

GUIDE TO ENGAGE WITH PEOPLE ACROSS THE CITY

Principles and steps to
make sense of technology together



ORGANICITY

About OrganiCity

OrganiCity is a service for experimentation that explores how citizens, businesses and city authorities can **work together to create digital solutions to urban challenges**.

OrganiCity is a prototype of Experimentation as a Service: a public service, which enables anyone in a city to experiment with urban data.

Experimentation as a Service is a model in which cities provide the resources for citizens, small businesses, corporations and city authorities, to test their new ideas at a small scale.

OrganiCity is created as an interoperable mechanism of **different elements to enable experimentation**:

- Experimentation management
- Urban data discovery
- Technical environment
- Inclusive co-creation
- Engagement principles
- Trustworthy legal and ethics

OrganiCity is a collaborative research project, funded by the European Commission through Horizon 2020.

More info at organicity.eu

This guide

Use this document as a guide for engagement practice.

Over the last two years we have improved and iterated these seven engagement principles to make them work for and with cities, experimenters and citizens in mind.

This *Guide to engage with people across the city* provides a journey for the OrganiCity team, the experimenters and anyone interested in taking part in the process.

Each principle has a set of actionable steps to guide you. Use them and expand them as you gain experience. Keep the principles in mind during your interactions with other citizens and organisations. It shall support us all to coherently implement OrganiCity.

Feel free to provide us with **feedback at** info@organicity.eu

OrganiCity Engagement Principles

Principle 1.

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EMPOWER ADJACENT COMMUNITIES AND CHAMPION ADVOCATES

Our role is to collaborate with existing communities and active individuals to support and facilitate their ideas.

- Identify local champions
- Build on local knowledge and skills
- Involve communities in the process

Principle 2.

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DESIGN FOR TRUST, ESPECIALLY AROUND CHANGE

Foster confidence through every stage of the engagement journey through clear communication and credible action.

- Build trust
- Embrace change
- Grow as your project takes shape

Principle 3.

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FACILITATE PERSONAL & COMMUNITY OWNERSHIP

People are essential in the process: ensure that they recognise the value and outcomes generated as their own.

- Create a learning environment
- Ownership over the process and the outcomes

Principle 4.

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DEBATE AND CO-CREATE ACROSS COMFORT ZONES

Our responsibility is to breach the knowledge silos that form across the city, and encourage the cross fertilisation between people and initiatives.

- Disrupt the comfort zone
- Actively build relationships with diverse groups and individuals
- Practice a respectful dialogue

Principle 5.

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USE CHALLENGE AREAS AS CATALYSTS FOR INNOVATION

'Data' can be difficult to understand on its own, so use challenges that help people understand how it can affect their daily lives.

- Ideate from high-level areas to focused challenges
- Encourage an open ideation culture

Principle 6.

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RESPECT THE VALUE OF VENUE: THE RIGHT SPACE AT THE RIGHT TIME

Selecting the right space and time for your activities requires an understanding of the needs of the community you are engaging with, and your own aims.

- Foster engagement via online platforms
- Foster engagement through face to face interaction
- Beyond (the usual) space

Principle 7.

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PROVIDE A CLEAR JOURNEY FOR PARTICIPATION AND VALUE VISIBILITY

Make all stages of the project accessible to guarantee effective co-creation. Make the journey clear and visible.

- Create and ensure accessible points to participation
- Expose the previous steps

PRINCIPLE 1. Empower adjacent communities and champion advocates

Every city has communities, initiatives, groups and enthusiastic individuals who share a common interest or want to tackle an issue that affects their surroundings.

Our role is to engage with these communities and individuals to support and facilitate their ideas.

Instead of developing new communities from scratch, we focus on empowering the people who are already doing innovative work and are actively involved in similar areas.



Step 1. Identify local champions

Who are the groups and individuals driving change in the community? Ask around, go to events and search online to identify these local advocates. Introduce yourself as an ally: set up a meeting to learn more about their work and start building relationships. Take time to really understand the local issues and priorities of the community before jumping in with solutions.



