



CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT SOLUTION BOOKLET

Smart Cities Marketplace 2025

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The Smart Cities Marketplace is an initiative supported by the European Commission bringing together **cities, industry, SMEs, investors, banks, research and other climate-neutral and smart city actors**. The Smart Cities Marketplace Investor Network is a growing group of investors and financial service providers who are actively looking for climate-neutral and smart city projects.

The Smart Cities Marketplace has thousands of followers from all over Europe and beyond, many of which have signed up as a member. Their common aims are to **improve citizens' quality of life, increase the competitiveness of European cities and industry** as well as to **reach European energy and climate targets**.

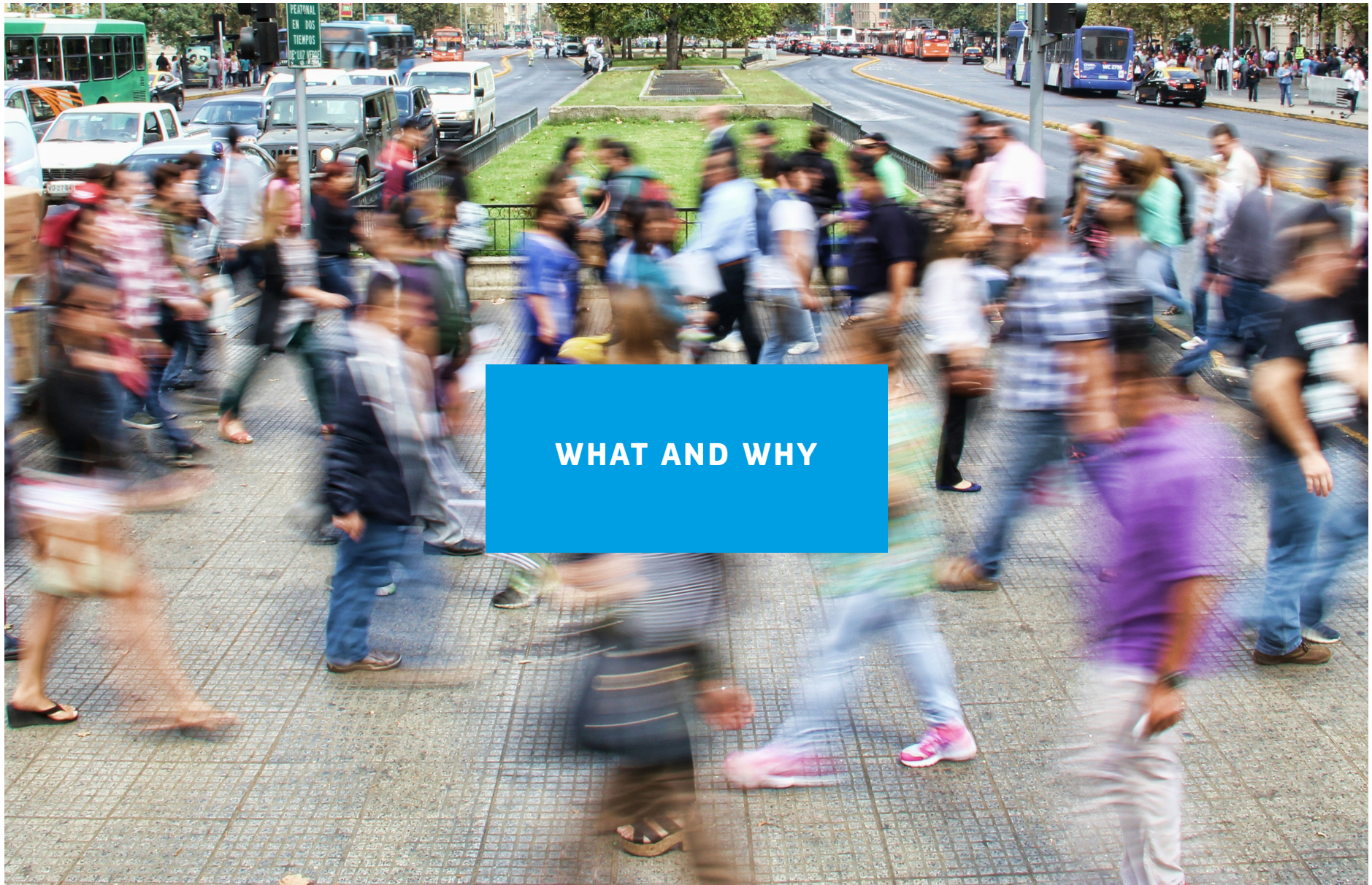
Explore the possibilities, **shape** your project ideas, and close a **deal** for launching your smart city solution! If you want to get directly in touch with us please use info@smartcitiesmarketplace.eu

WHAT IS THE SMART CITIES MARKETPLACE?

WHAT ARE THE AIMS OF THE SMART CITIES MARKETPLACE?

WHAT CAN THE SMART CITIES MARKETPLACE DO FOR YOU?





WHAT & WHY

What is citizen engagement?

Cities around the world are looking for ways to address the true needs of their citizens with a deep level of engagement and co-agency. At the same time, citizens themselves are eager to have more impact on their living environment.

Citizen engagement, a way of **actively involving citizens** in the city's decision making processes, can help to address these needs. Citizen engagement exists in many different forms, ranging from merely **influencing and informing** people, to real **participation** and actual **decision making**.



The city or its citizens could initiate the setup of such an engagement process, which is, in its most thorough form, organised by **collective effort**.



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“Citizen engagement requires an active, intentional dialogue between citizens and public decision-makers.”

Willem-Jan Renger,
Citizen Engagement Taskforce, IRIS project

Frequently encountered practical examples in which citizen engagement is used include:



co-design and co-creation

of urban interventions in cities



collaborative preparation

of municipal legislation and action plans



participatory budgeting

in which the local community decides how to allocate part of a municipal budget



citizens' proposals,

enabling citizens to submit suggestions and initiatives to municipalities

In all of the above examples, it is important to involve as **broad and unbiased a society** as possible in the decision-making processes. Understanding how this can be realised in practice should help direct cities to achieve **inclusive engagement**.



Already in 1969, Sherry Arnstein wrote her article “**Ladder of Citizen Participation**”¹. Since then, research and experimentation in many cities have resulted in a wealth of insights around the topic. However, more efforts are still needed to systematically monitor the approaches and their impact, analyse them, and summarise them into evidence-based guidance documents. While the result of citizen engagement **will be rewarding**, the process is almost always **challenging** and therefore requires a good understanding and well thought out approach.



To be really effective, citizen engagement should be strongly embedded in all stages of the decision-making process.



A meagre tick-box approach or postponing citizen participation only until the end of the process will have far less impact than an approach in which **deep commitment** or a **genuine co-creation interest** is considered from the outset. The latter encourages a **new way of thinking** and can be quite disruptive and fruitful for all actors involved. Not least, the city itself must be well aware of the commitment, **capacity and time** required to embed a citizen engagement mindset in its organisation as a thorough ambition.

Rather than a process done once within just a few projects, this involves a transition of business mindset. Many municipal organisations and public servants lack training to work with citizen engagement in practice, and municipalities’ governance procedures often don’t fit this purpose. Luckily, in the last few years, many solutions for capacity building are starting to be developed, both for individuals and for organisational transformations.

Citizen Engagement in the EU

- At the highest policy level, the European Union is organising the “[Citizens’ Engagement Platform](#)”² to enable citizens across the EU to contribute to key debates. In 2024, energy efficiency became the first topic addressed on the platform and by a complementary Citizens’ Panel. Recommendations are intended to inform future Commission initiatives.
- In the **Netherlands**, a new Environmental Law called the “[Environment and Planning Act](#)”³ came into force in January of 2024. It stimulates early participation and requires local governments to put interests, opinions and the creativity coming from citizens on the table in good time.
- The European Commission’s Competence Centre on **Participatory and Deliberative Democracy** is hosting a [Community of Practice](#)⁴ and organising yearly festivals on the topic of citizen engagement and participation.



¹ Arnstein, Sherry R., 1969. A Ladder of Citizen Participation, JAIP, Vol. 35, No. 4, pp. 216-224

² citizens.ec.europa.eu/index_en

³ government.nl/topics/environment-and-planning-act

⁴ cop-demos.jrc.ec.europa.eu/about



Why is citizen engagement relevant?








The question of why the government should engage with citizens is often asked and answered in many different ways. This demonstrates the complexity and diversity of our understanding and needs.

