

# **OLA ONLINE SURVEY 2025 SUMMARY**



# INTRODUCTION

**This is a structured analysis of the 2025 post survey for the OLA online seminar 2025.**

**The purpose of the survey was to assess if OLA's values were successfully transferred to the participants and to assess how effective the sessions were for the participants.**



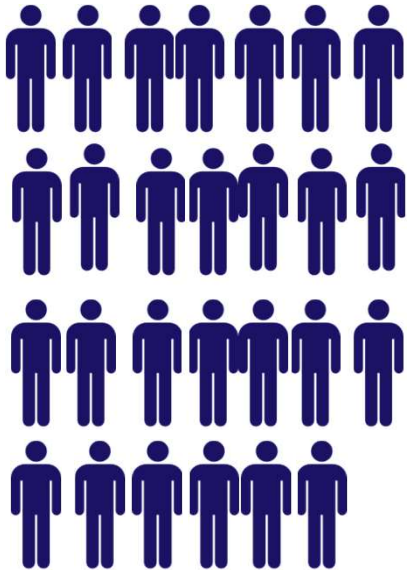
From **April 2nd to July 2nd, 2025**, the **Open Landscape Academy ERASMUS team** conducted an online seminar on **Democratic Landscape Transformation** for a cohort of **41 engaged students**, primarily Master's candidates (31/41).

The curriculum delved into essential subjects including **landscape democracy, collaborative visioning, and participatory evaluation**.

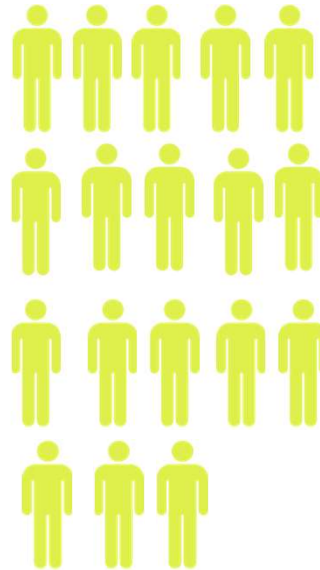
This post survey assessment revealed a powerful and significant shift in professional perspective, demonstrating that the **seminar successfully cultivated a strong, consensus-driven embrace of democratic, community-centered approaches** to shaping and protecting landscapes.



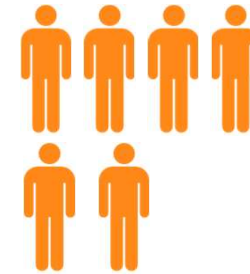
# Educational Backgrounds



**27** Architecture Students



**18** Landscape Architecture Students



**4** Urban Planning/Urban Design  
**1** Political Science  
**1** Enviromental Design



# Core Philosophy:

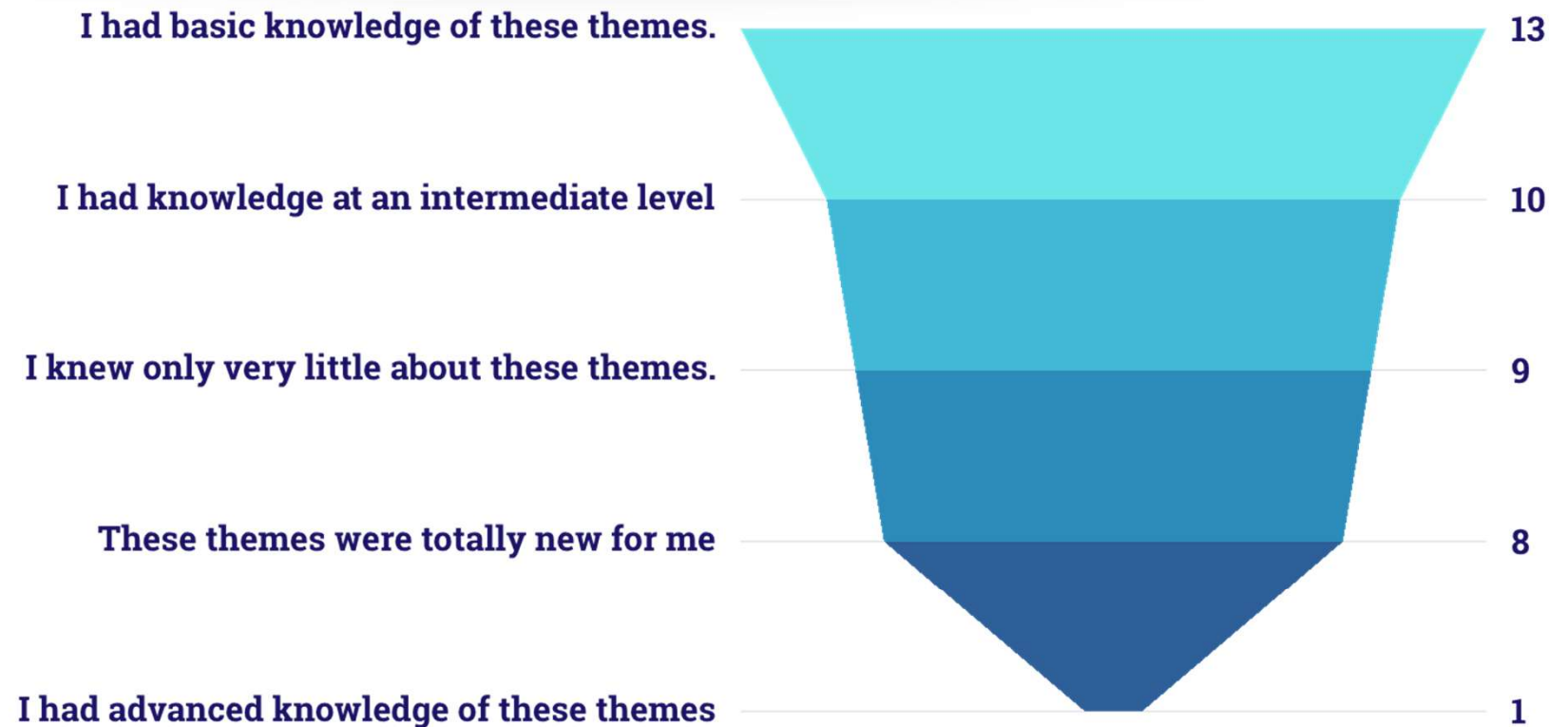
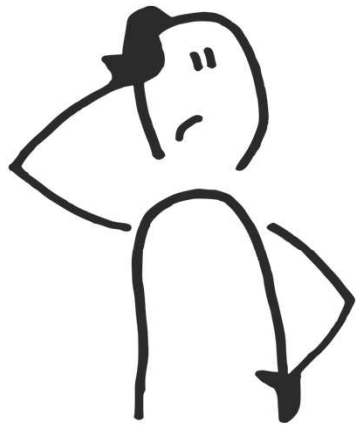
## Strong Consensus on Democratic Principles

Across all thematic sections, there is a powerful consensus on the core tenets of landscape democracy. The following statements received overwhelming agreement (Ratings 5 & 6 comprising 80-100% of responses):

- **Landscape & Community:** Belief that landscape is shaped by community interaction and carries shared rights/responsibilities.
- **Design for Transformation:** Strong agreement that landscape changes must benefit the common good, integrate user dreams, and be inclusive.
- **The Role of Participation:** Near-unanimous agreement that community involvement is necessary for sustained, resilient, and democratic outcomes (33 out of 41 respondents gave a Rating 6).
- **Professional Responsibility:** A clear sense of ethical duty to promote democracy, address injustices, and empower marginalized voices.



