PS-U-GO's Urban Living Lab: An Educational Space for Urban Commons in Naples (Italy)

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Abstract. The contribution is elaborated within the framework of Urban Living Lab (ULL), concerned with the right to the city, co-production processes and collective management models for public resources in complex decision contexts. We present the adopted value-focused thinking methodology and the results regarding the first implemented phase of the PS-U-GO Urban Living Lab Naples "Towards a free and accessible sea". It is one of the four ULLs implemented within the Erasmus+ project "PS-U-GO - Education in Living Labs: Participatory Skills for Sustainable Urban Governance", and it aims at contributing to the process of re-appropriation, democratisation and return of the sea to the city. This experimentation takes place in continuity with the action-research process developed by CNR IRISS in collaboration with Lido Pola - Urban Commons to monitor and implement urban regeneration processes in the Bagnoli neighborhood in Naples, Italy. It is an ongoing experience that involves actors of the quintuple helix: researchers, scholars and students; civic committees, urban commons and associations; public administrations and private; and last but not least, the sea.

Keywords: Commons · Urban regeneration · Collaborative decision-making process

1 Introduction

In recent years, the growing attention towards urban commons has led to a profound redefinition of the relationship between citizenship, urban space, and practices of shared use. The interaction of these three elements, in both their material and immaterial dimensions, often gives rise to project communities [1], capable of producing collective urban resistance and promoting collective practices of care, both understood as forms of affective labour and social reproduction [2, 3]. These practices are expressions of broader movements of resistance within the neoliberal city, capable, in some cases, of safeguarding urban spaces from the risks of gentrification and touristification, as well as from processes of neglect and urban decay [4]. Katsikana defines these concepts as

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O. Gervasi et al. (Eds.): ICCSA 2025 Workshops, LNCS 15897, pp. 321–339, 2026.
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-97660-5_22

forms of *social reproduction of resistance within the city*: often marginalised activities, yet essential for building common, horizontal, and non-hierarchical spaces that foster mutual learning and shared awareness.

In this perspective, urban commons are not merely material or environmental resources collectively managed; they are also social, political, and spatial devices, what Velicu terms *relational politics* [5], emerging from the continuous interaction between subjects, collective needs, and territories. From this standpoint, the city itself is conceptualised as a commons, no longer merely an object of consumption or appropriation, but a site of shared practices, active participation, and social experimentation [6]. According to Stavrides, common space is generated through the process of communing, that is, collective and horizontal actions producing porous, inclusive, and transformative urban thresholds. These threshold spaces represent moments where social distinctions dissolve, enabling citizens to act as active communitas, challenging and subverting the normalisation of space imposed by exclusionary urban forms [6]. Thus, the city becomes a network of places to be collectively inhabited, freeing it from proprietary logics and reconceptualising it as a living, accessible environment that fosters social bonds and participatory democracy.

Within the theoretical framework outlined by Elinor Ostrom [7], the community management of common resources proves effective when based on shared rules, cooperation, and collective responsibility. However, in the urban context, the relational dimension of urban commons is more complex: the value of space derives from its shared use by citizens, not from its exclusion or appropriation. According to Borch and Kornberger (2015), the urban commons paradigm differs from the classical natural resource model, as it places proximity, social interaction, and co-production of use-value at its core [8].

In Naples, a metropolitan city in southern Italy, this reflection finds fertile ground in the experiences around urban commons fostered by informal communities and the promotion of civic and collective use practices supported by the municipal administration [9–12]. This context has facilitated the emergence of project communities striving to reclaim denied spaces, activating urban regeneration processes starting from existing and collective needs and resources. In a broader scenario in which many Mediterranean coastal cities face persistent challenges such as lack of public services, denied opportunities for ecosystemic regeneration, and the pressures of overtourism, the issue of access to the sea and the management of its usable spaces becomes particularly relevant. The idea that beaches represent one of the most beloved – and contested – forms of public space is widely recognised in the literature, with numerous examples globally [13]. Indeed, worldwide, there is a worrying trend of restricting access to public beach areas to ensure private enjoyment of seafront properties or for commercial development purposes. The coastline of Naples exemplifies this, where the demand for sea access strongly emerges in the claims of social movements. The liminal areas between city and sea, such as beaches, docks, rocks, and tuff cliffs, while legally part of the maritime public domain and therefore recognised as public collective goods, are often subject to concessions that compromise accessibility, with significant impacts on spatial and environmental justice. As highlighted by Pica [14], the Comitato Mare Libero, Pulito e Gratuito Napoli (Committee Free, Clean and For-Free Sea Naples) has activated a

