

# CITIZENS LAB



**NETWORK MEETING**

**BRUSSELS 8-11 MARCH 2017**

# WHAT IS CITIZENSLAB?



**PURPOSE**

“to create a more participatory, diverse and accountable society in Europe”

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? ? ?  
? ? ?

“How can our diverse practises create a more meaningful quality of life in Europe?”

**COLLECTIVE INQUIRY**

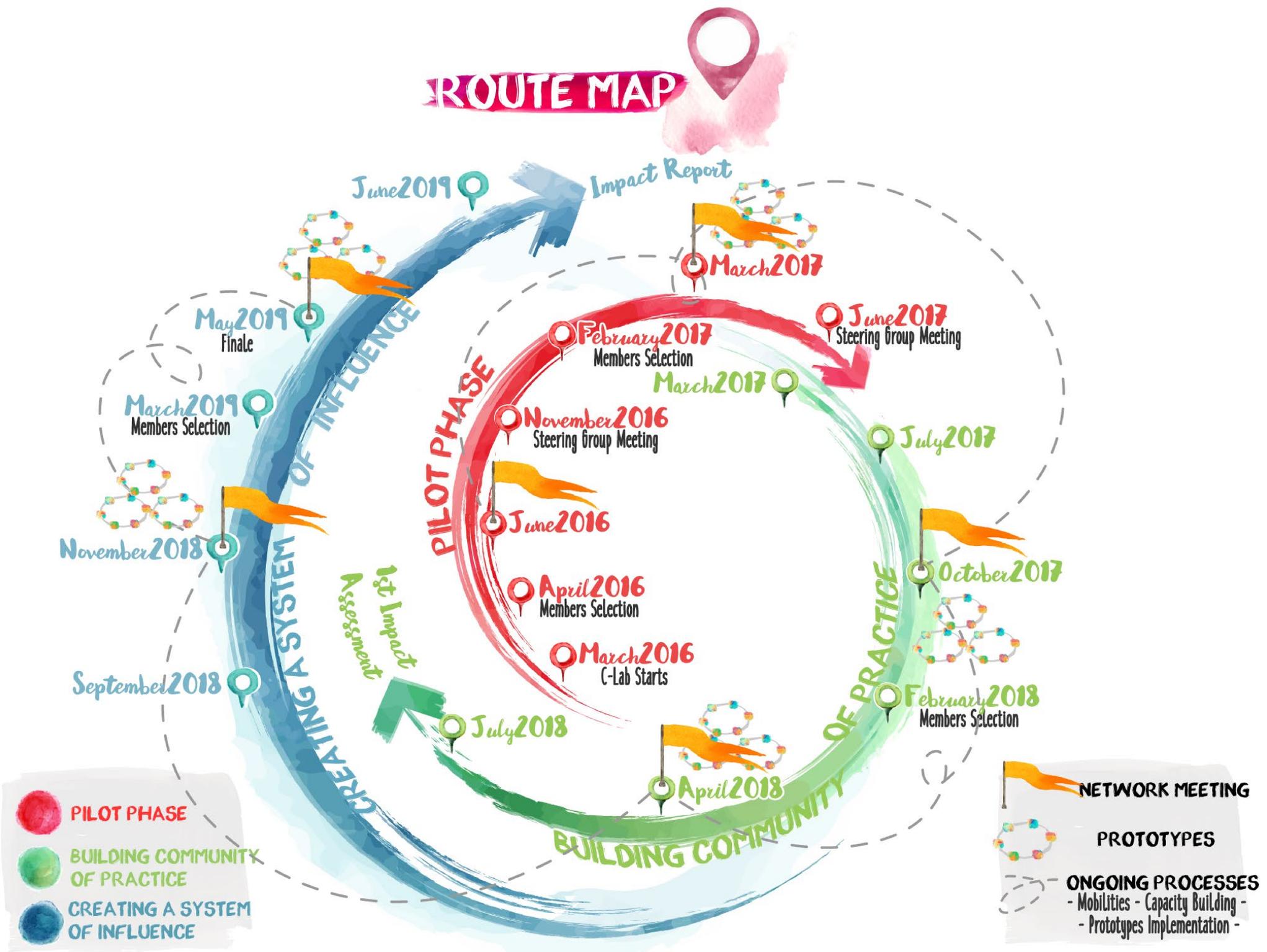
Around 50 active citizens from 23 EU countries, artists, academics, urban planners, local authority administrators, activists, and more gathered in Brussels from 8-11 March 2017 for the second time within the frame of CitizensLab, a Stiftung Mercator and Robert Bosch Stiftung funded programme. The aim is to create a new system of influence by connecting a wide variety of civil society actors and specifically their local innovative activities so as to foster a more participatory, diverse, accountable society in Europe. The CitizensLab is a change process using a Lab approach that works towards a collectively shared longer term goal, is hosted through a core team of its own members, experiments a new systems of influence through translocal initiatives and builds a network or community of practice of members and partners. To support this new system of influence to arise, five elements are used, (1) Network Meetings when members come together in person to exchange, discuss and co-create, (2) Mobility Exchanges where members can visit each other and create translocal initiatives, (3) Prototypes where members can experiment ideas and approaches for the new system to emerge, (4) Lumen an on line platform that is used for information exchange, dialogue and decision making, (on line connection also includes webinars and conference calls) and (5) a website that shares information wider about the CitizensLab.

