

# CITY-TO-CITY PARTNERSHIP IN DEVELOPMENT



# FOREWORD

This renewal project on city-to-city partnerships is part of the Flemish subsidy call 'Implementation of the International Development Agenda in Flanders 2018'. It was guided by Cimic and Contutti.

## CIMIC VZW

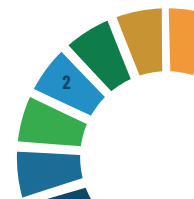
Cimic is a local and international network that believes in the power of diversity, encounter and dialogue across generations, traditions and cultures. Cimic takes a global perspective, keeps its finger on society's pulse and is moved by what happens in our communities. Cimic enables, strengthens and deepens encounters between people.

## CONTUTTI

Contutti guides organisations and individuals to collaboratively address complex challenges through 'hands-on' approaches. Contutti encourages everyone to contribute, based on their unique roles and potentials. Through meaningful collaboration that allows everyone to thrive, Contutti initiates action and helps turn ambitions to reality.

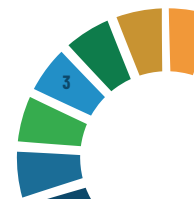
## THE ASSOCIATION OF FLEMISH CITIES AND MUNICIPALITIES (VVSG)

As an umbrella organisation, the VVSG takes on the role of knowledge sharer, network builder and local government advocate. The VVSG supports municipalities in the initiation, development and monitoring of city-to-city partnerships. As a partner in this project, the VVSG will disseminate the lessons learned in its national and international network.



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# INTRODUCTION ○

**This publication describes the lessons learned from a renewal project (2019-2022) on equitable partnerships, sustainable development and participation in an international context.**

In this project, three city-to-city partnerships between Flemish and Latin American municipalities experimented with new forms of collaboration and redefined their partnerships. Their objectives included:

- Increasing participation within the city-to-city partnership and their own municipality
- Establishing an equitable partnership with the city-to-city partner
- Integrating the sustainable development goals (SDGs) in the city-to-city partnership and doing so at the local level

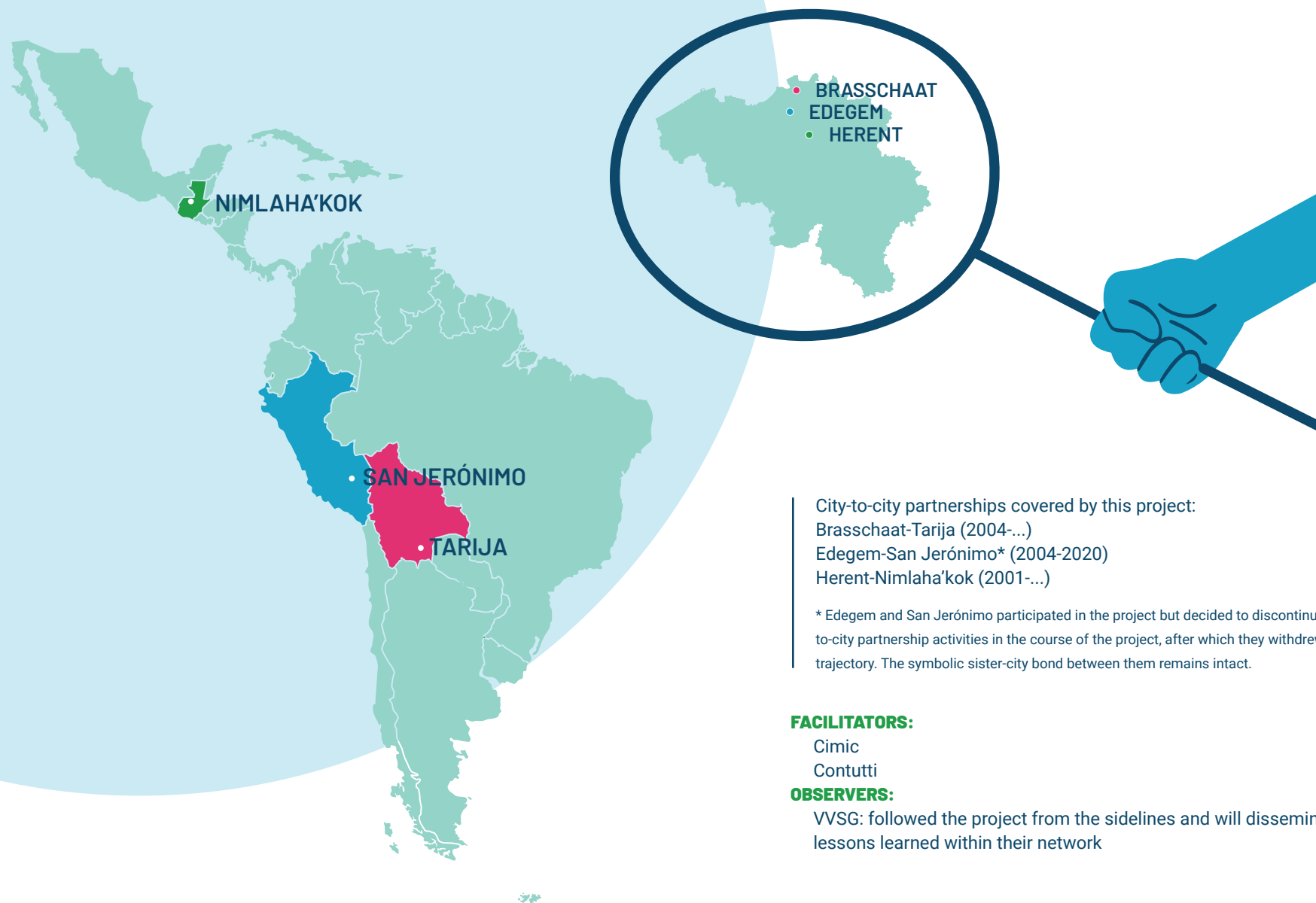
Under the guidance of Cimic and Contutti, they organised international dialogues, training sessions and practical exercises. Each step in this process was accompanied by collective learning points designed to exchange experiences, identify obstacles and determine the next steps.