# Previous knowledge of landscape democracy, democratic design and participation





# Views on Landscape and Community

The questions aimed to assess:

1. Participants' beliefs about the social and communal nature of landscapes.
2. The shared responsibility in shaping and protecting them.
3. How participants value community engagement, well-being, and ecological balance in landscape design.



# Landscape and Community : Barometer Ratings

The landscape is 'an area as perceived by people', and community actions and interactions with it shape its identity and character.

Managing and protecting community landscapes is a right that also comes with responsibilities for all.

The landscape should support the health and well-being of people, communities, and all members of an ecosystem.

Planners and designers should be concerned mainly with how landscapes function and look.

Partnering with local communities should be transformative for all involved, including the design and planning experts.

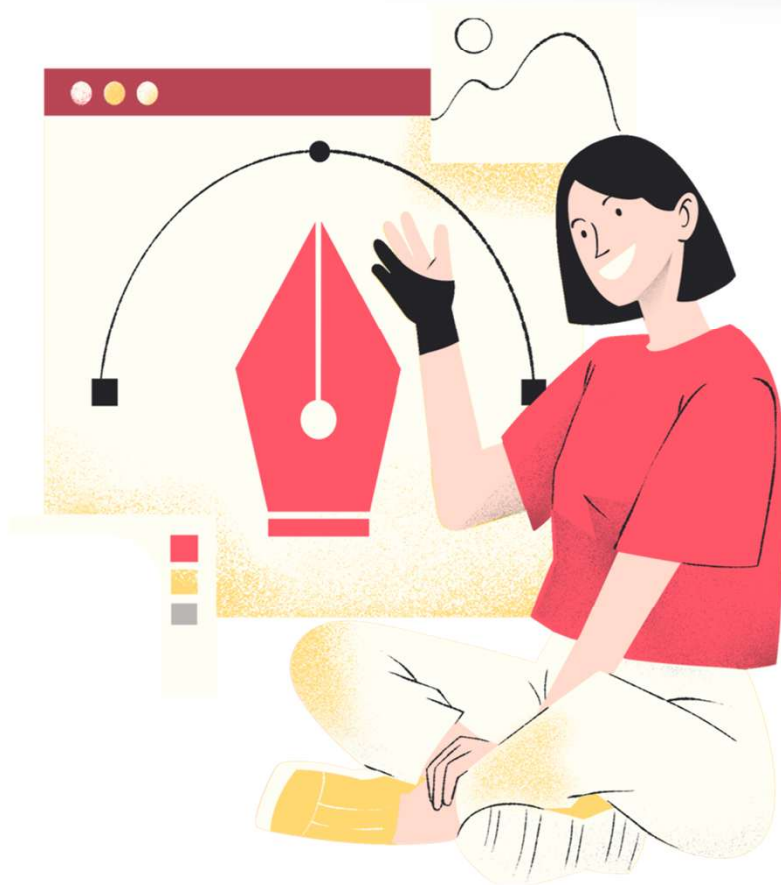




# Landscape and Community : Summary of Findings

- **Holistic well-being is the non-negotiable priority:** This conclusion is justified by the 32 mentions of "Rating 6" for the corresponding statement, which is the highest number of top-tier agreements for any statement in the survey. Combined with the 7 mentions of "Rating 5," it shows an overwhelming, 95% consensus.
- **Landscape stewardship is a universal right and responsibility, achieved through transformative collaboration:** This is justified by two key data points: **the statement on rights/responsibilities received the highest total approval (97.6%)**, and the statement on **transformative partnerships** received the second-highest number of "Rating 6" mentions (26), showing deep conviction for a reciprocal, learning-based process.
- **The traditional view of design (focused on function and aesthetics) is contested:** This conclusion is justified by the 15 mentions of disapproval (Ratings 1-3) for that statement, a significant minority that starkly contrasts with the near-universal agreement on the other principles. This division shows a clear push for the field to expand beyond its traditional scope.





# Views on Design and Planning

The questions aimed to assess:

1. Convictions regarding the fundamental principles of landscape democracy.
2. The belief that inclusive community involvement and collaborative, systemic processes are essential for creating resilient, equitable, and meaningful landscapes.
3. To gauge support for a transformative approach where planning and design are driven by shared responsibility and the common good, rather than by top-down authority or simplistic efficiency.



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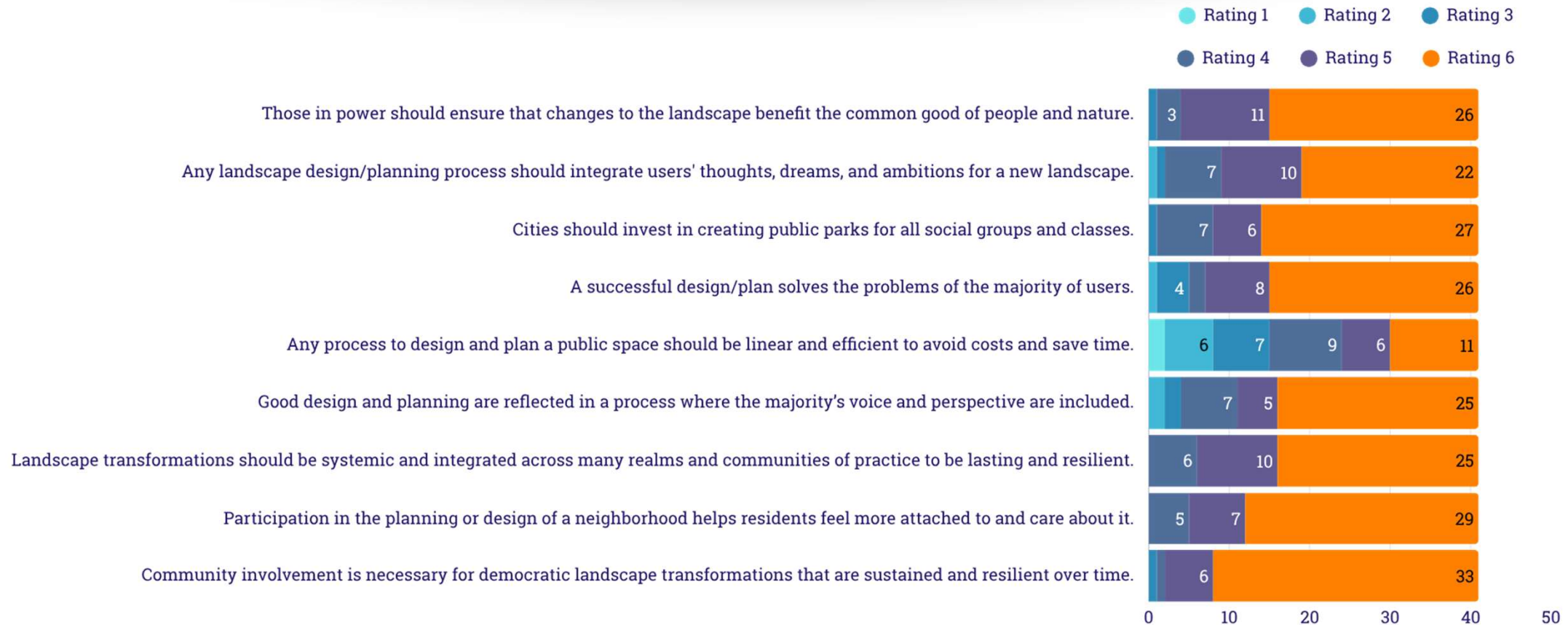


