishing an Organic District in Fiesole came about in 2016 when a group of citizens were motivated to make Fiesole a place that functioned "on a human scale" and to protect a remarkably beautiful, extremely fragile, territory. In 2017, the organising committee carried out the project by creating the Association of the Organic District of Fiesole, in collaboration with the municipal authorities, and two years later it received recognition as the first Organic District in Tuscany, in accordance with the new Regional Law 51/2019 that had recently been approved.

The Organic District of Fiesole is an agreement between farmers, citizens, tourism companies, associations, and local authorities to develop a sustainable management system for local resources, based on an organic production and consumption model.

How?

Using the Quadruple Helix approach, the local council and the organising committee held citizen assemblies and regular meetings in which citizens and stakeholders could participate. The result was the creation of local legislation making this area the first Organic District in Tuscany, and it became an example to be followed in the creation of regional legislation and the development of subsequent Organic Districts in the region.

Links and references:

www.distrettobiologicofiesole.it

Best practice #12. Sustainable management of mountain pastures in the Basque Country, Spain

Relevance to the objectives of the EU Mission “A Soil Deal for Europe”:

- 2.- Conserve and increase soil organic carbon stocks.
- 5.- Prevent erosion.
- 6.- Improve soil structure to enhance soil biodiversity.

Where? Basque Country, Spain and Iparralde, France.

When? 2016-2022.

Who?

The Basque government and the municipalities that form part of the project, as well as experts and rangers working in protected areas, experts working in agri-management centres, foundations, researchers, representatives of entities that own mountain land, and livestock farmers.

What?

The objective was to develop a conservation strategy for the mountain pastures in the Basque Country, conserving these areas for raising livestock. Targeted livestock management and stocking rates that were suitable for each individual situation was undoubtedly the best method for ensuring the conservation of grazing habitats (including soil) and the animals associated with them.

How?

The participatory process started with the diagnosis of the pasture areas and went on to establish needs and objectives by gaining the agreement of local agents and management experts in relatively informal meetings and workshops. However, the Oreka Mendian project highlighted that creating communication channels that could be maintained and formalised was a measure that should be looked at for future development.

Some of the measures developed under this project included: a) the organisation of workshops to involve farmers and landowners in project measures; b) the active participation of landowners in pasture management (some 181 landowners were involved, whose land covers 518 hectares); and c) the development of farm management plans to ensure pastures are used correctly in the long term. The project also included measures for training and actions for stakeholder participation (e.g. the creation of an agri-environmental programme in the field of sustainable rangeland management; communication and landowner and farmer networking, advocacy, and education activities).

Links and references:

<http://www.lifeorekamendian.eu>

Best practice #13. Suerte de Saavedra (Spain) Urban Vegetable Gardens

Relevance to the objectives of the EU Mission “A Soil Deal for Europe”:

3.- Stop soil sealing and increase re-use of urban soils.

4.- Reduce soil pollution and enhance restoration.

Where? Badajoz, Extremadura, Spain. **When?** 2010 – 2019.

Who?

Local authorities, academia and researchers, farmers, citizen organisations, and social movements.

What?

It was a collective, pioneering project involving an entire neighbourhood in the city of Badajoz which arose from a neighbourhood association that created community gardens in an area that was abandoned. The objective of the project was to generate new social relationships focused on caring for and correctly using the soil in the area.

These citizens were motivated by two main reasons, on the one hand, the need to improve the image of this (marginal) neighbourhood by involving both the young and the old in this social project; and on the other hand, the use of land (which had had no previous purpose), and to produce and create food sustainably and organically.

This initiative became a great success and created a great community that revolves around three main axes: 1. Caring for the soil (no chemical fertilisers or herbicides are allowed in these gardens), reusing land (that was abandoned), and cultivation (producing and creating food sustainably and organically). 2. Citizens, from the youngest to the oldest, were trained in workshops and seminars which promoted awareness raising, 3. The development of a social movement for the support and improvement of a marginal neighbourhood.

These urban vegetable gardens were assigned at no cost for a period of three years, with the possibility of a three-year extension. Badajoz City Council covered the cost of water for irrigation, while the tools and seeds were provided by the citizens using the vegetable gardens, who were able to plant fruits, vegetables, and aromatic herbs. Twelve of the 50 vegetable gardens on the 4,800 m² of land for this project were reserved as a social area for the Manuel Pacheco Primary School, the Social Services Centre, and Neighbourhood Associations (including the Senior Citizens' Association).

