

Tools to Weave Urban Futures

Background

This toolbox was developed within the context of Transformative Urban Coalitions (TUC), which supports cities in co-creating new strategies to address urban challenges related to planning, development, emissions, climate risk, inequality and inclusiveness. TUC facilitated the establishment of Urban Labs in five Latin American cities: [Buenos Aires](#) (Argentina), [León](#) and [Naucalpan](#) (Mexico), and [Teresina](#) and [Recife](#) (Brazil).

The toolbox is illustrated with stories, testimonies and lessons learned from the five TUC Urban Labs, which are spaces where people from different backgrounds come together to test ideas, tools and solutions for improving city life. In these spaces the tools were tested, refined and adapted in real-world contexts. It draws from systematic tool assessments carried out between 2022 and 2025, as well as critical reflections from Urban Lab members and the project team. By sharing practical examples and reflections from these experiences, we aim to support other practitioners in applying and adapting these tools to transform their own cities.

The toolbox was compiled by the United Nations University Institute for Environment and Human Security (UNU-EHS) in collaboration with the Instituto Internacional de Medio Ambiente y Desarrollo, IIED – América Latina and the Brazil and Mexico offices of the World Resources Institute, WRI Brasil and WRI México. TUC is funded by the International Climate Initiative (IKI) of the German Federal Government and continues to grow and scale to new cities.

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About the toolbox

This toolbox presents a curated collection of practical approaches, methods, tools and activities designed to support systemic change as promoted in the Weaving Urban Futures guidebook. Published as a companion to the Weaving Urban Futures guidebook, these resources emphasize the importance of working through place-based coalitions and negotiating across sectors. The approach goes beyond traditional urban planning by placing co-creation and the process of negotiating interests at the heart of urban transformation.

Goal: The aim is to encourage inclusive and participatory citymaking by involving a wide range of people and groups. The toolbox invites practitioners to contribute to concrete climate actions that lead to real change.

Method: The resources were developed and refined through real-world experiences, research and lessons learned from practice. Tools are organized around five key steps of the Weaving Urban Futures method to make them easy to use.

Audience: The intended audience is citymakers (practitioners in urban development and climate action) willing to create a diverse forum for enabling desirable urban futures. Here, we understand citymakers as any actor or organization engaged in planning, building and managing urban spaces, such as government, grassroots organizations, private sector, NGOs, funders and others.

The toolbox is divided into three main chapters:

Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter 2: Principles for meaningful social engagement

Chapter 3: Tools to Weave Urban Futures



Affective mapping activity with a group of women at Residencial Edgar Gayoso Teresina Brazil, August 2023. © Tátia Távora / WRI Brasil



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Chapter 1: Introduction

The Weaving Urban Futures framework helps cities to move collectively toward more just and climate-resilient futures. It is based on the lived experiences of the Transformative Urban Coalitions (TUC) project and the knowledge co-created by Urban Labs in five cities across Argentina, Brazil and Mexico. These labs explored solutions to the global challenge of climate change while actively driving transformation within their local contexts. The toolbox supports the implementation of the framework and passes on learnings that can be applied by citymakers worldwide, aiming at transforming their urban spaces in a participatory way.

This transformation requires a breakaway from “business as usual” and intentional efforts to reconnect the city to people, society and the environment. It also calls for learning through multiple perspectives, using a mix of methods and embracing adaptability when things get complex or change unexpectedly. Instead of prioritizing fixed results, the tools help to build enabling conditions through relationships and collaborative processes.

Structured around the Weaving Urban Futures five-step process (see [Figure 1](#)), the toolbox offers practical exercises to identify actors and opportunities, define goals, build action plans and monitor progress. It seeks to cultivate inclusive participation and bring together citymakers: community members, planners, public officials, grassroots leaders, private sector innovators and researchers. As such, this toolbox serves not only as a repository of strategies but also as an invitation to jointly weave more just and climate-resilient urban futures.

The methods and tools in this toolbox are designed to challenge rooted mindsets, embrace diverse forms of knowledge and foster both self-reflection and collaboration. The toolbox is grounded in academic theory and refined through hands-on practice. It also encourages active testing in different contexts.

[Chapter 2](#) presents the overarching principles that guide the toolbox structure and the use of our tools, while [chapter 3](#) presents the tools and how to use them.



Role-play participants in the León Urban Laboratory take on the roles of different key actors in society, debate, and using LEGO pieces, define the urban transformations needed to transition to a more climate-friendly municipality. Naucalpan, Mexico. November 2022. © WRI México

The Weaving Urban Futures steps

1

**Building and supporting
a place-based coalition**

2

**Developing a shared
understanding of the
local context**

3

**Creating a shared
vision for the future**

4

**Formulating strategies
and implementation
mechanisms**

5

**Learning by doing
and learning
from doing**

Methods, tools and on the ground transformations

Figure 1: The Weaving Urban Futures steps.

Chapter 2:

Principles for

meaningful social

engagement



Creating more sustainable and equitable urban futures requires including local perspectives in design and implementation. Several social engagement approaches can guide this process, not only to align interventions with local needs and aspirations, but also to strengthen legitimacy, ownership and long-term impact. These methods go beyond technocratic fixes by rooting actions in the lived realities of diverse urban populations. When social and technical efforts work together, urban interventions are more likely to generate multiple benefits and positive transformative change. Some of these approaches are:

- Inclusive participation
- Co-creation and co-design
- Citizen science

All three focus on putting people at the centre and bringing together different groups, professions and interests to collaborate (details in Figure 2). Planning a project for making your city or community more sustainable can be guided by such an approach or a mix of them. For example, a community-based enumeration used to close local data gaps can use citizen science while also practicing inclusive participation.

Successfully implementing these approaches involves using a variety of tools that help building place-based coalitions, planning and implementing projects and learning, as explained in the following chapters.

	Inclusive participation	Co-creation and co-design	Citizen science
What is the goal?	Embed representation into every stage of a project, programme or initiative.	Encourage the integration of multiple forms of knowledge, scientific, professional, local and experiential, into planning and implementation.	Leverage local knowledge and bridge the gap between science and society, to advance scientific understanding as basis for better decision-making.
What is this good for?	Collaboration and empowerment of all urban groups to ensure that any initiative is both socially just and contextually relevant.	Enables the collective identification of problems, the formulation of shared visions and the generation of innovative solutions, building new relationships of trust and collaboration.	Facilitates data collection and analysis, empowers participants, informs policy decisions and strengthens the connection between science and society.
How does it work?	Inclusive participation is a cornerstone of contemporary urban planning and development since the 1970s. It emphasizes collaboration, shared decision-making and collaborative learning among community members, planners, policymakers, researchers and other urban actors.	Co-creation and co-design have emerged as complementary approaches in participatory urban planning, where citymakers, communities, policymakers, researchers and private sector actors work together across the full lifecycle of an initiative. It supports experimentation, fosters inclusive innovation and builds trust and collaboration.	Involve the public in scientific research, independently or in collaboration with researchers. It empowers individuals to participate in social and scientific processes, embracing co-learning and shared responsibility throughout urban planning processes and promoting inclusive, evidence-based policymaking.
If I want to implement it, what are guiding questions?	• Who are key stakeholders, and how can we ensure the inclusion of voices that are often underrepresented or marginalized? • How can we make our engagement processes accessible and inclusive for all participants? • How will we recognize and integrate the diverse knowledge, needs and aspirations?	• Are we creating inclusive and accessible spaces for dialogue, creativity and collaboration that enable participants to co-design solutions? • Are our engagement methods structured to allow for generating ideas and exploring alternatives (divergent thinking) as well as refining and selecting shared solutions (convergent thinking)?	• What do we need to find out? Do we have a clear and participatory plan for data collection, analysis, storage and communication? • Is the project design, simple, relevant and tailored to the local capacities, while ensuring data quality and ethical standards? • How will outcomes be communicated back and used to make positive impacts?
What are some related tools?	• Actor mapping • Action plans • Demonstration activities • Participatory monitoring and evaluation • Role-play • World Café	• Backcasting • Collaborative collage • Collaborative murals • Future story • Mutirão	• Affective mapping • Collaborative mapping • Community-based enumeration • Photovoice
Where can I learn more about it?	IAP2, 2024; Arnstein, 1969; Biggs and others, 2021; Leino and Puumala, 2021.	Design Council, 2024; Frantzeskaki and others, 2025; Leino & Puumala, 2021; Biggs and others, 2021; Cinderby and others, 2021; European Union, 2022.	Eitzel and others, 2017; Serrano Sanz and others, 2014; Acevedo-Caradeux, 2017.

Figure 2: Summary overview of the principles for meaningful social engagement guiding this toolbox.

Chapter 3:

Tools to weave urban futures

This toolbox consists of overall 24 tools, organized along five steps, following the **Weaving Urban Futures** sequenced approach:

1. Building and supporting a place-based coalition
2. Developing a shared understanding of the local context
3. Creating a shared vision for the future
4. Formulating strategies and implementation mechanisms
5. Learning by doing and learning from doing

The five-step sequence supports citymakers in moving from building coalitions to acting and learning together. This structured progression provides orientation for implementing inclusive and context-sensitive solutions.

Urban transformation often begins with building and supporting a local coalition, using tools to understand who is involved, how they think and how to create spaces for dialogue and trust. The next step focuses on developing a shared understanding of the local context, with tools to explore local realities, visualize challenges and highlight opportunities. Once this groundwork is set, the process moves into creating a shared vision for the future, where tools enable participants to imagine transformative futures and align around common goals. These visions are then turned into concrete strategies and implementation mechanisms, using tools to explore pathways, allocate responsibilities and prepare for uncertainties. Finally, the toolbox highlights the importance of learning by doing and learning from doing, with tools to ensure that progress is tracked, experiences are shared and achievements are celebrated.

This sequence does not need to be followed strictly. However, connecting the tools in this way helps build momentum, strengthen collaboration and support long-term urban transformation. Some tools may be useful for more than one step, as depicted in Figure 3.

Tool	1. Building and supporting a place-based coalition	2. Developing a shared understanding of the local context	3. Creating a shared vision for the future	4. Formulating strategies and implementation mechanisms	5. Learning by doing and learning from doing
Action plan					
Actor mapping					
Affective mapping					
Backcasting					
Collaborative collage					
Collaborative mapping					
Collaborative murals					
Community-based enumeration					
Demonstration activities					
Future story					
Harvesting achievements					
Icebreakers					
*Climate Mindset Quiz					
Mutirão					
Newspaper headline					
Participatory monitoring and evaluation					
Participatory diagramming					
Perception survey					
Photovoice					
Risk matrix					
Role-play					
Transect walk					
*Card game					
World Café					

Figure 3: List of tools according to steps. Note: The tools are assigned to the step where they are most useful, but many tools can also be used (sometimes in adapted form) in other steps, shown here in gray. * Indicates our original tools.



Each tool is presented with a simple overview: general description, what it is useful for, what materials and resources are needed, the steps to follow and some implementation examples. Each of these tools is also rated for difficulty, considering its usefulness for achieving the proposed objectives, preparation requirements and ease of application. Lastly, sources and further resources are provided to make searching for more information easier.

We are particularly proud of our original tools: the **Urban Loom: threading citymaking card game** and the **Climate Mindset Quiz**, developed through joint efforts of researchers, practitioners and community members as part of action research throughout the project. The card game is designed to raise climate awareness while fostering systems thinking with a social justice perspective. The mindsets quiz is a self-assessment tool that bridges individual perceptions and collective understanding, supporting deeper engagement and shared learning about climate action.

All tools are meant to be applied during in-person workshops. Overall, they should be used in settings that encourage open dialogue, where people feel comfortable sharing their values, experiences and ideas. Working this way helps spark curiosity, build genuine connections and create space for different perspectives and types of knowledge within and across place-based coalitions. When used in a context where dialogue is possible, the tools can help bridge differences and open new possibilities for tackling complex urban challenges.

When using any of the tools, it is helpful to take some practical steps:

Before the session:

- **Familiarize with local conditions**, challenges and success criteria relevant to the urban initiative or project.
- **Identify who should be involved** and invite a diverse range of stakeholders relevant to the project (government, civil society, communities, academia and private sector).
- **Assemble a facilitation team** that has knowledge of the local context and assign clear roles, such as moderator and notetaker.
- **Prepare the materials you will use**, such as flip charts, printed maps, questionnaires, surveys or templates.
- **Identify a location and a time that is convenient** for the majority of participants, be aware that different people might be available at different days and times.