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# Design and Planning for Transformation: Barometer Ratings



# Design and Planning for Transformation: Summary of Findings

- **Community Involvement is Seen as Non-Negotiable for Success.** This is the most strongly held belief, justified by the two highest counts of "Rating 6" in the set. The statement on community involvement's necessity for democracy and resilience received 33 mentions of "Rating 6", and the statement on participation fostering attachment received 29 mentions of "Rating 6". This shows **an overwhelming conviction that community input is not just beneficial, but essential.**
- **Equitable Access and the Common Good are Core Responsibilities of Power.** There is a powerful consensus that **landscape changes must serve everyone.** This is justified by the high "Rating 6" counts for statements on the **common good** (26 mentions) and **creating parks for all social groups** (27 mentions), both achieving over 90% approval (Ratings 5+6). The group firmly believes that **those in power have a duty to ensure benefits are universal.**
- **A Linear and Efficient Process is Strongly Rejected in Favor of Systemic, Integrated Collaboration.** This is the most divisive finding, justified by the stark contrast in ratings. The statement endorsing a **linear process received significant disapproval** (15 mentions in Ratings 1-3) and the lowest approval rate (41.5%). Conversely, the **statement calling for systemic, integrated collaboration across communities of practice received 25 mentions of "Rating 6" and 85% approval, showing a clear preference for adaptable, multi-faceted processes over rigid, efficiency-focused ones.**



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# Views on Participation

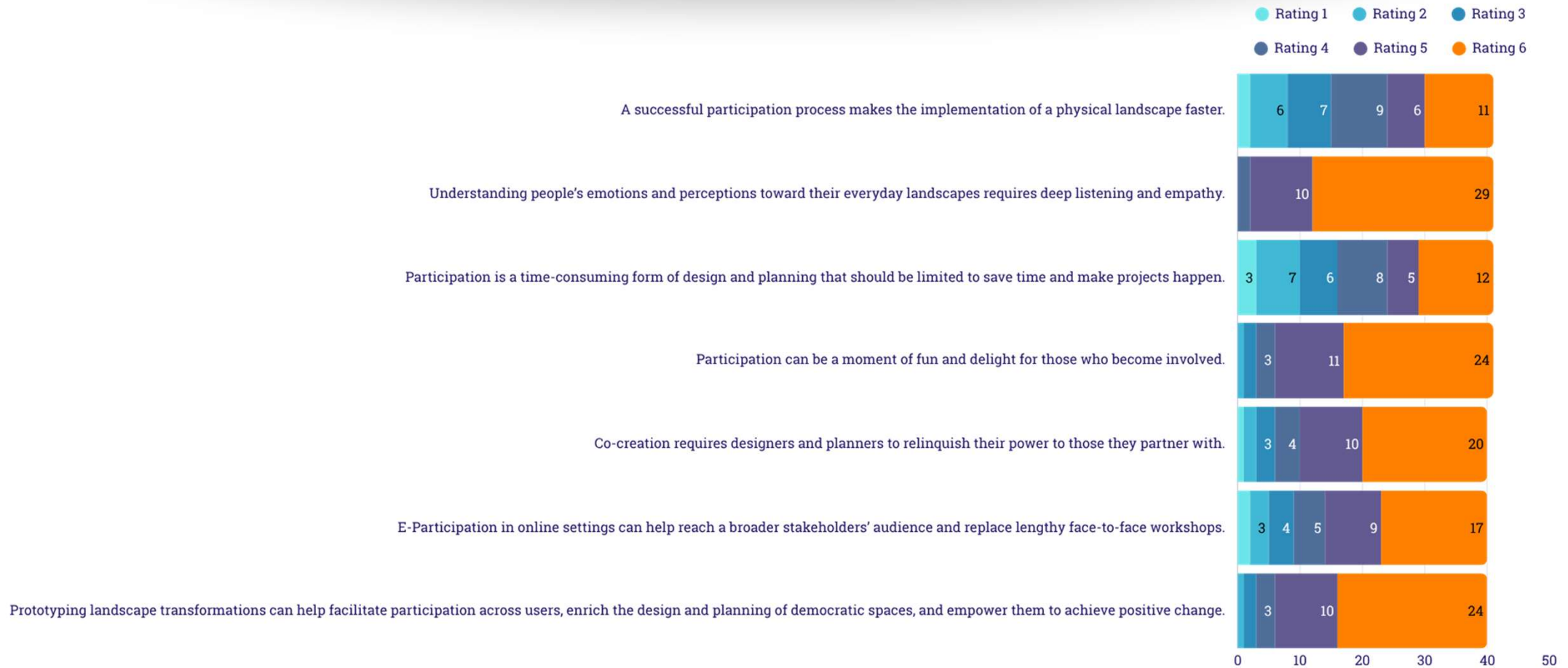
The questions aimed to assess participants' understanding of:

1. To determine the purpose and nature of public participation in landscape design.
2. To explore whether participants view engagement as a tool for efficiency versus a deeper process of empathetic connection, empowerment, and shared ownership.
3. Gauge the support for a model of co-creation that values emotional understanding and the redistribution of power over simplistic metrics of speed or time-saving.





# Participation : Barometer Ratings



# Participation : Summary of Findings

- **Deep Listening and Empathy are Foundational.** The group overwhelmingly believed that **understanding a community's connection to its landscape requires profound emotional engagement**. This is justified by the 29 mentions of "Rating 6" for the corresponding statement—the highest in this set—combined with 10 more "Rating 5" mentions, showing near-universal agreement (95% approval).
- **Participation is Valued for Empowerment and Engagement, Not Efficiency.** The data strongly rejects the idea that participation is primarily a tool for speed. This is justified by comparing two statements: **the one saying participation should be limited to save time** received 16 mentions of disapproval (Ratings 1-3), while the one stating it can be **"fun and delightful"** received 24 mentions of "Rating 6". This shows **the process is valued for its experiential and empowering qualities, not just its outcomes**.
- **Co-Creation Requires a Meaningful Redistribution of Power.** There is a clear consensus that **effective partnership demands a shift in control from experts to the community**. This is justified by the 20 mentions of "Rating 6" for the statement that **"co-creation requires designers... relinquish their power,"** backed by 10 more "Rating 5" mentions (73% total approval for Ratings 5-6). This is further supported by **high approval for prototyping** (24 mentions of "Rating 6"), **a method that facilitates this shared control**.





