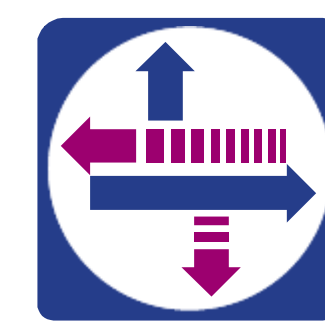




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## New synergies for urban mobility and public space policies: engaging local people

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**Mobility and public space policies** affect thoroughly citizens' everyday life and ignoring public has been detrimental for long. The challenge of sustainability calls for knowledge exchange and new synergies between local stakeholders.

## Mobility and public space

For the last century, urban streets worldwide have been built to accommodate automobiles. Priority to car needs has resulted in street environments admittedly unattractive for pedestrians. Attitudes towards urban street environment are now changing worldwide, focusing on a human-centered design, considering streets in their wider urban context, both as movement channels and **mixed-use places**, affecting the city identity. The **new policies** are acknowledging the significance of urban street life dealing with the concept of “**streets as places**” (PPS, 2008), originated in the placemaking theories and approaches, which benefit the new urban economies and place citizens at the heart of city planning (UITP, 2020).

Liveability and sustainability of urban settings are matters of growing importance for urban planners, engineers and designers worldwide. As Hespanhol argues (2018) “*contemporary city making has taken a turn towards favoring situated interventions that welcome participation by local communities, addressing their shared concerns, reflecting their values, and promoting social interaction in streets and public spaces*” and recent works advocate that engaging local communities in the co-design of urban environments that are meaningful to them, may ensure the long-term endurance of the designed solutions (Morfoulaki et al., 2022; Balaras et al., 2019).

**Serres city in Greece** has been gradually engaging local stakeholders in mobility and public space issues, through EU instruments like SUMP and lately through an URBACT project, “Space for People”, participatory processes being a prerequisite.

**This poster presents** the fruitful path of engaging local people in city planning and assesses their experience.



Fig.01: From highways to boulevards, URBACT Walk'n'Roll Cities Guidebook, Illustrated by Iván Bravo Studio

