

This work has been developed in the framework of the JUSTNature project. This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under Grant Agreement No. 101003757 <https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/101003757>

<https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/101003757>

Authors: Elizaveta Fakirova, Beatriz Kauark-Fontes, and Eleanor Chapman (Technical University of Munich)

Scientific Coordination: Jessica Balest, Sonia Gantioler (Eurac Research)

Review: Alice Reil, Linda Schrapp (City of Munich), Federico Michael Fleischmann (City of Bolzano), Nele Janssen, Elena Carafello (City of Leuven), Petroula Sofia Anastasiadou (Kydon, Chania), Ruth Lochmann (City of Merano), and Theodoros Glytsos (Technical University of Crete).

Graphic design: Original layout: Amy Segata (Eurac Research).

Layout adaptation: Sze Wai Chan and Beatriz Kauark-Fontes (Technical University of Munich).

Figure design: Sze Wai Chan and Natalie Koch (Technical University of Munich).

Photos Credit

Photo 01: Nele Janssen, City of Leuven.

Photos 02, 03, 04 and 05: Christian Lindner - Omega-Produktion, und Stadtgemeinde Meran.

Photo 06: Linda Schrapp, City of Munich.

Photo 07: Andrea Rózsa

Disclaimer: All the contents of this handbook have been prepared and updated with the utmost care and attention. This may not, however, constitute a guarantee for the correctness, completeness and up-to datedness of the contents. Therefore, the Technical University of Munich cannot be held liable in any way whatsoever for damages of any kind caused directly, indirectly or accidentally to users as a result of reading or using the information published due to any errors and omissions regarding the contents themselves. The contents of the handbook are written and edited by the Technical University of Munich. The contents do not constitute any form of advice.

© **Technical University of Munich,**

Chair for Strategic Landscape Planning and Management, December 2025



This publication is under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0

International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons license and indicate if changes were made.



This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under Grant Agreement No. 101003757

Contents

Introduction	6
1. BACKGROUND	7
2. WHY USE THIS HANDBOOK AND TRAINING TOOLKIT?	8
PART 1:	
Understanding Just, Collaborative Governance	10
1. SO, WHAT IS GOVERNANCE EXACTLY?	11
2. WHAT ABOUT COLLABORATIVE GOVERNANCE?	16
3. WHO TO ENGAGE?	13
4. WHY COLLABORATE?	16
5. WHAT MAKES COLLABORATIVE GOVERNANCE 'JUST'?	16
PART 2:	
Setting up Your Collaborative Environment	19
1. HOW TO IDENTIFY KEY ACTORS?	20
2. HOW TO ENGAGE?	22
3. ENGAGING AND WORKING WITH EXTERNAL ACTORS	24

PART 3:	
Developing a roadmap towards just collaborative governance	26
<hr/>	
1. WHAT IS A THEORY OF CHANGE?	27
2. STEPS TO DEVELOP YOUR ROADMAP	28
PART 4:	
Implementing your roadmap	37
<hr/>	
1. SPATIAL PLANNING AND DESIGN	38
2. IMPLEMENTATION PHASE	44
3. MANAGEMENT PHASE	47
Toolkit	50
<hr/>	

INTRODUCTION

Introduction

BACKGROUND

This handbook originates from the practice-based research project JUSTNature, which addressed the intersection of urban nature-based solutions (NbS) and justice in seven European cities, between 2021 and 2026 (see Figure 1 for an overview of the cities). As part of this project, practitioners working for six city administrations and one city-owned company were supported by a research team to consider not only the potential positive environmental impacts of local greening interventions, but also their justice implications. Embedded in “city practice labs”, local project teams worked to engage participants throughout the design, implementation and management of these interventions. As part of the supporting research team, we introduced the concept of collaborative governance to encourage each local project team to raise their ambitions – beyond passive forms of participation that focus on information-giving or target the usual suspects, toward more inclusive efforts to reach and engage vulnerable and minority groups and consider power distribution. This was both a challenging and rewarding experience, and the pages of this handbook document the fruits of our efforts. The handbook is intended for municipal staff or supporting research teams to learn from our experience when embarking on similar endeavours.

THE European Commissions defines nature-based solutions as “solutions that are inspired and supported by nature, which are cost-effective, simultaneously provide environmental, social and economic benefits and help build resilience. Such solutions bring more, and more diverse, nature and natural features and processes into cities, landscapes and seascapes, through locally adapted, resource-efficient and systemic interventions.”¹

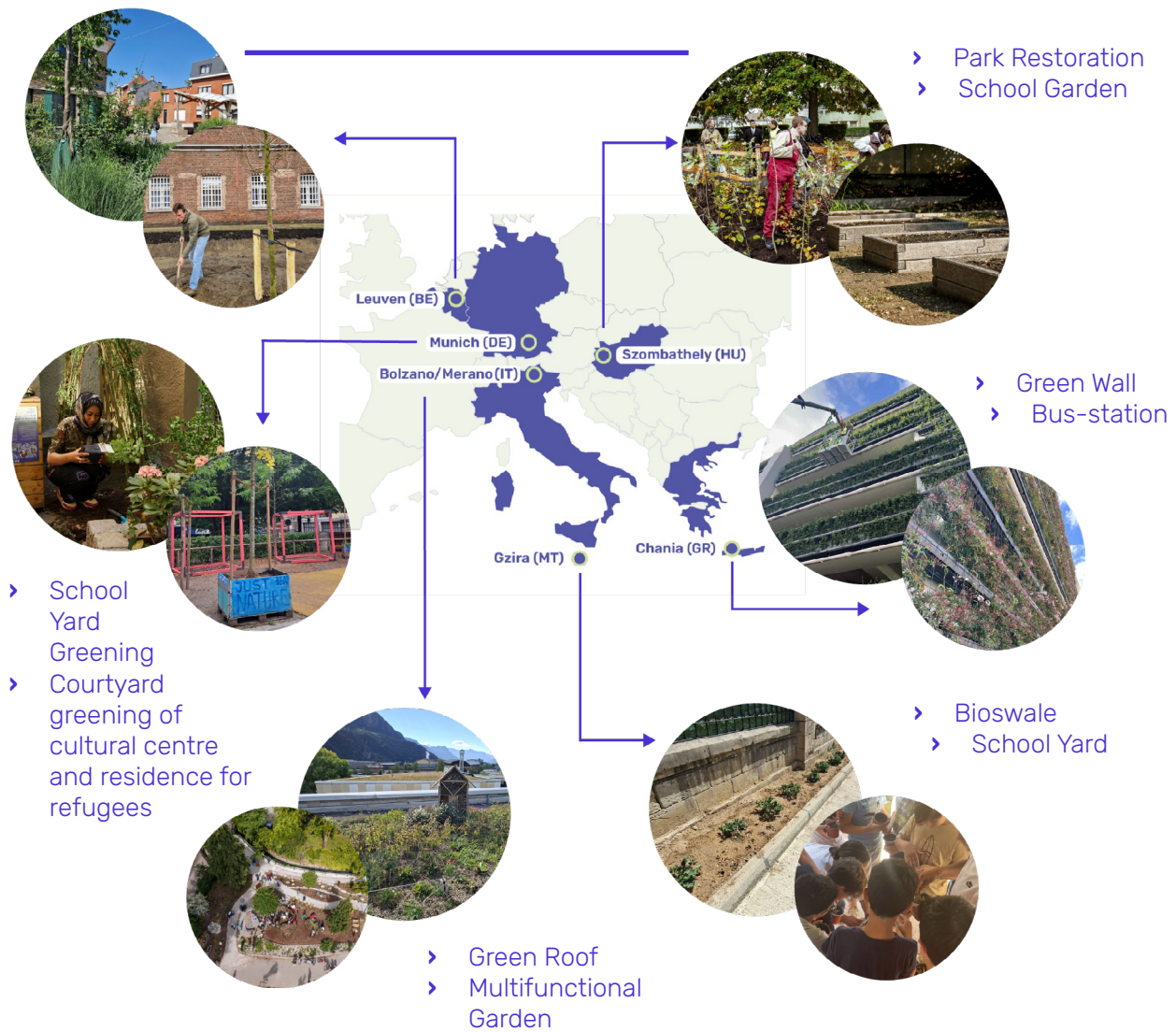


Figure 1: JUSTNature City Practice Labs and their nature-based interventions.

WHY USE THIS HANDBOOK AND TRAINING TOOLKIT?

Imagine you're a municipal project manager in the planning department, starting on a new project, where the aim is to redesign a vacant piece of land, turning it into a park. You have worked on major landscape redesigns before and are leading a team who already have all the technical expertise, but you now have a new mandate: to engage the local community in the design process, including reaching out to residents who are not usually engaged. The process should be a collaborative one, and address aspects of social and environmental justice.

This was the situation that many of our team, representing seven European cities, found themselves in when the JUSTNature project began in late 2021. Making urban greening more just, and more collaborative, has many benefits (more on those later in Part 1), but it's not always obvious how to put these big concepts into practice. Four years on, we've created this handbook and training toolkit to share our experience with people working in city administrations towards similar aims.

We're not the first to address this theme, and indeed many guidebooks are out there already. What sets this one apart is our effort to support municipal staff with a structured approach, designed to work for a range of levels of experience with the concepts of justice, governance and NbS and different levels of resources. We'll guide you to:

- 1. reflect** on your current starting point when it comes to just, collaborative governance and what it means in relation to NbS,
- 2. define** clear, place-based objectives that promote a just local environment,
- 3. assess** available resources and risks,
- 4. select** the right tools to take action, and
- 5. set up** mechanisms to monitor and evaluate progress.

We hope you'll find this a practical guide to support your own journey toward just co-governance of nature-based solutions. Let's get started!



Photo 1: Planting and maintenance action in Leuven Centraal, Leuven, Belgium.

References

- 1** European Commission. "Nature-Based Solutions – Research and Innovation – European Commission." Last modified September 9, 2025. https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/research-area/environment/nature-based-solutions_en

PART 1 :
UNDERSTANDING
JUST , COLLABORATIVE GOVERNANCE

PART 1:

Understanding Just, Collaborative Governance

Before jumping into action, it's a good idea to get familiar with the core concepts guiding this handbook: governance, collaboration, and justice.

1 SO, WHAT IS GOVERNANCE EXACTLY?

First, we want to clarify what we mean by governance. Governance is not a substitute or synonym for government but rather recognises the role of a diverse range of actors in making decisions that influence how society is shaped¹. It can refer to governing without government, as seen in community-led initiatives, but also governing by and with governments². It can also mean sharing power, including decision-making power, more widely and inclusively³. There are many ways in which different actors and institutions can be mixed and matched, combine efforts, and share decision-making and responsibilities.

2 WHAT ABOUT COLLABORATIVE GOVERNANCE?

In this handbook, we focus specifically on collaborative governance of nature-based solutions – or ‘co-governance’ for short. By this we mean:

“THE process of various actors across the public, civil society, and private domains working together to formulate, promote, and achieve shared objectives for positively transforming the urban environment in the context of a broader shift towards a just and sustainable future, through the planning, design, implementation, and management of a nature-based intervention.”⁴

This can mean providing support for NbS interventions initiated by non-governmental actors but also engaging diverse actors meaningfully in municipal-led projects, fostering a shared space where they feel safe to express and discuss their views and where all voices are heard and considered equitably in the pursuit of shared objectives.

In practice, collaborative governance involves:

- Working across departments to bring together diverse areas of expertise, fostering the multifunctionality and benefits of NbS, as well as their successful planning, design, implementation, and management.
- Engaging and working for and with the local community and broader civil society to bring in their knowledge, needs, and aspirations, ensuring a place-based and socially responsive approach.
- Involving academia and the private sector to bring in scientific knowledge, innovation, and diverse resources, building cross-sectoral partnerships that can strengthen effectiveness and long-term impact.

Co-governance is NOT...

-  just informing the local community about the urban greening project that will be created.
-  everyone deciding everything.
-  the same as just engaging residents.
-  promoting involvement only in the design phase.
-  always making projects slower and harder.

Co-governance is...






-  actively engaging local stakeholders in meaningful ways and about actively engaging local stakeholders in meaningful ways and empowering those affected by the project to take part in decision-making, while recognising that not all forms of participation are truly collaborative.
-  about **creating structured and transparent ways for different voices to contribute meaningfully**, depending on their role, capacity, and knowledge – with particular attention to those who are often not heard.
-  involving a broader range of stakeholders relevant to the process – **not only the local community, but also different governmental departments, NGOs, associations, academia, and private sector actors**—anyone who may be affected by or have a stake in the process.
-  involving stakeholders **throughout the design, implementation, and management phases**, giving them opportunities to help activate the space and decide how it will be used.
-  **capable of building trust, reducing conflicts, and mobilising custodians for NbS interventions**, meaning the initial investment of time often pays off through more successful outcomes.

Figure 2: Five common misconceptions about co-governance.

3 WHO TO ENGAGE?

Below is a sample of actors you might involve and why. Naturally, the relevance and feasibility of involving each actor will vary depending on your specific context. Use this as a guide to reflect on who should be involved in your case—even if they are not listed here.

PUBLIC SECTOR



LOCAL MUNICIPALITY

Municipal technicians – to bring clarity about technical requirements, barriers, and feasibility early in the project. Officers from departments that are not your own (e.g. transportation, housing, health, education or public works, cultural heritage, economy and sustainability) – to align the project with broader relevant goals and plans such as those for climate adaptation or resilience, land use or urban health. Green areas department – input essential to identify maintenance needs and operational challenges.

Participation department – if one exists, or colleagues with relevant experience if not. They can help with advice on engaging participants, what's worked in the past and what to avoid.

Elected Officials – core decision-makers whose involvement ensures political support, legitimacy, and awareness of community perspectives and project requirements.

Neighbourhood managers and social workers – or other staff involved in community outreach who likely have connections to key community actors outside the administration and ideas about who the vulnerable groups are and how to engage them.

REGIONAL GOVERNMENT

Regional planning, infrastructure and mobility authorities – to align NbS with mobility, flood protection, and regional development goals and strategies.

Regional environmental agencies – to ensure ecological coherence across municipalities and to help meet wider environmental standards and objectives.

Funding bodies or regional development funds – to financially support the NbS implementation and its long-term sustainability.

NATIONAL GOVERNMENT

Environment / Climate ministries – to contribute to national NbS strategies and access subsidies or incentives to support local implementation.

Urban development and housing authorities – to integrate NbS into national planning and housing frameworks.

Health / Social inclusion ministries – to link NbS to social and well-being agendas, promoting equitable and inclusive urban transformations.

PRIVATE SECTOR



SMES AND START UPS

Of course, involving the private sector in public NbS projects requires careful governance to safeguard the public good and prevent conflicts of interest. However, when managed thoughtfully, they can enhance NbS financial sustainability, innovation, and replication.

Small or Medium Enterprises (SMEs) – often locally rooted and community-oriented, SMEs can be valuable partners in place-based sustainable solutions. Compared to larger corporations, they are generally more inclined to prioritise the public good and less likely to dominate governance processes, helping embed NbS in local markets.

Landscape Architecture, Engineering, and Planning Firms – can provide technical expertise and creative design to ensure NbS are functional, attractive, and feasible. Their collaboration helps address practical challenges and integrate NbS into the urban fabric.

Social Enterprises and Green Startups – mission-driven and innovative, they combine entrepreneurship with social and environmental goals. Their involvement can contribute fresh ideas, strengthen local economies, and advance nature-positive business models.

RESEARCH & THIRD SECTOR



ACADEMIA AND EDUCATION

Researchers from universities and research institutions – bring scientific knowledge, tools and evidence for decision-making. They can help translate complex concepts—such as climate resilience, biodiversity, or environmental justice—into actionable strategies and they can also sometimes act as neutral facilitators in contested or sensitive processes.

