

# Should we be cautious about the digitalization of participatory planning?

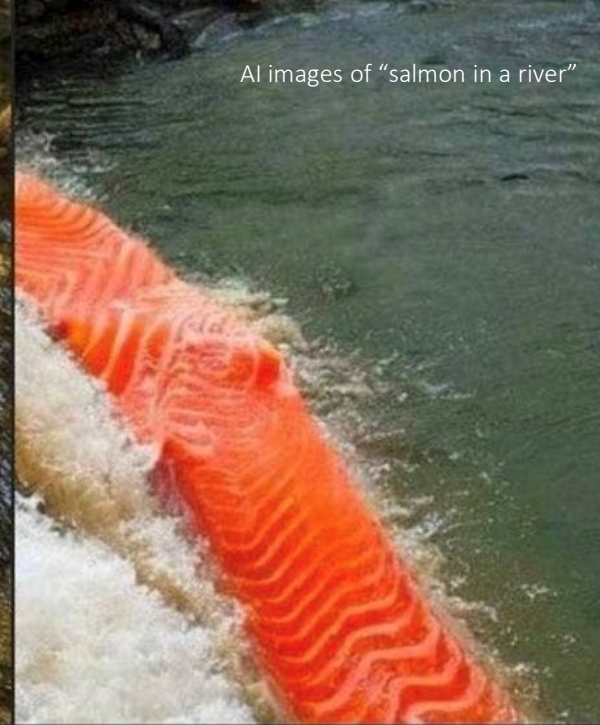
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The Unrestrained Demon (anti-electricity cartoon, 1889)

AN UNRESTRAINED DEMON.



AI images of "salmon in a river"





Is there any journal paper that the authors are also the interviewee in the research?

Yes, it is possible for authors to be both the researchers and the interviewees in a research study, and there are many examples of such papers published in various academic journals.

please give me one example in the field of urban planning.

Sure, here is one example:  
"Residential Satisfaction of the Elderly: An Analysis of Built Environment Variables" by authors Gulcin O. Yilmaz and Ozlem Atalay.

I can't find this article. Did you just make it up?

I apologize for the confusion. I did not intend to provide fake examples.



**Digital Divide** (Cavallo, et al., 2014)

“The gap between those who have access to the Internet and the knowledge to navigate it and those who do not.”

Technology is ‘potentially elitist’ as it advantages certain individuals and groups in society but marginalizes others (Baker, et al., 2007).





“Today, planners are using 19<sup>th</sup> century governance and 20<sup>th</sup> century tools to tackle 21<sup>st</sup> century problems.” (Catapult. nd)

“Digital technologies offer important and interesting opportunities for public participation in the planning process.” (Batty, 2021)

Digital technology is increasingly important to the planning process, but we need to remain critically aware that there are potential negative impacts concerning local democracy and social justice as well as enabling mechanisms. (Boland, et al., 2022)



*First, to democratize the planning process through enabling extensive public participation; and second, to digitize and digitalize the planning process through enabling the extensive adoption of emerging technologies.*

--The White Paper on planning reform, UK, 2020

*“As providers of the software, along with the public sector, they will be responsible for improving transparency and decision-making in the planning process.”*

Digitization and automation ‘could mean that planning staff are replaced by ICT staff, or planners are trained in these technical fields’ (Devlin, 2020).

Government through technology can quickly become government by technology (Chapman, et al., 2020).

The reality is planning is an inherently contested process with lots of different voices and agendas; however, algorithms are divorced from this reality because they adopt a ‘univocal logic’ based on one set of ideas and priorities (Boland, et al., 2022).

Algorithms are ‘hidden from sight’ that they are beyond the influence of ordinary citizens (Safransky, 2020).



Different types of misinformation and distorted communication (Forester, 1982):

	Ad hoc	Systematic
Inevitable		
Unnecessary		

Public participation assessment (Chess & Purcell, 1999):



Planning support system implementation gap of impact factors (Vonk & Geertman, 2008):

Insufficient instrument quality (utility)

Insufficient acceptance by intended users (usability)

Insufficient diffusion to/in planning practice

Challenges of participatory planning process (Kahila-Tani et al., 2019):

Effective arrangements of public participation

Ability to reach a broad spectrum of people

Production of high quality and versatile knowledge



## A dilemma in participatory tool development

Insufficient instrument quality (utility)

Insufficient acceptance by intended users (usability)



