

COMMUNITY PLANNING MARATHON:

The Social Hackathon in
Community Development



Erasmus+

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Foreword

We live in a time when we need to act quickly. Unfortunately, there is no time left to wait for incremental change. The climate crisis that we are all facing, and the growing social inequalities are challenges that demand quick and effective solutions.

The idea of social hackathons was born out of this urgency.

I have spent over 20 years in the field of mental health care and the broader social sector. The pace of change in this field is painfully slow. It takes decades for a new paradigm to spread, but it also takes many years for a new method or service to emerge. According to research carried out by the University of Amsterdam a few years ago, the average lead time for a social innovation is 12 years.

In contrast, in the IT sector and start-ups, innovation is thought of in terms of months at most, because a product, service or system can become obsolete very quickly.

As a social sector professional working in Estonia, I was introduced to an amazingly fast and efficient world of innovation that I had never seen before. In just over 20 years, the Estonian start-up ecosy-

stem reached the stage that can now take grass-roots initiatives from idea to implementation, validation to scaling in an incredibly short time.

At the same time, I cannot but be critical of the fact that the vast majority of these initiatives, copying the success stories of Silicon Valley, are still turning out ride-sharing, photo-sharing, dating apps, or faster, cheaper financial transfers. Many of the pitches in the start-up world begin with the phrase "Let's make this world a better place!", yet I got the impression that the contribution of this incredibly efficient eco-system to solving the real, pressing issues of our time is only minuscule compared to its potential.

The idea of social hackathons is based on these impressions in Estonia, combining the effective innovation culture of the start-up sector with the strong values of the social field.

As a staff member at Tallinn University, I was fortunate enough to take part in the work of international R&D communities, while at the same time connecting with local organisations and initiatives that can put innovative ideas into practice.

This is how we started working with the Vorumaa Development Centre in Võru county to develop and test the social hackathon methodology. Võru county is located in the south of Estonia, close to the Russian and Latvian borders, and is

one of the least developed regions in the country. We deliberately chose not to implement our ideas in Tallinn, the centre of innovation and digital society, but in an area facing the greatest problems, where innovation is most needed.

In cooperation with the university and the Development Centre, we organised five social hackathons in Estonia in the past three years, from 2018 to date, with 100 participants at each. We tried a variety of approaches and methods, polished our solutions from event to event, and today it is fair to say that we have successfully adapted this solution, originally from the IT sector, to address social and environmental problems. In Estonia, the social hackathon method has now been incorporated into the development toolbox of many municipalities and municipal associations, many of them regarding it no longer as a separate project funded by extra EU or research and development funds, but as an integral part of local development policy, providing funding from their own resources.

In 2019 the social hackathon initiative was awarded the most innovative initiative of the year by the President of Estonia.

We were delighted to start working with the Hungarian Association for Community Development in Hungary in early 2020, who have by now successfully adapted the method in Transylvania (Romania) and Hungary. This publication is based on the Hungarian experience and provides details of the method and the possibilities of its application for Hungarian professionals and interested parties.

29 September 2021

Zsolt Bugarszki, PhD, Associate Professor at Tallinn University



Introduction of the project¹

In May 2021 in Szeklerland, Transylvania (Romania), then later in August in the North Abaúj region in Hungary, nearly 100 people gathered for 48 hours to reflect together on issues, ideas, and opportunities for change, which are important to them and their communities. Adapted from the Estonian Social Hackathon, the methodology that fellow practitioners have dubbed as the community planning marathon (CPM) was not only a novelty for everyone who came into contact with it, but also enthralled all. Deep down, of course, those of us who worked hard to bring the method home had hoped that others would be as much inspired by the unfolding of the process as we were, but the amazing experiences we had during the first attempt exceeded anything we could ever dare hope for.

People involved in community work are reluctant to talk about results. In the world of projects and indicators, we try from time to time to sum up our results in terms of numbers, but to get a sense of real change, it is stories we need.

Starting with the numbers, we should mention five organisations, three countries, and one interesting exercise; a two-year project period, with countless meetings, both online and in person.

It is through these that the Szekler and Abaúj teams invited nearly 100 people to a marathon of joint planning, to work on their ideas in teams for 48 hours. In total, 13 ideas were eventually contemplated, looked at from different angles, taken apart, and put back together again over 48 hours, to finally emerge as action plans ready to be put into practice.

To understand the motivation of the 200 people who committed themselves in these two countries to make it all happen, it is important to see the stories behind the ideas. These are stories of local people, committed to the region, active in their communities, who recognised that they need to act for change and believe (or are at least willing to believe us) that they can lead the change.

This is the story of a group of young people who dreamed of a mobile shop, shortening the distance between producers and customers; people who want feedback on the work they are doing in their local community and therefore they came up with metrics for measuring the happiness of people in their localities by; an association that was dreamed up to mobilise local people with disabilities, and which regards its members as resources; the story of how a primary school closed down 4 years previously and reopened for the marathon is being saved by young adults and teachers whose yearbook photos had been

on display in the school corridors all along. It was an exhilarating feeling to be part of it all and to be the driving force behind it.

In the spring of 2019, the current project consortium met in Telkibánya, Northern Hungary, as we were working on wrapping up an earlier project. After a while, the evening discussions and brainstorming sessions turned into project writing, right there on the spot. Then, after the successful tender, we started our journey in the winter of 2019 with the firm intention to bring something new from the northernmost Baltic state (Estonia) to the practice and toolbox of Hungarian and Szekler community development and community-based planning. This was supported by the ERASMUS+ Strategic Partnership Programme, with a focus on adult education, and was coordinated by the Hungarian Association for Community Development, between 3 November 2019 and 2 November 2021. In the course of our work, we first learned about innovative rural development practice in Estonia and then, in cooperation with partner organisations adopted it for our rural community development practice methodology.

The manual was developed in cooperation with the project consortium partners, during partner meetings, drawing on experiences from Estonia, Szeklerland and Hungary. The process included in this manual is based on the Estonian prac-

tice, complemented by the description of how the social hackathon was adapted for community development, illustrated by good practices used by the project partners.

This manual, summing up the process, now enables practitioners interested in community work to apply the methodology of community planning marathon. To support this, we provide here further information on community development, in addition to the methodology in a narrow sense. Readers are thus invited to embark on a journey to discover the steps to develop a community planning marathon and to reflect on how they might implement it in their own regions, settlements, or communities².



¹You can find more relevant materials and interesting details are available on [the project's website](#) in English language as well

²In the first year of the project, the adaptation and our own preparatory work was supported by the development of a training material. In connection with this, we also took on the task of transferring the relevant theoretical knowledge and practical skills and methods gathered in the form of e-learning. Our online training material will be available on our website after the completion of the project.

Together for a common cause: the principle of good governance

Many people have shown in many ways that community-generated ideas and developments, although initially requiring much larger investment, are more sustainable in the long term. Given that it is the power of communities that bring processes to life, people not only feel a greater sense of ownership over the initiative but also have an interest in its long-term preservation and maintenance. All the force that is present in this type of coalition motivates people to cooperate and act together.

This approach is also reflected in the principle of good governance, which has its roots in the fifteenth century but has taken on a new meaning in recent decades³. Willy Brandt defined good governance as "the sum of the many ways individuals and institutions, public and private, manage their common affairs"⁴. The emphasis is on participatory, partnership-based, multi-level governance⁵, whereby cooperation between people and institutions is based on a reconciliation of interests. Boda (2006) points out that in public action it is not enough to focus on the "hardware", i.e. government institutions and legislation, but that there is a very important role for, among other things, stakeholder involvement, new levels, and forms of communication, where citizens are given the opportunity to contribute as actors to the development of their own living space.

The community planning marathon brings together local people, public and private institutions, clerical actors, and other players holding some kind of power from a given area, it involves them in addressing their local issues. Collective planning takes place in their partnership, dismantling the often hierarchical roles between them, and by this, it offers the opportunity to develop community-based solutions that respond to local needs and provide longer-term solutions to the problems of the people living there.

³Boda, Zsolt (2006): A kormányzás jelentésváltozása a globalizáció korában: a governance-koncepció [The changing meaning of governance in the age of globalisation: the concept of governance]

⁴Our Global Neighborhood: The Report of the Commission on Global Governance. The Commission on Global Governance (1995), cited by Zsolt Boda (2006)

⁵Pálné Kovács Ilona (2014): Jó kormányzás és decentralizáció koncepció [The concept of good governance and decentralization]. Magyar Tudományos Akadémia



What is a social hackathon?

*"I knew – again from experience - that the most rewarding moments in life, when we feel at our best and which we look back on with nostalgia, often happen when we set ourselves a goal that is hard to reach and when we have to use all our abilities to achieve it."*⁶

A social hackathon (SH), organised under the right conditions, provides a community-level experience that empowers people to take collaborative action in the long term. Although the journey leading there is full of challenges, investment, and uncertainty, we still believe it pays off and benefit the community in the long run. Those involved in the process will be enriched with experiences that they can build on in the future. But let's not get ahead of ourselves, let's look at instead where we have drawn our inspiration from!

Social hackathons are based on the hackathon method used in the corporate world. The name of the method originated in the software development competitions organised by major IT corporations and start-ups. It is a combination of the terms "hacking" and "marathon" and essentially involves a competition of ideas, usually lasting two to three days. "Hacking", because it aims to develop creative solutions to problems and needs

that arise, and marathon, because it involves participants working together for a set period of time (e.g. 48 hours).

