
From wicked problems to collective solutions

Lessons and recommendations from three cases through the lens of the Collective Impact Model

REPORT PREPARED FOR THE HANNAH ARENDT INSTITUTE

KATRIJN GOOSSENS | HANNAH ARENDT INSTITUTE

DIDIER CALUWAERTS | VRIJE UNIVERSITEIT BRUSSEL

KAREN CELIS | VRIJE UNIVERSITEIT BRUSSEL





Table of Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	4
LIST OF FIGURES	4
1 INTRODUCTION	6
2 THE COLLECTIVE IMPACT MODEL: THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS AND ASSUMPTIONS	8
2.1 From wicked problems to collective solutions	8
2.2 The foundations of the Collective Impact Model.....	10
2.3 The logic of collective impact.....	11
2.3.1 Collective vigilance	11
2.3.2 Collective learning	11
2.3.3 Collective action	12
2.4 Preconditions for starting a collective impact initiative	13
2.5 Five building blocks for the success of a collective impact initiative.....	14
2.6 The three phases of the Collective Impact Model	19
2.7 Challenges in applying the Collective Impact Model	21
2.8 Addressing the challenges: Collective Impact 3.0	23
3 METHODOLOGY	26
4.1 Case 1: Climate transition Malmö (Sweden)	31
4.2 Case 2: Neighbourhood Improvement Contract in Pro-Arsenaal Mechelen (Belgium)	53
4.3 Case 3: Climate villages Skive Municipality (Denmark)	69
4.4 Summary table of the three cases.....	82
4.5 Inspiring practices in the three cases	84
5 LESSONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	86
6 LIST OF CONSULTED DOCUMENTS AND INTERVIEWS	92
6.1 Annex 1: Sources consulted.....	92
6.2 Annex 2: Semi-structured interview list	94
7 ACADEMIC REFERENCE LIST	96

Executive summary

This report examines the Collective Impact Model (hereafter, CIM) approach to governance in seeking to address complex social challenges defined as “wicked problems.” Rooted in the work of Kania and Kramer (2011), such problems are characterized by three preconditions necessary for initiating a collective impact initiative: a sense of urgency for change; the involvement of influential champions; and adequate resources. In that context, the CIM emphasizes collaboration between various sectors, to realise five key conditions: a common agenda; shared measurement systems; mutually reinforcing activities; continuous communication; and a dedicated backbone organization.

The findings from three case studies in Malmö, Mechelen, and Skive reveal several insights into effective implementation of the CIM: a clear urgency for change, often spurred by external factors, is essential for mobilizing stakeholders. The early engagement of a diverse group of stakeholders helps to build a common agenda, supported by a backbone organization that facilitates meaningful participation and establishes robust measurement frameworks vital for tracking progress and enabling continuous learning.

The report underscores the importance of flexibility and mutual reinforcement among partners to foster sustainable collaboration. Based on these insights, it recommends developing inclusive processes for creating a shared vision, investing in capacity building for stakeholders, securing flexible funding to enhance adaptability, and commitment to continuous learning through regular feedback mechanisms. Overall, CIM offers a promising framework for addressing pressing social issues through coordinated efforts among diverse stakeholders.

List of figures

- Figure 1: Defining the common agenda (Climate Transition Malmö)
- Figure 2: Communication cycle (Climate Transition Malmö)
- Figure 3: Backbone organization (Climate Transition Malmö)
- Figure 4: Defining the common agenda (Pro-Arsenaal Mechelen)
- Figure 5: Communication strategy (Pro-Arsenaal Mechelen)
- Figure 6: Backbone organization (Pro-Arsenaal Mechelen)
- Figure 7: Defining the common agenda (Climate villages Skive)
- Figure 8: Backbone organization (Climate Villages Skive)



I Introduction

In recent years, modern democracies have faced growing crises of legitimacy (International IDEA, 2022; Valgarðsson et al. 2025). Trust in traditional institutions is declining, and citizens feel increasingly disconnected from the decision-making processes that shape their lives. Once seen as the primary drivers of policy and social change, governments now struggle to address complex societal challenges using conventional, top-down approaches. In response, **governance** has emerged as a more inclusive model of policymaking that recognizes the vital role non-state actors can play in revitalizing democracy (Lo, 2017). This shift, which moves beyond government-centric policymaking to embrace collaborative, multi-stakeholder solutions, is central to the **Speak-Up project** (<https://www.interregnorthsea.eu/speak-up>), which emphasizes effective citizen community engagement and participation. Speak Up focuses on new civic engagement and participation frameworks and models that give governments better ways to engage with citizens and that give citizens better ways to engage with governments.

The transition **from government to governance** – from elite-driven to citizen-involved policymaking – is particularly relevant in addressing long-term **wicked problems** that resist straightforward solutions (Walls, 2018). Issues such as climate change, urban poverty, systemic inequality, and public health crises are complex, contested, and resistant to problem-solving methods intrinsic to conventional governance structures, which are often fragmented, highly centralized, and marked by diffuse responsibilities, policy silos, lack of coordination, and duplicative efforts which hinder systemic impact. To overcome these shortcomings, new governance models must not only facilitate cooperation but also ensure sustained collaboration, accountability, and adaptability. In short, tackling wicked problems requires more than isolated, top-down government interventions; they demand collaboration between public institutions, private actors, and civil society, and require governance approaches that transcend sectoral boundaries, foster partnerships and mobilize diverse stakeholders toward shared objectives.

The structured methodology of **CIM** (Kania and Kramer, 2011), provides a robust framework for tackling complex social issues through cross-sector partnerships. Rather than relying on individual organizations working in isolation, CIM fosters collective action by aligning stakeholders around five key conditions: **a common agenda, shared measurement systems, mutually reinforcing activities, continuous communication, and the support of a dedicated backbone organization**. By creating the conditions for sustained collaboration, CIM helps to bridge gaps inherent in traditional governance and policymaking structures.

Unlike many conventional governance approaches, CIM does not impose a rigid blueprint for action (Kania and Kramer, 2011). Instead, it offers a flexible yet structured framework that enables stakeholders – including governments, businesses, non-profits, community organizations, and citizens – to co-create solutions tailored to their specific contexts. This adaptability makes it particularly effective for addressing the interconnected and evolving nature of wicked problems.

This report assesses the potential of CIM as a transformative governance approach. It begins by outlining its theoretical foundations and core principles, highlighting what sets it apart from other collaborative frameworks. Next, three case studies that we can link to the building blocks of the model are analyzed, and the successes, challenges and limitations are evaluated through a CIM lens. Finally, the report draws together the key lessons from these case studies and makes recommendations to improve the effectiveness of collective impact initiatives in governance.

The key takeaway from our report is that CIM offers a compelling response to the challenges of contemporary governance. Its emphasis on collaboration, inclusivity, and systemic thinking aligns with the growing recognition that complex social problems require collective solutions. By providing a structured yet adaptable approach to mobilizing diverse stakeholders, CIM holds significant promise for addressing the urgent and interconnected challenges of our time.



2 The Collective Impact Model: theoretical foundations and assumptions

2.1 From wicked problems to collective solutions

Kania and Kramer (2011) first introduced CIM in an article for the *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, to provide an innovative framework for addressing “wicked problems”. The model focuses on social progress and community change (Ennis and Tofa, 2020) by employing a cross-sectoral approach, involving key stakeholders from different sectors, such as government and civil society, who engage together with a common agenda, shared measurements, continuous communication, and mutually reinforcing activities (Kania and Kramer, 2011).

The term ‘wicked problem’ was coined in the 1960s to describe the most complex challenges facing societies and local communities (Rittel and Webber, 1973), such as climate change, rising poverty or increasingly diverse cities (Walls, 2018). Wicked problems commonly exhibit distinctive features (Conklin, 2006). First, they are complex problems that often have **multiple and intersecting causes**, about which there is little consensus, and which multiple interventions are needed to address them (Smart, 2017). Identifying these problems is a challenging task, as explanations of “the problem” often take variant forms, and can only evolve through a process whereby possible solutions reveal more definitive aspects of the problem (Conklin, 2006). Secondly, dissensus on problems frequently results in a **lack of consensus on possible solutions**. Solutions to wicked problems are not known in advance (Smart, 2017), so only ongoing assessment is likely to suggest solutions, from which new aspects of wicked problems emerge throughout the process. Thirdly, even if a consensus over solutions is reached, their **outcomes remain unpredictable** (Smart, 2017); finding appropriate solutions to wicked problems is not a ‘one-shot operation’. Any path one takes will have certain, sometimes unintended, consequences, which are likely to reveal new aspects or new wicked problems (Conklin, 2006).





Finally, because wicked problems occur across sectoral boundaries, **collaboration between multiple actors** is essential (Smart, 2017) to identify causes and seek solutions, which Conklin (2006) describes as a “social process” where different relationships need to be involved in the search for solutions. The nature of the process is dependent on the social complexity of the parties involved, and how these parties differ from each other. Each organization or actor involved, has distinctive goals, functions and ideology. Therefore, often the agendas and approaches will differ greatly from each other, creating fragmentation, which increases the need for collaboration. The diversity of stakeholders working together will reveal emergent problems at hand, and to maintain collaboration, different solutions will be implemented.

In response, **CIM facilitates a transition from the dominant isolated approach to a collective approach** (Kania and Kramer, 2011). Traditionally, companies, governments and non-profit organizations each proceed separately in the context of their own specific objectives (Kania et al., 2012), resulting in limited effectiveness and much frustration among participants (Kania and Kramer, 2013). In contrast, CIM harnesses the collective capacity of partners to collaborate effectively to realize deep systemic change (Weaver, 2021). The model provides a framework for initiating cross-sectoral coordination to generate large-scale social change (Kania and Kramer, 2011). It addresses the complex problems, opportunities and needs of communities, often involving a range of stakeholders, with no single party able to unilaterally provide a solution. These issues are often characterized by multiple underlying causes, requiring innovation in new policy guidelines, or major policy changes, that can solve the shared problem (Turner et al., 2012). The framework is therefore applicable in both small-scale projects and large-scale long-term programmes (Ennis and Tofa, 2020), to address problems that manifest at local, national and global levels (Kania et al., 2012). The model was developed in the United States. Whilst most of the literature and examples of its application have a North American focus (Smart, 2017), it has been applied in Australia, and some examples of initial CIM projects can be found in Europe (Beerman et al., 2021).



2.2 The foundations of the Collective Impact Model

CIM is built from a centralized infrastructure and a systemic approach to social impact. It promotes cross-sectoral collaboration, where various organizations make progress by pursuing shared goals (Kania and Kramer, 2011). A core assumption of this model is that complex social problems cannot be solved by single interventions, (Beerman et al., 2021), and often implies the creation of new organizations to coordinate and facilitate collective action. In this context, centralized infrastructure refers to a formal organizational structure that supports and coordinates a collective impact initiative. Unlike informal collaborations or loosely connected networks, collective impact initiatives require a dedicated backbone organization that facilitates communication, aligns activities, manages data and monitors progress. This ensures structure and collaboration remain focused on the shared agenda (Kania and Kramer, 2011). Through a coordinated strategy shared commitment, significant changes can be brought about within a community, both at the system level - indicating changes in core institutions - and at the population level, indicating behavioural changes in the affected population (Beerman et al., 2021).

Collective impact initiatives can play an important role in promoting problem-solving by increasing the involvement of different stakeholders in pursuing shared goals through deliberation, collaboration and connection (Lee and Levine, 2016). In this sense, **deliberation** means citizens coming together to openly discuss public issues. This process not only increases individuals' understanding of different points of view but also encourages the emergence of consensus and social support for policy measures. It is an essential step towards political action and fosters a sense of shared responsibility for the well-being of society. **Collaboration** is a natural development to deliberation. It implies jointly taking concrete actions to address local problems. Citizens must be able to move beyond their conversations and work together, even across boundaries that may hitherto have separated different groups and sectors. However, this collaboration must not only be purposeful, but also reflective, with citizens regularly evaluating the effectiveness of their actions and taking responsibility for the results. **Connection** is the glue that holds communities together. It is about building strong and lasting relationships among citizens and between citizens and local institutions. Trust, loyalty and hope are essential elements of these connections, which form a basis for healthy democracy and resilient communities. By connecting and building relationships, citizens can strengthen a sense of social cohesion and foster a sense of commonality (Lee and Levine, 2016).



2.3 The logic of collective impact

CIM is built on the idea that a collective of actors, working together transversally, will be more effective than individual actors working in relative isolation. The question then becomes why such a collective approach is better suited to tackling complex societal problems than other approaches. This is based on three main assumptions related to collective vigilance, collective learning and collective action.

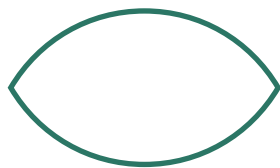
2.3.1 Collective vigilance

Collective engagement sharpens a community's collective vision, rather than each organization putting on its own lens. Setting a common agenda, with a shared understanding of the problem ensures that the collaboration of organizations will have more relevant opportunities during their process. Each stakeholder brings a fresh perspective to the collaboration that encourages creativity and new efforts. In this way, hitherto unnoticed resources and solutions can manifest for the problem, making it possible to build on already existing resources and solutions (Kania and Kramer, 2013).

2.3.2 Collective learning

Episodic evaluation is the norm in the non-profit sector. It is designed to assess the impact of individual initiatives and will often make a definitive final judgment on its failure or success. In contrast, developmental evaluation is better suited to CIM initiatives, as it more effectively navigates the complexity and emergence of unexpected situations or novel dimensions of the wicked problem throughout the process. This approach not only focuses on the relationships between organizations and the evolving problems or solutions that emerge, but also fosters a culture of continuous learning (Kania and Kramer, 2013).

Since CI is an adaptive process, leaders must remain acutely aware of changing conditions, seek opportunities to learn, share insights openly, and be willing to adjust in response to new developments. Through weekly or fortnightly reporting, developmental evaluation creates a constant feedback loop, consistently integrating new relationships and circumstances into the process. This reinforces strategic learning, where organizations actively use data and evaluative thinking to refine their approaches dynamically (Parkhurst and Preskill, 2014). By embedding learning into both strategy development and implementation, developmental evaluation complements the 'what' of shared measurement systems by also exploring the how and why behind emerging changes (Kania and Kramer, 2013).



2.3.3 Collective action

In effective CIMs, the learning process takes place almost simultaneously among all stakeholders, resulting in the joint development of new knowledge and new insights. This has two important consequences. First, it leads to the discovery of new solutions that meet the needs of multiple organizations, or are only realizable through collaboration, and secondly, all participating organizations will simultaneously adopt and implement the new solution (Kania and Kramer, 2013).

With an effective backbone and a shared measurement system to support it, the tiered levels of collaboration generate a significant degree of transparency between all organizations involved. While vision and oversight are centralized through a steering committee, they are also decentralized through multiple working groups focusing on different aspects of change. These working groups are most successful when they are representative of the already existing stakeholders. This leads to dynamic and forward-looking problem-solving that is both thorough and structured whilst being flexible and dynamic. Furthermore, it also increases the likelihood that a collective impact initiative will discover emerging solutions that meet the needs of all relevant stakeholders. Consequently, a more effective feedback cycle will emerge that allows different organizations to respond to additional information in an immediate and coordinated manner. This allows for greater benefit from each other's learning experiences, leading to a more aligned, direct and coordinated response (Kania and Kramer, 2013).



2.4 Preconditions for starting a collective impact initiative

If it is to generate significant impact, CIM needs three essential preconditions to be met before starting policy project Kania and Kramer (2011), to ensure that the necessary motivation is present to bring people from different sectors together (Kania et al., 2012).

Precondition 1

Urgency for change

There should be a broad sense of urgency by both the concerned community and the participating stakeholders (Beerman et al., 2021), if cooperation is to take off and succeed. In this respect, crises serve as critical moments when stakeholders and the concerned community are motivated to in a collective approach. Broad awareness is necessary to make the problem central (Kania et al., 2012).

Precondition 2

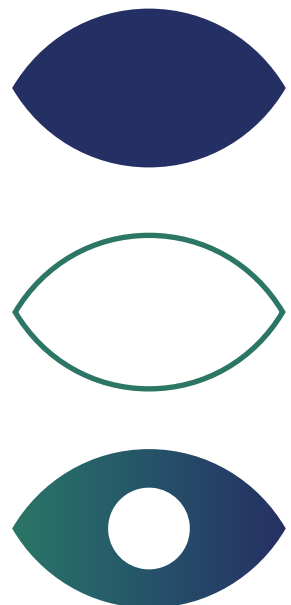
The presence of influential champions

The involvement of influential leaders is crucial. A CIM assumes the inclusion of key people of influence - the influential champions. This can be one person or a group of champions. Such figures lend respect and credibility to the initiative, and play a significant role in mobilizing financial resources and expanding the network (Beerman et al., 2021). These actors often come from the affected communities and possess particular talents and skills to bring together other involved stakeholders and maintain their active engagement. A key characteristic of influential leaders is their ability to undertake analysis, communication and problem-solving engagement with other stakeholders ensuring they do not impose their own views (Kania et al., 2012).

Precondition 3

Adequate financial and personal resources.

Finally, before starting a CIM project, all actors involved should be willing to invest and pool sufficient resources to finance and populate the necessary infrastructure. For a collective approach to succeed, the advantage of collectivizing is certainly of interest to funders.



2.5 Five building blocks for the success of a collective impact initiative

Once a project begins, the literature identifies five essential building blocks for success, the presence and sufficient development of which are necessary for success.

Building block 1

Common agenda

The first building block is a common agenda. This is not merely about having a common plan of action, it constitutes the broader framework in which all stakeholders commit to work together and goes beyond what individual partners can achieve alone (Beerman et al., 2021). The broad framework implies different organizations having a shared vision of the desired change. Rather than merely coordinating their actions, the stakeholders start from a similar definition of the problem, pursue similar goals, and seek a collective approach as a means to address the problems. This can be achieved through consensus on the actions needed and what constitutes the priority objectives (Kania and Kramer, 2011).

The common agenda is fundamental for collective action to succeed, but defining it is also one of the most difficult phases of the whole process. Drafting is about commitment. Partners must be brought together, engage in dialogue and listen to each other. Here, exploration and curiosity are important characteristics of the participating organizations. This should result in collective strategic thinking and commitment, with everyone aligned on the goal and the commitment needed to achieve it (Born, 2017).

Establishing a common agenda through collective strategic thinking requires: (i) the creation of a network of partners committed to bringing about change; (ii) the inclusion of actors other than experts, and importantly the inclusion stakeholders in the community who care about the problem-to-be-solved, and/or has lived it; (iii) high levels of curiosity and creativity; (iv) the ability to explore the problem both open-mindedly and focussed, zooming in on a particular problem to increase impact; (v) willingness and capacity to take time for the process of setting a common agenda; all stakeholders should take time, in addition to their own work, to work out a strategy for collaboration, joint goals and priorities (Born, 2017).



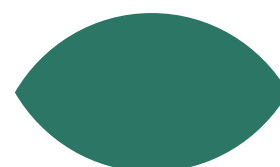
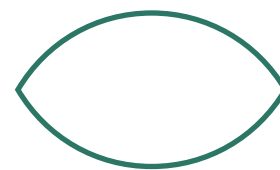
Building block 2**Shared measurement systems**

A common means of measuring results is maintained by collecting data on a consistent basis, and by defining a clear set of indicators in advance (Kania and Kramer, 2011). This ensures that the framework for action is supported by a common language ensuring better alignment between the goals of different stakeholders and allowing progress to be easily monitored. When different actions are mapped, it becomes clear which activities can reinforce each other, encouraging joint problem-solving. Organizations must meet regularly to share results, learn from each other and refine their individual and collective work. This kind of shared measurement system requires stakeholders to actively cooperate in reporting on their successes and failures and a clear expectation of transparency. Dedicated support from the backbone organization, reinforces the results by assessing the accuracy of the data (Kania et al., 2012).

As an initiative unfolds, partners must keep a close eye on the shared goals. In the early stages, slow or little progress towards the set goals is normal. Nevertheless, within three to four years the partners involved should expect to see clear and measurable results. Finding the right system to measure results is a complex challenge. Consequently, many initiators question the best way to measure the progress and success of their initiative (Parkhurst and Preskill, 2014). Previous studies on collective impact initiatives find this to be a challenging task. When there is a focus on more complex phenomena, such as social cohesion or poverty, a variety of organizations are often working in different domains with different audiences. Even the most dedicated and knowledgeable groups experience significant challenges that complicate their attempt to connect fragmented measurement systems (Cabaj, 2012). Consequently, reaching a consensus on which indicators to report on can be a lengthy process (Cabaj, 2017). There is also a cost associated with establishing shared measurement systems. Establishing systems to collect and understand data requires time, energy, and technical assistance, which usually demands a budget. In addition, despite the frequent focus on quantifiable indicators, it remains a reality that many outcomes of community change cannot be easily expressed as a number (Cabaj, 2012).

Over the last decade, the idea that shared data should support collective initiatives has become an essential condition within the social sector. Although, this vision of data collection remains relevant, the field has developed more nuanced understandings of how this can be applied in practice, it remains a source of frustration. The ability to use and act on data is a central competency of effective collective impact initiatives, but many engaged in this work struggle to collect and make best use of data (Pfiff, 2012).

Despite the costs and challenges involved, the benefits of developing effective shared measurement systems outweigh the disadvantages. Nevertheless, many CIM's often get stuck at this essential prerequisite, partly because participants find it difficult to agree on which community-level activities and outcomes are important to track and measure. When effort into the learning process is less than required, systems to effectively use feedback and insights to adjust thinking and planning are often lacking (Cabaj, 2012).

