Culture for social resilience

The BSR Cultural Pearls Guidebook

About the project

"BSR Cultural Pearl" is a title for smaller towns, cities and municipalities that provides awarded candidates a programme and support to use culture in building social resilience.

By engaging their citizens, increasing quality of life, sense of belonging and trust, they will be able to make their communities stronger and more resilient.

Who are we?

We are a partnership within the project **"Baltic Sea Region Cultural Pearls for more resilient Cities and Regions"** co-financed by **the Interreg Baltic Sea Region programme**.

SWEDEN Council of the Baltic Sea States	**GERMANY** Heinrich Böll Foundation Schleswig-Holstein
FINLAND Regional Council of Ostrobothnia	**ESTONIA** Creative Estonia
LATVIA Northern Dimension Partnership on Culture	**GERMANY** Ministry of Justice, European Affairs and Consumer Protection of Land Schleswig-Holstein
DENMARK Danish Cultural Institute	**GERMANY** ARS BALTICA
LATVIA Vidzeme Planning Region	**DENMARK** Varde Municipality
POLAND Baltic Sea Cultural Centre	**LITHUANIA** Alytus municipality

We enjoy the support of our associated organizations:

Pomorskie Tourism Board (EUSBSR Policy Area "Tourism")

Council of Oulu Region (EUSBSR Policy Area "Tourism")

Region Skåne

Federation of Swedish Municipalities in Ostrobothnia for Education and Culture

Estonian Business and Innovation Agency

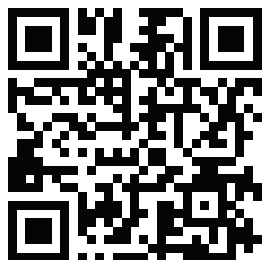**National Association of Creative and Cultural Industries Lithuania**

Region of Southern Denmark

Union of Baltic Cities

More information

www.culturalpearls.eu

www.interreg-baltic.eu/project/bsr-cultural-pearls

Who is this for?

This guidebook serves as an introduction for local and regional authorities who want to strengthen and empower their communities.

We believe that strong, capable and engaged communities can create liveable, well-managed cities prepared for the future. They ensure better lives for their inhabitants, allow for better decision-making, and ultimately create resilient societies able to withstand and overcome challenges.

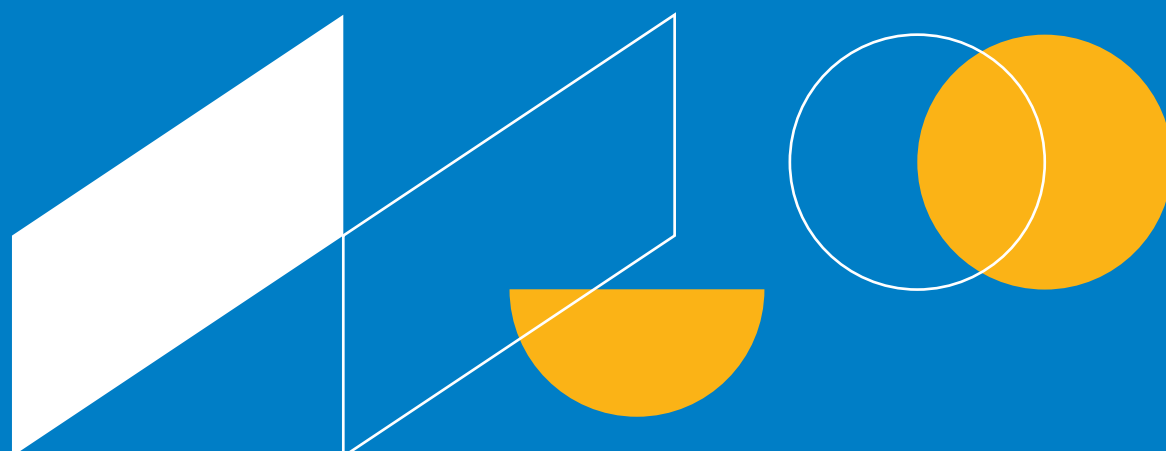**The Guidebook gives answers to the following questions:**

↘   What is social resilience?

↘   How does culture build social resilience?

↘   Why participation matters?

