

Co-creating urban commons through community-engaged pedagogies.

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The importance of empowering and engaging citizens in the shaping of their living environments to ensure a sustainable and affordable development and promote a sense of community has been highlighted in recent years (UN-Habitat). Citizens and professionals (architects, public institutions, private enterprises) are called to adopt new roles within the spatial design and provision process, which often challenges the ability of the latter to respond effectively to the rising need for a community-engaged design approach. The necessity to train future architects in conceptualising and implementing solutions, within a transdisciplinary framework, that uphold the sustainable development goals, reveals the need to revisit, assess and rework the relevant pedagogical approaches.

This paper reflects on a community-engaged housing studio approach and a subsequent design & build co-creation workshop at the Department of Architecture, University of Cyprus, in the design and development of a public space in a residential neighbourhood in Nicosia. The housing studio incorporates principles of inclusivity and sustainability and aims to create the conditions for an integrated framework of achieving sustainable urban governance and to initiate a community of practice between students, educators, researchers, enterprises, the community and the local municipality, fostering a participatory, co-creation process. Drawing from the tools and methods of live studios and Urban Living Labs, this transdisciplinary process involves the aforementioned participants at various levels and stages, and follows a circular methodology of (1) assessing and understanding, (2) engaging and co-creating, (3) co-designing and implementing and (4) assessing and evaluating.

Reflecting on the outcomes, the paper discusses the opportunities and limitations of a community-engaged design methodology to expose future graduates to real world contingencies and through interaction with different stakeholders, to encourage a sense of community and to empower the citizens as decision makers who have a sense of responsibility for their residential environment.