One answer within the context of smart city projects could be that citizen engagement is relevant because smart city innovations often bridge many fields of urban life. Thus, they have a far-reaching impact on people, and the associated needs, benefits, and risks have never been greater.



©Ev, Unsplash

In this context, citizen engagement helps to:

-  better **understand** and **address the needs** and concerns of citizens;
-  empower **multi-level governance** settings and **interactions** explaining what might happen, therefore increasing **transparency** in various decision-making processes;
-  include a **diversified group** of people through an accessible process which empowers those that are involved;
-  target specific **vulnerable citizen groups** that would not naturally participate in public hearings or town meetings;
-  engage people and strengthen **collaborative actions** and **bottom-up innovations**;
-  build **community trust** and consensus, create buy-in, reach a better **sense of community ownership** and therefore, strengthen the legitimacy of actions taken and increase long-term success;
-  improve cost and **resource efficiency** by providing broader expertise, increasing impact and by avoiding otherwise unforeseen problems in advance. In addition, citizens' perspectives as **non-experts** can help to (re)discover more sustainable and creative solutions that could work in a specific local context.



One example where citizen engagement makes a difference is the implementation of **climate change mitigation** and adaptation measures. When these are **solely adopted and supported by local authorities without being broadly supported by society, they will not gain the impact required to meet our global targets.**

Another example where citizen and stakeholder engagement are critical is in **Positive Energy Blocks and Districts (PEB/PED)**, where the social dimension is just as important as funding, technology, or resources. In the case of IRIS and +CityxChange – the two projects contributing to the first version of this booklet – this means local projects on the local energy transition and infrastructure linked with ambitions for urban regeneration, as well as **moving towards more energy-conscious behaviour.** Working in a setting of new and existing buildings over larger parts of neighbourhoods made it



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vitaly important to **build good connections** to citizens and stakeholders, to **include their ideas, concerns, and contributions**, and to make them **partners in the transition.** To improve energy consciousness, take measures to shift energy consumption to periods with surplus renewables or to increase the use of shared e-mobility instead of private cars; acting in partnership is required. This calls for extensive and innovative citizen engagement and co-creation methods, resulting in **citizens who understand, trust, use and feel ownership** of the integrated energy and mobility solutions offered in their district.



The Global Goals For Sustainable Development



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**WHAT'S IN IT
FOR CITIES?**

WHAT'S IN IT FOR CITIES?

To be successful in the long term, the portfolio of citizen engagement activities needs to be carefully aligned with the extent to which citizens are ready to participate in certain types of activities on the one hand and the city's resources and ambitions on the other.

Collaborative and participatory cultures are significant parameters that set the baseline in different city contexts. Besides, some cities may implement **concise and affordable individual tools**, while others have the capacity to develop, implement and **continually improve integrated approaches**.

Up to the present, in many smart and climate-neutral city project calls, citizen engagement has typically been included as an add-on, to be used as a measure to increase absorption of the technological solutions developed by experts in the projects. In the past years, this practice has started to change, with a more prominent integration of citizen engagement and urban governance in smart city calls. **In Horizon Europe, co-creation with citizens even lies at the core of the entire Framework Programme.**



Urban planning co-creation with citizens ©SCIS

“It is not enough to just reduce emissions; we want to make our cities irresistible while doing so. Build commitment and empowerment rather than fear and frustration.”

Annemie Wyckmans, NTNU,

project coordinator +CityxChange, +CityxChange, Re-Value and CraFT



Citizen engagement is ideally part of a more extensive **Quadruple (or, quintuple) Helix open innovation model**, meaning there

is intensive cooperation between stakeholders from research, industry, government, and society. In this manner, citizen engagement can deliver new forms of deliberation and operationalisation of the democratic process in the city, increasing local impact and building citizen trust. On the other hand, lack of citizen engagement may lead to a **lack of community support for public measures or suboptimal results.**



Leuven2030 co-creation ©Leuven2030 | leuven2030.be

What are cities able to achieve through citizen engagement?

Open platforms

Within the **Cities-4-People project**, the **City of Trikala** in Greece (81.000 inhabitants) used digital tools to identify solutions tackling mobility challenges, such as traffic congestion and unsatisfactory quality of public space and pedestrian infrastructure.

From the early stages of the project, the **Citizen Mobility Community** was created, engaging representatives from the citizen community and several associations, city authorities and services, and industry and entrepreneurs. Located in the central square of the city – a place of high visibility and usage – the **Citizen Mobility Lab** was hosted. At this location, brainstorming sessions, co-creation and idea sharing activities were organized. The project learned that identification and segmentation of the stakeholder groups needs to be **accurate to ensure inclusiveness**, relevance and suitable co-creation activities, while at the same time **flexibility is important**, as there may be overlaps between stakeholder groups. (For example: caregivers of disabled people face the challenges of both disabled and non-disabled people.)

The city's process involved several steps:

More details on the methodology and results can be found in [this article](#)⁵.



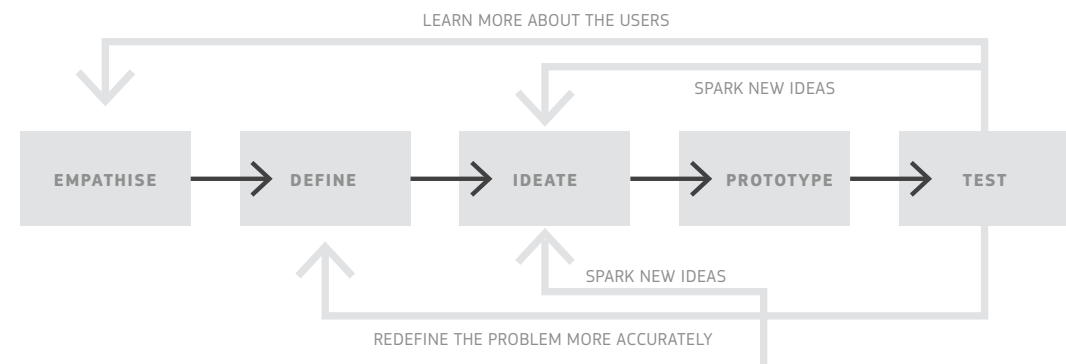
Identifying mobility challenges through semi- structured interviews with mobility stakeholders and an online survey targeting local citizens. The challenges were discussed with the Citizen Mobility Community, resulting in 11 co-created concepts.



Online **voting** on the list of concepts.



Shortlisting of 6 concepts, of which 3 would be prototyped.



Basic stages of co-creation in new service design
(adapted from: Interaction Design Foundation, 2019. Design Thinking,
www.interaction-design.org/literature/topics/design-thinking)

⁵ Margarita Angelidou et al., IOP Conf. Ser.: Earth Environ. Sci. 410 012059, 2020.
Co-creating sustainable urban planning and mobility interventions in the city of Trikala



Co-creation

As one of nine cities in the Re-Value partnership, the City of Ålesund in Norway (59.000 inhabitants) benefited from asking the local youth for ideas to develop its harbour area, so far dominated by concrete and constant stops by large cruise ships. By listening and taking immediate actions on citizen advice, the area is now becoming a temporary 'Cultural Harbour'.



Ålesund achieved this, in part, through a co-creative format known as Innovation Camps, in which local youth participate in daylong or multiday workshops targeting sustainable solutions to their problems. The format is perhaps better known from the world of entrepreneurship and is an intense workshop where, typically, students propose solutions after being given access to tools, information, and resources.

In the Re-Value partnership, Junior Achievement Europe has adapted the concept to address the need for climate neutrality in cities specifically.

Within six months of the first local camp, Ålesund drew inspiration from the winning youth proposal and created a temporary green hilltop, micro-houses, and a skating hall in its harbour area.

Innovation Camp Method

Innovation Camps, developed by JA Europe, are short, intensive problem-solving workshops that foster creativity, critical thinking, and teamwork, ending with a pitch competition.

- **Prepare:** Cities should set objectives and plan logistics.
- **Choose:** Choose relevant themes, focus on specific areas or sustainability topics
- **Mentor:** Municipal mentors guide students in developing and refining ideas.
- **Show:** Students present their solutions to peers, experts, and family, receiving feedback to support growth.
- **Act:** Local leaders take action and support co-creative change

Learn more at re-value-cities.eu/Innovationcamps



©Ålesund Kulturhavna, North by Northwest

Resource efficiency

Within the **IRIS project**, the primary objective of citizen engagement activities was to sufficiently **raise awareness and learning among key stakeholders** and within the participating Lighthouse and Follower cities by introducing pragmatic and effective co-creation mechanisms to critically assess proposed solutions in a timely manner.



