



COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL AUTHORITIES COLLABORATING FOR SUSTAINABILITY

How to create empowering partnerships to
scale sustainable development and
regenerative practices

A Handbook

Foreword

Community-led initiatives and local authorities can nurture a symbiotic, complementary relationship, and many already do! Relationships and their contexts are always changing though, and even those of us who have worked with others will always keep learning. We explicitly state this at the outset of this Handbook to highlight that we are far from all-knowing. This Handbook presents a flexible framework for action and collaboration and remains open to further inputs and improvements.

The Handbook is the guide for the curriculum on working together. At the heart of our learning is the relationship between local authorities and community-led initiatives that can enable us to better tackle the many challenges of the 21st century together. Strong collaboration between these groups and others will make all the difference to our future, and the future of our children and grandchildren.

Importance of collaboration

“And one of the things that was most important [for a community-led initiative] in that regard was really to look at what the resources are in the place where we are living and to try to give something back.”

Macaco Tamerice, Co-Founder of Damanhur Italy

“I really appreciate the innovative inputs from the ecovillage people of Lebensgarten Steyerberg, they really have something to say and bring sustainable innovation and good ideas to our village Steyerberg.”

Jürgen Weber, Major of Flecken Steyerberg, Lower Saxony, Germany

As these quotes show, we can learn from each other through honest conversations. These conversations should include how we work as well as the topics of focus. We will explore big issues such as resilience, regeneration, social innovation, integration and justice. We think these underlying issues are important for all of us in the context of our common purpose. Acknowledging this will enable us to combine technical, institutional and policy-led modes of working with place-based, spontaneous, experimental approaches. Our future will be enhanced by broadening the ways we tackle challenges, not narrowing them down.

As much as we aim for neutrality, we'd like to make it explicit here at the outset that we represent community-led initiatives better than local authorities. Although there is sustainability in the motivations and strategies of many institutions, an abundance of ideas, actions and change agency emerges from communities. This Handbook is about growing this potential through collaboration.



We recognise how some local authority staff may find the community-led way of working intangible, unfocused, idealistic, laid back, even chaotic or messy, while people in community-led initiatives may find the institutional way slow, dreary, bureaucratic, dehumanising. These approaches do not actually cancel each other out, but rather complement each other. If combined and integrated, the resulting synergies will work wonders, improving the social cohesion, sustainability and local economy, and helping both sides reach their shared goals.

Small community-led initiatives can innovate swiftly. However, such innovations need to be upscaled and embedded in institutional processes and wider social structures. Local authorities are essential in supporting this and in enabling progress towards wider sustainability—the Great Transition. Local authorities play a crucial role, standing between community-led initiatives and higher-level government structures (regional, national, international). Local authorities themselves can innovate and need to ensure that sustainability policies are implemented in communities. Strengthening partnerships between community-led initiatives and local authorities is thus an effective way to cross-pollinate ideas, develop opportunities and share successful initiatives. This can be initiated by either of the partners, and both partners can collaborate as equals. In this Handbook, you will learn about the basics of starting and nurturing this collaboration from either local authority or community-led initiative perspectives.

Forgive us for sometimes assuming readers' ignorance about the topics we cover in this Handbook. We are trying to make the document accessible to wider audiences. On the other hand, bear with us if some passages are too technical or complex. We are basing the text on resources and contributions by practitioners and academics amongst us from many fields and countries, so a level of complexity is unavoidable.

If you identify ways to improve this Handbook and the curriculum it underpins, please let us know. If you find this Handbook useful, feel free to recommend it and share it with your friends and colleagues! It will be best used within a curriculum led by a trained facilitator. However, we would also be happy if you can find another use for the materials—maybe they will plant a seed in your local ground, nurture a young idea or feed a flourishing project. Thank you for your interest and good luck in your efforts to support local places and global processes for a better world.

The Ecovillage Transition in Action team





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CREATING COMMUNITY: INTRODUCTIONS, INDIVIDUAL AND SHARED GOALS, LANGUAGE AND PROCESSES, INSPIRING EXAMPLES

Learning outcomes

- ★ Understanding of the rationale for this Handbook, the course and the wider resources associated with these
- ★ Recognition of the motivations and skills of training co-participants
- ★ Appreciation of different models for co-producing sustainable futures at a local level
- ★ Curiosity regarding how collaborations between community and local authority can scale up sustainability action and regenerative practices

Welcome and Introductions

Welcome to the Handbook and the curriculum to help you on your way! We hope this is going to be a thoughtful, helpful, practical and inspiring journey.

Purpose of the Handbook

The material and activities in this Handbook will inform and inspire you to scale up action for community regeneration and regional sustainable development.

It is aimed at four key target groups—local communities, community-led initiatives (such as Transition groups or Ecovillages), local authorities, and educators. Scopes and definitions of these terms can be found in the appendix. The Handbook supports a course programme and is supported by a Toolkit, a Trainers' Handbook with additional resources for you and those with whom you work and a Navigation Tool to help you plan and evaluate your activities.

We realise that you will be working in different contexts and using different languages. We also realise that many of you are doing great work already. The course that this Handbook contextualises is thus not only a set of lessons and resources but also a process by which you can learn how to talk across different groups, translating the languages of community and of local authority to a mutual appreciation of the needs we all face to create a greener, fairer and more prosperous societies living within environmental limits. The Toolkit includes case studies of community action in different areas of regeneration as well as specific tools and approaches by which to initiate and successfully develop collaboration with others. Ideally, you would participate in a course but this Handbook is a standalone document and you can learn from it too. To give you an understanding of the course here is a brief overview.

Aims of this Handbook:



Local authorities—to learn why it is valuable and how to work efficiently with community-led initiative and local communities



Communities—to understand why and how to work appropriately with local authorities



Dialogue and participatory planning—so that diverse stakeholders can come together to achieve shared goals through collaboration



Aims of the course

To provide scaling of existing solutions, the design and implementation of new and locally appropriate innovative solutions, increased engagement in and efficiency of local governance, and stronger local partnerships for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).



Learning outcomes of a course supporting this Handbook

- ★ Members of local authorities will develop skills and competencies to work better with community-led initiatives and local communities
- ★ Local community members will acquire skills, knowledge and competencies to understand why it is helpful and important to work with local authorities and how it is the best way to do it
- ★ Participants will improve their understanding of regenerative practices, in relation to nature, community and culture
- ★ Participants will develop competencies for dialogue and participatory planning so that diverse stakeholders can come together to achieve shared goals, including experiences of relevant approaches

Context for this Handbook

This Handbook grew out of a project called *Ecovillage Transition in Action (ETiA)*, funded by Erasmus+, and was developed through the partnership of the Global Ecovillage Network (GEN), GEN Deutschland, ECOLISE and the University of St. Andrews, Scotland, in collaboration with Kilden/Hurdal Ecovillage (Norway). We comprised a group including community facilitators and trainers and academics. All of us have experiences of living and working in a community, and most of us had worked with or in local authorities, NGOs and global organisations such as UNESCO.

The project researched the following questions:

- ❓ How to scale up regenerative practices that are developed and implemented in community-led initiatives such as Ecovillages and Transition Towns?
- ❓ How to implement and embed local authority sustainability policies in communities?
- ❓ How to support thriving collaborations to collectively achieve sustainability transitions beyond the community level?

Learning with this Handbook

We produced this Handbook to facilitate better collaboration between community-led initiatives and local authorities and enable them to co-create a better future.

The Handbook supports *a course* that spans five days, with two sessions per day, but this can be adapted as required. You can also use the Handbook without a formal course. Sessions are interactive and you are invited to bring in your own stories, questions and hopes. We understand that the needs, cultures and languages of local authorities and of community-led initiatives and ecovillages can be different and so we have adapted some materials for these different contexts. You may choose to do the course with others from your or other local government, or communities, or to do it across local government and communities in a region. This would help you understand each other and plan better!

The course is best undertaken in person to allow in-depth discussion and sharing in trust. However, virtual (and blended) spaces for learning are common today and you should make use of them when an in-person meeting is not possible.

Whilst, if doing a course, you will have at least one trainer leading your course, this course is designed to let you all learn from each other. Please come prepared to share your stories and experience, in a spirit of dialogue and mutual exchange.

At the end of this Handbook, you'll find definitions of key terms, acronyms and descriptions of methodologies. However, some of them are essential to the flow of the text and you'll find various definitions and descriptions integrated into the text. For example, the term community.

There are many ways to define 'a community'. In the context of this Handbook **community** is "a group of people resident in a particular place." A community is usually human scale, so is considered to be the size of a village or small town or city neighbourhood. It can be small in area (high density area) or larger (dispersed rural or island populations). Sometimes a community is defined by a postcode, sometimes by the name of a village or neighbourhood. There is always some ambiguity about who is a community member, because some people may leave to work or study elsewhere but consider the community home, and others may be transient residents.





An **intentional community** is defined by the *Foundation for Intentional Community* as "a group of people who have chosen to live together or share resources on the basis of common values."



Ecovillages are intentional, traditional, rural or urban communities that operate on a shared set of ecological, social and/or spiritual values, with sustainability as a common concern. They consciously seek to create and enact working models of sustainable living combined with social well-being and (in many cases) spiritual growth.



Community-led initiatives (CLIs) are any form of action undertaken by self-organised groups of people, often but not always living in the same geographical location, to improve their social and environmental conditions. Use of the term *community-led* stresses the leadership of and within communities that take initiative to bring about the changes they wish to see. They don't just speak out against problems, they take concrete action to address them and help create a better world.



A **local authority** is the administration of local government. Across Europe, the name varies: municipality (sometimes classified to urban and rural), province, county, parish, commune and (local) community. The size of the area they are responsible for varies across different countries. In Scotland, for example, the areas are large but in Switzerland they are much smaller. Sometimes there are smaller administrations nested within larger administrations. Local authorities are usually run mainly by public officials and have to provide some public services and implement local policies. In most countries, there is an elected council of local community members who work with officials to help link the work of local government to the needs of the local community.

Language and translation

We cannot disambiguate each and every term, so please bear with us in case of less than fully adequate use of terms. You say *regenerative practices*, I say *sustainable development*... We have different ways of defining, framing and articulating our aspirations and actions. There is a short glossary at the end of this Handbook and we suggest you make your own internal glossaries during your work to frame your shared language and intentions.



Rationale for this Handbook

Current global challenges manifest strongly at local levels, including environmental concerns such as climate change, biodiversity loss, pollution and waste. These problems exacerbate and prevent societies from tackling social inequalities. This Handbook explores how to address these problems together to promote planetary and human wellbeing. This necessitates considering what 'wellbeing' means.

We agree with the view that wellbeing should fit within environmental limits and recognise the finite resources of our planet. We also need to share those resources fairly among local areas and global communities. For communities to flourish prosperity is necessary but in the transition to sustainability, we consider the use of renewable energy, a circular economy with decent work and people having time and space for their own humanity. The phrase "transition in action" recognises the need for change in how society functions along with the active steps some people are taking to change.

Among community-led initiatives, there are excellent examples of improving the quality of life by having better fundamentals: a feeling of security, clean air and water, organic local food, healthy housing, connection with nature, leisure time spent with the community, and meaningful work that contributes to social welfare. These life essentials can be made accessible to all through the design of a more shared economy, emphasising cyclic material flows and enabling adjustments in response to unanticipated impacts. Linear, extractive (non-circular) economies can accelerate resource depletion, biodiversity loss and climate change, but also entrench inequalities and injustices, and perpetuate societal polarisation and fragmentation.

As much as it is needed to work on all those problems from within global institutions, this Handbook is about *community-led* initiatives working hand-in-hand with their *local authorities*, so that is what we focus on. We want to build community and government at the local level to strengthen local sustainability, regeneration and resilience.

In this Handbook the term "community-led initiatives" is our umbrella term for initiatives in local communities, intentional communities and ecovillages. Likewise, we use "local authority" with a recognition of other terms that this encompasses or partially overlaps with. We recognise that other actors may be involved.

A compact, well-integrated local community understands their shared identity and is willing to take proactive steps to address issues much before they strike them as catastrophes. That is where community-led initiatives and local authority officials work hand in hand. The challenge is how to really hear and understand each other.

Successful collaboration may require a considerable amount of conversation and mutual adaptation. A good way to begin is by acknowledging where you currently stand and what your long-term goals are and then working out why you need to work together and what needs to happen for partnerships to develop. Then use points of agreement even if, in some ways, your positions or approaches are divergent.

Principles of co-learning

It may be useful to begin with some ideas about co-learning processes. (Consider these points, especially as a participant at a training.)

► **Everybody has a valuable contribution to make ...**

Co-learning reduces or removes the hierarchy where the teacher is the person who is an expert in the subject matter and who imparts this information to the class, who are then largely passive recipients of the information. In co-learning, it is recognised that the experiences and skills of all participants are valuable, and the emphasis is on exchange of knowledge along with introduction of new knowledge. Knowledge is relational—that is, people absorb and take on board knowledge in different ways depending on the relationships with others in the learning process. Hence, co-learning is also about trusting and listening to each other as well as learning from/with the facilitator.

► **Different perspectives are valuable ...**

Regenerative practices and sustainable development force you to consider ‘a plurality of perspectives’—different ways of seeing and understanding the world. It is thus good if people in your team have different opinions and different experiences. Sometimes it can be hard to realise that people see life in different ways. Try to cultivate a sense of curiosity about the views of others and see your collaboration less as a place for judgements and more a place for discussion and shifts in view.

► **Learning is listening *and* talking...**

Co-learning means listening as well as talking, considering as well as communicating, reflecting and respecting as well as rhetoric. You will review the aims and learning objectives as indicated in the introduction. You will also review the resources and Toolkit and how to use it.

Co-learning and co-design

Learning how to initiate, deepen and maintain flourishing collaboration requires that both (or more) partners undertake a mutual exploration called ‘co-learning.’ Even if you are not using this Handbook in a mixed group course, it is useful to think of collaboration as a process of opening up, together. Actively working with partners can be undertaken through using co-design.”

Co-design is a process where people from different groups get together to co-create something—a process, or a physical output such as a community hub or transport plan. Brainstorming and lateral thinking for solutions lead to ideas and one or more are piloted. The pilot is then modified and more iterations are tried until a good design is achieved. See this website for more ideas and information: [What is codesign?](#)

[A brief overview.](#)

Who is involved in collaboration and why?

This Handbook is primarily about scaling regenerative practices and sustainability action through collaboration between communities and local authorities. However, multiple actors may be involved and scaling may occur up, down, across or deeply.

To solve these issues, scaling in all possible ways and directions is essential, but it requires effective collaboration. How to achieve it? Who needs to be involved? And why even attempt it?

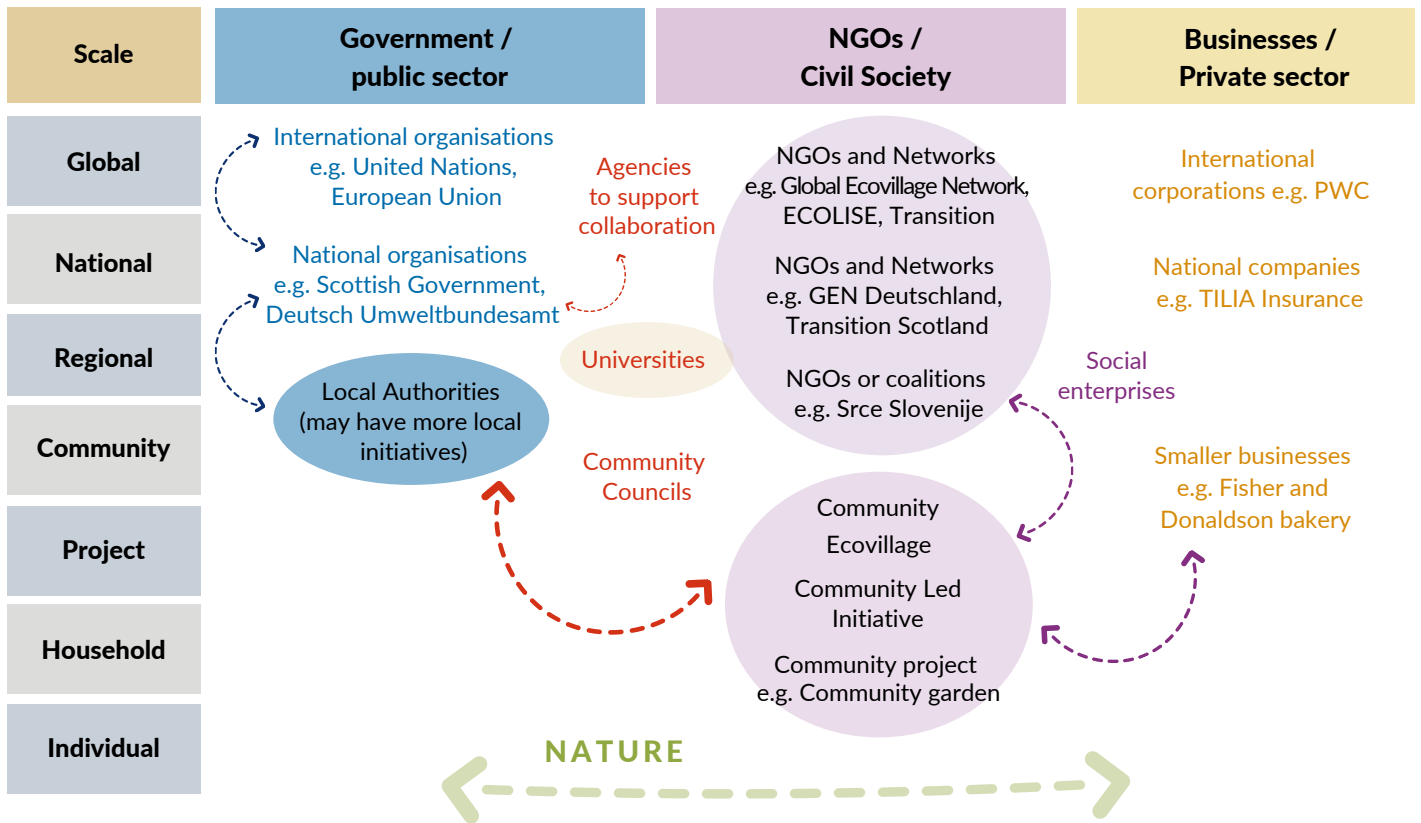
Scaling can occur in various ways and involve multiple actors. The diagram below represents some social elements of the wider socio-ecological system. It shows that collaboration can occur at different scales: from individual, through community, to global. The arrows indicate some of the main interactions, but any actor may interact with another in a given situation. Some actors can be multi-scalar, having impacts at different levels.

