

# ARCHITECTURAL QUALITY AS A COMMON CONCERN

*European conference on  
architectural policies*



FÉDÉRATION  
WALLONIE-BRUXELLES

cellule.  
archi,

**BWMSTR**



Vlaamse  
overheid



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Architecture  
Culture & the  
Contemporary

CityTools Grounded  
Urbanism

# **0 Introduction**

For over 20 years, the European Conferences on Architectural Policies (ECAP) have been a means of sharing, on an international stage, the main concerns regarding the quality of our built and unbuilt environment, and its evolution.

Over the past few years, these policies have been widely developed at both European and national levels. As the climate transition has gradually become part of political agendas, numerous declarations and initiatives stress the importance of considering a more cultural perspective in favour of a technical-economic one in this transition, based on the development of a common, high-quality 'Baukultur'.

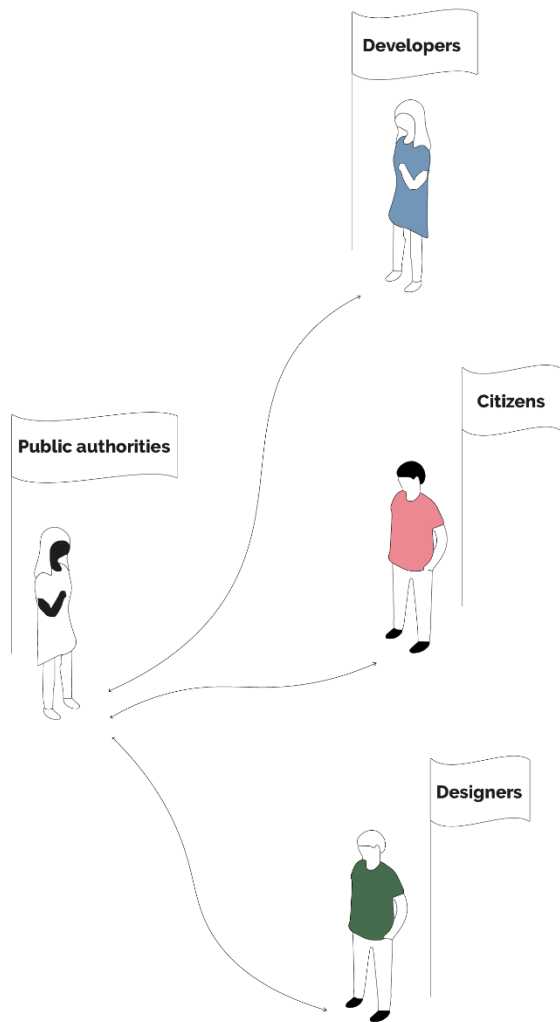
However, while tools have been created to provide a better understanding of this quality, the spaces where it can be tangibly established together have yet to be developed.

One of the many questions raised is that of the 'co-construction of public action', in terms of the ability to mobilise the various actors in a project. Although they have been invited to review their practices, many public organisations are still largely at a loss as to how to implement this renewal.

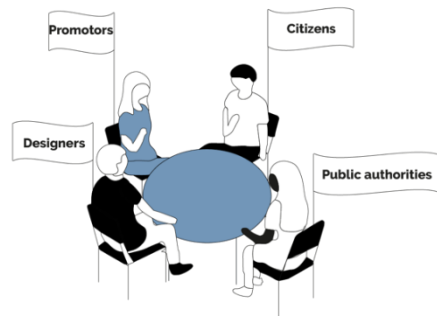
**In project development, how can public project leaders interact with such diverse actors as private developers, designers and, even more so, citizens? What role do these different actors play? When? And through what mechanisms? Above all, how can we make the question of project quality central to these interactions?**

By looking at each of these actors in turn, **the conference aims to examine how they can be mobilised by the public authorities.**

In preparation for the conference, **we hope to be informed about interesting projects by the EDAP and NEB partners.** Can you in one sentence describe the case study, indicate why the project fits the theme and provide us with a contact (mail and phone)? **We look for two supplementary projects per roundtable session.**



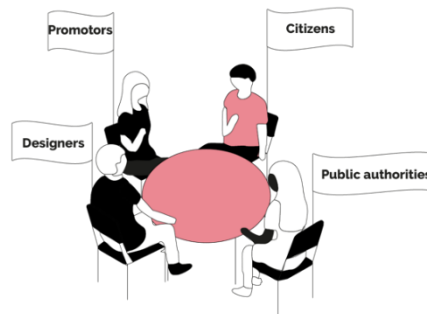
# Three interactions, seven thematic workshops



