

Garden in a night

Would you take the challenge to build a garden overnight?

Themes	Environment, Citizenship, Health
Complexity	Level 3
Group size	6+
Time	180 minutes
Overview	<p>This is a creative activity using drawing and model building to explore</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The forces that drive development ▪ How local development does or does not meet local people's needs ▪ How decisions about local development are made
Related rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The right to participate in decision-making processes ▪ The right to participate in the cultural life of the community ▪ The right to rest and leisure
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To understand that the outcomes of development are not inevitable ▪ To develop skills necessary for participating in local democracy and development ▪ To develop creativity, group work skills, co-operation and respect for others
Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Maps and pictures of where you live (past and present) ▪ A large-scale map of the neighbourhood showing your chosen site ▪ Pens and paper for drawing up designs ▪ Materials for making the models. For example, small boxes, tubs, tissue paper, paints, string, wool, wine corks, cardboard tubes, aluminium foil, egg cartons and other household junk, twigs, stones, bark, shells, etc. ▪ Glue and tape ▪ Paint and paint brushes ▪ Stiff cardboard or plywood to use for bases for the models
Preparation	<p>For part 1. Development – how and why</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Collect together past and present maps and pictures of the town or area where you live. ▪ Identify possible sites for the group to work on. Research in the locality to find out if there are any sites, which are due to be developed <p>For part 2. Making development plans:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Collect information about the site the group decided to work on for example, newspaper articles and minutes of council meetings ▪ If you are going to make models using "junk", make sure that you have plenty of materials. Start saving small containers, inner tubes from toilet rolls, etc., well in advance of starting this activity.

THEMES



ENVIRONMENT



CITIZENSHIP



HEALTH

COMPLEXITY



LEVEL 3

GROUP SIZE



6 OR MORE

TIME



180 MINUTES

Instructions

This activity is in two parts: part 1, "Development – how and why" is a discussion about the forces that drive change; in part 2, "Making development plans" people design a development project in their own locality, and build a model of it.

Part 1. Development – how and why

1. Introduce the topic of local development. Use maps and pictures to stimulate discussion about how the local environment has developed over the last 50 to 100 years. Talk about the political, economic and social forces that caused these changes. In general, have these changes been for the better? For whom and why?
2. Ask the group to name examples of developments that have happened during their life-times, such as extensions to buildings, shopping malls, housing estates, and who has benefited from these developments and how. For example, did the scheme provide much needed low-cost housing for local people or was it luxury apartments or holiday homes built as an investment by a finance company?
3. Look at the large-scale map of your locality and agree a local site that everyone wishes to work on.

Part 2. Making development plans

1. Display the large-scale map to show the site you have decided to work on. Make sure everyone is familiar with the site, and if necessary visit it.
2. Review the current plans for the site using information from local papers or minutes of council meetings. Talk about who is making the different proposals and what their interests in them are.
3. Brainstorm all the possible ways the site could be developed. Be as imaginative as possible.
4. Now break into small groups of 4 to 5 to review the brainstorm and briefly discuss the pros and cons of the different options.
5. The next task for each group is to come to a consensus about how the site should be developed, to draw up a design and then make a model of it.
6. When all the models are complete, let each group present their model and explain their plans.

Debriefing and evaluation

Start with a review of how the different groups worked. Did everyone feel involved? How were decisions made? Then go on to talk about the plans themselves.

- What were the main considerations when deciding how to develop the site? For example, cost, time, effort, profit, local needs - what?
- Were the plans people- and environment-friendly, and sustainable?
- Did the plans meet the needs of everyone in the locality? For example, the disabled, children, minorities?
- What resources would be needed to put the plan into effect?
- Were renewable resources used whenever possible?
- Were non-renewable resources used with care?
- How would the project affect the ecosystem in general? For example, was wildlife encouraged or were trees planted?
- What wastes would be produced building the project and in maintaining it? How will these wastes be disposed of?

Tips for facilitators

This activity assumes that most young people live in or near urban environments. The choice of site to work on must depend on your location and on your group. All sites have potential! Ideally, the group should research and decide. However, in some circumstances, for example, in schools, there may be curriculum constraints, so the teacher will have to choose.

Options for what to put on the site may include a shopping centre, a leisure centre, a school, housing, a car park, an open green space, a playground, a sports field, a quiet rose garden with seating for elderly people, a city farm, a wildlife sanctuary, an amusement park, a bowling green, etc. Encourage people to take the needs of different sections of the community into consideration.

Variations

You could choose a fantasy scenario. For example, what would you rather see on the site where your town hall, council offices, hospital, etc. now stand? Or if you live in a rural locality, what better use could there be for a disused pit or a slag heap left over from mining operations?

Suggestions for follow-up

Find out more about the council's plans for developing the site you have been working with. Talk about what you think about the plans and write to the council or to your local paper to let others know your views. Find out how planning decisions are made in the town or village where you live. How much influence do local people have on decision-making? How can young people have more say in planning decisions that affect them? If the group are interested in exploring issues related to local decision-making, they could do the activity "To vote or not to vote", on page 238.

Ideas for action

Attend a planning meeting of your local council and contribute to the planning process.

Participate in celebrating Environment Day. Look on the web for information about Environment Day activities in your country in: www.unep.org

Further information

The idea for this activity came from the project "Have på en nat" (Garden in a night) that was part of the Copenhagen City of Culture Festival in 1996. A group of young people from Økologiskeigangsættere, a local Agenda 21 organisation, worked for two years preparing to build a garden on a derelict inner city site – not quite in one night – but over a few days. The young people decided that they wanted a community garden on the 300 m² site. They learnt practical skills such as carpentry, plumbing, bricklaying and horticulture and prepared and grew everything off site, so that when the time came the garden could be assembled almost "overnight". There was something for everyone: little paths wound around the site by a turfed area, trees, shrubs, flowers and vegetables. The garden remained until the site was reclaimed by the council to be developed for housing in April 2001.

Key date

5 June

Environment Day.