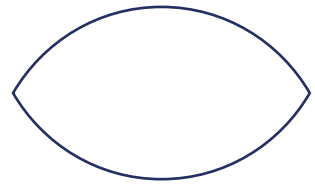


According to Parkhurst and Preskill (2014), certain steps to mitigate against failure can be followed when starting effective evaluation system in CIM's.

1. **Start early with data measurements:** Even before an initiative's shared measurement system goes live, collective impact partners can report a set of early performance indicators from existing data.
2. **Be clear about the design of data learning and integrate it from the start:** To make learning an ongoing and practical process, partners should put in place clear learning structures. For example, participating stakeholders can be asked to periodically identify and report urgent issues. These processes encourage the exchange of information, ideas, and questions, which is essential for the continuous improvement of the initiative
3. **Provide budget:** An ongoing investment in the measurement system is essential. For many collective impact initiatives, this means requiring a part-time or full-time staff member to collect data, analyze, integrate, and apply lessons learned. For other initiatives, external support may be needed, such as technical assistant or professional evaluator. Most initiatives will combine both internal and external evaluation resources at various times.

Pfiff (2021) further identifies four key lessons to help CIM's use their data more effectively for social change.

1. Priority should be given to learning from data rather than data systems *per se*. Thus shared measurement system are a means to an end, not ends in themselves. One should not only look quantitatively at the amount of data one collects, but how one will use the data to achieve the set goals.
2. CIM's should focus on data that highlights, rather than hides, the experiences of the people they want to support. Organizations will - often unintentionally - avoid the very populations they should be supporting. Communities should use data to recognize existing disparities and then address the structural inequalities experienced by these groups.
3. Use both qualitative and quantitative data. Often, when people want to gather evidence and demonstrate impact, people turn to quantitative data for the sake of funding. This is neither conducive to the learning process nor to achieving the set goals. CIM's need to be driven by data that reflect human experience; mixed method approaches are recommended to obtain a more complete picture of impact.



4. Often CIM's aim to implement large-scale change, but short-term and long-term goals should both be monitored. Overemphasis on long-term data and indicators can result in missed opportunities to capture slight changes, make interim adjustments and continuously improve. Choosing some intermediate measures to track both short-term and long-term impacts in the data system, gives a more nuanced and effective picture about the social impact of an initiative (Ebrahim et al., 2023). Examples include the following:
- In the Pro-Arsenaal project (see Mechelen Case study), a BIS internship scheme trained vulnerable young people in certain skills about safety and prevention to become neighbourhood guards. The results could be measured immediately providing a clear and concrete measure of short-term success, such as increased employment or improved skills.
 - In the same case study, long-term objectives and effects were monitored by the city administration by investigating whether the interns find employment in the safety and prevention sector, and whether they continued to use their new skills. This data could include tracking the employment of these interns or evaluating their experiences several years after the programme.

Building block 3

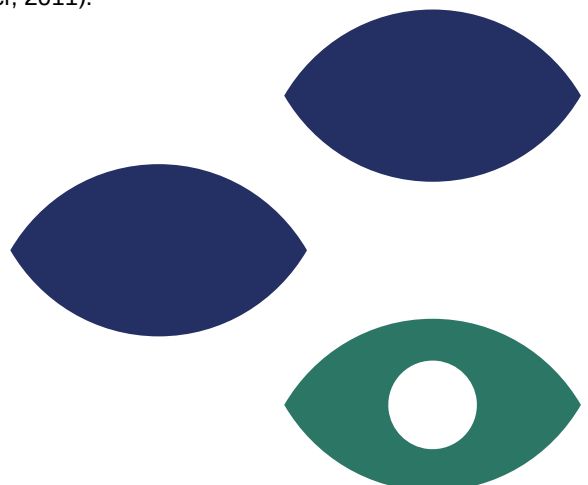
Mutually reinforcing activities

Collaboration between a diverse group of stakeholders is central to initiatives with collective impact. Here, the aim is not for all organizations to do the same thing, but rather for each organisation to take on the task in which it excels. In this way, their different activities will support each other if done in a coordinated way (Kania and Kramer, 2011).

Building block 4

Continuous communication

This builds, maintains, and when needed, re-establishes trust between different organisations such as non-profit organisations, government agencies, businesses and the affected community. A process with collective impact often takes several years, and for strategic engagement between partners to succeed, it is important to meet regularly (Beerman et al., 2021) to remind stakeholders of the common motivation behind their efforts. Moreover, it also facilitates the seamless integration of replacement people, or the integration of new actors due to changing and emerging needs. Finally, continuous communication provides a common vocabulary, which takes time to form, but is essential for developing a shared agenda and shared measurement systems (Kania and Kramer, 2011).



Building block 5**Backbone Support Organization**

The backbone support organisation is the spine of a CIM. It is crucial and indispensable for coordinating the various individual partners (Turner et al., 2012), and provides support and coordination to the other building blocks. This separate body needs dedicated staff (Kania and Kramer, 2011), and can be comprised of more than one organisation (Kania et al., 2012).

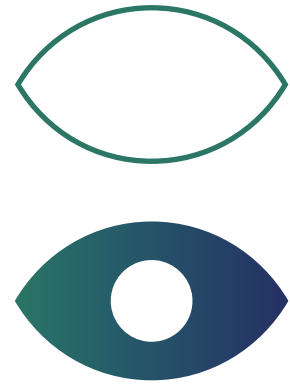
Since the tasks of the backbone organisation are too complex to be performed by a single actor, multi-level cooperation is required. Hanleybrown, Kania, and Kramer (2012) describe tiered levels of linked cooperation. It starts with the establishment of a steering committee, consisting of CEO individuals from the various cross-sectoral organisations dealing with the wicked problem, and representatives of stakeholders in the problem. The steering committee's responsibility includes the formulation of a joint agenda, which forms the basis for developing a strategic action framework. Once the strategic framework for action has been established, various working groups can be initiated, each focusing on the different pillars of this framework. These various working groups communicate with each other in tiered levels of linked cooperation. This implies that through effective coordination of the backbone organisation, aligned actions are possible between numerous organisations simultaneously addressing various dimensions of a complex problem.

The literature highlights two main forms of leadership for the backbone organisation: adaptive and systemic. The former is attentive to creating an environment in which the various stakeholders interact, work together to solve problems where necessary, whilst the latter is concerned to develop a more holistic view. It incorporates micro and macro perspectives to understand the different factors and circumstances that contribute to the problem and integrating them into the group's thinking and actions (Smart, 2017).

The Backbone organisation has six activities to fulfil. First, a clear vision and strategic direction must be set. Here, the task is to guide the various partners in finding a common understanding of the problem and setting a common agenda. Secondly, they support dialogue between the aligned activities, facilitating stakeholders to ensure that mutually reinforcing activities can be monitored. Thirdly, to establish common measurement practices that monitor agreed measurement systems and oversee data collection. Fourthly, they advance the policy agenda of each organisation ensuring they are aligned with the common policy agenda of the CIM. Fifth, they work to build public will. The organisation must coordinate community outreach, stakeholder communication and building commitment. Finally, they ensure private and public funding remains managed and focused on the goals of the CIM (Turner et al., 2012).

All aspects related to planning, managing, supporting and monitoring a CIM are therefore part of the backbone organisation's remit. Furthermore, the organisation is crucial for building trust among partners. The organisation requires a team of dedicated staff, which acts as an example for other participating organisations, highlighting the value of such dedicated staff with a proactive attitude within a partnership (Beerman et al., 2021).

The backbone organisation faces two challenges in terms of funding and leadership. Success demands a strong executive with adaptive leadership skills to mobilise people without imposing a set plan or claiming personal credit for success. They must strike a balance between exercising strong leadership to keep all stakeholders together, with playing a more subdued role so all stakeholders experience ownership of the initiative's success, even if this means operating more 'behind the scenes' (Kania et al., 2012).



2.6 The three phases of the Collective Impact Model

Once the three preconditions are met, three stages are necessary to achieve collective impact (Hanleybrown, Kania, and Kramer, 2012).

- **Phase 1 Initiating action:** The first phase roughly examines which key players occupy the landscape around a social problem, what work is already underway, and what arguments for change around the social problem are in present. In this phase, the initial governance structure is figured out with a strong champion.
- **Phase 2 Designing and organising for impact:** Stakeholders are brought together to design common goals and a shared measurement system. This phase also further develops the backbone infrastructure to align with the organisations involved.
- **Phase 3 Sustainable action and impact:** Stakeholders will actively learn and engage in mutually reinforcing activities. Systematic data collection will take place, and people will target priority areas for action in a coordinated manner.

In these phases, initiatives are most effective when they build from existing organisations and efforts (Kania et al., 2012). Furthermore, it is also important to be realistic and patient. An initiative can take a decade or more to come to peak fruition and will be in constant flux. For instance, setting the common agenda already requires two steps that undergo continuous change. On the one hand, geographical boundaries need to be set, but may change over time as subsequent analyses and activities may reveal other problems, stakeholders and regions that were not originally involved. On the other, a strategic framework for action needs to be developed. A successful framework for action includes several components that also undergo change throughout the process. The problem definition, the desired goal of change, key strategies to achieve that goal and an evaluation approach to how the initiative will obtain feedback and deal with it are components that change continuously throughout the process, according to emerging issues (Kania et al., 2012).

1
2
3



In 2018, the Tamarack Institute envisaged a reworked 'tool' – a version with 5 phases of collective impact (Tamarack Institute, 2018):

○ **Phase 1: Assess readiness.**

In this phase, it is the job of community leaders to assess community readiness to address socially complex problems, and the urgency and consensus within the community to move forward. In this phase, the problem and context clarified, and what resources are available are assessed. In addition, a plan to engage the community is developed

○ **Phase 2: Taking action.**

Once the decision is made to apply the CIM approach, the process of taking action begins. In this phase, community leaders identify influential champions and seek to form the backbone organisation and a shared agenda.

○ **Phase 3: Organising for impact.**

This phase moves from planning to action. The goal is to empower everyone involved in the initiative to actively contribute to the collective impact project and elicit input from the community for the shared agenda. The Backbone organisation helps coordinate and create space for developing the shared agenda. They take care of initiating working groups around underlying issues if necessary. Finally, they also consider a system to keep track of shared data and statistics.

○ **Phase 4: Implementation.**

This phase involves strong community involvement and mutually reinforcing actions and partnerships. public will to work collectively on the problem is built. The Backbone organisation ensures they stay in line with the shared agenda. In this phase, there is a strong emphasis on impact evaluation and individual actions with indicators established to measure impact and track results through reporting.

○ **Phase 5 Sustained action and impact.**

This phase builds on prior evaluations to learn collectively and refine strategies. Data collection is ongoing to monitor and report on the process and improve it. The community still remains actively involved.

It is important to note that in practice the model is less linear than the above phases suggest. CIM's are iterative processes which include repetition and ongoing (re)evaluation of previous steps (Tamarack Institute, 2018).

1
2
3
4
5



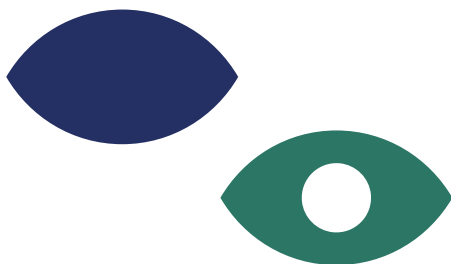
2.7 Challenges in applying the Collective Impact Model

CIM's can produce powerful results because of the increased alertness provided by multiple organisations who jointly seek resources and innovations toward a common goal. Continuous feedback loops ensure immediate action through the coordinated and simultaneous engagement of all participants (Kramer, 2013). However, the straightforward nature of the CIM can also prove to be a challenge. It is a simple model, but preconditions and conditions have to be met. Often, organisations and cooperating collectives believe they are in the process of implementing CI when in reality they are focusing only on one or two conditions, or involving selected sectors instead of all interested organisations. For a CI initiative to succeed, it is important to engage on all conditions so that forces can be combined in the most effective way (Beerman et al., 2021).

Not every problem is suitable for a CIM approach. There has to be a belief that long-term investment by stakeholders is necessary to achieve success. In its absence, there is a danger in applying a CIM to collaborative initiatives aimed at achieving short-term goals, for which it is less suitable.

Uniting individuals who previously had no common experience is a complex task, where building mutual trust plays a crucial role. Thus, giving insufficient attention to the role and place of the community must be guarded against (Beerman et al., 2021). A persistent criticism of collective impact initiatives is that they often fail to provide meaningful engagement and leadership from the concerned community. Without the deep involvement of community members, the actions and solutions proposed may be inappropriate, unacceptable or ineffective within the local context, as they may not correspond properly to the real needs of that community. When people who are directly affected by a problem participate actively, it not only leads to solutions that better meet their needs, but also has a greater chance of being embraced and adhered to (Smart, 2017).

After reflecting on collective impact efforts, Kania et al (2022) concluded that CI efforts are deficient in centralising social equity. The term 'equity' should not be confused with 'equality'. Whereas 'equality' assumes equal treatment for all, 'equity' recognises that a 'one-size-fits-all' approach is not enough as not everyone starts from the same starting position and that the support and resources needed to be successful may differ. 'Equality' implies that everyone, regardless of their circumstances, is given the same resources and opportunities, without regard to any existing advantages or disadvantages faced by certain groups. Thus, when talking about 'equity', specific needs and the context of a person or particular group must be taken into account.



That is why some propose redefining collective impact, to include equity as an essential prerequisite. They define collective impact as a network of community members, institutions and organizations that promote equity by learning together and coordinating actions to bring about change at population and system levels. Centralizing equity requires a reconsideration of assumptions about problems and recognizes the unique experiences of marginalized groups. Arguably, the collective impact framework does not pay sufficient attention to issues of power and justice, especially the ways in which these concepts cut across gender, ethnicity and socio-economic status. Projects are often carried out within existing unequal power structures, instead of trying to address them. The dominant focus tends toward involving leaders from business, government and non-profit organizations, with less attention given to prioritizing the involvement of the communities most affected by the social problems that collective impact targets (Ennis and Tofa, 2020). In focusing on changing underlying systems, collective impact requires diverse representation in leadership as well as strategies to shift power; stakeholders need to recognise their role in identifying and correcting inequalities, which are often ignored (Kania et al., 2022).

Collective impact projects take a long time to show results, making evaluation a lengthy and labour-intensive process. In addition, multi-stakeholder collaboration leads to attribution problems, with individual contributions difficult to identify (Ennis and Tofa, 2020). Developing shared measurement systems is one of the most complex challenges when implementing a CI initiative (Beerman et al., 2021). According to Kania and Kramer (2011), a shared data system can only be effective if all stakeholders make the results fully public and use this information to continuously improve their joint work. Research on CI initiatives has shown that understandings of the shared measurement process is often deficient when the focus has been primarily reliant on collecting quantitative data, rather than learning. It is essential to constantly communicate and focus on understanding the “why” (Beerman et al., 2021). A CI initiative requires continuous measurement and evaluation to learn and improve. Such projects are complex and dynamic, with multiple and changing strategies that complicate the task of evaluation. This is compounded by changes in context: demographic, organisational and/or policy environments all need to be reflexively monitored and managed.

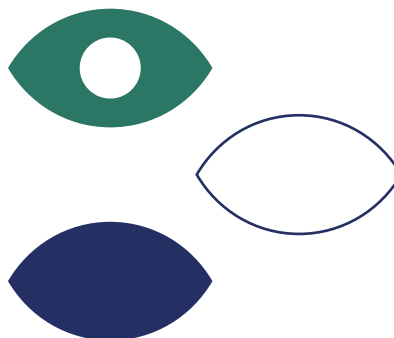


2.8 Addressing the challenges: Collective Impact 3.0

It is clear that there are several challenges in undertaking collective impact initiatives. According to Cabaj and Weaver (2016) of the Tamarack Institute, Kania and Kramer's 2011 collective impact model falls short, reflecting too little focus on the role of the community, and for investing too much in Backbone support. They suggest greater emphasis on fundamental system and policy change rather than short-term data (Cabaj and Weaver, 2016). Based in Canada, The Tamarack Institute specialises in promoting community change on challenging issues with a particular stress on reducing poverty. Since the introduction of the model in 2011, the institute has translated the collective impact model into tangible projects, and co-authored the Collective Impact Forum (Weaver, 2019). The Institute discerns three versions of the CIM: Phase 1.0 refers to the period prior to Kramer and Kania's article, and describes initiatives that spontaneously developed in the absence of a formal theoretical model. Collective Impact 2.0, is Kania and Kramer's 2011 version, taken up and reviewed in many communities. Collective Impact 3.0, is the institute's own incarnation that aims to deepen the model and respond to criticisms (Cabaj and Weaver, 2016).

The Tamarack Institute does not see its version as a replacement for Kania and Kramer's 2011 collective impact model. According to them, the framework has much that is 'about right', and has had successes in building collaborations to build stronger communities, and regard their version as a refinement rather than a replacement. They plan to release an upgrade to address the key criticisms and limitations formulated with the model, by incorporating the strength and weakness found in the original framework and insights from experience (Cabaj and Weaver, 2016).

The aim of the update is to shift the leadership paradigm in the model **from 'management-minded' to 'movement building'**, under the motto: 'act like an organisation, but think like a movement'. There should be a stronger emphasis on community engagement and deep systemic change, with management approaches that envisage leaders coming together by domain - such as education, poverty or health - to think about improvements to the existing system and ways to achieve better results. This approach puts a stronger focus on system improvement through joint-action measures, data sharing and coordination of services, and away from a focus on "cross-sector leaders at the CEO level", to embed the essential concept that those most affected by a problem fully participate in the solutions (Cabaj and Weaver, 2016).



The ‘movement building’ approach thus prioritizes **systemic reform** rather than minor improvements. The difference lies in leaders bringing together diverse stakeholders, including those not in traditional institutions or seats of power, who collectively develop a vision for the future from the experiences and stories of all stakeholders. CI 3.0 (Cabaj and Weaver, 2016). The following explicates in greater detail the refinements they suggest.

1. From a common agenda to a common ambition

It is essential that a wide range of community members must set the common agenda. They agree that participants working on a problem often see the causes and solutions from different perspectives which often leads to results being fragmented and individualised. However, they argue that strong leadership is required to achieve a common agenda. Key stakeholders must be brought together to assess and clarify the problem, and collectively form a shared vision of the changes needed and the strategies required to realise them. According to the Tamarack Institute, a focus on a common ambition can be even more effective in creating a broader movement for change. This requires participants to deliver results based on shared values among stakeholders within the community. A strong community vision can create an environment in which a diverse group can address the interdependent challenges underlying difficult issues (Cabaj and Weaver, 2016).

2. From common measurements to strategic learning

According to the Tamarack Institute, participants need to approach their shared process of measurements within a context of evaluation and learning. If social innovators are to transform the dynamic and complex systems that underpin social problems, the measurement tools must be manageable, able to provide real-time feedback on the results, and have a robust process for sense-making and decision-making. Moreover, as strategies adjust to respond to findings or changed circumstances, measurement tools must evolve with them (Cabaj and Weaver, 2016).

3. From continuous communication to authentic engagement

Putting the community first through authentic engagement, ensures everyone affected by the problem should be able to participate fully in the effort to address it. Together, equal stakeholders form a broader constituency that wants to champion change (Cabaj and Weaver, 2016).



4. From mutually reinforcing activities to high leverage and systemic focus

For Kania and Kramer (2011), the focus for stakeholder relations was on mutually reinforcing activities. This has two limitations, according to the Tamarack Institute. First, it might inadvertently encourage participants to focus too much on collaborations rather than achieving the greatest outcomes for systemic change. Participants should strive to understand complex systems, explore strategies for change and look beyond collaborations with other stakeholders. and adapt their strategies accordingly. Secondly, participants are limited in establishing independent - or even competing - paths to the common goal. The Tamarack Institute therefore advocates allowing mutual and independent strategies, through a combination of loose and tighter knit relationships. The aim should be to find an intersection between leveraged collaboration, evolving systems and independent actions (Cabaj and Weaver, 2016).

4

5. From a backbone support to a 'container for change'

Kania and Kramer's model of a top-down focused approach with a central organisation taking the lead, is replaced by a more bottom-up approach. *Contra* Kania and Kramer, the 'backbone' organisation is conceived less as a rigid, structured coordination, and more an organic approach, where stakeholders' needs and project progress determines the management function (Cabaj and Weaver, 2016). Using the concept of a 'container for change', the Tamarack Institute highlights the importance of creating a flexible and adaptive environment where participants can work together towards common goals.

5

Despite these insights this report will continue with Kania and Kramer's original framework, preconditions and building blocks.



3 Methodology

This study explores the potential of the collective impact model as a policy network and method of policymaking for local governments in Europe. The research methodology used in this study includes three case studies, Malmö, Mechelen and Skive, which are analyzed to explore the extent to which their CIM characteristics, preconditions and building blocks. A collective impact initiative should be seen as an emergent process rather than a predetermined and isolated approach. Therefore, this study is exploratory in nature. The case study approach is particularly suitable for this purpose, as it is able to identify and capture emerging phenomena that would otherwise be overlooked by standardized research tools (Zuckerman et al., 2020). These case studies are not intended as a comprehensive evaluation of the initiatives in question, but rather serve as a descriptive analysis to understand the model and the range of personal experiences of participants. This approach allows us to identify the main results already achieved, as well as the challenges the model faces within the context of local governments.