Actions

- **Search for relevant keywords or hashtags** on Twitter and Instagram to find active influencers and organisations. Follow them, connect with others in their circle and get in touch through direct messages.
- **Read blogs and listen to podcasts.** Search on Medium (a blogging website) to find relevant platforms and get in touch with the founders. They might be looking for relevant content and can give visibility to your initiative.
- **Attend local meetup events.**
- **Search for local festivals** through local newspapers and media outlets.

PRINCIPLE 1. Empower adjacent communities and champion advocates

Step 2. Build on local knowledge and skills

When starting to engage with a new community, follow the lead of the local advocates already working on the ground. They can help you gain a deeper understanding of the challenges and opportunities you might face. Their established position will help you obtain the trust of other participants.



Actions

- **Meet the community leaders** to gain an understanding of the contextual issues that might be relevant to your project. Be mindful, listen and keep notes for reference after the meeting.
- **Accompany the local champions** to their meeting or events and learn more about the way they work.
- **Help them organise an event or workshop**, starting the exchange of value by giving first.
- **Acknowledge their value:** make them aware of their strengths and think creatively about how you might offer value to complement aspects they might lack.

Step 3. Involve communities in the process

Empower people in your community by including them across the process to build a sense of ownership. Create activities that are hands-on, and help people develop new knowledge and skills that they can use to make positive changes in their community.



Actions

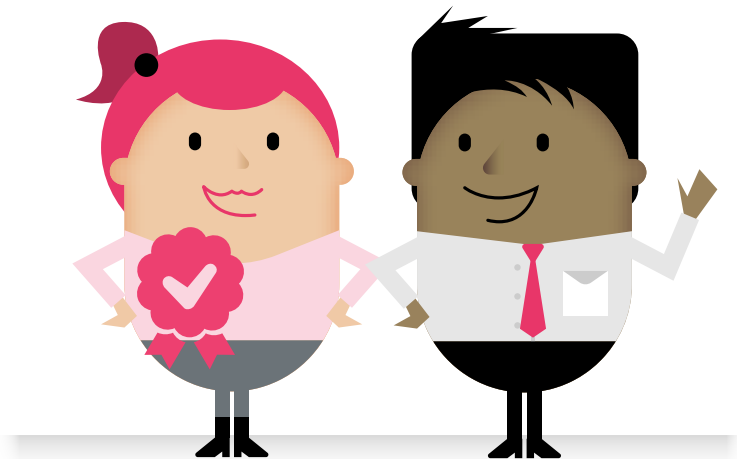
- **Start with light and fun workshops.** Make the participants feel welcome and comfortable. Clarify that there is no right and wrong: use 'ice-breakers' or 'warm-up' activities.
- **Create a project roadmap together.** Outline the goals of the project and plot the key activities that will happen on a timeline. Try using Realtime Board's online Project Management Canvas to keep everyone in the loop.
- **Send a weekly or monthly newsletter** where you can communicate findings, introduce new members, highlight achievements and goals.
- **Publish your workshop tools and methods online** so that the community can use them again in the future.
- **Bring everyone together in a launch event or final meeting.** Explain the project and the goals they achieved. Show your appreciation to the participants: the celebration can convey the end of a project or a stage.

PRINCIPLE 2. Design for trust, especially around change

Trust is an essential factor for successful co-creation.

Foster confidence through every stage of the engagement journey through clear communication and credible action. Human interaction builds and sustains trust better than money or power, so engage on an emotional level with people.

There are two kinds of trust that need to be developed and maintained over the course of your engagement journey: trust between the people involved, and trust in the project. In both cases, **trust can be fostered through open and transparent communication, personal interaction and by acting reliably.**



Step 1. Build trust

People need to build trust with you and among themselves to be comfortable in engaging actively. The co-creation process can challenge and shift established roles within a community, to give voice to those who tend to be less represented. Find balance by reassuring this is a safe place and it is beneficial to include different perspectives.