## Interactions with Developers

Workshop 1.1.  
Providing support for the private project of a developer/investor

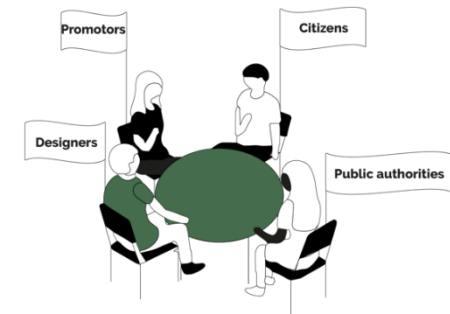
Workshop 1.2.  
Getting support from the investor developer for a public project



## Interactions with Citizens

Workshop 2.1.  
Getting support from citizens for a public space project

Workshop 2.2.  
Getting support from users for a housing project



## Interactions with Designers

Workshop 3.1.  
Designers assisting public authorities

Workshop 3.2.  
Design Expertise embedded in a policy context

Workshop 3.3.  
Design Research informing policies

# Preparation of the conference

For each theme, we will look at a Belgian case study representative of the current local political practices. We provide a summary of the project's history, and identify, based on a "classic" project procedure timeline, the key turning points in terms of spatial quality.

Standard project procedure timeline



Preparation: these are all the stages before the launch of a project. This phase covers several key stages, such as drawing up regulatory or strategic plans, purchasing land, carrying out technical studies to gain a better understanding of the site, launching studies to define or programme the project to determine the requirements, etc.

Procedure: Once the framework has been established and the idea for the project defined, the second phase consists of selecting the team that will develop the project. This phase involves drafting specifications, analysing tenders and bids, and then awarding the project.

Project development: Once the project team has been appointed, the project development phase begins. This includes preparing a preliminary design, applying for planning permission, drawing up a pre-construction file, and, finally, supervising the construction work.

Use: Once the site is completed, we will discuss the usages, management, maintenance, and life of the project.

**02** **Theme 2**  
**Interactions**  
**with Citizens**

# Introduction

We propose to discuss two types of interactions between public authorities and citizens:

1. Supporting citizens as part of a public space project: This theme examines projects which involve citizens who are directly or indirectly affected by the redevelopment of a shared public space. The target audience is therefore not entirely known (people living in the area, or using the public space).
2. Supporting users of a housing project: This theme addresses the involvement of (future) residents in a housing project. The public concerned is already known and the relationship with the project is more straightforward.

## **2.1: Getting support from citizens for a public space project**

- How can citizens contribute to improving the quality of a public space?
- Through what mechanisms and at what stage in the project process?



# Belgian case: Saint-Hubert

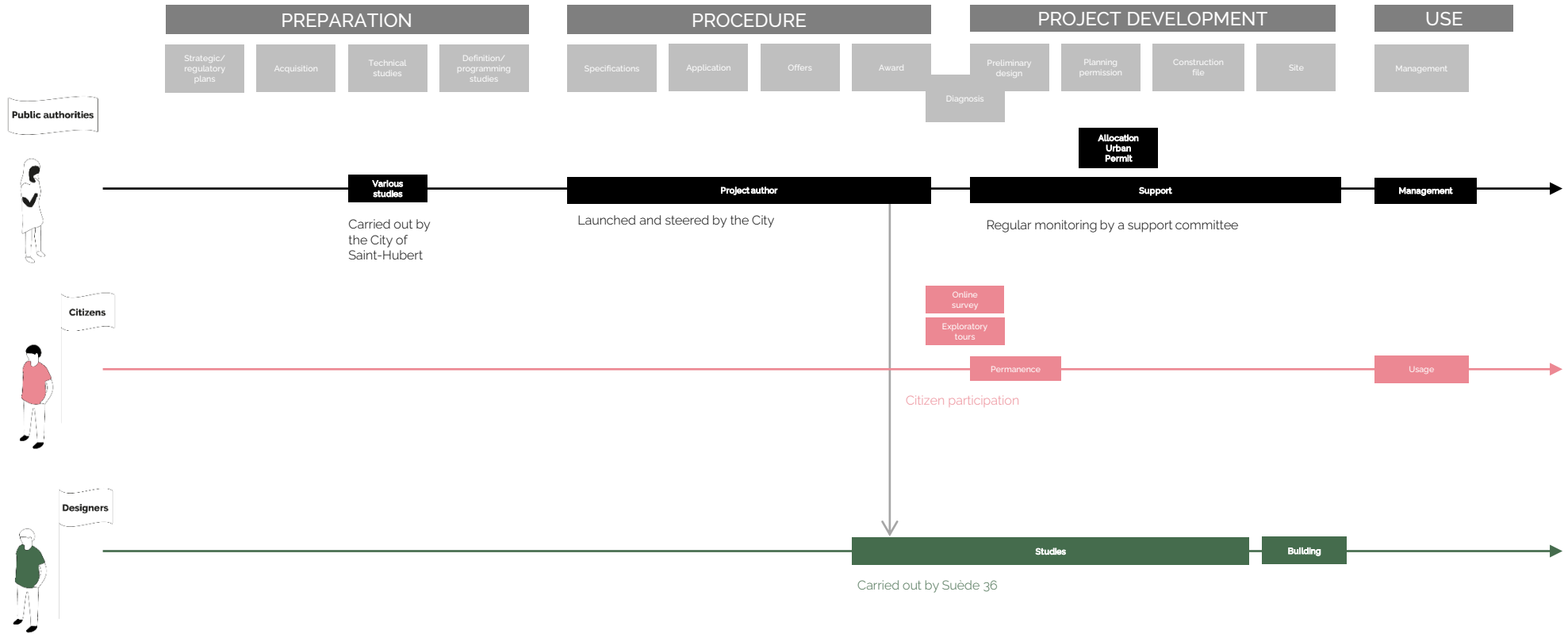
- Redevelopment of public spaces in the town centre
- Saint-Hubert - Belgium