# Overview of Professional Responsibility

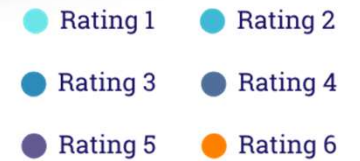
The questions aimed to assess participants' views on the **ethical core and practical methodology** of the design and planning professions.

They explored the conviction that **a professional's primary duty is to act as an agent of democracy and justice**, prioritizing the empowerment of marginalized communities and collaborative processes over client-centered or exclusively expert-driven models.

Overall, the goal was to gauge **support for redefining professional responsibility around the principles of equitable power-sharing and universal right to landscape agency**.



# Professional Responsibility : Barometer Ratings



# Professional Responsibility : Summary of Findings

- **A Moral Imperative for Justice and Democracy is Paramount.** The group strongly believes the core duty of a professional is to **champion democratic values and social equity**. This is justified by the two highest "Rating 6" scores: **29 mentions for empowering the marginalized** and **28 mentions for promoting democracy and justice "no matter who the client is."**
- **The Professional's Role is a Facilitator, Not a Sole Authoritative Expert.** There is a clear **preference for collaborative over top-down expertise**. This is justified by comparing two statements: the one asserting that **"cooperation is the only key"** received 24 mentions of "Rating 6", while the statement that designers **"must show laypersons what good design is"** received a much lower 13 mentions. The role of educator is supported, but **the role of collaborative facilitator is valued more highly**.
- **Universal Voice and Agency are Fundamental Rights, Despite Practical Challenges.** The group overwhelmingly endorses the **principle of inclusive participation**, even if it complicates the process. This is justified by another 29 mentions of "Rating 6" for the statement that **"we should all have a voice and agency."** Conversely, the view that **"collaboration complicates the work"** is the most contested statement, with 17 mentions of disapproval (Ratings 1-3), showing that **the principle of inclusion is considered worth the complexity**.







## Overview of Personal Perspective

The questions aimed to assess participants' **personal readiness and perceived competency to enact the principles of landscape democracy** in practice.

They explored the **individual's sense of agency, their confidence in specific collaborative methodologies, and their self-awareness** regarding the critical interpersonal skills of empathy and listening.

Overall, the goal was to gauge the **alignment between theoretical belief in participatory approaches and the personal conviction to effectively lead and facilitate them.**



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# Personal Perspective : Barometer Findings



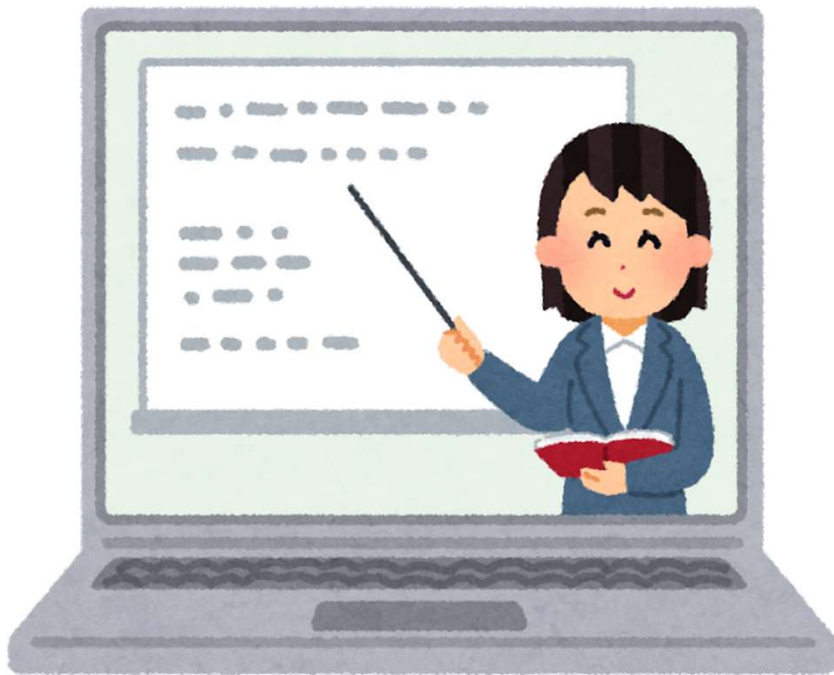
# Personal Perspective : Findings Overview



- **Strong Sense of Responsibility and Confidence in Core Democratic Skills.** The respondents express a **powerful personal commitment to leading community-centered work**. This is justified by the very high "Rating 6" scores for **feeling responsible for tackling challenges** (25 mentions) and being **prepared to lead engagement processes** (24 mentions). This shows a **readiness to act**, not just agree with principles.
- **High Self-Assessed Competency in Relational and Process Skills over Technical Expertise.** The group rates their **"soft skills" highest**. This is justified by the fact that **recognizing stakeholders/power structures** (25 mentions of "Rating 6"), **active listening** (25 mentions), and **empathy** (25 mentions) all scored higher than more **technical skills** like using **prototyping** (20 mentions) or the statement that their education gave them "all" the knowledge (20 mentions). They trust their ability to connect and facilitate more than they rely solely on formal expertise.
- **Awareness and Theoretical Knowledge Outpace Specific Methodological Confidence.** There is a subtle but important **gap between understanding concepts and applying tools**. This is justified by comparing two sets of statements: **Awareness of design's potential for co-creation** and the **concept of participatory action research** both received 25 mentions of "Rating 6". However, the more specific, applied skills of **"how to use prototyping"** and **"how to evaluate processes"** received a slightly lower, though still strong, 20 and 24 mentions of "Rating 6" respectively. This suggests a **very strong foundational belief system** that is **still being fully translated** into a practiced toolkit.