Each case has its own specific context. The first concerns the climate transition policy in Malmö, Sweden: 'Klimatomställning Malmö'. This large-scale policy plan on climate change and the green transition in Malmö did not explicitly depart from the CIM, but the principles underlying its approach show strong similarities with it. The second is located in Mechelen, Belgium. The local government wanted to address challenges such as the lack of social cohesion and the deteriorating quality of housing in the Arsenaal neighbourhood, through a 'neighbourhood improvement contract' project. Here they started explicitly from the collective impact model to increase social capital in the neighbourhood and create a pleasant living environment where everyone feels at home. The third case was concerned with the 'Climate Villages' project within the climate policy of Skive Municipality, Denmark. Although this was not set up from the collective impact model, we examine to what extent the different building blocks of the model can be linked to the project.

Two types of data were used. First, administrative and policy documents related to CIM initiatives were gathered and analysed (see annex 1 for overview of sources). Then, primary data were collected from targeted qualitative in-depth interviews with respondents related to the collective impact initiatives and people from partner organizations. These interview data were pseudonymized. A semi-structured interview protocol was used to ensure consistency and comparability of the information drawn from the interviews (see appendix 2), whilst also providing flexibility to the researcher and interviewee for depth and their own elaborations. A total of 10 different respondents was interviewed across the three cases. These respondents were chosen because of their substantive expertise and diverse (political, administrative and civil society) perspectives on each of the cases. All interviews were conducted by the primary researcher, K.G.. In Mechelen, four individual interviews were conducted, in Skive one individual respondent was interviewed and a focus group with four participants was organized, and for Malmö two respondents were interviewed. Despite the lower number of interviews in Malmö, the data collected from both interviews and documents provided sufficient relevant insights, reaching a saturation point and indicating that further interviews were unlikely to yield any new substantial information. The interviews were transcribed verbatim, and a thematic analysis was conducted to assess the preconditions, building blocks and challenges of the CIM in each of the cases.





Case studies





Malmö

4.1 Case 1: Climate transition Malmö (Sweden)

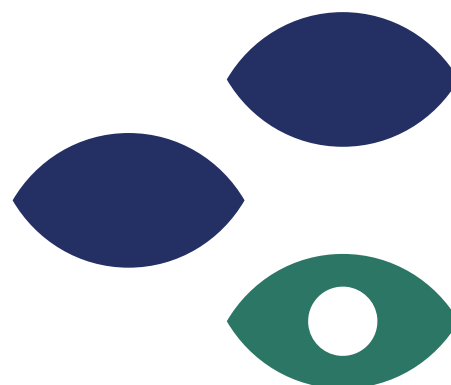
4.1.1 Case description

In recent years, the city of Malmö has focused on the large-scale policy program “**Klimatomställning Malmö**”. The city identifies climate change as a wicked problem and recognizes it as one of the greatest challenges of the 21st century. Climate change and environmental pollution pose complex threats to the entire society and economic system of the city. The Malmö city council therefore set itself three objectives: (1) to be territorially climate neutral by 2030; (2) reduce consumption-based emissions from citizens; and (3) achieve net-zero emissions as a city organization by 2030 (Malmö, 2021a).

Although the city council did not initially start from the CIM, the approach shows considerable similarities. In their presentation of climate policy, the city began by indicating that no single actor can tackle the problem. Analyses by the city of Malmö indicated that Malmö could become climate positive by 2030, but it would only be achievable if all stakeholders in the city actively worked together to find joint solutions and exploit their full potential. In this plan, various city departments would work together with large companies that had a significant impact on the climate. Other stakeholders such as civil society organisations, universities and other civil society actors were also actively involved.

The following elements of the CIM conditions were present in the Malmö case:

1. **Cross-sectoral cooperation:** Key actors from various sectors were identified and invited to jointly formulate a shared agenda with a clear, common goal. Various roadmaps mapped out the parties involved, and the efforts needed to achieve the 2030 climate targets.
2. **Monitoring systems:** Models were also developed to monitor progress and learning processes, and to improve efficiency. This involved ongoing analysis, reporting, and categorization of Malmö's climate situation, including emissions and adaptation needs.
3. **Dialogue and coordination:** concepts for citizen dialogue and cooperation were created, including the introduction of the ‘climate contract’. The roadmaps facilitated the composition of thematic partnerships.
4. **Continuous communication:** The process is iterative in nature, with regular feedback moments where the plan is adjusted and revised.



4.1.2 Preconditions for the use of the CIM

The fact that the city of Malmö employed a CIM-based governance model in the development of its climate transition is based on the presence of several preconditions.

Precondition 1

Urgency for change

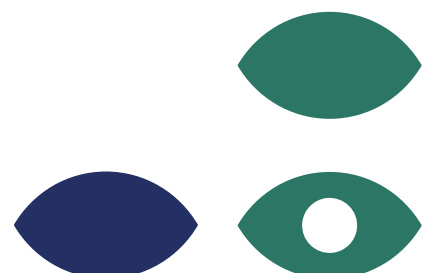
In the explanatory memorandum of the project “Klimatomställning Malmö”, the city of Malmö acknowledges that from an environmental and socio-economic development perspective, climate change is a problem that urgently needs to be tackled in a more efficient way. Climate adaptation is a priority component. Given the city's high population density and its fragile low elevation above sea level at the mouth of the coast, Malmö considers it essential to take immediate action. Using various figures, the city showed that Malmö suffers from rising water levels, regular storms, heavy rainfall, heat waves and drought (Malmö, 2021a).

Despite the decline in emissions figures with a rapidly growing population, the city realized that progress was too slow. They were well aware of the fact that cooperation, collective learning and mobilisation are the crucial factors for innovation and acceleration. That is why the city had been looking for good examples of best practice to tackle climate change and investigated which success factors play a role in this.

One of the respondents remarked that many stakeholders saw that this was a problem that needed to be tackled urgently. There are also external drivers for this:

“It becomes more difficult if you go into how much it will cost, who will pay what, and so on. But everyone sees that they have to make this transition, and that it is in their own interest. This can be due to various motives involved. On the one hand, you have the European ETS scheme with your emission regulations. The carbon pricing mechanism will be the incentive for them to work with us. They have to work together. There are also targets or guidelines from the European Commission that then create the conditions for the different ones. So there are all kinds of different drivers that are not necessarily driven by the city, but by a much larger market or other interests.” (Respondent 1)

According to the city, and consistent with the collective impact model, a collective approach would be the only efficient way to tackle the problem. They not only felt that there was a need for immediate action, but also that there was a broad interest and willingness among companies and stakeholders in the city to participate in this climate transition (Respondent 1). Nonetheless, the concern came mainly from professionals, and the process was partly initiated as a top-down process. The interviews show that climate change was not a top priority in daily life for many citizens, simply because they are more concerned with other obligations. Only activists or professionals within the field have the space to engage intensively with these issues. More positively, there was a strong and continuous dialogue on climate issues within professional networks, especially between companies, government agencies and other organisations. In Malmö, there was a well-developed network of professionals who worked full-time or part-time on climate issues, supported by various schemes and ongoing projects. This professional ecosystem played a crucial role in the transition, while the involvement of ordinary citizens remained more limited.



Precondition 2**Presence of influential champions**

The driving force behind the climate transition was the city of Malmö (Malmö, 2021). The board explicitly stated that cities were key players and had a crucial role within the climate transition and the achievement of SDGs.

The city also presented itself as a pioneer in the field of climate change. Firstly, the city has years of experience as a leading eco-city in the field of sustainable development. Malmö was a pioneer in Sweden to integrate the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as strategic spearheads in its policy. It also played an important role in promoting sustainable development in the city and the surrounding region, particularly in the areas of urban planning, consumption and mobility. Furthermore, the city of Malmö was one of the founding members of the platform 'viable cities', in which 23 Swedish cities are jointly committed to being climate-neutral cities by 2023. Finally, the city itself stated it had been an international role model for more than two decades. In their Environmental programme they say the following:

"Malmö has been an international role model for more than two decades, and we shall continue to be a progressive role model by playing a leading role in relevant regional, national and international initiatives. [...] We have the ambition, the skills and knowledge and the resources to continue to play a leading role." (Malmö, 2021a, p. 3)

In the Climate City Contract, the city started by expressing the need to tackle climate change (Malmö, 2021b). They point to the fact that today's rapidly changing world needs new ways of working together. They can only work on a climate transition by creating a sustainable organisational adaptability, encouraging innovation and creativity. Recognizing that it can be both part of the problem and the solution, the city was therefore willing to start a collective approach to a climate transition. They were able to use experience and knowledge from previous partnerships and collaborations with industry, academia and civil society in addressing the complexities of a just and equitable climate transition. They attributed themselves a key role in mobilising various stakeholders and providing a financing plan.

Although the policy programme was widely supported, some specific influential champions could be identified. At the beginning of the 21st century a group of top managers, including the then director of the Malmö environmental department, emerged as key figures who drew attention to the subject. According to one of the respondents, this group, together with the mayor at the time, paved the way for the large-scale project that is going on today. The respondent mentioned that it was then that the starting signal was given for the current result, a long tradition of working on sustainable urban development in the broad sense. The ruling politicians can also be seen as influential champions who set goals that the city council was obliged to follow. In addition, three directors of city departments played important roles: the directors of the environment; urban and spatial planning; and parks. In 2018, they gave the project leader the task of producing a plan of action for the complex problem of climate change. He thought about a plan of action: how will we achieve those objectives? What design can we use for this? And how can we implement that?



Precondition 3

Adequate sources

Malmö is a very well-funded city, with the desire to be climate neutral by 2030. This meant that the city needed to invest substantially in green energy, sustainable buildings and environmentally friendly transport. Essential **financial resources** were made available to support the climate transition, and were earmarked to be sourced from a number of different places. The analysis of the financial plan revealed three sources of funding:

- Green Bonds: Since 2017, Malmö has been borrowing around SEK 1 billion each year through 'green bonds' – loans specifically intended for sustainable projects.
- Other loans and credits: Malmö can also borrow from major European banks such as the European Investment Bank (EIB) and the Nordic Investment Bank (NIB).
- Own budget: In recent years, the city has largely paid for its investments without additional loans, because the finances are well managed.

They wanted to approach the investments in three different ways:

- Smart investing: Malmö looked at how they could help small businesses and housing associations and finance green projects, for example, by pooling investments.
- New sources of income: higher parking fees and additional taxes on waste processing to pay for sustainable projects.
- Collaboration: the city brought investors and entrepreneurs together to get green projects off the ground faster.

Progress is currently measured by economic and financial indicators, but some parameters are still under development. By 2026, the full roadmap and investment plan for the final phase up to 2030 should be ready.

In addition, **human resources** will also be made available. The interviews indicated that it was not just a matter of money, but that combination of the right people with the right talents and skills is needed.

"It's easy for people to get bogged down on funding, but funding is just one part, and like, if you don't have the right people with the right competencies, with the right mandates, and the right organizational structures and all these kinds of support functions, you're not going to get anywhere." (R1)

More than 200 people are involved in Climate Transition Malmö within various departments of the city; the core team consists of 20 full-time staff.





4.1.3 Process-based building blocks

The preconditions ensured that the Climate Transition in Malmö began under a good star, but during the process itself, attention was paid to various processes that exhibit close association with the building blocks of a CIM.

Building block 1

Common agenda

Climate change and environmental pollution were isolated as the **common problem**, creating complex threats to the entire social and economic fabric of the city. The **common goal** of 'Klimatomställning Malmö' was thus to contribute to limiting global warming (Malmö, 2021a, 2021b). The city's more specific stated goal was to be climate neutral by 2030, reached in part by reducing emissions based on consumption, and on achieving net-zero emissions as a city organization. They asked themselves the following question: How can we achieve a high standard of living and a good quality of life within the planetary boundaries throughout Malmö?

To translate this overarching strategic objective into a concrete plan, the environmental department, together with other municipal departments and the business community, developed 'The Environmental Programme for the City of Malmö 2021-2030' (Malmö, 2021a). This programme forms the basis of, and broad common agenda, for Malmö's climate work. This strategic document indicated the direction for the city's long-term activities and described twelve goals to reduce the climate impact by the year 2030.

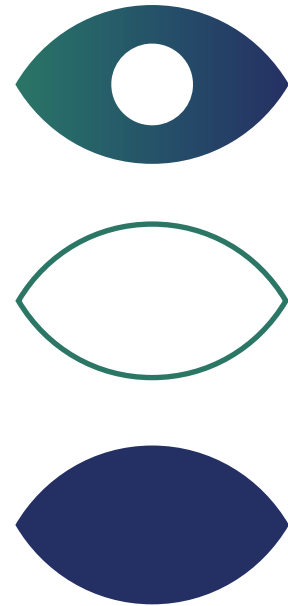


Figure 1: Defining the common agenda (Climate Transition Malmö)



The development of the project followed the sequence often described in the literature, i.e. beginning broadly when forming the common agenda before focusing more concretely. The search for a common understanding of the problem was operationalised through a major strategic analysis which began in 2019, and was organised around three central questions: how far they could get by 2030? What were the most important measures to take? How does what is happening in the world affect Malmö? This analysis resulted in several shifts that led to seven priority transition policy areas being formulated, coupled with detailed 'roadmaps' in which the current situation and the goals for each area would be discussed. As the final step, twelve 'Goals' were developed to realise the vision. This process was an iterative process, in which the Common Agenda is consistently assessed throughout the process.

The **seven priority transition areas**, and the areas in which action and cooperation have the potential to achieve significant emission reductions by 2030, were:

- **Electricity supply** – Areas of interest: development of city-owned solar company, lobbying for increased infrastructure capacity and wind investment in region.
- **Circular economy** – Areas of interest: heat recovery, circular construction materials, market development recycled materials, circular procurement and consumer goods.
- **Heating** – Areas of interest: separation of plastics, new local CHP capacity, Carbon capture and storage.
- **Climate-neutral construction** – Areas of interest: urban development process, site preparation and aggregates, circular / carbon neutral materials, renovation and property management, carbon storage and compensation.
- **Mobility** – Areas of interest: electrification of bus fleet, improved public transport, Metro to Copenhagen, accessibility, micromobility, regional system perspective.
- **Climate-smart consumption** – Areas of interest: social equity, food, textiles, mobility, and tourism.
- **Net Zero Organization** – Areas of interest: carbon neutral procurement, construction and energy efficiency.

For each of these areas, a '**Roadmap**' was developed, to set priorities in a common direction. The roadmaps assess where the city currently stands in each transition area, where people want to go and what is needed to achieve it. Each roadmap contains an analysis of the current situation, activities and objectives for each transition area. Together, they form a comprehensive collection of actions and measures that are supported and implemented by various municipal administrations, municipal companies, businesses, civil society and academia. These actions and measures are not only designed to achieve the 2030 targets, but also to build sustainable partnerships in the future. It examines who needs to be involved and what challenges may arise. The roadmaps are used in administrations to get a clearer picture of priorities between actions and to see which existing actions need to be supplemented. As indicated earlier, this is an iterative process, in which a review takes place every two years. The roadmaps are therefore under continuous development and the plans are evaluated and updated on the basis of new insights and results achieved. One respondent said the following:



“The roadmap actually offers everyone involved in the climate transition a direction that they should be able to use. Aren’t perfect yet, but they should be able to pick up, read through and understand. This is where we want to be. This is where we are today. These are the trends we see. These are the big shifts we need to work on. So it actually provides a framework for everyone to navigate together. It is then up to each individual actor to make their own decisions.” (Respondent 1)

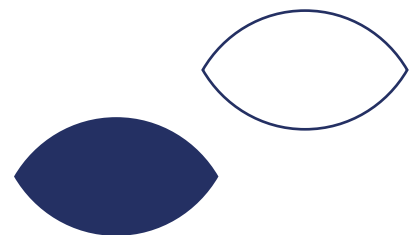
The roadmaps provide a common knowledge to understand what is happening and what can be done. The intention is that participating actors report on the objectives in the roadmaps. This way one can measure the collective impact and find out which things have a positive effect.

As a final step, **twelve ultimate goals** of the climate plan were defined from these roadmaps in the Environmental programme (Malmö, 2021):

- Greenhouse gas emissions in the Malmö geographical area have been reduced by 70 per cent.
- The Malmö City organization has net zero emissions.
- By 2030, Malmö’s consumption-related greenhouse gas emissions are well on their way to reaching sustainable levels.
- Malmö is 100 per cent powered by renewable and recycled energy.
- In Malmö, exposure to harmful substances to health has decreased significantly.
- In Malmö, the supply and access to green and blue environments has increased.
- Malmö has a sustainable mobility system.
- Malmö’s resilience to the changing climate has increased.
- Increased biodiversity in Malmö.
- Protect Malmö’s agricultural landscape and cultivate agriculture sustainably.
- Increased marine protected areas in Malmö and sustainable management of water and seas.
- Increased resource efficiency.

It was clear from the Malmö initiative that the preparation of the common agenda was a **time-consuming process** that cannot be achieved in a few months. It often takes several years, with adjustments continuously being made to the common agenda for the sake of the ongoing learning process. This is emphasized several times in the city’s documents regarding their climate transition (Malmö, 2021a). When the Climate Transition Team was set up, it was soon apparent that the roll-out of the policy would take up to 5 years. The action plan, for example, is the result of two years of development work. In addition, it would take years before all parts would be fully operational and all relevant stakeholders would be involved. While the city has already made significant progress in refining the direction they want to take on climate change, they acknowledge that most of the work remains to be done.

When forming the common agenda, it is important that there is **continuous involvement of the various stakeholders**. In the Environmental Programme, this also emerged as a crucial element: “All citizens of Malmö must be part of the solution and ask themselves how they can contribute to sustainability” (Malmö, 2021, p. 5).

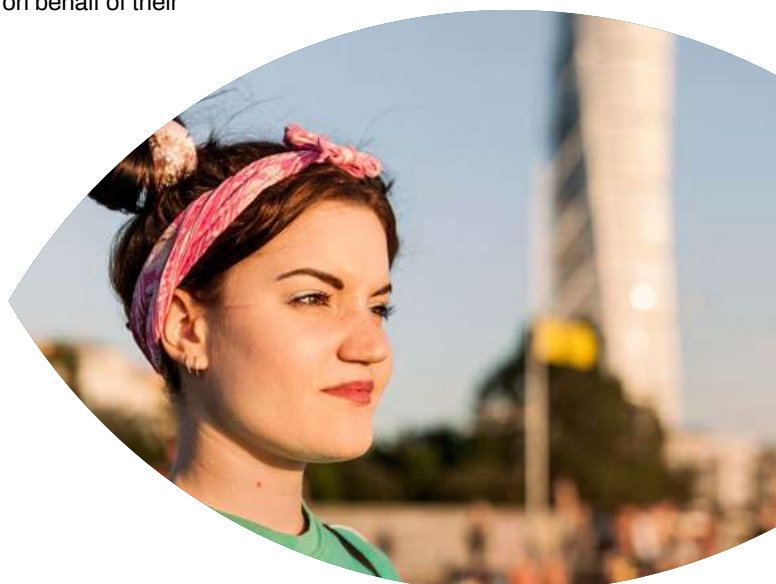
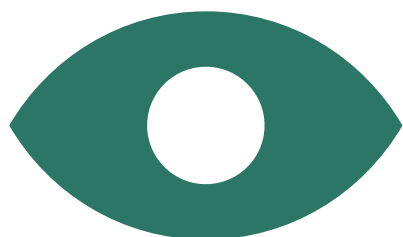


The work carried out cuts across various sectors: business, civil society, academia, media, public organisations and the people of Malmö are all involved in shaping the common agenda of the policy plan. In this way, everyone is mobilized to take action in the same direction. The selection of stakeholders within the Malmö climate contract was based on several criteria. Because of their significant impact, heavy emitters were approached directly on emissions, whilst organisations with a broad social reach, such as sports clubs and landlords of apartments, were involved because they can reach and influence many citizens. For the city, it is an important and ongoing process, to create the conditions that enable citizens to actively participate in policy decisions that will make an impact to ensure sustainable development in the long term. The project leader of the climate transition in Malmö faces a complex challenge: how and when to effectively involve citizens in the transition process. A central question is to what extent citizens should actually be involved. For some themes, such as mobility, the impact on daily life is immediately felt, making citizen participation seem self-evident. In other themes, such as the construction sector, the focus may be on efficient systems in collaboration with a small number of stakeholders, such as real estate owners and construction companies, rather than large-scale citizen participation.

The importance of *meaningful* involvement should be emphasized. Although the city considers citizens to be important stakeholders, the project was mainly initiated by the city itself, with a strong focus on the business community, knowledge institutions and partly civil society. Citizens already have many obligations in their daily lives, and involving them should actually contribute to the process, rather than being a symbolic exercise. That is why research is currently being carried out into which topics require citizen participation and how it can best be organised. This process is still in an experimental phase, and the next six months will bring greater clarity on the most effective approach.

To involve the stakeholders, work was done in stages. Initially, the initiative was taken by the city itself, with a selected group of stakeholders actively approached and almost all agreed to participate. Starting from the factual data and current situation analyses in the formulated priority areas, the most important actors were invited to start collaborations and develop roadmaps. Such players are often organizations or companies with significant control over emissions.

Currently, the dynamic has reversed: greater numbers of companies and civil society organizations are volunteering to participate. In total, almost 300 actors are now involved, ranging from individual organisations that signed the climate contract to various sector organisations that make agreements on behalf of their sector.



Building block 2

Shared measurement system

Malmö uses a common measurement system to gain insights into the progress of the climate transition. The Environmental Programme (Malmö, 2021a) states that every municipal council, organisation and company is responsible for monitoring and measuring its own activities and results. They must report annually to an environmental committee set up for this purpose, so that it is able to make a coherent analysis of the environmental transition in Malmö. For each roadmap, assessment is made over where they currently stand in relation to the common goal to which it is linked. From these data, the following questions arise: "What are the emissions, how far can our current efforts take us and what do we need to do further to reduce the gap between the current situation and the target picture?"