Photo of completed project © Suède36

# Belgian case: Saint-Hubert

- Timeline



# Belgian case: Saint-Hubert

- Narrative



Photo of completed project © Suède36

Claiming the title of "hunting and nature capital", the city of Saint-Hubert has positioned itself as an important regional centre. From a commercial, tourist, cultural, and heritage perspective, the potential of public spaces remains untapped, and the condition of the roads constitutes a hindrance to the town's development. Against this backdrop, the town launched a contract to renovate the town's central road network.

Suède 36 won the contract. In its bid, the team considered the overall context in the form of a masterplan before developing the project. Designing public space means working on the image of a city beyond the project itself. Through consultation methods, thanks to its expertise in mobility and its ability to propose technical solutions, Suède 36 is proposing a strong public space project that will durably change the image of the city. The proposal not only aims to upgrade the main thoroughfare in Saint-Hubert town centre but also the perpendicular roads, particularly for pedestrians and cyclists.

# Belgian case: Saint-Hubert

Citizens were primarily involved at the beginning of the process to collect useful informations for the diagnosis. To this end, a questionnaire was distributed during the summer. Then, three exploratory tours were organised in September 2014 on three different themes: Public space, Tourism/commerce, and everyday life. These tours allowed for an understanding of the context through use, while simultaneously creating a more personal space for information and exchange.

During the pre-project phase, a 2-day meeting was held in an office in the centre of Saint-Hubert. Participants numbered in the hundreds. The aim was to gain feedback on the initial guidelines while providing information on the forthcoming transformation project.

The works were completed in 2019.