Students from local universities and schools – university students bring new ideas, energy, and practical support through data collection, outreach, and communication, while engaging with schools is a great way to offer kids and teenagers a new perspective and support teachers in expanding their curriculum outside of the classroom.

NON-PROFIT ORGANISATIONS

Environmental NGOs – contribute with ecological expertise, advocacy skills, and a long-term commitment to environmental protection, strengthening NbS credibility.

Social justice or community development organisations – ensure that marginalised voices are heard, aligning the NbS also with social equity and community priorities. Think about locally active initiatives that engage with particular groups, like support groups for refugees, and centres for senior citizens.

Cultural organisations, including heritage and the arts – help tie NbS to local identity and memory, reinforcing community attachment and enhancing NbS acceptance.

Youth or education focused groups – promote awareness, stewardship, and early engagement, helping to cultivate long-term community involvement with nature.



LOCAL REPRESENTATIVES

Community-based organisations and interest groups - since they possess strong local networks, trust, and insight into community needs and dynamics; they're essential partners for reaching diverse groups and identifying local leaders.

Local leaders and representatives – influential figures such as religious or neighbourhood representatives who act as gatekeepers to their communities and can help in gaining their trust. engagement.

INDIVIDUAL COMMUNITY MEMBERS

Nearby residents – directly affected by the intervention, their lived experience provides valuable insights into local needs, values, and daily realities.

Local business owners – particularly in mixed-use areas, their engagement may help lessen opposition (e.g. to loss of car parking spaces) and they might even contribute to long-term NbS maintenance.

Local workforce – can offer practical input on their own use patterns and peak activity times.

Passers by / Regular users – people who frequently visit the space; involving them broadens perspectives, reduces conflicts, and fosters shared ownership.

AT RISK AND VULNERABLE GROUPS

To ensure environmental and social justice, it's vital to involve groups often excluded from accessing benefits or disproportionately affected by environmental risks. They are often harder to reach and require targeted strategies:

Low-income residents – often face greater environmental burdens and have fewer resources. Their needs and priorities may differ from those with more privilege. Involving them helps address existing inequalities.

Elderly people – more vulnerable to climate impacts but also have valuable local historical knowledge. Their inclusion can help the NbS better support their mobility, health, and social needs.

Children and Youth – future users and caretakers of urban nature. Involving them early on builds environmental awareness, stewardship, and can also be a powerful link to their families, helping to spread interest and knowledge at home.

Ethnic minorities and other marginalised groups (e.g. LGBTQ+ communities, people with disabilities) – people's cultural backgrounds, identities, and experiences shape how they access, use, and experience public green spaces – and minorities are often underrepresented in planning. Their engagement can ensure that NbS are culturally sensitive, socially inclusive, and physically accessible for all.

Figure 3: Key actors and why to involve them.

4 WHY COLLABORATE?

Bringing together diverse stakeholders for co-governance of NbS can be challenging. It may require additional initial effort, flexible and adaptive planning, good time management and some facilitation skills. But this investment is often repaid with the joint resources and knowledge resulting from working collaboratively, which serve to create better, more feasible, and context-appropriate solutions while fostering innovations that otherwise not possible⁵. This is crucial for city administrations, faced with having to do increasingly more with ever-shrinking resources. Opening up decisions to more input might seem a lot to handle, but not all stakeholders need to be collaborating at every stage⁶. Stakeholder collaboration can shift throughout the project, in line with opportunities and needs in each project phase, as well as their own interests, with some actors playing a more active role during certain phases than others⁷. It is important to always understand the purpose of the engagement, why should you engage that stakeholder at that moment and how? When people experience meaningful opportunities to contribute, it can help democratise decision-making and align outcomes closer with the public interest⁸. Not only that, but the initial investment in actively engaging people may pay off in a practical sense by creating more resources in the longer term, e.g. university students can support with evaluating your progress, while local residents may contribute to watering plants.

5 WHAT MAKES COLLABORATIVE GOVERNANCE 'JUST'?

Often the social impacts of urban greening are overlooked, with the focus on environmental performance, tackling climate adaptation or reversing biodiversity loss⁹. Right now, the benefits of green spaces and environmental improvements are not shared equally, and the impacts of climate change—like heat or flooding—are felt more strongly by certain groups. People with lower incomes, or who are disadvantaged because of their ethnicity, gender, or age, often carry the biggest burden¹⁰.

Co-governance is not necessarily just governance. But if NbS is delivered with attention not only to collaboration, but also to equitable processes and outcomes, it can:

- **Ensure** that many affected by the intervention can actively participate—not just be informed.
- **Integrate** local and community knowledge alongside expert perspectives.
- **Decentralise** influence, promoting fairer distribution of decision-making and NbS benefits.

Collaborative governance is most just when it centres around equity – not only in who is at the table, but in how the discussion is conducted and decisions are made, whose voices are valued, and who benefits. To help achieve this, we singled out five guiding principles for you to keep in mind for good and just co-governance:

PRINCIPLES



Empowering

- To give diverse people and organisations the ability to express their needs and have the chance to influence decisions. This means making sure the rules, roles, and tools in place allow all voices – especially the most vulnerable ones – to be heard and respected.



Collaborative

- Instead of creating conflicts, co-governance should help people collaborate and find solutions that benefit everyone: to identify a common problem and a shared goal. To mobilise and coordinate individual efforts, integrating multiple levels of governance, different governmental departments and external actors in service of a shared goal.



Responsive

- Decisions should be based on evidence—but not only from experts. Local, lived, and community knowledge should also count. Co-governance should actively recognise, analyse and be tailored to the specifics of the local context.



Adaptive

- Be open to listening to different kinds of knowledge and adjust plans when needed. NbS are natural solutions that change over time; why shouldn't their governance also be?



Legitimate

- Co-governance must follow democratic values. This includes involving people fairly, being open about how decisions are made, and balancing out unequal influences during the process.

Figure 4: Five principles.

Many actions can reflect more than one principle at the same time – because these aspects are inherently interconnected. You don't need to worry about categorising every future action. Instead, focus on keeping the five co-governance principles in mind to strengthen the co-governance of your NbS.



Photo 2: Autumn celebration in the Garden for All in Merano, Italy.

References

- 1 Treib, Oliver, Holger Bähr, and Gerda Falkner. "Modes of Governance: Towards a Conceptual Clarification." *Journal of European Public Policy* 14, no. 1 (2007): 1–20. <https://doi.org/10.1080/135017606061071406>
- 2 Mattijssen, T. J. M., et al. "The Long-Term Prospects of Citizens Managing Urban Green Space: From Placemaking to Place-Keeping?" *Urban Forestry & Urban Greening* 26 (August 2017): 78–84. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ufug.2017.05.015>
- 3 Beunen, Raoul, and Paul Opdam. "When Landscape Planning Becomes Landscape Governance, What Happens to the Science?" *Landscape and Urban Planning* 100, no. 4 (2011): 324–26. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.landurbplan.2011.01.018>
- 4 Lim, Yirang, et al. *State-of-the-Art Report on Good Practice for Co-Governance of NbS (D7.1)*. JUSTNature, 2023. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.10952061>
- 5 Klijn, Erik-Hans, and Joop Koppenjan. *Governance Networks in the Public Sector*. 2nd ed. London: Routledge, 2015. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315887098>
- 6 Naumann, Sandra, et al. *Harnessing the Power of Collaboration for Nature-Based Solutions: New Ideas and Insights for Local Decision Makers*. Brussels: Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, 2023. <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2777/954370>
- 7 Zingraff-Hamed, Aude, et al. "Stakeholder Mapping to Co-Create Nature-Based Solutions: Who Is on Board?" *Sustainability* 12, no. 20 (2020): 8625. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su12208625>
- 8 Gupta, Joyeeta, et al., eds. *Geographies of Urban Governance: Advanced Theories, Methods and Practices*. Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2015. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-21272-2>
- 9 Annarelli, Alessandro, Tiziana Catarci, and Laura Palagi. "The Forgotten Pillar of Sustainability: Development of the S-Assessment Tool to Evaluate Organizational Social Sustainability." *Environmental Science, Business* (2024).
- 10 IPCC. *Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability. Working Group II Contribution to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*. 1st ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009325844>

**PART 2:
SETTING UP YOUR
COLLABORATIVE ENVIRONMENT**

Part 2:

Setting up Your Collaborative Environment

Before starting your project, you need to set up a collaborative environment that unites key actors and creates the conditions for joint work. While it's possible to develop your project alone or within a single department, one which is developed collaboratively allows you to coherently articulate a shared vision and align long-term goal(s). A collaborative approach already at this early stage can serve as a basis for effective communication among all actors involved, helping everyone understand and explain why certain actions are needed.

1 HOW TO IDENTIFY KEY ACTORS?

One of the most crucial points of enabling NbS co-governance is to understand who should be involved. Keep in mind the full cycle of developing an NbS: **planning and design, implementation, and operation** (including maintenance, activation, and management). Consider who should be engaged now to shape the project together with you. You can use the types of actors listed in Figure 3 (see Part 1), together with the guiding questions below to help you.

1.1 Internal Actors (within municipality)

First, think about your working context and municipal structure, and reflect on:

- Who in my department should directly work on this project (e.g. who has relevant knowledge, who will be responsible for day-to-day coordination, who will be responsible for realisation)?
- Which departments will be directly affected by each phase of NbS development (e.g. transport, housing, health, education, water, energy)?
- Which departments control funding or approval processes at each phase of NbS development?
- Who has hands-on experience with implementation of NbS or engagement beyond the city administration?
- Who manages and maintains the green spaces in my municipality?
- Who has the authority to approve this project?

Involving the right internal people from the start is key to creating a strong interdepartmental team. So, here, take time to think carefully about who should be included within your context and think beyond your

own department to areas such as public works, transportation, housing, health, education, water, or energy, technicians and decision-makers who will influence the process. Engaging them early on will make the process more efficient by improving communication, knowledge sharing, workflows, and problem-solving.

Even if some colleagues cannot participate fully, it is still important to identify them, understand their role, and keep them informed or consult them at key points. It's a good idea to check your initial list of actors with colleagues or partners to ensure no one is overlooked.

STORIES FROM THE FIELD

Identifying internal actors in Leuven, Belgium

The City of Leuven formed their internal working group for the Constantin Meunierstraat pilot – a project focused on unsealing and greening a car-dominated street to support the creation of a climate-resilient space – by involving representatives from:

- **Public Works Department** – for infrastructure planning and execution
- **Greening Department** – to lead on ecological and landscape aspects
- **Mobility Department** – to align the project with transport and accessibility needs
- **Sustainability Department** – to ensure long-term environmental goals were integrated in the design
- **Accessibility Coordinator** – to make sure the NbS would be inclusive for all
- **Cultural Heritage Department** – to protect and integrate historical values of the site
- **Neighbourhood & Community Work Department** – to support local engagement and social cohesion
- **Youth Department** – to represent younger residents and their needs
- **Police Department** – to ensure safety and security aspects were addressed
- **Design Team** – as technical partners responsible for translating ideas into design.

By working together early on, the team prevented conflicts that would have happened in the permitting and contracting stages, identified better design solutions (that respected accessibility and the cultural heritage of the street while connecting to the local transportation grid), and even created new opportunities.

In this case, the pilot was selected to become a lighthouse district to explore the potential for alternative energy systems and a fifth-generation heat network, which only became possible thanks to the cooperation with the Sustainability Department. This has raised even more awareness about the project and also helped bring long-term, wider benefits to the neighbourhood.

1.2 External Actors (beyond municipality):

Now, for external actors, think about stakeholders across sectors – other levels of government, the private sector, civil society, and the non-profit and education sectors. Put on your “justice hat” and ask:

- Who from the local community should be engaged?
- Who might benefit from the intervention and deserve a voice, but is often left out of participatory processes?
- Who are the vulnerable or marginalised groups in the area that should be included?
- What are the different interests of the various stakeholders in relation to the intervention and possible entry points through which you can engage them?

If you don't know and can't easily find out, make these questions part of your early discussions with colleagues and stakeholders you've already identified. When listing actors, also consider and note their level of influence (or lack thereof) in current NbS development to better understand existing gaps and potential needs for empowerment.

2 HOW TO ENGAGE?

Now that you've identified the people who should be involved in the project, it's time to act: to start building collaborations and establish a working team. Think of this as a long-term effort – not only for developing your project, but also as a group that will move together through the entire NbS development cycle, with engagement levels adjusted according to each project phase.

2.1 How to establish a cross-departmental working team

- **Reach out to colleagues across departments to form your NbS multi-departmental working team.** Inviting colleagues individually – by email, phone calls or through one-to-one meetings – can help you explain your goals clearly and show them the benefits of joining.
- **Connect to their needs and Interests.**
- **In your very first meeting with potential members, aim to understand how this working group could connect to their own work and what they would gain out of this experience.** If they don't see the value for their work, they are unlikely to join.
- **Check and understand their availability.** Meeting lengths, times, and potential conflicts should be carefully considered to ensure that no one is investing valuable time without a clear benefit, and that no one misses out simply because they have another commitment at the scheduled time.
- **Create a structure that allows for collaboration without taking up too much of people's time.** A mix-and-match structure can help improve efficiency without requiring much extra effort. This

TOOLKIT



After listing potential actors, you can further characterise them through different actor mapping techniques. See for example the [Biodiversa Stakeholder Engagement Handbook](#)

Also see [Tool 1: Stakeholder Mapping Database](#)

could mean holding bilateral or small-group meetings and tailored communication alongside larger joint meetings.

- **Hold joint meetings early on and develop a timeline for setting up and validating the working group structure and ensuring everyone knows who will be working together and around what times they will be needed.** The smaller meetings can be used to address specific or technical issues, while larger joint meetings should be reserved for major decisions and meaningful updates. This way, everyone stays involved in the decision-making process and remains informed about how the project is progressing.
- **Review your project timeline and identify when major decisions need to be discussed or made.** Compare them with key dates coming up in your municipality's calendar, e.g. when input is requested to strategic documents, key meetings held, or public events taking place where you could share updates about your project. This will help plan meetings at the best times strategically.

“IN Leuven, we held cross-departmental meetings early on. People with a different background or different goals and objectives got a chance to hear each other's point of view and got a 'broader' perspective. This was a big advantage.” Nele Janssen, project manager, City of Leuven

STORIES FROM THE FIELD

Establishment of Interdepartmental Working Group in Leuven, Belgium

At the City of Leuven, the full interdepartmental team received quarterly updates through joint meetings, while ad-hoc meetings with relevant departments were arranged when specific input or decisions were needed.

In addition, all members had access to a shared project folder to stay informed and exchange documents. Monthly team meetings were planned in advance but were cancelled if there was no urgent content to discuss. To make meetings more efficient, invitations included relevant information and specific questions to be discussed, allowing members to prepare.

Smaller or bilateral meetings were also used when necessary. For example, when designing façade gardens, specific meetings were held with both the Greening Department and the Department of Cultural Heritage to address technical and heritage-related concerns. It was the responsibility of the project coordinator to ensure all relevant departments were kept informed and involved.

Each year, the functioning of the interdepartmental group was evaluated by the project coordinator to identify what worked and what could be improved to keep the activity relevant for all. Moreover, for any official decisions to be submitted to the city council, formal advice was requested from all departments represented in the group—ensuring transparency and shared ownership throughout the process. This structure helped involve the right people at the right time—whether it was technical experts, designers, or implementation staff.

The working group should be your core support and go-to resource throughout the project and as such, always consult them regarding the people involved, the steps you are taking and your plans, to ensure you don't miss anything. Make sure to create room for your colleagues to bring in their needs and objectives and to adapt your project plan accordingly. In this way, you will ensure more participation and fewer time conflicts within the team.

3 ENGAGING AND WORKING WITH EXTERNAL ACTORS

Finally, the time for external collaborations has arrived!

