

Teaching Unit 11: Governance for Resilience – Designing Civic-Public Partnerships from the Municipal Perspective

Key question(s)

What does an ideal civic-public partnership look like from a municipality's perspective? How can community initiatives be meaningfully integrated?

Overview

This teaching unit explores how municipalities can foster transformative civic-public partnerships to promote social resilience, democratic innovation, and sustainable urban development. From the municipal perspective, ideal partnerships should recognize community initiatives as co-creators of urban policy and spatial change, rather than passive beneficiaries. Through this Teaching Unit, students will examine the governance mechanisms, legal frameworks, and institutional capacities required for municipalities to integrate grassroots actors into formal planning processes.

The unit focuses on both the potentials and dilemmas of municipal engagement with civic society: accountability, scaling, institutional inertia, co-optation risks, and inclusive participation. Case studies from cities such as Ghent, Barcelona, Hamburg, Bologna, and Amsterdam will illustrate diverse co-governance approaches. Students will simulate municipal decision-making, evaluate civic proposals, and co-design inclusive participation strategies.

Learning Objectives

- Understand municipal planning processes and governance structures
- Identify models for integrating civic initiatives into local governance
- Analyze barriers and enablers to civic-public partnerships from an institutional viewpoint
- Co-develop civic engagement strategies for resilient urban governance

Teaching Methods

- Role-play simulation of a municipal council negotiating civic proposals
- Participatory mapping using Public Participation GIS (PPGIS) platforms
- Case study analysis and video reviews (e.g., Ghent Commons Transition Plan, Urban Commons projects, Bologna)
- AI scenario-building (e.g., ChatGPT as civic advisor)
- Stakeholder dialogue simulations

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