↘   Where do I start? – The Culture & Resilience Action Plan

It also provides examples and inspiration.

We invite you to join us and participate in the process of making your town, city or municipality more resilient by building a better, stronger and more flexible community – in other words, a community better prepared for today's challenges and for future ones.

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1. Background

BSR Cultural Pearls – Why it matters

In a fast-changing, ever more urbanized world, some of the most essential aspects of human (co-) existence are diminishing: trust, connectedness, sense of belonging, ability to collaborate and co-create.

Instead, increasingly fragmented, disengaged societies are having a hard time creating happy coexistence for its inhabitants, and prevent effective collaboration to invent a brighter future.

Meanwhile, many smaller cities, towns and municipalities are struggling with demographic change, the pull-factor of larger cities and with shrinking budgets. In the face of global and regional stressors such as war, migration, economic downturn, or the risk of climate disaster, decision-makers call for building **"resilience"**.

Rarely, however, do such efforts focus on the very backbone of any society – community. Nor do most cities and towns have the resources, knowledge or mandate to comprehensively address the subject. This calls for a shift in the narrative around resilient societies. It requires a new perspective on the role of public authorities in supporting these essential characteristics of community by being active facilitators of interaction between people. It underscores the importance of breaking silos and engaging in cross-departmental and cross-sectoral approaches. But it also calls for initiatives to equip local authorities with tools and knowledge about how to support community, engagement and participation – to use the power of local culture and creativity to create spaces for people to meet, connect, engage, participate and collaborate.
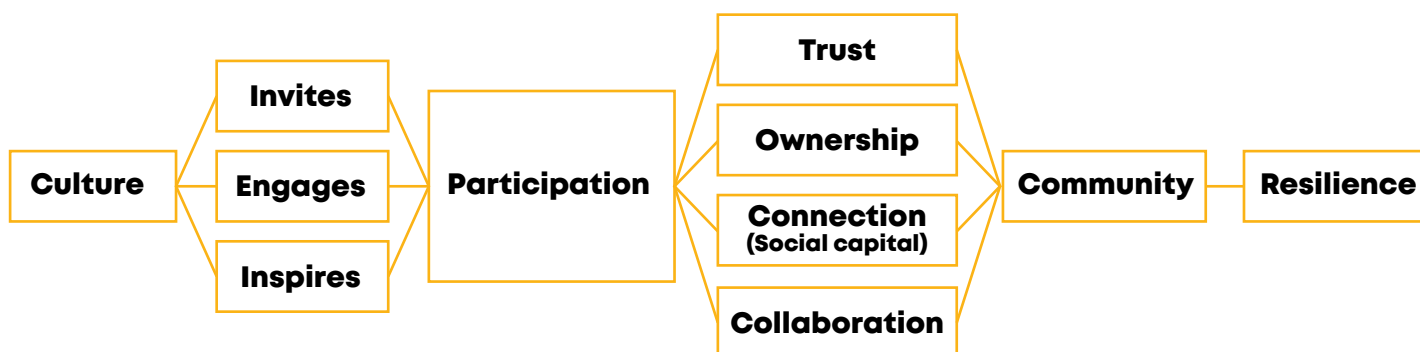
2. What is Social Resilience?

Social resilience refers to the ability of individuals, communities, and societies to withstand and recover from social, economic and environmental shocks and stresses. It involves capacity to adapt and learn from these challenges as well as to maintain or improve social and economic well-being.

In simple terms, social resilience is about a community's ability to overcome hardship together.

Countries in the Baltic Sea Region differ in size, historic background and cultural heritage, but they all share common challenges such as climate change, urbanization, economic down-turn, segregation, aging society or political tensions that influence our daily lives and require collective action here and now. Therefore, it is important to develop a shared understanding of the importance of social resilience and to work together to strengthen it in the region.

In order to adjust to the challenges and demands of this fast-changing world and make our neighbourhoods more liveable, decision–makers not only have to take good decisions but involve and engage their citizens. We need to be able to solve the problems of today, learn how to turn negative trends and prepare for the unexpected in the future. All together.

