FuturALL

CiAUD
Centro de Investigação
em Arquitetura, Urbanismo e Design

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Fundação
para a Ciência
e a Tecnologia

Envisioning Future through Co-creation and Design-led Planning in Deprived Urban Communities

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Keywords

Co-creation; Scenario-Elicitation; Design-led Spatial Planning; Futures-Literacy Deprived Urban Communities

Partner Institutions
AML; CIEBA/FBAUL

Expected Future Partner Institutions
CMCascais; CMSintra; CMOeiras

OBJECTIVES

The FuturALL project aims to empower deprived urban communities to become active agents in developing and testing novel participatory tools and methodologies that enable communities to envision alternative territorial futures. The project seeks to engage citizens, particularly the least engaged and most vulnerable groups, in co-creation, co-design, policy deliberation, and active participation in planning processes.

Using the Metropolitan Area of Lisbon's Plan on Deprived Communities as a reference framework and case study, specific objectives include:

- 1.Introducing future-elicitation as an innovative method and tool to stimulate spatial imagination within communities, namely by bringing together scenario-elicitation [2], design-led spatial planning [1;3], and futures literacy [4]. - 2.Testing the application of this approach in a living lab environment that explores the role of the university as a facilitator and leading actor to foster experimentation and innovation in collaborative planning, also looking towards a way back to education [4]. - 3.Contributing to the enhancement of place-based policies, with a specific focus on deprived urban communities.

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ABSTRACT + IMAGES

Since Fabrizio Barca's 2009 report, place-based approaches have become a central focus of European Cohesion Policy, particularly concerning community development and planning. The goal is to enhance the effectiveness and impact of policy investments addressing the problems and needs of certain places and communities by promoting integrated and customized strategies, rather than relying on separate sectoral approaches or universal solutions. To achieve this, place-based approaches should be: (i) site-specific and context-oriented, considering local assets, challenges, and community aspirations; (ii) integrated and cross-sectoral, seeking to harmonize different sectors for efficient policy territorialization; and (iii) collaborative and participatory, actively involving local communities, stakeholders, and organizations in the co-creation of policy strategies and solutions.

Due to their array of concurrent problems (e.g. poverty, unemployment, crime, inadequate infrastructure, social exclusion, territorial inequities), deprived urban communities are a primary target for place-based approaches. However, the co-creation of place-based approaches, particularly in such vulnerable contexts, remains a challenging task. Two main obstacles are raised: (i) First, low-skilled and underrepresented citizens and groups, particularly women, young people, but also new minorities (isolated elderly; refugees; homeless people) and other marginalized groups, often face limited political engagement. Enhancing their capacity-building, empowerment, and sense of ownership in policy-shaping is a crucial challenge. (ii) Second, tackling the roots of deprivation from an integrated perspective requires the ability of spatial imagination to envision alternative futures for one's territories. Increasing the spatial literacy of these groups and communities is essential to foster resilience in the present and build the basis for a new future.

Given these challenges, the vital key of the FuturALL project is to provide a participatory co-design and co-creation approach for empowering local actors as active agents, namely by helping them to imagine what they want for the future of their communities and territories. The main idea is to implement innovative design-led tools to support collaborative planning processes, which explore future urban imaginaries within communities in deprived areas. The ultimate goal is to guide place-based policies and collective decision-making while considering the development of tactical urban projects.

