syncity
Synergetic Cities for Europe

# cooperate
# a handbook to co-create the urban commons

Ina Ivanceanu, Richard Pfeifer, Catalina Dobre (eds.)

# cooperate

a handbook to co-create the urban commons

This book is based on the results of the Syncity project,
and was developed in a collaborative effort by the project partners.

syncity
Synergetic Cities
for Europe

**Imprint**
Austria, May 2021
Editors: Ina Ivanceanu, Richard Pfeifer, Catalina Dobre
Associate editors: Michael Anranter, Csilla Barkász
Conceptual support: Ursula Pfrimer
Proofreading: Charles Osborne

Production coordination and reviewing: Oikoplus KG, Vienna
Pictures/graphics: © Syncity unless indicated otherwise
Design, typography, infographics: Stephan Pfeffer

Publisher: Bibliothek der Provinz
A-3970 Weitra, www.bibliothekderprovinz.at

Print: Druckerei Bösmüller, Stockerau
Produced $CO_2$ neutrally through Bösmüller-for-Climate certificates
Book binding: G. G. Buchbinderei, Hollabrunn



ISBN: 978-3-99126-027-1

# cooperate

## a handbook to co-create the urban commons

# Preface
## When a pandemic hits a participatory project

The Syncity project, which ran from 2019 to 2021, focused on the Cureghem neighbourhood in Brussels, Belgium. It was about people exchanging ideas on the present and the future of a neighbourhood that is undergoing major urban transformation pressures. It was about starting new conversations and making connections, between academics, local associations, public authorities, retailers, business people, workers, students and residents. It was about understanding a neighbourhood as a truly social place. Then came COVID-19 and not surprisingly, the onset of the pandemic also affected the Syncity project.

The backbone of communication between the project partners and the residents and users of the neighbourhood was a series of Urban Living Labs: spaces of lively exchange and discussion that were meant to run over a period of two years and address the very tangible challenges faced by the people of Cureghem. This exchange became very difficult from spring 2020 onwards. Many planned events were banned as a preventive measure against the spread of COVID-19, others could only be organised in a much-reduced form and still involving risks. Syncity, as a transnational, applied, participatory and social science-oriented project, thrived on a diverse source base, including contributions from participating residents and users of Cureghem in the context of these Urban Living Labs. Cutting back on these labs obviously had an impact on the course of the project.


*The Syncity team in 2019 and one year later, after the COVID-19 outbreak.*

Over the year, Syncity became more theory-focused than originally intended. In response to this, the team decided to include insights from the whole project process into this handbook, and to broaden its scope with conceptual input, moving back and forth between theory and practice, as the Syncity project did.

The Syncity consortium has endeavoured to make the best of the exceptional situation in 2020 and 2021, to continue the project within its means and to produce useful tools for urban transformation processes. This handbook compiles a compendium of examples and ideas to support urban research and sustainability-oriented transformation in the future, going beyond the Syncity project.

It is to be hoped that this handbook will provide support and encouragement for new participatory action research projects to tackle the challenges of the post-COVID society. The pandemic has exacerbated the inequalities present in urban areas, thus highlighting the crucial importance of an inclusive and accessible public space for everyone.

Thomas Stollenwerk
for the Syncity team

# Contents

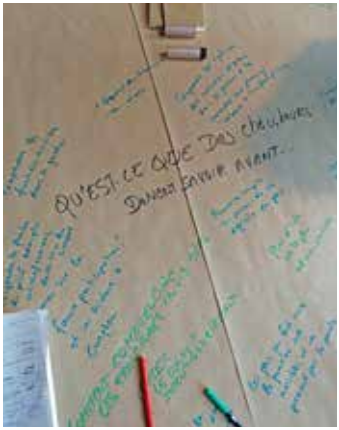
# Introduction
## From a project to an approach

This section presents the Syncity project and explains how it led to an innovative approach for urban transformation and planning. It introduces the five parts of the book and how to use them.

This handbook presents the Syncity approach: an innovative way to make urban planning sustainability-driven and stakeholder-inclusive — in particular for arrival areas in European cities. It is based on the experiences and results derived from the Syncity project, combined with the expertise of the team in the fields of architecture, social geography, urban planning, social work, ecological process evaluation, participation, sociology, and transdisciplinary communication.

Syncity — Synergetic Cities for Europe, funded by JPI Urban Europe, was a research and innovation project between Austrian and Belgian partners, carried out from 2019 to 2021. How to make urban transformation processes more just and green? In exchange with experiences, learnings and good practice from Vienna, the Syncity project explored this question in the real-life context of Cureghem, a city quarter within the municipality of Anderlecht in the Brussels Region. Cureghem has historically been an "arrival area" for immigrants in Brussels, and still is. The local population faces various challenges, such as high unemployment, a precarious housing situation, a lack of public spaces and ecological hotspots. The Syncity toolbox and this book present a hands-on approach to lay a basis for improvement.

Rooted in participatory research and action, the toolbox and this handbook are designed to inspire and support your own urban project. Successes and failures of a three years transdisciplinary process marked by many open, experimental moments are reflected here.



*What should researchers know before they start working in a neighbourhood? A Syncity brainstorming session.*

► Find the tools on the USB stick, or scan the QR code on the last page of this book.
► Find the method cards in the box, or a digital version on the USB stick and in the repository (QR code).

The Syncity toolbox contains

— the handbook
— ten tools to make your urban project engaging and sustainability-oriented
— eleven method cards for participatory action

This handbook is composed of five parts.

— Part I outlines the framework for urban sustainability and citizen participation. How can both paradigms be knitted together in an enriching way? This part lays out the main concepts behind the approach, presents eight Sustainability Criteria developed by the project, and discusses ideas about creating urban commons and emotional co-ownership by stakeholders, especially of vulnerable groups. How can they attain a better position for change making within urban transformation?
— Part II offers a step-by-step guide for setting up a stakeholder-inclusive process within a framework of urban sustainability. It is based to a considerable extent on experiences in Cureghem and is aimed at neighbourhoods facing strong transformation pressure.
— Part III describes innovative approaches to research in an urban transformation context, based on the combination of participatory action research and Life Cycle Assessment, and presents "Syntopia" — a future vision for a building which in itself enhances social, ecological and economic sustainability in a neighbourhood.
— Part IV explores the concept of Urban Living Labs and their next generation — Transformative Labs. It deals with the benefits of co-creation, co-design and co-construction processes, following the idea to include residents and users of a site as active partners into urban transformation.
— Part V offers two new stakeholder tools developed by Syncity to better understand a stakeholder landscape, and presents innovative practical ways of engagement in the analogue and the digital world: a laboratory on wheels, the app Kju:ti and the map-based blog Cureghem tales.

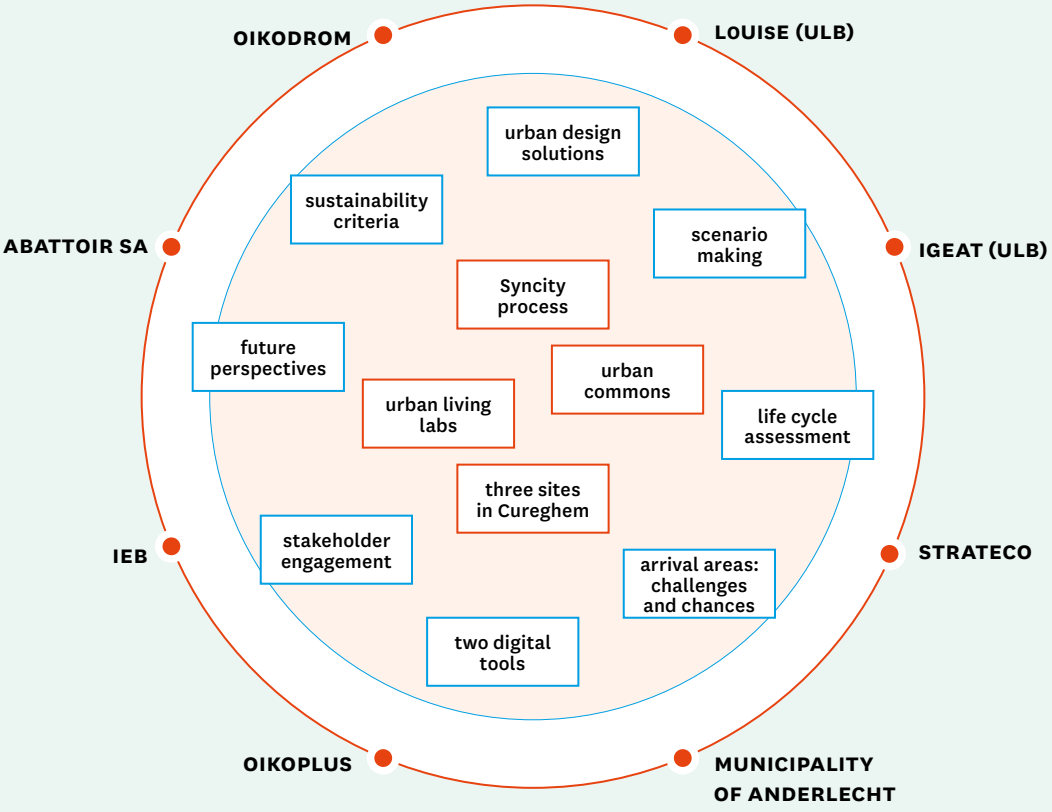
**INFO:** The handbook is composed of five standalone parts that you can read in any preferable order, or independently from each other. The sidebar links to the different parts of the book if you want to go deeper into a specific topic and offers practical info boxes and hints from reality.

Whether you are a member of a city authority or an NGO, an architect or a participant in a community organisation, a private developer or an urban activist: this handbook and the material in the toolbox are there to help you steer a path through urban transformation projects, aiming at participation and sustainability.

The editors
for the Syncity core team

| | |
|---|---|
| **Oikodrom — the Vienna Institute for Urban Sustainability**<br>Research NGO (overall project coordinator) | Heidi Dumreicher, Bettina Kolb, Ina Ivanceanu, Richard Pfeifer |
| **IGEAT (ULB) — Institute for Environmental Management and Land-Use Planning at the Université libre de Bruxelles**<br>Multidisciplinary research institute (Belgian coordinator) | Christian Dessouroux |
| **LOUISE (ULB) — Laboratory on Landscape, Urbanism, Infrastructures and Ecologies at the Université libre de Bruxelles**<br>Expertise in urban action research | Andrea Bortolotti, Catalina Dobre, Geoffrey Grulois, Marco Ranzato |
| **Abattoir SA**<br>Public limited company managing the economic activities and the real estate on the 10 ha site | Basile Museux |
| **IEB — Inter-Environnement Bruxelles**<br>NPO working on urban, ecological and social issues | Cataline Sénéchal |
| **Municipality of Anderlecht, CRIPA — Cellule Relations Interculturelles et Primo-Arrivants**<br>Municipal organisation that supports newcomers in Anderlecht and improves inter-cultural relations | Vital Marage |
| **STRATECO OG**<br>Start-up that evaluates sustainability potentials | René Kollmann |
| **OIKOPLUS KG**<br>Start-up specialised in innovative science communication | Michael Anranter, Ina Ivanceanu, Thomas Stollenwerk |

# The Syncity project:
partners and mind map



# Towards a just and green urban transformation

**AUTHORS:**
Csilla Barkász, Catalina Dobre,
Lukas Madl, Richard Pfeifer
**CASE DESCRIPTIONS CUREGHEM:**
Andrea Bortolotti, Christian Dessouroux,
Vital Marage, Basile Museux, Cataline Sénéchal

**Key words**
urban commons, sustainability criteria, Cureghem / Brussels, arrival areas, spatial justice

**What this part offers**
— a link between sustainability and participation
— the concept of emotional co-ownership
— a definition of urban commons
— insights into arrival areas
— eight criteria for sustainable urban transformation

**Zoom in**
From the 1990s onwards, city planners have addressed growing urban populations and the associated environmental and social problems by multiple visions of the sustainable city. For the task of creating urban sustainability, these visions stress the importance of making existing urban structures denser, as well as implementing innovative technical solutions.

But why is the crucial factor of citizen participation, as many contemporary researchers into urban sustainability argue, so often neglected in the context of sustainable urban development? Why is there a need to frame sustainability efforts on the neighbourhood level and ground them in stakeholder inclusive participation processes? What makes residents support sustainable solutions in the long run, and why can't sustainability be achieved without citizen support in the first place? Finally, how can arrival areas inhabited by newcomers to the city be sustainably developed?

This part shows that sustainability principles should be localised and offers eight sustainability criteria developed by Syncity as a source of inspiration. It further proposes the urban commons — public spaces in the city that are collectively governed and used by a group of residents — as a highly efficient form of governance.

# Eco-cities in response to a global challenge

This section looks at urbanisation through a sustainability lens and introduces the model of an eco-city.

The UN estimates that by 2050, 66 % of the world's population will live in cities. This rapid urbanisation goes hand in hand with the depletion of natural resources, increased energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions, soil, air and water pollution and other environmental and social problems: "Cities consume about 70 % of the world's resources and hence are major consumers of energy resources and significant contributors to greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions due to the density of urban population and the intensity of related economic and social activities." (Bibri and Krogstie, 2017: 184)

In response to this challenge, the vision of a sustainable city has emerged from the 1990s onwards. It represents an effort to balance economic development, environmental protection and issues of social equality and justice for the improvement of city-dwellers' living conditions while at the same time minimizing their ecological footprint (Bibri and Krogstie, 2017).

Current sustainable urban forms can be classified in one of the following four models:

- compact city,
- eco-city,
- new urbanism and
- urban containment (ibid).

Each of them emphasizes certain (design) concepts of urban planning in order to achieve sustainability, including compactness, sustainable transport, density, mixed land use, diversity of activity, passive solar design and greening (Jabareen, 2006)*. Despite the differences, all these models aim — albeit to a different extent — to prevent the expansion of cities in the surrounding landscape (ibid), since natural and agricultural land has become a scarce resource on the planet, and to explore the possibilities of urban sustainability within the existing urban (infra)structures.

* Find out more about sustainable city models: Jabareen, Yosef Rafeq, 2006.

The eco-city is an umbrella term used to describe several approaches to urban sustainability. Ecological changes (such as greening and passive solar design) are at the core of these approaches. As opposed to the other sustainable forms, eco-city approaches stress the importance of the management (social, economic, cultural) of the city instead of promoting a specific urban form (Jabareen, 2006).

Recent studies* stress the importance of public participation in addition to a sustainable urban form as a key ingredient, if not the prerequisite (Ghiasi et al., 2020: 2), for achieving urban sustainability. The following understanding of the eco-city model acknowledges the need for citizen participation in sustainable urban development: "Moving to eco-city paradigm requires a significant shift away from the conventional planning and design practice [...] the shift towards sustainability practice is not only a technocratic exercise but also a social-technical transition, which involves changes within policies, professional norms, national standards, technologies and consumption behaviours, or in short, a new paradigm of urban governance ..." (Deng et al. 2020: 2)

The Syncity approach combines this idea with self-empowerment of local communities, regarding them as equal partners in sustainability-oriented urban projects. In the long run, the ambition is to foster sustainability-oriented social, economic and environmental policies for the urban context. These policies should be directly linked to challenges and needs identified via stakeholder-inclusive participatory project planning on the levels of city neighbourhoods or specific sites.

* See Bednarska-Olejniczak et al., 2019; Deng et al., 2020; Ghiasi et al., 2020.

Details in the reference section at the end of this book

*The housing project Wohnprojekt Wien: sustainability-oriented, collaborative, self-organised; © Hertha Hurnaus*

# Citizen participation at the core of urban futures

This section presents models for citizen's power, reflects on conflict and consensus as productive forces and highlights the connection between participation and sustainability.

Urban environments are diverse on manifold levels. City planners have to take this diversity into account when looking for sustainable pathways. The experience of the inhabitants and users of a space is a crucial source of knowledge for any successful planning endeavor. Urban transformation projects which encourage inhabitants to participate from the very beginning and value their concerns, needs, ideas and knowledge will enjoy the support of the inhabitants in the long term.

The Syncity approach relies on recent studies that conceive of urban sustainability as interlinked with citizen participation. In fact, sustainable urban development can be seen as a community-driven process (Fu and Ma, 2020), and public participation is deemed vital for the creation of a sustainable city*. Urban sustainability transitions are multi-stakeholder processes which demand efforts across various sectors to achieve a sustainable urban change (Frantzeskaki and Rok, 2018). Urban sustainability is an ongoing and — in all probability — never-ending balance-seeking process (see Dumreicher et al., 2000: 288). In its course, the interests and agendas, values and worldviews of various urban actors are constantly revised and negotiated for the transformation of urban spaces.

* For more details, see Maiello et al., 2013; Frantzeskaki and Rok, 2018.

Sherry Arnstein's "Ladder of Citizen Participation" (1969) is one of the most influential articles in the field of public participation; it has led to a new approach to citizen participation (Gaber, 2019).

On the ladder, each rung represents an increased degree of citizen power and control over public issues. For Arnstein the top three rungs on the ladder are where real citizen power emerges (Gaber, 2019). Critics of the model condemn it for "framing of citizen participation as an overt struggle for power between government officials ['them'] and community activists ['us'] with the primary focus on the struggles of disenfranchised community groups" (ibid: 190).

*Citizen protests on Syntagma Square in Athens, Greece, 2011; ©Ggia/Wikimedia Commons*

John Gaber, a contemporary researcher of Arnstein's life and work, argues that the three uppermost sections of the ladder (collectively called the "Degrees of citizen power") have been misinterpreted. Though Arnstein was a strong advocate of community empowerment, she thematized power not as an object of competition between the local decision-making and governing bodies and the community, but as a power to be shared and used constructively in a working relationship (ibid).

On the "partnership" level, this means that citizens get an equal chance to contribute to decisions which affect them and are treated as equal partners during the process. "Delegated power" implies a stronger partnership, with the city government granting decision-making power to the local community (ibid). The highest form of power is "citizen control", which "guarantees that participants or residents can govern a program or an institution, be in full charge of policy and managerial aspects, and be able to negotiate the conditions under which 'outsiders' may change them" (Arnstein, 1969: 223).

During the past two decades new models of citizen participation have emerged across Europe that are situated on the "partnership" rung of Arnstein's ladder of participation. Collectively referred to as "collaborative participation models" (Innes et al., 2004: 426), they signal a shift in the set-up of participatory processes by aiming at stakeholder-inclusion and dialogue around

**The ladder of citizen participation**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Citizen Control | Degrees of citizen power |
| 2 | Delegated Power | |
| 3 | Partnership | |
| 4 | Placation | Degrees of tokenism |
| 5 | Consultation | |
| 6 | Informing | Non-participation |
| 7 | Therapy | |
| 8 | Manipulation | |

*Table based on Sherry Arnstein (1969)*

the various stakeholder interests. They further stress the need for "disadvantaged citizens" (ibid: 426) to have an equal voice in the course of the process. These new models are sources of new learning processes and innovations, contributing to network building and increased trust among stakeholders. They also involve all stakeholders in the information-gathering process and allow them to question and debate the information presented by other stakeholders. This way, collaborative participation models also address a widely recognised problem of public participation: information control and information reliability. Collaborative participation processes further reveal the interdependencies of the stakeholders concerned, which erases the divide between individual versus collective interest (ibid).

**The Syncity approach to citizen participation**

In line with the models described above, the Syncity approach aims at setting up an inclusive process for urban planning and transformation. It is designed to support self-empowerment of the residents, local economic actors, community-based organisations (civil society groups) and users by combining participatory action research, innovative outreach and sustainability orientation.

► See Part II for details on how to develop a multi-stakeholder process for creating a co-designed product / solution

Stakeholder cooperation is at the core of Syncity's participatory arenas, the Urban Living Labs. The aim is to develop a co-designed or even co-constructed solution, managed and further developed by a group of local stakeholders with responsibility and capacity in governance. The Syncity approach also stresses the importance of mutual acknowledgement of the responsibilities involved; it can be thus considered the opposite of the "not in my backyard" attitude to public issues. In other words, the Syncity approach sets the creation of commons as the ultimate goal of citizen participation, while acknowledging that commoning is a time-consuming process which also requires a supportive political environment.

**INFO:** "Not in my backyard" (NIMBY) is a term used to describe the attitude of residents' opposing (development) projects in their neighbourhood which they perceive as negatively affecting their quality of life. https://www.britannica.com/topic/Not-in-My-Backyard-Phenomenon

To make a multitude of stakeholders part of the commoning process, Syncity distinguishes three main groups: a) primary stakeholders, b) users and c) secondary stakeholders.

*Co-designing solar cookers: engaging with local residents of a social housing complex in Vienna*

a Primary stakeholders are people whose everyday lives or activities directly unfold on a site: residents, community-based organisations (civil society groups), small enterprises etc. Their everyday practices and social interactions shape the site. Their knowledge about the site is experience-based and practice related. Their dependency on the site often makes them vulnerable to changes.

b Close to primary stakeholders are all the users. Users realise their consumption or recreational needs within the perimeters of the site but could also orient themselves towards other locations. They are on the site because of everyday needs but are also characterised by their mobility. Just as primary stakeholders they inscribe their activities into the place and have practical, experience-based knowledge.

c Secondary stakeholders include city planning authorities, private investors, and governmental institutions. Most often, they possess a more abstract knowledge about the site: statistical data, rent market analysis, maps or urban and zoning plans, formal decision making.

Whereas primary stakeholders and users are directly connected, but differently anchored to a site, secondary stakeholders mainly intervene with it through rather formalised procedures.

**Conflict and consensus as productive forces**

Cooperation between as many stakeholder groups as possible inevitably produces conflict. For some time conflict has been seen as the basis for new things in the context of academic debate (Silver et al., 2010), and more recently agonistic theories that welcome more conflictual planning have come to the forefront (Hamedinger, 2020). Agonism emphasises the positive aspects of certain types of political conflict. It accepts conflict as an important political good that is present within planning processes and does not hinder but can enhance its democratisation. Its presence thus is understood as an expression of pluralism and openness towards new ideas. From this perspective, conflict is more of an asset, politically speaking, than a liability; it is an expression of pluralism and a sign that democracy prevails.

How can this view of conflict be useful for urban planning processes and transformation? The Syncity approach relies on the idea that having the possibility of consensus is important, but that does not mean the actual or empirical consensus is. For example: a face-to-face setting needs a communicative set-up in which one group of stakeholders is unable to dominate another group, this is more important than a setting that concentrates on avoiding conflict. Hence the participation process takes advantage of the possibility of consensus as a core value. At the same time, the Syncity approach has a political dimension: it can be in line or conflictual with, for example, municipal urban planning projects or real estate proposals.

*"The exclusion policies of tomorrow: It will be me. It will be you." Banner in Cureghem, 2019*

# The concept of emotional co-ownership

This section explores the relationship between people and 'their' spaces and what can foster or disturb this relationship; and explains why this is important for urban transformation projects.

Participation can be and has been misused: for example, to roll out existing urban planning agendas. In the Syncity approach it can only be the result of collective will. This involves approaching local knowledge with openness and respect, fostering the idea of emotional co-ownership: a key motivating factor for citizen participation (Dumreicher and Kolb, 2003: p248). In short: emotional co-ownership of a place is an expression of one's power to claim public spaces for everyday activities, such as playing, dog-walking, spending free time with friends, etc. It refers to one's ability to co-determine what happens in a place and what purposes it is used for. It links to the concerns of everyday life and also implies the possibility of creative self-expression, by shaping public spaces to one's own needs. (ibid). For city dwellers, places acquire meaning through these many forms of usage as well as possibilities to further develop a place (ibid), which in turn motivates them to care for their future.

Syncity social research shows that this focus also helps when investigating the absence of specific stakeholders in an urban site.

***An example from Cureghem***

*A female user group avoided a specific square although it ranked this public space as highly appealing. The reason: women were confronted with a conflicting social situation, because the almost exclusively male customers of a nearby café would stare at them and make comments from the terrace. For the women, using that highly gendered place for their needs would raise profound questions in terms of how they perceive themselves, and potentially result in conflictual relations both with their peers and — possibly — also between the group of men and themselves.*

Research shows that emotional co-ownership can be blocked because of tensions relating to the social identities (Somers, 1994) of primary stakeholders like


*"The World is yours" — An installation in a public space in Cureghem, 2020*

these women. In such an instance, the participation barrier can be tackled through outreaching and sensitive ethnography-inspired research and by producing outreach events that take the concerns of the vulnerable group seriously.

The commodification of public space, an ongoing phenomenon in European cities (Harvey, 2008), also weakens emotional co-ownership. It implies the allocation of public spaces to private interests motivated by economic profit while users and residents are under privately-organised control and sometimes even banned from using these spaces as a part of their everyday life. The commodification of space is especially problematic for less affluent urban quarters such as Cureghem, where small enterprises often even have to assume former public responsibilities. This results in a conflictual detachment from space and a vanishing emotional co-ownership, since people only fully identify with cities if they can use their potential, including public services and public space (Dumreicher, Kolb, 2003: 247f).

**INFO:** Vulnerable groups — a much-debated concept. The New Urban Agenda designates women, children and youth, the elderly living with disabilities, migrants, indigenous peoples, local communities and communities that are most vulnerable to disasters as vulnerable groups. The Syncity approach uses the term in the sense of those people who have a little say in urban planning and proposes a process that enables their voices to be heard.

► https://www.iied.org/addressing-needs-vulnerable-groups-urban-areas

# Yes, in my backyard: towards urban commons

This section presents definitions and characteristics of the urban commons as a collective practice and indicates why spatial justice is so important in this context.

*Trees and green spaces as urban commons, Cureghem 2019*

In achieving urban sustainability, governance is of key importance, and institutional processes which lead to spatial justice are important elements of good governance. The Syncity approach proposes the idea of public spaces in the city which are to be regarded as urban commons: inclusive and equitable spaces under collective use and governance.

What might these commons look like? Examples range from allotment gardens, cultural centres, community gardens (Colding et al., 2013), up- and downcycling systems and public street art galleries to complex systems, like a self-organised food exchange network, as it exists for example in Portugal: members partook in the production, distribution, and consumption of groceries and, additionally, in decision-making processes (Moreira and Fuster Morell, 2020).

When and how can such commons form at all? Whenever a societal concern — such as the quality of public space and the access to that space — brings together a collective that follows principles of equitable access and use, as well as sustainability (Walljasper, 2010). When a collective conducts social practices and manages commons in a self-organised, inclusive and voluntary way, it can be more effective and efficient than control through central governments and policies of market actors (Colding et al., 2013; Ostrom, 2015).

**What are key characteristics of the commons?**

1. the group of users can decide who to include in the system;
2. collective organisation and governance which involves a group of users partaking in decision-making and management;
3. governing user groups form their proper institutions / a collective and develop a set of rules for managing the common resource;
4. actual ownership is in fact not a central criterion; it is far outweighed by governance. (Colding et al., 2013: 4)

*Social injustice: Precarious living conditions in the French shanty-town Bidonville de Nanterre, 1956; © Jean Pottier/Musée national de l'histoire et des cultures de l'immigration*

**Thoughts on spatial justice**

Syncity builds on a concept of commons developed by critical urban research: it links commons to spatial justice and the production of urban space (Harvey, 2012; Stavrides et al., 2016).

The concept of "spatial (in)justice" (Soja, 2009: 3) connects the concept of social justice with space. It suggests that space is an active force shaping human lives rather than merely a stage where human activities unfold (ibid: 3). For Soja, spatial justice involves "the fair and equitable distribution in space of socially valued resources and the opportunities to use them." (Soja, 2009: 2). These resources can represent anything from housing to urban public transport or green public spaces in the city.

Dikeç develops the concept further by distinguishing between a) "spatiality of injustice" (Dikeç, 2001: 1792) and b) "injustice of spatiality" (ibid) — two concepts which complement each other. The spatiality of injustice implies that justice has a spatial dimension to it (ibid). This suggests that injustice can take a palpable form and materialize in space. Poor neighbourhoods located on the periphery of the city with infrastructure which is below average or completely lacking could be a good example (ibid: 1799).


*Graffiti in Turin, Italy; © Prof. lumacorno/Wikimedia Commons*

In contrast, injustice of spatiality refers to institutional processes that can be sources of injustice (ibid: 1792–1793.) These can include "the way the real estate market works, tax policy, or housing policy." (ibid: 1799). To illustrate this point, Dikeç recounts the case of workers in Turin, Italy, who were forced to move from the city center to the periphery, due to rising rents. This led to spatial injustice, discrimination and segregation (ibid: 1792).

In order to combat spatial injustice it is not enough to eliminate its specific manifestations. Moving the workers in the example above back to the city center would not solve the problem as long as the processes and institutions that constantly produce and reproduce spatial injustice are in place (ibid: 1795–1799). Urban


*Protests for affordable housing in Brussels; © IEB, Marathon du Logement 2013*

development projects which build on and seek to address the needs and concerns of local residents by involving them in the planning process from the very beginning can be viewed as an efficient way to prevent spatial injustice.

Urban commons come into life, in this view, when residents or users of a space translate their concerns about everyday urban life into explicit formulations of how urban space should be transformed and improved. The existing urban space then becomes the basis for creative collective practices, resulting in inclusive and equitable common spaces.

Cities are in dire need of urban commons to tackle the challenge of urban sustainability; some experts (see Maiello et al., 2013) even argue that collaborative initiatives and stable local communities are essential and more urgent than technical solutions. This calls for a shift from a top-down model with hierarchical separation between actors to a new horizontal mechanism of urban governance.

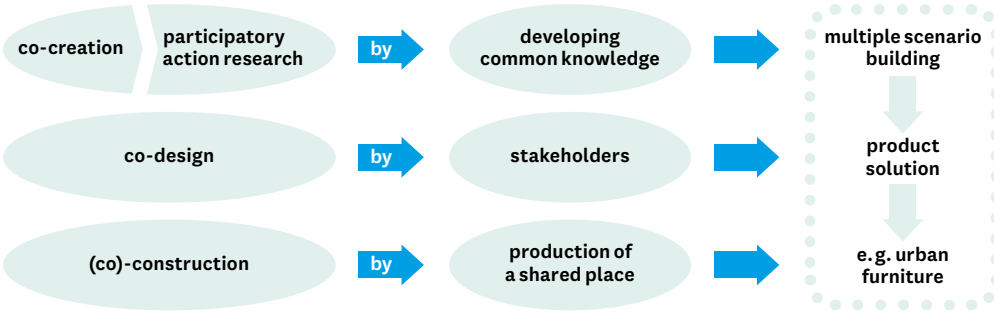
Commons strive to grow, and to sustain them, the community who manages them should constantly negotiate the values and interests of its members in a participatory way (Radywyl and Biggs, 2013: 168). The Syncity approach to support commoning practices is built upon multi-stakeholder cooperation, with a strong emphasis on local community needs and concerns.

