

## Participatory Time Machine

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### Short description

"A time machine is a device which brings about closed timelike curves—and thus enables time travel—where none would have existed otherwise" (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2022)

The method of participatory "time machine" can be seen as another device and way of travelling through time. It aims to the understanding and the collective "reconstruction" of the historical path of a place or development, while prioritizing the value of experiential knowledge and highlighting the narrations and perceptions of local community members. It refers to the collaborative creation of historical timelines together with local stakeholders, to record, visualize and discuss the local history. The participatory time machine can be implemented during physical meetings/ workshops with members of the local community and results to timeline diagram(s) on a common board, possibly combined with the corresponding map (see Figures 1, 2). The diagram(s) are used by the participants to add notes with ideas, events, narratives, sketches, etc. according to the period and the thematic category. The participatory "time machine" process can be understood as an adaptation of collective storytelling methods and can be proven useful in research projects that engage with local history, specific development trajectories or the historical dimensions of a phenomenon. Designed and implemented as an interactive process, it enables the blending of personal stories and memories with historical landmarks and events, towards a collective understanding of the past. Thus, among the benefits of the method are the community engagement and the emergence of neglected memories, identities, and facets of history.

**Tags/ keywords**: Method, Qualitative methods, Participatory Processes, (Hi)story, Local knowledge.

### Who can use this method/ be involved?

This method can be used by researchers or practitioners, seeking to approach and record the history of a place, seen from the perspective of local community members. The involvement of local actors

and their personal perceptions of past developments and events (e.g. residents of the neighbourhood under study) are crucial for applying this method.

## Steps

- Preliminary desk research on the history of the environment/ development/ phenomenon under study.
- Preparation of a draft base for the timeline with time periods and (if needed) proposed thematic categories.
- Development of guiding questions for the moderation of the workshops.
- Implementation of the workshop(s).
- Presentation/visualization of the results.

## Resources and materials required

- Local archives (Historical material, documents, informal history groups' documents, etc.)
- Key informants (e.g. Oral history groups, local cultural groups, etc.)
- Physical space for gathering and implementing the workshop(s) and basic material equipment (e.g. paper board, post it, pencils)

## Tips/ What to pay attention to

- It is very important to identify from the very beginning the local human and non-human resources that can play a vital role in the process (e.g. local communities, local archives, local cultural institutions, oral history groups etc.).
- Networks and channels for dissemination of the research project or initiative.
- Communication and facilitation skills for approaching, gaining the trust and engaging local participants to get involved actively in the process.
- Good visualisation.

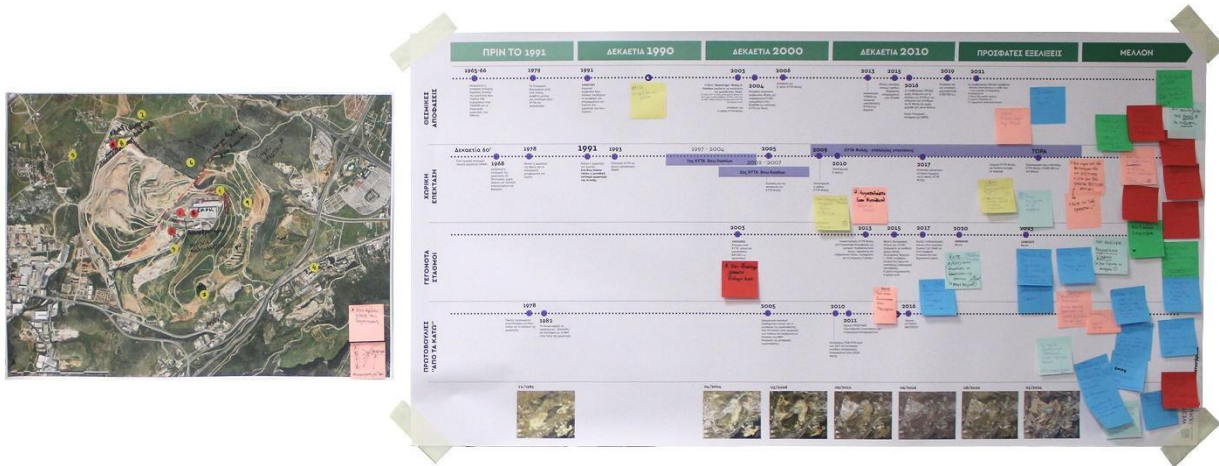


Figure 16: Example of Use: Time Machine Diagram and Map, West Attica Fairville Lab. Source: West Attica FvL

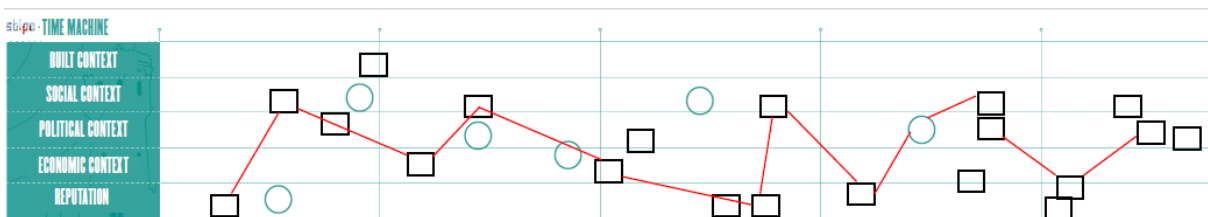


Figure 17: Time Machine Diagram. Source: Siënna Veelders and René Wezenberg, (2019), STIPO. (p.12). Available online: <https://stipo.nl/app/uploads/2021/01/Time-Machine-Manual.pdf>

## Example of use

Research project '100memories: Multifaceted research action for the physical and digital documentation and promotion of Asia Minor refugee memory' (video in Greek)

<https://100memories.gr/?lang=en>

<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=959910991684485>

## Further reading/(re)sources

<https://stipo.nl/app/uploads/2021/01/Time-Machine-Manual.pdf>