Once all relevant groups of external actors have been identified, you should start contacting and approaching them to initiate collaborations. It is important to:

- **Approach each group thoughtfully** – considering their interests, availability, and preferred communication styles.
- **Clearly communicate why you are contacting them** – what the NbS project is about, how they can contribute and benefit from participating, and what you will do with their contributions.
- **Listen actively to their responses and input from the start** –this helps build trust, identify shared goals, and shape a process that feels meaningful and respectful to all.
- **Adapt your engagement methods to the groups you're working with** – for example, offering flexible meeting times or formats, providing materials in accessible language (limiting project jargon), or working through trusted community intermediaries.
- **Be transparent about the process** – including what is still open for discussion and where there are fixed parameters.
- **Demonstrate that you value the time and effort of participants** – people are donating their time, so consider what you can offer in return. This might be as simple as tea and snacks, or it might be a gift voucher, a plant, or even monetary compensation, if your municipal rules allow. University students or young professionals might value networking opportunities or the chance to hear an influential guest speaker.
- **Be mindful of 'stakeholder fatigue'** – design your process and individual events to target the most relevant issues. Think about what will keep it interesting for participants and try not to ask more time than necessary of them.

During your co-creation and co-design process, you may encounter several engagement barriers with respect to the local community, such as a lack of trust in authorities due to past experience, time constraints, language differences, cultural factors, or limited environmental education. To help overcome these challenges, it can be useful to start with initial activities focused purely on engagement. These might include introducing the concept of NbS, clearly explaining the goals of your project, making your team visible and approachable, and taking time to get to know the local actors and their context. Don't forget to also invite relevant actors beyond

the local community, such as research institutions or NGOs (see ‘Who to Engage?’ in Part 1). Building these early relationships can lay the groundwork for stronger, more meaningful collaboration later on.

Be especially mindful when engaging the private sector. These actors can play a valuable role, but they may hold more power and influence than others and are often motivated by profit rather than the public interest. So, start paying attention to potential power imbalances that may arise later during the next phases of the project, in particular if you do engage the private sector. A just collaboration goes beyond simply inviting people to participate. It means actively empowering those who may have fewer resources or less experience, recognising their right to be meaningfully involved, and creating space for them to shape outcomes.

Examples of early engagement activities include:

- **Information sessions** – to explain what NbS are and what the project aims to achieve.
- **Community ‘walk-shops’ in the neighbourhood or site visits** – to explore the area together, gather first impressions and local insights.
- **Storytelling or mapping workshops** – to collect local knowledge and emotional connections to the space and topic.
- **Thematic workshops** – exploring related NbS topics such as biodiversity or gardening in a fun and light-hearted manner (e.g. birdwatching ...).

You can start by involving local champions or trusted community figures who can help spread awareness and build trust, or local academia or NGOs. Casual conversations with nearby residents, posters, postcard invitations, communication through local media or even phone calls can also be a great way to spark interest and reach others. You don’t need to involve all actors at every stage. Instead, target activities to specific groups, drawing on their interests, expertise, and preferred ways of communicating, not all actors can be reached with the same methods and channels – for example, the way you engage researcher’s familiar with NbS will differ from how you approach community members who are new to the topic, or local businesses. Engagement activities don’t need to be complex or costly – what matters is showing genuine interest and creating open, inclusive spaces for conversation from the start.

PART 3:
DEVELOPING A ROADMAP TOWARDS
JUST COLLABORATIVE GOVERNANCE

PART 3: Developing a roadmap towards just collaborative governance

It's now time to reflect on your own local context. This part will guide you to develop a strategic roadmap (or a "change pathway") that helps you create NbS that support collaborative and equitable processes and outcomes.

In JUSTNature, we used the 'Theory of Change' approach to develop a roadmap in each city, including objectives for your NbS, actions and indicators of progress – with a focus specifically on co-governance.

1 WHAT IS A THEORY OF CHANGE?

Put simply, a Theory of Change is an explanation of how a group expects to reach a common goal¹. Theory of Change is a widely accepted methodology for planning strategic transformation and has been adopted in many project-related environments, including other European Commission-funded studies related to NbS². The European Commission's Handbook for NbS Assessment outlines a simplified overview of the components of a Theory of Change, adapted from the CLEVER Cities project (Figure 5).

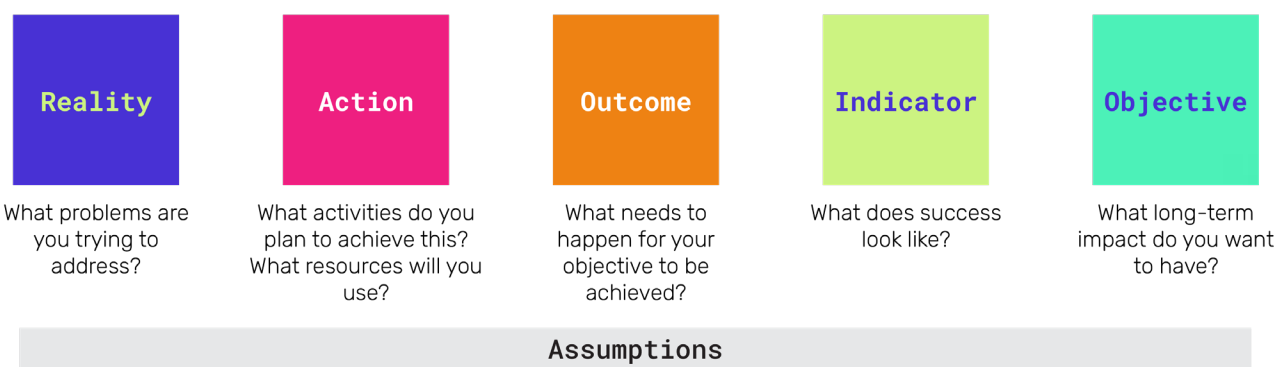


Figure 5: Example of the elements that make up a Theory of Change, adapted from the CLEVER Cities Project, "Theory of Change," accessed October 20, 2025, <https://clevercities.eu/clever-guidance-sub/theory-change/>

2 STEPS TO DEVELOP A ROADMAP, BASED ON THEORY OF CHANGE

There are different methods for developing a Theory of Change, and to develop a full change pathway can demand a large amount of effort and resources. This will particularly be the case if you start early, engage a wide group of participants, and regularly check in on and update your roadmap. In JUSTNature, we conducted a 'mini' Theory of Change process: a short-form exercise involving two group working sessions to introduce the concept and develop draft roadmaps, supported with a digital whiteboard for each city team to work on further. This was at a stage that many project parameters had already been defined. In our experience, the earlier you start, and the more attention you give your roadmap, the more likely you are to see results. Regardless of which approach you take, steps are as follows:

- **Step 1:** Define your goal for your project This is a broad, overarching statement of what you want to achieve – the big picture or ultimate purpose. Your goal may already be defined within your project, or it may be something you need to articulate yourself.
- **Step 2:** Define clear objectives for the governance of your NbS, along with a directly corresponding sentence about the reality you want to change (see Toolkit: Guide to making objectives SMART).
- **Step 3:** Working backwards ('back-casting'), write down all "outcomes" - key conditions, or results that need to exist in order to reach the objective(s). Use Nouns instead of Verbs. Review your outcomes and prioritise the most important ones.
- **Step 4:** Define actions that you can take to reach each outcome. Here use Verbs.
- **Step 5:** Prioritise actions. At this stage, you should also "test" your actions by discussing the assumptions that are behind your pathway. These are the things that are taken for granted or accepted as certain to happen in order that actions lead to outcomes. Making them explicit helps to test whether you are likely to succeed with this approach or need to adjust something.
- **Step 6:** Define ways to keep track of and monitor your progress, for example by defining indicators.

The result of this process is a roadmap that visually describes your Theory of Change (see Figure 5). To get there, let's go step by step through the process.

Step 1: Define your goal

Most likely you are coming to this with some ideas already about what you are working towards and assume that everyone else has the same purpose in mind – but this is not always the case. To make sure everyone is on the same page, it's useful to begin with a session where the long-term goal is discussed and defined as a group. Before you define your goal, start with asking:

- **What problem or need do you want to address?**
- **Why is this issue important in your context (e.g., social, environmental, governance)?**

TOOLKIT



See Tool 4:
Digital Whiteboard
to create a Theory
of Change)

- How does it relate to just, collaborative governance?
- What change or impact do you want to create?
- How does your team or department currently collaborate with civil society and local stakeholders in the planning and implementation of NbS?
- If you have already identified a site or a neighbourhood for your project, do you know which groups are vulnerable or might have less of a voice in planning and development in that location?
- In your projects normally, how do you address the needs, interests, and values of diverse groups, including those who are vulnerable or less powerful?
- How does your team or department support and recognise citizen-led (bottom-up) initiatives

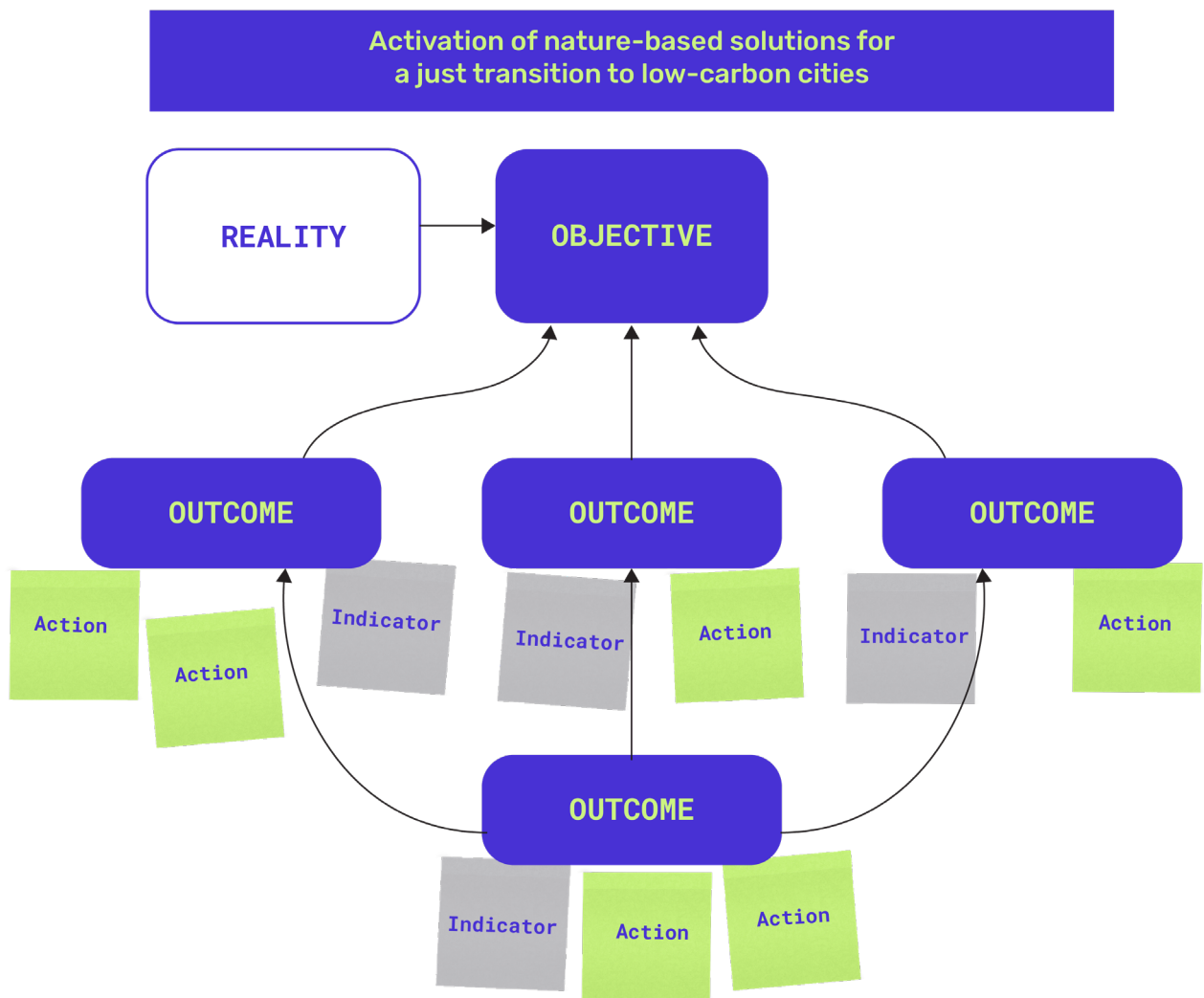


Figure 6: Schematic roadmap (or change pathway).

To help clarify your team or department's 'baseline' for just, collaborative governance of NbS, and what you might be able to improve, start with this quick checklist:

- Does your team or department normally collaborate with civil society and local stakeholders in developing projects?
- Does your team or department normally identify groups that are vulnerable or have less of a voice in the locations where you develop projects?
- Does your team or department have ways to address the needs, interests and values of diverse groups, especially those who are vulnerable or less powerful?
- Does your team or department support citizen-led (bottom-up) initiatives? What mechanisms or practices are in place to ensure that decision-making processes are fair, transparent, and inclusive, allowing all voices to be heard and influence outcomes?
- How does your municipality identify and address power imbalances to promote more equitable participation in NbS governance?

If you answered 'no' or 'I don't know' to any of the questions above, then you already have a clear opportunity to make your current reality, i.e. existing ways of working, more just and collaborative! If you answered 'yes' to all, you would need to dig a bit deeper, e.g. asking how your team currently works with others, especially less powerful actors, and what can be improved.

You can reflect on this individually, but it will be most productive to come together as a group at some point. Based on the discussion you have (or reflections inspired), you can formulate your goal. This will serve as the foundation for developing your roadmap.

TOOLKIT 

See Tool 3:
Guide to Making
Objectives SMART

STORIES FROM THE FIELD

Example of the JUSTNature project Goal

In the JUSTnature, project partners got together to jointly decide their overarching goal:

“To activate nature-based solutions (NbS) to ensure a just transition to low-carbon cities, based on the principle of the right to ecological space”.

You can see the goal is the bigger picture they want to achieve and guides all other local objectives and actions developed.

Step 2: Define clear objectives

The next step is to define objectives related to your goal. Each objective should address a particular change you want to make to the existing situation around the co-governance of NbS, which needs to be defined as a problem or 'reality statement' (see Figure 5).

TIP: Reflect on the different realities of your key stakeholders. Brainstorming and writing down as many ideas as you can think of can help expand the reality statement you wrote down earlier to also reflect their challenges. This helps to come up with objectives that addresses local challenges that are relevant also beyond the project, helping motivate and mobilise other actors to support you.

If you have not yet engaged other actors, we really recommend doing so here, as this can drive the formulation of common objectives and foster the development of more meaningful actions later on. Clear and precise objectives are crucial, as otherwise it will be hard to work out what should be done to reach them and how to know if you are successful. To help make your objectives as useful as possible, we recommend a critical review with colleagues based on the SMART objectives framework³. You'll find a worksheet to guide these discussions in the Toolkit.

SMART stands for:

- **Specific** – Make your objective as specific and exact as possible, by defining what impact to expect, for whom you want to have a change, and who should be involved in making this change.
- **Measurable** – Make sure that your objective represents a progress and/or success that can be tracked over-time. This can be done based on certain indicators, metrics, or other forms of monitoring (see part Step 6).
- **Achievable** – Make sure that you can realistically reach the objective with the timeframe and resources available.
- **Relevant** – Your objective should be aligned with the reality you want to change and existing local initiatives.
- **Time-bound** – Establish your objective within a realistic time, a deadline to achieve it, indicating the urgency and accountability behind it.

Defining a SMART objective at the beginning can be challenging, and you may need to revisit it at least once. Just make sure you clearly and specifically state what you want to achieve, how you will know it has been achieved, and by when.