# Co-creation, co-design, co-construction … co-what?

This section offers ideas on how to actually create the commons, including different approaches, their advantages and their use in the context of Urban Living Labs.

What can form the urban commons? And how can projects like Syncity contribute to this process? Co-creation, co-design and co-construction are essential approaches here.

They mark a paradigmatic shift in the disciplines built upon design practices (architecture, urban planning, product design, etc): flexible projects that significantly involve users throughout the process instead of following a predetermined process led by external experts (James, 2018). Positioning users as experts in their own context (van Rijn and Stappers, 2008) transforms their lived experiences into respected knowledge, equal to the professional expertise of designers, for example (NCOSS, 2017). Users contribute knowledge proactively; their ideas, critiques and feedback help to improve a particular situation. Research and design are performed not on behalf of them but with them (CO-CREATE, 2019), aiming to create, redesign or evaluate a wide range of products, services or systems (NCOSS, 2017).



*Co-design and co-construction of a solar powered drying oven for fruit: workshop in the frame of "zukunftskarawane", 2019; © Oikodrom*

Generally speaking, co-creation refers to the participation of users in the development of an innovation (Steen and van Bueren, 2017). It can encompass a wide range of collaborative methods for end users, and more strategic design activities, like improving public services. Co-creation tends to be distinguished from co-design by the extent to which methods and activities are oriented towards a design which is ready for implementation. However, clear-cut and widely accepted definitions do not exist (Dobre et al., 2019: 4). While co-creation often refers to any act of collective creativity, co-design happens when collective creativity is applied throughout the entire design process (Sanders and Stappers, 2008). Hence it follows the overall postmodern twist that questions the hierarchical position of the traditional designer and avoids the immediate application of universalistic design rules.

Due to its focus on design and often technically complex solutions, the process of co-design requires, however, more guidance and expertise than a co-creative process. The experts related to the relevant professional fields are therefore allocated a more prominent role in supporting and formulating the production of the process's outcome. Researchers and / or designers take on the important role of facilitators who provide guidance through the process and offer expert knowledge on social interactions, production processes and technologies (Sanders and Stappers, 2008: 12).

This move towards collaborative design-practice usually leads to a change in mindset and behaviour of all stakeholders involved (NCOSS, 2017) and, ultimately, to the co-creation of new knowledge, shared meanings and unexpected outcomes. (James, 2018).

The Syncity approach establishes a framework for very different partners to collaborate throughout successive phases: co-create, co-design, co-construct. The prefix "co" does not only signify a collaborative stakeholder integrated work process; just as importantly, it signifies allowing for and supporting the creation of urban com-

mons. Connecting to the emotional co-ownership of primary stakeholders and to their concerns about everyday life is where the energy for participation comes from.

The establishment of the urban commons demands for a partnership between the different stakeholder groups. Urban Living Labs can be a good setting for such a partnership to develop.

User participation and co-creation are essential mechanisms to enhance the diversity of ideas which in turn become the precondition to create new common knowledge and to develop innovative solutions. Such a way of innovating and developing ideas might also allow for entirely different approaches to urban (co-) governance.*

► Find out more on Urban Living Labs and Transformative Labs in Part IV

* See Bulkeley et al., 2018; Naumann et al., 2018; Schwab, 2016.

**INFO:** Scenario making in Syncity — a transdisciplinary and cross-sectoral endeavour that leads to new planning proposals. It involves the expertise of civil society, residents, users, secondary stakeholders, academics.

Syncity develops solutions within scenario making processes. It formulates scenarios based on initial research and translates them into first concepts and ideas to initiate debate and new ideas for solutions among a multitude of stakeholders. Scenario making can involve architectural and urban design features but can also tackle challenges related to public and community-based services, for example.

The initial scenario making phase is about co-creating ideas in a low-threshold way: invent and negotiate ideas for the future in a rather informal, sometimes playful way. The objective is to overcome barriers by engaging and reaching out to new stakeholders present or not yet present at a certain site.

► Find out more on scenario making in Part IV

Once several scenarios develop, the collaborative endeavour reaches the moment of concretisation: Co-designing solutions. This requires cooperation with planning experts and ecological assessment to check their environmental impact and to further support the negotiation process. Scenario making then turns into an iterative process and goes on until at least one desirable scenario emerges that is supported by the stakeholders involved.

*Change your place together: scenario workshop in the Austrian village Pürbach in the frame of "zukunftskarawane", 2019; © Oikodrom*

Concretisation requires careful stakeholder management and sound facilitation of the group processes. In short, co-design in the Syncity approach is about raising complexity and then condensing this complexity into one scenario that all stakeholder groups widely support. This requires a great deal of negotiation between stakeholders, which in itself is a step towards a commoning practice: to reflect upon individual needs and concerns within the greater scope of a shared sustainability oriented vision.

When a collective develops ideas together, it might lay the basis for a future co-governance of what increasingly becomes their own project. Scenario building thus strengthens the co-ownership of primary stakeholders and hence also their sense of responsibility for a place.

From scenario making to co-design — and then what? How to move towards implementation? There are many possible pathways for the next step, from a next series of collaborative events that aim at co-construction, to a professional planning body realising the co-design, or to further negotiations within urban governance bodies.

# Arrival areas: chance and challenge

This section introduces arrival areas and why they represent both a challenge and potential for urban transformation; it also presents the neighbourhood of Cureghem in Brussels and the three sites of the Syncity project.

The Syncity project focussed its research and actions on the neighbourhood of Cureghem in Brussels, Belgium, a main arrival area for newcomers. The underlying question related to this specific case was how to work with concepts of urban sustainability, the commons and participation in this diverse and specific urban context and develop them further.

The term "arrival area" describes areas in cities where new migrants move to (Hanhörster and Wessendorf, 2020). They are typically inhabited by earlier migrant-settlers, who set up particular infrastructures, maintain them for some time and then move on to other areas. Thus an arrival area can function as a supporting infrastructure where longer established migrants can take on the role of knowledge brokers in order to access resources for newcomers.

► See Part II on how to develop stakeholder-inclusive participatory processes in (not only) arrival areas

These areas are characterized by cultural and social diversity, they are densely populated, and show signs of informality (Hanhörster and Wessendorf 2020: 7). At the same time, it is difficult to categorize and spatially delimit or differentiate arrival areas from each other, even if they lie within the boundaries of the same city (Taubenböck et al., 2018).

Within the context of an entire city, they are usually both "problem areas" and a chance for authorities: probably these spaces are where "the next great economic and cultural boom will be born or where the next great explosion of violence will occur." (Saunders 2010: 15). They have multi-local connections reaching into the city centre and other parts beyond the "borders" of the areas as such (Hans et al., 2019). For example, a resident of the area in question might work in some other part of the city or a shop owner might be connected to other city districts via his / her business partners located elsewhere in the city.

*The Abattoir area and Cureghem neighbourhood in Brussels; © Global View-Abattoir*

For city authorities, the main challenge lies in the coordination of actors and the use and organization of space in arrival areas (Bovo, 2020) to improve the living conditions for current and future inhabitants (Kühn and Bernt, 2019). In the Syncity approach, the aim is to develop and apply participatory tools and methods that are adapted to this specific urban setting and its related challenges, allow for stakeholder inclusion and help to transmit and debate concepts of sustainability.

**A slaughterhouse and open market, a square, a street: learning from three sites in Cureghem, Brussels**

Cureghem presents the typical features of an arrival area: the population density is almost three times the Regional's average, the average flat area is 60 m² compared to the regional average of 74 m². In two square kilometres Cureghem numbers about 125 nationalities (IBSA, Monitoring des Quartiers). It is a former working-class neighbourhood that still bears the marks of decades of disinvestment and political abandonment which followed the de-industrialization process of the late 1960s / early 1970s*.

* See Mistiaen et al., 1995; Kesteloot, 1995; Sacco, 2010.

Cureghem has a tradition of arrival and transition for a variety of reasons. Property rentals are relatively cheap, and contracts are easy to conclude (Chabrol and Rozenholc, 2015). The vibrant neighbourhood economy and ethnic entrepreneurship — clustered around a second-hand car market, the Abattoir marketplace and slaughterhouse, and the so-called "textile triangle", an area known for its retail outlets — offers low-skilled job opportunities.* Migrants find valuable socio-cultural points of reference, such as the presence of members of their community in businesses and associations and access to places of worship.

* See Scohier, 2015:14.


*Many worlds in one place: the Foodmet market at the Abattoir, 2019*

The approach presented in this handbook is informed by the experience gained at three specific sites in the Cureghem neighbourhood. Working in such a neighbourhood with a research and innovation project on urban sustainability, the main question is how to truly involve the different kinds of local stakeholders: from residents living in precarious housing situations to pop up recycling initiatives, from Flemish meat workers to Syrian shop owners, etc. Such a project must find ways of including stakeholders with different access to resources (social, cultural, legal, etc), often with a lack of trust in public authorities, many of them not (yet) acknowledged by city planners as partners in the urban transformation process. The high diversity of languages spoken adds to the complexity.

The projects' detailed results show that an arrival area like Cureghem has substantial potential for sustainability oriented urban transformation, including

- a great amount of creativity and openness to self-education and life-long learning from the part of its residents,
- many local and bottom-up innovation initiatives, partly intermingling cultural traditions and
- many active community members engaging with the city.

A participatory process can help to reveal this potential and to co-develop it further.

## Site 1: An open space as a resource for all

### The Abattoir slaughterhouse and market

Built 1888–1890 as a city within the city, the Abattoir (French for slaughterhouse) site represents entrepreneurial activities close to the food industry, as it comprises a slaughterhouse and Brussel's biggest weekly market. Companies are divided across the site into two clusters: the slaughterhouse complex and the newer Foodmet building. Foodmet is an indoor market with a productive roof (urban farm and photovoltaic plant) opened in 2015. The Abattoir outdoor market attracts about 100.000 people every week. The site has always been very trade and production oriented. During the 1980s the complex was leased out by the municipality of Anderlecht. As a consequence the slaughterhouse, including logistic facilities, was handed over to local entrepreneurs who organised into the stock company Abattoir SA: they still hold the lease and handle the management of the site. Since then the Abattoir has been one of the key players shaping the socio-economic fabric of the entire city district of Cureghem.

*Metal bulls greet visitors at the Abattoir entrance, 2020*

Due to its vast surface (11 ha) and central location, the Abattoir area is subject of urban planning debates centred on its urban renewal potentials.

At the time of writing, the existing economic activities are changing, and Abattoir SA and their retailers are negotiating their future place on the site. This also raises questions about the future of the Abattoir site's huge open space, which includes the market area, a network of non-public circulation paths, informal pedestrian zones and parking areas, as well as logistic surfaces.

*Brussel's biggest weekly market, 2019*

During the time of the Syncity project, Abattoir SA envisioned the future of the open space as better integrated into the surrounding neighbourhood. However, the Regional authorities had their own visions about the future of the site. These were condensed into four different projects for the site or along its perimeter, aiming at transforming the open space in some way (for example, a plan for a new metro station and another for a new road that runs through the site). The need for

a stakeholder-inclusive urban development arises, to ensure that new activities build on existing activities rather than replacing them, to avoid disrupting the economy of the district and creating a potential void in the neighbourhood.

The aim of the Syncity project on this site was to make these various projects communicate with each other. Syncity raised awareness among municipal and Regional stakeholders that their projects, if not sensitive to the needs of Cureghem residents and other stakeholders on the site, can potentially endanger existing economic activities. Syncity identified the stakeholders on the site, including small and medium-sized enterprises, and supported their needs and concerns.

It set up an Urban Living Lab where the various stakeholders were able to discuss the development of the site, with the aim of reaching a consensus on the future cooperation between the rental companies, Abattoir SA and the authorities of the Brussels-Capital Region. This implied that the open space should be regarded as a common resource by all stakeholders. In practice, any future site-related development plan should be considered a collaborative effort of the stakeholders.

*Piles of waste: a common sight in Chaussée de Mons*

## Site 2: How to deal with waste?

**Chaussée de Mons**

Cureghem's main shopping street is crowded with ethnic restaurants, cafés and grocery stores. The road is the entry point to Anderlecht for people coming from the city centre, and the main traffic axis from the periphery into the city. The high population density and the limited size of the dwellings make Cureghem, and more specifically Chaussée de Mons, prone to problems of cleanliness. At the same time, Chaussée de Mons is also a site of vibrant commercial life, given the character of a linear high street and good connection to public transport services, making it a fertile ground for family-run businesses and immigrant grocery shops and restaurants. The street has two main lanes and an additional one dedicated to public transport. Both sides of the road have continuous

*Chaussée de Mons, Brussels, 2019*

rows of parking lots and sparse tree lines, narrow sidewalks, and curtain walls of crumbling multi-storey and multi-apartment buildings of different heights, with commercial ground floors regularly interrupted by warehouses and garages.

Interviewed stakeholders stress that the frequent relocation of residents, coupled with the concentration of wholesale and retail shops and the many visitors, are the main causes for visible waste problem throughout the Chaussee de Mons. It is not only house clearances that generate the need to get rid of the bulky household furniture and appliances often abandoned on pavements, at crossroads and squares; businesses also discard large volumes of residual waste, wooden pallets, plastic crates and packaging of all sorts. Car maintenance in public spaces results in spillage and debris, etc. In this context, the local residents and users regularly bemoan in social media and local newspapers the feeling of being abandoned by the public authorities (Deffet, 2018). The recent entrepreneurial impulses by small shops and restaurants add to the overall dynamic and increase significant amounts in general waste production. Simultaneously, these stakeholders are stigmatized the most with regard to the associated image of garbage piling up on the street. As such, they represent a potential agent for change.

The Syncity team set up an Urban Living Lab with local shop owners, the Regional waste service provider and the municipality of Anderlecht.

► See Part IV — Waste scenarios from Cureghem

► See Part III — Life Cycle Assessment: ecological challenges and sustainability transitions

In a co-creation process, four scenarios were developed, all of which included physical devices for separate waste collection, as well as waste management solutions, including improving the service, increasing the frequency of waste collection, installing fixed containers, and renting a storage facility for waste containers. These scenarios were informed by the results of the Life Cycle Assessment method, which pointed out the ecological challenges on the site. The process led to commitment and a problem-solving atmosphere. In 2021, the participating stakeholders were discussing the foundation of a committee of small shop and restaurant owners.

*Dr De Meersman square or street? Brussels, 2020*

## Site 3: A street or a place for people?

**Dr De Meersman square**

The church of Notre-Dame Immaculé de Cureghem and the small space in front of it could easily escape the gaze while passing through the busy Chaussée de Mons. The church was built at the end of the 19$^{th}$ century during the same period as the urbanisation of the Cureghem neighbourhood. The area in front of the church, with a size of approximately 800 m$^2$, is administratively referred to as rue Dr De Meersman, and has a highly functional mix of residential, commercial and collective spaces for interaction. It is an illustrative example of the Cureghem neighbourhood with its long history of population dynamics due to immigration. In 2021, the the area hosted two Albanian cafés, a Belgian fries shop, a Turkish bakery

and grocery shop, a recently arrived Syrian-Palestinian hairdresser, a Lebanese grocery shop and a shop with Belgian-Moroccan specialities. Residents consist predominantly of tenants with mixed origins and family roots in Morocco or Turkey, or new immigrants from Albania, Portugal, Syria, Lebanon and Romania.

In 2013, during a sustainable neighbourhood contract programme, the municipality aimed to transform the area in front of the church into a pedestrian space by replacing the existing pavements and, most notably, by installing retractable posts to limit cars. However, these were never put into use because of a legal dispute between the municipality and the contractor. In 2019, at the start of the Syncity project, administratively the area still needed to be recognised and named a 'square'. It continued to serve as a car park for customers of the many nearby shops from early morning until late in the evening, and as a drive-through area for motorcycles.

*Street blocks to stop cars at rue Dr De Meersman*

In 2020, the municipality installed a series of static sphere blocks and metallic poles to restrict car access. However, this was and is not sufficient to ensure a lively and inclusive public space. In such a densly populated neighbourhood that at the same time has very few public spaces, the new little 'square' needs to host a wide variety of uses, both formal and informal. A compromise for the shop owners was found: a temporary opening with a movable fence was left for delivery trucks. An owner of the Lebanese shop took the role of gatekeeper, which gave a certain level of empowerment to the local shop-owners to decide what and when cars can access the 'square'. This Syncity Urban Living Lab concentrated on the transformation from a street to a square by discussing, co-creating and co-constructing new urban furniture for it. It raised issues of conflicting interests and included a series of open workshops and debates on site, and the co-construction of an architectural model together with citizens of all generations.

# How to support sustainability in arrival areas?

This section presents the set of sustainability criteria developed by the Syncity team, and how they turned into a practical tool.

What could be meaningful sustainability guidelines for an arrival area like Cureghem? Moving back and forth between theory and practice, Syncity brought the challenges and potentials of the three sites in Cureghem into a dialogue with global policy ambitions on urban sustainability, in particular with the New Urban Agenda* published by the United Nations in 2020 within the context of the SDGs.

It then combined the experiences and know-how from the three sites with the Syncity partners' knowledge on sustainability approaches in the context of urban transformation. Ultimately, we claim to have critically re-engaged, reworked and reformulated a broad variety of policy solutions to develop a Syncity set of criteria that is at the heart of the project identity. In order to elaborate a shared understanding of this Syncity identity, partners engaged in an interdisciplinary process over the course of two years.

The criteria presented here summarise what to consider during a participatory process in arrival areas, stressing the great significance of the inherent diversity and the existing pool of potential of such areas for the planning of an urban project. Based on the criteria, Syncity developed a practical sustainability check tool which consists of a background questionnaire linked to a net diagram. Find this tool on the USB stick or scan the QR code on the last page of this book.

It can

- help a project keep up an internal dialogue on its own sustainability impact throughout different project phases,
- be used as a stimulator for discussion on a neighbourhood scale, and
- serve as a self-assessment instrument at the end of an urban transformation project.

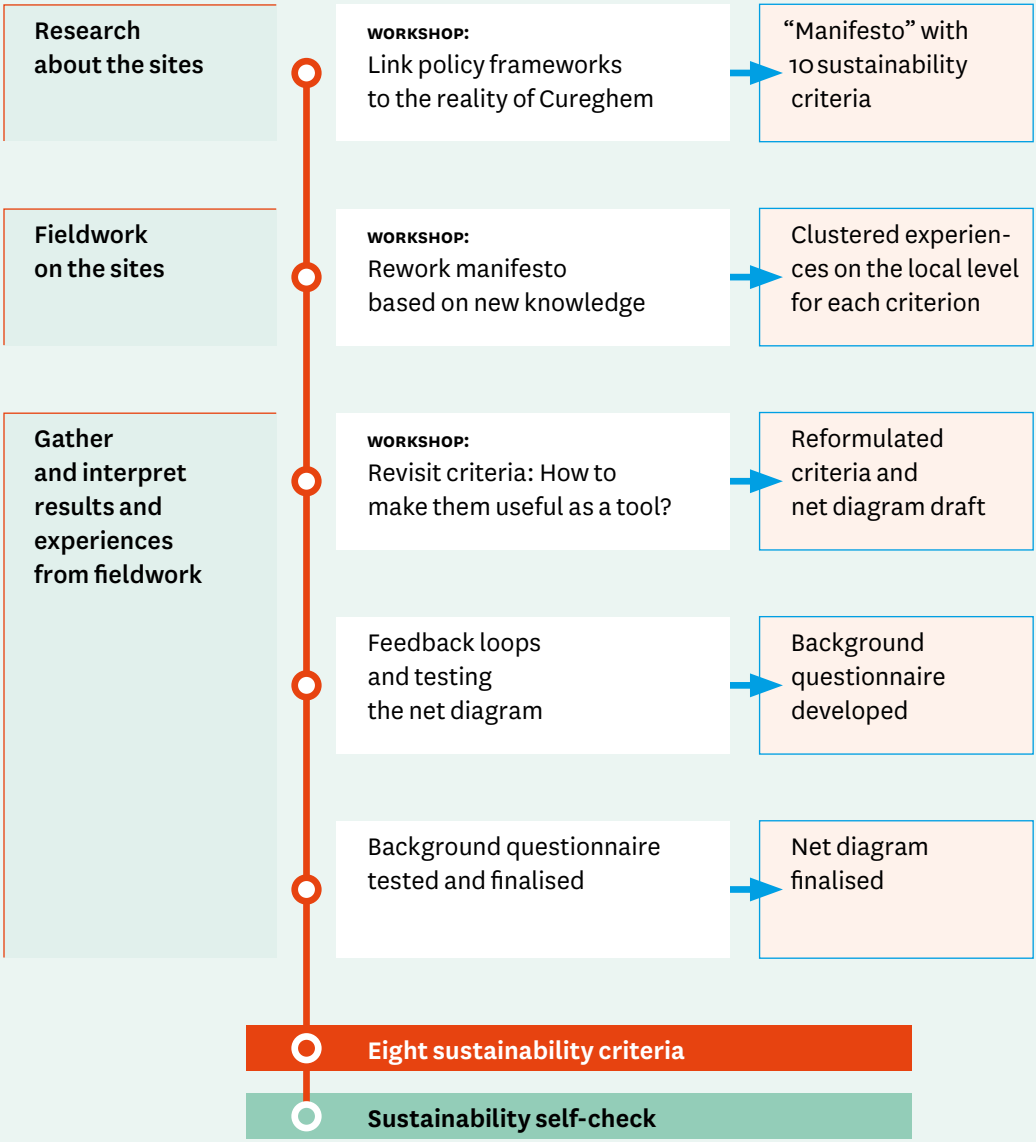
* See https://unhabitat.org/the-new-urban-agenda-illustrated

**INFO:** The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015 to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity by 2030. The 17 goals recognize that action in one area will affect outcomes in others, and that development must balance social, economic and environmental sustainability.


*SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities*

## Sustainability criteria for Cureghem

Moving between reality and policy framing



# Eight criteria for reflection and self-evaluation

- (A) **The right format for participation**
- (B) **Appropriate language**
- (C) **Interconnected stakeholders**
- (D) **Awareness of ecological improvement**
- (E) **Empowered vulnerable groups**
- (F) **Spatial justice**
- (G) **Local cultural diversity valorised**
- (H) **Improved social cohesion**


*Sustainability Criteria brought to life: a 2020 Syncity workshop*

## The right format for participation

Establish transparent frameworks for discussion and exchange of information, from inclusive debating formats to digital solutions such as open data standards

**How?**

- get to know the area where urban transformation should take place, as well as its dynamics
- use open and accessible media and appropriate communication channels for different target groups to promote the participation process
- make it possible for all stakeholders to take an active part in debates and discussions and invest time and energy in finding the right format. Focus on vulnerable groups which usually do not take part in urban planning debates
- provide local stakeholders with information and the opportunity to engage in participation from the very beginning of the project
- implement feedback loops with stakeholders in order to enable exchange between various actors

B

## Appropriate language

Adapt the language of sustainability discourses and urban planning to the primary stakeholders, in particular residents and users

**How?**

- develop and use visual communication, particularly to simplify complex issues of debate. Iconography, models and graphics, as well as online tools can help
- take the linguistic diversity into account and encourage discussions in different languages. Have debates take place in open and accessible spaces, facilitate the adaptation of all stakeholders and their representatives to the diversity of spoken languages
- convey the principles of sustainability in comprehensible, everyday language
- avoid circling around abstract, highly specialised buzzwords

## Interconnected stakeholders

Rethink and support links, relationships and alliances between municipal services, residents, users, economic actors and any other important stakeholder group

**How?**

- increase the exchange between various stakeholders through public activities and events
- listen to the participants' perception of the area and where they think areas of conflict or areas that require a transformation are situated
- discuss and develop participation tools together with stakeholders. Use this input as starting point for further debates
- explain and clarify the complexity of decision-making processes and chains of responsibility in the context of urban planning

D

## Awareness of ecological improvement

Consider and evaluate the ecological footprint of the sites you are working on and of the solutions that the project develops; inform stakeholders about possible methods of measuring and minimising the ecological footprint

**How?**

- understand / evaluate the material and energy flows of sites via tools such as Life Cycle Assessment, promote the re-use of materials, determine potential for improvement
- organise or create incentives for initiatives in the neighbourhood for sustainability initiatives
- compile methods of how to make the sustainability topic tangible for different stakeholders
- raise awareness of recycling, up-cycling and down-cycling: workshops and pop-up stores are possible formats of implementation

E

## Empowered vulnerable groups

Support the economic capacities of inhabitants through the recognition of their education, their knowledge of the site, their capacities and professional knowledge

**How?**

- make the attractivity and value of local markets visible, which often represent the foundation of the local economy and are attractions for (local) urban dwellers as well as tourists
- valorise and support existing know-how, skills and established economic practices by spreading knowledge among all stakeholders
- include and empower residents “sans papier”, helping them to gain access to the formal labour market
- support newcomers to gain a foothold in their new neighbourhood

F

## Spatial justice

Address and transform gentrification processes, develop ways that support disadvantaged groups throughout an urban transformation process: towards urban renewal without displacement

**How?**

- make the regulation of the price of housing and the promotion of social housing a subject of discussion with all stakeholders
- rethink gentrification in such a way that economically fragile groups can benefit from it and improve their living conditions
- encourage a diversified neighbourhood to avoid the socio-spatial segregation of disadvantaged societal groups
- prioritise the needs of local residents in debates and decision-making processes

G

## Local cultural diversity valorised

Include existing cultural activities, respect diversity and value cultural practices within a logic of self-empowerment and equality

**How?**

- get an overview and reflect upon the religions, traditions and customs of inhabitants and users; learn about power relations amongst them
- give voice and space to minorities and disadvantaged groups
- promote cultural and religious exchange between different societal groups, developing shared approaches whenever possible
- promote “soft” cultural practices such as food or music
- facilitate and valorise cultural display in public space (festivities, sharing of knowledge)

H

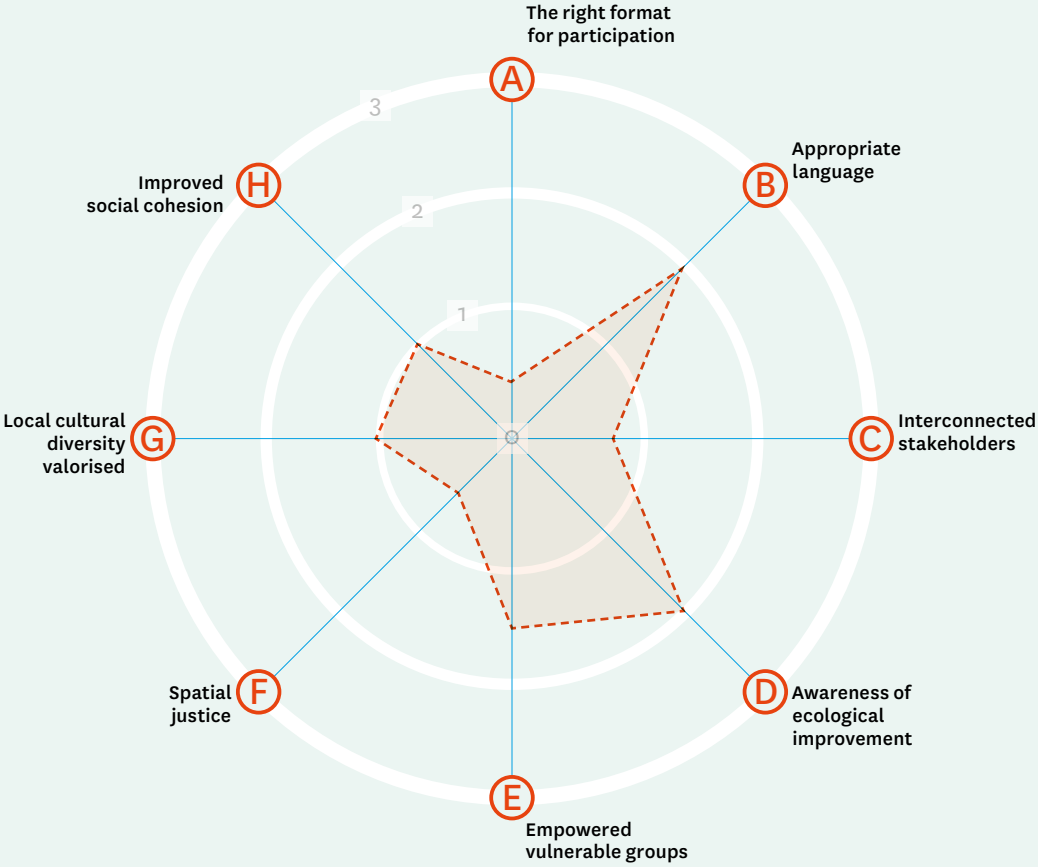
## Improved social cohesion

Foster the social improvement of those living, learning and working in the area, and support solidarity between them

**How?**

- include local associations in participatory processes as early as possible
- promote exchange in the neighbourhood through neighbourhood assemblies, discussion groups, local conferences, etc
- create a common understanding of urban processes and their complexity
- create amenities for people through the revitalization of public spaces
- support access of residents to cultural, economic and social resources (networks, social capital)

# The net diagram
## A tool for self-reflection and evaluation




An example of the net diagram in use: results from a Syncity self-reflection workshop, showing which criteria need to be focused on in the next step of the process.

► For more details on how to use the net diagram for your own project, see the "Sustainability self-check" on the USB stick, or scan the QR code.

# From listening to transformation: A step by step guide

**AUTHORS:**
Richard Pfeifer,
Csilla Barkász,
Christian Dessouroux

**Key words**
process design, participatory tools, stakeholder work

**What this part offers**
- methodological innovation
- expertise to set up and apply the Syncity approach from first project idea to urban design solution
- an applicable process design, split into phases and methods for each phase
- hints from reality: lessons from real-life situations to inspire your own project and help steer your way through it
- ideas for including ecological assessment and sustainability criteria
- pathways towards a shared product/solution

**Zoom in**
This part shows how to develop a multi-stakeholder process that becomes manifest in a co-designed product or solution, this can be anything from an improved service, urban furniture or a shared vision.

Split into phases, featuring an overview, recommendations for action, suggestions about who to work with at each stage, separate steps, examples, how-to guidelines and instructions.

# The Syncity process

**PHASE 0** **Create your project**

What to do?

- find allies
- sketch objectives and impact
- establish a project partnership

ACHIEVEMENTS

- a core team
- a project proposal

ACHIEVEMENTS

- multi-stakeholder engagement
- project framed in sustainability policies

**PHASE 2A** **Raise awareness, engage stakeholders**

What to do?

- spread knowledge
- keep decision-makers informed
- use creative participatory methods

**PHASE 1** **Relate to the needs of residents and users**

What to do?