During the session:

- **Create a safe and welcoming environment** for open communication (space setting is relevant).
- **Start by explaining the goal** of the session and clearly state why you are using the tool.
- **Facilitate actively and encourage everyone to participate**, know when to listen and respect different voices. If someone assumes a more silent role, you might gently invite them to share what they have observed toward the end.
- **Be ready to adjust the process** depending on participants' input and needs.
- **Make sure there is enough time** for people to share their experiences, opinions and knowledge.

After applying the tool, allow time to reflect and:

- **Discuss shared goals**, concerns and opportunities for working together.
- **Summarise the main points** and clarify any follow-up actions (if people worked in small groups, bring everyone together to share).
- **Reflect together** on what was learned or understood collectively.
- **Support the implementation of changes** based on findings (e.g., advocacy for policy change).
- **Agree on the next steps** and how the group will continue the process.

The tools can be adapted to the needs of each city or neighbourhood, working groups and stakeholders. The time required for implementation and the steps to be followed may vary depending on each case, urban project or initiative. While the tools are presented separately, they can be selected and applied in a sequence, as part of a broad, integrated transformation process, as seen in the stories shared from the five Urban Labs. While they followed the five steps, concrete implementation was different and so was the selection of tools.

Figure 4 provides a summary of tools, indicating the context in which to use them and the expected outcomes, along with information about duration of application, difficulty and where in our TUC project they were applied.

Summary of tools

Tool	When to use	Outcome	Time	Difficulty	Applied in		
1. Building and supporting a place-based coalition							
Actor mapping	At the start of an initiative to see who to involve, their influence and relationships.	A clear picture of key actors, their roles and power dynamics.	1.5 h	Medium	ARG	BR	MX
Icebreakers	At the start of a workshop or meeting to build trust.	A fun, shared experience that helps participants feel at ease, build quick connections, and get ready to collaborate openly.	10 to 15 min	Low	ARG	BR	MX
Climate Mindset Quiz	Early in planning to understand how people think and feel about climate change.	Identification of common mindsets and personas that guide engagement strategies.	1 to 1.5 h	Low	Drawing from all labs, applied internationally.		

The “applied in” column shows the country where each tool was tested:

ARG- Argentina
BR- Brazil
MX- Mexico

Tool	When to use	Outcome	Time	Difficulty	Applied in		
2. Developing a shared understanding of the local context							
Affective mapping	When you want to encourage sensory and affective reflection on the territory.	A map with feelings, perceptions, memories, challenges and potentials.	1.5 h	Medium		BR	
World Café	When you want open, inclusive conversations and input on complex issues.	Shared ideas and perspectives captured through rotating dialogues.	1 h and 15 min	Medium		BR	MX
Photovoice	To let communities express experiences visually.	Photos and stories that highlight lived realities and inspire action.	2 weeks to 3 months	Medium	ARG		
Community-based enumeration	In areas lacking reliable/updated data or where communities want ownership of knowledge.	Locally generated, credible data that strengthens advocacy and planning.	2 to 4 weeks	High		BR	
TUC card game	To raise awareness about climate impacts and solutions in cities.	A fun, strategic learning experience linking climate problems with solutions.	15 min to 1 h	Low, Medium or high, depending on game mode	ARG	BR	
Transect walk	To observe and document conditions directly in the community.	First-hand insights on local issues and opportunities across a defined area.	3 to 5 h	Low	ARG		MX
Collaborative mapping	To visualize local knowledge, assets and challenges.	Maps that reflect shared experiences and priorities.	2 h	Medium	ARG		MX

Figure 4: Summary of tools.

Tool	When to use	Outcome	Time	Difficulty	Applied in		
3. Creating a shared vision for the future							
Collaborative collage	When you want to spark creativity and explore together what an initiative could look like.	A collective artwork that expresses ideas, feelings and shared futures.	1 to 1.5 h	Medium	ARG		MX
Newspaper headline	To quickly inspire a shared vision of future success.	A catchy, motivating headline that captures a desired future.	45 min to 1 h	Low		BR	MX
Future story	To go deeper in visioning and describe future change in detail.	A shared narrative of what a successful transformation could look like.	1 to 1.5 h	Medium		BR	
4. Formulating strategies and implementation mechanisms							
Backcasting	To design pathways from a desired future back to today.	A phased strategy showing what actions are needed over time.	2 to 3 h	Medium	Applied internationally		
Role-play	To explore challenges from different perspectives.	Empathy, new insights and collaborative problem-solving.	1.5 to 2 h	High			MX
Participatory diagramming	To clarify goals, priorities and cause-effect relations.	A structured diagram that organizes objectives and their connections.	2 h	Low	ARG		
Action plan	When turning vision or goals into concrete steps.	A practical plan with clear actions, responsibilities and timelines.	1 week to 1 month	High		BR	MX
Risk matrix	When identifying and prioritizing project risks.	A clear overview of risks ranked by likelihood and impact.	1 to 2 h	Medium		BR	

Tool	When to use	Outcome	Time	Difficulty	Applied in		
5. Learning by doing and learning from doing							
Collaborative murals	To engage communities through creative expression.	A public artwork that builds pride, awareness, and connection.	1 to 5 days	Low	ARG	BR	MX
Demonstration activities	To translate plans into visible, real-world action.	On-the-ground experiments that prove change is possible.	1 to 3 sessions of 1 to 1.5 h; Implementation 1 or more days	High	ARG	BR	MX
Mutirão	When a community wants to join forces to complete a shared task or project that is too big to do alone.	Collective action and solidarity that strengthen community ties and achieve a common goal.	2 to 5 months of planning; 3 to 5 days of hands-on work	High		BR	
Participatory monitoring and evaluation	To track progress and adapt with input from all stakeholders.	Shared learning, accountability and evidence for better decisions.	Flexible, could be months	High	ARG		MX
Perception surveys	To capture people's feelings and opinions on an initiative.	Data on attitudes and experiences to guide improvements.	1 to 4 weeks	Medium	ARG		MX
Harvesting achievements	At milestones or after activities to celebrate progress.	Strengthened community spirit through recognition and trust.	1 or more days	Low		BR	

The “applied in” column shows the country where each tool was tested:

ARG- Argentina
 BR- Brazil
 MX- Mexico

Figure 4: Summary of tools.

1. Building and supporting a place-based coalition

Weaving Urban Futures

Actor mapping

Overview

Actor mapping is a visual depiction of the key organizations and individuals that influence a project or issue. It shows who is involved, how they are connected and how their actions and relationships influence the process or outcome. This helps reveal power dynamics, conflicts, alliances and who should be engaged to support success.

Use

Use actor mapping to identify important actors, their relationships, levels of influence and interests in a given context.

Set-up

Participants: 5 to 15 people.

Place: a room or space big enough for all participants with a table to create the actor map.

Time: approx. 1.5 h and time needed for further revisions.

Materials: flip chart to draw the map, sticky notes, coloured markers, figurines or special stickers for representing actors.

Tool difficulty

Medium

Steps

1. Ask participants to list organizations, groups and individuals relevant to the topic and write them down on sticky notes.
2. Distribute the sticky notes on a map sheet, grouping them by category if helpful.
3. Draw connections between actors to show relationships such as funding, control, friendship, formal roles or influence. Use different color makers to represent different types of links.
4. Assess how much influence each actor has on the project or issue, for example by giving them an 'influence tower' (small figurines with different heights that can be placed on the map) or score based on a value or signs (+ / -). The higher the tower, the stronger the influence.
5. Identify each actor's interests: Are they (strongly) in favour (+) or against the project (-)?
6. Create an "Influence x Interest" matrix: Place actors on a chart with "Influence" on the X-axis and "Interest" on the Y-axis. This shows who is crucial to engage (high influence, high interest), who should be empowered (low influence, high interest), who should get stimulated to participate (high influence, low interest) and who should be informed (low influence, low interest). Discuss what the map and matrix mean for organizational strategy, networking and dispute resolution.
7. If needed, programme interviews with key actors to fine-tune your findings.
8. Summarize findings in a table or database including actors, stakeholder type or group, connections, levels of influence and interest and possible actions.
9. Update the actor map as the initiative evolves.



Actor mapping. Identifying key people and institutions. Mexico, 2025. © WRI México

Learn more

[Public-Private Dialogue \(PPD\) Stakeholder Mapping Toolkit](#) (World Bank Group, 2016)

[Net-Mapp toolbox](#) (International Food Policy Research Institute, 2007)

[Actors Map](#) (Digital Society School, n.d.)

[The Actors Map](#) (UNaLAB, 2020)

[Net Mapping](#) (Wageningen University, n.d.)

[How actor-network mapping informs the early stages of system innovation: A case study](#) (Stuyfzand and others, 2022)

Applied in Teresina and Recife, Brazil; León and Naucalpan, Mexico and Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Icebreakers

Overview

Icebreakers are short, playful activities designed to help participants feel comfortable, connect with one another and begin thinking collaboratively. They are especially useful when addressing complex urban challenges, as they set the tone for open dialogue, creativity and trust – key ingredients for collective problem-solving. Beyond being a warm-up, icebreakers signal that everyone's contribution matters and encourage a mindset of curiosity and collaboration from the very beginning.

Use

Use an icebreaker at the start of a session to encourage communication and openness among participants.

Set-up

Participants: 10 to 25 people (adaptable to group size).

Place: an open, comfortable area where participants can interact (indoors or outdoors).

Time: 10 to 15 minutes.

Materials: flexible depending on the activity, could be a ball of yarn, cards, flip charts, markers.

Tool difficulty

Low

Stories from the ground: Naucalpan and León

Applied in Teresina and Recife, Brazil; León and Naucalpan, Mexico and Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Steps

1. Invite participants to form a circle or small groups.
2. Introduce a simple prompt, for example, sharing a word, a personal story, or naming a challenge or opportunity they see in their city.
3. Use a playful element like passing an object, writing on cards or sticking notes on a wall to visualize connections and ensure everyone contributes.
4. Continue until all participants have engaged, gradually creating a shared overview of perspectives, feelings or ideas.
5. Pause to briefly reflect: What connections do we see? What surprises us? What themes are emerging?
6. Conclude by linking the activity back to the workshop's purpose: emphasize that collaboration and diverse perspectives are essential for tackling urban challenges.

Context

Icebreakers were used at the beginning of the Urban Lab sessions in both Naucalpan and León. Their purpose was to foster communication among participants and encourage them to exchange perspectives in a relaxed manner. These exercises helped spark ideas and collective imagination around how participants envisioned the future of their cities.

Goals achieved

- Strengthen communication among participants.
- Set the tone for collaborative work.

Experience

"We used a ball of yarn which participants threw when they had their turn. Each time someone caught the ball of yarn, they introduced themselves by saying their name, a hobby and one word that expressed how they would like to see their city in the future. Afterwards, each participant only repeated what the previous person had just shared before adding their own responses. This required a lot of attention, as you never knew when the ball would be thrown your way, and you needed to remember exactly what the last person said. At the end, the group reflected together on the importance of collaboration, using the web of yarn that had been created as an analogy. This simple but effective exercise supported both engagement and creativity, setting the tone for more in-depth collaborative work during the sessions." (WRI México)



Icebreaker activity. Participants use strings to pull a bottle, testing their communication and collaboration skills. Naucalpan, 2023. © WRI México

Learn more

[Sense of place and experimentation in urban sustainability transitions: the Resilience Lab in Carnisse, Rotterdam, The Netherlands](#)
(Frantzeskaki and others, 2018)

Climate Mindset Quiz

Overview

A mindset quiz is an assessment tool that helps classify and understand the different ways stakeholders think and feel about certain issues such as climate change and action. It identifies common “archetypes” of mindsets which reflect prevailing worldviews or attitudes. Using a climate mindset quiz early in project planning helps reveal the values, beliefs and perceptions that shape how people respond to climate action and challenges. Understanding these mindsets supports building trust, consensus and designing strategies and solutions that resonate with different groups. Repeating the survey throughout the process can help track how mindsets may shift over time within the coalition, both in response to and in support of transformative urban action. Climate mindset quizzes range from simple self-assessment tools to complex academic surveys, depending on the specific goals of the analysis and the involvement of research partners.

Use

Use a mindset quiz to recognize both common and diverse values, beliefs, attitudes and perceptions among stakeholders. Findings can inform targeted strategies for stakeholder engagement and mindset shifts, stronger coalitions and collaboration, and locally grounded solutions that remain effective and responsive to evolving stakeholder needs.

Set-up

Place: a room or space with tables, chairs and internet connection.

Time: 1 to 1.5 hours.

Materials: printed mindsets quiz or online version.