Actions

- **Acknowledge and thank** participants at the beginning and end of your activity. Respect and honour everyone's contributions, regardless of their position or role in the community.
- **Mix people with different roles** when working in groups.
- **Ensure everyone feels equal.** For example, using only one kind of post-its and pens makes it easier to write down ideas anonymously.
- **Communicate your activities in a simple and structured manner.** Participants are less worried when they know what happens next. You can do this by showing the agenda ahead of the event.
- **Demonstrate credibility in your actions.** Keep your word and act professionally when you might not be able to keep your promises. Above all, be honest.
- **Embrace the awkwardness.** Co-creation workshops are never easy: use humour and fun activities to include different kinds of participants. Get ideas for fun activities such as at [Gamestorming](#).

PRINCIPLE 2. Design for trust, especially around change

Step 2. Embrace change

Through innovation, unexpected shifts can affect your ability to deliver on a plan: this can affect the dynamics in your group. Open communication is the key to manage change and strengthen trust. Likewise, experimentation can provide a space for citizens, city representatives, entrepreneurs and other stakeholders to learn from each other.



Actions

- **Create different scenarios** which will help the group understand and question the possible levels of impact of their ideas.
- **Include props, engaging images and random objects** (which can be a bit silly) in your workshops. These elements can be used for activities that create a natural and authentic atmosphere between participants.
- **Use role playing** to help people understand the perspectives and priorities of others by stepping on their shoes.
- **Communicate important changes in a timely and transparent manner.** Use online platform such as Slack, Facebook groups or a regular newsletter through Mailchimp. Keep in touch about any changes, why they are happening, and what will happen next.

Step 3. Grow as your project takes shape

Creating trust and embracing new ways of thinking, can take time and requires different approaches. Large organisations will need patience, because they depend on established processes. Whilst small organisations might be more likely to embrace your ideas, they might also require a one-to-one relationship that could be resource intensive.



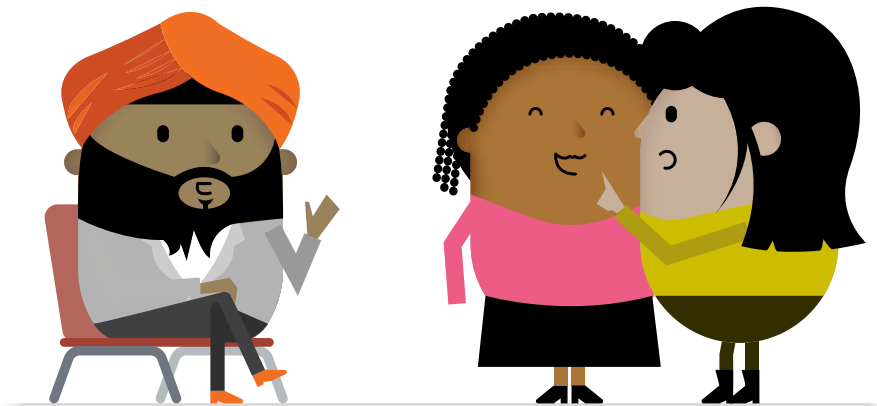
Actions

- **Create relationships and develop a network based on common interests.** People will add value when you demonstrate you are willing to correspond to their effort in building towards a common goal.
- **Document your process online and share this with involved parties.** You may write reflexions on a blog or share ideas on Twitter.
- **Interview participants and incorporate their knowledge in your co-creation process.** Don't use people as data subjects, collaborate with them in an active manner: being open to evolve your thinking and building a common understanding.
- **Communicate to the group** how their input has evolved the project.

PRINCIPLE 3. Facilitate personal & community ownership

People are an essential part of the process, it is important that **participants of OrganiCity recognise the value and outcomes generated as their own**. We aim to make sense of technology together. So, we shall facilitate the adoption of emergent technologies in a process which brings both social and technical innovation.