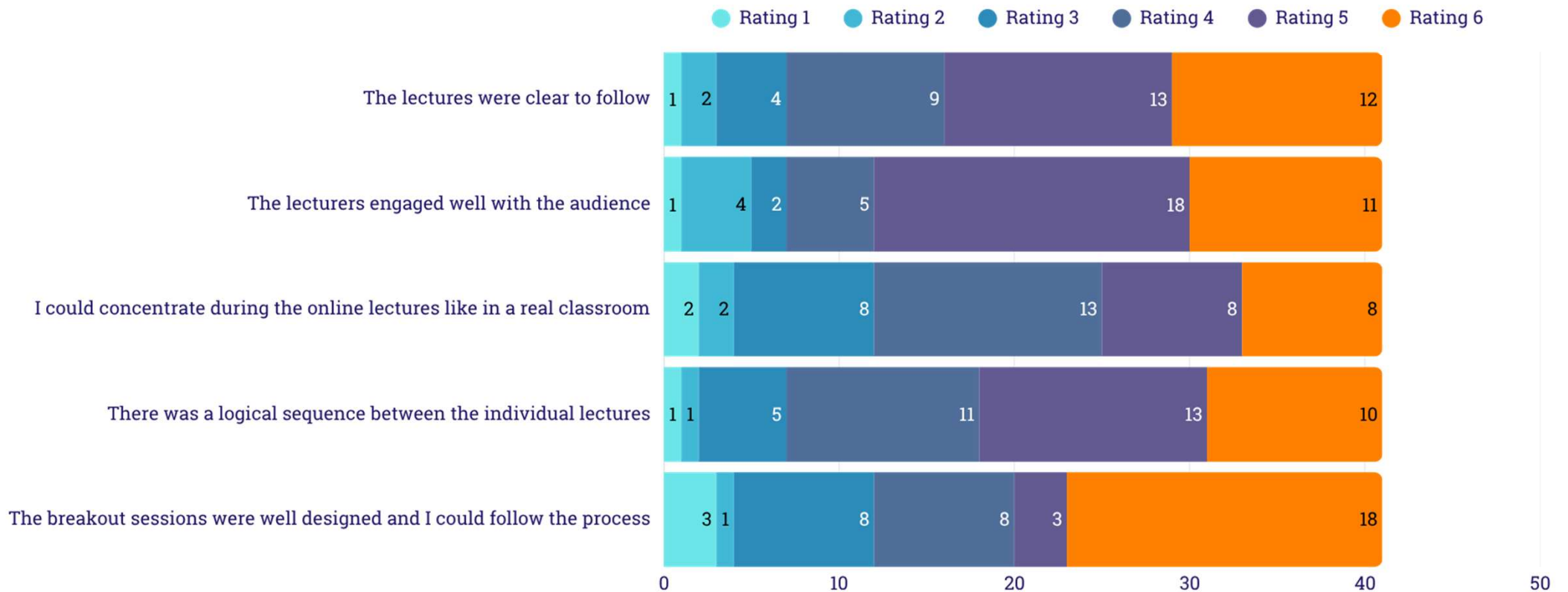
# Overview of Lecture and Seminar Evaluation



The questions aimed to assess the effectiveness and structure of the lecture and seminar format. Focusing on both **content delivery** and **participant engagement**, it explored the clarity, sequence, and engagement of the lectures, while specifically **evaluating the challenges of the online environment** and the **success of interactive components like breakout sessions**. The overall aim is to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the educational model to identify what worked well and where improvements could be made for future sessions.



# Lecture and Seminar Evaluation : Barometer Findings





# Lecture and Seminar Evaluation : Summary of Findings

- **Breakout Sessions Were a Clear and Effective Highlight.** The breakout sessions were the most **definitively successful element**. This is justified by the 18 mentions of "Rating 6", which is the highest top-tier score in this section, indicating **these sessions were exceptionally well-designed and easy to follow for a significant portion of the audience**.
- **Lectures Were Generally Effective in Clarity, Engagement, and Structure.** The **core lecture content was well-received**. This is justified by the strong combined approval (Ratings 5+6) for **lecture clarity** (25 mentions), **lecturer engagement** (29 mentions), and **logical sequence** (23 mentions). This shows a solid majority found the **central teaching to be of high quality**.
- **Online Concentration Posed a Significant Challenge.** Maintaining focus in the online format was the most difficult aspect for participants. This is **justified by the response to online concentration, which received the lowest combined top-tier approval** (Ratings 5+6) of only 16 mentions and the highest concentration of "Rating 4" responses (13 mentions), indicating a widespread sentiment that it was **merely "adequate" but not comparable to a real classroom**.



# Lecture and Seminar Evaluation : Overview of Lecture Phases

The next question asked participants to provide a reflective evaluation of a four-phase seminar structure. It aimed to gather specific, qualitative feedback on which phases were most effective for learning, which content was most relevant or applicable to the participant, and where they encountered difficulties in comprehension or engagement.

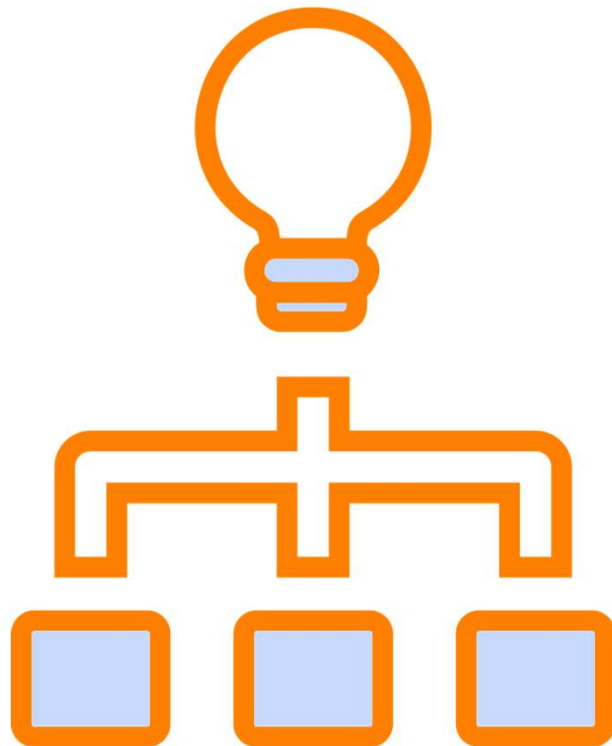
The goal was to understand the tutorial impact of each segment and identify strengths and potential gaps in the curriculum's delivery and content.



Phase	Full Title	Mentions (out of 41)	% of Respondents	Summary of Key Insights
C	Collaborative Design: Visioning, Co-Designing and Prototyping (Eszther, Anna et al)	31	76%	The most praised phase – seen as hands-on, practical, and directly relevant to real-world applications. Many valued the prototyping, visioning, and co-design methods, saying they turned theory into action. A few found prototyping initially confusing but rewarding once practiced.
B	Entering the Process: Activism, Community and Power (Ellen)	27	66%	Highly valued for its focus on participation, power structures, and community engagement. Participants said it deepened their understanding of democracy, inclusion, and social justice. A few found the political theory and activism content hard to follow or too abstract.
A	Mapping the Terrain of Democratic Landscape Transformation (Deni, Ellen & Kristin)	20	49%	Appreciated for giving a strong conceptual foundation and theoretical background linking landscape, democracy, and systems thinking. Some found this phase dense or technical but essential for later stages.
D	Collaborative Evaluation (Jeroen)	16	39%	Valued for showing how evaluation can be participatory and integral to transformation. However, many noted it was the hardest to follow, as evaluation frameworks felt abstract or theoretical.



