

# THE POWER OF MANY



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**How city officials can use co-creation  
for Just and Sustainable Cities**

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## How city officials can use co-creation for Just and Sustainable Cities

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## Author's Note

*This book addresses people who work at municipalities and directly or indirectly with citizens. This includes city officials / civil servants who are part of the operational structure of a municipality and deal with the daily tasks of implementing policies in the territory. By extension, people who work with municipalities in any way can learn from this book. Whenever the first person is used in this book, it strictly refers to the team of people and partners who have supported the previous municipal actors in their tasks and local projects.*

# FOREWORD

**Just transition.  
Citizen engagement.  
Fairness.  
Equity.  
Sustainability.**

City officials across Europe hear these words more and more often. We recognise their importance, yet many of us struggle to fully integrate them into our daily work. The lack of time, resources, or even the fear of failure often holds us back.

The Fair Local Green Deals project has offered five European cities – Gent, Łódź, Valencia, Vitoria-Gasteiz and Wrocław – an opportunity to move beyond theory and put these concepts into practice. Through collaboration with stakeholders, colleagues, fellow cities, and with invaluable support from ICLEI Europe and its partners, we explored how to translate these values into local contexts and test them in real-world scenarios.

Each city and its citizens are unique, with different challenges and opportunities. As you'll read in this book, our approaches reflect those differences. Yet, common threads – like the skills required to support this transition – also emerged. They are also captured in this book.

We've truly enjoyed this journey, and we believe you would have too. The lessons we've learned and challenges we've overcome show that cities can lead the way toward a fairer, greener Europe, given the right support. We hope this book can provide some of that support for you, offering both inspiration and practical tools for your next steps.



Emilio Servera,  
València Clima i Energia,  
Municipality of València, Spain



## INTRODUCTION

### Why are MANY needed?

As the speed of ambitious climate actions increases globally, equally does the risk of an equitable distributions of benefits and burdens<sup>1</sup>. In this scenario, EU member states have the challenge to ensure that their sustainability transformations are just for all when reaching the goals pledged at international treaties and policies such as the Paris Agreement and European Green Deal.

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<sup>1</sup> *Towards a just transition: What does this really mean for cities and towns?* ICLEI Europe 2023

There is no doubt that such a challenge calls for bold decision-making, and even more, at the local level of governance. **Cities and towns are the place where broad policy agendas intersect with people's lives.** It is the arena where responses to climate change become a reality. They are the closest level to citizens, and therefore, a key actor that can act as a transformative force and enabler of cooperation.

However, cities' agency to act is limited by structural barriers such as geographical and sectoral competencies. Although

the public sector is accountable for ensuring public good, these challenges can't be solved by this actor alone. Cities need different types of support from many different actors, and tapping into innovation to catalyse local change. They need the *power of many*.

The word *Many* in this book is not only about more people coming together, but also their knowledge, skills, experiences, smartness, perspectives, and personalities. It is about the **transformative power that working together can bring**. Every person is a 4 billion year evolved 'machine' that has the capacity to understand and solve the most complex problems we encounter. To unlock this power, what is needed the most is to facilitate the exchange of collective intelligence.

We believe that *co-creation* is a particularly effective avenue to achieve more just and sustainable cities. We define co-creation as the simple act of creating something together. In the urban context, this concept translates into citizens collaborating across the different sectors of society to tackle environmental and social challenges. In other words, citizens coming together to change the ways of doing, thinking and organising, to ensure a transition towards a society that lives within planetary boundaries and leaves no one behind.

Cities have a long history of engaging citizens on the discussion of urban challenges and prototyping of solutions. Co-creation in this book is a synonym of

the terms "stakeholder engagement", "participatory process", and other democratic processes which goals are to ensure procedural, distributive and recognition justice<sup>2</sup> in climate actions.

Does that mean that putting a hundred people together in a room will solve our most pressing challenges? The answer is no. Meetings won't solve cities' problems. This book dives deeper into the practicalities and challenges of conducting a **meaningful and just co-creation process** with citizens. It touches on the most common problems city officials face from the conceptual to the implementation phases.

Although the word 'citizens' is widely used across the book, we acknowledge all actors have multiple and simultaneous roles and participate in different institutional logics at the same time (state - community-market, formal - informal, profit - non profit)<sup>3</sup>. Yet, all of them share a common feature, they are all citizens from a city and all of them should have the opportunity to participate in co-creation processes. Therefore, citizens extend from the neighbour next door to a representative from an NGO or a private enterprise, and from the local policymaker to the school teacher.

All the outcomes written in the following sections are connected to a philanthropic funded project that

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<sup>2</sup> *ibid*

<sup>3</sup> Multi Actor perspective.  
Avelino & Wittmayer 2016, 2019



sought to pilot the translation of the European Green Deal to the local level in a more fair, inclusive and democratic way. The Fair Local Green Deals project, therefore, worked alongside city officials from the cities of València, Vitoria-Gasteiz (Spain), Wrocław, Łódź (Poland) & Gent (Belgium) to implement meaningful and inclusive co-creation processes. Such actions pursued to tackle on the one hand the most pressing challenges in each local context, and on the other, one or more of the policy areas of the European Green Deal<sup>4</sup>.

After more than two years of continuous tailored support, tangible results have emerged. These five experiences, albeit different in their challenges and context, are a clear example of co-creation to learn and draw insights from. This journey has created a group of people who feel more empowered to start a movement in their cities. Most importantly, it has created endless opportunities to learn from mistakes.

To help you navigate this book, the following sections will reply to the question: **How can city officials use co-creation for Just and Sustainable Cities?**

In the first section, a set of three guides are presented to explain the different steps of co-creation:

- (how to) bring citizens together
- (how to) facilitate dialogues and knowledge exchange
- (how to) find the resources to invest together

The next sections will present examples and testimonies from city officials to encourage you to implement co-creation processes in your city. They will show how to use this tool while having in mind the objective, in other words, not doing co-creation for the sake of co-creation. In the last section, it is shown how cities are affected by the national and international context, and how to influence it to change policies at the different levels of governance.

We know that the road to introducing and normalising just and sustainable practices can be bumpy, even more so when we try to radically transform our ways of doing things. However, you are not alone. Your challenges are similar to the ones other city officials are facing, and we want to help you to make this journey as smooth as possible.

Pick the chapter you are interested in the most, and dive into it!

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<sup>4</sup> Read more about the project on [page 96](#)



“

*We hope you open this book as many times as you need whenever support or advice on those topics is searched for. While reading, keep reflecting, seeking different perspectives, and trying new things without being afraid of failing. We wish you good luck in your journey!*

**Franco, Laura & Daniel**  
Justice, Equity & Democracy team  
ICLEI Europe





# HOW TO MAKE CO-CREATION A REALITY?

A co-creation process doesn't include only the moment of the public events, whether they happen in-person or online. It also includes all the steps before, such as setting the agenda, sending invitations, finding a place, and ensuring equal access. And all the steps after, for instance follow-ups, ensuring accountability and the actual implementation of results, materialising commitments made, or simply continuing the process.

The first chapter in this section is all about designing your co-creation process. Here you will find insights about the role you, as a city official, play in this process and the principles you should take into account, the core elements of a co-creation process and tools to help you plan your events.

The second chapter includes practical advice to facilitate a co-creation process. Once you have all people convened in one place, what should you do? What competencies do you need to avoid this becoming an ordinary meeting? How can we create a safe and welcoming space for everyone to bring their perspectives? All these challenges will be addressed here.

The last and third chapter touches on the big question of finding resources, once new perspectives, ideas and solutions have been discussed. This chapter is not about helping you find the money you need to implement climate actions. It is about rethinking how we as a society value the resources we have, and how co-creation is key to help finding what we need.

*Before jumping into the nitty-gritty of co-creation, we would recommend you watching the following 10-minutes **VIDEO**\* - A guerrilla gardener in South Central LA, Ron Finley, TED Talk, February 2013.*



\* If a QR code or hyperlink in this book isn't working, you can access all the links at: <https://sustainablejustcities.eu/resources/the-power-of-many>

Picturing one of the key challenges of the just transition, the protagonist of the video shows how he has been dealing with the lack of good quality and healthy food in his neighbourhood – he lives in a food desert. At last, he has found a way to solve such an issue without the support of the public authorities. But he doesn't want to do this alone. In fact, he is inviting the local municipality to be part of it. In between the lines of this neighbourhood story, you will find the mantras that will guide you through the following sections and the three main steps to make co-creation in urban policymaking a reality.



## Mantras for your process

We hope these mantras will keep you motivated along the way. Both when you design and run your co-creation process with citizens, but also when you talk with other colleagues in your own city, or when you help other cities to give life to their own processes.

### PROBLEM FRAMING, STORYTELLING!

From the gangster gardener to Greta Thunberg, albeit very different in their communication style, the most effective problem-framing is the one that resonates with people at large. It's not only about stressing the environmental aspect of the climate and just actions. It's also about the way we live, behave, and create communities. It is about the taxes we pay as well as the bills at the end of the month. The massive energy renovation of buildings in your city should be framed not only as good for the climate - but also for your wallet. Doing something about climate change in coastal areas is not just a matter of climate adaptation. It is also saving many people from having to flee their homes. Working on food security is about creating communities and eating strawberries in a public park! In your problem framing, you need to stress the co-benefits of such a local-level participatory and co-creation process in addition to climate policy targets.

### LET'S MEET BY DOING!

Fewer meeting rooms and more collective action. To motivate people to participate, they need to feel that they will contribute to the creation of bigger

value - and more tangible character - rather than just words, thoughts and intentions. In your public events, show that an immediate impact is created through actions. Even if the actions are very small in size (e.g., a small garden lot with new vegetables, manifesto document) it doesn't mean its scale of impact is small.

### FREE IS NOT SUSTAINABLE!

Every person who joins your co-creation process brings different types of resources. We are not only talking simply about money, but also political support, human capacity, time, and natural resources. Some of them might help in the short term to pilot new projects, models and solutions. In the long term, they can help you find the investment model that works for everyone (even the planet!). More of this in the 'Finding the resources to invest together' chapter.

Have in mind that all humans have universal needs, and therefore, they expect that their actions are retributed somehow. For some this retribution may be money or may be valued in different ways other than money, and for others it may simply be recognition for certain action or belonging to a social group.

# BRINGING CITIZENS TOGETHER

## What is your role and task as a city official in a co-creation process? And what is the role and task of the citizens?

The Participation Ladder is meant to inspire you in reviewing, rethinking and reinventing some of your citizen engagement practices. The higher you get on the ladder, the more control you will give away, but the higher the potential to create a long-lasting movement. Even at the upper level, your role won't become redundant. On the contrary, it will empower other people to work for the same cause under your support. Here we review each step of the ladder briefly.



	Citizen's role	Your role
<b>5 CO-INITIATE</b>	Take the initiative; define the framework	Spar, facilitate, support
<b>4 CO-PARTICIPATE</b>	Collaborator, executor	Create the framework, facilitate, curate
<b>3 CONSULT</b>	Contributor	Invite citizens to give input and shape the final solution
<b>2 MOBILISE</b>	Guest	Mobilise citizens around a solution that has already been devised
<b>1 INFORM</b>	Receiver	Inform citizens on the plan

FOR the citizens WITH the citizens BY the citizens

Involvement of  
civil servants  
and citizens  
in the  
neighborhood

**INFORMING** - a one-directional communication to citizens. You as a city official inform citizens and stakeholders of a plan / solution that has already been devised.

**MOBILISING** - You ask citizens to advocate for a plan / a solution that has already been devised. This typically attracts primarily the usual suspects - those who are already highly invested and engaged in the topic, either because they are against it or because they are very much in favour of it.

**CONSULTING** - The problem to be solved is already framed and defined by you, but the solution and the action plan to get there have not been devised yet. The input you get from the citizens is meant to widen your horizon of possibilities. When shaping the final solution you will decide which input to keep, which to work on, and which to discard.

**CO-PARTICIPATION** - The challenge and dream is defined in very broad terms. Solutions coming from actors and sectors other than the municipality itself are welcome, provided they contribute to the same cause. Your role is to create the framework for people to propose, try out and implement different solutions.

**CO-INITIATION** - Citizens and stakeholders identify a problem / challenge, describe it in their own terms and propose their own solution. You provide them with your own resources, tools, services and institutional support to help them implement the solution.

These five different stages of engagement can be combined for different purposes. As described in the following paragraphs, not all citizens will be engaged at the same time and in the same activities. In this book, we position co-creation processes in between the Co-participation and Co-initiation engagement practices.

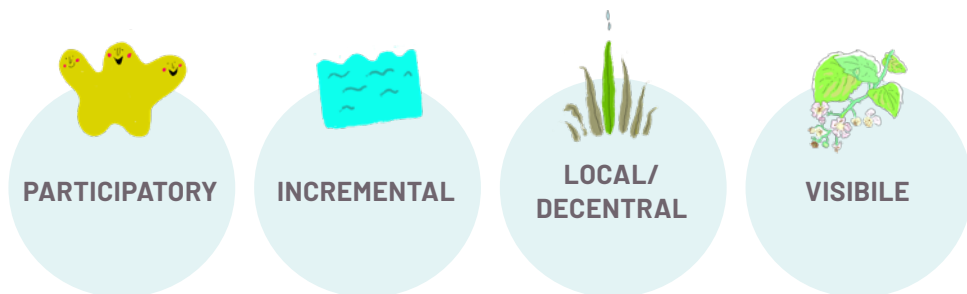
he looks  
like he's  
dancing...?



no, he's  
not!

it's about  
being open to  
new initiatives

# What are the core principles when designing a co-creation process?



**PRINCIPLE I: PARTICIPATORY** - You are trying to start a movement. You cannot do it alone. Plus, the challenges that your co-creation process will try to address are so complex and entrenched that they cannot be solved by the municipality alone. You need the knowledge, skills and willpower of everyone. When inviting citizens to participate, remember that few do it solely for the sake of participation.

This is why you need to understand where you can create value for citizens here and now. For some, it could be a new business opportunity. For others, a way to gain acknowledgement in their local community. For others, the possibility to spend less money on an energy bill, and for others, simply an entertaining evening. People have very different drivers and motivations!

**PRINCIPLE II: INCREMENTAL** - Start small and create a movement that spreads like ripples in the water and out to the whole city. Community by community. Keep trying and adjusting your approach until it works for more and more people so that they all start “buying into it”.

**PRINCIPLE III: LOCAL** - Root the project in a specific place rather than the whole city, and use that as a test bed to try out and experiment with new things. Start with a building, a parking lot, a street, a block, or just one neighbourhood. Create quick wins and learn from reflecting on what worked, what didn't work and then test the new model in another place.



*Get inspired by the solo-dancer presented in this **VIDEO**: Derek Sivers' TED Talk 'How to Start a Movement'.*

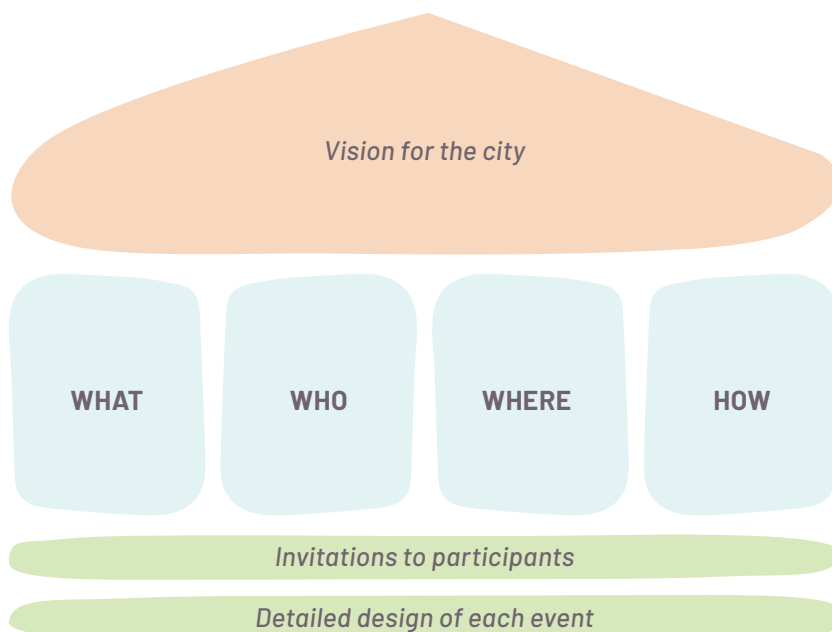


Remember the video of the guerrilla gardener? The point is that it has to be something you can do with the resources at hand. When the design has proven to be good enough, scale up or test new ideas. This is all about trying and failing.