Social resilience can be strengthened through a variety of strategies, such as building strong social networks and relationships, investing in education and training, promoting economic diversity and fostering a sense of community ownership and participation. Cultural activities such as music, dance, theatre, and visual arts can bring people together, create a sense of belonging, and strengthen social connections that can help individuals and communities to overcome difficult times.

In the next chapter we focus specifically on how culture can be used to engage with communities to build social resilience.

3. What is the role of culture for community?

We regard culture as a tool for strengthening communities and providing them with the capabilities to be active, inclusive and engaged.

We apply a very broad definition of culture. It includes all creative activities that bring people together, from poetry, theatre, music, arts and design to fashion, rituals, language, food and everyday life.

Culture as a tool can be viewed in different ways:

↘ **The Gateway**   cultural activities are an easy and encouraging way of inviting people to join. Invite people to a public hearing, and most will choose to do something else. Invite them to a barcamp, a food festival, an open-air photo exhibition, or a poetry-slam instead!

↘ **The Spark**   culture and creativity provides us with new perspectives, new ideas, and inspiration. It can challenge our views and be inspiring. Engaging in creative activities with others trains our minds to look for new and unexpected solutions, it increases risk-taking, experimentation and innovation. Doing creative activities together with others also develops collaborative skills.

↘ **The Space**   culture creates a space to meet and gives us reason to interact with other people enforcing social relations. Inclusive culture is open for everyone.

Culture and Creative Sector (CCS)

There is an entire sector of professional artists, cultural animators and other creatives willing and able to support you to bring culture and creativity into your process, providing a service as designers of processes, as facilitators of conversations, or as inspiration to new projects. This can include using the skills of creatives for a better dialogue with various stakeholders, co-creating future visions and scenarios together and increasing civil engagement by concrete artistic interventions.

Thanks to the CCS services public authorities can unlock new ideas and approaches to engaging with the public.

In summary, culture is an effective tool to spark engagement in members of your community, even reaching those that do not normally take part in processes of a public nature.

Engaging with cultural activities in itself strengthens social relations, local cohesion and thus resilience. But it may even invite people to actively participate in more substantial processes of development.

The next chapter explores why participation matters.

10 STEPS TO GET PEOPLE INVOLVED BY JAAKKO BLOMBERG
www.jaakkoblomberg.fi/home

1. Be open for new possibilities and be the one to say them out loud.

2. Keep the concept as simple as possible. Choose an easy and understandable name and clear roles.

3. Don't get stuck on the original idea. Create visions together.

4. Establish clear frames, structure and tools. Be also ready to change them, if needed.

5. There is room for creativity. People like to create. Don't make unnecessary limits.

6. Shortterm commitment is ok. Participants can decide how to take part.

7. Rewards of participation: doing good, making and meeting friends, having fun, making something meaningful, being part of something bigger, experience, money.

8. Be open. Without knowledge people don't feel like being part of something. Don't create wrong expectations. Make it possible to always join.

9. Be present. Be there to help and to react to questions, problems and suggestions.

10. Make it attractive. In real life and online.

4. Why participation matters?

Participation is key in building connected, strong, and therefore, resilient places.

It offers the possibility for citizens to form and express their ideas and opinions improving the way they live and function in their local community.

It empowers them as it allows them to have real influence on the processes and decisions concerning public matters.

Thanks to participation people learn how to become more sensitive not only to their own needs but also to the needs of others and how to take greater responsibility for their neighbourhoods.

Participatory process may be initiated by anyone e.g. by local leaders, district councils, NGOs, community centres etc., however it needs some municipal support.