Have a look to our CitizensLab prezi presentation [here!](#)

# HOW HAS THE CITIZENSLAB EVOLVED?

The CitizensLab was initiated in March 2016 and the first Network Meeting was held in June 2016. A Steering Group was chosen and met in November 2016 where five themes were identified for achieving the Lab's long term goal through translocal work, as well as different ways in which the Lab can operate were developed. The purpose of this second Network meeting was to introduce 20 new members into the CitizensLab, deepen the relationships between members, inquire into taking a Lab approach, begin to identify potential translocal initiatives and strengthen the organising conditions of the Network. The meeting took place in three different locations in Brussels – a theatre, an EU Think Tank Social Enterprise and Start-Up co-working space.

The way forward is to move from an initial Pilot Phase to a Building a Community of Practice Phase in order to move towards Creating a System of Influence.



# WHO ARE THE CITIZENSLAB MEMBERS?

You can find here a link to the [Booklet](#) presenting all CitizensLab members



# HOW DO WE EXPERIENCE EUROPE?

**Netherlands:** It's like there are 2 worlds. One "Television" world showing the extreme and another one, the "Street" world, which is beautiful.

**Italy:** I feel Europe is distant.

**Italy:** There's a general sense/ feeling of division.

**Slovenia:** Great skepticism, great populism, no-one reports or talks about the good things; panic happens.

**Turkey:** Feeling of being left alone & confused, desperate, resistant.

**UK:** Brexit, being put in a place and by a group of people/politicians that we do not want to be.

**Romania:** Trying to keep our identity as Europeans. Disappointment regarding Europe. Great sense of fighting for European values.

**France:** Division between the people who produce more and want to produce more and the ones who want to live simpler.

**Greece:** Europe seems confused.

**Ukraine:** General controversy. Corruption but also a strong movement fighting for Civil Rights and freedom around Europe.

**Latvia:** We live in a bubble, European society feels that nothing can affect it.

**Germany:** We live in a bubble, we as Germans have an immoral attitude (closing borders towards refugees and the other EU nations that are also being affected from the refugee crisis e.g. Greece). I don't feel comfortable, I feel disappointed, Civil society has to self-organise and try to help refugees.



# WHAT SECTORS DO WE WORK IN?

**Civic Engagement:** Developing Transparency for citizens to work better with politicians & Social Cohesion – Networking (people-authorities)

**Urban Design:** Youth, Public Resources, Partnerships

**Arts-Culture:** City engagement/ Research, Cultural Capital & Lab in Participation

**Public Finance:** Index of physical transparency & Methods for public participation

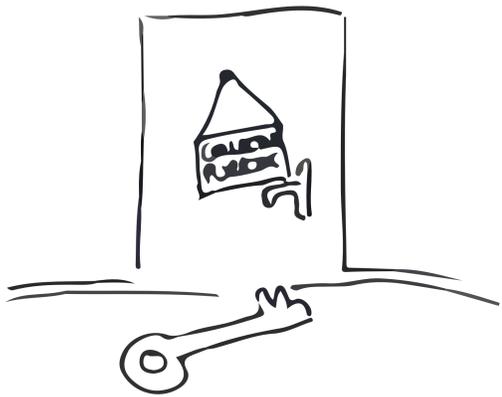
**Public Sector:** Development issues in municipality, Bring creative local initiatives together, Create infrastructure, Try to create trans-nationally, Organise dialogues (bridging)