STORIES FROM THE FIELD

For the municipality of Gzira, in Malta, after the first discussion about SMART objectives, they defined two:

#1 – A multi-actor working group, including representatives of multiple departments and community members, is advocating to national government for resources to support future NbS projects, using evidence of results from the JUSTNature project.

#2 – Enhance at least one school’s ecosystem by empowering them to develop new environmentally sustainable practices.

However, these objectives were not yet fully SMART, as they lacked clarity about which actors were involved and the timeframe for achievement. This ambiguity could lead to different interpretations and delay progress toward the intended results. The Gzira team then reviewed and refined them, arriving at:

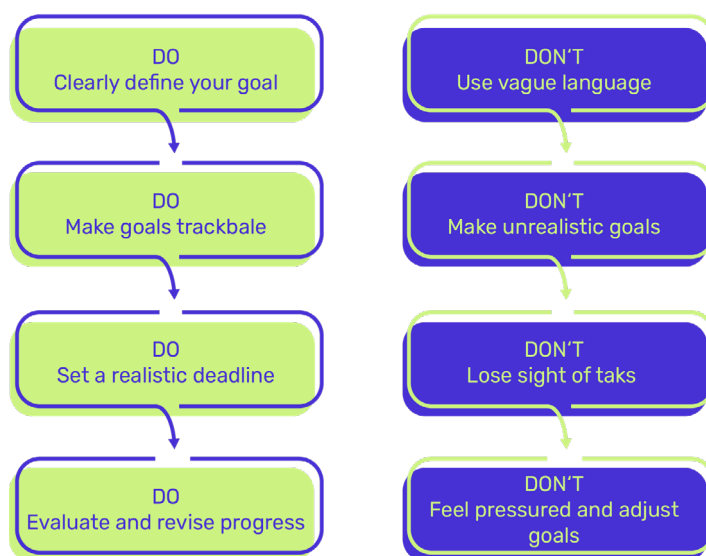
#1 – To establish by end of 2025 a multi-actor working group, including representatives of multiple governmental departments (such as regional departments, planning authorities and other jurisdiction) and community members composed of councilors, local residents and so on, is advocating to national government for resources to support future NbS projects, using evidence of results from the JUSTNature project.

#2 – By 2025 enhance at least one school’s ecosystem by empowering them to develop new environmentally sustainable practices.

Keep in mind that the SMART objective framework encourages you to be realistic about your context and constraints. This can be useful to manage your scope of work, but it’s important too to think about the ambition of your overall goal, and which objectives might put something in motion that outlives your project and contributes to changing your wider working environment for the longer term.

Figure 7: Dos and Don’ts of SMART Objectives. Adapted from Melissa Gertschnig, “SMART Goals,” BachelorPrint, October 2020.

SMART Objectives



Step 3: Outline the necessary outcomes toward your goal

The next step is to work backwards from your goal and objectives to identify all the necessary outcomes or building blocks that would logically need to happen along the way. This approach is sometimes called 'back-casting'. Instead of starting from where you are now, you begin with the future you want and ask:

- › “What needs to be in place for this objective to become a reality?”
- › “What would need to happen just before that?”
- › and “What would need to happen before that?”

You continue this process until you arrive back at your current situation. This creates a logical sequence of steps that will guide your next steps, while ensuring everything stays aligned with your ultimate objectives and goal.

When listing outcomes, use nouns or noun phrases instead of verbs. This helps you describe conditions, systems, or achievements – not activities.

Use	Avoid
“Shared vision among stakeholders”	“Engage stakeholders”
“Stronger collaboration between city departments and local organizations”	“Collaborate with local organizations”
“Community trust in governance process”	“Build trust”

Figure 8: How to define your Outcomes

Using nouns helps you focus on what the change looks like, instead of what actions you’ll take, which comes next.

To help you frame outcomes as a state or condition (not an action), try starting your outcome statements with:

- **“There is...”** as in “There is stronger collaboration between city departments and local organisations”.
- **“We have...”** as in “We have built community trust and ownership in local NbS”.



TIP: Some outcomes are dependent on other outcomes. Connect these visually in your roadmap, with arrows in a sequence that makes sense for you. Try to group similar outcomes – maybe they can be achieved by aligned actions! Or certain actions might generate more than one outcome.

Step 4: Define actions to reach each outcome

Now that you have identified the necessary outcomes toward your goal, the next step is to define the specific actions you can take to help bring each of them about. Unlike outcomes, actions should describe what you will do, not what should exist. This means using verbs, not nouns. Actions are about your contribution to change.

Imagine you're writing a to-do list. For example:

- **Organise** stakeholder meetings
- **Develop** a cross-departmental coordination plan
- **Facilitate** co-creation workshops
- **Advocate** for policy change
- **Train** staff in inclusive participation methods
- **Draft** a shared vision statement

Here, don't hold back – bring all possible actions to the table to fully explore what needs to be done. Don't forget to write down who will lead each action!

TOOLKIT 

See Tool 4:
Digital Whiteboard
to create a Theory of Change

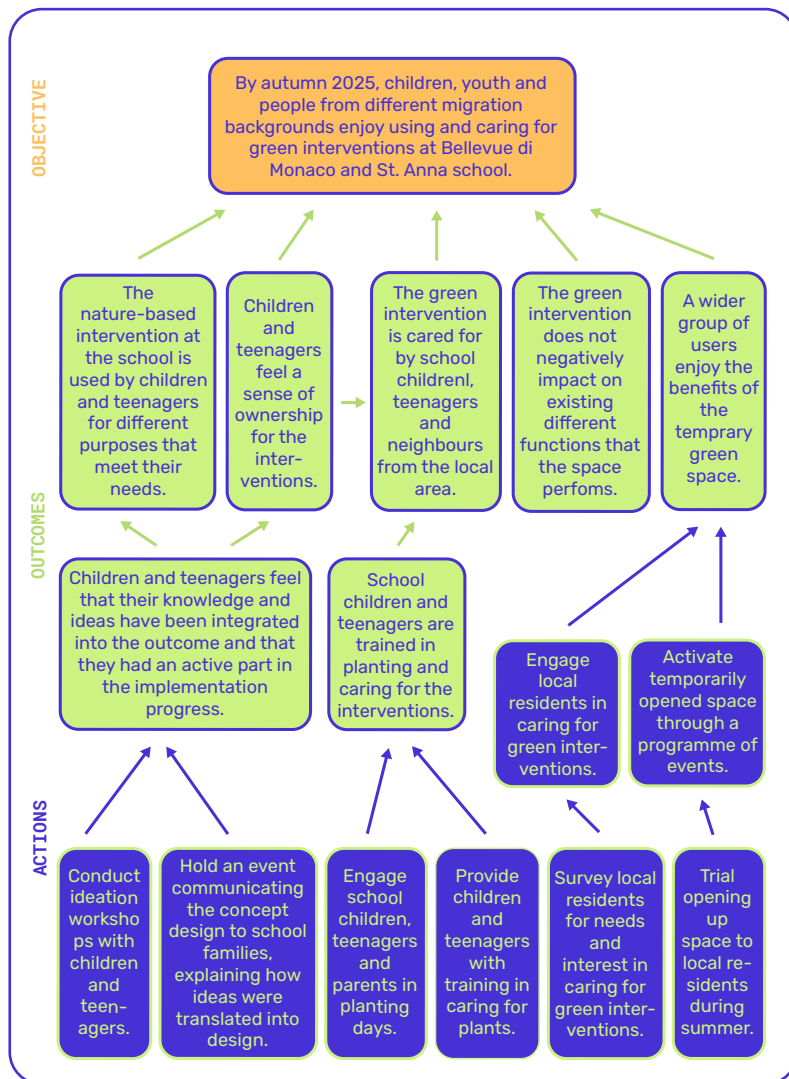



Figure 9: Part of the Munich team's Theory of Change for one objective.

Step 5: Prioritise your actions

If you've really used your imagination, at this point you probably have more actions than you can handle. It's a good idea to review them most relevant for achieving your objectives and those that fall within your strongest capacity to influence or act upon. These prioritised actions will serve as your starting point for implementation. You may find it helpful to use a matrix that considers feasibility and impact.

TOOLKIT



See [Tool 8: NbS Evaluation Matrix](#)

	HIGH FEASIBILITY	LOW FEASIBILITY
High Impact	Top priority - consider for ToC	Not a focus now, more long-term goals – monitor and prepare
Low Impact	Do only if easy and low-resource needed	Not a focus now

Figure 10: Feasibility vs Impact Matrix

It might also help to focus on actions that are feasible within the scope and timeline of your project. Be ambitious but stay realistic about your context and constraints – this will help you stay motivated and avoid frustration along the way.

Step 6: Define ways to track your progress

Lastly, you should begin considering how to measure and monitor your progress to ensure that your efforts toward just, co-governance of NbS remain on track and achieve their intended outcomes – and ultimately, your objectives. Monitoring helps you understand what is working well, notice where challenges arise, and identify where and how to adjust your approach over time.

Define how you will evaluate your outcomes

Firstly, look at your strategic roadmap, think of the actions that are to come and how you could measure their effectiveness. By measure, we mean identifying if and how your actions are making progress – through indicators, observations, feedback, or other forms of evidence that demonstrate movement toward your objectives. This may involve different monitoring approaches, depending on your strategic roadmap.

To inspire this process, the supporting toolbox includes two different tools for monitoring and evaluating your progress:

- a comprehensive reference list of indicators presented in the form of a card deck, with each card representing one indicator. These cards are organized according to justice principles and serve as examples of how collaborative governance and justice can be assessed;
- a template for a learning log, a structured document to record planned, ongoing, and completed activities, reflecting on how they went, what was learned, what worked well, the challenges faced, and what could be improved throughout your activity and project.

Rather than prescribing a one-size-fits-all approach, we encourage you to identify the approach that best suits you. If working with indicators, check which ones your department or team is already using, or adapt the ones in our Toolkit. To support a reflexive monitoring approach, start with the Learning Log template we provide, but feel free to adapt it to your project and reality. Your approach needs to fit your local context and the capacities of the people involved, and this can also change over time depending on which phase of the project you are in.

Tip: Since governance is a complex concept that doesn't always fit well with quantitative indicators, try to go beyond common quantitative ways to measure progress, such as counting the number of people taking part in an activity, e.g. by surveying participants to gather their perspectives: if they feel heard and included, how the actors influence (or felt like they influenced) decision making, and/or how useful they found the experience. This can be done through:

- **Short reflective workshops** at key stages of the project,
- **Regular assessment surveys** with local stakeholders,
- **Internal 'learning logs'** to track how your activities went,
- **Cross-departmental feedback sessions**,
- **Resources mapping**, to reflect on personal achievements and links to wider structural change over the course of the project.

When selecting your monitoring methods, make sure the required data can be effectively collected. For qualitative or non-numerical indicators, aimed at understanding specific features, processes, and ongoing dynamics of governance and planning, it can be useful to engage with local stakeholders to gather diverse perspectives in a structured and comprehensive manner. Data can be collected through:

- **Interviews**,
- **Surveys**,
- **Collective interviews (focus groups)**.

These methods can involve citizens, technical experts, municipal administrators, and other stakeholders within the urban context. To support this process, you can refer to the [Method Guide](#) for interviews, surveys and focus groups that we created in JUSTNature.

Don't forget to document your monitoring to be able to show your progress towards just NbS co-governance. Our Learning Log template is one way to do so.

References

- 1 Anderson, Andrea. "The Community Builder's Approach to Theory of Change: A Practical Guide to Theory Development", accessed November 7, 2025. <https://developmenteducation.ie/resource/the-community-builders-approach-to-theory-of-change-a-practical-guide-to-theory-development/>
- 2 European Commission, Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, ed. Evaluating the Impact of Nature-Based Solutions: A Handbook for Practitioners. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2021.
- 3 Doran, George T. "There's a S.M.A.R.T. Way to Write Management's Goals and Objectives." *Management Review* 70, no. 11 (1981): 35.

TOOLKIT



- **Tool 5: Indicator Cards**
- **Tool 6: Learning Log Template**
- **Tool 7: Guide to Running a Local Stakeholder Workshop**

PART 4:
IMPLEMENTING YOUR ROADMAP

PART 4:

IMPLEMENTING YOUR

ROADMAP

Now that your change pathway (or roadmap) is in place, this section supports you through its realisation. It shares real-life examples from the JUSTNature cities, across the phases of spatial planning and design; implementation; and management.

1 SPATIAL PLANNING AND DESIGN

1.1 What happens in this phase and what does it mean for co-governance?

This is the first step in making your NbS a reality—turning general ideas from your roadmap into one or more specific projects that are both feasible (can be done) and viable (likely to work well and last over time). This process includes planning which solution(s) to adopt, for what purpose, and sometimes even where they will be located – always considering NbS potentialities and complexities as well as local needs and desires. It also involves working out the actual design of the NbS—how it will be shaped and function, and what it will look like.

Of course, you're not expected to do this alone—this should be a shared decision made together with your key partners and stakeholders, in the spirit of just co-governance. This phase usually will include:

- **The co-creation and co-design** of the solution, together with both internal and external stakeholders.
- **Collecting insights and providing feedback** to the design and the multi-departmental working team.
- **Presenting the final design** to all stakeholders involved, to gather any final feedback and ensure transparency and continued engagement. This includes explaining why certain ideas could not be integrated, if that's the case.

This is a learning-oriented and circular process, based on feedback, reflection, and collaboration. This will ensure that your NbS is environmentally effective and socially meaningful. In sum, just co-governance of NbS here can ensure that your NbS:

- **Reflects local needs and desires**, fostering acceptance, satisfaction and stewardship.
- **Builds trust among stakeholders**, improving cooperation and reducing conflicts or resistance down the line.

- **Integrates diverse forms of knowledge**—from expert to experiential—leading to more creative, context-appropriate, and resilient solutions.
- **Avoids reproducing existing inequalities** by actively including marginalised groups in shaping the intervention and better distributing local benefits.
- **Strengthens local capacity and ownership**, empowering communities to care for and advocate for the NbS over time.
- **Promotes transparency and accountability**, making sure decisions made are clear, inclusive, and open to scrutiny or adjustment.

Ultimately, just co-governance in the planning and design phase lays the groundwork for successful implementation and long-term impact of NbS—making them not only greener, but fairer.

1.2 Co-designing your NbS

This refers to joint efforts with your internal and external stakeholders to define and co-design your NbS. While it often culminates in co-design workshops (though other engagement formats may also be used), it should start with internal discussion in your working group to clarify the project’s scope, technical aspects, and constraints. This way, you can present a clear picture of your project’s feasibility and work together on realistic and achievable solutions. Make sure that all actors know and understand the objectives and constraints of your project (e.g. budget limitations, timeline, technical limitations). This avoids disappointment if some suggestions cannot proceed. You can also select burning questions and needs that you need to bring forward to the external stakeholders.

How to make your co-design activities fair and inclusive depends on your context and capabilities. In some cases, it might mean getting everyone together, in others it might be more suitable to run specific events for different target groups. What is crucial is to create a space where all stakeholders feel comfortable speaking and their voices can be captured. It is also important that they understand that this will most likely require more than one activity. So, if you have a very diverse group of actors, think about how you can facilitate this and remember to record the inputs you are getting. Focus on engaging end users (those who will benefit from and engage with the NbS) as well as the vulnerable groups you identified. You should ensure that the activities are designed in a way that supports those groups’ attendance.

Since it can be challenging to catch everyone’s interest, you might need to develop more than one type of activity to achieve your goals and effectively gather input. Some examples are:

- **Participatory Mapping** – where you map with the local actors green spaces, challenges and opportunities, capturing local knowledge and identifying priority areas.
- **Visioning and Storytelling Exercises** – this could mean imagining how local actors would like the area to look in 10, 20 or 50 years with NbS, or asking them for personal stories connected with NbS. It can help identify long-term vision and desires from the community and foster creative ideas.