The choice of participatory tools depends on the group of participants, the goal of the process and the amount of time that can be spent on it.
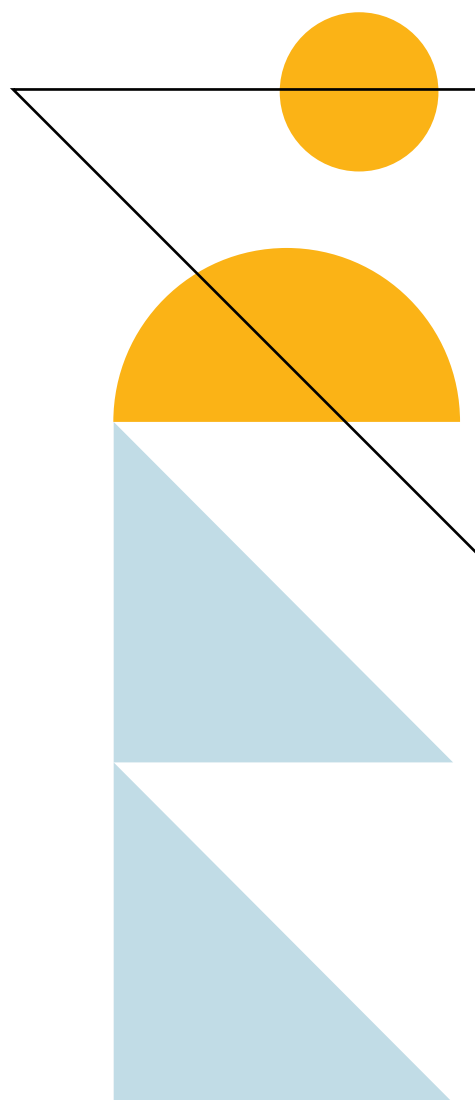
Some useful principles include:

↘ There is no right or wrong use of participatory methods;

↘ The goal is always to learn;

↘ There can be no learning without trying (and sometimes failing);

↘ Using participatory methods may be challenging
– and that is alright.

Using cultural methods allows for varied participation and may better reflect the neighbourhood's identity, culture and history. The shared experience of co-creation not only facilitates communication, but also strengthens social relations.

Participation may have various forms reflecting different level of citizen engagement as shown for instance in *The Hierarchy of Participation* by *WeSolve Better Together*.

Hierarchy of participation figure:
by *We Solve*
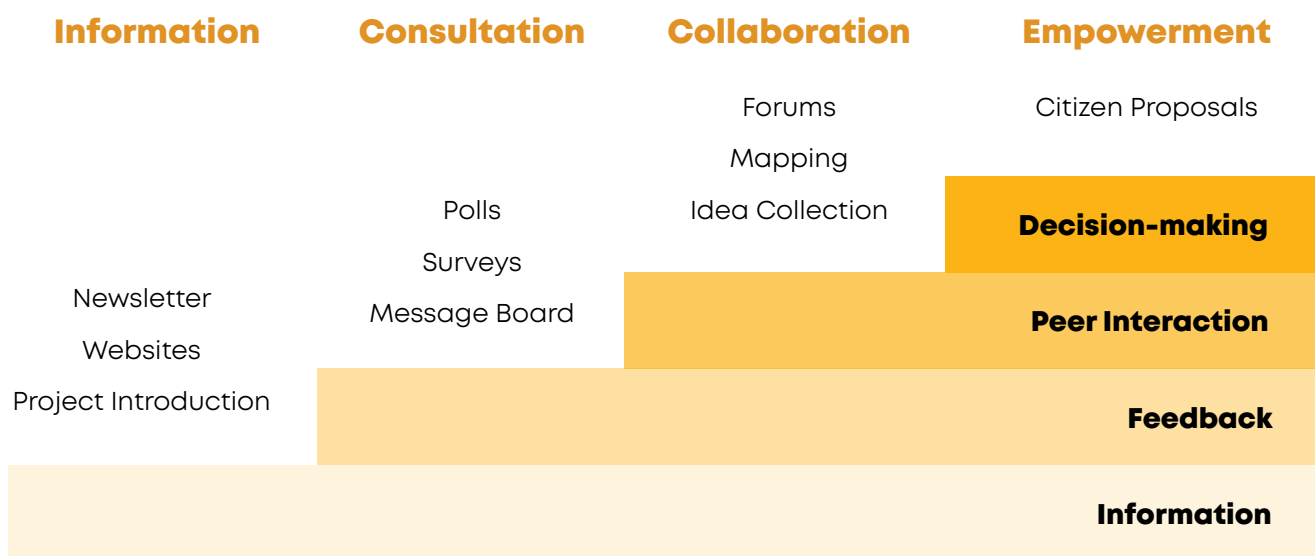
www.wesolve.app/the-hierarchy-of-participation-levels-techniques-and-examples

5. How to create a Culture & Resilience Action Plan?

Having understood how you as a local authority can use culture to empower your community and create a more resilient society, you now turn to action.