In recent years, hackathons with a social focus have gained ground. Their novelty is that it adds social issues and actors to the established hackathon formula, so that the key to solving the issues and developing action plans is no longer necessarily rooted in a programming language. ICT (Information and Communication Technology) based solutions may still emerge, but the tools used for solutions are usually wide-ranging, and colourful teams develop ideas that can lead to a broad range of plans: from the creation of a storybook to the idea of a social enterprise. The organisers of social hackathons therefore extend this method beyond the corporate world and allow it to be applied to everyday social needs. The purposes of organising social hackathons can be very diverse, but the most important is to provide an authentic experience of intense collaboration, partnership and problem solving that gives the teams gathered around an idea the momentum to collaborate beyond the scope of the event.

Before we go into how we have used this method, we would like to take the reader to the southernmost tip of Estonia, where we had the chance to learn about the methodology forming the basis of the Abaúj and Szekler community planning marathons.



⁶Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi: Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience. From the Preface to the Hungarian edition, p4

The Estonian example



"In the village there are elderly and disabled people, along with an entrepreneur, a fireman and a woodcutter, which makes us a community. And any problem that arises in such a community is first and foremost a community issue." – claims Zsolt Bugarszki, one of the developers of the method, a Hungarian-born social policy expert, currently living in Singapore and a distance learning lecturer at the University of Tallinn.

In Estonia, a country open to innovation, the hackathon method is well known in the ICT sector, and its social version is also becoming a commonly used format of, for instance, start-up competitions. Our Estonian partners have further developed this method in a rural context to provide an opportunity to tackle social and environmental problems in resource-poor areas through the active participation of local residents.

Adopting the hackathon format that is so prevalent in the ICT world, a lot of work has gone into adapting it to allow for collaboration between different social groups. The first step was to simplify the language of the hackathon to make it more accessible. Initially, the social hackathons responded to the problems of rural Estonia, which affect the organisers' region as well: a lack of capacity in social services has led to a

situation where many elderly people live alone, unattended and unaided, and people with disabilities live in isolation. How can local solutions to these problems be developed? The social hackathon process was adapted to this, with a strong emphasis on the preparatory period. This type of method is not limited to the 48 hours of the main event, as it was recognised that it is important to allow sufficient time for the involvement and commitment of different local actors, as it will also be key to the success of the event this. To ensure that the broadest possible range of participants from a given region are represented at the main event, a preparatory phase of six to nine months is usually built into the process, depending on the embeddedness of the organisers, their previous local operations and on how well-established their contacts are. They believe that a creative makerspace can only really take off when the cooperation of people from different backgrounds is enabled, which can lead to the development of different ideas in response to needs in the local community.



The first 48-hour social hackathon was organised in 2018. Building on its success, the next one soon followed, so did the next one, attracting more and more interest... The 48-hour main events were usually organised in school buildings, initially in different parts of Võru county, but now they also take place outside the county. These events are usually attended by around 100 people, including the organising team, representing different fields: local governments, ministries, social and health service providers, users of these services, NGOs, entrepreneurs, local companies, professionals and citizens. The main event of the social hackathon always starts with a short presentation by the idea originators (introducing the idea in a brief presentation of just 2-3 minutes), followed by group work to develop the ideas. Usually 10-12 teams are formed and once they are established, they can start the development work, using various methods provided by the organisers. During the social hackathon, teams can rely on the help of mentors who support the collaboration as experts in different fields (e.g. from service development to IT development, from service user engagement to marketing). The ideas presented propose solutions to local problems. Some of such ideas from earlier events include: an educational programme and logistical support for school kitchens to use a variety of organic ingredients in school canteens; a proposal for GPs to prescribe physical exercise and training for patients (in addition

to medical prescriptions); the development of an organisational model for a county-wide centre for people with dementia, which would gather information on available services and provide support and information for families to adapt to this situation; a community solar power plant, etc. The event ends with a presentation of the ideas developed. The best ideas are rewarded by a jury and several sponsors. After the social hackathon, teams receive mentoring support if they need it to implement their ideas beyond the scope of the event.

Thus, in the Estonian model of the social hackathon, the method has become a tool for rural development, and its successful application in recent years shows that it works. Based on these experiences, we decided to adapt the Estonian model for community development.



The birth of the community planning marathon and the process of adapting the social hackathon model for community development

The idea of using the social hackathon for community development was the next step in a process that began with a two-year community participatory research. As we were analysing the research results with the local communities and our colleagues from the Szekler and Abaúj regions, we felt that the term “disadvantage” had been overused recently to such an extent that we wanted to break out of its mould and catalyse local resources in a fun and empowering way. One of the key messages of the research was the realisation that an abundance of external resources coming to the most disadvantaged regions can be counter-productive, suppressing the sense that we do live in a wonderful environment with an abundance of resources. At this time, the Estonian partner organisation of the Hungarian Association for Community Development had organised the umpteenth such process with great success. Recognising the local problems, we decided to try and implement this approach, to strengthen the Abaúj region and the Szekler municipalities in their values and their own resources.

Our version of the social hackathon, the community planning marathon, is therefore a participatory method that creates the opportunity for members of a community to find, within a given timeframe, common, creative solutions to real-life problems that are currently making their daily lives difficult. It does so in a supportive and empowering environment. The method is therefore an adaptation of the Estonian social hackathon focusing on rural development, which was further developed along the lines of community work carried out in Hungary and Szeklerland, Transylvania (Romania).

While the social hackathon used in Estonian rural development focuses on innovation (which in many ways is intertwined with economic development, even when it comes to social innovation), the community planning marathon is more value- and community-oriented, focusing on activating and involving local actors and strengthening participation. Although the format and the process are the same, in the former case it is the product or service developed during the process is what is important, while in the latter case it is the process itself that matters most.⁷

⁷Since the process is the same, we generally we use the term social hackathon throughout the manual. However, when describing the Abaúj or Székely examples, or when emphasizing the community development specificity of the method, the term community planning marathon is used.

As its name suggests, the community planning process has three main characteristics:

- 1. COMMUNITY-BASED PLANNING PERMEATES ALL ITS ELEMENTS;
- 2. IT PROVIDES THE OPPORTUNITY AND CONDITIONS FOR A CREATIVE PROCESS;
- 3. IT IS TRULY A MARATHON, AS IT IS MOSTLY A 48/36/24-HOUR EVENT.



Community-based planning, because...

A common feature of community planning processes is that stakeholders are involved from the earliest possible stage of the planning process, and through the situation analysis and problem-solving, they get to know each other's goals and interests; then they jointly develop the plan itself through a consensus⁸. This is also a prerequisite for a community planning marathon: in order to organise a 48-hour marathon event, the involvement of stakeholders starts months in advance through conscious planning. How this is done will be described in more detail later.

The community planning marathon, like community planning in general, helps local citizens and local institutions to take the initiative and play an active role in the local community, and to have the opportunity to solve their own problems together, building on the resources available. This process, therefore, builds on the resources available to and found within the community, and can be called asset-based planning. The process of community planning marathon is characterised by the following:

- the basic aim is to enable as many local people as possible to be involved in this process,
- the local community is developed and strengthened through the mapping and use of resources.
- success derives mostly from building relationships,
- changes in the community are brought about by the involvement of local people.

The community planning marathon, as a consciously structured planning process, helps local residents to identify the values and resources in their community, and to build on these to develop innovative ideas in a good atmosphere and in the framework of a collaborative process.

⁸Source: Sain, Mátyás (2010): Segédlet a közösségi tervezéshez. Területfejlesztési füzetek 1. [A guide to community planning. Regional development booklets 1.] VÁTI Magyar Regionális Fejlesztési és Urbanisztikai Nonprofit Kft. Budapest

Creative work is the main driver because...

Creativity is "the ability to produce work that is both novel (i.e., original, unexpected) and appropriate (i.e., useful) "- Sternberg & Lubart⁹

"Creativity by individuals and teams is a starting point for innovation" – Teresa M. Amabile¹⁰

The creative makerspace allows people from different professions to work together to develop an idea of their choice. This creation process takes place with facilitation and according to a schedule where, over the 48 hours, the completion of each milestone creates a certain tension in the participants as well; in a creative environment, this encourages them to create and to develop the most feasible solution to the problem. Mentors help to establish this creative space, and their work is key in this.

It's a marathon because...

The event, i.e. co-creation, typically lasts for 48 hours. These 48 hours are usually not free from the healthy tension and competitive pressures that result from being confined together, the timeframe and the drive for task completion, which are often resolved during the 'AHA! experience' of working out a solution. All of this space is facilitated by fun and relaxing activities (e.g. dancing, yoga, other games) that give you the energy to make the most of the 48 hours.

In the course of adapting the hackathon format, we highlighted some principles that we felt were important to keep in mind throughout the event. During the community planning marathon (CPM), we contribute to strengthening cooperation, partnership, diversity and inclusion in the community, and these are the pillars of the design of the planning process itself.

⁹Robert J. Sternberg, Wendy M. Williams (1995): How to develop student creativity.

¹⁰Teresa M. Amabile (1996): Creativity in Context: Update to the Social Psychology of Creativity



COOPERATION

All work in the community is based on cooperation, however, the degree of cooperation varies depending on how well the parties can agree on common goals. The cooperation we propose is based on partnership and an ongoing two-way dialogue.