- **Priority Setting & Scenario Building** – you can bring forward and compare diverse NbS options, discussing their benefits, trade-offs, feasibility, acceptance and opportunities with the group. In this way, you can easily exclude options that are clearly undesirable and understand the main priorities.
- **Co-design workshops** – organise hands-on activities where the group, from the local community to planners and designers, can sketch or model together NbS ideas. This brings ideas directly with technical expertise, and can be facilitated around maps, photographs, or mock-up models.
- **Role Playing or Serious Games** – simulate decision-making by giving participants different roles than their own, for example, city planner, business owner, resident, etc, and discuss this in relation to the NbS. It can foster participants to look and grasp beyond their perspective, promote creative ideas while accounting for power imbalances in a playful way.
- **Visit to a potential site** – to explore the spatial possibilities with participants, understanding their wishes, areas or functions in need of change, and constraints.

You might combine one creative activity (like visioning, storytelling, or mapping) with one technical activity (like scenario building or potential site visit) to balance imagination with feasibility. Think also about accessible formats, e.g. an info stand at a local festival, where there is no explicit requirement to participate in an activity or share an opinion. These can be valuable to reach people who lack the time or interest to join a more formal event. In JUSTNature, different cities used a mix of co-design workshops, pilot visits, scenario building and drop-in formats.

TOOLKIT 

Tool 7:
Guide to Running a Local Stakeholder Workshop can help you create and set up your own workshops.

STORIES FROM THE FIELD

Co-design Workshops with site plans and site visits in Merano, Italy

The city of Merano developed three co-design workshops in total to transform an open space mostly used as a walk-through zone into an inviting garden. They brought together participants from civil society (majority), the public sector, academia, and industry through outreach efforts via emails and phone calls. The workshop began with an introduction to the JUSTNature project and a presentation and discussion of potential NbS for the site, including a biodiverse show garden and edible plants. The workshop included a site visit, which enabled participants to identify key challenges such as limited access points, traffic safety concerns, and the risk of overloading the small area with too many functions. Small-group discussions around a site plan brought concrete ideas into paper, including traffic calming, improved access to a water canal, a “Snack Park” with berry bushes, native planting to boost biodiversity, an edible garden and comfortable seating. The workshop sparked important discussions about the role of green spaces: not only as ecological assets, but also as vital meeting points that promote justice, health, and well-being for local community. For the municipality, the workshop was a learning moment. Residents expressed clear priorities, and the city saw the importance of reaching out, and the need to more effectively engage underrepresented groups in future projects. The process showed how participatory NbS design can surface community needs, spark new ideas, and begin to build the sense of shared stewardship needed for long-term success.



Photo 3, 4 & 5: Co-design Workshops in Merano, Italy.

Nevertheless, many challenges for just NbS co-governance can emerge during the co-design phase. Our experience in JUSTNature shows that, despite efforts, reaching underrepresented or vulnerable groups, as seen in the case of Merano can still be difficult. Engaging children also presents its own challenges, since their interests and attention spans differ from those of adults. Similarly, people who are not native speakers of the local language might need complex concepts to be presented in simpler ways. However, there are ways forward: people from your interdepartmental team might be able to help you by offering diverse facilitation expertise and schools and teachers can be valuable partners for engaging children. Unusual or underrepresented actors may also be reached through unusual but creative methods that invite broader participation.

STORIES FROM THE FIELD

Door-to-door surveys and collaboration with Advisory Boards in Leuven, Belgium

After early co-design workshops, the Leuven team realised they needed to work harder to reach beyond the 'usual suspects' for their temporary street redesign.

First, they collaborated with a social worker to identify local vulnerable groups and then conducted door-to-door surveys to gather their feedback. This turned out to be an effective way of reaching people who didn't attend workshops; gathering perspectives that might otherwise have been missed. While time-consuming, door-to-door conversations were less time consuming than expected, allowed the team to access more useful local knowledge, constructive criticism, and may have contributed ultimately to stronger support for the intervention.

Next, the team reached out to several existing advisory boards to make the NbS design both inclusive and accessible. Input was gathered from the boards for nature and biodiversity, mobility, cultural heritage, and especially accessibility (representing people with physical disabilities, hearing or vision impairment, and on the spectrum). The accessibility board was consulted multiple times for feedback on the design of the NbS and also visited the site. These exchanges highlighted concrete needs such as higher borders around green areas to guide safe walking paths, adaptations to reduce sensory overload for people on the spectrum, and more thoughtful placement of paths and seating. Their feedback is now being translated into the street's longer term redesign and will inform design principles for future projects.

1.3 Collect insights and provide feedback

Now that you have started co-designing your NbS, you need to think about what to do with all the information you are gathering. While this may sound straightforward, several challenges often arise—from small technical issues, such as illegible handwriting, to more complex questions, such as whose needs should be prioritised.

To address these challenges in a just way, it helps to structure the process from the beginning. Think about the following:

Systematise your data – Digitise notes and feedback as soon as possible after meetings or events, and use shared templates or software (e.g., spreadsheets, transcription tools, or survey platforms) to avoid losing meaning due to poor handwriting or fragmented documentation. Ensure to distinguish between ideas coming from your identified vulnerable group(s), and those coming from groups that might be more dominant.

Categorise inputs – Group ideas and needs into themes (e.g., location, NbS type, accessibility, biodiversity, safety, aesthetics). This helps identify overlaps and recurring priorities across stakeholders.

Clarify criteria for prioritising ideas – Before making decisions, agree with your working group on transparent criteria, such as feasibility, impact, urgency, and benefit to vulnerable groups. Alignment with project goals will also be a major factor, but an adaptive process will ideally also remain open to emerging needs and interests that may

TOOLKIT



Use our **NbS Evaluation Matrix (Tool 8)** to evaluate your proposed designs according to defined criteria.

Our **Learning Log Template (Tool 6)** can help guide self-reflection individually or with colleagues.

not have been known earlier on. Consider also what to do if you encounter conflicting ideas among the stakeholder groups and who to prioritise. How to do this depends highly on your context and focus, but you can explore with quotas (e.g., ensuring that vulnerable groups' needs are always reflected), weighted scoring systems (e.g., giving more weight to feasibility or long-term impact), or percentage-based representation (e.g., balancing community, technical, and political inputs proportionally). This can be decided with your interdepartmental group, or even with your external stakeholders. Remember that just co-governance of NbS does not mean satisfying every interest, but striving for fairness, inclusion, and transparency in collective decisions.

Document decisions – no matter what you decide, clearly record how decisions were made, why certain needs were prioritised, why some suggestions were not taken up, and which suggestions were left to be addressed in the future, so you can show accountability for the process.

Report the decisions to your design team and carefully review the plans for your NbS intervention(s) with them, incorporating their feedback.

Communicate decisions and the reasons for them also to participants who have provided input at workshops, through surveys or however you engaged them. This might be through a slide show at your next workshop, a poster, or an email update, if you have collected email addresses. Don't forget to thank all the participants for their engagement and time.

By systematically collecting, prioritising, and feeding back insights, you turn diverse inputs into a clear, productive and fair foundation for the next stages of your NbS.



Don't forget to evaluate your progress, and your actions towards just co-governance! Every engagement activity should include an evaluation component (e.g. surveying participants).

At the end of the design phase, meet with your working group to reflect on how things went. You might want to use some of the self-reflection questions in our Learning Log.

2 IMPLEMENTATION PHASE

STORIES FROM THE FIELD

JUSTNature design evaluation and final workshop in Leuven, Belgium

In the case of Leuven, feedback was systematically collected continuously via emails, phone calls, and street-level interactions, resulting in over written 110 contributions and integrated throughout the co-design of the Meunierstraat pilot. A survey after the final design was developed complemented this process with about 105 answers, as well as a second round of door-to-door conversations. All this information was fed back into the design team, shaping both the pilot and broader NbS planning in the city.

At the end of the co-design phase a final workshop was held where project partners and designers presented the updated plans, explained how community input had influenced the process, and invited final comments. This participatory and responsive approach proved highly effective: the pilot was widely accepted and stakeholders expressed strong support. The circular participatory approach was credited as key to the design success.

While the spatial planning and design phase is highly important, co-governance does not have to stop there. In practice, the level of emphasis on each phase can differ depending on the context and project. In our experience, in some cases—like the city of Chania, where a green wall with specific technical requirements was predefined—the co-design phase was more limited in scope, while later phases such as implementation and activation become more critical.

2.1 What happens in this phase and why does it matter

During the implementation phase, your nature-based intervention becomes a physical reality. This phase usually includes the following steps:

- **Procurement of a contractor to construct the intervention (which may involve preparing tender documents, advertising or inviting potential contractors, evaluation of tender submissions, and appointing the successful contractor),**
- **Preparation of a contract for the construction works,**
- **Obtaining necessary approvals (e.g. building permit),**
- **Construction (including management of the budget and dealing with any variations to the design),**
- **Monitoring and rectification of defects,**
- **Handover.**

The implementation phase is perhaps the most challenging phase for co-governance. Procurement, construction and associated approvals are typically 'top-down' tasks led by a project manager, with specific rules and norms in place, and opportunities to make these more collaborative may not be obvious. Certain procurement regulations may prohibit or restrict collaboration, e.g. rules that prevent the contractor and client from discussing the project during the tender period (usually in place to prevent one candidate from obtaining an unfair advantage – important for the legitimacy of the process) at the same time limit the ability to address potential misunderstandings, or for candidates to contribute to improving the project specifications. There may also be some risks involved in engaging non-professionals in construction, e.g. injuries, poor quality work, or unclear responsibilities for fixing defects. Introducing co-governance in the implementation phase starts with recognising these limitations and being mindful of the regulatory environment specific to your city administration. However, collaborating in this phase also offers potential benefits, making the construction process smoother and leading to a better result (see more below).

2.2 Who to involve

- **Potential contractors for the building works**
- **Representatives of active groups at your intervention site**
- **End-users at your intervention site**

2.3 How to enable just co-governance in the implementation phase?

• Actively recruit expert knowledge before formal procurement

- › Actively engage potential contractors in an open discussion prior to the formal tendering phase, to ensure that project specifications are clear and complete, that budget is sufficient and that new ideas are able to enter the information flow early enough to be actioned.
- › **Benefits:** This can help address the risk that specifications or budget are inadequate, or that costly changes arise only during construction.

• Go public (legitimate/empowering)

- › Run public tender processes where possible. Invited tender processes reduce transparency and make it more difficult for newcomers to win projects. Also, make sure your tender is very complete in terms of collaborations and specifies the needs and conditions very well, to reduce potential confusion. The tender can make sure the process is just.
- › **Benefits:** This can help reduce the risk of complaints about special treatment and widens the pool of potential collaborators.

• Get hands on (empowering)

- › Discuss with community leaders at your intervention site which parts of the construction process might be interesting and meaningful for end-users to engage in – e.g. while some construction activities may demand professional expertise, planting shrubs and trees may be an option. Define age groups and any special needs. Make sure these activities are broadly outlined in the tender specifications and make time to define with the selected contractor a detailed procedure for engagement that is safe and age-appropriate.
- › **Benefits:** Involving users of a place directly in its physical transformation can a powerful way of fostering ownership of the intervention and its care later on. It may also equip participants with new skills.

• Be available (responsive)

- › The problems that arise during the construction phase may directly affect the community at your site or nearby; a typical example in Leuven was basements filling with water. Make sure the community can reach you during the construction phase, and that you have a system in place to address problems (e.g. staff to handle complaints and/or to check the construction site).
- › **Benefits:** Incidents like this can't always be avoided, but being available and responding quickly will reduce their impact and avoid negative feelings developing that may increase opposition to your project.



Make sure to conduct evaluation rounds to collect feedback from as many participants as possible.

Tender specifications should include provisions for participation in debriefing meetings to evaluate the experience of working together. Time for evaluation should be planned into key meetings and events, e.g. the last meeting of the construction phase, to take advantage of everyone being together.

Don't forget about your roadmap! Do your objectives remain valid or need adjusting, because new information has come to light? Did any new actions come up?

STORIES FROM THE FIELD

Implementing with kids

At the St Anna primary and secondary schools in Munich, kids and teenagers were engaged in the implementation phase through two action days in July 2023, before the summer break. The activities had to be kept simple, so as to manage risk and work with the time frame usually available for a typical teaching unit (45 minutes). Other activities included weaving willow branches into the fence surrounding the school, and painting planter boxes.

When primary school kids involved in these activities were interviewed over a year later, they recalled it as a positive experience and cited different reasons, ranging from learning something new, to getting the chance to see something really being built, suggesting it was an impactful experience in a range of ways. Crucial to the success of such an effort is to engage a staff member at the school in advance to liaise with other teachers and mobilise their classes. In this case, dates were fixed about three weeks in advance and with the help of one contact person at each school, however the experience shows that internal organisation can be time-consuming and is best managed by a small team. It's also important to consider and agree in advance on who will conduct a quality check and maintain built elements when non-skilled labour is involved, to avoid defects arising.



Photo 6: Kids at Munich's St Anna school were engaged in creating the intervention, through activities such as weaving willow branches.

3 MANAGEMENT PHASE

3.1 What happens in this phase and what does it mean for co-governance?

The management (or operation) phase is where your earlier investments in planning, design and implementation are tested in practice. This phase offers huge potential for co-governance, because now there is something tangible in place, which is likely to spark a reaction from the community nearby – whether curiosity or irritation! This is a great opportunity to capitalise on interest by engaging the local community in caring for the NbS.

In the operation phase, just collaborative governance means that the municipality shares responsibility for maintenance, management, and activation with end users of the space, in ways that should be fair, inclusive, and supportive, not creating a burden for those engaged. This is important because:

- Your NbS is likely to flourish if cared for and accepted by its users and less to fall into neglect or vandalism.
- Citizens engaged in management and care are likely to feel a sense of ownership, which builds trust in the municipality and improves long-term stewardship.
- Partnerships with non-governmental organisations and end users, including vulnerable groups, can help ease the burden on municipal budgets and staff by sharing responsibilities for long-term maintenance.
- On the other hand, if spaces are not properly maintained, cared for, and actively used, they risk falling into neglect and even being vandalised, which may mean costs for repairs, re-investment, and re-engagement to make the space attractive again. • Engaging locals in the actual maintenance of the NbS can build capacity (e.g. gardening skills) – especially for technically demanding solutions like green roofs and walls.

3.2 Who to involve?

- Municipal department responsible for maintenance,
- Local neighbourhood bodies: e.g., district committee,
- End users (e.g. people living nearby, or known to have an active role at the site),
- Local organisations with strong community ties – such as schools, NGOs, sports and other local clubs, cultural associations, and overall community associations which can mobilise participants and connect harder-to-reach groups,
- Local experts (e.g. with gardening skills or biodiversity knowledge to help in training others).

3.3 How to enable just co-governance in the implementation phase?

- **Clarify roles**

Define what the city will do in this phase (e.g. pruning, mowing, heavy maintenance) and what citizens can be responsible for (e.g. watering, cleaning, informing about repairs needed). Communicate potential benefits they could get (e.g. organising events, sharing ownership), but also expected workload. This avoids misunderstandings and keeps participation fair.

- **Link activities to people's needs**

Show how participation can be an opportunity that connects to daily challenges. For example, job-seeking graduates in a field related to NbS can gain practical experience for their CV, retirees can build social connections, and families can access safe, engaging spaces for children.

- **Make participation accessible**

Consider the access requirements of different target groups (e.g. municipal staff, teachers, kids, local communities etc.) in selecting formats (workshop, tour, online or offline), as well as timing (during the school or working day, after-hours or weekend), and other barriers to participation (e.g. cost). In Leuven, providing childcare during meetings enabled parents, especially mothers, to participate more actively, leading to richer and more diverse discussions.

