

STUDY METHODOLOGY

UComNetSus-Africa

A. FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION (FGD)

What is FGD?

A Focus Group Discussion (FGD) is a qualitative research method and data collection technique in which a selected group of people discusses a given topic or issue in-depth, facilitated by a professional, external moderator. This method serves to solicit participants' attitudes and perceptions, knowledge and experiences, and practices, shared in the course of interaction with different people.

The technique is based upon the assumption that the group processes activated during an FGD help to identify and clarify shared knowledge among groups and communities, which would otherwise be difficult to obtain with a series of individual interviews. It focuses on group interaction and allows for data to be generated collectively.

Beginning FGD

The first few moments in focus group discussion are critical.

The moderator must create a thoughtful, permissive atmosphere, provide ground rules, and set the tone of the discussion.

The recommended **pattern** for introducing the group discussion includes:

- (1) Welcome,
- (2) Overview of the topic
- (3) Ground rules and
- (4) Introductions (icebreaker)
- (5) First question, then discussion
- (6) Thank participants and close meeting

Here is an example of a typical introduction:

“Good evening and welcome to our session. Thanks for taking the time to join us to talk about *social, economical and ecological challenges and opportunities* in (city). My name is () and assisting me is (). We're both from the University of (). We are part of a project called ‘Building urban community networks for sustainable cities in Africa’ (UComNetSus-Africa), that is funded by the Belmont Forum and with partners from Lagos, Kigali, Kumasi, Nairobi, Dar es Salaam and Mombasa. The project aims **to develop novel networks and communities of practice that address the inter-linkages, synergies, and trade-offs among social, economic and ecological needs of city residents**. We had an earlier stakeholder meeting of which you might have heard of or participated. This project is timely because cities in Africa are faced with the challenge of rapid urbanisation that is derailing the momentum to realizing sustainable development goals. Kigali city was selected as one of the case studies. We would like to know what your perceptions, knowledge, experiences, practices and suggestions are. You were invited to this FGD

because you have been/are part of similar conversations and hence familiar with the topic of discussion. In this FGD, there will be no wrong answers but rather differing points of view. Please feel free to share your point of view even if it differs from what others have said. Keep in mind that we're just as interested in negative comments as positive comments, and at times the negative comments are the most helpful. You have probably noticed the microphone. We are tape recording the session because we do not want to miss any of your comments. People often say very helpful things in these discussions, and we cannot write fast enough to get them all down. Your identity will be concealed, and we would not use any names in our reports. You may be assured of complete confidentiality. The discussion will help us to plan for better and more sustainable African cities, in which the social, economic and ecological interventions have urban communities at the core. Well, let us begin. We have placed name cards on the table in front of you to help us remember each other's names. Let's find out some more about each other by going around the table. Tell us your name, where you live and what you do for a living.”

**Please be reminded that your names and identities will not be used anywhere in this research.*

Example questions:

How do people name, understand, experience and assess a (social/economical/ecological) issue?

How do people perceive and understand the link between () and ()?

From your own experience, what are the challenges (social/economical/ecological)?

How do people (your leaders/ your community/yourself) act on these challenges?

How do people distinguish their role in the (social/economical/ecological) issue?

What is your (personal/community) experience of interaction with (leaders) regarding the (social/economical/ecological) issue?

Creating the Questionnaire

- Keep the number of questions reasonable (under 10, if possible). This prevents the participants from getting confused or worn out by a long discussion.

** Since we need to have the FGD within the participatory mapping, we can discuss just very few questions to be asked.*

- Keep the questions simple and short. FGD participants won't get the chance to see the questions like in a survey.

** In our case they will also be doing participatory mapping, which also collects lots of information at the same time.*

- Ensure that the wording on questions is clear. Otherwise, participants will end up discussing the question itself, rather than what the question was trying to ask.

**Translate questions in local language where applicable e.g. Swahili in Dar es salaam, Kinyarwanda in Rwanda*

- Be careful that questions about sensitive issues or topics are asked carefully. Otherwise, the FGD will stop just because people are too embarrassed to answer.
- Make sure that questions are worded in a way that cannot be answered with a simple “Yes” or “No” answer. Using words like “Why” and “How” will help elicit better responses from participants.

Length of the Focus Group Discussion

An FGD should be between 60 and 90 minutes.

If the FGD is shorter than 60 minutes, it is often difficult to fully explore the discussion topic. If the FGD is longer than 90 minutes, the discussion can become unproductive (as participants get weary) and the discussion can start to impose on participants’ time.