- participatory action research
- identify sustainability potential
- understand the stakeholder landscape

ACHIEVEMENTS

- deeper connection to local context
- incorporate needs and visions of primary stakeholders

## PHASE 2B Co-create scenarios

**What to do?**

- carry out Urban Living Labs
- make the results accessible
- self-evaluate the labs

**ACHIEVEMENTS**

- multiple scenarios for site-related interventions or solutions

**ACHIEVEMENT**

- a new urban commons with sustainability orientation

## PHASE 4 Co-construct

**What to do?**

- think of co-management and co-governance
- build the solution together
- re-apply the sustainability criteria

## PHASE 3 Co-design and transfer

**What to do?**

- combine the multiple scenarios
- co-design a sustainable solution

**ACHIEVEMENTS**

- set the basis to realise the solution

# PHASE 0

## Create your project

What if you perceive your project as a collaborative, sustainability-oriented participatory process, that unfolds over time and brings an advantage to the community and the site you are working on?

**What to do**

— summarise what you already know about the urban site or issue at stake — or what you think you know
— get inspired by Syncity sustainability criteria to develop your urban sustainability component
— find allies and set up an initial core team
— understand the ecological challenges of the site
— sketch out first the objectives and desired impact
— establish a project partnership

**Who to collaborate with**

— city administration, local politicians, etc
— economic actors
— experts on urban issues
— local associations and community organisations
— ...

**What to achieve**

— a core team including experts from various disciplines and backgrounds across different sectors (civic, private and public sectors)
— a project proposal that includes sustainability aspects
— a project agreement (or similar) signed by the core team

## Step 1

**Deepen your knowledge, challenge your assumptions, look beyond the local context**

In most cases the site or urban challenge is known. For example, the Syncity project was triggered by the knowledge that ongoing urban renewal initiatives in Cureghem would change and challenge its capacities and character as an arrival area. In other instances the issue or site is predefined by governmental decision or urban planning regulations, or it comes to the surface thanks to civic engagement or a social movement. Discussing the future might start from a conflict situation where each stakeholder group tries to defend its needs and practices. It is necessary to scrutinize these narratives and arguments systematically. Constant self-reflection helps to overcome assumptions, prejudices and biases. The core team needs to create enough space for this process of reflection.

**INFO:** For helpful approaches to project management that supports dynamics of change, see for example AGILE or IPMA (check out the "IPMA individual competence baseline") or look into "SCRUM for dummies" (Layton and Morrow, 2018).

Quantitative surveys are a good way of collecting data about structural influences in a neighbourhood, such as gentrification, migration, characteristics of the local labour market, etc. They can also complement qualitative research methods by pointing out underrepresented groups within the contexts explored.

Looking beyond the local parameters and reflecting on the bigger dimension is important. Whatever is happening on the site might not be causally related to the site itself. A localized urban planning challenge often crystalizes or becomes visible at a certain site while multiple other issues or sites have contributed to it, such as demographic changes, local economic issues, the poor quality of the housing stock in the neighbourhood — to name just a few.

**INFO:** Gentrification, according to Clark (2005:258) "is a process involving a change in the population of land users such that the new users are of higher socio-economic status than the previous users, together with an associated change in the built environment through a reinvestment in fixed capital."

**How to do that**

— research and analyse relevant newspaper articles, scientific works, official problem statements
— interview experts: from civil society actors to local decision-makers

- historical analysis to show changes in demographic characteristics, usage patterns, functionalities and infrastructures and civic initiatives over time, and contextual analysis to reveal the way the chosen site or issue is embedded in the context of the neighbourhood and / or the whole city
- look for urban renewal policies, links to governance, current usage patterns, decisional rhythms of planning administration
- write a site definition report, ideally revealing links with additional places and issues that are intertwined with the chosen site or area of thematic interest

***An example from Cureghem***

*Through historical and contextual analysis, the Syncity project identified a street in Cureghem, Brussels, that epitomized a specific issue at stake: improper waste disposal and littering. The team found that a change in the local economy, together with an increase and change in population had exacerbated an already problematic waste situation in the neighbourhood. At a particular section of a street which was becoming attractive for small restaurants and oriental groceries (including its immediate surroundings), things started to crystalize. Visible piles of waste populated the area, and residents and shopkeepers felt discriminated against because they had to live and run their businesses under these circumstances. Some of these stakeholders started to protect trees by building cordons around them, and shop owners informally "reinvented" the waste collection system. The Syncity team then defined this street as one of the sites for tackling the wider issue of waste management, since the local stakeholder groups had expressed their discontent with the current situation. The initially isolated initiatives of the locals started to communicate with each other, and synergies were formed.*

► See Part I — Site 2: How to deal with waste?

*Propose, discuss, adjust — a Syncity session 2020*


*Include sustainability right from the beginning*

**HINT FROM REALITY:** The Syncity process needs about 18 to 24 months to produce relevant results.

► See Part I — Sustainability criteria for Cureghem

## Step 2

**Define the aim of your project, propose a plan for change that includes ecological improvement**

Formulate the overall aim, the time frame and the desired impact of your project. On that basis, create a concept that enables you to communicate your ambition and reach out to potential project partners in a simple way. Draft a one-pager, expand it to a more comprehensive version later. When writing this, bear in mind the potential project partners that could be involved. Ensure the urban sustainability dimension of your project.

**How to do that**

— break down the aims into primary objectives: specific, achievable, timebound and evaluable
— define the time frame of your project, create a timeline
— define the expected impact: a tangible difference that can be experienced by the participants when the project has been completed
— get inspired by the Syncity sustainability criteria, define your own approach
— think of possible risks and measures to avoid them — or, even better, of ways to transform risks into opportunities

## Step 3

### Create your core team and find partners

What kind of expertise and disciplines do you need for your project? Who will be affected by your project and its results?

The advantage of involving different disciplines lies in the fact that each of them will highlight a different element of the mosaic. Scan the neighbourhood for associations or initiatives with a common goal or sustainability orientation. Combining different fields of knowledge as well as actors with different theoretical and practical expertise is key to knitting together diversified capacities. The transdisciplinary dialogue that emerges will increase the Zprobability of finding a site with high potential — and seeing it as a space of manifold possibilities.

**How to do that**

- involve someone with expertise in ethnographic research
- involve a local association whose activity is connected to the (social / environmental / economic) development of the neighbourhood, ideally a well-known and trusted entity in the area
- involve someone who can perform a Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) on the neighbourhood level or some other form of ecological footprint evaluation (see Step 4)
- list potential project partners and define them in terms of their possible interest or roles, within urban renewal for example

**HINT FROM REALITY:** If you have the chance, visit public neighbourhood events; you will see what kind of organizations present themselves at the site.

► For guidelines on systematic stakeholder mapping and analysis, see the stakeholder balance tool and the stakeholder matrix for commoning described in Part V

Your core team turns into a consortium and signs the project agreement, containing a framework for steering the overall participation process. This involves deciding on a form of governance within the project, defining responsibilities, degrees of task autonomy and the mode of decision making. The project agreement allows you to deal with difficulties along the sometimes rocky road of participation.

## Step 4

### Pre–scan ecological hotspots at the site

A first pre-assessment of the ecological situation will help to turn ecological hotspots into potential locations for future improvement. This can be done by applying a basic ecological footprint measurement technique on the neighbourhood level. You will need access to certain fine-scale data sources, i. e. on population density, building stock, energy consumption, mobility behaviour and infrastructure. Incorporating these pre-findings into the design of the project at this early stage promotes the fine tuning of project goals, establishes solid ground for the scenario making in Phase 2, and will ideally help in the long run to reduce the ecological footprint of the case study in question, including businesses active on site as well as residents, this increasing their life quality on the site.

► Find out more about this and the method of Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) in Part III

To evaluate the current situation of a neighbourhood you can assess the metabolism of a city quarter, for example by using the ELAS calculator, which follows the methodology of the Sustainable Process Index (SPI). The assessment results enable the user to make scientifically sound decisions for projects, based on current figures on energy consumption, average ecological footprints and $CO_2$ life cycle emissions.

### How to to that

— apply the ELAS calculator,* a free to use web-based tool

► For more details, see the ELAS calculator on the USB stick, or scan the QR code on the last page of this book.

# PHASE 1

## Relate to the needs of residents and users

Take a closer look at the site or challenge, become acquainted with local knowledge. Explore local issues from the point of view of residents, users and economic actors on the site.

**What to do**

explore the neighbourhood to find spaces of possibilities and spaces that embody future sustainability potential, capture the dimensions and fields of action of sustainability: ecology, socio-economy, culture, governance, built environment

- look for emotional co-ownership: identify needs of residents, users and economic actors
- start a debate and exchange process with local (civic) organizations
- establish solid ground for your outreach work (to be carried out in Phase 2)

**Who to collaborate with**

- city administration, local politicians etc
- economic actors
- civic organizations
- users and residents
- ...

**What to achieve**

- a deeper connection between the project and the local context
- incorporate needs and visions of primary stakeholders

**HINT FROM REALITY:** Time is a critical resource: you might aim for a maximum of one year for this phase. It is difficult for stakeholders' engagement to be sustained for longer than that without any practical results or changes becoming visible.

## Step 1

### "Listen" to the residents and other stakeholders in the area, find points of entry

Enter the urban area the way you gain access to a new genre of music. There are many ways to "listen" to a site. Walk in the area to sense its atmosphere, collect artefacts, listen to testimonies. See residents and other stakeholders related to the site or area as local experts. Some of them could become "gatekeepers" or intermediaries to wider stakeholder networks. Be sensitive to plans, visions or actual appropriation practices (i. e. placemaking activities) carried out by the multitude of stakeholders on the site. Develop your "listening capacity" to generate the necessary knowledge. The aim is to improve the project's impact and inclusiveness. Combined with a sustainability approach and sound stakeholder tools, this will support the creation of commons.

**INFO:** A gatekeeper is "the person who controls research access. For example, the top manager or senior executive in an organization, or the person within a group or community who makes the final decision as to whether to allow the researcher access to undertake the research." (The SAGE Dictionary of Social Research Methods)

**How to do that**

Apply participatory action research and space related methods, for example:

— Informal interviews

Based on the concept of narrative interviews, these more informal interviews with local stakeholders follow an open and biographical approach, often inspired by a narrative input directly linked to the experience of the interview partner, such as a local newspaper article, a story from the neighbourhood, etc.

— Walking interviews

► Method card 08
— The walking interview

Understand a person's relation to the urban environment through a "walk while talk" approach. This often reveals emotions that people associate with spaces. You can allow for a more open or a controlled approach when it comes to the selection of particular destinations.

— Participatory photo interview

► Method card 05
— Participatory photo interview

A method from visual sociology that uses the power of photographs. It makes participants visualize their

relationship with the urban space and is a subtle way to learn more about people's ideas and concerns with a strong self-reflexive character.

### — Collaborative mapping

► Method card 07
— Collaborative mapping

A method of sketching usage patterns on a printed map. It serves to deepen the understanding of placemaking routines and temporal rhythms, usage types, etc. This method can help reveal usage patterns and interaction between practices and the urban space.

### Step 2

**Analyse the relations between key stakeholders**

This goes hand in hand with the listening task and will expose the gaps in your knowledge. It is the basis for developing a strategy on how to close particular gaps in your stakeholder work and to consider what is needed for developing commons.

From the stakeholder analysis point of view, a site is more than a geographic locality. It is constituted by a network of people and institutions who inhabit, act upon or use the site. Look at the site through this lens: as a social field with a multitude of stakeholders and manifold connections between them.

Stakeholder relations are dynamic: the emphasis in the relations might change, and new stakeholders might appear while others disappear. As a result, stakeholder mapping and analysis never ends. It is something to come back to in Phase 2 and 3 when the project reaches out and carries out Urban Living Labs. Stakeholder analysis and mapping then develops into stakeholder management and opens up opportunities to evaluate the impact as the project moves along.

**How to do that**

— The stakeholder balance tool

► More about this tool in Part V

Work with the list of stakeholders that you have created in Phase 0 and use this tool to group them in categories. Describe key characteristics, include assumptions about their interests, and think of ways of accessing them individually or in groups. Play with distance: add information regarding how "close" or "distant" they are from each other. Add notes on their degrees of involvement in the neighbourhood (for example, based on know-how collected through "listening to the site").

— The stakeholder matrix for commoning

► More about this tool in Part V

Use this tool to map stakeholders and understand their power to contribute to the urban commons. What is the nature of their power position, knowledge, articulation, and anchorage with the site in question? What is their interest, or due to which means / activity are they part of the place? This tool helps you to understand the landscape of stakeholders involved in your site or sites, and how engaged they already are in a site beyond their individual interest, towards common interests.

**HINT FROM REALITY:** By the end of this phase you are very likely to discover that some disciplines or elements of experience-based knowledge are missing. For example, you might find that a local civic association which you discovered during the listening phase is of great value to the project. Be prepared for this and find ways to still include partners into the project.

## Step 3

**Create an atlas of your site(s)**

The format of an atlas allows to organise your findings spatially in a widely known form, digital or physical / printed. What areas or thematic issues play a role? Develop a common understanding of this with your project partners and map issues and places in the atlas.

**How to do that**

— organize your findings along sites and topics
— relate these sites and topics to relevant urban renewal policies, official development plans, etc
— create your own way of visualizing these relations and topics with the aim of sharing them with a diversity of stakeholders: one way to do this is by setting up or extending an existing website with a geovisualization tool and / or GIS based story mapping tools

► Find an example for a digital atlas at www.cureghem-tales.eu/atlas/

# PHASE 2 A/B

# Engage stakeholders for co-creation

This phase consists of two parallel strands that mutually support each other.

Phase 2A: Raise awareness about local issues, inform about your project, involve primary stakeholders and users in co-creation.

## PHASE 2A

### Raise awareness, engage stakeholders

**What to do**

- spread knowledge among local residents and users, keep them informed and engaged
- keep the decision-makers informed and interested by referring to existing policy ambitions
- enrich existing ideas for creating scenarios in Phase 2B

**Who to collaborate with**

- users and residents
- municipality
- local economic actors
- civic organizations

**What to achieve**

- multi-stakeholder engagement in urban transformation issues
- increased sustainability awareness among stakeholders

**Step 1**

**Boost the creativity of stakeholders for co-creation**

Many different methods can enhance stakeholder awareness of local issues while engaging them to find creative solutions in a collaborative way. They can also help to "recruit" local residents and users for the Urban Living Labs of Phase 2 B. Evaluate at regular intervals whether the outreach and attractiveness of your activities continue to maintain expected levels by using the stakeholder engagement and balance tools developed.

**HINT FROM REALITY:** Document the outcomes of these more playful activities properly, as they help you fill in the potential knowledge gaps arising during "listening" in Phase 1.

**How to do that**
Some suggestions:

— Urbodrom game

► Method card 02
— The Urbodrom game

A board game for ages 14 – 99 in which the players negotiate a specific site or neighbourhood in a collaborative and sustainability-oriented way.

— Plexhibition

► Method card 10
— Plexhibition

This uses drawing to engage with the site. It raises awareness of the qualities of the environment and can be carried out by almost everyone.

— Porte parole

► Method card 04
— Porte parole

A way of enhancing emotional debate about the present and future of a site by using large posters and facilitated on-site interventions.

— Seeding the city

► Method card 06
— Seeding the city

An educational technique, especially useful when engaging children and their caretakers. It promotes increased awareness of green infrastructure and biodiversity in urban environments.

— The walkshop

► Method card 03
— The walkshop

An in situ tour where experts from urban planning and renewal institutions can meet and engage directly with the actual users of a site.

— Utopic interventions

Temporary interventions in a site that propose a possible desirable future for the site based on the preliminary project findings. Such interventions can help to set new standards of what is possible and encourage participants to think outside the box. They can range from a pop-up bicycle repair workshop in a public park to a community-run restaurant in a vacant warehouse to a temporary recreational area.

## Step 2

**Set your project in the context of relevant sustainability policies**

Clarify and fine-tune your project's expected outcomes in relation to existing policy initiatives. This can be done by further adapting the Syncity sustainability criteria.

► See Part I — Sustainability criteria for Cureghem for details

Revise official material found during your research in Phase 0, such as existing urban policies or structural plans, with an orientation on sustainability. Connect your project content and goals to supranational initiatives such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) or the UN Urban Agenda. Incorporate these strategic documents into the context of your site or issue, translate the expert terminology into a language that is accessible to the stakeholders. The result can be a list of guidelines or principles that support and guide scenario-making in the context of the Urban Living Labs (ULL).

**How to do that**

— workshops with the project core team and additional experts: bring your selection of sustainability documents, create debate around them and break them down to a local level, for example with stations or round tables in a World Café setting

► The World Café method: www.partizipation.at/world-cafe.html

## Step 3

**Revise your findings and sketch out first ideas**

Many of the applied participatory methods and tools give hints about what people need and what they are concerned with. Based on a thorough documentation of the results, draft new or revise existing ideas as a basis for future scenarios.

**How to do that**

— look into the documentation of the participatory events, write a summary report
— hold a workshop to explore overlaps and contradictions between the ideas and the research findings
— sum up the discussion and point towards promising pathways.

## PHASE 2B
## Co-create scenarios

Phase 2B: Carry out Urban Living Labs to develop the content for scenarios and reach a moment of co-creation, pointing to an imaginable future or to possibilities for a positive change.

**What to do**
- set up an Urban Living Lab (ULL)
- self-evaluate your ULL activity

**Who to collaborate with**
- users and residents
- local economic actors
- city administration and local politicians
- civic organizations

**What to achieve**
- multiple scenarios for site-related interventions or solutions

### Step 1
**Prepare the Urban Living Lab**

Use the stakeholder analysis carried out in Phase 1 to make the ULL as inclusive as possible. Balance and set up your working groups i. e. for the scenario making. From this moment on, your stakeholder work turns into stakeholder management. This step translates the knowledge gained in the previous phases and develops initial scenarios. When designing formats for the ULL, check the sustainability criteria and establish a lively dialogue between the ULL and the core team.

► See Part IV for more details on Urban Living Labs

► See Part V for more details on what makes stakeholder management meaningful

**How to do that**
- based on the needs and interests of the residents and users, develop first scenarios to be discussed, criticized or further developed by the participants of the ULL
- relate these to the LCA to check if ecological issues are covered.

## Step 2

### Implement the Urban Living Lab

Here, new scenarios emerge on the basis of listening and research. It is often the most creative and trans-disciplinary moment of a project, and the pivotal space for building up commons with or amongst stakeholders.

**How to do that**

— take care of language issues (translators, facilitators)
— group size: allow all participants to give input
— think of group dynamics: take into account power relations when composing working groups
— create an atmosphere which is open to experimental and creative ideas from all participants
— ensure quality facilitation and documentation
— consider organising possible follow-up talks
— make the results of the ULL accessible for all participants and those who are interested but were not able to attend
— develop your own experimental methods.

**HINT FROM REALITY:** Choose a good space for your Urban Living Lab. Ideally it should be easily accessible, bright and comfortable, and situated in the neighbourhood. Use intercultural competencies to prepare the setting; be sensitive to cultural differences when selecting food and drinks, as well as the chosen date and place of the event. Plan time to evaluate and reflect the related events.

Three methods that Syncity developed:

— Choose your urban furniture

► Method card 01
— Choose your urban furniture

The method stimulates the users' imagination to express their aspirations in relation to the transformation of their public space. It is an interactive selection game to imagine possible ways to transform a public space.

— Atelier scenario

► Method card 09
— Atelier scenario

A participatory workshop that brings different stakeholder groups together around one topic of shared concern, to seek their opinions, collect knowledge and move towards future solutions in a collaborative and creative environment.

— Architectural model

► Method card 11
— Architectural model

A small-scale model of a real site or space that helps to pool the knowledge and ideas of ULL participants. This assists in overcoming language barriers and can also be used for scenario-making by placing different objects.

# PHASE 3

## Co-design and transfer

This phase synthesizes the different scenarios. The challenge is to develop one co-design out of the many ideas and transfer it — towards its realisation.

**What to do**

— combine the multiple scenarios developed during the co-creation ULL
— create a solution: an urban furniture to be built, an action group to communicate with the municipality, a reworked master plan for the long-term development of a site
— support existing commoning processes among the stake-holders which will help the co-designed solution to be sustainable after the end of the project.

**Who to collaborate with**

— residents and users
— city administration and local politicians
— local economic actors
— investors
— civil society organisations / civic associations
— an architect / designer
— neighbourhood networks

**What to achieve**

— The co-design solution is transferred / realised.

## Step 1

**Synthesize the scenarios, make them more concrete and co-design a solution**

The goal is to work towards a synthesis of the multiple scenarios created in Phase 2 by recombining and further developing them, still within the framework of Urban Living Labs and most probably involving several workshops / sessions and feedback loops. Re-engage with the Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) at this stage to reflect on the ecological impact of the different solutions while they synthesise and become more concrete.

**How to do that**

— facilitate the negotiation process between the stakeholders and their different interests towards a synthesis of the scenarios in several cycles (one or more workshops)
— stay within the given limited resources (i. e. space, money, expertise, time …) with the aim of combining as many of the initial scenarios developed in Phase 2B within the given limitations — new scenarios will evolve that are more complex than the initial ones
— carry out LCAs for the different scenarios and give hands-on input for possible improvements
— select / rank scenarios. The bases for judgment are the scenarios'
  a ability to integrate the different stakeholder needs,
  b respect for sustainability aspects, and
  c contribution to the commons

Scenarios which are able to combine these will enter the next round, etc. The method for this selection process can range from a self-organised stakeholder jury to a selection process based on sociocratic methods.

You can apply the "Choose your urban furniture" and "Architectural model" method described in Phase 2B.

► Method card 01
— Choose your urban furniture

► Method card 11
— Architectural model

## Step 2

**Co-design with professional planning support**

Once new scenarios are developed, successive sessions with, for example, a professional planner can help to translate the debate and input into concrete plans. These are again presented to the stakeholder assembly, which will give feedback to the plan. After several rounds participating stakeholders and the planner(s) should come to an agreement. Make sure to re-engage with the Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) at this stage to reflect on the ecological impact of the different solutions while they synthesise and become more concrete. Co-design Urban Living Labs are thus about deciding what becomes the final outcome.

Conflicts among stakeholders will most likely emerge during this process; they are an inherent part of the commoning process. Find ways to manage conflicts and keep the interest of the participants alive. This will increase the chance that stakeholders will continue the process of commoning after the project team leaves. Keep track of the ecological impact (positive or negative).

For example, if the scenario involves the design of a public building or urban furniture, you need to invite an architect or designer to the session, since the final product needs to meet certain technical parameters. Ensure that this external expert has the role of a consultant who only intervenes in the decision-making process of the stakeholders to a limited extent.

► Interesting examples from cooperative urban planning in Vienna https://www.wien.gv.at/stadtentwicklung/grundlagen/verfahren/

**How to do that**

- contact a professional planner with experience in co-creation, include a group facilitator
- bring the synthesized scenarios of Step 1 and additional contextual materials into a planning format
- carry out LCAs for the different scenarios and give hands-on input for possible improvement
- develop a presentation on synthesized characteristics and footprint variations
- present the new scenarios within an ULL
- develop scenarios further in an iterative process between the planner and the ULLs

## Step 3

### Transfer the solution

Ideally the process leads to useful and valuable proposals for the chosen site or neighbourhood. In many cases implementing these proposals is a challenging journey: it involves support and permission by authorities, funding sources, sometimes additional expertise, etc. Challenges encountered on the way might include rejection of the proposal by the relevant authorities, potential conflicts with other existing or planned projects by city-planning authorities, losing stakeholder support on the way, etc. However, if the solution is realised, it boosts the self-empowerment of the participating stakeholders and raises the commoning quality of the site.

### How to do that

#### Advocacy planning

► https://www.partizipation.at/advocacy-planning.html

Originally this is a participation method whereby an advocate (not in the legal sense; usually a planner) gives ordinary citizens expert advice in planning matters, assists them and represents them in front of official bodies at communal and state level.

It can be a useful way of establishing connections with public authorities or a private developer, in order to obtain (political) support and / or the necessary financial resources for the implementation of the co-designed solution or product. When "advocating", make sure to point out the many benefits of the solution or product that was created in line with the Syncity approach:

a it is based on an improved knowledge of stakeholder needs, as a result of the participatory action research methods applied in its development,

b it involves a transdisciplinary approach which integrates knowledge from different research disciplines, practice-based expertise, as well as the local knowledge of residents and users assures high quality,

c there will be a shorter implementation time, since the product or solution enjoys higher stakeholder acceptance and support.

Include an architect or other professional designer in your advocacy team, ideally the same person who provided the participants with expertise in the co-design ULL. Public authorities or private developers are often guided by an "expert mindset" (Manzini and Rizzo, 2011). A professional presentation is important here.

### Step 4

**Support the establishment of a (local) urban transformation network**

Transfer your own know-how and tools (internet blog, the atlas, cargo bike etc) to primary stakeholders and support the development of a local urban transformation collective. Most probably, residents, local economic actors, users and community based associations can grow bonds with each other due to their practical engagements with a site. This bonding enhances social and cultural capital and further defines the quality of the urban commons. Based on these connections, find arrangements with relevant decision making bodies such as the municipality or other secondary stakeholders.

**How to do that**

- make use of the collaborative energy of the scenario making by emphasising common interest and achieved outcomes
- use conflict as a productive force, bring in a professional facilitator
- be sure to allow for enough time and space for your Urban Lab participants to get to know each other
- support neighbourhood events that strengthen the collective's connection to the area
- find a partnership model with the municipality to build up co-management and co-governance capacities, enhance trust and discuss mutual responsibilities.

# PHASE 4

## Co-construct

This phase initiates co-construction, ideally having participants of the ULLs directly involved. Materials and skills should enhance local value chains, and consider sustainability / the results of the LCA.

**What to do**

— build the solution co-developed in the Urban Living Labs
— continue to use the Syncity sustainability criteria or any other sustainability framework for self-checks and inspiration

**Who to collaborate with**

— anyone necessary to construct the solution (civil engineers, etc) and permit it to be used: this can include city administrators and local politicians, architects / designers, investors, civil society organisations (depending on the solution).

**What to achieve**

— a new urban furniture, a facility in a public space or public building which contributes to the creation of a common and reflects a sustainability approach, etc.

***Encouraging co-construction: Imagine…***

*…you are a community group organising a project. You have created partnerships involving different stakeholders and implemented the Urban Living Lab. You discovered that the senior residents in your community are lonely, since most of them live on their own, and there are insufficient facilities where they can spend time outside their homes and / or with other members of the community. You involved a group of seniors in the phase of co-design, and together you came up with a plan to tackle the problem. You set up a group of volunteers who would regularly visit the elderly, chat with them and provide them with company. You also envisioned a new set of urban furniture which is "senior-friendly" (e. g. benches with armrests that help seniors when standing up or creating chess-tables — or whatever board games are popular among seniors — in public parks). Then you transferred these solutions to the city-administration,*

*who approved them and promised to implement them at some point. You can certainly celebrate this as a major success, since you raised awareness of an important issue and created a plan for solving it. At this point you have two options: you can either wait for the city officials to initiate the process, or you can go one step further and co-construct.*

**How to do that**

— find the right scale: be realistic about what you can achieve and what would be too much of a burden: e.g., you could implement a small-scale project where you collaborate with local students of architecture who design urban furniture or meeting places for seniors for free, as part of their college assignments
— if necessary, find new partners and financial resources needed for the implementation of the co-designed solution
— if necessary, start a new project to realise the solution
— start thinking of co-management and co-governance: who will take care of the new solution on the short and long run?

*Design of a tree protection structure including a recycling and exchange box and a flower support, ready for co-construction — Syncity SIP 2021, Groupe Mons; © Khaoula Fakih Lanjiri, Clarence Depaepe, Céline Schröder under the guidance of Andrea Bortolotti (ULB), Daniela Salgado Cofré (ULB, PUC-Valparaiso) and Vital Marage (CRIPA-Commune d'Anderlecht)*

III.

# Research at the interface of past, present and future


**AUTHORS:**
Ina Ivanceanu, Lara Schober
**URBAN INNOVATION WEEK:**
Catalina Dobre, Marco Ranzato
**SYNTOPIA:**
Heidi Dumreicher, Bettina Kolb, Michelle Prem
**LIFE CYCLE ASSESSMENT:**
René Kollmann

**Key words**

participatory action research, Urban Innovation Week, Life Cycle Assessment, Syntopia

**What this part offers**

- principles and aims of participatory action research
- ideas how to overcome top-down planning systems
- a new transdisciplinary format for research and debate
- a proposal for a sustainability-oriented urban education center with focus on circular economy
- an introduction to Life Cycle Assessment and how to use it

**Zoom in**

The central question of this part is: how to ground urban transformation projects of a city quarter in the needs and wishes of its residents while enhancing environmental sustainability at the same time? The answer proposed by Syncity is a combination of participatory action research methods and ecological assessment of the neighbourhood, with the help of the Life Cycle Assessment method.

Furthermore, Syncity developed an innovative format called the Urban Innovation Week, and the idea of Syntopia, a vision for a new building in Cureghem where sustainability ideals are put to practice in the fields of living, working and education, based on the capacities, skills and needs of the local residents.

# Exploring the relationship between people and spaces

This section outlines the potential of the participatory action research approach for the field of urban transformation. It proposes a new experimental research format — the Urban Innovation Week — and presents a sketch of a desirable future: Syntopia.

Syncity's approach to research is inspired by ethnographic and participatory action research studies. It listens to and values the place-related knowledge of local users and residents as a specific expertise, complementary to the knowledge of professional stakeholders in the field of urban transformation such as urban planners, architects or municipalities.

Syncity research looks into spatial perceptions, practices of people that relate to spatial needs, and intangible relations between space and identities. Such approaches enrich an urban development endeavour by relating the project to the needs of the local stakeholders, taking into account the following points:

— First, an understanding of a site going beyond its physical and geographical parameters. A site is the result of manifold interactions, and it is connected to other sites via the many connections (institutional, economic, social, etc) of the people who use or inhabit it, and who have place-related values, interests and goals: these people are referred to as primary stakeholders (see Anranter, 2016).

► See Part II — Phase 1 for participatory action research methods.

— Second, a site is never just a container of buildings, events and people; it is a "lived" space (Lefebvre, 1991: 39), meaning that the material reality of space shapes the lives of the people who inhabit or use it, while their actions and social interactions shape the space in turn (ibid).

— Third, methods such as participant observation on the site help provide an insight into everyday practices and site-related usage patterns, while informal interviews and analyses of everyday discourses show values and interests related to usage patterns of a site.