There may be scaling through or facilitated by national or international NGOs or networks. Other actors may influence or contribute to collaboration. For example, universities can stimulate innovation and research; the private sector can support and take up innovation. Increasingly, we are seeing organisations that are hybridised, such as social enterprises (non-profit businesses working at a local level), universities (often public sector with charity status yet increasingly commodified), and public agencies that have been privatised.

We've pointed out already that community-led initiatives are typically agents of societal transformation towards sustainability. Niche innovations tend to scale from smaller to larger levels and in order for them to find a place in society, they require enabling conditions which come from structural, top-down governance support. Scaling down and scaling up thus form a virtual cycle and this can be seen in all effective collaborative frameworks. How this plays out is shown in the **Multi-level perspectives model**. The model illustrates how small-scale changes interact with enabling conditions, strengthening sustainability transitions and eventually leading to societal transformation.



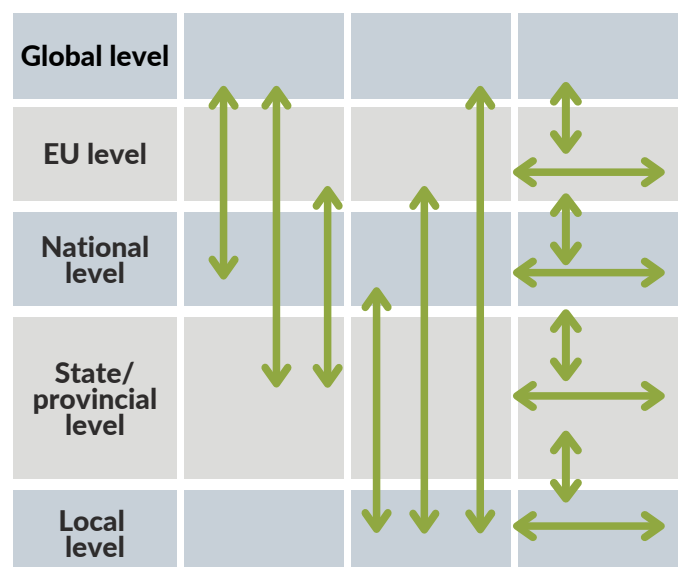
DIAGRAM OF ACTORS FOR COLLABORATION



Actors or stakeholders who may be involved in collaboration to scale community regenerative practices and sustainability action. Such actors can function at global, national, regional or local scales. Some actors are multiscale (e.g. GEN, Transition) and some are hybrid. The arrows indicate some of the main interactions but of course any actor may interact with another in a given situation. It is ultimately a socio-ecological system held by nature.

Multi-level Governance

Another way of thinking about scaling up is Multi Level Governance. This considers how local levels of governance link to regional and then national levels, and then to international and global regulations, processes and institutions. This kind of vertical linking can be between adjacent levels, such as between a community and a local authority, or across multiple levels, for example, directly between local and global. An example of this might be a local ecovillage engaging with the Global Ecovillage Network, or a local authority engaging with the UN SDGs. There is also horizontal interaction, across organisations and bodies at each level.



Local government engaging communities

A good example of a local authority engaging communities took place in Scotland through a strategy for the local government to engage local communities in climate action (White and van Koten 2016). Their policy brief summarises these steps. They found that in order to link well with local communities, the local authority needed to be creative and work in different ways, to support wider resilience and not just instrumental change, to enable structural changes, to give more support and resources to marginalised communities, to reallocate resources and to examine how they themselves acted as a community of practice and interest. The graphic shows key strategic areas that the municipality decided to focus on.

A local authority strategy?



ALTERNATIVE
DELIVERY
MECHANISMS TO
ENABLE
COMMUNITY
ACTION



BUILD
COMMUNITY
RESILIENCE



CREATE
INFRASTRUCTURE
AND PROCESSES



SUPPORT
MARGINALISED
COMMUNITIES



FINANCIAL CLIMATE
OFFERS AN
OPPORTUNITY FOR
DIFFERENT WAYS OF
THINKING AND AN
INTERNAL
REALIGNMENT OF
RESOURCES



LOCAL
AUTHORITY AS A
COMMUNITY OF
INTEREST

Key points:



You may see things differently, and you can respect and value these different perspectives as you learn together



You have established individual and collective goals



There are different models to help communities share resources and knowledge with each other, and to explain scaling up



Multi-level perspectives and multi-level governance can be useful ways of imaging how you might collaborate with others to scale up sustainability action



Language can be a barrier to collaboration unless you are curious and careful to explain yourselves—and then it can enrich mutual understanding

WHO ARE WE? UNDERSTANDING POTENTIAL PARTNERS

Learning outcomes


- ★ Understanding what we mean by community-led initiatives and ecovillages and exploring their aspirations and ways of working
- ★ Understanding the main roles that local authorities play in sustainable development and regeneration and appreciation of their motivations and constraints
- ★ Knowledge of the political compass and awareness that people may hold different views on how to run our countries and local areas
- ★ Recognition of diverse potential relationships, formal and implicit, between local authorities and communities
- ★ Consideration of needs for collaboration to scale up community action

You will be introduced in this session with further discussions and definitions of potential partners so that you can understand each other's perspectives and work together better.

Community-led initiatives and ecovillages

Community-led initiatives in this training programme are considered to be projects that are started in communities and that take place in the local area. Sometimes they are small and well defined, such as a community garden. Sometimes they are more diffuse, such as a Transition initiative that is running different projects on food, energy and transport. Sometimes they just involve a small number of keen community members, at other times they may include a constituted community organisation and on occasion they include the entire resident community in some way. In this Handbook we are interested in community-led initiatives that are promoting regenerative practices, or pursuing sustainability. They often focus on more than one topic, including, for example, skill shares and cycling support, food growing and access to healthy food, community renewable energy and co-housing, forest schools and children's play areas.

An ecovillage is a type of community-led initiative. It is sometimes seen to be a melting pot of solutions or a living laboratory for the future. It is an intentional, traditional; rural or urban community that is consciously designed through locally owned, participatory processes in four dimensions of sustainability: social, cultural, economic and ecological to regenerate their social and natural environments.



“An ecovillage is a human-scale, full-featured settlement in which human activities are harmlessly integrated into the natural world in a way that is supportive of healthy human development, with multiple centres of initiative, and can be successfully continued into the indefinite future.”

(Gilman, 1991)

“Ecovillages are the newest and most potent kind of intentional community, and in the vanguard of the environmental movement that is sweeping the world, I believe they unite two profound truths: that human life is at its best in small, supportive, healthy communities, and that the only sustainable path for humanity is in the recovery and refinement of traditional community life.”

(Rosenthal and Dawson 2006)

Ecovillages are, in general, community-led initiatives. However, community-led initiatives are not necessarily ecovillages. People move to an ecovillage to adopt the values and practices there and to deliberately gather to pursue a common life practice and lifestyle.

For several decades already, ecovillages have been living laboratories in which many pioneering solutions have been developed. Today, they are increasingly influencing their wider communities with their holistic solutions and teachings. Learning from these activities has prompted hundreds of academic papers and many methodologies that inform this Handbook.

Many ecovillages are united under the umbrella of the Global Ecovillage Network (GEN), founded in 1995. GEN reaches out to more than 6000 communities on all continents. Ecovillages are vastly diverse, yet united in their actions towards low-impact, high-quality lifestyles.

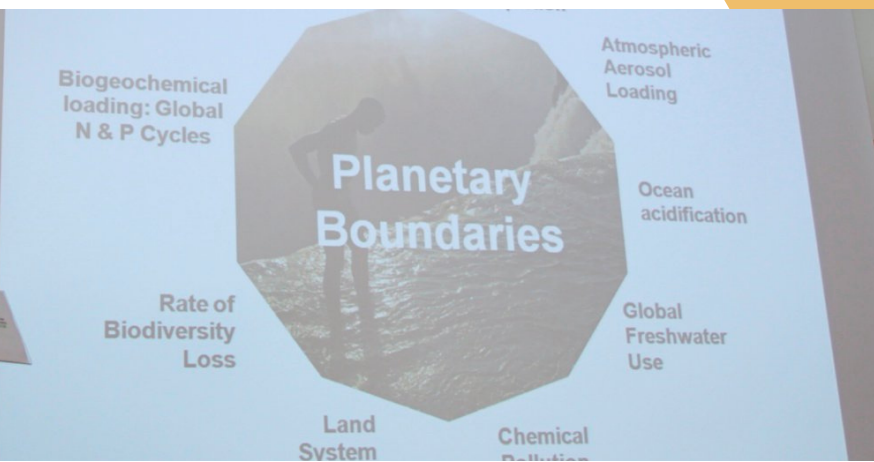
While there is no one single way of being an ecovillage, there are three core practices shared by all:

- ✓ Being rooted in local participatory processes
- ✓ Integrating social, cultural, economic and ecological areas in a whole systems approach
- ✓ Actively restoring and regenerating life systems

We have many reasons to believe that human settlements, both urban and rural, can benefit from adopting ecovillage principles and practices. This can only take place within open collaborations, leading to new learnings and applying these principles. The ecovillage movement strives to give people the possibility to live in what we call “*communities for future*” (cf. ECOLISE 2021). ‘Ecovillagers’ see many benefits in community life that contribute to achieving the SDGs, as we’ll see later on in this Handbook.

Working ‘in community’, whether in community-led initiatives or ecovillages, can be an attitude of solidarity with other people, demanding mutual respect, willingness to compromise, compassion and trust. Community is thus a process that has to be created and constructed. It should be inclusive.

Ecovillages and, more broadly, community-led initiatives pursue visions of and practices for the future, which aligns their work nicely with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This course is aligned with lessons learned in sustainable communities (SDG 11) and explores how to build partnerships (SDG 17) using education (SDG 4) and strong institutions and good governance (SDG 16) to address poverty (SDG1), hunger (SDG2), health and well-being (SDG3), gender equality (SDG5), water and sanitation (SDG6), affordable clean energy (SDG7), decent work (SDG8), infrastructure (SDG9) and responsible consumption and production (SDG12) whilst living within environmental limits through supporting climate action (SDG13), life below water (SDG14) and life on land (SDG15).



Local authorities—the guardians of the local

The duty of local authorities is, first and foremost, to serve the interests of their local communities, organisations and businesses. They are among the key gatekeepers for the successful installation of transformative projects on a regional scale. Inter-organisational collaboration in networks and partnerships is supposed to promote the potential for learning and innovation needed for environmental transformation and sustainable development. Their position is between national government agendas and local communities, with the responsibility to adapt national statutory requirements to local contexts for local communities.

Whilst national regulations and policies will be in place to support similar goals to those of local communities (better, fairer, greener places, for example), they are often expressed in different languages and can be rigid in their implementation. Programmes of action can be organised sometimes years in advance, and are supported by limited resources, so it can be difficult for local governments to respond rapidly to a community request. National and international standards especially regarding climate change have to be implemented on a local level. Thus the local authorities become very relevant in order to transform the local culture towards sustainability. These actions can, in our view, be supported by sustainably oriented community-led initiatives.

The role of local authorities differs across countries and contexts. For example, in Scotland, there are only 32 local government councils across the whole country. Some of these are based on cities and others are in large dispersed rural areas. In Germany, local government councils are much smaller, more like the old parish structure. The scale of what is meant by 'local' thus differs in each country.

Local government usually comprises elected community councillors and government staff (civil servants) in the administration. Depending on the country, the roles differ. For example, in Scotland, the elected councillors can raise issues and bring matters to the attention of local government administrations, but it is often good to go directly to local government staff. Elected officials and civil servants are usually dedicated individuals, often working in constrained and difficult circumstances. Sometimes elected officials are only in post for a limited time, whereas civil servants can be in post for many years.

This influences your capacity to get to know them and their understanding of long term issues in the local area.

The value of good administration

"It really depends on who is sitting in which position if you really want to change something on a local scale. If there is someone who can open doors in a position such as a mayor or as a district member of parliament you really get a chance for your ideas to be heard and ideas for local development such as e-car sharing or renewable energies can be implemented."

(ecovillage activist for e-car sharing in Lower Saxony, Germany)

In Germany, for example, local authorities differ according to the size of the community. The responsibilities of local authorities in rural areas differ from the responsibilities of those in bigger cities. The same is true about the challenges in rural and urban areas. The cooperation between rural local authorities with rural community-led initiatives, such as ecovillages, has a different character to the cooperation between urban authorities and Transition Town projects.

Local authorities are often tied to statutory requirements, meaning that they must abide by certain legalities. They have legal frameworks, a clear division of labour, a strong connection to national bodies and the work of government.

Local governments have many functions that are relevant for community-led initiatives. Administrative services support the smooth functioning of society. Organisations running community-led projects should check how their needs fit into existing local government strategies, and local government officials should try understand that much of what local communities want aligns with broad regional aims.

Here are some examples of the basic work of local government:

- registration of births, deaths and marriages
- financial benefits and money advice
- bins and recycling (waste management)
- business support
- education
- environment
- health and social care
- planning and building
- roads, travel
- community development

All this work necessitates strong, reliable structures that preserve social stability over decades.



Celebrating difference

You can see from these descriptions that community-led initiatives and local authorities are usually very different entities. How can they synergise and celebrate these differences?

You might want to think of local authorities as being deeply rooted trees, slow-growing, maturing over decades, whilst community-led initiatives are like nimble bees, pollinating with ideas and buzzing with new practices, helping the fruits grow and giving the tree its liveliness.



Whilst it can be difficult for local authorities to respond nimbly to community requests or projects, local governments are, of course, staffed by human beings. Many are open-minded and committed to sustainability, but feel confined by institutional structures. Others are comfortable with the structures and feel pushed out of their comfort zone by programmes geared towards sustainability. Both types of local administrative workers are important and deserve esteem.

All staff in local government have specific roles. Sometimes there is a community development officer assigned to specific communities or sections. Sometimes there is a climate change community engagement officer. Transport, business, rural and spatial planning roles might also be relevant points of contact for collaboration with community-led initiatives.

If you are based in local government, you will know most of your organisation, and you will probably be able to help by signposting members of community-led initiatives to key government staff and supportive individuals. If you come from a community-led initiative, it is worth mapping out which people might be good points of contact and are open to receiving innovative ideas.