Choices could be made on how best to deploy resources to have the **highest impact** within the participating smart cities and communities.

Through testing and piloting of materials with local stakeholders and hosting several awareness-raising sessions, the project identified where citizen engagement would be vital, relevant and have added value.

! After all, picking the right battle is extremely important.

The project developed a **template** in which cities described in detail their citizen engagement activities for each of the solutions to be deployed. This allowed citizen engagement activities to become more visible and fully integrated within broader deployment trajectories. In addition, a number of KPIs for citizen engagement were formulated and integrated into wider validation frameworks.

With this iterative **open innovation approach**, the engagement and influence of citizens in the project sought to be both **considerable and sustainable**, with measurable outcomes within the project lifecycle.

To learn about the conclusions from the IRIS efforts, learn more in [Chapter 7 of 'Inside Smart City Solutions from IRIS'](#)⁶



⁶ irissmartcities.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/20230522_IRISMagazine_double_pages_FINAL_WEB.pdf#page=43



Inclusiveness

The **City of Graz** wanted to take action in a district with challenging circumstances: a high proportion of migrants, various cultures and ethnicities, education levels and incomes below average. The strategy that was applied to **reach out to marginalized groups** such as migrants, elderly people, and children was to offer different formats of **Living Lab activities**: workshops, social safaris, online questionnaires, mental maps, etc.

Instead of waiting for people to show up, Lab organizers actively approached them on the street, literally bringing the Lab to the people. By repeatedly offering opportunities for stakeholders to participate and by actively approaching them, over a long period of time, they succeeded to also include marginalized groups in the process.

More examples from cities can be found in **deliverable D3.2** from the **+CityxChange project**⁷.

Legitimacy

The **city of Leuven** has a clear plan to become climate-neutral and is a part of the EU's Cities Mission. In 2013, 60 founding members, including residents, enterprises, knowledge institutions and (semi-) public authorities, jointly founded a city-wide non-profit organisation, which since 2016 is called **Leuven 2030**. Currently, the organisation has over 600 members. Thanks to its composition and the fact that everyone can become a member, the non-profit organisation represents all actors in the city, giving it the support and legitimacy needed for a transition with a broad societal impact.



©Flickr - Werfvergadering Leuven 2030 | leuven2030.be



⁷ cityxchange.eu/knowledge-base/delivery-of-the-citizen-participation-playbook



BEFORE GETTING STARTED

There is no single comprehensive approach to citizen engagement that works in every situation. However, there is material available that can inspire cities and be adapted to the local context.

Some important contextual parameters that need to be considered during different steps of the citizen engagement methodology, are provided in this chapter.



Roadshow en CitizenEmpowerment ©City-zen Roadshows



Collaborative city planning ©City-zen Roadshows

Purpose

The approach applied and actions taken will depend on what exactly a city wants to achieve through citizen engagement. Arnstein's ladder of participation provides insight into what levels of engagement exist.

Structuring of solutions and engagement activities

The IRIS project developed a Citizen Engagement Ladder model, which consists of four steps of increasing citizen engagement levels. Each solution implemented in the participating cities is categorised in one of the four steps, quickly providing an idea of the required citizen engagement activities for each solution. The main criteria for division in various categories are the so called 'touchpoints', which are the contact points between the user and the solution and which indicate the ability of citizens to influence the outcomes of the KPIs of the IRIS project through their own behaviour.

Chapter 5 of [IRIS Deliverable 1.6](#)⁸ provides detailed information on the IRIS Citizen Engagement Ladder.



⁸ irismartcities.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/d1.6_user_business_and_technical_requirements_of_transition_track_5_solutions.pdf

Budget

Budget availability will greatly impact the actions that can be taken within the city.

When citizen engagement forms part of a municipal investment and operation, rather than being treated as an add-on, in most cases room can be made within the existing municipal budgets dedicated to these operations.

Time

The time available from the initiation of the engagement activities until the moment of implementation of a certain measure or the moment of decision making is important, since many engagement trajectories consist of multiple steps (initiation, communication and invitations, workshops, etc.) and, as such, require some minimum amount of time for the maturation of the participatory effort.

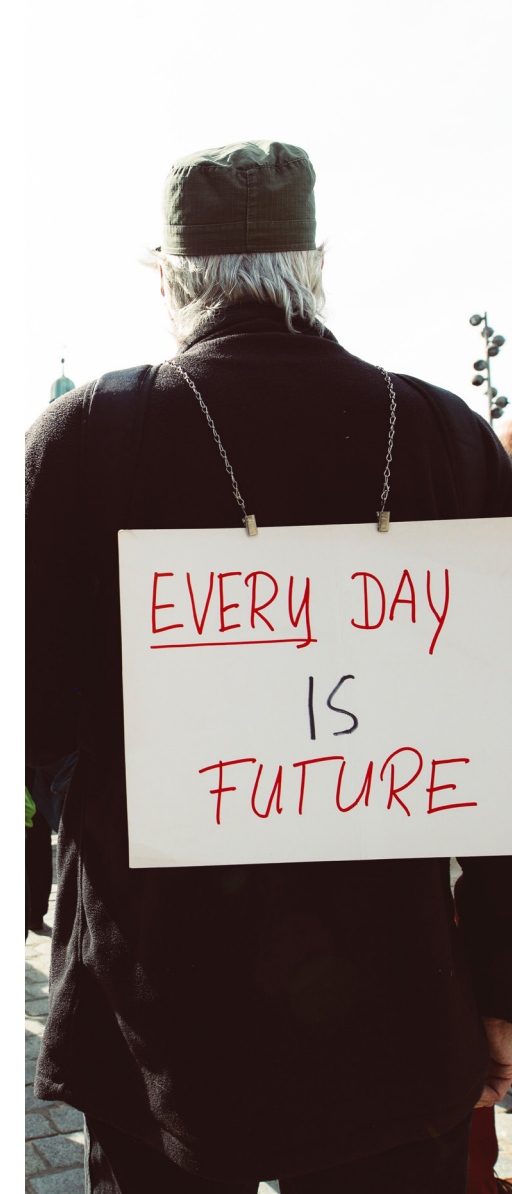
Also the available time and human resources within the city administration will influence the possibilities to **manage engagement activities**. It is better to focus on selected processes with **full commitment** than to half-heartedly focus on over-ambitious initiatives.

Stakeholder type

Ideally, a broad and unbiased selection of stakeholders should be included in citizen engagement activities — individuals, representative organisations, networks, research institutions, industry, and government — working collaboratively along a Quadruple Helix approach.

In addition, as citizens are at the core of the engagement activities, their characteristics will obviously influence the process in many ways. Cities need to look at **who should be engaged** and take into account **social status, age, gender roles, migration background, disability, wealth status, willingness to pay, interest to participate in innovation, personal living environment, impact by the interventions**, and many more.

These characteristics will impact communication, the speed of the process, the required actions, certain focuses to be placed, etc. However, it is important to take into account differences between people; this should not imply stereotypical identification of societal groups as if they are homogeneous. Taking into account **positionality** (the social and political context that creates someone's identity) is important, but it should be done based on **multiple characteristics**.





Creative approaches

I-Change

The I-CHANGE project has developed a game to highlight the power of collective action against climate change. The game Our Climate Story is a board game designed to engage citizens of all ages in tackling various hazards. It connects sustainable actions with everyday life, encouraging players to take both individual and collective action to reduce carbon emissions and enhance resilience. Players can craft a story tailored to any city or explore existing climate stories from Barcelona, Bologna, Jerusalem, Amsterdam, Genova, Ouagadougou, and Dublin.

Game available for download via citizens4climate.com/game.

NEURALPATH

The NEURALPATH project is testing the educational game 'Energize' in Dresden, Paris, Madrid, Istanbul, and Valencia. With the overall objective of achieving climate neutrality, players learn about energy consumption, efficiency, and sustainability, helping residents engage with positive and clean energy districts and co-design efficient, climate-friendly solutions. In the game, players can buy products, organise awareness activities, and interact with others to understand how individual habits impact a district's energy use.

More information on the NEURALPATH | neutralpath.eu.

Culture

Culture refers to the customs and beliefs, way of life and social organisation of a particular group of people. Cultures can be country, region, city or even district-specific.

They can also be mixed in areas where for example people originating from different countries or adhering to different religions live together. **As it is embedded in the way the community thinks, feels and operates in the broader sense, a culture's features and the extent to which different cultures are mixed will impact the approach to be taken.**

The characteristics of stakeholders and cultures can have a very subtle impact on a city's engagement process. The things to pay attention to are not always immediately visible and often **require a thorough understanding** of the person or culture in question. For example: cooking on real fire is important in certain cultures, therefore switching to electrical cooking and phasing out the use of natural gas might not be evident.