Each roadmap has its own Key Performance Indicator (KPIs) and the environmental goals from the Environmental Programme are checked by means of predetermined indicators. The following excerpts give a good illustration of this process (Malmö, 2021a, p. 22, 27):

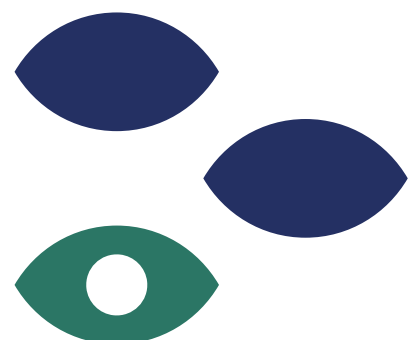
- **"Goal 7. Malmö has a sustainable mobility system.** *Everyone in Malmö should have access to a mobility system that provides conditions for a low level of environmental impact and good health. Land must be used efficiently, with priority given to sustainable means of transport. In Malmö it should feel natural to walk, ride a bike or use public transport. The City of Malmö's organisation must set a good example."*

Indicators: Number of journeys undertaken by walking, cycling or the use of public transport; Number of work-related journeys within the City of Malmö's organisation undertaken by air or with own vehicle; transition to sustainable means of goods transport; sustainable urban logistics; emissions from road traffic.

- **"Goal 10. Malmö's agricultural landscape is cared for and used in a sustainable manner.** *Land is an important natural resource. The way in which land is planned and used has long-term consequences. Malmö has the most arable land in Sweden. It needs to be cared for correctly to ensure continued long-term food production. Methods for the use of agricultural land must be adapted to ensure that they preserve and develop the quality of the land and its natural values."*

Indicators: Percentage of organically farmed agricultural land; Number of microhabitats in the agricultural landscape; Agricultural land acreage.

The basic data are updated annually and made publicly available. For greater in-depth analyses, a more extensive report is produced biannually. This is carried out in collaboration with consultants, and provides insight, into emerging trends and the pace of change. It also outlines necessary major transitions, their socio-economic, the levels of investment needed, whether decisions are best reached, locally, nationally or at the European level.



The advantage of accurate monitoring is that the climate transition in the city can be continuously adjusted, with annual evaluations based on sound indicators. Given the short implementation time and ambitious climate targets, the need for a flexible approach to quickly measure, monitor and collectively learn changes is highlighted. In this way, lessons from previous actions can be quickly learned and applied. A project called RASK was developed to support follow-up and learning processes (Malmö, 2023). RASK developed methods and tools to integrate follow-ups into climate work. The learning process was also a dynamic process that continues to develop throughout the climate transition. The evaluation and monitoring plan is as follows:

1. Departments and partners should continuously integrate the results of the follow-up into their regular work and report at least twice a year.
2. Situation-specific forums for learning, knowledge transfer and dialogue are developed.
3. Learning sessions are built into each roadmap process to foster individual and collective reflection and discussion on challenges, solutions, lessons learned, and dissemination.
4. Tools and methods are used and developed to promote learning.
5. The method is re-evaluated annually to adopt new perspectives developed on the basis of the follow-up and the learning work.

The role for coordinating this data is undertaken by an environment committee. They are responsible for acquiring data and preparing the reports so that that each municipal administration, company or organization monitors its own activities and passes on the results to the environmental committee.



Building block 3

Mutually reinforcing activities

For a CIM to succeed, organizations must work together in the same direction. They must look for smart partnerships, in which organizations with particular capabilities can strengthen each other. We see this idea reflected in the policy plan of 'Klimatomställning Malmö'. Some ideas that are central to the plan emphasize this. They begin from the idea that all stakeholders have an important role in the climate transition, but **cooperation** between sectors and key actors is essential if their unique contributions, based on their own circumstances, form a common goal. In this phase, the focus has been mainly on the government, the business community and knowledge centres, while the involvement of civil society and citizens in the formulation of the joint agenda limited. The clear intention, however, is that they will be given a greater role as important stakeholders in the process of mutually reinforcing activities. In the policy documents we examined, there were **some examples** in the various priority areas and roadmaps (Malmö, 2021a). As progress was made in the creation of the roadmaps, more companies, organizations and other stakeholders were involved. Collaborations have already been set up in each roadmap; some with a small number of stakeholders and others with an extensive networks.



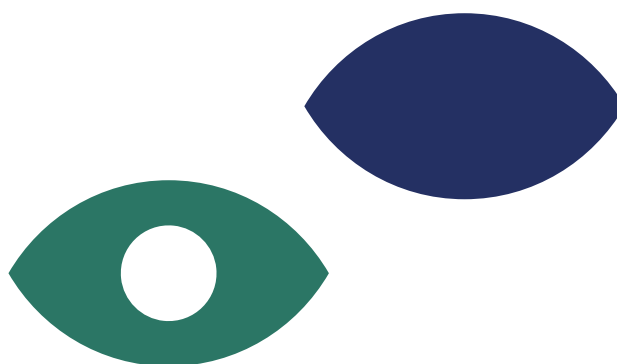
In the roadmap of **climate-friendly consumption**, 23 climate actions have already been set up for the residents of Malmö. An awareness campaign has been launched, the Consumption Compass has been developed in collaboration with the Stockholm Environment Institute and the City Innovation Platform established to carry out projects on the city's future sustainable food system.

In the field of **Climate Neutral Building**, a complex sphere of work involving many stakeholders witnessed the collaboration between 200 companies in the city. The roadmap of this area was developed by the construction industry in cooperation with the city of Malmö. This resulted in LFM30, an industry-driven organization to which the collaborating actors, such as real estate companies and construction companies were connected. They have committed to making their construction, operation, renovation and maintenance work climate neutral by 2030. In turn, this cooperation and connection inextricably affects other priority areas; for example, the demand for circular products and heating.

There is also a '**climate contract**' (Malmö, 2023). Universities and companies were invited to engage in in-depth cooperation in the city. It is a local partnership in which important players from the city connect to jointly achieve the climate goals. The contract is based on the Paris Agreement and invites organisations to join the same ambitions and goals for the climate transition. Those who sign the climate contract commit to making efforts to reduce their emissions by 2030.

Conditions for local development work **were also investigated**. The aim was to explore how to make it easier for civil society organisations in Malmö to get involved and create everyday opportunities for co-creative processes. The aim is to create daily opportunities for co-creative processes, so that citizens have the opportunity to share their perspectives and contribute to solutions that support both the climate goals and their daily needs. Finally, the city is developing a program for **neighbourhood-level climate initiatives** to work with communities and local priorities.

The city acts as a core organisation to support the development of tools and approaches that can increase the involvement and cooperation of civil society organisations and the wider community in the transition process. The building block of mutually reinforcing activities within a CIM is shaped by facilitating cooperation without strictly directing it. In this respect, the city created discussion spaces in which stakeholders were given the opportunity to jointly explore solutions and determine whether cooperation is desirable and feasible. This process is flexible: in some cases synergies arise automatically, while in others cooperation becomes more difficult because of competing interests. Malmö fostered self-sustaining relationships between actors, so that they could continue to collaborate and develop projects independently of the city. The city retained a macro perspective, in which it connected parties and gave direction to the transition without being directly involved in each individual consultation. In this way, dynamic and sustainable cooperation was promoted, tailored to the willingness and interests of the parties involved.



Building block 4

Continuous communication

Dialogue in various forms is essential for the city in the development work of a policy plan, and the city fulfilled the role of coordinator and facilitator of dialogue during the development of the common agenda. Their approach to communication can be divided into two parts: **internal and external** communication networks (Malmö, 2021a). The former was coordinated by the Environmental Agency who ensure that communication within and between the municipal services runs smoothly and that all stakeholders are kept informed of the progress, trends and necessary adjustments in the climate transition process. For example:

- There are weekly meetings with the process team (backbone supporting organization).
- Different sub-processes have their own meeting moments, for example, for the communication team and the team responsible for stakeholder involvement.
- Check-ins at different levels:
 - Bi-weekly check-ins with the project leader and key managers.
 - Monthly meetings with all coordinators of the transition areas.
 - Monthly check-ins with the media, civil society, etc.
 - Regular communication with directors and politicians.
- Ad-hoc communication in addition to formal meetings; spontaneous conversations and emails.

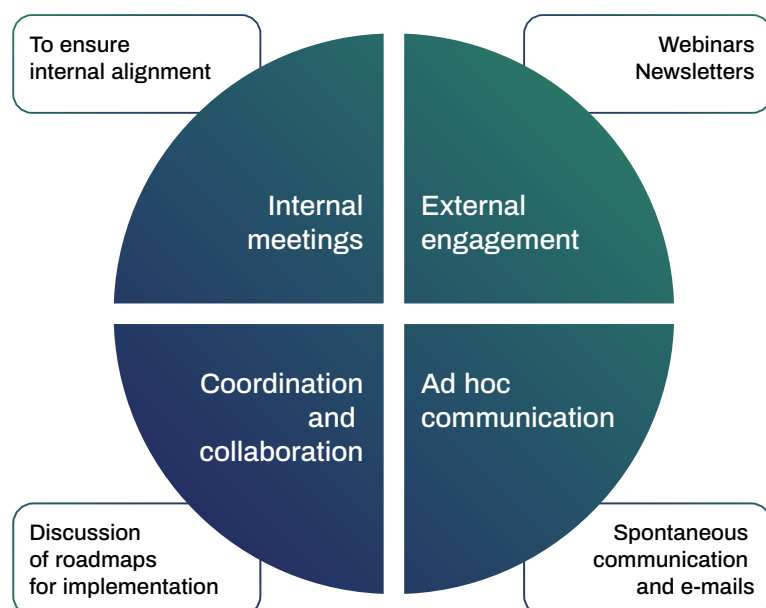
In addition, to inform and involve stakeholders, the public and signatories of the climate contract to include, the following is **being developed**:

- Webinars and seminar series' accessible to everyone to promote knowledge-sharing are organized once a month. They aim to build a mutual knowledge base so that all stakeholders – from policymakers to stakeholders – have a shared understanding of the climate transition. The content of the online lectures varies and can relate, for example, to energy issues, but also trends and challenges in the climate transition. These lectures help to spread expert knowledge.
- An official Malmö homepage and internal pages to disseminate information.
- A newsletter every six weeks with updates, good practices and event announcements for stakeholders and those who have signed the climate contract.

Within the various priority areas, coordination will take place between the various participating stakeholders to discuss collaborations, the roadmaps and their implementation.



Figure 2: Communication cycle (Climate Transition Malmö)



Building block 5

Backbone organization

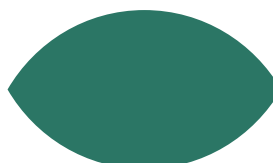
In the literature, different functions and types of leadership for the backbone support organization are described. In 'Klimatomställning Malmö' these roles are evident, albeit divided among different organizations (Malmö, 2021a; Respondent 1, 2).

The **Malmö City Council** and more specifically the **Environmental Department** comprises the central backbone support organization. The city council has an important role as coordinator and facilitator of the entire project and policy plan, whilst the Environmental report indicates that share a long experience of working with academic, business and civil society organizations to work for a better environment. The city sees cooperation and cross-sectoral work as the key to success and promotes this cooperation function of the local climate transition. By inviting stakeholders to enter into dialogue, develop forums and ensure the involvement of all stakeholders, we discern a clear example of adaptive leadership reflected in this, creating an environment for interaction. For example, they developed the climate contracts model to intervene with the business community. They are also working on a similar model for cooperation with civil society, to support cooperation with NGOs and citizens who want to work for the climate and enable co-creation. They also indicated that they will strive to provide external financing, which is also a function of the backbone support organization. Thus, the decentralized functions of the backbone support organization are present but devolved into smaller backbone organizations.

The **Environmental Department** of the City of Malmö was designated by the Mayor of Malmö as the department responsible for the climate transition. This is divided into a 'process management team' and a 'Environmental Committee'.

The **process management team**, also known as the Climate Transition Team or the core team, is mainly responsible for the management of the entire process, coordination and preparation. This takes on a coordinating function in distilling the joint agenda and developing strategic cooperation between stakeholders. Support functions such as communication, financing and stakeholder mobilisation are also part of the core team. Two project leaders keep an overview: one at the macro level (ensuring that everything is coordinated) and one at the internal level (coordination between city departments). This team took the initiative in developing a joint vision and approach. They maintained an overview of the entire process, the collaborations and (overlapping) roadmaps, to support local climate actions at the neighbourhood level based on the needs, opportunities and challenges of the local community. Despite this coordinating role, they also strive to strictly ensure that the backbone organization does not impose things, but rather provides the conditions that elicit cooperation:

"[the project is] building a kind of collaborative arenas where they can meet stakeholders. So anyone who wants to get started with the circular economy, for example, we set up arenas where they can all meet and talk to each other. So the idea is to create self-sufficient relationships where the project leaders don't necessarily have to play a role. The goal is that the project leaders don't put themselves as central as possible, but just support the process and make sure it's going in the right direction, and so on. So self-sufficient relationships are very important." (Respondent 1)



The roadmaps in Malmö ensured that the backbone organization provided direction and structure, without imposing obligations. They provide guidance and perform complex analyses to generate insights into what needs to be changed and over what time period, but leaves the decision-making responsibility to the people involved. Everyone who has signed the climate contract must decide for themselves what their role and responsibility is. This makes the collaboration flexible and on a voluntary basis, with the focus on supporting others rather than imposing a fixed vision.

The second organization is the '**Environmental Committee**', which focuses on establishing common measurements. Here, the municipal administration, committees and companies are responsible for their own operational objectives in their organisation. However, they must report their results and KPIs to the Environment Committee, who then prepare reports that form the basis for the ecological component of the City of Malmö's sustainability reporting, and reports them to the City Council.

In Malmö, the climate transition was organized as a **matrix organization**, which means that different departments and responsibilities are combined and connected. Instead of strictly separate departments, employees from different departments are brought together to work on climate goals. The employees not only report to their department directors, but also to the directors of other departments or politicians, such as the mayor and aldermen of the areas concerned. This flexible and integrated approach ensured that multiple areas of expertise were used effectively and worked together.

The seven transition areas each have their own **coordinator**. Although they work closely together, they remain responsible for implementation within their own department. Some coordinators operate outside the environmental department; for example, mobility falls under Roads and Parks, and climate-neutral construction under Urban Spatial Planning. Finally, a number of **working groups** have been set up, according to the different priority areas. Even within these, a distinction is sometimes made between working groups. For example, in the area of climate-neutral construction, there are working groups on other underlying themes such as circular economy, climate-neutral building materials, climate-neutral construction sites and transport, etc.

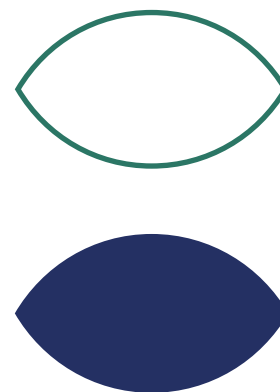
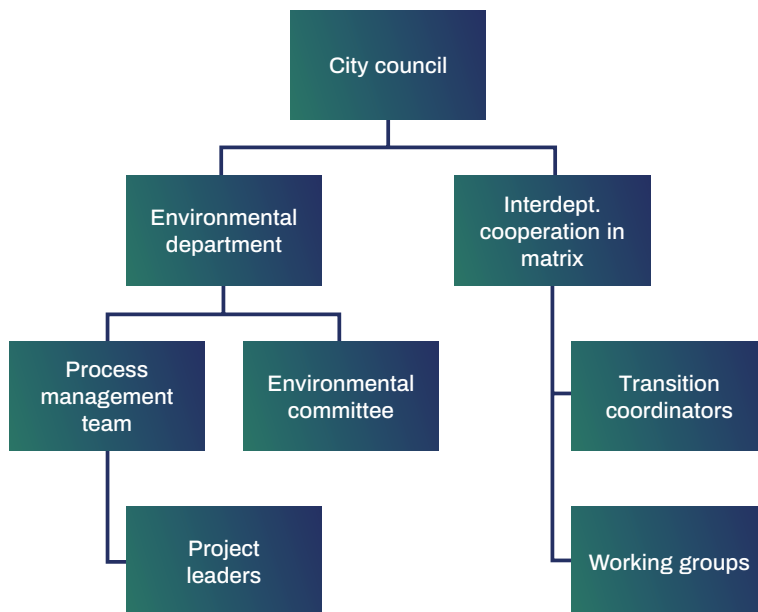


Figure 3: Backbone organization (Climate Transition Malmö)



Despite the clear structure of the supporting organization, we identified the following ongoing challenges:

1. It was a difficult challenge to establish a strong backbone organization: There were many specialists in different fields on climate challenges, but few generalists who could lead a large-scale process with multiple stakeholders across different city departments.
2. The lack of continuity in the workforce of the backbone organization: if the project leader were to leave the organization, the progress of the project would stop almost immediately, because there was no denoted successor to take over the role. This is because the organization is too dependent on individual experts who specialize in their own field, but has few leaders able to connect the diverse expertise and facilitate collaboration that maintains an overview. This indicates that there is a shortage of people who can combine specialist knowledge with the broader skills to use that knowledge effectively in collaboration with others. There ought to be more people who possess natural leadership qualities to help them develop the skills needed to connect teams and foster collaboration.



4.1.4 Success factors

In the interview, respondent 1 emphasized the importance of establishing a continuous and dynamic learning process within partnerships and organizations. Learning takes place on multiple levels: individually, within teams, at organizational level and even across organizations. This requires horizontal knowledge sharing and collaboration, in which insights and meaning-making are shared and integrated throughout the structure.

The success factors from the CIM – collective vigilance, collective learning and collective action – are integral to Malmö's project. Collaboration continues beyond reaching a consensus on goals. The world is constantly changing and priorities and strategies can become quickly outdated. This requires a flexible and iterative approach to constantly re-evaluate and adjust goals and expectations. The regular review of the roadmaps, which took place twice a year played an important part in ensuring that the establishment a common goal is not fixed; constant dialogue and reflection is needed to continue to address to new developments and challenges.

In the first phases, the roadmaps were developed internally in collaboration with external experts. At the launch of the climate contract (see mutually reinforcing activities), all the stakeholders were brought together to present the roadmaps, objectives and priority transition areas. During these meetings, local stakeholders were given the opportunity to provide feedback: do the plans match their needs? Are there any important elements missing? Are there differences of opinion about the impact of certain actions?

This structured dialogue not only contributed to better mutual understanding and insight into each other's efforts, but also stimulated collaboration, because actors were inspired to join initiatives led by others. This strengthened processes of mutual coordination and the effectiveness of the joint transition approach.

4.1.5 Overview of challenges in the Malmö case

Organizational challenges:

- The interviews show organizational issues, especially the division of tasks, responsibilities and the conversion of plans into concrete action were the major organizational challenges. Despite clear goals and robust structures, implementation turned out to be more complex in practice. Each organization needed to learn internally how to implement changes, and that process took time. It required not only insight and adaptation within one's own organization, but also cooperation with external parties, who also had to adjust their working methods.

Common agenda as a time-consuming process:

- A key challenge in Malmö's approach was that the creation of a common agenda is time-consuming, often spread over several years and subject to continuous adjustments. The roll-out of policy, such as the Climate Transition Team and the action plan, required long-term development and stakeholder involvement. Despite this challenge, Malmö has managed this process well and has already made significant progress, although most of the work is still in the future.



Backbone organization:

- The backbone structure in Malmö faced two major challenges: first, overcoming the problem of having many specialists in specific climate domains, but few generalists able to lead a large-scale, multi-stakeholder process. Secondly, the lack of continuity in the workforce, which made the progress of the climate transition vulnerable. There is a need for more leaders with the capacity to connect knowledge and foster long-term collaboration.

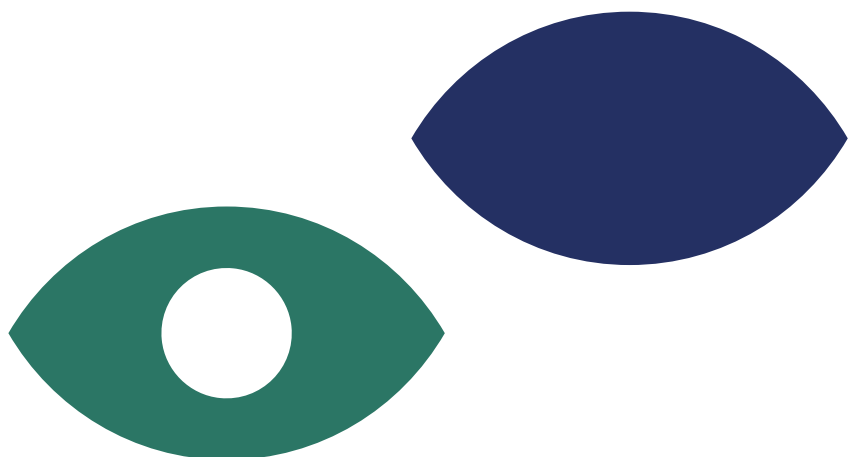
Relationship with other policy levels:

- The progress of the transition was and is greatly hindered by national policies. While the set targets for 2030 may not be fully achieved, the cause is unlikely to be the local stakeholders, but rather with regional, national or European decision-makers who delay or do not take crucial decisions. Overcoming these structural challenges remains an obstacle to future progress.