The introduction of a new means of collaboration to a city-to-city partnership that has long operated under a donor-recipient relationship does not take place overnight. Moreover, the coronavirus pandemic forced them to rethink the entire trajectory from the very beginning. The journey they undertook together was filled with obstacles and challenges, but equally with lessons learned.

Through this publication they aim to share those lessons with other local governments. And they hope to contribute to the evolution towards renewed international municipal cooperation.



## CITY-TO-CITY PARTNERSHIPS



City-to-city partnerships covered by this project:

Brasschaat-Tarija (2004-...)

Edegem-San Jerónimo\* (2004-2020)

Herent-Nimlaha'kok (2001-...)

\* Edegem and San Jerónimo participated in the project but decided to discontinue their city-to-city partnership activities in the course of the project, after which they withdrew from the trajectory. The symbolic sister-city bond between them remains intact.

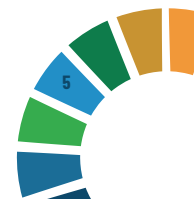
### FACILITATORS:

Cimic

Contutti

### OBSERVERS:

VVSG: followed the project from the sidelines and will disseminate the lessons learned within their network



# CONTEXT OVERVIEW

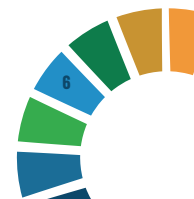
Local governments are the closest level of government to citizens and play an important role in society. They are well informed about local community issues, can identify local challenges and are able to formulate responses. Therefore, they serve as an ideal link between citizens and the world.

In the new millennium, the Flemish government recognised the significant role of local governments worldwide, including in international cooperation. This led to the formalisation of city-to-city partnerships. From the beginning, the concept of city-to-city partnerships was further developed by the municipalities involved. That process was coordinated by the VVSG. Since 2006, the VVSG has facilitated the participation of various city-to-city partnerships in the federal multiannual programme for municipal international cooperation. This programme provides financial support and substantive assistance to enable structural change in the Global South. The focus of the programme lies with the Southern partners.

Meanwhile, the context within which city-to-city partnerships operate continues to evolve. In a globalised world, the challenges for local governments are becoming increasingly complex. The Millennium Development Goals have been replaced by the SGDs, signifying a shift towards a shared world rather than a North-South dichotomy.

## THE THREE CITY-TO-CITY PARTNERSHIPS INVOLVED IN THIS APPLICATION ARE:

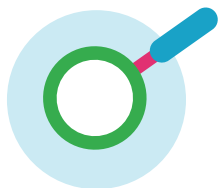
BRASSCHAAT	○ — ●	TARIJA IN BOLIVIA
EDEGEM	○ — ●	SAN JERÓNIMO IN PERU
HERENT	○ — ●	NIMLAHA'KOK IN GUATEMALA



The VVSG responded to this in two ways. On the one hand, a new vision for municipal international cooperation was developed (see: From [North-South to Global, towards a local global policy](#)). On the other hand, a [pilot project was initiated to integrate the SDGs into municipal policy planning](#). Within this innovation project, we, the participating city-to-city partnerships, aim to incorporate the concept of city-to-city partnership. This means collaborating on the realisation of the SDGs in both partner municipalities and doing so as part of a global network.