network of civic mobilisations which, through mapping practices, legal actions, and collective activism, has reclaimed the right to the sea as a fundamental right, advocating for the inclusion of the coastline within the emerging legal category of commons [14]. In this perspective, treating the coast as a commons represents a cultural and political challenge aimed at reactivating the relationship between spaces, rights, and citizenship. As Lucarelli [15] argues, recognising the social function of the maritime public domain could restore the sea to a public and participatory dimension, freeing it from the market logics that have fragmented access. The experience of the Comitato Mare Libero Napoli shows how collective care, understood as a transformative action and a process of building ties, can redefine the deep meaning of coastal space, turning it into a social infrastructure capable of generating shared value [16]. However, this implies the need to experiment with new forms of collaborative governance. In recent years, Living Labs (LLs) have emerged as experimental spaces capable of enabling urban innovation processes through collaborative approaches, becoming key tools to foster social and environmental transitions, often positioning themselves as operational alternatives to traditional urban governance models, activating reflective and transformative practices [17, 18]. LLs, in this context, emerge as protected environments for experimentation, socio-technical niches where alternative solutions can be tested, co-created, and potentially transferred into mainstream governance, through a process analogous to the Multi-Level Perspective on socio-technical transitions [19, 20]. Originally developed within the field of computer science [21], the concept of Living Lab has rapidly expanded into social and urban domains. From platforms for technological testing, LLs have evolved into territorial co-creation contexts, where inhabitants are no longer mere users but become actively engaged actors in transformation processes [22, 23]. This evolution reflects a shift from a technology-centred innovation approach towards a social and territorial approach, recognising everyday life, cultural significance of places, and actor plurality as key resources for urban innovation [24, 25]. Urban Living Labs (ULLs) therefore operate as collective learning spaces in urban contexts, where practices of co-design, incremental experimentation, and the production of new urban narratives coexist [26–28].

This contribution presents the methodological approach and the results of the first phase of work dedicated to defining the thematic and operational choices of the PS-U-GO Urban Living Lab Naples – Towards a free and accessible sea (PS-U-GO ULL Naples), conducted from February to October 2025 as part of the Erasmus+ project PS-U-GO – Education in Living Labs: Participatory Skills for Sustainable Urban Governance0F.[1] The PS-U-GO project, spanning three years (January 2024 – December 2026), aims to implement four Urban Living Labs as experimental educational spaces, where actors from the quadruple helix – businesses, research, public institutions, and civil society – are involved in processes of self-definition, co-design, and testing of ideas and solutions to address the most pressing urban challenges. The four ULLs are being developed in the European cities of Cottbus (Germany), Naples, Palermo (Italy), and Nicosia (Cyprus) (Fig. 1). The objective of the PS-U-GO project, in its international dimension, is twofold:

[1] Information on the project can be found at the following link: https://www.psugo.eu/, The project partnership is composed of academic partners (University of Cyprus, University of Cottbus BTU), research organisations (CNR), Third Sector organisations (SFIUS, Urban Foxes, PUSH) and AESOP; the Neapolitan unit is coordinated by Stefania Ragozino (CNR-IRISS).

on the one hand, to promote the active participation of local communities towards a sustainable and innovative urban governance; on the other, to provide students and other actors involved with advanced tools and skills in the field of civic participation, through innovative educational models based on non-formal learning, tested in real and complex contexts.

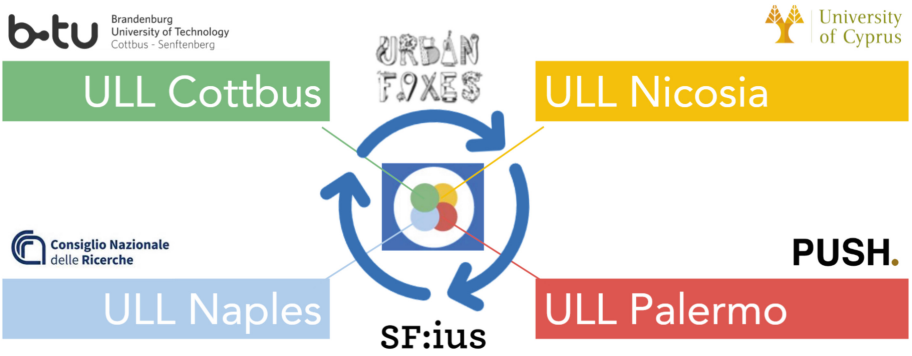

Fig. 1. The four ULL system of the PS-U-GO project

In the specific case of Naples, the ULL1F[2] is conceived as an instrument of social innovation aimed at the re-appropriation, democratisation, and restitution of the sea to the city, through the experimentation of a collective management model of urban commons applied to the liminal areas of access to the sea and through a collaborative pathway fostering knowledge co-construction, civic participation, and collective action. This learning module, inspired by the *learning with political movements* approach [29], is part of a broader system of collaborations and international projects that bring together the world of research and activism in the city of Naples, moving forward towards horizons of mutual learning.

The paper presents the case study of sea accessibility in the city of Naples, positioning the Comitato Mare Libero Napoli within the broader Italian and Neapolitan context. It then details the research methodology underpinning the project and guiding the first phase of the PS-U-GO ULL Naples, the "Theme Choice" phase. The paper concludes with the presentation and discussion of the results.