Collaboration

By **scaling up** we refer to a number of different types of exchange of best practices and know-how. Here are different ways to understand scaling:

- ✓ Scaling—within a community
- ✓ Scaling—horizontally across communities in a region
- ✓ Scaling—horizontally across communities in a network
- ✓ Scaling—vertically from community to local authority
- ✓ Scaling—vertically from community to national or international actors
- ✓ Scaling down from local authority, national or international to community

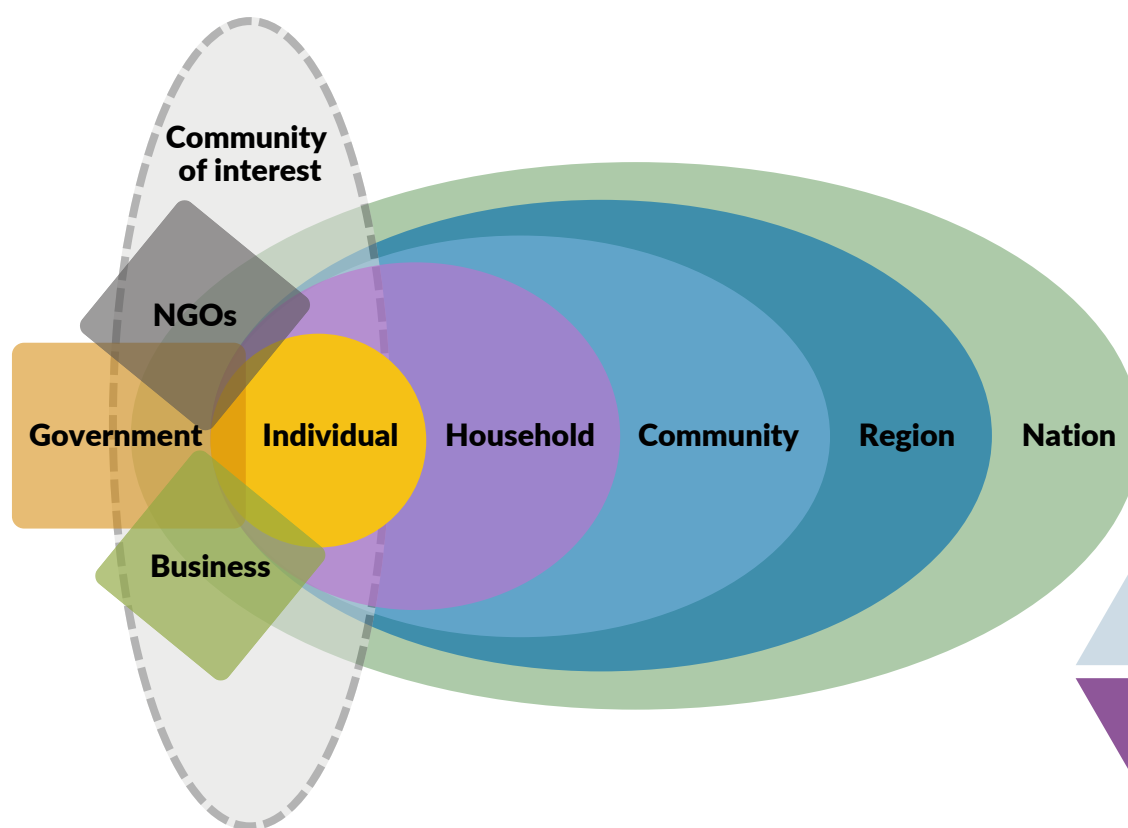
Transfer of knowledge and practices can thus flow ‘up’ or flow ‘down’ from larger to smaller bodies. It also ‘jumps’ across different sectors, domains and levels. When a community-led initiative chooses to base its work on the UN SDGs, that is an example of adopting an internationally agreed sustainability standard at a local level. An industrial innovation can be picked up by an agricultural cooperative or an urban planning strategy adapted to rural context.

The way in which current society functions forces everyone to be strongly invested in their local places while also living in a globalised world in which ideas and practices are shared more widely than in the past. Some principles and policies form strands of focus from the very local to the global level; these include relevant terms such as sustainability, regeneration, circular economy, zero waste, climate change action, social justice and biodiversity conservation.

This Handbook draws lessons from movements such as Permaculture, Transition, and Ecovillages that occasionally collaborate with the Community-led Local Development (CLLD) programme. CLLD is a EU mechanism to facilitate bottom-up innovation, as well as disperse best cases of local authority policies promoting action on such issues.

You can find points of alignment along lines of these strands and across scales, and thus strengthen their cumulative impact. The SDGs are an excellent example of a possible strand and we use them as a framework in this Handbook. You can rely on other “strands” just as well.

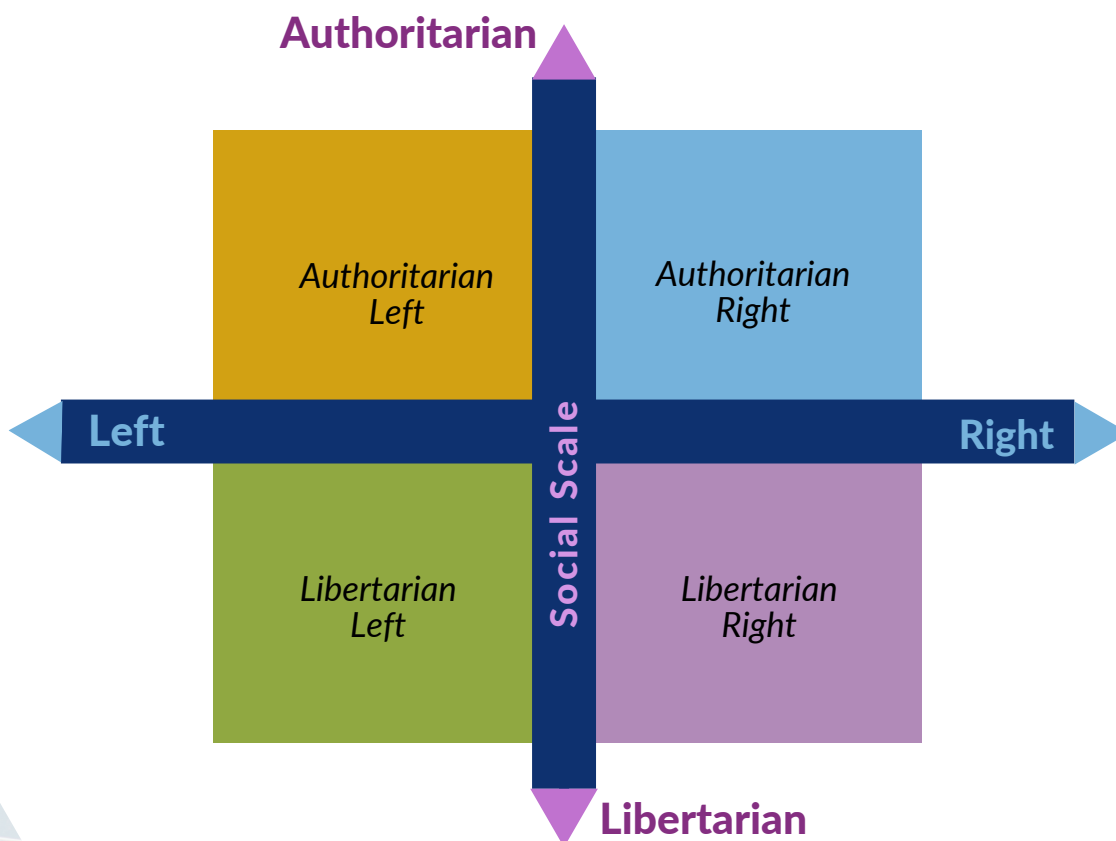
The following diagram captures the complexity of potential scaling:



Although we focus in this Handbook on cooperation between community-led initiatives and local governments, indirectly, all other entities can affect every such collaboration. We nest our collaboration within a broader context to understand the forces at play and inform the work that needs to be done.

The Political Compass

Before the collaboration between a community-led initiative and the local authorities begins, it is good to know where each of them stands—politically, economically and ideologically. There are various assessment tools to see where each is standing and a simple one is [The Political Compass](#). By filling in the questionnaire you can roughly see where you stand. Please, understand that this is *an illustration* of a possible assessment tool and if you think it is in any way inappropriate, think about what this tells you about your own position in the global political reality.



In the Political Compass, the further to the right you go, the more you're likely to be aligned with the mainstream narrative, with a "business-as-usual" economic growth paradigm. The further to the left you go, the more you are likely to support social welfare, equality and the alternative economy for the common good.

The higher up you go, the more you favour the right of the state to interfere and control. The lower you go, the more you trust citizens to make their own decisions and self-govern—whether in the Ayn Rand way (to the right of the economic axis) or in the Noam Chomsky way (to the left). Mind that the term "libertarian" comes from the U.S. frameworks, while in Europe the term "liberal" would be more appropriate.

If North Korea fits in the top left corner, Singapore might fit in the upper right. Liberal countries (such as Switzerland and the Scandinavian countries) might be

positioned slightly below the central line and to the right. Community-led initiatives, relative to their social context, are often in the lower, liberal half, incentivising change, which the traditional conservatives resist. Militant activists against the dominant system are deep in the lower-left corner.

The concept of a state is inseparable from the concept of authority and welfare, therefore it is practically unavoidable for a functioning modern society. The understanding of what state is and should be, however, is far from uniform. Still, it should be noted that most developed democracies in the 21st century gravitate to the (upper) right, while the authoritarian type of socialism (upper left corner) is almost absent from politics in the West.

Through the lens of the Political Compass, you might notice that community-led initiatives can be in practically any quadrant. The further away they are from where their society's centre is, the harder the collaboration between them and their local authorities is probably going to be. What we stress here and why we find this tool valuable is because it tells us how the *relative distance* between each community-led initiative and their local authority affects their potential for collaboration.

We don't imply that community-led initiatives inherently favour sustainability and social welfare, while governments favour capitalism and exploitation. The reverse is quite possible and the local authorities might struggle to get their citizens on board with plans for sustainable development. In any case, we think there are benefits to preserving social and environmental integrity, regardless of where the initiative comes from, as long as the collaboration works. Ideally, this can also result in the regeneration of degraded areas, healing damaged ecology, increasing local food production, diversifying economy, etc.

The case of Denmark— mayors proud of their ecovillages

In Denmark, mayors are proud of their ecovillages and use them to demonstrate local possibilities and to spread learning and regenerative practices more widely.



Community-led initiatives are more likely to approach their local authorities than the opposite, but increasingly, local authorities are looking for allies in their communities to tackle the challenges of climate change. Such forward-thinking alliances are at the forefront of local development and their cumulative innovations make for a fantastic resource ready to be shared. The climate predicament is shared by everyone and working together is simply an imperative.

Overton Window

Lastly, we'll briefly mention a concept that complements Political Compass, named by Joseph Overton. Overton Window is the range of proposals that you can recommend without appearing too extreme given the climate of public opinion at that time. Proposals fall within six categories and can be **unthinkable**, **radical**, **acceptable**, **sensible**, **popular** or **fitting policy**. You can change your proposal to fit what's sensible/popular and thus impact policy. Or you can make efforts to change public opinion so that your positions become sensible/popular and integrated into policies. Both ways have their pros and cons. Best solutions are the result of a mature dialogue with two sides coming closer to each other and reaching a win-win outcome.

Key points:



Local community initiatives include ecovillages and other community-led initiatives (which are often led by enthusiastic people in communities of place, including Transition initiatives)



Local authorities work across larger areas than communities and have many existing administrative responsibilities, many of which are determined nationally



Collaboration between community-led initiatives and local authorities can lead to fruitful outcomes, with grounded local activities scaled up across larger areas



The ideas of Collaboration and Scale can be complex and may work out differently in practice in different contexts

CREATING A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE - HOW DO THE UN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS HELP YOU IN YOUR COMMUNITY AND REGION?

Learning outcomes

In this session you will:

- ★ Learn about methods of mapping regenerative practices and sustainability strategies
- ★ Appreciate systems thinking and the interconnectedness of your actions
- ★ Explore future thinking by developing aspirations for your local areas
- ★ Develop collaborative competencies by combining knowledge and skills of different participants
- ★ Strengthen strategic thinking around practical examples on the Map of Regeneration and exploration of local authority sustainability strategies

What exactly do we mean when we talk about 'creating a sustainable future' and 'promoting regenerative practices'? In this session, you will explore what areas of practice you might cover and think about how you might develop strategies. Although some of these ways of strategising will be similar across different partners, community-led initiatives are likely to use different ways of prioritising areas of action from more formal, often more static local authority areas and routes.

An example of mapping areas of activity across the community perspective is the Map of Regeneration. It has been developed by the Global Ecovillage Network.

Ecovillages & The Map of Regeneration

[Map of Regeneration](#) is a planning and mapping tool that helps you identify 'leverage points', 'blind spots' and other such strengths and weaknesses. The tool broadens the common perception of what is going on in the community (neighbourhood or region) and why, and it structures this perception within five areas. With a clear focus, the group can design future strategies that serve everyone not only in a sustainable way, but in a *regenerative* way. This implies going beyond the existing state of affairs to create practices and places in which nature, society and human-nature relationships are actually restored.



First, you will need the **Ecovillage Design Cards**. The 32 cards illustrate and distil years of experimentation and learning, as well as current research on resilience, sustainability and participatory design. You can buy these online to use not only in your community but in diverse group setups.

The cards are divided into five groups—four areas of regeneration (Culture, Economy, Ecology and Social) arranged around one central core of integration (Integral Design). In each area, you find six cards, and on Integral Design there are eight cards. Each one represents one of 32 Ecovillage Principles. Together, they make up a tool for mapping, reflection, dialogue, learning, research and design—for individuals, organisations and communities.

Using the GEN Map of Regeneration

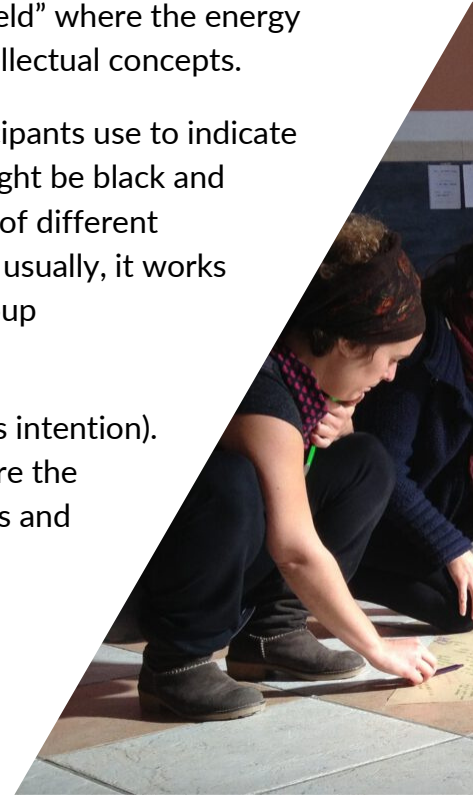
Using the cards gives a quick visual image of assets and needs in a community. The information is elicited from the collective field and can be used as the beginning of a SWOT analysis, a collaborative design exercise, setting up peer-to-peer learning and more. It can be done once, or regularly, as a way to keep track of how a project or community develops. It is not a strictly scientific method but is more closely related to Systemic Constellations. The group can identify from “the field” where the energy for change is—and follow this, rather than stay confined to intellectual concepts.

The mapping requires two different kinds of objects that participants use to indicate whether a card represents 1) *an asset* or 2) *a need*. Examples might be black and white stones, green and red leaves, a stone and a seed, papers of different colours, etc. Each participant needs a set number of each kind; usually, it works best with three of each, but this depends on the size of the group doing the exercise.

First, you clarify your intention for the mapping (energy follows intention). Are you trying to better understand a concrete project; what are the skills and knowledge gaps in your group; what are the strengths and weaknesses in your community/neighbourhood/region? or something else? You can simply ask, what you do well and what you need to improve or is missing in your region?

The cards of the map of regeneration are then laid on the floor or table by placing the cards face up, grouped in areas with integral design in the middle. Participants then walk around in silence, without discussion, and place their objects that indicate the ‘asset’ or ‘need’ respectively on the cards/principles that, to them, illustrate the strengths and weaknesses related to the intention that the activity is about. When everyone is done, gather around the cards to observe and reflect on the result.

One way of reflecting on the cards and what they show is to make and fill in the table of assets and needs together. In each field, simply indicate how many markers for assets and needs respectively there are in each area.



Area	Assets (number)	Needs (number)	Total (number)
Social			
Cultural			
Economy			
Ecology			
Design			

To see assets and needs in a table like this often brings unexpected insights, and clearly shows where there is more energy or interest in a group—no matter if it is expressed as an asset or as a need.

The map of regeneration can be used in many ways. For example, you may focus on one area of regeneration and, over time, its impact will likely spread to other areas. The map itself will help you understand how that unfolds. A crucial realisation in most groups that have used this tool is how deeply all areas are interconnected. To resolve problems in one area requires applying solutions in all of them. The holistic approach that this tool facilitates is why we consider it to be important.

It should be noted that the inner ring of Integral design includes many of the aspects necessary for collaboration and scaling up of projects that may originate in one or more parts of the outer ring of the Map of Regeneration. It may be useful to reflect on aspects such as partnership, stakeholders and scaling.



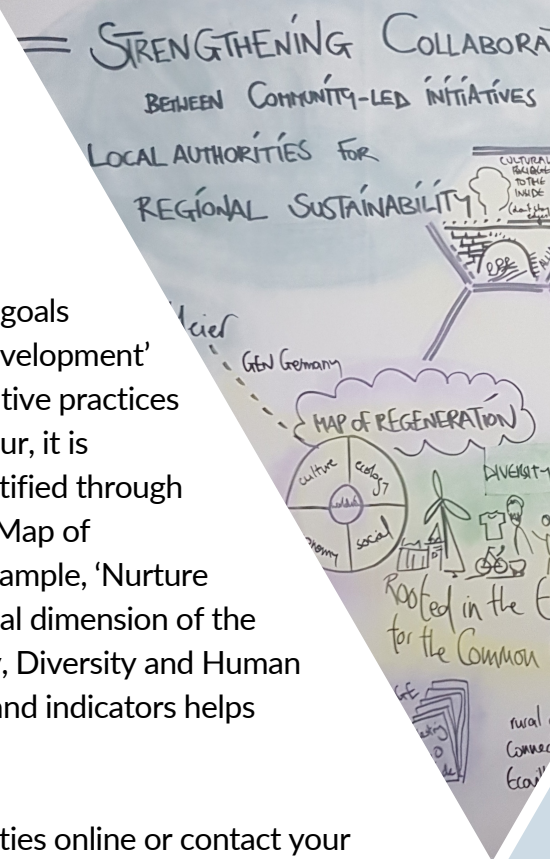
Local authority sustainability strategies

Every local authority has a plan which links to their national goals and strategy. It is likely that they will refer to 'sustainable development' or, for example, 'sustainable transport', rather than regenerative practices as is often the case in communities. For collaboration to occur, it is important to think how community focus (such as that identified through ongoing projects or identified through an exercise with the Map of Regeneration) might link to local authority strategies. For example, 'Nurture diversity and cohesion for thriving communities' on the Social dimension of the Map of Regeneration would link with a strategy on 'Equality, Diversity and Human Rights' in Fife Council, Scotland. Identifying common goals and indicators helps develop successful collaboration.