**PRINCIPLE IV: VISIBLE** - Find ways to make your project visible and tangible by creating results that people can experience, talk about, and refer to. You should strive to show the impact that is created when it is created. The beauty of wildflowers in an urban garden gives nourishment to the soul and to the eye right away, and it's hardly something people can ignore. Making your project "Instagrammable" or "catchy" and communicating broadly about it is a way to acknowledge those who have been part of it. It also provides a living example that others can be inspired by.

## The core elements of a co-creation process

What are key messages, people, locations, event formats that can create wider ripples in your city and spark a city wide movement? The following paragraphs review the core design elements of such a process.



## Vision for the city about the challenge(s) citizens face

Usually this is a story - *something that resonates with people and their everyday life*. Make it beautiful and catchy. Avoid language that is very technical like: 'We want to become carbon neutral' as this is unlikely to resonate with the public. In a process focusing on green mobility, a formulation like the following is more likely to work: "We want to create a city where kids can hang out safely on the streets without their thoughts, play and conversations being interrupted by the noise of cars driving by."

### WHAT?

Try to think about *what challenges are possible to solve within the timeframe* of the co-creation process and what concrete results can be showcased at the end of it. Concrete results speak louder than words. Describe your intention in a way that it is convincing: What is the challenge? What are the aspects of this challenge that you want to focus on? Whom do you want to solve the challenge with? What are the expected results? Again, the language needs to be close to the everyday life of the people.

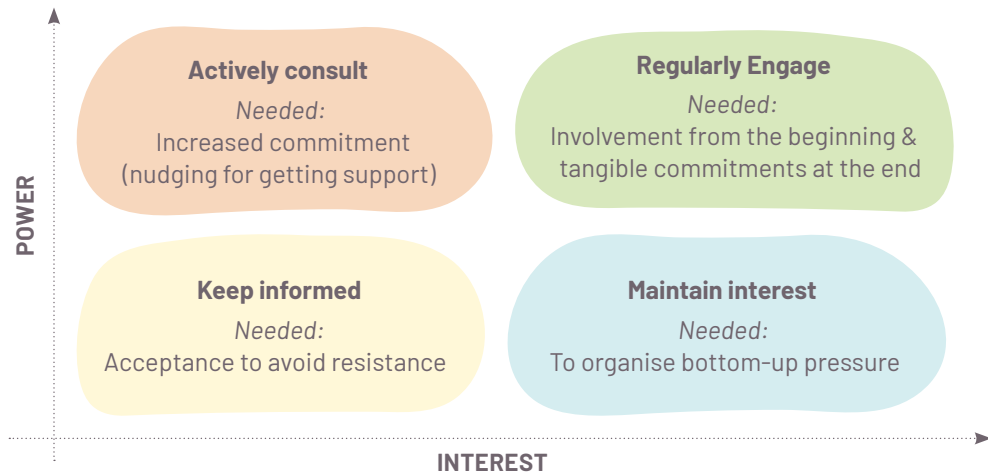
### WHO?

Who will you invite to participate in this project's phase and implement actions to realise the vision for the city? Here are some criteria that can inform your decision on the participant composition:

- **Those who are directly affected by the issue**
- **Those with passion and deep knowledge of the field**
- **Those who have power and resources.**  
N.B., Resources are not just money, but also academic, non-academic and experiential knowledge (e.g. history of the neighbourhood), wide local networks, talent in entertaining people at the participatory events (e.g. music / poetry / performance art). Read more in the chapter "Finding the resources to invest together".
- **Those who struggle to show up**  
(aka Underrepresented communities.) Make an extra effort to recruit them, get as close (both physically and mentally) as possible to their situation in order to understand what could motivate them or make it easier for them to participate. Quotas are hard to meet and people don't want to feel like tokens. So rather go to them and "Meet them in their garden".



One way of mapping such participants is by applying the *Power versus Interest Matrix*. Name all the actors that are connected to the topic under discussion. In that way, the connection between such actors and the different ways of engagement becomes clearer. The actors situated in the top right corner should be part of your event. The rest will be part of the process in different ways (e.g. getting commitment, acceptance or even putting bottom-up pressure on the ones in power). You can even fill this matrix with all the actors in your first public meeting to avoid missing an important piece!



## WHERE?

An important element of the planning should answer the question: Where will you hold the different events? Here are some criteria that can inform your decision on the location.

- **Location chosen for proximity** - close to the source of the problem or solution. It can also be at an experimentation site or where an affected vulnerable community meets up or goes regularly (e.g. communal spaces, parks, neighbourhood areas, etc).
- **Symbolic location** - an exciting and unexpected venue that can become part of citizens' collective memory. Something unusual, crazy, fun, weird. For example, if your project is centred around the topic of food access and healthy eating, a good idea could be to hold an event in a supermarket, food local market, in a vegetable garden, etc.
- **Digital event** - holding an online event gives you the possibility to reach out to more people (including those who can't attend physically). Another possibility is to use surveys to collect opinions from people before a physical event. The results of the survey can be shown to the attendees, hereby giving the event broader legitimacy.

## HOW?

This phase of the project is an occasion to learn, reflect, meet, work, and collectively commit to initiating a new, long-lasting movement in the short-term, as well as the realisation of a common vision for the whole city in the longer-term. An important aspect to facilitate this in your events is entertainment in the form of music, good food, and unique cultural offerings that typically have the effect of making people across different sectors open up.

Remember that if you host a really fun, memorable event, people are from the start way more likely to remember it, have positive feelings, and support the process. In other words, getting more buy-in.



*If you want more inspiration, watch this event happening every year in Madrid, Spain, called "**Compromiso con el Clima**" (Climate Commitment). Here, city officials and civil society organisations educate citizens on the climate neutrality mission while having fun.*

The **4 COMMON STEPS** in the design of any participatory and co-creation process will be:

**ONBOARDING** - getting people to know each other; in particular, breaking down barriers across sectors; identifying the problem and formulating a common understanding thereof, exploring and informing stakeholders about the benefits of participating and cooperating on actions and solutions.

**LEARNING** - facilitating knowledge exchange between citizens to be part of the solution. If new actors with other knowledge and experience are needed, this is the moment to invite them. At this stage, new tools, perspectives, trainings, competences or any type of support can be given to the participants.

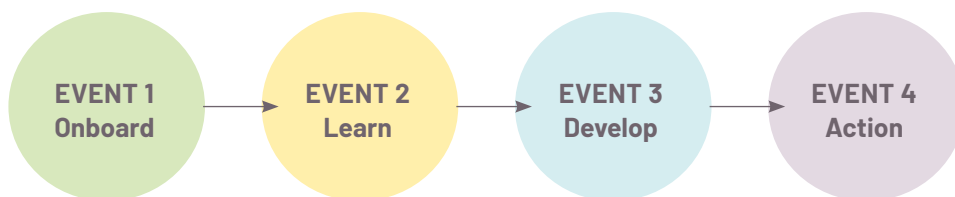
**DEVELOPING** - working together on shaping common solutions. This could be anything from idea generation, to testing an idea on the ground, to weighing the pros and cons of different scenarios - considering barriers, feasibility, and opportunities. The focus is placed on trying and testing as many solutions as possible.

**ACTION/DECISION** - This could be a formal/informal agreement, a decision, a pilot test, a model for collaboration across-sectors.

## The design of a co-creation process

The following designs are based on the idea of running a minimum of 4 events. These can be designed to build upon one another or to run parallel and independently from one another. Design possibilities are infinite. In the next paragraph, you can find three possible designs you can take inspiration from.

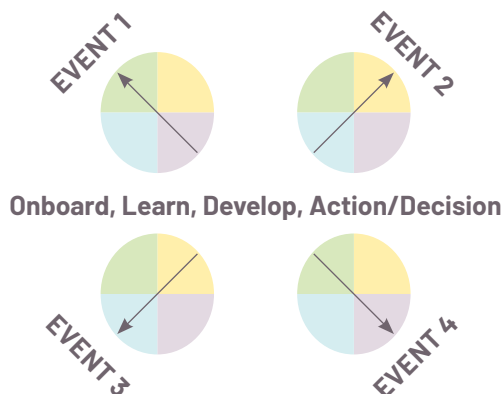
### DESIGN 1



In this process, events build upon one another. This means that the output from one event will become the input for the next event. To ensure such continuity, it is required that the same core group of participants gather each time in a centralised location, over a longer period of time. This design ensures that ideas arise from a good relationship of trust and common understanding between the participants.

The outcome of this type of process, if skilfully facilitated, is particularly solid. This is because it builds upon the strong and continued commitment of the participants, who have been involved and who have had the time to build a team, learn from each other, exchange opinions, develop action plans, and take actions throughout the process. Learn more about how the municipalities of Wrocław and Gent have integrated this approach in the chapter *"Moving from theory to practice: embracing the complexity of reality"* ([page 55](#)).

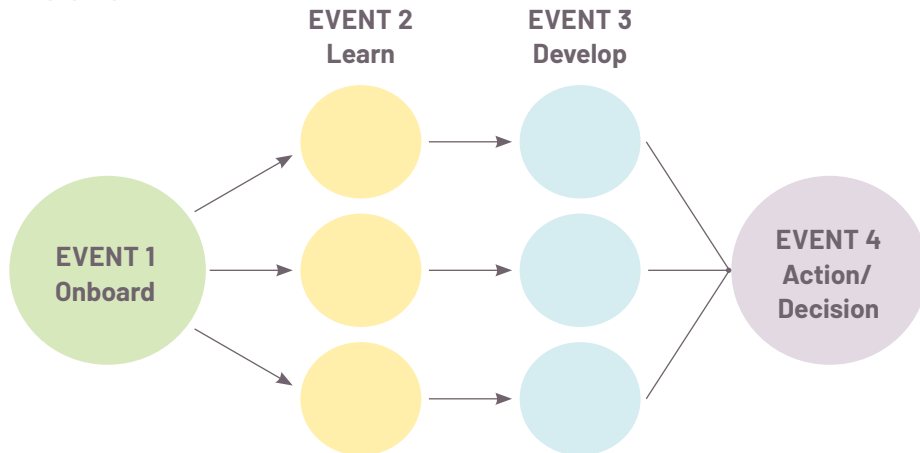
### DESIGN 2



In this process, *events run in parallel* and independently from one another. This makes it possible to plan the events in a decentralised way, thereby *attracting different types of participants*. In other words, clustering participants according to topics, institutional logics, roles they have in the city, or any other category that responds to the challenge in place.

For example, each event could take place in a different neighbourhood of the city with a unique challenge to solve, but always related to the main challenge. This brings the possibility to unleash the potential of each neighbourhood to explore different solutions. In this design, each event will cover the 4 elements (onboard, learn, develop, action/decision), but it can be broken down into two if needed. This design strengthens the network and connections at the local level. Learn more about how the municipalities of Łódź and Vitoria-Gasteiz have implemented this design in the chapter "*Moving from theory to practice: embracing the complexity of reality*" ([page 55](#)).

### DESIGN 3



In the last design, we have combined some of the elements from the first and the second design. Starting from a very central first event, that onboards everyone participating in the process, we continue with decentralised events and then we finish off with a final event that builds upon the experiences, learnings and ideas developed in three different contexts.

This approach is very flexible and could be useful to tackle big challenges at the city scale through smaller complementary initiatives taking place at the local level. This enables the involvement of very different stakeholder groups with a tailored approach. Learn more about how the municipality of Valencia used this design in the chapter "*Moving from theory to practice: embracing the complexity of reality*" ([page 55](#)).

In the following box, you can find an example of how to implement the previous designs.

### Scenario 1:

Focusing on food waste at the city level

- **EVENT 1**
  - Onboarding a group of citizens representing the demographics of the city at large
- **EVENT 2**
  - Learning from experts (academics, NGOs, local residents)
- **EVENT 3**
  - Co-developing recommendations for public officials
- **EVENT 4**
  - Municipality and other actors take actions/decisions on the basis of citizens' recommendations



### Scenario 2:

Focusing on food waste (1) in supermarkets, and (2) in homes

#### Track 1

- **EVENT 1**
  - Onboarding leaders of selected supermarkets in your town.
  - Learning from each other on how they deal with food waste.
- **EVENT 2**
  - Developing approaches for better collaboration and actions to reduce food waste at the supermarket level
  - Deciding on tangible steps to put these into effect

#### Track 2

- **EVENT 3**
  - Onboarding citizens in a specific neighbourhood
  - Learning from each other on how they deal with food waste
- **EVENT 4**
  - Generating ideas on how to reduce food waste in homes
  - Organising a food waste reduction challenge in the neighbourhood
  - Expanding project reach into wider community

# Helpful tools for planning events

## First Tool: Programme

To structure your thoughts about the design of each single event, it could be helpful to start from a draft of the programme. Mix and match the following elements. Then, start giving each of them a time length – this will vary according to purpose and focus of each event.

### 1. INFORMING - EVERYBODY ON THE SAME PAGE

- Purpose of the process both in general and in your city
- Purpose of today
- Programme for today

### 2. BREAKING THE ICE - TEAM BUILDING

- Presentations - Preferably in a quick and entertaining manner e.g. what is your favourite place in the city?
- Or: Providing a common experience and reflect on it e.g. everyone watches the video of the Gardener
- Or: physical warm up - stand up from your chair and find a person you do not know - tell them why you have decided to participate today

### 3. LEARNING

- Unidirectional learning: Presentations, reflections, knowledge sharing rounds with “experts”: academics, NGOs, local residents.

- Learning by doing: Providing a physical experience and reflecting on it.
- Horizontal learning: Making people understand a topic by reflecting on their own experiences.

### 4. ENGAGING - WORK TOGETHER ON SOMETHING

- Collective diagnosis: collaborative description of a problem - many perspectives
- Collective action: everybody solves a common simple task e.g. taking pictures of places in the cities where nature is well integrated in the urban space
- Brainstorming sessions - e.g. generate ideas to solve an issue
- Rapid prototyping - e.g. describe/ draw possible solutions
- Decision making - e.g. prioritising among different proposals, expressing intention to commit, divide tasks among participants



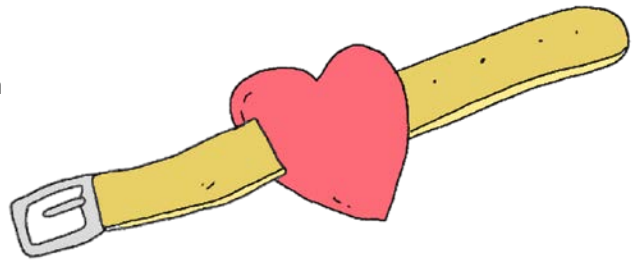
## 5. REWARDING - EXPRESS THANKS FOR PARTICIPATING

- Say thanks
- Give food
- Give discounts (e.g. public transport? Museum card?)
- A public concert

## 6. WRAPPING UP, THANKING AND INFORMING

- What we have done today
- Thanks a lot for your participation
- What is next? - Plans to follow up and follow through

Thank you for  
giving your  
precious time



## Second tool: Invitation

Once your draft programme is complete, you can start preparing an invitation template. In bold below, you can see the main elements of the invitation. The text not in bold is suggestions on how to write the text. Remember to adjust the template every time according to the focus of the event and who the invitation is directed to.

### INVITATION:

**Vision for the city** (in a language relatable for everyone)

**What, when and where** (Purpose and focus of the event, clear info on time and place)

**Why should you participate? What is in it for you?** (Think of what can motivate each of these stakeholders)

**What will you bring?** (Reveal some elements of the programme)

**How should you get prepared?** (This can be anything from a small preparatory task to instructions on how to reach the place)

**Looking forward to seeing you!**

Dear xxxx

I hope this message finds you well. With this email, we would like to invite you to:

- xxxx
- xxxx
- xxxx

**The present:**

*write here what the participants are getting out of it?*

*(from now on, the example continues with the case of Riihimäki, a city in Finland which after 15 years of no activity, is opening up a huge multifunctional space for the local community, businesses and cultural institutions)*

**A city-wide Vision Workshop for the Urban Power House**

Psssst...As you have probably heard, the Urban Power House is opening up again after 15 years.

