

Teaching Unit 18: Reflecting, Debating and Synthesising the Learning Outcomes

Teacher's Instructions

1. Purpose of the Session

The final session brings together the core ideas of the UPRUN module and invites students to critically reflect on what they have learned about civic engagement, social resilience, co-production, governance, public space, and neighbourhood transformation.

Instead of ending with a conventional lecture, the session is designed as an interactive thesis-based discussion format in which students formulate, test, revise, and connect their own arguments. The aim is to help students move from knowledge reproduction to critical positioning: they should be able to articulate what they consider important for socially resilient neighbourhoods and explain under which conditions these ideas hold.

2. Learning Objectives

By the end of the teaching unit, students should be able to:

- » formulate clear and debatable theses on neighbourhood resilience, civic engagement, co-production, governance, public space, or related themes;
- » analyse the assumptions, mechanisms, conditions, and possible counterarguments behind a thesis;
- » connect different thematic fields such as civic engagement, tactical urbanism, participatory planning, co-production, community development, social infrastructure, public space, urban commons, social resilience, transformative capacity, and place-based leadership;
- » develop a more precise understanding of how planning, civic action, institutional support, and social resilience interact;
- » reflect on their own future role as planners, designers, mediators, researchers, or civic actors.

3. Preparation Before the Final Session

Each *student* prepares 3–4 theses related to topics they found particularly relevant during the UPRUN module. The theses may address, for example:

- » civic engagement and participation;
- » co-production and civic-public partnerships;
- » social resilience and community networks;
- » governance and institutional learning;
- » public and green spaces;
- » tactical urbanism;
- » social infrastructure and third places;
- » heritage and local identity.

Make sure, that the students formulate their theses as a clear statement, not only as a topic. Give one or two examples for a good thesis. Students send their theses to the lecturer one or two days before the final session.

You, as *lecturer*, review all submitted theses before the session. You can group the theses into thematic clusters, for example civic engagement, tactical urbanism, participatory planning, co-production, community development, social infrastructure, public and green spaces, urban commons, social resilience, transformative capacity, and place-based leadership. You can probably identify two types of theses: *orientation theses* that summarize a shared interpretive framework and *discussion theses* that are suitable for deeper debate and further development.

Please prepare a short introductory overview that presents the main thematic areas and relationships between the student theses. Here, you can also present the orientation theses. Please select around 4–6 theses for deeper discussion.

4. Session Structure (90 minutes)

Part 1: Opening and Framing (10-15 minutes)

You open the session by briefly summarizing the purpose of the final meeting: to reflect on the module, discuss key insights, and test students' own theses. You present the main thematic clusters that emerged from the submitted theses. On this basis, you also introduce a small number of orientation theses that are relatively uncontroversial and help frame the discussion.

Part 2: Thesis Deep Dive in Small Groups (30-40 minutes)

Option 1: Group Discussion

Students are divided into small groups. Each group receives one selected thesis for deeper analysis. You as teacher select these theses from the students' submissions! The aim for the student groups is not simply to agree or disagree to the thesis, but to understand how the thesis works, under which conditions it is convincing, and how it could be reformulated more precisely. Each group works with the following analytical grid:

- » What exactly is being claimed?
- » What is the assumed mechanism?
- » Under what conditions does the thesis hold?
- » What counterarguments are there?
- » How could the thesis be tested empirically?
- » How should the thesis be formulated more precisely?

Each group documents its discussion on a flipchart, poster, whiteboard, or digital board.

Option 2: Fishbowl Debate

Duration: 30–40 minutes

If you prefer a more discursive format, the interactive discussion can be organized as a fishbowl discussion. The fishbowl is particularly suitable for controversial theses where students should explore different positions, conflicts, and trade-offs.

The Setup: Four to five chairs are placed in an inner circle. The rest of the students sit in an outer circle. Three or four students start the discussion in the inner circle, while one chair

remains empty. Students from the outer circle can join the discussion by taking the empty chair, and one person from the inner circle then leaves. As lecturer, you moderate lightly and ensure that different voices are heard.

Fishbowl Discussion: As teacher, you select the topics for the Fishbowl discussion from the submitted theses of the students. However, a potential topic could be: Civic Autonomy and Institutionalization. The thesis could be: “Civic initiatives need institutional support, but too much institutionalization can weaken their autonomy.” This could include the following questions for the discussion:

- » How can public institutions support civic initiatives without controlling them?
- » When does co-production become co-optation?
- » Should informal initiatives become formal organizations?
- » Who gains and who loses when civic engagement becomes professionalized?

Fishbowl Output: During the fishbowl, two students act as rapporteurs. They document the main arguments on a flipchart under three headings: (1) strong arguments in favour; (2) strong counterarguments; (3) open questions for future planning practice. At the end, the group formulates one revised thesis.

As a lecturer, you should facilitate 2–3 fishbowl discussions on different theses, following the outlined procedure before summarizing the results in the following step.

Part 4: Gallery Walk and Plenary Reflection (20-25 minutes)

All flipcharts or posters are displayed in the room. Students walk around, read the results, and add comments, questions, or stickers. Alternatively, each student group presents its results to the other groups in 2-3 minutes. You, as lecturer, then facilitate a plenary discussion. You might use some of the following questions for the discussion:

- » Is the thesis formulated causally?
- » Is there a clear relationship between cause and effect?
- » Which intervening variables are missing?
- » Is the thesis too general, or does it apply only to specific cities and contexts?
- » Who would need to act?
- » Which institution would be responsible?
- » Which resources would be necessary?
- » Which conflicts are likely?

Part 5: Final Reflection (10-15 minutes)

The final reflection connects the discussion back to the overall aims of UPRUN. You should invite students to respond individually or in pairs to one of the following prompts:

- » One concept I understand differently now is ...
- » One thesis I would reformulate after today’s discussion is ...
- » One skill I want to develop further is ...
- » One thing I take from the course into my future planning practice is ...

You close the session by summarizing how the module has connected civic engagement, social resilience, co-production, governance, public space, and transformative capacity.

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