If you are working in a community, you can explore possibilities online or contact your local councillor or community officer to ask for relevant contacts. If you are working in local authority, you can see how your particular area of interest is located within a holistic framing for communities.

Local authority mapping

Most local authorities have already identified local needs and priorities and have aligned these with national needs. Usually, there are existing documents and maps available. However, tools such as the Map of Regeneration can be useful to identify thematic possibilities and to understand where there is the greatest motivation to work.





Key points:



You need to map and plan your goals and actions



The Map of Regeneration is a useful tool when communities interact with local authorities



Community actions often link, intentionally or not, to existing sustainability strategies and action plans in local authorities



Aligning your goals and focusing on particular areas whilst maintaining a holistic perspective will support collaboration



THINK GLOBALLY, ACT LOCALLY - HOW DO THE UN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS HELP YOU IN YOUR COMMUNITY AND REGION?

Learning outcomes

- ★ Systems thinking across the UN SDGs
- ★ Appreciation of scale and how local can inspire and be inspired by global issues
- ★ Understanding of how to agree aspirations then develop targets and indicators to work towards these
- ★ Knowledge of different tools to strategically plan, act and evaluate
- ★ Collaborative competencies related to SDG 17 on partnership

Introducing the UN SDGs

Another way of thinking about areas of activity and ways of mapping is offered by the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Since most nations have now adopted these, many local authorities are pursuing them in some way and have subscribed to the scope and goals. Some have even aligned the SDG targets and indicators with their own plans. Meanwhile, there is an impact assessment exercise aligned with the SDGs that is also linked to the Map of Regeneration that we just explored. This means that local authorities and communities may find the UN SDGs a common set of goals to address, and a good starting point for discussion and collaboration. It also allows even small initiatives to feel that they are contributing to global goals that are addressing some of the major problems we face.

The new United Nations development agenda, "Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development", was launched in 2015, aiming to give guidelines for global development and guide public policies over the next 15 years. The Agenda is a plan of action for people, the planet, and prosperity. It consists of a declaration; 17 Sustainable Development Goals and 169 targets; the means of implementation and global partnerships, as well as a framework for monitoring and review (United Nations, 2015).

Adopted at the United Nations Summit on Sustainable Development held in New York in September 2015, the SDGs are seen as an integrated and indivisible set of global priorities for sustainable development, including measures relating to ecological, social and economic aspects of sustainability. The SDGs establish social goals, environmental boundaries and indicate critical levels to the use of natural resources (United Nations Organisation, 2015).



The international agreement on the Sustainable Development Goals started to be elaborated during Rio + 20—United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, held in Rio de Janeiro in 2012, with the aim of redirecting humanity towards a path of sustainability. The process, which lasted over 3 years, involved the UN Member States, 83 national surveys that mobilised more than 7 million people, and thousands of actors from the international community, became the largest consultative process in the UN's history. The SDGs were created with learning from Millennium Development Goals, in order to continue and improve on action beyond the Millennium (United Nations Organisation, 2015).

Limitations of the SDGs

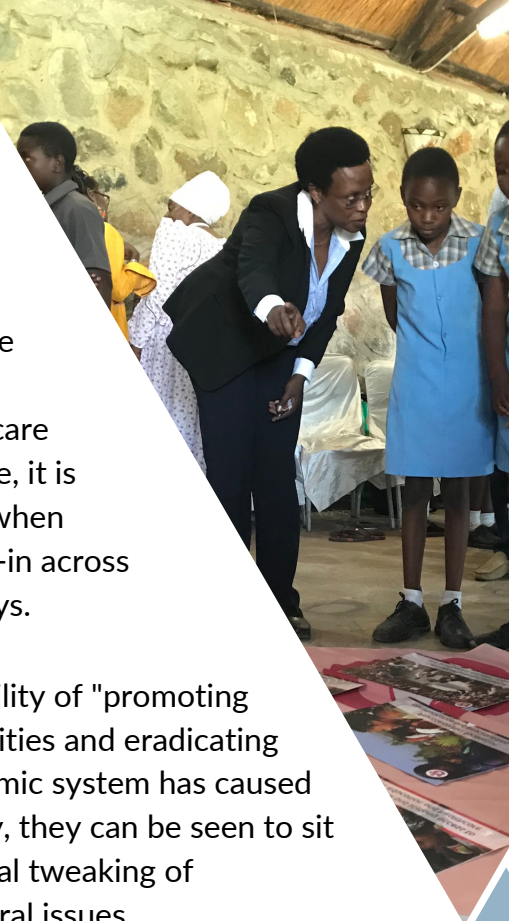
The SDGs are not perfect and many people are uncomfortable about the idea of 'delivering' this agenda. There are several critiques of them. With so many diverse actors involved and care being taken not to upset global economic and political balance, it is understandable that many compromises had to be accepted when they were developed. This means that they have a broad buy-in across different levels and sectors but they are limited in several ways.

Firstly, for example, the SDGs continue to suggest the possibility of "promoting sustainable and inclusive economic growth", reducing inequalities and eradicating poverty, without seriously addressing how the current economic system has caused some of the sustainability challenges that we face. In this way, they can be seen to sit between the radical aspiration for a new world and the gradual tweaking of mainstream processes without challenging underlying structural issues.

Secondly, whilst the SDGs are presented as a 'wall' of issues, people often interpret them as separate issues, when in practice they are all interconnected and should be addressed systemically (Stafford-Smith, 2016). In practice, the pursuit of one SDG can thus occasionally cause paradoxical unintended consequences, for example, when international trade intentions negatively affect local indigenous people. Thirdly, the SDGs are difficult to monitor and evaluate and many of the indicators are not yet agreed or are not meaningful for all partners. However, despite these flaws, the SDGs remain a globally accepted route towards sustainability with many positive consequences, and we can use them cautiously and critically to co-design solutions in our regions.

How might the SDGs help you in your community or region?

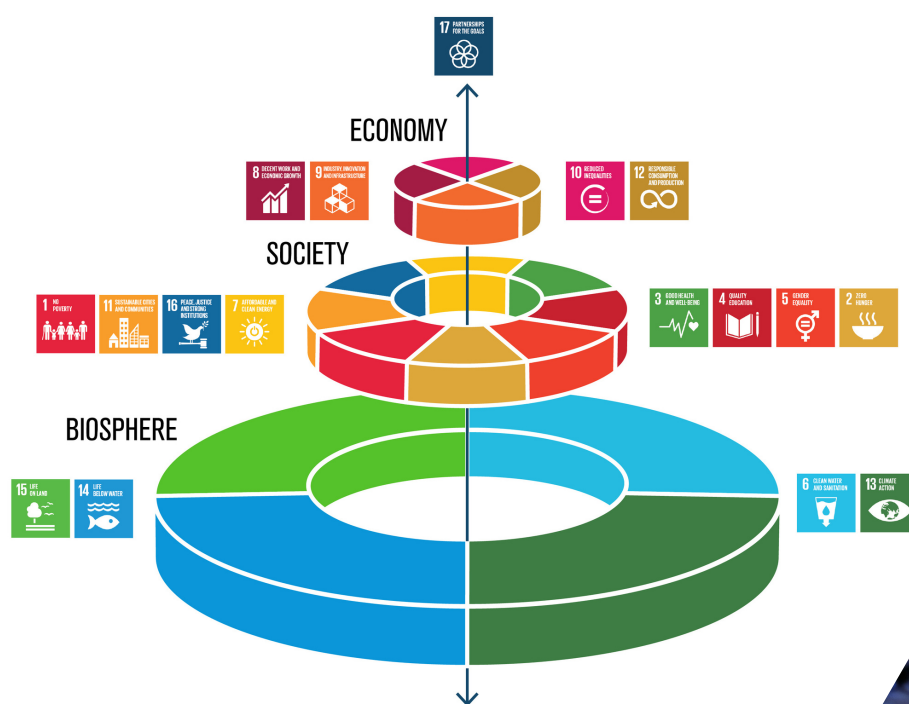
The SDGs are starting to create a *common language* across countries and sectors and they remain the best working compromise that we have. They are thus very useful. Most local authorities will be linking to them in some way so they can be an excellent starting point for discussion between communities and local authorities.



The SDGs promote a *wide scope and interactivity* across the issues. We want to address and support the various aspects that we wish to enhance. Hence, they promote, for example, health and education, climate action and renewable energy, life on land and in water, sustainable communities and decent work. Some people think that sustainability and regeneration are only about the environment—the SDGs show that we have to consider our systems as interconnected. If we don't care for nature, we cannot have healthy, well fed, fulfilled communities. If we don't address social inequalities and provide dignity for all, we cannot protect the environment.

The interactivity between the SDGs may manifest differently in different locations and regions. At times, the pursuit of one SDG may have a negative effect on another; but at times, the SDGs will synergistically and positively support each other. This interactivity is representative of the systems thinking and holistic aspiration and approach of the 2030 Agenda. There are several ways we can begin to map this interactivity. Ross (2021) summarised different tools to help communities and other groups begin to explore this system thinking in practice.

The SDGs can also show how *the planet supports all of our endeavours*. Rockström and Sukhdev, from the Stockholm Resilience Centre, proposed a new way of looking at the Sustainable Development Goals, showing how healthy functions of the biosphere are the basis of healthy societies and economies. This perspective evidences the need to transition to a logic where the economy is one of the drivers for a healthy society and healthy environment, rather than the end goal by itself. See below (Stockholm Resilience Centre, sd):



Several years after the SDGs were launched, we are now seeing some *inspiring examples* of how the SDGs can be implemented, from theory to practice, from international agreements to tangible reality in local places. There are now some examples of how global goals can be achieved in different areas and scales. For example, in Brazil, especially in São Paulo, there is a form of representation and participation of civil society in which one of its main goals is to achieve and localise the objectives of sustainable development locally—through regional councils for the environment, sustainable development and culture of peace in each subprefecture of the city of São Paulo (there are 32 councils operating since 2009, initially with Agenda 21 and currently with Agenda 2030).

There are also inspiring examples available in the toolkit developed alongside this Handbook.

Key points



The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were launched in 2015 to provide a practical route forward for ambitious aspirations for a transformed world



The SDGs have 17 goals, 169 targets and many indicators; they are not perfect but they are the best compromise and common language that we have at present



You can work together with the SDGs in your regions to promote systems thinking, recognising how issues are interconnected and using tools to try to work across sectors and scales



Whilst the SDGs may seem distant or are expressed in difficult language for some communities, there are now inspiring examples to show how they can facilitate collaboration and help us work together towards common goals



FIRST STEPS FOR COLLABORATION BETWEEN COMMUNITY-LED INITIATIVES AND LOCAL AUTHORITIES

Learning outcomes

- ★ Recognition of the different norms that can exist between communities and local authorities and of how to overcome these through openness, language and expectations in first contact
- ★ Understanding of approaches and tools to initiate collaboration across communities and local authorities
- ★ Appreciation of the challenges of early collaboration and need for recognition of different worldviews and different ways of working
- ★ Interpersonal skills and competencies to enable development of functional relationships across groups

How should community-led initiatives approach local authorities?

Engagement and Collaboration within and across Communities and between Communities and Local Authorities

In order to maintain collaboration within and across communities, many experiences have been mapped within community-led initiatives over decades. In many cases, you need to be sensitive to differences in culture and ways of communication, **and** you also need to be careful of making assumptions. Community members can work in professional positions, in government, in business, in civil society or in academia. People from the local authority have their personal commitments and love for their place. You can use some tools to support visioning within and across groups and to then maintain relationships and ensure partners are happy to collaborate for our common future.

Community-led initiatives and local authorities vary in the degrees of their experience in mutual communication and collaboration. We aim to support the more inexperienced groups and those with intermediate experience, and we'd be glad to see the expertise of the experienced further shaping this Handbook. We acknowledge the complexity of this collaboration as local policies change with shifts in national, European and global political milieus.

Working across local government and communities

Let's review a few points where and how local authorities and community-led initiatives can work together. We've seen many reasons for collaboration already and here we give a few practical examples:

- 1** community needs legal or certification approval e.g. planning permission, approval of curriculum of a new school, nursery inspection
- 2** local government is seeking engagement with local communities to reduce deprivation and encourage development in general e.g. a community development regional programme to reduce poverty in a community
- 3** community is seeking seed funding e.g. to test feasibility of a new project
- 4** local government wants to pursue a particular project or programme e.g. redevelopment of a public space or building and wants input
- 5** there is a need to develop participatory planning and/or participatory budgeting processes to enable collaboration in relation to the co-design and/or co-management of shared spaces and processes
- 6** community is seeking partnership in a regional initiative e.g. regenerative agriculture or a biodiversity corridor in the region
- 7** community needs infrastructure to support regenerative practices e.g. extra buses or change in bus timetable to support use of public transport, cycle lanes to make cycling safer

There are different ways to engage across communities and local government.

- ▶ **Planning charrettes:** local government appoints a facilitator to enter the community and run a participatory planning process.
- ▶ **Participatory budgeting:** local communities decide where a percentage of the budget will be spent and so can articulate their priorities, given limited financial resources.
- ▶ **Consultations:** consultations can be difficult for both community and local government. Any town hall discussion can get hijacked by people with extreme interests or narrow agendas. The framing of a written consultation can be frustrating for those people in the community wanting more input. However, sometimes it is a useful way as a community to make local government aware of your priorities and as local government to get a sense of the amount of interest and direction of interest in communities.

Thus, we address two general approaches:

- 1) those initiated by community-led initiatives
- 2) those initiated by the local authorities

This collaboration can come with many challenges because of the differences in language and culture of these two types of social organisation (part of the so-called 'wicked problem'). In this Handbook, we emphasise these differences to try to enhance mutual understanding. We know that actually there is a spectrum across community and local authority. For example, some community members themselves work for a local authority or other similar institutions, and some local authority staff are actively engaged in community initiatives in their local place.

Community-led initiatives tend to be more organic, hands-on, focused on immediate, concrete problems, food, health, family, day-to-day life. Local authorities are more institutional, bound by long-term strategies, budgets, investments, managing complex resources and structures, operating with larger brush strokes. Community-led initiatives can feel lost and unnoticed within those large strokes. Even when coalitions are formed, community-led initiatives may not be significant enough to be considered by local authorities as serious partners in local development.

Before you, as a member of a community-led initiative, approach your local authorities, self-scrutinise your motivations. Why do you want to work with your local authorities? How do you envision collaboration? What are the roles going to look like? What resources are needed?





If you want to connect with the local government, it is worth finding out how they work and joining their relevant initiatives. Once you have understood their functions and projects, you can introduce your own. People are all different so it is useful to find individuals with whom you can develop good working relationships and build trust and who are in roles that are relevant to your interests or needs.

Local authorities deal with hundreds if not thousands of proposals and they prefer mature ideas with clear action plans that are aligned with the local development strategy. Or if a new idea comes as a critique of their strategy, a comprehensive, feasible alternative should be included.

From protest to friendship

"It is really important that you look at the local policies. What do they want to achieve, what is on their agenda, which solutions do they have to create on a local level in order to achieve the national or international climate goals for instance. And then you formulate your ideas in such a way that you come with solutions for them. This is what they need. If they have to create a natural recreation area, you can see how you can support them as community-led initiatives. Local governments need entrepreneurs and people who really want to bring things into action. They are always striving for good solutions. So be a social or sustainable entrepreneur and implement solutions."

(Founder of a tiny house project, Netherlands)

Some community-led initiatives start in a protest against industrial enterprises, such as waste incinerators, power plants, highways etc. and find themselves in direct opposition with the local authorities. If you are a member of such an initiative and you see your local authorities as your enemies, you should know that there are ways to reach a constructive dialogue. Sometimes this does require persistence and strengthening alliances in your local community and beyond to frame your voice and the necessary actions.

We stress this as community-led initiatives often struggle with being formal enough when addressing their local authorities. It's not enough to get them excited about your project, your commitment will be tested by your punctuality, clarity, keeping deadlines etc.



Here are a few bullet points to keep in mind:

- ▶ You can only make a good first impression once—your preparation for your first communication is crucial
- ▶ No matter how good your first impression was, you need to follow up with the right action so the local authority learns that you're reliable
- ▶ It's often easier to focus on one problem at a time than to address a palette of problems all at once—especially in the beginning, to first build trust—later you can move on to broader projects
- ▶ Clarify mutual commitments before engaging in mutual collaboration Identify (or simply ask) what the local authority's needs are and work from there on solving the issues of the local community
- ▶ Be willing to collectively support dialogue, and build positive relationships with employees in local authorities

There's a difference between you engaging with local authorities from a long-term or short-term perspective, but in either case, being an honest, responsible and proactive partner increases your credibility in their eyes. Just as much as their honesty, integrity, and responsibility give them credibility in your eyes.