**On the 7th of March** in the afternoon, we will hold the first city-wide workshop related to the future of the Urban Power House.

*What value shall the Urban Power House create for life in Riihimäki?*

*How can we make the best use of the empty square metres?*

*What activities should be hosted under the same roof - and in the surrounding area?*

*... But most importantly would you/your organisation like to be a part of shaping this project?*

**Please save the date in your calendar! We want you to be there!**

**What:** At the Vision Workshop, we will visit the site and then work together in groups of around 5 people on developing common visions for the future of the Urban Power House.

**Who:** We expect over 60 participants representing the citizens of Riihimäki, local associations, the cultural sector and the business community in Riihimäki.

The event will be designed and facilitated by Sara Nardi, the appointed experts in facilitation of large-scale engagement processes from the New European Bauhaus project. The New European Bauhaus is a pan-European project, focusing on creating living spaces and experiences that are beautiful, inclusive and sustainable.

***RSVP - Please confirm your participation.***

I hope that you will accept this invitation to a very important event for the future of Riihimäki.

Please answer **YES** to this email, if we can count on your participation.

You'll receive an email with further details in about three-four weeks.

***Let's develop the site together!***

*Extend the invitation tapping into the invitees network* As a final point, we would like to ask you to help us reach out to more people.

Prior to the Vision Workshop, we would like to gather as many ideas as possible and from as many people as possible on the development of the site. It is important to us that the project direction reflects the needs and desires of the community at large.

Help us spread this simple survey around in your network - family, friends, beloved ones, colleagues, so they too can get involved.

Link to the survey: [xxxxxx](#)

See you on the *date*!

Have a very nice day

## Third Tool: Run sheet

Now that participants have been invited and a first draft of the programme is completed, you have time to focus on the elaboration of each programme session. A run sheet is simply a minute-by-minute plan of each session in the overall programme on the event day. It can have fields like *Start* and *End Time*, *Activity*, *Materials* needed, *People Responsible*, etc.

Typically, when working on the run sheet you will realise that you also want to change something in the programme. Therefore, as a last step after working with the run sheet, remember to update the programme.

### STRUCTURE EXAMPLE:

Time	Title of your session	What happens? And who makes it happen?  Detailed description of the content you have to go through. E.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Who is responsible for presenting/ facilitating this session?</li><li>• How much time do they have at their disposal?</li><li>• What are they supposed to say/do?</li><li>• If it is participants who have to work or do something, write instructions here.</li></ul>	Technique/ material  Should you play music?  Show slides?  Show handwritten papers?
17.00	<b>Welcome and introduction</b>	Thøger 10 minutes Say hi to the participants and remind them what the purpose of today's event is	Show slide 1: "purpose of today"

For a full template of the runsheet, please consult our [website](#).



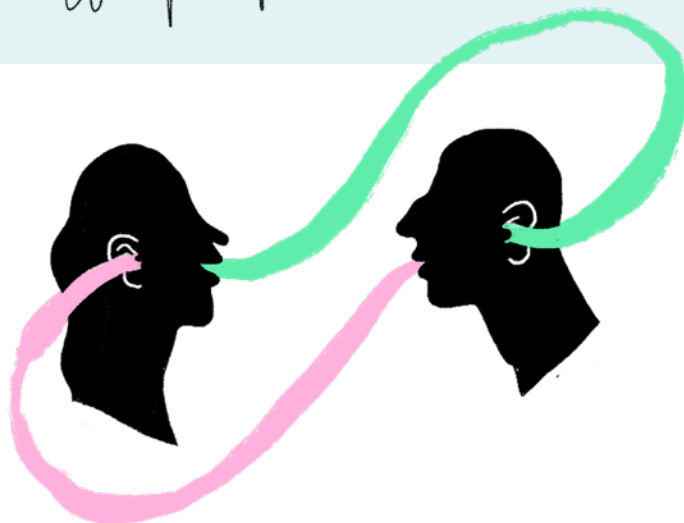
# FACILITATING DIALOGUES AND KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE

In the previous chapter, the level of detail needed when planning a co-creation process was introduced. However, this is not all, we need to go one level deeper. That means discussing what happens at the moment of the event, when all people are waiting for this process to start.

This is why we will speak about the facilitation mindset and techniques, or as many people call it: the art of hosting. The goal is not becoming a facilitator right away. What matters the most, is that you will get a clearer idea of the competences needed and the atmosphere you should create when such events are facilitated.

Even if you are not the facilitator per se, you will be someone with valuable knowledge to help in the planning of each session. By understanding what facilitation should or should not bring to a room full of participants, you will be able to set the requirements and ask critical questions. You will be able to guide an external / internal facilitator. It will also help you when hiring an external organisation during a public tendering process as the cities of València, Wrocław and Łódź did!

*talking  
&  
listening  
to people*





Before jumping into the following pages, we recommend watching the following videos. You know the drill!



**VIDEO 1** – Watch minutes 6.42- 7.51 – Pay attention to the director and to the instrumentalists. What is/are the roles of the director?



**VIDEO 2** – Watch it all – pay attention to the guest, the host, and what happens in the room – how do power and responsibility shift?

The videos above help understand the competencies, attitudes and abilities needed to become a facilitator of change. Specifically, we believe dexterity is required in two main roles:

## Orchestrating

You are capable of promoting bold visions for your city and establishing new alliances across sectors of society that can help you pilot new solutions. Orchestration is an analogy for guiding a new movement and uniting all the different instrumentalists towards collective action – guiding the orchestra as a whole. That means you should acknowledge the importance and “skills” each symphony member has.

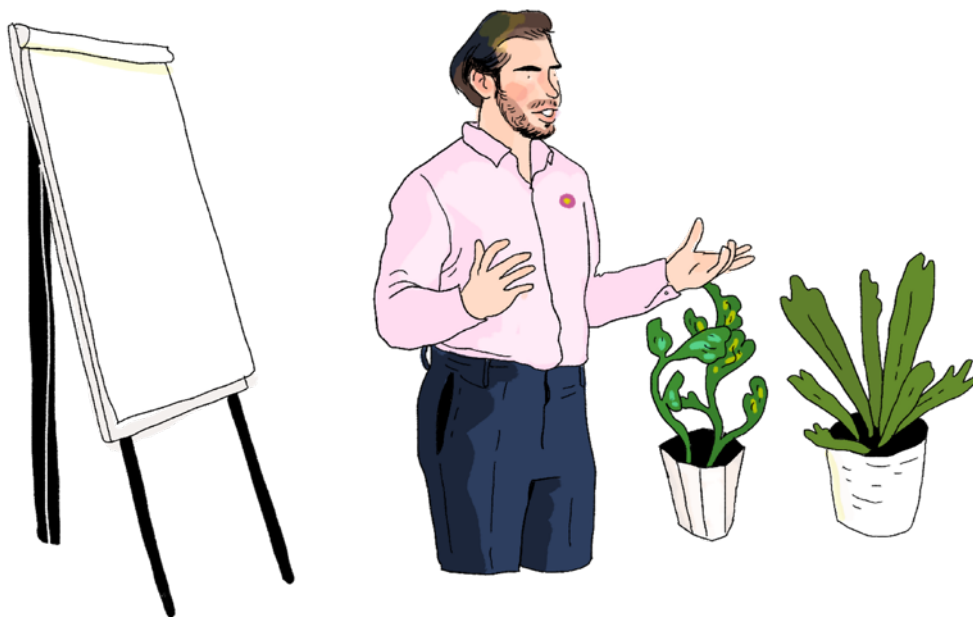
## Guiding

You can make it easier, and more engaging, for those who have to be onboarded in the transformation process and take an active part in it (likely for the first time). You are able to create a safe space where everyone is welcome to share their perspectives and learn from each other. You make everyone feel their knowledge is valuable for making horizontal learning happen. As a host, you will be the group guide. You need to ensure everyone feels comfortable enough until you are not the (main) reason why they are actively participating.

A good host trusts that other people in the room (participants) are competent and can take over their and your roles whenever needed.

## What are the five competences of a good host?

While keeping in mind the roles mentioned above, this chapter will introduce competences any good host should have when facilitating a co-creation process. Although there are many similarities with celebratory events, you will find key differences that will transform this encounter of citizens in a **meaningful co-creation process**. The five competences described in the following paragraphs are: *the art of welcoming, sensing the room and listening, asking questions to facilitate a dialogue, using your voice and body language and managing friction.*



### First competency of a good host: Welcoming

Welcoming starts before the process officially starts.

How do you make sure to lower barriers to participation (whether physical, psychological, or social)?

Choose wisely the venue and the access to its location. If the venue is very interesting and fun, but has clear barriers, plan ahead or provide a temporary solution to make it easy for everyone to arrive well and safe! For instance, if the venue has a steep slope, and one of the participants has a disability that doesn't allow them to walk, climbing down such a slope will be a challenge. How do you make sure this person feels included? How do you make sure this person is not in the position of having to ask for help?

Every barrier, be it a physical or mental one, makes it more likely that people will arrive late and/or in bad spirits. Make sure guidelines and directions are clear.

What might get people talking, even before the process officially starts?

- **Serve food and coffee.** Invite your guests to help themselves!
- Plan the space to facilitate **informal chats** between those participants who arrive early.
- **Talk to participants** before the event starts. Present the guests that don't know each other.
- **Play music** and make a welcoming atmosphere that makes people talk about it.
- Develop some **preparatory tasks to solve / discuss** so participants are encouraged to talk to each other. Delegate tasks to early arrivers. This will give them a confidence boost and make them feel part of the event.



Think of examples from your own experience when assisting these events, please! What was the most memorable moment of such an event? What was the most exciting thing about it? What was something that you didn't like at all?

#### Make a toast!

The first step in any event is to create alignment between the participants and a common playing field. This is exactly what happens in any party - you need to know what it is that you are celebrating.

#### Try it out yourself

Try to make the initial speech of a group process as if you were making a toast. Keep it short and concise, avoiding technocratic language. Follow this structure:

1. **WHY** - explain the reason their participation is important and urgent.
2. **HOW** - inform about what the process is for the day, and in a way that stimulates people's appetite for participation.
3. **OUTCOME** - give the audience an immediate reward - what will they get out of the day? (this is also a way to manage expectations.)





## Second competency of a good host: Sensing the room and listening

Have you ever spoken to someone who seemed truly engaged and interested in every word that came out of your mouth? How did that make you feel?

Important? Understood? This is what truly listening does to people.

When addressing complex and global problems like climate change, we need to understand other people's perspectives. We need to learn from each other across sectors and find solutions from all corners of society. Especially from those people who typically do not get the opportunity to be heard.



*"As a facilitator, you have to create the conditions for everybody to feel comfortable and willing to express their point of view and be heard."*

**Sara Nardi** - Project Manager,  
VOLCANO group

A way to do this is by holding your initial speech and then immediately initiating a collective warm-up exercise, focusing on listening. Divide your audience into random “groups” of ca. 4-5 people, or ask them to divide themselves, for instance based on genders or society sectors they represent (e.g. activists, developers, parents, etc.), and reflect according to a common prompt.

Crucially, the focus of this prompt is not related to the topic of the event but more to the human and individual side, i.e., something from our everyday life, a situation that most of the participants have experienced or even connecting with their inner drivers and passions. At the end of the exercise, we need to create the sense that we are all humans, and our voices and perspectives are as important and equal as all the people in that room. Get inspired by the following examples!



### Collective warm up - Example

Draw circles on the ground representing “bases”. Ask people to place themselves in those according to the type of actor they are representing or how they perceive themselves in the process. When everybody has found their place, ask them to find a buddy from another group in the room / a person they don’t know.

When everybody has found someone, ask the following prompt out loud:

#### OPTION 1

(Sharing with the group): What is a secret that not even your closest colleague knows about you?

1. one minute - one person talks - the other person listens - no interruptions; swap
2. one minute - one person talks - the other person listens - no interruptions; swap
3. thirty secs - Tell your partner’s story to the bigger group; swap
4. thirty secs - Your partner tells your story to the bigger group

## OPTION 2

(Creating one-to-one relationships): Why are you here? What is the one single question you're looking for by the end of the day?

1. 3 minute - talking - listening - no interruptions; swap
2. 3 minute - listening - talking - no interruptions
3. 30 secs - Tell everyone the answer of the second question to the group. The first answer is only for the person you have talked to.



Get inspired by another example in this [VIDEO!](#) - "TV 2 Play - All That We Share"

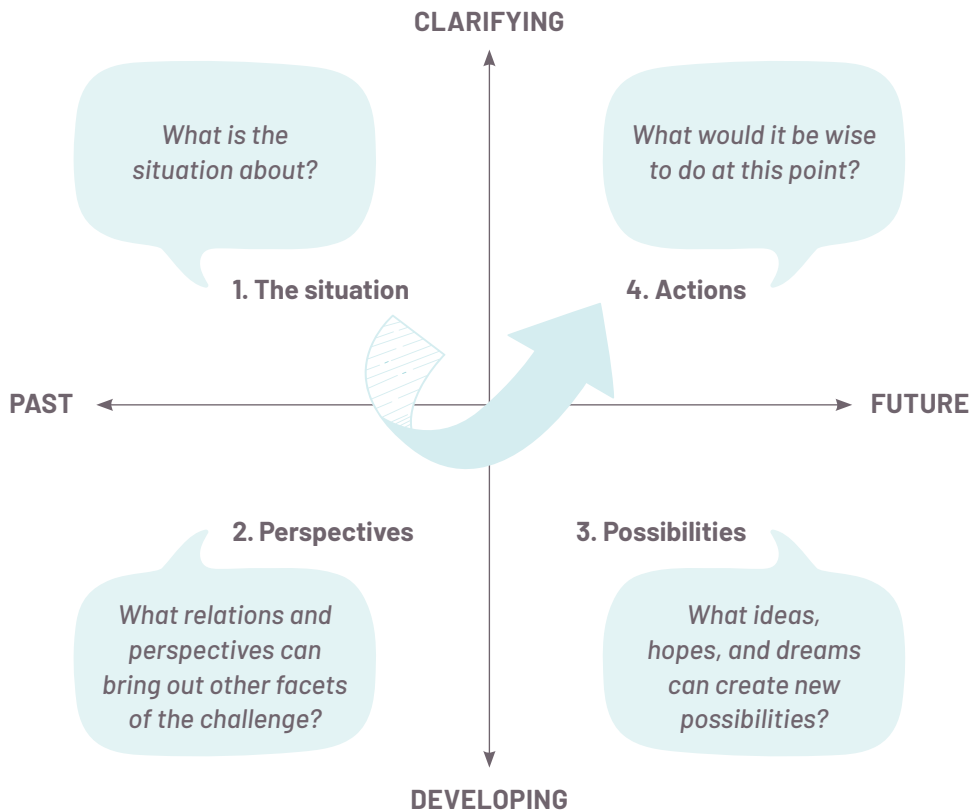


### Third competency of a good host: Asking questions to facilitating a dialogue

As a facilitator, joining a group discussion to ask a well-placed question can help steer the conversation in the direction you want it to go. Asking good questions can help you and the group you are facilitating. They can lead to better understanding and addressing a complex problem.

It is useful to keep the matrix below in mind when you formulate questions. Each quadrant corresponds to a different type of question. You can see each quadrant as a step you need to go through if you want to make participants move from their current understanding of a problem, to suggesting solutions that can be relevant for more people.

To illustrate this process, we take the example of a workshop, where you help a city official (Malgosia) to develop a speech in order to convince her manager to allocate budget and resources to a project.



**Credits:** Tomm K (1988) 'Interventive interviewing: Part 111. Intending to ask lineal, circular strategic and reflexive questions'. *Family Process* 27 1-15.