For the city-to-city partnerships that started this innovation project in 2019, the federal programme ended in June 2020. The downscaling in these countries was carried out at the request of the federal government, which aimed to concentrate resources more strongly in a smaller number of countries.

## INNOVATION PROJECT GOALS:



**Identifying common priority SDGs** on which local governments want to have a clear and quantifiable positive impact



**Initiating a (digital) dialogue** on citizen participation as a tool to achieve the SDGs



At the end of the process, each municipality/ city has **implemented one specific initiative in practice** that aligns with the common SDGs



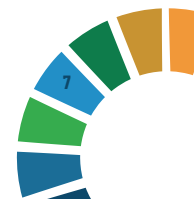
**Collaborating** with various stakeholders in an equitable manner



Discovering how to **support citizen initiatives at the local level** through knowledge exchange, as well as identifying the challenges and opportunities associated with them



**Sharing** lessons learned, challenges and successes



# PHASES

## INITIATION

PERIOD: JANUARY - JUNE 2019

1

A core group of partners from Flanders established the project workflow. The short period to submit a project proposal resulted in insufficient coordination with all partners. The Southern partners in particular were not adequately heard. Some municipalities organised work visits to involve them afterwards. The initiation phase was conducted with a three-day kick-off, where each city partnership chose a central SDG and initial insights were shared on the participatory approach to projects. The next steps in the project were discussed.

## CONFRONTATION WITH REALITY

PERIOD: JULY 2019 - MARCH 2020

2

The mandates of the officials involved were not sufficiently defined. This was accompanied by uncertainty over political support for the renewal of the city-to-city partnership work. There were exchanges of personnel, one city-to-city partnership doubted the continuation of its city-to-city partnership work, and job descriptions were revised.

There was also a clear contradiction between the ambitious project proposal and what was considered feasible within the municipal context and the role of the city-to-city partnership coordinator. We used this period to identify these challenges.

### **This led to the central premise of our trajectory:**

How, with this specific form of international cooperation, do we align with existing priorities and opportunities in our own municipality so that we can even begin to work on participation, equitable partnership and the SDGs? Involving other colleagues was a must, but certainly not easy. After all, the city-to-city partnership had long focused on the implementation of specific, technical projects in the partner country.

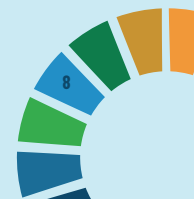
## CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

PERIOD: APRIL 2020 - APRIL 2021

3

The project proposal focused on physical exchanges, but due to the coronavirus pandemic, there was uncertainty about the planning. On consideration of new approaches, we hit upon the following results:

- We would continue the project in a slimmed-down version. The focus would shift to three digital dialogues, each with their own specific objectives. In the meantime, the municipalities would proceed with their self-selected projects.
- We obtained approval from the Flemish government to extend the project for one year.
- We were able to increase the involvement of the partners in the South as we had been given more digital opportunities. As a complete core group, we were able to make the necessary preparations, include simultaneous interpretation, etc.





## ROLL-OUT

4

PERIOD: MAY 2021 - AUGUST 2022

**8 June 2021:** In the first digital dialogue we sought to establish a shared language and understanding of what participation means to us as partners.

**26 October 2021:** In the second digital dialogue we move towards practical implementation. How do we approach the chosen project in a participatory manner? We clarified the problem statement, explored the context and visualised the desired change.

**May to August 2022:** We organised Spanish and Dutch training sessions to further develop knowledge and skills in the design and facilitation of participatory processes.

## COMPLETION

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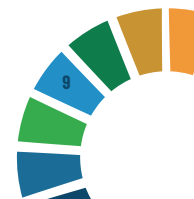
PERIOD: SEPTEMBER 2022 - DECEMBER 2022

Each city-to-city partner developed their own project based on the various training sessions and insights. In November 2022 there was a final two-day gathering in Flanders to discuss the journey and look ahead to the further development of this city-to-city partnership, attended by the VVSG and representatives from politics, civil service and civil society.

## CONCLUSION

From this complex journey, we have learned several lessons. We had to rethink, rewrite and adapt, but remained determined. The diversity within the group promoted the discovery of solutions and new collaborations.

The seven lessons that we would like to share with other local governments are set out in the following section. Hopefully, they will inspire others who wish to work towards equitable partnerships, the SDGs and participation within their own international cooperation networks.





## BE WILLING TO ADJUST

When something isn't working, you must be willing to make adjustments. External expertise can help you see alternative approaches. These include thinking outside the box and introducing new working methods.

