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1. Summary

This document outlines the co-creation methodology to be used for the stakeholder workshop (Task 7.2) in September 2023. The stakeholders of this workshop will be activists working with issues of access to housing and housing justice. Their experiences and practices will contribute to innovative ideas to MERGING. The aim of the workshop is three-fold 1) Knowledge sharing and learning of good practices 2) Increased awareness of possible different solutions to the same problem depending on context 3) to document outputs such as detailed solutions for countering problems related to migrants' integration through housing for dissemination among the civil society, policy makers, and policy users. The aim and organisation of the workshop is inspired by design thinking.

2. Introduction

This report will outline the methodology of, and serve as a guideline for, the workshop to be organized as described in Task 7.2 in the Grant Agreement (page 32):

Task 7.2 Host stakeholder **workshop for new ideas and innovations** for progressive governance solutions. Initiate and facilitate the co-creation process. UGOT in collaboration with the partners will identify the most relevant stakeholders from the regional, the national and the local level. **UGOT will develop the methodology and will organise and host one stakeholder workshop** [---].

The workshop design presented here is inspired by an event organised by UGOT member Christina Hansen in September 2022 for the H2020 MIMY project (<https://www.mimy-project.eu/>). The similarities lie in that also this workshop, organised within the framework of H2020 MERGING, will draw inspiration from the co-creative methodology called design thinking (Liedtka, J., 2017; Janik-Hornik et al., 2019; Pachocka et al., 2020).

The focus of the workshop will be activists. Activists are here defined, for the purpose of this workshop, as people who are organised collectively with certain political aims related to access to decent housing and the right to the city.

The reasons behind choosing activists as the main stakeholders for this specific workshop, or online forum, are several. Firstly, UGOT members consider activists being interesting and important stakeholders in society, not the least when it comes to issues of societal change and efforts to create a more just society, which are central aims of MERGING. Secondly, activists have not yet been involved as stakeholders in MERGING and can thus represent an added

value to the project. Thirdly, since the topic and aim of the workshop according to the Grant Agreement is to come up with new ideas and innovations for progressive governance solutions, UGOT consider activists as a well-suited group. Activists are known for being radical thinkers and innovative practitioners; activists' strengths and abilities are to think and act counter hegemonically. These perspectives have not yet been considered in the MERGING project and therefore ought to be considered highly relevant for the T7.2 Stakeholder Workshop.

Nevertheless, it is important to reflect upon any possible disadvantages of only focusing on activists in this workshop. What kind of stakeholder voices will then be excluded? One important argument that support the selection of activists as stakeholders for this workshop, is the fact that previous WPs in MERGING have almost exclusively focused on stakeholders who are either officials or politicians (policy users or policy makers). By focusing on another group of stakeholders in this workshop, can we approach a more complete picture of the barriers and possible solutions to housing challenges in relation to migration. However, we must be aware of the activists' political positionalities and viewpoints when carrying out the workshop.

In Social Movement scholarship, activists are commonly defined as people who work politically in extra-parliamentarian groups and networks in their free time beyond a "normal day job". Examples of such activists are Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca (PAH; Platform for People Affected by Mortgages), a Spanish grassroots organization that takes direct action to stop evictions and campaigns for housing rights (González 2019). Another example is Refugees Welcome International which is a network of various local Refugees Welcome organizations located in various countries in Europe where volunteers are engaged. This network has the shared mission of providing private accommodations for refugees and the aims of "fostering exchange between refugees and locals, combatting discrimination and prejudice, and supporting refugees and asylum seekers in the establishment of local social networks (<https://www.refugees-welcome.net/about-us/>). This can be seen in this video created by Refugees Welcome: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uEnsmZ3YESs&t=81s>.