### FIRST QUADRANT:

#### What is the situation about?

Questions focus on the past and/or present occasion. Malgosia is at the centre of the situation. As a facilitator you could for example ask them:

*On what occasion are you holding your speech? What have you already done? How is it going? What is working? What is not working? What are the most important things to know about the situation?*

### SECOND QUADRANT:

#### What relations and perspectives can bring out other facets of the challenge?

Questions focus on the past and/or present for someone other than the person you are interviewing. In this case it would for example be Malgosia's boss and/or the manager and colleagues of Malgosia's manager. As a facilitator you could for example ask them:

*Who are the key persons in this occasion? How would your manager describe the situation, if it were them I was talking to?*



### THIRD QUADRANT:

#### What ideas, hopes, and dreams can create new possibilities?

Questions focus on the possible future outcome(s) and are seen from the perspective of different people / interests. In this case, you would ask Malgosia to describe future outcomes:

*Let's look into the future and assume that you have held a really good pitch for your boss. What would your boss say to you to congratulate you about the very good pitch? What would they highlight? Think of some concrete examples that would make you feel it was a success.*

### FOURTH QUADRANT:

#### What would it be wise to do at this point?

Questions focus on the actions to take to realise the desired outcome outlined in the previous quadrant. In this case you could ask Malgosia:

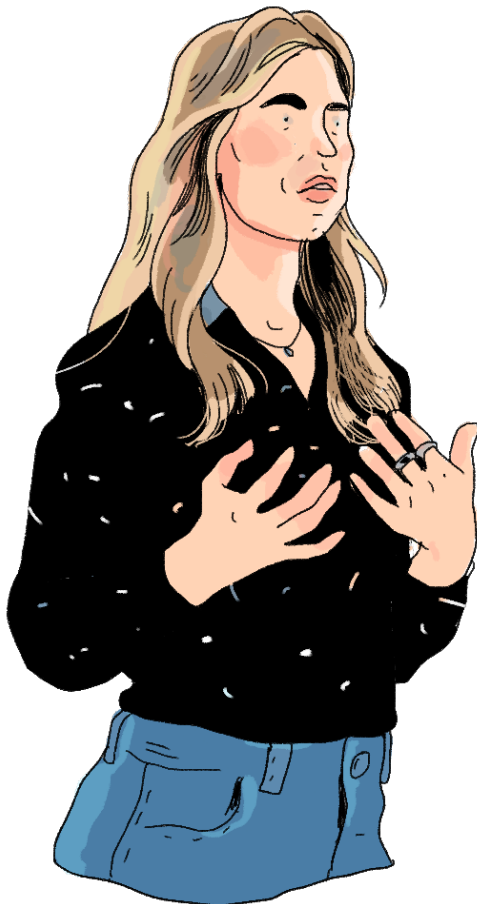
*What is the best way for you to go forward with your pitch-preparation now? What thoughts do you have now about how we best get to the outcome you described before?*

## Fourth competency of a good host: Voice and body language (Body language, gestures, tone of voice, etc.)

During a facilitation process there will be many occasions when you are required to raise the tone of your voice. For example, to ask people to be quiet, or to bring attention to a specific problem, to highlight an aspect of a discussion, etc.

Even though this might be necessary it can still be uncomfortable for many of us. Therefore it is important to have a comfortable position (body language) to fall back to, showing groundedness, control and authority, after exposing yourself in this way.

Other tricks when you are not (yet) confident about raising your voice/ or when you are dealing with a very large group of people: use a bell; a glass with a spoon; climb up on a chair so everybody can see you, etc.



### Try it out yourself

- 3 min - Rehearse your fall back position on your own. This needs to feel comfortable for you and convey groundedness, and calm to your counterparts.
- 10 min - Try it out in the circle
  - Loudness level 1 - hello  
(As if you were talking to a person in front of you)
  - Loudness level 2 - hello!!  
(As if you were making a toast / holding a speech to a small group)
  - Loudness level 3 - hello!!!  
(Welcome everyone! As if you were talking to hundreds of people in a full venue)
  - Fall back position



## Fifth competency of a good host: Managing friction

How do you manage friction constructively?

Take this (scripted) quote from a recent workshop. The following steps can help you to facilitate this dialogue. Another useful tool in this case can be found in the chapter “Principles of Nonviolent Communication” ([page 40](#)).

*“I had higher expectations about this session. I feel that I am having to talk on behalf of other people. To be honest, we do not see the relevance of the exercises we are doing to the project! I'm afraid we are wasting time!”*

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT** - It takes great courage to speak up in front of many people. Acknowledge the person's energy and dedication! Thank them for their comment, and avoid the words YOU (direct attack to the person and the group) and BUT. Don't force people to take the position of one of the parties (host / person criticising).

**REPOSITION** - Repeat out loud what the person has said, but reframe it positively. Here it is important that you focus on the needs of the person. What are they actually saying? What are they actually frustrated about? Keep it on the professional level and do not address the emotional aspect. For example: Explain – with solid arguments – why and how the session you have designed IS relevant for the task at hand. Show humility and openness to make it even more relevant from now on. Ask the person to help you improve the process (see next point).

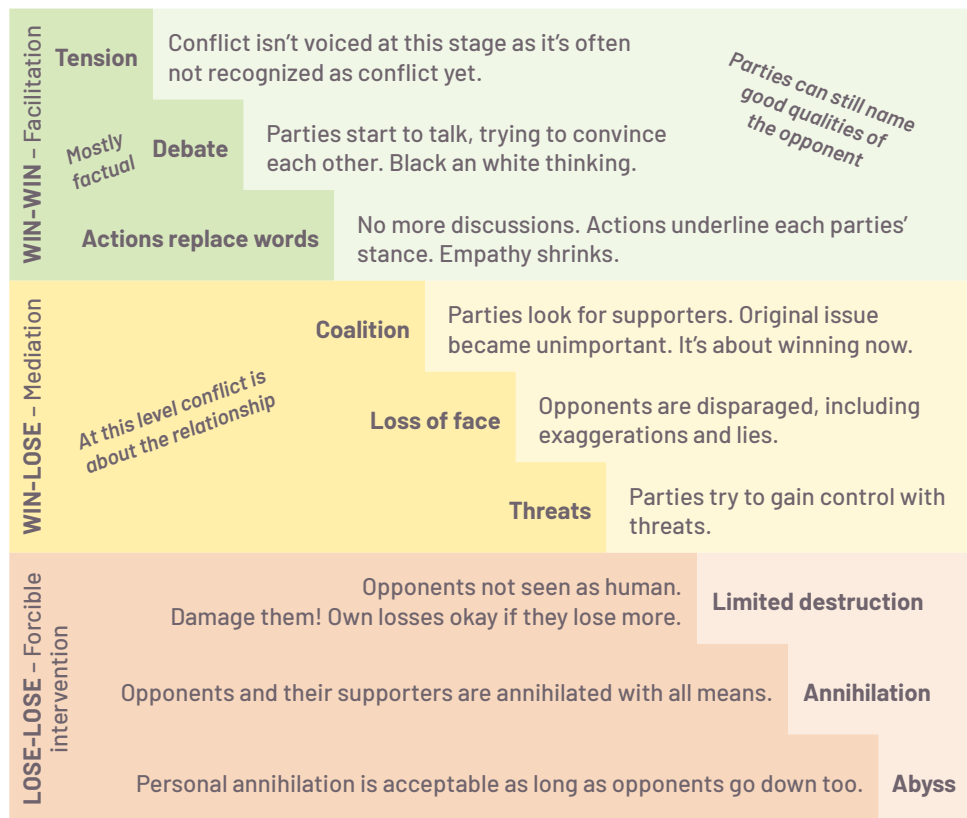
**INVITATION AND CO-CREATION** – Offer the person the opportunity to be part of shaping the programme ahead. For example: How can we make sure that this point becomes a part of our programme today? Offer other people in the room, who might want to, to also join the conversation. Call a break first, if needed. Replace one of the sessions to make sure this need is included. If there is a significant critique towards the project / approach selected and shared among the participants, the facilitator should be able to reshape the whole agenda to accommodate these new needs.

Try it out yourself

Read the quote from the workshop at the beginning of this subchapter and reflect on the following question: **How would you answer this person?**

Conflict escalation ladder

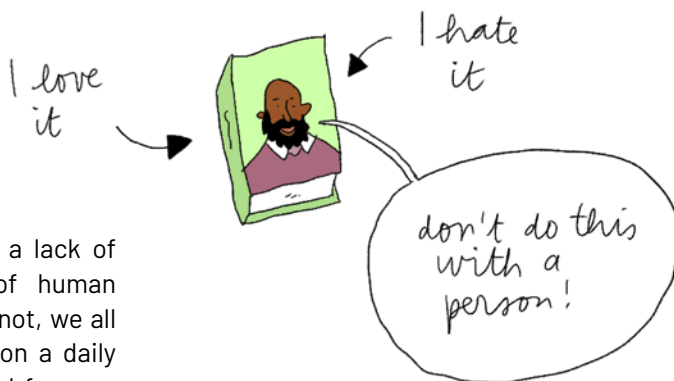
Remember that not every conflict can be solved through facilitation! In any conflict, there are different stages and different types of involvement that might help solve it. Friedrich Glas's model can help you understand this.





## Principles of Nonviolent Communication

Non-violent  
communication:  
how to communicate  
your NEEDS in a  
RESPECTFUL way



Most problems arise due to a lack of sufficient communication of human needs. Whether we like it or not, we all work with people and face, on a daily basis, situations that demand from us to convey what we want. The outcome of that simple operation will define how much our needs will be satisfied, and ultimately, how content we feel in a specific time, space and society.

We have discussed – and we will repeat it again – how understanding each other’s perspectives and needs is a central point in co-creation processes. This is why we want to introduce the Nonviolent Communication principles. It is a technique, created by Marshall Rosenberg, to help people communicate in a more cooperative and compassionate way. It’s not about dealing with conflict, convincing the other, or finding solutions, it’s about making connections at the level of feeling and needs.

Let’s take for example a conversation between two friends discussing a new book. It’s easy and safe to express a personal experience with judgements that are black or white: “I truly loved that book” or “I hated that book”. Does this change the book? No, the book is exactly the same as when it was published. Luckily books have no feelings, so such extreme comments can be easily dismissed.

However, it becomes more complex when we talk about people. Let’s say you are in a café with a friend, having a conversation about very exciting news for you. You noticed your friend is constantly checking their phone and not really listening to what you are saying. Your immediate thought is “this

person is so selfish that they wouldn't pay attention unless the topic is about them" and what comes out from your mouth is: "Are you going to listen to me, or will you play with your phone all the time?"



*"Every Judgment is a tragic expression of an unmet need."*

**Marshall Rosenberg**

You can already guess the immediate reaction of the other person.

Whenever people's behaviours fail to meet a need (e.g., being listened to), you easily fall into judging other people. What it is hard to recognise is that these judgments are a sign of a moment of vulnerability and a way to express emotions. When such judgements are used to request what one needs, the reaction will always have a high emotional level and the answer will also come with a judgement.

*What can you do to convey what you need while building trust and empathy?*

The four principles of Nonviolent Communication show how to structure such requests:

## 1. OBSERVATIONS: What I observe...

This is the factual information, what a camera could capture in a photo. Everyone can see it and it brings an objective point of view. In the café example, the fact is that your friend is checking their phone.

## 2. FEELINGS: How I feel...

The other person can't read your mind, so you need to be clear about how this situation makes you feel. In the café example, it can be guessed that you were feeling anger / sadness for not feeling heard.

*If you struggle  
- like we all do -  
to name emotions,  
look at the following  
**list of feelings** (first page)  
to help you.*



## 3. NEEDS: What I need..

Next, you need to present your actual needs. As the problem starts with an unmet need, this is an element that needs to be conveyed well. Going back to the café example, you are excited about good news and you want to share it with your friend and you would like to be listened to.

Look at the following **list of needs** (second page) to help you.



#### 4.REQUESTS: What I ask for..

Last but not least, you have to request what you want for your needs to be met. Even if the other person is not obliged to fulfil your request, stating your feelings and needs is already a step forward towards building empathy and a relationship of trust. Going back to the café example one more time, the request is very simple: wanting undivided attention and to be heard.

Aggregating all the four principles into one sentence would look like the following:

*"I see you're constantly checking your phone and your attention is divided... That makes me feel sad and frustrated because I care a lot about what we are discussing and I would like you to know what happened. I need you to listen to me. Could you please stop looking at your phone and start listening to me? If not, for any reason, I can try and talk to other people."*

As mentioned before, many responses could come as an outcome of this statement, but let's imagine the following response:

*"I'm sorry that I made you feel like that. I actually care a lot about what you are telling me, but I can hardly focus as X is happening right now and all my attention is there."*

Even if the answer may not meet the expressed needs, communicating in this way can help to understand the problem without leading towards an argument that affects the connection between you and your friend.

## Putting it into practice

Although the emphasis here is more at the individual level, each organisation and institution is composed of people. At the end of the day, one or more people are responsible for the actions of such groups.

This is why it is important to first understand how to use this tool in a personal context before moving into more complex messages (e.g., recommendations to policy makers) and requests towards different types of audiences.

The following exercise can be applied at the beginning of a co-creation process.

In groups of three, look at the following everyday cases and answer the following question.

How would you express your request to that person? (3-5 min to work in teams and 2 min to share to the group)

- Your flatmate doesn't clean the dishes after they cook.
- Your partner is working until late hours, you want to talk to them to express that you had a bad day and need their support.
- You arrive home, a parent wants to tell you everything about their day, but you really cannot listen at this moment and need time for yourself.

Reflect on how you could apply this tool to other personal and professional situations.

*Take a moment to reflect...*



Sometimes you  
don't need money,  
you just need help  
from someone who's  
done this before.

## FINDING THE RESOURCES TO INVEST TOGETHER



### Discovering “new” resources

Imagine you succeed in finding many innovative solutions through an inclusive and democratic co-creation process. Imagine those solutions can help tackle one of the pressing challenges in your city, such as heat waves or flooding. Imagine those solutions can be implemented by your municipality and its citizens. What is missing?

Finding (financial and other) resources to implement the outcomes of co-creation processes was considered by the pilot cities to be one of the biggest

challenges from the outset. It is widely known that more actions are needed to effectively counter the effects of climate change. It is also well known that cities and their infrastructure play a major role here. **Why then is it so hard to find the (financial and other) resources that are needed to invest in such initiatives?**

Should this question be left unaddressed, it could harm long-term public relations and trust-building efforts city officials intended to build with citizens. For instance, when

commitments about actions (e.g., policies, infrastructure, services) are made and not fulfilled later due to lack of resources. During the coordination of the *Fair Local Green Deals* project, and specifically in their co-creation processes, we have observed a general decrease in city officials' ambitions when envisioning potential solutions. Citizens and municipalities have focused more on solutions that did not require significant investment of money as other solutions are more likely to not be implemented.

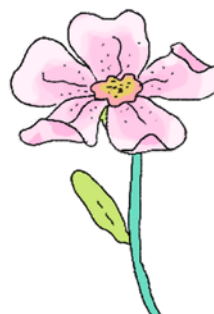
While co-creation alone will not solve climate issues, neither will the sole focus on unlocking financial resources across sectors and governance levels. Local governments are struggling to make their climate projects financially viable or "bankable" to meet the market's traditional terms. Yet, the reality is that climate action rarely provides the low-risk and immediate monetary returns that investors traditionally seek. This creates a **fundamental misalignment** between the goals of the market and those of municipal administrations, which pursue broader societal and ecological value and tend to orient their action towards *longer-term* goals.

While many actions can be taken to unlock streams of public funding at different European levels of governance, the private sector remains the one that has access to most of the financial resources in our current economic model. However, due to Europe's historic economic position and long-term financial stability,

one must acknowledge that this is a privileged starting point. Countries in the Global South are oftentimes even more dependent on international organisations and private sector funding. Therefore, in both contexts there is a need to **start directly engaging the private sector** to play a greater part in financing climate actions.

A good starting point is reflecting on how we – as individuals and society – value what we have, need, and can use in our lives. In other words, **re-evaluating our relationship with the resources and benefits** all living beings and this planet can offer and receive. Rather than being passive consumers, everyone can contribute to, invest in, and become co-producers / beneficiaries of our households, streets, neighbourhoods, city and planet.

VALUE  
is not the  
same as  
MONEY



Ongoing efforts to innovate within a business-as-usual model are highly valuable, as this will help taking the initial step. For example, merging portfolios of climate measures and projects to distribute the risk and justify the co-benefits that are not quantified within the investment equation. However, this might only work for certain contexts and cities.

