STAKEHOLDERS I
As in a river, engagement starts with many stakeholders coming together. This is a process of INCLUDING and BRINGING TOGETHER.

Use an umbrella organisation to hold public meetings as a starting point for bringing together stakeholders and developing a map of the different groups and interests in the district.

When there are a number of existing local stakeholders, consider kick-starting the process by identifying or creating an umbrella organisation that can bring a significant number of stakeholders together in public meetings. Try to find well connected organisations that will be able to multiply your outreach potential but also bring in a range of individuals and smaller stakeholder groups that will be representative of the diversity of the area. Lastly, make these initial public meetings comfortable, inviting and enjoyable so as to set the scene for future events and create positive word of mouth.

Consider running focus groups to provide an opportunity for stakeholders to identify, in a more general and comfortable way, issues or topics that might be address through the co-creation of NbS.

In general, working with smaller groups of people brings a number of benefits. It makes people more comfortable with sharing their ideas and experiences and it allows more time for everyone to participate more effectively. It is also the recommended way to get more detailed information on the issues and potentials in the project area. Focus groups are a good example of small groups that present some level of communality and can, therefore, explore issues and options in detail.

Try sending out questionnaires and conducting interviews with key actors in different departments of the relevant organisations to gain an understanding of the level of knowledge in terms of community participation and NbS. Get a sense of what these stakeholders consider as important.

Reach out internally and externally in order to gain an understanding of the level of knowledge amongst colleagues in different departments and stakeholders in related institutions. Many people can have influence on the process and it is important to connect with them. In the CLEVER context, questionnaires and guided interviews were used with these stakeholders utilising specific questions to gain an understanding of their level of NbS knowledge. This allows the co-creation team to gauge on what level to pitch communications with them and what actions should be realised in terms of raising awareness and perhaps some capacity building.

Organise workshops with the various municipal departments to NbS discuss your project and look for opportunities to implement, particularly in the geographical area you wish to work in. Small interventions can be a good way of establishing a precedent.

Find out who your allies can be in the various municipal departments by inviting them to cooperate in a spirit of opportunity-seeking. A project that lacks funding can succeed if it is associated with another initiative that already has its funding. In the case of CLEVER Cities, discussion workshops focusing on a particular neighbourhood helped to identify the many micro-projects and interventions planned in the area by other departments and has helped to potentially integrate NbS opportunities.

Consider realizing stakeholder analysis focused on motivational characteristics, stakeholder capacities and availabilities in order to develop different pathways to participation.

Find a suitable language when first contacting stakeholders. Terms like co-creation or NbS might overwhelm local stakeholders. Give stakeholders space to portray their activities, aims, group composition etc. in order to derive insights into capacities, availabilities and motivation. Also it may help to identify signs of "participation fatigue" at an early stage. Think about the fact that stakeholders have different levels of experience, when it comes to collaborating. This is particularly important when it comes to loosely organised groups of volunteers or young stakeholders (e.g. schoolchildren, youth centres).

Realise social network analysis to understand the relationships and local partnerships that exist in the area. This can help to identify key stakeholders and determine relationships and levels of influence.

There are a number of tools to help with stakeholder mapping. One of the most coming are power-interest matrixes that help understand stakeholder motivations. Consider trying social network analysis which maps out the relationships between local stakeholders as it can help highlight individuals or groups with the most significant influence on the process and determine which groups are connected. By identifying influential stakeholders who act as bridges between different groups it can help understand what potential collaboration opportunities and partnership are available what forms of engagement should be applied.

STAKEHOLDERS II
A river ties together all the places along its path and engagement connects all the stakeholders in an area. This is a process of CONNECTING: COMMUNICATING and BUILDING TRUST.

Build trust by supporting groups in their own endeavours.

Invite or visit smaller local groups for an interview or a site visit. This will allow the teams to get to know each other and increase your understanding of the demands of the group and to appreciate the qualities of the projects they have realized. Identify if there are possible overlapping elements in order to find a suitable common approach for their participation in the project. Cooperation may be minimal but building community relationships is a valid process in itself. If there is interest, try to co-design a process that can deliver on mutually supported goals or concepts (e.g. by organizing a theory-of-change-workshop). Try to be transparent about the concrete support you are able to provide and how it can be integrated into a later co-implementation process. You will not be able to grant all wishes and expectations.

Participate in different events and activities in your local area or district to spread knowledge and information about NbS.

It is important to be seen in the local community and be available if residents have questions about the proposed works or NbS in general. By actively participating in activities and events with the local community, it has been possible to become better known in the community and to build trust. Spreading knowledge about NbS and the efforts to green the city in an informal and often fun setting allows the team to be seen as friendly faces and not just as faceless people from the municipality.

Experiment with communication tools that can reach different stakeholders in variety of manners. Be sure to make use of existing networks to reach target audiences efficiently.

There are now many channels of communication that can be utilised in engagement, including virtual, printed and face-to-face. Consider tools that are appropriate for the phase and type of engagement, and that take into account the preferences, needs and limitations of the stakeholders involved. Face-to-face meetings provide an opportunity for direct interaction and open dialogue allowing for real-time conversation and the clarification of questions. This can include individual interviews used to gather in-depth insights. Printed materials such as newsletters or fact sheets provide stakeholders with material that they can review at their own pace. More increasingly, there are a host of online platforms, such as websites, forums, and social media apps that can share information and collect feedback at any time and over different geographical ranges. It is important to work with a combination of communication methods that are appropriate for your stakeholders including existing material. In CLEVER for example, municipal mailing lists were used in one project which was a simple and effective form of reaching some people. Overall, consider developing a diverse suite of communications tools and techniques.