In the following, we present a step-by-step approach to creating an action plan for culture-driven social resilience.

Prepare a diagnosis
You have to understand your city or town well, have a bigger picture of it. That is why you need to identify your assets/positive sides and challenges you face, shocks and stresses you can encounter;

Form a vision
You need to be clear of what you want your city to be in a longer run, what is to be the main outcome of the planned transformation process. A wide and inclusive process ensures ownership and understanding;

Identify concrete issues
Themes related to your challenges which, when addressed, will help achieve your vision (e.g. ageing society/demographic changes in the society, new technologies, migration, poverty, education needs, climate change and flood risks, urbanization);

Identify areas/places
You want to cover (e.g. district with a specific problem, part of the city, city centre, etc.);

Identify your goals
You have to decide what you want to achieve (e.g.: "We will increase meaningful interactions between generations by 50% in the next year", "We will increase citizen wellbeing by making the city more green", "we will make all urban spaces more available and accessible to citizens", "We will increase the walkability of suburban areas". (On the basis of the Resilience Strategy of Vejle Municipality in Denmark). Remember to specify your goals by making them Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound (SMART);

Identify stakeholders
Key institutions, organisations, other entities, which you plan to involve in the process to build local partnership (e.g. business support organizations, key NGOs such as environmental organisations or local associations, youth organisations);

↘ **Identify Culture and Creative Sector**

Which present in your city you would like to involve in the transformation (e.g. cultural institutions such as libraries, culture or meeting centres, cinemas, etc., media companies, artists, musicians, film producers, design institutions/companies, video games producers, software companies, local television or radio station). It will be helpful to think about cultural measures/tools that will be used to achieve your goals, too;

↘ **Identify local leaders**

I.e. local change-makers – individuals who are active and ready to take lead to help you involve the citizens;

↘ **Identify the core team**

Responsible for preparing and implementing the action plan (e.g. department/s, local politicians, cultural, educational or other institutions);

↘ **Identify your target groups**

Which communities and/or social groups you are planning to address and how they will be involved in the process of strengthening social resilience;

↘ **Develop specific actions**

Needed to reach your goals (e.g. "Conduct a survey of cross-generational interaction", "plant 50 new trees and establish 2 new picnic meadows", "organize a school competition for students walking to school" make sports' spaces more open to all citizens). Actions should refer to one or more of your defined goals and include all steps needed to achieve the goal; they should explain:
- what will happen,
- who will do it,
- when they will take place,
- what resources (financial and human) are needed;

↘ **Develop good narration**

To "sell" the plan/initiatives – storytelling as well efficient communication channels is helps to have citizens and all the stakeholders on your side;

↘ **Identify monitoring and evaluation process**

Envision tools, institutions, time-span which will help you to check the level of your success when implementing the vision.

BSR CULTURAL PEARLS

Interreg
Baltic Sea Region

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the European Union

RESILIENT ECONOMIES AND COMMUNITIES
BSR Cultural Pearls

6. Inspiration & good practice

Everyone's Backyard – PL

#method #tool #revitalization #neighbourhood #art #youth #community
Challenge: **weak social relations, neglected neighbourhood**

Iza Rutkowska, an artist/designer, in 2015 was commissioned by the City of Wroclaw to help renovate a run-down backyard. She used participatory artistic tools to involve local residents. First, with the help of a giant hedgehog „toy", she gathered children for plays and attracted grown-ups' attention. Then she knocked on the doors and listened to people's ideas. One of them was to take local kids for holidays with the Hedgehog. And in 2016 it was made possible through crowdfunding. This successful realisation of the residents' idea helped the artist to win their trust and mobilised them to renovate their yard. In 2018 they got funding from the municipal participatory budget and together with the artist they redisigned and rebuilt the space. Later, Iza Rutkowska created the School of Knocking on Doors so that an interdisciplinary team could gain practical knowledge on „performative" consultations with inhabitants.