**Social Entrepreneurs:** Make online – offline dialogue (understand, embrace dialogue), Internet, Online freedom

**Other initiatives:** Authentic meeting between rural-urban, Psychosocial support, Working with young people, Unite different stakeholders (business, government, local government etc.), Transnational networking

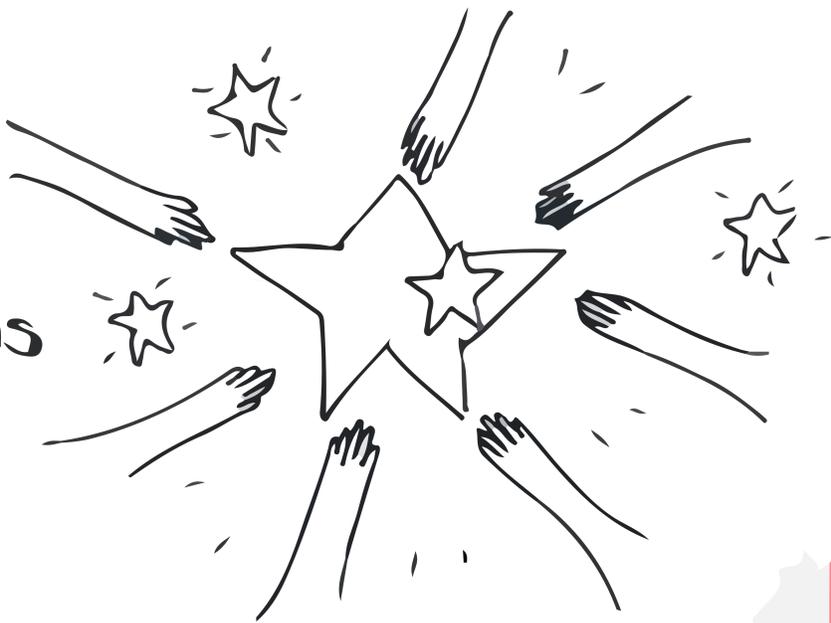


# WHAT MOTIVATES US TO BECOME THE CITIZENSLAB?



“ We are coming through the door with our **INDIVIDUAL PERSPECTIVE** in order to discover our **COLLECTIVE PURPOSE** ”

“ We will see how we can **CRAFT** our individual dreams **TOGETHER** ”



# WHAT MOTIVATES US TO BECOME THE CITIZENSLAB?

**To Exchange Knowledge and Experience** – “Thinking and learning about how to upscale/multiply/connect local initiatives. Looking for ways to counter the anti-Europe narrative” “I’m moved by the diversity and knowledge of all of us and how powerful that is in creating/taking concrete actions and build something that tackles some of the challenges we face in the EU/world today.”

**Act Locally & Globally** – “Act locally, think globally.” Citizens lose energy if they act isolated in microstructures. Through networking we could acquire more weight, more capacity to influence and to deliver quality; more pleasure within endeavor. We, citizens, would like to share transparency tools and our ideas on a new democracy model.” “CitizensLab for me is expressing what I have to do in the local level at a European level. I see this level as a possibility of a fresh start that enables innovative local practices. It is an empty box that needs to be filled.”

**Build Strong Communities** – “Share the idea of bottom up storytelling with other actors. Implement literature as a participation tool. Transfer the open literature platform to other countries. Networking with similar cultural projects.” “I believe in the synergetic properties of networks to rapidly expand good and interesting practices. On the other side, I believe in the mixed legitimacy bottom-up processes of change and people-to-people learning environments.”

**Get Inspired** – “To find inspiration and partners for actions of real societal change for sustainability.” “Gain additional motivation, inspiration and ideas. Potential collaboration with members. Diversity. Influence on European level.”

**Make Change** – “Move from conflicts to changes. Reformulate issues throughout collective and creative experiments. Activate and exchange with diverse people.” “Make my own projects stronger by exchanging ideas. To get to know people, to meet, to connect... When nation-state conditions are getting worse, a European level of action represents a possible workaround, a possible way of changing things at a local level.”