Dresden, Energize ©Three o'clock

Problem type and size

Problems could be simple or complex, well known or new, impact a limited number of people or have far-reaching consequences for a large community.

For example, think about the difference between engaging people in an exchange library at street level or rolling out a low-emission zone throughout an entire city. The knowledge required and resources, budget and effort to be dedicated will be completely different in both situations.



The **Cynefin framework** is one possible framework which can be used to better understand the problem at hand. Details can be found in this [Harvard Business Review](#)⁹ article, which uses the framework to help business leaders understand suitable responses for different problems in different contexts, and in this [RSA report](#)¹⁰, which incorporates the framework and provides a more extensive explanation on how systems thinking can be used as a basis to solve complex problems.

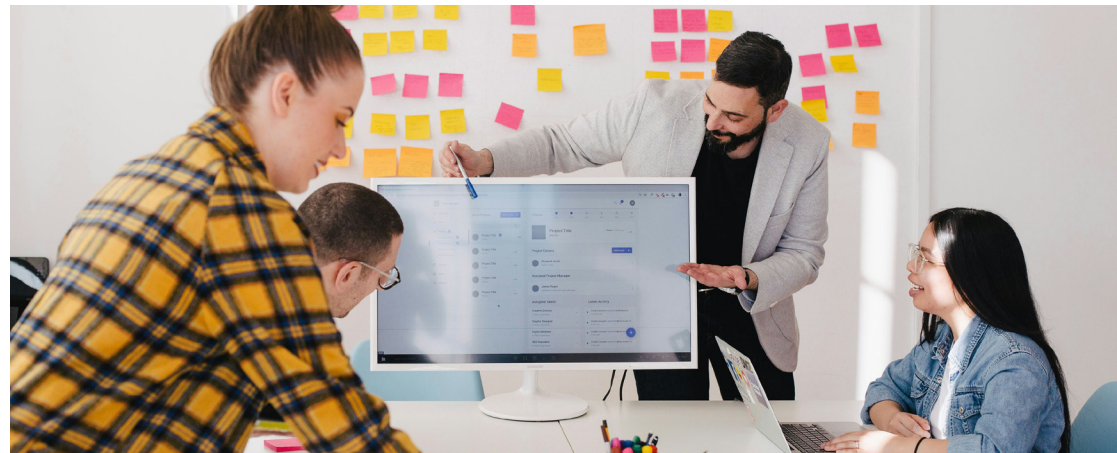
9 D.J. Snowden and M.E. Boone, A Leader's Framework for Decision Making. Harvard Business Review, November 2007.
10 R. Conway, J. Masters and J. Thorold, 2017. From Design Thinking to Systems Change, How to invest in innovation for social impact.



Offline versus online & the importance of place

While online activities and tools could be very useful (can be organised quickly, high degree of responsiveness, broad reach, etc.), the importance of offline and face-to-face engaging actions should not be underestimated. They remain important to establish personal connections between people. The widespread use of online platforms needs to be complemented by more small scale, neighbourhood level face-to-face meetings. Besides, even today not everyone is active online.

When working offline, proximity is an important factor to consider: bringing the activity to an environment familiar to the citizens a city wants to engage with often results in **higher attendance rates** and **increased inclusiveness** than when citizens are invited to come to a more distant place. A **well-chosen and pleasant setting** for live meetings also helps participants to detach from their traditional roles and professional backgrounds, and open up to genuine **co-creation and creativity**.



©Jason Goodman, Unsplash

Phase of the decision process

Whether a city starts its engagement activities at the very beginning of its solution development when all options are still open or only when some or even most of the decisions have already been taken will of course influence the potential impact stakeholders could still have and the type of activities the city will organize. Ideally, **citizen engagement is initiated even before the start of any other activity**. This allows citizens to be involved in the problem definition and even the governance of the engagement activities themselves.



Also the **governance structure** plays an important role. For example, citizen participation in a funded project can demand different formalities and processes than citizen participation as an integral parts of a municipal planning. More insights on this topic can be found in **this paper on prevailing approaches and practices of citizen participation in smart city projects**¹¹ which uses the +CityxChange project in Trondheim (Norway) as an example.

Experience

The city's previous experience with citizen engagement and the relevant knowledge it has within the organisation, could simplify the overall process and speed up the initiation. If a city does not have sufficient in-house knowledge or experience, it is highly recommended to call on **external expertise**.

Also, citizens' experience with engagement processes – which could be positive, negative or everything in between – needs to be considered, as it will influence their initial **level of trust and openness** towards any activities.



©Jakub Zerdzicki, Unsplash



Start with citizen engagement for better project results.



Reach out for external expertise if there is not sufficient in-house knowledge.



Remember that positive experience influences level of trust towards city activities.



¹¹ Gohari et al., 2020. Prevailing Approaches and Practices of Citizen Participation in Smart City Projects: Lessons from Trondheim, Norway



CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT IN ACTION

Understanding the full context

In complex urban or community environments, there is no simple straightforward relationship between problem and (solid) solution. Neglecting certain parameters can result in undesired side effects or failure. One should look beyond the obvious and ask the right questions. What is the problem? Who is affected by this problem? Which links can be identified between the problem and other contextual parameters? Asking the right questions at the right moment can reveal critical gaps in the required knowledge and make information visible before one is faced with a **fait accompli**.

When we speak of digital transformation, both at the level of policy and research, we tend to adopt a rather narrow concept of technology-as-infrastructure. However, such a narrow focus on infrastructure does not help us comprehend the far-reaching cultural, economic, and social implications of these infrastructural developments. **A systems approach that enables understanding of the full context is necessary.**

Throughout the entire citizen engagement process, it is therefore important to be aware as much as possible of the full context. As a starting point, a city can take into account the different parameters that have been discussed before. Subtleties need to be considered carefully.

The **complexity of large smart city projects** means the cities, experts and projects in the smart city community have developed a breadth of guidance on how to work at the systems level, which is needed before properly addressing the individual challenges.

The **Scalable Cities** group has published '[Systemic Changes in Governance: Equipping local governments for realising climate-neutral and smart cities](#)'¹² highlighting the needed systems thinking for achieving climate-neutral cities. The booklet combines the experiences of the many Smart City Lighthouse projects and highlights key lessons on what governance changes were needed to deliver the transformative action, including to better cooperate with citizens.

One of these Lighthouse projects, **+CityxChange**, also developed a specific process called **Bold City Vision (Deliverable D3.1)**¹³ to help cities define their ambitious vision and goals, break them down into actionable steps, and implement them in cooperation with local and international stakeholders.



¹² smart-cities-marketplace.ec.europa.eu/insights/publications/systemic-changes-governance-equipping-local-governments-realising-climate
¹³ cityxchange.eu/knowledge-base/framework-for-bold-city-vision-guidelines-and-incentive-schemes



Purpose setting

A goal-oriented approach will help to shape the spending of public and other resources in the best possible manner towards the city's ambitious targets.

Clearly define the goal at the start of the process. On the one hand, think about which problems need to be solved. To do so, consult a broad public early on to identify the real problems and challenges the city would like to tackle. This is called front-loading.

Don't start from a specific solution because you will risk the problem it addresses, after all, is not so relevant.

On the other hand, make sure the purpose of the city's engagement activities is clear. How will citizen participation affect the outcomes of the participatory process? How will the local council incorporate their citizens' voices into the final project? This kind of expectation management will avoid misalignment and disappointment throughout the process.



Capacity building

Once the problem to be solved and the purpose of the city's citizen engagement activities are clear, identify which people and knowledge are needed. Some of this knowledge might be readily available within the city organisation, some might require calling for external expertise.

Examples include, but are not limited to:

- **Professionals** in communication, built heritage, education, health, crime, design thinking, transition management, etc.
- **Technical experts** in energy, waste, construction, water, etc.
- **Interest groups** and **associations** of residents, businesses, volunteers, etc.

To strengthen their own organisation and staff, cities can look for inspiration from other cities, for example, on how their procedures, structures, routines and regulations might be useful for local implementation. However, rather than directly copying approaches or solutions, it is important to identify and translate the intentions, drivers, ecosystems and other resources behind the approach, to the local context.