After discussions with MERGING partners, we concluded that it may be difficult, for various reasons, to only recruit these kind of extra-parliamentarian activists and volunteers. One reason would be that they may not be able to devote time for this kind of online workshop conducted during normal working hours daytime. Another potential reason is that some extra-parliamentarian activists may not find participating in a workshop financed by the European Union to be in line with their political ideology and aims. Extra-parliamentarian housing activists, such as those in PAH, are commonly categorized as "radical" in the social movement literature: composed of individuals who believe in revolutionary, left-libertarian solutions, inspired by a number of left-radical outlooks such as syndicalism, anarchism, communism, and

autonomous Marxism (Jämte, 2013). Due to the potential obstacles described above, we decided to broaden the understanding of “activists” to also include those who are employed in certain organisations who work with issues related to housing justice. One example is the Swedish Unions of Tenants (Hyresgästföreningen) who work for the rights of tenants in Sweden. Their main struggle today in Sweden is related to the struggle to stop the introduction of market rents in the country.

The activists recruited for this workshop will thus not necessarily only work with access to housing for people categorized as “migrants” or “refugees”, which are *the* focus of MERGING. Some activists may work with housing justice issues and will most probably have worked together with migrants in this struggle, but not exclusively, since housing shortage and injustices is not something only affecting “migrants” but all people in vulnerable conditions.

Here follows some general information of the workshop:

Participants: Activists from Sweden, Spain, France and Italy working for the right to housing.

Numbers: At a minimum the workshop should include, *excluding MERGING researchers*, 8 participants and maximum 12. This number of participants will enable an efficient and creative online workshop; by creating breakout rooms and discussing certain issues in smaller groups. Approximately two participants are expected to participate from each country.

Length: The workshop will last for three hours.

Place: The workshop will be carried out online through a video conference program (preferably an open source program since activists may be critical of using a proprietary tool). The online form will facilitate the active participation of stakeholders from various distant geographical places (Sweden, Spain, France, Italy). Creative and participatory online tools such as Miro (or equivalent) will be used.

Date: The workshop will take place on Friday 22 September 2023. (*Time tba*)

Work principles: Sharing experiences, listening to others, trying to establish links between people and challenges, exploring potential solutions.

3. Work performed

During the months of March-June of 2023, UGOT has had three different meetings with partners (one in March, one in April, and one in June) to brainstorm possible content and to discuss potential participants of the workshop.

In April, UGOT finalized the rationale of the workshop and send it to partners for feedback. UGOT collected the feedback and revised the rationale accordingly. Partners were also encouraged to name potential groups and organisations from which to recruit activists to the forum. The work of actively recruiting participants by each partner started in June 2023. The rationale (see below) is formulated as the actual letter of invitation that will be sent out to the activists:

Activist Online Forum:

Knowledge sharing and innovative ideas on housing solutions for newcomers

Duration: 3 hours




Where: Online

When: 22nd of September

Housing is a fundamental part of our everyday lives. It impacts other opportunities in life such as work, education, health, and social life. Housing thus constitutes a key pathway for migrants' dignity, inclusion, and a good life.

Scholars show how the lack of affordable housing and housing shortage is a result of a neoliberal market-oriented and profit-first approach in housing policies and urban restructuring. In addition, migration policies and regulations, coupled with the lack of political will and the existence of discriminatory practices among authorities and housing providers, constitute obstacles for migrants' access to housing. Nothing of this is new to you as an activist, practitioner or local authority who struggle for the right to housing and the right to the city. Despite multiple structural and political obstacles for migrants to access affordable and decent housing, people from the civil society, such as activists, are nevertheless finding ways to support migrants and finding solutions in this process. Two examples are opening squats and welcoming migrants at home.

We are now reaching out to you to share with us your experiences and knowledges on the ground.

-  How do you work in practice to support migrants to access housing?
-  Do you have experiences of temporary or permanent housing solutions for migrants that were successful?
-  What are the barriers you face in supporting migrants in their access to decent housing?

Our online forum will bring together approximately ten activists from Sweden, France, Spain, and Italy to discuss experiences as well as to brainstorm innovative ideas for making housing accessible and affordable for migrants. The forum will enable knowledge sharing among activists from different countries, which can inspire new ways of organising, as well as knowledge sharing with the researchers and stakeholders involved in MERGING. MERGING will then forward your experiences and knowledges to promote alternative practices of integration through housing among policy makers, policy users and civil society in these countries.

3.1 Workshop design and organisation

Below follows a description of the organisation and design of the Activist Online Forum (T7.2 Stakeholder Workshop).