**Meet Like-Minded People** – “What moves me to be a member of CitizensLab is to find like-minded people; people with passion for social issues and who are willing to increase their influence together. I believe that all starts with DIALOGUE. True dialogue is more than a meaningful conversation; true dialogue creates true human connection and that is when the magic happens. I invite all members of CitizensLab to join Dialogue Digital’s core community; to become online dialogue pioneers.”

**Others** – “Connect “education” to civil society and make participation part of education. Get out of the box.” To promote a more inclusive society for immigrants and refugees.”

# THE IMPACT WE ARE ACHIEVING & THE CHALLENGES WE ARE WORKING ON



## Our Impact Map

- Working for common longer term goals & visions whilst also making micro changes
- Developing Skills
- Cultivating Human Rights & empowerment
- Sharing the information about our local practices/networks
- Initiating and Mediating Meaningful Dialogue
- Innovating outside of the System
- Increasing participation & Democracy > Open Governments
- Increasing Transparency & Accountability
- Creating Physical Space for Dialogue
- Fostering a Sense of belonging created by local actions

## The Challenges we are Working On

- Improving Housing for All
- We are stuck in doing and forget about being
- The “Migration crisis”
- Aligning EU Values with National Values
- Making actions last (Sustainability-Continuity-Scale-up)
- Mobilising and capacitating communities to act democratically and become self-sufficient
- Working beyond too many short-term visions
- Being pro-actioners & doers of the change we want
- Acting together, Being patient and working against time pressure as change is not happening fast enough
- Keeping integrity
- Supporting local level implementation whilst also sharing the difference we are creating
- Mitigating against “systemic” violence on physical as well as psychological levels
- Battling against a lack of communication & promoting true dialogue
- Working against Inequality & Social Exclusion
- Dealing with the complexity of the social systems
- Imagining positive narratives to avoid fear of change (fear of chaos/conflict)
- Going out of our own comfort zones in order to face fears!
- Fighting against lack of fiscal openness/processes
- Reversing lack of Hope & apathy of young people
- Reducing nationalism
- Mitigating against Public Resources support systems of trust (“lack of resources”)
- Filling the gap of a lack of critical thinking!
- Working with local authorities

## OUR VISIONS OF EUROPE IN 2030



Viewed through the lens of 5 themes, The CitizensLab longer term goal of a more democratic, transparent and accountable Europe is envisioned as:

### ART

In 2030, everyone is considered an artist, because art plays a central role in life in Europe. It is interconnected with the political sphere, decision making, education, culture, etc. In fact, Art is a transformational tool for society, especially used for the creation of acceptance for all and is open for everyone to use or express themselves. It has gone beyond just being an elite form, that is used for commercial gain and primarily for entertainment and instead it is seen as an essential part of everyday life. The importance of Art is recognised and this is reflected that resources are allocated to its use for all.



