

Report of a Remote Participatory Design Process to Renew a Schoolyard During COVID-19

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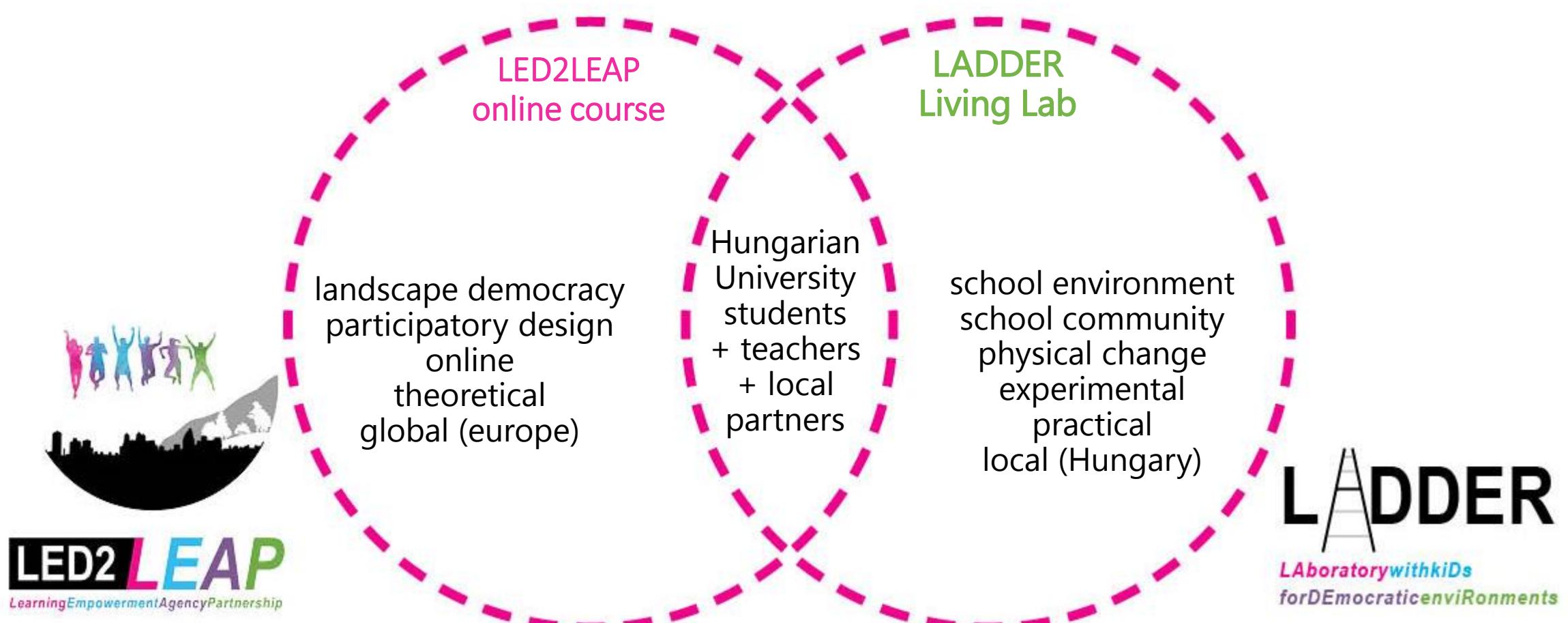
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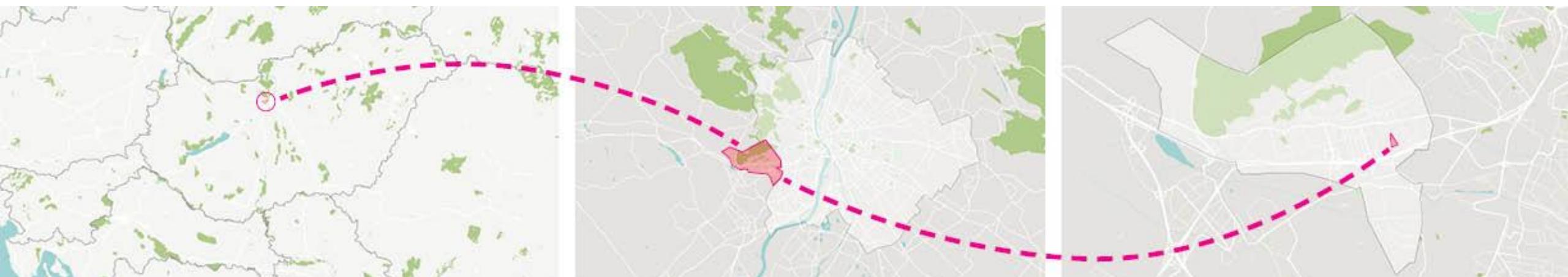