Aims

The workshop will be conceived and presented as a platform for knowledge exchange and creative co-creation of new ideas, at the intersection of policy, practice, research, and civil society initiatives related to housing. The aim can thus be seen as threefold:

- Create an opportunity for exchange between stakeholders (activists) in different national contexts with a particular focus on innovation. (Knowledge sharing)
- Increased awareness of possible different solutions to the same problem depending on context. (Learning of good practices)
- To document outputs such as detailed solutions for countering problems related to migrants' integration through housing for dissemination among the civil society, policy makers, and policy users. (Output)

Method

To devise innovative solutions for integration challenges through housing, we draw on some features from design thinking in combination with common features of general workshop methods such as facilitating inclusive discussions through creating small groups.

Design thinking involves the use of non-linear, iterative processes aimed at better understanding a given problem or situation, and subsequently challenge current assumptions, redefine problems and arrive at innovative solutions (Liedtka, J., 2017; Janik-Hornik et al., 2019; Pachocka et al., 2020). This often requires thinking “outside the box”, a change in thinking and in the perception of the issue in question. Design thinking can thus serve as a useful framework to identify, address, and attempt to solve a variety of problems, including those related to the integration of immigrant (Pachocka et al., 2020, 142). It is simultaneously an intuitive and structured method of working and problem-solving in which teams, often interdisciplinary, develop broadly defined innovations (Pachocka et al., 2020, 144).

The design thinking methodology is not meant to be implemented very strictly but rather to function as a guide in organizing the workshop structure and process. The goal will be to encourage participants to reflect on integration challenges through housing based on their experiences of activism and explore creative, innovative solutions. Furthermore, the process will pragmatically focus on the needs of the actual people (migrants, refugees, people in

vulnerable conditions) to facilitate the understanding of their environment, culture and integration challenges.

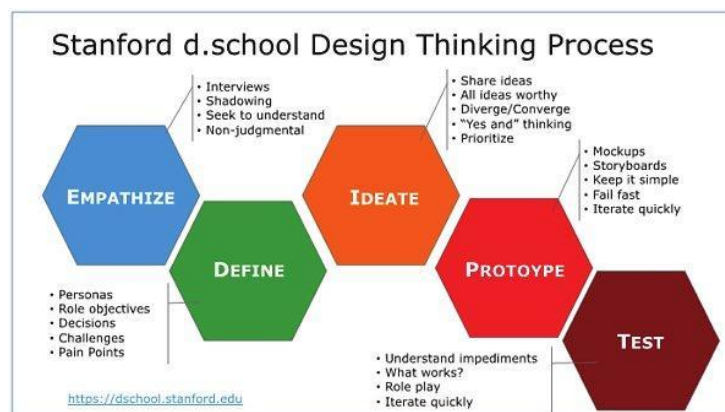
Design thinking is a human- and user-oriented method that is commonly applied throughout the entire design process. It assumes that the central point of the design process is the person – the recipient or beneficiaries – for whom the result of the design work is dedicated. This commonly presupposes the active participation of the beneficiaries in the workshop process. This is not the case in this workshop since it only includes housing activists who work in support of people in need of housing. However, some of the invited activists may be migrants themselves and/or with past experiences of the complexities of accessing housing. All activists, whether they are migrants themselves or not, will have valuable practical experiences of working closely with migrants (and other local population) in need of housing and with problem solving together with migrants related to the lack of access to (decent) housing. The workshop will thus explore the participants (activists) experiences of co-creating direct actions, campaigns, and other political struggles together with the people in need of housing.

Furthermore, design thinking combines divergent thinking, which relies on “searching for multiple solutions to the same problem, generating original ideas and their different variants, and convergent thinking, whose role is to choose and adjust the best solution” (Pachocka et al., 2020, 145). In each country or context, activists may have used and tried different solutions to one and the same general problem. This may inspire the activist in other contexts who are used to other specific solutions.

Design thinking stages

Among the possible configurations of the methodology, the following is proposed that encompasses five phases or stages: Empathize, Define, Ideate, Prototype and Test (Fig. 1).

Figure 1.



Applying the Design thinking process to the workshop structure

Phase 1: *Empathize*

The first phase will include the presentation of the main findings from relevant Work Packages in MERGING. Only a few key or interesting findings should be selected.