PARTNERSHIP

In a partnership, the collaborators are equal partners in the process of solving the issue, the hierarchy between them is reduced and in many cases even eliminated during the 48 hours, so that participants share the success just as much as they share the risks, as agreed in the partnership.

DIVERSITY

Diversity theory in general draws attention to the value of the diversity of people (in terms of gender, culture, ethnicity, race, nationality, faith, age, political and philosophical interests, sexual orientation, educational background, social status, etc.) within a community. However, in the case of a community planning marathon, we can aim for very different aspects of diversity depending on the type of community in which the event is taking place.

INCLUSION AND ACCESSIBILITY

Inclusion implies the acceptance of community members' diversity, ensuring that any aspect of diversity does not disadvantage community participation by providing equal opportunities, and that the event is equally accessible to all without barriers.

These core values underpin the design of the process and permeate the whole organisation process. The community planning marathon's other core mission is to bring a culture of social innovation and creativity into the community development space.

Community planning is not only an event but a kind of co-creation in which very different actors work together to create “something” that provides an innovative response to problems in the life of the local community. The emphasis here is both on the collaboration of actors of very different background, as well as cooperation and co-creation.

What is this method good for and what is it not?

WHEN SHOULD IT BE USED?

- + If you want local solutions to be developed locally by the widest possible range of stakeholders
- + If you want to mobilise resources that you had not known, or only had partial access to so far, e.g. a more extended participant pool, involving new expertise, making new contacts etc.
- + If, as an initiator or organiser organisation, you want to increase and strengthen your local support
- + If you want to enhance the agency of local citizens (development of their individual competences), empower them to be able to actively shape and spearhead change in their own environments
- + If you want to provide a good community experience in a good atmosphere
- + If you have had problems in reaching out to different generations (the creative method makes it just as suitable for addressing and involving young people as for older people)

WHEN SHOULD YOU AVOID USING IT?

- If you believe in expert-led development processes and have no confidence in the knowledge of local people or in a partnership approach
- If you are pessimistic about whether community action has any added value for local development
- If you want to make a difference in a short time
- If you do not have sufficient resources available to organise the event
- If you insist on retaining control over the development of ideas by all means

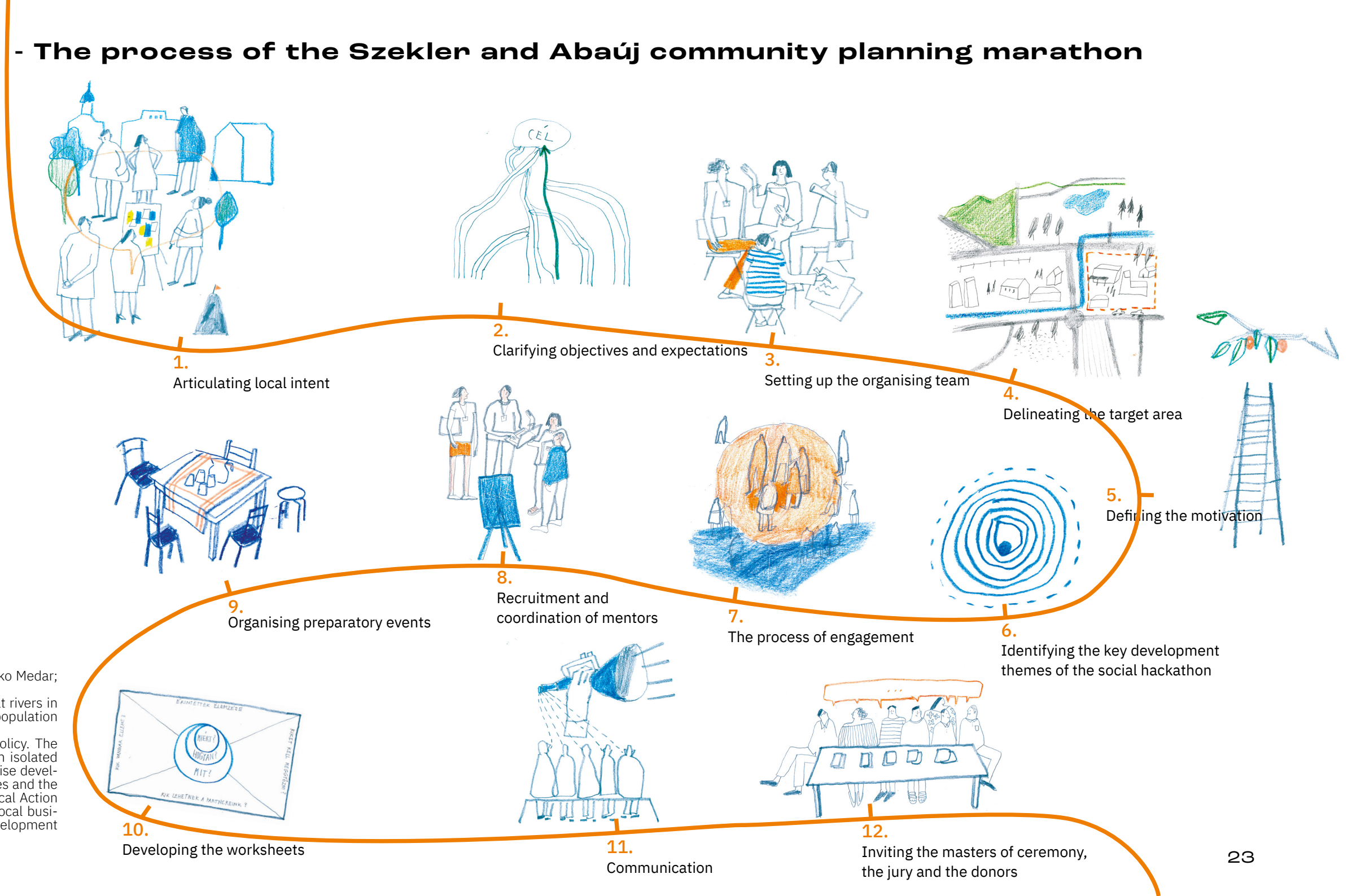
Social hackathon step by step¹¹ - The process of the Szekler and Abaúj community planning marathon

Using the examples of the Szekler and Abaúj social hackathons, this chapter of the manual describes the process of a community planning marathon: the preparation, the main event and the period following the event. The preparation will be discussed in most detail, with the aim of helping you, the readers, to plan your own community planning marathon process.

The SH process in Szeklerland¹² was organised by the Homoród-Küküllő Leader Association (HKLeader), with the support of the Human Reform Foundation. By and large, it fit into the rural and community development processes represented by the LEADER organisations¹³.

The Hungarian example is based on the SH process that was implemented by the “Fogadó” North Abaúj Community Development Association (“Fogadó” Észak-Abaúji Közösségfejlesztők Köre Egyesület, FÉSZAK) as a local organiser and the Hungarian Association for Community Development (Közösségfejlesztők Egyesülete, KÖFE) as a supporting partner organisation; it was the next stage in the micro-regional community development process in the Abaúj region.

¹¹Bugarszki, Zsolt; Katri-Liis Lepik; Kadri Kangro; Marju Medar; Kristina Amor; Marko Medar; Koidu Saia (2020): [Guidelines for social hackathon events](#)
¹²Szeklerland, or Székely land, is located in the upper valleys of the Mureş and Olt rivers in what was eastern Transylvania and is now Romania, with the large majority of the population being ethnic Hungarian.
¹³The LEADER programme is part of the European Union's rural development policy. The programme aims to ensure that EU funds for rural development are not used in isolated areas (education, health, agricultural development, cultural development, enterprise development, etc.) and without consulting local society, but through integrated initiatives and the involvement of local political, economic and civil society actors. To this end, a 'Local Action Group' should be set up in each sub-region, bringing together local authorities, local businesses, and local NGOs. The task of these action groups is to draw up a rural development strategy for the sub-region concerned.



Preparation

We should not forget that each process is unique and unrepeatable, and it is very important to get to know the local conditions during the preparation and to adapt the planning process accordingly. In doing so, it is worth considering the following:

- What resources do we already have in the local community?
 - Our relationships, existing partnerships in the local community (social capital);
 - Types of knowledges present in the community (human capital);
 - cultural assets that the community possesses, uncovers and preserves (cultural capital);
 - Natural assets, resources, which we can build on (natural capital)
 - What is the power and political context like in the region? What is our own position? How much influence do we have on local processes, how much control can we have? (political capital)
 - What is the built infrastructure like in the local community at the time of the organisation of the event, e.g. transportation, institutions? (built capital)
 - What is our financial background like? How much money and other support do we have for the organisation? (financial capital)
- What are the local needs in the selected area which we would like to address during the event and find solutions to?
- How do we wake up the need for change in local residents? How can we help local residents recognize the ways in which they can influence their daily lives?

There could be many more questions, of course, that could be considered; the above list is only a suggestion for what we think should be thought through when planning to organise a community planning marathon (CPM) in your area. In our experience, considering such questions helps us design a social hackathon that is tailored to the local context, one that builds on local resources and responds adequately to local needs. Articulating these questions and their answers well will also help us find partners for the implementation.