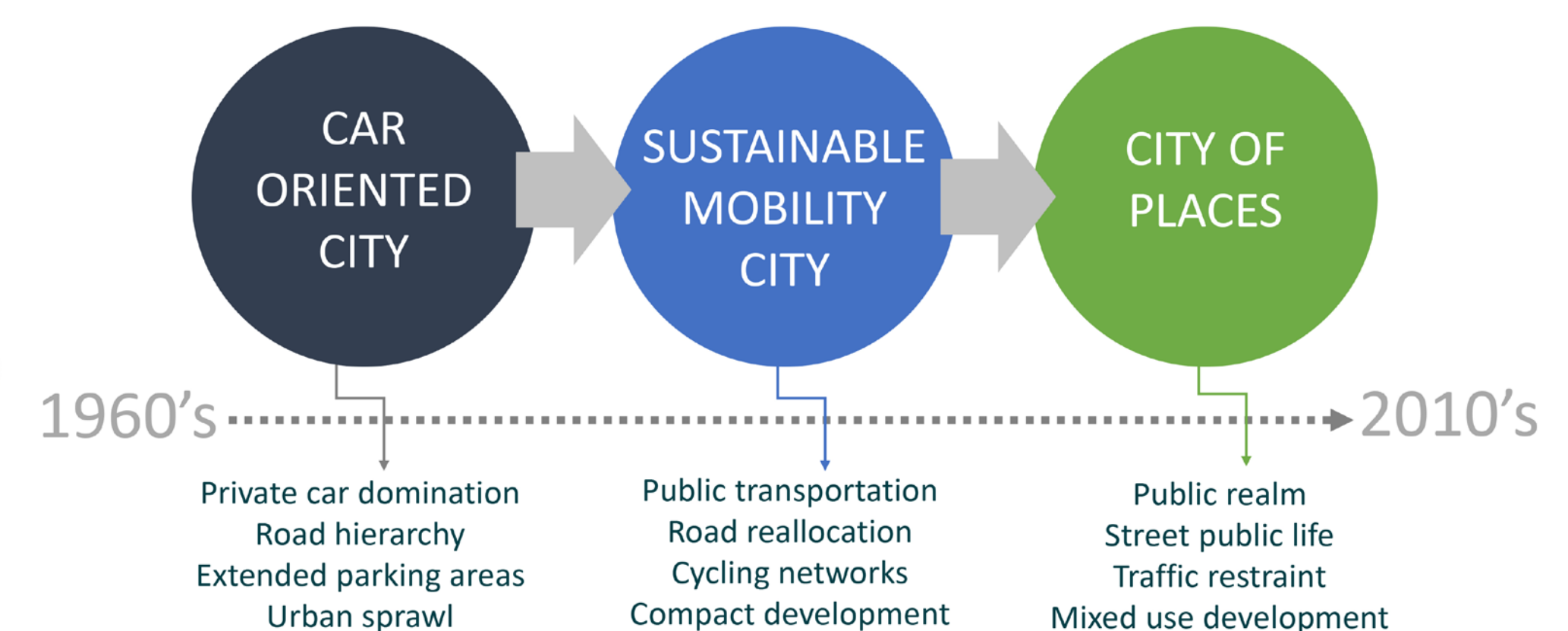


Fig.02: The evolution of planning approaches 1960's to 2010's (UITP, 2020 and own contribution)

## Participatory processes for public space and mobility

## Urban mobility and public space in Serres: a challenge for a new approach

Serres is gradually engaging local stakeholders in mobility and public space issues. This process has been achieved through cooperation as, admittedly, the synergy approach is gaining ground in the city and some local milestones can be defined (Table 01).

Based on the Space4People Cities Network approach, the key objective for Serres was to improve the city center area by evaluating certain streets and experimenting with innovative paving and signaling solutions, aiming to create a more attractive, accessible and without exclusions public space.

Given that the main demand was the production of an Integrated Action Plan (IAP), the local methodology embraced the URBACT program principles of integration, participation, and action learning in a step-by-step approach (Fig. 03, 04).

Table 01: Urban mobility and public space key local milestones

a/a	Milestone	Funding	Public involvement	Year
1	ACTIVE TRAVEL NETWORK	URBACT II programme	Local Support Group	2012
2	Urban Mobility Study	Centre of Renewable Sources, GR	Stakeholders / Public consultations	2015
3	Military Assets as Public Spaces - MAPS	URBACT II programme	Local Support Group	2018
4	Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan - SUMP	Green Fund - GR	Stakeholders Network	2020
5	URBACT Space4People (S4P)	URBACT III programme	Local Support Group	2022
6	Memorandum of Understanding for Public space co-creative planning	-	S4P Local Support Group follow-up	2023