- **Provide resources**

Support participation by offering training, small funds, tools, or meeting spaces. Where possible, cooperate with or support civil society organisations already connected to end user groups, so they can take on coordination roles more effectively.

- **Recognise contributions**

Value volunteer efforts visibly. Use signage (e.g. "This park is cared for with the help of..."), certificates, or public acknowledgments. Consider establishing an annual award to celebrate outstanding contributions or titles to recognise roles (e.g. Green Wall Community Manager).

- **Plan continuity**

Volunteer engagement often declines over time as life circumstances change. To avoid losing momentum, design models where roles remain in place even if individuals rotate out - for example, by engaging schools, associations, cooperatives or community networks rather than relying solely on individuals. Also, don't assume that you will find volunteers to undertake maintenance. Make sure you have a back-up plan!

We created '**action sheets**' to provide inspiration on four topics related to co-governance in the management phase:

- **Expanding access to green space**
- **Building capacity**
- **Activating the space**
- **Changing management responsibilities**



Evaluate progress in this phase by, for example, setting up regular meetings or check-ins with citizen groups to review what works, adapt responsibilities, and address challenges. Use simple tools like surveys, feedback boards, or digital channels to keep communication open.

TOOLKIT



If you want to know more about Nature-building Communities (NbCs), and how to foster one in your municipality, check **Tool 9: Nature-building Community Template**.

For inspiration check out the: [Action Sheets](#)

A school-based nature-building community in Szombathely

In the JUSTNature project, we developed and tested the concept of Nature-Building Communities (NbCs). These are open, voluntary governance networks where members collectively take action to develop, restore, and manage urban ecosystems through nature-based solutions¹. NbCs can be created at a city-wide scale, connecting actors across different areas, or at a site-specific level, bringing together those directly engaged with a particular place or project. The latter proved especially valuable in JUSTNature during the operational phase of NbS implementation.

In Szombathely, the municipality fostered an alliance linked to a school-based NbS, made up of teachers, pupils, and parents, and integrated into extracurricular activities. This was achieved by linking the NbS project with existing initiatives—such as a DIY club and cooking club—and engaging interested community members. The NbC emerged organically, with a shared commitment among students, teachers, parents, and school staff to collaboratively maintain and activate the green areas. Motivation stemmed from both personal and educational benefits, including hands-on learning, outdoor activities, and climate education. Herbs and vegetables from the raised beds are being used in lessons and school events, reinforcing connections between environmental care and everyday learning.

While formal ownership and decision-making authority remain with the municipality and the School District, the NbC has autonomy over daily operational tasks. Major modifications or events still require approval from the headmaster or School District. Broader and more complex green space maintenance is carried out by the municipal park management personnel, who face ongoing challenges such as irrigation efficiency, citizen feedback management, and balancing regulatory constraints with sustainability goals—areas where collaboration with the NbC has already proven supportive.



Photo 7: The school Nature-building Community planting raised beds, in Szombathely, Hungary.

References

- 1 Zamudio, Mariel, et al. D7.3: A Framework for the Governance of Nature-Building Communities, Deliverable 7.3 (JUSTNature, forthcoming).

PART 5: TOOLKIT

- 1 STAKEHOLDER MAPPING DATABASE
- 2 DIGITAL WHITEBOARD FOR TARGETED COMMUNICATION WITH STAKEHOLDERS
- 3 GUIDE TO MAKING OBJECTIVES SMART
- 4 DIGITAL WHITEBOARD TO CREATE A THEORY OF CHANGE
- 5 INDICATOR CARDS
- 6 LEARNING LOG TEMPLATE
- 7 GUIDE TO RUNNING A LOCAL STAKEHOLDER WORKSHOP
- 8 NBS EVALUATION MATRIX
- 9 NATURE-BUILDING COMMUNITY DESIGN KIT
- 10 GUIDE TO RUNNING A RESOURCE MAPPING WORKSHOP

TOOL 1

STAKEHOLDER MAPPING DATABASE

AUTHORS: MAGDALENA JANZIC, FRANCESCA FERRARA
AND NINA HORSTMANN (PROSPEX INSTITUTE)

Stakeholder Mapping Database

1 WHAT IT IS

Stakeholder mapping is used to know whom to involve in any planning activities and stakeholder engagement around your municipal project. One creates a database of people, organisations, and groups in your community. This may include their contact information for future engagement, which needs to be handled confidentially within your team, if so.

2 PURPOSE

Use the database to:

- Identify who needs to be involved in your project.
- Understand who has influence over decisions.
- Find actors that are often overlooked or excluded.
- Ensure a balanced representation across different community groups.
- Plan targeted outreach and track engagement over time.

3 WHEN TO APPLY IT

Begin when starting your project. The database is a living document meant to be updated regularly throughout your project.

Keep in mind to...

Start early: Complete your first stakeholder mapping before beginning community engagement.

Keep it current: Update after major events, and when you notice gaps in representation of certain groups or categories.

4 HOW TO APPLY IT

| STEP 1:

Set Up Your Categories - Create categories that give you an overview of what you need to involve each person. For example, you might want to know their contact details, profession or expertise, level of influence over public decisions, current inclusion status, and justice segments - such as age, gender, socioeconomic factors, or access barriers.

| STEP 2:

Find Your Stakeholders - Start with the already known stakeholders, then dig deeper. Ask who benefits, who is affected, and who is missing. Ask your stakeholders who else could be included. Get in touch with the community centres, schools, neighborhood groups, local businesses, and online platforms.

| STEP 3:

Organise and Analyse - Build your database with your defined categories, plus other relevant fields e.g. engagement history and accessibility needs. Look for patterns: Who is already included and who is not? Which group needs to be represented? Which communities need targeted outreach?

| STEP 4:

Use Your Database - Match participants to goals for co-governance, including diverse representation or empowering vulnerable groups. Make sure to include those whose involvement has been limited in the past. Balance influence levels, prioritise underrepresented groups, and track relationships between them. Define targeted outreach strategies with our Digital whiteboard for targeted communication with stakeholders.

| **STEP 5:**

Keep It Updated - Add new contacts after each activity, note participation, and update info where needed. Review regularly to identify gaps and spot new stakeholders.

Practical Tips:

- Start with key stakeholders and expand gradually.
- Ask your stakeholder how they want to be contacted.
- If collecting personal data, explain how you will use it and offer opt-out options.
- Keep personal data secure and follow privacy regulations.
- Actively seek people outside your usual networks.
- Involve multiple team members to access diverse communities.
- Focus on building relationships.

Access the editable database template [HERE](#).

This is a template that includes basic information you should collect and record, but feel free to expand on this based on your needs.

Stakeholder Mapping Worksheet

Use this worksheet to identify and organise stakeholders for your project. Regularly review and update when needed.

Stakeholder Name	Contact Info	Role / Expertise	Connection to Project	Current Inclusion Status	Justice Considerations	Preferred Contact Method

TOOL 2

DIGITAL WHITEBOARD FOR TARGETED COMMUNICATION WITH STAKEHOLDERS

AUTHORS: EDWARD DUCA, EMMA CLARKE AND KAREN FIORINI (UNIVERSITY OF MALTA)

Digital whiteboard for targeted communication with stakeholders

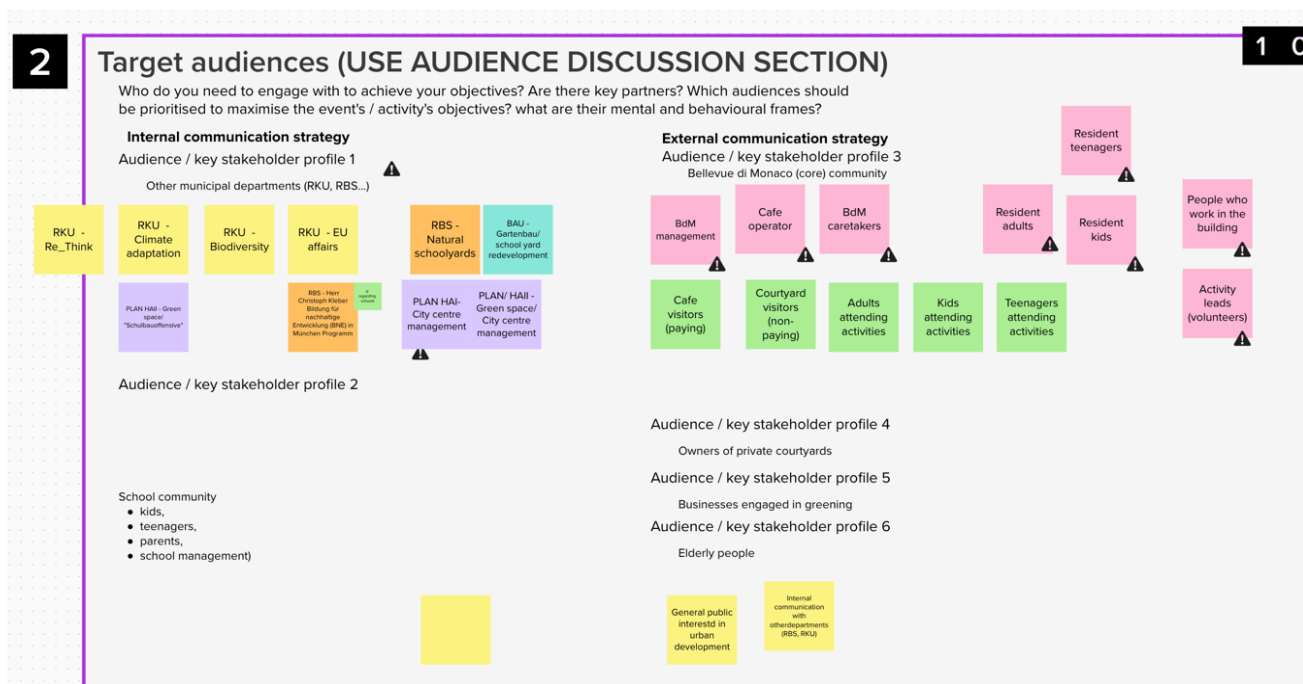


Figure 11: Example of the Digital whiteboard for targeted communication with stakeholders from the city of Munich, Germany.

1 WHAT IT IS

This digital whiteboard helps you define and analyse your audiences, identify communication gaps, and shape targeted communication plans. Use it to connect NbS benefits with the needs, values and concerns of specific groups, then translate them into dissemination, communication, and engagement activities.

2 PURPOSE

Use this tool to:

- Identify priority audiences and understand their motivations, barriers, and expectations.
- Match NbS benefits (environmental, economic, social, and health-related) with what matters to each group.

- Choose communication messages, channels, and activities that are relevant and realistic.
- Build a shared understanding across municipal departments, project partners, and community stakeholders.

3 WHEN TO APPLY IT

Cities should use this tool:

- After you have developed your first list of stakeholders (See also Stakeholder Mapping Database).
- Before launching any communication or engagement campaign.
- During periodic reflections, especially if earlier communication efforts have not reached certain groups.
- When preparing replication or scaling plans..

Keep in mind to...

Use the review feature to reflect on your campaign, e.g. on a yearly basis, to ensure its relevance and effectiveness.

4 HOW TO APPLY IT

First familiarise yourself with the [Mural Board](#).

| **STEP 1: Set up a working group.**

Include city staff, local organisations, community representatives and, if possible, planners or designers connected to the NbS intervention. Access the Mural board, read the first section and follow the instructions according to your needs. It's a good idea to already know the aims and objectives you want to achieve.

| **STEP 2: Identify your audiences.**

Use the first area of the Mural board to list all possible groups: residents, shop owners, schools, commuters, vulnerable communities, NGOs, technical departments, etc. Then prioritise the most important ones.

| **STEP 3: For each selected group, fill in the templates that ask:**

- What do they value?
- What concerns might they have about the NbS?
- What benefits matter most to them?
- What barriers could prevent engagement?
- What motivates participation?

These reflections form the core of the audience-centred approach.

| **STEP 4: Match messages to needs.**

Use the next section to draft messages that speak directly to each group. The tool encourages simple, concise statements: "What is the key idea this audience needs to hear?"

| **STEP 5: Select channels and activities.**

Based on each audience's needs and wants, choose suitable communication formats—neighbourhood meetings, school activities, press articles, Instagram posts, street posters, WhatsApp groups, pop up parks, walking sessions, co-design workshops, etc. Remember to plan who will lead each action, how often communication should occur, and what resources are needed.

| **STEP 6: Yearly review and refine with stakeholders.**

The Mural board has a second part that allows you to review the communication plan by checking whether the messages and channels are appropriate, adjusting languages, and coming up with revised engagement activities and marketing plans.

Access the Mural Board [HERE](#).

TOOL 3

GUIDE TO MAKING OBJECTIVES SMART

AUTHOR: ELEANOR CHAPMAN (TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY OF MUNICH)

Guide to Making Objectives SMART

1 WHAT IT IS

An overview of practical steps to help review one or more existing objectives that you have defined for your project, with a view to making them SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound). The steps are accompanied by a checklist for each SMART criterion, in the form of guiding questions that can be used to direct a critical reflection individually or in a group.

2 PURPOSE

Defining objectives is common to a project setting and probably nothing new to you. Some project teams are handed an objective to work with, while others have more flexibility to work this out together. Either way, doing a critical review of your objective(s) has three key benefits:

- It's important that your objective(s) are defined clearly and precisely, as otherwise it will be hard to work out what should be done to reach them and how to know if it works (also see Digital whiteboard to create a Theory of Change). The steps and checklist here will help check whether your objective(s) are fit for purpose or need some refining.
- If used in a group setting, these materials can help clarify expectations in your project team, and make sure everyone understands (and ideally supports) what you're working towards.
- Once you have SMART objectives, you'll be in a better position to communicate about what you're doing to other colleagues and potential partners.

3 WHEN TO APPLY IT

- Early in your project development, after setting up your collaborative environment, and before the spatial planning and design phase.
- Ideally as part of developing a roadmap for your project.
- **Keep in mind to...**

Consult the Digital whiteboard to create a Theory of Change, for more on how to integrate your SMART objectives into a strategic roadmap. It's crucial to think about the reality or problem you want to address for each of your objectives.

4 HOW TO APPLY IT

The steps and checklist on the next pages can be used to for critical reflection alone or in a group. We recommend a group discussion, to foster a shared understanding of and support for your direction as a team.

Download the checklist [HERE](#).

FOLLOW THE STEPS

STEP 1 **Review Existing Objectives**

Review all defined objectives related to co-governance and socio-ecological challenges. For each objective, note which departments, organisations or groups need to be involved in achieving it.

STEP 2 **Map Relevant Stakeholders**

Identify a list of contact persons from these departments or organisations and indicate which objectives each person is connected to. One person may be linked to several objectives.

STEP 3 **Set Up Conversations**

Arrange a short conversation with each contact person, ideally face-to-face, otherwise by phone or online meeting. Conversations can also be held in small groups.

STEP 4 **Discuss the Objective**

Begin each conversation by explaining the purpose of the exercise. Present the objective that is most relevant for the person or department. Use the SMART checklist to explore what change is needed, why it matters, and which obstacles or opportunities influence it.

STEP 5 **Refine the Objective**

After the discussions, refine each objective using the SMART checklist. Where possible, integrate concrete links to existing local initiatives, work processes or policies. For each objective, write a short "reality statement" describing the current situation that is aimed to be changed.

STEP 6 **Confirm Understanding**

Share the revised objectives and reality statements with the people consulted and ask for brief feedback to confirm that the information is accurate or to identify what may need adjustment.

STEP 7 **Document the Outcomes**

Summarise the results in a table (see below) that lists, for each objective, the reality statement, the draft objective and the revised SMART objective. Use this table as a basis for further project planning and communication with the team and partners.

