



HYDROUSA

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report will develop a comprehensive plan for engaging the community through a participatory model for the project entitled '*Demonstration of water loops with innovative regenerative business models for the Mediterranean region*' HYDROUSA.

The main focus of the model will be analysing methods of engaging members of the community, including them in the decision making and evaluation process of HYDROUSA activities and particularly in co-creation activities.

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ABBREVIATIONS

DCP Dissemination and Communication Plan



1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Our Approach

This handbook has been designed to analyze ways to integrate more participatory methods into approaching new communities, engaging them in different ways to various outputs and outcomes of the project. By studying deeply our users we design relative actions and programming that serve the community, we make sure that the right message is transmitted and that our suggested solutions and technologies could be integrated to the local context as they improve the social and economic welfare of the locals.

Our objectives for our participatory approach:

- Reaching out the community to get actively involved
- Delivering HYDROUSA's message through experiential, co-creative workshops
- Connecting emotionally the community with our solutions
- Creating loyalty
- Educating our community to a solution oriented approach
-

It is important recognising that in each context, the final content would be shaped by its local community and thus our programming would not look the same in any of the three communities/demo-sites.

We follow the guidelines, the tools and the values described at D9.1 Dissemination and Communication Plan and D9.2 HYDROUSA Branding Identity, throughout our practice and outcomes.

1.2 Why we need more participatory methods in Innovation Actions?

Participatory methods are powerful tools for community activation and self-organization, when they accompany a local development dynamics-project. It is about encouraging community participation to initiatives through a strategic utilisation of various communication and dissemination tools.

By "community participation", we mean facilitating the active involvement of different community groups, together with the other stakeholders involved, and the many experts and research agents working at a community or a site along with the decision and the policy makers.

Participatory methodologies are used to achieve positive social impact for a group or in a community. Through Participatory Methodologies we actively involve the target participants in a process to improve their situation. Participants become "program designers" and "researchers" as they identify and approach solutions to the obstacles phased within their community.

Participants are transformed in key actors and evaluators of each action, reflecting on how well the process has helped them reach the commonly stated initial goal.

This process whereby participants engage in self-reflective inquiry into their own situations, identify problems and possible solutions, implement the solutions, and evaluate the process, is ongoing – as new problems or obstacles are recognised, approaches to addressing the problems are developed and implemented.

The community is taking a central role in the development and the content of the designed actions, identifying, articulating and prioritising the main challenges faced.



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This report explains how to use highly participatory approaches, like the techniques used in HYDROUSA Project, in community-focused projects for remote communities.

Practical “how-to” steps are described including a section on critical challenges and approaches used to overcome these challenges in HYDROUSA Project.



2. A STEP-BY-STEP APPROACH

Beginning with shared purpose

Participatory methods that are designed for local communities require special engagement with the community and participants right from the beginning. There are many different ways of beginning this process of interacting with the community and participants. We put forward here some steps to consider following in beginning a new participatory program, based on the experience of the Impact Hub Network and based on the experience from the first community workshops for HYDROUSA.

This is a framework, each one should be creative about whether there are other strategies that are better suited to own context.

2.1 Step One: Identifying your Allies

Many times the lead-expert organisation of the Participatory methods is not based to the community of interest. To overcome challenges of mistrust and uncertainty we need first to spot the local agents. These shall be respected or rooted organisations that are strongly positioned among the community or to the local context. In HYDROUSA these are the Local Partners, who are part of the consortium. It's important to ensure a diverse base, including local authorities (e.g. Municipalities or local chambers), private businesses (e.g. young entrepreneurs, local businesses) or institutions (e.g. NGOs, local organisations).

Each of these allies, will share a new perspective on the local reality and will have access to a different community subgroup. The representatives of these entities will be core participants at our activities but also will act as ambassadors and community activators.

2.2 Step Two: Downloading - Sensing

Through our contact with the local partners we understand the main pains and gains of the local community. We adjust our project proposition according to these needs and opportunities, ensuring relevance and alignment.