Tool difficulty

Low

Steps

1. Introduce the concept of mindsets. Present briefly what mindsets are and how they shape climate and urban decision-making.
2. Individual reflection exercise based on the prompt: “Think of a recent decision or action you took or did not take, related to climate or sustainability. What motivated you? What challenges did you face? How did you feel about this decision?”. Ask participants to write short notes privately.
3. Group discussion: form small groups (3 to 5 people) and let them share reflections with each other. Encourage active listening and note key themes (similarities or differences in motivations, perceived barriers and drivers). Each group shares 1 to 2 insights with the full group.
4. Explain the Climate Mindset Quiz. Walk participants through quiz length, type of questions and estimated time. Clarify that the quiz is for self-awareness instead of judgement and that results will be used to guide discussions and learning.
5. Complete the quiz. Distribute printed quizzes or share the [digital access link](#). Allow quiet time for completion. Facilitators remain available for clarifications.
6. Once results are in, ask participants to reflect individually on: “Does your result resonate with you? Why or why not?”.
7. In the full group, guide participants in sharing

their results and to consider how these different mindsets influence coalition dynamics. Ask questions such as:

- a. Why is it important to understand diverse mindsets when working together?
- b. How might having only one type of mindset in a team affect decisions and outcomes?

Stories from the ground

Context

Building on research about climate mindsets conducted across Urban Labs (for example, detailed surveys, interviews), UNU-EHS developed a concise climate mindset self-assessment quiz. The quiz draws on key traits and archetypes identified in these studies, notably the Skeptical Activist, the Optimist Technocrat and the Bystander with Mixed Feelings. It has been applied in diverse settings, including global events and academic seminars, to stimulate critical conversations around how to create more inclusive and effective climate collaborations that embrace diverse perspectives.

Goals achieved

- Enabled individuals to identify and understand their climate mindsets.
- Supported the design of targeted trainings and international engagements on coalition building.
- Enhanced capacity development by fostering self-reflection and group dialogue.

Experience

“The mindset quiz builds directly on research findings from our Urban Labs, particularly the three unique personas with varied worldviews and approaches to climate action. At events like the Conference of the Parties (COP) meetings and the World Urban Forum (WUF), it has helped participants from diverse backgrounds gain insight into their own perspectives and connect with others, both likeminded and different. This awareness forms a foundation for more empathetic conversations and tailored climate action journeys. Trainers found the quiz valuable for simulating the challenges and opportunities that diverse values, beliefs and perceptions present in the process of building coalitions for action.” (UNU-EHS)

Learn more

[Mindset shifts and sustainability transformation journeys across Urban Labs in Latin America](#) (Guerra and others, 2025)

[Identifying mindsets for urban sustainability transformation: insights from Urban Labs](#) (Guerra and Syed, 2024)

Applied internationally, drawing from Teresina and Recife, Brazil; León and Naucalpan, Mexico and Buenos Aires, Argentina Urban Labs.

2. Developing a shared understanding of the local context

Weaving Urban Futures

Affective Mapping

Overview

Affective mapping is a creative way of understanding a place through sensory experiences and emotions of the people who live or move through it. Unlike technical or collaborative mapping that focuses mainly on shared data or problem-solving in groups, affective mapping highlights sensory experiences, perceptions and emotional connections to space. It can be done collectively – where participants share feelings, memories, challenges, impressions and potentials to build a shared map – or individually, as a more introspective exercise and closer to a personal diary of place (another tool to reflect on experiences and feelings about a place over time). Such activities make affective mapping a particularly powerful tool for uncovering what often cannot be captured by conventional tools, like the atmosphere of a street, the memory tied to a corner, the feeling of safety or discomfort, et cetera.

Use

Use affective mapping to encourage reflection on the territory, support participatory diagnoses and inform the co-creation of plans and projects. It strengthens community ties and helps communities and decision makers see places from new perspectives. It also helps to uncover hidden vulnerabilities, such as women's safety perception on their route to work.

Set-up

Participants: flexible. Participants can be involved collectively or divided into groups of interest (such as by age or gender) to capture diverse perspectives.

Place: a room or open space with a table to support the map.

Time: 1.5 hours.

Materials: a large, printed map of the territory, along with markers, sticky notes, stickers, pins and magazines for collages.

Tool difficulty

Medium

Steps

1. Define the activity's goal: Sensory experiences? Collective memory? Identifying problems? Strengthening belonging?
2. Prepare materials and workspace.
3. Present guiding questions to steer the discussion, for example: "Which places do you like most?", "Where do you feel unsafe?", or "Which spaces could be improved?"
4. Facilitate the activity, encouraging participants to share experiences and contribute to the map.
5. Record and organize the results in map and report format.

Stories from the ground: Teresina

Context

In 2023, the Urban Lab in Teresina locally known as the Alliance for the Residencial Edgar Gayoso, applied affective mapping with children, youth and women to engage the community in reflecting on their territory through daily experiences.

Goals achieved

- Developed a shared understanding of residents' challenges and opportunities.

Experience

"Affective mapping exercises with women and children created a collective view of the territory, led by members of the Urban Lab. The activity revealed spaces of affection, challenges and opportunities, while fostering dialogue on common local issues. Beyond creating a map, it was an act of citizenship: strengthening bonds, stimulating conversation and increasing residents' sense of ownership over urban issues. Centring women and children's voices is essential, as they experience public space conditions most directly and hold knowledge vital to making the territory more welcoming and inclusive." (WRI Brasil)



Affective mapping with a group of women at Residencial Edgar Gayoso, Teresina, August 2023. © Tátilla Távora / WRI Brasil

Learn more

[The image of the city](#) (Lynch, 1960)

[Emotion mapping: Using participatory media to support young people's participation in urban design](#) (Deitz and others, 2018)



Applied in Teresina, Brazil.

World Café

Overview

A World Café exercise can facilitate open and inclusive discussions among diverse groups around strategic challenges and complex topics. Organized in a relaxed, café-style setting, participants engage in a series of small-group conversations that evolve through rotating discussions, enabling the cross-pollination of ideas. Key questions guide each round, facilitating the sharing of experiences and perspectives among participants. Adaptable to a wide range of contexts and objectives, it is particularly effective for surfacing shared understanding.

Use

Use World Café to facilitate conversations in multi-stakeholder settings, ranging from small to large discussion groups.

Set-up

- **Participants:** flexible, divided into groups.
- **Place:** a room with small round coffee tables, preferably around five chairs per table.
- **Time:** a 5 minute welcome, 3 x 20 minutes conversation rounds, a 10 minute wrap-up (approx. 1 hour and 15 minutes total).
- **Materials:** coloured pens, block of paper.

Tool difficulty

Medium

Steps

1. Create a friendly environment resembling a café.
2. The host introduces the World Café method, providing context, background on the topics to discuss and purpose while inviting participants to engage in a relaxed atmosphere.
3. The group is divided into smaller groups for guided rounds of discussion. Each round begins with a question or set of questions. Next rounds can use the same questions or build upon questions of previous rounds.
4. Each round of conversation lasts 20 minutes. After the end of each round, participants move to another table. A person per group can remain as “table host”.
5. Capture graphics that reflect participants’ words and images as they speak and assign someone to draw and write during the rounds. Graphics include freehand drawing using colourful pens or other materials, diagrams, abstract figures, mind maps and anything else that serves to represent and transfer ideas.
6. Participants share insights or outcomes from conversations with the rest of the group after each round.
7. Results are reflected visually. Participants detect trends in the drawings and reflections at various tables.

Applied in Teresina and Recife, Brazil and in Leon and Naucalpan, Mexico.

Learn more

[World Café Website](#) (The World Café Community Foundation, 2025)

[The benefits of using graphic recording](#) (Kelly, 2005)

[The “World Café” as a Participatory Method for Collecting Qualitative Data](#) (Löhr and others, 2020)

Stories from the ground: Teresina and Recife

Context

In both Urban Labs in Teresina and Recife, the World Café tool was used to complement a local technical assessment that informed potential demonstration activities. It facilitated multiple structured conversations among coalition members simultaneously.

Goals achieved

- Gathered detailed information about the territory.
- Helped to define the scope for demonstration activities.
- Broadened the range of ideas for potential demonstration activities responding to local challenges.

Experience

“In 2022, we used World Café to complement the technical assessment and, in 2023, we applied it for ideation during a period of lab expansion that resulted in growing divergences among members. To support the technical assessment, we divided the participants into three groups that rotated tables every ten minutes, with their answers recorded for later analysis. The questions for the three groups were: 1) What do you lack? (for example, time, resources, knowledge, technical capacity), 2) Are there any initiatives or projects in the area that relate to climate change and urban sustainability? 3) Are there any public policies, plans or parliamentary amendments relating to the centre of Recife? The responses informed the decision-making process for the demonstration activities.” (WRI Brasil)



World Café. Shared ideas and perspectives captured through rotating dialogues, Recife, April 2022. © Adriana Preta / WRI Brasil.

Photovoice

Overview

Photovoice is a visual methodology where participants use cameras or smartphones to capture images that reflect their experiences and concerns. These photographs help start conversations, build understanding of local contexts and support community-driven change. Originally developed to amplify marginalized voices, photovoice lets people tell their own stories visually and advocate for improvements.

Use

Use photovoice to explore, to reflect on and to raise awareness of community issues through photography.

Set-up

- **Participants:** 10 to 30 community members.
- **Place:** locations for discussion groups.
- **Time:** from 2 weeks up to 3 months, depending on the time set to capture the photographs.
- **Materials:** cameras or smartphones, paper, pens, recorders.

Tool difficulty

Medium

Applied in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Learn more

[Archivo de la Memoria Popular Villa 20, 2018.](#)

[Photovoice](#) (Centre for Society and Mental Health, n.d.)

[Using photovoice methods to explore older people’s perceptions of respect and social inclusion in cities: Opportunities, challenges and solutions](#) (Ronzi and others, 2016)

[Photovoice study of the food environment in Villa Verde, Madrid: A participatory research project for Obesity prevention](#) (Social and Cardiovascular Epidemiology Research Group, 2016)

Steps

1. Recruit community participants interested in taking part.
2. Hold an initial meeting to explain photovoice, set themes and establish guidelines for capturing photos.
3. Ask participants to use their smart phones or provide cameras and demonstrate how to use them. If there are local photographers or youth experts within the community, check their availability to provide photographic tips.
4. Allow time for participants to capture images related to the agreed topics. It could last from two weeks to several months.
5. Organize group discussions where participants share their photographs and reflect using the SHOWeD Method:
 - What do we **S**ee here?
 - What is really **H**appening here?
 - How does this relate to **O**ur lives?
 - **W**hy does this situation exist?
 - What can we **D**o about it?
6. Facilitate participatory analysis by selecting the photos from all participants that most effectively illustrate the topics outlined during the first meeting. Ask them to write narratives for the selected images. If written narratives are a barrier, change to oral narratives and record.
7. Plan how to share findings: A community exhibition displayed at a cultural centre? A slide presentation during a broader community meeting? A publication in a local newspaper? At an art gallery with a press release? Website creation and sharing through social media? Or a combination of dissemination strategies?

Stories from the ground: Buenos Aires

Context

The community initiative *Archivo de la Memoria Popular de Villa 20* applied photovoice principles to produce participatory audiovisual recordings of activities developed by the Urban Lab in Villa 20.

Goals achieved

- Created a visual record of community stories and experiences.
- Raised awareness and fostered reflection among participants.

Experience

“The TUC project facilitated the creation of participatory audiovisual recordings as part of its cooperation with the Archivo de la Memoria Popular Villa 20 (Villa 20’s Archive of Popular Memory). Within this framework, the project helped young community leaders to develop basic filmmaking skills and collaboratively produce videos documenting project stages. This process encouraged participants to jointly explore issues important to them, reflect on their experiences living and working in Villa 20 and use their stories to advocate for change. The recorded materials also helped spread awareness of the project’s goals and activities related to collective climate action.” (IIED-AL)



Photovoice workshop, Barrio 20, September, 2023. © Archivo de la Memoria Villa 20



Young documentarists, Barrio 20, April, 2023. © Archivo de la Memoria Villa 20



Photovoice workshop, Barrio 20, June, 2023. © Archivo de la Memoria Villa 20

Community-based enumeration

Overview

Community-based enumeration is a participatory data collection method in which community members have an active role throughout the process as enumerators, from planning and implementation to analysis and reflection. Rooted in collaboration between residents and researchers, this approach helps communities generate and own knowledge about their socioeconomic and environmental realities. It fosters collective understanding and promotes democratic access to data, empowering communities to better advocate for their needs and priorities.

Use

Use community-based enumeration for addressing data gaps, mapping the territory and assessing conditions in vulnerable or underrepresented territories. It bridges academic and local knowledge while strengthening social ties and community capacity. Beyond collecting data, it helps people get organized, understand themselves better and express their local needs clearly and with credibility.

