



A course for island facilitators: The habitability index – a tool to define, describe and develop small islands

Concept

Being habitable is existential for an island to attract a resident population in a sustainable way.

The outcome of this course is an up to date image of the habitability of a small island: facts, strong and weak aspects, perceived and possible perspectives. How can this image and knowledge be used to find common grounds for vital development?

This course processes and discusses the benefits, use and usefulness of a habitability index. The habitability index is used as an integrated part of the development process of a small island, and based on the concept of the Six Thinking Hats.

The habitability index considers seven important areas: (1) prosperous people, (2) trust and participation, (3) clean water, (4) ecosystems, (5) attractiveness, (6) energy, and (7) local economy. Within each area is a set of indicators, which is used to measure and display the individual situation of the island. The process is uncomplicated but not simple: open, honest and participatory, making it possible to engage all citizens.

Well facilitated, the index creates a common perception of the island's present situation and acts as a strong driver for development and change. This course is aimed for facilitators who want to learn how to use the index.

The habitability index was developed by the islanders of Kökar, an island and a municipality in the Baltic Sea. During a two-year Interreg-project, the initial plan was to develop a sustainability plan for the island, but the result turned out to be a habitability plan instead. “If our island is not habitable, we are not a sustainable society”, the islanders said. After having identified the key areas for a vital future of Kökar, they created 40 indicators and measured their own habitability. The outcome was partly frightening. “Now we know why people won’t live here” the Mayor of Kökar concluded, “in a very distinct way.” As a result of the project, Kökar developed a Habitability Plan: <https://www.kokar.ax/bobarhet>.

Islands are fragile societies, threatened by the extreme seasonal shifts in human pressure. A small European island multiplies its population by a ten or a hundred during the vacation time in the summer. This causes huge stress on the infrastructure such as water, sewage, energy, waste, healthcare, transportation, internet and phone services. Many small islands face a decreasing and ageing population. Climate change is another risk factor for small islands when the weather conditions are vulnerable due to an unbalanced ecosystem.

For a successful process, most of the islanders, from politicians, companies and organizations to ordinary inhabitants, should be included. In the case of Kökar, more than 50 % of the population – the total number of residents is 235 persons – actively took part in the planning of the future of their island. The work process respected all viewpoints, and was based on input of new knowledge. The result was a common habitability plan.

The final plan derived from the habitability index and can be used in marketing – showing the possibilities of the island as a place to live – as an object for external financing and funding, and as a place for new business ventures.

Aims

The aim of this course in habitability is to train 12-20 facilitators on smaller islands, preferably two or more participants per island, or one + one from islands working closely together.

Objectives

The participants will:

- ✓ Learn about the decisive characteristics of small island societies
- ✓ Understand the importance of engaging their fellow islanders in the work, using both formal and informal processes
- ✓ Be able to make a habitability analysis of their island, including setting up new indicators if needed
- ✓ Know how to integrate the habitability index in a change process based on the methods for the Six Thinking Hats

After having managed a project and acquired experiences of their own, the participants will be invited to a feedback session to discuss and improve the index and their own their ability in using it. This will presumably take place in the spring of 2022.

Target group

Islanders, practitioners, academicians, local politicians, students and civil servants committed to small island development.

Content and preliminary dates

The course duration is nine weeks, starting in April 6, 2021 and ending on June 4.

It consists of five parts. Each part contains an online session of 3 hours – **13-16 CET** – with presentations, discussions and reporting of assignments. In between these online sessions, the participants will study on their own, reading and taking part of recorded presentations. There is an assignment knotted to each part in the course with individual feedback from the teachers.

	Part 1	Part 2	Part 3	Part 5	Part 5
Introduction	Presentations, practicalities, dates, lecture formats and technicalities, assignments, literature, feedback April 6				
Lecture	Change process The Six Thinking Hats method, process & tools Small island characteristics April 6	The index “Hard” and “soft” facts. Making an index, indicators. Opportunities and threats April 20	Serious creativity Generating alternatives Including the islanders in the creative process May 4	Action plan Fishbone & Schnelle tools The importance of making simple plans May 18	
Reading	Pleijel: How To Read an island April 7-15	Our Habitability Plan (Kökar) April 21-28	De Bono: The Six Thinking Hats May 5-12	John P Kotter May 19-27	
Individual assignment	April 7-15	April 21-28	May 5-12	May 19-27	
Individual feedback	April 16	April 29	May 17	May 28	
Summing up					General feedback, evaluation, diplomas June 4

Credits

A complete fulfilment of the course will generate a diploma/certificate.

Costs

A course fee of 150€ per person applies for all participants.

Participant criteria

For the selection of participants, a short motivation text (approx. 1000-2000 characters) including a preliminary description of the case island (included in the application form).

We are aiming for a broad international diversity with as many countries represented as possible. However, we encourage 2 persons from the same island to apply. The total number of participants is limited to 20.

Course teachers

Christian Pleijel, the municipality of Värmdö, Sweden.

Experienced facilitator of strategy processes, with many years of experience working interdisciplinary with business, energy, transport, waste and cultural subjects on islands.

Expert knowledge of European island communities, published a book in 2014 on small European islands: How to Read an Island. Pleijel is regularly called to the European Commission as an expert in island issues.

<https://www.kth.se/profile/chbp>

Cecilia Lundberg, PhD, Centre for Lifelong Learning at Åbo Akademi University, Finland.

Education planner in continued education, sustainable development, learning, communication and environmental issues.

Centre director for Baltic University Programme's national centre in Finland.

Chair of the Archipelago institute at Åbo Akademi University and editor in chief for the journal The Archipelago (Swedish, published by Åbo Akademi University).

PhD in marine biology, with focus on the eutrophication in the Baltic Sea.

<https://research.abo.fi/en/persons/cecilia-lundberg>

Pia Prost, MSc, Centre for Lifelong Learning at Åbo Akademi University & Archipelago Sea Unesco Biosphere Reserve, Finland.

Editor, communicator and marine biologist, involved in archipelago and rural development, sustainable development, education, project management and international cooperation.

Vice chair of ESIN, the European Small Islands Federation, and board member of the National Association of Finnish Islands.

Member of the secretariat of the Island Committee of the Finnish Government.

Guest lecturers

Anette Hallin, professor in Business Economics, Åbo Akademi University, Finland.

Special interest: how change - in organizations, management, work - happens through co-production of technology/materiality and organizing/the social. <https://research.abo.fi/en/persons/anette-hallin>

Siv Sandberg, assoc. professor in Social Sciences, Åbo Akademi University, Finland.

Special interest: local and regional governments in a Nordic/Scandinavian perspective.

<https://research.abo.fi/en/persons/siv-sandberg>

Course organizer

Skärgårdsinstitutet vid Åbo Akademi (the Archipelago Institute at Åbo Akademi University), Centre for Lifelong Learning at Åbo Akademi University, <https://www.abo.fi/en/centre-for-lifelong-learning/>

Contact

If you have questions about the course, do not hesitate to contact: christian@pleijel.ax, cecilia.lundberg@abo.fi or pia.prost@abo.fi.