Step 1: Articulating local intent

As is the case with all community-based interventions, it is important for a community planning marathon as well to have a few locals articulating the need for such an event, and who think it necessary to initiate and launch the process themselves. (This is also essential if the initiative comes from outside the local community.) Perhaps it is not by chance that you are reading this manual – maybe it is you, or your community, who will end up coordinating the organising group! This is very important for the success of the planning later. Local commitment is a pre-condition to change in the local community. Ensuring local commitment at the very beginning strengthens the recognition and acceptance of the process within the community.



HKLeader is the organisation operating in the Homoród-Küküllő region. The region is bordered on the west and south-west by Mureş county, on the north and north-east by the Harghita Mountains, on the south by Brasov county, and on the south-east by the Baroti Mountains. The Association was founded in 2016 with 39 members, including 15 municipalities, 20 non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and 4 enterprises. Embarking on regional development, HKLeader developed a Local Development Plan for the 2014-2020 programming period, in which it laid down three


main objectives: 1. to improve the living conditions of the rural community, 2. to develop an inclusive and sustainable economy, 3. to attract young people to the region. The Association believes that sustainable rural development can only be achieved if it is based on local communities and if we manage to motivate local people to act. The organisation uses SH as a tool for this.

FÉSZAK has been working on community development since 2007 on a micro-regional level, and settlement development on the basis of community development, covering the northern part of Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén county, North Abaúj. The organisation has partnered with KÖFE, the Dialogue Association and the Abaúj Leader Association. Their mission in a nutshell: community solutions are the most sustainable and therefore the most desirable solutions in the long run. Through its community development work, FÉSZAK seeks to foster participatory democracy, step up against social injustices, reduce inequalities and to fight extreme poverty. Pessimism, which has become so widespread in the region, along with the stigmatization due to the area's disadvantaged status, has a negative impact on the lives of local people; to counter this, FÉSZAK launched a process of empowerment, in which a community planning marathon can be an important stage.



Step 2: Clarifying objectives and expectations

The first step in developing a community planning marathon is to answer some questions: Why would you like to organise it in your own community or in a specific area? What are your expectations and how can the CPM process meet these expectations? How does it contribute to the future of the local community? What can the community and the organising group gain from it? It is worth addressing these questions in a wider circle, therefore we suggest that you organise one or more workshops where you and some of the members already committed to the process can formulate goals for the event.

 The main motivation of HKLeader for organising the CPM (locally it was referred to as Rural Development Marathon) was to bolster their strategic planning by drawing on the community this way, in the hope that the plans developed in the process will be potent enough to win funding in their next fundraising phase. Over 90% of the funds allocated for the implementation of the current development plan had already been used and it was now timely for them to prepare a development strategy for the new programming period and to strengthen the applicant communities. They thought that learning the social hackathon method and introducing it in the region would increase community participation, and thus enhance the implementation

of community-based strategic plans, the development of future action plans and the formulation of project ideas.

FÉSZAK sought to strengthen its micro-regional community development work of 15 years in Abaúj by organising the community planning marathon (locally called the Abaúj Community Development Marathon, or ABATHON in short) and they hoped to attract new, active members into their development team. ABATHON had a two-fold aim: to enhance efficiency in mapping and involving active actors from the micro-regions, also to set a meaningful task for the organisations, which would lift them up and inspire them to act in accordance with their mission. They hope that in the future, they will become permanent players in the strategic development processes of the Abaúj region and/or evolve into a team ready to facilitate strategic processes on their own.



Step 3: Setting up the organising team

In most cases, the organisers of social hackathons (hereinafter: SH) live in the area targeted by the SH. There may be cases, of course, where the SH is not organised by members of the community, but are commissioned: when, for instance, a municipality, district, or county authority initiates the event and invites an organisation to run the process. However, every SH, as a possible tool of community development, must draw on the participation and involvement of community members. The first important task for you as organisers, therefore, is to find those actors who will actively shape and support this process locally.

The community members who become part of the organising team commit themselves for a longer period (about 6-9 months), as the SH consists of several phases (preparation, event, and follow-up). The organising team remains active throughout these three phases and helps to make the process as efficient as possible. Therefore, at the very beginning you should decide whether you can ensure your presence throughout the whole process. If not, it is worth thinking about and arranging your replacement in advance.

The size of the organising team, i.e. the number of people who become active participants in the organisation process, depends very much on the context. It is so given the nature of an SH: it may happen that a local community development group decides to organise such an event; or it may also be that an organisation committed to urban or rural development undertakes the event; in some cases, an informal group of a few members of the local community may embark on organising an SH. The resources available to the organising team may very varied, and this has a major influence on what shape the team will take eventually.

The most ideal situation is that if during the implementation period members of the organising team, all or at least some of them, can work part-time or full-time on the tasks related to the organisation. Of course, the SH can be organised also if the organisers are committed volunteers and work part-time on the process. In this case, however, it is necessary to involve many more people into the tasks pertaining to different areas.

Thus, it is clear that each organisation process is unique, and it should be tailored to local conditions; nevertheless, there are some general aspects that are key for the SH's design. The following table sums them up.

Organisational roles and tasks

Role	Tasks
Chief	<i>coordinates the different areas pertaining to the organisation</i>
Community development coordinator	<i>oversees the implementation of the substantive work, uses the community work methodology</i>
Volunteer coordinator	<i>recruits and coordinates volunteers involved in tasks related to the implementation of the main event</i>
Communication coordinator	<i>coordinates communication, including handling social media, setting up a website, communication with the press</i>
General local organiser	<i>responsible for logistics, infrastructural background</i>
Technical assistant	<i>technical tasks, such as organising and setting up microphones and technical background</i>
Fundraiser	<i>contributes to ensuring funding for the event, e.g. by working on soliciting fees, grants (including through different types of crowdfunding)</i>


Above is just a summary of the tasks and their grouping that we propose, but of course it is possible to diverge from this, as all tasks will depend on the design of the process that is tailored to the local context.


The key for setting up the organising team is to ensure that its members are committed to the process throughout the whole time, who can become the driving force behind the event, and who commit themselves to making it as success.

Their commitment and motivation spreads to the other people involved, which will foster successful collaboration.

If the organisers conclude that an SH could be important within their own community, and they see they how it can make their everyday life better, then they will be able to pass this vision on to their fellow collaborators and to the other participants involved in the process.

Our experience is that the more community-based the organising group is, i.e. the more local volunteers are involved in it, the more important it is to monitor and respond to any fluctuation in motivation, while constantly paying attention and devoting energy to strengthening the organising group.

 *The HKLeader organisation was fortunate enough to be able to integrate the organisational tasks of the SH into their daily work, so the organisational team was provided by their staff. The Association's Executive Director was the main coordinator and technical leader of the process, while the other three staff members were responsible for the other tasks.*

 *The unique feature of the organisation of the Abaúj community planning marathon was that it was realised by dedicated volunteers, which required the cooperation of a great number of*

people during the preparation: the organising team consisted of 16 people, a total of 12 members of FÉSZAK and 4 members of KÖFE took part in organising the event. The main co-ordinator in FÉSZAK was a person who is also a member of KÖFE, who was responsible for the coordination of the different tasks. Four working groups assisted with the coordination: the community development, the volunteer coordination, the logistics and the fundraising working groups. Each working group was composed of a mix of members from FÉSZAK and KÖFE, with 2-3 people coordinating the work of the given area, assisted by other volunteers (in total, about 30 volunteers were involved in the organisation process with varying degrees of activity). The working groups met every other week in the last 4 months and held inter-group meetings where one person represented the respective working groups. In the last period, in the month before the event, several meetings per week were necessary to ensure the smooth running of the event.



Step 4: Delineating the target area

When planning the SH, it is important to identify as early as possible the area in which you want to organise the event and the boundaries of your chosen community.

Depending on the type of implementing community, we have identified three types of SHs:

- **SH IN A LOCAL COMMUNITY:** the target area is a given territorial unit, e.g. neighbourhood, city, district.
- **SH BASED ON AN AREA OF INTEREST, AN ISSUE OR A SPIRITUAL COMMUNITY:** an SH organised by communities linked to the identity of individuals (e.g. occupation, ethnicity, hobby, interest representation, sexual orientation)
- **SH LINKED TO AN ORGANISATION:** SH organised by a community that can be linked to a formal organisation or institution (e.g. work community, trade union, non-governmental organisation, company)

We can say, however, that the different types of communities appear in most of the SHs, all of them are represented in some form. For example, there may be an SH whose organisers are linked

to a particular organisation (e.g. an NGO), but the target area where the hackathon is implemented is based on a particular local community (e.g. a district, a borough) and members of communities from this area, formed along different interests, are involved as participants (e.g. a local church or a group of animal lovers). Whatever you as organisers decide on the target area, it is very important to be aware of its boundaries to ensure that the next steps – the preparatory events and the main event itself – can include a range of participants from this area. The SH will be successful if the stakeholder in the target area, the entire pool of potential participants, can have proportional representation.

HKLeader's community planning marathon was initiated by a local organisation that carries out rural development, and the main organisers included the organisation's staff members and volunteers joining the process for certain tasks. In addition, local actors with an interest in rural development were consulted throughout the organisation process: municipalities, community and rural development practitioners, staff of other LEADER organisations, NGOs, entrepreneurs and, last but not least, local residents. Thus, taking after an organisation-based working group, they were able to create a broad local community-wide SH, which included interest-based communities.