Set-up

- **Participants:** a balanced team of (paid) community members and experienced researchers.
- **Place:** meeting spaces for planning, coordination and debriefing.
- **Materials:** questionnaires, pens, clipboards, informed consent forms, ID badges.
- **Preparation time:** 2 to 4 weeks.
- **Interview duration:** 40 minutes to 1 hour.

Tool difficulty

High

Steps

1. Assemble a diverse field team, ensuring a mix of local knowledge and research skills. Select members based on communication abilities, conflict resolution and teamwork.
2. Provide training on the enumeration goals, ethical considerations, data collection methods and field conduct.
3. Work collaboratively to formulate a survey questionnaire. With the active participation of community members, adapt questions, language and logistics to the cultural and social context of the community. Align field logistics, including team schedules, safety protocols and material checklists. Prepare field diaries and communication strategies. Plan for continuous coordination with a field supervisor to track progress and address emerging issues.
4. Define the roles and responsibilities of each team member. Ensure the process is inclusive and respectful of gender, age and other social dynamics.
5. Establish an interview protocol for enumerators to follow. Use a respectful and friendly tone when introducing the project. Clearly explain the purpose of the interview and obtain informed consent. Be mindful of social hierarchies and spaces, and never approach minors without proper authorization. Foster empathy and attentiveness, especially when discussing sensitive topics.
6. Conduct a survey test to familiarize the team with the questionnaire and adjust as needed.

Applied in Teresina and Recife, Brazil.

7. Conduct the interviews. Complete all sections of the questionnaire carefully, whether on paper or digitally and ensure consent forms are properly signed. Avoid giving the respondent access to the questionnaire to prevent bias. Collect feedback at the end to improve the process.
8. Compile all questionnaires and consent forms. Verify that all documentation is accurate and complete. Use team diaries to record observations and field experiences. If possible, include visual documentation to enrich the analysis.
9. After data collection, involve the community also in the interpretation of data.
10. Share preliminary results with the team and community members. Discuss lessons learned and refine methods based on participant feedback. This step not only validates the process but also supports continuous learning and improvement.

Stories from the ground: Teresina and Recife

Context

Community-led enumerations were carried out in Comunidade do Pilar (Recife) and the Residencial Edgar Gayoso (Teresina), both in Brazil. The initiative aimed to provide baseline data for the work of the Urban Labs established in these neighbourhoods and guide project decisions, such as prioritizing certain areas or themes.

Goals achieved

- Enabled the co-creation of relevant and context-specific research instruments and up-to-date data.
- Fostered community participation, active engagement and strengthened bonds within the community.
- Promoted collaboration between the community and academia, bridging local knowledge and academic expertise.
- Supported the development of a locally grounded database to inform interventions on the ground.

Experience

“The whole survey process allowed the involved team and the community to get to know TUC better and vice versa. Particularly during the questionnaire construction phase, residents were able to give their opinions and help draft questions. Subtle changes in language, such as replacing expressions and restructuring sentences, made the questionnaire more suited to that context. This draws attention to the need to invest more time in constructing the questionnaire with the community, including more rounds of testing. The effort demonstrated the need to bring academia closer to the community, as a way of bringing academic knowledge closer to the concrete reality of the territory. It is important to be clear about the reason for the research, which is why there should be a publicity campaign prior to the fieldwork. This increases the receptiveness of the residents.”
(WRI Brasil)



Community-based enumeration at Residencial Edgar Gayoso, Teresina, Brazil, in March 2023. © Tátilla Távora / WRI Brasil



Community-based enumeration at Residencial Edgar Gayoso, Teresina, Brazil, in March 2023. © Tátilla Távora / WRI Brasil

Learn more

[Why enumeration counts: documenting by the undocumented](#) (Patel, 2012)

Urban Loom: threading citymaking card game

Overview

The game encourages players to find connections between the impact of urban activities on climate change and the available solutions that can be applied in cities. Players must critically reflect on the systemic nature of the climate crisis and its solutions to win the game. It equips participants with key knowledge about how current political, social and economic systems are related to interconnected crises such as climate change and social injustice. The cards present 40 challenges commonly experienced in cities globally and 40 available solutions to build zero-carbon and socially just cities. The game can be played in three different modes, where players are challenged to identify connections between urban problems and combine them with possible solutions to make cities more resilient.

Use

Use the card game to encourage players to think strategically, work together, build consensus and seek the best possible alternative among the available solutions.

Set-up

- **Participants:** 1 to 6 players, depending on selected game mode.
- **Place:** a space with a table and chairs.
- **Time:** approx. 15 minutes to 1 hour depending on selected game mode.
- **Materials:** a set of TUC cards (available in English, Spanish and Portuguese).

Tool difficulty

Easy, medium or hard, depending on selected game mode

Applied in Buenos Aires, Argentina and in Teresina, Brazil.

Card set

[Card game rules and Card set for printing](#)

Steps

1. Begin by deciding how you want to play. There are three different modes to match your energy and experience:
 - Cards against climate change (easy): a light and fun way to get familiar with climate issues.
 - Domino effect (medium): think about the chain reaction of the most common urban issues.
 - System change, not climate change (hard): a more challenging mode where you work together to rethink whole systems and strategies in a competitive or cooperative way.
2. Once you have picked your mode, read the rules and print your card deck, shuffle the cards and make sure the playing space is ready.
3. As you play, pay attention not just to winning but also to the situations, solutions and challenges that the cards present.
4. After each round, pause for a moment to share your thoughts. Why did you make that choice? What strategies worked? What surprised you? Try to connect the game to real-life environmental challenges and inspire new ideas for action.
5. When the game ends, take a few minutes together to reflect on the main lessons. Which choices would you carry into the real world? Which ones made you rethink your perspective?

Stories from the ground: Teresina

Context

The game was created as a simple way to start conversations in the Urban Lab of Residencial Edgar Gayoso, in Teresina, Brazil. Many residents had little or no formal education, and some could not read, which made it difficult to engage with climate and environmental topics through traditional methods. By playing together, the community was able to test the game as both a fun learning activity and a tool for reflecting on their own daily challenges and realities.

Goals achieved

- Raised awareness of climate and environmental issues.

Experience

“We do not want the game to create a feeling of hopelessness or helplessness or increase the climate anxiety in the players. In the game, we bring several solutions that can be locally implemented, while having global impacts like efficient energy use in households or efficient public transport that would ultimately contribute to reduce global greenhouse gas emissions. We want people from communities to know they are part of a global effort to slow down a crisis, in which they will likely be among those most impacted. People know a lot about local impacts of climate change but might not know scientific terminology. The game can provide common ground for citizens without a climate science background and planners to come together and discuss problems and solutions using a shared tool. There is no one size fits all when it comes to climate change. For that reason, the game has to offer as many options as possible, but more importantly, it has to leave room for people to propose new cards and take out cards that do not fit in their context.” (UNU-EHS)



Card game session in Residencial Edgar Gayoso, Teresina, Brazil, 2022. © Mariana Fiuza / UNU-EHS

Transect walk

Overview

A transect walk involves a group of people, preferably a mix of community members, technical specialists and government officials, walking a predetermined path (transect) across a community or project area. Their aim is to observe, document and assess various aspects of the environment to better understand the local context. The walk entails collecting spatial data by observing people, their surroundings, resources and infrastructure, with the option of developing a transect diagram that portrays the conditions of the area. It aids in triangulating data acquired using other techniques and stimulating discussions among stakeholders.

Use

Use transect walks to identify visible concerns and experiences across an area and inform place-based decisions and actions.

Set-up

- **Participants:** flexible, based on context.
- **Place:** agree to meet at a specific location at a set time to start the walk.
- **Time:** 3 to 5 hours.
- **Materials:** a previously prepared base map, sketchbooks, markers, devices to capture pictures (cameras, cell phones etc.).

Steps

1. Define a route for the walk, with facilitators guiding. If there is a large group, smaller working groups are suggested, each focusing on a different route.
2. Discuss the aim of the walk, for instance addressing one specific issue, evaluating different areas, facilitate conversation about local behaviours and needs, etc. Develop observation criteria.
3. Assign responsibilities for participant documentation (drawing, recording, capturing photos, taking notes).
4. Focus on the aim and opportunities for participant observations.
5. Ask participants to draw a diagram of collected information.

Tool difficulty

Low

Applied in León and Naucalpan, Mexico and in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Learn more

[Transect walk](#) (UNaLAB, 2020)

[Transect walk](#) (CatComm, n.d.)

[Transect walk](#) (SSWM, 2020)



Transect walk. The Naucalpan Urban Lab goes to the streets to identify the main problems in the area, Mexico, August 2022. © WRI México

Stories from the ground: Naucalpan and León

Context

The Urban Labs in Mexico, including both León and Naucalpan, organized transect walks along routes that crossed key city landmarks. This tool allowed participants to physically explore and recognize the area while collectively identifying the territory's strengths, challenges and priority issues to address.

Goals achieved

- Reached consensus on the study area based on local knowledge.
- Identified key sites with the greatest potential for transformation.

Experience

"During the transect walk, the transformation areas where the Urban Labs would focus their efforts were defined together with the community. Walking through these areas made it easier to spot the key places with the most pressing challenges and greatest opportunities for change, helping to target strategies more effectively. A simple form was used to capture observations along the way, following a route that had been planned in advance based on the initial diagnosis. It was necessary to coordinate with the municipality regarding security issues. The exercise was successful and participants shared a lot of information with each other." (WRI México)



Transect walk. The León Urban Lab goes to the streets to identify the main problems in the area, Mexico, August 2022. © WRI México



Transect walk. The Naucalpan Urban Lab goes to the streets to identify the main problems in the area, Mexico, August 2022. © WRI México

Collaborative mapping

Overview

Collaborative mapping is a participatory process where local individuals identify assets, barriers and intangible resources within their communities or territories. This approach goes beyond simply collecting data, as it promotes inclusivity by engaging a variety of stakeholders to contribute their knowledge and experiences to mapping exercises. By validating spatial data together, it increases community engagement and creates maps that truly reflect lived realities. Collaborative mapping can be done by drawing maps from scratch or by marking locations and topics on a printed or digital base map.

Use

Use collaborative mapping to visually represent and deepen understanding of diverse local experiences, perceptions and the context.

Set-up

- **Participants:** flexible, based on context.
- **Place:** a large table or workspace for drawing.
- **Time:** 2 hours.
- **Materials:** large paper or base maps, markers, coloured pencils and paint.

Tool difficulty

Medium

Steps

1. Explain the purpose of the mapping: what is going to be identified? (For example, experiences, perceptions, concerns, barriers, strengths and opportunities).
2. Allow participants to freely draw or mark on the map, either starting from scratch or using a base map.
3. Encourage participation from all participants, including through storytelling and group discussion around the mapped elements to uncover deeper insights.
4. Take detailed notes or create a register of the identified topics and locations identified on the map.
5. Reflect on the final map together, giving participants the chance to explain and interpret outcomes.



Collaborative mapping. Based on their daily experiences, participants in the León and Naucalpan Urban Labs identify the main problems in their municipalities to prioritize areas of work, Mexico, July 2022. © WRI México

Stories from the ground: Naucalpan and León

Context

Collaborative mapping was used in Mexican Urban Labs, where participants located and mapped problems and opportunities according to previously identified topics like housing, environment, public services and mobility, all priorities for transformation in Naucalpan and León.

Goals achieved

- Spatially identified key concerns and opportunities for urban transformation.
- Defined priority intervention areas based on mapped concerns.

Experience

"The tool was adapted as a collaborative assessment mapping exercise, combining digital and physical methods. We discussed where the greatest number of problems to be solved were located. The information was organized by clustering points that needed attention. It is an attractive tool, especially for people who know their territory well. There was less participation through the digital media, better results were obtained in the face-to-face workshops. People actively collaborated in the sessions, they were encouraged and felt part of the process of delimiting the intervention area. We would use this tool again because it is an interesting process for people. However, it takes time to process the data." (WRI México)



Collaborative mapping. Based on their daily experiences, participants in the León and Naucalpan Urban Labs identify the main problems in their municipalities to prioritize areas of work, Mexico, July 2022. © WRI México

Applied in León and Naucalpan, Mexico and in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Learn more

[The Collaborative Conservation Mapping Project](#) (New Mexico Highlands University, 2024)

3.

Creating a shared vision for the future

Weaving Urban Futures

Collaborative collage

Overview

Collaborative collage is a creative activity where participants arrange and combine photographs, images, drawings and words or phrases on a canvas to express ideas, personal experiences, feelings and associations around a specific theme or project. It helps visualize current and desired future situations through a layered and flexible work of art that sparks creativity, reflection and dialogue. This process supports co-design, exploring complex topics and collectively shaping a shared vision.