Meeting with the top person in the local government's office is not necessarily the best way to go. Often the director of a particular department is the person who has been there much longer and who knows the office better. There is a difference between long term employed civil servants and elected officials, who are sometimes only in authority for short time periods. The mayor will possibly change at the next local elections. Even when you speak with the mayor, having allies and friends in the office is key. Whoever in the office you manage to establish a good connection with may help you start the collaboration. Meeting the right person at the right moment can make all the difference.

Keep in mind that officials are often very busy, running from one meeting to another, managing many topics all the time. The best time to talk to them is during official hours, particularly during topical open days, public consultations, celebrations and so on. If you get introduced to the local authority representative by someone who works with them and is their personal friend, that can break through many initial barriers. The more friends you have in the local community and the better impression you make on them, the more likely it is that local authorities will take you seriously. You better represent local interests if you are part of the local context. In any case, even if your first contact is in an informal setting, you should schedule an official meeting with a responsible person in their office and present your proposal there.



Working hand in hand

"...kind of trying to find also people, major stakeholders, ministers of parliament to remind them actually what longing is inside of themselves and kind of how they actually want to act for their children—when they have children. To really try to touch them on a personal level where you for a few seconds simply forget about what you achieve or whatever. Simply to establish a relationship and to tap into it and to see what we have in common and how can we find ways, you know, to combine our strategies, ideas, whatever. To have a kind of open spirit to really collaborate and embrace other opinions, but staying true to what you want and what you are longing for and you want to tap into..."

(Ecovillage Activist from Scotland arguing for a culture of regeneration)

A quick guide for local groups approaching local authorities

1

Get to know other groups and organisations in your local environment and engage with them!

Look for existing municipal registries, local networks, government or non-government assisted services and so on to identify who is around you. It's good to become a member of your Local Action Group or equivalent (LAG, part of the instrument called CLLD/LEADER—Community-led Local Development). Spend some months engaging with them and creating alliances.

Example of good collaboration with CLLD

Well I have been a mayor for four years now and I really appreciate what the ecovillage brings into that region. We are a climate commune now and this is also because of all of the innovations the ecovillage brought in during the last 30 years. The solar panel gas station, the advocacy for renewable energies in various ways like biogas plants, windmills and so on. There are very innovative people in, such as a professor for architecture which advises the council on sustainable regards. We even established a specific position in the council for climate issues. We are proud of having an ecovillage in our village that brings in international guests and an innovative culture. Without the ecovillage this would not be the same place.

(Mayor in a village in Lower Saxony, Germany)

Local Action Group is a good place to learn what's the general "climate" between the NGOs and the local authorities, their agencies and their relations with the neighbouring local authorities, municipalities, and ministries at the national level. You can adjust your approaches with the local authorities accordingly. If unsure what to do, connect with existing local organisations and find out more from them. Be humble and learn. Join their programmes and projects before you ask them to join yours. Working in an alliance is always more effective than working alone.

2 Know who you're talking to and interact with them professionally!

Go online, and find out who the people in the local authority offices are. Learn the names. Study them. Look for their development programmes. Find out what opportunities they already offer for various organisations to interact with them.

As self-evident as this might seem, let us stress it: when approaching another organisation or local authority, it is wise to come presentable, in smart-casual clothes that you feel good in (not overly-casual but also not overdressed), clean hands, orderly. The way you look will affect the conversation and as trust develops you can relax more, but the first meetings are crucial to building trust.

Professional interaction includes knowing who you are, what causes you represent and how able you are to express that succinctly. The purpose of the interaction needs to be clear and you should stick to the essence without getting lost. It is often helpful to bring a written summary of who your community group is and what you are seeking, with evidence of past achievements if you have them.

Later on, make sure to take care of the continuity of interactions with the representatives you've spoken with. For example, send an email to thank them for their time and reiterate the main conclusion of your meeting.

3 Establish a legal entity!

When you interact with a legal entity (which local authorities always are), you have a better chance of being taken seriously if you yourself are a legal entity. Choose the form of the legal entity carefully, according to what you do and represent (Association, Foundation, Cooperative, Charity etc.). If you're unsure, look for similar NGOs in your region/country to assist you in determining the best form of legal entity for your group. The more interactions your legal entity has with your local authority, the more trust will be created.



As much as this is about legal entities, it is also about people. Try to develop personal relationships with the people in the offices, especially the staff of the "secretariat" that often continue while the persons in the role of a mayor, director or president of the local community may change frequently. Ideally, you nurture good relationships with both the head of the office and (some of) the staff.

Precise administration is crucial here and that's a lesson worth taking for any initiative planning to work with local authorities.

4

Be consistent, plan well ahead and use the existing leverage points!

Government institutions run within multi-annual plans. Depending on the phase you're entering the interaction with the local authority (beginning, middle or end of a period), your approach should be adjusted accordingly.

Don't expect support for your projects, no matter how fabulous you think they are, if you haven't made sure they're nested into the authority's plans. A good channel to enter the official multi-annual strategies is the CLLD programme (or equivalent in your country).

Your LAG is in charge of creating the strategy of local development for a seven-year period and you can influence that process. It can be powerful to have an impact when they are developing the strategy for the next period. Depending on how active your LAG is, you will be exposed to opportunities to engage with your local authorities and local organisations.

Community-led initiative's story about good collaboration

"So I work really closely with the local and district authorities. I am a member of the local council myself and got elected. They actually wanted to elect me as a mayor, but my kids and partner said: No, then you don't have time for us anymore at all (laughing). I think if you really want to achieve something as a community, you have to be part of the village itself and have good relationships with the people of the village as well. We established an organic community-based agriculture enterprise, an e-mobile charging column in the village, and a forest kindergarten. We got a lot of land for our organic agriculture to only farm our fields and greenhouses with horses. All this wouldn't have been possible without engagement and good relationships in the village and the local council. Of course, it is not easy to be a part of that old-white-men council, we have no women in the council. But it is a start, to be respected and respectful as a member of an alternative community in order to achieve something that we regard as important in terms of climate goals on the local level."

(Co-founder of a political commune and ecovillage and a council member of the local parliament in central Germany).



5 Make use of what's already there!

Local authorities across Europe have standard channels to interact with local organisations and support them. At first, you might not be able to make use of them, but be patient and keep trying. Start with what's easier, for example participating at events such as fairs, festivals and conferences, including the EU level events such as European Mobility Week, European Day of Sustainable Communities (organised by ECOLISE) and so on.

Once you prove to be trustworthy, the authorities will be open to taking on ideas that are not in their plans and make exceptions just for you. Don't expect them to do that before you've proven that you work in the public interest and gained their trust. Be careful not to cross the line between friendly symbiosis and corruptive favour trading.

6 Always engage and follow up proactively!

Official institutions are overburdened with pleas and demands. Too often, they're asked to listen to citizens and very rarely feel heard. If you can sincerely make an extra effort to recognise the needs of the authorities and communicate that with them and even do something proactively in that direction, that will gain you extra trust.

This means you are entering every interaction with the local authority by listening, paying attention to what they say and then following up with active proposals—or even just taking up action. You will be surprised at how welcoming local authorities will be to your future proposals if they see you as a silent ally, knowing what needs to be done—and doing it—without being asked.

How should local authorities approach community-led initiatives?

As a local authority, you are bound by long-term strategies, budgets, investments, managing complex resources and a number of institutions. Within such constraints, it is not easy to integrate hundreds, sometimes thousands of citizens' initiatives in your town, municipality, or region.

Some authorities establish their own internal institutions to support diverse initiatives, others recognise non-governmental organisations that emerge bottom-up in the society and support them via existing or new structures and mechanisms. It's up to you to decide which mechanism works better in your context and how you manage the relationship in the long run.

Maintaining good relationships with community-led initiatives has a number of benefits. In local places in every region, people build healthy family values, friendships, cultural identity, local economy ... The local councils can provide a link to this local vibrancy, but in some places, it is alternative community initiatives that are pioneering new approaches and solutions. Local communities are also a point of emergence of social innovation, environmental awareness and action, and self-organised responses to many societal challenges.

Proactive support of such initiatives and deepening mutual trust can make a difference between life and death in natural catastrophes, health emergencies and various other crises that are very likely to increase in the coming years with the effects of climate change. The Covid crisis demonstrated that well connected and supportive local communities can sometimes cope better. This gave some relief to the medical system and government institutions.

In a supportive local environment, young families feel welcomed and that is crucial for every society to thrive. A high level of engagement in community-led initiatives is a sign of a healthy social base; it fosters social cohesiveness and politically active citizenship.

Community-led initiatives come in a vast diversity and a broad spectrum, extending from neighbourhoods managing their tiny community gardens to nationwide campaigns involving hundreds of thousands of volunteers cleaning up illegally dumped trash. Some initiatives come together only a few times a year at celebrations and community actions, while others, such as ecovillages, choose to live closely together in intentional communities and serve some higher values, around which they design their common purpose.

Community-led initiatives are usually brimming with energy and when local authorities can bring that energy to the core of their activities, it can be a win-win situation. Community-led initiatives may be reactionary, standing in counterculture—but that is usually for a reason. Those governments that, decades ago, took their active citizens seriously and joined them in advocating for low-carbon lifestyles are reaping benefits today. Some citizens' radical reactions to the threats of climate change and other issues can be harnessed for the good of the broader society.

In order to understand the capacities and competencies of these active citizens, it is good to experience their own environment, visit them, and participate in their events and campaigns. Since local authorities can be in a position of power, it might be easier for you to break the ice and approach initiatives and people you would like to meet outside of the office. Many community-led initiatives are pioneering scientific studies and some will even have been featured in academic studies. Assuming good intentions is always a good start.



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A quick guide for local authorities approaching local groups

1 Get to know groups and organisations in your local environment and engage with them.

Community-led initiatives are interested in other local groups to form alliances and you, as a representative of the local authority, should keep an overview of what's "bubbling" out there among regular people. If you approach them proactively and even initiate the collaboration, you can have the respect of the people.

There are places where various initiatives and NGOs self-organise into an umbrella organisation or network (such as Transition). In such a case, it is most convenient for you to build the alliance primarily at that level and approach other initiatives through them. If there is no such network in your region you may consider initiating it yourself, ideally by providing support and funding for local initiatives to self-organise and manage their work independently of you.

2 Be accessible!

If you invest in being accessible to people, their respect will translate into building alliances with you instead of being stuck in hard-headed reactionary opposition to your institutional stiffness. It may be frustrating to deal with non-professional initiatives. You have so much to do in your daily office work and you may think that engaging with "amateurs" is a waste of time. But some patience at the beginning may pay off and you may reap the fruits of institutional and informal modes of operation working together.

3 Be supportive but not condescending!

Managing a substantial municipal budget and large infrastructural projects may cause you to lose sight of small initiatives with tiny annual budgets. Still, there are very likely many such initiatives and their members constitute a significant share of the members of your local community. Condescension and treating them as less important may lead to resentment.

4 Match needs with assets!

Support is a lot more than providing funding, of course. If you understand the needs of your community-led initiatives and know what assets you manage, you can just pair these needs and assets for the astonishing benefit of everyone.

There are local authorities that provide creative or office spaces for their community-led initiatives in abandoned buildings free of charge or for a small rent. Having buildings occupied protects them from deteriorating and saves you money in the long run. Local waste management can be turned into a repurposing and recycling business; missing public transport can be solved by car-pooling schemes; repurposing old assets to make them suitable for new needs is a positive thing you can do for your community.

For both communities and local authorities

This initial interaction can be difficult. There are many ways that you can make it work better, for example, by employing a professional facilitator or by using some of the tools available for co-design. Collaborative Methodologies that may be useful to generate spaces for discussion include Open Space, World Café, Search Conference Method.

Do not underestimate the importance of the practicalities—making formal agreements, timelines, strategies and action plans. Once you begin a collaboration, you need to think carefully about the details of implementation. It can also be important to consider capacity building needs and to collectively raise resources to and honour people's momentum and motivation. It can be tricky to navigate roles and responsibilities and relationships, as we will see in the next section.

Some tips and tricks

If you are the person in charge of collaboration, the facilitator or the coordinator, we'd like to wrap this chapter up with a few hints for you to do your work more effectively and more humanely.

- ▶ Ensure everyone's *engagement and commitment*. If commitments are made, follow up on them so they can be kept. If individuals disengage address the underlying reasons instead of assigning blame.
- ▶ Take care of good note-keeping and harvesting. Keep a log of all agreements, decisions, conclusions etc. First and foremost, showcase accountability before calling out anyone for the lack of it.
- ▶ Choose carefully between an organised group process and a one-to-one approach. At a meeting between a representative of the local authority with someone from the community-led initiative you can achieve more than at a large meeting—and sometimes it can be vice versa!
- ▶ Whenever possible, avoid discussing issues from opposing sides of the table. Look for every opportunity to sit on the same side of the table and use "we" language. This will bring a shared perspective and your partner will likely start using "we" language too.
- ▶ Don't explain the methodology that you're applying, just use it! If you really need to explain it, at least don't relativise it!
- ▶ Take feedback seriously, especially criticism. Work towards addressing it even when you find it irrelevant or unsubstantial.
- ▶ Start small and follow through. Do not plan large projects before trust is built. As the trust builds up, shared projects can build up too.

For experienced facilitators and project managers, these hints might be self-evident; if you're new to this work, they might seem overwhelming. Wherever you stand, don't forget the power of sincerely asking for help when you're lost.



Key points

- ✓ Seek commonalities in the aims of a community-led initiative and the local authority
- ✓ Respect that different contexts have different terminology and dress code—make an effort to be relatable by local authorities or community as appropriate
- ✓ Build up relationships of mutual trust and respect: be willing to collectively support a dialogue, and build positive connections between fellow human
- ✓ Look for contributions for improvements, do not only criticise the status quo
- ✓ Be aware that local authorities have a lot of different people, problems and challenges to deal with and that they have to work within national frameworks that can limit their capacity to act spontaneously



CULTIVATING A CULTURE OF COLLABORATION

TOOLS FOR DECISION-MAKING, DIALOGUE, AND CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

Learning outcomes

- ★ Appreciation of the power of participatory processes
- ★ Understanding of collective governance approaches such as sociocracy
- ★ Recognition of the triggers and management of conflict
- ★ Competencies in planning for the future and collaborative working

Once you have started your process of collaboration, it will need nurturing. It is challenging to hear all of the voices and perspectives in democratic processes whilst still enabling action in a strategic way. That is a very common topic, however, when engaging community voices in regional processes through participatory governance. This session covers how to communicate effectively, respectfully and with understanding, how to coordinate actions together, make decisions and tackle the inevitable conflict. It should be stressed that conflict is a common experience when you introduce change! And subtleties in managing conflict can lead to the group either boosting its activities or collapsing.

There are different possibilities to integrate all voices. Deliberative democracy and consensus models are manyfold. With deliberative negotiation processes within an educated and reflective civil society, a participative and rational field is being established. Consensus means that deliberative negotiation processes come to an end when all group members accept the best and most relevant argument in the group.



Of all the methodologies available in the world today to work better with diverse groups, we've chosen to give special attention to **Sociocracy**, which works with the principle of consent, which will be elaborated below. Sociocracy is a broad methodology with a few offshoots and "cousins" (such as Holacracy). An accessible variety, (relatively) easy to use as an independent resource, is [Sociocracy 3.0](#).

Many community groups are adopting Sociocracy to enable them to function effectively whilst acknowledging many voices and a non-hierarchical structure. If you explore it you will learn to better coordinate your work, communicate and, most importantly, tackle tensions and conflicts. You'll learn why and how to hear more voices in deciding on future directions and pathways in your local area.

Here we only mention a few other broader *methodologies and resources* that you can use for better collaboration. Short descriptions and links of each is in the Resources section at the end of this Handbook. We suggest you check the book *Reinventing Organizations* and look into following additional methodologies:

- ▶ CLIPS, Community Learning Incubator Programme for Sustainability (both a methodology and a toolbox)
- ▶ Dragon Dreaming (both a methodology and a toolbox)
- ▶ Non-violent Communication (NVC)
- ▶ Art of Hosting (AoH)
- ▶ The 8 Shields Model

These can be used in combination with Sociocracy or independently. Many groups have already discovered a blend that suits them best. All these methodologies are applicable in official situations within local authorities too.






What is sociocracy?

Sociocracy is a rich, comprehensive self-governance system featuring shared power and self-management. It is a living, evolving, integrated system of values, principles, patterns, practices, and tools. It is designed for people with a mindset of a world that is nurturing, respectful and inclusive. In this mindset, they choose to work together collaboratively to realise their visions in ways that balance the fundamental values of efficiency, effectiveness, clarity, inclusivity, and respect while embracing the realities of uncertainty, continual change, evolution and growth.



An overview of sociocratic practices

Sociocracy consists of a combination of processes and tools:

-  Sociocracy distributes decision-making authority into teams of people that are called circles.
-  The decision-making method for circle decisions is consent: that means a decision is made when no circle member objects to the decision. One objects to a decision when a decision negatively impacts how the circle can achieve its shared aim.
-  Links connect related circles. Links are circle members who are members of two related circles and can carry information back and forth. They also balance the power relationship between the circles.
-  Circles define roles to make sure all functions of their circle are executed. Circles choose by consent, which member fills a role.
-  Most circles use rounds—the practice of talking one by one—in their circle meetings.