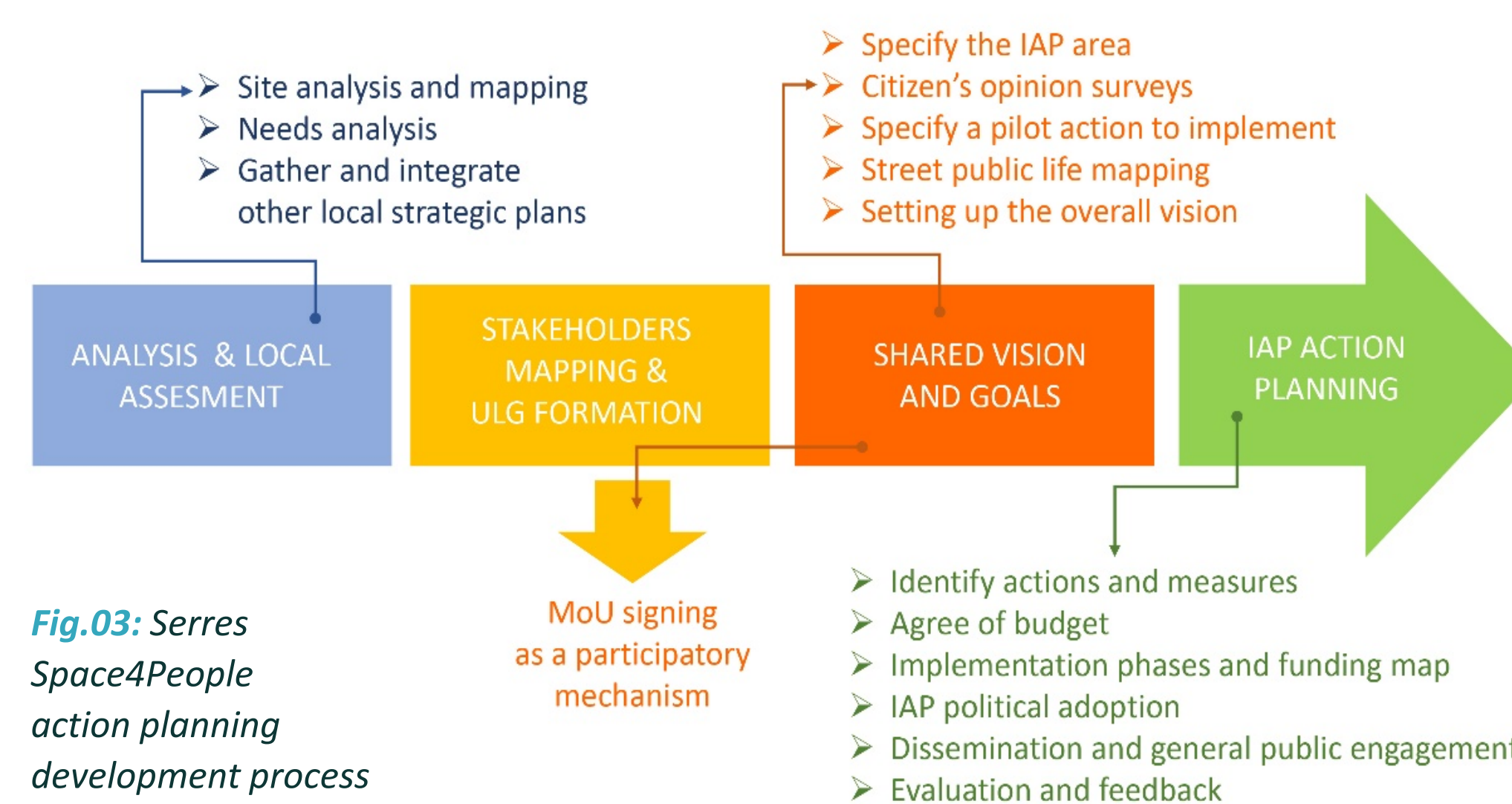


Fig.03: Serres Space4People action planning development process

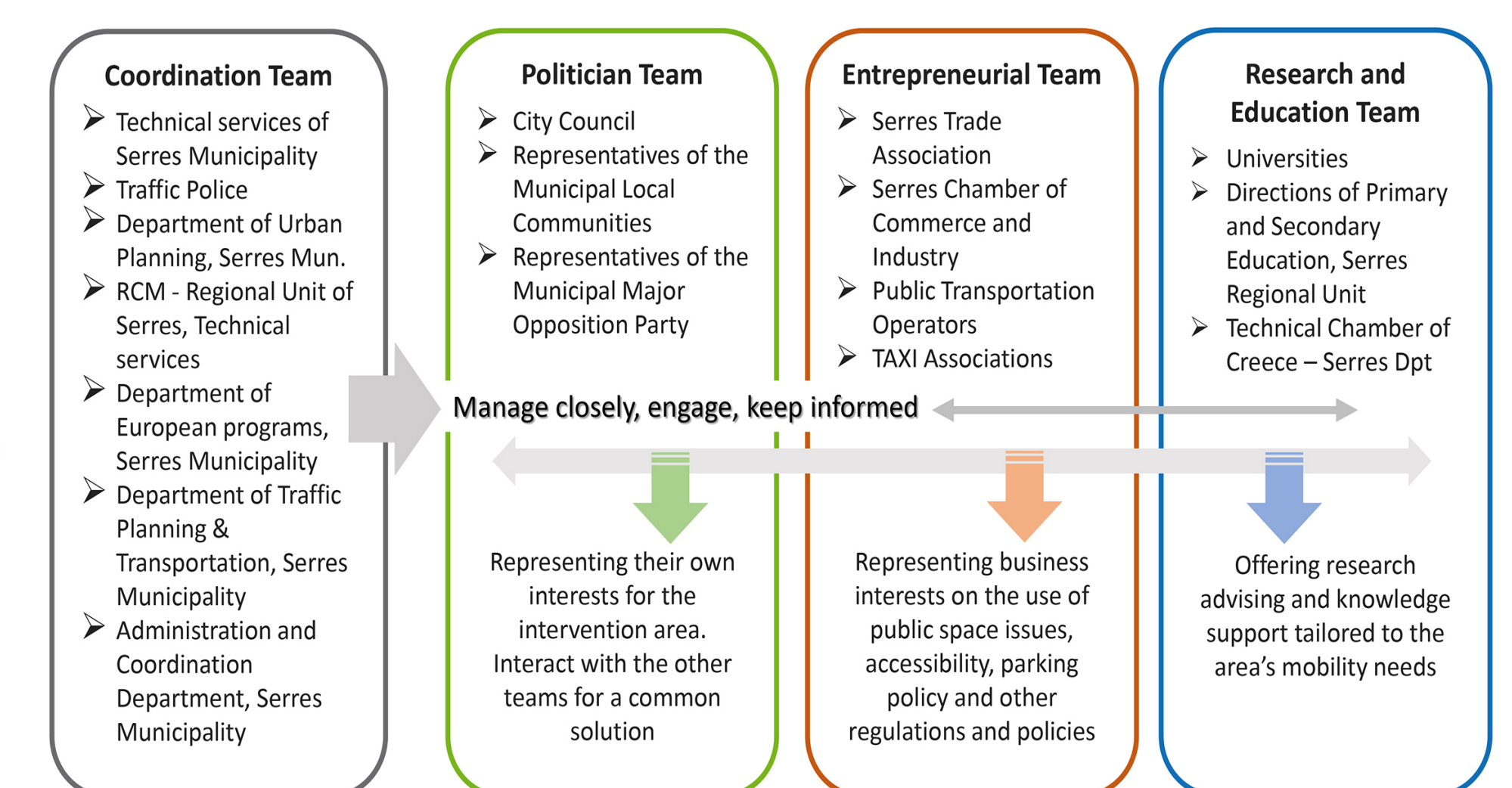


Fig.04: Serres Space4People – Local Support Group structure

7 areas 10 surveys 3 streets and public life mapping tools

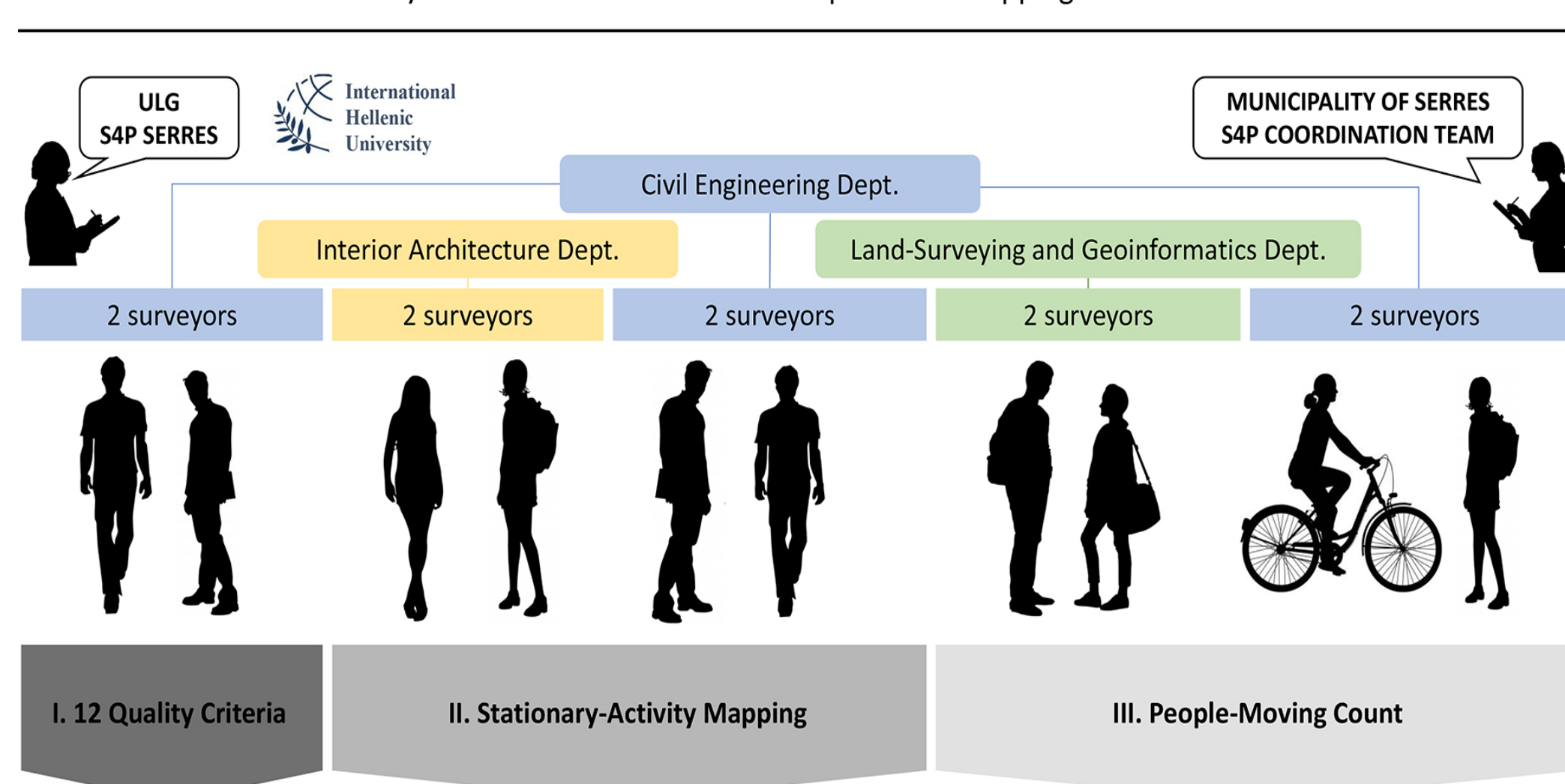


Fig.05: Space4People Serres, field research 2022 - team structure

## Involving youth in public life data collection

Aiming to make the most of the local support group, there was an encouragement to engage more people from the entities the group members represented. In this direction, one ULG member representing local academia, contributed in a generative way, involving more local people in the participatory process. This was possible in the data collection step, through a small scale “**public space audit**” exercise for young scientists-to-be but currently active citizens: 10 undergraduate students from different Departments of the International Hellenic University (IHU) – Serres Campus.