Introduction



Project Objectives – LADDER Living Lab

- Hungarian University of Agriculture and Life Sciences + NGO kultúrAktív + Elementary School no.1. of Budaörs
- From 1st of January, 2020 to 1st of December, 2020
- Originally planned to be not a remote process
- Participatory Action Research: co-creation, exploration, experimentation and prototyping, and evaluation



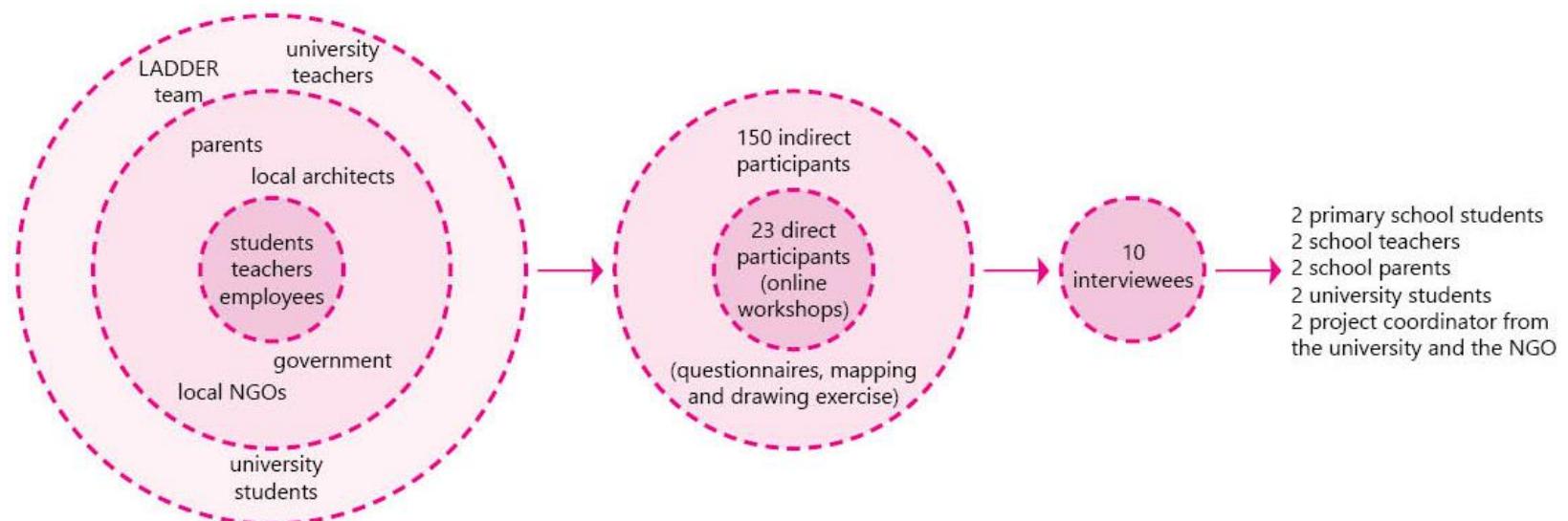
Research Method

- Qualitative research → semi-structured interviews:

- (1) influence of COVID-19 on the context of participation such as school environment, community, planning traditions in Hungary
- (2) experiences and role of the interviewee in the participatory planning process
- (3) opinions, advices related to the remote participatory process.