For more insight into these points, check these links and other resources listed at the end of this Handbook:

[How does consent decision-making work?](#)

[How do circles interconnect?](#)

[How do roles get defined and filled?](#)

[How to organise effective meetings?](#)



Dealing with conflict


Conflicts arise no matter how much care you take to avoid them; it is better to have methods of conflict resolution and management prepared in advance than to look for them once the conflict is already ablaze. (This section is adapted from [CLIPS](#) and more information can be found there.)

Roberto Tecchio, a well-known Italian facilitator and counsellor, coined a concise definition of conflict: “Conflict is the result of two factors: disagreement and personal discomfort.” In other words: conflict is not proportional to the intensity of disagreement, it is proportional to the level of personal discomfort stemming from disagreement. The topic of discussion, implications and magnitude of the decision do not lead to conflict in and of themselves.

Disagreement can be a gift to the group. It reflects differences in opinion and perspective, brings fresh ideas and proposals and widens the horizons. It is the antidote to conformism and passivity and preserves group resilience by constantly tapping into collective intelligence and stirring the energy. Disagreement can stimulate innovation and highlight when change is required. It can be a positive attribute in a changing world, to help us respond and adapt to issues such as climate change. The real catalyst for conflict is discomfort. Discomfort deeply impacts relationships and impedes people’s ability to participate constructively in decision-making, implementing decisions, and even in everyday living. Everything becomes difficult, unclear, confusing. An emerging conflict can help to catalyse change, but if not addressed it can cause personal, group, project and collaboration damage.

In a conflict, one can either win or lose and in the long run, we all end up losing as we see groups decrease in number and energy, get bogged in endless discussions and finally dwindle, die out or break in two (or more) fractions, only to start all over again in a new setting. Conflict can occur within community groups or within local authorities or between them. In the case of local groups working with local authorities, the difference in power can manifest by local authority determining availability and setting the tone of the conversation and even avoiding their share of responsibility in the conflict. The opposite is, of course, possible as well, with the local group using their lesser power as an excuse for not fulfilling their share of agreements. When organisations interact with a large power gap between them, there is a potential for abuse of power, knowingly or unknowingly. There are cases when diplomacy is necessary, and other cases when it is possible to talk about an emerging or active conflict openly—depending on how each side is used to dealing with conflicts and their capacity to tolerate discomfort.





When individuals strongly disagree, but neither of them feels uncomfortable in the discussion, their relationship is not in danger. Spaces are found to listen to each other on different levels in order to address emerging tensions. An effective way to honour and manage disagreement is by using **facilitation of meetings** and choosing decision-making processes that respect different positions instead of dividing the group into majority and minority (such as *consensus* and *consent*, versus majority rule—you can find the description of both in the appendix section). This will not always be possible if the local authority has an already instituted model of decision making and is not open to trying out new approaches. On the other hand, if all parties are open-minded, that gives everyone an opportunity to learn from each other on a more level ground.

There are many dynamic social structures that allow mobility and direct participation of members. You've already read about **sociocracy**. It provides strategies to address disagreement and contextualise it in spheres of influence and competence where individuals can be seen, heard and appreciated by their fellows. Such systemic approaches deal with conflict before it even appears, preventing it by building a sense of community and strong organisational structures.

When parties do end up in a conflict, many conflict resolution methods can be applied to understand it better and resolve it. (CLIPS programme, for example, designed the [conflict mapping method](#)). It's also worth mentioning **Arnold Mindell's theory on rank and privilege**, an ingenious tool to read and understand social dynamics in groups and in society at large (Mindell, 1995).

All theories are worth exploring, but the message is: to manage conflict, we need to address disagreement and discomfort with the appropriate instruments, in the appropriate context. It is a challenging path, but well worth following on the way to a less conflicting and more collaborative society. Community-led initiatives have a variety of experiences since they tend to live together and solve their conflicts carefully. Out of that experience methods have been developed or adapted (Sociocracy, The Way of Council, Ho'oponopono, ZEGG Forum etc.) with which a fruitful exchange about the deeper meaning and clarification can happen. Since intentional communities see themselves as laboratories of participation and more egalitarian structures, they reflect on formal and informal hierarchies and here a mutual learning process can take place between them and local authorities.

To conclude: when local authorities work with local initiatives, as in all projects, it is worth investing time to establish clear agreements, including having a clear conflict resolution process—just in case. This might mean all the parties involved will require some training to be on the same page or have some exchanges about it at the beginning of the collaboration. Having everyone understand how the process works, adds an element of security because you can all rely on some safeguards and boundaries. It is crucial to take the necessary measures in time. This pays off since the only worse thing than heated conflict is an ongoing heated conflict.

Why make governance more participatory?

Today's global challenges need novel approaches to organising public affairs, or *res publica*.

The world has changed, and we all feel it. When outcomes are determined more by systems than by individuals, the choice of systems becomes vital. A system can help you show up, or it can reinforce your stereotypes and biases. It can ignore whole realms of information, or it can help you see the world more fully.

Participatory governance may mean many things to many people, but in general, it comes as a trend and a movement towards more decentralised governmental structures. Both decentralisation and an emphasis on participation were part of hopes for democratisation in the late 20th century. The representative democracy has its limitations that can be overcome in part by a more direct citizen or civil society participation. This process can only start on the local level. Communities within their limited areas and spaces practise participation and deliberative, or grassroots democracy every day within their negotiation processes. It enables and empowers people and within the collective intelligence, more reflected and considered decisions are being taken than if one or a minority of individuals take decisions, considering only a few interests.

Participatory governance is embodied in processes that empower citizens to participate in public decision-making and make organisations run in more empowering ways, and it has been gaining increasing acceptance as an effective means to tackle democracy deficits and improve public accountability. Nowadays disenchantment with politics can be observed especially in rural areas. People tend to hide in their backyard because of the feeling that “I cannot change it anyway.” So participation has on the individual and on the societal level positive impacts.

Around the world, a growing number of public sector organisations, their partners in civil society and private organisations—especially intentional communities and ecovillages—are experimenting with innovative practices that seek to expand the space and mechanisms for citizen participation in governance processes beyond elections (agile leadership formats in enterprises, for example). There is evidence that participatory governance practices are contributing to stronger transparency, accountability and responsiveness, and improved public policies and services, increased wellbeing in work organisations in all sectors, as well as stronger partnerships in cross-sector alliances.

Forms of participation

Who participates? Participatory institutions are open to the general public but it is often a small minority of the population that is willing and able to attend these often long, boring, and frequent meetings. With regard to the nature of



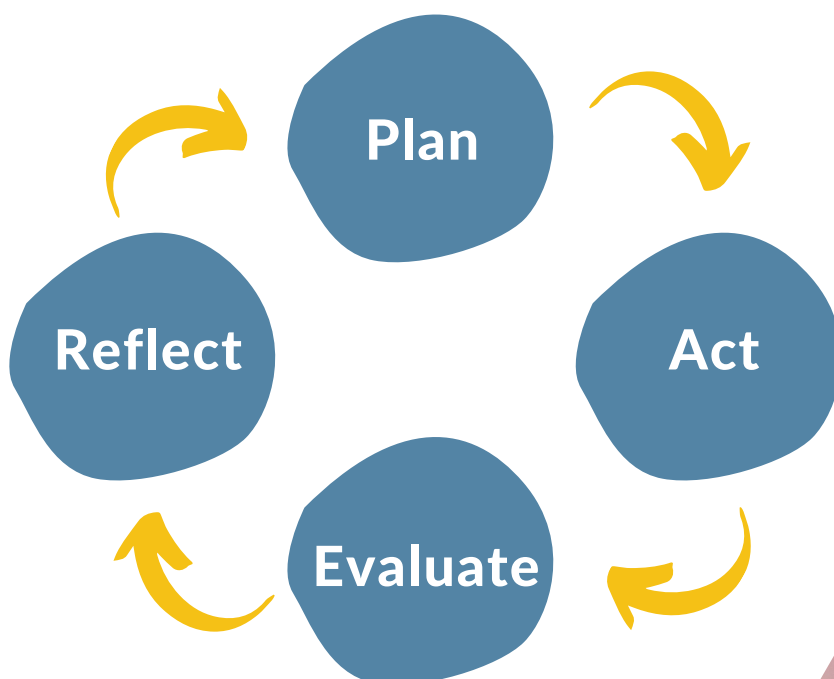
participation in cross-sector alliances, four issues warrant attention: 1) who convenes participants? 2) who participates? 3) and what environment is supportive of promoting participation? 4) what form and intensity of participation is required?

When you combine participation with self-governance, you may realise there are a few possible ways that will play out. It might be best that a small active group leads the way and informs everyone else of the result, involving them in the process periodically (working in small groups on one issue, for example). Or in some cases everyone's participation might be necessary throughout the process (a so-called "plenary"). A good facilitator will know what type of participation will best serve the group.

We would like to stress that **facilitation is a skill** (more than a methodology or a technique) which you can learn and practice to improve your command of all the above methods and tools. Or, as an alternative, you may decide to hire a professional facilitator to support you in your specific process.

The active cycle of reflective learning

Throughout your collaboration, it can be useful to consider a simpler cycle of action, reflection and consideration, which may be more familiar to those in local authorities. This is a version of the Kolb Cycle of experiential learning, where we acknowledge that our processes are cyclical and not linear. We build increasing knowledge in each turn of the cycle. We start with Plan, and then Act, Evaluate and Reflect before Planning for the next cycle.



This is the basic cycle, but it has been adapted in several ways for community projects and especially for projects that involve personal aspiration and collective visioning. These simple steps are thus also integrated within the stepping stones described below in the Journey of Regeneration.

Dragon Dreaming

For conflict resolution, egalitarian participation and for developing new projects, ecovillages have adapted methods from indigenous people all around the world. One such methodology that is inspired by the Australian aboriginal wisdom is Dragon Dreaming. Dragon Dreaming is a very elaborate project management and collaboration methodology with similar four basic phases as the active circle of reflective learning. The names of the four phases are different: 1. dream, 2. plan, 3. do, 4. celebrate. And there is a concept of a hologram/fractal where each of these four phases includes these four steps in its own particular way. Also, every project serves a small role in a larger scheme.

If you look at Dragon Dreaming superficially, it simply helps individuals and groups to make their dreams come true. At a deeper level, Dragon Dreaming improves self-awareness, communication skills, meeting culture, conflict resolution and has a theoretical explanation and a practical solution for just about every situation you may encounter in project management.

It uses a live system approach and offers simple holistic tools for starting, planning, acting, evaluating and celebrating their projects. It is thus a more complex model of the simple action and reflection cycle. Some call it a meta-methodology. Importantly, it also helps individuals to consider their own achievements and journey during collective endeavours.

You can read more about these and other methods in the appendices. We're listing some of our favourites that we've tested in practical collaboration between community-led initiatives and local authorities. If you have experience with such collaboration too, we don't doubt you have your own favourites.

Use any tool that you think can facilitate the often awkward dialogue between the community-type, informal initiatives and the necessarily structured, formal municipal structures. With good communication skills and nurturing people-centred dialogue building bridges is easier than you might have thought.



Successful communication is a co-occurrence since the transmitter and receiver have to be able to send and receive matching frequencies. As has been shown in this chapter, this can be facilitated by a good structure that enables communication, such as for example sociocracy. Further, it is based on methods that help resolve misunderstandings, such as conflict resolution formats in which speaking clearly and calmly as well as listening to each voice is made possible.

We've mentioned only a few methodologies and frameworks that will enable you to have better participation when you're creating and implementing your projects, hopefully reaching a successful completion. There are many more. As is often the case, it's better to know well and follow diligently one methodology than to know them all but be unable to follow any of them with discipline. Pick one and stick to it and that will support you in having successful participation, communication and collaboration.

Key points

- ✓ Make a conscious effort to establish a suitable and inclusive decision-making process for your collaboration
- ✓ Sociocracy is a comprehensive self-governance system for sharing power and smart self-management via consent
- ✓ Conflicts do not always need to be suppressed—they can help catalyse change / but appropriate tools can help us address discomforts and enable people to be heard fairly
- ✓ Make use of decentralised government structures and enable citizen participation through innovative practices
- ✓ You can use Dragon Dreaming to move from your "dream" to a functional plan that can be implemented and celebrated.

THE JOURNEY OF REGENERATION



Learning outcomes

- ★ Understanding of the steps involved in project planning, implementation and celebration
- ★ Appreciation of the joys and challenges that can be experienced in undertaking action for the future
- ★ Knowledge for when and how to engage partners in collaboration to progress a project together
- ★ Ability to create visions of the future and to plan strategically how to achieve your aspirations

In this session we explore the process of doing activities, with an emphasis on our collaborative ventures. We can see this in different ways. Communities might use processes such as the Journey of Regeneration to understand typical stages of a project and enable them to overcome sticky points and plan ahead. Local authorities will have different internal processes linked to community development and project management principles and practices. Here we explore the Journey of Regeneration.

The Journey of Regeneration using the Stepping Stones

The Journey of Regeneration explores nine archetypal Stepping Stones of an innovative project design and implementation model developed within the SIRcle ERASMUS project. This model addresses, among other things, the importance of heeding your calls to change, finding your collaborators and allies, and the challenge of dominant social structures resisting change proposed by pioneers and innovators who come up with new types of solutions.

This tool describes the dynamics between new initiatives and the status quo, as well as the key steps of collaborative and regenerative project design and implementation. The model is roughly based on Joseph Campbell's Hero's Journey and built on three such journeys of change, the Transition to Resilience Training, the Pioneers of Change Training and the Oasis Game. Those who were involved with the early design of the approach strongly felt that the time of the lonely hero is over and that today's challenges require us to act together. This is reflected in the emphasis on alliance-building, collaboration, conflict resolution and outreach in the Stepping Stones. The previous name of the Journey of Regeneration was the Evoneers' Journey. Evoneers came from a combination of the words evolutionary and pioneers - the ones who take a lead in the further evolution of the system they are in. Travellers, navigating together through the journey of regeneration.

The Stepping Stones describe the evolutionary circle that propels us as a society from one relative state of stability to the next such state by ideas and actions of certain "heroes". In essence the steps are:



A "hero" is "called" to do something about some challenge and accepts the call to action

This action is resisted by society, accustomed to its normalcy (defending the status quo)

The "hero" builds an empowering case, makes it appealing and a "fellowship" forms around it

The tension between the old and the new intensifies and the hero undergoes ups and downs

The "hero" enters a "dark cave" to conquer her/his own demons of self-doubt, uncertainty, fear etc.

Morally challenging resolutions have to be made to come back to light

The "hero" emerges victorious and distils the lessons learned for others to apply in their lives

New normalcy evolves and gradually solidifies



The protagonists (heroes) of the Journey across the Stepping Stones typically *challenge* something in the established system therefore they mostly come from outside the system. When we look at this in terms of community-led initiatives and local authorities, the protagonist usually comes from the former and challenges the latter. When the change is initiated by someone from the institution of the local authority, that person embodies different values and dares to push against the *status quo*.

Understanding the two opposing positions that define the Journey can help you steer the “ship” through the stormy waters of change. The two positions are:

- ✓ 1. the hero upsetting the existing normalcy and being driven towards establishing a new normalcy
- ✓ 2. the system’s inertia, resistance to change in desire to preserve stability

Whether you are coming from a community-led initiative or a local authority, you can use the Stepping Stones to distinguish constructive forces from destructive ones in the evolution of social structures. This is true both in the case of the call to change and the resistance to change.

If a community-led initiative experiences resistance in their local authority, or vice versa, and the change seems impossible, that means the energy is not sufficient to reach the tipping point, perhaps in relation to lack of capacity or resources. Each party should listen to the other carefully, learn, go back and try again until it succeeds. *Listening doesn’t only mean agreeing*. You can hear “a lot between the lines”.

As we said in the beginning, there is no perfect society, therefore pointing out flaws is easy; the hard part is constructively creating viable alternatives.

If you work in a local government and a community-led initiative approaches you, allow them to express their view (including criticisms) and then ask them for their *specific* proposals. If their expression is clumsy, give them the benefit of the doubt and ask questions. Invite them for another meeting. If they prove to be good listeners, learning as they go and implementing your proposals, you might have found a good partner towards sustainable development in your region. Giving enthusiastic initiatives open doors may help young entrepreneurs develop their social skills as well as a university.



If the members of the initiative don't listen but sharply criticise and expect you to do all the work simply because they insist *it must* happen or else... (threatening you with dry activist pressure), you can make clear that you do not see the added value of collaborating with such initiatives. If the initiative's vision is inspiring and beneficial, if the plan is smart and actionable, first results promising, trustworthy people in the community giving positive feedback about it, it is viable to give it a chance even when they are critical of you. They are here to support you and carry the burden of transformation. They won't turn their back on you when troubles begin.

Pioneering citizens with a lot of energy are a gift to the local community and you should let them upset the *status quo* when you see they are committed to positive change. While that's going on, you should plan ahead—together with them—how to integrate the emerging elements into a new future normalcy and try to secure a smooth adaptation of the existing structures into new, better ones, instead of worse social structures that do not serve the citizens well.

Community-led initiatives should understand that local authorities, even those that are progressive, guard social stability and limit social change carefully. Usually, local authorities prefer mature initiatives over naive ones.