The best way to build interest is to **allow the community to take ownership of the goal**: build a shared vision of what it should be and include them in the process of making the vision a reality. In the end, the outcome will be more resilient because everyone would have a vested interest in this.



Step 1. Create a learning environment

Treat your engagement activities as an opportunity for participants to learn new skills. Don't treat it as a way to extract information and ideas from the community. Specifically, investing in people and building digital literacy is a powerful way to foster a sense of community development and ownership in the project.



Actions

- **Use inclusive language to introduce new technologies and tools.** Explaining complex ideas with simple words lowers the barrier of entry and enables people from diverse backgrounds to participate in the discussion.
- **Break down the co-creation process** into a series of steps that can be repeated and adapted by the community.
- **Organize skill-building workshops.** Teach people about the meaning of data, how to use co-creation methods or how to include ethics and business models in their process.
- **Publish the tools that you use online as open resources.**
- **Keep people in the loop and encourage them to be active in sharing on platforms like Slack.** If people can't make it to a meeting get them to dial in through skype or Google Hangouts.
- **Create an online community space to share resources and assets.** There you can publish podcasts, videos, templates and articles that derived from your physical events.

PRINCIPLE 3. Facilitate personal & community ownership

Step 2.

Ownership over the process and the outcomes

Build a sense that those involved share the progress as much as the results. Help people see the skills and knowledge that evolved from their involvement. Community ownership should include intellectual and creative outputs.



Actions

- **Engage participants regularly in decision making with co-creation activities.** Use a combination of online and in-person approach to generate input and to collect feedback from the community. Aim to build relationships that can be sustained over the long term.
- **Create virtual discussions.** Check how [TalkLondon](#), [DemocracyOS](#) or [Cities for Life](#) involve citizens. These can be digital spaces for members to feedback and relate with each other.
- **Enable awareness through events and talks.** This allows digital and non-digital natives to engage and collaborate.
- **Learn as you do. As we prototype in a real-world setting, we are able to understand the effect and value of an idea.** We should take an active learner attitude and foster this perspective across others.



PRINCIPLE 4. Debate and co-create across comfort zones

Diversity is a powerful driver of innovation. People with different perspectives, experiences and skills have the creative potential to solve problems.

The responsibility of an OrganiCity is it to **breach the knowledge silos that forms across the city, and encourage the cross fertilisation** between initiatives and groups. Successful co-creation requires diversity, willingness for people to step outside of their comfort zones and maintaining an open dialogue.



Step 1. Disrupt the comfort zone

Your comfort zone is the space where people feel in control, where risk-taking is minimized and familiar routines are reinforced. Comfort zones can hinder creativity and innovation. Your role is to disrupt the comfort zones of existing collaborations and encourage co-creation between diverse groups and individuals, this can be done by introducing new experiences and alternative ways of seeing the world.



Actions

- **Interrupt your digital comfort zone.** Shake up your usual social media feed by following people or groups who have different interests and opinions from your own.
- **Go to events and interact with new people.** This gives you a fresh perspective and can increase your confidence.
- **Enrol in a workshop or course to learn a skill** that is completely unrelated to your everyday work, you can recommend this to stakeholders as well as to communities you work with.
- **Introduce unexpected workshop techniques that help to disrupt the usual train of thought.** For example, the 30 circles by Tim Brown. You can find more techniques by searching online for lateral thinking.
- **Role play in a workshop setting helps groups and individuals to put oneself in the position of someone else**, which creates empathy between participant – an essential emotion when co-creating.

PRINCIPLE 4. Debate and co-create across comfort zones

Step 2. Actively build relationships

Engagement activities tend to attract the same crowd of people, so valuable perspectives could be missing in the conversation. Connecting with communities outside your network, whether from a different industry or demographic can be challenging. But with the right people it can be a rewarding experience. A diverse group can be valuable in the evaluation stage of experiments: they provide guidance, constructive criticism and enhance the potential for success.