By collaborating with a wide range of actors, cities can devise blended skill sets and clusters of competencies to properly assess, scope and tackle more complex and chaotic problems. At the same time, **informing and training citizens and building their capacity will result in more understanding and interest in the field where the participation is taking place.**



Capacity building with citizens

Building capacity is essential to prepare citizens for an active role in co-creation processes, and several approaches can be employed:

- Providing training sessions led by municipal staff or external experts before the co-creation process begins is the most traditional method and is used in the majority of projects.
- Partnering with existing citizen-led initiatives ensures that knowledge remains within the community and can be applied across topics, as described in a report from UrbanCommunity.
- As described on [page 19](#) of this booklet, gamification can help make sense of and connect complex streams of urban development for non-experts.

Establishing community groups to provide feedback on multiple interventions can build lasting capacity and benefit projects over time. An example is the **Community Action Groups from Clever Cities**¹.



¹ clevercities.eu/fileadmin/user_upload/Resources/D1.1_Theme_6_Running_CALs_in_16_steps_FPM_12.2018.pdf



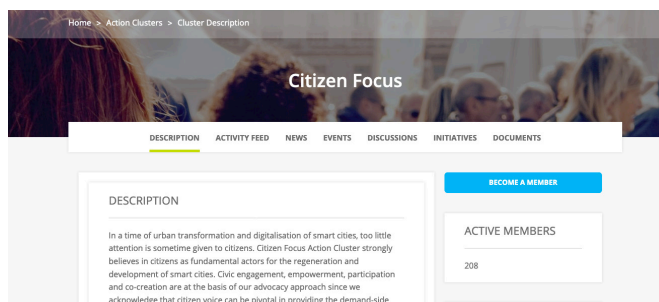
Including diverse stakeholder groups

Different target groups require different approaches. To achieve a certain effect, it is important to know how (not) to communicate with each of them. Stakeholder segmentation helps to define groups of people, allowing the city to tailor actions based on their characteristics. When trying to engage with people, identify with their point of view: **“What’s in it for them?”**

“Ensuring internal knowledge sharing and learning on citizen engagement across the city silos, and building internal capacity of city administration staff, will avoid one-time, “token” activities on citizen engagement.”

Maria Sangiuliano,

Chair of the former Smart Cities Marketplace Action Cluster on Citizen Focus



The S3C Toolbox¹ provides several useful guidelines, tools and a step-by-step approach on segmentation:

- Using segmentation to better target user groups
- Learning about target groups
- User group segmentation tool



Example from Leuven

People in different stages of their life, require a different approach.

Leuven2030 is the not-for-profit organisation coordinating the activities related to the city’s climate action plan. One of the measures Leuven2030 planned was to initiate and support the renovation of private residential buildings. The local administration targeted a neighbourhood that looked homogeneous with regard to the building typology and went on site with a team to inform and guide the process. However, on site it turned out to be all but a homogeneous setting. The mix of occupants was diverse with some people who bought their house recently and focused on saving, while elderly residents were not eager to invest, and only a few other people who were actually open to the initiative. Moreover, a lot of building owners had already invested in varying energy efficiency measures.



¹ The S3C project learned from experiences of other projects and developed a set of tools and guidelines focusing on engagement in smart grid projects. Those tools and guidelines have been tested and validated in demonstration projects and were then made available in a finalised toolkit. smartgrid-engagement-toolkit.eu/fileadmin/s3c/toolkit/user/guidelines/GUIDELINE_LEARNING_ABOUT_TARGET_GROUPS.pdf



Engagement activities, tools and infrastructure

During the phases of purpose setting and capacity building with citizens, the first engagement activities have already taken place. Once the problem definition and its context are clear, the stakeholders are identified, and the required capacity is in place, the next phase can start. A wealth of engagement activities exists. The chapter on **“Tools”** on [page 39](#) includes references to some useful materials where a city can find inspiration and learn about their applicability.



An important contributing factor in setting up engagement activities may be **Design Thinking**, which is useful for creating user-centred new products and services.

Students from HKU University of the Arts in Utrecht applied Design Thinking to involve Utrecht’s residents in the design of smart streetlights for their neighbourhood. More information from the **pamphlet developed by the students**¹.

Chapter 6 from the **IRIS Deliverable 1.6**² provides further insights on the Design Thinking approach.

Besides, citizen engagement often benefits from the availability of infrastructure such as **living labs, an innovation centre or a central landmark building** as a meeting place. **Cities have testified that such infrastructure plays a key role in sustaining citizen engagement.**

¹ irissmartcities.eu/system/files/private/irissmartcities/booklet_v4_-_english_-_with_logos.pdf

² irissmartcities.eu/system/files/private/irissmartcities/d1.6_user_business_and_technical_requirements_of_transition_track_5_solutions_v1.2.pdf



Co-creation © Cities-4-People Consortium, 2020

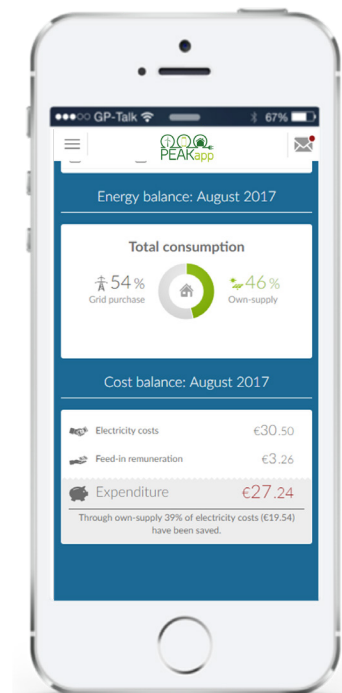


Co-creation © Cities-4-People Consortium, 2020

Open Data

Open Data policies can be applied in various forms and have many benefits:

- **Sharing data within the city organisation** and assembling it in a single platform or federated systems will **increase the insights** that can be extracted and **enable reuse**;
- **Open data and open standards** make it easier for a city to **access its own data** and **coordinate** with vendors and local stakeholders;
- **Data availability** for citizens will **increase their knowledge, awareness and readiness to participate and be engaged in an informed way**; and it can help to integrate citizens and stakeholders more directly into solutions through open innovation, hackathons, citizen science, etc.;
- **Disseminating data** in general will build trust and credibility.



PEAKapp | peakapp.eu
An ICT-ecosystem for energy savings through Behavioural Change, Flexible Tariffs and Fun.

Some interesting examples include:

- The [Open Data BCN platform](#)¹ from Barcelona (Spain) contains more than 500 datasets and also includes a specific 'Citizen Space' for citizens to ask questions, report incidents and write comments.
- The city of Dormagen (Germany) has for years hosted
- a [platform where citizens can report issues](#)² related to public infrastructure with more than 1.500 reports.
- The City of Brno (Czech Republic) hosts 157 datasets on [data.Brno](#)³ and combines this with a yearly participatory budget—with citizens voting for actions—of around 1.4 million per year.
- The City of Espoo (Finland) hosts [Espoo Climate Watch](#)⁴, which compiles the city's climate actions, monitors their progress, and evaluates their impact.
- [EU-Citizen.Science](#)⁵ provides knowledge, tools, training and resources for citizen science.

1 opendata-ajuntament.barcelona.cat/en
2 maengelmelder.dormagen.de/#pageid%253D1=undefined
3 datahub.brno.cz
4 ilmastovahti.espoo.fi/en
5 EU-Citizen.Science



Monitoring and evaluation

Monitoring of citizen engagement activities can be realized through a wide variety of KPIs, ranging from the **number of people** that attended a session, over a **quantification of the extent** to which the activities impacted certain aspects of people’s lives, to a **qualitative appreciation**.

Monitoring and evaluation helps to:

- **showing the project progress** and its social and societal impact;
- **add feedback** from and to citizens;
- **prevent tokenist conceptions** of citizen engagement and reductionist “box ticking exercises”.



The **Cities4People project** co-created a Core-Outcome-Set of indicators together with citizens. A minimum set of outcomes that need to be achieved is defined along with the citizens: **they define the measures to evaluate the success of the interventions**. After the pilot phase, data is collected through **questionnaires and online voting** in multiple rounds (using the Delphi Method). Finally, the citizens evaluate the outcome of the interventions, comparing it to the outcome categories they had set at the beginning in the Core-Outcome-Set. This way, they participate through the entire process until they also co-evaluate the impact of the interventions.

Some recommendations can be given to improve the outcome of this step:

- **add qualitative analysis** to truly understand the impact and usefulness of engagement activities;
- **make sure different member groups of society are represented to avoid biased evaluation**;
- **share open data**, which allows others to validate results and impacts, and which helps to derive more general recommendations spanning multiple projects;
- **align indicators across projects or cities to allow for benchmarking**;
- **establish the monitoring indicators at the start of the engagement process**.