There are, of course, autocratic and corrupt local authorities that choose who to collaborate with based on personal gains and potential for power and leverage (immature forms of leadership). In that case, *mature* community-led initiatives will have a hard time establishing a partnership. They might be forced to stay in opposition and fight for the change by building alliances with other organisations and initiatives, without engaging with the government. However, if the power of this alliance grows sufficiently, the government will very likely follow. Governments often follow power, especially in the case of immature governments.

If you are representing a community-led initiative, be patient. You might be in contact with the wrong people or maybe you are not seeing the full picture. Maybe your mayor is not as backwards thinking as you imagine. Could it be that your plan is not good enough (yet)? Be thankful if your local government is kind enough to give you honest feedback. Be thankful if they do not change all the time at the slightest impulse. Think about it: if local policies are constantly changing, then even if you get your proposal accepted, it probably won't last very long.

To bring it back to the Journey and the Stepping Stones: when your "fellowship" is strong, the road to success will be tough if your project is meaningful. You'll have to meet success and failure to grow and get ready for your "prime ordeal". You'll have to overcome your inner limitations and struggles to overcome the challenges with your allies and enemies.



A practical example of an Evoneer's Journey:

In 2009, Nara Petrovic (a member of the editorial of ETiA) attended a conference in Finland and learned about a one-day-national cleanup campaign, organised in 2008, that had 4% of the population of Estonia participating. He saw a short clip produced by organisers. A friend urged him to initiate a similar campaign in his country, Slovenia. Nara accepted the call and shared the idea with his friends. After a series of meetings, a core team was formed and tried to figure out how to convince institutions to come on board. Institutions were at first hesitant, but persistence paid off and gradually more and more institutions became partners. There were a few crises on the way, testing the team's determination.

Ultimately, *all* 210 municipalities in Slovenia participated. It was clear very early in the project that collaboration with local authorities was essential and despite all the trouble the team prioritised getting them on board. Other key partners came from the NGO sector: practically all umbrella associations were on board too.

Towards the end, when 100,000 people had already registered, the government said that all participants would need to have insurance. It was impossible to collect everyone's information and the challenge seemed insurmountable at first. But the team found a way out with a creative insurance company that was willing to help find a legal solution. A bulk sum was agreed upon to cover any incidents.

On 17 April 2010, 270,000 volunteers (13.5% of the population of Slovenia) participated in the cleanup. The story was documented in [Let's Clean Slovenia in One Day Final Report](#) and in the documentary [On that clean day](#). The report inspired other countries to join. By 2018, more than 180 countries had similar national cleanups with more than 20 million participants across the globe.

As a result, new recycling schemes, Zero Waste programmes, clothes-exchanges, new technologies and infrastructures etc. have become something normal in many urban and rural areas.

With this story, we've illustrated one Evoneer's Journey in one country, Slovenia. You may notice that there was a similar journey prior to it, in Estonia, and a third, global level following later. There are hundreds and even thousands of Evoneers' Journeys coming together as if in a mosaic.

In all cases, the Evoneer's Journey sequence of Stepping Stones applies, shaking up the old normalcy by the "hero's" perturbation and unleashing the transformation until new normalcy takes root.

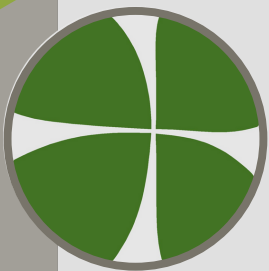


Let's recap the Evoneer's Journey through the nine steps. We provide here language that aligns more with project management and is compatible with local authorities, and language that may inspire and invigorate community members and activists.



1. The spark of inspiration / Answering the call / Igniting the fire

Everything begins with an individual or a few individuals at the most, starting the quest to answer a “call”. They form a **core team based** on trust and shared intentions in relation to an idea.



2. Mapping potential / Crossing the threshold / Drawing the map

Soon in the journey, the heroes' determination is put to the test. The test may lead to some key people leaving while others commit more deeply. Their mission is consolidated in the concrete context in which they operate, which may need mapping of potential. When they map, they attract more people to the cause, their credibility growing.



3. Strengthening inclusivity / Engaging the circles / Embracing diversity

The challenge of more people wanting to join is how to integrate diversity. Like tends to attract like, and diversity tends to lead to tensions and conflicts in the team. A strong common intention helps people see how to get involved. The result is that **all people of good will can contribute their solutions** to the common project.

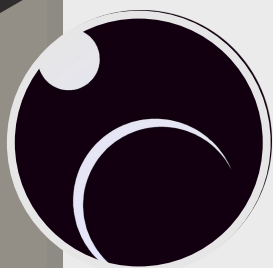


4. Piloting implementation / Daring to act / Exploring the landscape

The harmony in the team is not easy to establish or maintain.

The heroes make many mistakes and they **learn from mistakes about working together**. They don't learn (only) in a workshop environment, but while actually accomplishing things together. Collaboration can get messy, but that only enhances their immersion in their context and addressing real issues.

They manage their operations in such a way as to stay true to their initial calling.



5. Tackling challenges / Facing the dark night / Integrating the shadow

The first trial at the beginning tested the team's determination, thus, the second trial tests their integrity. Some challenges come up that seem insurmountable, cause division in the team and lead to a period of dark struggle. That's when they need to **open spaces to resolve conflicts and regroup stronger**. The team often realises that their mission was about internal transformation first, preparing them to deal with the external challenges. That's when they can do what they were called to accomplish.



6. Recognising system change /Manifesting the new / Opening to the unexpected

Accomplishing the goal isn't the end of Evoneer's Journey. Something new has been created and needs to be consciously integrated into society—not only the results but the process as well. The team reflect back on the Stepping Stones that brought them there and **distil the lessons learned, all the innovations and solutions that led to a systemic change**.



7. Celebrating success / Maturing on the path / Gathering the harvest

The team engages with all the fellows, all the partners and supporters to celebrate and reward their contribution to the difficult path they walked together. They **bring to awareness how they all matured** and what had changed in society as a result of their effort. The team allows themselves to rejoice and celebrate their success.



8. Disseminating successful stories /Sharing the gift / Celebrating with beauty

All the lessons learned are not to remain in some dusty archive! Every great story must be told (and retold). **The lessons learned must be shared with the world**—in a book, a documentary film, a science report, an ongoing research programme, a curriculum. This gives other Evoneers a chance to get inspiration, be motivated and learn how to take their inner calling from the initial idea to its final manifestation.

9. Reflective learning / Coming home / Listening to the future

To really see what has changed during the journey the heroes must return to their “home”, the place where it all started, their community. That puts the changes into perspective. The heroes have changed and the context has changed too. **From the point of deep reflection, they can open up to a new calling.** And the next cycle of the Evoneer’s Journey may begin!

Key points:

- ✓ Collaborations for sustainability and regeneration support a transition to sustainability and the transformation of the world envisioned by many leaders and embedded in the UN SDGs
- ✓ Such transitions can be difficult and explicitly acknowledging the stages of the journey of the individual ‘evoneer’, the group, the collaboration and the project can be useful
- ✓ These stages can be envisioned as nine stepping stones that detail the inspiration, mapping, action, difficulties, successes and reflection of such projects
- ✓ The language used by different stakeholders to describe sustainability action and regenerative practices may sound very different



SEEING THE BIGGER PICTURE: THE ACTIVE CYCLE OF REFLECTIVE LEARNING AND CELEBRATION OF SUCCESS

Learning outcomes

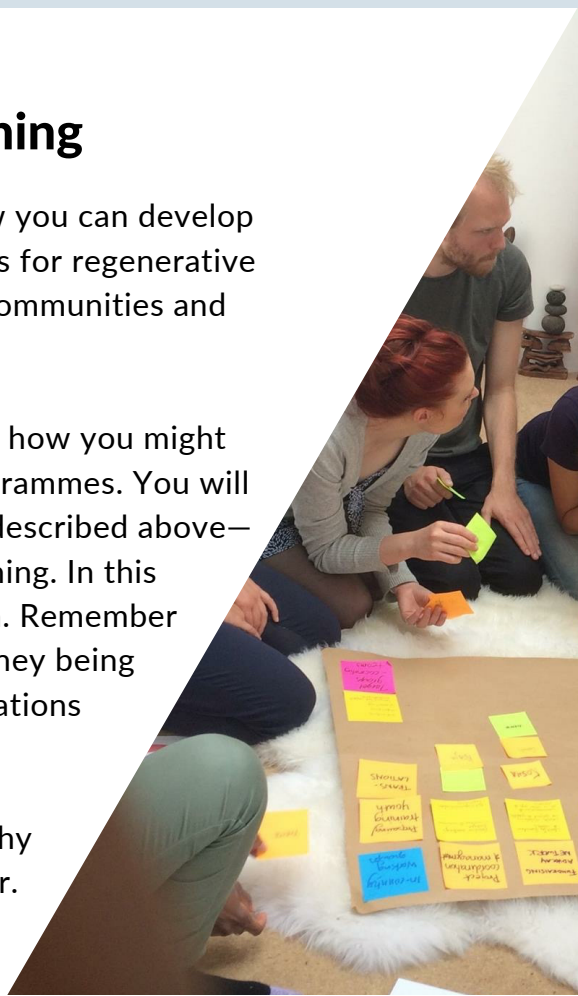
- ★ Reflection on the learning undertaken, goals achieved and the possibilities for action
- ★ Understanding of monitoring and evaluation schemes for collaborative community and local authority projects
- ★ Understanding of the importance of celebrating success
- ★ Feedback and appreciation of the shared journey on this course
- ★ Competencies for self awareness and collaboration

The active cycle of reflective learning

In this Handbook, you have explored aspects of how you can develop collaborative relationships, projects and programmes for regenerative practice and sustainable development across local communities and local government.

You will now reflect back on this journey and mirror how you might integrate this into your respective projects and programmes. You will pick up on the later stepping stones of the journey described above—the final stages of the active cycle of reflective learning. In this session, you will focus on monitoring and evaluation. Remember that in this Handbook the emphasis was on the journey being enriched through collaboration, offering new destinations and more possible routes.

Let's take each of the stages to help you consider why you do the evaluation and what you want to monitor.





Initiating and planning

By now, you will have realised that it makes a difference who is initiating a project and why! This will affect the format, the motivation, resources, structure and everything. Appreciate the spark of visioning and hold onto the sparkle of enthusiasm. Feel the excitement and potential of a new project or programme. Then get down to roles, timelines, budgets and plans... Mapping helps refine and interpret the vision in a local context. Community-led initiatives and local authorities can bring different skills and resources to this.



Acting

By now, you will have realised that it makes a difference who is initiating a project and why! This will affect the format, the motivation, resources, structure and everything. Appreciate the spark of visioning and hold onto the sparkle of enthusiasm. Feel the excitement and potential of a new project or programme. Then get down to roles, timelines, budgets and plans... Mapping helps refine and interpret the vision in a local context. Community-led initiatives and local authorities can bring different skills and resources to this.

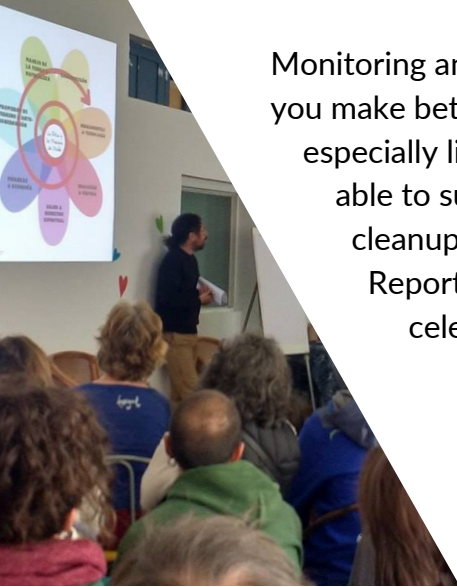


Monitoring and evaluating

Many community projects are not good at this stage and many local government departments spend too much time on this step. But monitoring and evaluating can be fun if you see it as part of a learning process. Dragon Dreaming, for example, encourages a particularly celebratory way to do evaluation and to focus on people, not (merely) on finances and outputs.

Try to be creative, build it into events, curricula, feedback on infrastructure and group meetings. Your evaluation can be visual and impactful, especially if you use images and infographics, and use numbers to quantify outputs, as well as stories and cultural interpretations (music, drama, poetry, art).

Monitoring and evaluation help you with **decision making** and management, so you make better plans in future. It helps you with **advocacy**. Local governments especially like evidence to demonstrate the efficacy of a project before they feel able to support it. Remember the story in chapter 7, about a nation-wide cleanup campaign? All the results were carefully gathered and the Final Report was shared with hundreds of partnering organisations to celebrate the success.

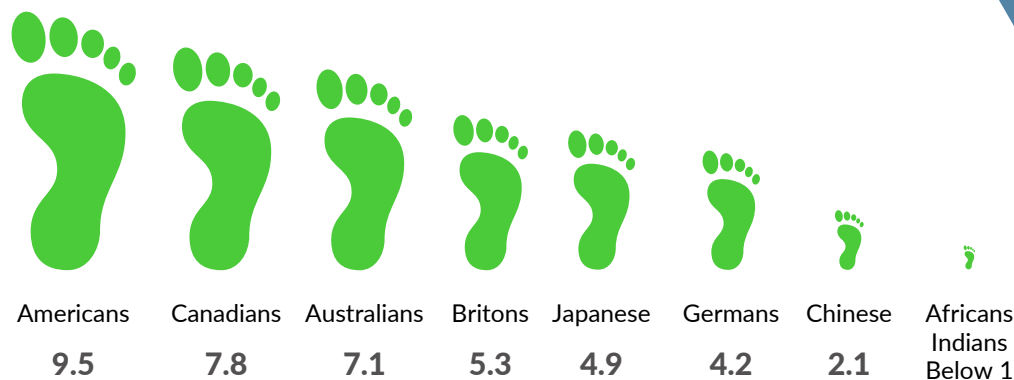


The less engaged members of the community or the local authority can be convinced to join an initiative if they can see the benefits from it. Monitoring and evaluation can also help participation and consensus building. People can discuss what was achieved and buy into the process. Finally, the research and analysis allow you to share your learning and achievements with others in the region or beyond.

But what to monitor and how? Which templates to use as a basic measure? Besides the typical measurables: the number of people involved, money raised and spent, events organised, organisations involved etc. a very common quantity to monitor is the so-called **ecological footprint**.

The quantitative evaluation of different average ecological footprints around the world is a convenient way to show just how much of the earth's resources people in different countries use. Or people in different regions, economic backgrounds, urban vs. rural areas etc. Ecological footprint methodology has its fervent proponents as well as critics; it is a good starting point that has room for improvement and we're urging you to use it not because it's a perfect methodology, but because it can be fine-tuned through your use and feedback.

ECOLOGICAL FOOTPRINTS



WHAT LANGUAGE DO WE USE TO MEASURE?

The language we use in monitoring and evaluation can differ between community-led initiatives and local authorities. The table below shows how we may think and discuss reasons for and forms of measuring impact in different ways. Often what a funder wants can seem very dry, but when translated into community rationale it can seem more inspiring for community members!



Audit culture	Empowering, value based culture
To set appropriate targets	To strive towards meaningful goals
To test if targets reached	To celebrate what has been achieved
To deliver expected outcomes	To be answerable to self, community and society
To meet funder reporting requirements	To be mindful of obligations and expectations of partnerships with others
To demonstrate impact	To show how people can make a difference
To deliver transparent reporting	To share experiences honestly with others
To build capacity for effective management	To enable people, alone and as part of communities, to learn and fulfil their capacities
To ensure resource efficiency	To respect the limitations on peoples' time and energy
To archive a record of events	To reflect on experiences and events, thus deepening individual learning, creating community memories and building a cultural heritage of community working
To record number of people attending events	To capture the significance of events and enable flexible planning to better engage people
To meet administrative demands	To have fun and connect with each other
To ensure alignment with national and international strategies	To make the world a better place, in our community and globally
To evidence impact for future funding applications	To show that community initiatives can make a difference
To facilitate timely strategies and create policies	To plan how best to work with people and place to create a vision and make it happen

Examples in this table show only two possible ways of looking at any situation. You can draw your own descriptions that best suit your own needs.

For monitoring and evaluation, you will need to assess **indicators**. This is where the new [Global Ecovillage Impact Assessment tool](#) can be invaluable. It helps you choose indicators and use participatory processes to reflect on progress to date. The indicators in this tool are linked to the SDGs, which makes it easier to link community projects to local government goals.

It is also good practice to have indicators that are SMART (see TABLE). If you apply this already at the level of aims and goals, making them SMART, then your indicators at the end will reflect this even better.

S	Specific, sensible, well defined	
M	Measureable, able to assess completion	
A	Achievable, feasible for the actors in time given	
R	Relevant, worthwhile, at the right time	
T	Time-bound, with a timeline and planned endpoint	
(E)	Evaluated—some later models include this aspect	
(R)	Reviewed—without review and reflection, we cannot tell what we achieved!	

Celebrating

It's common in teams to get so lost in action that you forget to celebrate. But celebration is actually part of the cycle. It allows you to gather, share learning, strengthen a sense of community, have fun and show others what you have done.

There's a saying in Dragon Dreaming that brings smiles to people's faces: "If it's not fun, it's not sustainable." Celebration deserves as much attention and funding as planning and doing and in Dragon Dreaming it means coming back to individuals and acknowledging their individual contributions with personalised rewards. Raising everyone's salary is one way to celebrate, but a much better way is to give each person something they deeply care about: their favourite food, dress, activity, book, music, place ... Or you can support them in something they or those closest to them struggle with. Sometimes even the fact that you noticed and sincerely offered to help will amaze them.