On the journey, we ran into various obstacles. The original project proposal was based on physical exchange points, which became impossible due to the pandemic. Additionally, we quickly realised that the project was too one-sided.

To move forward, all city-to-city partners had to transition from being spectators to being co-owners. Fortunately, the shift to a digital exchange not only presented new challenges but provided new opportunities.

### CHALLENGES

- ✎ Creating sufficient engagement despite the distance and differences in language, context and vision
- ✎ Transforming a broad project proposal into specific, jointly supported goals
- ✎ Accounting for time differences, strict timing, reduced spontaneity, shorter digital attention span, technical limitations and differences in technical skills
- ✎ Creating an environment where everyone's opinions can be heard
- ✎ Cultural differences may result in some participants, such as women, feeling less comfortable appearing on camera (realisation that the Zoom space is experienced differently to a physical space)
- ✎ Without clear structure and organisation, the large quantity of potential input can lead to chaos and a lack of results

### OPPORTUNITIES

- ♥ The digital revolution enables the preparation of sessions with the entire core group. This allows for better alignment of expectations, approach and objectives
- ♥ The opportunity to engage in online training sessions using the same knowledge and work methods
- ♥ The elimination of waiting times enables continuous exchange, even in the long term

## PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE 1

During the two-day kick off in 2019, we immediately engaged in exercises related to designing participatory projects. However, we quickly realised that we were getting stuck on the concept of participation. We were not on the same page and failed to make progress as a result. In light of this, the core group decided to adjust the trajectory and take sufficient time to establish a shared understanding. We ultimately achieved this during the first digital dialogue.

Within the core group, we developed a workflow in advance. We mapped out technical obstacles, different approaches and potential risks. The structure of the dialogue and the interim objectives were carefully determined to achieve the desired end-result. During this initial dialogue, we chose to mix the groups. We did this to promote exchange and ultimately establish a shared framework.

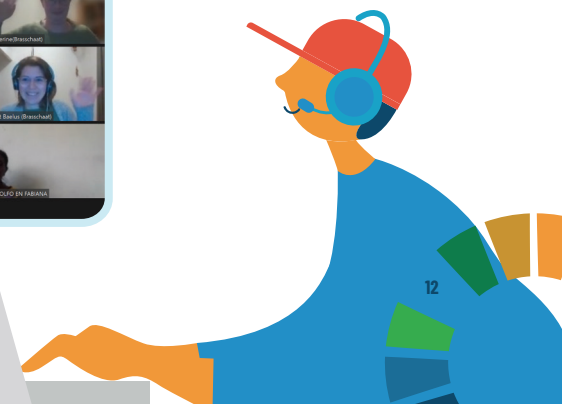
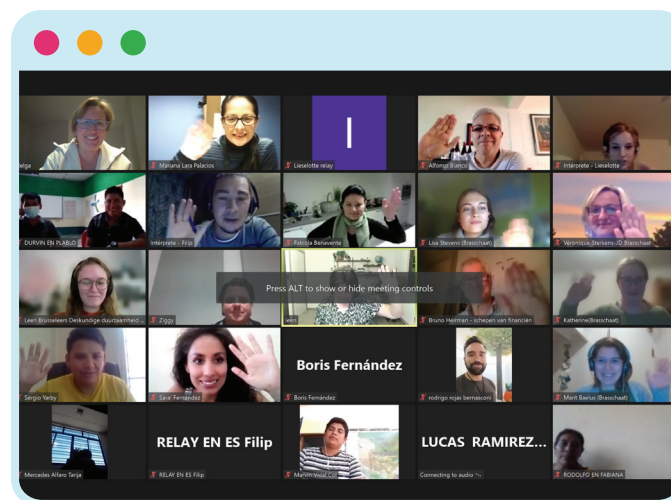
In the second dialogue on the participatory approach to projects, we consciously chose a different methodology. We no longer worked with mixed groups as we did during the first dialogue. This was done to give all city-to-city partners the opportunity to apply the exercises to a recognisable and self-selected problem in their own context, thereby increasing ownership and active participation.

The large quantity of input was collected and structured through breakout rooms, plenary sessions and Miro boards (see practical lessons learned 4). The roles of discussion leaders, technical support and simultaneous interpreters should not be underestimated in this process.

## PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE 2

To enhance the involvement of all city-to-city partners in the project's progress and objectives, we eventually enlisted an additional bilingual facilitator with a Latin American background. This facilitated smoother discussions, where all voices were heard.

Unfortunately, she had to leave the project prematurely. Her departure posed a challenge to our courses on designing participatory processes and facilitation. We overcame this obstacle by creating Dutch-language videos with Spanish voice-overs. These videos can be valuable in the long term and can be reused, giving added value for municipalities and future city-to-city projects.