A traditional quantitative-based approach to solve this challenge would focus on collecting money in a world where access to financial resources is highly unequal. It also clearly delineates who the actors in power to provide such resources are. This is why no matter how much money we collect, borderless challenges such as climate change won't be solved unless we rethink the **social and ecological values** behind an economic system that is based on growth and resource extraction.

It is important to acknowledge such complex changes will not happen overnight and will require social innovation on both individual and societal levels, so let us start from breaking down this challenge by asking ourselves the following question:

*How do we re-value the resources we (already) have?*

The way societies set a price for material or immaterial resources is a social contract or paradigm, in other words, ideas and beliefs that are shared and accepted by all actors from a community. Although such paradigms have become more globalised and this is not something individuals can change alone, they still have the power to define how much they value an object, service, activity, and living being.

With that perspective in mind, all sectors and actors who are part of our societies have resources the public sector does not have, and can innovate in different ways to that of the public sector. This is exactly why the **investment of resources should be part of the co-creation process**. I.e. co-creation should not stop once the solutions are proposed, leaving the implementation responsibility exclusively to the local, regional or national governments. Nevertheless, the public sector should play a key role in steering such a process.

*We need time as a resource. It takes a tree years to start having a positive climate effect.*





By developing other forms of co-investments, **new interpretations of risk and vulnerability** can be unlocked. A clear example of such interpretation would be, for instance, broadening the understanding of consequences when not acting towards climate change effects (e.g. number of casualties prevented from future heat waves) and the co-benefits such investments can provide.

The exact form of the economic model or co-investment logic that comes as a result of a co-creation process will change according to the scale, type and context of the climate action in question. For example, the exact stakeholders who have the power / interest to contribute to greening schoolyards will differ completely in type and number if that climate action is applied to public spaces around the school at the scale of particular neighbourhoods.

The focus here is not about how to simply attract financial investment by meeting the conditions the private and financial sectors demand before unleashing their capital. It is about listening to the needs of these sectors in order to understand their challenges when investing resources into climate actions. Likewise, city officials and citizens should have the chance to communicate their needs and what they can offer to find a common ground.

*The cost of not adapting in time is rising*





# Broadening our social contracts

## Is it (only) about money?

The idea of value and risk, very ingrained in each investment operation, is something we, as a society, have created to put a system in place that helps us simplify our lives and add order to them. Every one of us has an unconscious definition of what these values are, because of the interactions and relations with other people and with the material world. However, when the exchange of goods and services becomes more complex and global, the purpose and societal goals start to get blurry.

The consequence of this escalation of complexity is that people tend to simplify these relations. Thus, for example, when an investment is made, it is measured only through the return of money (value) and the probability of not getting it back at a specific time (risk). Therefore, people have a tendency to think of money as the only valuable resource. In other words, being blindsided by money.

Broadening this perspective and eliminating those barriers are the first steps to envisioning new investment logics, models, and even bolder and long-term goals such as changing our current economic system. As mentioned in the previous section, only talking about climate neutrality does not resonate with citizens. In this case, the topic is something they deal with everyday:

**the value of material / immaterial objects and the risk of not having them in their lives** (e.g., how much things cost).

After the five Fair Local Green Deal cities implemented their co-creation process, it was recognised that more than just money, what was really needed to implement climate actions was time, physical and mental work, space, political support, water, machines and tools, plants, etc. It was understood that the value created by such actions went far beyond the monetary return such investments can offer.

And such benefits have a name: mental and physical well-being, increase of biodiversity, saving time, improvements in education, and quality of life. Where the challenge lies at the moment is how to make them part of the investment equation.

So, is it (only) about money? As the saying goes, there's a song for everything and "Price Tag" from artist Jessie J (2011) comes in very handy here. The short answer is NO.

It's not about the money money money



## Re-coding value and benefits



This chapter brings the opportunity to experiment and test an alternative pathway in your local context with your citizens. A common practice throughout the journey of co-creation is to stop and reflect, and this is exactly what you need to do with the exercises presented on the following pages.

Here the concepts of value and risks are challenged by evaluating what everyday objects bring to people. By doing so, you will understand how you perceive and categorise the (non-financial) resources that you and society have and that are not currently valued by the market. After this reflection, the same principle can be applied to bolder examples, such as adaptation measures to tackle heat waves.

To find additional material related to the exercises and a template for online use, please visit this [webpage](#).



## STEP 1: VALUE

### Exercise: How much value do our objects have?

The aim of this exercise is to reflect on the value people assign to objects or other elements of their lives based on personal perceptions and priorities. It is also contrasting how such value is influenced by the context and the market. This simple game challenges the participants to reflect on their perception of value and seeks to highlight how the current economic model often doesn't take into account certain benefits and risks.

**Time needed:** 20 min (10 min in couples and 5+5 min together)

**Type of exercise:** plenary discussion + small groups (couples) discussion

#### Instructions:

1. Explain the exercise to the group. You can use the following sentence to start:

*"How much value do our objects have? We will try to reflect on how we value things in our lives with a simple exercise. You will be divided into groups (couples) and each of you will pick an object..."*

*Shoes versus  
life without  
shoes.*

*€1 million*



2. Divide the group in couples.
3. Each person picks an object. One person picks one very functional object: something that you would need every day for work or life (e.g., shoes, phone, laptop, etc); The other person picks one object that has an emotional attachment (e.g., a gift from a grandparent, an object that has history, etc).
4. In order for them to reflect on benefits and risks, ask the participants to answer the following guiding questions:

*"What does the object bring to your life?"*

*"What would happen if you didn't have this object in your life?"*

5. After listening to each other, ask the participants to guess the price for the object of the other person.
6. Gather all the participants back in the plenary and ask them to share the results of their discussion.

You can use a simple table to divide the object in "matching" (if the guessed price matched the actual market price) or "not-matching" (if there was a difference between prices). You could use the following guiding questions for the discussion:

*"Was the exercise difficult? If yes, why?"*

*"Did the price you guessed matched the actual market price of the object? Please explain why."*

## STEP 2: REALITY CHECK

### **Exercise: How can we recode benefits & risks?**

After the first discussion, this second exercise aims to reflect on how it is possible to recode value and risk. The aim is to apply the same approach used in the first exercise but for a real example at the city or neighbourhood level. Starting from climate adaptation issues (such as heat waves and greening actions), the group is encouraged to look at these issues with new eyes, analysing the co-benefits and the prevention of climate risks, as well as the different resources available to tackle them.

**Time needed:** total 60 min (40 min in groups and 10+10 min together)

**Type of exercise:** plenary discussion + small groups discussion

#### **Instructions:**

1. Introduce the real example to the entire group. You can use the following example to draw inspiration.

*"Imagine your neighbourhood, or the blocks around the nearest school in your area. Heat waves are becoming more and more frequent. The municipality is leading a co-creation process with actors who are affected by the issue or have power to either solve or exacerbate the problem. The aim is to find climate adaptation measures, initiatives, and solutions to tackle the problem...."*

2. Invite the group to talk about the possible solutions. You can use a word cloud game or a pin board with sticky notes, for example.
3. Choose the two main solutions and divide the participants in two groups (or alternatively, preselect two options such as "Planting trees" or "Water features").
4. Ask the participants of each group to do a mapping exercise (25 min), and identify:
  - *Benefits (that are social, ecological and financial);*
  - *Risks of having and/or not having the solutions implemented (e.g. risk of having the solution implemented can be the gentrification of the area)*
5. Ask the participants to do a second mapping exercise (15 min), and identify the resources (of any kind) needed to make this happen. You can use guiding questions, such as:
  - "If our vision is to implement this given solution, how do we do it?"*
  - "What do we already have and what do we still need?"*
6. Gather all the participants back in the plenary and ask them to share the results of their discussion. You can use a simple table to divide the inputs under "Benefits", "Risks" and "Resources"

How can we recode  
benefits & risks?









# MOVING FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE: EMBRACING THE COMPLEXITY OF REALITY

In the previous chapters, you have gone through the different steps needed to implement meaningful and inclusive co-creation processes. Now it's time to add another layer to this story. No matter how much effort you put into planning such processes, there are circumstances that are beyond your control, making reality more complex and requiring flexibility to adapt.

In this section you will hear the experience of five pilot cities and how they attempted to tailor a co-creation process to their unique local contexts. Instead of taking such complexity as a problem, this book calls for a more positive perspective. The aim is to see the challenges that arise while testing on the ground as **opportunities to fail and learn from mistakes**.

The cities of València, Vitoria-Gasteiz (Spain), Wrocław, Łódź (Poland) & Gent (Belgium) took part in the Fair Local Green Deals project and had the opportunity to test the tools mentioned



in the previous chapters, in the course of two and a half years<sup>6</sup>. They did so with the objective of translating one of the most ambitious and complex EU policies<sup>7</sup> to the local level. However, this had to be done **without forgetting ongoing efforts** (e.g. local plans, strategies, and initiatives) and doing all this in a (more) inclusive way. In other words, leaving no one behind.

The challenges they encountered and the lessons learned have been summarised here for you. What these cities discovered was that even though their contexts were different, they had a lot in common.

<sup>6</sup> Read more about the project on [page 96](#)

<sup>7</sup> Read more about the [European Green Deal](#)

*That we have a lot in common although our territories and cities are very different*





# THE CLIMATE STAR [GENT]

What happens when a city wants to tackle multiple climate challenges simultaneously?



This is what the Municipality of Gent tried to do. The city administration has long been innovating in the field of citizen engagement, through initiatives such as its Climate Coalition, Climate Arenas, and Youth Climate Council<sup>8</sup>. Ongoing initiatives across the city inspired the *Environment and Climate Service* team to strengthen this ongoing work by starting five co-creation processes in parallel, each working on a different topic. This made the experience of Gent a unique case within the Fair Local Green Deals project. A dedicated city official was assigned to each group to monitor the work and engage the stakeholders in different ways. These points of contact had a Forum – meeting group across teams including +15 departments and units – to reflect and make decisions in the framework of the project. Each co-creation process continued separately, following the **Design Type 1** (see the chapter "Bringing citizens together:

*The design of a co-creation process" on page 20)* and involving the same core group of participants across the series of events. The municipality took on the role of peer stakeholder and not of coordinator, thus allowing it to provide guidance, while nevertheless empowering the actors involved.

*The objective was to both reinforce existing networks and encourage new links between socio-economic systems.*

The fact that each of the five groups started on a different 'maturity' stage, entailed additional effort to meet specific needs. In other words, local groups that had created a long-relationship of trust had different requests, compared to those that had recently met for the first time.

<sup>8</sup> The Ghent Climate plan 2020-2025: <https://www.calameo.com/read/0063954479db097ad1e64>

## 5 groups working on 5 climate challenges:



**FOOD:** the municipality aimed to bring forward the food city strategy by supporting and amplifying the work of a network already established 10 years ago. The aim was to broaden the audience and target group of different initiatives and support the food council with a city official and process guidance.

**CULTURE:** the objective of this co-creation process was to agree on a common vision and goals to create a Climate Action Plan, together with several cultural institutions and representatives of cultural groups such as the *Arts and Culture Council and the Design Museum*.



**AFFORDABLE APPLIANCES:** this experiment was about involving citizens in finding potential solutions and prototypes for sustainable and affordable home appliances. Their co-creation process focused on understanding their needs and providing feedback to existing municipal initiatives.

**CIRCULAR BUILDING MATERIALS:** by looking at the existing networks, city officials tried to bring together different actors for the first time. Since no clear Circular Economy strategy at the city level existed, this process helped to guide the municipality's overall goals.



**CLIMATE FORUM:** The Climate Forum is a pre-existing initiative of organisations, companies and institutions that aims to speed up the fight against the climate crisis. In this co-creation process, workshops were organised with around 15 entities (such as workers unions and SMEs) and mostly focusing on: creating a plan for climate neutrality at the city level that tackles different sectors; strategies for energy reduction and renewable energy; and assessing through surveys whether their current actions help move forward the energy transition.

# GREENING THE CITY [ŁÓDŹ]

## What can citizens do to support the creation of better public spaces?



This was the main question guiding the *Environmental Management Division*. City officials planned their co-creation process in connection to greening actions that increase the city resilience when facing climate change effects.

The municipal team decided to include a participatory approach in an existing strategy concerned with creating new public rain gardens. Such infrastructure intended to prevent runoff from roads and concrete surfaces from reaching local waterways during a heavy rain season.

*The focus of this process was on the city centre and the topic of discussion was the spatial design of such green spaces.*

In the case of Łódź, the co-creation process was designed based on the **Design Type 2** (see the chapter "Bringing citizens together: The design of a co-

creation process" on [page 20](#)). Four events were organised to involve a diverse number of stakeholders' groups, such as students and pupils, local activists, members of the city council, and representatives of the local media. City officials wanted to make a particular extra effort to engage the elderly, and to involve the private sector via local entrepreneurs and small businesses.

After a trial first event, the team realized that facilitating such events were challenging due to the lack of previous examples, experience and skills. An external organisation was involved to provide support and organise workshops where citizens and city officials could move out of their comfort zone and get out of their "bubble". As a result, the Łódź team overcame their own institutional blind spots and personal beliefs by looking at problems from the perspectives of others.

## POP OUR BUBBLES



We need to look  
from different  
perspectives  
(because of lack  
of knowledge)



# ADAPTING TO EXTREME HEAT [VALÈNCIA]

## What will we do next summer?



A trend of rising year-on-year temperatures has become a pressing question for the municipality of Valencia. Active in the field of climate neutrality and adaptation, the local administration has built its climate strategy through the *Missions València 2030*<sup>9</sup>. For instance, major EU initiatives such as the *100 Climate Neutral and Smart Cities*<sup>10</sup> and the Mission in Adaptation are part of the city strategy.

Within this framework, Valencia prepared its first *Climate City Contract*<sup>11</sup>, a “living” plan to address concrete actions and barriers to reaching climate neutrality by 2030.

*When the opportunity to implement a co-creation process through the Fair Local Green Deals project arrived, the team decided to use it to strengthen the next version of its Climate Plan from an equity and social justice perspective. Specifically, by identifying and prioritising potential actions targeting extreme heat together with local stakeholders and citizens.*



One of the key actions already identified was the development of school greening projects in Valencia. As the project developed, an opportunity arose to move from theory to action. Thanks to the commitment from the city council to develop a *Green Schoolyards Plan*<sup>12</sup>, three school communities were involved to re-naturalise their playgrounds.

The co-creation process was planned adapting the **Design Type 3** (see the chapter "Bringing citizens together: The design of a co-creation process" on [page 20](#)). The municipality led the process and acted as a bridge between the groups of actors involved, through a series of events. These occurred in parallel, with different formats and objectives tailored to the two respective audiences:



### 1. TECHNICAL MEETINGS:

These meetings brought together representatives of different city departments and service agencies, including the València 2030 Climate Mission team, with researchers and experts from the fields of heat adaptation, energy, urban planning, innovation and citizens engagement.

### 2. EVENTS WITH PUBLIC SCHOOLS:

These events were organised in collaboration with the *Parks and Gardens* city department, to support the development of the Green Schoolyards Plan through a participatory approach involving the schools and the wider community.



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<sup>9</sup> Missions València 2023:

<https://www.missionsvalencia.eu/?lang=en>

<sup>10</sup> EU Missions in Horizon Europe:

[https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/funding/funding-opportunities/funding-programmes-and-open-calls/horizon-europe/eu-missions-horizon-europe\\_en](https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/funding/funding-opportunities/funding-programmes-and-open-calls/horizon-europe/eu-missions-horizon-europe_en)

<sup>11</sup> The Valencia Climate City Contract is publicly available here:

[https://netzerocities.app/\\_content/files/knowledge/4065/valencia\\_nzc\\_ccc.pdf](https://netzerocities.app/_content/files/knowledge/4065/valencia_nzc_ccc.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> A masterplan to develop greening projects in 3 public and municipal schools and their communities.

# EMPOWERING CITIZENS FOR CLIMATE ACTION [VITORIA-GASTEIZ]

**“People think involving citizens doesn't have value but it really, really does!”**

Sustainability is not only climate action, but also inclusion of citizens in the decision-making process. The Department of Territory and Climate Action team of Vitoria-Gasteiz knows this well and started a participatory process to co-create a new “Action Plan for Empowering Citizens for Climate Change” [Empowerment Plan].