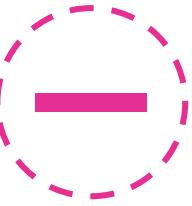
- Recorded Zoom interviews → transcript → key phrases, terms, and practices were marked

- Grounded Theory



Results

- 1) Spatial understanding** of the design site: includes the advantages and disadvantages of technologically mediated or narrative based mapping methods implemented in the project.
- 2) Communication in online workshops:** includes our participants' perception of verbal and non-verbal communication, flow of dialogue and discussions, relating to others and building human connections in the online environment.
- 3) Team experience** in remote participation: trust building, dedication to the team work, as well as positive equal representation of team members are in the focus of this category.



Results – Spacial understanding

- “not being inspired and affected on site, only relying on your or others' memories” (school parent)
- “[Video] doesn't convey the mood at all as if we go there, we can't hear the sounds, can't feel the wind” (university student).

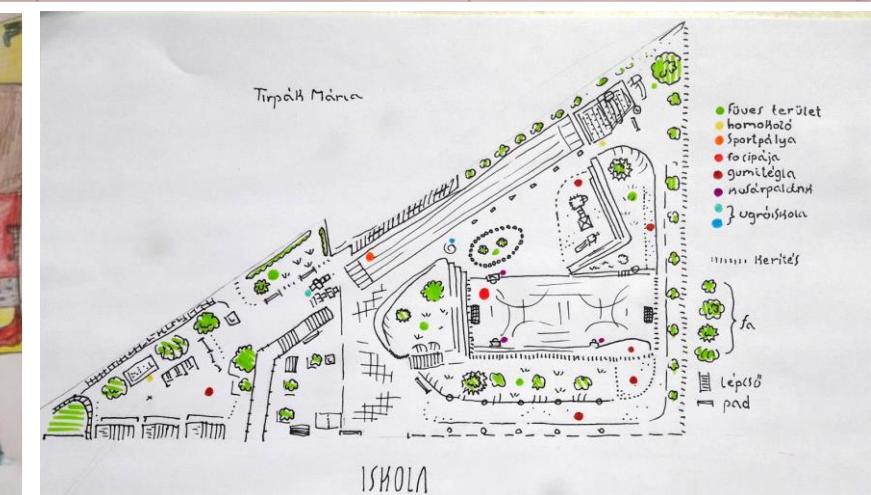




Results – Spacial understanding

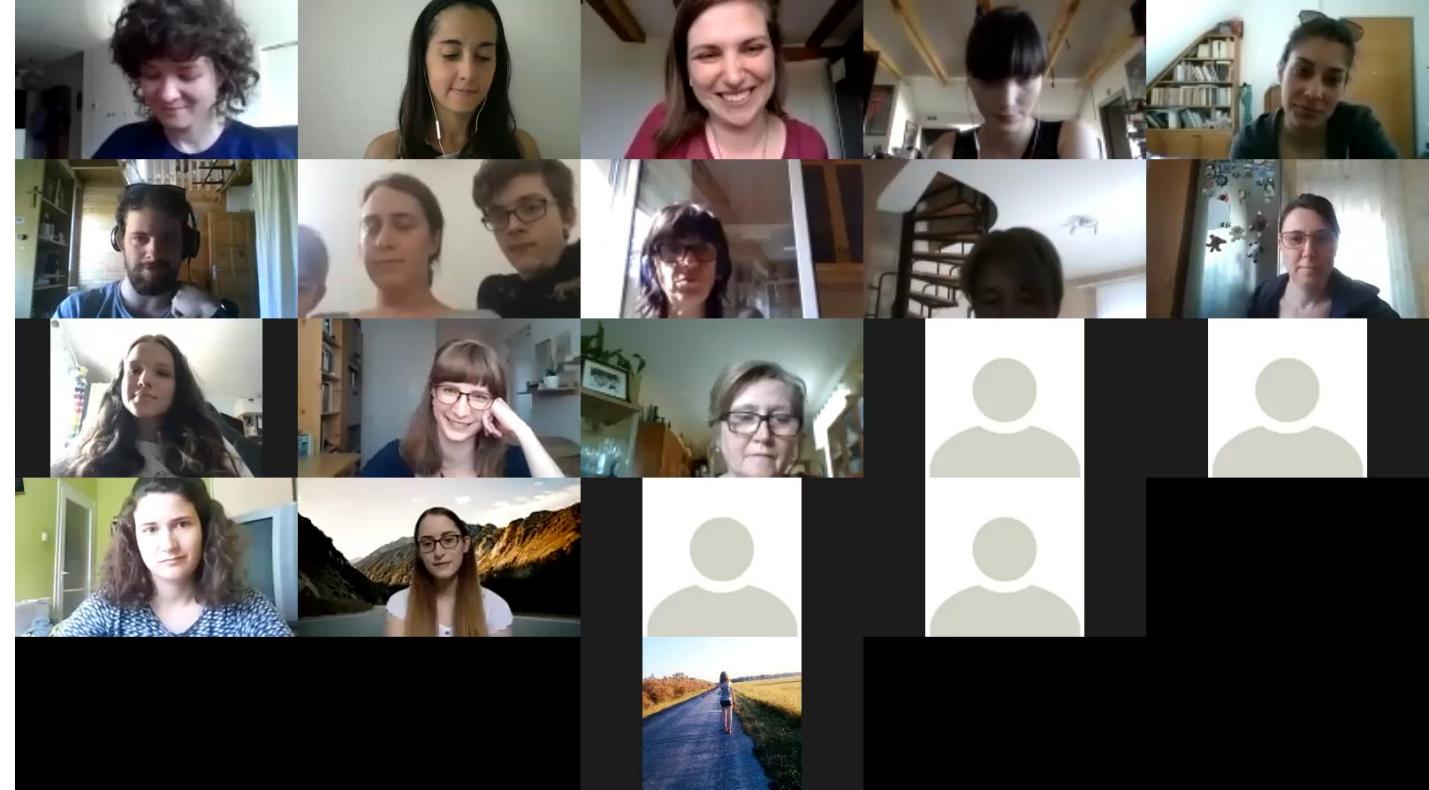
▪ "Landscape architects did not personally see the school. However, perhaps this was not such a problem since it is one of the basic approaches in community planning to understand what the community sees, feels and hears, and so in our case this has been absolutely achieved by the applied methods. I think in our collaboration the professional eyes remained closed, while the eyes of the community were open and sharp." (project coordinator)

▪ "geography has a great potential [for remote technics], and digital space can be used better in this field" (school teacher)



Results – Communication

- “personal interactions did not come through” (university student)
- “when you meet someone in person, the **charisma, behaviour and reactions** present in that situation give you an opinion about the person” (school student)
- “Now I find myself constantly looking down here and thinking how weird it is not to look people in their eyes, and even if I look into the other’s eyes, he doesn’t see me looking into his eyes, that was disturbing in a way but you have to let this feeling go.” (university student)
- “I think if we’re next to each other [...] we can react much more effectively [...] immediately to each other and we don’t have to wait for our turn to speak because [in the online environment] only one person can talk at a time.” (school student)
- “from this more casual atmosphere [in the offline environment], there are **side conversations**, which cannot be created online” (university student)