Active citizen engagement:

- The goal of full citizen engagement in climate transition policies is difficult to achieve. The reality is that climate change is not a top priority for many citizens whose attention is mainly focused on other commitments. This explains why climate change activists and professionals are intensively involved in these issues. The professional networks in Malmö enable an ongoing dialogue between companies, governments and organizations, but less overt citizen involvement. This raises the democratic question of whether broad citizen engagement is necessary, or whether it is more effective to work mainly with targeted stakeholders?

The biggest challenge that arises in the extant literature, and one that is tangentially linked to the point above, is how to take into account equality and social inequalities. The city, together with the University of Malmö and Swedish innovation and research organizations, completed an exploratory project to develop a neighbourhood-oriented model for a just climate transition. This combined ideas and needs from the community (bottom-up) with the city's climate goals and technical plans (top-down). The aim was to use local experiments to design solutions that are more widely applicable and can respond flexibly to the various needs within the city. By working in different neighbourhoods, it hoped to actively involve a diverse group of residents from different socio-economic backgrounds in the transition, but uncertainty remains whether this is enough. The process is highly data-driven, with extensive analyses on energy poverty, vulnerable areas and the impact of climate change. Although a lot is already being done, it remains an ongoing learning process in which insights, strategy and knowledge development are central. The challenge is to shape a just and inclusive transition, while still looking for the best approach and impact.







Mechelen

4.2 Case 2: Neighbourhood Improvement Contract in Pro-Arsenaal Mechelen (Belgium)

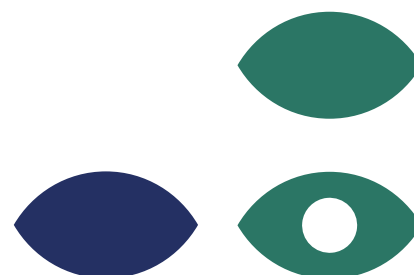
4.2.1 Case description

The **Pro-Arsenaal** project, is a neighbourhood improvement project focusing on activating human capital and creating a pleasant living environment where everyone can feel at home¹. The neighbourhood is characterized by **various problems** (Mechelen, 2023). First, there is a paved road that runs right through the neighbourhood, which is accompanied by typical challenges that paved roads entail. Traffic on this road is very busy, which negatively affects the quality of life. As a result, the neighbourhood is not an attractive living environment for many: people who buy a home there, leave as soon as they have the opportunity. The built environment in the neighbourhood has few green spaces and consists mainly of hard elements, a workshop of the railway company NMBS and various industrial companies in the district. The residents have predominantly low incomes and high levels of poverty, which leads to a low quality of life. The range of housing stock is very limited and quality often poor.

The origins of the district were closely tied to the development of the rail network in the 19th Century, of which Mechelen was a central location. The residential area was built in the 1880s for railway workers and remains a predominantly working-class neighbourhood. Few improvements have been made to the housing provision since that time, which contributes to the current problems in the area, such as energy efficiency. The neighbourhood is diverse, which sometimes leads to conflicts between the different target groups. There are regular reports of nuisance, crime, loitering youths and illegal dumping. In addition, there are minimal public spaces or facilities that contribute to the maintenance of a cohesive social fabric. Finally, until recently, the presence of the local government in the neighbourhood was very limited, service centres and information counters were conspicuously absent, reinforcing a sense of isolation.

The project was formed of three main objectives: promoting social cohesion; improving the quality of living; and increasing safety in the neighbourhood. It aimed for radical change whereby the quality of the housing would be structurally improved, and residents encouraged to meet and get to know each other better².

The project sought to achieve this through co-creation and intense cooperation between various departments of the city (housing department, social policy department and prevention and safety department) and stakeholders in the neighbourhood (Mechelen, 2023). To this end, they have actively started working within the context of a CIM. This approach was adopted to meet the request of the Flemish government to make the results of the neighbourhood improvement project visible and measurable. The problems faced by the district are socially complex and cannot be solved by one department or singular interventions, thus a joint agenda between different sectors and services of the city of Mechelen needed to be developed.



1 <https://www.mechelen.be/pro-ject-arsenaal>

2 <https://www.mechelen.be/pro-ject-arsenaal>

The preconditions and building blocks outlined in the CIM literature, are evident in the Pro-Arsenaal district improvement contract in Mechelen. For example:

1. **Cross-sectoral cooperation:** Key actors from various sectors were identified and invited to work towards a common goal.
2. **Monitoring systems:** Models were developed to measure the progress of the process. This resulted in a baseline assessment, analysing both qualitative and quantitative data to determine impact and progress over a four-year period.
3. **Dialogue and coordination:** Through various activities, such as the A-team (more information about this project follows below) and the district budget, the backbone organization maintains an overview and ensures constant contact with various stakeholders from the neighbourhood who are working together on the project.
4. **Continuous communication:** The backbone organization maintains formal and informal communications with the project's activities and impact. In this way, it is aware of everything that is happening in the neighbourhood and remains in close contact with the stakeholders.



4.2.2 Preconditions for the use of the CIM

When developing the district improvement contract, there was clear evidence of the necessary preconditions.

Precondition 1

Urgency of change

The complex and 'wicked problems' faced by the district needed to be tackled holistically, not individually, and not by a clearly identifiable group (Mechelen, 2023). This clearly met the criteria for the first precondition: urgency for change. The impetus came mainly from the city and was initially a top-down endeavour. Nevertheless, it soon became apparent, partly through neighbourhood surveys and conversations, that there were many questions, and a growing enthusiasm from the neighbourhood itself for change. Partners, such as the youth work of Arsenaal j@m and the school De Puzzel, also indicated that they wanted change in the neighbourhood to tackle the lack of social cohesion and public meeting places.

Precondition 2

Presence of influential champions

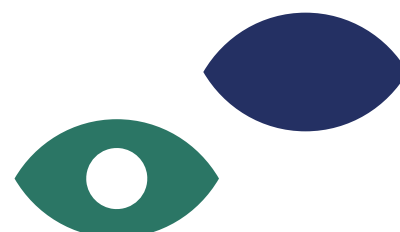
The Pro-Arsenaal project had identifiable influential champions; mainly policy-makers from the relevant services of the city of Mechelen, who produced the idea and plan of action. They wrote the project application for the neighbourhood improvement project drawing on the idea of a CIM (Mechelen, 2023). There was enthusiasm from the board and the administration to be present in the neighbourhood again and to be closer to the residents. Some representatives, such as two aldermen and the mayor (then subsidizing minister), put their shoulders to the wheel of the project and emphasized its importance. However, there was a noticeable lack of key local figures and social actors within the neighbourhood itself. This was largely explained by the lack of social cohesion, which left the community with few, if any, community leaders.

Precondition 3

Adequate sources

Substantial financial resources were made available for the project. The Flemish government made €800,000 available for the district improvement contract, the city of Mechelen added co-finance support of 20% (€200,000), making a total of 1 million euro available over 4 years (Respondent 3, 4). Respondents indicated that additional budget was provided by redirecting existing resources from the city to the project, the largest part of which was wage costs. The Pro-Arsenaal project employed a social cohesion coach, a district lawyer and a coordinator for the A-team. €60,000 of the budget were working resources, made available as a district budget for citizens and associations to finance their own initiatives. The financial resources enabled the project to recruit the 'dedicated team' that acted as the backbone organisation of the project (Mechelen, 2023). The team were excited to work on the project and had consciously applied for the role. There was also a lot of enthusiasm among the services involved (social policy, prevention and safety and housing) to participate in the project.

In the interviews, one respondent (Respondent 6), emphasized that good community workers were essential. The success of the organization, they argued, was strongly dependent on the motivation, inventiveness and social skills of the staff, who must be approachable, reflexive, able to respond to the needs of a diverse neighbourhood, and be bold enough to deviate from established plans when the situation changes. The ability to make spontaneous contact and to pick up signals from the neighbourhood and respond to them was more important than a perfectly written file. The team that was appointed according to the youth work handled this well.



4.2.3 Process-based building blocks

The preconditions being met, ensured that the district improvement contract could begin, and that the CIM would be used as a governance model. A process was drawn up in which attention was paid to the distinct building blocks outlined in the CIM (Mechelen, 2023).

Building block 1

Common agenda

To make Arsenaal a neighbourhood where everyone feels at home, a place that is fun, beautiful, safe and healthy was the **desired vision of change** for the project. It was underpinned by an aspiration to activate the human capital of the district.

The proposed changes were divided into three pillars³:

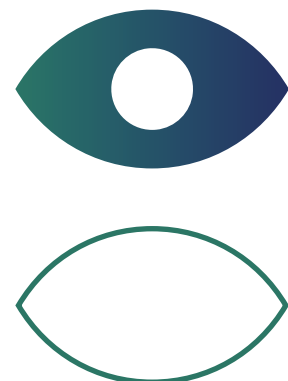
- **Housing:** structural improvement of the quality of housing to ensure the health of residents.
- **Quality of life/social cohesion:** bringing everyone together and creating a neighbourhood where it is pleasant to be.
- **Safety:** a fresh look for the neighbourhood with fewer insecurities by encouraging people to do things together and create connection between people. Furthermore, they wanted to engage young people from the neighbourhood in an internship to enable them to move on to a profession in the security sector.

With the Pro-Arsenaal project, the city became strongly committed to participatory forms of social engagement, in which local organizations and local residents were closely involved. The preparation of a joint agenda for the CIM took place in **several phases**. Each phase contributed to defining and concretizing the ambitions and actions for the district (Respondents 4 and 6).

The first step was to prepare the **project application**, which had to be submitted within three months. Due to the short time span, this was carried out by the various departments involved from the city administration. This phase had an internal focus and formed the basis for the neighbourhood improvement contract and the overall direction of the initiative. Secondly, an **initial environmental analysis** followed, in which the most important problems in the district were mapped. This consisted of a **pre-measurement**, based on predefined indicators and a large-scale survey among residents aged 16 and over. The survey focused on the three core pillars of the project and was carried out through an intensive and personal approach, such as door-to-door visits and the deployment of multilingual community guards. This approach ensured a high response rate and a diverse representation of residents.

The pre-measurement provided valuable insights into priorities and bottlenecks in the neighbourhood, such as illegal dumping, mobility problems, social safety and youth problems. In addition, concrete indicators were established to monitor the progress of the project. Based on these insights, a neighbourhood action programme was developed that further advanced their ambitions (Mechelen, 2023).

The core team (backbone organization) which consisted mainly of professionals, drew up a detailed action plan based on the pre-measurement findings, in which strategic and operational objectives were formulated. These objectives



3 <https://www.mechelen.be/pro-ject-arsenaal>

must give direction to the connected services in their daily operations. For example, the Safety and Liveability department focused on the residents' concerns about safety and quality of life that emerged from the survey. It was decided to draw this up with professionals, because whilst the experiences of citizens are valuable, developing solutions to the challenges is a complex task that often requires specific expertise. Later, neighbourhood moments were organised to ask for input from citizens about these plans.

Although neighbourhood gatherings and chats were organised to involve residents and collect feedback, in practice it proved difficult to fully tailor the action plan to all residents. That is why the action plan was mainly formed by the most important points of attention from the survey. In the interviews, it was indicated that the input of these neighbourhood chats is debatable:

"After the action plan was made by professionals, there were a number of neighbourhood chats and neighbourhood moments where people could reflect and give input. People certainly came to that. People liked that. But to say that the biggest input and the biggest change has come out of that? I don't think so." (Respondent 4)

During the drafting of the action plan, various stakeholders were involved, such as Saamo, the urban youth work J@m, schools, and later also the NMBS and the police service. In the initial phase, formal partner meetings took place regularly, for example with youth work organization J@m. These meetings were mainly seen as moments to share updates on progress, rather than jointly determining who would take on which tasks. Due to staff changes, these consultations became less frequent, which has made the joint management of the project more difficult. The interviews revealed that these meetings were experienced more as progress updates than as moments of active involvement in aligning tasks and objectives.



Figure 4: Defining the common agenda (Pro-Arsenaal Mechelen)



The respondents indicated that the preparation of the joint agenda presented some important challenges. One of the biggest obstacles was making major issues and the parties involved manageable. This required a growth process and constant consultation with the core team, during which ideas arose. The process also required boldness to remain flexible in management, depending on the obstacles encountered. One of the keys to success was to break down the big challenges into small, achievable steps, which kept the team motivated. However, as one of the respondents indicated (Respondent 4), it sounds nice in theory, but in practice it turns out to be difficult to fully realize this. The biggest challenge therefore lies in translating ambition into concrete, feasible tasks. This is apparent, for example, from the following quote from the interviews:

"There was a fairly long start-up period, from the moment the project application was written. Because then people were already thinking about making the combination of those three pillars, which is actually the key to a joint agenda, isn't it? [...] The question is, of course, what is the joint agenda? Those big ambitions you want to realize there. Or is that very concrete? What steps and activities you are going to do? So I think the minds were already maturing. Very strong in the writing phase of the project application. This has also been strongly reported to the management team. What our intentions and ambitions were there. In other words, I think that has quietly grown a bit and so it is indeed right that you say. That will take a long time to get there." (R4)

After the action plan had been drawn up by professionals, neighbourhood discussions were organised in which people could reflect and give their input. Although these moments were well attended, and participants expressed their appreciation, they did not lead to major changes. In general, it can be said that the joint agenda was put together top-down by the backbone organization rather than being established bottom-up in collaboration with the community. Even though there might have been input in the earlier phases of the process, it should be reminded that the CIM works best when influential leaders and the backbone organization mobilize stakeholders for a collaborative approach, without imposing their own views.



Building block 2

shared measurement system

The Pro-Arsenaal project sought to meet the requirement of shared measurements by means of baseline measurements, consisting of two major measuring instruments: indicators and a survey (Mechelen, 2023).

○ Indicators

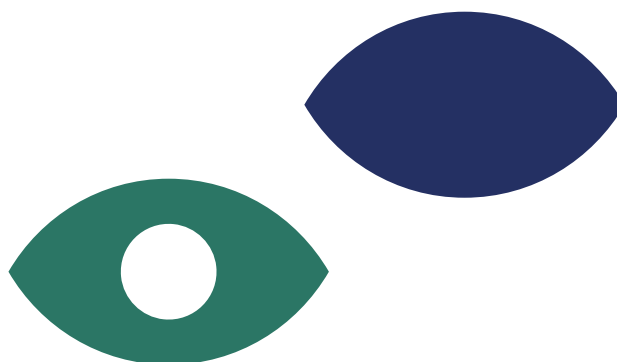
In the quantitative part of the measurement (existing data and self-acquired data), 86 indicators were identified, which were related to the goals of Pro-Arsenaal and the three pillars. On the one hand, these figures are from the existing data. They collected data that was already available, e.g., the figures on illegal dumping, crime, traffic violations. On the other, these are figures that the project itself keeps. Indicators that came out of this were, e.g., crime figures, number of tile gardens, number of vacant houses, number of home visits. Unlike the survey, it is not information obtained from the citizens, making it fairly easy to request and follow-up.

○ Survey

The core team collected data from residents of the neighbourhood by means of a neighbourhood survey (conducted December 2023 – January 2024), in which every resident over the age of 16 was invited to complete a questionnaire. In order to achieve a maximum participation rate, the core team called on community guards and supervisors from the A-team to deliver this door to door. In addition, translation tools were used to remove language barriers. Furthermore, they were also distributed to the parents in the local primary school. After 4 years, the same survey will be conducted again to map the results of Pro-Arsenaal. A research agency has processed the data from the first survey and will also carry out the post-measurement.

An important advantage to the project was the intensive involvement in the neighbourhood down to street level. The indicators and the survey make it possible to work in a refined way and to monitor the results closely, suggesting a strong data-driven approach. At the same time, the interviews show that there was still room for growth in the conscious use of data for collective learning and adjustment (Respondent 4).

Although the core team and those involved learned along the way, this was mainly done through mutual consultation and not explicitly through data as a steering tool. The initiative is very data-driven, but displayed less emphasis on collective learning. The indicators collected, such as reports of fly-tipping, currently provide few concrete insights into the impact of the project, partly because it is still too early to draw conclusions.



Building block 3**Mutually reinforcing activities**

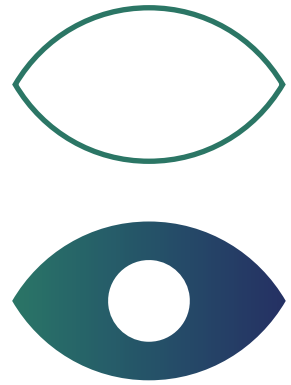
In a CIM it is necessary to organize activities that are mutually reinforcing. The Pro-Arsenaal project achieved this through the connections made between different services of the city on the one hand, and the efforts of different stakeholders on the other; each contributing in their own way. So it is not only the city of Mechelen that actively contributed to initiatives and actions in the neighbourhood.

An important aspect was the **connection between three policy domains and services**, which were not immediately self-evident (Mechelen, 2023). There were high levels of close cooperation and coordination, in which team members knew how responsibility was distributed and how they can support each other. This transcendence of domains ensured an efficient and targeted approach to problems, and created new ways of working together within the city of Mechelen. The project successfully provided a broader range of services by connecting the various services that use and coordinate each other's expertise.

In the longer term, the project will allow the stakeholders to get to know each other better, which facilitates permanent processes of cooperation and the exchange of ideas, even when the project has ended. This strengthens the depth of the follow-up projects, cases and the approach to specific problems in the neighbourhood. The project therefore also creates sustainable networks and a more integrated way of working.

In addition to the core team and the departments of the city, **other stakeholders were also involved** in Pro-Arsenaal. In the initial phase of the project, the team met regularly with stakeholders. That consultation came to a standstill, but through direct contact with partners from the city council, the youth work, the school, the NMBS and other stakeholders continue to participate in various activities. Again, this is mainly a top-down process directed by the city council, rather than through joint consultation.

The **A-team** of Pro-Arsenaal in Mechelen was a project that focused on supporting young people between the ages of 18 and 25 who are temporarily lost, with the aim of preparing them for a stable career in the security sector. This was done through a paid BIS internship (vocational immersion internship), in which the young people not only gained work experience, but also received intensive guidance in terms of personal development and professional skills. The project served multiple purposes: it helped young people to build a positive relationship with the security sector, a sector that is sometimes perceived as distant or negative. It prepared them practically and mentally for a job, such as a community guard, security guard or even police officer (Respondent 5). They also ensured that safety was enhanced in the neighbourhood. A maximum of three interns can participate at one time, so that there is sufficient personal attention. The strength of the A-team lies in the cooperation with various local partners, such as unemployment offices, social services, youth work and other civil society organizations. These partners offered additional guidance, such as mental support, administrative help, or help with looking for a job. There is a strong interaction between these organisations and the A-team, with young people receiving extra guidance from Stroom vzw during their internship, for example.



The A-team project is a very good example of a **mutually reinforcing activity within the CIM**. It works together with various organizations, each of which uses its expertise to achieve a common goal: supporting vulnerable young people towards a sustainable career. This cooperation not only prepares young people for work, but also creates a wider network of support that significantly increases their chances of success. The success of the project is evident from the personal stories of young people who have found a permanent job in the security sector through the A-team and have given their lives a new direction.

A critical question is whether the collaboration between the partners was genuinely facilitated by the Pro-Arsenaal project, or if it primarily resulted from urban services working with partners on specific themes without direct interaction between the partners themselves. One of the respondents indicated that they had not come into contact with completely new partners through Pro-Arsenaal. Although the collaboration with existing partners such as schools predated Pro-Arsenaal, new contacts were made between the them and municipal services, such as the Housing Department. This not only expanded the professional network, but also provided a more direct and effective way to provide help in distressing situations, as they knew who to turn to for help and could reach each other with greater haste when needed.



Building block 4

Continuous communication

In the PRO-Arsenaal Project there were regular moments when people came together for consultation (Mechelen, 2023).

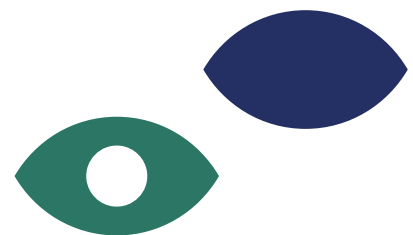
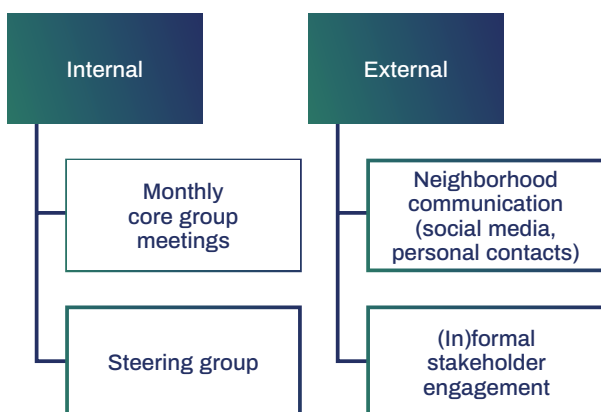
Internal:

- The enhanced trust and cooperation reduced the need for regular **formal meetings**. The core group initially met weekly for consultation. Over time this became weekly and then fortnightly, and communication within the core team became more informal.
- The steering committee also met with the core team several times a year.

External:

- There were various **channels of communication** towards the neighbourhood. A lot was done through personal contacts of the core team, who were physically present in the neighbourhood and communicated with citizens. There were also social media channels for the project, such as a Facebook group, Hopler (channel in which neighbourhoods can communicate), a website and a bimonthly newsletter. The school also actively kept the parents in the neighbourhood informed about the project.
- With the stakeholder partners, a distinction can be made between formal and informal contact:
 - **Formal communication with stakeholders** was structured in the beginning, with regular partner meetings. These moments were mainly intended to share updates, but sometimes lacked focus on drawing up the joint agenda. Due to a lack of continuity in the core team, and the loss of a responsible colleague, communication came to a standstill, giving partners less insight into the project and their role in it. A monthly update and moments to sit down with the partners could have prevented this.
 - The **informal consultation with stakeholders** was mainly conducted through a colleague from the core team who was actively present in the neighbourhood. As a result, there was regular spontaneous contact with partners such as J@m, the school and local residents. Partners indicated that these informal moments, such as short conversations in the hallway, were often more effective and impactful than formal communication, as they allowed for collaborations to be quickly called in when necessary.