Use

Use collaborative collage to visually explore ideas, experiences and potential solutions together, fostering creativity, reflection and shared decision-making.

Set-up

Participants: 6 to 25 people, divided into smaller groups.

Place: a room or space with tables for working.

Time: 1 to 1.5 hours.

Materials: a large canvas or poster board, magazines, newspapers, photographs, printed images according to objectives, markers, pencils, pens, paper, scissors, glue, tape.

Tool difficulty

Medium

Applied in Buenos Aires, Argentina and in Leon and Naucalpan, Mexico.

Learn more

[Collage as a method.](#) (Barron, 2023) / [Collage](#) (Digital Society School, n.d.)

[Heritage through collage: a participatory and creative approach to heritage making](#) (Abranches and Horton, 2023)

[Biographical Collage as a Tool in Inuit Community-Based Participatory Research and Capacity Development](#) (Dutton and others, 2019)

[Collaborative and participatory design approach in architectural design studios](#) (Priya and others, 2020)

[Collage-Based Research and Design](#) (Wehmeyer, 2021)

[Exploring the links between the use of NbS, mindshifts and transformative urban coalitions to promote climate resilience within an ongoing reurbanization process. The case of Villa 20, Buenos Aires](#) (Hardoy and others, 2022)

Steps

1. Introduce collage-making as a way to engage creativity and dialogue.
2. Split into smaller groups and begin the collages.
3. Encourage participants to explain their image choices and combinations and promote respectful group discussion about the issues and possibilities that emerge.
4. Gather the full group to share each collage's story. Stimulate a joint reflection on commonalities and differences between collages.
5. Allow time for participants to modify or add to their collages based on reflections and feedback.
6. Decide on next steps and how the collage will be used to define intervention strategies.
7. Create a summary of the most important findings and document the collages with photos.

Stories from the ground: Buenos Aires

Context

Collage and rendering techniques were used in the Urban Lab in Villa 20 to co-design pilot interventions featuring nature-based solutions. Urban Lab members, including community representatives, layered images and references onto photos of selected intervention sites. This helped to generate proposals and gave the community a clear visualization of how interventions might look.

Goals achieved

- Supported participatory design through a shared visual goal.
- Refined intervention design strategy.
- Helped define technical specifications for nature-based solutions.
- Informed decision-making.

Experience

“Collaborative collage was used to design the interventions in Villa 20. It was a participatory design in which the community could choose how they wanted the space to look. It required the preparation of photographs, transparencies, acetate prints and elements like vegetation, urban furniture and lighting beforehand. We used photographs of several intervention points and reference images of nature-based solutions to overlap, draw, propose and discuss. For instance, we discussed the possibility of altering the flooring material to make it more permeable, considering the environmental and climate implications as well as potential aesthetic appeal. We worked in groups and each group reviewed the issues they wanted to solve related to public space and climate conditions in the neighbourhood. We tried to come up with an intervention idea for each of the sites we proposed to intervene in. Potential obstacles to implementing the actions were also discussed and community representatives provided feedback when some ideas proved unfeasible. It was a successful, fun, original and creative exercise in co-design. In later stages, participants requested images so they could reimagine how the project would look as it progressed.” (IIED-AL)



Collaborative collage. Renders to visualize the interventions and validation process. Urban Lab meeting in Barrio 20, August 2022. © Julia Nesprías / UNU EHS



Collage workshop. Urban Lab meeting in Barrio 20, July 2022. © Jorgelina Hardoy / IIED-AL

Newspaper headline

Overview

This tool encourages groups to imagine a successful future by “time travelling” several years ahead and creating a newspaper or magazine headline. The statement should celebrate their project, organization or coalition’s main achievements, imagining that they have already happened.

Use

Use newspaper headline to spark collective imagination and rapidly develop a shared vision statement.

Set-up

Participants: 5 to 25 people, divided into small groups.

Place: a room with chairs and tables.

Time: 45 minutes to 1 hour.

Materials: paper, pens, markers, optional canvas for layout.

Tool difficulty

Low

Steps

1. Determine the time frame for the headline story (for example, one, five or ten years in the future).
2. Divide participants into groups of up to five people.
3. Ask each group to imagine a future where their project or coalition has succeeded.
4. Provide paper or a canvas for them to design the front page of a fictional newspaper celebrating this success story. Ask them to write a catchy headline that captures the key achievements. If there are multiple groups, have them share their headlines and discuss similarities and differences.
5. If relevant, blend the headlines from small groups into one shared vision.

Stories from the ground: Teresina and Recife

Context

The tool was implemented during the first coalition-building meetings for the Urban Labs in Teresina and Recife, Brazil, to support the creation of a shared dream.

Goals achieved

- Identified shared interests and motivations.
- Supported future-focused planning and forecasting.

Experience

“In Teresina, this tool was helpful in identifying dreams that later became demonstration activities within the project, such as building a community centre. The headlines were very useful and we continued to work with the ideas behind them throughout the whole project. The themes listed (public space, culture, CO2 reduction, local economy, among others) were brought up in an integrated way, often through narratives imagining what Teresina’s centre would be like in 2026. Reflecting on the use of the tool, we found that there was not enough time to come up with a single joint vision in one session. We needed complementary meetings. So, applying the tool took longer than we thought. People got emotional writing about the future of the territory. It took the whole year to work on it during some meetings. Despite the time required, the tool was able to stimulate teamwork and engagement for the project.” (WRI Brasil)



Collage for the activity during the first Urban Lab meeting, December 2021. © WRI Brasil



Newspaper headline. Activity during the first Urban Lab meeting, December 2021. © Lais Valieris / WRI Brasil

Applied in Teresina and Recife, Brazil and in Naucalpan, Mexico.

Learn more

[Magazine article exercise](#) (Change elemental, 2022)

[Future Newspaper](#) (UNaLAB, n.d.)

[Predict Future Headlines](#) (Reimaginary, 2020)

Future story

Overview

This tool is a structured visioning exercise that guides participants to develop a more detailed and meaningful story of a desired future. The group works together to create a narrative that describes what a successful initiative looks like. This in-depth storytelling exercise helps build a shared understanding of what transformation could mean in practice. It can operate at any scale and take on a variety of forms, including the creation of a project vision, the revision of an existing vision or the integration of multiple visions. A good vision should be realistic and adaptable, focused on the present and near future, so it motivates action instead of sounding like just another plan.

Use

Use future story to create a detailed, shared long-term vision.

Set-up

Participants: 4 to 25 people, divided into small groups.

Place: a room with chairs and tables and a wall to create a storyboard.

Time: 1 to 1.5 hours.

Materials: paper, pens, markers, sticky notes.

Tool difficulty

Easy

Steps

1. Acknowledge the present. Ask participants to answer the following question in one short paragraph: Where are we now? The question can focus on a previously identified challenge or situation.
2. Set the time frame for the story or vision (5, 10, 20 or 30 years) and ask participants what they want to see by then. What activities and changes will they observe? What accomplishments have been made? How do organizations collaborate? What institutions, attitudes or mindsets have changed? Ask participants to imagine a future where the challenge/situation has been addressed.
3. Ask each participant to individually write down a story or create a drawing that answers the questions. Ask them to identify and include story elements such as future goals and dreams, places and main characters.
4. Then, in couples or small groups, choose the most significant story elements. Present the ideas in plenary by group.
5. In plenary, organize the elements and ideas into themes, identify common dreams and directions and emphasize the most significant components along with their names. You can create a storyboard with sticky notes and drawings, grouping the elements.
6. Consider how these elements relate to one another. Is there a sequence of events? What is the thread of this future story or vision?
7. Discuss with the entire group whether they can create one story, reflecting a common vision or if they prefer to keep independent future stories according to the themes discussed.
8. Decide how the story will be shared. Will you include text, drawings and pictures? Or will you design a specific format to share the story?

Stories from the ground: Recife

Context

The tool was implemented by the Urban Lab in Recife during the definition of the demonstration activities to learn from participants' expectations about the project.

Goals achieved

- Found interests and motivations.
- Contributed to creating a shared vision about how people imagine the place with the impacts of the intervention.

Experience

"It was a visioning process, like a journey to the future. With eyes closed a story was told about entering the territory, imagining it being a few years after the project. It was asked what people were seeing and feeling, what did the area look like. Developing the future vision of the urban lab was an emotional and energizing experience during a period when coalition members were feeling discouraged. The application was easy and the group allowed itself to be immersed in the process. Groups debated and created a synthetic vision in one paragraph. In a subsequent step an exercise was carried out to prioritize the existing initiatives, trying to connect them with the project's objectives and the future vision."

(WRI Brasil)



Construction of the vision of future for the Urban Lab territory, first guided by audio then divided in groups. Recife, July 2022. © Isadora Freire / WRI Brasil

Applied in Recife, Brazil.

Learn more

[Visioning](#) (Wageningen University, n.d.)

[Visioning](#) (Change elemental, 2022)

[Translating purpose and mindset into positive impact through shared vision, compassion, and energy—a comparative study of seven organizations](#) (Leah, 2024)

4.

Formulating strategies and implementation mechanisms

Weaving Urban Futures

Backcasting

Overview

Backcasting is a future-oriented tool that begins with the articulation of a clear vision of a desired future and works backward to identify the actions and conditions needed to achieve it. It deliberately shifts the perspective from “what is” to “what is needed”, enabling citymakers to find pathways toward long-term goals. It helps participants map out the milestones and interventions required over time, often across multiple time frames. In doing so, it supports the translation of aspirational visions into practical and phased strategies.

Use

Use backcasting to develop pathways toward a desired future by identifying the short- and medium-term actions required to initiate and sustain transformative change.

Set-up

Participants: 5 to 25 people, divided into smaller groups.

Time: 2 to 3 hours.

Place: a room or space big enough for all participants with tables and chairs to work from.

Materials: sticky notes, markers, whiteboard or paper charts, paper sheets.

Tool difficulty

Medium

Steps

1. Review the shared long-term vision and clarify its goals, risks and opportunities to ensure everyone has a common understanding.
2. Create a timeline on a whiteboard or large paper from the present year to the planning horizon (for example, 5, 10 or 15 years into the future). Place a sticky note with the long-term vision statement at the timeline’s future end.
3. Divide participants into small groups, each focusing on a specific “transformation pathway”. Ask them to brainstorm backward from the future, identifying key milestones and interventions that made the vision possible.
4. Groups place their sticky notes along the timeline, creating a sequence of milestones and interventions that trace a path from the future back to the present.
5. Groups present their timelines, merge overlapping ideas and identify the most critical and robust interventions per time horizon.
6. Facilitators check that each pathway connects clearly to the present with actionable next steps.
7. In plenary, groups present their pathways, find connections and spot synergies between different transformation tracks.
8. Reorganize participants into new groups to consolidate linked pathways, identifying shared interventions or enabling conditions that benefit multiple goals.
9. Groups categorize actions into themes and strategic areas, building on cross-cutting opportunities.
10. In a final plenary session, groups present their consolidated pathways, assess coherence and provide final feedback.

Stories from the ground

Context

Building on research and insights from Urban Labs, UNU-EHS used the backcasting tool to support capacity development training for anticipatory thinking and strategic planning for transformations. This tool was used to help participants move from present-day observations to envisioning inclusive and actionable futures. The tool was applied in international climate policy settings at the Bonn Climate Change Conference (SB 62) 2025, where it supported reflections on long-term change across actors, processes and institutional contexts, for the Action for Climate Empowerment (ACE) Dialogue.

Goals achieved

- Co-created stories of transformation by connecting present clues with envisioned futures.
- Defined leadership roles, success indicators and barriers overcome in future scenarios.
- Identified seeds of change in the present that could grow into impactful achievements.

Experience

“At the 2025 Bonn Climate Change Conference (SB 62), participants used the backcasting tool to reflect on how today’s insights, gathered through World Café-style discussions, could evolve into a fully integrated and inclusive climate empowerment process over a 10-year horizon. Backcasting helped clarify the needed changes, who drives them or who is missing, and how they could unfold (What, Who, and How). Trainers found that the tool effectively helped participants learn that seeds of transformation already exist and can unfold by creating and sharing present inspiring stories. An alternative future relies on nurturing these inputs into actionable strategies for collective action.” (UNU-EHS)

Learn more

[UN Strategic Foresight Guide](#)
(UN Futures Lab, 2023)

[Exploring desired urban futures: the transformative potential of a nature-based approach](#)
(Bina and others, 2024)



Applied internationally at the Global Climate Policy Dialogues, using insights from all Urban Labs.