The Syncity research approach defines itself by the following principles and aims:

### Principles

- context-specific
- focus on positive change and potential
- involving the community throughout the whole process
- residents and users as co-researchers who reflect on a particular situation based on their own social history and experience (Reason and Bradbury, 2008).
- sharing and creating practice-based knowledge

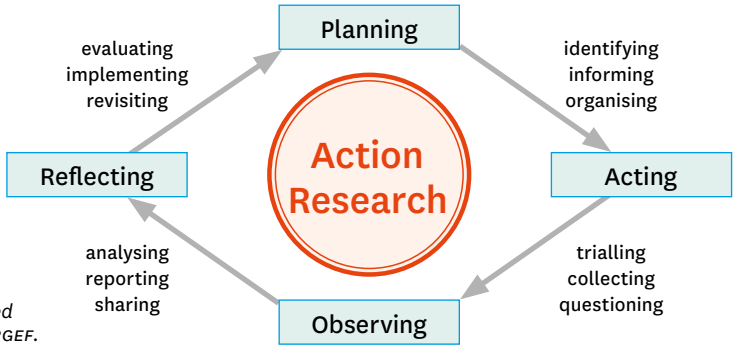
### Aims

- an increased awareness and capacity among participants
- enabling residents and users to act as agents of positive change in their own community
- achieve meaningful and locally embedded theories and practice through a democratic and collaborative process with participants.*

* For more details see Cruz Velasco, 2013; Reason and Bradbury, 2008

To develop the content of the Urban Living Labs, Syncity follows the principles of participatory action research (PAR) to understand specific urban problems and find and implementing solutions to address them. A useful starting point is the action research diagram below, representing the methodological basis of participatory action research. It focuses on planning, acting, observing and reflecting with regard to the continuous improvement of one's practice in a pro-active, participatory and collaborative way (see for example Tripp, 2005).

**INFO:** Participatory action research (PAR) represents one of the many developments of the family of action research inquiries, which has been used since the post-war years in different fields of applications, such as community development, organisational change and teaching.




*The cyclical inquiry process of action research. Graphic based on Health Action Research, ARGEF.*

Syncity connects the PAR approach with urban planning and urban transformation. In practice, these fields are mainly dominated by experts, professional planners and political actors, whereas residents and users of public spaces — in particular vulnerable and marginalized societal groups — remain excluded from planning processes. Their needs are often subordinated to the aesthetic visions of the professional planners and designers (Ku and Kwok, 2015: 119). PAR, as innovative approach to urban and spatial research, aims to overcome this normative top-down planning system.

**What is important in this process?**

- facilitate action on site (instead of focusing on mere observatory research)
- gather a wide range of knowledge and foster stronger relationships between researchers, planners and participants: the action research diagram can help
- mutual learning and respect; this enables everyone involved in the process to take meaningful action
- value an equal distribution of power and principles such as social justice and equity in the (decision-making) process
- aim at long-term urban transformations and collective change (Strydom and Puren, 2014)
- ensure that research results have local relevance and embeddedness

Ultimately, by participating in projects that apply this approach, planners can create meaningful places and spaces where residents feel a sense of belonging and pride. For Syncity, PAR is therefore closely linked to the concept of emotional co-ownership.

**INFO BOX:** The third edition of the SAGE Handbook of Action Research (Bradbury, 2015) offers insights into how a wide range of areas can benefit from the application of (participatory) action research, including the field of urban planning.

# The Urban Innovation Week: a transdisciplinary encounter with a neighbourhood

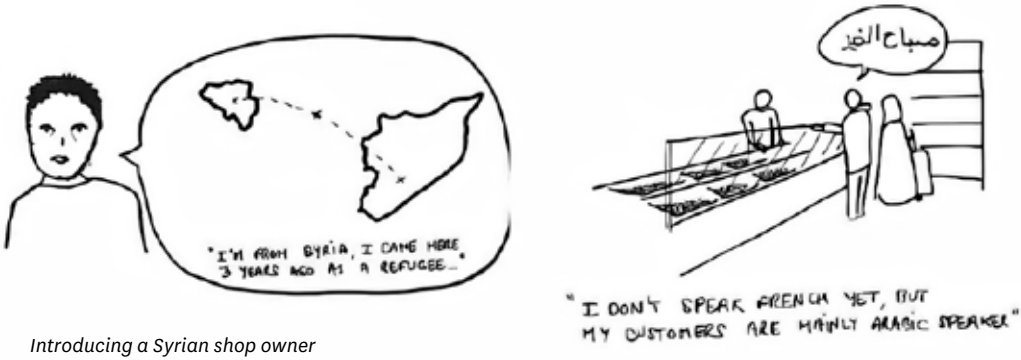
This section introduces a new format which enables experts from different disciplines to understand the local context of a neighbourhood by engaging in a dialogue with residents and users.

Syncity developed the "Urban Innovation Week" within the framework of the "Semaine d'Innovation Pédagogique" (SIP): intensive pedagogical one-week workshops that have been hosted each year since 2015 by the Faculty of Architecture at the Université Libre de Bruxelles. The Urban Innovation Week adapts participatory methods to the urban space and its stakeholders rather than vice versa, and bridges the gap between research and practice. It is particularly suited to projects in urban areas under strong pressure for transformation, because it aims to reduce the tension between urban professionals (architects, urban planners) and people who actually inhabit the site and use it.

In Syncity, students from different disciplines (architecture, urban planning and design, landscape architecture), guided by researchers, urban professionals and activists, examined the complexities of the Cureghem neighbourhood by combining research with stakeholder participation and open debate.

Facilitated by the local faculty of architecture within the SIP, the Urban Innovation Week represented an incentive for participants to reflect on the role and responsibilities of architects, urban planners and designers in the urban transformation of a arrival area neighbourhood in Brussels. Each workshop offered the autonomy to define its own objectives and methodologies, which allowed moving from an academic teaching and learning context towards active learning on site.

*Students present an urban furniture design for the Abattoir open space — Syncity SIP 2021, Groupe Abattoirs; © Meg Cotinaut, Roxane Janssens, Jeremy Cuvelier, Louison Richart, Adélie Darimont, Félix Gomrée under the guidance of Alessandra Bruno (ULB), Basile Museux (Abattoirs SA) and Christian Dessouroux (ULB)*




*Introducing a Syrian shop owner in Chaussée de Mons — Syncity SIP 2019; ©Sketches by Ronald Mocadie published in Ranzato, Dessouroux, Museux (eds.), 2020*

The specificity of the Urban Innovation Week lies in

— combining multiple research and action methods to examine the dynamics of a neighbourhood in a trans-disciplinary approach in urban planning and design (Muller et al., 2005),

— facilitating mutual active and multi-level learning * between researchers, architects, activists, public authorities, urban designers and planners, and local residents and users of a specific urban area, and

— adapting the design charrette approach, which uses design-related methods (e.g. mapping, models, drawings) to allow participants to investigate the local context through direct interaction with local stakeholders and to propose possible transformation pathways for the neighbourhood (Girling et al., 2006)

* See more about this Pahl-Wostl, 2009 or Gidley et al., 2009

Syncity developed three Urban Innovation Weeks, all interlinked with each other:

### Week 1 (April 2019)

**"Beyond architecture and urban design"**

Split in two groups (TOP and BOTTOM) participants focused on regeneration programmes and projects in Cureghem in the midst of everyday lives. They investigated the socio-spatial reality of the area by focusing on interrelations, patterns of behaviour, practices, and space appropriations of both users and residents (BOTTOM) and on planned transformation projects in the

*A 2019 SIP excursion to interim spaces in Cureghem*

area by evaluating the target population, the related urban vision, values, and discourses inherent to the way these projects are presented and promoted (TOP).

### Week 2 (April 2020)

**"Revealing the political of a contended space"**

Cancelled due to COVID-19, the week was to portray the socio-spatial complexity that makes the Abattoir of Anderlecht a truly "public" space. It was replaced by students' fieldwork in the context of the Master's course "Global Urban Agenda". The course explored the governance dimension of public participation processes (past and present) in the Cureghem neighbourhood concerning urban development, with particular attention paid to the participation of stakeholders in ongoing urban development projects. Who is involved and how, in which phase of the project, with which tools and methods?

### Week 3 (April 2021)

**"(Co)-construction with the public space"**

► See Part II on the different phases of the Syncity process.

It focussed on the role of co-construction of street furniture in the transformation of public spaces. The students were invited to summarise findings from Phase 3 of the Syncity process, to produce sketches, models and construction guidance manuals for street furniture based on the outcome of the ULLS. Due to COVID-19 the workshop was carried out online with few interactions outdoor in small groups.

**Two key components of the format:**

— involve local experts and neighbourhood associations throughout the process. At the beginning of the week they bring insights about the sites, and at the end of the week, when students or other "outsiders" present their findings, they engage in mutual learning experiences.

— an open and casual atmosphere to encourage lively and honest discussions as well as reflections upon initial assumptions or expectations among the participants.

*Imagining new usages for the Abattoir site — Syncity SIP 2021, Groupe Abattoirs; © Meg Cotinaut, Roxane Janssens, Jeremy Cuvelier, Louison Richart, Adélie Darimont, Félix Gomrée under the guidance of Alessandra Bruno (ULB), Basile Museux (Abattoirs SA) and Christian Dessouroux (ULB)*

***An example from Cureghem***

*During the first Syncity's Urban Innovation Week, 15 students formed two separate groups — TOP and BOTTOM — and explored three cases: housing, commercial/community and public space. The BOTTOM group found a high degree of heterogeneity of actors in terms of their relations to the neighbourhood, and a high diversity of activities in public spaces, leading to conflicts of usage. The TOP group results highlighted the municipality's difficulty about acting in Cureghem.*

Ultimately, the Urban Innovation Week is an ideal format to:

— instigate a project team's full immersion into a site and allow the team to become acquainted with inherent stakeholder relationships

— reveal the study site's dynamics and potential areas of conflict prior to the project's actual fieldwork

— ensure a balanced investigation of the needs of different stakeholders, such as residents and urban professionals

— channel the enthusiasm, energy and innovative thinking of students, to contribute to the emergence and development of new ideas as an ongoing project

— put into practice a transdisciplinary approach to investigating and interacting with a site

— move beyond the traditional setting of academic learning and promote iterative feedback loops and 'learning by acting' among different actors to analyse 'wicked urban problems'

# Syntopia: from participatory research to a draft for a life skill building

This section shows how research can develop inspiring future scenarios based on ideas from local residents in combination with scientific scenarios.

What if there were a place combining living, working and learning in Cureghem while also supporting a sustainable lifestyle? A place for synergies between social and spatial aspects? A place that generates job opportunities for residents and encourages individual capacity building? A place for living, working and learning for all generations, serving sustainable activities in a circular economy? And … what might this place look like?

Syntopia is both a building and a concept. It has capacity building and education at its core, with a particular emphasis on women and gender, and is based on research and practice from the fields of social science and urban design.

The idea for Syntopia is based on results from empirical Syncity fieldwork carried out in Cureghem in 2019–2020. The methods employed were walks through the territory, observations, photo-taking and 25 semi-structured and partly photo interviews with experts and residents. The interaction with the following research partners in particular inspired the team:

- a group of young students of diverse ethnic backgrounds, trusting in their future capacities
- an Arab candy seller in a newly opened shop in Chaussée de Mons
- an artist occupying an "interim space" in Cureghem, developing new building material from mushrooms
- a woman from Sub-Saharan Africa who owned a dress shop and organised a restaurant.

*Mushroom bricks produced in Cureghem by "Le Champignon de Bruxelles", 2021*

Furthermore, inspiration came from Abattoir SA and the organisations present on the Abattoir site itself, including the company owners, an architect working on site, a market manager and a market vendor.

Syntopia is based on insights from this research combined with expert knowledge from architecture and urban planning, and incorporates findings from Syncity's first Urban Innovation Week. In this approach, scientific

knowledge production and local residents' experience-based knowledge are the starting point for future ideas towards a sustainable future of the neighbourhood.

Based on that concept, any particular individual capacity of a resident from Cureghem, for example, could initiate a community development and contribute to a wider process enhancing people's education and further training. Interim spaces are then required for temporary usage where inhabitants can develop their ideas: for instance, to establish a new restaurant, a bicycle repair station, etc. In this bottom-up approach, individuals can contribute to the community's development through mechanisms such as agency, capacity building and resource provision. Individual capacities can contribute to a wider process enhancing people's education and further training, ultimately creating ideas for a sustainable future. The corresponding empowerment concept includes several mechanisms through which individuals can shape their opportunities and personal freedoms within communities. "Five mechanisms were seen to foster community empowerment: agency; capacity building; resource provision; opportunity structure; and sustainability". (Hennink et al., 2012: 206).

**The view from within: challenges and opportunities**

► Part I for details on Cureghem

At the time of research, many inhabitants of Cureghem suffered from social and material disadvantages. The Syncity qualitative research points towards several main challenges along the lines of gender and age in the area, decribed as follows:

*Informal street vending in Cureghem, 2019*

Given the limited access to the labour market for residents due to school dropouts or stigmatisation, unemployment rates are high among young people, and many men resort to precarious and informal jobs where they often face exploitation. Women, on the other hand, find themselves confronted with traditional gender roles and often depend economically on their male family members, which can again lead to violence. Gentrification is on the way with new modern housing blocks being built, and the neighbourhood is changing fast.

During the fieldwork periods a main important economic driving force in Cureghem was food production and vending on the Abattoir site, providing important work opportunities for people from the area and far beyond. In addition, food production facilities, such as sustainable vegetable and fish production and a mushrooms farm, have been established on site. The Abattoir SA also provided a safe environment for cultural events including activities for children, mainly run by the NGO Cultureghem, and offered a safe open public space for the whole neighbourhood.

*A meal at a fair price under the roof of the Abattoir: the community kitchen of the NGO Cultureghem, 2020*

Cureghem's diverse and multicultural community creates opportunities in the form of new businesses developing in the neighbourhood. In addition to the already existing Arabic, Turkish and African food shops, Syrian restaurants, bakeries and confectioneries have been established in recent years. The Abattoir and the food market hall FOODMET contribute to and support this cultural mixture. They could represent places that support people's capacities and provide opportunities for entrepreneurial or technological experiments and new economic activities. One example is a start-up company which focuses on mushroom breeding and provides training for interested people.

Syncity research shows that many current residents perceive their personal future as lying outside the neighbourhood. But at the same time, it indicates that Cureghem does offer a future to the young generation and could do so to a much greater extent. For example, young girls at school in the area have an optimistic future perspective, while young unemployed men cannot find a place within the society.

"I was employed and did my job well. After 6 months they dismissed me anyway. Then they get a new Moroccan for the next 6 months." (Interview 22, 9/2020). Here, a young man describes the reality of being at the mercy of a capitalist labour process and a situation of exploitation. Syncity research shows that while young men are accused of enhancing the bad image of the neighbourhood, women suffer from a highly challenging daily family life

and even violence: "This idea of ghettoism in the quarter … you leave the women in their role, 'leur regime' … it's the women at home, she deals with the children, and it is the man who is at work. You need to establish the opposite. You find many cases of violence. This is because the man has the economic domination. He is the one who works. He makes all the necessary things to make the money (les sous) for the house. Keep the necessary resources to gain the life … he makes everything." (Interview 20, 9/2020).

There are also ideas for possible solutions contained in the interviews: "[…] it would be important to make more chances of work for the women … but this is hard. The foreigner has problems to find working places, the women are much more feeble … (need) more chances." (Interview 20, 9/2020). For newly arrived people, in particular from Morocco, and those who are "not-yet-European citizens", the relationship between men and women is changing: one of the interviewees suggests that educating women would give them more opportunities, thereby becoming their own boss in their new life.

"So it would be important to find work for the women … teach them the skills they need for the labour market … she needs a home without having to depend on the man for eating and for living." (Interview 20, 9/2020).

In general the results of the research indicate that the future of the community of Cureghem is strongly connected with the education system and its power to give women in particular more opportunities of leading an independent life. It also shows that education about civil rights would be an important way to help disadvantaged societal groups overcome violent or exploitative relationships.


*A picture of a restaurant in France reveals new ideas for Cureghem. Photo interview 26, 9/2020; © Google Maps*

**Example from a photo interview**

The photo on the left shows the social media contact of a restaurant in a French city. The photo stands as a symbol for a possible future, for a new model of a restaurant owner. The interviewee explained that he wants to open a restaurant with a sort of "mixed kitchen" or fusion kitchen, similar to the restaurant in the picture. A place that combines traditional Syrian cooking with European cuisine. According to the interviewee, younger Syrians look towards a new interpretation of their own traditional food, but at the same time they want to respect the older generation of men with shops in Cureghem's neighbourhood who they consider "less dynamic, less flexible entrepreneurs". The interviewee feels his future is "coming soon" but is not sure that it will be in this neighbourhood. This restaurant would fit in the experimental area of the Abattoir, but maybe not so well into the traditional "island" of Cureghem. His personal future is not connected with a specific area — yet the neighbourhood of Cureghem could also be the site of this possible future activity, supposing there is a change.

**A future idea from outside: one place for all**

Unemployment is a major stumbling block, and future ideas for the neighbourhood must integrate new and much-needed economic perspectives for its residents. Ideally, these new economic activities are sustainability oriented. Based on these findings, the Syntopia building and concept combines local knowledge and ideas with a Syncity expert scenario that was originally developed for a space at the Abattoir site. The scenario brings together productive spaces, technology and eco-economy, and is based on new trends in eco-economics and locally adjusted economies, such as circular economy, reselling, repairing, recycling and detoxication, which are associated with low technical skills, innovation and research. It assumes that the Cureghem of today already provides many qualities and solutions to develop circular economies (waste, food …). Part of this scenario is the idea of a cluster dedicated to food production and facilities

**INFO:** Green jobs: the International Labor Organisation (ILO) of the UN declares them as such when they help to improve energy and raw materials efficiency, limit greenhouse gas emissions, minimize waste and pollution, protect and restore ecosystems and support adaptation to the effects of climate change. Those topics are becoming more and more important on the labour market: secure jobs for the future, at the same time jobs helping to ensure that the future is secured.

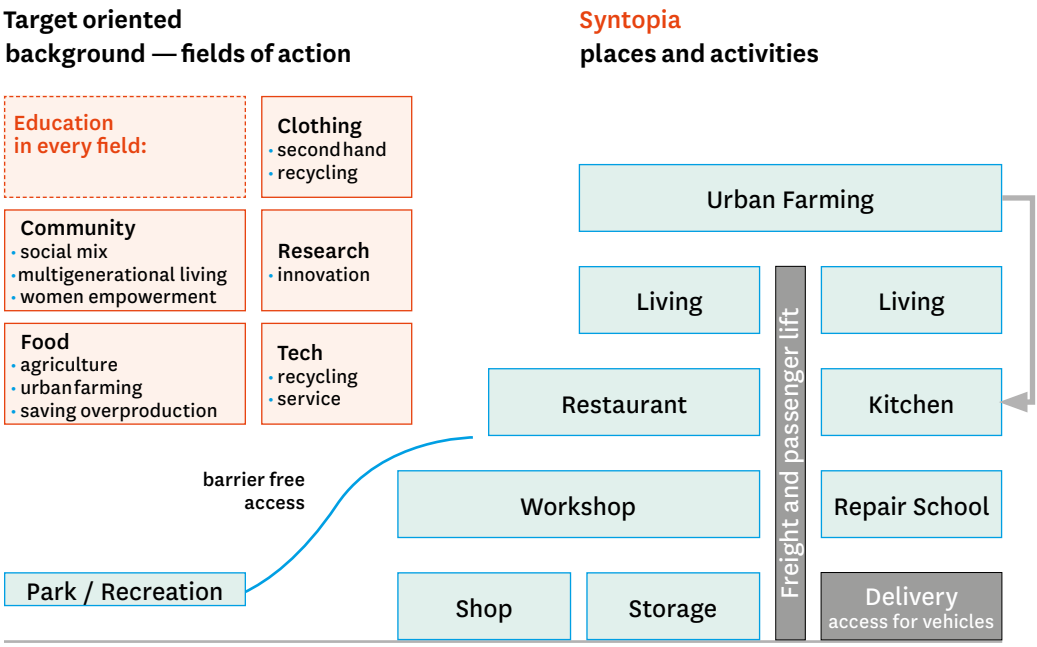
*Economic activities in Cureghem, mapped in 2017/field survey; graphic from: Orban, Trenado, Vanin, 2021*

that provide affordable housing and gastronomy for workers. The main idea of this scenario is to bring together in one place / building the services, initiatives, projects and actions from committed citizens (organised in local associations and residents' committees) which are currently scattered in the district or in the city. This will create much-needed synergies and intertwine processes: for example, recycling and upcycling, production and selling, etc. At the same time, the scenario might entail a risk: offering tailor-made spaces risks undermining the spirit of small-scale entrepreneurship, DIY, improvisation, creativity and ingenuity that is very typical of this area in Brussels. Furthermore, over-programming of the site could also be counterproductive. (Syncity, 2019: 13).

Syntopia responds to these challenges while keeping the aim on improving the living conditions of current residents and the possibilities of the community, following the approach of De Arce et al: "Here comes the sun: in this scenario, 'the poor' are not seen as victims, but as empowered actors to form their own destiny, embedded in the larger geopolitical context. The glimmer of hope comes in the form of better educated citizens who are able to overcome adversity in a more confident manner." (De Arce et al., 2016: 112).

**Syntopia — a draft of a life skill building**

Syntopia builds upon the existing capacities for desirable change found in the neighbourhood and takes them further, as opposed to a top-down urban transformation approach that brings new activities into an existing area without taking into account what is there already. The knowledge and experiences of the inhabitants of Cureghem, as inidcated above, serve as a basis for a self-supporting economic and socio-cultural future. The sketch combines already existing knowledge of residents, proposes new opportunities for learning and practice and brings it all together under the roof of urban sustainability.




*Syntopia flows and synergies, Dumreicher/Prem (Oikodrom) 2021*

The draft above is a proposal for the flow and synergies between different activities proposed in Syntopia, presenting a section (not a plan of a building). It shows a combination of living, teaching-learning and circular economic activities, connected with each other in synergetic ways. For example, a community kitchen for residents and visitors can serve as a place where students can learn how to cook in a professional way, while in the restaurant they practice serving and accounting. The food grown in and on top of the building is in accordance with ecological principles, the project serving as a showcase to learn about organic urban farming. At the same time it opens economic opportunities based on eco-technical innovation.

**Target oriented scopes and activities at the basis of the Syntopia draft**

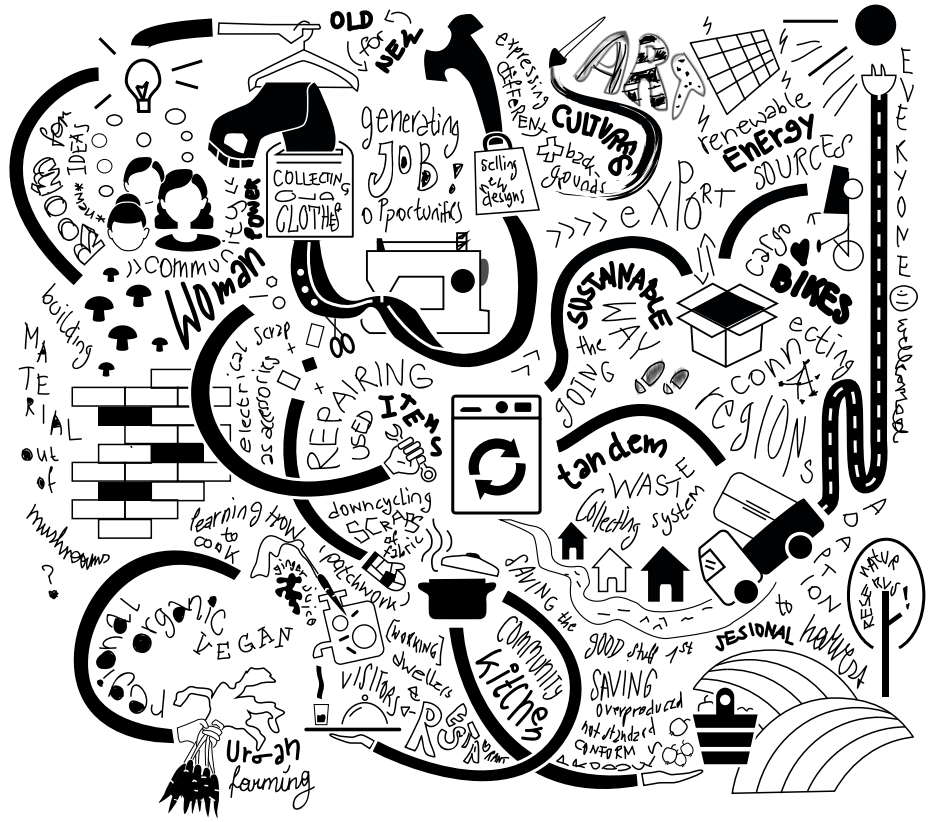
- Community: social mix and multigenerational living, women's self-empowerment, cultural diversity
- Social impact: participants gain knowledge and self-confidence. They learn and work in a supportive context.
- Economy: build upon existing knowledge and take it further, combined with sustainability-oriented innovation, towards lasting economic independence
- Civil Rights: education for disadvantaged groups
- Arts: spaces for "out of the box" approaches
- Clothing: second-hand and upcycling
- Food: urban farming, community cooking, focus on choices of seeds, adaption to seasonal harvest,
- Tech: recycling and repair services for electronic products
- Economic enterprises with sustainability-oriented philosophy: green professionals
- Research and innovation: space for experiments

**Syntopia — room for diversity and variety**

The sketch suggests how different experiences of life are more than spatially interconnected. In fact, space is the shared point of departure for thinking about reshaping and claiming opportunities.

In Syntopia the women's experiences in Cureghem are understood as embedded in social power relations: this recognition can become a driver of a positive change. Experience hence can be explored along temporality and contextuality; both can become practical starting points to begin a transformative empowerment process.

1. Temporality: projects aiming at self-empowerment open spaces of possibilities for participants. They become aware of their present and future potentials.
2. Contextuality: Individual and collective self-empowerment processes can be linked to the core of womens everyday life experiences. Their responsibilities in care work, marginalised position in the labour market and stigmatisation due to cultural othering are starting points for a collective engagement.




*Illustration© Michelle Prem/ Oikodrom, 2021*

Mobilization, political self-representation and policy advocacy can support transformative empowerment processes (Dumreicher, Kolb and Prokop, 2016: 57).

Through further education and capacity building, residents — especially women — can improve their situation. Syntopia can be their springboard to gain a foothold and develop sustainability-oriented economic activities. In turn, this can strengthen disadvantaged groups in the neighbourhood, thus reducing the risk of displacement caused by gentrification processes.

Syntopia could function as a model of good practice for European cities in establishing sustainability-oriented urban education / economic centres. It aims to contribute to a just and green city of tomorrow, where residents, no matter their socio-economic or cultural background, can live, work and learn in synergy with the place, growing and renewing it together.

# Life Cycle Assessment: ecological challenges and sustainability transitions

This section introduces the method of Life Cycle Assessment, used to understand energy consumption, ecological pressure, lifecycle $CO_2$ emissions as well as the socio-economic impacts in a given area. Based on As-Is-Analyses, this section also exemplifies how to build greener and more sustainable future scenarios.

► See Part IV — Co-co-co: towards cooperation and the commons

The Syncity approach emphasizes the importance of ecological assessments that inform decisions and processes in a data-driven, objective and reality-based way. More concretely, Syncity conducted a Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) of Cureghem's metabolism to understand ecological challenges and develop scenarios for improvement. This approach was also used to evaluate the subsequent outputs of the co-creative and co-design processes.

**Where to start?**

In every Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) the question of data availability and quality arises. Data collection is usually the most tedious and challenging task within an LCA. For Syncity, data were generated by and through the project partners, as well as regional actors (such as the Bruxelles-Propreté). In addition, the team looked at possibly relevant databases and literature to estimate as precisely as possible any missing values in the available data.

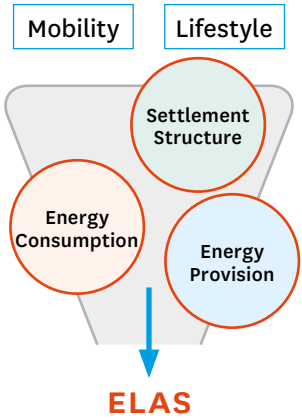
To characterize the recent situation of Cureghem, an LCA was performed using the Energetic Long Term Assessment of Settlements (ELAS)-calculator. This tool, which implements the methodology of the Sustainable Process Index (SPI), has been specifically developed for long-term energy analyses of settlement structures.

The results of the assessment using the ELAS calculator — after being translated into easily understandable figures and insights — enable residents to make scientifically sound decisions for their own community based on current figures on energy consumption, average ecological footprints and $CO_2$ life cycle emissions.

**INFO:** Learn more about the Sustainable Process Index (SPI) in Krotscheck and Narodoslawsky's 1996 article *The Sustainable Process Index: a New Dimension in Ecological Evaluation*.

**What is a Life Cycle Assessment (LCA)?**

LCA is an analytical method to provide solid, comprehensive and quantifiable information about the environmental performance of products, processes or human activity throughout their entire life cycle (Audsley et al., 1997). In order to move towards more sustainable pro-




*Holistic analysis of settlements using the ELAS Calculator (diagram after René Kolmann)*

**HINT FROM REALITY:** Although no environmental evaluation can tell the 'ultimate truth', LCA can point out relevant environmental aspects and is regarded as a useful tool for decision making.

ducts, processes or services, it is necessary to consider the total environmental effects. LCA has become an integral part of planning processes in industry as well as for energy and infrastructure systems (Narodoslawsky and Stoeglehner, 2010).

LCA has its limits as well as its strengths. The methodology is standardised by the International Standardisation Organisation (ISO) in the 1404x series of ISO standards (ISO, 1997), which provides a general framework for conducting an assessment. However, these standards leave considerable space for interpretation, since they merely form the base for advancement within additional guidelines. Depending on the individually-selected evaluation methodology, data quality and the defined system boundaries, results can vary widely.

Furthermore, the base of the evaluation can differ widely (Curran, 2013; Čuček et al., 2015), ranging from evaluations based on, for example, carbon footprint (Wright et al., 2011) to those based on a combination of different indicators. At this juncture, the challenge could be unclear results, because indicators may point to different directions. One way to overcome this problem is to use a number of indicators and weigh them, or to use highly aggregated measures such as the methodology of the Sustainable Process Index (SPI) (Krotscheck and Narodoslawsky, 1996), used for the Syncity Project.

### Calculating the energy consumption of settlements with the ELAS calculator

Spatial and urban planners currently face challenges such as increased urban development and the requirement to move towards sustainable energy systems. The ELAS calculator was created (Stöglehner et al., 2011) within the research project "ELAS — Energetic Long Term Analysis of Settlement Structures" during 2009–2011 to assist these experts in overcoming such challenges.

The ELAS calculator is a holistic decision-making tool that models complex energy systems, identifying the correlation between energy supply, energy consumption and settlement structures.