Results – Communication

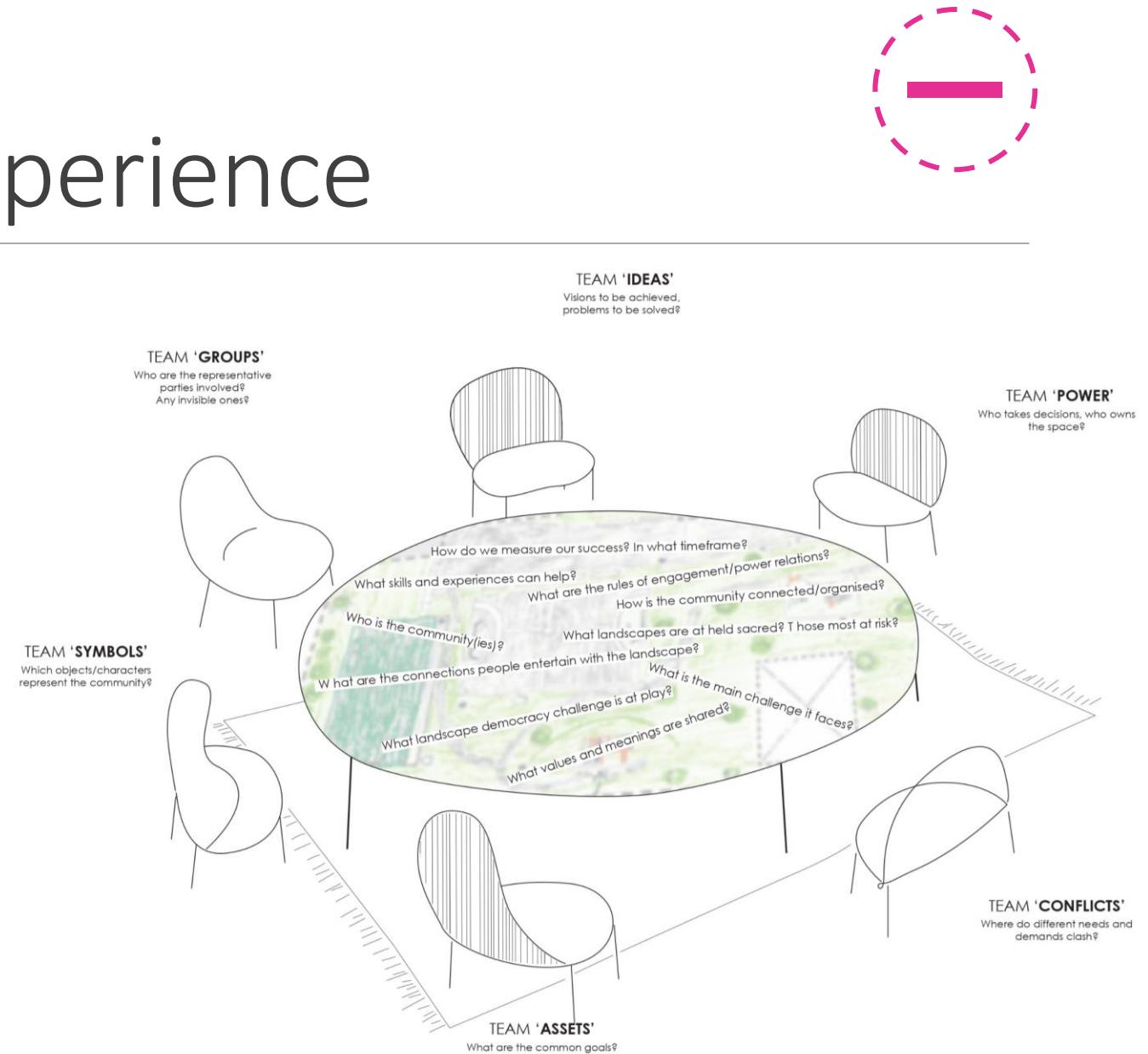
- "in general, my girls don't like to go to school, but when the school went into online mode, they said they felt less stressed [...]and they liked this setting more so they **actually performed better** because of it" (parent)
- "I like the Mural platform, that I got to know through [the project]. I think it was good for brainstorming" (parent)
- "We used a platform, [it was] like a digital board that could be edited by many at once. And there were **some different games** [we played]. There was also an opportunity to **express an opinion in writing**, on small post-it notes" (university student)

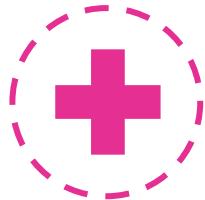
The screenshot shows a Mural board titled "Budaörs kerekasztal (NCM)". The main area contains several sections:

- Fő kihívásunk**: "Hogyan tudja az iskolaudvar jobban kiszolgálni a használókat?" (How can the school building better serve its users?)
- Célok**: A section for setting goals, with a box for "Mihály Fazekas".
- Szavazás**: A voting section.
- Highlight votes**: A sidebar on the left lists the 6 steps of the Nominal Group Technique (NGT):
 1. lépés: Ilyenkor be a nevezeteket az egyik résztvevő és mindenki közvetlenül tükrözheti meg, hogy melyik résztvevőt köszönhetően többet tennének a kihívás megoldásához.
 2. lépés: Ilyenkor be a nevezeteket az egyik résztvevő és mindenki közvetlenül tükrözheti meg, hogy melyik résztvevőt köszönhetően többet tennének a kihívás megoldásához.
 3. lépés: Során minden résztvevő eldönti az elnöki, majd a második egyetlen eldöntést, porosztapok elhatárolva a többiek számára. Majd meccsenek az elnökökkel a Círek területén.
 4. lépés: A moderátor szavazatával kezdődik az előző lépésben eldöntött elnökökkel szemben. Poggyászatot meg olván egységesítik célokat, majd minden résztvevő eldönti, hogy melyik résztvevőt köszönhetően többet tennének a kihívás megoldásához. Ha olyan egységet találnak, mely nem csorongostatás más célokkal, hagyják körül mindenkitől.
 5. lépés: Az egységesített tematikákat meghatározása után szavazzatnak arra a harmónia céloira, hogy melyik résztvevőt köszönhetően többet tennének a célok megvalósításához.
 6. lépés: A szavazás végeztével minden résztvevő a tematikákat a legjobb szavazzatával elválasztja meg, egységesítve a célokat eredményei, vizsgálják meg, mennyire szoros a verseny közreműködők között, elmondják az eredménytőlököt.

Results – Team experience

- "It's basically **trust building**, which again has to be the starting point of any community design, or even any community, [...] and that was a lot harder [to achieve] in the online environment" (project coordinator)
- "we inspire each other less in the online environment" (university student)
- "sometimes it was hard to stay focused and don't open any other platforms or apps while somebody else was speaking" (university student)
- "I noticed that I'm not so motivated in the whole thing, I don't feel it belongs to me so much" (university student)
- "we have many **more tools** to build trust in a personal setting" (parent)





Results – Team experience

- “everyone was a little lame, and that dissolved the whole thing a bit. [...] there were smiles and weird names [on Zoom], [...] and it simply eased the mood a bit in my opinion, adults could have been much more relaxed, more direct.” (university student)
- “Doesn’t matter who is the parent, the student or the teacher, everyone appears on the same platform in the same size of squares, having equal opportunity to have a say.” (project coordinator)
- “I had a good time during the calls because I could really have a say and share my opinion at any time and it wasn’t that you are just a kid and you couldn’t intervene because you don’t understand what’s going on and what it’s all about, but I was really involved like a design partner.” (school student)



Conclusions

■ ELEVATING SPACIAL EXPERIENCE:

- (1) Focusing on comprehensive understanding
- (2) Enabling the discovery of various qualities of the space
- (3) Immersive experiences through challenge-based, sensory and imaginative technologies
- (4) physical, social, cultural and symbolic aspects, subjective and objective dimensions

■ ENCOURAGE VISUAL COMMUNICATION

- (1) Technologies that support non-verbal communication
- (2) Z-generation: visual-driven generation → image-based communication
- (3) solutions that incorporate meaningfully inefficient moments of sharing and exchange with the intention to bond participants and deepen dialogue

■ MAXIMIZE TEAM EXPERIENCE

- (1) Friendly, non-hierarchical atmosphere → redistributing power relations
- (2) Crucial role of the facilitator → Icebreaking activities, feeling of community
- (3) Easy-to-use, cheap digital tools

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Thank you!

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