©Edvin Johansson, Unsplash



CitizenLab | [Measuring Impact in Civic Tech](https://citizenlab.co/ebooks-en/measuring-impact-in-civic-tech)
citizenlab.co/ebooks-en/measuring-impact-in-civic-tech



World Bank Group | [Evaluating Digital Citizen Engagement: A practical guide](https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/ac311ad6-e260-50fc-a2a4-a9e71925d835/content)
openknowledge.worldbank.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/ac311ad6-e260-50fc-a2a4-a9e71925d835/content



Monitoring of KPIs can be realized in many different ways



Let citizens define the success measures



Co-evaluate the impact of the interventions with the citizens

Privacy

Credible privacy protections are a key acceptance factor for many ICT-mediated engagement activities. Engagement with citizens and other players can ensure this is done correctly and well, concerns are taken aboard, and experiences can be reused across organisations. This section only provides an overview of some important aspects. Detailed technical and legal guidance is strongly suggested.

The European General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) is very thorough on privacy. GDPR compliance is **mandated by law** and should be ensured together with city Data Protection Officers and solution providers.

! Data sharing of privacy-related data between organisations needs to be well understood and limited in line with GDPR.

Data minimisation principles likewise should apply. Whenever possible, **little or anonymized data should be collected**. Data aggregation and anonymization should be applied as much as possible. There is also a need for **data sharing agreements**. Ideally, these can be made public to be as **transparent** as possible.

Data Privacy Impact Assessments (DPIA) should be part of municipal workflows and should ensure that personal data use is understood and protected. Apart from surveys and workshops, automated data collection, etc., a valuable way to engage with citizens and collect data can be **voluntary data provision** (for example citizen science, contributions to participation platforms, contribution to global open sources, etc.).

When working with **Citizen Participation Platforms**, these need to be set up in a privacy aware mode, **in line with GDPR/DPIAs** and with relevant technical expertise. The development principle of Privacy-by-design ensures privacy is considered early in activities; the focus should be on value for city and citizens, and the avoidance of broad surveillance.







The AI Factor

Artificial Intelligence in European smart cities pre-dates the intense attention following the wide-spread use of AI chats and other popularised usage in recent years.

On citizen engagement specifically, AI will also affect efforts more and more and needs to be looked at when considering privacy.

Elements of attention include:

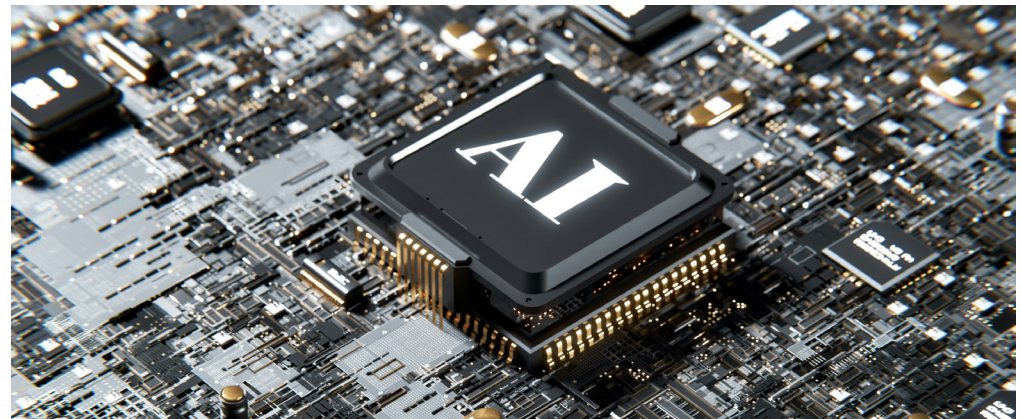
-  personal recognition and tracking;
-  media analytics and social semantics;
-  social nudging.

 Furthermore, the **threat of biased or discriminatory use of AI or automated decision making needs to be taken seriously.**

Several cities have deployed AI in connection with chatbots or to strengthen databases also used by the public, and AI supporting many more steps of the citizen engagement journey is logical, but caution is warranted to retain trust.

Some cities have begun venturing into the use of AI for more sophisticated purposes, while ensuring privacy and personal data protection. AI can be an important support tool for building more participative communities.

- In Aarhus (Denmark), as part of the [UrbanTestbeds.JR project](#)¹ local children had a chance to communicate directly with the local climate action plan, utilizing AI support. In general, the use of AI for storytelling is one tested in the project, with a potential to be used by other local entities.
- In the [DigiCityClimate project](#)², the city of Stockholm (Sweden) is creating an AI-driven energy advisor to support citizens in taking climate action, most especially through smart energy investments. The AI supports the collection of local data and communication with citizens.



©Igor Omilae, Unsplash

¹ interreg-baltic.eu/project-pilots/ai-chat-with-local-climate-plan
² kth.se/profile/annehak/page/digicityclimate-project





GENERAL LESSONS LEARNED

Knowledge and capacity building

All too often a lack of capacity leads to a very limited implementation of citizen engagement activities or even none at all.

Sufficient resources need to be made available within the city administration, and the knowledge gap must be overcome by sharing and building on the wealth of materials, experiences, and expertise that is available.

Cities can learn from each other and build capacity within their own organisation. Experts can and should be included whenever needed.



©Rawpixel, Unsplash

Collaboration versus Communication

It is always important to distinguish between Communication and Co-Creation activities. **Although there is a tendency to push for co-creation for every aspect of citizen engagement, this is not always the best strategy.** Co-creation with citizens on subjects or measures where there is little room for contribution or where there is no future interaction between the citizen and the service can be even counterproductive. In such scenarios, communication can or may suffice. Making co-creation a prerequisite can be a risky approach.

It is also helpful to **distinguish between identity and role based stakeholderism.** Only adopting identity-based stakeholderism has often led to box-ticking and compliance. It is better to **create interfaces between different actors** that can highlight differences in agency and how this is manifested. This means acknowledging a shift from identity-based stakeholders to **role-based understanding of stakes.** Applied **game design and scenario-based reasoning** have much to offer here in allowing people to explore **multiple perspectives.** This is often best achieved within **open innovation environments** focusing on **mutual learning.**



Learn from others and share your knowledge and expertise



Before deciding for co-creation check if it is the best strategy



Let citizens explore different perspectives

Collaborative governance



Collaborative governance helps to integrate the different aspects of a complex endeavour like citizen engagement. **Each city will develop its own way of describing the processes, goals and parameters of its project.**

The following elements should be considered:



principles to stick to;



alignment with and integration into strategic planning processes;



frameworks to build the project around;



building legitimacy;



guiding processes that will steer daily activities;

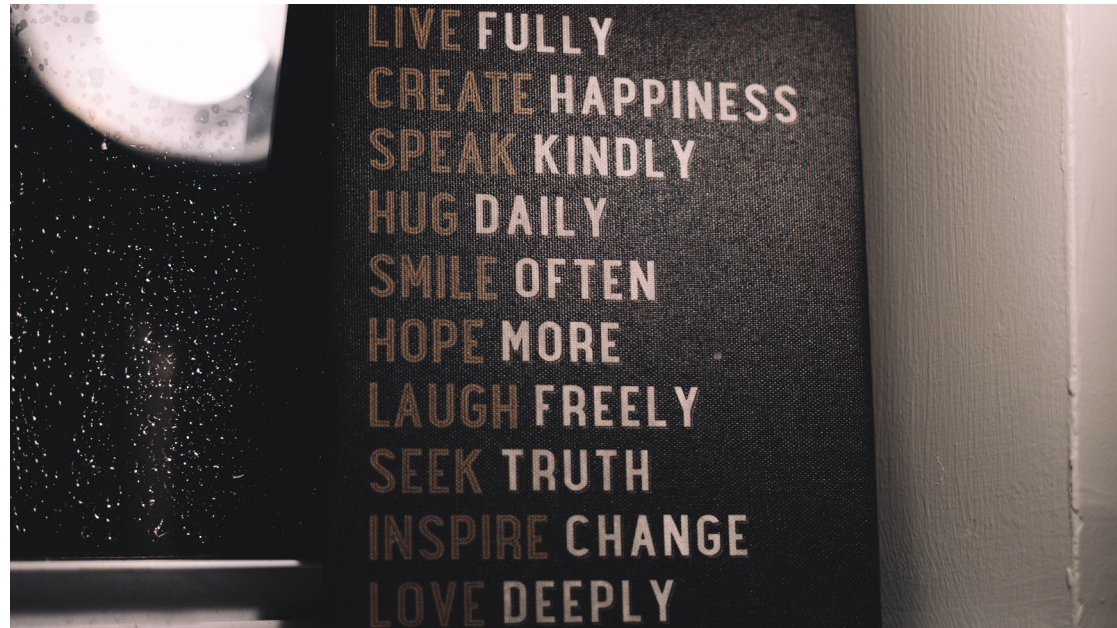


local context and its impact on the process.