How?

The participatory process started before the construction of the community vegetable gardens and was then established in the Municipal Regulations created for this initiative and guaranteed by the integration of citizens and stakeholders in the management of this project.

Links and references:

<https://prepsol.eu/communities-of-practice/huertos-urbanos-suerte-de-saavedra-urban-vegetable-gardens>

Best practice #14. Participatory process for the development of Milan Urban Food Policy Pact in Córdoba (Spain)

Relevance to the objectives of the EU Mission “A Soil Deal for Europe”:

3.- Stop soil sealing and increase re-use of urban soils.

Where? Córdoba (Spain) **When?** 2015 – 2020.

Who?

Initiated by the social movements related to food, and dynamized by the Córdoba City Council and the University of Córdoba, with the participation of farmers, grocery stores, cooperatives, restaurants, environmentalist groups, NGOs, citizens, etc.

What?

The co-production of food policies in the city of Córdoba to develop the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact, including the creation of a formal governance space (the coordination council) with the participation of stakeholders and institutions. This new institution coordinates the development of a process, a strategic proposal and a project called Alimentando Córdoba (Feeding Córdoba) that includes within others: an organic farmers market; a strategy to guarantee the right to food in vulnerable communities; a process to help farmers to switch to local and organic food production; and a strategy to protect peri urban agriculture and soils through an Agricultural Park.

How?

Several workshops and other participatory activities have been developed with the participation of stakeholders and citizens. In particular three annual conventions were celebrated in the city of Córdoba around the Milán Urban Food Policy Pact. A dialogue process with farmers that are producing food around the city of Córdoba. A dialogue process between the food social movement and the municipal social services to guarantee the right to food for vulnerable communities.

Links and references:

Vara-Sánchez, I., Gallar, D., García-García, L., Morán, N., and Moragues-Faus, A. (2021). “The co-production of urban food policies: Exploring the emergence of new governance spaces in three Spanish cities”. Food Policy. 103. 102120. 10.1016/j.foodpol.2021.102120

<https://www.cordoba.es/documentos-sobre-la-mesa-tecnica-de-trabajo>

Best practice #15. Agroecological Living laboratory of Varaita valley (Piedmont, Italy)

Relevance to the objectives of the EU Mission “A Soil Deal for Europe”:

2.- Conserve and increase soil organic carbon stocks.

5.- Prevent erosion;

Where? Val Varaita, (Piedmont, Italy) **When?** 2021 - ongoing.

Who?

Inhabitants, farmers, food producers, educators, restaurateurs, researchers and policy makers who deal with agriculture and food supply chains in Valle Varaita.

What?

Val Varaita is a territory characterised by repopulation phenomena and new ruralisms: new actors that carry out activities in the food and agriculture sector. Moreover in the Valley it was already developed in 2020 a Course on “Soil Guardians” based on organic and biodynamic practices to enhance soil fertility and good practices. Val Varaita was identified for the recognition and valorization of the biocultural diversity of the Alpine areas.

The main objective of the living lab is to join the skills, paths and visions of the participants in order to share, implement and support the agroecological principles on their territory. According to this, their main aim is to: support those involved in agriculture in mountain areas, improve agri-food supply chains, sustain local tourism, preserve and improve bio-cultural diversity, deal with climate change, make the local activities more sustainable at an environmental, economic and social level, for associations and farms.

In particular, the living lab is developing: relational economics and tourism in low seasons, food sovereignty with specific focus on local cereals and access to land.

How?

The Living Laboratory was developed as part of a European H2020 project "Agroecology for Europe" and was proposed by the agroecology group of the University of Gastronomic Sciences of Pollenzo with the support of the association “Il Limone Lunare”.

A living laboratory (LL) is a working group to develop transdisciplinary research and innovation activities in a territorial, local and participatory context with all the LL actors.

For the establishment of the LL, 3 participatory workshops were carried out in 2021 and 2022. The workshops included different activities regarding the creation, the implementation and the dissemination of the LL, such as: personal mapping according to different questions to develop a prospective diagnosis, common imaginaries, narrative mapping, thematic workshops to design common imaginaries and actions, and finally common visions to develop an action plan.

Links and references:

<https://www.unisg.it/en/ricerca/ae4eu-agroecology-for-europe/>

<https://www.agroecology-europe-hub.org/en/our-understanding-of-living-labs>

<https://www.unisg.it/assets/LL-REPORT1-IT-def.pdf>

Author: Noa Matarán Delgado.