But how can we use future urban imaginaries to improve collaborative urban processes and empower local communities by strengthening their spatial and future literacy?
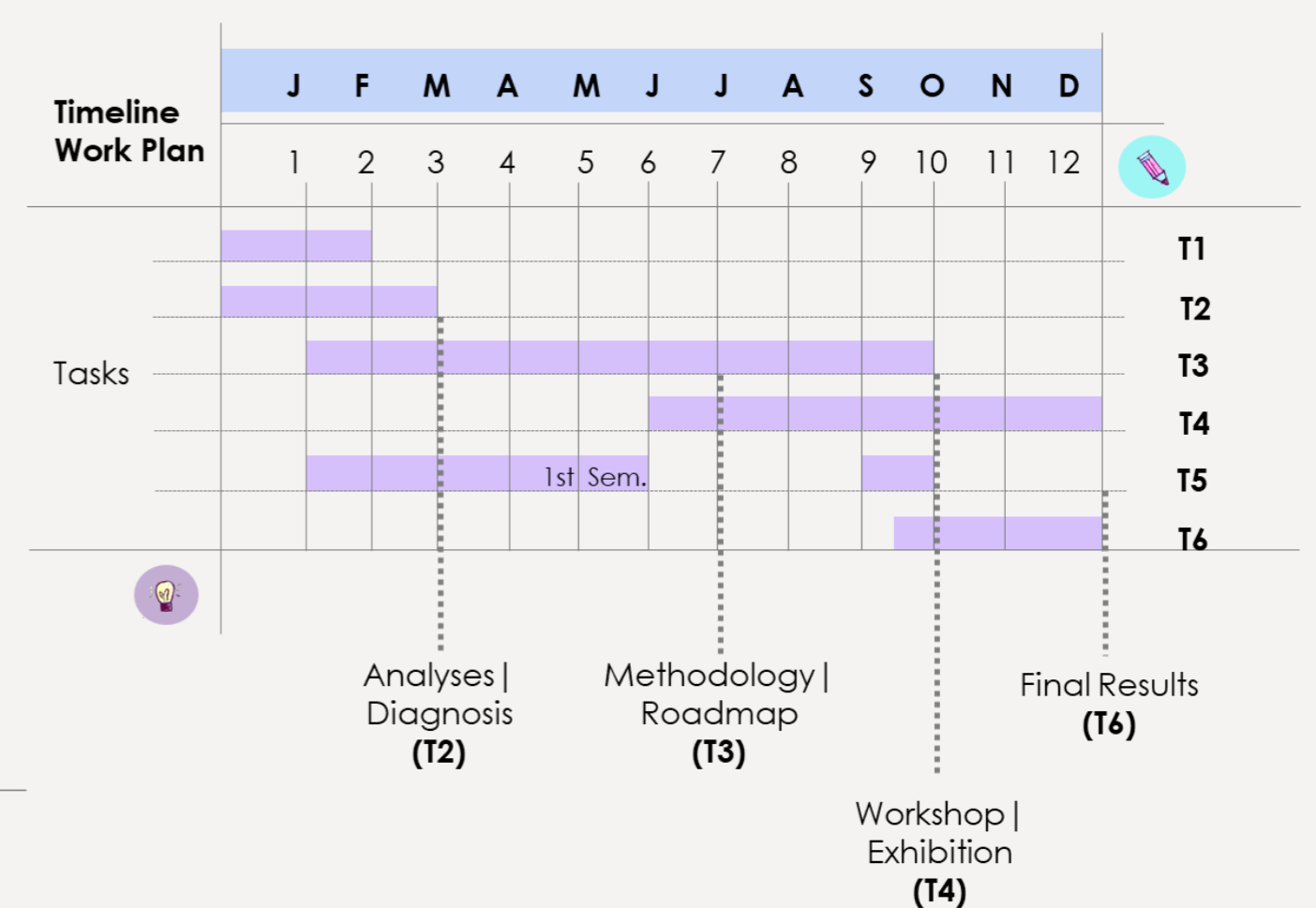
To unpack this primary research question, FuturALL aims to employ a twofold methodology:
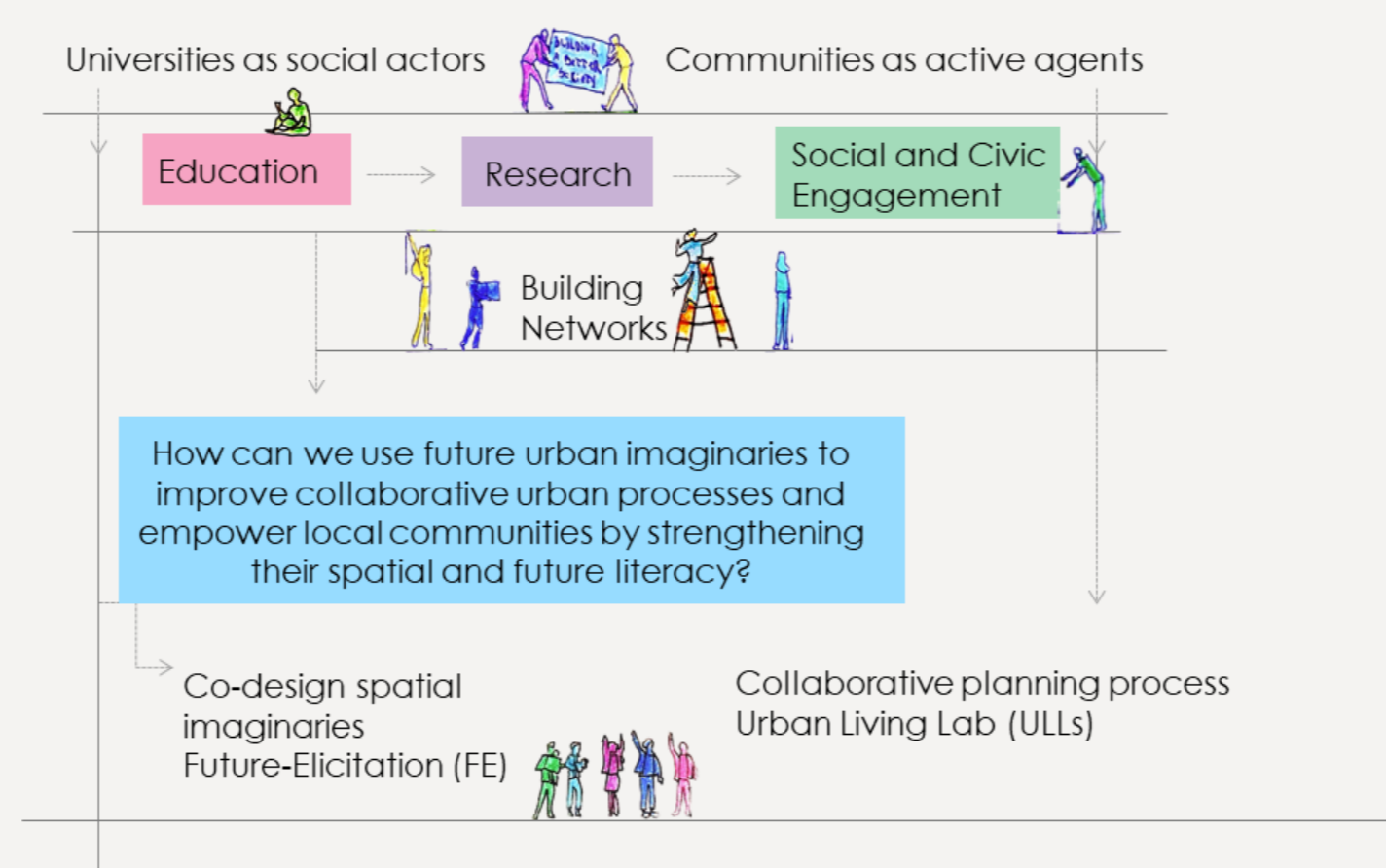
(i) Use an Urban Living Lab (ULL) [5] to facilitate engaging activities that foster a learning environment within communities. ULLs are considered experimental arenas where innovative tools are tested in real-life contexts, connecting academics, non-academics, and stakeholders to provide support for decision-making and place-based policies. This approach emphasizes the proximity to individuals who require a voice and change, leveraging the role of universities as social anchors. (ii) Advance the concept and method of Future-Elicitation (FE) to stimulate the development of spatial imagination among individuals through design-led, evaluation, and visual-based tools. FE combines three established approaches: a) Futures Literacy [4], a concept and methodology by UNESCO aimed at developing prospective thinking skills, enabling the anticipation of potential futures and utilizing this ability to drive co-creation, collective mobilization, and action.; b) Scenario-elicitation [2], a participatory method that makes use of photographs to reframe various possible scenarios and elicit people's perspectives on their living environment; c) Design-led spatial planning, which relies on visioning techniques such as maps, images, storytelling [3], and other design tools to support spatial planning and territorial governance at different scales, such as the Place Standard Tool, an urban design formative evaluation tool designed to facilitate and structure conversations around the quality of places [1].