**INFO:** The ELAS calculator tool is applied to real world case studies and is available as a free web-based tool, meant to deliver insightful results to diverse target groups such as communities, planners, architects, and builders as well as interested individuals. Freely accessible at: www.elas-calculator.eu

**HINT FROM REALITY:** The ELAS-calculator is not suitable for the ecological assessment of production processes. Each application uses its own, carefully selected indicators.

It thereby considers factors such as:

- energy provision for construction, renovation and operation of buildings
- public infrastructure of settlements
- mobility of residents
- existing or planned living space
- existing or expected population
- planned technical facilities.

It calculates the overall energy consumption of the settlement as well as its ecological pressure, life cycle $CO_2$ emissions and socio-economic impacts (Stöglehner et al., 2013). As well as being applied to existing settlements, it can also serve to estimate the energy consumption of planned residential areas with regard to heating, electricity or the operation of public infrastructure.

The calculation of a settlement can therefore start from two distinct points:

- As-is-analysis of an existing settlement
- analysis of the ecological and economic effects of a planned project on the "green field" (the chosen location)

Syncity used the As-is-analysis approach of the ELAS calculator to evaluate the neighbourhood of Cureghem and factors such as the energy consumption and life cycle $CO_2$ emissions. To do so, the project looked at the following parameters: location, buildings (including space-heating and hot water supply), electricity (consumption and production), municipal services and infrastructure and mobility.

To give an example, the degree of centrality is a main factor in calculating mobility. For this purpose, Syncity had to choose a centrality level between 1 and 5 based on Cureghem's geographic location with the help of a criteria catalogue and the questioning function of the calculator. Based on the chosen centrality level 5 "superregional centre", the calculation of mobility was performed in the background of the ELAS calculator.

*The Sustainable Process Index (SPI) compares human activities, in which resources are consumed and pollutants released into nature, with nature's ability to provide resources and assimilate pollutants; ©STRATECO OG*

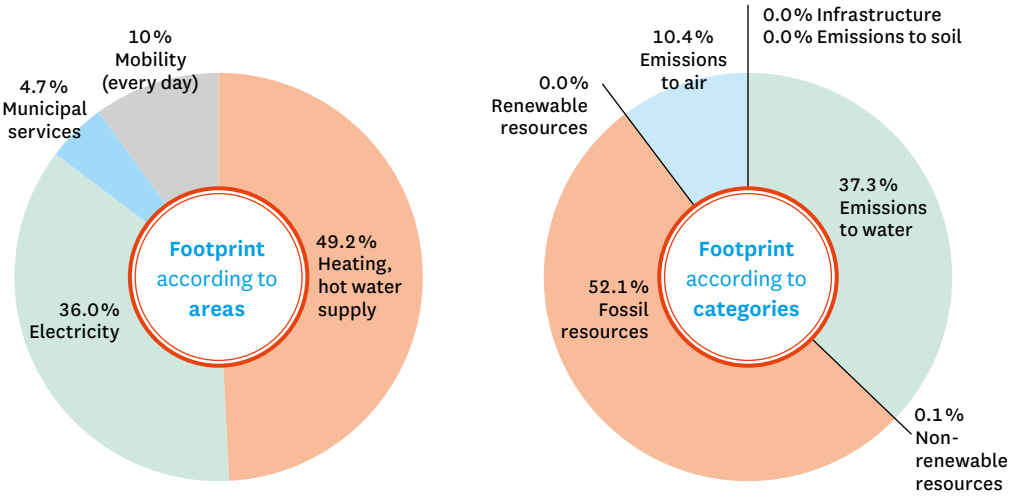
This automatic calculation, in turn, is based on a database of ten case study settlements carried out within the scope of the ELAS project. This database combines the five degrees of centrality with other factors such as three age-groups and purpose of travel. With that, 75 specific modal splits — an indicator showing the percentage of "travellers using a particular mode of transport compared to the ratio of all trips made" (Ungvarai, 2019:1) — could be generated as a basis for the calculator, differentiating between everyday mobility and vacation mobility. The Syncity approach only took into account Cureghem's everyday mobility.

**A green scenario for Cureghem**

In addition to Cureghem's As-is-analysis and based on the eight sustainability criteria, Syncity developed a "green scenario" to calculate how the neighbourhood could become more environmentally sustainable in the future.

► Part I — Eight criteria for self reflection and evaluation

The ecological analysis of representative service processes within the existing settlement (As-is-analysis) of Cureghem shows total energy consumption, the ecological footprint (SPI) and $CO_2$ life cycle emissions.



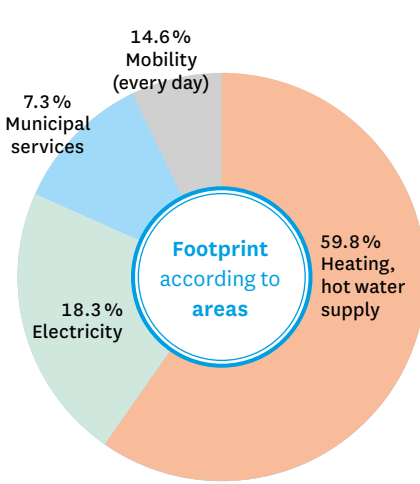

*Ecological footprint (SPI) for Cureghem: the As-is-analysis according to service contributions related to the areas and to impact categories in percentages*

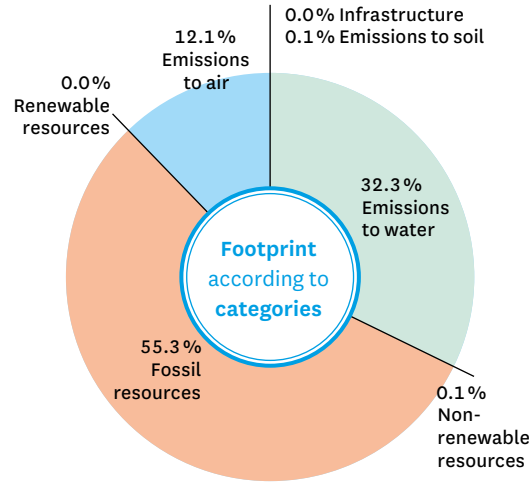
*Figure 8: Ecological Footprint (SPI) for the Green-Scenario according to service contributions related to the areas and to impact categories in %*

As one representative result, the diagram above presents two types of approaches to calculating the footprint:

1 On the left the ecological footprint (SPI) is shown according to contributing services or areas such as electricity, municipal services or mobility. Here it is shown that the main ecological driver within Cureghem, the so-called ecological hotspot, is the space heating and hot water supply required (49 %), followed by the footprint caused by the electricity (36 %) and municipal services (5 %) used. The everyday mobility affects the total footprint by 10 %.

2 On the right the ecological footprint (SPI) is shown according to impact categories such as infrastructure, emissions to water, air or soil, or non-renewable and renewable resources. Here the most burdening factors are the fossil resources (52 %) used within the entire lifecycle, followed by the emissions into water (37 %) and air (10 %).




*Ecological Footprint (SPI) for the Green-Scenario according to service contributions related to the areas and to impact categories in in percentage*

Based on the already existing entries of this As-is-analysis, Syncity conducted a new calculation with alternative data in the areas of mobility and electricity to define a greener and more sustainable scenario for Cureghem.

These adapted calculations with the ELAS calculator produced new results for the green scenario that should be taken into account for future planning. A 33 % energy reduction in the settlement sector, a switch to renewable electricity and more ecologically friendly mobility would result in an overall reduction of the total energy consumption of –21 %. The ecological footprint (SPI) would be reduced by –36 % and the $CO_2$ life cycle emissions by –32 %. These results, therefore, underline the importance of transforming Cureghem's approach to electricity and mobility in order to reach a more sustainable and green future.

# IV.

# Urban Living Labs 2.0: a new generation

**AUTHORS:**
Ina Ivanceanu, Catalina Dobre, Lara Schober
**WASTE SCENARIOS:**
Andrea Bortolotti, Vital Marage, Cataline Sénéchal

**Key words**

Urban Living Labs, Transformative Labs, co-creation, co-design, co-construction, participatory scenario making

**What this part offers**

- a journey through the landscape of Urban Living Labs: origin, guiding principles and forms, examples
- inspiration for Transformative Labs, towards co-management
- principles of co-creation, co-design and co-construction and how to apply them
- an introduction to scenario making and how to use it in a participatory way
- all illustrated with examples and learnings from the Cureghem labs

**Zoom in**

Can Urban Living Labs serve as incubator of the urban commons, facilitating collective processes for positive change? If so, under which conditions? What are their limits and what are the future perspectives? The long-term aim of the Syncity Urban Labs is to contribute to wider sustainable urban transformations. This part focusses on Urban Living Labs 2.0, favouring open processes over conventional ones, and questioning power structures instead of reproducing them. It takes a close look at co-creation, co-design and co-construction, and at participatory scenario making: towards unexpected solutions that are locally supported, socially embedded, and sustainability-oriented.

# What is an Urban Living Lab, and why hold one?

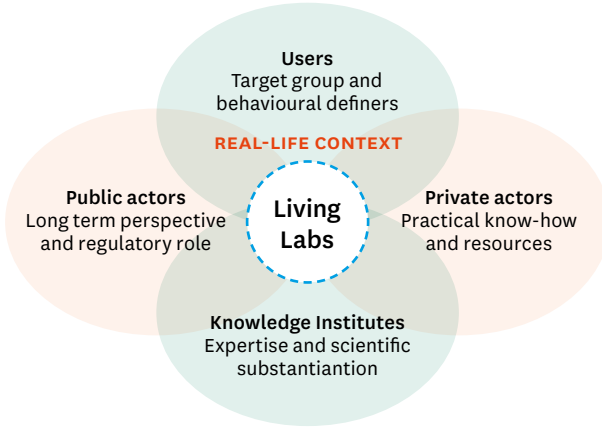
This section is a journey through the landscapes of Urban Living Labs, their preconditions and limits, illustrated with examples from Cureghem and around the world.

Urban Living Labs originated as research and development spaces with a focus on testing technologies related to information and communications (Naumann et al., 2018). Over time the concept evolved and expanded; to become applied in a range of areas of activity such as social development, economic growth, consumption and lifestyles, urban planning, and environmental sustainability (Voytenko et al., 2016). The concept of Urban Living Labs lacks a universally adopted definition (Naumann et al., 2018), since it emerged first in practice and was then theorised based on empirical studies. The Syncity approach follows the definition of the European Network of Living Labs: "Urban living labs are user-centered, open innovation ecosystems based on systematic user co-creation, integrating research and innovation processes in real life communities and settings." (ENoLL, 2006).

Further important characteristics (see Voytenko et al., 2016) include:

- geographical embeddedness in a specific urban context
- experimentation and learning, testing and reflection
- participation and user involvement with an emphasis on inter- and transdisciplinarity
- leadership and ownership coordination, with the labs shaped in a different way than traditional private sector projects or urban planning processes
- evaluation and refinement feeding back into improvements within the labs.

Based on these main features, the Syncity Urban Living Labs aim for urban design solutions, social innovation, increased urban sustainability and knowledge. They develop urban design by co-creating, testing and evaluating solutions together with participants, in a real-life context.




*The Urban Living Lab stakeholders. Diagram based on Steen and van Bueren, 2017*

Syncity applied the ULL approach for a variety of reasons. Due to their focus on co-creation, innovation, capacity building and stakeholder participation, Urban Living Labs often generate support and acceptance from local stakeholders and residents (Steen and van Bueren, 2017). Knowledge and solutions created are, ideally, "closer to society and more immediately able to be put to use" (Bulkeley et al., 2018: 319). The ULL approach achieves meaningful impact faster and creates integrated solutions which connect to the multiple needs and demands of stakeholder groups involved.

These specific characteristics of ULLs lead to a greater use of existing innovations and a better embeddedness in the local cultural and institutional contexts. This again helps to create shared values and a common identity, securing long-term application of innovations. Moreover, the emphasis on openness, co-creation and interdisciplinarity leads to higher levels of creativity and innovation. Often unexpected results and new useful knowledge emerge, including innovative sustainability solutions. By sharing and integrating opinions, ideas and expertise from different fields and backgrounds, the learning process between all participants as well as the replication and adaptation of solutions is facilitated (Steen and van Bueren, 2017).

**INFO:** To make sure these advantages can unfold, Syncity incorporated participatory research and ecological assessments (see Parts II and III for more details) before developing the ULL, to ensure their local embeddedness.

**Thoughts on success and failure**

Urban Living Labs face similar challenges to other manifestations of co-creation and stakeholder participation: they require not only substantial effort and investment in organization, coordination and management, but also ways of working which go beyond conventional research and laboratory approaches. In particular, the engagement of end users or residents requires special attention, as their participation is voluntary.

To ensure the right preconditions, ULLs in the Syncity approach embracethe following methodological guiding factors:

- hands-on: direct involvement, intervention and active participation by stakeholders, rather than solely theoretical approaches.
- low key: informal, modest and easily accessible sessions which create safe environments for stakeholders to freely exchange opinions and ideas.
- public space oriented: focus on public spaces in an inclusive and accessible manner, where improvement can positively impact a wide range of stakeholders and residents.
- connecting: bring togetherpeople from different backgrounds and multiple disciplines, thereby facilitating the creation of new relations and alliances.

The experimental and open nature of such ULLs also entails possibilities for failure and sometimes doesn't facilitate a direct path to a clear solution (Steen and van Bueren, 2017). A certain openness to failure is therefore required, to avoid disappointment and frustration.

Despite some common definitions, each project, site and issue might require a different kind of approach when it comes to the operationalisation of an ULL. This results in a wide range of Urban Living Labs in terms of actors involved, design and format. Bulkeley et al. (2018) developed a typology and categorised ULLs according to their distinct design types and laboratory dispositions within the framework of Governance of Urban Sustainability Transitions (GUST).

**INFO:** Governance of Urban Sustainability Transitions (GUST) is a research project funded by JPI Urban Europe that aims to "advance the governance of sustainability transitions through urban living labs". In order to develop a ULL typology it takes a closer look at 40 different labs in Europe. Find more information here: www.urbanlivinglabs.net/

*Co-constructing the architectural model for Dr De Meersman square, a Syncity workshop, Cureghem, 2020*

The design of ULLs, on the one hand, refers to the configuration and practice of the labs and is determined by who configures them, and why. Three ideal types can be distinguished:

1 strategic ULLs: refer to the regional and national scale in terms of needs addressed, actors involved and budget needed — they are often developed by state intermediaries — and include mostly large-scale initiatives within a wider smart, or sustainability, strategy.

2 civic ULLs: are led by municipal governments or civic universities, focus on particular urban concerns such as employment creation, and tend to be co-funded.

3 organic ULLs: relate to the specific needs of communities or neighbourhoods and include actors such as urban civil society and not-for-profit groups.

The disposition of labs, on the other hand, refers to how laboratories take form, in particular indicating how controlled or contingent they are. More concretely, the three types outlined above can be placed along a spectrum of four dispositions: trial, enclave, demonstration and platform:

*The Syncity approach: High contingency framed by sustainability and urban design solutions*

*A Syncity participatory mapping session for Dr De Meersman square, 2019; © Marco Ranzato*

Whereas the most controlled form (trial) is characterised by a closed process of learning and an expected particular outcome, the most contingent and open one (platform) brings disconnected entities together, captures value and improves urban conditions by fostering new relations and arrangements.

The Syncity approach opts for openess within a given framework, defined by the ambition to develop urban design solutions and contribute to sustainable transformation. Still, the aim is to align with the platform disposition, potentially giving rise to new forms of governance and experimentation that can contribute positively to sustainability transitions and true transformation. Ultimately, Syncity chose this disposition because it embodies the potential to transform, clearly linking to the new generation of Transformative Labs, and allowing for the Syncity's particular combination of methods and approaches.

### *Inspiration from Cureghem*

*The ULL at Dr De Meersman square was conceptualized as an open lab, inviting interested passers-by to get involved in collaborative mapping and co-design sessions aimed at the reconfiguration of the public space. The result was a vivid engagement with societal groups that are usually hard to reach such as children or women, formulating inspiring and unexpected ideas.*

► Read more about the ULL at Dr De Meersman square in Part I

► Syncity's Cureghem Tales offer further content, including a video, on the Urban Living Lab at Dr De Meersman square: https://www.cureghem-tales.eu/urban-lab-rue-dr-de-meersman/

# Examples from the world

Three examples that show the diversity of the approach in terms of involved actors and desired outcomes.

**Helle Oase (Berlin, Germany)**
Initiated by a single individual with help from local residents, Helle Oase started out as a collaborative urban gardening project. Besides enabling residents to become involved in collective gardening, it soon stimulated social interactions and began to function as a meeting point and open space for the community. As ULL it also served as an experimental learning space to test new approaches to social cohesion (Naumann et al., 2018).

**New Light on Alby Hill (Stockholm, Sweden)**
In order to improve the lighting and increase the security and attractiveness of a walkway for pedestrians, the municipality tested new LED technology installations in an ULL. The lab focused on experimenting with the co-design of possible lighting solutions together with residents and ascertaining how their involvement could have a positive impact on various sustainability issues of the suburb (Bulkeley et al., 2018).

**The LivingLab Shanghai (China)**
As an educational platform, the LivingLab Shanghai promotes open innovation through education-based research, a design-driven approach for complex social problems and a multi-stakeholder ecosystem. It thereby generates the social construction of knowledge and, through the involvement of relevant stakeholders, bridges top-down and bottom-up social innovation processes (ENOLL, n. d.).

► Helle Oase: http://www.helle-oase.de/

► New Light on Alby Hill: Karlsson et al., 2015

► Living Lab Shanghai: https://enoll.org/network/living-labs/?livinglab=livinglab-shanghai#description

**INFO:** Get inspired and discover more examples worldwide on the European Network of Living Labs website: https://enoll.org/network/living-labs/

# Incubators of the urban commons

This section links the Urban Living Labs to the idea of creating the urban commons and presents the next generation: Transformative Labs.

► See Part I for more details on urban commons, commoning processes and participation in relation to ULL

Since the beginning of the Syncity project in 2019, a new generation of Urban Living Labs has increasingly been featured in the literature: "Transformative Urban Living Labs" (Cuomo et al., 2020), "Transformation Labs" (Pereira et al., 2020) and "Transformative Urban Innovation Systems" (BioMed Central, n. d.). They challenge conventional ways of conducting urban research and aim to overcome common issues of upscaling, such as the lack of institutional support hindering systemic change across the urban context, as well as presenting a new focus on transformation. The approach applied and presented by Syncity contributes to this new strand. It focusses on enhancing commoning practices, and by doing so it aims at a wider social impact and longer durability, going beyond the initial site and duration of the lab and extending into the future. Ideally, it also disrupts existing institutional decision-making structures and supports new forms of governance.

***Inspiration from Cureghem***

*In particular, the example of the Urban Living Lab Chaussée de Mons shows the beginning of how this might take form. By bringing a variety of stakeholders together to discuss and further develop scenarios and find potential solutions, sustainability issues were tackled in an unconventional way which gave autonomy to participants. The subsequent potential formation of a traders' committee with the aim of improving waste collection could give rise to new practices based on co-designed solutions. Through upscaling to the wider neighbourhood and maybe even replication in other parts of the city, these practices could impact decision-making processes and long-term policies.*

► See Part I for more details on the Chaussée de Mons ULL

The idea of upscaling opens up a field of. On the one hand, it is essential to move beyond perceiving ULLs solely as experiments, with the main outcome of learning and innovation (Bulkeley et al., 2016). On the other hand, ULLs

should be not overburdend as "magical boxes" which will deliver perfect urban design solutions. From the Syncity perspective, the solution could be to move towards a discussion on new forms of urban governance and how ULLs can shape transformative processes.

Depending on three central aspects

1 design of the intervention,
2 processes of mutual learning and stakeholder engagement, and
3 practices to which an ULL gives rise,

the Urban Living Lab 2.0 may take on a "role as part of the wider phenomenon of a shift in the governance of sustainability" (ibid: 15) and contribute to social and environmental transformations.

**INFO:** For an interesting approach to the capacity to govern and transform, research in transition studies looks at elements such as power and agency in relation to institutional configurations and socio-material conditions (Bulkeley et al., 2016)

**Potential for large scale transformation?**

Urban Living Labs often lack strategies for upscaling or mainstreaming, meaning that learning and innovation are mostly achieved on a small scale and don't extend beyond the laboratory into wider sustainability transitions across the urban context (Bulkeley et al., 2018: 323).

This lack of upscaling and the risk of being temporally and spatially confined have sparked interest and debates about the model of ULL 2.0. This new generation aims at the capacity to achieve larger scale sustainability transformations. Some authors (e. g. Cuomo et al., 2020) point to the lack of critical perspective and empirical studies when it comes to assessing the transformative potential of ULLs and see a need to take a closer look at whether effective transformation truly materializes or is merely pursued in rhetoric. Reality often proves that ULLs, which initially set out to transform structures beyond the experiment site, end up either:

— 'dead' due to a lack of institutional recognition
— 'marginalized' due to a lack of feasibility or
— 'assimilated' by public actors as projects that don't propose any real changes.

*Transforming a public space into a living room, Cureghem 2019*

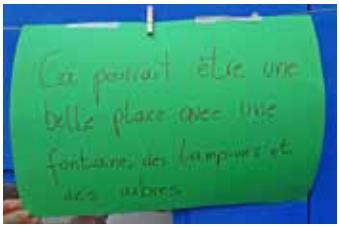
As opposed to these three trajectories, Urban Living Labs 2.0. follow the trajectory of effective transformation by challenging "the regulations and management of spaces by promoting an alternative and unusual model of environmental and social policy, which eventually diffuses on an urban scale" (ibid: 2).

A useful analytic grid to assess the transformative potential of ULLs was developed by Cuomo et al. (2020). It consists of three key dimensions: (1) unconventionality, (2) autonomy, and (3) systemic impact on policies.

1 Unconventionality relates to the involvement of citizens, grassroots associations and start-ups in order to break down standard routines and procedures by public actors and propose new perspective and tools, ultimately reaching a shift in patterns of action.

2 Autonomy emphasizes the capacity of stakeholder collectives to propose solutions and freely create or even manage experimental places, resulting in the empowerment of stakeholders, which can enact new roles with less bureaucratic barriers from public offices.

3 Systemic impact on policies means new orders of urban governance that allow experimental practices to shape the policy agenda through feedback loops and a shift in institutional and decision-making processes. However, impacting long-term policies can be difficult to achieve, since a variety of enablers and constraining factors may affect trajectories and the transformative results.




*"With a fountain, lanterns and trees this could be a beautiful square." Suggestions from a passer-by on Dr De Meersman square*

***Inspiration from Cureghem***

*The Syncity project covered the dimensions of unconventionality and autonomy in its urban labs. The third dimension — systemic impact on policies — was touched upon. For instance, the urban lab at Chaussée de Mons indicated that creating a self-organised traders committee could help to fulfil this dimension in the future, based on the idea that the municipality develops a new partnership model with this local collective or even encourages others to form.*

# Cooperation: the sweet spot where change can evolve

This section leads to the concepts of co-creation, co-design and co-construction and how they were applied in the Urban Living Labs in Cureghem. It explains why and how these concepts can contribute to a paradigm shift towards new and unconventional power structures and role distributions in urban transformation processes.

Co-create knowledge and ideas for scenarios, co-design these scenarios into solutions and co-construct outputs: these are the lines along which the Syncity Urban Living Labs developed. The prefix 'co' does not only refer to cooperation but is also intended to signal support for the creation of the urban commons. The 'cos' share one main characteristic: the active participation of users throughout the process of scenario making and the crafting of solutions. Within the context of an Urban Living Lab, this means all lab participants should be included by means of a co-co-co process from the initiation of the project, through its plan development, design, implementation, evaluation, refinement and dissemination, to its replication or transfer of knowledge and results.

The three 'cos' thus represent a paradigm shift: users participate in flexible and open projects as experts in their own context instead of representing passive objects in a predetermined process led by external experts (James, 2018; Van Rijn and Stappers, 2008).

This shift mainly refers to the fact that the three concepts go back to the 1950s when companies in the US as well as in Europe started to explore approaches that would bring their designs closer to the future users, thereby improving customer satisfaction. Initial advances were made in the US with the concept of user-centred design: researchers observe or interview users from an 'expert perspective' to improve their products, following the notion of 'user as subject'.

Since the 1970s, however, Europe and in particular Scandinavia has followed the path of 'user as partner' within their framework of participatory design. This approach enables users to participate right from the early phases of a project by providing expertise and ideas. Developments in particular within the area of participatory design gave rise to the notions of co-creation and co-design, and ultimately also co-construction (James, 2018; Sanders and Stappers, 2008).

**HINT FROM REALITY:** The Syncity approach emphasizes in particular the concept of knowledge co-creation and its value for urban transformation, since this can increase local awareness and capacity as well as facilitate new connections between interest groups. This in turn guarantees wider acceptance, support and implementation of the innovations developed during the ULLs.

*The wood workshop of the NPO Gilbard in Cureghem; © Catalina Dobre*

► To find out what differentiates and defines each concept see Part I: Co-creation, co-design, co-construction ... co-what?

For example, the term co-creation was largely developed in the 1990s as a strategy of joint value creation by the company and the customer (Kambil et al., 1996) to build an improved service or product experience collaboratively. This new approach to value proposition quickly found its way into other fields, such as education (Steen and van Bueren, 2017).

Similarly, co-design found its initial application mostly within business and marketing, since it facilitated an increase in the market value of products or services through targeted design, packaging and advertising, tailored to the needs and experiences of customers. However, co-design nowadays represents a practice in architecture and planning, giving room to designs based on sustainability and user experience (Sanders and Stappers, 2008).

Co-construction has received a lot of attention recently, both in urban studies and urban practices, mostly under the name of tactical urbanism (Lydon and Garcia, 2015) or Do-it-yourself urbanism (Fabian and Samson, 2016). These terms include the phase of co-construction as part of bottom-up urban transformation processes where local communities are the main driving force. The prime objective is to actively transform the public space using local materials and low-tech techniques adapted to the context (Fabian and Samson, 2016).

Syncity carried out three Urban Living Labs in the neighbourhood of Cureghem. All labs had a follow-up character, opposing the idea of single-stage events. The content of these labs was determined by the scientific results of participatory research. All three were based in a real-life context and sought a response or solution to a challenge together with local stakeholders, involving them from a very early stage, valuing their opinions, looking for their feedback and allowing for their evaluation. All labs were free of charge and easy to access, and they were conducted by means of an intense stakeholder engagement process (more on this in Part V). The ULLs were created as a learning environment for participants,

► Find out more about the three Syncity ULLs in Part I — Arrival areas: chance and challenge

► Method card 03 — The walkshop

**INFO:** Co-management refers to a stage in which, ideally, responsibilities are shared and objects are maintained by local communities, leading to meaningful change and long-term positive impact on the community's urban life. For Syncity it is therefore linked to the creation of an urban commons.

**INFO:** The Syncity focus on co-construction in the public space is inspired by the work of philosopher Joëlle Zask and the specificity of public spaces in Cureghem, which are scarce due to the high built-up density and are characterised by a great diversity of interests, often leading to conflict. She questions the quality of a public place and emphasises that a place is public 'only if it contributes to the development of each individual's individuality' and retains 'the mark of past changes' (Zask, 2018: 11).

applying the three 'cos' which connect to distinct phases in the overall Syncity process (see Part II).

One ULL focused on the Abattoir site and aimed to connect relevant stakeholders, to raise awareness and to co-create knowledge about the adaptation of the Abattoir Masterplan through methods such as 'walkshops'.

The second lab focused on one of Cureghem's most vibrant streets hosting a variety of commercial, residential and social practices, Chaussée de Mons, where the lab addressed a waste collection issue through the development and discussion of scenarios with local shopkeepers and other stakeholders following a co-creative and co-design approach.

Based on demands and opinions expressed in PAR and interviews, the third lab aimed to improve the situation of the public space rue Dr De Meersman, characterised by conflicts of usage between various stakeholder groups, by engaging interested stakeholders in a process of co-designing possible future configurations of the public space. Ideally, the ultimate stage of this lab entails the co-construction of objects of street furniture on site. Syncity's aim is to co-construct objects that connect to the needs and concerns of local stakeholders and can have a meaningful impact by enhancing emotional co-ownership of local stakeholders and users.

For Syncity, co-constructing street furniture is essential when it comes to urban transformations: Street furniture has the potential to transform public space into more inclusive environments in a short period of time and with few resources. It supports the social dimensions of space. To reach a long-term transformation characterized by permanent objects in public space, Syncity emphasises the importance of looking beyond co-construction, towards a new capacity: co-manage, co-govern.

*A 2020 Syncity walkshop at the Abattoir site bringing workers, researchers, designers and urban planners together*

**HINT FROM REALITY:** Facilitation was key for the success of the ULL Chaussée de Mons. It allowed various stakeholders with often divergent interests and experiences to participate in a co-design process and generate ideas in a respectful and equal way.

**A new role distribution and power structure**

The shift to a participatory approach challenges the roles of the players in the design process.

1. The user is no longer the passive object of study but rather plays a "large role in knowledge development, idea generation and concept development" as "expert of his/her experience" (Sanders and Stappers, 2008: 12).
2. The researcher, who used to provide theoretical knowledge and observe and/or interview the user, now supports the user "by providing tools for ideation and expression" (Sanders and Stappers, 2008: 12).
3. The designer, who may also be the researcher, no longer merely passively receives knowledge and adds technical understanding but instead collaborates on the development of tools for ideation and gives form to generated ideas with his design skills.

The focus of co-co-co resides therefore in facilitating and providing the right tools for users to express themselves creatively (Sanders and Stappers, 2008). Chisholm (2019) defines the role of facilitation as: "an essential component [...]. Facilitators provide ways for people to engage with each other as well as providing ways to communicate, be creative, share insights and test out new ideas."

Related to this new distribution of roles, the concepts also challenge and change existing power structures, moving away from the rigid, hierarchical structure that only allows experts to take decisions and develop the solution, and moving towards a horizontal, democratic and flexible structure where a wide range of people can make a creative contribution.

*A Syncity Urban Living Lab welcoming all generations, 2020*

**Five principles**

NCOSS (2017) establishes five main co-design principles that sum up quite well the characteristics mentioned before. The Syncity approach relates these principles not only to co-design but also to the concepts of co-creation and co-construction, which in turn are closely linked to the platform disposition of the ULLS:

1 inclusive: co-co-co involves a variety of stakeholders in terms of their lived experience or professional expertise at all stages of the project, from framing the issue to generating ideas, developing prototypes and testing solutions
2 respectful: all participants are respected as experts in their domain and their input (time, ideas, emotions, knowledge, criticism, etc) is equally valued, overcoming inequalities and allowing for differences in opinion
3 participative: instead of consultation or observation, users are involved as active participants who engage throughout the whole process, which is open, empathetic and responsive
4 iterative: As an experimental process with often unexpected outcomes involving innovation and change, co-co-co should encourage trialling possibilities, adaptations, iteration, and the continuous evaluation of solutions with participants, and it should allow for failure
5 outcome-focused: Even though the output matters, co-co-co focuses more on the outcome, as the ultimate goal

is to develop, test and spread solutions that are supported by all stakeholders and result in sustainable change, improvement and positive impact.