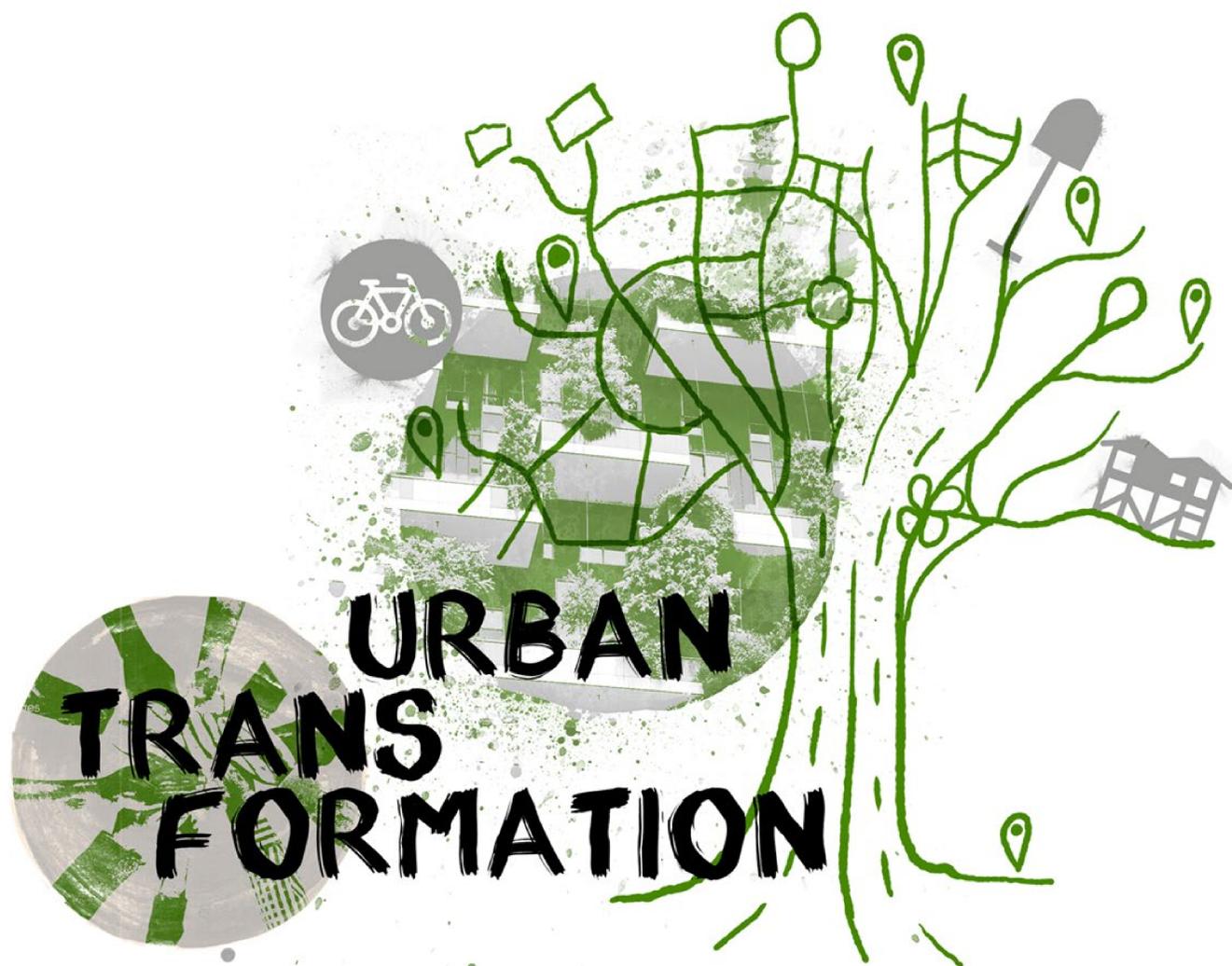
# OUR VISIONS OF EUROPE IN 2030



## EDUCATION

Schools have gates open at all times and for all people by 2030. Education is just as much about active citizenship and involvement in the community and civil activities. It is a place and way of creating synergies between people and with local authorities. Teachers have autonomy and schools are empowered to also be autonomous depending on the needs of the students and the community. A school of tomorrow is directly connected to its community, engages in the creation of its own solutions through partnering with students and engaging parents and other local people, develops the social skills as well as the basic academic skills, the teaching approach is primarily action research, i.e. experimenting to meet the needs of people and their lives in society, offers lifelong learning for all ages, uses its space and technology as an enabling resource, and are incubators of what the community needs now and in the future.

## OUR VISIONS OF EUROPE IN 2030



### URBAN TRANSFORMATION

By 2030 Urban Transformation will be focusing on ecological sustainability, housing and economic sustainability. The notion of urban territory will not only be anthropocentric but will also include wild areas, i.e. mountains, woodland, rivers, etc. In fact it will be considered as integrated inhabited space by many species and not just as urban or rural inhabited by humans primarily. Creating and holding urban balance will be key. This will involve creating alternative thinking and solutions such as cooperative economic models, using existing building stock innovatively, zero waste practices, new models of affordability of housing, new working patterns like working close to home, co-creational & integrative governance, public as the commons, connection of micro-level solutions to create wider impact.

# OUR VISIONS OF EUROPE IN 2030



## SOCIAL INCLUSION

Social Inclusion by 2030 is a practice and not something we are working towards. How did this happen? We used all the tools we had learned with which to bring different parts of the society together, e.g. dialogue, arts, food, exchanging traditions, storytelling, dance, etc., which included refugees and migrants. We combined using both in person as well as digital methods, e.g. mobile apps, digital platforms to tackle social exclusion challenges, etc. A key change is that minority groups have a voice and participate in decisions that affect them. Challenges such as social status, poverty, lack of communication, lack of self-esteem, literacy, fear, language, age have been tackled and dealt with. Marginalised groups have found their voice and have their identity and are self-sustainable.