# Concept Mapping and Team Collaboration

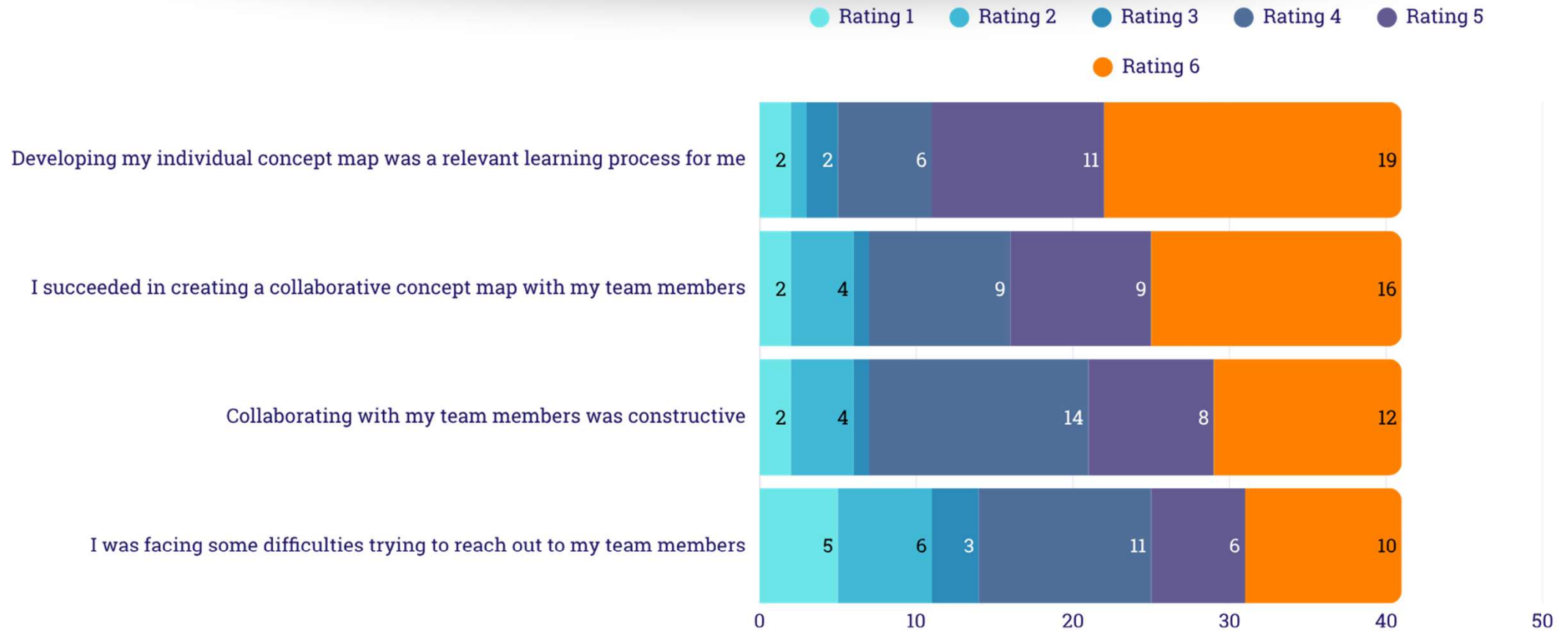


This explored the individual learning value of the exercise, the team's success in synthesizing knowledge into a shared product, and the practical challenges faced during the collaborative process.

Overall, the goal was to evaluate both the cognitive and social dimensions of this group-based learning activity to understand its strengths and identify obstacles to effective teamwork.



# Concept Mapping and Team Collaboration : Barometer Rating





# Concept Mapping and Team Collaboration: Illustrative Quotes

**"I learned how important genuine community participation is for shaping fair and inclusive public spaces."**

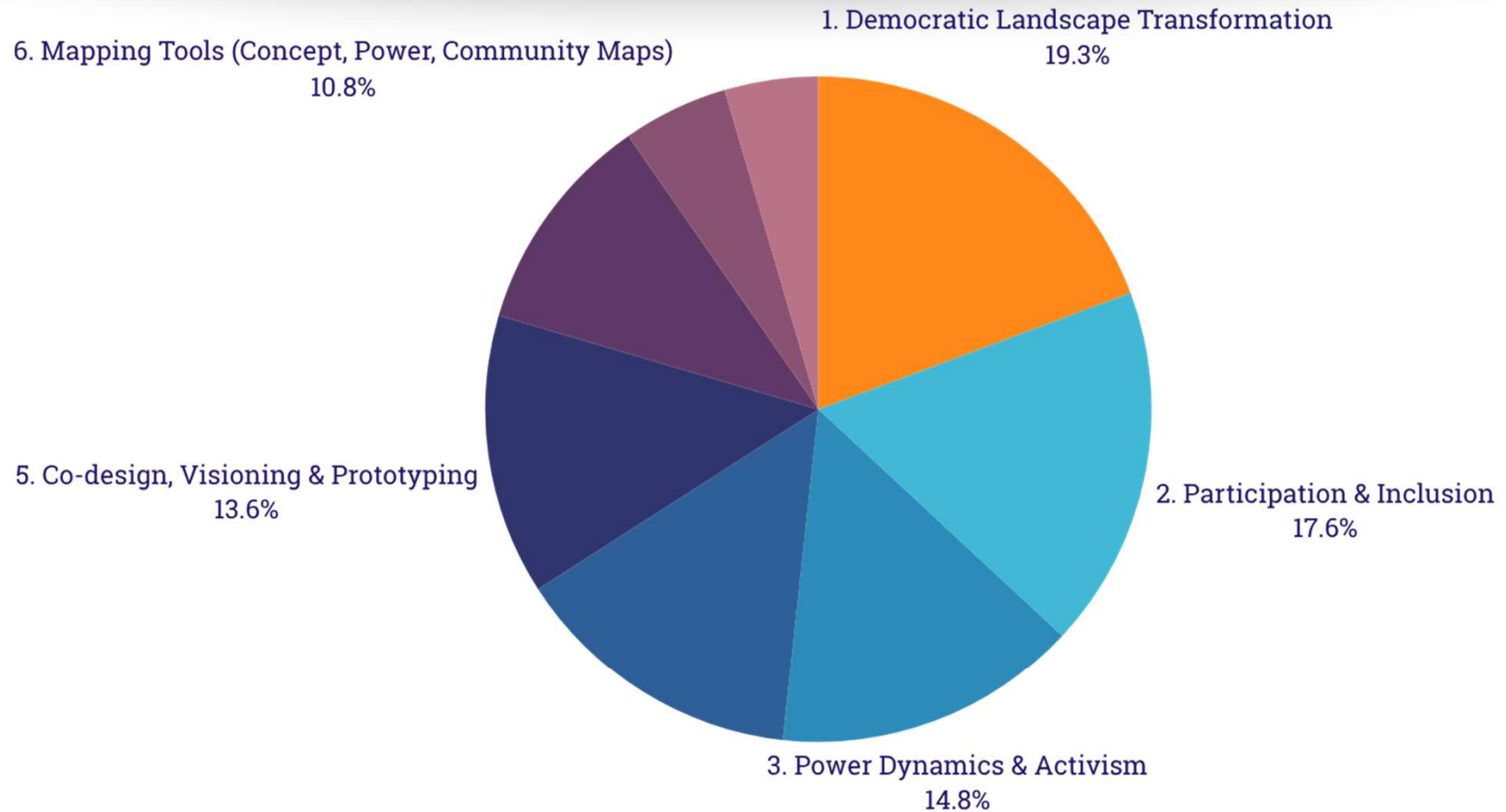
**"Working with international students gave me new perspectives on user-based design."**