Based on a thorough review of existing plans and strategies within international and EU frameworks, such as the 2030 Urban Agenda and the Mission for Climate Neutral and Smart Cities, it became clear that the existing strategy to involve citizens in climate actions had to be reviewed.



*Thus, the co-creation process focused on the engagement of key municipal internal and external agents to review and update the actions identified during the initiative Urban Klima 2050<sup>13</sup>.*

<sup>13</sup> <https://urbanklima2050.eu/en/>

The co-creation process was based on a combination of **Design Type 1 & 2** (see the chapter "Bringing citizens together: The design of a co-creation process" on page 20). It was organised in three main phases, to involve different groups of stakeholders at different stages:

### PHASE 1:

City officials conducted a review of the existing strategies of the municipality, including those on engagement, empowerment and communication. The objective was to update the database of key actors from the civil society sector and revise the current challenges and good practices with them.

### PHASE 2:

The municipal team redefined the action plan through three different consecutive series of events.

- **Session with politicians:** The objective was to ensure political alignment and commitment towards the Empowerment Plan by involving policy makers from the city council. Such actors reviewed the diagnosis results and provided their input.
- **Session with internal departments:** The core team presented the Empowerment Plan process to other municipal departments and invited them to identify key barriers and opportunities. After the session with external actors (see below), they convened again to analyse the viability and implementation of each action.
- **Sessions with key external actors:** City officials invited the actors mapped in phase 1 to reflect on the existing municipal strategies and on the input from policy makers and city officials. Two sessions were held, one focusing on new ideas for joint actions, and the other one on identifying local leaders who could implement them.

### PHASE 3:

This phase involved drafting the final action plan with the input from all the events. The results were presented to policy makers for approval and political support. Lastly, the Empowerment Plan was communicated and disseminated, primarily through a public event with all actors invited.

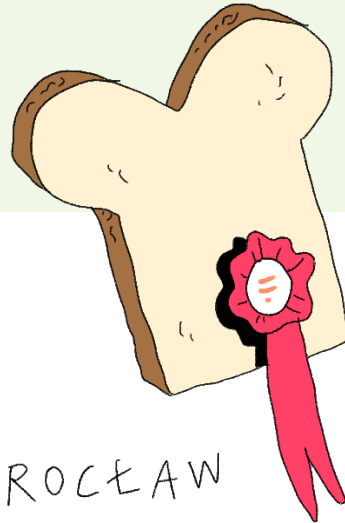




# A FOOD MANIFESTO FOR THE CITY [WROCLAW]

“How can we raise awareness about nutrition? How can we reduce food waste?”

Our main goal  
is food policy



The municipal team approached the development of a new food policy for the city of Wrocław as the first opportunity to talk about the food system on a *city-wide scale*.

The opportunity to integrate a co-creation process allowed the city officials to invite different groups of stakeholders interested in changing (or affected) by issues connected with the food system. This meeting created a space for these actors to get to know each other and increase awareness surrounding the interconnections between nutrition, food poverty and food waste in Wrocław.

The team needed to convince participants that a complex strategy such as a food policy is **not about a single action, but rather a process** where everyone needs to collaborate. In order to better facilitate the workshops discussions and address underlying power dynamics, the team contracted an external organisation.

They used the innovative FutureS Thinking method<sup>14</sup>, which helped participants to make informed decisions based on possible future scenarios, trends and developments. Thanks to this methodology, participants stayed motivated throughout the meetings.

In this case, the co-creation process was planned following **Design Type 1** (see the chapter “Bringing citizens together: The design of a co-creation process” on [page 20](#)).

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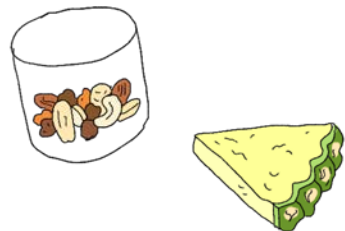
<sup>14</sup> Learn more about the FutureS Thinking method here: <https://greenhat.pl/#method>

*The involvement of the main actors was organised around a series of consecutive events that led to an initial step towards developing the new city food policy.*

All events characterised by having an introductory lecture and followed by discussions on relevant topics such as:

1. **FOOD SECURITY** – supply chains, structure and needs of the population, resources and alternative options.
2. **HEALTHY EATING** – promoting thoughtful shopping, sensible eating and balanced meals, educating the community about food waste through rewarding good practices.
3. **FOOD SOVEREIGNTY** – cooperation with universities and other municipalities, supporting the network of interested actors involved in local initiatives, innovation and cooperation.
4. **FOOD POLICY PRIORITIES** – Discussing the challenges Wroclaw is facing in the context of future food policy and selecting the priorities for the next steps.

As a result, a public and online Food Manifesto with all the signatures of the participants was developed as the base and starting point for the new policy. It was celebrated through a public event and it is planned to celebrate its anniversary every year to include more signatures and widen public support.



# COMMON CHALLENGES WITHIN CO-CREATION PROCESSES



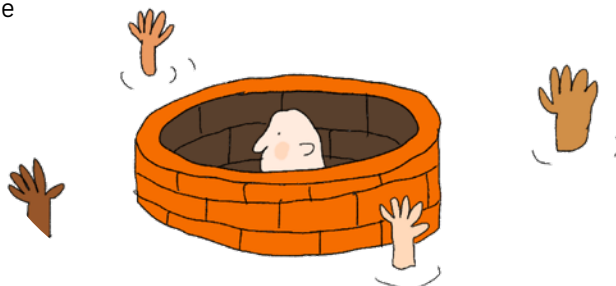
## Challenge 1: Project management and internal capacity

The experimental nature and undefined structure of the *Fair Local Green Deals* approach was one of the first challenges. City officials found it difficult to explain to their peers why this co-creation process differed so substantially from other existing practices. Particularly, in connection with the flexibility required to be adapted to existing municipality frameworks and initiatives (Gent). **Having an open framework was perceived as a problem**, especially at the beginning when identifying the specific issues at the city level and the possible ways to tackle them (Wrocław).

A challenge was also posed by the need to allocate internal staff to project tasks beyond the core team when there was a clear capacity shortage. City officials had a high workload of projects that did not provide all the resources needed to finance more staff.

Such projects significantly decreased the capacity to monitor ongoing activities.

As a consequence, existing staff could not provide guidance to new staff or external organisations undertaking services that were outsourced (Gent).



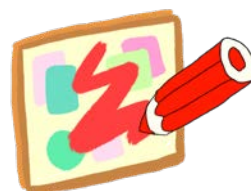
## Challenge 2: Political support and elections

Obtaining approval from the city council is an early prerequisite for the implementation of any co-creation process. This can be a challenging task for the city officials proposing it, especially when the project has an undefined structure or when the city council work on policies is on hold due to ongoing election uncertainties.

All five cities went through local elections during the course of the project. This challenged the city officials to keep political support, get concrete political commitments (Gent), and ensure the continuity of activities (Vitoria-Gasteiz). This included uncertainty on whether the municipal staff would maintain their job positions throughout the project.

**The delays caused by political cycles posed the risk of compromising the entire co-creation process** for many of the cities involved (Łódź, Valencia, Vitoria-Gasteiz, Gent).

*The local elections made us wonder if we could keep going at all.*



## Challenge 3: Engaging citizens and other actors

From the beginning, the implementation of a co-creation saw a series of challenges related to effectively engaging specific groups of citizens and individuals. Explaining to citizens *why* they should join the process and communicating the *importance* of the overarching goals, was something all the five cities struggled with (Wrocław, Valencia, Vitoria-Gasteiz).

*To citizens, climate change is like Star Wars.*



In this regard, developing **strategies to adapt technocratic language** was an important task. City officials needed to improve their communication skills to involve vulnerable groups. Especially actors that perceived themselves as lacking the technical expertise to contribute effectively. Oftentimes, the most significant challenge was also to overcome the historic lack of trust from citizens towards public institutions generally (Łódź).

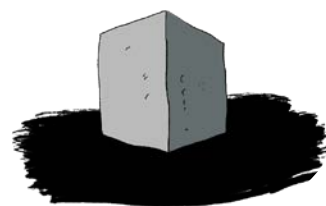
In other words, promoting a change of perspective from "What do I get in exchange if I participate?" to "How can I help my community?".

## Challenge 4: Facilitating a co-creation process

Almost all cities struggled with finding a good approach to design their co-creation process. Particularly creating a framework specific enough to make progress on a local issue, while broad enough to attract citizens to collaborate together. Though the challenge of planning events was explicit from the beginning, the facilitation and soft skills needed to host events were not. This included **creating a safe space for participants to build relationships of trust**, balancing power structures and navigating dynamics between sectors (Wrocław).

Involving different types of actors, especially vulnerable groups, rather than just those repeatedly included in decision-making processes (i.e. the usual suspects) was a challenge for several cities. The city officials had to find ways for them to express their needs connected to the issues under discussion in a meaningful way. They noticed that people were tired of the same old workshops, and had to find creative solutions to invite participants (Vitoria-Gasteiz) or maintain the motivation of the group (Wrocław) throughout the series of events.

*Lack of soft skills*



## Challenge 5: Finding resources for climate actions

From the beginning of the project, one of the main challenges seen by city officials was how to turn citizens' wishes into reality. When the municipality is not able to make financial commitments at the beginning of a co-creation process, it also has less power to convince other local actors to participate and take action. More importantly, not fulfilling the actions agreed at the end of the process could potentially harm the relationship of trust created.

*We get blindsided by money: the financial resource is not the only one*



In that sense, the question of how to **move from a commitment between citizens and the municipality towards implementing solutions** played a substantial role. All the cities involved faced this struggle in relation to both financial and staff capacity. This challenge therefore had the double task of (i) finding financial resources (short-term vision), and (ii) demonstrating new investment logics where citizens can also contribute with any type of resources (long-term).

# WHAT CITIES LEARNED BY TRYING AND FAILING



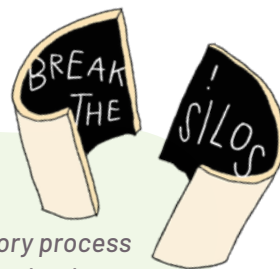
## Learning 1: Permeate the municipality's structure

Updating city climate strategies and plans is an effort that requires high levels of cooperation between different departments. City officials are all affected by similar struggles and involved in tackling interconnected challenges, but the fixed structures force them to work in silos. Introducing an undefined project framework that had co-creation at its core and required creating synergies between existing municipal initiatives showed that **cooperation is not only possible but also necessary**.



*"This participatory process  
experience showed us how  
departments can work together."*

**(Vitoria-Gasteiz)**



One successful example was the collaboration between the València 2030 Climate Mission team, the Clima i Energia agency and the Parks and Gardens department in the city of Valencia. This cooperation enabled the development of the Green Schoolyards Plan in a co-creative way, directly involving the schools representatives and other stakeholders through a public participatory process.

As a consequence of this, the experience of greening schoolyards became one of the measures included as an adaptation strategy to heat waves in the climate city plan update. This co-creation process got the attention of the broader administration who committed to allocate core municipal budget to actually implement the outcomes in each school. This represents a clear example of how a city's team, thanks to the flexibility offered, had the chance to look for and **invest their resources on existing opportunities**, resulting in significant impact across the city administration.



“This was the first time a project contributed to updating the Climate City Contract (Climate City Plan), and the team acquired skills that can be shared with other departments to show how other projects can do the same.”

(Valencia)

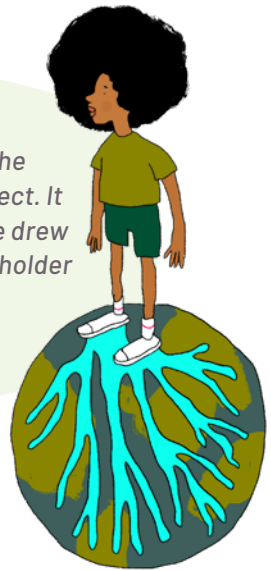
## Learning 2: Develop the roles and skills needed for co-creation

The challenges for city officials to take on the role of implementing a co-creation process led to the need to update the internal structures and distribution of responsibilities among staff (Gent). A structural approach across several teams and departments seemed necessary, especially when the city was taking on a facilitation role. As a consequence of this experience, the new position of “Stakeholder Manager” was created, to coordinate the partnerships with local stakeholders efficiently and consistently.

“

*“The collaboration across teams within the service was possible because of the project. It was a positive experience from which we drew the important lesson to organise a ‘stakeholder management service-wide’.”*

**(Gent)**



This also highlighted the importance of acting together and thinking of all sectors as equal actors, in order to share responsibilities and achieve the highest goals and the best results (Wrocław). For this reason, some municipalities redefined their role in the co-creation process, and they presented themselves as peer stakeholder of the other actors involved, empowering them to action (Gent, Wrocław).

“

*“Stakeholders are very active if you give them a voice. Listen to people and really hear what they want.”*

**(Łódź)**



City officials understood the importance of filling one of the key expertise gaps, by undertaking specialised training on facilitation and recruitment of facilitators. After that, most of the city officials hired external collaborators (e.g., facilitation experts, planning experts or landscape designers). In such cases, the role of the city officials was to guide and oversee the co-creation process and to create bridges and connections between the groups involved (Łódź, Valencia, Wrocław). External teams supported the co-creation process in facilitating the meetings, informing citizens about technical aspects on the basis of the type of audience involved (see the chapter *“Bringing citizens together”* on [page 13](#)).



## Learning 3: Bring the potential of diversity

One of the first steps city officials faced was to **define the scale of the co-creation process**. Some cities learned that a broader systemic approach was more effective to tackle the selected climate issue, proceeding to involve relevant actors operating at a larger city scale (Vitoria-Gasteiz, Wrocław). Other cities found out that working at the neighbourhood level enables concrete and meaningful citizen involvement (see the chapter "Facilitating dialogues and knowledge exchange: what are the five competences of a good host?" on [page 30](#)), so they involved local actors and maintained the role of bridge between different levels of governance (Gent, Valencia, Łódź). As each city differs substantially from others, there is no right answer in choosing a scale.

When **mapping the local actors and stakeholder groups to be involved**, the city officials applied a Interest/Power matrix (see the chapter "Bringing citizens together: the core elements of a co-creation process" on [page 16](#)) to their context, and in one case combined it with the concept of the pentahelix<sup>15</sup> (Wrocław). This helped to encourage the inclusion of as many participants from different backgrounds as possible, who can contribute to the process with their specific knowledge, experience, competences and skills.

“

“Everything a municipality does should be developed with citizens and residents. Without their contribution, any plans will fail due to lack of support. It’s crucial to include them in order to ensure buy-in (e.g. start with a topical manifesto).”

(Łódź)

You need local support.

You're not taking away our football fields!



<sup>15</sup> <https://medium.com/@thefounderslab/the-pentahelix-model-key-to-sustainable-innovation-89f0352bd14a>

However, in order to make their participation possible, municipal teams **had to adapt internal processes** to a more flexible and open model. An example was having the citizens' recommendations online as a living document (Wrocław). Through signing an agreement that all parties felt part of, the municipality was able to balance what was written on paper with actions in reality, encouraging and empowering stakeholders to take ownership of the process.

“

*“A bit of patience and flexibility for the final event allowed lots of people to join and sign the agreement. People went crazy and really wanted to contribute to the document.”*

(Wrocław)

## Learning 4: Tailor communication strategies

During the co-creation process, city officials experimented with different engagement strategies and communication styles. On many occasions, it turned out that a more personal and informal approach worked better and had a positive impact on the attendance and participation of the audience. For example, the use of a more **informal workshop format** and the selection of an **unusual location** (see the chapter “Bringing citizens together: the core elements of a co-creation process” on [page 16](#)), such as school spaces, helped the participants to feel more at ease and connect better with the issues at stake (Valencia).

The meeting culture (i.e., inviting people to a workshop in a venue) didn't prove to be the most suitable or accessible way to gather opinions or ideas for many citizens, especially the most vulnerable ones (Gent). Engaging with different actors, especially vulnerable groups and citizens not familiar with climate change jargon, highlighted the importance of **focusing communication and language on the everyday topics** citizens care about (see the chapter “Bringing citizens together: the core elements of a co-creation process” on [page 16](#)).

