

## Option 2 Focus group community

### Definition



A focus group is a group conversation between 6 or 8 people from the community. By doing a focus group, you will gain insight into the opinions of people from the community. Because it is a group conversation, you will have a lot of interaction between the participants which could be an added value. However, it can also be a disadvantage because some participants may overpower other participants. It is the job of the focus group leader (the moderator) to guard that every participant is given the opportunity to speak.

A focus group is a qualitative research method. It gives you the opportunity to explore a problem more in depth and also to consult the group for possible solutions.

### Preparation

- The youngsters have to decide who to invite to the focus group. Who will the participants be (for example people living in the community or people working in the community, or people that know the community well?). It can be useful to research the community using desk research to get an understanding of the demographic of the community. It can help you decide which groups or profiles should definitely be included in the focus groups. For example: if there are primarily older citizens living in the community, you can't really organize a focus group without asking older citizens to participate. Some focus groups are composed out of a homogeneous group, others prefer organizing heterogeneous groups (mixing different background, professions, age groups). When a group is homogeneous, participants usually feel safer to express themselves but similar profiles are often inclined to confirm each other. A heterogeneous group will spark more discussion and creativity but it is hard for each participant to express themselves in a heterogeneous group.
- The youngsters have to convince people to participate in the focus group. Hopefully, they already have some data from persons living in the community willing to participate (based on previous modules). If they do not have the data yet, they can think about different channels to find respondents (flyers, approaching own network, using carefully chosen social media channels, use network from schools/coaches, ...). You have to adapt the channel to find the respondents depending on the target group (for example: it is hard to reach senior citizens using social media). It is important that respondents also see the added value of participating (because they will give some shape to the community in the future, or because they get free food/drinks or even a small gift). All the people have to come to the school or HUB at the same time, so finding respondents to participate in focus group is harder than finding respondents who are willing to be interviewed individually. This is also due to the fact that these individuals believe that their single contribution is rather small compared to that of the rest of the focus group. Hence, they see their input as dispensable.
- The youngsters will have to create a questionnaire that will serve as a blueprint for the group conversation. At the end of this document, there is an example of a questionnaire that can serve as an inspiration or starting point. Of course, youngsters have to adapt it.
- The youngsters have to decide how many groups they want to interview and how they want to do that. The youngsters can keep it simple by just doing a group conversation and subsequently clustering the ideas given to them from the participants. It is also an option to do a more thorough approach by doing two (or more) group interviews and by giving the

participants options to vote. Hereby the youngsters will be able to collect some quantitative data and can let the respondents decide what the priorities are. The youngsters have to divide the roles between themselves: every group has to have a moderator (someone who leads the conversation), someone who supports the moderator (by checking the questionnaire to make sure every topics is discussed) and someone who takes notes.










































## Execution

Each focus group has to contain at least the first two steps. Other steps are optional.

- Firstly, the participants are welcomed in the group. Everyone introduces themselves. It is important that everybody feels at ease. The moderator starts the conversation by asking the questions from the questionnaire. The moderator has to make sure that every respondent answers. Interaction between the different participants can be encouraged by directly addressing them or by asking if someone agrees with a certain opinion. Try to have the group conversation as fluidly as possible but it is important to stay focussed on the relevant topics. Always try to lead the conversation back to the information you want to collect. A focus group can be between two or three hours long, but no longer.
- Secondly, the youngsters have to analyse the data they have collected. They can write down the important elements on paper and try to make clusters out of certain elements that can be grouped together. They can do that on paper, for example by writing down every problem of the neighbourhood on a small paper and subsequently grouping them together. In the end, they will have clusters of problems. Another approach is by creating mindmaps for each topic. You have tools available online that can help to make mindmaps or you can create a mindmap on paper. This step the youngsters can do solely between themselves or at the end of the focus group with the help of the participants.
- The third step is optional. It can be interesting to do a second focus group (with the same participants or with other participants). The starting point here is that you have (for each topic or question) listed the possible answers provided to you by the first focus group. For example, a possible question could be “What kind of businesses is the neighbourhood missing”? so you have the topic “Businesses the neighbourhood is lacking”. Based on the previous steps, you have some (clusters of) answers. You can formulate each answer in a sentence (for example: I think the neighbourhood is lacking bakeries) and let the participants vote. You can find templates and an example attached by this document.

Topic/question:	“What kind of businesses is the neighbourhood missing”				
The neighbourhood is missing					
Possible replies	strongly disagree	disagree	neutral	agree	strongly agree
1 a bakery		x			
2 a bike store			x		
3 a laundromat				x	
4 take away healthy meals	x				
5 childcare				x	
6 support for elderly					x
7 ...					
8					
9					
10					

- You can also use an online tool (such as mentimeter) and let the participants vote to see whether they agree with a statement. When you use mentimeter, you can also list possible businesses the neighbourhood is lacking (based on the first focus group) and let all the participants vote.
- The fourth step is also optional. There has to be a small break between the third step and this step because the data needs to be analysed. The answers from step three are subsequently presented to the participants.  
You can do the analysis using an approach that is called ‘color code’ for the analysis.