[2] The ULL builds on the ongoing action-research process promoted by CNR IRISS in collaboration with Lido Pola – Bene Comune (2021 – ongoing), aimed at activating urban regeneration processes in the Bagnoli district, as well as on the activities of the Comitato Mare Libero, Pulito e Gratuito di Napoli, and the AESOP International Conference "Urban Conflicts and Peace: Everyday Politics of Commons", co-organised by CNR IRISS and hosted by DiARC and Lido Pola – Bene Comune in 2023. The ULL is supported, in its educational dimension, by the Evaluab - Evaluation Laboratory of the DiARC, University Federico II of Naples.

2 The Case Study of the Neapolitan Coast

"Il mare non bagna Napoli"2F,[3] the title of the renowned 1953 book by Anna Maria Ortese [30], today stands as an illuminated installation atop the MADRE museum, created by artists Bianco-Valente, and continues to resonate as a powerful monito regarding the city's urban condition. This paradox aptly describes the progressive physical and symbolic separation between Naples and its sea. The city's morphology, shaped by unplanned urban growth and a longstanding orientation towards industrial and port development, has contributed to reinforcing this fracture. The historic centre, which for centuries had developed in close relationship with the waterfront, has been progressively saturated by port infrastructures, shipyards, commercial docks, and logistical areas, transforming the coastline into a technical and functional space, removed from public use.

The same process affected both the eastern and western peripheries: from San Giovanni a Teduccio to Bagnoli, areas once characterised by a direct and daily relationship with the sea have been reconfigured as industrial or residual spaces, now in states of degradation and marked by denied and fragmented access. In parallel, the most scenic coastal stretches, such as those of Posillipo, have been progressively privatised through the development of exclusive residential parks, private beaches, and concessions for hospitality and tourism purposes. This process has turned cliffs, coves, and historical access points into closed, filtered spaces, very often inaccessible to the general public, drastically reducing the availability of free public beaches [14].

The combination of uncontrolled urban growth, coastal industrialisation, and widespread privatisation has resulted in a severe restriction of accessibility and usability of the liminal areas between the city and the sea. The collective right to the landscape, bathing, and relationship with the sea has been reduced to a privilege, denying much of the population the natural proximity that for centuries had defined both the material and immaterial identity of Naples. These dynamics are deeply intertwined with issues of socio-economic status, racial segregation, and climate justice, and reveal how, through illegal actions and exclusionary regulations, the coastline can be transformed from "a strip of nature" into a palimpsest of greed, racism, ecological neglect, and socio-economic discrimination [13].

In 2011–2012, the civic campaign "Una Spiaggia per Tutti" (A Beach for All) promoted a proposal for a popular consultative referendum to establish the "Great Public Beach of Naples in Bagnoli". The proposal was signed by 15,000 citizens and subsequently approved, but then forgotten by the Municipality of Naples. Since 2020, mobilisations for a free, clean, and accessible sea have spontaneously resumed from east to west of the city, in response to the closure of four public beaches by municipal ordinances, starting with the Gaiola Marine Protected Area (AMP Gaiola). The movement "Mare Libero, Pulito e Gratuito Napoli" emerged spontaneously, from the convergence of small, fragmented struggles and the legacy of the historic committee "Una Spiaggia per Tutti". From 2020 onwards, in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic and the resulting emergency management policies, public administrations and private organisations implemented measures to restrict access to both private and public spaces. While such measures were necessary to contain the spread of infections, they were maintained even

[3] The Sea Does Not Bathe Naples.

after the end of the pandemic, effectively resulting in privatisation or quasi-private management of public and inalienable spaces that were meant for free public use. Restrictions on access to the sea, beaches, parks, and public gardens generated widespread discontent and frustration among the population, who experienced the erosion of fundamental rights linked to individual and collective psycho-physical well-being. The reservation and access-limitation model for beaches was first adopted by the C.S.I. Gaiola Onlus Association, which manages the Gaiola Marine Protected Area (Natura 2000 Network). This model was then adopted by the Municipality of Naples for the two main public beaches in the city centre: Baia Donn'Anna and Spiaggia delle Monache. From 2021 to 2025, the "Mare Libero, Pulito e Gratuito Napoli" Committee organised dozens of protests to denounce the inadequacy and discriminatory principles of the reservation system. Under this system, the municipality delegated management to private beach concession holders, who developed a digital app allowing only two booking slots: one from 10:00 to 13:00, and another from 14:00 to 17:00. By design, the system excluded both minors and elderly people, due to the technological barrier imposed by digital booking. Over the years, with the support of Co.Na.Ma.L. (National Free Sea Committee), the Neapolitan group filed five legal appeals to the Seventh Section of the Campania Regional Administrative Court; three were won, while two remain pending. It is crucial to note that the Neapolitan committee could pursue these legal actions solely thanks to contributions from thousands of Neapolitan citizens: all court costs were covered through crowdfunding, raising around €30,000 over three years, with each appeal costing over €5,000. Despite the rulings in favour of citizens, the Municipality of Naples and the Port Authority have continued to ignore court injunctions, persisting with reservation systems and access restrictions on the aforementioned public beaches. To date, the committee's achievements include over 50 public mobilisations; 5 legal appeals filed, of which 3 were won; €30,000 raised in donations to cover legal expenses; 4 documentaries broadcast on European public television.