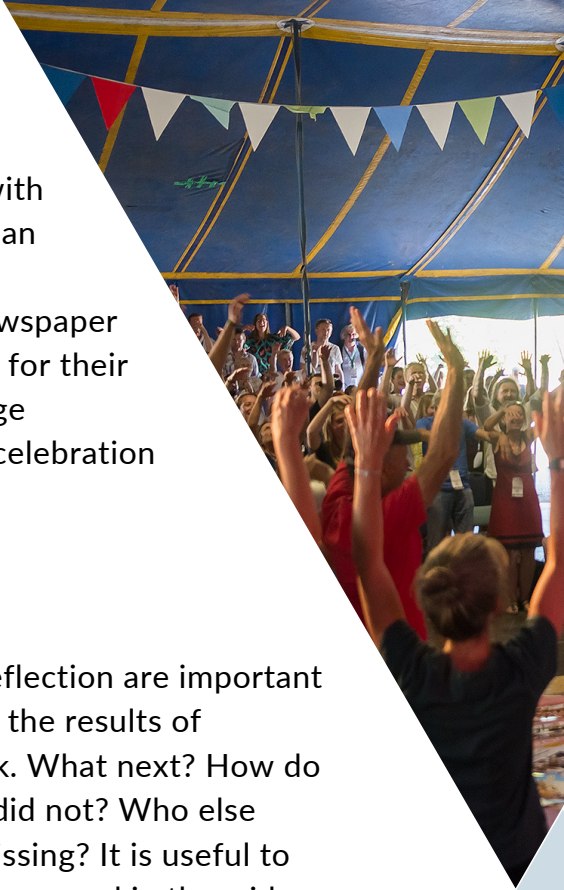
As groups you can celebrate in many different ways. A shared meal is a celebration at which you engage with each other and share what you're up to. A festival or an open day is a classical opportunity for meeting and celebrating. A publication or an article in the local newspaper makes people see and possibly appreciate individuals for their contributions. Never miss an opportunity to encourage gratitude for all that has been achieved. Essential to celebration is to take a pause ... and then link to reflection.

Reflecting

Individual quiet reflection and collective facilitated reflection are important too. These help you take the spirit of celebration and the results of monitoring and evaluation and to ignite another spark. What next? How do you adapt your project? What has worked and what did not? Who else might you need to bring on board? Whose voice is missing? It is useful to gain a sense of perspective. How has your project progressed in the wider journey for regenerative practices and sustainable development? Take these reflections into planning for the next stage or initial stepping stone.

You might want to use the new navigation tool developed in this ETiA project. Remember that this course is assessing how you can scale up sustainability action from community to regional level. You are thus not only assessing project goals and outputs but also the process and collaboration. Here, and then in your projects, reflect on networks, relationships and trust, on learning and competencies, as well as on practical aspects such as reduced carbon emissions.

- ✓ Scaling community action can be interpreted in many different ways
- ✓ There are existing frameworks to help you think about what it means
- ✓ Work to the crisis but be patient when you hit practical challenges or opportunities...
- ✓ Remember that small-scale community action can leverage wider socio-technical innovation and support societal transformation!



Back to the beginning

Now let's take some time to consider the first steps we took, to reflect and to complete our learning cycle.



Individual intentions

Did you achieve your expectations from the beginning of the handbook?



Collective goals

If you used this to begin a collaboration, have you achieved any collective goals to date?

Wider vision

At the beginning of the Handbook, you located your intention for collaboration between community and local government in the context of wider visions for a regenerative, sustainable future. Have you made some movement towards this? Can you see how your reflections might help this shift? It can be useful to reflect on system transformation in this regard and there are several tools to do this.

Leaving with intention

What will each of you do with this learning? Can you identify what your first steps will be on returning back to your local communities and local authorities?

Closing the circle

Reflections on learning, process and gratitude.

We hope you enjoyed this Handbook! Most of all, we hope it will help you develop and strengthen collaboration between communities and local governments, scaling up sustainability action, embedding regenerative practice in regions and making the world a better place.



Key points:



Monitoring and evaluation is a critical part of all projects, including collaborative ventures, and should be planned to integrate in all stages of the journey



Monitoring and evaluation can be fun! And link to celebration and sharing of results and impacts



In this Handbook, you have sought for learning, development of competencies and a process of preparation for successful collaboration



In this session you reflect on what you have learnt and how this relates to your early expectations



You have discussed here how you might take this learning back into your efforts for sustainable development and regeneration

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THE APPENDIX:

RESOURCES

This Handbook is not the only product to help you scale up collaboration between your community and local authorities. It comes in a package with three additional documents, one of which is a separate and beautifully designed Toolbox! You'll find all the methods from this Handbook presented in a more practical format.

In this last part of the Handbook, we're listing all the mentioned resources: methods, models, activities, tools and references with a short description and the link(s) to primary resources.

We first list those methods that have been covered in the Handbook extensively and you can see in the parentheses on which pages. Later we list those that have been mentioned.

Methods

Map of Regeneration (pages 26 to 30)

A planning and mapping tool that helps communities identify leverage points, blind spots and other such strengths and weaknesses.

Links:

<https://ecovillage.org/projects/map-of-regeneration/>

<https://prezi.com/view/bOjFnQaBH20H8Ysdp8LS/>

The Journey of Regeneration (pages 59 to 66)

A model exploring nine archetypal Stepping Stones of an innovative project design. This model addresses, among other things, the importance of heeding our calls to change, finding our collaborators and allies, and the challenge of dominant social structures resisting change proposed by pioneers and innovators who come up with new types of solutions.

Link: https://www.sircle-project.eu/?page_id=25

Ecovillage Impact Assessment (page 71)

A tool to support community evolution through easily understandable data and results, inspire further action and provide data for understanding and improving the impact of community-led initiatives and the wider movement for regeneration.

As this tool is based on both Map of Regeneration and SDGs, it makes for a good bridge between local authorities and community-led initiatives.

Link: <https://ecovillage.org/impact/>

Sociocracy (pages 51 to 52)

Wikipedia defines Sociocracy as “a system of governance that seeks to create psychologically safe environments and productive organizations. It draws on the use of consent, rather than majority voting, in discussion and decision-making by people who have a shared goal or work process.”

Below we're adding a link to the cousin of sociocracy, called *holacracy*.

Links:

<https://sociocracy30.org/>

<https://www.sociocracyforall.org/start-here/>

<https://www.holacracy.org/>

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sociocracy>

Consensus vs. consent process (pages 52 and 54)

Consensus requires agreement. Consent requires that no one disagrees. Many groups using Sociocracy will invoke the principle of “good enough for now, safe enough to try,” to point out that the decision is not forever. Everyone can come up with a better proposal in the future and replace the current solution.

In Sociocracy 3.0 to *consent* is to “raise, seek out and resolve objections to decisions and actions, so that you can reduce the potential for undesirable consequences and discover worthwhile ways to improve.”

Links:

<https://patterns.sociocracy30.org/principle-consent.html>

<https://www.sociocracyforall.org/sociocracy/>

Co-design (Page 10)

A process where people get together to co-create something.

Link: <https://www.beyondstickynotes.com/what-is-codesign>

The 8 Shields Model (page 51)

is a model for community organising and wellbeing that has developed from indigenous cultures and inspired a global movement. It has a 30-year track record of strengthening personal wellbeing, creating healthy leadership, and supporting collective engagement in nature-based, intergenerational communities around the world. In helping to develop a legacy of individual health, community wellbeing, and enhanced connection to nature, self and community, it is seen as one means of addressing both our current ecological crisis and the widespread loss of healthy connective culture in the West. The model draws on the universal pattern languages based on natural systems, legacies of ancient wisdom cultures as well as contemporary scientific research on resilience. Connection with nature and mentoring underpin the model.

Link: <https://sites.google.com/site/sustainablelivingproject/eight-shields-model>

The political compass (pages 22 to 24)

A tool (with a questionnaire) defining an entity's (person's, state's, organisation's etc.) political position on a chart with two axes: horizontal between left and right (economics) and vertical between libertarian and authoritarian (rule).

Link: <https://www.politicalcompass.org/test>

Check-in (and check-out) activities

There are hundreds of simple activities that have been developed over decades for a smoother opening and closing of meetings of all sizes. These activities have become essential to the culture of collaboration in more horizontal organisations. Check-in is even more valuable in the case of online meetings when we're seeing only each others' faces.

There is no one single resource that we could direct you to, but an online search will provide you with an abundance of resources. You can get ideas from lists of questions for the introductory circle, or use more dynamic ice-breakers and crowd-breakers, depending on the situation.

Just a hint: choose consciously between left-brain and right-brain activities/questions. "What's your expectation from the meeting?" is a left-brain (rational) question. "How do you feel right now? Describe it by presenting yourself as a particular species of a tree. You may also stand up and add movements." That is a more emotional, intuitive question.

Links:

<https://clips.gen-europe.org/tools/>

<https://www.range.co/blog/getting-started-check-in-meetings>

<https://thedigitalworkplace.com/articles/100-non-lame-check-in-questions-for-meetings/>

CLIPS, Community Learning Incubator Programme for Sustainability (pages 51, 52 and 54)

A solution oriented programme to guide community-led projects in their initial steps – and for existing initiatives that struggle with problems or simply need revitalisation. CLIPS revolves around a conceptual model of concentric circles to show complex dynamics and layers found in community projects. Layers start with the relation between the Individual and the Community, and continue with Intention, Structure and Practice. CLIPS relies on many methods and tools shared across similar projects.

Link: <https://clips.gen-europe.org/>

Dragon Dreaming (pages 57)

A systemic design process, a philosophy and a methodological framework for the realisation of collaborative and regenerative organisations and platforms. Dragon Dreaming is a playful, inspiring, encouraging and meaningful method for assisting individuals and groups who seek to make their dreams come true. Dreams are the most intimate part of human aspirations and the process of Dragon Dreaming unites individuals' dreams into a shared dream, translates that dream into an actionable plan, and makes sure the plan is followed up with

everything necessary for it to be fully implemented. That's not the last step, however, because every project, to be complete, must end with a celebration. Dragon Dreaming provides an inspiring philosophical framework as well as practical tools for each of these phases.

Link: <https://dragondreaming.org/>

Arnold Mindel's theory on rank and privilege (page 54)

In 1995, Mindell created a map for exploring the factors leading to power. These factors can be considered as *privileges*. ... He defines rank as the "sum of a person's privileges" and sees it as a "conscious or unconscious, social or personal ability or power arising from culture, community support, personal psychology or spiritual power.

The more rank you have, the less aware you are of how it affects others negatively. When you use it poorly, you suffer, your relationships with others suffer and you create an unhappy world around you. The use and misuse of rank is often extremely subtle and your openness to those who might be subjected to it and their feedback is important.

Link: <https://www.zegg-forum.org/images/PDF/Texte-Englisch/Rank-short.pdf>

Facilitation (pages 48, 54 and 56)

"Facilitation concerns itself with all the tasks needed to reach a productive and impartial meeting outcome that reflects the agreed objectives and deliverables defined upfront by the meeting owner or client," says [Wikipedia](#).

Specialised organisations exist in most countries of the world today offering facilitation services and training for aspiring facilitators.

Link: <https://www.td.org/talent-development-glossary-terms/what-is-facilitation>

Non-violent Communication (NVC) (page 51)

A method of structured communication that facilitates compassionate, deep listening, speaking with integrity and empowerment.

NVC was developed by Marshall Rosenberg and is now used by a wide community of practice globally. It has been successfully applied to tackle personal or local conflicts, and has strengthened the efforts of international peace talks, for example, in the Middle East.

Link: <https://www.cnvc.org>

Great Transition Initiative (page 2)

An online forum of ideas and an international network for the critical exploration of concepts, strategies, and visions for a transition to a future of enriched lives, human solidarity, and a resilient biosphere.

Link: <https://greattransition.org/>

Art of Hosting (AoH) (page 51)

An approach to leadership that scales up from the personal to the systemic using personal practice, dialogue, facilitation and the co-creation of innovation to address complex challenges.

Link: <https://artofhosting.org/what-is-aoh/>

Open Space (page 47)

A way to enable all kinds of people, in any kind of organisation, to create inspired meetings and events. ... Participants create and manage their own agenda of parallel working sessions around a central theme of strategic importance,

Link: <https://openspaceworld.org/wp2/>

World Café (page 47)

A simple, effective, and flexible format for hosting large group dialogue. Each element of the method has a specific purpose and corresponds to one or more of the design principles.

Link: <http://theworldcafe.com/key-concepts-resources/world-cafe-method/>

Transition Town resources (pages 6, 18 and 21)

Transition is a movement of communities coming together to reimagine and rebuild our world. It uses participatory methods to imagine the changes we need, sets up renewable energy projects, re-localises food systems, and creates community and green spaces.

Transition has a vast toolbox of its own. We stress here a framework for how Transition groups and municipalities can create sustainable change together, called Municipalities in Transition.

Links:

<https://transitionnetwork.org/>

<https://transitionnetwork.org/news-and-blog/municipalities-project-harvest/>

Permaculture resources (page 21)

Permaculture is an ecological design system for sustainable living which offers practical and effective solutions to help people address global issues like food security, poverty, and the impacts of climate change at a local level.

Permaculture projects have a local focus and bring people together to support community-level action to global issues.

One of the best resources for the collaboration between municipalities and community-led initiatives is *52 Climate Actions* (the last link below).

Links:

<https://permaculture-network.eu/>

<https://permacultureprinciples.com/>

<https://www.permaculture.org.uk/resources/websites>

<https://www.52climateactions.com/>

Search Conference Method (page 47)

A participative planning method that enables people to create a plan for the most desirable future of their community or organisation, a plan they take responsibility for carrying out themselves.

Link: <http://www.elementsuk.com/libraryofarticles/searchconference.pdf>

Communities for Future (CfF) (page 16)

ECOLISE's action programme, supported by awareness-raising, research and policy advocacy, for the strengthening and mainstreaming of community-led action on sustainability and climate change across Europe. This includes the possibility of national actors coming together to implement CfF in their own countries, as coalitions of national networks of community-led initiatives and partners from other sectors.

CfF includes a [wiki](#), a [document library](#) and an [initiative map](#), supported by a [collaboration platform](#), and is intended to provide a dynamic repository of knowledge about and for community-led action.

In 2019 a [Status Report](#) on the state of community-led action in Europe has also been published.

Links:

<http://communitiesforfuture.org/>

<https://www.ecolise.eu/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Status-Report-on-Community-led-Action-on-Sustainability-Climate-Change-in-Europe-2019.pdf>

Glossary

Circular economy emphasises cyclic rather than linear material flows and enables adjustments in response to unanticipated negative impacts. Linear, extractive (non-circular) economies can accelerate resource depletion, biodiversity loss and climate change, but also entrench inequalities and injustices, and perpetuate societal polarisation and fragmentation.

Community is a common word used roughly to describe a “social unit (a group of living things) with commonality such as norms, religion, values, customs, or identity.” For more definitions that connect with the way we use the term in this Handbook please check this link:

<https://wiki.communitiesforfuture.org/wiki/Community>.

Community-led initiatives are any form of action undertaken by self-organised groups of people, often but not always living in the same geographical location, to improve their social and environmental conditions. Use of the term *community-led* stresses the leadership of and within communities that take initiative to bring about the changes they wish to see. They don't just speak out against problems, they take concrete action to address them and help create a better world.

Ecovillages are intentional, traditional, rural or urban communities that operate on a shared set of ecological, social and/or spiritual values, with sustainability as a common concern. They consciously seek to create and enact working models of sustainable living combined with social well-being and (in many cases) spiritual growth. (see more on pages 15 to 16 of this Handbook)

Fife council is the local authority for the Fife area of Scotland and is the third-largest Scottish council.

Intentional community is a group of people who have chosen to live together or share resources on the basis of common values.

Local authority is the administration of local government, usually run mainly by public officials and have to provide some public services and implement local policies.

Permaculture is “an approach to land management and settlement design that adopts arrangements observed in flourishing natural ecosystems. ... Permaculture uses creative design processes based on whole-systems thinking, considering all materials and energies in flow that affect or are affected by proposed changes.” ([Wikipedia](#))

Regenerative practice reverses the effects of climate change and improves the state of the environment and people (fertility, biodiversity, health, well-being etc.). Nowadays it is commonly acknowledged that sustainability must go hand in hand with this reversal.

Acronyms

CLI—Community-led Initiative

CLLD—Community-led Local Development, a EU mechanism to facilitate bottom-up innovation, as well as disperse best cases of local authority policies promoting action on such issues

CLIPS—Community Learning Incubator Programme for Sustainability, a programme to support starting community initiatives

ECOLISE—European Network of Community-led Initiative on Climate Change and Sustainability, uniting bottom-up initiatives

ETiA—Ecovillage Transition in Action, the ERASMUS project that produced this Handbook

GEN—Global Ecovillage Network

LA—Local authority

LAG—Local Action Group (part of CLLD programme), pages 41, 42 and 44

NGO—Non-government Organisation

SDG, SDGs—Sustainable development goals are covered in Chapter 4 of this Handbook

UNESCO—United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

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