Cultural tools	Social resilience aspects
↳ Co-design and co-creation ↳ Performative action ↳ „Performative" consultations ↳ Use of giant toy for social animation	↳ Strengthening social relations in the neighbourhood ↳ Building mutual trust between the residents and authorities ↳ Participation in decision-making ↳ Ensuring a sense of ownership ↳ Empowerment of residents ↳ Youth involvement ↳ Inter-generation dialogue

www.izarutkowska.com/en/everyones-backyard

KreisKultur [Circle Culture] - DE

#method #villages #municipalities #funds #communities

Challenge: **insufficient interaction btw cultural institutions and communities**

Villages, town districts or communities are invited to develop their own cultural program. The development happens in a co-creative workshop, whose aim is to find out which topics are most important for the community.
Based on the workshop's outcome the cultural format is developed in cooperation with the cultural institutions' staff. The results are presented to the community.
In consequence of joint work there comes a cultural event tailor-made to the needs of the community. Cooperation between the communities and the institutions continues throughout the funding phase in order to enable a cultural exchange between institutions and the citizens.

The funding is provided in cooperation with the state of Schleswig-Holstein and the district of Rendsburg-Eckernförde.

Cultural tools	Social resilience aspects
↘ Co-design and co-creation ↘ Cultural animators as facilitators	↘ Community building ↘ The sense of togetherness is maintained ↘ Better dialogue and cooperation between citizens, cultural institutions and authorities

www.kreiskultur.org/kreiskultur/das-projekt

Leisure Day for Newly Arrived - FI

#method #village #communities #social diversity

Challenge: **immigration and integration**

In the western Finnish city Närpes (population ca. 10000), Swedish is the majority language (77.5%) while 5.3% speak Finnish and 17.2% of the population has a mother tongue other than Finnish or Swedish. The Leisure Day for Newly Arrived was arranged to present what leisure opportunities for are available for residents in Närpes. At the same time the associations had the opportunity to attract new members. More than 20 associations representing cultural, sports and youth activities participated in the event. The city also presented its own programme of leisure activities. About 300 people attended the event, among them there were mainly new residents and families with children, but also other younger and older Närpes' residents. The Leisure Day is organised by the Recreation Department and the city's integration staff.

Cultural tools	Social resilience aspects
↘ Presentation of cultural activities available to citizens ↘ Active invitation to co-creation	↘ Building strong social networks, esp. for vulnerable groups (e.g. immigrants) ↘ Creating integration space for residents from different backgrounds ↘ Activation of community ↘ Cross-sectoral co-operation

Contact persons:
Culture Secretary Victor Strömbäck +358 405690901.
Integration coordinator Jennifer Ståhlgård +358 407678921.

Vidzeme Culture Program – LV

#art #funding #community #rural #participatory budget
Challenge: **need to strengthen citizen involvement**

The Vidzeme Culture Program is an essential financial instrument that promotes and ensures the cultural activities in Vidzeme region (Latvia). The Vidzeme Culture Programme funding is a part of "Culture Programs in the Regions".

The Vidzeme Culture Program provides an opportunity for local residents of the region to implement their creative cultural ideas, thus strengthening the local community and cultural values of the Vidzeme region. The program is very popular among the local residents which is confirmed each year by a significant number of project applications covering a wide range of cultural events. Citizen engagement in the decision making process is crucial. Consultations with the residents are carried out during the project evaluation process (according to the participatory budgeting method). Many local citizens are involved in the project implementation process, too (visitors, artists, coordinators, etc.) - each year ca. 40 000 people.

The funding of the Vidzeme Culture Program has been received within the State Culture Capital Foundations program "Latvian Historical Lands Development Program".

Cultural tools	Social resilience aspects
↘ Cultural Programme as a tool to build/sgtrengthen local identity and stronger community	↘ Funding cultural measures/getting CCS involved ↘ Building feeling of agency ↘ Participation in decision making ↘ Strengthening/building local identity ↘ Community building

www.balso.vidzeme.lv/noteikumi

7. Definitions

↘ **CCS/CCI**   Culture and Creative Sector / Culture and Creative Industry – used more or less interchangeably – defined by the EU as: "all sectors whose activities are based on cultural values or artistic and other individual or collective creative expressions. The [Culture and Creative] sectors include architecture, archives, libraries and museums, artistic crafts, audiovisual (including film, television, video games and multimedia), tangible and intangible cultural heritage, design (including fashion design), festivals, music, literature, performing arts, books and publishing, radio, and visual arts; [Regulation establishing the Creative Europe Programme, COM/2018/366 final - 2018/0190 (COD) Ch1, art 2].