**INFO:** In line with the vast range of possible applications, co-co-co does not follow a clear and universally adopted structure or procedure. In fact, "the process is as variable as the problems it aims to address" (NCOSS, 2017:2).

In order to apply these principles and achieve a positive outcome, the Syncity co-co-co processes were cyclical rather than linear. In particular, co-design sessions required reassessments and change at many points to facilitate innovation and the identification of "the 'sweet spot' where change can evolve" (NCOSS, 2017:2). By going through several cycles, new scenarios or solutions evolved that were more complex than the initial ones. An example of this are the waste management scenarios developed for the street Chaussée de Mons during a co-design Urban Living Lab. Through cyclical processes of feedback and discussion, the resulting scenarios became more complex and comprehensive than the initial scenarios that formed the basis for the lab.

**Benefits and limitations of co-co-co**

Throughout the process of applying the concepts of co-creation, co-design and co-construction in a real-world context, Syncity encountered a variety of benefits as well as limitations, in line with previous research* that refer to similar conclusions:

* James, 2018; Chisholm, 2019; Sanders and Stappers, 2008


*"Is Docteur De Meersman a street or a square?": Collecting local opinions and ideas for urban furniture, 2020*

### Benefits

- more personalized experience for the user, higher degrees of individual competence
- enables everyone involved to be an active agent of change, giving relevance to their needs and experiences
- increased legitimacy of the process
- more inclusive and credible solutions, leading to higher satisfaction among users, increased sustainability and durability
- focus on realization and implementation, enabling more original, targeted and differentiated outputs (CO-CREATE, 2019)
- wide applicability, in particular to complex issues

— improved knowledge of real needs and desires, leading to supported solutions with more user value
— contributes to shifts in power and favours non-hierarchical structures
— creates ownership of solutions (James, 2018)
— immediate validation of ideas or concepts, generating higher quality outcomes
— better cooperation and relationships between different people or organisations, and across disciplines
— increased levels of support and enthusiasm for innovation and change (Chisholm, 2019).

### Limitations

— increased legitimacy of the process requires high level of creativity, and all participants have to believe they are creative and behave accordingly
— users may not participate actively without convincing incentives
— overcoming traditional roles, procedures and power structures requires new (soft) skills from designers and other stakeholders
— high short-term investment (which usually pays off in the long run, since solutions are more sustainable and durable)
— unexpected outcomes (however, this can as well be a benefit)
— adverse consequences of co-co-co processes are often not identified, as the focus lies on positive future opportunities (Sanders and Stappers, 2008)
— public authorities may doubt the technical capacity of local communities and be unwilling to share responsibilities when it comes to implementing solutions

**INFO:** To overcome limitations and stimulate creativity among participants, Syncity developed innovative methods such as the Atelier scenario (Method card 09), Plexhibition (Method card 10) and Architectural model (Method card 11).

► See Part II — Phase 2

# What if: participatory scenario making for a desirable future

This section shows how participatory scenario making can respond to complex issues and develop solutions supported by a wide range of stakeholders.

In the Syncity approach, scenario making plays a central role and is carried out in a participatory way. Scenario making (common literature also refers to it as scenario building or scenario planning) is a technique to project potential futures (Ratcliffe, 2000). It represents a paradigm shift in science: moving away from pure objectivity and neutral observation towards interested engagement (Ogilvy, 1996). By analysing a variety of quantitative as well as qualitative variables, including expert information as much as data, it narratively describes possible future developments in a speculative way, thereby sparking discussion and stimulating imagination (Warfield, 1996).

The scenario approach does not aim for predictions or forecasts but rather seeks to "enable decision-makers to detect and explore all, or as many as possible, alternative futures so as to clarify present actions and subsequent consequences" (Ratcliffe, 2000: 5). It allows to explore 'what-if' options and is about creating knowledge that can facilitate decision-making - because when scenarios meet reality, reality talks back. Ideally, it creates a learning environment that favours challenge and surprise over confirmation and perpetuation of current perceptions. Decision-makers in turn may find the means to better accept uncertainty as well as prepare for and manage change. For this to happen, however, they need to engage in a collective process of creative thinking (Ratcliffe, 2000).

The use of the scenario making technique goes back to the 1950s and 60s, when the founder of the Hudson Institute, Herman Kahn (Kahn and Weiner, 1967) worked on US military studies and, in particular, scenarios regarding the possibility of a thermonuclear war. In his text he coined the phrase "thinking the unthinkable". From the 1970s onwards the technique was especially popular among consulting firms offering scenario making services. Since then it has achieved wide-reaching application in the fields of government, business and military (Ratcliffe, 2000).

**HINT FROM REALITY:** The ULL Chaussée de Mons centred on waste management, a complex issue that brings different professional and personal interests together and is predestined for conflict. Scenarios helped unravel the complexity and find common grounds for discussion by looking at it from different angles and providing new perspectives.

**INFO:** The field of urban planning has not made much use of the approach of scenario making. Only recently has it become recognised that urban transformation processes require a more future-oriented approach due to their complexity and uncertainty (Stojanović et al., 2014).

For Syncity in particular, and the application of scenario making to complex urban planning and design issues in general, this technique is not just about utopian visions. Rather, by providing a common language and tangible outputs, it can facilitate negotiation processes with government authorities when proposing alternative design solutions.

For any field of application it is important to note that scenario making and its process methodology "comprise a wide range of approaches and techniques" (Ratcliffe, 2000: 5). There is no one-size-fits-all solution, and anyone applying scenario making should invest time in choosing the appropriate tools and methodology tailored to the project's aims. Regardless of the chosen approach, the process ideally has the following characteristics to ensure a positive outcome:

- scenarios focus on the needs of a specific issue, facilitating the development of context-specific solutions
- scenarios are well-structured and consistent
- the process is flexible and adaptable
- the final product has a high degree of stakeholder ownership (ibid).

► See Part II — Phase 2 and 3 for details on how to apply scenario making in the process

► For more information on the different dimensions, categorisations and methodological approaches of scenario making, see for example the scenario-building handbook by John Ratcliffe (2000).


*"A neighbourhood with a lot of value, a pleasent street": Key messages developed with shop owners from Chaussée de Mons, 2020*

► See Part III for more information on participatory action research and ecological assessments


*"Agir ensemble" — Acting together to reduce the waste: Syncity flyer inviting stakeholders to the Urban Living Lab, 2020*

**Waste scenarios from Cureghem**

Based on participatory action research, interviews, historical analyses of the shop floor use on Chaussée de Mons, analyses of demographic change and ecological assessments, the Syncity approach includes co-creative development of initial scenarios — a sort of preliminary stage. The Urban Living Lab Chaussée de Mons shows how such initial scenario ideas were taken to the next stage.

For this lab Syncity applied participatory scenario making to trigger a debate among shopkeepers and local stakeholders about current shortcomings and desirable futures regarding better street cleanliness and an improved waste service. The main objective was to provide a common understanding of the problem across various stakeholders, have workshop participants visualize how things could work regardless of their knowledge, and propose and discuss possible alternative arrangements in a collaborative way. These scenarios were evaluated through a LCA in order to make their environmental impact clearer to all participants.

The result of this Urban Living Lab were four complex scenarios for an improved waste management system.

### Scenario 0

**Baseline**

Curbside collection of plastic garbage bags with diesel-powered garbage trucks operated by the regional waste agency (ARP) 2 days / 7 (Tuesday and Friday morning starting from 6 AM). Separate collection is compulsory for plastic bottles and cans, and paper and cardboard. Nevertheless, this obligation is poorly met and enforced. Organic waste is collected on a voluntary basis, but no one applies it. Residual waste is hauled to the regional incineration plant north of Brussels. Recyclables are sent to Recyclis, the regional sorting plant south of Brussels.

### Scenario 1

**Increased collection frequency**

Curbside collection of plastic garbage bags with diesel-powered garbage trucks operated by the waste agency


*Scenario making in progress during a Syncity workshop, 2020*

(ARP) 7 days / 7. Separate collection is compulsory for plastic bottles and cans, and paper and cardboard. Nevertheless, this obligation is poorly met and enforced. Organic waste is collected on a voluntary basis, but no one applies it. Residual waste is hauled to the regional incineration plant north of Brussels. Recyclables are sent to Recyclis, the regional sorting plant south of Brussels.

### Scenario 2

**Installation of fixed containers in a single spot along the road**

The municipality provides for the installation of containers in the public space (at rue Dr De Meersman or Parc de la Rosée) for the separate collection of plastic bottles and cans, paper and cardboard, organic, and residual waste from the local shopkeepers. Containers are equipped with exclusive access (by chip or key) for the shopkeepers, who sign a contract. Emptying takes place once the container has been filled through the use of diesel-powered trucks equipped with cranes. Waste is either hauled to the regional facilities (waste incinerator and Recyclis) or taken by private operators outside the region to other privately owned plants.

### Scenario 3

**Rental of a storage room for waste containers**

The municipality provides the rental of an inside room / courtyard (at D'Ieteren — Circularium) along the street to store mobile containers for the separate collection of plastic bottles and cans, paper and cardboard, organic, and residual waste from the local shopkeepers. Separated fractions are collected directly at the shops, who have signed a contract 3 days / 7 by a single operator using a cargo-bike. High quality sorted materials are taken by the regional agency for an acceptable price or by private recyclers and hauled outside the region to private facilities.

# V.

# New tools for stakeholder engagement

**STAKEHOLDER BALANCE TOOL AND COMMONING MATRIX:**
Vital Marage, Basile Museux,
Richard Pfeifer, Cataline Sénéchal

**KJU:TI AND SYNCITY CARGO BIKE:**
Thomas Stollenwerk

**CUREGHEM TALES:**
Michael Anranter

**Key words**

tools for stakeholder analysis and management, digital ideas

**What this part offers**

- thoughts on barriers to stakeholder engagement and how to overcome them
- two new tools developed by Syncity
- a laboratory on wheels
- a spotlight on digital pathways to enhance engagement

**Zoom in**

The field of urban planning is traditionally characterized by an unequal distribution of knowledge and access to it. How to ensure that local stakeholder groups can enter the negotiation process related to urban transformation, and strengthen their position for a more active stake? How to support their access to communication channels and have their voices heard by decision-making and city-planning institutions? And finally, how to support the creation of the urban commons in this process?

# Power, knowledge, commoning: two new tools

This section offers two new tools that allow for an analytical understanding and strategic engagement with stakeholders, and how to use them.

Commoning means creating a common good. In the Syncity approach this common good is a co-designed result and can range from a proposal for a new urban furniture to a concept on how to improve waste management in a neighbourhood.

Through an ongoing commoning practice, a top-down impetus, such as an urban planning process initiated by the municipality, can flip to a bottom-up process. It extends the impact of the participation en-deavour beyond the project period and helps to overcome participation barriers. Such participation barriers might include:

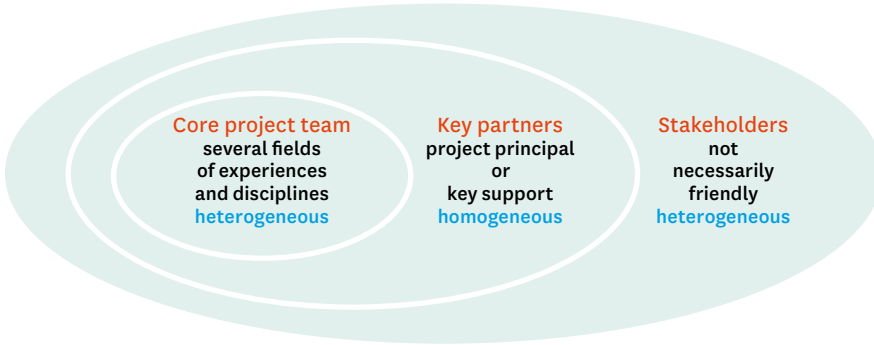
— resource barriers: a lack of time and financial resources, reducing the capacity to participate
— cultural barriers: from language, awareness of existing stigmatizations, to a lack of intercultural competences on the side of the urban planning experts
— a lack of information about where and when activities take place, how authorities / urban planning institutions see the current situation, and how participation affects the outcome.

The Syncity stakeholder approach aims at overcoming such barriers, and is guided by three key goals:

a enhance awareness of existing knowledge of local stakeholders
b enhance contact between different stakeholder groups
c enhance emotional co-ownership of all stakeholders to a site.

When local residents and users become aware of their valuable local knowledge, when stakeholders from different fields — from local dwellers to researchers and urban planners — are connected with each other in multiple ways, and develop a strong emotional co-ownership of the site, this is a source of energy that can lead to the creation of the commons in the course of an urban transformation process. This energy can grow

when stakeholders feel self-empowered, have an ongoing interest in participating in a planning process and are able to manage conflicts between themselves.




*A project is situated in a stakeholder landscape: heterogenous and not necessarily supportive*

In an urban site, neighbourhood / city quarter, it is the multitude of social interactions and cultural self-expressions of the residents and users that reshape the area and give it new meanings. This is how local knowledge develops over time, and it is these place-related social and cultural interactions that create feelings of emotional co-ownership. City-planning authorities often neglect this local knowledge and the potential it can have for sustainable urban transformation; instead, they create urban projects based exclusively on the expert knowledge of architects and urban planners. The Syncity approach sees local users and residents as experts in their own context and aims at their self-empowerment in the planning process.

A rule of thumb: Especially when interacting with local residents and users of a site / space, you need to be aware which groups of people use the site / space in what ways and when. This means the involvement of stakeholders is nourished by the findings of research described in Phase 1. Apart from the classical ways of communication (flyers, social media, etc) reaching out to these groups might include the use of local festivities (religious and secular ones) to inform people in the area / create awareness of the project, or applying participatory action research methods as described in Phase 2.

**INFO:** Arrival areas such as Cureghem are typically characterized by a high social and cultural capital, high density of social networks and migrant-run businesses (hairdresser, language classes, etc) which serve as information hubs. In arrival areas there is also a high fluctuation rate of inhabitants who are often faced with socio-economic disadvantages (Hanhörster and Wessendorf, 2020).

# Tool 1
# The stakeholder balance tool

Entering the landscape of stakeholders connected to an urban site or challenge is a complex endeavour. It means exploring networks and power relationships between different groups and individuals.
Syncity has developed two tools that support an inclusive and creative stakeholder process and engagement over a longer period of time. It combines analytical and strategic approaches to:

- allow for an overview of target groups and for a systematic reflection about how to communicate with which group (tailored communication)
- explain the dynamics and relations between groups at present and the way these change over time
- tell what is needed to achieve a commoning process
- add guidance for participatory action research.

*One group, many interests: enhancing trust between stakeholders at the Abattoir site, 2020*

**HINT FROM REALITY:** The first mapping might bring you in contact with stakeholders who already have "a say" in the area or topic, such as established institutions like museums, religious organisations or representatives of political parties. Look out for the marginalised groups and individuals to include them in the process.

Any stakeholder analysis and strategy carries the projects' normative assumptions and frameworks with it: basically, ideas about "what should be". In other words, the analysis and strategy will lead to different results depending on who applies it. For example, in the Syncity project, stakeholder work focused from the beginning on place-related stakeholders and their degree of connection or anchorage to the chosen sites: because the project assumed that local residents and users are important agents of change for sustainability-oriented urban transformation. If a real estate agent applied the same tools, the results of the stakeholder analysis and strategy would probably be different, reflecting different aims, interests, etc.

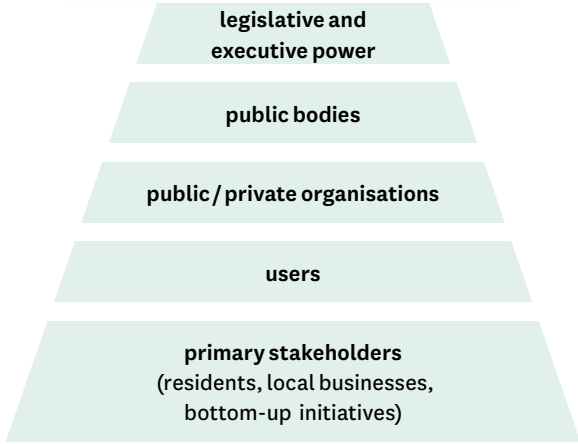
This tool supports the analytical level of stakeholder work. The aim is to prepare the ground for a mutually acknowledging dialogue between all groups.

**Step 1**

**Create a list of stakeholders and group them along the five categories of the tool:**

- legislative and executive power (such as a municipal council)
- public bodies (such as a state administration)
- public / private organisations (such as a public transport enterprise, an NGO, a trade union, a financial lobby …)
- users (such as pedestrians, the clients of a market, the students of a university …)
- primary stakeholders with strong anchorage to the space (residents, local businesses, bottom-up initiatives, etc).

**HINT FROM REALITY:** The larger the scale of analysis in your stakeholder works (a whole city quarter as opposed to a smaller site), the more you should consider actor-network mapping as a possible better choice.

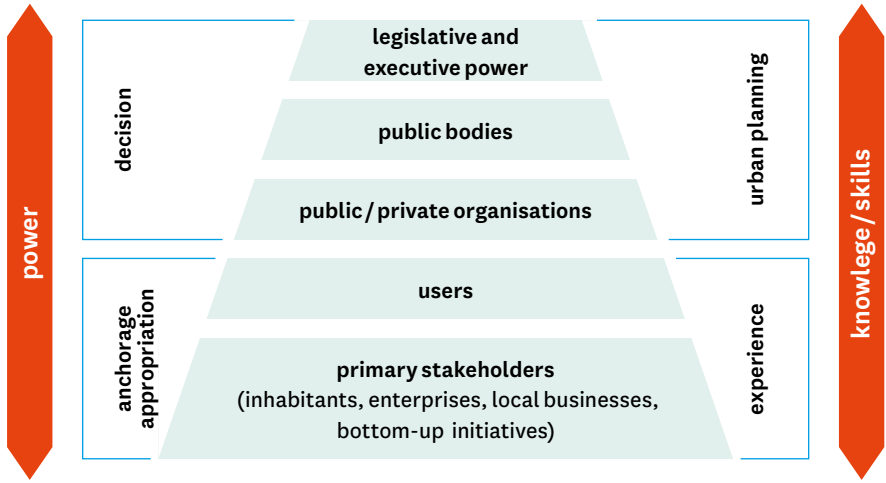



*Step 1:*
*The five stakeholder categories*

## Step 2

**Analyse the stakeholders along two parameters:**

— their type of power linked to their knowledge / skills
— the degree of their appropriation and experience of a site and their anchorage to it.




*Stakeholder balance tool*

**INFO:** A resident has a different knowledge of a site (we call it experience-based knowledge) than an urbanist (planning knowledge) or a politician (governance knowledge), and so on (see the different layers of the tool).

### On power and knowledge / skills

Each stakeholder group has a different relationship to a site, depending on his/her interaction with it, and a certain type of knowledge based on that relation. These different types of knowledge are in fact equally important and valuable for sustainable urban transformation. However, they are expressed in different languages, some of them more formal and affiliated to academic or planning disciplines than others. The knowledge that leads to decision making power located on the top level (formal language) usually has a powerful impact on a site's development. At the "bottom" level, where the highest quantity of stakeholders is located, the actors usually communicate with a more experience-based language — yet their impact on urban planning is generally low. Bridging this gap is both sensitive and essential. Stakeholders' language and knowledge built

upon practical engagement with the local environment (bottom level) cannot be detached from its environment immediately (Archer, 2004:166). At the same time, having bottom knowledge expertise does not mean being restricted to it. The aim should be to create a learning environment in which the different groups can access the different kinds of knowledge (Archer, 2007: 45). In the Syncity approach this is done through the ULL.

**INFO:** Formal academic knowledge has historically been misused to colonise and incorporate the bottom knowledge in a way that forms and reproduces hierarchies (see Ashcroft et al., 2000: 181)

### On anchorage and appropriation

— Anchorage is defined as the extent to which a stakeholder needs a specific site for his or her everyday life and what he or she knows about this site (type of knowledge). It expresses the degree to which a stakeholder is related to a place. The Syncity approach assumes that rootedness is the outcome of practice knowledge built from usage and experience, along with the degree to which a primary stakeholder can project herself or himself as a part of the future of the site. To give an example, a property owner living in her / his own apartment might see herself / himself in the future of the site and might be aware of its advantages. The way anchorage is present for a stakeholder helps to understand how he or she can be included in the participatory planning process and also what a planning process needs to take into consideration.

► For details on rootedness as an indicator, see page 133.

— Appropriation is linked to the habitual use of a site. A simple example for ways users appropriate a space is by sitting on a public bench versus destroying it. Examples of guiding questions here: at what point is a stakeholder engaged with a certain site? How does he / she appropriate it? Is there any direct usage or appropriation, if so, what kind? In which way does he or she emphasise particular qualities of the site?

*"Grätzloase" in Vienna: Citizens temporarily transform parking lots into green spaces for recreation, 2020.*

The tool underlines the reciprocal dependency between the different stakeholders. A municipality needs the positive and active appropriation of an urban space by its users to be able to carry out any desirable urban transformation project successfully. A group of residents / users needs the formal expertise of urban planning and related fields to reshape an urban space according to their needs and visions.

**Benefits of the tool**

- better understand the proportions of the different groups in terms of quantity
- identify who the primary stakeholders are
- a basis to ensure that the primary stakeholders (those with the strongest anchorage to and experience of the site) are included in the Urban Living Labs
- a success indicator for a participatory process: Who is involved? Who isn't?

**HINT FROM REALITY:** Never underestimate your stakeholders! One lesson from the Syncity Urban Living Lab for the co-design of a waste management system was that the expertise of local shop owners was extremely sound, far reaching and evidence-based.

**Limits**

It only creates a diagnosis of a given site: it is not a management tool, and it doesn't show the relationships between the different stakeholder groups.

**What speaks against stakeholder categories, and why they still help**

Stakeholder analysis addresses the involved "stake" of individuals and groups in a certain project. This is done by developing or applying a set of categories to the "landscape of stakeholders" in a given site, in order to abstract from the "messiness" of social reality — a scheme that helps to understand differences between groups and find ways of engaging with them. Post-colonial studies (Ashcroft et al., 2000: 73), however, show that categorizing human beings into groups and categories needs critical assessment, re-assessment and scrutiny. Moreover, referring to just one aspect which is important for someone's life or for a group (such as religion, property-rights, gender, etc) can of course never reveal a full identity. It is obvious that people are much more complex than any category can mirror. Therefore stakeholders actually always appear in several categories to one degree or another — and they change positions.

At the same time, certain categories help to plan and manage the involvement of whoever you are able to subsume under these different categories. It helps to take your endeavour of stakeholder engagement beyond the level of your intuition, perhaps bias. Mapping stakeholders according to certain categories promotes collective reflection within the core team and systematises the use of specific tailored research and outreach methods. For instance, monitoring your own activities with stakeholders according to categories might show that specific groups are harder to reach than others, or might even not yet be included in your engagement efforts. This helps to reflect and plan concrete measures for their further involvement.

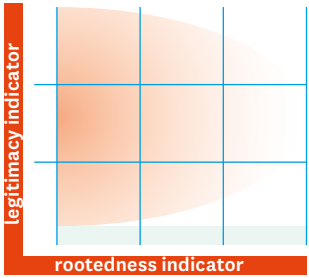
**HINT FROM REALITY:** Once you have a first list of stakeholders ready, clustering them with this tool is a useful way to prepare the ground for your Urban Living Labs and to decide who to invite, who to interview beforehand, etc. Ideally you have direct contact with at least one stakeholder from each category in this phase to begin creating what later develops into a commoning space of an ULL.

# Tool 2
# The stakeholder commoning matrix

Based on your initial stakeholder analysis with the first tool, the next step is to foster multiple stakeholder inclusion and develop mutual understanding between the different groups. The second tool supports the transition of your stakeholder work from analysis to engagement, stakeholder-inclusive planning and the formation of urban commons.

This tool highlights a stakeholder's capacity to take part in a process of commoning and enables you to:

- analyse positions of local groups of stakeholders in relation to your Urban Living Lab (which gives you the basis to intervene)
- predict the way stakeholders will express their interests within a relational setting
- identify and analyse the different capacities to act of the various stakeholders and differentiate between individual interest and shared interest in creating urban commons.




*Rootedness and legitimacy increase the capacity of an actor to produce urban commons.*

A stakeholder's capacity to take part in a commoning process is influenced by two indicators:

- legitimacy and
- rootedness.

**Legitimacy as an indicator**

In the Syncity approach there are several forms of stakeholder legitimacy, all equal in validity. For example, a stakeholder — an individual or a group — can have a high degree of legitimacy in a community when his or her knowledge is recognized by this community and considered relevant for its members. One person's legitimacy doesn't erase or counteract another's. They coexist and complement each other and arise from the different categories of knowledge described in Tool 1:

- decision / governance-based knowledge and power
- the power and knowledge to realise an urban project
- appropriation / experience-based knowledge and power.


*Claiming visibility and legitimacy: entrance to Sure We Can, a non-profit redemption center in Brooklyn, New York; ©Mrgarden 2342 / Wikimedia Commons*

Levels of legitimacy refer to the constituent characteristic of how a stakeholder is participating in the place-making of the site. A stakeholder's "legitimacy" also becomes visible in the way he or she claims its space on that site. Are these claims referring to rather narrow individual needs or are they inclusive towards other groups, or even a collective claim built upon related groups? Is the stakeholder acting upon a site as a governmental body that makes decisions, a community of interest that formulates a project, or rather as an individual with a particular concern?

Levels of legitimacy open up different doors relating to participation, but they also set boundaries on how a stakeholder can support a participatory process. These boundaries become visible in the way a stakeholder represents herself or himself within the participatory process, how she or he speaks about a site, and how she or he engages with it.

**Rootedness as an indicator**

Rootedness means the way people can or cannot "project" themselves as part of the future of a site. It classifies the temporality and interest (individual / group / commons) of a stakeholder's actions in a certain place in three types:

— permanent: if a stakeholder is active in a certain place on a long term and regular basis, her or his interest in the site is permanent, and such a stakeholder can be more strongly involved in the creation of the urban commons.
— fluctuating: occasional users of the site
— targeted / limited: a stakeholder who is only active within a limited amount of time in a certain space or pursues a clearly pre-defined individual interest. Such a stakeholder will be less able to take part and contribute to the creation of the commons.

A way to assess rootedness is to ask questions that relate the stakeholder to the future of that site i. e. refer to how he or she would like to use that site in 10 years from now. Sociological research carried out in Syncity found that many inhabitants of Cureghem were troubled when imagining themselves living in the neighbourhood for a long time. Asking about rootedness can give many insights into what stakeholders perceive as challenging.

For example, tenant residents were struggling to imagine their children living near the site even though their own responses implied that they would like to live in proximity to their children.

An example: Assuming the stakeholder balance tool has identified two stakeholder groups with a high practical knowledge of a site. Group 1 are property owners who rent out apartments. Owning an apartment makes them very "rooted", as their private interest is tied to the site. Yet this also means that in the course of a participatory event they would advocate their own interest (legitimacy criteria) when talking about the desired future of the site.

Group 2 uses the site for recreational purposes and has practical attachment to the site, based on their experiences. Stakeholders from this group might there-

*Living statues in Vienna, 2019: using the city as a stage creates a feeling of belonging.*
*© Ina Ivanceanu*

fore show signs of strong engagement during a participatory event, such as speaking up in a passionate way for the businesses they like to shop at, or cafés they like to visit, although this will to find common interest does not automatically mean their engagement and involvement would go beyond this single moment of participation. If they find that the site changes or becomes difficult for them / when change affects their preferred usage in a negative way, they might just as well find another site with comparable possibilities for shopping and having a coffee. In order to get a clear picture of which stakeholder already has high potential for the commoning process, you need another layer of reflection — and here the stakeholder matrix for commoning is helpful.

***Example for assessing the degree of legitimacy of a stakeholder in Cureghem***

*The public body CRIPA represents the municipality when dealing with shop owners while at the same time speaking on behalf of the Arabic-speaking group of shop owners when addressing the municipality. Shop owners acknowledge CRIPA as their representing body and trust it, mainly because the organisation has Arabic-speaking employees. Consequently CRIPA has insider knowledge with regard to the shop owners' problems, which it can successfully communicate to the municipality. Therefore CRIPA is trusted by the municipality as well and enjoys a "double" legitimacy. This example also shows that the legitimacy criteria is linked to the idea of representation.*

**How to use the tool — step by step**

**Step 1**

Define the type of stakeholder and place them in the matrix — a small box for individuals, a larger one for a group (ratio depending on approximate number of group members).

**Step 2**

Define the type of knowledge / power (legitimacy indicator) and place the box accordingly.

a the stakeholder is part of a public body: place the box in the field "decision / governance"

b the stakeholder is capable of realizing an urban project: place the box in the according field

c the stakeholder uses / acts upon the space regularly: place the box in the field "appropriation / experience"

If one stakeholder fits several levels, choose the answer that is more relevant to your inquiry or place the box in between the levels.

*Opening procession with couscous at the participatory festival SOHO in Ottakring, Vienna 2018; © Mehmet Emir*

**Step 3**

Assess the type of interest and the time dimension (rootedness indicator) and place the box accordingly:

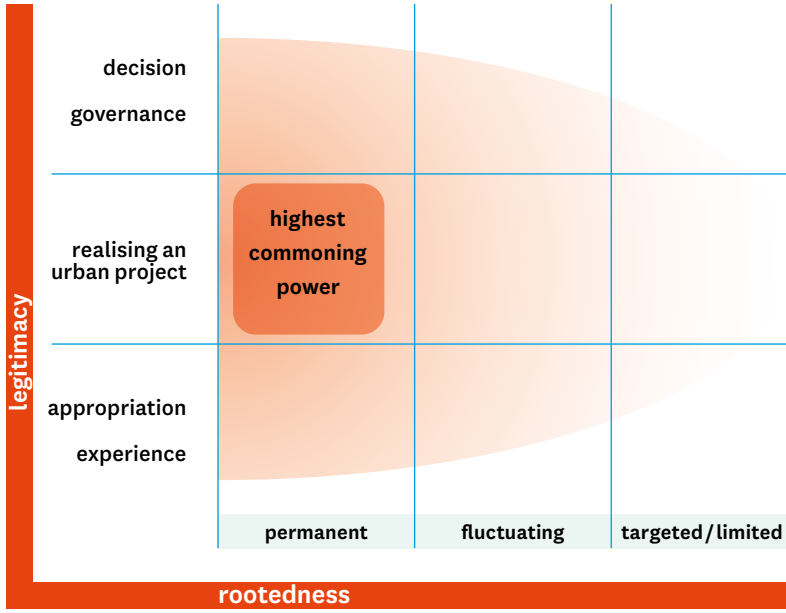
a permanent: the stakeholder is using the site on a daily basis

b fluctuating: the stakeholder only uses the site for services or leisure occasionally

c targeted / limited: the stakeholder is linked to the site by a specific mission or subject

**Step 4**

Check the matrix for its dynamic towards the commons: Which stakeholders are close to the coloured field that indicates commoning power? Which stakeholders are most distanced from this field? Use this as a basis for your strategies.