Actions

- **Analyse the participants** you engaged during your project over the past month. Use available data to back up your findings. Then look for those perspectives that might be missing.
- **Explore alternative engagement channels to reach a wider audience** (online and offline recruitment) such as blogs, Instagram, Snapchat or Periscope.
- **Remember marginalized communities:** people on low incomes, immigrants, people of colour, people with disabilities or women because they tend to be underrepresented in the tech and urban design sectors.
- **Promote your event differently:** use different channels or change your tone of voice. Focus on the people and what they will take away, rather than the pure tech aspect, which attracts a very niche audience.
- **Introduce fun warm-up methods when bringing diverse groups together.** For example, 'three minutes of fame' format, people have 3 minutes to tell their story in an engaging way.

Step 3. Practice a respectful dialogue

Bringing people together with diverse perspectives to engage in dialogue and debate can lead to new insights and creative breakthroughs, but only when that dialogue is practiced respectfully. Respectful dialogue includes listening to understand the views of others, following-up with questions and constructively building on ideas.



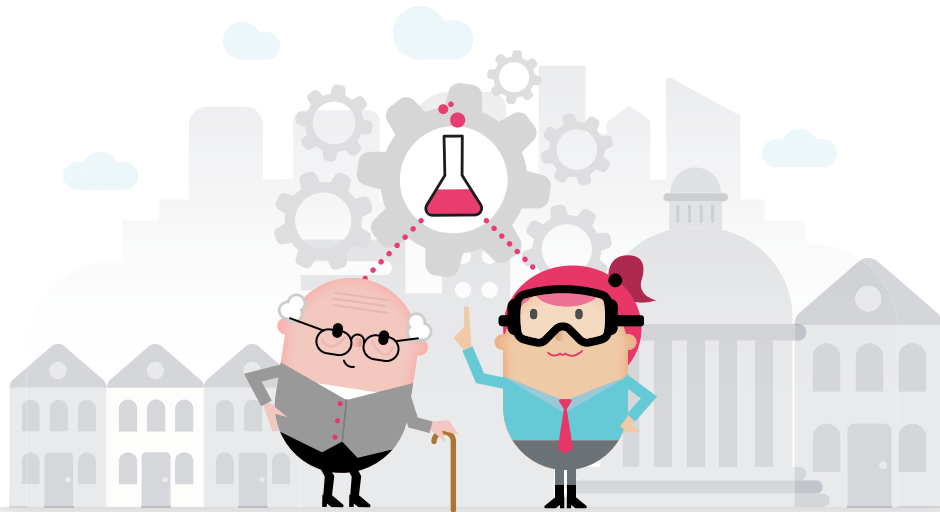
Actions

- **Moderate the exchange of different views and opinions.** There might be some discomfort, but you need to always remember debates can provoke new solutions and challenges.
- **Plan open workshops and debates,** by creating a space for new members to join and get involved.
- **Foster online debates,** which allows groups and individuals to express their thoughts when these cannot be expressed in a collaborative scenario. The create a place where participants can continue conversations from previous encounters. This is essential to build a wider network.
- **Spread the OrganiCity media channels** so new members can follow and promote OrganiCity experiments in their community.
- **Listen, Affirm, Respond, Add.** Follow the LARA method to communicate across differences. This approach helps groups engage in respectful dialogue by making sure people feel listened to and valued.

PRINCIPLE 5. Use challenge areas as catalysts for innovation

At OrganiCity, we enable collecting, sharing and discovering urban data to explore new ways of shaping the city. However, **'data' is not easy to understand nor to engage with** – particularly because we want to include people with different backgrounds and experience.

You should **use challenges around themes that resonate with their daily lives**, interests and concerns to foster dialogue and ideas; instead of discussing data.