Role-play

Overview

Role-play simulations are an interactive approach to explore real or potential problems in a city. By stepping into different stakeholder roles, participants practice problem-solving, negotiation and collaboration in a safe environment. The method is commonly used for complex issues such as climate change, environmental policy or urban governance. Participants are given a scenario, a set of roles with background information and a task to complete. Playing roles outside of their usual (professional) identity helps them better understand other perspectives.

Use

Use role-play to explore challenges from different perspectives, test solutions safely and build empathy and collaboration among stakeholders.

Set-up

Participants: 10 to 15 people (depending on the roles needed).

Place: a room or space big enough for all participants. Tables and chairs to work.

Time: 1.5 to 2 hours.

Materials: cards, markers, flip charts.

Tool difficulty

High

Applied in León and Naucalpan, Mexico.

Learn more

[Role plays](#) (SSWM, 2020)

[Role-play simulations for climate change adaptation education and engagement](#) (Rumore and others, 2016)

[Role-Play Simulations for Decision Making in Contexts of Uncertainty: Challenges and Strategies When Engaging Elites as Participants](#) (Alejandro, 2024)

[Social Presencial Theatre \(SPT\)](#) (Presencing Institute-u-school for Transformation, n.d.)

Steps

1. Choose a scenario for a challenge or situation. This can either be predesigned by facilitators or identified by participants. If coming from participants, form groups for 3 to 5 minutes to discuss the types of problems they expect may arise. Collect the scenarios and all roles that might be involved, for instance, different stakeholders, institutions, groups, cities.
2. Explain the scenario and roles, giving background on their interests, focus and intentions. Leave space for participants to respond creatively.
3. Assign roles by asking for volunteers or by placing people in roles different from their usual positions to encourage new perspectives.
4. Allow preparation time for participants to step into their roles and plan their strategies. Ask them to consider additional aspects of their character to make roles more realistic.
5. Participants without a designated role can act as observers, with clear guidance on what to watch for. They can take notes on dynamics, interactions and emerging patterns.
6. Run the role-play, encouraging each participant to pursue the goals of their assigned role, negotiate with others and work toward solving the situation.
7. Evaluate and discuss in three parts: (1) feelings, reactions and tensions, (2) tactics, approaches, motivations or goals and (3) general lessons or theoretical connections. Start by asking each player how they felt in their role.
8. Compile and document the main learnings and potential solutions discussed.

Stories from the ground: Naucalpan and León.

Context

During meetings in both Urban Labs in León and Naucalpan, participants were assigned roles different from their real-life positions to discuss the implementation of the action plans' activities in the intervention areas. We tried to achieve an agreement on how they wanted to modify the area based on the role assigned in the draw.

Goals achieved

- Reached agreements among diverse sectors.
- Identified concrete actions to realize the vision defined for the areas.
- Contributed to team building.

Experience

“A role-playing exercise was conducted to help map activities defined in the Urban Lab’s Action Plan using LEGO DOTS materials. Participants exchanged roles by sector and built a scale model to represent key actions needed to achieve their shared vision for the intervention area in León. It was a fun exercise that encouraged people to have informal conversations. It changed the dynamics and helped participants understand different perspectives. It reduced tensions between public officials, strengthened team building, improved commitment and fostered empathy and trust among actors to reach agreements. As a whole, the exercise was a bit complex and took time to prepare and explain. Also, the selection of roles required extensive review to ensure all interests were represented. However, once people understood the objective, it flowed smoothly. Structuring the information collected was challenging, but everyone was happy with the experience and its outcomes.” (WRI México)



In the Naucalpan Urban Lab, participants assumed the roles of key social actors, engaged in debate, and used LEGO pieces to envision the urban transformations needed for a more climate-friendly municipality, Mexico, December 2022. © WRI México



In the León Urban Lab, participants assumed the roles of key social actors, engaged in debate, and used LEGO pieces to envision the urban transformations needed for a more climate-friendly municipality, Mexico, December 2022. © WRI México

Participatory diagramming (decision and objective trees)

Overview

Tree diagrams (also known as decision trees or objective trees) are used to visually map, analyse and organize how different ideas, actions and outcomes are connected. These diagrams help participants identify the steps needed to reach specific goals and to understand how changes in one part of the system can affect the whole system. Participatory diagramming involves creating these trees collaboratively, bringing together different individuals or groups to contribute their perspectives.

Use

Use participatory diagramming to align objectives, define priorities and streamline processes. The hierarchical structure of the tree diagrams makes them particularly effective for tracking cause-effect relationships and understanding the impact of dependent events.

Set-up

Participants: up to 20 people.

Place: a room with a free wall to hang the tree diagram.

Time: 1 hour.

Materials: large paper, markers, cards.

Steps

1. Place a main concept or objective at the top of the diagram.
2. Branch out with related ideas or steps linked to the main concept. This could be a concept or objective breakdown.
3. Continue adding branches until all relevant ideas are mapped and there is a conclusion or outcome.
4. Adjust the tree by adding or removing objectives based on group discussion. For large groups, multiple trees may be created. Use time to merge ideas in a final session.
5. Share the diagram(s) with other stakeholders that could be involved for input and alignment.

Tool difficulty

Low

Applied in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Learn more

[Action tree](#) (The Game change network, 2025)

[Problem and objective tree](#) (European Commission, 2025)

[Participatory diagramming in social work research: Utilizing visual timelines to interpret the complexities of the lived multiracial experience](#) (Jackson, 2013)

Stories from the ground: Buenos Aires

Context

The actors involved in the Urban Lab Villa 20 had different predefined ideas regarding the project's direction and how to implement their vision for urban transformation. Objective trees were used to define clear objectives, plan actionable steps and to align diverse interests among all members of the coalition.

Goals achieved

- Clarified and guided the coalition's overall objectives.
- Supported the definition of an intervention strategy and pilot projects.
- Built consensus and mutual trust among diverse stakeholders.

Experience

"The tree diagram was built by participants writing objectives on cards and exchanging ideas. Despite some participants not knowing each other initially, the process fostered trust and collaboration. Because the group was large, it helped to break them into smaller groups that discussed and organized the objectives in different ways. Although only one tree was expected, the output was three distinct trees, each reflecting different priorities and pathways relevant to the neighbourhood's unique context. These visualizations helped reveal varied approaches and align strategies for Villa 20." (IIED-AL)



Participatory diagramming UL Villa 20, April, 2022. @ Mariana Giusti / CIHE FADU / Vakuum

Action plan

Overview

An action plan is a practical tool that turns a shared vision or goal into tangible steps for implementation. It outlines what needs to be done, who will do it, how to do it and when to do it. The action plan offers a way to organize and manage projects, align responsibilities and mobilize resources. It can also integrate financing, regulatory and management instruments, making it an essential bridge between planning and execution. It helps to ensure everyone involved is on the same page and facilitates informed decision-making.

Use

Use an action plan to structure and coordinate the implementation of projects and initiatives, including key roles and responsibilities, timelines, funding sources and progress-tracking mechanisms.

Set-up

Participants: 10 to 25 people (depending on stakeholders needed).

Place: a space or room big enough for all participants.

Time: 1 week to 1 month.

Materials: sticky notes, markers, paper, coloured pencils, spreadsheets or digital tools like Excel.

Tool difficulty

High

Steps

1. Identify strategies and major activities to achieve project goals.
2. Break down actions into SMART steps that are Specific (is clear and well-defined), Measurable (can be tracked), Achievable (is possible to reach), Relevant (aligns with the vision) and Time-bound (has a clear time frame).
3. Structure the listed actions in a matrix, including necessary resources, timelines, roles and responsibilities, necessary partnerships, accountability mechanisms and evaluation methods or indicators. Phase the actions across the timeline.
4. Validate the draft with stakeholders to gain feedback, build partnerships and ensure feasibility.
5. Regularly update the plan in collaboration with key stakeholders to monitor implementation progress and adjust as needed.

Stories from the ground: Naucalpan and León

Context

After defining common visions for the work in León and Naucalpan, both Urban Labs developed their action plans separately.

Goals achieved

- Supported collaborative planning for a defined area.
- Identified cross-cutting activities and the importance of integrating different sectors in transformative change.
- Established key activities, timelines, responsibilities and resources needed.

Experience

“For the elaboration of the action plan, participants built on work from a previous workshop where the common vision had been agreed upon along with transformation opportunities. Emphasis was placed on the importance of translating the common vision into concrete targets and actions through a plan. The exercise involved dividing the participants into four groups with the same predefined themes for the common vision: (1) environment, (2) urban planning and housing, (3) public services and (4) mobility. Each group had to determine at least three essential actions to achieve the vision, according to predetermined transformation opportunities. Participants were asked to fill out a form organizing the activities as short-, medium- and long-term. Subsequently, they identified the necessary resources (human, technical, economic, legal, etc.) to carry out each of the proposed activities. Responsibilities were also assigned by type of actor (civil society, academia and government) and participants were asked to commit to specific tasks to advance the implementation of the plan.” (WRI México)

Learn more

[Action Plan](#) (UN-Habitat, 2024)

[Laboratory Quality Stepwise Implementation tool](#) (WHO, n.d.)

[Define and develop an action plan](#) (UN WOMEN, 2019)

[Community Tool Box](#) (University of Kansas, n.d.)



Applied in León and Naucalpan, Mexico.

Risk matrix

Overview

A risk matrix is a structured tool used to identify, evaluate and prioritize risks associated with a project, policy or system. It maps risks by their likelihood and potential impacts. Risk assessment matrixes are widely used to support decision-making under uncertainty, including in urban planning, infrastructure development, disaster risk reduction and strategic project management.

Use

Use a risk matrix to collaboratively identify and categorize the risks associated with your project.

Set-up

Participants: 5 to 20 people.

Place: a space or room with tables and chairs to work from.

Time: 1 to 1.5 hours.

Materials: flip charts, paper, sticky notes, markers, prepared matrix (likelihood-impact).

Tool difficulty

Medium

Steps

1. With participants, clarify what “risk” means, why it is important to identify and discuss it.
2. Establish risk tolerances and thresholds, as they may influence risk perception and potential responses.
3. List potential risks, considering all different dimensions of the initiative: economic, social, environmental, technological, political, among others.
4. Group risks by type (for example, technical, operational, financial, economic, political, environmental, etc.) and adapt to the project context.
5. Identify the likelihood of each risk. For instance, has it happened before or are there comparable risks?
6. Determine the potential consequences or impact of each risk. Consider also how the risk can cascade and generate or strengthen other risks.
7. Use a matrix to assign values to likelihood and impact, for example:

Likelihood

High: almost certain to occur; value = 3

Medium: fairly likely to occur; value = 2

Low: unlikely to occur; value = 1

Impact

High: critical; value = 3

Medium: significant; value = 2

Low: insignificant; value = 1

8. More levels can be added if needed, for example through a 5-point scale.
9. Document risks using clear risk statements that outline cause, event and effect: as a result of <cause>, a(n) <event> may occur, which would lead to <effect on objectives>.
10. Example: As a result of a lack of resources, the timeline may be extended by one month, which would lead to phase 1 not being concluded as scheduled.
11. Use the matrix and register to identify which risks require the most attention or management action.



Strategic planning and risk identification. Recife, October 2022. © WRI Brasil

Learn more

[Collaborative tools and techniques to build the project risk plan](#)
(Project Management Institute, 2007)

[Integrated Participatory and Collaborative Risk Mapping for Enhancing Disaster Resilience](#)
(Liu, 2018)



**Applied in Recife,
Brazil.**

5.

Learning **by doing** and learning **from doing**

Weaving Urban Futures

Collaborative murals

Overview

Collaborative murals are typically large-scale artworks that community members, students, local artists and sometimes local government or other organizations create together. These murals tell important local stories, involving local knowledge, heroes or historical events. They foster community pride and ownership and can raise awareness of climate, environment, culture and social justice.

Use

Use collaborative murals to engage and empower communities through a creative, inclusive art process that fosters connection, awareness and reflection.

Set-up

Participants: 10 to 15 people.

Place: open space (with permission to paint the mural).

Time: 1 to 5 days.

Materials: adequate painting materials according to the surface (surface could be, for example concrete, metal, bricks or textile).

Tool difficulty

Low

Steps

1. Engage the community to lead the process by discussing their interests, stories and ideas for the mural. Explore and learn together about the social, political and historical context of the place and the people involved.
2. Encourage participation from different groups, including residents, teachers, students, artists and local leaders.
3. Collaboratively define the mural's theme and message based on the community's vision: What is the mural about? What story will it tell?
4. Identify potential locations together with the community, emphasizing visibility and accessibility. Obtain necessary permissions from authorities and other relevant parties.
5. Assess the mural's surface conditions and discuss any maintenance or security considerations as well as necessary painting materials.
6. Co-create sample designs and draft concepts with the group, reflecting their ideas and feedback.
7. Begin the painting process with broad community involvement, which may take several days.
8. Host a community event to unveil the finished mural and celebrate the collective achievement.