*The Commoning Matrix*

**The field of commoning power**

Once the stakeholders are placed on the matrix some will be located within the coloured field, some outside of it. The strongest colour indicates the "highest commoning power". Stakeholders located there have the necessary level of legitimacy and rootedness that can be harnessed for the commoning process. It is them and their engagement, what the emerging urban commons on the site needs the most. Participation activities directed at this group of stakeholders will probably have an positive effect on their commitment. Stakeholders outside the coloured field are either too "unstable" to contribute to the formation of the commons (e.g. a politician having a mandate for a short period of time) or lack the necessary co-ownership for the site (e.g. a project team active on the site for a definite period of time, like Syncity).

The more stakeholders can be characterized by a high level of legitimacy and rootedness, the more it is likely that they will be able to grow beyond a community of interest, allowing for commoning (Linebaugh, 2007).

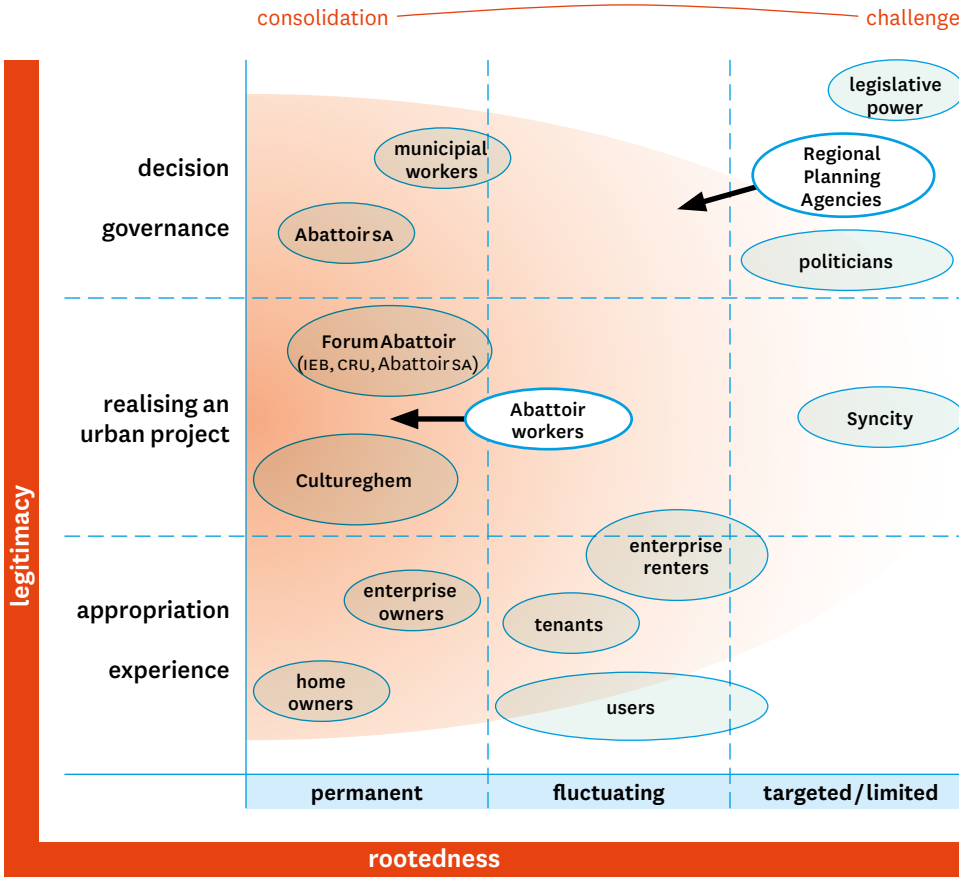
In the context of the Urban Living Labs, the tool makes it possible to deliberately mobilize certain groups to collaborate in the scenario-making or co-design process.

**Working wit the matrix — examples from the Abattoir**
High commoning power: Forum Abattoir. A bottom-up initiative with the overall mission to communicate and echo the interests of the primary stakeholders, started by three larger stakeholders: the NGO and Syncity partner IEB, the Abattoir SA that manages the Abattoir open space and the Centre de Renovation Urbaine (CRU), an association that helps resident-owners to renovate their houses. Forum Abattoir created a public discussion on urban renewal in Cureghem in general, by activities like distributing a free newspaper to the users of the site. Even though their mission statement does not allow to carry out an additional collaborative project, on the basis of their trustful relations with all primary stakeholders and their experience-driven knowledge, they can be placed in the field of the "highest commoning power".

*Towards shared knowledge, Cureghem 2020*

Low commoning power: Enterprises that rent space from the Abattoir SA. These primary stakeholders make use of the various spaces of the Abattoir (including the open space) without having a significant impact on the plans made for its overall transformation. Therefore, they are situated further from the field with the highest commoning power.

Shifting power 1: A private enterprise needs to be placed in the bottom section of the matrix. Why? Because its knowledge and means to engage with a site are informed by managerial decisions on an entrepreneurial level, built upon its characteristic needs: performance, innovation, and market outlook. In order to move a step up closer to the centre of the matrix and develop more commoning power, it would have to change its whole economic form — for example, from a medium scale enterprise into a community run cooperative.




*The commoning matrix in use: stakeholders related to the transformation of the Abattoir open space, version 2021*

Shifting power 2: In the beginning of Syncity, the Abattoir workers (vendors, butchers, market managers, etc) were placed further away from the commoning field (see above). The Syncity Urban Living Lab helped to confer more legitimacy and a more permanent rootedness to them, shifting the group closer to the red field. At the same time the lab made the Regional Planning Authorites come closer to commoning because they experienced the site in person and had to explain their urban planning vision within the world of the workers. Both stakeholder groups came closer to a position of being able to create a commons.

# Exploring new pathways: from analogue to digital

This section offers analogue and digital approaches to stakeholder engagement. It presents the Syncity cargo bike as well as two new digital tools developed by Syncity: an app and a map-based blog.

Conventional urban planning processes exclude large parts of the population for multiple reasons: the high organisational effort required, the location- and time-dependency, challenges due to multiple languages spoken in a community, or simply because of a lack of information about the target groups. Such problems constitute the so-called "participatory gap". What is needed is a constant discussion on participation barriers and how to overcome them, both in analogue and digital ways.

Analogue participatory events allow for face-to-face interaction and exchange of ideas. They create space for raising awareness and debate and provide an opportunity for the stakeholders to establish new connections and cooperations. On the downside, they might need considerable financial and human resources as well as know-how in terms of event organisation, management, coordination and moderation. They are time and place bound, which could limit the participation of specific stakeholder groups (for example, the time of the events could clash with the working hours of some residents and users).

Digital tools can contribute to reducing the participation gap and the complexity of the participatory process when they are simply to operate, allow a detachment from time and location and, in the case of an arrival area, support multiple languages. Digital applications might also face problems related to compatibility with certain devices, a lack of prior knowledge from the side of the users, large data volumes, etc. However, by being accessible only to people who own and are able to operate digital devices, digital apps can contribute to the so-called "digital divide". When going digital, the important question is who is left out on this specific journey and how to include those groups as well.

It is thus a matter of tailoring and fine-tuning stakeholder engagement tools to the needs, habits and capacities of the different groups, especially when operating in arrival areas with a high socio-cultural diversity.

*The Syncity cargo bike… is not just a bike!*

**The Syncity cargo bike: a laboratory on wheels**

The Syncity project was all about analyzing a neighbourhood in depth to achieve improvements together with the residents and other local stakeholders. So right from the creative planning phase of the project the team was trying to find ways to establish a presence in the neighbourhood, get in touch with people, and invite them face-to-face to the Urban Living Labs. The result was an adapted cargo bike: a mobile outpost to attract passers-by, adults and children alike. It served as a dissemination tool, enhanced the interaction during the ULLs and helped the project team to display information and get in touch with the neighbourhood.

Looking back, the advantages of a mobile facility for working with a community in open spaces clearly show. The bike almost automatically demonstrates that public space can be used in many creative ways, stimulating ideas about ecologically-friendly means of transportation.

In general, bicycles are becoming more and more established in logistics systems. Services such as delivery, small trades, but also waste collection — which has great potential, especially in Cureghem — are switching to the sustainable bicycle variant. Short or last mile routes and urban goods distribution in particular are suitable for the use of a cargo bike. (Melo, Baptista, 2016). Cargo bikes can be seen as a means of inclusion in urban development and can enable inhabitants, especially those who are weaker in socio-economic terms, to participate in the local transport system. Furthermore, they can be easily integrated into existing infrastructures (Melo, Baptista, 2016): “As the cheapest form of non-walking transport, the cargo bike eliminates mobility barriers and makes transportation accessible to almost everyone, all while requiring no driver’s license.” (CycleLogistics, 2019: 16)

In dialogue with the integrative bicycle association Lenkerbande e. V. based in Vienna, the main features of the bike were developed and checked for technical feasibility. The focus was firmly on the re-use of material (upcycling) and low-threshold features.

*Ready for Brussels*

► Method card 03
— The walkshop

As a result, the Syncity cargo bike combined playful, creative, analytical and informative elements. It served as an activation tool and a new, unusual element in the public spaces in Cureghem, arousing considerable interest and prompting people to take a closer look. One key aim of the bike was to support participatory action research: with surfaces to write on, an instant camera for participatory photo interviews, and paintable, see-through "plexiglas canvases".

Equipped with an umbrella as a sunshade and a box with information material about the project, it served as an information stand for the public. It also carried a wheel of fortune made from an old bicycle tyre for various games and incentives. Bringing together different participatory methods, it displayed, among other things, the architectural model within the Urban Living Lab carried out on Dr De Meersman square while being used as a coffee table during walkshops.

Despite the many practical challenges involved, from finding a suitable location for such a large vehicle in Cureghem to the considerable organizational challenges (financial resources for the materials to construct the bike, human resources, insurance issues, etc), the cargo bike fulfilled its most important purpose, which was to generate interest, enhance creative work and support communication between stakeholders of all ages and different socio-economic backgrounds.

### When a digital idea meets reality

This is a story that is hardly ever told: how an original project idea changes over time when it meets up with reality. In the Syncity case, the story begins with one simple thought: digital tools can support communication with the stakeholders, enhance their engagement and create a useful interface between Cureghem and the outside world. Based on this, the original digital concept focused on creating "Cureghem tales": a responsive online tool to support communication between local people, city authorities, local NGOs and researchers, and more than that: a tool where local communities can represent themselves, displaying their attraction to insiders and outsiders while strengthening the collective history, memory and identity of the neighbourhood. A tool that raises awareness for sustainability and that is based on maps to strongly relate the issues raised to a spatial dimension. A digital all-in-one solution.

Initially, the Cureghem tales were planned to be collected in a semi-automated and constantly updated way. But during the development process, the original idea was split up into two streams: Cureghem tales as a centrally administered and edited community blog for the representation of data and stakeholder involvement, and the app Kju:Ti to facilitate data collection and stakeholder involvement.

*An idea adapts to reality: this process needs flexibility on all sides, from the project team to the funding agency.*

So, after meeting up with the reality in Cureghem and constant reflection and adaptation, two different digital solutions emerged.

| | |
|---|---|
| **Idea** | An interactive storytelling tool for urban neighbourhoods. |
| **Reality check** | The project needs a tool that answers concrete challenges and questions. |
| **Action** | Kju:Ti: A mobile app for direct interaction with the project communities |
| **But…** | Syncity still needs a communicative digital space open to the neighbourhood. |
| **Action** | Cureghem tales: A blog that works with maps and narrations. |

# Kju:Ti — the digital question tree

**What is Kju:Ti?**
Kju:Ti is a low-threshold digital communication tool developed by Syncity. It serves for different use cases like urban planning or participation projects and can be enriched with methods of empirical social research. Kju:Ti basically works as a question and answering tool. It asks questions to the users and gets answers in return.

**How does it work?**
People interested in a participation process activate Kju:Ti on their smartphone. This allows Kju:Ti to send push notifications. These push notifications contain questions that users can answer with as few clicks as possible. Users don't have to open the app, the question and answering options are shown directly on the screen.

**What is the idea behind?**
Kju:Ti targets the participatory gap by simplified operations, relative detachment from time and location and allowing easy implementation of different languages.

**How do users get in contact with Kju:Ti?**
Users can install Kju:Ti on their mobile device, on their computer desktop or on a tablet.

**INFO:** There is no installation process per se: users just have to click on a button to allow notifications, and they are good to go.

**How do users interact with Kju:Ti?**
Users interact with Kju:Ti by receiving questions from time to time and answering them. For instance, when there is an Urban Lab or a town hall meeting and a certain topic is discussed, users can quickly be asked one to three questions about their opinion, their ideas, etc.

**Which knowledge gains can Kju:Ti provide?**
Kju:Ti collects informal knowledge, connects planning and research with residents, and supports sthe planning and research process with better data.


*Slide control* *Binary choice* *Geo tagging* *Numerics* *Pic upload* *Stated choice/ Preferences*

*The Kju:Ti app offers six answer options*

**Kju:Ti in detail**

The ICT tool draws upon methods of empirical social research as well as new digital tools and transforms them into an accessible and useful mobile application. It thus offers a framework for transferring common methods of deliberation, participation and social research to the digital world, while at the same time paving the way for new methods and implementing them in participatory urban research and communication work.

Kju:Ti can be used to understand values embedded in urban communities and, at the same time, raise awareness of the needs of the local population. The data collected through Kju:Ti can inform participatory processes.

Whoever runs a Kju:Ti-supported process, such as a municipal institution responsible for organizing a participation process, defines the questions. They can be assigned to specific topics and evaluated accordingly. Topics in the field of urban planning are then, for example, governance, mobility, experience, housing situation, etc. Different question types address sentiments, knowledge, biases, or specific indicators. The response options available (see the graphic above) are binary and multiple-choice selection, setting geotags, photo upload, entering free text or numbers, and a rating scale using a slider.

The questions posed to individual users build on each other to create question trees. The name of the app

derives from these question trees. An example: if a female user answers the question about the means of transport she uses most often with “bus”, this will result in different follow-up questions than for a user who states that he usually travels by bicycle.

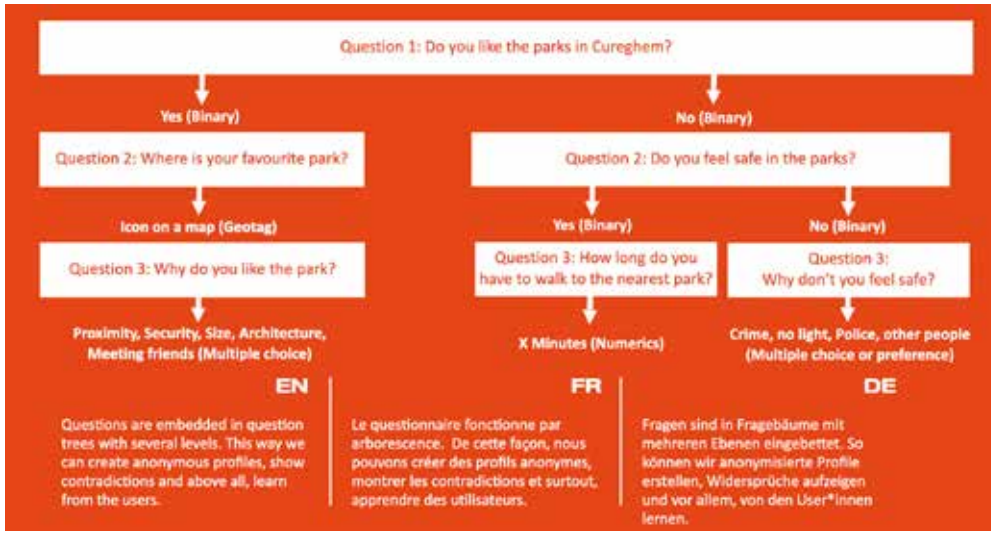
Kju:Ti combines a number of aspects that characterize digitality (Stalder, 2016). First, referentiality which is omnipresent today. Everything is constantly referring to something. Tweets to tweets. Comments on articles. And in the meantime, the copy-paste function of duplicating without losing data has also got a firm grip on pop culture. Everything is remix and rearrangement; everything is allusion and reference to what already exists. This principle of referring back to something that already exists is firmly established within Kju:Ti’s question trees.

Second, the aspect of communality. Using Kju:Ti within communities leads to the most interesting results. But what makes an ideal community within which Kju:Ti can be used as a tool? How should the Kju:Ti community be constituted? This was an important subject of discussion within the Syncity project. On the one hand, Kju:Ti was thought of as a tool for inviting an open and undefined community of users to participate in planning processes. At the same time, the user group was thought of geographically; with the concrete district of Cureghem in Brussles as the frame of reference during Kju:Ti’s development. In parallel, the use of Kju:Ti was also imagined within relatively closed communities, for example the tradespeople in a specific shopping street in Cureghem — Chausée de Mons.

*Syncity partners testing Kju:Ti, 2020*

Asking questions about the openness and closedness of the community is central for several reasons. First, it involves questioning the representative nature of the results that emerge in Kju:Ti surveys. It also considers questions of legitimacy when Kju:Ti is applied in participation processes.

What influence does the composition of the users have on the use of Kju:Ti itself? In an open group of anonymous

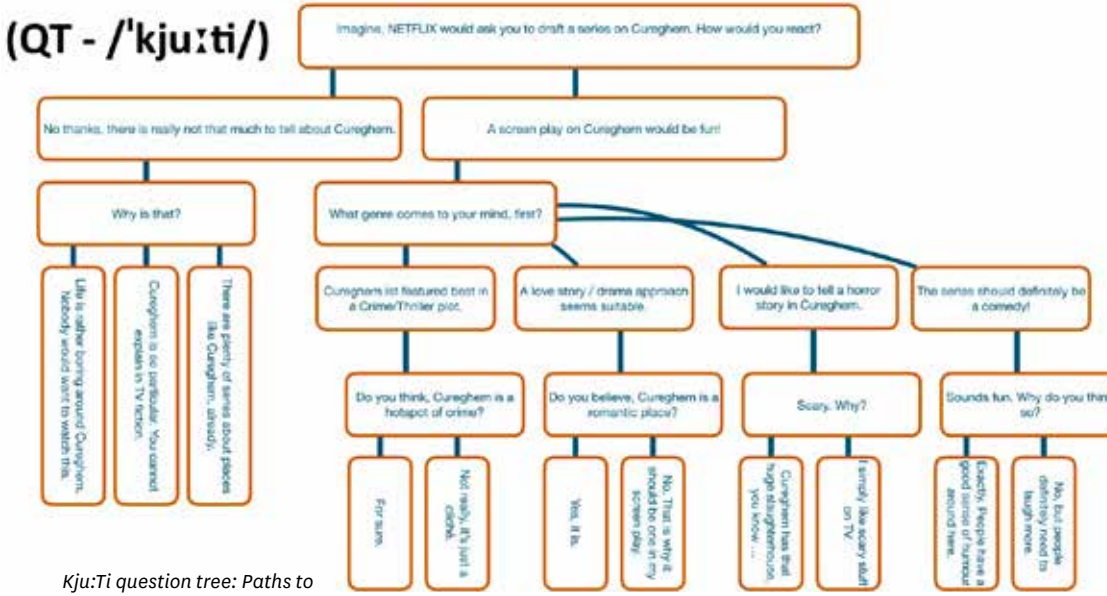



*Kju:Ti example for guiding questions*

users, the questions asked via Kju:Ti may differ a lot from the questions that would be posed to a manageable group of Kju:Ti users who may also be anonymous from a technical perspective but who have commonalities that are known in advance. Or as an example: if you ask the whole of Cureghem, you ask different questions than if you only ask the single mothers from a certain street in Cureghem.

The question of selecting communities of users is also of a technical nature. How does Kju:Ti attract users and how can this group be limited? This is an important question, because what use is a digital platform for supporting participatory processes in urban planning if it does not reach those affected by the planning project? Who is affected? How can people be surveyed in a meaningful way via a smartphone app if people from all over the world can participate as well? In the course of the development of Kju:Ti it became apparent that an appropriate approach could be to consciously perceive Kju:Ti as an extension of participatory formats into the digital realm.

In concrete terms, this could mean: Wherever participation takes place, for example at town hall meetings, in discussion events, or even on websites of municipal




*Kju:Ti question tree: Paths to answer complex questions interactively and collectively*

authorities, interested parties will be invited to install the Kju:Ti app. Such a model also demonstrates to users that the "Kju:Ti method" has a collaborative character, and that it is only through the individual answers to the questions by many individual users that really interesting or meaningful data sets are generated, which can enrich citizen participation.

Another aspect of communality in Kju:Ti is the possibility for users to ask questions to the community themselves. Those who answer questions in the app can also feed questions into the app themselves and define answer options. The six different answer options are also available to users. In this way, Kju:Ti also allows members of the community to ask questions to their peers.

And finally, an important aspect of digitality is that it is based on algorithms. Only algorithms allow the mass processing of data. At the time of writing, Kju:Ti was not yet at the point of producing mass data (even if it is theoretically being developed to do so). The question of how question trees can possibly be developed in an automated way is one of the most exciting questions in the development of Kju:Ti.

Kju:Ti is more a communication tool than a tool for collecting large amounts of data. The famous Shannons-Weaver model of communication (Shannons and Weaver, 1949) assigns recipients of information the role of decoders, whose job is to decode the information they receive. In this model, communication never happens passively. This is important for Kju:Ti. Its aim is to enable the simplest possible form of participation. As simple as possible means as few clicks as possible. All push notifications sent by Kju:Ti must be easy to understand, i. e. decodable, and the responses to push notifications must in turn be decodeable for Kju:Ti users and Kju:Ti operators. Among the six response options offered by Kju:Ti, some are more simple to decode and evaluate than others. These include selection in binary and multiple-choice form, setting geotags, entering numbers, and selections by slide control (stated preference). When entering free text or uploading images, decoding gets much more complicated. Nevertheless, the development team did not want to do without it, since the input option also opens Kju:Ti to classical methods of hermeneutics and interpretation as well as segment analysis for visual materials.

The question of communication and participation with the simplest possible means was central to the conception of Kju:Ti. This is about low threshold, about accessibility. From the beginning, the goal was to achieve the greatest possible accessibility, and to do so in a twofold, combined way. On the one hand, Kju:Ti should make participation accessible. On the other hand, Kju:Ti should be as accessible as possible. The dual character of low-threshold accessibility becomes apparent through analogous forms of participation. Of course, a citizens' meeting is low threshold. You just have to turn up. But at the same time, it takes time, courage, self-confidence, language skills, empathy and other resources to get involved. Or to put it even more bluntly: It is extremely simple and low-threshold to put a cross on a ballot. But you also have to know what the parties on the ballot stand for in terms of their programs.

*This is what the Kju:Ti code looks like*

And this also touches on the topic of language. Within the discussions in the team behind Kju:Ti, one position always present was that Kju:Ti had to be multilingual from the very beginning. This shows how the methods of digitization "lie at cross-purposes with the practiced practices of society," as sociologist Armin Nassehi (2019: 140) calls it. Digital codes defy multilingualism. The language in which Kju:Ti communicates at its user interface does not matter at all to the technology in the background. And so it is true that Kju:Ti is of no use unless a language is found that is understandable to the users. Kju:Ti can ask questions in all languages, as long as they use Latin and Arab letters in their codification. This demonstrates the simplicity and diversity of digitality: Kju:Ti generates question trees, nothing more; but by being able to "feed" Kju:Ti with questions and answers in different languages, it is at the same time an extremely versatile function.

Smartphones are widespread today, even among people with low incomes. Kju:Ti offers a low-threshold digital participation opportunity in the urban planning discourse. It can allow for new sections of the population, which were previously excluded from conventional planning processes, to participate. Kju:Ti does not claim to solve the participatory gap but to add a new alternative for broadening the target groups for planning, participation and communication.

# Cureghem tales: the map-based blog


*An entry point to Cureghem through a sustainability lens*

► https://www.cureghem-tales.eu/tales/

Cureghem tales is a website with map-based elements to showcase aspects of Cureghem to the local community or to people who are not familiar with the area. It is a digital space to tell your own story if you are connected to Cureghem, a story of everyday life, a forum where organisations and businesses and also the Syncity project community can showcase their work and activities. The common goal of all Cureghem tales is to represent and consolidate the neighbourhood as a place where people live, work and produce together. Some contributors have adopted this spotlight on Cureghem to promote their very own trade and production.

Cureghem tales invites the user to engage with the neighbourhood through story-telling and addresses two target groups: outsiders who are not familiar with the area, providing them with insider information on challenges and opportunities defined by the community itself, and people and communities already engaged with the neighbourhood (inhabitants, local business owners, etc) who want to share their stories with a larger audience.

Interested parties can get in touch with the Cureghem tales team, raise objections and request changes. A call on the website encourages this. Once a person submits a story and a couple of photographs with an explanation and geo-reference, the team would transform the contribution into a Cureghem tale.

**What is a Cureghem tale?**

Each Cureghem tale consists of an edited article accompanied by a map or other powerful visual elements, such as photographs, graphics and / or film). Reading time should not exceed five to eight minutes. The methodology is primarily journalistic but incorporates strong ethnographic and cartographic elements supportive to the character of a narration that follows peoples' biographies and actions rather than results (Schmid, 2003: 19).


*Connecting people and spaces*

For the cartographic elements embedded in the narratives (but also potentially to be retrieved independently from narratives in the Atlas section on the blog), the guiding principle was to present multiple contents in a way that they can be intuitively experienced. The type of event depicted, the underlying challenge, the location and the action taken were to be apparent on a map and supplemented by background knowledge. To ensure that the cartographic representation does not exceed a certain level of complexity and that readability as well as comprehension are maintained in all cases, Cureghem tales works with several levels of abstraction (Grolemund and Wickham, 2015). These combine a maximum of three different kinds of information and are visually supported by colours and symbols.

For each tale supported by the Atlas, the map focusses on a specific aspect or phenomenon. A good example is the tale "Beyond Waste. Studies and Actions based on Voices from Cureghem". While you find essential background data and hard facts in the tnarrative ext, the Atlas combines statements from dwellers with photos from the situation on the street, to give the reader an emotional impression.

*Get inspired by Madame Soumah*

***Three examples of Cureghem tales***

**Cureghem Gnamakoudji**

*Madame Soumah, originally from Guinea in West Africa, has been running the "Foyer Féminin", a self-organised association mainly for migrant women and girls, for many years in Cureghem. In this tale, she shares her secret on how to brew Gnamakoudji, a refreshing ginger juice originating from West Africa.*

**Beyond Waste. Studies and Actions based on Voices from Cureghem**

*Chaussée de Mons in Cureghem is often full of large piles of garbage that, although regularly removed, reappear in almost no time. The problem is related to the public waste collection system and the waste management by residents and business owners alike. How to improve the situation? Find out from this tale.*

**About Cureghem's street trees**

*Once a busy street, rue Dr De Meersman was turned into a square by the municipality to be used by locals. Yet business owners and their clients continued to use the square as a parking lot, which created safety problems and made the place inaccessible for people. Read the tale to find out about possible solutions.*

**Technical Basics**

Anyone can create her or his own version of a Cureghem tale. To keep the barriers to entry as low as possible, the team worked with a widely used content management system and applications for the technical basis which do not impose costs on the end user: WordPress (with external domain hosting) and StoryMapJs from Stamen Design. While the first of these two suppliers is already established and almost unlimited in free versions, the use of StoryMapJs entails restrictions where other, commercial suppliers clearly stand out in terms of flexibility and content management.

**Two ideas to adapt and improve the Cureghem tales**

1 Cureghem tales as a journalistic product: a major potential comes with the further automatization of data collection and processing. In the future the narrator's task should change significantly, with the application of Kju:Ti allowing for semi-automated thematically targeted data collection and analysis in specific areas. It could make the storytellers' lives much easier. At the time of writing this text, this is still a vision for the future.

2 Cureghem tales as a topic- and location-centred showcase: the design and underlying structures of Cureghem tales are technically simple enough to allow you to create and / or adapt them to suit your own needs. Besides showcasing and presenting Cureghem to the public, the format may work as an attractive, middle- and / or long-term marketing tool for markets and or shopping streets, since they are likely to have plenty of content suitable to cartographical representation.

As an outsider to Cureghem, click yourself through the stories on
► www.cureghem-tales.eu/tales
and see
► www.cureghem-tales.eu/atlas/

For sharing a story see
► www.cureghem-tales.eu/contribute-to-cureghem-tales/

Find a practical guide to create your own neighbourhood tale on the USB stick or scan the QR code on the last page of this book.

# Conclusion
## A square, a street, a slaughterhouse: lessons learned, ideas ahead

What are the components of a desirable city, today and in the future? And how could a neighbourhood like Cureghem in Brussels, with all its challenges and potentials as an arrival area in a European town, can become more welcoming for all its residents in a sustainable way?

Syncity initiated a dialogue with a variety of stakeholders concerning these questions, from municipal agencies to inhabitants, shop owners, school children, local associations and many more; all of them connected to three specific sites in Cureghem. Syncity shows the pressing need for an inclusive participation model for urban transformation, especially in arrival areas where significant parts of the citizens are not allowed to vote in municipal, regional or national elections. This book summarizes the lessons learnt along the way, moving back and forth between citizens' real life experiences on the one hand, and applied and fundamental research on the other.

**What's new?**

Syncity's methodological innovations presented in this handbook include:

- two tools for stakeholder engagement: from analysis to the support of commoning practices
- new participatory methods for co-design and an outreaching "listening" approach to understand a site from a multi-stakeholder perspective
- a laboratory on wheels and
- two ICT-tools with the potential for bridging the gap between people, their knowledge on urbanistic and ecological matters.

In the course of three years, Syncity designed and tested a participatory process that allows to understand the complexity of urban areas, yet giving it accessible ways of communication and cooperation. It combines partici-

patory action research, ecological assessment on the neighbourhood level, Urban Living Labs and processes of co-creation, co-design, and co-construction.

**Three processes to improve urban transformation**

1 Put the creation of commons at the core of urban transformation processes. This, in turn, needs stakeholders with a high level of emotional co-ownership, which again leads to strong commitment to care for a shared urban resource and to co-manage it in a non-exploitative way.
2 Think beyond a separation of private and public space, finding an innovative approach to the question of urban commons — moving towards co-governance and co-management of urban facilities by stakeholder groups and municipal authorities.
3 Frame "private" needs and concerns of individual residents, users, etc of a site following urban wellbeing and sustainability principles.