Budget availability

Budget availability has a major impact on the actions that can possibly be taken within the city.

When citizen engagement forms part of a municipal investment and operation, rather than being treated as an add-on, in most cases **room can be made within the existing municipal budgets dedicated to these operations.**



©Ty Williams, Unsplash

From buzzword to reality

Needed reality, not new buzzword//From buzzword to reality

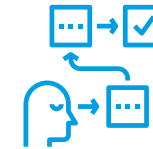
Work undertaken in the EU’s Horizon 2020 framework has played a large role in transforming citizen engagement (and co-creation) from a buzzword to a well-established need in cities all over Europe.

! In the future of climate-neutral and smart cities in Europe, it’s clear that **citizen engagement from inception to the final evaluation is absolutely key**. The question is now focused on how cities and project owners can best deliver this as an important part of combatting climate change **locally and globally**.

The time has come where cities and all stakeholders shift from a mere endorsement of the principles and values of citizen engagement to actual commitment and concrete implementation. Learning from undertakings within H2020 Lighthouse projects and newer projects funded by Horizon Europe with the clear mandate to deliver the co-creation paths needed, provide a path for comprehensive and sound citizen engagement plans embedded in each city’s Smart City Strategy to overcome an add-on or box ticking approach to citizen engagement.



Monitoring and evaluating the implementation of plans and all citizen engagement initiatives and communicating about invested resources, results and the added value, could help to this respect. Overall, such an approach would make it possible for city administrators to become accountable on citizen engagement.



©Markus Spiske, Unsplash

Timely engaging and frontloading

It is wise to introduce co-creation activities as early as possible in the innovation process or if not possible, remember to assess the level of impact the city can achieve against the stage in the innovation trajectory.

In this way, the city can ensure the use of the methods most appropriate to the stage of innovation development.



©Thought Catalog, Unsplash

Trust

Cities may seek to work with **ambassadors and translators from local neighbourhoods** as they can have a huge influence on the success or otherwise of the city's engagement approaches.



©Adi Droid, Unsplash

A shift in paradigm from pull to visit



In too many citizen engagement activities, a dominant form is to invite citizens to a central venue to listen, engage, co-create, discuss, etc. In many neighbourhoods the turn-up for this kind of activity is too limited in numbers, cultural diversity and opinion diversity.

We therefore strongly recommend a shift in effort for citizen engagement: to visit the citizens instead of always asking the citizens to come to 'us' at a central venue. In other words, we should **change how we meet with citizens: try to get into their 'comfort zones' instead of inviting them to our 'comfort zone'**. This 'comfort zone' can be different from person to person and should be tailored. Especially in neighbourhoods with a lower socioeconomic status the 'central meeting approach' will most probably fail, as could be testified in the IRIS project from the Utrecht demo area case, where **visiting citizens in their own dwelling proved much more effective**.



Starting with what is available

When starting off citizen engagement activities, cities should not forget to **map existing citizen engagement success** and **mobilize existing active players** (considering the Quadruple Helix).





TOOLS

Catalog of Tools for Citizen Engagement and Participation

The +CityxChange H2020 Lighthouse project has created options for Participatory Platforms with seven online tools. The description of each of these tools includes a list of recommended software applications distilled from the analysis of more than 35 applications. The identified tools are listed below and can be found in **section 5.1** of [+CityxChange Deliverable 3.2](#)¹.



- » Collaborative Text
- » Online Debate
- » Online Mapping
- » Online Voting
- » Accountability
- » Online Proposals
- » Participatory Budgeting

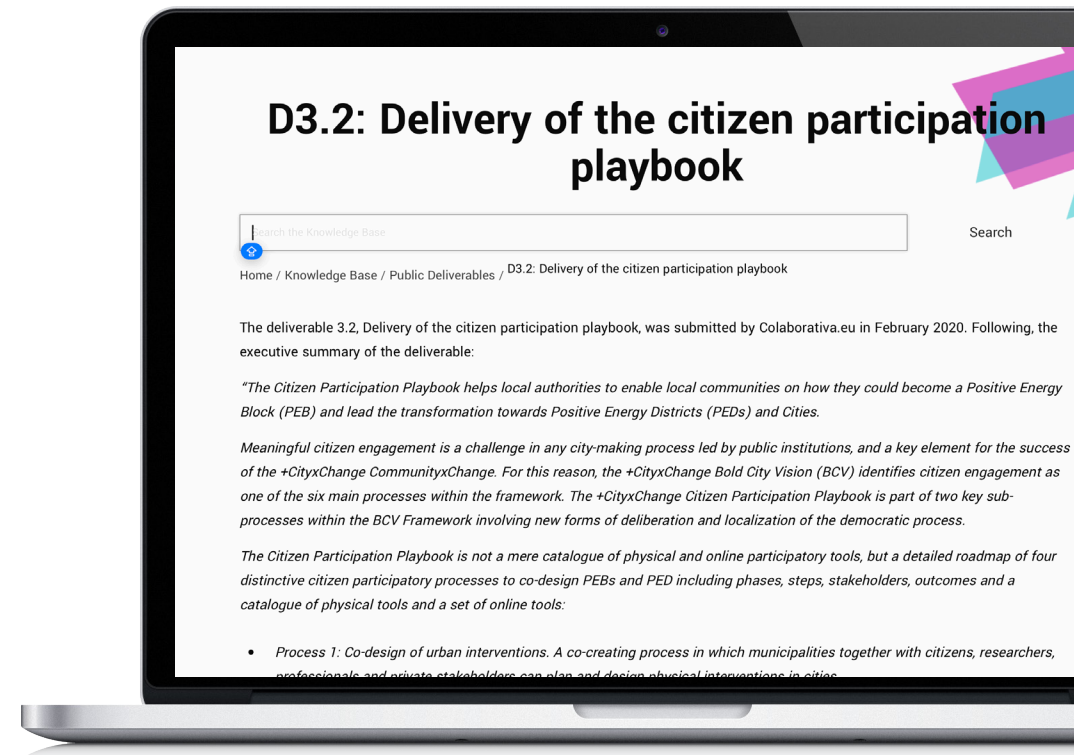
In addition, it provides a Catalog of Physical Tools with implementation guidelines and references to practical examples for:

- » Narrative tools
- » Co-design workshops
- » Focus working groups
- » Public Engagement Events
- » Go and find citizens
- » Mapping sessions
- » Gamification

Details in **section 4.6** of [Deliverable D3.2](#)².

¹ cityxchange.eu/knowledge-base/delivery-of-the-citizen-participation-playbook

² cityxchange.eu/knowledge-base/delivery-of-the-citizen-participation-playbook



The Power of Many - How city officials can use co-creation for Just and Sustainable Cities

As described in the introduction to this booklet Citizen engagement often, but not always, should begin with co-creation and/or shared settings of goals. In a new “book” from the Fair Local Green Deals project, local leaders can find step-by-step approaches to co-creation.

The resource provides hands-on guidance, practical examples and reflections for city officials to co-create with citizens and make sure citizen engagement goes beyond informing but is a part of meaningful co-participation and co-initiation process. It especially covers:

Co-participation

Broadly defined goals allow various actors to propose, test, and implement solutions, with the city providing a supportive framework.

Co-initiation

Citizens identify a problem, propose solutions, and receive city resources and support to implement their ideas.



Source: sustainablejustcities.eu/resources/the-power-of-many



The S3C Toolkit

The S3C toolkit is developed for anyone who is involved in the development of smart grid projects, products or services in which engagement of users plays an important role. It provides approximately fifty guidelines and tools with actionable information and advice that can support a city in the planning and implementation of its smart grid project, based on extensive field research.

The information in this toolkit website is organized via three gateways which – depending on your knowledge needs and personal interests – can be used to navigate through the contents:

Learning

To get acquainted with the S3C approach and its research findings. One can compile his own personal information booklet by selecting preferred topics and cases.

Developing

Intended for professionals who are involved in the design or implementation of an actual smart grid project or working on concepts and ideas for smart grid products and services. Here anyone can browse through all guidelines and tools by phases in the project cycle.

Exploring

Aimed at anyone who is generally interested in the field of smart grids, and wants to learn more about customer involvement. Organized around five key topics regarding user engagement, this gateway contains all guidelines and tools on how to commit users in smart grid projects.