Step 1. Ideate from high-level areas to focused challenges

During your ideation move between specific questions (to help participants to relate to the issues and produce ideas with a specific focal point) and high-level fields (whilst thinking holistically of the underlying causes and effects of those ideas).



Actions

- **Organise an open ideation workshop.** You can find methods for ideations workshops and some templates that get you started.
- **Craft challenges related to real issues.** Base these on city issues – you can understand which are the issues by the city priorities or research with citizens. Define challenge questions that are wide enough to generate more than 10 random ideas.
- **Start your question with How might we...?** Asking “how” asserts that there are solutions available; “might” gives participants permission to propose ideas that might work or not, widening the creative field; “we” asserts that the design process is co-creative and that building on ideas is the aim of the game.
- **Get to the heart of an underlying problem.** Use the Five whys technique: start with a general problem and ask “Why...?” five times. Each answer forms the basis of the next question. This process allows to question and strengthen ideas.

PRINCIPLE 5. Use challenge areas as catalysts for innovation

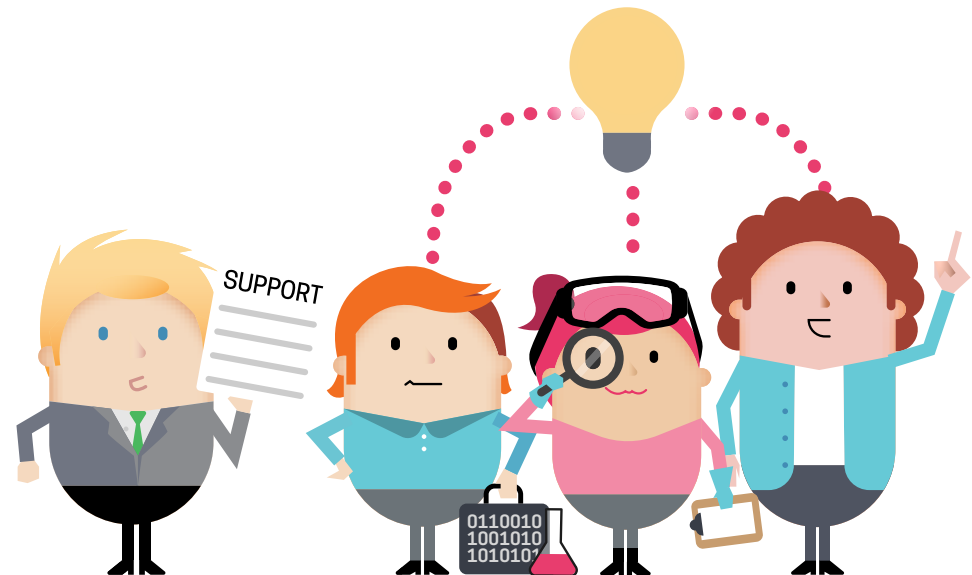
Step 2. Encourage an open ideation culture

The strongest ideas are developed collaboratively, so participants have to be ready to share. Create an atmosphere where people can voice many silly ideas and build on each other's thoughts, in order to co-create innovative ideas.



Actions

- **Enable ideation offline and online.** Participants can share their ideas at OrganiCity Scenarios for discussion or to help others develop experiments which are relevant to their needs.
- **Workshops need to be effectively resourced.** Successful collaboration and experimentation is resource intensive to ensure you offer the participants the right space and questions to make the most of their time.
- **Act as a facilitator.** Make sure you are in charge of the situation, remain neutral and always monitor the progress of the event.
- **Make your ideas tangible.** Use lego or cardboard to communicate your idea and prototype scenarios, so that abstract concepts become concrete and stimulate further discussion.
- **Use the brainstorming rules by IDEO:** Defer judgement. Encourage wild ideas. Include a mix of individual and group activities. Build on the ideas of others. Stay focused on the topic. One conversation at a time. Be visual. Go for quantity.