As a case study, the project will operate in one of the deprived communities that have been identified in the Metropolitan Area of Lisbon's Plan for Deprived Communities as a target for place-based approaches under the investments of Portugal's Recovery and Resilience Plan (PRR). Research achievements and results encompass the following: (i) Concrete inputs for the enhancement and implementation of the current integrated place-based strategy for the selected case study - a direct contribution to the results of the PRR; (ii) Policy recommendations for designing and implementing place-based approaches in deprived urban communities; (iii) Reflections on the potential impact of co-creation practices and methodologies, namely future-elicitation, on educational practices and current pedagogy in urbanism and spatial planning.

Overall, the FuturALL project explores the role and social responsibility of universities in promoting civic engagement and innovation in local governance. By extending research activities beyond the confines of the campus, this project ultimately aims to make significant contributions to: the empowerment and capacity-building of the least engaged communities, namely in terms of spatial and future literacy; the improvement of public policies, namely integrated place-based approaches; and the co-production of knowledge with potential impacts on both research and education.

Universities as social actors → Communities as active agents
Education → Research → Social and Civic Engagement
Building Networks

How can we use future urban imaginaries to improve collaborative urban processes and empower local communities by strengthening their spatial and future literacy?

Co-design spatial imaginaries Future-Elicitation (FE) — Collaborative planning process Urban Living Lab (ULLs)

Timeline Work Plan — J F M A M J J A S O N D — 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12

Tasks: T1 T2 T3 T4 T5 T6 — 1st. Sem.

Analyses | Diagnosis (T2) — Methodology | Roadmap (T3) — Workshop | Exhibition (T4) — Final Results (T6)

Future-Elicitation (FE) | Futures-Literacy | Scenario-Elicitation | Design-led spatial planning | Visual-based approach | Co-design spatial imaginaries

Urban Living Labs (ULLs) | Innovative methodological and educational practices | University – Community – governance engagement | Place-based interventions | Collaborative planning processes

University - Community Engagement ⟷ **Active urban agents** ⟷ **Future-Elicitation (FE)**

How can the co-design process and spatial imagination be improved for more effective future urban alternatives? → Strategies: Co-creation; Futures Literacy; Scenario-Elicitation; Design-led spatial planning

How to facilitate the integration of new knowledge, practices, and behaviors between university and community? → Approach: Social Responsibility; Civic Engagement

What is the methodology? → Developing an Urban Living Lab (ULL) environment of experiences to implement and test innovative planning design-led tools (Future_Elicitation)

Results? **Understanding the needs for the development of the Community's life by stimulating spatial imagination and for that to improve place-based policies**

Methodological level — Governance and policy level — Educational level

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SCIENTIFIC RELEVANCE FOR THE DISCIPLINE

In recent decades, urbanism and spatial planning have undergone significant transitions and paradigm shifts. These include the shift from: urban form to urban processes; regulatory land-use planning to strategic, collaborative, and argumentative planning; statutory to soft planning; government to governance. This project, focusing on co-design and co-creation, offers valuable contributions to address these transition challenges:

(i) Firstly, it seeks to reintroduce spatial imagination into urban governance and collaborative planning processes. In this transitional phase, urbanism and planning have been moving away from a sense of spatiality, i.e., a territorially-focused and spatial-oriented approach. FuturALL aims to reestablish spatial imagination as a performative act within urban governance. (ii) Secondly, engaging local actors, especially marginalized groups, remains a challenging issue in urbanism and spatial planning. FuturALL aims to promote their involvement by experimenting with visual-based and co-design techniques in collaborative processes.

EXPECTED ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL IMPACT

Ensuring the active participation of deprived communities in shaping their futures and territories, particularly the most vulnerable groups, is a key research goal. To achieve this, the project emphasizes the interconnectedness of research, education, and community development, embracing the third mission and social responsibility of universities. FuturALL is expected to generate economic and social impact at multiple levels: (i) Global level: Contributing to the 17 SDGs and their targets outlined in the 2030 Agenda, notably: Target 10.2 - SDG 10 to reduce inequalities; all targets of SDG 11 with particular attention to Target 11.9, promoting urban sustainability and inclusive integrated planning; and Targets 17 E; F, G; H I of SDG 17, fostering partnerships and policy coherence. (ii) National, metropolitan, and local level: Providing direct contributions to the domestic implementation of PRR in deprived communities within the country. (iii) Institutional level: Facilitating the integration of new knowledge, practices, and behaviors within academia, local and national government institutions, as well as community organizations and associations.