The PS-U-GO ULL Naples community aligns with and integrates into this stream of civic mobilisation and advocacy, forming a close relationship between three main groups of actors, operationally involved across the various methodological phases (Fig. 2): the technical-organisational committee, composed of researchers from CNR IRISS, the Evaluab team at DiARC, and activists from Lido Pola – Bene Comune; the Labor-actors with 15 participants selected via an open call, including university students, recent graduates, post-doc researchers, and professionals from various disciplines (urban planning, architecture, sociology, law, journalism, and psychology); the activist community of the "Mare Libero Napoli" Committee, involved in reclaiming sea access as a commons.



Fig. 2. The core working team of the PS-U-GO ULL Naples.

3 Methodology

The methodology common to the four ULLs of the PS-U-GO project is presented below, followed by the methodological approach developed for the PS-U-GO ULL Naples.

3.1 The PS-U-GO Methodology

The methodology developed for the four Urban Living Labs (ULLs) in Nicosia, Palermo, Naples, and Cottbus is the result of a careful process of analysing existing practices, systematising past experiences, and adapting them to the specific educational and participatory aims of the PS-U-GO project3F.[4] The methodology is founded on four key principles that define the identity of the project's ULLs:

1. *Real-world context*: each ULL is rooted in a specific and real urban context, addressing actual territorial challenges.
2. *Inclusive participation and co-creation*: active involvement of all stakeholders following the quadruple helix model (public, private, research, civic).
3. *Experimentation and evolution*: adoption of an iterative approach, based on cycles of experimentation, evaluation, and continuous learning.
4. *Sustainability and impact*: orientation towards producing concrete and lasting change, both in urban practices and in participants' capacities.

This methodology integrates the learn-make-show approach proposed by project partner Urban Foxes, and was designed to be flexible and adaptable to different local contexts while maintaining a common reference framework. The process is structured into three main steps, developed through a cyclical and iterative approach.

Design and Initiation. In this initial step, preceding the activation of the ULLs, the project team defined the mission, objectives, and expected impacts for each ULL to be developed. In this perspective, an initial "blueprint" was created — flexible and adaptable

[4] The partnership produced the deliverable 'Urban Living Labs Methodologies' available at the following link: https://www.psugo.eu/portfolio-item/urban-living-labs-methodologies-deliverable-5/

— intended to guide the activities. A mapping of local needs, with particular attention to young people as the primary target group, enabled the launch of stakeholder engagement strategies within each territory.

Operation. This step pertains to the implementation of a shared yet flexible methodology across the four ULLs. This structure allowed the development of comparable processes, despite significant differences in local-scale specific objectives and expected impacts. The methodology comprises four operational steps (Fig. 3):

- Theme Choice: participatory identification of work themes, giving priority to listening to the emerging priorities from the territory.
- Exploration: urban laboratories, masterclasses, on-site explorations, and co-analysis sessions with external experts to deepen the chosen theme.
- Experimentation and Co-Creation: co-design, prototyping, and testing innovative solutions and practices through collaborative activities with the community and other stakeholders.
- Urban Showcase: public presentation of the processes and outcomes through open events, exhibitions, or other creative and accessible formats.



Fig. 3. The methodology of PS-U-GO ULLs.

Evaluation and Feedback. Within the international project team, a systematic method was defined for collecting both qualitative and quantitative feedback from participants and stakeholders. This step is to be considered transversal to the Operational phase, enabling critical analyses of processes and outcomes from a comparative perspective, thus contributing to the consolidation of learning for continuous improvement, scalability, and transferability of the practices.

3.2 The PS-U-GO ULL Naples Approach

Within the context of the city of Naples, the PS-U-GO ULL Naples has been conceived as an essential device to enable local capabilities [31, 32], by valuing often invisible

resources and fostering spaces of trust between citizens, institutions, and the research community [33]. The methodology adopted by the PS-U-GO ULL Naples reflects a vision whereby the territory is not merely the location of intervention, but the very engine of transformation, activated through inclusive participatory pathways sensitive to social, cultural, and economic diversity. Particular emphasis is placed on engagement methods and tools to support collaborative decision-making processes. In this perspective, the Action Research approach [34, 35] is employed to structure continuous cycles of exploration, intervention, and critical reflection, supporting dynamic, adaptive, and mutual learning. In line with these premises, the ULL of Naples promotes several core principles tailored to its specific context:

- Right to research: within reflections on globalisation, this principle refers to guaranteeing, as a fundamental human right, the opportunity for each individual to systematically enhance their knowledge and, more broadly, to actively participate in shaping the future [36].
- Right to the city: this concept goes beyond the mere demand for fundamental needs; it represents a specific quality of urban life, encompassing access to urban resources and the possibility of experiencing a form of urban living alternative to the logics of capitalism and industrialization [37].
- Everyday life: recognising and critically examining the routines and institutions of daily life that have a real impact on urban regeneration practices and urban resistance movements [38, 39].
- Frugality: in the context of co-production, this implies developing effective solutions by valuing local resources and community knowledge, rather than relying on large-scale, long-term solutions often tied to major investments and characterised by limited participation [40].
- Culturality: acknowledging local narratives and place identities as cultural resources and components of a dynamic process involving both individuals and the wider community. This is fundamental for identifying community values and promoting cultural transformation through the formalisation of new shared norms [41].
- Plurality: adopting differentiated approaches in line with the concept of socionatures, to capture the social, cultural, and natural complexity of territories [42].
- Mutual and informal learning: fostering co-creation processes based on continuous, horizontal sharing of experiences and knowledge.
- Transformative social innovation: experimenting with models of participatory and inclusive governance, as well as technological solutions, by promoting deep change processes emerging from the co-evolutionary interaction of factors and narratives towards systemic innovations [43].

The PS-U-GO ULL Naples is therefore based on the idea that stakeholder engagement and the construction of shared visions are indispensable components for activating transformative social innovation processes. To this end, during the Theme Choice phase—the focus of this document—the laboratory adopted a combination of operational tools designed both to facilitate the active engagement of communities and stakeholders and to support the co-creation of future scenarios.

The activities were developed through a progressive cycle of participatory meetings, involving different groups of actors alongside numerous stakeholders and external

experts connected to the issue of sea accessibility. Every week, the working group convened for laboratory workshops, seminars, masterclasses, and public assemblies. Each meeting focused on the analysis of specific themes and employed collaborative engagement tools aimed at building a shared knowledge base and initiating the definition of the manifesto's key elements. Specifically, four main stages were structured, during which the Labor-actors and the various actors engaged in dialogue on four key issues deemed fundamental for drafting the manifesto: Shared Values, Preliminary Objectives, Common Problems, and Stakeholder Mapping.

The participatory process was supported by a variety of tools inspired by the principles of "gamestorming" [44], which foster collective creativity, visual communication, and spontaneous interaction among participants. The use of visual artefacts (post-its, canvases, conceptual maps), collaborative workspaces (MIRO, physical workspaces), and the adoption of a simplified visual language facilitated the emergence of ideas, their collaborative reorganisation, and their subsequent translation into operational strategies.

The methodological process adopted for the PS-U-GO ULL Naples is grounded in the adaptation of Value-Focused Thinking (VFT), traditionally developed for systemic decision support [45, 46], to the dynamic complexity of participatory urban governance. Following the latest insights on the operational integration of value-based decision processes, the PS-U-GO ULL Naples interpreted VFT not merely as a decision support tool but as the overarching architecture of the collaborative process. In particular, the VFT methodology [47] was reinterpreted and articulated according to the PS-U-GO methodological structure. The following section describes the four phases of the ULL, with a specific focus on the Theme Choice phase, which concluded in April 2025 (Fig. 4).

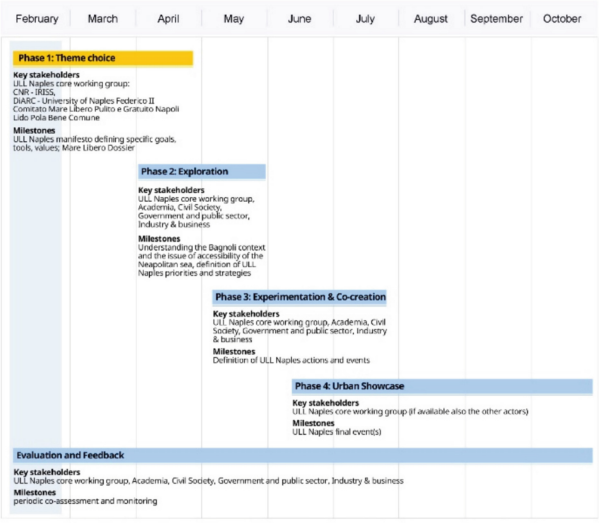

Fig. 4. The PS-U-GO ULL Naples roadmap

Theme Choice – Shared Construction of Objectives. In this initial phase, VFT was used to launch the process, corresponding to the Front-End, which focuses on clarifying the problem situation and establishing the value base of the process, thereby fostering the emergence of shared values. Specifically, the Theme Choice phase was structured around four main activities, which, through a recursive process, led to the drafting of the ULL's Manifesto: (1) building a set of Shared Values; (2) defining Preliminary Objectives aligned with the group's capacities and ambitions; (3) identifying Common Problems relevant to urban commons governance in Naples; and (4) mapping the Quadruple Helix Stakeholders to be engaged according to objectives and issues.