Build trust and foster a sense of relevance among the various stakeholders in order to create a strong and cohesive neighbourhood around NbS interventions. NbS can act as catalysts for positive change and improved collaboration in a community.

Building trust and fostering a sense of mutual relevance among various stakeholders, such as schools, kindergartens, local associations, youth clubs, and the community at large, is a valuable approach for creating a strong and cohesive neighbourhood. It is important to establish effective communication channels, such as community meetings and online platforms that promote transparent and open dialogue. Collaborative initiatives and joint events further support a sense of ownership and shared responsibility. Sharing resources and facilities among different stakeholders, organizing volunteer and mentoring programs contribute to building trust and creating a community where everyone actively contributes. By encouraging teamwork and a feeling of belonging, they will feel part of the implementation process, reducing conflicts and push-back.

When workshop discussions are sterile or the key players are not involved, it is useful to go on site to talk directly with the stakeholders while making the decisions.

Use site visits to make exchanges more impactful and to address the issues experienced by users and their expectations of an NbS project. As the project advances, present the scenarios and solutions for the new urban landscape. CLEVER Cities was able to use this strategy to validate the implementation of NbS in a number of streets where bringing neighbours together on site helped to establish a positive consensus on the solutions to be implemented and how to install them.

Produce and distribute information, with a range of medias, describing how residents can influence policy and increase the presence NbS in their local area to as well as what they can do in their own garden/yard.

One way of connecting with local residents and communicate the importance of NbS in the city, is to create a booklet that could be disseminated widely both digitally and through events and the local library. It allowed residents to learn about NbS as well as encourage them to get involved in their local area and be made aware of ways they can influence their local community and local environment.

STAKEHOLDERS III

As organisms are sustained by a lake, stakeholders become part of an ecosystem that must be maintained. This is a process of CONSOLIDATING RELATIONSHIPS and BUILDING LINKS to governance.

Work to build community by consolidating and strengthening local informal social groups, but also by consider how to create new social groups and networks that can become part of the local governance process.

It is important to support and strengthen the existing networks that are emerging in the local area in order to build capacities, increase interest in NbS and to generally provide more stability to the engagement work. It is also an opportunity for new groups and constellations to be formed that are more focused on environmental themes and at the same time, attract a wider range of people to be a part of the governance process.

Gain trust from the local community by providing supplies (soil, seeds and plants) to local community gardening groups and initiatives. This will increase both trust and faith in the municipality as well as interest and knowledge in gardening and pollinators.

Position yourself as an enabler. Hands-on support will be interpreted as breaking cycles of inaction and also symbolize a starting point for a new period of implementation activities. Try to bring together local demands or wishes with professional expertise (e.g. NGO´s or experts from the municipality). Integrate educational elements in the course of a workshop or planting action. Do research about small scale, low-threshold funding options and offer support with the application formalities. This is not only helpful to empower stakeholders but can also contribute to longevity of the project / intervention.

Residents and users of green roofs are responsible for the management of the implemented green spaces.

The management of the implemented green roofs can be entrusted to the residents and users themselves. This approach promotes a sense of ownership and community involvement in the maintenance and care of these green areas. As the primary stakeholders, the residents and users play a crucial role in ensuring the well-being and sustainability of the green spaces. They are responsible for various aspects of the management, including regular maintenance. By actively participating in the management of the green spaces, the residents and users develop a deeper connection with the environment and foster a sense of pride and responsibility for their green spaces. In CLEVER Cities, this collaborative approach created a shared sense of community and contributed to the overall livability and sustainability of the Russoli and Ponti green roofs, Milan.

Establish a collaboration agreement between associations and citizens as a key step in sustaining relationships and ensuring effective management of the shared NbS in the project area.

A collaboration agreement defines the purpose and scope of the partnership, establishing clear goals and objectives. It outlines the roles and responsibilities of each participating party, ensuring a smooth functioning of the shared management. Decision-making processes and conflict resolution procedures are established to facilitate effective governance. Resource allocation, including financial, manpower, and equipment are also thoroughly discussed and agreed upon with all stakeholders. Communication and coordination channels are agreed upon. The Municipality can open its doors and invite stakeholders to join the co-creation process from the beginning. In Milan for instance, the collaboration agreement was initially set for a duration of three years, with options for renewal or review. Open and transparent communication, along with a shared vision for management, are essential for the success of the agreement.

Offer your stakeholders training or technical exchange sessions that can provide them with knowledge that will support their analysis of the project, its challenges and the opportunities represented by NbS.

Build the capacity of your stakeholder group to make informed decisions by offering them micro-training or exchange sessions with experts. An objective and measured understanding of the challenges and potential benefits of NbS (without false expectations) will facilitate discussions with the community, including on the more technical or divisive aspects, and help to establish a long-term collaboration contract.

Begin investigating conflict resolution mechanisms to help working relationships with and between stakeholders to continue and progress despite disputes.

At an early stage, try to sketch out the overall process and make transparent, how partners´ rationales (e.g. administrative procedures, legal framework, funding scenarios) work. Find a routine, protocol or tool for communicative transparency and frequency (e.g. jour fixe or use of project management tools like "slack" or alike). Try to position yourself as a guardian for the process, not necessarily for the outcome. This integrates the projects conceptual dynamics and will put you in a backup role for all stakeholders. Keep people focused on the common issues, challenges, solutions and multiple benefits and avoid have stakeholder falling into "positions".

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