Dear colleague,  
I just wanted to point out a few totally boring ways to communicate, for example a very long information-dense video, which often has a tone that is too serious, or it's like twenty minutes long when people have an attention span of maybe two or three, also a very boring way of getting a point across is via newsletters: we get way too many of them as it is, and don't get me started on super long whatsapp m...

Read more ✓✓

For instance, the team of Łódź noticed that the energy crisis generates more interest in fair aspects of the green transition, compared to other fields. It was also important to strategically share the key pieces of information, avoiding irrelevant technical details and focusing on the benefits for the actors involved (Vitoria-Gasteiz).

“

*“Take for example the construction of a new bike lane on X street: people are generally against it. But if you tell them how it will improve air quality, you can more easily get them on board”*

**(Vitoria-Gasteiz)**

“

*“Meetings should not be the only format used to co-create a city plan. They might not be as accessible for all stakeholders and they can even deter stakeholders with a “doer” mindset.”*

**(Gent)**

Find the right language

(municipalities don't teach us that!)



They are intelligent. They just want to know 'what's in it for me?'



In some cases, city officials had to reassess their communication style towards particular stakeholder groups (see the chapter "Bringing citizens together: the core elements of a co-creation process" on page 16). They learned that communication needed to be very clear, accessible and practical. It was essential to explain beforehand what would happen with the citizens' ideas, to manage their expectations

and to ensure that there would be follow-through to make the ideas a reality (Gent). The use of social media to engage citizens and stakeholders proved

to have a very positive effect on the success of the initiative, by reaching different groups with more tailored communication (Łódź).



*"In the future, we will try to change the way of communicating about this type of meetings to make it more relevant to the retail and logistics industry. We interpret the absence of representatives from this sector as a lack of valuable insight into the system."*

(Wrocław)

## Learning 5: Create a sense of community

Every single actor in a city is capable of contributing to the solution of the problem. City officials and municipalities play a key role but they depend on all other sectors to invest in solutions that tackle climate change. In that sense, **creating a sense of community** proved to be crucial to get different actors on board and motivated (Łódź). In other words, empower everyone to become agents of change.

Joining forces with existing initiatives across the city and networks was a strategy that helped the city officials to optimise their capacities and get more relevant actors involved (Gent, Valencia). Another strategy was not separating the co-creation process from the discussion about the resources, and recognising that cooperation is needed in all phases of the process (see the chapter "Finding the resources to invest together" on page 44). For example, by engaging directly with small local businesses to understand how they could contribute to the development of the rain gardens (Łódź).

MONEY IS  
NEVER ENOUGH  
- WITHOUT  
PEOPLE



*"No matter how much money you gather, if you don't have people on board, the projects will fail."*

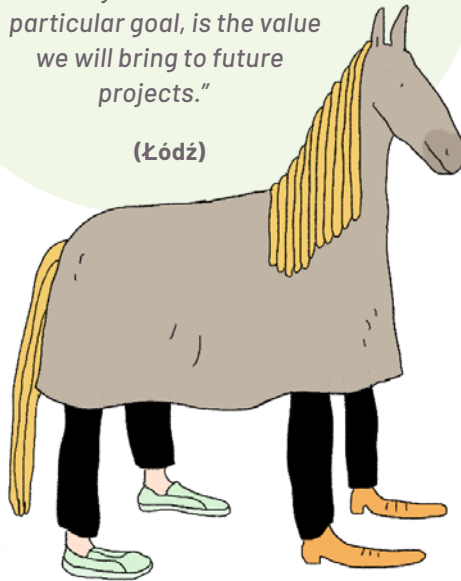
(Łódź)

Although building partnerships is a crucial element, it is an effort that takes time and might not be completely achievable in a two-year co-creation process. For that reason, having participating actors (including city officials) commit to specific actions was a way to provide a meaningful and long-term commitment (Gent, Wrocław). Furthermore, creating links with multipliers and civil society organisations provided an entry point towards groups that were hardly accessible through municipal channels.



*"Working together with different actors and building a sense of community, to work towards the particular goal, is the value we will bring to future projects."*

**(Łódź)**



*Everything we do with the municipality should be done with the support of citizens.*







**HOW TO  
ACHIEVE  
A GREATER  
IMPACT?**

# IS THIS MORE IMPACTFUL? IF YES, DO IT!

When the representatives from the five municipalities started their co-creation processes, they asked us – the project coordination team – for a step-by-step guide. Since each project they previously participated in – whether or not it was linked to co-creation – came with a fixed concept and methodologies to tackle this challenge, they wanted something similar.

City officials had multiple ongoing projects. They needed to work against the clock to fulfil different tasks or deadlines, and to deal with the pressing demands of their citizens. Thus, there was no interest in adding an extra layer of work. What they needed was the mental and physical space to **stop and reflect** on their activities and to find synergies with what was *already happening* in their cities.

These were the reasons why they were encouraged to use the *Fair Local Green Deals* project as an opportunity to take a deep breath and strategically combine different tasks / projects. Simply put, focusing their efforts on only ONE of the most pressing challenges they had already identified in their cities.

Not only were they asked to synergise with other activities, but also to ensure political support from their city councils, mayors and deputy mayors. The more internal support they received (e.g.,

Focus on just  
ONE issue,  
and tackle  
that.

other departments), the more visibility their work created and with it, the possibilities to contribute to existing initiatives, breaking silos and **creating resilience against significant political shifts** between election cycles.

It was therefore understood that contrary to original expectations, the less pre-defined the framework was, the more opportunities appeared. An *impact mindset* was applied to deal with such uncertainty, meaning that the project coordinators and city officials constantly asked themselves:

Does this create more impact than what you / we planned?

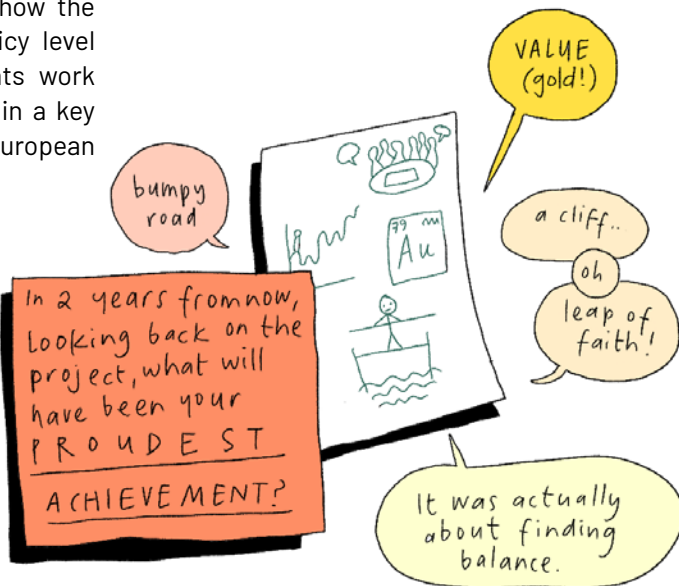
Is it aligned with the end goal of the project / co-creation process?

If the answer was no, they immediately proceeded to adapt the plan or the task. After five work plans, local elections in all the cities, and several deadline extensions, the biggest lesson arrived: working in this way requires *time and flexibility*.



Trust arrived with time, and as soon as this message was understood, the work of all city representatives gathered momentum. Their increased motivation was inspiring to their peers, leading to a unique constellation of actors in each of their projects. Synergies and collaborations emerged from many fronts and new opportunities arose. In other words, **co-creation became the means towards a bigger end goal.**

In the next pages, you will find testimonies from the five cities that perfectly showcase the previous paragraph. Next, we will seek to expand our horizons to think beyond municipal boundaries. Here there will be recommendations for actors and organisations that support city officials on the real needs identified out of the experience of the pilot cities. We will then touch upon the issue of how to improve existing funding schemes for cities. Lastly, we will look at how the changes at the European policy level might affect local governments work and how the latter actors are in a key position to influence the European political agenda.



Zanfaj processi

## FOUR MESSAGES FROM CITY OFFICIALS



At the end of the *Fair Local Green Deals* project, the city officials from the five cities were asked to formulate messages directed to actors who might be able to support cities from within the administration (e.g., mayors, policy-makers and civil servants at other levels of governance) as well as external actors (e.g. organisations working with municipalities). The messages were formulated with the principles of Nonviolent Communication (see the chapter "*Principles of Nonviolent Communication*" on [page 40](#)). These four quotes clearly show that no matter what type of support is requested, city officials have in common that they know what their problems are – they can see them every day – and oftentimes they and their citizens have the knowledge and resources to solve them. What they need is to be trusted, listened to, and given the time to work on such issues.

*The first two messages are requests the city officials found crucial to share while looking back at the past two and a half years and contrasting them with previous project experiences. They target internal and external partners that support them in current and future projects. The next two messages have in common the positiveness and hope towards co-creation processes. They bring two lessons that encourage internal and external partners, including other city officials from other contexts, to embark themselves on a similar journey.*

# 1

**“Some changes in [existing] plans / projects needed to be made, but we did not have enough time. That made us feel frustrated, anxious and overwhelmed. Achieving impact requires greater flexibility.”**

When it comes to involving citizens and building trust across multiple actors, time management becomes a mission in itself. Simply put, setting deadlines that are long enough to allow changes and unforeseen events, but short enough to push the team involved to get things done.

Making changes is easier said than done. Sometimes, the effort of shifting a deadline, budget, task, and objectives may create new administrative challenges and shift the focus away from the goals. Yet, after this co-creation journey, these city officials are here to assure you that the time invested in bringing more flexibility will pay off with the impact achieved at the end of the project.

*We can't do things  
when there's not  
enough time  
and/or flexibility*



## 2

**“We have observed a lack of communication. That made us feel frustrated, misunderstood and confused. We are ready to listen and be heard. We ask to find a common ground and create synergies between partners, projects & initiatives.”**

In a co-creation process, each participant’s perspectives, knowledge, and experiences are just one piece of the bigger puzzle. All the needs of the group should be included in the process. Not providing this space might lead to misunderstandings. In order to avoid that, creating a two-ways relationship of trust is very important.

City officials need a little push to test what they want while aligning efforts that target similar challenges. What is needed is that external and internal partners who work with them to start creating those opportunities.



### 3

## **“Projects with undefined frameworks may be challenging, but we ask you [colleagues] to trust the process.”**

Having such a flexible approach to project management might trigger fear, uncertainty, de-motivation, getting lost, you name it! However, if every single step was defined at the beginning of each project, it wouldn't be a co-created effort.

In order to avoid a sense of disorientation, there has to be a clear alignment towards a common goal. As an actor of change within your municipality, you will need reassurance, good guidance and mutual support from peers (e.g. colleagues or facilitators) to resist the ups and downs. Yet, the feedback is clear - trusting the process is worth it.

projects with a defined framework may be overwhelming. But we ask you to trust the process.

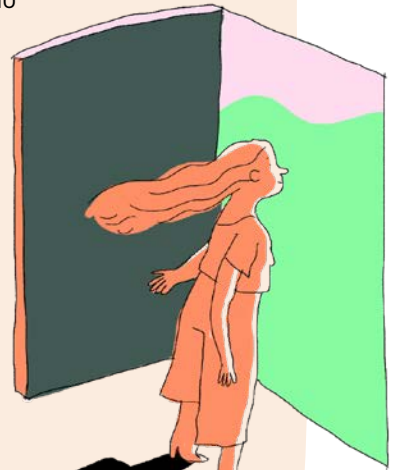


## 4

**“We see that new doors have been opened with a very small push. That makes us feel hopeful, motivated & happy. We request more projects and initiatives like this to try, test, and fail!”**

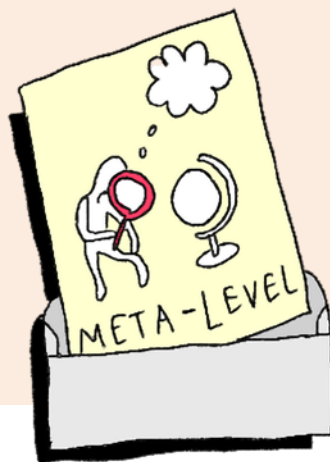
Creativity gets triggered when you feel trusted, take ownership of the process and there is a space where you are allowed to try out new things. It's like walking into a room full of tools and materials you can use for your next experiment. The main difference is that inside that room, you will also find people who accompany you, inspire you, and encourage you to not be afraid of failing. This can be called a “good failureship”.

With this experience, it was seen that with few resources, a lot could be done. New opportunities appeared that did not exist before. New ideas came up after engaging citizens in light of trusting that this process would pay off. Such impact has created hope and a sense of meaning in the work city supporters and city officials do.



*Seeing doors being opened  
fills us with hope that  
change is possible*

# WHAT CAN BE DONE AT A WIDER SCALE?



## Training and support city officials need

Cities within the European context are requesting trust in trying and testing what they know without the fear of failure. They need tailored on-the-ground support, in the local language, with a good understanding of the local, national, European and global initiatives. In other words, they need **support beyond the surface level**.

Municipalities are teaming up with their national peers in order to learn from each other, such as the multi-city project URBANEW<sup>16</sup> in Spain. They have learned how to apply to European funds, how to coordinate projects beyond their municipal scale, how to do research together with academic partners, how to do partnerships with private actors, how to do a peer exchange with fellow cities from other countries, and how to bring their voice to other policy arenas.

We also see great efforts in the development of national platforms (e.g., CitiES2030<sup>17</sup> in Spain, Viable Cities<sup>18</sup> in Sweden, Mission M100<sup>19</sup> in Romania) that help cities in advancing their climate plans. These platforms are coordinating their actions with international organisations to unite their needs and communicate them to not only the national member states, but also to key actors from the private sector.

<sup>16</sup> URBANEW project. <https://urbanew.es/>

<sup>17</sup> CitiES 2030. <https://cities2030.es/en/>

<sup>18</sup> Viable Cities. <https://viablecities.se/en/>

<sup>19</sup> M100 National Hub. <https://m100.ro/home>

Trust the cities!

Trust the others!

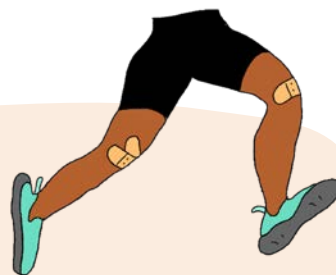
Big changes start with small steps at the individual level. People who can shape their organisations across different sectors are eager to have a more active role in building more just and sustainable cities. However, there is still a lack of spaces where they can connect at the individual and organisational level. In other words spaces where they feel welcomed and safe to share their perspectives. As there will inevitably be clashes of perspectives, work has to be done on developing methods that allow people to communicate their needs in a clear way and align with each other.

That being said, actors like us, who support municipalities and city officials in advancing their work have a clear responsibility:

**understanding the context and providing support where they think it is needed.**

Each city is a world in itself. Many actors are initiating actions in different locations at all times, so there is no better way of advancing the previous work by simply strengthening existing initiatives.

*failureship  
(learning from  
our mistakes)*



## What kind of support city officials need?

The following fronts have been identified throughout the co-creation process of each city:

### ENGAGEMENT AND PARTICIPATION OF CITIZENS

- Training key agents and gatekeepers to reach out to vulnerable communities and building trust
- Developing open spaces for co-creation around the city (already existing communal spaces)

### INNOVATION AT THE GOVERNANCE LEVEL

- Initiating a capacity building programme for municipalities to work horizontally and collaboratively
- Providing soft skills trainings (e.g., facilitation, mediation, communication)

### DEVELOPMENT OF ALTERNATIVE WAYS OF FINANCING CLIMATE ACTIONS THROUGH THE JUSTICE LENS

- Building business cases where ecological and social benefits are equally valuable as the economic ones
- Encouraging citizens to understand money as one of the many resources we can use for investing in their cities and communities.



## Improving funding schemes for local governments

Within the *Fair Local Green Deals* project, the primary goal of both the funder and the cities was to create impact. **This alignment allowed a flexibility that other funding schemes did not provide.** In practice this was translated into flexible deadlines, changing work plans and tasks, moving resources between budget lines, among other sudden changes that came along without any warning.