Members of FÉSZAK reached out to their contacts in the Abaúj region, located in the Gönc district (involving 28 small villages and two towns) who are in the best position to help the future development of the region with their ideas. In addition to the key people (local people who are active in a particular settlement, and can mobilise others),

they tried to involve local entrepreneurs and municipalities. Therefore, it is fair to say that they implemented a wide-reaching, local-level SH, with the participation of local communities that were formed based on a particular interest or around a particular organisation, who enriched the event with their perspectives.



Step 5: Defining the motivation

When identifying the motivation for organising an SH, it is worth taking into account, on the one hand, the shared motivation of the local community at the regional level, and, on the other hand, the personal interests of the future organisers and participants. It is recommended that you reinforce these throughout the process through joint discussions and exercises, to ensure that people's motivations are clarified, and their commitment is bolstered. We recommend that you organise local community discussions in different parts of the selected area to strengthen motivation.

Motivations should be thought through based on the roles of the SH participants as well and we recommend the following division for this:

1. Motivation of organisers
2. Motivation of participants
3. Motivation of mentors
4. Motivation of the jury
5. Motivation of sponsors

Thinking about the motivation of organisers, participants and sponsors is particularly important and should be a key focus.


An important aspect – in case a local community-based SH is planned – is the issue of belonging: it is important to ensure that people feel that they belong to the community, that they have a strong community identity, because this emotional component will be very important throughout the whole process. Therefore, we suggest that you think through motivations along the identity pertaining to the selected community.

Both HKLeader and FÉSZAK built their programmes on local identity: they tried to motivate people by emphasising that they could have an impact on their own environments by coming to this event.




Step 6: Identifying the key development themes of the social hackathon

Depending on the target area and the people organising the SH, it may be worth identifying areas for development and preliminary topics, which can help prospective participants to think through their ideas in advance. This fully depends on the context, therefore it is up to you, the future organisers, to see whether it makes sense to do this in your community.

 During the CPM in Szeklerland, the organisers announced in advance a selection of thematic areas of the local rural development vision and invited participants to bring their ideas accordingly:


1. socialisation of youth based on tradition and local culture;
2. local services and tourism;
3. local products;
4. sustainable management of local resources;
5. family-based, active, local communities.


 During the preparation of the CPM in the Gönc district, the main areas were identified in advance (e.g. rural development, health promotion, local products, tourism, local economy, etc.), however, the organisers focused on finding the idea originators through personal contacts, so there was no need to announce these areas publicly. In this case, thinking through the possible thematic areas was helpful in providing internal guidelines for the organisers.



Step 7: The process of engagement (partners - key actors - participants)

A community planning marathon is most likely to meet its community development goals if from the very beginning it can go beyond the narrow organisational circle and reach out to, and engage, potential partners, volunteers or participants in the community, who can contribute in some way to the success of the event from early on. To this end, it is worth reviewing the existing network of the organising team already in the early stages, by defining the aspects of diversity that will be important during the organisation.

 In the community planning marathon in Szeklerland, the Homoród-Küküllő Leader Association was the main organiser. It managed to engage staff members of other Leader organisations from the beginning, so that nearly 24 rural development and/or community development professionals were involved in the process as mentors. Furthermore, mayors in the target area and active key people from the municipalities acted as partners and supported the process all along. As a result, organisers were able to meet the objective of diversity as well, as they considered it very important to have a proportionate mix of local participants from different professions and ages from the target area specified earlier.

 In the Gönc district, the organiser FÉSZAK (the local micro-regional community development organisation) began its work by drawing on its own network, this is how most participants of the first knowledge transfer workshops were recruited, who later became idea originators. Participants of the main event, potential team members, were approached through their own and FÉSZAK's network. In addition, practitioners from the side of the co-organiser KÖFE joined the locally selected mentors as well.

We recommend that you select aspects that you think will ensure the diversity of the CPM. Once you have identified these, you may wish to create a contact database based on the selected groups, which could help you to easily track partners and participants within the organising group.

For example, the database could include the following groups:

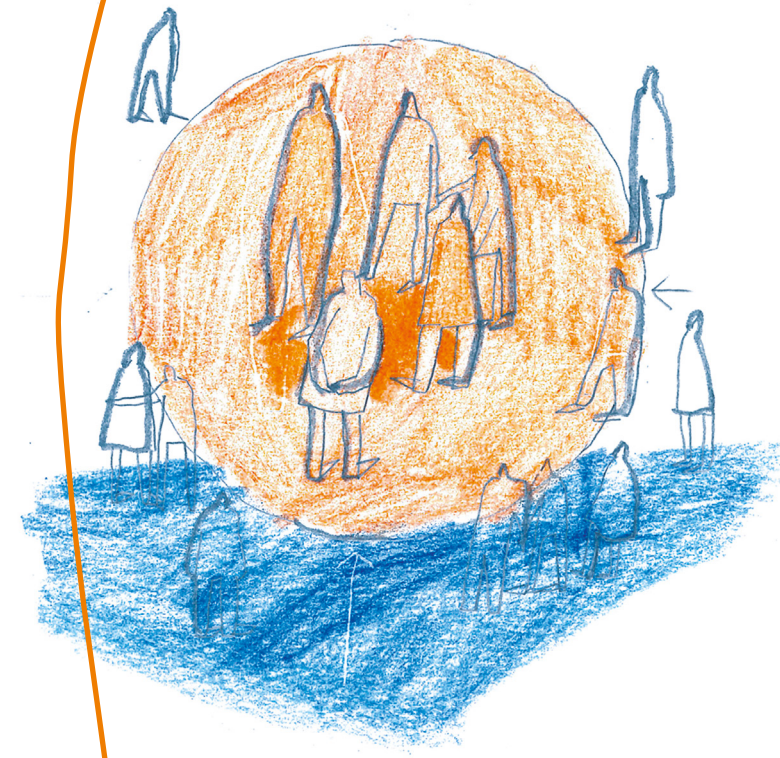
1. Local people - their skills, experience, motivation, capabilities and willingness may contribute to the project, with a particular focus on people who are often excluded, their access should be ensured.

2. Local issue-based communities, formal and informal groups, organisations - local associations, their volunteers, clubs and networks (for example, all athletic, cultural, social, faith-based etc. groups run by volunteer members) which can contribute to the project.

3. Local institutions, services, businesses, municipalities - local institutions - public institutions such as schools, libraries, parks, police stations, etc., as well as local businesses and organisations, which can contribute to the project.


You may encounter some initial resistance when approaching participants. This is a perfectly normal reaction, as you are inviting them to take part in an event that is very likely new to them. However, any resistance can be overcome by making it clear from the start that this is not an event for (only) professionals, but for local people who want to do something, who are ready to improve the vitality of their local community. These locals may of course have some kind of expertise in a particular area, but the fact that they live locally is the most important expertise they need for this event.


During the engagement, the following community intervention methods are recommended: community dialogue workshop, community questionnaire, future workshop method, asset mapping.



Step 8: Recruitment and coordination of mentors

The SH's key players, beyond the participants, are the mentors. They support the teams in working together as effectively as possible, both during the preparatory events and throughout the SH, and possibly afterwards, in developing and implementing their ideas. In each case, it has to be made sure that the mentors, their expertise, and knowledge fit the type of the event.

 The main objective of the Szeklerland community planning marathon was to support rural development at community level through the LEADER organisations, and therefore the mentors were rural and community development experts from regional LEADER organisations. Each team had two mentors all along, who facilitated the planning process.

 In the Gönc district, FÉSZAK, as a community development organisation operating in a micro region, implemented the community planning marathon together with the Hungarian Association for Community Development (KÖFE), a national organisation. Thus, the mentors included both local professionals who are well-versed in community work methods, as well as members of the national organisation who work as community development practitioners in Hungary. Two mentors assisted one team in this case as well,

but there was also the possibility to draw on the intermittent support of mentors with a specific expertise (communication, IT, rural development, financial management, and fundraising) when the teams needed it.

In addition to having the expertise that matches the specific SH, it is important that mentors also have a general understanding of group facilitation. This is because during the intensive process of the marathon, difficulties or impasses will inevitably arise within the teams, and if a skilled facilitator is present throughout the process, the teams will overcome these obstacles much more quickly and be able to focus more effectively on developing creative solutions.



FURTHER ASPECTS TO CONSIDER:

—It is important that you as organisers and the mentors take time to adjust to each other, therefore it is recommended that you organise a preliminary meeting(s) with the mentors to discuss the basics of cooperation, to identify the methods they like to work with and you can suggest techniques to support the facilitation.

—Mentors are very valuable actors for the hackathon, they are key to its success, therefore you should make sure that they have all the background knowledge and the right conditions for their work.


Mentors and teams may be supported by a mentor coordinator, aligning the work of mentors with the needs of teams.

—Preparatory events may serve as pilots for the mentors, where they can test themselves in this role; if you find at the preparatory event that mentors have different values than you, then you may choose different mentors.



Step 9: Organising preparatory events

The main event is always preceded by a series of preparatory events. To make the main event as smooth as possible, a number of preparatory processes are necessary. The method and the form of the preparatory events depend on the characteristics of the social hackathon's target area/target group.

 The preparatory process in Szeklerland included community-based knowledge transfer. Here the preparation of mentors included training about the SH methodology, situational exercises through which they could experience how it works, as well as studying and developing together the worksheets that would be used throughout the facilitation. Following this workshop, three further preparatory events were held, as the region consists of three smaller sub-regions and the organisers sought to address potential participants in all of them. During these sessions, participants discussed the ideas, the community planning marathon, as well as its potential impact on the region.