## AN INTERNATIONAL FRAMEWORK STIMULATES INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION

The presence of a shared international framework (the SDGs) encourages international collaborations to address global challenges.

The seventeen SDGs or Sustainable Development Goals serve as an important framework to anchor policies and projects. This applies at both local and international levels. As shared goals that connect us globally, they establish the basis for a common language.



### PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE 1



On a working visit to Guatemala, we, as city-to-city partners, organised an SDG route through the different communities. Our goal was threefold: to present our project, exchange ideas about the 2030 Agenda and discover which SDG was seen as a priority in local communities.

By organising this SDG route together, we were able to convey a message of respect and equality between both city-to-city partners. This encouraged people to attend our meetings. At the same time, we fostered connections by walking together, speaking a common language and presenting ourselves as a single group, with the aim of working together towards a common SDG (SDG 13).

### CHALLENGES

- ✦ Using the broader framework of the SDGs correctly: not reducing it to a method of checking off objectives, but ensuring that it elevates projects to a higher level of sustainability in the broadest sense
- ✦ The necessity of collectively giving specific and shared meaning to certain 'broad' SDGs in a common language
- ✦ The quest for the right form for this learning process: do we start from a collectively chosen SDG? Or do we choose a common theme that can be linked to different SDGs?

### PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE 2

In September 2022, Tarija, the city-to-city partner for Brasschaat, participated for the first time in the VVSG 'Sustainable Municipality Week' campaign. This campaign focuses on highlighting local 'sustainability heroes' to shed light on the SDGs at the local level.

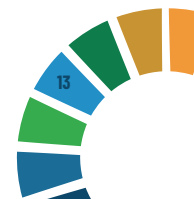
Tarija and Brasschaat saw the joint participation as an opportunity. The city-to-city relationship makes the global nature of the SDGs very tangible to us. Through the city-to-city partnership we experience daily the many global challenges we work on at the local level. In Brasschaat, we chose to organise a joint hero exhibition and a shared hero poem, written by a Tarija poetess and illustrated by a Brasschaat illustrator.

## LOCAL HEROES FOR GLOBAL GOALS

*Sustainable Municipality Week*



In Tarija, 12 heroes were also identified and celebrated at a local event with politicians, the public and the press. The campaign had a significant impact in Tarija, and the collaboration proved to be enriching for both municipalities.





## FOR INSPIRATION

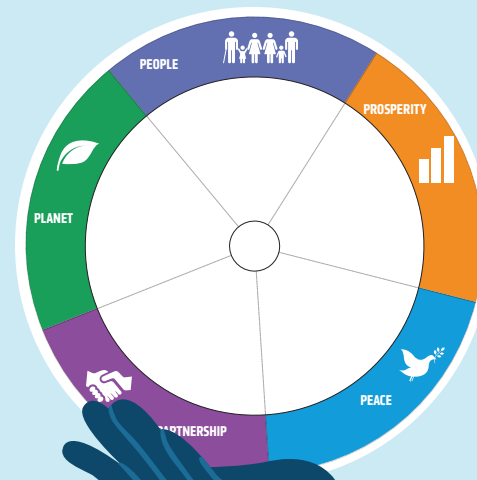
The SDG Circle Exercise by the VVSG is a useful tool for local governments or organisations to come together and reflect on the impact they can have on the SDGs. The exercise demonstrates that participants are often already unconsciously engaged with the SDGs in their daily lives or work. At the same time, the exercise encourages the SDG reflex, where every project considers how to achieve the greatest possible positive impact on differing SDGs. The game board and manual are freely available on the VVSG website.

GAME BOARD SHOWING ONE  
CORE THEME



GAME BOARD ON 3 LEVELS:  
INTERNAL, LOCAL AND GLOBAL

GAME BOARD BASED ON THE 5 PILLARS  
OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT



[DOWNLOAD THE EXERCISE](#)

## SPEAK THE SAME LANGUAGE

**To collaborate constructively, a common understanding is necessary. Do we speak the same language? Do we have the same understanding?**

Participation is a concept that can be interpreted in different ways. It is important to define what it does and does not entail. This is certainly not an easy task, especially in an international context. Even at an individual and municipal level, it poses challenges.

Without a common understanding, it is difficult to progress towards meaningful exchange and practical implementation of joint projects. In this process, involving external experts can be helpful.

### PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE

An exploration of the concept of participation in different regions proved to be highly valuable for all participants. Its interpretation varied greatly among the partners.

This city-to-city partnership project focused on an advanced form of participation, namely co-production. The knowledge and tools provided for this purpose were new to all involved. By actively engaging with them, it became increasingly clear how we can further utilise this approach in the future, both within our local government and the city-to-city partnership initiatives.