Research and Innovation programmes funded through the European Commission (e.g. Horizon 2020, Horizon Europe, LIFE) are one of the most common ways for city supporters to access public funding. Such programmes look for greater impact too, and have so far supported many initiatives, creating innovative tools and approaches, based on the analysis of the state-of-the-art of sociological and technical knowledge. However, the flexible nature described above is hardly met by EU grants and grant managers.



flexibility

On top of the internal management challenges, project managers need to go through burdensome processes to justify small or bigger changes at the European level and hope for acceptance. This mechanism ensures that public funds serve the purpose of the objectives set in each funding call, but it often results in barriers that do not allow to make the changes that are needed.

Local governments are in great need of expanded human capacities, and oftentimes they subcontract services that cover skills, knowledge, and experience they do not have within the administration. Failure to apply a flexible approach budget-wise hampers the possibility to meet the previous need. It also brings consequences such as the lack of personnel to implement tools, replicate approaches in their contexts, or gather information needed from local stakeholders to effectively implement participatory processes.

As mentioned in the challenges of the five pilot cities, municipal teams are tied to political cycles that might translate uncertainty towards projects themselves and the implementation of citizens' ideas. For this, it was recommended to create opportunities to engage with other actors at different levels of governance of the public sector. However, this brings an extra layer of work to city officials.

Similar circumstances to those to the EU funding programmes are experienced with the ones at regional and national level too. Oftentimes, funding opportunities that come from these authorities are not accessible to city officials, because they do not target the real needs of the municipal administration, such as funds to expand human capacities or implementation of results.

In that sense, city officials and their supporters should advocate for funding schemes at regional, national and European levels to provide more opportunities to readjust the plans, objectives, tasks and budget. Although it was repeated throughout the different sections, it is necessary to have one thing clear: **Civil servants know what they need to do, they just need trust, space, and time to do it.**

license to  
test and fail



## Strengthening the EU Green Deal

Context and time define what happens on the ground. Working with local governments means politics are involved and that political support is needed. At the time of preparing this publication, the recent European elections (June 2024) have set the tone for the following 5 years. In a similar way to how the co-creation journey described so far has been affected by different local and national elections, these results are expected to influence any initiative in Europe.

Looking at the Political Guidelines<sup>20</sup> 2024-2029 and the first candidate statement at the European Parliament<sup>21</sup>, this chapter comes with an optimistic outlook. One of the most ambitious climate policies will not be backtracked: the European Green Deal.

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<sup>20</sup> [POLITICAL GUIDELINES FOR THE NEXT EUROPEAN COMMISSION 2024-2029](#). Ursula von der Leyen. Candidate for the European Commission President.

<sup>21</sup> [Statement at the European Parliament Plenary by President Ursula von der Leyen, candidate for a second mandate 2024-2029](#).

Europe is keeping the 2030 and 2050 climate neutrality targets with a special focus on implementation and investment towards them. The new European Commission will aim to enshrine the 2040 target of 90% CO2 emission reduction by 2040 in law before COP30 (November 2025).

### **What does all this mean for local governments?**

It means that the work of local governments and city officials to ensure a just and inclusive transition will be *more significant than ever*. Experiments such as the one described in this book have a green light to get extra support and move forward on different fronts centering on the use of democratic and co-creation practices. It also means that all lessons learned from such initiatives can provide recommendations on how to improve the future policies.

In order to advance implementation of existing climate plans, President Ursula von der Leyen has pledged that commissioners will reduce administrative burdens by eliminating red tape, reducing reporting, providing more trust, better enforcement, and faster permitting. Along with this perspective, Commission officers will hold regular dialogues with stakeholders to discuss how to best align implementation with realities within the EU policy landscape, such as the Cohesion Policy.

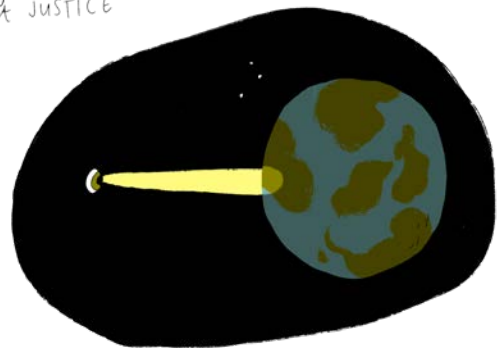
Research spending will be increased to focus more on strategic priorities

at the cutting edge between emerging science, tech and industry. Commissioners will revise public procurement legislation to modernise and simplify the public procurement rules to support innovative and clean solutions.

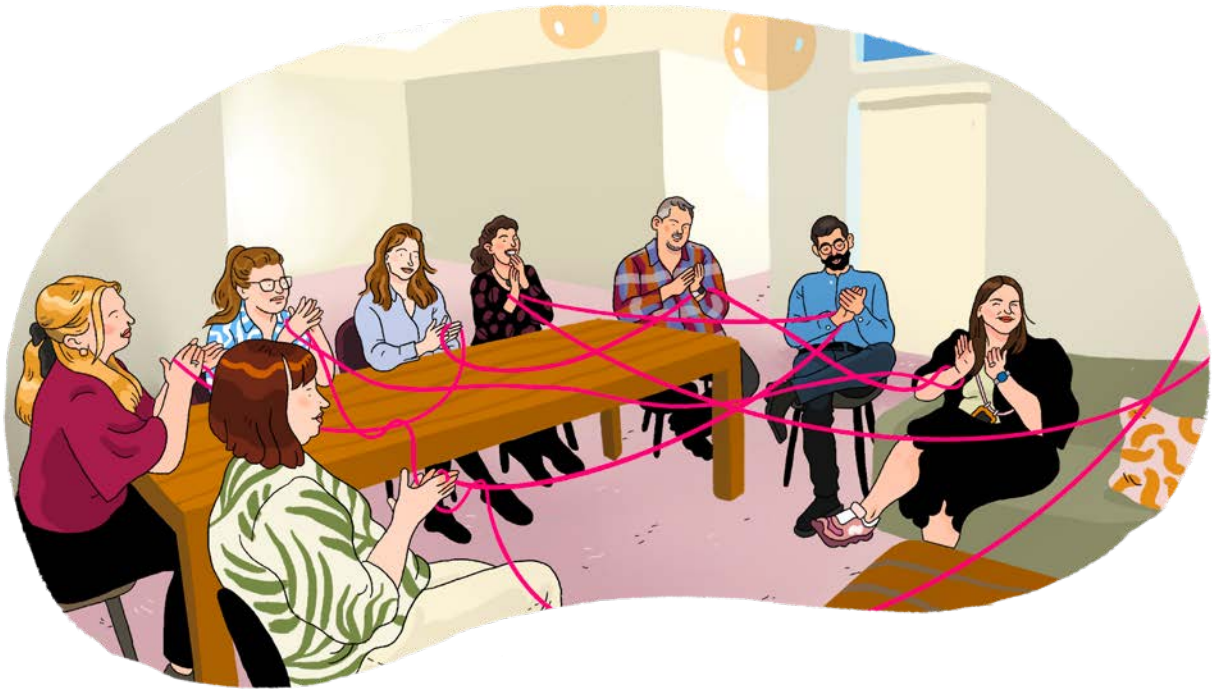
Last but not least, the work on climate resilience and preparedness will be strengthened by mapping the risks and needs for infrastructure energy, water, food and land in cities and rural areas. This will be part of a new European Climate Adaptation Plan, to support Member States notably on preparedness and planning and ensure regular science-based risk assessments.

The message you need to hear from this summary is that **you are not alone**. In each of the past paragraphs, there is an opportunity for you to influence the political agenda. Climate efforts are increasing across Europe and there will be good opportunities in the next five years to demonstrate what a sustainable, just and inclusive city looks like. Let's do it together!

Tunnel vision  
Not just CARBON,  
but JUSTICE







## CONCLUSION

### What did *not* work for us?

Working side-by-side throughout this journey enabled us – the team connected by an imaginary red thread<sup>22</sup> – to create a small community that supports each other. Though not everyone who participated in this common effort is expressly mentioned in this publication, **we thank all the passionate people** that supported the city officials and the coordination team.

That red thread is also the representation of the invaluable lessons we have learned and that we don't want to forget. And although the focus is often placed on the positive things, on the successful experiences and the happy endings, another take-away from this experience has been the opportunity to learn from our mistakes.

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<sup>22</sup>Röd tråd" is a Swedish expression used to describe that something follows a theme. In other cultures, it also means people destined to share a journey together.

There is a lot of potential in acknowledging that we can sometimes be wrong, reflecting on the reasons and changing our course of action. Most importantly, learning from this and communicating it.

The mission approach has received increased attention (e.g., EU Missions), **but one of its purportedly core principles – testing and failing – is missing in the execution process.** Here, the focus is solely on a goal that has a huge ambition and the external pressure (e.g. political consequences) to achieve it.

In the previous chapters we described what has happened in each of the five cities and how theory opened up countless unexpected challenges and opportunities in practice. Reflecting on each step was key to achieve a greater impact. So now it's our turn to get out of our comfort zone. What we imagined as an outcome at the beginning turned out to be a completely different story. So we summarised here our five biggest failures:

### **Failure #1: Committing to a formal agreement**

At the beginning of the project we created a methodology to implement Local Green Deals in each of the cities. Although we interpreted the translation of the European Green Deal as a policy framework that could take any format, the perception was that this was a formal and legal agreement between two parties. As soon as cities communicated this to their colleagues and citizens, the answer was that no one would commit to such a thing. This was the same as asking a stranger to marry you without giving them the chance to first get to know you.



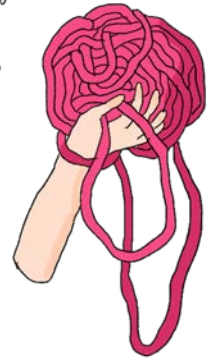
### **Failure #2: Setting ambitious deadlines**

The Fair Local Green Deals project originally planned for city officials to run at least three events in one year. The reality was that this timeline turned out to be highly ambitious, given the realities of local elections, and the need to ensure political commitment and design the co-creation processes. At times, we did not even know if the same city officials would remain in their positions and be able to keep working on the project. That meant readjusting the work plan!

### Failure #3: - Underestimating external support

Cities wanted to receive external support for designing their co-creation process. In the tendering process, we started working with another organisation but the contract fell through (during the Christmas season!). Luckily, our colleagues from Volcano stepped in to support us and provided some of the excellent resources that have been included in this book.

*when you explained about your city, you made me feel like I can trust people.*



### Failure #4: - Overlooking cities' resources

Lack of personnel and internal capacity within the team almost forced one of the given cities to drop out in the middle of the project. Due to internal processes, there was no way of hiring a new person. Tasks and responsibilities were reduced to allow the city's team to continue the project with minimum requirements. The good news was that the co-creation process with citizens never stopped!

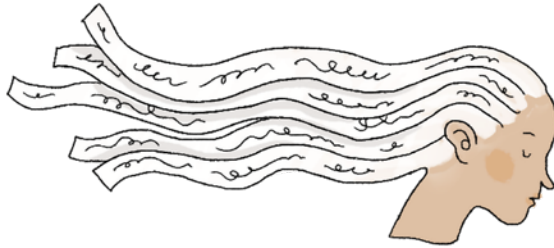
### Failure #5 - Reporting cities activities

At the beginning of the project a clear reporting strategy was defined. The coordinating team made the process as simple and short as possible, to get the key information from each of the participatory events happening in the cities. It didn't work. We are still thinking about what the best way of reporting is, but above all, how necessary reporting is compared to having a both ways relationship of trust.





Even if the result  
is not a success,  
the process is always  
a success, because  
of what you learned.



This is the main message we want to convey to you, among the many lessons we learned. The quicker you accept this, the more you will be able to focus on the final goals. What is important is creating more and more spaces where people feel comfortable to **test things without fear of failure**.

Throughout this book, we have stressed how the power of many can contribute to making more just and sustainable cities. You have received guidance on three important steps – bringing people together, facilitating their dialogue to find solutions and finding resources together. Collectively, these make co-creation a meaningful avenue to unleash the power of collective intelligence in our democracies.

You have seen the mistakes and lessons achieved throughout two and half years of work on co-creation from your peers working in València, Vitoria-Gasteiz (Spain), Wrocław, Łódź (Poland) & Gent (Belgium). Their voice is illustrated and printed in these pages.

We hope all those quotes and testimonies give you the courage and motivation to venture yourself in a similar journey. They are here for you whenever you open these pages.



# ABOUT THE PROJECT

The European Green Deal aims at making the continent Europe climate neutral by 2050. Its success relies on the implementation on the local level.

The Porticus Foundation, through the Fair Urban Transition Programme, granted ICLEI Europe the opportunity to undertake a two-year project, seeking to pilot the translation of the European Green Deal to the local level in a more fair, inclusive and democratic way.

The Fair Local Green Deals project therefore worked alongside civil servants from the cities of Valencia, Vitoria-Gasteiz (Spain), Wrocław , Łódź (Poland) & Gent (Belgium) to implement meaningful participatory processes that tackle on the one hand the most pressing challenges in each local context and on the other, one or more of the policy areas of the European Green Deal.

The project started with an open framework that allowed cities to adapt it to their real needs. The main condition was to include within such processes citizens who had power over resources or to change/stop democratic climate solutions and/or were affected by the issue itself. In other words, including local actors that are not usually part of the decision-making process. It also paid special attention to the inclusion of minorities and marginalised groups.

This flexible approach allowed cities to change and adapt their plan and even synergise opportunities with other ongoing projects, plans and initiatives within and outside their administration. Due to the different contexts in play, each city chose to focus on different challenges:



**VALENCIA:** Review and update the Valencia Climate City Contract (latest plan for climate neutrality) to prevent the reinforcement of inequalities. Specific focus on adaptation actions against heat waves in primary school yards (Heat Guide & Green Schoolyards Plan).

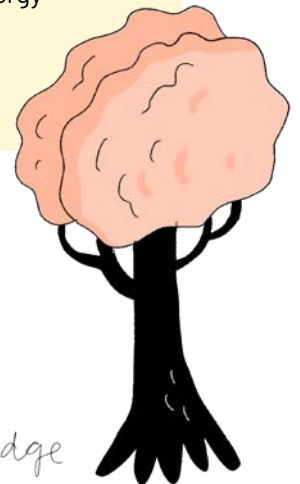
**ŁÓDŹ:** Intervention in 5 public green spaces by including local actors in the co-creation process. The development of rain gardens will increase the city's resilience by preventing water runoff from reaching local waterways.

**VITORIA-GASTEIZ:** Co-creating a Citizen Empowerment Plan for climate actions with three working parallel groups: political actors, civil servants from other departments and relevant actors from civil society. This is a first step to allow citizens to access and validate the Vitoria-Gasteiz Climate City Contract.

**WROCŁAW:** Identifying the most committed local actors to design a fair, healthy, sustainable food system. This group has created the "Wrocław Food Manifesto", whose recommendations will be directly fed into the new food policy. A communication campaign has been launched across the city in collaboration with university students.

**GENT:** 5 experiments on: 1) circularity (building materials for reuse); 2) role of culture in climate mitigation & adaptation; 3) energy-efficient and affordable home appliances; 4) fair, local and sustainable food system (strengthening the food council).

Taking into account citizens' opinion is fundamental to making European policies democratic and capable of sustaining, adjusting and innovating themselves based on citizens' needs. The pilot cities in the project shared their experiences and approaches with each other as well as third cities, enabling them to increase and improve participation of their citizens.



Knowledge

# ABOUT ICLEI

ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability, founded in 1990, is the world’s leading network of local and regional governments committed to sustainable development. ICLEI believes that local action drives global change and the leadership of local and regional governments can make a major difference in addressing complex environmental, economic and social challenges.

Being part of our global network ensures that through joint action, peer learning, and strong partnerships between civil society, business leaders and all levels of government we can accelerate local sustainable development and make real change on the ground.

Since 1992 the ICLEI European Secretariat has been closely working with ICLEI network cities in Europe, the Middle East and West Asia, other European networks, the European Commission, the Committee of the Regions, and many others. The ICLEI European Secretariat works with its over 160 in-house sustainability and communications professionals from its offices in Freiburg (DE), Berlin (DE) and Brussels (BE).