Selecting the Participants

Focus group discussions involve two to eight people on average. A group of more than eight participants becomes ‘crowd’ for a FGD and is more difficult to coordinate.

- **Gender:** Will men and women feel comfortable discussing this topic in a mixed-gender group?
- **Age:** Will age affect the way that people react to this topic?
- **Hierarchy:** Will people of different hierarchical positions be able to discuss this topic equally?

Preparing for the Focus Group Discussion

- Be sure to make the location and time of the FGD are clear to all participants.
- If you anticipate some participants not showing up, invite 10-20% extra participants. However, be careful to not create too large of a group.
- Be sure that the FGD is in a public place that is convenient for participants. Consider the location’s proximity to public transportation. If the FGD must happen out in the field, make it as comfortable and convenient for participants as possible.
- Make sure that the setting does not bias the information being collected.
- If it is important to collect demographic data from participants (like age, gender, education, etc), design a short form that takes no more than 2 or 3 minutes to complete. The form can be administered before the focus group starts.

Read more from, Rosanna L. Breen (2006) A Practical Guide to Focus-Group Research, Journal of Geography in Higher Education, 30:3, 463-475, DOI: [10.1080/03098260600927575](https://doi.org/10.1080/03098260600927575)

B. PARTICIPATORY MAPPING

Introduction

Participatory mapping is also known as community mapping, participatory geographic information system (PGIS) in different literature (volunteered geographic information (VGI) (Fagerholm et al. 2021; Verplanke et al. 2016). Participatory mapping is a map-making process that qualitatively attempts to visualize urban space phenomena based on community knowledge in an easily understandable way. It is based on the premise that local inhabitants hold accurate as well as expert knowledge of their local environments. It is thus a method of integrating local knowledge, perception and value to geographic information and spatial data for a comprehensive analysis (Potschin-Young et al. 2018). Maps created by local communities represent the place in which they live, showing features communities themselves perceive as important such as waste dumps, flood prone areas, green spaces, sacred areas, *et cetera*. The process of mapping can contribute to building community cohesion, help to engage participants to be involved in resource and land-related decision-making, raising awareness about pressing land-related issues and ultimately contribute to empowering local communities and their members.

Materials needed:

- Broad sheets of paper
- Markers of different colours
- Large table/board to support the paper
- Max 8 participants (uniformity of participants)

Steps for Participatory Mapping

Step 1. Ask the individual or the group to draw the boundaries of the city limits being discussed. You could also facilitate the process by bringing an already drawn empty map of the city. Those who want to go digital, you will have to project an overhead map onto a large sheet of paper/wall and then participants work within the space. Maps may be done by individual and later merged.

Step 2. Participants outline or show some major city landmarks or features e.g., roads, rivers and property boundaries. This makes participants more comfortable and display their knowledge of the city.

Step 3. Having prepared the map, which could be as large as a wall, people can then add their information either directly or by using sticky notes. Let them record what is most significant to them, and then ask for more detail if something you are interested in is missing. Motivate all the people present to add their perspective, without influencing them too much. You could use the following guiding questions and motivate people to add the missing information:

- Which are the problems our city is confronted with (use those we already prioritized in the earlier stakeholder process e.g., related to water or sanitation)?
- Where are these problems located?
- Where are the hotspots of these problems? Which are the worst? Which areas are the best?
- Potentially: Who is responsible for these problems?
- Are problems connected to each other? How do the problems influence each other?

Step 4. Several modifications to the map may be needed before those involved are happy with the final result. Include additional written comments such as quantities/rates/interests, if necessary.

Step 5. This map, representing the current state of affairs may be used later to make comparisons.

Reference

Rosanna L. Breen (2006) A Practical Guide to Focus-Group Research, *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*, 30:3, 463-475, DOI: [10.1080/03098260600927575](https://doi.org/10.1080/03098260600927575)

Fagerholm, N. & N. Käyhkö (2009): Participatory mapping and geographical patterns of the social landscape values of rural communities in Zanzibar, Tanzania. In: *Fennia – International Journal of Geography*, Vol. 187, Is. 1, 1-19.

Fagerholm, N., C. Raymond, A. Olafsson, G. Brown, T. Rinne, K. Hasanzadeh, A. Broberg & M. Kyttä (2021): A methodological framework for analysis of participatory mapping data in research, planning, and management. In: *International Journal of Geographical Information Science*, 1-28.

Verplanke, J., M.K. McCall, C. Uberhuaga, G. Rambaldi & M. Haklay (2016): A shared perspective for PGIS and VGI. In: *The Cartographic Journal*, Vol. 53, Is. 4, 308–317.