The Hungarian community planning process also included a knowledge transfer workshop, however, it targeted potential participants. They learned about the community planning marathon, started working on developing their own ideas and

think about their potential assets, e.g. team members. Thus, after the knowledge transfer workshop, three additional preparatory events took place at the municipality buildings of the idea promoters, or close to them, where they worked more on enhancing the diversity of the prospective teams. These preparatory events thus focused on the prospective idea promoters and the participants associated with them.



Although their frequency and format may differ from region to region, preparatory events always contribute to the effectiveness of the main event. Tailoring the preparatory event to the state of the given community is the responsibility of the organisers. It is therefore worth assessing the state of local communities (to do this, you can use the situation assessment suggested at the beginning of the introductory chapter), and your own embeddedness in the local community: if you feel that you do not have enough local connections, you may want to plan a longer preparatory phase. We recommend organising a minimum of 2-3 preparatory events.

The preparatory event may include a knowledge transfer, or a training session, to facilitate the engagement of a group of participants (e.g. training of mentors, brainstorming of ideas of participants). However, most often they take the form

of facilitated community workshops, where invited participants represent the target area. (For example, if the SH has a local focus, preparatory events can take place in different locations in the target area.) We may think of these workshops as preparatory discussions, pilots of the process, which – thanks to real-time feedback – helps to shape the main event and reduce the possibility of any possible mistakes that may occur.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE?

- To provide an opportunity for the organisers to explain what the participants and mentors can expect during the main event, and for the participants to give feedback about the extent to which they understood it;
- to prepare the teams, participating in the main event, for the event, through practising parts of the event e.g. presenting ideas in 2-3 minutes, thinking through the areas of expertise of team members from the point of view of diversity;
- to strengthen the work and cooperation of mentors.



Example 1: The preparatory event in Szeklerland

"First, we summarised the association's work it has carried out thus far, as well as the process whereby the planning becomes a dream come true; we used pictures of completed projects as illustration.

Then we briefly presented the process ahead (preliminary event and Rural Development Marathon, and highlighted the timeliness of the development plan for the next period) and asked those present to join and participate in this process.

We have also presented the association's vision for the future along five themes. The 17 local participants were divided into 4 groups and we assigned two mentors to each group to help. When forming the groups, we kept in mind that ideally only one person from each municipality should participate in the group.

The groups' task was to identify, within one hour, the obstacles (problems) which stand in the way of realising the vision and identify the those that affect them personally. To overcome this obstacle, participants held as many recruitment talks (pitching) as they saw fit, with the intention of recruiting members for a team. In the end, the 4 groups gave 5 recruitment speeches in total, which were analysed, and we pointed out that this 2-minute recruitment speech is a major factor in whether the speaker would be able to form a team to tackle the obstacle. Participants left after this event recognising the tension that the future depends on them."

(László Lázár, Homoród-Küküllő Leader Association)



Example 2: The preparatory event in the Abaúj region

"The preparatory events serve to promote the main event, the 48-hour ABATHON. In Abaúj, we realised that their objective, first, is to introduce the method; second, to show how the event is structured; third, to reach out to more and more people and get them involved in ABATHON. After all, they will be the ones who bring the issues, form the groups, and who will thus determine the overall programme. Therefore, we wanted the events' titles to be interesting and inviting.

The first preparatory event, Pancake Friday, took place at the Pitvaros restaurant in Telkibánya on 9 July. We reached out to the participants of the previous knowledge transfer workshops and asked them to bring with them others who might be interested in this process. In addition to this, the FÉSZAK Circle personally invited people through their network from the north of the region, who were known to want to take action in the community, have ideas for change and change-making.

As several people were joining the ABATHON team for the first time, we began with introductions. Then we introduced the two organisations behind ABATHON. Representatives of the "host" Association of Community Developers of North Abaúj (FÉSZAK) explained that, as a local organisation,

it embarked on this project to find partners to ensure that people living in the locality shape the future and do not expect solutions from outside. They feel that this programme can help them move beyond North Abaúj and renew their association. Then came the Hungarian Association for Community Development (KÖFE); as a national organisation its goal is to show how to run institutions, organisations, and whole communities with a community-based approach. And not only to show but also to teach people of community-based operation through the process of community learning. New tools and methods are needed to get people to talk to each other, to get them to come together think about their community and their region. KÖFE realised that the social hackathon offered such an opportunity and it was inviting people who are open and want change to be partners in using this method as part of community development. It is not a ready-made method – on the contrary, every time each region has to create and invent its own hackathon - and with ABATHON we can show a model that gives communities the courage to use this method."

(Aranka Molnár, KÖFE)

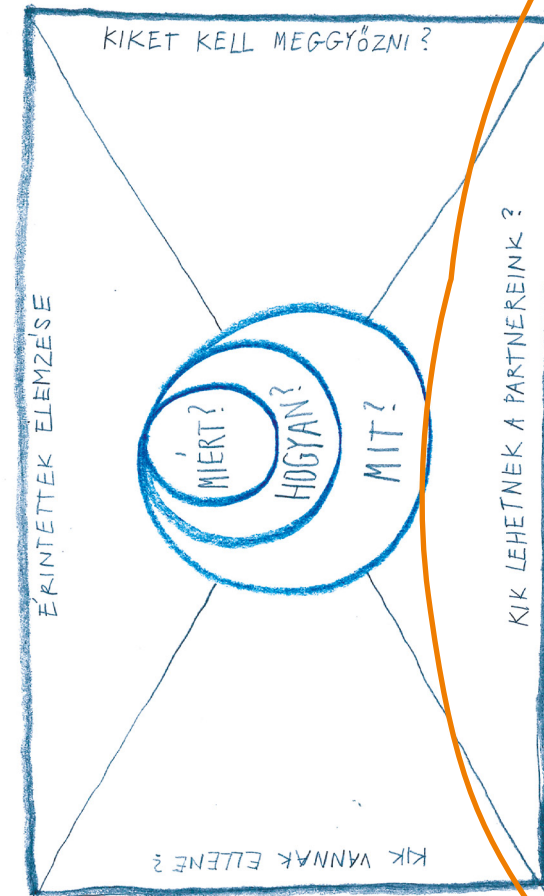


Step 10: Developing the worksheets

During the 48-hour event, the teams, with the help of their mentors, work on their ideas through different milestones. To help facilitate this process as much as possible, we use pre-made worksheets that help complete these milestones. The worksheets can be developed, for example, with mentors or with the help of external experts.

We adapted most of the themes and methodology of our worksheets from the Estonian model, and were further developed by the Szekler and KÖFE mentors. They cover the following areas:

- formulating individual and collective motivations within teams;
- clarifying and mapping individual and community resources;
- the relationship between the need and the idea for solving it (thinking about the need, articulating our attitude to it, possible ways out, defining the scope of actors);
- defining the target group, stakeholders (potential facilitators, barriers);
- preparing an action plan.



Step 11: Communication

When planning the communication, it is definitely worth separating external and internal communication at the very start.

By internal communication we mean primarily the channels of communication and coordination within the organising team, which should be developed based on mutual decision.

External communication has different aspects, depending on the communication strategy that was developed. (We believe that a strategy is always necessary.) The basic questions when developing the communication strategy include what, to whom, for what purpose and how to communicate. Once these have been answered, the dynamics and associated tasks should become apparent.

It is important to note, however, that while communication is essential, it is worth adjusting our commitments in this area to our existing resources (capacity, time, available platforms/channels, etc.) and "only" take on what we can surely do. Of course, if the organisers see this as a personal challenge, then they can take on a lot of big tasks, but it is also worth stopping from time to time to look at what has been achieved (efficiency of the communication), so that there is still time to change tactics and confirm new directions.

In what follows, we will list some areas where it is important to put our communication activities at the service of the process: reaching out to participants, addressing and engaging them; searching for potential supporters; ensuring the commitment of the jury and various sponsors and supporters; visual documentation of the event (even if ex post), disseminating it to the wider community.


To this end, it is important to find a catchy name for the event; a logo (whatever the technique used to prepare it); a short, clear description of who we are and what we are inviting people to do. Also, it is not worth economising on the photographer's fee who would document to the event, as the photos taken can be of valuable service for years to come.

Overall, it is recommended to use the communication channels known and available to the organisers (e.g. news sites, forums used by the communities in the settlement, online communities). In case there is enough capacity, you may set up new communication channels around the event.

In the Szekler practice, the internal communication of the organising team was based on the usual methods. In the external communication, online and face-to-face communication was separated. The organisers used social media platforms and

communication channels which had already been in use (e.g. email list, newsletter) to reach and engage participants. They also used their personal networks for reaching out to people and then the snowball method was used to reach as many relevant people in the area as possible.

The organisers put great emphasis on appearing in the regional media, with interviews, radio interviews, articles about the event, as well as on post-event coverage. In other words, major media in the target area were involved in organising the event.

 During the Abaúj hackathon (ABATHON), internal communication also took place mainly within the organisational circle, through the coordinated work of the working groups.