Suggestion: These findings may be shared as a short (one page) document by email to the participants one week before the online forum takes place. Findings should be presented in a clear, direct, and non-judgemental format. It is recommended to use something visual, like infographics or illustrations.

Phase 2: *Define*

Select a few key issues, points of discussion, and open questions to examine and discuss in the group. Phase 2 will take into account the initial pool of knowledge and experience among the workshop participants Pachocka et al., 2020, 145): What does their activism consist of? What are their successes and failures, opportunities, and obstacles? The issues should potentially include reflections on responsibilities of institutions, role and position of different actors, critical points related to the main issue of integration through housing.

Phase 3: *Ideate*

Encourage participants to freely discuss the selected issue(s), reflecting also on their personal experience and knowledge. This phase should include the following participatory procedures: brainstorming, sharing ideas, assuming all ideas are worthwhile, exercising divergent and convergent thinking and prioritizing.

Note: MERGING partners should carefully moderate the power relationships in the group.

Suggestion: In this phase it will be important to split the participants in smaller groups to facilitate the inclusion of every participant and encourage discussions.

Phase 4: *Prototype*

Encourage participants to creatively elaborate possible innovative 'solutions' to the issues discussed. These may include proposals to mitigate problems/risks, to increase support and aid groups, to create targeted interventions or activities, etc. Encourage participants to think "outside the box" beyond common ways of thinking and perceiving of the issue in question."

Phase 5: *Test*

Encourage a discussion on the merits and possible problems of the solutions proposed, as well as the main points that emerged from the discussion. Conclude the discussion by creating a concise and concrete list of possible initiatives; lessons learned; take-home messages.

Suggestion: We suggest each group to present their main ideas and solutions. This should be followed by an overall discussion with the entire group aimed at identifying lessons learned, and innovative solutions.

Ethical concerns

When performing design thinking as part of a workshop methodology it is imperative to consider the following ethical concerns:

- The need to create a non-judgmental, safe environment able to stimulate trust;
- The capacity to deal with possible emotional reactions;
- The capacity to effectively moderate the participation of everyone involved;
- The capacity to acknowledge potentialities but also limitations;
- The capacity to deal with ambiguities and dilemmas; subjectivity and bias.

Consideration:

The facilitators of the stakeholder workshop should consider issues related to political bias if most of the workshop participants are individuals with leftist oriented outlooks. What perspectives may be prioritised, and which perspectives may be left out?

4. Preliminary workshop content and outline

Below we present the preliminary schedule of the Activist Online Forum on 22 September 2023 based on the theoretical and practical ideas presented in previous chapter.

Note: participants will have received information beforehand on the MERGING project and some of the key results relevant for this workshop.

13:00-13:15 Welcome and presentation of participants.

13:15-13:30 Presentation of the forum design: aim, process, and expected results.

13:30-14:00 Discussion (30 minutes) on definitions: what does social change and innovation mean in the context of housing solutions for newcomers? What is “innovation” to you?

14:00-14:15 Break (15 minutes). Key topics to be discussed after the break will be shared to the participants before the break.

14:15-15:15 Group discussions (1 hour) with three main questions:

1. What experiences do you have of projects/actions/initiatives that involved short and/or long-term housing solutions for newcomers and other vulnerable groups?
2. What challenges did you meet?
3. What changes do you see necessary for these housing projects/actions/initiatives to have an impact on a larger scale, why and what are the first steps to be taken towards such changes?

(Facilitators of the online forum collect, synthesize, and organise examples and experiences using the online tool Miro/Google Jamboard/Teams/TBD)

15:15-15:45 Ideas for the future. Presentation and plenary of the main ideas that were discussed in the groups.

15:45-16:00 Conclusion: Summarising the main conclusions and next steps.

5. Conclusion

With the help of the workshop methodology as outlined in this report, we hope to be able to collect new and innovative ideas to the topic of integration challenges related to housing.

After having conducted the workshop on 22 September 2023, the output will be documented in the D7.5 Co-production of the policy assessment (due 31 October 2023). Results will also be formulated as part of a Policy Brief (D7.6, due 31 December 2023).

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