Shared Values. This activity was developed through a participatory approach, based on administering a questionnaire to all members of the Technical-Organisational Committee, the Laborattori, and the activist community of Mare Libero Napoli, during the ULL's first meeting. The activity was structured as follows:

- Initial value set: the questionnaire presented a list of 38 value concepts, derived from a qualitative analysis of the motivation letters submitted by Laborattori during the application phase.
- Individual selection: each participant was asked to select five values that best represented their motivation and personal vision.
- Narrative space: after completing the questionnaire, an open assembly session was held, during which each participant could briefly explain the meaning they attributed to the chosen values, fostering an autobiographical narrative dimension.

Preliminary Objectives. The methodology adopted to define the Preliminary Objectives involved the creation of three working tables, each composed of members of the Technical-Organisational Committee (acting as facilitators), the Laborattori, and the Mare Libero Napoli activists (Fig. 5). Each table followed a facilitated process structured in five main steps:

- Selection of guiding values. In an initial session, groups were asked to identify the main values to use as a reference when formulating objectives. Structured brainstorming. Participants freely expressed ideas and aspirations regarding what the laboratory should achieve, using the selected values as a compass.
- Clustering and synthesis. The ideas were collected, grouped by thematic similarity, and systematised into priority intervention areas.
- Formulation of General and Specific Objectives. For each thematic area, the following were defined: A General Objective that translates the shared value into a broad goal; Several Specific Objectives, more operational in nature, representing intermediate steps necessary to achieve the general objective.
- Validation and prioritisation. The objectives were discussed and validated in plenary through debate, with initial prioritisation based on relevance and feasibility, in relation to available resources, competences, and the temporal horizon of the ULL.

Common Problems. The methodology adopted to identify Common Problems relating to the governance of urban commons followed a sequence inspired by collaborative



Fig. 5. Working tables for the definition of Preliminary Objectives

problem structuring and causal analysis tools. The activity was carried out through three working tables and structured in four main phases:

- Problem brainstorming. During facilitated sessions, the Laborattori, Technical-Organisational Committee, Mare Libero activists, and other relevant actors (including researchers and activists from the Naples Commons Network) were invited to identify perceived problems in urban commons governance and record them using visual supports (post-its, MIRO boards).
- Discussion and comparison of emerging problems. Problems were presented and discussed by participants at each table to clarify meanings, highlight differing perspectives, identify redundancies or overlaps, and map interrelations between issues.
- Selection and prioritisation of Fundamental Problems. Through a structured discussion, the identified problems were ranked by systemic impact, urgency, and relevance, and then grouped into Fundamental Problems, i.e., structural issues synthesising the most critical concerns (e.g. “Disparities in roles for commons management”, “Lack of shared governance tools”, “Privatisation of coastal access”).
- Cause analysis and construction of the Fishbone Diagram. Using the Fishbone Diagram method, the group explored the root causes generating or reinforcing the fundamental problems, grouping them into categories (managerial, regulatory, economic, political, cultural). This provided a visual mapping of the links between systemic issues and underlying causes, creating a collective tool to guide the design of future actions.

Stakeholder Mapping. The stakeholder mapping process for ULL Naples followed an iterative and participatory approach, aimed at identifying, analysing, and positioning key actors according to their interest and influence, to guide engagement and collaboration strategies for the subsequent phases of the ULL:

- Framing the reference structure. The Laborattori, the Technical-Organisational Committee, and DIARC researchers defined the four sectors of the quadruple helix:

Research and innovation: universities, research centres, study groups; Public institutions: local authorities, public agencies, maritime authorities; Private sector: economic actors, maritime concessionaires, entrepreneurs; Civil society: associations, citizen committees, informal groups.

- Identification of priority stakeholders. Through a series of facilitated thematic tables, each group worked on one of the four sectors, identifying: Existing, already active stakeholders relevant to the issue of sea access; Potential stakeholders to be involved or engaged.
- Relevance and influence analysis. Stakeholders were placed on Cartesian grids using two main criteria: Their capacity to influence the achievement of ULL objectives; Their interest in themes related to the access, management, and enhancement of the sea as a common good.
- Development of descriptive profiles. For each priority actor, a descriptive profile was produced, summarising: Their institutional or organisational role; Their current and potential relevance to the ULL objectives; Their preferred engagement modalities (e.g., workshops, interviews, operational collaborations, advocacy).

Exploration – Investigation and Scenario Building. During the Exploration phase, the VFT approach will be enhanced through a combination of collaborative mapping methods, stakeholder engagement on spatial issues, and situated field reflections (urban walkshops, masterclasses). This phase aims to deepen the understanding of the territories and relevant actors to the identified objectives, translating the value framework into initial hypotheses for action and potential transformation scenarios. The construction of causal networks linking problems and objectives, typical of the VFT approach (means-ends networks), is here reinterpreted as a tool for shared exploration of urban complexity.

Experimentation and Co-Creation – Testing Shared Solutions. In the Experimentation phase, the VFT model evolves further by integrating co-design and co-creation moments for activities and operational tools. Building upon the objectives and criticalities explored, participants will be called upon to co-design solutions that, through incremental and iterative processes of feedback and adaptation, aim to develop practices of re-appropriation and civic use of the sea resource. In this phase, as indicated by Keeney [45, 46], the Back-End component of the VFT—dedicated to evaluating alternatives and action strategies—is reinterpreted in a collective and participatory manner.