For external communication, the online and the face-to-face communication strategies were separated: while the former was mainly organised on the basis of the social media pages of FÉSZAK and KÖFE, face-to-face communication was organised using the snowball method, meaning that all the organisers who had already joined were asked to mobilise their own networks and possibly those of other community groups in their municipalities (e.g. a local folk singing group, dance club, community development club, environmental group, etc.). The advantage of the geographical area is that the community development work there has

a history of 15 years, thus members of the organisations that have been set up during this time, and now their children were also able to actively participate in the process. The people they invited became idea promoters, participants and volunteers. The organisers contacted and invited potential donors individually. The images, video and audio materials of the main event were produced by partners within the KÖFE network, with the involvement of volunteers, who have experience in this activity.



Step 12: Inviting the masters of ceremony, the jury and the donors

The master of ceremony is a host and facilitator, who makes sure that the event framework is clear to all and is respected, and ensures that there is laughter and a good atmosphere. Consequently, it is worth choosing people for this role who are comfortable with appearing on a stage, or at least those who can cope with the spotlight, at least for the duration of the event. It is recommended that you work with a pair of masters of ceremony, so that they can complement and help each other. In addition to going over logistical information with them during the preparation, you should emphasise the importance of creating a good atmosphere and attention to the dynamics of the participants. Also, it is ideal if they understand the methodology as well and not only the general picture of what is happening, therefore it may be a good idea to recruit at least one of the MCs from the organisers. When selecting the MCs, we recommend that you choose regional actors, iconic members of the local community, whose commitment can further enhance the event's prestige and its local embeddedness.

In both the Szekler and the Abaúj community planning marathon, we decided to have two MCs, which proved to be effective in our case. One of the MCs was good at creating a cheerful atmos-

phere, while the other, having a good understanding of the professional dynamics, was able to shape the processes.

The jury evaluates the ideas presented during the main event. Ideally, its members should be people who play a key role in the life of the community and who may be committed to supporting an idea in the longer term. The jury could include, for example, company directors, sponsors, famous people (local/regional), public figures, etc., and it is recommended to reach out to them through personal contacts. Another important criterion for the selection of the jury members is that the person invited should be open-minded and sensitive to the specificities of the community approach. (It is not easy, and perhaps not even possible, to assemble a jury that meets all criteria.) As regards the number of jury members, a maximum of 10 members are recommended, based on the Estonian experience.

Jury members should be invited well in advance (at least one month before the main event) to ensure proper preparation, as they need to be aware of the nature and the purpose of the event and the judging criteria (these criteria were set by the expert staff of the organisers at an earlier stage of the process). Timely invitation also gives the opportunity to introduce the jury to the public (e.g. on social media) in advance - this can

encourage the participants to attend the event.

Sponsors and jury members are not necessarily the same. Sponsors should be recruited from a wider and narrower circle of people, depending on the type of support that would help the participating teams to realise their ideas. Support could imply financial contribution, expert support, donation of equipment, etc. Identifying the range of support needed will set the path for finding sponsors. The process of reaching and approaching sponsors and potential supporters should

also take place according to a plan, and for this it is worth involving people with expertise in this field. In the course of the two community planning marathons we have implemented, we managed to involve the following sponsors: e.g. local governments, mayors, small and large enterprises, county and local branches of the Digital Success Programme¹⁴, LEADER organisations.

¹⁴Digital Success Programme in English, launched by the Government of Hungary in late 2015, affects the entire digital ecosystem and the aim is that every Hungarian citizen and business can benefit from digitalisation.



Step 13: Use of online participation platforms

To support the offline (face-to-face) strand of the whole organisational process, such as the community planning marathon, there are now online platforms that can structure a community-based planning process in the online space in a creative and forward-looking way. It is important to bear in mind that these platforms are not the same as the online channels included in our communication plan, as they are used not only for communication, but allow genuine social dialogue. Such platforms include, in our opinion, the [YourPriorites](#) site operated by the Icelandic Active Citizens Foundation and its Hungarian counterpart, TársalGÓ, run by KÖFE, which is currently in the test phase. These platforms are suitable for generating high quality and meaningful dialogue between community planning actors around specific themes and ideas during the preparatory phase of the CPM, during the 48 hours of the event or even during the follow-up work. The function of the platforms thus varies and expands according to the phase of the planning process in which they are used.

Of course, these interfaces, just like other online platforms, do not substitute the power inherent in personal engagement, but they can support it very well. However, this also requires a conscious,

well-planned and organised approach to online platforms, which in the right hands can become very effective tools, so we have a responsibility regarding the processes that evolve and what we do with them.

During both the Szekler and the Abaúj community planning marathon, we shared the ideas that were developed during the event's 48 hours and some elements of their action plans on the online participatory planning platform. In doing so, our goal was to reach new people in the region who would contribute to the implementation of the ideas, promote them and increase their acceptance, and allow local residents to share further suggestions (arguments for and against, proposals) related to the ideas.

társalgó

The main event of the social hackathon

The term “social hackathon” is often used to describe the main event only - and for good reason, as it is at the heart of the whole process. All the preparatory work is ultimately aimed at creating a successful main event. In our practice, the main event is a 48-hour weekend marathon, running from Friday evening to Sunday evening. Below is a detailed description of the main programme elements of the event.

Registration

We recommend that you request pre-registration for the event, as the information thus received will help your preparation both logistically and in terms of content. At the same time, it is important that this remains an open event and that the lack of pre-registration should not be a barrier to participation. However, on-site registration is by all means should take place.

At the registration desks, participants pick up the necessary tools. In addition to (or in combination with) the name card, it is also useful to display a distinctive sign indicating participants’ role, e.g. organiser, mentor, participant, jury member. (With nearly 100 people working at the same time, these organisational aids will greatly help

the joint work.) For the team formation, each participant should have a card with the colour representing his/her role (the cards will show the diversity of the team – more information on this will follow later) - these cards will also be given to participants at the registration desk.

Opening event

The event starts with an opening event, which has great motivational power. It allows the organisers to introduce themselves (where appropriate, sponsors may also be involved), and includes speeches and various performance. The opening event provides an opportunity for participants to learn about the main milestones of the 48 hours ahead of them (the event’s script is also available on paper, so it is easy to follow the event). Encouraging speakers for the next stage can start here - the relaxed atmosphere of the opening event supports this.

Pitching (recruitment) speeches

In this part of the event, we meet the idea originators, who pitch their ideas to the audience, usually without visuals or with minimal visuals only (e.g. 1 image per idea). The pitching speech should last between 1.5 and 3 minutes (if the participants are typically inexperienced speakers or have some communication difficulties, we recommend that you plan for three-minute speeches). To keep the event within the planned timeframe, it is important to strictly adhere to the timeframe for the speeches. The process is facilitated by one or two master of ceremonies who will ensure that everything runs smoothly.

After the pitching, the mentors can ask the idea promoters one or two questions to further help clarify the ideas. A summary will be prepared of the speech and the questions on flipchart paper, which the theme manager then takes aside and uses to recruit members for the next part of the event.

Marketplace – group formation

The aim of the marketplace is to help the idea promoters to form a diverse team of at least 5-8 people - the marketplace is about recruiting team members. At the marketplace, the idea promoters can set up a "stall", e.g. a flipchart with notes

on the idea. Participants walk around the stalls, re-read the notes, discuss the ideas with the idea generator and the team members that already joined - and eventually decide which team they will join.

When describing the principles of the social hackathon, we have already highlighted the importance of diversity. We mentioned that the criteria for this is up to the organising team. Participants will receive their coloured cards at the registration according to these criteria. For example, if sectoral diversity is the main criterion, then different colour cards should be given to representatives of the NGO, the public and the for-profit sectors; and if professional diversity is important, then the colours are given to each specialisation area. When a participant joins a team, his or her colour card is pinned to the team's board - thus supporting the monitoring of diversity in the process.



This stage is an important milestone of the social hackathon, as it is here that the idea promoters will identify who they will work with in the next intensive collaborative work. It is also where the mentors select the teams that they will work with over the next 48 hours. For the participants, the team selection is an important decision, and hopefully also a longer-term commitment: they need to find an issue and a team that they can imagine working with. It is therefore worth allowing more time for this stage (at least half an hour, but up to 1-2 hours).

The final teams will be formed by the end of the marketplace session (not all ideas will eventually have a team!), and it is worth reporting on this in plenary at the end of the phase.

Developing ideas, teamwork

Following the buzzing excitement of marketing and team formation, the marathon begins, with the teams working intensively together to develop the idea, with support from mentors/facilitators. The focus at this stage is therefore on the teams and mentors working together.

The result of the development work is usually an action plan, or maybe a prototype - in any case, a concrete "product". Depending on the idea, very unique results may emerge. It may happen, for instance, that the team

develop and even implement a part of the idea (e.g. a website plan, a book extract) in the time available.

The mentors' support is crucial at this stage, as they provide exercises, games and tasks that help team members get as close as possible to the innovative implementation of a prototype idea or a related action plan. During the teamwork, it is particularly important to ensure facilitation for the team dynamics, so mentors also pay particular attention to the way in which individual team members can relate to each other.

The joint work is supported by the fact that each team is allocated a space, where the development work can take place without interruption. This room is available to them throughout the event, giving them the opportunity to organise the schedule and the format of the development work, according to the team's dynamics. The organisers will provide recreational opportunities: games, performances, music can be added to the event to stimulate creative brainstorming. Teams report on their progress along pre-defined checkpoints, where mentors provide them with feedback. *(Checkpoints are described in the next section.)*

At the Abaúj community planning marathon, we divided the work of mentors and provided opportunities for teams to get additional help from specialist mentors in addition to team mentors. The specialist mentors were experts in the following areas: communication, ICT, rural development, fundraising. To access the help of the specialist mentors, teams had to book an appointment.