CHECK-LIST FOR MAKING OBJECTIVES SMART

This checklist can be used for an individual critical review of project objectives or as a guide for structured discussions with colleagues, following the steps outlined above.

S

SPECIFIC

What outcome do you expect? (benefit, learning or other effects)

.....
What exactly do you want to change about the current reality?

.....
For whom do you want to make this change?

.....
By how much or in what direction do you plan this change?

.....
Who is involved in making this change?

M

MEASURABLE

Based on what indicators or metrics can the demonstrated progress be measured?

A

ACHIEVABLE / AMBITIOUS

.....
What change can you realistically facilitate with the project duration?
.....

How can you connect short- or mid-term achievements with longer term change?

Are there wider policy agendas or strategic objectives that you can connect this objective to?



RELEVANT

How is it aligned with the overall Project goal, and to existing local initiatives?



TIME-BOUND

What is a realistic time frame to start and achieve this defined objective?

COMMENTS, NOTES, OR QUESTIONS:

Draft objective What should be achieved through the project?	Reality What existing challenges and needs does this objective address?	New SMART objective How would you redefine your objective after your SMART review?	Site level / City level Will this change things at the level of the site (NbS intervention) or more broadly?

TOOL 4

DIGITAL WHITEBOARD TO CREATE A THEORY OF CHANGE

AUTHOR: ELEANOR CHAPMAN (TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY OF MUNICH)

Digital whiteboard to create a Theory of Change

1 WHAT IT IS

A Theory of Change (or roadmap) plays a role as a basis for effective communication between the people involved in your project, especially your working group. It outlines a shared vision and the steps to get there. A 'change pathway' or strategic roadmap can be act as a visual summary of how you plan to get from A to B, which will aid internal planning and progress tracking, as well as help to explain to colleagues and other stakeholders why certain things need to be done.

2 PURPOSE

This digital whiteboard gives you a template to set up your roadmap (or change pathway)..

3 WHEN TO APPLY IT

- Early in your project development, after setting up your collaborative environment, and before the spatial planning and design phase.
- Ideally, in connection with reviewing your project objectives and in collaboration with the other actors (internal and external) of your project.

4 HOW TO APPLY IT

You can use the Miro board template to create your team's roadmap, or you can use its elements to manually set up a working session with paper and markers. Either approach can be used for a workshop-style discussion, where

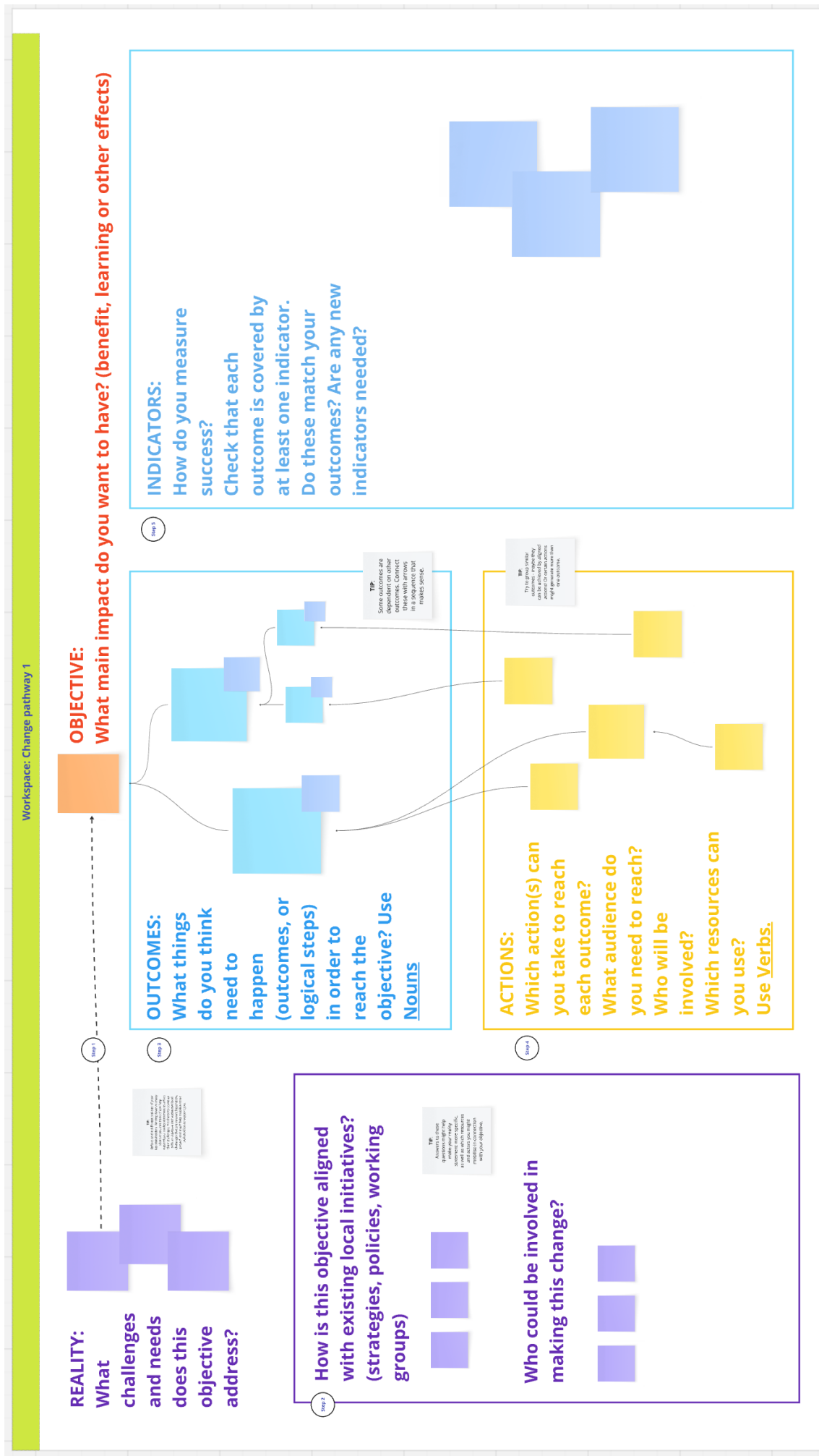
you display the template using a projector or on flipcharts paper.

Keep in mind to...

- Consult the Guide to making objectives SMART.
- Allow at least 2 hours per objective, and you may need 2-3 sessions before all details have been worked out.
- Once your roadmap is in place, it will work best if you periodically come back to it as a team and check in on your progress.

You can find a sample of the Miro board below and the link to the digital version [HERE](#).

Figure 12: Example of the use of the Digital whiteboard to create a Theory of Change.



TOOL 5

INDICATOR CARDS

AUTHOR: BEATRIZ KAUARK FONTES (TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY OF MUNICH) AND TANNYA PICO (INSTITUTE FOR URBAN EXCELLENCE).

Indicator Cards

1 WHAT IT IS

These cards or reference sheets describe specific indicators for co-governing NbS for quantitative and/or qualitative measurement of your progress. Each card focuses on one indicator and provides key steps to collect and interpret data.

2 PURPOSE

These cards can help make monitoring and evaluation simpler and more consistent, especially across multiple teams or cities. They can help you explain indicators to others quickly (for example, each card can be printed or displayed in workshops) and support participatory monitoring – involving other actors in the monitoring of your NbS co-governance, as stakeholders can help select and interpret the indicators together.

3 WHEN TO APPLY IT

Use your Indicator Cards as soon as you have identified your objectives and activities. This allows you to plan from the beginning how you will measure and track your progress, ensuring that your monitoring aligns with your goals from the start.

4 HOW TO APPLY IT

| STEP 1 - Pre-identify what matters:

Together with your team and stakeholders, revisit your objectives and outcomes to decide which aspects of NbS co-governance you want to monitor (e.g., inclusiveness, collaboration, transparency). Explore the available Indicator Cards and, as a group, identify which ones best reflect your shared priorities and context.

| STEP 2 - Co-select feasible indicators:

With your team and partners review the pre-selected cards collaboratively. Discuss the methodologies described on each card to assess which indicators are realistic to apply, given your collective capacities, resources, and timeframe. Prioritise those that are both meaningful and feasible – ensuring everyone understands and agrees on what will be measured and why.

| STEP 3 - Assign cards:

Link the selected indicators to your different project activities to identify when each should be applied. Assign clear responsibilities for each indicator – deciding who will collect data, who will interpret it, and how results will be shared. This fosters engagement, shared responsibility, learning, and helps leverage everyone's strengths and capacities.

| STEP 4 - Use and update:

Use the selected cards throughout your project to collect data and reflect on progress. Encourage all involved actors to share observations, challenges, and learning. Revisit and update your indicators as the project evolves, ensuring that your monitoring process remains inclusive, and relevant to everyone.

You can download your indicators cards [HERE](#).

UNDERSTANDING THE CARDS

1
#1 Coherence of existing policies

Empowering
Legitimate

DESKTOP REVIEW

Are concepts in existing and proposed policies related to NbS clearly defined?

Are existing and proposed policies related to NbS written in plain language that is easy to understand?

②
④ 0 / 6

1- Front side

① Number and name of indicator

② Qualities of indicator

Adaptive

Collaborative

Empowering

Legitimate

Responsive

Research Methods

DESKTOP REVIEW

INTERVIEW

SURVEY

OBSERVATION

③ Description of indicator

④ Additional information / Checklist

5
#1 Coherence of existing policies

Identify existing policies related to NbS

Identify proposed policies related to NbS

For each document, check whether key terms are defined

Check a text sample for readability using the Flesch-Reading-Ease scoring system

Record average scores per document

Based on review, select documents needing improvement

2- Back side

⑤ Checklist

TOOL 6

LEARNING LOG TEMPLATE

AUTHOR: BEATRIZ KAUARK FONTES (TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY OF MUNICH)

Learning Log Template

1 WHAT IT IS

A Learning Log is a living document for recording and reflecting on each of your activities with the aim of compiling all experiences in one place, check what worked well, what didn't and noting what needs to be improved. Our template also provides space to document how you are measuring progress and to record your results, giving you a clear overview of your process in one place.

2 PURPOSE

The Learning Log Template aims to foster a culture of reflection, learning, and knowledge exchange throughout your co-governance process; while helping you stay on track with your objectives and goal. By capturing insights in real time, it enables you to identify challenges early, celebrate successes, and build collective learning that strengthens future actions, decision-making, and collaboration. It can also serve as a foundation for reporting, evaluation, and sharing lessons learned.

3 WHEN TO APPLY IT

Start using the Learning Log at the very beginning of your NbS project and update it regularly throughout all phases – planning and design; implementation; and management. It works best when used collaboratively, with all key actors contributing their perspectives after each major activity, meeting, or milestone.

HOW TO APPLY IT

| **STEP 1 - Review and adapt:**

Start by reviewing the template and adjusting it to fit your project context. You can add, remove, or rename sections so the log reflects your team's specific processes and objectives.

Feel free to translate it into your own language so that more colleagues and partners can collaborate effectively.

| **STEP 2 - Define frequency:**

You can add entries at any time, but consistency is key. Ideally, fill it in right after your activities or planning sessions. At a minimum, update the log every six months or after major milestones. Gather input from others involved in the project so your entries capture multiple perspectives. Be honest – there are no right or wrong answers.

| **STEP 3 - Reflect:**

Reflect openly on both successes and challenges to assess progress, learn from experience, and improve your efforts toward your objectives. Review your Learning Log entries together with your team and stakeholders, identifying strengths, weaknesses, and what still needs to be done. This reflection can take place every six months, annually, or after major project milestones – depending on your timeline.

| **STEP 4 - Use and update:**

Use what you've learned to adjust your actions, strategies, or collaborations. The Learning Log should evolve as your project evolves, helping you and your partners continuously improve. Feel free to modify the template so it stays relevant and useful throughout your project.

| **STEP 5 - Repeat:**

Regularly repeat the process of recording, reflecting, and adapting. This ongoing cycle turns the Learning Log into a powerful tool for continuous improvement and collective learning until the project ends.

On the next page you'll find a printable version (recommended in A3), and a digital version [HERE](#).

Learning Log table – Your Actions towards co-governance (this table is in a A3, so if you will print it, please do so in this size).

Obj. #	1) What actions are planned, in progress or have been completed for this objective? (In this field, please add all actions you conducted, writing their name and a quick description)	2) What is the status of the action(s)? (Completed, in progress, or planned?)	3) Who did you engage with, and how did this collaboration/participation go? What (if any) incentives did collaborators or participants receive to be involved? (For whom, think about organising team, targeted participants, actual participants. As incentive think about payment but also voucher, networking, snacks)	4) What were the outcomes (good or bad) and how did they contribute to your co-governance objective – or not? (e.g. skills development, new working relationship, management taken over by a new group, conflict between participants)	5) What went well with this action and what did not go so well? What would you improve next time? (think about lessons learned and room for improvement)	6) How did you measure the impact of this action?
Action 1:						
Action 2:						
<p>How are you measuring your progress towards this objective? (ex. recording the number of stakeholders participating in the workshops with their self-identified background, satisfaction of local actors, number of people signing up to participate in more meetings, numb.</p>						

TOOL 7

GUIDE TO RUNNING A LOCAL STAKEHOLDER WORKSHOP

AUTHORS: MAGDALENA JANZIC, FRANCESCA FERRARA
AND NINA HORSTMANN (PROSPEX INSTITUTE)

Guide to running a local stakeholder workshop

1 WHAT IT IS

A Local Stakeholder Workshop brings community members together to discuss, plan, and shape municipal projects. These are structured meetings where residents, local organisations, businesses, and city staff work together to create solutions. They can be expanded through public community events or pop-up activities to reach more people.

2 PURPOSE

Use stakeholder workshops to ensure that your project serves all community members. Through these workshops you can:

- Help community members understand your project and contribute their ideas in order to gain their support
- Design solutions together with those who will use them, are affected by them or can contribute to them, so that your project results in a lively and cherished space
- Include and consider the voices of those stakeholders who are often left out of city planning, such as children or people using wheelchairs
- Learn what works and what doesn't so that you can optimise and repeat the process in other projects
- Build lasting relationships with engaged community members, to strengthen the trust and support for your future initiatives

3 WHEN TO APPLY IT

Local stakeholder workshops are an engagement format that support the relevance, acceptance and long-term sustainability of your project by making sure that the project development is aligned with community's needs.

An engagement cycle could include 5-6 workshops held at key moments throughout your project:

- Explore and Design – What do we need? What could work here?
- Plan Implementation – Who does what? How do we make this happen?
- Set Up Governance – Who manages this in the long-term? How do we make decisions?
- Plan for Sustainability – How do we fund this? Can we involve local businesses for mutual benefit?
- Evaluate Together – What worked? What did we learn?

4 HOW TO APPLY IT

Before each workshop:

- List who needs to be there and reach out to underrepresented groups
- Prepare clear agendas and materials everyone can understand
- Arrange logistics, having in mind comfort, safety and accessibility needs

During the workshop:

- Adjust your approach if some voices dominate
- Take clear notes and photos (with permission)

After the workshop:

- Follow-up with the stakeholders and let them know how the discussion will forward
- Show how input shaped decisions
- Keep people informed between workshops
- Thank participants and invite them to stay involved

Throughout your project:

- Connect the same people across multiple workshops when relevant
- Build trust by being transparent about what's possible and what's not
- Focus on building relationships with your local community

Keep in mind....

Match your participants and the group size to the workshop purpose. For example, during the design phase, aim to bring in the residents of the area and community groups – especially those whose voices are rarely heard. For the workshops focused on the governance, involve city officials and institutional partners, ensuring visibility of different interests.