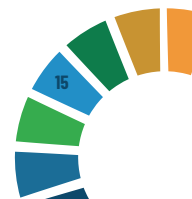
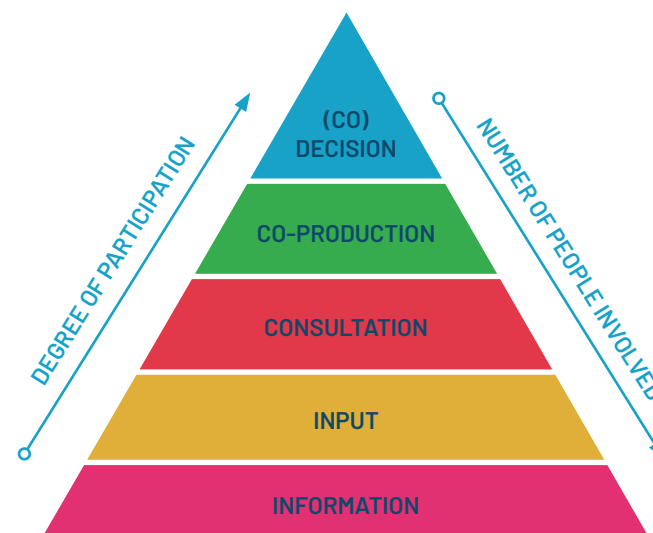
Furthermore, we recognise that as Flemish partners, we still have much to learn from our city-to-city partners and their approach to local-level participation. An interesting example is the structured manner in which neighbourhoods in Tarija are involved in determining the multiannual plan.

### FOR INSPIRATION

To apply this new form of collaboration in practice we worked in two stages.

### CHALLENGES

- ✦ Creating mutual understanding of the concept of participation. Does everyone share the same vision of participation? What does it look like? What is the purpose of our participation? Participation goes beyond asking for feedback. It involves more than informing citizens or collecting their ideas. A clear framework is essential to the project's success.
- ✦ The shift from theory to practice: how do we implement participation in our project? What is needed?
- ✦ In the past, city-to-city partnership was based on specific, visible and often technical projects. Participatory work requires new skills, adjusting expectations, a new mindset for both partners and a different type of collaboration
- ✦ Allocating sufficient resources for this project. Creating the necessary engagement requires time and active participation, both physically and online



1

## STEP 1

### ESTABLISHING A SHARED EVALUATION FRAMEWORK WITH 8 KEY CONCEPTS

Everyone has positive or perhaps negative experiences of participation. These personal experiences formed the basis for the dialogue that would lead to a shared understanding of participation.

We asked each participant to share their own experience of participation. The other participants were then tasked with extracting three key elements from that story. From the collection of key elements, the participants selected eight basic concepts. These concepts formed the building blocks of a shared framework against which we would evaluate our understanding of participation.

The resulting radar represents how we perceive participation within this collaboration. In a new partnership, it is necessary to repeat this exercise to arrive a common understanding.



**DOWNLOAD RADAR WITH 8 BUILDING BLOCKS OF PARTICIPATION**  
"ONLY AVAILABLE IN DUTCH"

2

## STEP 2

### 6 BASIC TOOLS FOR DESIGNING A PARTICIPATORY PROCESS

The participating municipalities were provided with six basic tools to shape their participatory process:

- Focus Sharpener: to clarify the topic
- Environmental Scan: to thoroughly explore the context of the issue
- Ambition Setter: to formulate goals and outcomes
- Stakeholder Analysis: to identify key players and roles
- Process Designer: to outline the flow of the process
- Intervention Designer: to design specific sessions or meetings

Through practical exercises, all city-to-city partners learned to use these tools and apply them to their own practices.

#### 6 BASIC TOOLS



AMBITION SETTER



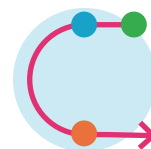
STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS



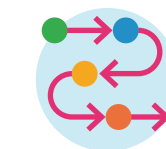
ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN



FOCUS SHARPENER



INTERVENTION DESIGNER



PROCESS DESIGNER



## INVOLVEMENT IS KEY

**A core group with a clear mandate from the municipality and an understanding of the project's value is indispensable.**

The effectiveness of this project is determined by the involvement of the participants. How connected does each individual feel to the project? What resources and competences do they have of their disposal for this project?

### PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE 1

To create support, it is important for all parties involved to feel ownership of the project. To begin with, Herent proposed a project involving micro-credits for sustainable local businesses for Ninlaha'kok. However, after discussions, Ninlaha'kok decided to choose a different project that had long been on their agenda: reforestation to protect natural resources while also creating a sustainable source of income for the local population. This project was embraced by Ninlaha'kok, resulting in a stronger collaboration.

### PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE 2

At the two-day workshop at the end of the project, we engaged all partners in an exercise to discover the shared interests of the renewed city-to-city partnership. We identified what we want to achieve, what we expect from each other and what we can contribute individually. Despite significant differences among the partners, it was important to seek common ground and find areas where we could meet each other halfway.

A successful collaboration can only continue if all involved stand to benefit. Therefore, it is crucial to have open discussions about this. The exercise revealed a greater need for thematic exchanges with various partners in and outside Flanders, such as those focused on youth participation and engagement. On the other hand, it became clear that one partner saw the collaboration as a gateway to accessing European subsidies and connections. This expectation had existed for some time, but had never been openly expressed.

Lastly, the two-day workshop provided an opportunity for the VVSG to clarify its role as a supportive partner and address unrealistic expectations.

### CHALLENGES

- ✗ Reaching consensus and ownership by jointly developing projects as equal partners based on common goals
- ✗ Clarifying the contribution, role and needs of each partner in the collaboration
- ✗ Identifying the opportunities and risks of this project for both partners
- ✗ Expressing mutual expectations and facilitating open and honest conversations
- ✗ Regularly assessing the above. Are the fundamental factors still the same, or has something changed?



## YOU CAN'T DO EVERYTHING ONLINE

Finding the right balance between online and physical meetings is important to capture the experience, culture and context of the partner. Physical meetings provide a deeper level of exchange and facilitate mutual learning. They also strengthen mutual trust, understanding and transparency between partners.

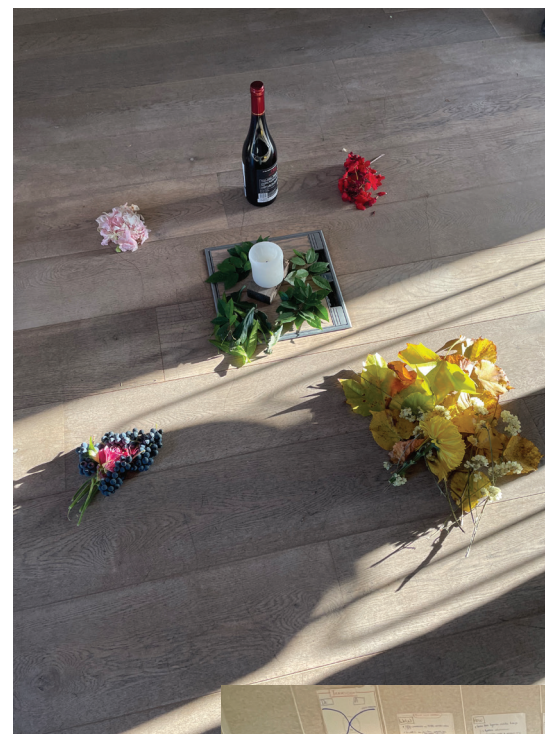
To formulate realistic joint objectives, it is crucial for partners to have a good understanding of each other's context. Online discussions offer many advantages, but it may be more challenging to grasp the other party's context. Physical gatherings allow partners to better understand each other and enable any sensitivities, unspoken issues and ambitions to surface more readily and be addressed.

### CHALLENGES

- ✎ Physical work visits are expensive and increase our ecological footprint
- ✎ Limiting the number of participants during physical visits
- ✎ Adhering to strict coronavirus guidance
- ✎ Understanding each other's context requires language skills, insight into culture, political structures, history, etc.
- ✎ The need for willingness to listen with an open mind and genuine interest in the other party

### PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE

Understanding and respecting each other's culture is of huge importance. On our two-day closing conference in Flanders, we therefore paid special attention to some of the participating municipalities' welcome and meeting rituals. These moments are essential for building mutual trust and ensuring that all partners are involved in the collaboration in an equitable manner. This promotes a transparent, smooth and inspiring exchange of ideas.



## INCREASE YOUR SUPPORT BASE

The project needs to be well integrated in the municipal functioning. If not, it runs the risk of being affected by even the smallest external change.

A broad local support base, involving various stakeholders, is less susceptible to changing environmental factors such as shifting political situations, mandates and personnel. To increase support and ensure continuity, it is crucial to raise awareness of the project in the municipalities and have a policy vision in relation to the SDGs. This will benefit not only the overall city-to-city cooperation but the specific projects themselves.

### PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE

When writing a project proposal, you consider the political context in which it is formulated. However, the implementation and development of a multiannual project often extend across different political terms, which may not align within an international context. Each transition carries the risk of the project being blocked or hindered. We have observed that a clear mandate and a strong core group are essential, especially during periods of change such as this.