# OUR VISIONS OF EUROPE IN 2030



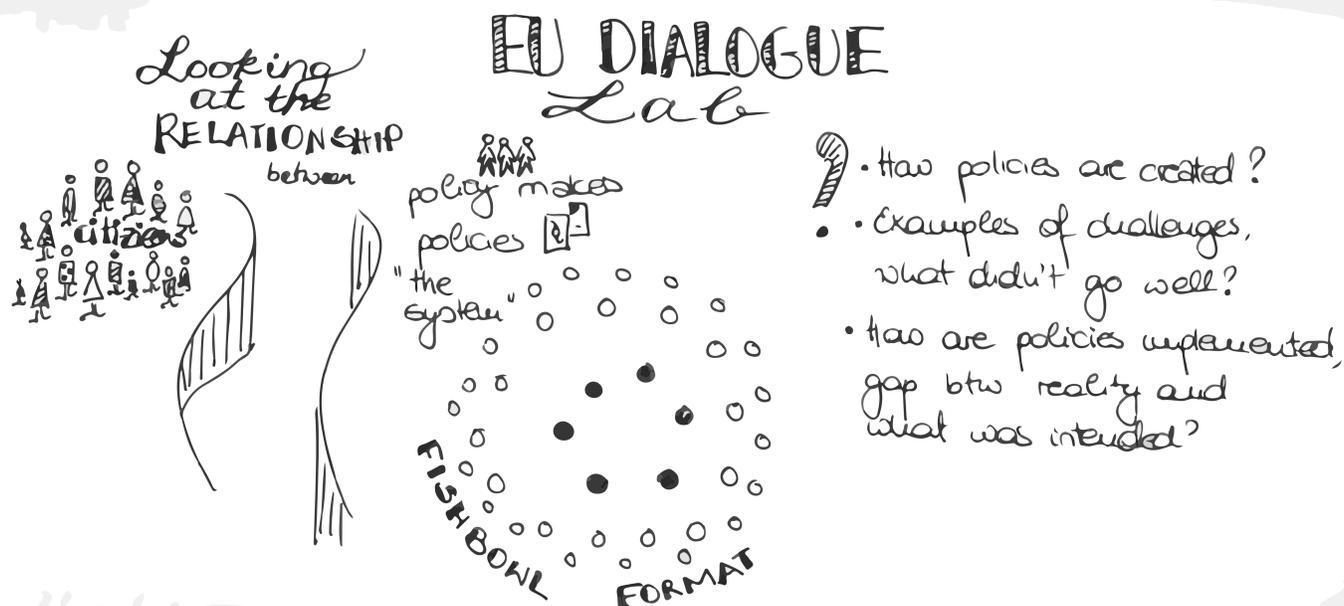
## DEMOCRACY

In 2030 we have accountable, transparent and open governance structures, which are inclusive and unify the local, national, European and global levels. We live in direct democracy societies, where this is lived through active citizenship, random representation, and shared responsibility. Democracy is not used as a word for everything (and especially misused) but has been reclaimed to mean active citizenship. Specifically democratic governance includes accountability to citizens in Europe, transparency (tools for transparency-rating-participatory budgeting, etc.), open government enabling direct democracy & balanced representation, direct democracy (Increased participative democracy & direct role of people, including in all stages of policy-making cycle), balanced representation, human (people-centered) and enabled by technology (direct decision-making), inclusive-unifying (citizens have means to participate, have education & skills, people understand & respect each other & our diversity).

# DIALOGUE LABS – EU, MEDIA, ADVOCACY

The CitizensLab engages with current institutions and processes through dialogue as part of seeking to be a new system of influence. Therefore, included in the second Network Meeting was a morning dedicated to speaking with Think Tank experts and an MEP as well as experts in advocacy and media, exploring the relationship between civil society in policy making, media relations and advocacy. The dialogues raised different issues and perspectives, which included:

**EU Lab: The role of civil society in the European policy system: how can civil society take part in EU policy-making?**