↘ **Shock**   A shock is a sudden event that impacts the vulnerability of a city, citizens, or society. It may mean loss of life, disability, damage to infrastructure and housing, loss of livelihoods, reductions in government support, etc.. These can be natural, man-made or economic disasters. Examples include weather and climate related events (torrential rains, floods, draughts, heat/cold waves, climate variability, land degradation), terrorism, conflicts, deforestation, gender-based violence, crime, fire, market failures, toxic spills, pandemics etc.

↘ **Social Resilience**   Social resilience refers to the ability of individuals, communities, and societies to withstand and recover from social, economic and environmental shocks and stresses. It involves capacity to adapt and learn from these challenges as well as to maintain or improve social and economic well-being. In simple terms, social resilience is about a community's ability to overcome hardship together.

↘ **Stressor**   A slow-onset event, long-term change or lengthy disruptions that can be of high impact but generally occur over a longer period of time and subject individuals, communities or societies to tension. Examples include aging societies, consequences of migration, brain-drain, social conflicts, loss of jobs, substance addictions, poverty, health problems.

8. Resources and further reading

Urban Toolkit on Cultural Tools - **www. urbantoolkit.eu**

On Participation

Bates, Oliver – "6 reasons why participation important"
www.linkedin.com/pulse/6-reasons-why-participation-important-oliver-bates

Grow through Activating Local Potential (GALOP)
Good practises (Træna). Grow through activating local potential

People Powered - "The Participation Playbook"
www.participationplaybook.org

SLOCUM, Nikki - "Participatory Methods Toolkit – A practitioner's manual"
www.archive.unu.edu/hq/library/Collection/PDF_files/CRIS/PMT.pdf

We solve, "Hierarchy of participation levels"
www.wesolve.app/the-hierarchy-of-participation-levels-techniques-and-examples

On Resilience

NORDREGIO, Resilience Study
www.nordregio.org/wpcontent/uploads/2017/04/Resilience-Study__Feb-2.pdf

OECD, Resilient Cities
www.oecd.org/cfe/resilient-cities.htm

RESILIENT CITIES NETWORK, What is urban resilience
www.resilientcitiesnetwork.org/what-is-urban-resilience

URBACT, Resilient Europe Network
www.urbact.eu/networks/resilient-europe

URBAN RESILIENCE HUB, Social Resilience Guide
www.urbanresiliencehub.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Social-Resilience-Guide-SMALL-Pages.pdf

On Culture

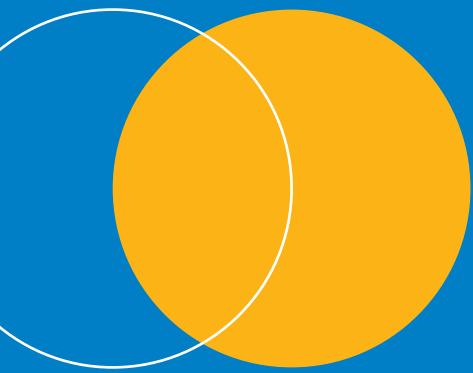Voices of Culture Europe "Role of Culture in Non-urban areas of the European Union"
Link to Voices of Culture
Vos, Aat. (2020). Can cultural institutions be third places?
Can Cultural Institutions Be Third Places?

Global Grassroots, "Spotlight on: Sense of community and belonging"
Sense of community and belonging

Academic Articles

Barcus, H. R., & Brunn, S. D. (2010). *Place elasticity: Exploring a new conceptualization of mobility and place attachment in rural America. Geografiska Annaler: Series B, Human Geography*, 92(4), 281-295.

Brown, B. B., Altman, I., & Werner, C. M. (2012). *Place attachment*.

Cross, J. E. (2015). *Processes of place attachment: An interactional framework. Symbolic interaction*, 38(4), 493-520.

Mærsk, E., (2022) *There and back again. The intertwining of educationally related(im)mobility choices of young adults from peripheral regions with contemporary identity and place narratives.*

Savage, M., Bagnall, G., & Longhurst, B. J. (2004). *Globalization and belonging. Sage. theory, methods and applications*, 12-22.