Make Workshops Accessible:

| BY Removing barriers to participation:

- › Choose locations easy to reach by public transport
- › Offer evening or weekend times for working people
- › Provide translation, childcare, or travel reimbursement if needed
- › Use clear language, avoid jargon
- › Notice who speaks most and create space for quieter participants
- › Try different discussion formats (small groups, paired conversations, visual activities)

›

| ADD Flexible Formats When Needed

When you need specific input, or would like to enable access to a particular group, you can add other engagement formats, such as:

- › **Focus Groups:** Gather 8-12 people with shared experiences or expertise for deeper conversation on specific topics
- › **One-on-One Meetings:** Talk directly with key actors (business owners, department heads, technical experts) to build relationships and get detailed input.
- › **Interactive Activities:** Use games, mapping exercises, or role-playing to make participation more engaging and accessible.

You can find a check list for running your own Local Stakeholder Workshop below or access it digitally [HERE](#).

Workshop Planning Checklist

BEFORE THE WORKSHOP

1. Define workshop purpose:

- Outcomes of the workshop:
- Required decisions or inputs:

2. Based on the Stakeholder Mapping database and the purpose of your workshop, identify and invite participants

Stakeholder Group	Specific People/Organizations	Contact Info	Invited	Confirmed
Local residents			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Community groups			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Institutional partners			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Technical experts			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Outreach:

- Reach out to underrepresented groups
- Send invitations with clear purpose and agenda
- Follow up with reminders one week before
- Confirm final attendance 2-3 days before

3. Ensure Accessibility

Location:

- Venue is accessible by public transport
- Wheelchair accessible entrance and facilities
- Adequate parking available
- Safe and well-lit area

Timing:

- Evening option available for working people
- Weekend option considered
- Appropriate duration (2-3 hours)

Support Services Needed:

Service	Required?	Provider/Details	Cost	Confirmed
Translation services	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No			<input type="checkbox"/>
Childcare	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No			<input type="checkbox"/>
Travel reimbursement	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No			<input type="checkbox"/>
Accessible materials (large print, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No			<input type="checkbox"/>
Sign language interpreter	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No			<input type="checkbox"/>

4. Prepare the venue and the materials

Agenda:

- Create clear, jargon-free agenda
- Include timings for each section
- Share with participants in advance

Materials Checklist:

- Registration sheet
- Presentation materials
- Feedback forms
- -----

Documentation:

- Camera/phone for photos (prepare consent forms)
- Note-taking templates prepared

Team Roles Assigned:

Role	Person	Contact	Briefed
Facilitator			<input type="checkbox"/>
Note-taker			<input type="checkbox"/>
Photographer			<input type="checkbox"/>
Greeter/Registration			<input type="checkbox"/>
Timekeeper			<input type="checkbox"/>
Tech support			<input type="checkbox"/>

AFTER THE WORKSHOP

- Send thank you message to all participants
- Share summary of discussion and key outcomes
- Explain how input will be taken on board
- Distribute photos (with permission)
- Process feedback forms

EVALUATION & LEARNING

- What Worked Well:
- What Could Be Improved:
- Lessons for Future Workshops:

TOOL 8

NBS EVALUATION MATRIX

AUTHOR: ELENI GONI (E2ARC)

NbS Evaluation matrix

1 WHAT IT IS

The NbS Evaluation Matrix is an interactive, Excel-based decision-support tool developed within the JUSTNature project to guide the qualitative assessment and prioritisation of NbS. It offers a structured way to compare multiple intervention scenarios by combining two key dimensions:

1. The expected potential of each solution across several justice areas; and
2. Its implementation complexity, considering risks in financial, technical, scheduling, & value aspects.

The tool includes predefined drop-down lists, embedded formulas, and automated calculations to ensure consistency and easy use. Its transparent structure makes the evaluation process clear, traceable, and easy to communicate among different stakeholders..

2 PURPOSE

The main purpose of the NbS Evaluation Matrix is to support municipalities and other actors in making informed, transparent, and participatory decisions when selecting among different NbS design alternatives. By evaluating NbS potential benefits and challenges, the tool helps identify:

- **Quick wins** – easy, low – cost interventions with clear benefits;
- **Strategic initiatives** – complex solutions with high long-term impact; and
- **Options to revisit** – ideas that may require refinement or postponement.

3 WHEN TO APPLY IT

The tool is best used during the concept design and planning phases of NbS development, when several possible interventions or scenarios are being considered. It can also support participatory workshops as a

discussion and co-creation aid, particularly when multiple perspectives or competing interests are involved. By making assessment criteria explicit and comparable, the matrix helps balance expectations with feasibility and enables transparent, evidence-based selection of NbS.

4 HOW TO APPLY IT

The tool follows a three-step process within the Excel workbook:

1. **Assess solution potential** – For each NbS scenario, select the current status (Excellent to Very Poor) and expected impact (Negative to Significant). The tool automatically determines the NbS potential (High, Medium, Low, or To be avoided).
2. **Assess implementation complexity** – evaluate the probability (Very Low to Very High) and impact (Very Low to High) of potential risks across four categories: Financial, Technical, Scheduling, and Value. The tool then calculates the risk significance (Major, Moderate, Minor), used to determine overall complexity.
3. **Prioritize alternatives** – The tool combines the results of Steps 1 and 2 to derive an overall implementation complexity rating (Low / Medium / High). These are automatically plotted in a matrix, visually classifying each NbS option as a 'Quick win', 'Strategic initiative', 'Option to revisit later', or 'To dismiss'. This visualisation helps you interpret trade-offs between impact and feasibility and supports transparent, collaborative prioritization of NbS.

The digital version of the tool is available [HERE](#).

TOOL 9

NATURE-BUILDING COMMUNITY DESIGN KIT

AUTHOR: VIKTOR BUKOVSKI (ABUD-ADVANCED BUILDING AND URBAN DESIGN)

Nature-building Community Design Kit

1 WHAT IT IS

The Nature-building community (NbC) design kit is a list of design questions for the earliest stages of creating autonomous groups who, in partnership with property owners, the municipality, and other relevant stakeholders, can reliably co-develop and co-maintain urban ecosystems.

2 PURPOSE

- Guiding a group of local volunteers and other community members on how to become competent and organized partners to renature cities.
- Help turning early community enthusiasm into concrete action to create and maintain NbS.
- Overcome typical risks and convincing property owners, including the municipality on the viability of local community partnership.
- Supporting creating strong advocacy groups who would have a say in how to renature cities.

3 WHEN TO APPLY IT

- As soon as there is a core group of locals interested in collaborating, volunteering, creating or maintaining urban ecosystems in their area.
- It is more important to use it at the early stages of community development, irrespective of the stages of the physical development of the NbS.
- It can also be used to build capacity in existing neighbourhood organizations.

4 HOW TO APPLY IT

Depending on the place, the culture of cooperation, the kind of people engaged, and the preexisting sense of community, there will be different modes to use the template. Some communities are mature enough to go through the design questions with the help of a consultant on their own. In other cases, the municipality or dedicated NGOs will need to provide incubation for the would-be NbCs and use the design questions to frame a series of workshops. The kit contains five modules but depending on the complexity of the group or that of the NbS, it may be possible to cover multiple in the same session.

You can find the Design kit in the next pages, and access [HERE](#) for more information.

The design kit

Design problem	Guiding questions
Scope	
Resource system	Which ecosystem services by which NbS does the NbC provide and safeguard? What systemic, particularly ecological processes underpin the NbS? What are the boundaries of this system?
Degrees of affectedness	Who is affected and to what degree by the NbS? Who has a stake in the NbS? Which stakeholders are more, which are less powerful? Are there vulnerable social groups to consider?
Purpose	What does the NbC aim to do? What values guide NbC actions?
Architecture	
Roles	Who does what? What different rights and responsibilities are assigned?
Actors	Who needs to be brought to the table? What skills and capacities are required? To what extent are they already available? What are their preexisting relationships?
Structure	What are the different levels of participation? Who are the key peripheral and who are the core actors and roles? How are they engaged? How are different actor groups connected within and into the core?
Value logic	
Incentive system	What motivates each actor? What are the incentives and deterrents that ensure collective choices are adhered to?

Value capture	Which ecosystem services are traded? Under what business model? What other sources of funding are attainable?
Governance	
Leadership model	Who is/are driving, leading the process in the beginning? Is there a core group of reliable figures?
Institutional space	What are the core interactions the NbC should make easier? How can these be grouped into different arenas? What do these arenas need to provide to make core interactions easier?
Operational rules	How are benefits shared? How are responsibilities allocated?
Collective choice rules	How are decisions made? How are they challenged?
Strategy	
Core information pool	What information needs to be monitored to effectively enforce rules? What others to effectively capture value and sustain outcomes? What others to diagnose problems, learn, and adapt? How can all that be obtained?
Incubation	How to grow and retain membership in the beginning? Who are potential and necessary partners, and how to engage them? How to engage with the local public? What are the early learning goals, and how to fulfill them?
Network effects	What are the risks and benefits of growing? What will be easier, what will be harder? What are the key milestones of growth, and what changes at these milestones?

TOOL 10

GUIDE TO RUNNING A RESOURCE MAPPING WORKSHOP

AUTHORS: BEATRIZ KAUARK FONTES AND ELEANOR CHAPMAN (TECHNICAL
UNIVERSITY OF MUNICH)

Guide to running a resource mapping workshop

1 WHAT IT IS

A resource mapping workshop is a participatory reflection exercise designed to help individuals and groups explore how their personal agency has shifted during a project, and how this relates to structural conditions. It invites people to identify the capacities they possess, how these have evolved, and what systemic changes are still needed to ensure lasting impact. This exercise was adapted from the power mapping tool from IDEO.org's Design Kit: <https://www.designkit.org/methods/power-mapping.html>

2 PURPOSE

- **Reflect** on personal capacities (knowledge, skills, confidence, influence) and how these have changed during the project.
- **Recognise** individual and collective contributions to collaborative governance.
- **Link** personal agency to broader structural conditions that support or limit change.
- **Identify** actions for sustaining co-governance practices beyond the project's lifespan.

3 WHEN TO APPLY IT

- Mid- or late-stage of a project, when personal and organisational shifts may have occurred.
- When teams need to make sense of their impact on governance processes.
- As part of a learning, evaluation, or capacity-building event.
- To prepare for strategic discussions about sustainability, institutionalisation, or next steps.

4 HOW TO APPLY IT

Before the session:

- Decide on your format, depending on group size. If you have a large working group and everyone will be involved, split into groups of no more than 3-4 people who are actively reflecting. Make sure you have someone to moderate each group.
- Print materials: tokens in two different colours to represent present and past. You can just print these on different coloured paper.
- Prepare a flipchart for each participant with a "resource spectrum"

During the session:

| STEP 1: Map Current Resources (10 min)

Participants place first set of colored tokens on a spectrum (low to high) to reflect current personal capacities (e.g., confidence, skills, influence).

| STEP 2: Reflect on Changes (20 min)

- Using second set of colored tokens, mark where capacities were at the project's start.
- Facilitate discussion: What changed? How? Why? Capture key points.

| STEP 3: Map Potential Actions (20 min)

- Discuss and identify one key structural change still needed.
- Brainstorm and note concrete actions that could support broader change.

| STEP 4: Report Back (15 min)

Each participant shares one key takeaway, insight, or action to bring forward.

List of Tokens

- 1. Money & Financial Assets** – the ability to mobilise financial resources to support NbS and co-governance initiatives. This includes both direct funding (e.g., grants, budgets, donations) and indirect resources (e.g., in-kind contributions, or financial management skills).
- 2. Perceived & Explicit Permission** – the extent to which you feel you have the formal authorisation and the informal social “license” to introduce new initiatives and gain support for them. Explicit permission refers to formal approvals or recognitions given by your chef, colleagues or institution. Perceived permission, by contrast, relates to your sense of being allowed, accepted, or encouraged to participate and contribute. Both are crucial, as even when formal permission is granted, you may hold back if you feel socially or politically discouraged.
- 3. Connections with Helpful People who Hold Power** – existing relationships with individuals or institutions that hold influence over decision-making processes. This refers to the engagement of power holders not just as gatekeepers, but as potential allies who can help advance NbS and co-governance within your city.
- 4. Effective & Influential Communication** – actions to share information about the work done in JUSTNature and its results. It refers to the ability to target different groups (including those often marginalised as well as power holders), inside and outside the project’s community, to show them why the project is/was valuable to foster replication of activities or continuation of the work done.
- 5. Education & Knowledge** – knowledge acquired in connection with Nature-based Solutions (NbS) and co-governance. The emphasis is on appreciation and understanding the concept and what it entails, rather than on acquiring technical or operational skills.
- 6. Experience, Reputation, and Public Regard** – the accumulated knowledge, track record, and credibility that you hold in relation to NbS and co-governance process: how you feel your experience and competence is valued by colleagues and others you work with.
- 7. Decision-Making Authority** – ability to make and / or influence decisions.
- 8. Capacity to Support Community-led Initiatives** – ability to conduct actions to support more citizen-driven/bottom-up NbS interventions, where citizens are at the lead on the intervention from the start, with municipalities as participants or partners.
- 9. Capacity building ability** – ability to develop training activities to build local NbS and / or co-governance capacities, promoting local skills among multiple stakeholders, especially for marginalised groups. Refers to the creation of technical skills that range from know-how in designing and implementing NbS to hands-on opportunities to help build the intervention.

10. Awareness Raising power – skills to inform and raise awareness of people about your work.

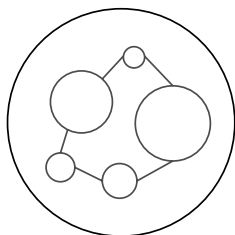
11. Ability to expand access to green space – capacity to develop actions to convert an existing space to a new use or expand access rights of an existing one, with the diverse stakeholders involved. This may include actions to make a private green space public or convert a car park to a green space but also includes working with the stakeholders involved (ex, actors who hold the 'right' to the space, or those who are currently excluded) to make the green expansion possible.

12. Ability to Activate the Space – your ability to foster actions to attract users to new or redeveloped green spaces, on a continuous capacity (a series of events) and tailored for diverse groups of actors, including those who are underrepresented or vulnerable. It focuses on bringing 'life' into space.

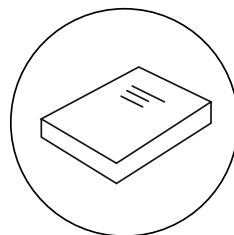
Tokens to print



**Money &
Financial
Assets**



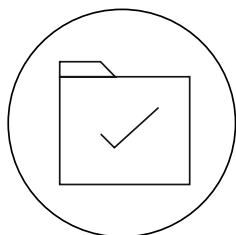
**Connections
with Helpful
People who Hold
Power**



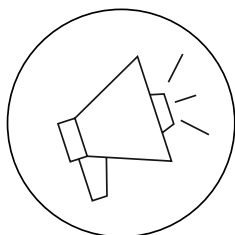
**Education &
Knowledge**



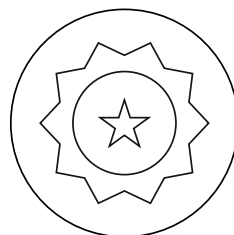
**Decision Making
Authority**



**Perceived &
Explicit
Permission**



**Effective &
Influential
Communication**



**Experience,
Reputation, and
Public Regard**



**Capacity to Support
Community-led
Initiatives**



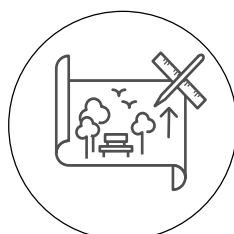
**Ability to activate
the space**



**Awareness raising
power**



**Capacity building
ability**



**Ability to expand
access to green
space**

Resources Mapping



Flipchart design for resource mapping exercise. Copy this onto a digital whiteboard or physical flipchart for each active participant to map their resources.

Name of your city, project, and participants

What changed over time and how?

Collective work environment: what still needs to be changed in this relation?

What short term or mid term actions could you do to help?