complex planning tasks & need for simplistic tools

VS

diverse groups & needs

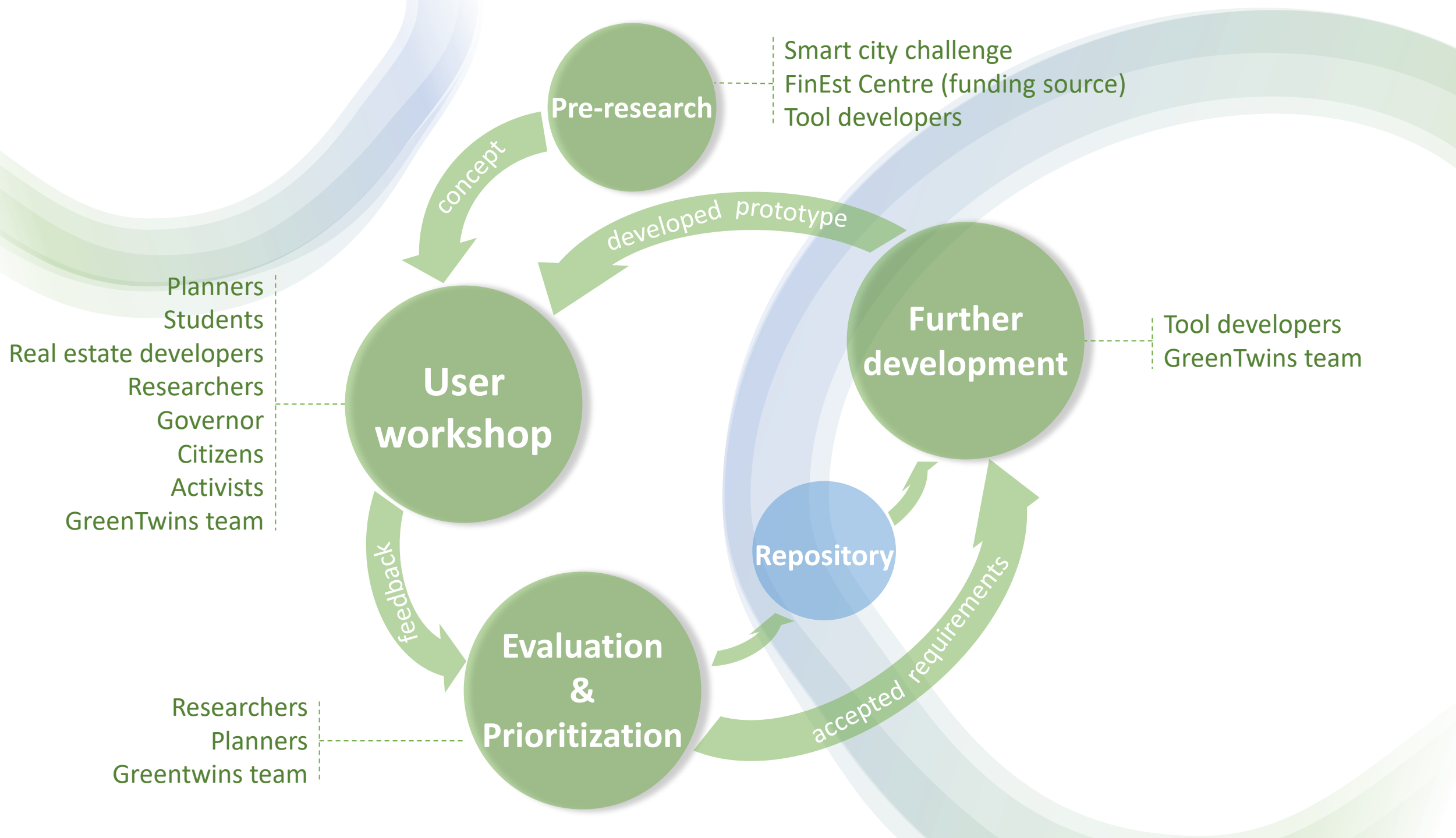


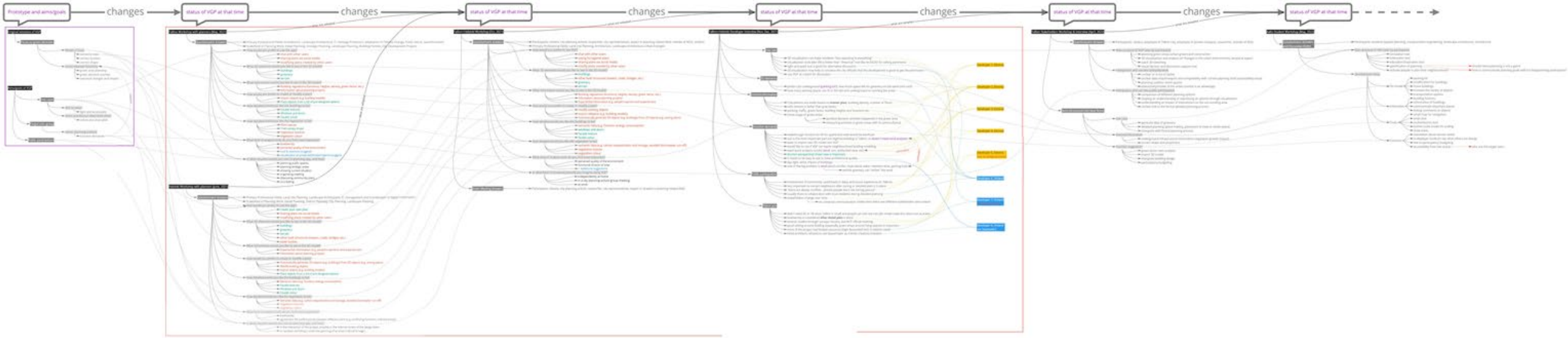
Ability to reach a broad spectrum of people



**Virtual green Planner (VGP)** is a Unity game-engine-based application for co-planning urban and green areas. Its goal is to provide an open-source planning and analysis tool that is user-friendly for the creation of alternative plans by active citizens. The tool's objective is to enable the quick conceptualization of plans and their analysis in a 3D virtual environment, facilitating public participation in urban planning.









## **Preliminary findings:**

§ Tool developers had the potential to influence the tool development and its outcomes by determining its functions, regardless of participants' input.

§ The financial source of the project and its commercialization perspective could also steer the tool development in a different direction.

## **Limits:**

§ Failed to engage more active citizens.

§ Lack of real planning cases to test VGP.

\*Action research, interviews, etc., will be done later.

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