Syncity also came across issues of major concern for many residents and users in arrival areas that participation can reveal and draw attention upon but cannot solve without the commitment of public authorities, such as the displacement of vulnerable groups through urban renewal. This must be tackled in broader coalitions on a municipal, regional, or even national level, involving policies related to rent-control, targeted investment programs, subsidies and social housing.

However, connecting to the concerns of local people does allow for achieving results that are accessible and serve the benefit of the people that participate in such processes. If implemented carefully participatory processes can create safe spaces for disadvantaged groups to express and share their knowledge and increase the understanding of how arrival areas are structured as well as how they work. The proposed actions require different kind of investment, most importantly time and empathy but also a sincere commitment to take local challenges, concerns and potential seriously.

# References


Anranter, Michael. 2016. 'Place-making Tactics or Strategies? A Case Study on Governmental Strategies in Urban Restructuring Processes and the Effective Challenge of Asylum Seekers' Trying to Find a Place and Way of Place-making in Bolzano'. Spaces and Flows: An International Journal of Urban and Extra Urban Studies 8(1): 31-42. CG Publisher.

Archer, Margaret. 2004. Being Human: *The Problem of Agency*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Archer, Margaret. 2007. *Making Our Way Through the World: Human Reflexivity and Social Mobility*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Arnstein, Sherry R. 1969. 'A Ladder of Citizen Participation'. Journal of the American Institute of Planners 35(4): 216–224.

Ashcroft, Bill, Griffithsand, Gareth and Hellen Tiffin. 2000. *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts*. 2nd edn. London and New York: Routledge.

Audsley, Eric, Alber, Sebastian, Clift, Roland, Cowell, Sarah, Crettaz, Pierre, Gaillard, Gérard, Hausheer, Judith, Jolliet, Olivier, Kleijn, Rene, Mortensen, Bente, Pearce, David, Roger, Ettiene, Teulon, Hélène, Weidema, Bo and Henk van Zeijts. 1997. 'Harmonisation of Environmental Life Cycle Assessment for Agriculture'. Final Report for Concerted Action AIR3-CT94-2028: 1–101. European Commission DG VI Agriculture.

Bednarska-Olejniczak, Dorota, Svobodová, Libuše and Jarosław Olejniczak. 2019. 'Towards a Smart and Sustainable City with the Involvement of Public Participation — The Case of Wroclaw'. Sustainability 11(2): 332.

Bibri, Simon E. and John Krogstie. 2017. 'Smart Sustainable Cities of the Future: An Extensive Interdisciplinary Literature Review'. Sustainable Cities and Society 31: 183–212.

BioMed Central. n.d. *Beyond Urban Living Labs: The Making of Transformative Urban Innovation Systems*. Retrieved 20 February 2021 from https://www.biomedcentral.com/collections/urbanll.

Bovo, Martina. 2020. 'How the Presence of Newly Arrived Migrants Challenges Urban Spaces: Three Perspectives from Recent Literature'. Urban Planning 5(3): 23-32.

Bradbury, Hilary (ed.). 2015. *The SAGE Handbook of Action Research*. 3rd edn. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.

Bulkeley, Harriet, Coenen, Lars, Frantzeskaki, Niki, Hartmann, Christian, Kronsell, Annica, Mai, Lindsay, Marvin, Simon, McCormick, Kes, van Steenbergen, Frank and Yuliya Voytenko Palgan. 2016. 'Urban Living Labs: Governing Urban Sustainability Transitions'. Current Opinion in Environmental Sustainability 22: 13–17.

Bulkeley, Harriet, Marvin, Simon, Voytenko Palgan, Yuliya, McCormick, Kes, Breitfuss-Loidl, Marija, Mai, Lindsay, von Wirth, Timo and Niki Frantzeskaki. 2018. 'Urban Living Laboratories: Conducting the Experimental City?'. European Urban and Regional Studies 2019 26(4): 317-335.

Chabrol, Marie and Caroline Rozenholc. 2015. 'Rester en centre-ville. Ce(ux) qui résiste(nt) à la gentrification.' Uzance Revue d'ethnologie européenne de la fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles: 4-15.

Chisholm, John. 2019. *What is Co-Design?*. Retrieved 21 February 2021 from http://designforeurope.eu/what-co-design.

Clark, Eric. 2004. 'The Order and Simplicity of Gentrification: A Political Challenge', in Atkinson, Rowland and Gary Bridge (eds.), Gentrification in a Global Context. London and New York: Routledge, pp. 256-264.

CO-CREATE. 2019. *What is co-design? and Why should we co-design?*. Retrieved 21 February 2021 from http://www.cocreate.training/resources/.

Colding, Johan, Barthel, Stephan, Bendt, Pim, Snep, Robbert, van der Knaap, Wim and Henrik Ernstson. 2013. 'Urban Green Commons: Insights on Urban Common Property Systems'. Global Environmental Change 23(5): 1039–1051.

Cruz Velasco, Xunaxi. 2013. *Participatory Action Research (PAR) for Sustainable Community Development*. Oregon: Post Growth Institute. Retrieved 9 January 2021 from http://postgrowth.org/participatory-action-research-par-for-sustainable-community-development/.

Čuček, Lidija, Klemeš, Jiří Jaromír, Varbanov, Petar Sabev and Zdravko Kravanja. 2015. 'Significance of Environmental Footprints for Evaluating

Sustainability and Security of Development'. Clean Technologies and Environmental Policy 17(8): 2125–41.

Cuomo, Federico, Ravazzi, Stefania, Savini, Federico and Luca Bertolini. 2020. 'Transformative Urban Living Labs: Towards a Circular Economy in Amsterdam and Turin'. Sustainability 2020 12(18): 7651.

Curran, Mary Ann. 2013. 'Life Cycle Assessment: A Review of the Methodology and Its Application to Sustainability'. Current Opinion in Chemical Engineering 2(3): 273–77.

CycleLogistics — *CityChangerCargoBike. 2019. 20 Good Reasons to Ride a Cargo Bike. Copenhagenize Design Co.* Retrieved 15 February 2021 from https://cyclelogistics.eu/sites/default/files/downloads/20%20Good%20Reasons%20A5%20English.pdf.

De Arce, Rafael, Dumreicher, Heidi, Medina, Eva, Pérez-Salazar, Gloria and Delia Visan. 2016. 'Defining Future Scenarios of Poverty Alleviation: A prospective Assessment', in Dumreicher, Heidi and Xavier Oudin (eds.), Nopoor: Towards a decent and fair future. Weitra: Bibliothek der Provinz, pp. 110-113.

Deffet, Eric. 2018. 'A Cureghem, propreté rime avec citoyenneté'. Le Soir, 1 June 2018. Retrieved 28 January 2021 from https://plus.lesoir.be/160060/article/2018-06-01/cureghem-proprete-rime-avec-citoyennete.

De Jouvenal, Bertrand. 1967. The Art of Conjecture. London: Weidenfeldt & Nicholson.

Deng, Wu, Cheshmehzangi, Ali, Yuanli, Ma and Zhen Peng. 2020. 'Promoting Sustainability Through Governance of Eco-City Indicators: A Multi-Spatial Perspective'. International Journal of Low-Carbon Technologies 16(1): 61-72.

Dikeç, Mustafa. 2001. 'Justice and the Spatial Imagination'. Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space 33(10): 1785-1805.

Dobre, Catalina C., Ranzato, Marco and Luisa Moretto. 2019. 'Citizen Involvement in Co-Producing Decentralised Stormwater Systems in Brussels.' CoDesign: 1–18.

Dumreicher Heidi, Levine, Richard S., Yanarella, Ernest J. and Taghi Radmard. 2000. 'Generating Models of Urban Sustainability: Vienna's Westbahnhof Sustainable Hilltown', in Burton, Elizabeth, Jenks, Mike, and Katie Williams (eds.), Achieving Sustainable Urban Form. London & New York: Routledge.

Dumreicher, Heidi and Bettina Kolb. 2003. 'Seven Theses on Town and City Quality', in Benzing, Brigitta and Bernd Herrmann (eds.), Exploitation and Overexploitation in Societies Past and Present. Münster: LIT, pp. 241-262.

Dumreicher, Heidi, Kolb, Bettina and Bettina Prokop. 2016. 'Development Projects and Empowerment in Three Continents: The View of the Beneficiaries', in Dumreicher, Heidi and Xavier Oudin (eds.), Nopoor: Towards a decent and fair future. Weitra: Bibliothek der Provinz, pp. 54–57.

ENOLL. 2006. 'What is a Living Lab?'. European Network of Living Labs (ENOLL). Retrieved 9 January 2021 from http://www.openlivinglabs.eu/.

ENOLL. n.d. 'LivingLab Shanghai'. European Network of Living Labs (ENOLL). Retrieved 5 January 2021 from https://enoll.org/network/living-labs/?livinglab=livinglab-shanghai#description.

Fabian, Lousie and Kristine Samson. 2016. 'Claiming Participation — a Comparative Analysis of DIY Urbanism in Denmark'. Journal of Urbanism: International Research on Placemaking and Urban Sustainability (9)2: 166-184.

Frantzeskaki, Niki and Ania Rok. 2018. 'Co-Producing Urban Sustainability Transitions Knowledge With Community, Policy and Science'. Environmental Innovation and Societal Transitions 29: 47–51.

Fu, Yang and Weihong Ma. 2020. 'Sustainable Urban Community Development: A Case Study from the Perspective of Self-Governance and Public Participation'. Sustainability 12(2): 617.

Gaber, John. 2019. "Building 'A Ladder of Citizen Participation'". Journal of the American Planning Association 85(3): 188-201.

Ghiasi, Sedigheh, Hassanzadeh, Mojtaba, and Behin Forghanifar. 2020. 'Role of Public Participation in Sustainable City'. International Conference on Research in Science and Technology. Kuala Lumpur, 14 December 2015. Malaysia: RSTconf.

Gidley, Jennifer M., Fien, John, Smith, Jodi-Anne, Thomsen, Dana and Tim Smith. 2009. 'Participatory Futures Methods: Towards Adaptability and Resilience in Climate-Vulnerable Communities'. Environmental Policy and Governance 19(6): 427–440.

Girling, Cynthia, Kellett, Ronald and Shana Johnstone. 2006. 'Informing Design Charrettes: Tools for Participation in Neighbourhood-Scale Planning'. Integrated Assessment 6(4): 109–130.

Grolemund, Garrett and Hadley Wickham. 2013. 'Visualizing Complex Data With Embedded Plots'. Journal of Computational and Graphical Statistics 24(1): 26-43.

Hamedinger, Alexander. 2020. 'Ist die Kommunikative Planung am Ende?' dérive 79. Retrieved 13 January 2021 from https://derive.at/texte/ist-die-kommunikative-planung-am-ende/.

Hanhörster, Heike and Susanne Wessendorf. 2020. 'The Role of Arrival Areas for Migrant Integration and Resource Access'. Urban Planning 5(3): 1-10.

Hans, Nils, Hanhörster, Heike, Polívka, Janet and Sabine Beißwenger. 2019. 'Die Rolle von Ankunftsräumen für die Integration Zugewanderter. Eine kritische Diskussion des Forschungsstandes'. Raumforschung und Raumordnung | Spatial Research and Planning 77(5).

Harvey, David. 2008. 'The Right to the City'. New Left Review 53: 23-40.

Harvey, David. 2012. *Rebel Cities: from the Right to the City to the Urban Revolution*. New York: Verso, pp. 186.

Hennink, Monique, Kiiti Ndunge, Pillinger, Mara and Ravi Jayakaran. 2012. 'Defining Empowerment: Perspectives From International Development Organisations'. Development in Practice 22(2): 202-215.

ISO. 1997. *Environmental Management — Life Cycle Assessment — Requirements and Guidelines*, No. ISO 14040. Geneva: International Standards Organization.

Jabareen, Yosef R. 2006. 'Sustainable Urban Forms. Their Typologies, Models and Concepts'. Journal of Planning Education and Research 26(1): 38-52.

James, Alison. 2018. 'Co-design and Co-construction: LEGO®-Based Approaches For Complex, Creative Learning'. International Journal of Management and Applied Research 5(4): 304-312.

Judith E. Innes and David E. Booher. 2004. 'Reframing Public Participation: Strategies for the 21st Century'. Planning Theory & Practice 5(4): 419-436.

Jupp, Victor (ed.). 2006. 'Gatekeeper', in Jupp, Victor (ed.), The SAGE Dictionary of Social Research Methods. London: SAGE Publications Ltd, p. 126.

Kahn, Herman and Anthony J. Weiner. 1967. *The Year 2000: A Framework for Speculation on the Next Thirty-Three Years*. New York: McMillan.

Kambil, Ajit, Ginsberg, Ari and Michael Bloch. 1996. 'Re-Inventing Value Propositions'. Stern Working Paper IS-96–21. New York University. Retrieved 18 February 2021 from http://kambil.com/wp-content/uploads/PDF/Value_paper.pdf.

Karlsson, Anja, Federley, Maija, Holopainen, Riikka and Ilari Seitsonen. 2015. 'SubUrbanLab project: Establishment and implementation of Urban Living Labs in Alby and Peltosaari'. SubUrbanLab project reports. Retrieved 5 March 2021 from https://www.buildup.eu/en/practices/publications/suburbanlab-project-establishment-and-implementation-urban-living-labs-alby.

Kesteloot Christian. 1995. 'The Creation of Socio-Spatial Marginalisation in Brussels: A Tale of Flexibility, Geographical Competition and Guest-Worker Neighbourhoods', in Hadjimichalis, Costis and David Sadler (eds.), Europe at the Margins — New Mosaics of Inequality. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, pp. 69-85.

Kolb, Bettina and Laura S. Lorenz. 2013. 'Let's see: Participatory Visual Methods in Practice', in Fogel, Curtis, Quinlan, Elizabeth and Andrea Quinlan (eds.), Imaginative Inquiry: Innovative Approaches to Interdisciplinary Research. Palo Alto: Academia Press, 79–92.

Krotscheck, Christian and Michael Narodoslawsky. 1996. 'The Sustainable Process Index: a New Dimension in Ecological Evaluation'. Ecological Engineering 6(4): 241–58.

Ku, Hok Bun and Jackie Y.C. Kwok. 2015. 'The Action Research Practice of Urban Planning — An Example from Hong Kong', in Bradbury, Hilary (ed.), The SAGE Handbook of Action Research. 3rd edn. London: SAGE Publications Ltd, pp. 118-131.

Kühn, Manfred and Matthias Bernt. 2019. 'Wachsen durch wen? Stadtentwicklungsstrategien in Bremen und Leipzig im Umgang mit Migration, Raumforschung und Raumordnung.' Spatial Research and Planning 77(5).

Layton, Mark C., and David Morrow. 2018. *Scrum for Dummies*. New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons.

Lefebvre, Henri. 1991. *The Production of Space*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Linebaugh, Peter. 2007. 'The Law of the Jungle'. Capitalism Nature Socialism 18(4): 38-53.

Lydon, Mike and Anthony Garcia. 2015. *Tactical Urbanism: Short-term Action for Long-term Change*. Washington, DC: Island Press.

Maiello, Antonella, Christovão, Ana C., Nogueira de Paiva Britto, Ana L. and Marco Frey. 2013. 'Public Participation for Urban Sustainability: Investigating Relations Among Citizens, the Environment and Institutions — an Ethnographic Study'. Local Environment 18(2): 167–183.

Manzini, Ezio and Francesca Rizzo. 2011. 'Small Projects/ Large Changes: Participatory Design as an Open Participated Process'. CoDesign 7 (3-4): 199-215.

Melo, Sandra and Patricia Baptista. 2017. 'Evaluating the Impacts of Using Cargo Cycles on Urban Logistics: Integrating Traffic, Environmental and Operational Boundaries'. European Transport Research Review 9(30): 1-10.

Mistiaen, Pascale, Meert, Henk and Christian Kesteloot. 1995. 'Polarisation socio-spatiale et stratégies de survie dans deux quartiers bruxellois'. Espace Populations Sociétés 3: 277-290.

Moreira, Sara and Mayo Fuster Morell. 2020. 'Food Networks As Urban Commons: Case Study of a Portuguese "Prosumers" Group'. Ecological Economics 177.

Müller, Daniel B., Tjallingii, Sybrand and Kees J. Canters. 2005. 'A Transdisciplinary Learning Approach to Foster Convergence of Design, Science and Deliberation in Urban and Regional Planning'. Systems Research and Behavioral Science 22(3): 193–208.

Narodoslawsky, Michael and Gernot Stöglehner. 2010. 'Planning for Local and Regional Energy Strategies with the Ecological Footprint'. Journal of Environmental Policy & Planning 12(4): 363–379.

Nassehi, Armin. 2019. *Muster: Theorie der digitalen Gesellschaft*. München: C.H. Beck Verlag.

Naumann, Sandra, Davis, Mckenna, Moore, Michele-Lee and Kes McCormick. 2018. 'Utilizing Urban Living Laboratories for Social Innovation', in Elmqvist, Thomas, Bai, Xuemei, Frantzeskaki, Niki, Griffith, Corrie, Maddox, David, McPhearson, Timon, Parnell, Susan, Romero-Lankao, Patricia, Simon, David and Mark Watkins (eds.), Urban Planet: Knowledge towards Sustainable Cities. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 197-217.

NCOSS. 2017. 'Principles of Co-design'. NSW Council of Social Service, Fair Deal Forum. Retrieved 21 February 2021 from https://www.ncoss.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Codesign-principles.pdf.

Ogilvy, Jay. 1996. 'Scenario Planning, Critical Theory and the Role of Hope'. In Slaughter, Richard A. (ed.), The Knowledge Base of Future Studies 1(2&3) Melbourne: DDM Media Group.

Orban, Alexandre, Sanchez Trenado, Corentin, Vanin, Fabio. 2021. 'Who benefits from productive activities? Analysis of the case of Cureghem'. Field surveys 2017. Brussels Studies. Collection générale 153. Retrieved 19 April 2021 from https://doi.org/10.4000/brussels.5358.

Ostrom, Elinor. 2015. *Governing The Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Pahl-Wostl, Claudia. 2009. 'A Conceptual Framework for Analysing Adaptive Capacity and Multi-Level Learning Processes in Resource Governance Regimes'. Global Environmental Change 19(3): 354–365.

Pereira, Laura, Drimie, Scott, Zgambo, Olive and Reinette Biggs. 2020. 'Planning for Change: Transformation Labs for an Alternative Food System in Cape Town, South Africa'. Urban Transformations 2(13).

Radywyl, Natalia and Che Biggs. 2013. 'Reclaiming the Commons for Urban Transformation'. Journal of Cleaner Production 50: 159–170.

Ranzato, Marco, Dessouroux, Christian, Museux, Basile (eds.). 2020.› Urban Regeneration in the Midst of Everyday Life. Brussels: Université libre de Bruxelles.

Ratcliffe, John. 2000. 'Scenario Building: A Suitable Method for Strategic Property Planning?'. Property Management 18(2): 127-144.

Reason, Peter and Hilary Bradbury (eds.). 2008. *The SAGE Handbook of Action Research: Participative Inquiry and Practice*. 2nd edn. London: SAGE Publications.

van Rijn, Helma and Pieter Jan Stappers. 2008. 'Expressions of Ownership: Motivating Users in a Co-Design Process'. Participatory Design: 181-184. Delft: ID-StudioLab, TU Delft

Sacco, Muriel. 2010. 'Cureghem: de la démolition à la revitalisation'. Brussels Studies 43, 25 October 2010.

Sanders, Elizabeth B. N. and Pieter Jan Stappers. 2008. 'Co-Creation and the New Landscapes of Design'. CoDesign: International Journal of CoCreation in Design and the Arts 4(1): 5-18.

Saunders, Doug. 2010. *Arrival City: How the Largest Migration in History Is Reshaping Our World*. New York: Pantheon Books.

Scohier, Claire, 2015. 'Cureghem: Histoire d'une terre d'accueil'. Bruxelles en Mouvements 276: 3-5.

Shannon, Claude Elwood and Weaver, Warren. 1949. *The Mathematical Theory of Communication*. Illinois: University of Illinois Press.

Silver, Hilary, Scott, Alan and Yuri Kazepov. 2010. 'Participation in Urban Contention and Deliberation'. International Journal of Urban and Regional Research 34(2): 453-477.

Soja, Edward W. 2009. 'The City and Spatial Justice', in Didier, Sophie and Frédéric Dufaux (eds.), Justice spatiale 1. Retrieved 8 February 2021 from https://www.jssj.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/JSSJ1-1en4.pdf.

Somers, Margaret R. 1994. 'The Narrative Constitution of Identity: A Relational and Network Approach'. Theory and Society 23(5): 605–649.

Stalder, Felix. 2016. *Kultur der Digitalität*. Berlin: Suhrkamp Verlag.

Stavrides, Stavros. 2016. *Common Space: The City as Commons*. Zed Books: London.

Steen, Kris and Ellen van Bueren. 2017. 'Urban Living Labs: A Living Lab Way of Working'. AMS Research report 2016-2017. Amsterdam: AMS Institute.

Stöglehner, Gernot, Narodoslawsky, Michael and Wolfgang Baaske. 2011. *Energetic Long Term Analysis of Settlement Structures. Factsheet*. Retrieved 29 November 2013 from http://www.elas-calculator.eu/res/en/ELAS_Infopaket.pdf.

Stöglehner, Gernot, Narodoslawsky, Michael and Karl-Heinz Kettl. 2013. *ELAS — Assessing the Energy Aspects of Settlements, Sustainable Buildings Construction Products and Technologies*. Full Papers. Graz: University of Technology, pp. 1537-1544.

Stojanović, Milica, Mitković, Petar and Mihailo Mitković. 2014. 'The Scenario Method in Urban Planning'. Architecture and Civil Engineering 12(1): 81–95.

Strydom, Wessel and Karen Puren. 2014. 'From Space to Place in Urban Planning: Facilitating Change Through Participatory Action Research'. The Sustainable City, WIT Transactions on Ecology and the Environment 191: 463-476.

SYNCITY. 2019. *Three Usage Scenarios for the Synplantation framework*. Internal report.

Taubenböck, Hannes, Kraff, Nicolas J. and Michael Wurm. 2018. 'The Morphology of the Arrival City — A Global Categorization Based on Literature Surveys and Remotely Sensed Data'. Applied Geography 92: 150-167.

Tripp, David. 2005. 'Action Research: A Methodological Introduction'. University of São Paulo-USP, Educação e Pesquisa 31(3): 444-467.

Ungvarai, Adam. 2019. 'Modal Split — Different Approaches to a Common Term'. IOP Conference Series: Materials Science and Engineering 603(4). Retrieved 5 March 2021 from https://iopscience.iop.org/article/10.1088/1757-899X/603/4/042091.

Voytenko, Yuliya, McCormick, Kes, Evans, James and Gabriele Schliwa. 2016. 'Urban Living Labs for Sustainability and Low Carbon Cities in Europe: Towards a Research Agenda'. Journal of Cleaner Production 123: 45-54.

Walljasper, Jay. 2010. *All That We Share: A Field Guide to the Commons*. New York: The New Press.

Warfield, John. 1996. 'An Overview of Futures Methods', in Slaughter, Richard A. (ed.), The Knowledge Base of Future Studies 1, 2 and 3. Melbourne: DDM Media Group.

Wright, Laurence A., Kemp, Simon and Ian M. Williams. 2011. '"Carbon Footprinting": Towards a Universally Accepted Definition'. Carbon Management 2(1): 61–72.

Zask, Joëlle. 2018. *Quand la place devient publique*. Lormont: Le Bord de l'Eau.

* * *

**Reference System:**
The 2021 New Oxford Style Manual building on Author-Date (Harvard)

# The Syncity partners and teams

Oikodrom — the Vienna Institute for Urban Sustainability
Heidi Dumreicher, Bettina Kolb, Richard Pfeifer,
Ina Ivanceanu, Ruth Eiselsberg, Stephan Pfeffer

IGEAT (ULB) — Institute for Environmental Management and Land-Use Planning at the Université libre de Bruxelles
Christian Dessouroux, Corentin Sanchez

LOUISE (ULB) — Laboratory on Landscape, Urbanism, Infrastructures and Ecologies at the Université libre de Bruxelles
Geoffrey Grulois, Catalina Dobre, Andrea Bortolotti and Marco Ranzato, in collaboration with Stefania D'Alterio, Alberto Squizzato and Elodie Ville

Abattoir SA
Basile Museux, Jo Huygh, Elke Tiebout, Joris Tiebout, Paul Thielemans, Mohamed Ibrir, Eddy Bucquoye

IEB — Inter-Environnement Bruxelles
Cataline Sénéchal, Claire Scohier

Municipality of Anderlecht, CRIPA — Cellule Relations Interculturelles et Primo-Arrivants
Vital Marage, Hazem Yabroudi, Achraf Ben H'ssain

STRATECO OG
René Kollmann, Stephan Maier, Michael Eder

Oikoplus KG
Michael Anranter, Thomas Stollenwerk,
Ina Ivanceanu, Jonathan Fetka, Daniel Moser

Project coaching and monitoring: Ursula Pfrimer

# Acknowledgements

**Anderlecht Municipality**
Bourgmestre Fabrice Cumps
Echevins and échevines Susanne Müller-Hübsch
Elke Roex, Jérémie Drouart and Allan Neuzy
Urban development and mobility Department/
Jérémy Labie, Patrice Demol
Urban Renovation Department/
Karim Boulmaïz, Stéphane Hiligsmann
Cleaning Department/Ann Staes
Population Department/Eric Walraevens
Prevention Department/Simon Dutron

**Local associations and companies in Cureghem**
Cultureghem, Wood in Molenbeek, Gilbard,
Union des Femmes Libres pour l'Egalité des Droits (UFLED),
Cosmos, Université populaire d'Anderlecht (UPA),
Union de Locataires d'Anderlecht-Cureghem (ULAC),
Centre de Rénovation Urbaine (CRU),
Circularium, Notre-Dame Immaculée Church,
Hotel Van Belle, YP Invest

**Brussels Capital Region Agencies**
Perspective Brussels, Agence Bruxelles-Propreté,
Urban Brussels, Citydev

**Other associations and planning offices in Brussels**
Groupe One, Guichet d'entreprise d'Euclides, CityTools

**Students participating in the SIP 2019 and 2021**
(Master course architecture and landscape architecture/
Université libre de Bruxelles and Université de Liège):
2019: Alessia Basile, Alice Conard, Julie Genaux, Spyridon Kallergis, Ronald Moucadié, Martina Segato, Irène Six
2021: Meg Cotinaut, Jeremy Cuvelier, Clarence Depaepe, Adélie Darimont, Alexandre Dewailly, Khaoula Fakih Lanjiri, Félix Gomrée, Edyna Hocq, Roxane Janssens, Aurélien Jubault, Louison Richart, Céline Schröder, Morgane Thiebert

**Experts contributing to the SIPS**
Jens Brandt (Tampere University),
Design with Sense, Collectif Dallas,
Daniela Salgado Cofré (ULB, PUC-Valparaiso),
Alessandra Bruno (ULB)
Invited lecturers SIP 2019 and 2021:
Claire Scohier (IEB), Martin Rosenfeld (ULB),
Vincent Alexis, Cléa Samson and Alan Becharef
(Communa asbl), Roberto Sciarelli (Scugnizzo
Liberato / University of Coimbra),
Álvaro Mercado (ULB, PUC-Valparaiso)

**Syncity project group at the**
**Willy Brandt School of Public Policy, Erfurt (GE)**
Lead: Edgar Aragon
Students: Danielle Al-Qassir, Jessica Davila,
Annalisa Filomena, Graham Gibson, Richard Henahan,
Sreekanth Mukku, Eric Mushimiyimana, Tamara Puerto,
Tahira Tarique, Meseret Wondirad, Aheremali Yelixiati

**Syncity bike development in collaboration with**
Stefan Trimmel — Lenkerbande EV, Vienna

**The hosts of the Syncity Walkshop Vienna**
Florian Brandl / GB*
Irmgard Hubauer / Stadtraum am Kempelenpark
Karima Aziz / Mädchenzentrum PEPPA
Anne Wiederhold / Brunnenpassage

**The participants of the Syncity exchange workshop**
**Vienna, October 2019, and in particular**
Irmgard Hubauer / Stadtraum am Kempelenpark, Vienna
Bettina Schwarzenberger /
City of Vienna, Department of Youth Work
Radostin Kaloinanov / Interface Wien GmbH
Ulla Schneider /
SOHO Ottakring and Creative Spaces Vienna
Barbara Slotta / Vienna municipality

**Toolbox testing**
Davis Adedayo Eisape, Barbara Hammerl,
Wencke Hertzsch, Barbara Jeitler,
Julia Wohlfahrt, Markus Zilker

**Syncity project support / Oikodrom**
Csilla Barkász, Ella Brandner, Luisa Eser,
Charlotte Fleischmann, Laura Lohmann, Lukas Madl,
Michelle Prem, Patrizia Pumpler, Sandra Schmidhofer,
Lara Schober, Jonathan Zimmerman

**Synplantation**
**and advice in questions of urban sustainability**
Richard S. Levine / Center for Sustainable Cities
Design Studio (Lexington, USA)

**Funding agencies**
Beata Bibrowska / Innoviris.Brussels
Johannes Bockstefl /
FFG — Austrian Research Promotion Agency

**Feedback, inspiration and support**
Georg Grünberg
LECIT — Henan International Laboratory for
Eco-Community and Innovative Technology, China
Uschi Liechtenegger
Michael Narodoslawsky
Alexandra Rupp-Ebenspanger /
MA 21 Stadtteilplanung und Flächenwidmung
R.U.S.Z. repair centre, Vienna
Annette Wolfsberger

**Our greatest thanks go to the people of Cureghem for sharing their time and creativity.**

**Their thoughts, ideas and perseverance nurtured and inspired us to search further and deeper for an urban transformation process of greatest benefit to the neighbourhood.**

10 tools to make your urban project
engaging and sustainability-oriented
**www.syncity4.eu**

This handbook was developed in a collaborative effort between the Syncity partners.
www.syncity4.eu

Citizens as agents of change in their neighbourhoods: this handbook offers a step-by-step guide for urban projects and lots of ideas to develop the urban commons together, especially in disadvantaged urban areas. From co-creation towards shared governance: Explore the landscape of future-oriented urban transformation with helpful concepts, inspiring tools and plenty of examples and lessons from real life.

URBAN EUROPE

This project has received funding in the framework of the Joint Programming Initiative Urban Europe.

innoviris .brussels
we fund your future

Federal Ministry
Republic of Austria
Climate Action, Environment, Energy, Mobility, Innovation and Technology

*Verlag* Bibliothek der Provinz

9 783991 260271