PRINCIPLE 6. Respect the value of venue: the right space at the right time

Selecting the right space and time for your activities requires an understanding of your needs and the needs of the community you are engaging with. Ask yourself if your goal is fulfilled with a one off event or further events over time. Think about the room size you need and on which time of the day to invite people. Since our physical and virtual spaces are increasingly overlapping and interconnect; people expect a **fluid and transparent experience across the digital and physical world.**



Step 1. Foster engagement via online platforms

Online platforms and forums allow users to feel anonymous and independent – this can encourage further involvement from introverted and self-conscious participants. This is relevant since we are encouraging debate across comfort zones. It allows people to see many sides of the same story, without the need to participate.



Actions

- **Share the online channels on physical events.** Allow participants to exchange ideas, stay in touch and build networks.
- **Ensure that the exchanged content is appropriate.** A person or team should focus on ensuring the debate is relevant, and people don't abuse their perceived anonymity.
- **Motivate and support the introverted individual.** Support them to move from an anonymous online presence towards a more active position.

PRINCIPLE 6. Respect the value of venue: the right space at the right time

Step 2.

Foster engagement through face to face interaction

Meeting in person enables close collaborations and an exchange of ideas, that can be difficult to achieve online. By creating physical spaces of encounter, you promote interactions between participants and build relationships. These interactions are the most powerful and participants will remember their experience for longer.



Actions

- **Create a community space where participants can meet and feel comfortable.** Spaces can be found online like [hirespace](#) or by collaborating with organisations. Consider essentials such as wifi, seating options and wall space.
- **Cater for the participants needs.** Ensure a lack of physical barriers, nibbles for different dietary requirements and non-alcoholic drinks.
- **Foster relationships with independent spaces:** makerspaces, start-up collectives, co-working offices and other suitable organisations, like [Makerversity](#) in London.
- **Arrange relaxed social events and after work meetups.** These will bring the group closer and strengthen the individual's commitment.
- **Organise mentor sessions and one-to-one meetings.** Choose a suitable environment when discussing personal issues or challenges.
- **Establish 'a third space' for collaboration.** Santander enables a space for experimenters at Enclave Pontillo to come together, meet and share ideas.

Step 3.

Beyond (the usual) space

Alternative ways of engagement and storytelling, such as tours, safaris and experiential workshops allow to connect with different groups and individuals on an immersive level. These new forms of engagement are more personal and specifically designed to your project.