A distinctive element of the methodology applied is the continuous integration of evaluation and feedback cycles, designed to foster reflective learning and ensure the adaptability and scalability of the practices developed. The iterative VFT-ULL approach thus enables not only the structuring of a collaborative decision-making process but also the consolidation of local capacities and the promotion of transformative social innovation.

4 Preliminary Results

The Theme Choice phase of the Naples Urban Living Lab (ULL) was dedicated to the shared definition of the PS-U-GO ULL Naples Manifesto, a foundational document aimed at clarifying the role, objectives, and modes of action of this temporary community.

The construction of a shared value set represented one of the first and most significant outputs of the PS-U-GO ULL Naples methodological process. This activity aimed to create a common base of ideal and cultural references capable of guiding the entire laboratory process, reinforcing the participants' sense of belonging to the temporary community and making explicit the guiding principles of collective action.

This activity pursued three main objectives: to foster mutual understanding among participants through the language of values; to elicit and systematise the values considered a priority by each actor involved; to build a shared framework to serve as a reference for defining the objectives and operational strategies of PS-U-GO ULL Naples. In this sense, the collective restitution and processing of the questionnaire results followed two main directions: through the sharing of values, participants articulated the personal meanings they attributed to the selected concepts, which were essential for enabling moments of exchange and discussion during the laboratory sessions; through a frequency analysis, the most recurring values within the group were identified, allowing convergences and affinities to emerge. Through this process, a shared value set was constructed, reflecting: attention to the collective dimension and the value of care (care for the territory, relationships, resources); recognition of active participation as a founding principle of citizenship; the importance of social and environmental justice; the promotion of solidarity, collective responsibility, and the autonomy of local communities. The shared value set, in addition to representing a common symbolic and operational asset capable of linking participants from diverse backgrounds, competences, and visions, played a fundamental role in guiding the construction of the preliminary objectives of the laboratory during the Theme Choice phase, as well as in shaping the methodological and operational decisions to be implemented in the Exploration and Co-Design phases. Moreover, the process of eliciting values consolidated the community dimension of the ULL, strengthening the sense of co-responsibility towards future objectives and facilitating a more fluid and conscious collective work in the subsequent phases. The definition of the Preliminary Objectives represented a pivotal stage in the process of drafting the ULL Naples Manifesto, setting the direction for the subsequent development of exploration and co-creation activities. The main aim of this phase was to translate the shared value set that emerged in the first meeting into preliminary objectives that could transcend and connect the laboratory's dual souls: the academic side (research and experimentation) and the operational side (activism and civic action). Furthermore, this action served as an initial framework for defining the ULL's priorities for action.

The process led to the definition of a structured set of Preliminary Objectives and Sub-Objectives for the ULL, which clearly synthesised the pact between the academic community and civic activism. This initial operational framework proved fundamental for shaping the narrative structure that underpinned the final drafting of the ULL Naples Manifesto. This approach also strengthened the collaborative and reflective dimension of the laboratory, promoting not only the construction of shared objectives but also the co-production of meaning among the different actors involved.

In the process of drafting the PS-U-GO ULL Naples Manifesto, the phase dedicated to identifying Common Problems played a central role. This activity was necessary to critically analyse the legal, administrative, and operational context related to the management of urban commons. The shared identification of issues allowed different

perspectives to emerge, valuing each actor's situated experience, intending to anchor the definition of objectives to a concrete understanding of existing constraints and create a collective knowledge base useful for the subsequent design of strategies and actions for change. The application of this methodology helped produce a shared and layered framework of the main challenges that the management of the sea as a commons might face. Moreover, the process fostered an important collateral outcome: the construction of mutual trust among actors with different backgrounds and experiences, thanks to the open sharing of criticalities and the opportunity to recognise common problems from diverse perspectives.

Within the methodological framework aimed at drafting the ULL Naples Manifesto, stakeholder mapping represented a key step for consolidating the network of actors involved—and to be involved—in defining strategies oriented towards achieving the laboratory's objectives. This activity drew inspiration from the quadruple helix model—research, public institutions, private sector, and civil society. Accordingly, four thematic tables were structured, one for each sector, with each table also reflecting on integrating a fifth dimension linked to the sea as a thematic and natural actor, whose perspectives would later be explored during the Exploration and Co-Design phases.

The main goals of stakeholder mapping are focused on: identifying actors relevant to the ULL's preliminary objectives; analysing the interest and influence power of different actors relative to those objectives; supporting the design of targeted engagement strategies specific to each actor; strengthening the laboratory's capacity to operate from a systemic and inclusive perspective.