Photos of the on-site  
visit and the  
exploratory tour ©  
Suède36



# Czech case : Litomysl – embankment and park

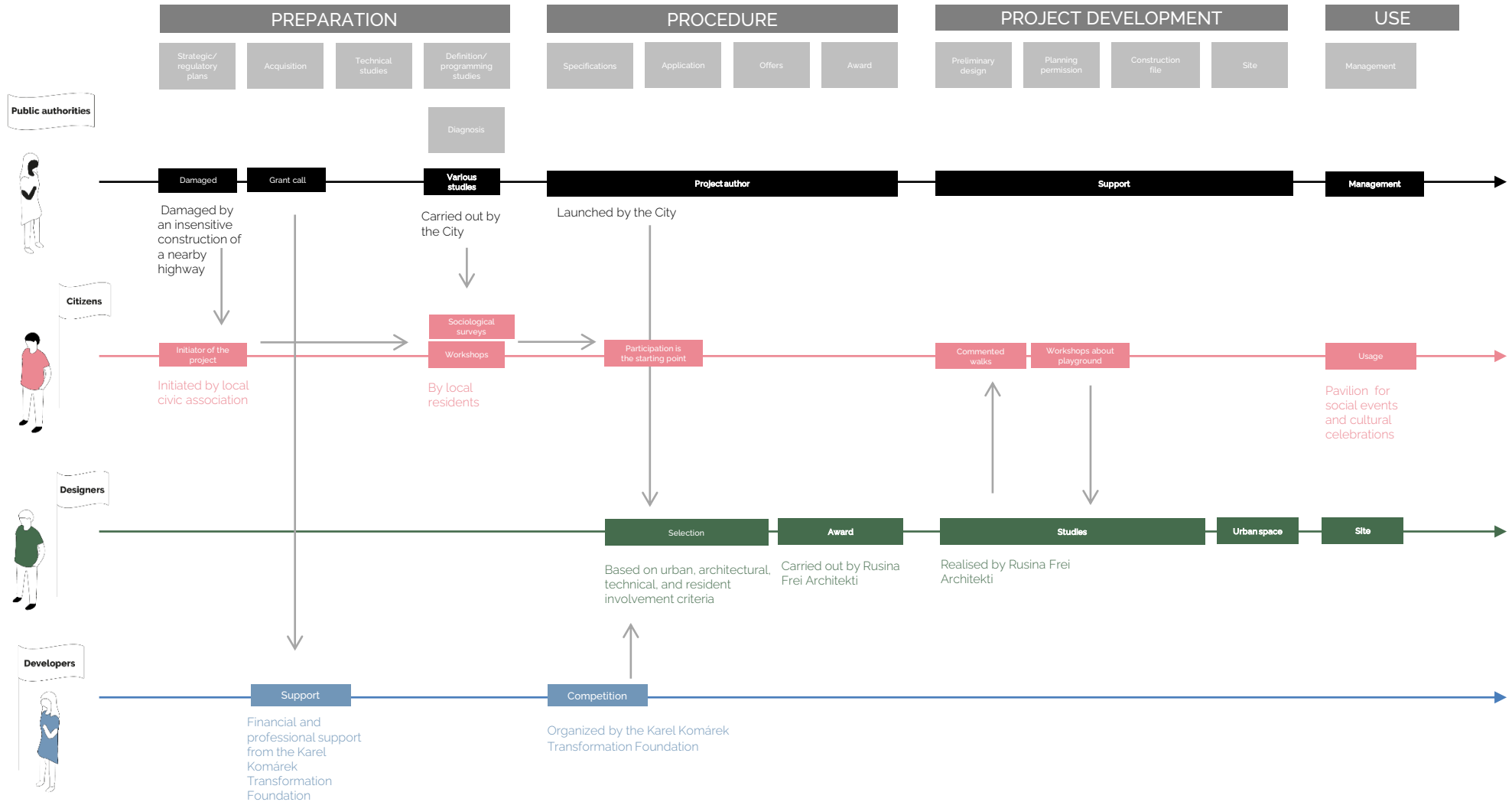
- Bring life back to the waterfront and create a pleasant space for spending free time around the river, at the request of local residents
- Litomysl, Czech Republic



Photo:  
<https://www.komarekfoundation.org/promeny>

# Czech case : Litomyšl – embankment and park

- Timeline



# Czech case : Litomyšl – embankment and park

- Narrative

Rusina frei architekti  
river loučna  
embankment in  
litomyšl



The embankment at Vodní vally and the park at Smetana's house are located near the historic center of Litomyšl. Even at the beginning of the 20th century, the surroundings of the Loučná river were full of life, but later insensitive interventions caused life to gradually disappear from the embankment.

The transformation of the entire location was initiated by the local association Generation 89 and the city of Litomyšl. In 2011, the city received financial and professional support from the Karel Komárek Transformation Foundation. Thus, a large-scale reconstruction began, the aim of which was to bring life back to the embankment, and at the same time to connect the river with the city more.

Throughout the project, local people have been involved through various activities. In the beginning, an extensive survey of opinions was carried out, from which the terms of reference for the architectural competition emerged. The design from the studio Rusin Frei architekti won. In the next stages of the project, the initiatives of the authority and local residents were reflected in it, who repeatedly had the opportunity to discuss the solution of the space directly with the authors of the proposal - during discussions or commented walks. Discussions followed at every shift in the project, a key topic was, for example, the new children's playground.

# Czech case : Litomyšl – embankment and park

Today, the embankment is a modern urban space, the natural charm of the river bed has been preserved. The architects connected the originally separate spaces of Vodní vally street, the embankment, the river and the park near Smetana's house. The focus of the transformation has become the waterfront promenade with an original children's playground, lined with a red wall, inscribed with the memories of people who once grew up here. Better access to the river and new possibilities for crossing it are made possible by a stone ford, a new suspended footbridge and tilting jetties reminiscent of the old swings. A pavilion with a green roof was built in the park near Smetana's house as a background for social events and cultural celebrations.