When beginning a new program that has participatory characteristics, there are certain questions that we have to address:

- What are the expectations of the targeted community about other related innovation and/or research projects?
- Is it hard to shift expectations or prejudices?
- Do we identify people who would be excited to be informed and involved in this new program?
- Are there specific or predefined resources we can link with the community, like skills training programs, school summer camps, workshops & seminars etc.?
- Is there trust established towards the local partners?
- Is the project we are launching based on the community's identification of priorities or aligned with those, or is it something new?



Together with the Local Partners we design the areas of action and the specific objectives that we will focus during the participatory process. We prioritise the challenges and articulate a key question/or a series of questions that are relevant to the local context.

Examples

How we might create new employment opportunities and develop new business ideas by utilising wasted water and local resources? [MYKONOS]

How we might create, connect and scale practices that are related to circular economy and environmental sustainability - redefining the identity (branding) and the quality of life for a local community - island? [TINOS]

How can we leverage the land of remote areas, through circular practices (waste-grey water management for irrigation and fertigation, composting, etc.) creating new model of eco-farming and tourism? [LESVOS]

2.3 Step Three: Mapping and Interviewing

On the next stage we create some hypothesis of the people that we would like to engage and to the profiles that we want to reach. We create clear objectives for each audience and a direct invitation communicating what we need from their participation.

Table 1. Community profiles

Persona Type	Our Need
Young residents	Support with work in the field- be involved in scaling stage
Impactful position in local Authorities	Connect us with people and provide information
Older residents	Narrate traditions
University professor	Educate children on the program and help with future summer camps
Local opinion leader	Connect us with other people and be an informal ambassador
Farmer	Support with work in the field and provide know how
Women’s associations	Be involved in post-production of the agroforestry- processing – packaging
Expert on local plants	Consulting on plant selection and on the production phase
Local partner	Provide network of contacts, credibility and information
Local public servant	Logistics support, local media contact
Local business owner	Connect us with people and provide information
Journalists	Disseminate project

Tip: Stakeholders may include school teachers, farmers, youth representatives, women representatives, opinion leaders, community counsellors, district officials, prominent elderly men and women and other. The total participation should be between 20-40 people, and shall have representation from each of the defined audiences.



We will work with the local partners (DELAROS, TINOS, MYKONOS, LESVOS, MINAVRA, ELT) to identify the stakeholders and the target groups and “download” all the relevant information that are essential to understand the local dynamics and politics, the sociocultural environment, the economic state and potential opportunities and barriers that might arise before the implementation of the Participatory Methods. The questionnaire is developed by ALCN with the collaboration of the IHA Team.

Indicative questions

General

- *How would you describe the island regarding its landscape?*
- *What would you share about topography, geography, history, climate conditions on the island and site?*
- *What are the mainland related activities - for what purposes is the land used for (Surrounding environment (swimming places, ship constructions, etc.))?*
- *Which are the waste management practices on the island and our site? (Recycling, Composting)?*
- *What type of tourist activity is taking place on the island and our site (Alternative tourism (eco –tourism etc.))?*
- *Which are the high season periods? What are the numbers of tourists visiting during the touristic period for the island?*
- *What are the main characteristics of the Natural environment (landscapes, monuments, etc.)?*
- *Are you aware of other environmental – research related programmes on the island and on our site?*

Water related

- *What is the average monthly/annual demand on water per sector-industry on the island and on the demo site?*
- *How is the above demand distributed in each season?*
- *Are there any particular water treatment methods on the island and on the demo site?*
- *What are the main sources of water for the households (e.g. wells, desalination plants, mountain's sources)? What is the contribution of each source on the island in general and on the demo site specifically?*
- *What are the main sources of water for agriculture (e.g. wells, desalination plants, mountain's sources)? What is the contribution of each source on the island in general and on the demo site specifically?*
- *What is the water demand for other activities (e.g. tourism, swimming pools, etc.)?*
- *Are you using desalination? If yes, what methods of treatment of residuals are you using (e.g. brine)?*

Wastewater

- *What wastewater treatment systems are you using on the island and on the demo site in particular?*
- *What is the percentage contribution of each system?*
- *Is there currently any treated wastewater reuse? If yes, where is the treated wastewater used for?*



2.4 Step Four: Community Event

The Coordination Team visits the community where we want to begin a participatory program, to explain in person the main objectives/mission to community members and to potential future participants.