Stories from the ground: Buenos Aires

Context

The Urban Lab in Villa 20 spearheaded the creation of several collaborative murals addressing climate change and sustainability. These murals resulted from strong partnerships with local schools and universities and were awarded the 2024 #Art4Resilience: Knowledge into Use Award by the Global Resilience Partnership.

Goals achieved

- Raised awareness of climate change and sustainability in a vulnerable, informal context.
- Communicated local evidence to the wider community.
- Fostered partnerships and dialogue around climate justice.

Experience

"In 2023, 150 students from the School of Design of the Faculty of Architecture, Design and Urbanism at the University of Buenos Aires developed 55 mural proposals addressing climate change and sustainability in Villa 20. These were informed by exchanges with residents and other stakeholders. Two murals were selected by the community and painted in early 2024. They creatively depict everyday community life, integrating sustainable practices such as vegetable gardens and recycling. Implementation involved residents from all ages, art professors, art students, the TUC team and the Institute of Housing of Buenos Aires. They all worked together or contributed materials over five weekends to make the murals a reality and showcase more desirable futures for the community. The involvement of diverse individuals from different sectors ensures that multiple perspectives are considered, enriching and amplifying project achievements. Community ownership and collective efforts are instrumental in pushing the transformation forward. Murals are strategically placed on two prominent street corners near the main commercial street of Villa 20, forming a thematic unit within the neighbourhood's newly established Environmental Circuit. We aim to continue exploring such partnerships to create more murals." (IIED-AL)



Collaborative mural in Villa 20, Buenos Aires, Argentina. © Silvana Marchetti / IIED-AL

Applied in Buenos Aires, Argentina; Naucalpan, Mexico and in Recife, Brazil.

Collaborative murals

Stories from the ground: Recife

Context

In Comunidade do Pilar, Recife, residents participated in a collaborative mural activity using natural paints made from earth, water and glue. Guided by artist Ianah Melo, community members learned to create different coloured paints and then jointly painted the mural.

Goals achieved

- Promoted creative and sustainable activities in the community.
- Supported learning about natural paint-making techniques.
- Contributed to developing new skills.

Experience

“The workshop about natural paints demonstrated techniques for creating paints from earth, water and glue. Different colours were created and the paints were used to create an artistic mural. The activity was planned to take place in two stages: the first involving the manufacture of the paint and the second the collective painting of a mural. The workshop participants co-created the mural with the help of the artist. After creating the paints, the artist and workshop participants painted a mural on a wall of a housing complex in Comunidade do Pilar. The earth-based dye generated particular interest among the community’s craftswomen, who understand that they can replicate the technique to dye items produced as part of a handicraft training programme that supports local women in generating income through sustainable and recycling practices.” (WRI Brasil)

Applied in Buenos Aires, Argentina; Naucalpan, Mexico and in Recife, Brazil.

Learn more

[Transforming urban planning processes and outcomes through creative methods](#) (Cinderby and others, 2021)

[Co-Creation and the City: Arts-Based Methods and Participatory Approaches in Urban Planning](#) (Carpenter and Horvath, 2022)

[Mural making Process](#) (University of Uta, n.d.)

[Collaborative murals in methods and materials](#) (Handsman, 2021)

[Massive ecosystem restoration mural appears in New York city, calls leaders to act for nature](#) (United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, n.d.)



Collaborative mural in Villa 20, Buenos Aires, Argentina.
© Silvana Marchetti / IIED-AL



Collaborative mural. Workshop on earth-based paints with local artist and residents of the Pilar Community, Recife, Brazil, December 2023. © Marília Farias / WRI Brasil

Demonstration activities

Overview

Demonstration activities, often referred to as experimental, catalyst or pilot projects, are real-world interventions that translate collaborative visions, plans and innovative solutions into tangible actions within a city. They are generally easy to implement and either low-cost or funded as part of aligning efforts with existing projects and programmes. These activities showcase how moving beyond planning to implementation can inspire innovation and change. Whether small or large, temporary or permanent, they act as experiments that prove transformation is possible. By working together to create real changes in physical spaces, stakeholders build trust, ownership and momentum for sustained urban change. The emphasis is on practice: demonstrating, through shared effort, the pathways toward better futures.

Use

Use demonstration activities for tangible, on-the-ground action that addresses urban challenges and tests solutions in real contexts.

Set-up

Participants: 20 to 40 people (varying throughout time).

Place: an identified place to be intervened; consider necessary permissions.

Time: 1 to 3 sessions of 60 to 90 minutes each for planning; 1 to 2 days or more for implementation, depending on scale.

Materials: based on project needs.

Tool difficulty

High

Steps

1. Select an intervention area with the group and define the scale of the intervention. Is it accessible to the public and does it present opportunities for meaningful transformation?
2. Conduct site analysis to understand social, spatial and environmental characteristics.
3. Facilitate participatory workshops to collaboratively generate intervention ideas, refine design concepts and align them with community needs, technical feasibility and regulatory requirements. It is important that the demonstration activity reflects the general vision and goals that were agreed for the area.
4. Organize the necessary budget, materials, equipment and skilled personnel. Develop a logistics plan that accounts for timelines, procurement and coordination among stakeholders.
5. Carry out the intervention on the ground, maintaining flexibility to adapt as challenges arise. This phase should be visible, inclusive and foster on-site interaction among stakeholders and the community.
6. During implementation, create opportunities for public participation, through guided tours, information stands or interactive activities to strengthen transparency and community ownership.
7. Systematically record observations, collect quantitative and qualitative data and assess the performance of the intervention against predefined indicators.
8. Organize debriefing sessions with all stakeholders to review results, identify lessons learned and consider adaptations for replication or scaling in other locations. Communicate outcomes through public reports, visual documentation or policy briefs.

Applied in Teresina and Recife, Brazil; León and Naucalpan, Mexico and in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Stories from the ground: Buenos Aires

Context

The Urban Lab in Villa 20 piloted various nature-based solutions across several streets to physically transform the neighbourhood and promote climate adaptation. These demonstration activities were led and implemented by different community groups, who developed valuable skills throughout the process.

Goals achieved

- Encouraged community engagement and education regarding sustainable urban practices.
- Improved environmental quality in the neighbourhood.
- Fostered a sense of pride and ownership among community members, inspiring replication efforts by neighbours.

Experience

“All individual nature-based solutions pilots, or ‘environmental milestones’, were connected through a new environmental circuit, created as a partnership between the TUC project and the Environmental Sustainability Project of the Housing Institute of Buenos Aires. These milestones mark locations where actions are underway to enhance environmental quality and promote healthier, more inclusive and safer environments in Villa 20. The circuit highlights features such as tree-lined streets, vertical gardens and pergolas. Informative posters with QR codes were installed along the path so that residents and visitors can know more details about the different solutions and techniques, including a guide on native vegetation.” (IIED-AL)



Signage indicating the route and explaining the environmental awareness circuit in Villa 20, Buenos Aires, Argentina, February 2025. @ Jorgelina Hardoy / IIED-AL



Environmental awareness circuit in “el Pasaje” Villa 20, Buenos Aires, Argentina, February 2025. © Jorgelina Hardoy / IIED-AL

Demonstration activities



Demonstration activity. The Naucalpan Urban Lab improved Plaza Revolución by replanting vegetation, adding shade structures and creating recreational spaces, Mexico, July 2023.
© WRI México



Stories from the ground: Naucalpan

Context

One of the demonstration activities developed by the Urban Lab in Naucalpan was aimed at testing solutions to reduce the heat island effect and improve the pedestrian experience in one of the municipality’s most prominent public places: Plaza Revolución.

Goals achieved

- Blended expert knowledge with lived experience for activity design and implementation.
- Created comfortable and shaded spaces.
- Introduced native plant species with planters made of reusable materials.
- Improved the main crosswalks that lead to the square.

Experience

“The activity was organized and carried out by representatives from municipal and state governments, universities, organized civil society, cycling organizations and students. The Urban Lab in Naucalpan identified Plaza Revolución as one of five intersections with the highest percentage of traffic accidents, making it a high-impact location on a main municipal road. A green infrastructure expert designed the project based on community input and local needs, considering recreational activities and pedestrian flows. A pergola was built, urban furniture installed, vegetation planted and a recreational sports area for children created. On the day of implementation, adjustments were made on-site. After implementation, heat measurements showed a temperature difference of up to 10°C between shaded and unshaded areas in the square. The temporary intervention in this 4,200 m2 square demonstrated direct positive impact, prompting discussions with municipal officials about making it permanent. Challenges included space maintenance, vandalism and crime and design difficulties due to the size of the square.” (WRI México)

Learn more

[Guidelines for Urban Labs](#) (Project team URB@Exp, 2014–2017)

[Impacts of urban living labs on sustainability transitions: mechanisms and strategies for systemic change through experimentation](#) (Wirth and others, 2018)

[Urban labs beyond Europe: the formation and contextualization of experimental climate governance in five Latin American cities](#) (Roll and others, 2024)

Mutirão

Overview

Mutirão is a Brazilian word that etymologically derives from the Tupi-Guarani motyrã linguistic family, meaning “gathering for harvesting or building” or simply “working together”. It is a grassroots practice based on solidarity, cooperation and mutual help, often used to accomplish projects that are difficult for individuals to do alone. It emphasizes collective action, shared responsibility and the pooling of resources and labour to benefit the whole community. The concept is deeply rooted in Brazilian culture and is seen as a model of collective mobilization for social and environmental goals.

Use

Use mutirão to bring a community or group together voluntarily to work collectively on a shared task or project, such as building something or supporting one another.

Set-up

Participants: approximately 50 people from various sectors and the community, divided into working groups.

Place: meeting space, preferably within the community.

Time: approximately 2 to 5 months of planning; 3 to 5 days of hands-on work on agreed dates.

Materials: Based on project needs.

Tool difficulty

High

Steps

1. Plan the workday(s) agenda, according to the physical workload to be performed, with the necessary breaks, meals and recreational moments.
2. Recruit volunteers from the community, explaining the meaning of the work to be carried out jointly. Mutirões are usually based on solidarity and cooperation among neighbours. Invite people from different ages and backgrounds, making sure that everyone finds a meaningful activity to contribute with.
3. On the day, welcome participants with refreshments and make sure to make everyone feel welcome and appreciated.
4. Review agreements and clarify objectives: What are we going to build and why?
5. Name working groups and define their specific responsibilities, for example: landscaping, painting, material preparation or furniture installation. Assign tasks according to skills and comfort, and provide tools as planned; adjust if needed. Working groups discuss their activities and agree on roles, including non-physical tasks like managing supplies or logging work.
6. Appoint a core team to support groups and maintain communication.
7. Hands-on work in shifts determined by the day's schedule, resources and weather (avoid the hottest hours to prevent exhaustion).
8. Plan meals that everyone eats together. Meals are an opportunity for team building. It is recommended that there is a time for sharing among all the working groups.
9. Resume work.

10. At the end of the day's work, gather as a large team to discuss and share the day's experiences, including reporting back on completed tasks.
11. Close with appreciation and celebration of the teamwork.

Stories from the ground: Teresina and Recife

Context

Both Urban Labs in Brazil used the mutirão tool to engage the residents in Comunidade do Pilar, Recife, and Residencial Edgar Gayoso, Teresina, in their interventions. The mutirões were relatively quick actions to test solutions and demonstrate possible transformations in the short-term.

Goals achieved

- Implemented the strategic intervention.
- Disseminated the project ideas and goals.
- Created ownership among neighbours over the interventions.

Experience

“Over five months in Teresina, community members, public officials, private sector and academia worked together to create the first public square in the residential area of Edgar Gayoso. This was the first strategic intervention of the Urban Lab and it was implemented in two mutirão stages: first came painting murals and planting, then building a shaded structure, a space for leisure and a bus stop. The process required significant time, resources and coordination but successfully mobilized residents and volunteers. A lot of energy was spent, but the result was wonderful.” (WRI Brasil)

Learn more

[Joint efforts carry out transformations in communities of Recife and Teresina](#)
(WRI Brasil, 2022)



Applied in Teresina and Recife, Brazil.