**"Understanding the true power of the people through activism."**

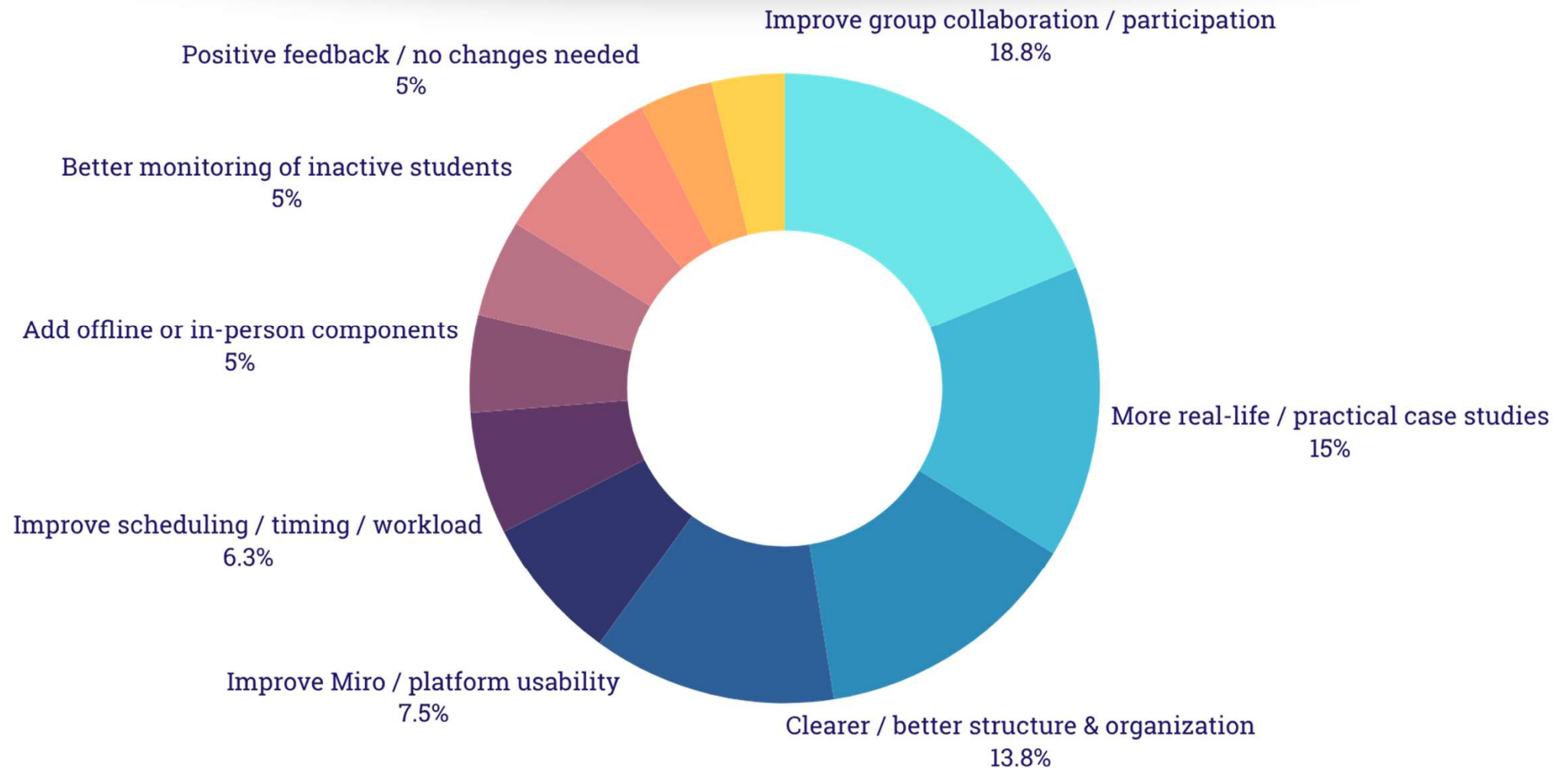
**"Evaluation is not a final step – it's part of an ongoing, inclusive process."**