## Key speakers:

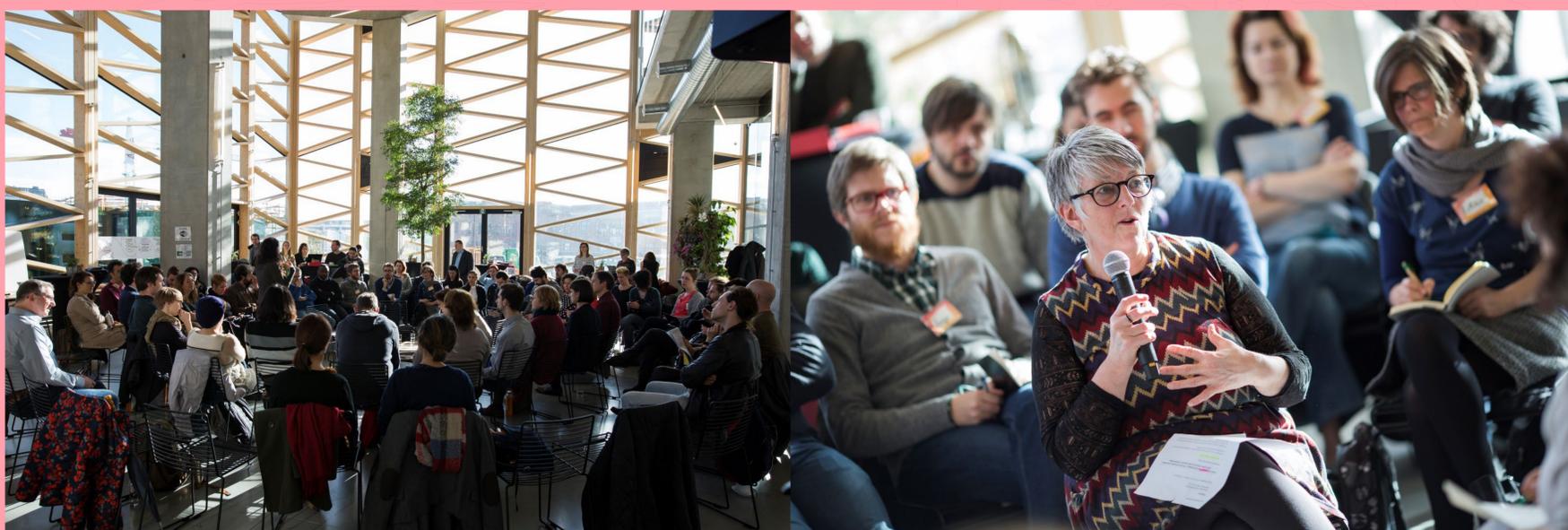
**Julie Ward** – Labour Party UK, MEP-Socialists & Democrats group

**Rosa Balfour** – Director European Programme, GMF Brussels

**Fabian Zuleeg** – Chief Executive, EPC Brussels

## Guiding questions:

How can local actors of change contribute to EU “thinking” through its actors (e.g. think-tanks), its procedures and its politics? Gaining influence and visibility in the EU ecosystem: what works?



# DIALOGUE LABS – EU, MEDIA, ADVOCACY

## Key elements that emerged from the discussion:

- Understand the system and learn about the policy cycle, the earlier you can influence the better
- There is a language and jargon being spoken in policy-making, it is important to learn it
- Be persistent and nicely annoying over long period of time
- Know what you are trying to achieve. There are competing organised voices that might dry you out (form alliances)
- “Brussels bubble” is more open than you might think; crucial is how to find the door!
- Don’t expect results over time, influencing policies is a long process
- Engaging citizens is complex. You have more stakeholder engagement than citizens engagement > how do we make it less complex?
- Let’s not forget our national level: we want to bring something from our local area to the European Policy making
- Very Brussels based, are we working for Brussels or is Brussels working for us?

## Media Lab: How are European media changing and where can civil society find a way in?



### Key speakers:

**Alexander Damiano Ricci** – President of Babel International

**Quentin Ariès** – Journalist at Politco.eu

### Guiding questions:

- What are the main mechanisms in which Media operates?
- How does Media stay connected to what is most important for citizens?
- What are the main challenges Media face and how are they overcome?
- How can media’s impact be strengthened through Civic Society’s involvement?