RESEARCH PLAN AND TASKS

Building upon previous research conducted by team members (Softplan; Writing Urban Places [3]; Urban Maestro [1]; LUDA and PdD Researches [2;5]), this project seeks to find common synergies, while emphasizing the pivotal role of academia as a catalyst to foster change in local development and policy-making. This project also aims to expand to Portugal (Southern Europe) some of the learnings and approaches in test in Horizon Europe's project DUST – Democratising jUst Sustainable Transition, one of the team member's missions as a member of the DUST's Advisory Board.

The following research steps were designed as an experimental research ground for future research, considering the primary goal of Embryo Projects – leverage future research and applications to funding.

Task 1: Theoretical insight and literature review

Task goal: Conduct a literature review and in-depth discussions on the primary debates surrounding the research object and main goal of the project.

Task steps: This task encompasses several levels of debate: (i) Exploring the impact of the reciprocal relationship between the university and society in implementing collaborative planning processes through innovative methodological inputs and fresh educational practices. This involves gathering case studies and good practices supported by living labs environments; (ii) Debating the rationale, methods, and approaches employed by the three methodological references (futures literacy; scenario-elicitation; and design-led planning) that support future-elicitation techniques; (iii) Investigating the construction of socio-spatial imaginaries as collective and performative acts and understanding how to harness the power of transformative imagination to unlock local potentials and empower vulnerable groups.

Main Output: Producing a state-of-the-art that will play an instrumental role in both subsequent tasks: task 3 (providing conceptual and operational references for constructing design-led and visual-based tools) and Task 4 (informing the selection of collaborative methods and techniques for engaging activities).

Task 2: Case study's identification and diagnosis

Task goal: Select and characterize a deprived urban community as the empirical framework for the study.

Task steps: The empirical framework for the research relies on the Metropolitan Plan for Deprived Communities in Lisbon's Metropolitan Area (LMA). Approved in December 2021, this Plan provides a strategic framework for investments in deprived communities under the Portuguese Recovery and Resilience Plan (PRR). PRR demands integrated place-based interventions that engage local and sectoral actors and address various socio-territorial vulnerabilities. The plan identifies six key territorial units where deprived communities are located. The task involves:

2.1. Selection: (i) Examine the Metropolitan Plan to grasp its broader context, relationship with other strategic documents (e.g., Metropolitan Strategy 2030), and contents. (ii) With the support of the LMA (a project partner), chose a territorial unit considering the area's history of community development and the ease of establishing contacts with local stakeholders. (iii) Based on previous analysis, select the deprived community, giving priority to those with local living labs or similar structures.

2.2. Characterization and diagnosis: (i) Analyze the proposed plans developed by the municipalities to access PRR's funding; (ii) Data collection and site survey; (iii) Prospective diagnosis; mapping, socioeconomic characterization, spatial analysis.

Main Output: Set the empirical framework for the study

Task 3: Methodological framework for future-elicitation

Task goal: Refine the concept and method of future-elicitation by exploring futures literacy, scenario-elicitation, and design-led spatial planning. Future-elicitation aims to achieve four main objectives: enhance individuals' foresighting and future-oriented thinking skills to improve their future literacy; introduce visioning mechanisms and techniques to enhance spatial-oriented thinking and imagination, thereby developing individuals' spatial literacy; use foresighting and visioning to support integrated place-based interventions at different scales of approach; and use urban governance to elicit people's, emotions, opinions, facts, and reactions.