This analysis allowed for the classification of actors as: key actors (high influence, high interest); actors to engage (low influence, high interest); actors to monitor (high influence, low interest); secondary actors (low influence, low interest). The mapping produced: a systemic and updated overview of the actor ecosystem operating in or influencing sea access in Naples; the identification of potential strategic alliances and stakeholders to proactively involve in the subsequent Exploration and Co-Creation phases; the creation of an operational database useful for designing future engagement and collaborative governance activities. Additionally, the mapping facilitated a broader reflection on the need to integrate multi-actor and multi-level approaches, acknowledging the complexity of institutional, economic, and social balances characterising the governance of urban coastal resources.

These activities found an initial synthesis in the National CONAMAL Conference (March 2025), held at the Ex Asilo Filangieri common space. On this occasion, the PS-U-GO ULL Naples promoted a collaborative mapping experiment, administering a questionnaire to actors and participants aimed at exploring perceptions and priorities on the issue of sea access. The conference was followed by an international Training Event4F[5] with the PS-U-GO project partners, during which: the subsequent Exploration phase of the ULL Naples was formally launched; the ULL Manifesto was presented, drafted by the Laborattori based on the knowledge and experiences developed throughout the Theme Choice process.

[5] The Training Event 2 Naples was co-organised by the PS-U-GO ULL Naples Organizing Committee and the Croatian partner SF:ius and hosted by the Department of Architecture, University Federico II of Naples.

5 The PS-U-GO ULL Naples Manifesto

The Theme Choice phase, characterised by a collaborative and reflective approach, led to the definition of the PS-U-GO ULL Naples Manifesto, a document that establishes the ULL as a temporary community sharing values, objectives, and modes of action. The Manifesto emerged from the need to give voice to the plurality of actors involved—not only to define common objectives but also as a tool to build, through dialogue and co-production, a shared identity. Specifically, it defines the identity, vision, mission, shared values, operational objectives, involved actors, and methodological tools adopted by the laboratory. This moment marks the starting point for organising the next phases of the presented methodology. In response to the question "Who are we?", the Manifesto describes the group as a heterogeneous network composed of researchers from the IRISS Institute of the CNR, lecturers from the DIARC Department of the University of Naples, students from various faculties, alongside activists from the Neapolitan Commons Network and the Mare Libero, Pulito e Gratuito civic movement. The group was established as an experiment in hybridisation between informal groups, associations, research bodies, and educational institutions, to explore and promote practices of regeneration in situ to increase the accessibility and usability of common goods, particularly the sea, the liminal coastal areas, and the urban spaces connected to them. The group's vision centres on a long-term strategic goal: the formal and substantive recognition of Naples' liminal coastal areas as commons. In this perspective, the collective enjoyment of the sea and its urban interfaces is recognised as a right to be claimed and protected. The mission translates into an operational commitment to building an enabling environment for the production of shared knowledge, through a collaborative, experimental process based on mutual learning and action research. The ultimate goal is to produce evidence capable of supporting and legitimising civic claims regarding the collective use of these spaces. The guiding principles underpinning the laboratory's work reflect those of the commons network and the free sea movement: non-discrimination, mutualism, solidarity, care, self-determination, and community protagonism. The organisational and relational model is based on a horizontal and inclusive approach, rejecting hierarchical logics and promoting active participation. The laboratory pursues a set of concrete objectives: to generate shared knowledge that increases the critical awareness of individuals and groups, encouraging actions for civic protection and mobilisation; to promote relationships based on reciprocity and care for natural resources and people; to encourage direct participation in decision-making processes, moving beyond mere consultation to build truly collaborative practices; to defend and expand the accessibility and usability of common goods, conceived as key elements for an ecological reconnection between nature and the city.

The PS-U-GO ULL Naples's work targets a heterogeneous and diverse audience of actors, involved at various levels in the management and use of public and private assets located in the liminal coastal areas. The group aims to engage, in a synergistic, horizontal, and collaborative way, the multiplicity of actors and entities belonging to the quintuple helix (research, civil society, public institutions, business, and natural resources), to promote the protection and extension of access to the sea and common goods. The group also identifies with a shared methodology, based on engagement tools and techniques that facilitate inclusion and collaboration. The initial phase adopted the Value-Focused

Thinking method, alongside structured discussion tools (brainstorming, causal analysis, visual classification, stakeholder mapping). The Naples Urban Living Lab is expanding its repertoire of engagement tools for the next exploration and co-design phases. These aim to activate collaborative methods capable of stimulating shared reflections and generating collective visions. Among these: Participatory mapping, to visualise socio-territorial relationships and criticalities; Co-design workshops, to foster the integration of expert knowledge and local insights; Walkscapes and urban explorations, as immersive practices in the places under study; Visual and interactive tools (posters, canvases, toolkits, maps), supported by digital platforms, to facilitate communication and collective reflection.

Acknowledgments. This study was funded by the Erasmus+ project PS-U-GO - Education in Living Labs: Participatory Skills for sustainable Urban Governance (ID KA220-HED-FB48E1DA). In the unity of the work, SC, SR and MC conceived the work, SC developed the methodology, SC, SR, LL, FM drafted the manuscript, and SR and MC coordinated the activities and revised the final version.

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