The first visit to the local community has to be coordinated with the Local Partners, in order to ensure representation from various backgrounds (according to the agreed target audience). The local partners are responsible for mobilising the key stakeholders for the meeting.

We explain the purpose of the project in detail, including the level of participation that will be expected or desired of the community members. If this is a highly participatory program, this may include their involvement in the initial design of the program, the identification of the targets, facilitation of meetings for the target population, and researching and addressing the problems faced by the target population.

Suggested Flow:

Here is a model of how a first meeting with community-members might run:

- i. Welcome remarks by Coordination Team and Local Partners.
- ii. Check-in Introductions - Opening with a key question that everyone is called to respond, creating a common sense through Appreciative inquiry (AI). This is a model that seeks to engage stakeholders in self-determined change (e.g. What do you appreciate the most in our local context - what are you most proud of in your community?)
- iii. Present the project - We put in the center of our design people and environment, emphasising to the challenges that we are working on. (e.g. What is the problem we try to address? - Why are we investing time and resources, what is our mission?)
- iv. Explain ethical considerations and assure transparency of what will be implemented in the future that is related to the group.
- v. Open a brainstorming session on the reasons for coming together as a group, tapping on the collective knowledge. In case of a large group we split the participants in smaller ones (3-5 people/group) to ensure participation and that all the voices are heard.
 - i. Examples on key questions: What are the particular challenges that the local community faces that are different from challenges faced by others in similar context? What are the opportunities we foresee around agriculture - energy - water treatment? What were the old technics for fencing, irrigation and fertigation?
 - ii. Be patient if the participants do not readily contribute ideas, as they may not have confidence to speak out. The Coordination Team and the Local Partners may take the lead role to get the discussion started.
- vi. As the discussion emerge, the Coordinating Team and the Local Partners writes down notes to review them later within the collective.
- vii. Participants are invited to come together and share their input about the questions discussed, collectively harvesting the shared thoughts.
- viii. We harvest the results through various means like notes, flip charts drawings, audio - video and image recording.



Recommendations:

- There should be the possibility for the participants to contribute to meetings in whatever way they are most comfortable. As more participants contribute, it is likely that they will build-up a sense of togetherness in the group. They may develop feelings of sympathy and empathy, which may be manifested in words and actions towards others.
- In the first meeting and subsequent gatherings, leaders may naturally emerge within the group. We encourage the natural leadership potential while still cultivating the development of leadership qualities in participants who may stand out less.
- Commitment and loyalty to the project will emerge over the course of several meetings. This process requires cultivation.
- As particular challenges or concerns are discussed, the focus should always be on coming up with creative ways of addressing the problems.

We present also a timeline with the next actions planned and the next steps of the process. In this meeting, and in subsequent meetings, ethical considerations can be developed and discussed (eg. Is this in benefit of the entire community or is it for the privileged ones?). Community members should be clear that this program is a European Program for Research and innovation and that there are no additional costs that will have to be transferred to the community.

Participants will be free to join or not join as they choose to the designed activities. We develop a set of principles that lay the groundwork for engagement with the community. These principles can be revised and adapted as the program continues.

2.5 Step Five: Local Facilitators

We highlight facilitator(s) or community coordinators to work at the local context.

We consult with the Local partners about whether there is a local person who can join the project to facilitate the participatory program or whether it makes more sense to bring a person from outside into the community. If it's an outside person, it is important having him or her reside in the community for the duration of the planned actions or to have easy access to the community.