Source: smartgrid-engagement-toolkit.eu/home

Cities-4-People tools and resources for replication and co-creation

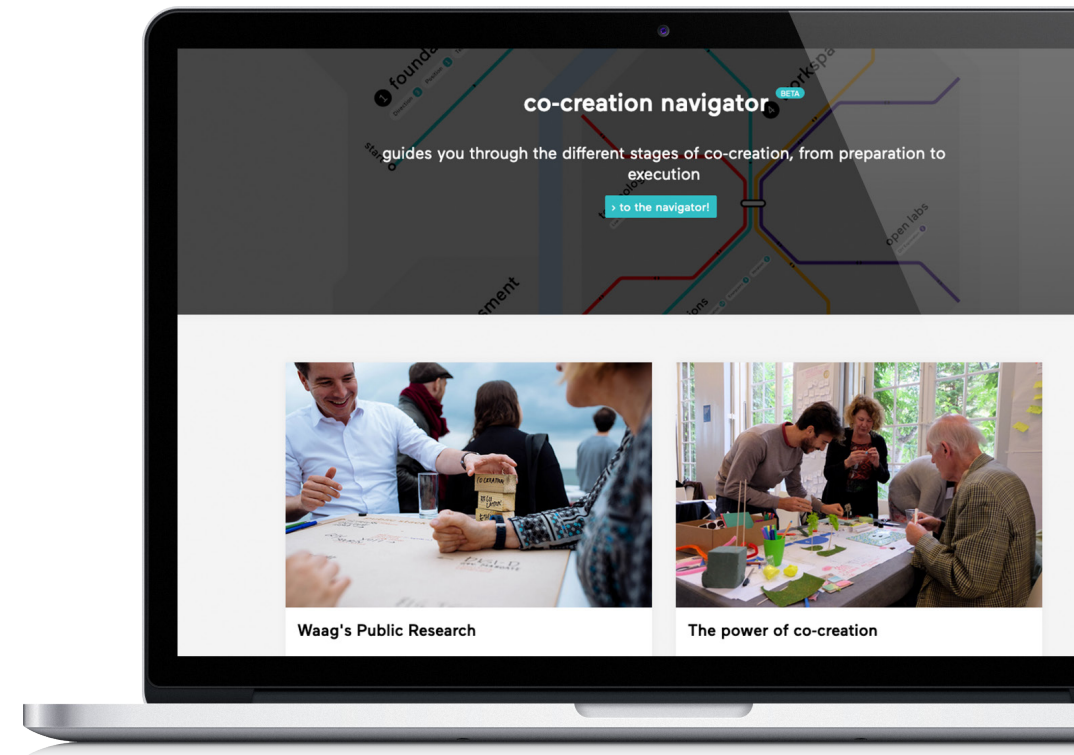
The Cities-4-People (C4P) project focused on sustainable and people-oriented transport solutions to address the many challenges linked to mobility and faced by urban and peri-urban areas.

The project's pilot areas were key for testing and evaluating the proposed solutions. Starting from concrete cases, C4P develops evidence-based guidelines, summarised in a Deployment Toolkit & Replication Guide, aiming to enhance the innovation capacity and sustainability of urban mobility systems.

The project provided a [repository of tools and resources](#)¹ that can be used to start co-creatively tackling challenges in your own neighbourhood:

- Communication and Voting Tools;
- Resources for 'People-Oriented Transport and Mobility';
- Educational and Inspirational Materials;
- Guides and Best Practices.

The project will deliver a [Citizen Mobility Kit](#)², including all tools and methods used by the different pilot cities, together with the specific experiences in each city. As part of the Citizen Mobility Kit, a [co-creation navigator](#)³ has been developed, providing detailed instructions on tools that can be used while co-creating.



¹ cities4people.eu/resources/tools-and-resources-for-replication
² cmk.cities4people.eu
³ ccn.waag.org



GLOSSARY

This glossary provides a common understanding of the terminology used in this Solution Booklet.

Also within a city's own engagement process or during collaborating with other cities, it can be helpful to identify a common framework of understanding, as it will facilitate effective communication between the different stakeholder groups and help to collect and provide knowledge in a structured way.

CITIZENS

» The broader stakeholder group of people that live, work, visit or move through the city.

CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT

» The involvement of citizens in the city's decision making processes, with the objective to better address the needs of the citizens and build public support.

CO-CREATION

» The process when all relevant stakeholders in the city are involved in the planning of a service or solution, for example when civil society initiates the construction of a digital platform, participates in budget prioritising, or contributes in a city council discussing its maintenance and design. (Source: +CityxChange, D3.2)

CO-DESIGN

» Happens during the definition of the problem and the development of actions to be performed in which both citizens, specialized experts and civil servants work together. (Source: +CityxChange, D3.2)

FRONT LOADING

» Starting with community engagement before the actual work starts. This should be done even before the project goals are developed. Helps to build trust and eases the overall process. (Source: +CityxChange)

DECISION (MAKING) PROCESS

» The process of evaluating different options and making choices to retain and implement some of them.

POSITIONALITY

» The social and political context creating someone's identity in terms of race, class, gender, sexuality, and ability status. It also describes the way someone's identity influences, and potentially biases, his or her understanding of and outlook on the world.¹

SOLUTION

» Solutions are measures a city implements to achieve a certain objective. The roll-out of E-buses for example could be a solution to decrease carbon emissions.

QUADRUPLE HELIX APPROACH

» The intensive cooperation between stakeholders from research, industry, government, and society. When environmental considerations are added as a key element, the model evolves into a Quintuple Helix.



USEFUL DOCUMENTS

USEFUL DOCUMENTS

The original version of this booklet (2020) had the following key source material:

- » Deliverables and output from **+CityxChange**¹
- » Deliverables and output from the **IRIS project**²
- » Various activities from the former **Citizen Focus Action Cluster** and **Citizen City Initiative** of the **Smart Cities Marketplace**³

Other key resources

- » **Systemic Changes in Governance: Equipping local governments for realising climate-neutral and smart cities (Scalable Cities)**⁴
- » **Green Cities Wiki (Smart Cities Marketplace, based on the Smart Cities Guidance Package)**⁵
- » **How to consult with your community (Locality)**⁶
- » **DIY Manual on Engaging Stakeholders and Citizens in Climate Adaptation: Tools, Good Practices and Experiences (Climate-Adapt)**⁷
- » **Up and down the scaffold of smart citizen participation (Paolo Cardullo and Rob Kitchin)**⁸

¹ cityxchange.eu

² cordis.europa.eu/project/id/774199

³ smart-cities-marketplace.ec.europa.eu

⁴ smart-cities-marketplace.ec.europa.eu/insights/publications/systemic-changes-governance-equipping-local-governments-realising-climate

⁵ smart-cities-marketplace.ec.europa.eu/insights/green-cities-wiki

⁶ neighbourhoodplanning.org/toolkits-and-guidance/engaging-with-your-community-in-a-meaningful-way/

⁷ climate-adapt.eea.europa.eu/en/mission/solutions/citizen-engagement-manual

⁸ researchgate.net/publication/317281793_Being_a_'citizen'_in_the_smart_city_Up_and_down_the_scaffold_of_smart_citizen_participation

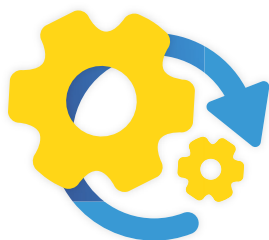


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Smart Cities Marketplace

The Smart Cities Marketplace is a major market-changing initiative supported by the European Commission bringing together cities, industries, SMEs, investors, researchers and other smart city actors.

The Marketplace offers insight into European smart city good practice, allowing you to explore which approach might fit your smart city project.



Matchmaking

The Smart Cities Marketplace offers services and events for both cities and investors on creating and finding bankable smart city proposals by using our Investor Network and publishing calls for projects.

[Investor network](#)

[Call for Applications – Matchmaking Services](#)

[Project finance masterclass](#)



Focus and Discussion groups

Focus groups are collaborations actively working on a commonly identified challenge related to the transition to smart cities.

Discussion groups are fora where the participants can exchange experiences, co-operate, support, and discuss a specific theme.

[Focus and Discussion groups](#)

[Community](#)



Scalable Cities

A city-led initiative providing large-scale, long-term support for the cities and projects involved in the Horizon 2020 Smart Cities and Communities project.

[Scalable Cities](#)

CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT SOLUTION BOOKLET

Smart Cities Marketplace 2025

The Smart Cities Marketplace is managed by the European Commission Directorate-General for Energy

