

## Learning Situation

### Creating Safer and More Welcoming Urban Spaces

Cities are complex environments, where safety does not depend solely on the presence or absence of objective risks, but also on how people perceive and experience public spaces. Insufficient lighting, poor visibility, unclear signage, abandoned or neglected areas, overcrowding, or a lack of accessible information can significantly affect the sense of safety of citizens and visitors.

In smart cities, safety is increasingly understood as a cross-cutting issue involving urban design, communication, community participation, and the responsible use of digital technologies. Making a space safer does not only mean preventing risks, but also creating conditions that foster trust, better orientation and inclusion, and well-being in everyday life.

This Learning Situation invites students to explore the topic of urban safety in their local context and to reflect on how urban spaces or travel routes can be improved through realistic, community-oriented interventions that are appropriate.

#### Driving Question

**What can we do to improve safety and the perception of safety in our city through community participation and smart solutions?**

#### Scenario

Many municipalities are working to improve public safety and the perception of safety in urban spaces. However, some areas continue to be perceived as unsafe or unwelcoming, especially at certain times of day or by specific groups of people. Poorly lit streets, isolated public transport stops, unclear travel routes, or ineffective communication in emergency situations can negatively affect how people move through and experience the city.

Students also encounter these situations in their everyday lives, for example, when travelling between home and school, when travelling to sports or cultural activities, or when using public spaces. For this reason, the municipality invites young people to observe their urban

context and propose concrete and feasible ideas to make certain spaces safer and more welcoming.

Students are encouraged to focus on solutions that combine observation of the context, community involvement, clear communication, and, where appropriate, propose the use of simple digital tools. This does not involve investigative activities or simulating the work of law enforcement, but rather reflecting on how design, information, and participation can contribute to improving the quality of urban life.

### **Task**

Students design an evidence-based proposal that responds to the municipality's request to improve safety and the perception of safety in a specific urban context. Working in groups, they choose a place, travel route, or public space that is relevant to their everyday lives and analyse its characteristics, patterns of use, and the main perceived critical safety issues. The aim is to develop a realistic and sustainable improvement proposal that takes into account physical space, social behaviours, communication, and the possible role of digital technologies.

### **This activity implies a holistic approach.**

This Learning Situation promotes a holistic approach, encouraging students to consider different interconnected aspects of urban safety, such as spatial design, visibility, accessibility of information, citizen participation, and a sense of collective responsibility. Within this framework, each group has the opportunity to orient its work according to interests and observations that emerge during the activity.

**To support the process, teachers may use the dedicated Lesson Plan**, which provides a step-by-step structure while still leaving students a high degree of autonomy in carrying out their work.

[Link to LESSON PLAN](#)

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### **Alternative Approaches**

In addition to the approach described in the Task above, we also propose alternative ways of implementing the Learning Situation. When choosing one of these alternative options, the Lesson Plan developed for the main Driving Question can still serve as a reference, but it should be adapted to match the different structure and focus of the chosen approach.

## 1. Single-Challenge Approach

Teachers may choose to focus the activity on one single specific safety-related issue that is particularly relevant to the local context.

This option is often easier to manage because:

- it may require less time, since the class concentrates on a single well-defined challenge;
- it simplifies planning, as all students work within the same theme;
- it increases local relevance, allowing teachers to select a challenge that is meaningful and visible in the school's immediate surroundings.

In the single-challenge approach, all student groups work on the same overarching urban safety challenge. To provide focus and structure, each group can be assigned one of four perspectives to guide their investigation:

**Where** – Investigating and describing the current state

**Who** – Exploring community needs and perceptions, including residents, students, and other users

**Why** – Examining and describing the factors that contribute to safety issues

**How** – Identifying realistic design, communication, or community-based solutions

This structure allows students to specialise in one dimension of the challenge while maintaining a shared focus. At the end of the research phase, the groups come together to combine their findings, creating a comprehensive understanding of the issue and collaboratively proposing informed, well-rounded solutions.

### **Suggested Local Challenges (What can be done...?)**

#### ***Improving lighting and visibility***

Students analyse public spaces where poor lighting or limited visibility negatively affect comfort and the perception of safety, especially during evening or night-time hours.

*What can be done to improve lighting and visibility in selected public spaces in order to increase comfort, orientation, and the perception of safety?*

#### ***Creating safer evening routes for pedestrians***

Students identify and analyse routes commonly used after school, sports, or cultural activities and examine which elements make these routes feel unsafe or unwelcoming.

*What can be done to make frequently used evening routes safer and more welcoming for pedestrians?*

### ***Preventing vandalism and promoting care for public spaces***

Students investigate how vandalism, neglect, or poor maintenance influence people's behaviour and perception of safety in public spaces, and how community involvement can play a role.

*What can be done to reduce vandalism and strengthen a sense of shared responsibility for public spaces?*

### ***Improving communication in emergency situations***

Students assess how information is communicated in public spaces during emergency situations, focusing on signage, clarity of information, and accessibility for different users.

*What can be done to improve communication, signage, and access to information in emergency situations in public spaces?*

## **2. Developing Your Own Learning Situation**

Teachers may design their own Learning Situation within the topic of urban safety. The examples provided above are suggestions and can be adapted or replaced with other local challenges that better reflect students' environment and community needs. Teachers may also consult local authorities or stakeholders to identify a meaningful and realistic focus for their students.

A good Driving Question should:

- be relevant and motivating for students;
- be feasible within available time and resources;
- support structured group work;
- involve accessible stakeholders (families, municipality, local associations);
- be linked to at least three of the five project competences.

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