Color Code						
strongly disagree						
disagree						
neutral						
agree						
strongly agree						
Topic/question:						
Possible replies	respondent 1	respondent 2	respondent 3	respondent 4	respondent 5	respondent 6
1 a bakery						
2 a bike store						
3 a laundromat						
4 take away healthy meals						
5 childcare						
6 support for elderly						
7						
8						
9						
10						

Based on the color code, you can see that the participants are in need of a bakery. There is no need in the neighbourhood for support for elderly or childcare.

If you used an online tool such as Mentimeter, you can just present the results without having to do the analysis.

Step by step, the moderator goes through the different topics and the replies. The moderator asks the participants for their opinion. Are they surprised or not? It can be a good addition to let the participants vote to have a sense of their priorities. You can do that either by hand or by offering the participants stickers that can be placed next to possible answers. That way, for example, you can know for which businesses the need is the highest within the community.

#### Possible variations and tips:



- As said, youngsters can do the 'light' version (step 1 and 2) or the extended version (step 1 and 4). If you do the extended version, you will have to foresee two dates for focus groups. It does not necessarily have to be executed with the same participants.
- Youngsters do not have to limit themselves to one focus group. It can be interesting to form more than one focus group. Normally, the limit would be 6 or 8 focus groups. If youngsters choose to do more than one focus group, it can be interesting to do one focus group with people living in the neighbourhood and for example one with people working in the neighbourhood or entrepreneurs. Of course, a different questionnaire has to be made if youngsters choose to approach a different group. Try to avoid mixing different profiles within one group.
- Youngsters have to choose which role to play (moderator, supporter of moderator and taking notes). If different focus groups are organised, it can be good to change roles.
- It can be helpful if the focus groups are recorded. By doing that, you can check some things with your coach or teacher afterwards. Keep in mind that if you record the focus groups, you have to ask the permission of the participants.
- Ask participants to register and give you some information. Do not forget to ask whether or not they want to cooperate in further research phases and, in so, how you can contact them.

#### Material:



- Materials depend on the method the youngsters choose (on paper or online).
- PC/laptop with projector will be necessary if the youngsters will do step three and four.
- Some drinks and bites for the participants.
- Perhaps a small gift as an incentive for the participants.
- Audio-recording material/ windows excel/template of possible questions questions

#### Timeframe:



The timeframe that is needed depends on the number of focus group and the extend (2 or 4 steps).

Preparation (brainstorm) can be done in a day. One light version of a focus group can be done in a day. For the extended version you also need an extra day.

**Do the youngsters have to be in group or can this method be conducted alone:**



In group.

You must have at least three people in one group (preferably more).

**Sources and more information:**



Partially adapted from 'le color vote' (Soc. Salengro Armentières)

More information about focus groups to research communities:

<https://www.participatiewordtgesmaakt.be/websites/52/uploads/file/Participatiekoffer%20-%20Methodes.pdf> (Dutch)

Focus groups is also a method used in HCD. More information about how to use focus groups in HCD: <https://www.designkit.org/methods/20>

### **Interview guide for focus groups (people living in the community)**

*Introduction: present yourself and tell a little bit about the SYU-project.*

*Ask the participants to introduce themselves. Ask a few questions, such as ages, profession, living situation, how long did they live in the neighbourhood, ...)*

1. What do you like about the neighbourhood?
2. What do you dislike about the neighbourhood?
3. What kind of businesses from the neighbourhood do you visit often?
4. What kind of businesses do you think the neighbourhood is missing?
5. Are you facing any problems at the moment that you haven't found a suitable solution for in the neighbourhood?
6. We want to open a pop-up that is community oriented. Could you give us any advice?

*Conclusion: ask the respondent if they have any remarks they want to add. Thank them for participating.*

### **Interviewing guide for focus groups (people living in the community)**

*Introduction: present yourself and tell a little bit about the SYU-project.*

*Ask the participants to introduce themselves. Ask a few questions, such as ages, profession, living situation, how long did they live in the neighbourhood, ...)*

1. What part of the neighbourhood are you living in?
2. What do you like about the neighbourhood?
3. What do you dislike about the neighbourhood?
4. How did it change since your arrival business activity wise?
5. What kind of businesses from the neighbourhood do you visit often?
6. What kind of businesses do you think the neighbourhood is missing?
7. Are you facing any problems at the moment that you haven't found a suitable solution for in the neighbourhood?
8. We want to open a pop-up that is community oriented. Could you give us any advice?

*Conclusion: ask the respondent if they have any remarks they want to add. Thank them for participating.*