Figure 5: Communication strategy (Pro-Arsenaal Mechelen)



The common agenda, with the objectives as a guiding principle, continues to guide the project. This is occasionally adjusted, but still functions as a starting point. Nevertheless, the interviews show that the active shaping of the agenda during communication moments has come to a halt. Reviving this process is perceived as a challenge, especially by external parties, while it is perceived to be easier internally.

Building block 5

Backbone organisation

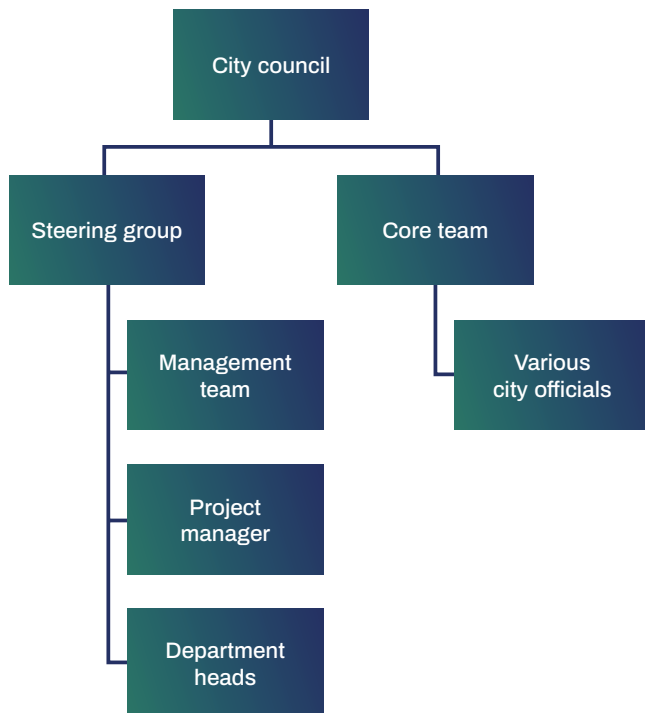
The city is providing two backbone support organizations for the PRO-Arsenaal project (Mechelen, 2023). On the one hand, there is a **core team**. They monitor the three pillars operationally and ensure the implementation of the project. The core team consists of employees of the city of Mechelen, including Project Manager Prevention and Safety; District lawyer; Project officer social cohesion; Team coach supervisors; Consultant 'Energiepunt'; Housing quality controller; Account Manager Communication. They take on the following functions:

- The core team was responsible for conducting the survey, gathering the data which generated the baseline measurement, and developing the questionnaire for all local residents aged 16 and over.
- The Project Manager, Prevention and Safety collects data at regular intervals, monitors the indicators and then reports them to the steering committee. He has a good overview of what is happening in the neighbourhood.
- Other employees pass on data to the project manager of prevention and safety.
- Keeping an overview of participating services, different objectives, the action plans and organised activities. They ensure that cooperation takes place between the various services and any other relevant stakeholders where necessary.
- They are present in the neighbourhood and are committed to rolling out actions.
- They have an overview of the planning of the district budget and the realization of the various projects that arise from it.

On the other hand, there is also a **steering group**, responsible for taking strategic decisions at the policy level. This included the management team, consisting of the project manager for prevention and safety, various department heads. It also included a number of political representatives, such as the aldermen for prevention, social affairs and housing, the chair of the OCMW and the mayor and finally someone from the Flemish government. They followed up on the data and results. In addition, they remain well informed about the developments within their domain and understand how they are related to the other activities that take place in Pro-Arsenaal.

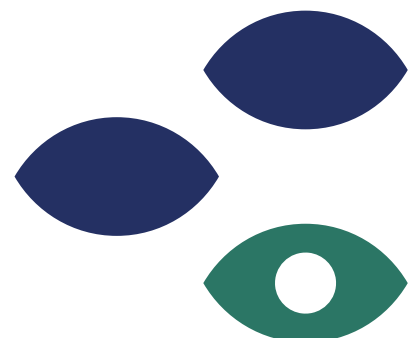


Figure 6: Backbone organization (Pro-Arsenaal Mechelen)



Even though this backbone structure was functional, the interviews revealed the following areas for further improvement.

- There was a lack of continuity within the workforce (Respondent 3): this was especially pertinent among the employees who were responsible for maintaining communication moments with external partners. It required not only organizational structures, but also a stable group of employees. When someone dropped out, the core team should have been better prepared.
- Lack of coordination and role definition (Respondents 3 and 4): The project chose not to appoint a general project coordinator for Pro-Arsenaal, mainly for financial reasons. However, the interviews showed that the respondents felt the need for more central coordination. The lack of this led to miscommunication and a lack of coordination at certain times, both internally and with external stakeholders, which resulted in ambiguities about responsibilities and objectives. Consultation with stakeholders also came to a standstill and the agenda of core team meetings was not always clear. In addition, the roles within the project were sometimes poorly defined, which made collaboration difficult. The project recognized this challenge and is considering appointing a district coordinator to provide more overview and improve project management.
- Ambiguities about backbone structure to project partners: There was a potential lack of clarity among partner organisations about who is managing the project. Communication was often informal through the core team, which meant that the backbone structure of the project is not always visible to the partners.



4.2.4 Overview of challenges in the Pro-Arsenaal case

Stakeholder engagement:

- Pro-Arsenaal sought to tackle the challenge of **leadership and meaningful involvement from the community** involved through intensive proximity and presence in the neighbourhood through three pillars (Housing, safety and liveability and social cohesion). For example, they actively looked for ways to involve less accessible and vulnerable groups, by organising a neighbourhood budget and actively questioning them, going door-to-door and offering support in filling in questionnaires. This has helped them break the typical pattern of only highly educated, older, white women, although they acknowledged that it is not yet fully representative. In addition, it was mentioned that the input from this survey was minimal when the action plan was drawn up which could have been more extensive. Most of the organization therefore remains **fairly top-down**, with little room for entrepreneurship from the neighbourhood, outside of initiatives such as neighbourhood chats and neighbourhood budgets. This indicates that the community concerned does not yet play a leading role in the decision-making or implementation of the project.
- There was a great focus on safety and public order, which was often given priority over social development work. This made it more difficult to give the social aspects of community development work the necessary attention, especially when it came to the “hard” indicators such as mobility, safety and legal issues. Nevertheless, attempts were being made to tackle power structures, by giving a voice to vulnerable groups, such as young people and people without access to quality living environments. This was done with the aim of reducing inequality. Although the initiatives sometimes mainly involve the ‘usual suspects’, the project does succeed in stepping outside the existing power structures, by being actively present in the neighbourhood and reaching more people who would otherwise not be involved. Breaking through power structures is mainly done through outreaching and establishing direct connections between the government and the local residents, which will only really take its fullest shape over the course of the project.

Joint agenda:

- During the preparation of the common agenda, the challenge was **translating ambitious goals into concrete, achievable steps within a complex collaboration**. Drawing up a joint agenda proved difficult due to the size of the issues and the number of parties involved. This process requires continuous coordination with the core team, flexibility and the willingness to make adjustments where necessary. Although dividing major challenges into small steps was seen as a success factor, it remains difficult to fully achieve this in practice. The biggest challenge therefore lies in converting ambitions into feasible actions.

Shared measurements:

- Currently, the project experiences some difficulties in **using data for collective learning and strategic adjustment**. The project has a strong data-driven approach, with close monitoring at the district level. However, the collected data is currently still used to a limited extent as a steering instrument for joint learning processes. Learning is mainly done through informal consultation rather than explicit data analysis. Moreover, some indicators, such as reports of fly-tipping, still offer little insight into the actual impact. There is a clear ambition to evaluate the data qualitatively at the end of the project and to place it in the right context, so that valuable lessons can be learned from it.



Mutually reinforcing activities:

- Currently, there is little organic, bottom-up cooperation between partners, apart from the guidance of the city council. Collaborations are now mainly facilitated by urban services on specific themes, instead of spontaneously creating new interactions between partners. However, the project has contributed to stronger connections with urban services, which expanded the network and allowed for faster assistance. The challenge, however, lies in creating a climate in which partners can also come into contact with each other and work together autonomously and sustainably outside urban structures.

Continuous communication:

- An important challenge within the project was **to ensure effective cooperation with civil society and partner organisation and joint management**. While formal partner meetings took place regularly in the beginning, these were mainly used to share progress updates, rather than jointly determining who would take on which tasks. Staff changes have made these meetings less frequent, which has further complicated coordination. Partners indicated that they experienced the consultations mainly as informative, which meant that there was less room for active involvement and joint decision-making. This has led to less streamlined cooperation and a need for stronger structural coordination

Challenges with the backbone organization:

- A key challenge for Pro-Arsenaal, in the context of a CIM, was that **many stakeholders, including members of the backbone organization, were not fully cognisant of the model and its building blocks**. This posed a problem because a shared understanding is essential for a joint agenda formation and effective cooperation. Without this knowledge, misunderstandings can arise, cooperation remains fragmented, and the impact of the model is limited. The lack of awareness also undermines the motivation and involvement of stakeholders, which can jeopardize cooperation.
- **The lack of continuity within the workforce** (see above)
- **Lack of coordination and role definition** (see above)
- **Ambiguities about backbone structure to project partners** (see above)







Skive

4.3 Case 3: Climate villages Skive Municipality (Denmark)

4.3.1 Case description

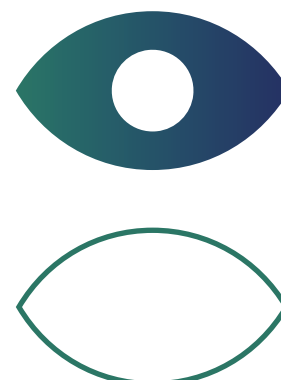
The Danish municipality of Skive identified global warming as a wicked problem. Their remedy was the development of the project '**Climate villages**' ('**Klimalandsbyer**'), which involved bringing two local communities (climate villages) in the municipality of Skive in an innovative initiative that took steps towards a more sustainable future together. The project is anchored within a broader climate plan, Skive 2050, in which an important element is the involvement of citizens in the green transition to a more sustainable society (Jørgensen, 2024). The aim was to involve citizens, associations, companies and institutions in joint climate initiatives, which are consistent with the CIM. In this way, they want to create a climate-responsible sustainable community.

Two climate villages were established, each consisting of a cluster of different villages within the municipality of Skive, the **Sydvestsalling Cluster** and the **Rødding/Lihme Cluster**. They both started from the assessment that climate challenges underpin their main problems. Other problems, such as demographic change, limited access to services and migration of young people, are considered secondary but hopefully solved as an indirect positive co-effect of the project activities. The population numbers of the individual villages underline the importance of cooperation: forming a strong, united community together, instead of continuing to struggle as smaller units with a declining population. One answer to this problem was to create more attractive housing and living conditions and a shared identity for both newcomers and existing residents of the local area. An important factor in this is improving the quality of life, with sustainability at its core.

In **Sydvestsalling**, four villages Lem, Vejby, Ramsing and Håsum decided to establish a local community with the aim of strengthening cooperation between the villages and forming a united front. In the **Rødding/Lihme cluster**, the two villages of Rødding and Lihme already had a long tradition of cooperation, which became further emphasized. They both formed a cluster by bringing together people from the different villages.

An interviewee indicated that collaboration with stakeholders was crucial for the success of the project:

"I think you could say that we cannot solve these problems if citizens, municipalities and experts, whoever they may be, cannot solve them if they do not work together as partners. Then we won't get there. So, we have to figure out how can we as a municipality facilitate this process of getting these people together and getting them to meet. Getting them to talk to each other and come to solutions together. That is what we are trying to do with the climate villages project." (Respondent 7)



Close cooperation between working groups, residents and the municipality of Skive ensured that climate villages were successfully realized. This approach was consistent with the CIM, in which different stakeholders – such as the government, local organisations and citizens – work together towards a common mission: to develop sustainable, climate-resilient communities. Local citizens were the main stakeholders in the project, and were closely involved in drawing up the common agenda, and the initiatives which reflected the wishes of the community and provided a strong foundation for creating change.

Not all the conditions from the literature were present, but there was nonetheless a strong similarity between the CIM and the Climate Villages in Skive (Jørgensen, 2024).

- **Cross-sectoral collaboration:** Key actors, led by citizens, were identified and invited to jointly formulate a shared agenda with a clear, common goal.
- **Continuous dialogue and coordination:** In addition, concepts for civil dialogue and cooperation were created, including the introduction of thematic working groups and the *Fremtidsbutikken*. For each climate village, there were coordination groups that kept an overview of the project.



4.3.2 Preconditions for the use of the CIM

Precondition 1

Urgency of change

The interviews reflected a degree of ambiguity about the significance of climate change for the communities. Whilst one respondent indicated that climate change was a complex issue for many residents, they were mainly concerned about the demographic challenges that result in fewer people living in the community (Respondent 9).

The initiators of the climate villages project attempted to link the climate challenges to these demographic shifts, by making it clear that a better living environment will help maintain the population and attract new families to keep the community alive. The responses to climate change were thus presented as the means to solve multiple social and economic challenges, but respondents were principally motivated by the resolution of the practical future of their village or municipality (Respondent 8, 9). There therefore was a sense of urgency, but no consensus on the source and degree of urgency.

Precondition 2

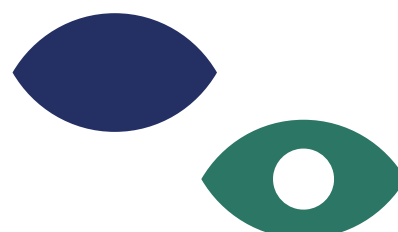
Presence of influential champions

The interviews revealed various influential advocates (Respondents 7, 8, 9). Initiating this project was a political decision taken at the level of the municipality. Politicians agreed that people in the municipality had to work on the climate plan and the green transition, and established a climate committee which decided to allocate money for the new climate village initiative.

During the start-up process, communities in the municipality could apply to become a climate village and those who submitted the applications have also been identified as influential champions. These were people with a keen interest in the project, who were willing to take responsibility for mobilizing people in their community to organise coordination groups in each climate village. One respondent said the following:

“They have a very broad network in the local villages. They are very passionate about work they do. They are all practical people, real doers.” (R7)

In the Sydvestsalling cluster, one person was identified as a key figure, a citizen who sat on both the climate committee and the coordination group of the cluster, who was credited with conveying the shared vision of the climate committee to the community. According to the respondents, a strong link was thus built between the citizen development project of a climate village and the political level.

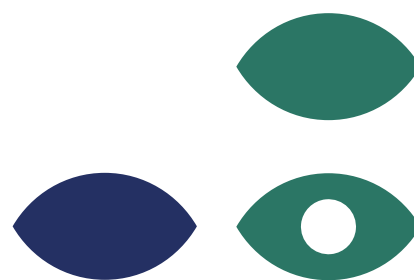


Precondition 3**Adequate resources**

The **financial resources** for the project came from various sources and were allocated gradually through urban renewal funds granted to municipality of Skive co-financed by the state and the municipality. Over the course of several years, surplus funds were accumulated which were allocated to the Climate Village initiative. Each village received DKK 1 million to generate climate-friendly ideas and projects that contributed to the improvement of their village cluster. Furthermore, the project received funding from other rural projects where surplus revenue was able to be reallocated. Finally, the project was also funded by Speak Up, a 3-year Interreg North Sea Region project with 12 partners in 6 countries on effective citizen engagement and community participation. With these funds, the municipality was able to recruit staff specifically for this project.

Alongside the many volunteers in the climate villages who were strongly committed to the project, additional **human resources** were also made available. A project manager was appointed to act as a neutral link in the project and to facilitate cooperation between different stakeholders. They sought to create consensus about forthcoming steps and action plans.

In the interviews, a respondent indicated that continued engagement is one of the biggest challenges for the project, and suggested that it was essential that those involved in the project remained active beyond the first year, so that the initiatives continued (Respondent 7). Finding ways to ensure the continuity of these initiatives is a crucial step for long-term success and will require sustained commitment, especially when resources are limited.



4.3.3 Process-based building blocks

The preconditions ensured that the Climate Villages in Skive began under a reasonably good star. We observed meaningful similarities between the way the project was developed and organised and some building blocks of the CIM. However, there are some building blocks that have been addressed to a lesser extent.

Building block 1

Common agenda

The shaping of the common agenda can be distinguished at different levels. First, the **strategic initiative PURE LIFE**, which constituted the strategic vision of the municipality; the way in which the municipality sees itself as a promoter of the green transition (Respondent 7). The initiative formed part of the municipality's overarching objective to become a leader in sustainable solutions and green innovation, and the result of partnerships between citizens, institutions, companies and the municipality. They focused on three main principles: (1) green actions; (2) 'in communities'; (3) 'for a region in balance'. The common principles supported the development of a sustainable and green region for both residents and businesses. PURE LIFE provided direction to make efforts focused and cohesive.

The **climate plan of the municipality of Skive** acted as a broad framework within which the climate villages were situated (Respondent 7). The common agenda of the project was then shaped by the Climate Committee, which set broad goals from the start. The initiative had to meet two key criteria: it had to be climate-related or sustainable, and it had to contribute to a stronger sense of community. Communities that applied to become a climate village were encouraged to develop initiatives that were not only climate-related, but also aimed at engaging as many people as possible within the community. This dual focus - climate and social connection - underpinned the agenda.

The shared vision on desired change for the Climate Villages was drawn from that dual focus. Climate villages mobilised stakeholders to strive for a climate-proof, sustainable community. They (citizens, associations, companies and institutions) do this by taking collective action to achieve the following objectives:

- Reduce the ecological footprint through local actions.
- Work together as wider communities to reduce consumption, reduce CO2 emissions, and promote biodiversity and locally produced food.
- Strengthen the community through citizen participation, dialogue, and collaboration with stakeholders, to create a shared understanding and commitment around the realisation of a green transition.
- Focus on knowledge sharing and learning between villages.
- To ensure that the overall changes make the region more attractive to new residents.

The communities who wished to be involved in the Climate Villages, had to set up a coordination group prior to **application process/initial process**. This group had to consist of a diverse representation of local stakeholders. The idea was that they would draw up a project proposal with their own vision and themes that met the general objectives of the climate plan. Here, the focus was on ensuring that citizen-led green initiatives would strengthen the community and promote a sustainable society.

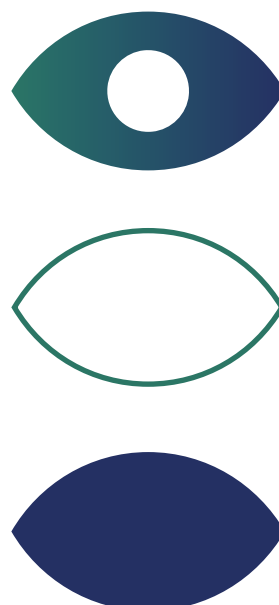
The applications were assessed by a working group set up by the Climate Committee (Respondent 7). This group consisted of politicians, citizens and municipal employees to ensure diverse representation. The working group recommended the selected applications to the Climate Committee, which in turn passed on its recommendations to the Technical and Environment Committee. The latter has formally submitted the proposals to the city council for final approval. It is important to note that the Climate Commission is a §17.4 committee, which means that it only has advisory powers and cannot make binding decisions.

Figure 7: Defining the common agenda (Climate villages Skive)



On the one hand, the villages in the **Sydvestsalling Cluster** wanted to work together on projects that promoted a sustainable lifestyle and reduce environmental impact. They did this by developing green oases, activities and events that encouraged a sustainable lifestyle and more conscious living. The villages of Lem, Vejby, Ramsing and Håsum became connected by the Climate Ring, a network of cycling routes and hiking trails that integrates these initiatives. The aim was to make the region more attractive to live in and visit by developing a strong green profile, with a focus on community, nature and sustainability.

On the other hand, the **Cluster Rødding/Lihme**. Sought to create an attractive area for local young people, as well as newer residents and tourists. They wanted to develop a climate-conscious identity, their unique natural environment and strengthen the existing community to increase the influx. The projects in Rødding and Lihme were ambitious and aimed to transform local communities into sustainable, vibrant and attractive places to live and work, by creating both individuals and a community that is aware of the environmental impact of their actions. From this broader focus, four more concrete areas of attention were defined (Jørgensen, 2024). First, the energy community and feasibility study, which looked at how residents could produce and share renewable energy. Secondly, a focus on entrepreneurship and new housing models, seeking to create attractive housing options to encourage sustainable lifestyles, such as alternative housing, and co-working spaces to support entrepreneurship. Thirdly, the initiative was attentive to sustainable recreation and tourism, which aimed to improve local biodiversity and reduce resource consumption. Finally, the development of active communication systems to strengthen local involvement, and promote climate-conscious behaviour through events and activities.



After drawing up the vision for each cluster, working groups were set up for each theme within this vision, and set specific goals that worked toward realising it. They engaged stakeholders through the snowball effect, which worked well in their communities. As one of the respondents from the Sydvestsalling cluster explains:

"We started with 10. Then we held a kick-off meeting where 20 people signed up to participate. When we organised another meet, they brought even more people. Now we are 30. They talked to each other, and they came over, we said you could just bring someone, and they did. At least 70 people already showed interest." (Respondent 9)

Schools were also approached to begin projects with children, whose parents also became aware, increasing the reach of the project. This led to the topic of climate villages being increasingly discussed, which led to a growing number of people becoming aware of the project and actively involved; several generations within families, and other groups that were less represented in volunteer projects, increased the levels of participation.