The research sought for characteristics that would improve the relationship between the users of urban public space and the city itself, focusing on central axes and areas where **public life** takes place (Daniil, 2007). The survey was designed with reference to the methodology tools developed by the Danish architect - urban planner Jan Gehl. With the aim of developing “**Cities for People**” (Gehl, 2010), Gehl Architects provide open access to mapping templates and tools counting quantitative and qualitative features of urban public life. Thus, three of these tools were adopted, translated, and applied in the 2022 field research in Serres (Fig.05).

## Resources & acknowledgments

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## Conclusions: Process assessment, findings and local impact

A year after the “Space4People” completion, a post evaluation survey was conducted to examine the **participation experience**. The feedback was 20 completed questionnaires from a random sample of ULG members and IHU students, quantitatively representative as it corresponds to approximately 66% of the targeted group of people.

A **high acceptance of the participatory planning process** is recorded as the whole Space4People experiment was well received by the groups involved.

The city is facing the birth of a **stakeholder's ecosystem** where the parts interact, give birth to ideas, and **co-create solutions**, while living the added value of their respective input to the overall cause.

Achieving greater public acceptance through a **sense of ownership for the solutions** implemented requires more investment in communicating the results of individual participation and contribution.

The participatory path we undertook, and the results of the assessment survey certify that **engaging local people** regularly contributes to **transparent local governance** and enhances active citizenship.