© Tomáš Souče



© Jan Slavík



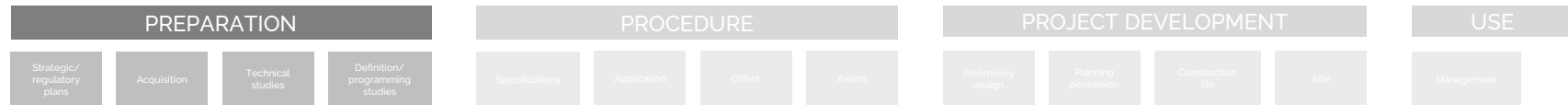
# Czech case : Litomysl – embankment and park

- Glossary

- **Local association Generation 89** : The project was initiated by a local civic association that persuaded the municipality to take part in a nationwide contest for the public park development project.
- **Karel Komárek Transformation Foundation** : Karel Komárek Proměny Foundation is a Czech private non-profit organisation founded in 2006, whose mission is to support the development of the urban environment in the Czech Republic and to promote public awareness of architecture, landscaping, and the importance of the quality environment for people.
- **Smetana's house** has functioned as a cultural center; concerts, theater performances, balls, and social gatherings are held here. Moreover, it serves as a home for many of Litomyšl's associations, ensembles, and amateur troupes.

# Questions

- Preparing the ground for high-quality architecture?



Framework:

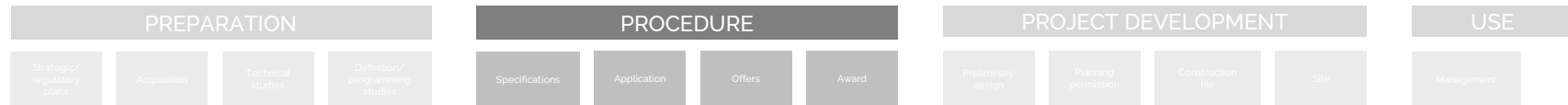
- How to involve citizens in upstream urban planning and programming studies?

Support:

- How much influence are citizens given in the decision-making process? On the appropriateness of a project, on the urban and environmental vision, on the programme?
- What timing and format are given to this involvement? For example: meetings, workshops, social surveys, temporary occupancy, etc.

# Questions

- How can citizens be involved in the choice of designers?



## Framework:

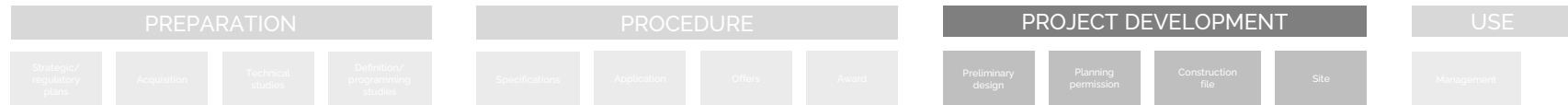
- How can citizens be involved in drawing up specifications or sitting on a jury?

## Support:

- How can the jury be made transparent and open?
- How can citizens be brought into the complexity of a technical choice?
- How to select citizen representatives? For example: a panel drawn at random
- What format should participation take? For example: observers, deliberative vote?
- How can the outcome of a jury's choice be explained to the public after the competition? For example: exhibition, communication about the winner, etc.

# Questions

- How do you refine an architectural proposal through a collective approach?



## Framework:

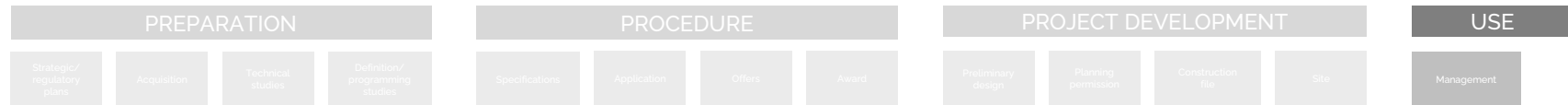
- How to involve citizens in the decisions that will be made during the development of the project? For example: public consultation during the planning permission phase

## Support:

- How can we define the project based on citizens' needs? For example: Helping with user management
- How can the project be monitored with the citizens? For example: Workshop to refine the preliminary design, meetings, site visits, etc.

# Questions

- How can a project be managed and maintained in line with the uses to which it is destined?



Support:

- How to involve citizens in the management of the project?



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