Mutirão. Construction of the Central Square at Residencial Edgar Gayoso, August-October 2022. © Paulo Sérgio / WRI Brasil

Mutirão. Construction of the Central Square at Residencial Edgar Gayoso, August-October 2022. © Paulo Sérgio / WRI Brasil

Participatory monitoring and evaluation

Overview

Participatory monitoring, evaluation and learning (PMEL) is a collaborative method that engages a broad spectrum of stakeholders, particularly civil society and local communities, in all stages of monitoring and evaluating programmes, policies, projects and initiatives. Unlike conventional top-down models, it invites participants to co-create frameworks, gather and analyse data collectively to reflect on results and share them. By valuing practice-based knowledge and adapting to local contexts, it creates space for voices often underrepresented in traditional evaluation. It is grounded in principles such as participation, flexibility, negotiation, learning and methodological openness.

Use

Use participatory monitoring, evaluation and learning to track progress, assess results and inform implementation. It helps projects stay relevant, inclusive and responsive to changing needs, while empowering communities to shape decisions that affect them.

Set-up

Participants: flexible, aim for diversity and representation rather than a fixed number.

Time: 2 to 3 weeks for planning; usually 2 to 6 weeks for data collection; overall cycle runs alongside the full project (several months to years), with check-ins every few months.

Place: a meeting room for planning and reflection; fieldwork takes place directly in the community or project sites.

Tool difficulty

High

Steps

1. Identify diverse stakeholders who will lead the PMEL process.
2. Collaboratively define what will be monitored by creating a simple and practical framework that fits the local context. Assign roles clearly, engaging different stakeholders throughout the whole process. Stick to a manageable set of indicators (up to ten).
3. Choose from a mix of quantitative (for example, surveys, sensors) and qualitative data collection methods (for example, interviews, observations, storytelling).
4. Facilitate data collection using the agreed methods with active involvement from stakeholders. Ensure inclusivity by adapting the pace and approach to participants' interests, knowledge, experience and capacities, and pay special attention to including vulnerable groups.
5. Work as a group to analyse and interpret the results, identify patterns, challenges and successes and draw lessons.
6. Present the results in an accessible and visual format to the wider group. Facilitate reflection and discussion around follow-up actions and improvements.
7. Integrate learning throughout the process with tailored training, coaching and peer exchanges.

Stories from the ground: Naucalpan and León

Context

Participatory monitoring, evaluation and learning tools were applied in both Urban Labs in León and Naucalpan. Participants were first introduced to the necessary skills for the construction of relevant indicators and different evaluation techniques through capacity development sessions. Based on these sessions and inspired by WRI's "Urban safari: Participatory air quality identification and awareness survey" methodology, surveys were co-designed and applied before, during and after the interventions.

Goals achieved

- Fostered learning on how to build, apply and evaluate urban indicators.
- Promoted the active involvement of stakeholders in monitoring and evaluation of demonstration activities.

Experience

"During capacity-building sessions, participants created their own indicators to evaluate climate action and social justice in urban projects. They also proposed how these indicators could be applied, analysed and interpreted. This helped explore practical and collaborative ways to monitor and measure the impact of demonstration activities developed by the Mexican labs, including socioenvironmental evaluations and air quality assessments. This active involvement sparked remarkable interest and appropriation." (WRI México)



Participatory monitoring. During neighbourhood surveys and capacity-building sessions in both Leon and Naucalpan Urban Labs, participants developed collaborative indicators to assess climate action and social justice in urban projects, Mexico, July 2023. © WRI México

Applied in León and Naucalpan, Mexico and in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Participatory monitoring and evaluation



Temperature monitoring. Community awareness Barrio 20, Buenos Aires, Argentina, June 2024. © Ana Da Silva / artículo 41



Temperature monitoring sensor, September, 2024. © GOGDT / Gobierno Ciudad de Buenos Aires



Installation of sensor, Barrio 20, July 2023. © GOGDT / Gobierno Ciudad de Buenos Aires

Stories from the ground: Buenos Aires

Context

The Urban Lab in Villa 20 installed a network of sensors to measure temperature and humidity. This addressed a major gap in local climate data in the informal settlement. The data is collected and managed by residents in partnership with the municipal government. It helps assess the impact of newly implemented nature-based solutions and supports broader planning in the neighbourhood, including the co-design of heat and flood mitigation strategies.

Goals achieved

- Closed important data gaps in a historically underserved area while fostering new skills among residents.
- Strengthened informed community participation in decisions concerning Villa 20.
- Provided a replicable model for citizen science in informal settlements.
- Fostered new partnerships between the municipal government and the local community.

Experience

“Technical tours and talks with neighbours and representatives of institutions were conducted to identify ten sites where sensors could be installed in Villa 20. In 2023, ten outdoor sensors were installed to monitor temperature and humidity. Studies of indoor and outdoor temperature at ground level are being carried out in strategic locations to assess thermal comfort across the neighbourhood. This sensor network allows not only to generate a long-term record with periodic data collection and analysis, but also to make a comparison between different sections of the neighbourhood, including streets intervened by the project with newly implemented nature-based solutions. This will allow us to design new policies, including for housing and public space improvements, according to each context in the future.” (IIED-AL)

Learn more

[Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation](#) (Institute of Development Studies, n.d.)

[Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation | SSWM – Find tools for sustainable sanitation and water management!](#) (SSWM, n.d.)

[Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation: An Overview of Guiding Pedagogical Principles and Implications on Development](#) (Onyango 2018)

[Use participatory monitoring and evaluation approaches](#) (Spotlight Initiative, n.d.)

Perception survey

Overview

A perception survey is a research tool used to understand people’s subjective experiences and opinions about a specific topic, policy or initiative. By using structured questions that often combine quantitative scales with open-ended responses, perception surveys provide valuable insights into public opinion, helping to identify trends, satisfaction levels and areas for improvement. Their strength lies in efficiently analysing feedback from diverse groups, but their true impact emerges when embedded within broader feedback loops that inform decision-making and foster community-responsive planning.

Use

Use perception surveys to collect stakeholder opinions, evaluate impact and support adaptive management of a demonstration activity.

Set-up

Participants: flexible.

Place: a meeting room for planning steps.

Time: 2 to 4 weeks for planning, question design and piloting; several weeks for data collection, depending on the approach and sample size; 1 to 4 weeks for data analysis and reporting.

Materials: questionnaires (paper or digital), visual aids like photos or maps when using image-based perception surveys, ethics approval and informed consent protocols.

Tool difficulty

Hard

Steps

1. Identify what you aim to understand (for example, safety, satisfaction, social impacts) and whose perceptions are most relevant (for example, residents, business owners, visitors or a mix of actors involved).
2. Contextualize the research by engaging early with the community through focus groups or forums to understand local priorities. Consult past surveys and literature to ensure relevance. If appropriate, consider community-led surveys, where community members conduct the surveys within their neighbourhood.
3. Develop questions and create a mix of quantitative (for example, Likert scales) and qualitative (open-ended) questions that reflect project priorities and local concerns. Use accessible and culturally appropriate language.
4. Pilot the survey with a small group and revise based on feedback.
5. Design an inclusive strategy to reach a representative sample of the community. Employ multiple methods (online, in-person or via telephone) to enhance accessibility and reach.
6. Train local facilitators to conduct the survey respectfully and ethically. Consider partnering researchers and residents for data collection.
7. Implement the survey, always starting with a clear explanation of the survey’s purpose, ensuring consent and confidentiality.
8. Collaboratively analyse the findings with community members to ensure accurate interpretation and context-aware conclusions.
9. Share results using diverse formats (for instance, infographics, presentations) and use the insights to guide decisions, adjust interventions or shape future planning activities.

10. Use validated metrics when available, consider image-based approaches for visual projects and repeat surveys over time to track evolving perceptions (e.g. before and after an intervention).

Stories from the ground: Buenos Aires

Context

Participatory evaluation of the demonstration activities carried out by the Urban Lab in Villa 20, based on passers-by counting and perception surveys regarding nature-based solutions. Approximately 15 residents and four local researchers collaborated in data collection and analysis.

Goals achieved

- Measured the impact of interventions aimed at increasing shade, green spaces and thermal comfort in public spaces.
- Determined how much these interventions are perceived to enhance life in Villa 20.

Experience

“Lab members conducted perception surveys to evaluate the demonstration activities from February to March 2024. They counted passers-by and asked residents, including parents from School No. 11, about their experiences and opinions about the intervened areas. The evaluation methodology was developed by IIED-AL, the lab facilitator, while Villa 20 residents coordinated and carried out the fieldwork. Residents received prior training on TUC’s goals, evaluation objectives and survey methods. After three months of data processing, preliminary results were shared with the community, providing contextual information for the evaluation. This participatory approach allowed for a deeper understanding of the interventions’ impact on the quality of life of neighbours, with community involvement significantly enriching the process and analysis.” (IIED-AL)

Learn more

[How to use perception surveys in a feedback mechanism](#) (IFRC, 2022)

[2023 Perception Survey on the Quality of Life in European Cities](#) (European Public Affairs, 2023)

[Usage behavior and health benefit perception of youth in urban parks: A case study from Qingdao, China](#) (Yao and others, 2022)



Perception survey in Barrio 20, February 2024.
© Marcela Costello / IVC

Harvesting achievements

Overview

Celebrating successes and creating shared moments of connection are essential for building motivation, empathy, trust and awareness in urban initiatives. These celebrations recognize both individual and collective efforts, strengthening ownership and appreciating the hard work behind joint actions. Beyond formal meetings, these gatherings foster engagement, group cohesion, mutual learning and the exchange of experiences, which help sustain relationships needed for ongoing collaboration and transformation.

Use

Use harvesting achievements to build and maintain a strong sense of community and shared ownership by recognizing and celebrating collective accomplishments.

Set-up

Participants: flexible, ideally all members involved in planning and implementing the initiative.

Place: an accessible, inclusive venue close to or within the intervention area. The venue should have a symbolic connection to the celebrated achievements. Space should allow for interactive activities like circle seating, displays and both indoor and outdoor events.

Time: flexible; can be a festival lasting one or more days.

Materials: refreshments, audio system for music, games, art supplies, collaborative puzzles and flip charts or walls for displaying achievements.

Tool difficulty

Low

Steps

1. Choose a welcoming space with areas for games, music and recreational activities.
2. Open the celebration with a warm welcome and icebreaker games to build energy and connection among participants.
3. Invite participants to reflect and write down key achievements, then form small groups to share, refine and choose contributions to bring forward.
4. Create an achievement wall where contributions are posted and participants can explore them.
5. Offer snacks and music to encourage relaxed socializing.
6. Hold a group session recognizing achievements, highlighting diverse contributions and expressing gratitude toward each other.
7. Guide a discussion to identify lessons learned and agree on next steps with assigned responsibilities to keep the momentum going.
8. Use collaborative games or other group activities to strengthen community spirit.
9. Reaffirm the shared purpose of the coalition and take a group photo.
10. Celebrate!

Stories from the ground: Recife

Context

An end-of-year festival was held over two days at the end of 2023 to celebrate the achievements of the Urban Lab in Recife. The festival took place in Comunidade do Pilar and included workshops on natural paints and community gardens.

Goals achieved

- Created a moment of connection beyond formal or “mandatory” activities.
- Allowed the group to celebrate key milestones together.
- Supported a fun immersion in sustainable themes and solutions by the broader community.

Experience

“The festival began with a performance by a maracatu (a traditional music genre from Brazil) group from Comunidade do Pilar, followed by refreshments. Then, Urban Lab members presented their work and participants registered for workshops about natural paint and community gardens. The first day ended with a game of bingo and the distribution of Christmas gifts. During the second day, the workshops took place. Many children from the community enthusiastically participated in the gardening workshop, learning about the medicinal and nutritional benefits of different plants and how to care for them. Fifteen seedling boxes were given to participants to take home and grow their own vegetables. Though attendance was modest, the festival was an important moment to celebrate the 2023 achievements of the coalition. Those present enjoyed socializing, signing up for activities and celebrating together. Notably, some residents helped organize the event, marking an important milestone for community engagement in urban transformation.” (WRI Brasil)



Celebration. Alliance Festival at Comunidade do Pilar, December 2023.
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Applied in Recife
and Teresina, Brazil.

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About

Transformative Urban Coalitions

Transformative Urban Coalitions (TUC) is implemented by the United Nations University Institute for Environment and Human Security (UNU-EHS), the World Resources Institute (WRI) together with its national offices in Brazil and Mexico, the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) together with IIED – América Latina in Argentina, and the German Institute of Development and Sustainability (IDOS), with support from the German Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action under its International Climate Initiative (IKI).

TUC seeks to shift the sustainability trajectory of cities towards zero carbon emissions by 2050 by altering the deeper social, technological and political structures and systems that are currently reinforcing high-carbon, resource-intensive urbanization. To achieve this goal, TUC facilitates the establishment of transformative urban coalitions in five Latin American cities to develop new strategies for addressing local challenges in urban development and inequality while at the same time reducing carbon emissions.

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