Checkpoints, consultations

Teamwork is occasionally interrupted by various checkpoints and consultations. The aim of these is to assess the teams' progress and to respond in time to any blockages or difficulties. The checkpoints should be well distributed over the 48 hours, e.g. at the end of the morning and afternoon sessions on the second day and before the final presentations on the last day.

At the checkpoints, team representatives (1-2 per team) meet the mentors and organisers in the order in which they have signed up previously (Team mentors usually leave their teams for this time, so almost all mentors are present at the checkpoints). Each team has 8-10 minutes which they can use as they wish: they can use the time for presentations, but they may also come with a question and use the time for a discussion.

The role of the checkpoints is also to help the teams to get used to the experience of presenting to an "audience", and to ensure encouragement and confirmation from outside on the process that they perceive primarily from within. The feedback can be taken back to the team (it is recommended that you take time to do this afterwards), because you can learn a lot from it.

It is also worth giving the teams and their mentors the opportunity to look at each other's processes from time to time - these stops are also a good opportunity to do this, when, after the team presentation, presenter can stay in the circle to listen to their peers who come after them.

It is recommended that team members take turns in representing the teams and ensure that others have the opportunity to represent their ideas and take part in the consultations. It is also worth giving teams the opportunity to look at each

other's processes from time to time - these checkpoints are a good opportunity to do this, where team representatives can stay in the circle after their time is up to listen to their peers.

The effective use of mentors' resources is reinforced by the fact that at the checkpoints, mentors also gain insight into the work of other teams and their possible blockages. In addition to their general knowledge, each mentor has different experiences, and sharing these experiences can add a lot to the joint work. The checkpoints will reveal these connections and also allow one team to borrow a mentor from another team for a certain period of time (e.g. half an hour) to share experience.

Presentation of the ideas developed

We are coming to the end of the 48 hours, where the most important act is the presentation of the ideas developed. The teams prepare a final presentation, along the lines of the recruitment speeches we heard at the beginning of the event. Communication experts (special mentors) may be brought in to help the preparation, who will consult with the teams beforehand on what to keep in mind when preparing and delivering such a presentation.

Teams have a few (e.g. three) minutes for this presentation and 1-2 people per team can actively participate in the presentation, again using various visual elements, gimmicks, surprising twists and turns - in short, anything that their imagination and creativity can come up with. After each performance, the jury will have the opportunity to ask questions (for up to 7 minutes) to facilitate a better understanding and presentation of the idea. The master(s) of ceremony will also assist during this phase of the closing phase.



Assessment by the jury

Following the final presentations, the jury will move to another and, on the basis of what they heard, and the worksheets prepared by the teams, will make its decision (which will be presented at the final event, described in the next section), taking into account the evaluation criteria previously agreed.

It is important, however, that the jury does not only see the final performances, because these are not enough for them to not understand the process, which is the value of the result. On the other hand, impartial decision-making requires that the jury does not get too involved or see too much of the event - a middle ground must be found.

During the assessment by the jury, it is a good idea to prepare a variety of activities for the par-

ticipants, to help ease the excitement of the wait, and at this point you can also take photos of the teams.

Closing event and award ceremony

The participants had a very meaningful, intense, tiring, but also uplifting cooperation, it is important to close the event in a dignified way, to reinforce the positive feelings. The closing event is a time of celebration and joy, which can be supported by various activities, such as singing and performances. The closing event should also include the announcement of the jury's decision and the distribution of prizes and awards, which should also be accompanied by a spirit of celebration. It is the task of the organisers to make the atmosphere of the closing event as pleasant as possible, to "lift" the participants, to reinforce the value of being together.



What happens after the main event?

According to the general practice of the SH, all actors (participants, mentors, organisers) are committed to the 48 hours of the event. In the case of the CPM, the process following the main event is also important. What happens after the event, whether (and how) the cooperation continues also depends on existing capacities. It is important to communicate this clearly.

The following is an attempt to show how the process may evolve after the main event from the perspective of different actors.

Idea promoters and their teams

Idea promoters "own" their ideas until the start of the event; after this, however, these ideas are transformed into a shared "product", an issue, a partnership between the team members. Thus, it is important to clarify that, although the initial idea promoters may become the main coordinators and facilitators of the group after the event, the team members involved in the idea development were also part of the process and thus also became "owners". (In case an idea implies the development of a concrete joint "product", it is recommended that a formal or informal joint agreement is concluded between the team members, not only addressing future collaboration, but also the sharing of intellectual property.)



Thus, the afterlife of ideas following the event depends mainly on the cooperation of the team. If the event has given them enough momentum and motivation to want to continue, they will find a way to do so. If it is in a position to do so, the organising team may provide support for this (it is important to communicate openly whether this is the case). Prizes or mentoring offers can also support and boost continuation. However, it is common experience that about two out of eight ideas make it to the implementation phase.

Mentors

Mentors are contracted for 48 hours, regardless of whether their participation is voluntary or paid. However, the experience shows that they often commit to further supporting and continuing to work together with the team in some form. This is something the organising team should think about in advance, including the kind of support it can provide, if any.

Organisers

For the organisers, it is worth considering the results of the event from their own perspective as well: to what extent were their expectations and goals met and what they have learned during the process? If it makes sense for them, it is worth using the momentum of the event to build further partnerships, strengthen their relationships, or even commit to a future CPM.

During the preparation and the running of the event, they encounter nearly 100 people, many of them being new acquaintances, and it is important to strengthen these relationships in the hope of future collaboration after the event.

The collaboration of participants, mentors and organisers does not necessarily end with the main event of the SH, because this collaboration will only be successful if the idea developed is imple-

mented. As we have noted earlier, it is a natural process that not all ideas reach this stage of implementation, but we strive to give every team the opportunity to implement theirs.



Closing remarks

While the building of viable communities is often made up of one small step after another, community planning marathons help you take many small steps in a relatively short time. This can be a catalyst for people involved in the process to feel that they are not alone in the face of local issues and that they can develop their own solutions that will have a visible impact on their communities even in the short term.

The CPM provides a model, a framework for this, which should be designed in a way that is tailored to the given circumstances. While events can have very different purposes and take different sizes, it is very important to emphasise that the purpose of every community planning marathon is to strengthen and catalyse local resources.

Often there is a lot of development interventions taking place in a given area (e.g. in disadvantaged sub-regions) initiated from outside, leaving little space or time to mobilise local resources from the inside. We recommend this type of work and practice to practitioners who believe that people can bring about change locally and are open to facilitating it in an interesting form, through a community planning marathon.



Our consortium's offer

There is an abundance of methods in community work. There is a wealth of tried and tested practices, of paths that have been taken. At the same time, there are situations that call for innovation, innovative ideas, and there are professionals who are also trying to expand their repertoire. This project was born out of such professional ambition and has slowly become a reality. All along, there has been a lot of learning together. Learning the method, learning about the local conditions, how to adapt it, learning how to cope with practical challenges. It was a learning process with all its uncertainties, difficulties and, ultimately, its joys. It is a journey that we believe is worth taking.

It is, however, possible to find partners along the way. Like our Estonian colleagues were there to help us, we are here for you to support and encourage you at various stages of the journey, to guide you or to ask the right questions at the right time.

Since its establishment, the Hungarian Association for Community Development has been looking for new ways of working with communities and new places where we can try them in a responsible way, in partnership with the local community. This was the case with various forms of community planning, different methods of community economic development, etc., which have

become an integral part of our organisation's practice and that of many other organisations. Most recently, the ERASMUS+ project, running from 2019 to 2021, focusing on the adaptation of the Estonian practice of the social hackathon model, has given us the opportunity to invite the communities of Szeklerland and North Abaúj to an exciting joint experiment, to test their skills.

If you have any questions after reading this guide, or in relation to any part of it, and you would like to get answers to them before you start organising your own community planning marathon, we offer **face-to-face consultations** to discuss them. Like our consortium partner, the Hungarian Reform Association, KÖFE is a training institution licensed under the Hungarian Adult Education Act, with highly experienced trainers who are also practitioners - including members of HKLeader and FÉSZAK. Thus, we can support the adaptation of the community planning marathon with **training courses for both** professionals and local residents in Hungary and in Szeklerland.

In addition to training, we are happy to support the process by **providing mentoring** (through regular meetings and contacts), which can provide assurance, reinforcement and tailored support for practitioners who have just begun learning the method.

PLEASE FEEL FREE TO CONTACT US: WE ARE HAPPY TO ANSWER YOUR QUESTIONS BY EMAIL OR BY PHONE, WHETHER YOU HAVE A QUESTION OR A MORE COMPLEX PROBLEM.



CONTACTS:

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“Fogadó” North Abaúj Community Development Association (“Fogadó” Eszak-Abaúji Közösségfejlesztők 

Köre Egyesület, FÉSZAK): feszakkor@gmail.com

Vorumaa Development Centre: arenduskeskus@vorumaa.ee 

We also recommend our publications on the subject, also available online

An e-learning version of the training material developed during the project is available on the above-mentioned website.

Kitti Boda, Lucia Csabai, Zsuzsa Gyenes, Aranka Molnár (2020): In the service of small local communities (collection of case studies)