Task steps: (i) Collect and review tools and techniques used in futures literacy, scenario-elicitation [2], and design-led planning. (ii) Brainstorm possibilities for combining different tools and techniques while considering the main objectives of future-elicitation [3]. (iii) Explore and test design-led, evaluation, and visual-based approaches within a specific context, focusing on the selected case study, such as urban design Formative Evaluation Tools (FET) for engaging local stakeholders and communities of deprived urban areas to assess and identify the strengths and weaknesses of a place [1]. (iv) Facilitate interdisciplinary discussions involving fields such as architecture, arts, urbanism, spatial planning, landscape architecture, and geography. Engage students in articulation with task 5. (v) Investigate diverse approaches to introduce these techniques in real urban governance settings, taking into account different groups of people (women, young people, etc.) and stakeholders.

Main Output: Prepare a roadmap and methodological guide for implementing future-elicitation. This will be the basis for task 4.

Task 4: FuturALL Living Lab

Task goal: Set a 'FuturALL Lab' as an Urban Living Lab [5] in the selected community and test the future-elicitation methodology. In this exploratory phase – the embryo project – the focus is on laying the foundation for the lab rather than full implementation.

Task steps:

(i) Establish institutional contacts and partnerships with the municipality and local technical unit responsible for PRR implementation in the selected community. (ii) Build connections and networks with local associations, NGOs, universities, and researchers working in the area. (iii) Explore existing living labs in the vicinity and identify potential physical spaces for workshops, exhibitions, interviews, and the realization of other types of engaging activities. (iv) Organize a collaborative workshop. (v) Organize an exhibition showcasing the results of task 3.

Main output: Organization of a workshop and exhibition.

Task 5: FuturALL Elective Course

Task goal: Engage students in the study, enhance research-education collaboration, and explore innovative pedagogical approaches while raising awareness about the social responsibility of universities.

Task steps: In task 5 it is expected to: (i) Offer a one-semester elective course on co-creation and future-elicitation practices and methodologies. (ii) Develop course contents, methodology, and assessment criteria. (iii) Involve students in task 3 and the organization of the exhibition and workshop from task 4

Main output: Create an elective course on future-elicitation.

Task 6: Results and Recommendations

Task goal: Analyze research outcomes and provide insights and recommendations to enhance place-based approaches for deprived urban communities and introduce co-creation practices in education.

Task steps:

(i) Identify key challenges and opportunities in implementing place-based approaches in deprived urban communities. (ii) Assess difficulties, obstacles, and potentials of future-elicitation as a methodological framework to support place-based solutions. (iii) Survey the community and stakeholders on their perception of future-elicitation methods. (iv) Evaluate the university's role in the involvement of students in driving these engaging activities near the community. (v) Provide recommendations for designing and implementing place-based policies. (vi) Reflect on the potential impact of co-creation practices in urbanism and urban planning education. (vii) Assess the overall research proposal using SWOT analysis.

Main output: Publication of an article; report on the research outlines, seeking improvements for future funding applications.

EXPECTED SCIENTIFIC RESULTS

Scientific results are expected at three levels: (i) Methodological level: Develop and test future-elicitation as a new methodological concept and approach that incorporates co-creation practices and advances the state-of-the-art by combining established methodologies. Future-elicitation also elaborates on the innovative idea of spatial literacy, one of the weaknesses of place-based approaches, in our view. (ii) Governance and policy level: Introduce innovative approaches to local urban governance settings and provide recommendations for designing and implementing place-based policies in deprived urban communities. (iii) Educational level: Explore novel pedagogical approaches in urbanism and spatial planning, leveraging co-creation practices, conducted in a real-context environment with interdisciplinary collaboration and participatory planning settings. This fosters the involvement of students with diverse stakeholders, promotes knowledge exchange, and nurtures critical thinking and civic awareness at both the university and the community, i.e., the co-production of knowledge.

BUDGET: € 7.500,00

The budget will primarily be allocated to two main budget lines as outlined below:

(i) Purchase of goods and services (€5.500,00) for the following activities:

- Support data collection and mapping in diagnosis and analysis; - Development of spatial imaginaries tools and production of visual materials, including infographics on research results. - Design and produce the exhibition materials. - Coffee break for the workshop.

(ii) Missions (€2.000,00):

- Support the participation in scientific meetings, conferences, the presentation of the research outlines and results, and networking activities.