Respondents emphasized that it was not always feasible or necessary to involve all stakeholders, even in a small community. According to them, it was more important to focus on the different levels of stakeholders, such as political and community actors, and to identify who were the essential stakeholders. They indicated that the project has succeeded well in connecting the political level with the community, which they considered a crucial ingredient in achieving their goals. Additionally, respondents noted that stakeholder engagement sometimes relied on personal networks, as people who were not known and often harder to reach. The coordination group were cognisant of who to call in, and as we will show later, this was very well established in one of the climate villages.

Building block 2

Shared measurement system

Communities can measure certain aspects of their projects. For example, they can check how many of the planned initiatives have actually been implemented by comparing the original application and programme with the final results. They can also check whether the budget received has been spent correctly on the projects. In addition, they measure how many people are involved in the projects and how many participants the activities have attracted.

However, we found no evidence that a system had been set up for 'shared measurements'. This meant that the projects were unable to be monitored on the basis of specific indicators. For example, there are no figures available on climate change, such as a possible decrease in CO₂ emissions.



Building Block 3

Mutually reinforcing activities

In both climate villages, the concept of '*Fremtidsbutikken*' (the shop of the future)⁴, was a method used to for to participate in discussions and activities about the future of their local communities. It was organized by the municipality of Skive and some local volunteers from the coordination group. They discussed what kind of concrete activities they wanted to organize, what they wanted to participate in, and what their opinion on activities were. This provided a space for community members to come together, exchange ideas, meet, and interact in a meaningful way. The *Fremtidsbutikken* played an important role by mobilizing participants to work together on ideas and the concrete activities.

Both climate villages were committed to cooperative initiatives to promote sustainable living. They formed working groups and managed to gather 40 people who all wanted to be part of the working groups: In the Sydvestsalling Cluster we found several examples where participants had been able to do much of the work themselves.

- Climate Ring: A route that connects the villages of Lem, Vejby, Ramsing and Håsum, with green meeting places such as community gardens, orchards and picnic areas, where residents can come together, grow food and learn about sustainability.
- Repair cafes and swap shops where residents can repair, swap, and reuse clothing and household items to promote sustainability and social interaction by sharing skills and resources.
- Social engagement through various events, workshops and lectures. With the 'Harvest Festival', for example, they inspired residents to live sustainably and celebrate their joint efforts in green initiatives.
- Educational initiatives such as workshops on composting, sustainable food production, and renewable energy provided practical knowledge for climate-friendly choices.



⁴ <https://www.interregnorthsea.eu/speak-up/news/the-climate-villages-initiative-in-skive-municipality-citizen-led-sustainability>

There was also a wide range of activities in the **Rødning/Lihme cluster**, designed to encourage behavioural change and focus on reducing CO2 emissions, reducing resource use and promoting biodiversity. One, as mentioned earlier, is committed to four focus areas, organizing activities such as local energy production within the framework of the energy community; designing tiny houses and sustainable housing, researching the needs of young people in housing situations and hybrid workplaces in the context of entrepreneurship and new forms of housing; leisure and tourism activities that promote biodiversity and reduce consumption behaviour; organizing activities such as workshops and lectures, community gardens and community dinners in the context of active communities. These are existing activities and locations within the Rødning/Lihme region that illustrate the resources and initiatives that the cluster can build on to further encourage behavioural change and support sustainable development. Other, more specific examples are:

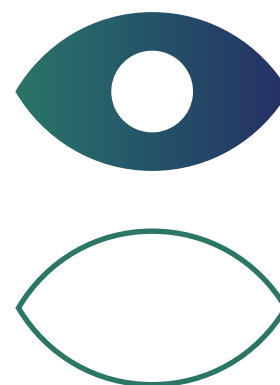
- ◊ Apple Festival in Rødning: annual festival dedicated to local production. Activities include apple pressing, information about apple cultivation and locally produced food.
- ◊ Spøttrup circle: an association of more than 140 local artists based in Rødning. They host art exhibitions, live music, and local music performances, with an open café on weekdays as a meeting place.
- ◊ Repair workshop 'stanneriet': a place where seniors voluntarily repair materials such as tools, appliances, bicycles and clothing.
- ◊ The green house near Spøttrup and the lake: An old small farm bought by a foundation and converted into a dynamic centre for nature lovers, entrepreneurs and visitors. Open to anyone who wants to experience modern small-scale farming with livestock and a selection of grains and legumes, they offer various courses on the sustainable use of local resources and skills.
- ◊ Lihme Community House: a cultural centre for the city, which can be used as a cultural unit hub or meeting room and where various activities can take place.

Building block 4

Continuous communication

There was no clear communication system established in advance. The climate villages both do this in their own way (Respondent 7). **Communication in the climate village of Sydvestsalling** takes place on three levels. First, the coordination group for each climate village communicates internally via a WhatsApp group, and meets once a month to discuss what is happening. Secondly, a representative of the coordination group, who is also a member of the Climate Committee, communicates with the Climate Committee about what is going on locally in the climate village. The project manager of the climate villages also participates in some of the meetings and communicates back to the politicians to keep them informed. Finally, there is a Facebook group to interact with the rest of the community. **Communication in the climate village of Rødning/Lihme** is mainly via e-mail and SMS. There will also be a newsletter.

The documents we examined mentioned that regular meetings and follow-ups were held, where citizens were able to give their feedback, and projects were adapted to their needs. Interviews later revealed that people did this at an early stage of the project, where they worked on the future store, but it was not continued. There were regular meetings with the coordination groups, but no additional meetings with citizens from the communities themselves.



Building block 5

Backbone organisation

As a backbone support organization, several departments were designated (Jørgensen, 2024). First, a **Climate Committee**, which represented the political level of the project. The committee consists of politicians and citizens, and has played an active role in initiating the process and handling applications for climate villages, which it sends to the City Council for approval. Apart from initiating the project and handling the applications, they have no organizational role. As such, they can't really be considered a backbone organization that one would expect to find in a fully functioning CIM, rather it took the role of an influential champion. However, they are always kept informed of the state of affairs in the climate villages. The Climate Committee includes both citizens and politicians from the city council to ensure broad representation and involvement.

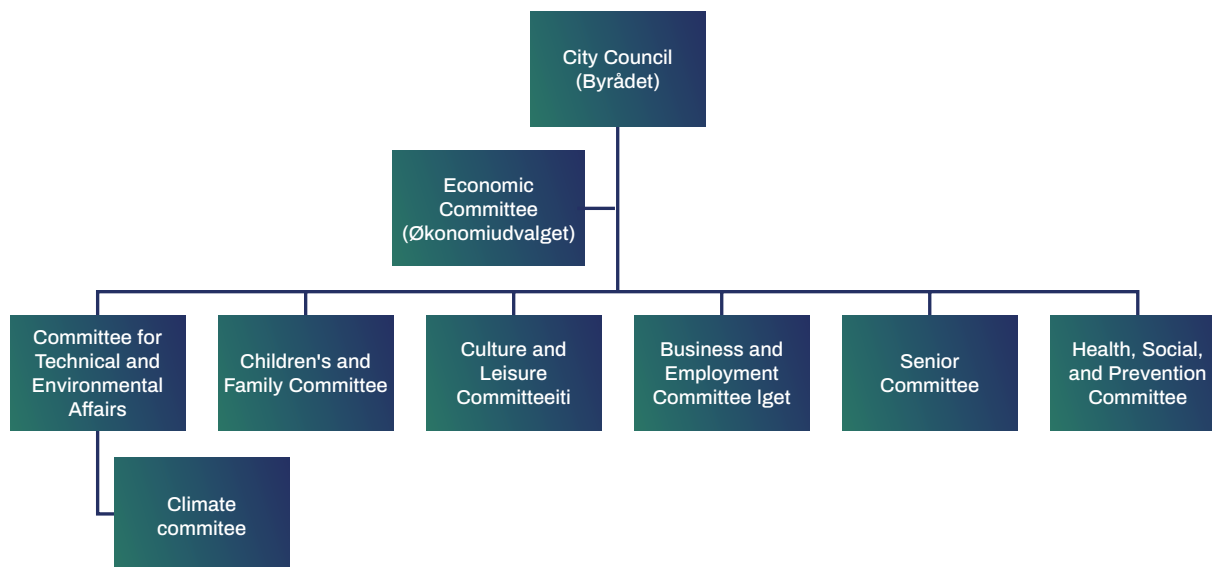
On the administrative side, the **Department of Technical, Environmental and Development Affairs** are responsible for the climate villages and the initiatives they proposed. They take on all practical functions related to project development and progress. They make planning decisions and prioritize collaboration with local working groups and coordination groups. For example, if a project such as a community garden was proposed, the initiator would have to submit an application to this department to get a permit. They also undertook administrative matters in the field of budgets.

In addition, there was also a **project leader for climate villages**. The project leader acted as a neutral link in the project that facilitated cooperation between different stakeholders and provides support to both climate villages to steer everything in the right direction. She sought create consensus on upcoming steps and action plans.

The most important group that can be seen as a form of backbone organization was the **coordination groups** in both climate villages. The Climate Village Coordination Group includes the initiative citizens who have prepared and sent the application to become a Climate Village. The coordination group brought citizens together to engage in dialogue, ensure that working groups are created around the themes they discussed together, and that the objectives for each working group are consistent with the joint agenda of the climate village. They take care of communication with the Climate Commission and communication with citizens from the community via social media channels.

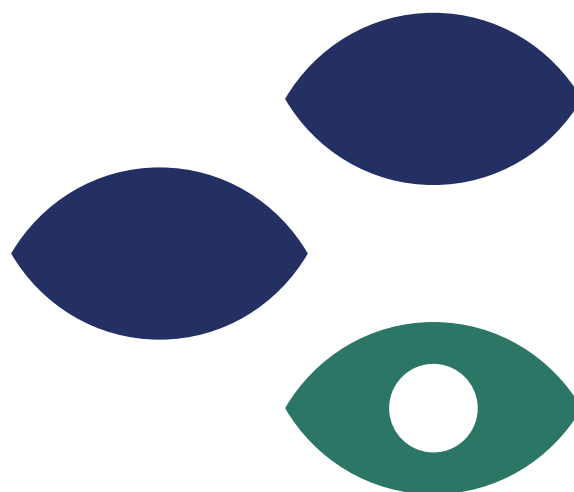


Figure 8:
Backbone organization (Climate Villages Skive) (Jørgensen, 2024)



In the Sydvestsling cluster, an **individual actor** was identified as a key figure within the backbone operation. This person, a member of both the Climate Commission and the cluster's coordination group, served as an important link in communicating the Climate Commission's shared vision to the wider community. According to the interviewees, it played a central role in facilitating the connection between the citizen development project, the coordination group for the climate village and the political level.

In addition, the members of the Coordination Group are represented in each Working Group, ensuring a direct link between the two. The coordination group also serves as a liaison with the technical administration and the project manager.



4.3.4 Overview of challenges in the Skive case

The municipality of Skive has clearly identified climate change as a policy challenge and a wicked problem. A solution has arguably been found by linking this challenge to demographic issues of greater importance to the local population. The initiators of the climate village project have sought to link the urgency of the climate issue to these demographic challenges, in order to increase the awareness and involvement of citizens. Climate change transitions are therefore not only presented as solutions to environmental problems, but also as the solution to cognate social and economic challenges.

As noted above, the documents indicate that regular meetings and follow-ups were held, during which citizens were able to give their feedback and projects were adapted to their needs. However, interviews reveal that this involvement mainly took place in the early phase of the project, but was later discontinued. Although there are structural meetings with coordination groups, additional meetings with the communities themselves are lacking. The **lack of a sustainable participation strategy and sustained engagement** is therefore a crucial challenge to long-term success.

The interviews revealed several challenges in the operation of the **coordination groups**. While these challenges were successfully addressed in one climate village, this turned out to be less effective in others.



The **Sydvestsalling Cluster** has a number of strengths, which allowed the coordination group to strongly involve the community in the project:

- Broad vision and participation: The coordination group opted for an open and inclusive approach, actively engaging citizens by creating space for their ideas and goals. This led to a shared vision and collaboration within the community.
- Community mobilization: People have been motivated to participate in working groups and have set successful collective goals.
- Equal cooperation: Decisions are made on the basis of consultation, without a hierarchical structure. Members feel heard, explore opportunities to contribute and take responsibility for actions.
- Pragmatic projects: The projects are accessible and actionable, allowing them to effectively engage the community and achieve results.

The **Rødning/Lihme cluster** faces greater challenges:

- Lack of community involvement: The coordination group struggles to mobilize the community and form working groups around themes. There is little support for their vision and initiatives.
- Complex and technical projects: The coordination group has little connection with the community. The projects proposed by the coordination group (e.g. energy communities and tiny houses) are ambitious, technical and difficult for ordinary citizens to implement, which makes broad participation difficult to achieve.
- Top-down approach: The coordination group is more focused on monitoring and implementing their own vision, rather than developing a shared agenda with the community.
- Low attendance at gatherings: There is little community interest in participating in meetings and initiatives, which hinders further progress. The coordination group assumed that informing citizens would be sufficient, but poor turnout shows that this was not enough to mobilize a significant group.

4.4 Summary table of the three cases

		Malmö	Mechelen	Skive
Case description	Theme	Climate Transition	Neighbourhood improvement contract – Pro-Arsenaal	Climate Villages
	Year of initiation	2021	2021	2024
	Phase of CIM	Sustainable action and impact	Designing and organising for impact.	Designing and organising for impact.
Preconditions before start	Urgency for change	Top-down initiation, but concern for change shared by all stakeholders.	Top-down initiation, but concern for change shared by all stakeholders.	Climate transition is not a priority concern for the community, but they link it to demographic challenges.
	Influential champions	City as driving force.	City government and administration as driven force.	Politicians from the municipality; people who applied to become a climate village; and Mette Høstgaard (citizen representative of the Climate Committee and member of the coordination group in one of the Climate Villages).
	Adequate resources	Sufficient financial and personnel resources.	Sufficient financial and personnel resources.	Sufficient financial and personnel resources.
Success factors during process	Common agenda	Broadly agreed upon problem definitions, solutions and policy priorities.	Broadly agreed upon problem definitions and action plan.	Broad agreement on definitions of problem, solutions and action plan.
	Continuous involvement of stakeholders	Stakeholders involved in every step of the process.	Limited stakeholder involvement during the process. Usually initiated top-down.	Involved from the initial process of applying for climate village to implementing the actions.
	Shared measurement	Annual reporting of key indicators and monitoring of process.	Zero measurement: pre-measurement through survey and indicators, repeat measurement after 4 years.	Communities measure their projects based on implementation, budget and commitment, but there is no system for shared measurement with predetermined indicators.
	Mutually reinforcing activities	Multifaceted approach to the climate transition targeting citizens, neighbourhoods, organizations and the city.	Multifaceted approach to the climate transition targeting citizens, organizations, schools and city.	Specific focus on civic activities arising from interaction during fremidsbutikken.
	Continuous communication	Internal and external communications network.	Strong internal communication network, both formal and informal. Other stakeholders are kept informed of updates, but less involved in continuing to shape the agenda.	Communication system was not defined in advance; climate villages do it in their own way; citizens are no longer involved in follow-ups.

	Malmö	Mechelen	Skive
Strong backbone organization	Clear backbone organization, organized in process teams, core team in matrix structure.	Clear backbone organization from the city government, consisting of a core team and a steering committee.	Coordination group and project leader in both climate villages as backbone organization.
Collective learning	collective learning through shared data and iterative process.	Strong data-driven approach, but less emphasis on collective learning and adjustment.	Lack of systematic data collection to draw lessons from. There is still a lack of an iterative process, which does not make full use of the impact enhancing initiative.
Main challenges	Very time intensive process, inherent to the policy approach (viz. the project approach). Requires much organizational planning to delineate roles, tasks and responsibilities. Requires much coordination across policy levels. Requires substantive specialists and generalist profiles. Requires continuity in in personnel of backbone organization.	Involvement of vulnerable groups grows, but decision-making remains largely top-down. Shared agenda - Translating ambitious goals into achievable actions. Data are collected but still little used for strategic adjustment and collective learning. Collaborations arise mainly through city services, not spontaneously between partners. Consultations are often informative and lack joint decision-making and coordination. Lack of general knowledge about the CIM among all stakeholders. Lack of continuity in staff. Lack of a central coordinator leading to miscommunication and unclear responsibilities. Lack of clarity on backbone structure.	Climate and demographics: Linking climate challenges to demographic issues to increase engagement. Decline in engagement: Participation declines after inception due to lack of sustainable strategies. Differences coordination groups: Sydvestsalling works well due to inclusive approach, Rødding/Lihme struggles with low participation and top-down steering. Difficult mobilisation: technical projects and lack of support limit involvement in Rødding/Lihme.

4.5 Inspiring practices in the three cases

Malmö	Mechelen	Skive
Cross-sectoral Cooperation Malmö has successfully identified and engaged key actors from various sectors, including city departments, large companies, civil society organizations, and universities. This collaboration is crucial for formulating a shared agenda and working towards common climate goals.	Creation of a Common Agenda The project focused on establishing a joint vision for the neighbourhood that encompassed the improvement of housing, quality of life, and safety. This common agenda helped align various stakeholders' efforts towards shared goals, fostering a sense of collaboration among diverse entities and residents.	Cross-sectoral Collaboration The initiative emphasizes the involvement of various stakeholders, including citizens, local organizations, and the municipality, working together towards common goals.
Common Agenda Formation The development of a broad and inclusive common agenda, spearheaded by the Environmental Programme for the City of Malmö 2021-2030, reflects a systematic approach to identifying and addressing climate issues collaboratively. This required an iterative process of strategic analysis to clarify shared goals. They started with a broad approach when formulating and gradually narrowed their focus as the agenda took shape.	Inclusivity in Stakeholder Engagement By conducting door-to-door visits and employing multilingual community guards, the project ensured a high response rate to surveys, which helped capture a diversity of perspectives and needs within the community.	Community Engagement Local citizens (in the coordination group) are actively involved in shaping the common agenda, ensuring that the initiatives reflect the community's needs and desires. This grassroots participation fosters ownership and commitment to the project's goals.
Shared Measurement Systems Malmö has established a robust measurement system with specific indicators to monitor progress towards its climate goals. This unified approach allows for effective tracking of contributions from all stakeholders and ensures accountability.	Data-Driven Approach The use of pre-measurements and continuous surveys to gather data on community issues allowed the project team to identify priorities and measure progress effectively.	Structured Coordination Establishing coordination groups and working groups allows for organized collaboration. These groups maintain a connection between the community and the local government, ensuring that communication and progress are sustained.
Iterative Learning and Adaptation The emphasis on continuous feedback and adjusting plans based on new data and insights demonstrates a commitment to dynamic learning. Regular reviews of roadmaps ensure that the city's strategies remain relevant and responsive to emerging challenges.	Interdepartmental Collaboration The project encouraged collaboration between different departments within the city (such as housing, social policy, and safety) to address complex social challenges. This interconnectedness is vital in creating sustainable solutions that are culturally and situationally aware of the community's context.	Mobilizing Local Networks Utilizing personal networks to engage different community members has proven successful. This method facilitates the expansion of participation and encourages community members to bring others into the fold, enhancing involvement and support for the initiatives.
Engagement and Dialogue Through structured dialogues, Malmö encourages local stakeholders to voice their needs and concerns. This inclusivity fosters collaboration and a sense of shared ownership over climate initiatives.	Focus on Local Capacity Building By offering platforms for citizens to engage (like the neighbourhood budget), the project empowers local community members, which can develop human capital and enhance social cohesion.	



5 Lessons and recommendations

Governments worldwide are confronted with complex societal challenges that require an integrated approach. The Collective Impact Model (CIM) provides a structured method to promote cross-sectoral collaboration and achieve sustainable impact in combating wicked problems. From the analysis of three cases (Malmö, Mechelen and Skive), we can draw lessons about the necessary preconditions and success factors of the CIM, and formulate concrete recommendations for governments that want to get started with the CIM themselves. The implementation of CIM requires not only the presence of the right structural and organizational conditions, but also a thorough knowledge of the dynamics within cross-sectoral cooperation.

All cases show that a successful Collective Impact initiative demands the right preconditions to be in place. In every case, there was a clear **urgency to implement change**, often backed up by figures. Yet this was initially a top-down emphasis, with the wider community itself not always fully aware of this. What each of the cases showed was the importance of **external factors as catalysts for change** and for the application of the CIM. For example, Malmö was influenced by European emission regulations, Mechelen by social issues and in Skive they linked demographic challenges to climate change. Governments must respond strategically to external factors (legislation, economic benefits, ecological changes, social urgency) in order to create support and action. A policy strategy based on the CIM should not only structure internal collaborations, but also take advantage of the opportunities offered by international, national and regional policy frameworks. In all three cases, **sufficient funding** was available, which was essential for building a strong foundation and being able to assemble a **dedicated project team**. In Malmö, the importance of a clear division of roles and mandates was stressed so that decisions could be taken effectively in such a large initiative. In Mechelen, they had a large staff but experienced problems in defining clear role descriptions and appointing a coordinator for the project, leading to ambiguities in the process.