**"Designers are mediators between power, people, and place."**

# The Most Important Learning Outcomes?

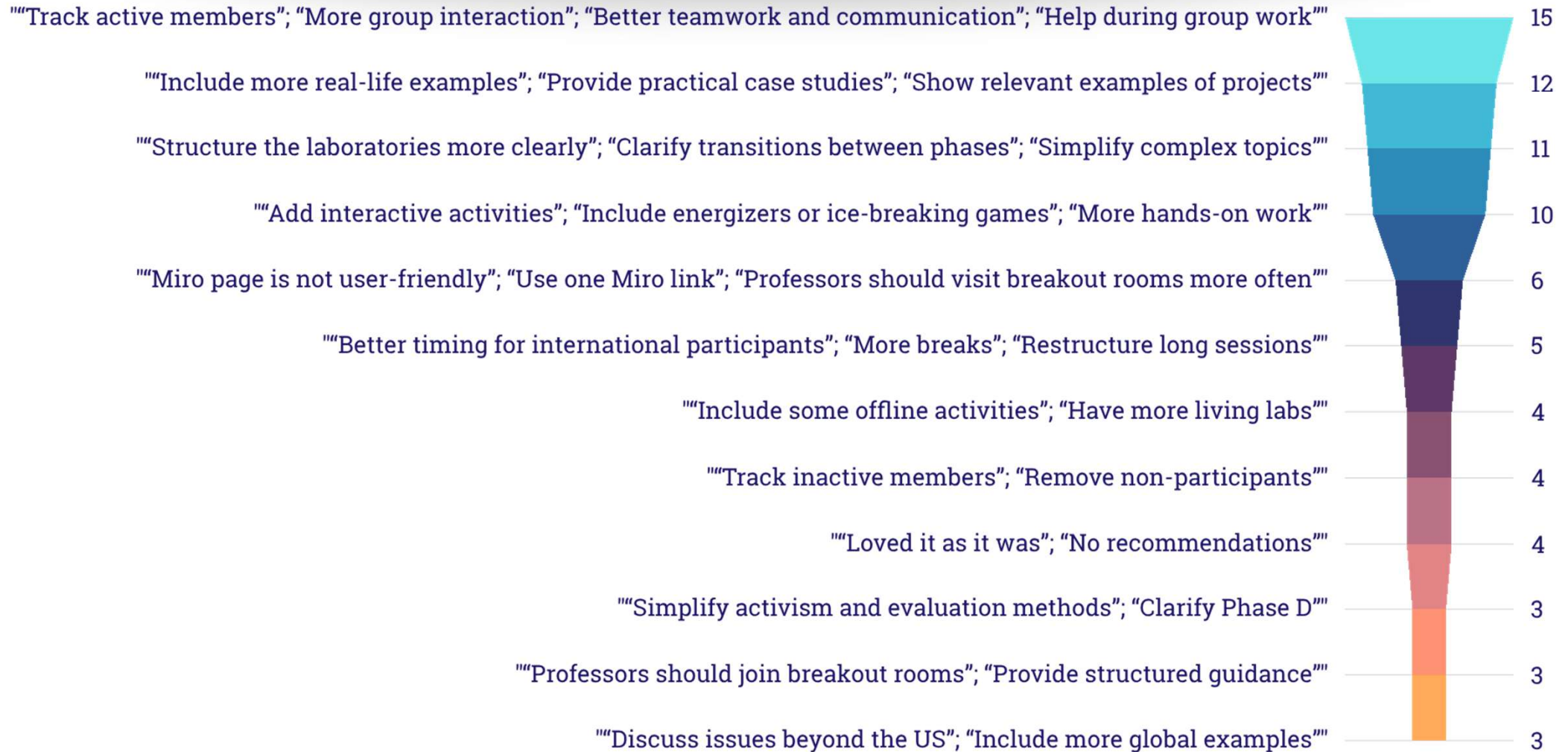


# Recommendations for improving the seminar



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Theme



# Evaluating OLA's Mission



**OLA stands for Open Landscape Academy. The OLA mission is to generate capacity for democratic landscape transformation across. This is expressed in OLA's living document, the Charter for Democratic Landscape Transformation. We would like to know from you: What would OLA need to offer in order to keep you involved in the future? What would motivate you? Would you like to be a part of it? Which role would you like to take?**



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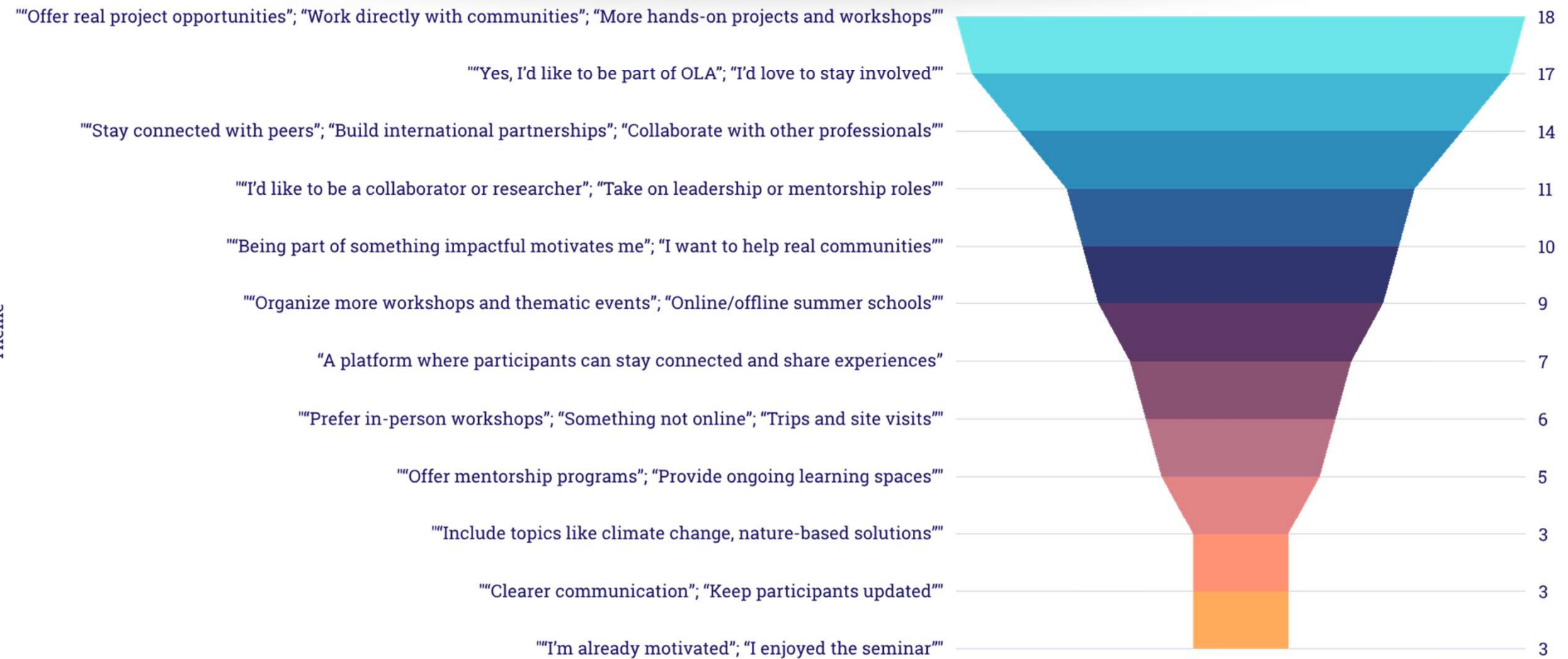




# What would OLA need to offer in order to keep you involved in the future?



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# CONCLUSIONS

## Participant Reflections

- Strong agreement on the importance of community engagement, democratic design, and professional responsibility.
- Participants felt confident to lead participatory processes and identify key stakeholders and power dynamics.
- Nearly all emphasized empathy, active listening, and collaboration as vital professional skills.

## Future Engagement with OLA

- 44% want hands-on, real-world project opportunities.
- 41% are eager to stay involved in OLA initiatives.
- 34% highlighted the importance of networking and international collaboration.
- 27% are interested in active roles (e.g., researchers, facilitators, mentors).
- Additional requests: hybrid or in-person formats, mentorship programs, and expanded themes (e.g., sustainability, climate change).



# CONCLUSIONS

## Recommendations for Improvement

- Enhance group collaboration and active participation (37%).
- Include more real-life and practical case studies (29%).
- Provide clearer structure and smoother transitions between phases (27%).
- Foster greater interactivity and engagement (24%).
- Improve online tools, timing, and workload balance.
- About 10% felt no major changes were needed.

## Seminar Experience

- Positive: Inspiring, well-structured, and intellectually enriching.
- Challenges: Dense theoretical content (Phases A & D), limited breakout time, online coordination, and language barriers.
- Collaboration: 100% participated in working groups; teamwork rated as constructive and beneficial.



**The seminar was overwhelmingly successful in achieving its core mission.**

**The data reveals a strong consensus on philosophical principles, high satisfaction with interactive learning, and a clear desire for continued practical involvement with the Open Landscape Academy (OLA).**

**We thank all participants for their passionate contributions and invite them to continue this journey with us in future seminars and Living Labs.**

**For more information about how to get involved, visit [openlandscapeacademy.org](https://openlandscapeacademy.org) or contact [info@openlandscapeacademy.org](mailto:info@openlandscapeacademy.org).**



**Thank You!**