If these elements are lacking, the project and its progress are susceptible to every shift and alteration. Through the course of the project, we faced the following challenges:

- 1 the departure of one of the city-to-city partnership coordinators
- 2 the termination of the Edegem-San Jerónimo partnership
- 3 the coronavirus pandemic
- 4 the early departure of the additional bilingual facilitator
- 5 search for an additional facilitator for the two-day conference due to the illness of one of the partners
- 6 the need for constant readjustment

Such situations are not uncommon in international municipal partnerships. The more partners involved, the more frequently these types of situations may arise. It is important to take into account the risks associated with these situations and regularly evaluate the collaboration with all parties concerned.

### CHALLENGES

- ✖ Changing political situations create different mandates
- ✖ Turnover in personnel leads to a loss of commitment and knowledge about the project
- ✖ Aligning the chosen projects and objectives with local, regional national priorities
- ✖ Building support for renewed collaboration that does not solely focus on financial resources and technical projects

Governments change. When you no longer share the same wavelength, it is important to communicate that quickly. Otherwise, you lose valuable energy. At such a point, it is good to have a clause to fall back on. A good example is that of the municipality of Edegem. From the beginning, the municipality was bold enough to develop an exit strategy for the municipal partnership, as provided for in the federal programme.



# FOR THE FUTURE

We have made mistakes and learned from the things that went wrong. We have had to overcome setbacks but have shown resilience in finding solutions. Ultimately, this journey brought us back to the starting point, where we were able to develop a new way of collaborating.

While we haven't yet achieved an equitable partnership, we have gained a better understanding of what is needed to achieve it. Though participatory projects have not yet materialised, the first steps have been taken and we will continue to expand on them.

Together with all the partners, we have gained more insights into the concept of participation, the design of the participatory processes and how they can help us both locally and in the context of city-to-city partnerships. In the future, we will focus on a thematic collaboration involving multiple actors, no longer thinking in terms of, 'What can we contribute from Flanders?', but asking 'What knowledge and expertise can we share with each other?'

At the moment, themes such as water, agroforestry and children's rights are high on the agenda. The SDGs provide a common framework to which we would like to align this method of collaboration. The participatory tools and insights gained from this journey will help us shape future projects in a more efficient and effective way.

However, this way of working is only possible if there is a dedicated operational budget available within the city-to-city programme. Without an operating budget, the collaboration will be entirely dependent on the subsidies available at any given time.

Our focus on open and transparent communication between city-to-city partners has led to the development of a new collaboration agreement between Brasschaat and Tarija. This agreement sets out the expectations of both partners, as well as the common priorities to be addressed in the collaboration. The lessons learned above serve as a foundation for further shaping the agreement. As a city-to-city partnership, we hope that this way of working will lead to more equality, mutual learning, stronger collaboration and sustainable development. For Herent and Nimlaha'kok, the journey undertaken has strengthened the commitment of both partners and provided the necessary tools to foster ownership in Nimlaha'kok and improve communication.



The COVID-19 pandemic has shown us that we cannot do without each other and that collaboration is necessary. Peer-to-peer learning and exchange have provided solutions, but, in practice, it has not always been simple. In times of crisis, we tend to withdraw into ourselves.

However, city-to-city partnerships can help discover and strengthen connections. There are numerous good examples of citizen initiatives where participation plays a central role. Based on such practical examples, we can further define our own local government role. Knowledge exchange on participation, such as through an international conference, can be of great interest to many municipalities and cities that want to gain more experience in this area.

The experiences and stories of equitable city-to-city partners serve as an inspiration for municipalities and their residents. Moreover, they increase support for more international cooperation and solidarity. For local governments worldwide, this is an enriching challenge to further invest in this area in the coming years.



#### OBJETIVOS DE ENFOQUE

Colaborar con diferentes grupos de interés (stakeholders) de manera igualitaria

(Aprender a) apoyar y estimular iniciativas ciudadanas a nivel local

Aprender unos de otros a través del intercambio de buenas prácticas

Aprender a establecer colaboraciones con varios actores/socios y lograr un beneficio mutuo para ambos municipios/comunidades (sin presupuesto o presupuesto adicional)

#### FOCUS ON GOALS:

Collaborating with various stakeholders in an equitable manner

(Learning to) stimulate and support citizen initiatives at the local level

Learning from each other through exchange of experiences

Learning to establish collaborations with diverse actors/partners and achieve a win/win outcome for municipalities/communities (without exchanging budgets)



# COLOPHON

## DESIGN/EDITING

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