1. The importance of a shared agenda and strategic objectives

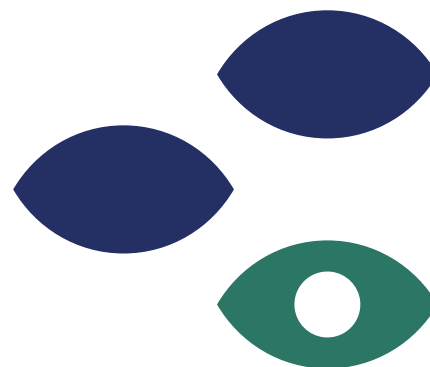
The first lesson we can learn from the three cases is the absolute necessity to determine the direction of travel early in the implementation process of the CIM. Consultation in the start-up phase of the policy program or project was necessary to arrive at common problem definitions, formulate shared strategic objectives, and to plan the path towards the realization of those objectives. A shared agenda with substantive objectives and process-based planning is the backbone of the success of the CIM; in Malmö, a broadly supported climate strategy was developed with concrete objectives and sectoral roadmaps. In Mechelen, a shared agenda emerged through a neighbourhood improvement contract, while in Skive the agenda was linked to both climate and demographic challenges.

Governments must therefore ensure a clearly formulated vision with measurable goals, a clear trajectory, and participatory involvement of all stakeholders. It is important to ensure the approach avoids being too top-down, with the government taking an overly dominant role. This requires a broad consultation process in which policymakers, private actors and civil society organizations participate and jointly determine the priorities. Ideally, this would begin during the conception phase of the process, and best thereafter to provide regular feedback to the initial agenda and vision during implementation. It is important to be clear about the structure of the CIM from the early stages when forming the joint agenda. External partners need to be aware of how the CIM works in order to shape a joint agenda together. It is also important that they integrate this functioning within their own organizations to achieve shared goals.

Recommendation 1

Formulate a clear, shared, strategic agenda but ensure flexibility throughout the CIM process

A common long-term vision of policy problems and solutions must provide direction, but also leave room for adjustment throughout the process. Stakeholders should actively participate in its formulation. The agenda-setting process must be iterative and inclusive, with continuous feedback loops and the ability to make adjustments based on new insights or changing circumstances. The process should also be open to newly identified stakeholders. To solve big issues, it is advisable to start broadly by formulating the agenda and then set increasingly concrete goals. This makes complex issues manageable for all stakeholders.



2. A strong backbone organization is crucial

A second lesson is that an effective backbone organization is necessary to coordinate collaboration. Although the CIM focuses on the collective and wants to promote participation of all stakeholders, it is necessary to have an organization that acts to oversee and coordinate the whole. In Malmö, the Environment Department played this central role, while in Mechelen, the backbone function was diffusely spread among several city departments and project managers who together formed a core team. In Skive, the function and tasks of the backbone organization were divided into several layers, including a climate committee, a project leader and a coordination group per climate village.

The success of the CIM is thus intrinsically linked to the presence of one central, clearly definable, coordinating backbone organization, which is both open and participatory and ensures a balanced initiation of the process, that leaves room for creative input from partners and citizens. Governments need to invest in a stable backbone organization with sufficient resources to support the process for the long term. In addition, it is essential to provide mechanisms that guarantee continuity, such as institutional anchoring, and interdepartmental and intersectoral cooperation. In the cases in question, there was a clear challenge with staff continuity, where the stability of the backbone organization depended on a few employees whose broad and important role in the coordination process made them not easily replaceable.

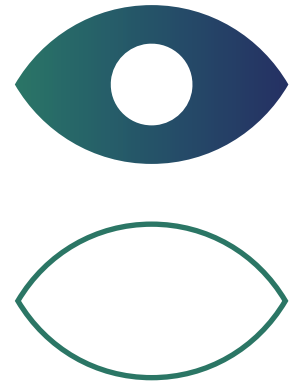
However, as our case analysis has shown, the mere presence of a well-resourced backbone organization is not sufficient for success. It is essential that the backbone staff possess both the expertise and the skills necessary to effectively implement the CIM as a process. In other words, they must not only have substantive knowledge of the specific issue at hand but also **strong competencies in process management, stakeholder engagement and networking skills** to ensure the CIM's success. In this respect, it is essential to ensure a clear structure within the backbone organization, with clear roles and, if necessary, the appointment of a coordinator.

Additionally, for effective implementation, project initiators, backbone staff, and stakeholders must develop a **shared vocabulary**. Establishing common language and understanding is crucial for aligning expectations, fostering collaboration, and ensuring that all parties are working toward the same objectives. This involves both knowledge about the functioning and building blocks of the collective impact model and thematic expertise on the topic at hand.

Recommendation 2

Invest in a strong backbone organization and skilled staff

The success of the CIM depends on the presence of a neutral, connecting and coordinating organization. Governments must ensure sufficient resources and operational expertise within the backbone organization. This requires a multi-disciplinary team that has both technical expertise and process skills, to facilitate collaboration between various sectors. Stable financing is also crucial to achieve the long-term vision (recommendation 1). Governments need to diversify sources of funding and invest in training and capacity building.



3. Monitoring and shared measurements strengthen cooperation

The path to achieving the common agenda and realising the strategic objectives is littered with institutional, political, and practical pitfalls. That is why it is necessary to provide feedback on a regular basis, and to make adjustments. The existence of institutionalised feedback loops through regular monitoring of key performance indicators is crucial for the success of the CIM. For example, Malmö used a robust measurement system with annual reports and KPIs per roadmap, while a formal measurement system was partly missing in the other cases, resulting in less structured evaluations.

The central lesson we draw from this is that governments, in collaboration with the stakeholders of the CIM, must establish clear and measurable indicators based on the strategic objectives, and implement a transparent measurement system for continuous evaluation and adjustment. This system should not only collect operational data, but also leave room for qualitative feedback and societal perceptions of success.

Recommendation 3

Develop a robust monitoring system and build in a dynamic and iterative process of adjustment

Based on the shared strategic vision (recommendation 1), it is important to provide a shared measurement system with KPIs and annual reports. This increases the responsibility and involvement of stakeholders and makes evaluation and adjustment possible. The monitoring system should be participatory, transparent and focus on both process and impact evaluation, using both quantitative and qualitative indicators.

The formulation, reformulation, and implementation of strategies is a continuous process. Governments must build in regular feedback moments and evaluation cycles and be able to make flexible adjustments. Learning networks and participatory evaluations can help to continuously improve the effectiveness of CIM interventions.



4. Stakeholder engagement and cross-sector collaboration

The fourth lesson we can learn from the comparison of the cases is that stakeholder involvement is crucial for the success of the CIM, and must be structurally anchored through participatory methods and active networks. This requires strategic communication, regular and above all accessible, consultation moments, and the recognition of various forms of expertise and experiential knowledge within the communities involved. Purely formal participation opportunities are not sufficient, as long as the participation is not respectful of the input of the various stakeholders.

Malmö and Mechelen went the furthest in involving stakeholders and working with companies, civil society organizations, academic institutions and citizens. Each of these actors were able to provide substantial input – especially in the case of Malmö. Skive had similar intentions and emphasized citizen participation, but the degree of involvement differed per village.

Expanding on the CIM, our case analysis highlights one remaining challenge. While governments in all three cases were committed to involving a broad range of stakeholders in the process design, one key aspect was missing – or at least not explicitly defined: **the role of “ordinary” citizens in implementing the CIM**. Although citizens were recognized as affected parties who needed to be engaged, their **specific role and level of participation** often remained unclear. It was not explicitly defined **when and how** they should be involved – whether in **determining the common agenda, setting strategic and operational goals, or selecting valid indicators**. Clarifying their role in each phase of the CIM is crucial for ensuring meaningful citizen engagement and truly inclusive governance.

Recommendation 4

Facilitate cooperation and clearly define roles, responsibilities, and expectations

Governments should actively bring together diverse stakeholders through networking events, participatory workshops and collaborative contracts. This can be supported by shared digital platforms, in which cooperation and knowledge sharing between the actors involved is stimulated. However, the practical implementation of such stakeholder involvement should start from clearly delineated roles, responsibilities, and expectations.

Recommendation 5

Facilitate and encourage cross-sectoral cooperation

Governments should actively bring together diverse stakeholders through networking events, participatory workshops and collaborative contracts. This can be supported by shared digital platforms, in which cooperation and knowledge sharing between the actors involved is stimulated.

In conclusion, the CIM can provide an effective method for tackling complex societal challenges. The cases of Malmö, Mechelen and Skive show that CIM can be successful if the right preconditions are met. By following the recommendations above, governments can implement CIM in a sustainable and effective way and achieve large-scale impact.



6 List of consulted documents and interviews

6.1 Annex 1: Sources consulted

Sources consulted for the Malmö case:

- Environmental Programme for the City of Malmö 2021 – 2030 - Adopted by the Malmö City Council on 29 April 2021.
- Climate City Contract - 2030 Climate Neutrality Investment Plan of Malmö - City of Malmö
- Climate City Contract - 2030 Climate Neutrality Commitments – City of Malmö
- Climate City Contract 2030 - Climate Neutrality Action Plan – Part A
- Climate City Contract 2030 - Climate Neutrality Action Plan – Part B
- Climate City Contract 2030 - Climate Neutrality Action Plan – Part C
- 7 färdplaner Klimatprat (Powerpoint by the city of Malmö)
- Klimatomställning Malmö hösten 2023 (Powerpoint by the city of Malmö)
- Presentationsbilder engelska KLOM (Powerpoint by the city of Malmö)
- Tillsammans ställer vi on 4 June (Powerpoint by the city of Malmö)

Consulted sources for the Mechelen case:

- Website Pro-Arsenaal: <https://www.mechelen.be/pro-ject-arsenaal>
- Progress report 2023 – Call for neighbourhood improvement contract 2021 “Pro-Arsenaal” - Agency for Domestic Administration Team Urban Policy

Sources consulted for the Skive case:

- Climate Villages in Skive Municipality – Self-made document by Signe Bak Jørgensen
- Program for Rødding/Lihme - Pilor project Climate Villages 2024 – 2025 – Business and development
- Program for the Sydvestsalling locality – Pilot project Climate Villages 2024 – 2025 – Business and Development



6.2 Annex 2: Semi-structured interview list

1. Introduction

- Introduction of myself
- Purpose of research
- Informed consent

2. Could you briefly **introduce yourself** and explain what role you had within [the project]?

3. Before you can launch a Collective Impact initiative, there are **three key prerequisites**.

- The first is an **urgency for change**, a widely shared awareness in the community that the 'wicked problem', in this case climate change, needs to be addressed. What is the level of awareness in your community about the seriousness of this problem?
- The second precondition is the presence of **influential champions** who can get a project off the ground. They must be able to mobilise people and raise awareness of the importance of addressing the issue. These can be both individuals and organisations. In this project, do you think there were influential champions present who helped launch a Collective Impact initiative?
- The final precondition is that there must be sufficient resources to launch an initiative. We are talking about financial resources, but also personal resources, dedicated staff who want to start the initiative.
 - Do you have any knowledge of how or whether there were sufficient financial sources?
 - Do you feel there were sufficient dedicated staff to launch the initiative?

4. Common agenda [short explanation first on the broader framework in which all stakeholders commit to work together, shared vision of desired change, similar problem definition, similar goals and collective approach to address the problem]

- Do you feel that you were able to form a joint agenda with [the project]? How did this come about and how was it shaped?
- It is usually best to start broadly with a direction you want to go in, then put more focus in the process and the goals you want to achieve. Do you feel this worked out well in [the project]?
- Do you feel like all stakeholders were involved in forming the common agenda?
- How did the initiative reach all these stakeholders?
- Forming the common agenda is known as a challenging and difficult phase. It requires a lot of commitment, commitment among stakeholders, dialogue, exploration and curiosity. Have you experienced any challenges in forming the common agenda?
- It is important to take enough time to form the common agenda. Yet this often proves to be challenging. Do you feel that enough time was taken to form the common agenda?

5. Shared measurement systems [short explanation first: result must be measured and reported, on a consistent basis with indicators, to see progress and learn during process]
 - Did your project develop a system where results could be reported and tracked?
 - Have indicators for success been developed
 - How were these indicators developed?
 - How are they tracked? What system is behind this?
 - Do you think the shared measurement system will give a better view on how to promote alignment and cooperation between targets and organisations?
 - Do you generally feel that this system works well?
 - It is important to focus not only on collecting quantitative data, but also effectively on learning from it. Essential to constantly communicate and focus on understanding the 'why' of the results. Is this happening sufficiently?
6. Mutually reinforcing activities [short explanation first: each organization and stakeholder takes on the task in which it excels but work together, support each other in a coordinated way]:
 - I went through policy documents of your project. As I understand it, there are mutually reinforcing activities in your project and this idea is strongly embedded. Is this correct?
 - Do you have examples of mutually reinforcing activities?
 - Can you talk a bit more about the mutually reinforcing activities and how it works?
 - Do you feel that there is effectively good cooperation between different stakeholders and that this is done in a coordinated way?
7. Continuous communication [short explanation (Continuous communication between stakeholders, who meet and communicate regularly, to ensure trust between different organizations, strategic engagement, reminder of motivation, provides a common vocabulary)]:
 - From the policy documents, I understand that dialogue is an important pillar in your policy. However, it is not clear to me how this works.
 - Do you feel that continuous communication is met? Do you meet regularly with the partners?
 - How is this shaped? What ways of communication exist in your project?
8. Backbone support organization [short explanation first: often a separate organization or multiple organizations who take the lead and coordination]:
 - Which organisation or organisations perform this function of backbone support organisation in your project?
 - How I interpreted it, there is a subdivision between several established teams that take on the role. Is this correct and can you say a bit more about this structure?
9. Are there other challenges you faced or are still facing while starting or implementing [the project]?
10. These were my questions. Do you have anything else you would like to say or add?

7 Academic reference list

Abbott, M., and Wirtz, S. (2019). California essentials for childhood case study: Collective impact through strategic opportunities. *International Journal on Child Maltreatment: Research, Policy and Practice*, 1, 133–152.

Beerman, R., Beke, M., and Wynarski, J. (2021). *The Collective Impact model and its application in European Cities with a special focus on the topic of urban security and social cohesion*. Brussels: European Commission. [https://www.ecorys.com/app/uploads/files/2021-06/Action%205%20-%20Report%20'The%20Collective%20Impact%20Model%20and%20its%20Application%20in%20EU%20cities'%20\(2\).pdf](https://www.ecorys.com/app/uploads/files/2021-06/Action%205%20-%20Report%20'The%20Collective%20Impact%20Model%20and%20its%20Application%20in%20EU%20cities'%20(2).pdf)

Benjamin, L. M., Ebrahim, A., and Gugerty, M. K. (2023). Nonprofit organizations and the evaluation of social impact: A research program to advance theory and practice. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 52(1), 313S–352S.

Born, P. (2017). *How to develop a common agenda for a collective impact*. Waterloo: Tamarack Institute. <https://www.tamarackcommunity.ca/hubfs/Resources/Publications/CommonAgendaforCollectiveImpact.pdf>

Cabaj, M. (2012). *Collective impact and shared measurement: Tough but necessary*. Waterloo: Tamarack Institute. <https://www.tamarackcommunity.ca/hubfs/Resources/Publications/Collective%20Impact%20and%20Shared%20Measurement%20Tough%20But%20Necessary.pdf>

Cabaj, M., and Weaver, L. (2016). *Collective impact 3.0: An evolving framework for community change*. Waterloo: Tamarack Institute. https://cdn2.hubspot.net/hubfs/316071/Events/Multi-Day%20Events/Community%20Change%20Institute%20-%20CCCI/2016%20CCCI%20Toronto/CCI_Publications/Collective_Impact_3.0_FINAL_PDF.pdf

Cabaj, M. (2017). *Shared measurements: The why is clear, the how continues to develop*. Waterloo: Tamarack Institute. <https://www.tamarackcommunity.ca/hubfs/Resources/Publications/Shared%20Measurement%20Paper.pdf>

Conklin, J. (2005). *Dialogue mapping: Building shared understanding of wicked problems*. John Wiley & Sons.

Ennis, G., and Tofa, M. (2020). Collective impact: A review of the peer-reviewed research. *Australian Social Work*, 73, 32–47.

Farley, J. (2007). Wicked problems. *BioScience*, 57, 797–798.

International IDEA. (2022). *The global state of democracy 2022: Forging social contracts in a time of discontent*. Stockholm: International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance.

Kania, J., and Kramer, M. (2011). Collective impact. *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, 9(1), 36–41.

Hanleybrown, F., Kania, J., and Kramer, M. (2012). Channelling change: Making collective impact work. *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, 1–8. <https://doi.org/10.48558/2T4M-ZR69>

Jørgensen, S.B. (2024). Climate Villages in Skive Municipality. Skive: Skive Municipality.

Kania, J., and Kramer, M. (2013). Embracing emergence: How collective impact addresses complexity. *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, 1–7. <https://doi.org/10.48558/ZJY9-4D87>

Kania, J., Williams, J., Schmitz, P., Brady, S., Kramer, M., and Juster, J. S. (2022). Centering equity in collective impact. *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, 20, 38–45.

Lee, M. J., and Levine, P. (2016). A new model for citizen engagement. *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, 14, 40–45.

Lo, C. (2023). Going from government to governance. In A. Farazmand (Ed.), *Global encyclopedia of public administration, public policy, and governance* (pp. 5634–5639). Cham: Springer International Publishing.

Malmö. (2021a). *Environmental programme for the City of Malmö 2021–2030*. Malmö: Malmö City Council.

Malmö. (2021b). Climate City Contract. Malmö: Malmö City Council.

Malmö (2023). Climate City Contract 2030 Climate Neutrality Action Plan. Malmö: Malmö City Council.

Mechelen. (2023). Voortgangsrapport 2023. Oproep wijkverbeteringscontract 2021 “Pro-Arsenaal. Mechelen: Stad Mechelen.

Parkhurst, M., and Preskill, H. (2014). Learning in action: Evaluating collective impact. *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, 12, 17–19. <https://doi.org/10.48558/BCC5-4275>

Piff, J. (2021). Data in collective impact: Focusing on what matters. *Stanford Social Innovation Review*. <https://doi.org/10.48558/9C8P-WD91>

Rittel, H. W. J., and Webber, M. M. (1973). Dilemmas in a general theory of planning. *Policy Sciences*, 4, 155–169.

Tamarack Institute. (2018). *Compendium of collective impact resources: The five phases*. Waterloo: Tamarack Institute. <https://www.tamarackcommunity.ca/hubfs/Resources/Tools/TOOL%20-%20Compendium%20on%20Collective%20Impact:%20The%20Five%20Phases.pdf>

Turner, S., Merchant, K., Kania, J., and Martin, E. (2012). Understanding the value of backbone organizations in collective impact: Part 1. *Stanford Social Innovation Review*. <https://doi.org/10.48558/X3KJ-B&S10>

Smart, J. R. (2017). *Collective impact: Evidence and implications for practice*. Southbank: Australian Institute of Family Studies. https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/sites/default/files/publication-documents/45_collective_impact_in_australia.pdf

Valgarðsson, V., Jennings, W., Stoker, G., Bunting, H., Devine, D., McKay, L., and Klassen, A. (2025). A crisis of political trust? Global trends in institutional trust from 1958 to 2019. *British Journal of Political Science*. Advance online publication.

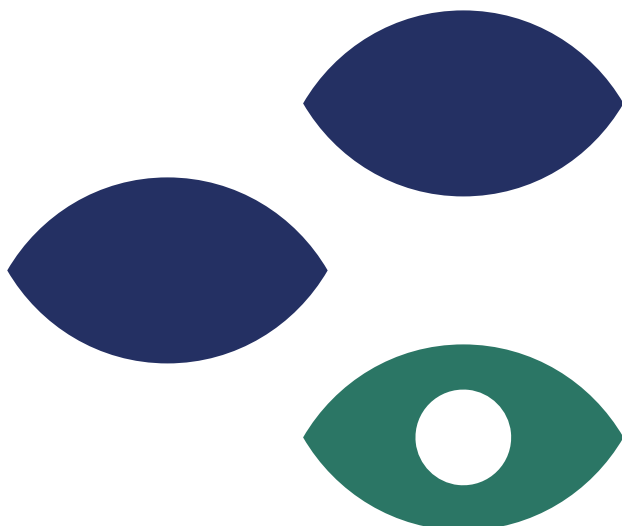
Walls, H. L. (2018). Wicked problems and a 'wicked' solution. *Globalization and Health*, 14, 1–3.

Weaver, L. (2014). The promise and peril of collective impact. *The Philanthropist*, 26, 11–19.

Weaver, L. (2019). *The journey of collective impact: Contributions to the field from Tamarack Institute*. Altona: FriesenPress.

Weaver, L. (2021). *The collaboration spectrum revisited*. Waterloo: Tamarack Institute. https://www.tamarackcommunity.ca/hubfs/Resources/Publications/Collaboration%20Spectrum%20Revisited_Liz%20Weaver.pdf

Zuckerman, S. J., Garrett, A. L., Sarver, S., and Huddleston-Casas, C. (2020). Playing well with others: A case study of collective impact in the early care and education policy arena. *International Journal of Child Care and Education Policy*, 14, 1–23.





Photography Climate transition Malmö:

©City of Malmö, ©Bojana Lukac, ©Apelöga, ©Werner Nystrand, ©Macs Moser
©Jens Nordström, ©Sanna Dolck Wall, ©Fredrik Johansson, ©Anna Hållams

Photography Neighbourhood Improvement Contract in Pro-Arsenaal Mechelen:

©Mechelen

Photography Climate villages Skive Municipality:

©Thomas Køser, ©Anders Heegaard, ©Mette Plougmann Sørensen,
©Climate Village Lihme/Rødding and ©Climate Village Sydvestsalling

