

## **The Secret Ingredient of Student Involvement: Applied Science Case Studies to Enhance Sustainability**

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**Abstract :** Recent planning thinking has laid the foundations for a general sense of best practice that aims to enhance the quality of life, suggesting an open and participatory process. It is accepted that integration of top-down and bottom-up approaches may lead to efficient action in environments and sustainable planning and development, although it is also accepted that such an integrated approach has various challenges of implementation. A flexible framework in which the strengths of both the top-down and bottom-up approaches were explored in this research, based on the EU Interreg VALUE Added project and five case studies where student education and student involvement played a crucial role within the participation process of the redesign of the urban environment. It was found that international student workshops were an effective tool to integrate bottom-up and top-down structures, as it acted as catalyst for communication, interaction, creative design, quick transformation from planning to implementation, building social cohesion, finding mutual ground between stakeholders and thus enhancing overall quality of life and quality of environments. It offered a good alternative to traditional participation modes and created a platform for an integrative planning approach. The role and importance of education and integration within the urban environment were emphasized.

**Keywords :** top-down, bottom-up, flexible, student involvement

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