Tip: It is usually helpful for a facilitator to be from the same cultural background as the participants and well-versed in the participants' concerns. While a facilitator does not need to be from the community, the community must accept the facilitator and be comfortable with that person's role.

The facilitator has the responsibility to get to know the community where he or she will be working. The Coordination Team and Local partner (but also other members of the consortium) will need to work with the facilitator intensively at the onset and ongoing through the timespan of the project to ensure that he or she has a firm grasp of the projects goal, objectives and progress.

Recommendations:

Participatory actions for communities require a different kind of facilitation than traditional programming or workshops. The complexity and the diversity of the stakeholders involved require human oriented qualifications for the implementation of this program. The facilitator needs to be able to establish good relations with the participants and community members, be solution oriented towards challenges or worries that might occur and having the ability to convene the community together. The expectations and the Key Performance Indicators shall be clear for this role and regular reporting shall occur.

2.6 Step Six: Creating relevant programming

According to the expected outcomes and impact of the project we have designed format that can address different interest groups around the community. Our mission is to build a dynamic “Community of Water Allies” who deeply cares, acts and prototypes nature-based solutions and technologies for water management and water/wastewater treatment. This community is composed not only from local people, farmers, young students and researchers but also representatives from the local authorities, international experts, EU regulations specialists. Through our dissemination and communication strategy we designed programming that is manifested through physical, virtual and physical spaces, enabling dialogue, raising awareness, testing and advocating. On the making but especially when we will be launching the Demo Sites, we will animate water related activities and discussions, stimulating active participation of the community. **Suggested formats are described in the following subchapters.**

2.6.1 Informative Formats for Raising Awareness - Info Point

HYDROUSA kiosks will operate during summer to share information with citizens, tourists and visitors on the cycle of water. The kiosk will be designed and operated by volunteers and students who will be participating at the HYDROUSA summer school/workshops. The info stand operation - hosting and activities will be collectively designed during the summer- camp in order to include, info sessions, leaflets, interactive games, possible projections. The info kiosk will be built with open designs and we will use upcycled materials aligned with HYDROUSA’s principles and values with industrial designers from collectives. The Info stand will also be runned with the involvement of locals who are interested to be more actively involved in the project.



Figure 2.1. HYDROUSA Info Point Examples

2.6.2 Education and Capacity Building - Summer Schools

Workshops & Summer School: Will be organized around the themes suggested by HYDROUSA. The themes will arise from each demo site and according to the needs that emerge from the initial Co-creation workshops. These can be attended by students, scholars, researchers and creatives; the summer schools will be designed with the objective to bring the “Community of Water Allies” closer together in order to:

- Disseminate HYDROUSA’s goals and milestones
- Co design HYDROUSA’s goals (Info stands concept, community activities)
- Explore different natural based solutions beyond HYDROUSA’s technologies
- Explore sustainable practices for water management and water treatment



Figure 2.2. HYDROUSA examples of Summer Schools

2.6.3 Artists & Researcher Residencies

Artists and researchers will be invited to stay for two weeks up to one month on the islands and work on site-specific projects around the HYDROUSA theme. Their work will engage locals and the outcomes of their work will be displayed in exhibitions or be donated to local communities as public art. The residencies will be in collaboration with art and science organisations or artistic institutions like Athens School of Fine Arts (Mykonos artistic residency), Marina Abramovic Foundation (attraction and expansion), Angewandte (Vienna School of Fine Arts - Art and Science Department).



Figure 2.3. HYDROUSA examples of art installations



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3. OTHER RESOURCES

Facilitating a group? Looking for inspiration? Connect with the methodologies of the Art Monastery online, with this free searchable database of tools for fostering creativity.

<http://www.hostingtransformation.eu/methods-search/>

Community Canvas: A framework to help you build meaningful communities.

<https://community-canvas.org/>