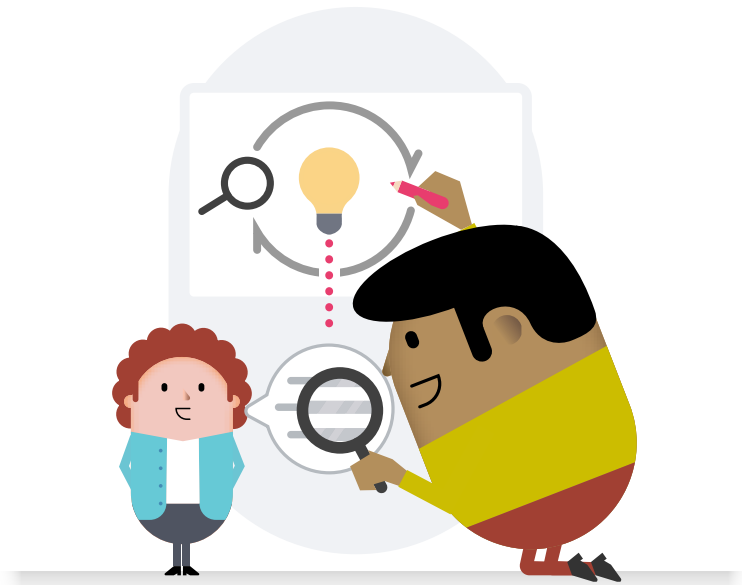
Actions

- **Expand your engagement activities into the city.** Host activities at schools, community centres, parks and other urban environments. Introduce urban safari tours, you can bring to life their imagination with issues and success stories applied to a real place.
- **Organize 'walking conversations'.** Create an interactive story of a city by inviting guest speakers and experts to talk about specific challenges such as air quality or accessibility. These talks can be around 20 min and link to the issues you have identified in your city.
- **Incorporate new technologies that enable you to communicate your visions,** research and concepts through [Virtual Reality](#) or 360 cameras. Immerse the participants in real and altered fictional footage to enable concrete reactions.
- **Speculate situations in film.** Communicate what the outcome of your project could be and create a fictional space that walks people through how your idea could affect their surroundings.

PRINCIPLE 7. Provide a clear journey for participation and value visibility

Make all stages of the project accessible to guarantee effective co-creation. Provide a clear visibility of the journey: what stage are we at and what will happen next?

OrganiCitizens give generously of their time, contributing ideas, comments or experiments. Correspond their contribution by clearly communicating where their efforts lead.



Step 1. Create and ensure accessible points to participation

Ensure transparency and consistency throughout the project. Provide a clear and concise journey for participation at each stage. People will engage in different ways: some are very active attending events whereas others like to observe from the edge adding their opinion only occasionally.



Actions

- **Communicate your expectations.** Provide information about: what is expected of participants, citizens or cities? What skills are required? Keep this information easy to access.
- **Include different levels of participation and respect the contributions of everyone.** Be aware that every stakeholder involved follows a different process. Lead your audience to spaces where they can continue the conversation.
- **Support fluency by creating open online channels** for your team as well as participants through platforms like Slack or Azendoo.
- **Provide a simple feedback mechanism, that allows participants to provide their feedback online and offline.** Think beyond the usual feedback cards and create something more engaging. A useful tool to collect digital feedback is usersnap.
- **Allow people to submit anonymous submissions** of ideas or questions through tools like Google Forms, Slido or Ask.fm.

PRINCIPLE 7. Provide a clear journey for participation and value visibility

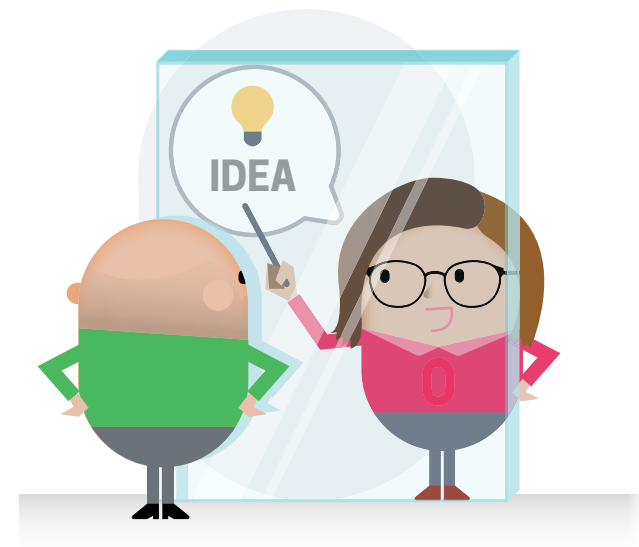
Step 2. Expose the previous steps

People will join your project at different stages. It is valuable to provide them with information of the previous topics discussed and the milestones achieved. This is also useful internally for your team, to allow consistency in decisions – the next steps should be based on the results of the previous co-creation.



Actions

- **Document your activities.** Take pictures and film (if appropriate) every aspect of the project including planning, testing, and prototyping ideas. It's important to not focus just on the final outcome.
- **Communicate your progress.** What impact did we made? What were the learnings from each activity? Which new questions have emerged?
- **Write blog posts to share insights and reflect on your process.** Share your content through digital channels like Twitter, Facebook, Medium, YouTube or Vimeo.
- **Share experiences at conferences, events and meetups.** Show your process – positive and negative experiences. This will give you visibility across different audiences that can align with your vision.





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