# DIALOGUE LABS – EU, MEDIA, ADVOCACY

## Key elements that emerged from the discussion:

- Consider changing socio-political and economic landscapes
- European integration affected media landscape: no more topics on national level
- New practices and sources (social media, reddit)
- Issue of budgeting is very important
- Remember that for media agencies «Good news isn't really news»
- Journalists often don't understand such terms as participatory practices, social innovation, clusters, etc.
- Best way to attack journalists is to be transparent
- It's not always necessary to contact mainstream media

## Advocacy Lab: Civil Society Advocacy to influence policy-making



### Key speaker:

**Bruno Selun** – Founder and Director, Kumquat Consult

### Guiding questions:

- What are elements of successful advocacy?
- Integrating European advocacy in local projects: Yes or no, and how?
- Which institutional mechanisms exist for civil society to contribute to policy-making in Europe at the local, national or supranational levels?

## Key elements that emerged from the discussion:

- Don't be afraid to seek unlikely allies – for most people it is about living peacefully together
- Advocacy is about understanding the landscape
- Few principles for effective advocacy: relevance, good timing, targeting (expertise, roles, seniority, reputation, availability), empathy, ethics
- The EU treaties include a possibility to submit a petition > you can use it, if you are advocating on a topic of EU influence. Also there is the European Citizens Initiative (ECI), use it if the topic you are advocating for is also in the interest of the European Commission.

# CITIZENSLAB'S TRANSLOCAL INITIATIVES

A range of topics were explored during the Network Meeting, all initiated by the members themselves as potential experiment areas or translocal initiatives where the Lab's longer term goal can be actualised.

From the topics explored, eight translocal initiatives were chosen as being ready to proceed:

## Network Navigator

This initiative will support CitizensLab members to locate themselves within the network as well as to visualise how the initiatives are connected and the dynamics between them. A spider map and a database will be developed. This initiative is of strategic relevance for the network development as it will track the new emerging ecosystem and get clarity on how local networks work and by that help to build a system of influence on the European level.

## C-Hackerspaces

The purpose of this initiative is to connect the emerging translocal initiatives and provide an (online) infrastructure to implement activities. For that reason a knowledge sharing a wiki will be created. Also pop-up labs that function as temporary hubs and makerspaces could be envisioned for the future.

## Visualising Local Municipal Budgets

The purpose of this initiative is to decrease the gap between citizens and public administration by fiscal education and more transparency in local budgets. Therefore, a tool to visualise local budgets will be developed as well as a workshop and a learning curriculum to heighten the understanding of local municipal budgets.

## School of Tomorrow

The objective of this initiative is for youngsters to become more active citizens through exploring the idea of commoning in different urban contexts. By centering commoning activities around e.g. nature in the city or cultural heritage youngsters' senses of ownership and responsibility as well as their identification with their cities will be increased. A pilot project will be started in several European cities.



# CITIZENSLAB'S TRANSLOCAL INITIATIVES

## Urban Games/ Street Delivery

This initiative will use gamification methods to solve local problems. Playful conditions will be created to help gaining knowledge about place and get into a discourse about them. In order to explore what concrete formats can be applied within the CitizensLab context, a manual of formats and methods that citizens developed for different situations will be created.

## Inclusion Leader Network

The purpose of this initiative is to make the voices of minorities more present in the societal discourses to counteract exclusion and increase citizens' participation. The long-term goal of this initiative is to bring more inclusive leaders in positions of power in media, the private sector, education and the political sphere. An Incleaders Workshop will be held in March 26, 2017 in Amsterdam. Some CitizensLab members will attend also to inquire about the translocality of this initiative.

## Social Inclusion of Immigrants

In order to bridge the gap between immigrants/ refugees and the local community in this initiative a workshop with migrants and local community will be co-designed. Through cultural activities such as theatre, music and cooking local communities will get the chance to connect. A pilot will be designed in Bari, but the format should afterwards travel to other European cities.

## European Capital of Culture – Leeuwarden 2018

Within the frame of the European Capital of Culture Leeuwarden will provide the space, context and some funds to facilitate translocal collaboration. Those activities will take place in the field of participation art, news commons and urban planning as well as in formats connecting rural and urban contexts. The translocal cooperation can be implemented in tandem constellations in 2018.



# THE CITIZENSLAB'S ORGANISATION

During the final day of the second Network Meeting, the CitizensLab's organisation was shared and co-created through the following topics:

- 1) Knowledge sharing
- 2) Governance and decision making
- 3) Members responsibility
- 4) Capacity building, skills learning
- 5) Circular narratives
- 6) Mapping networks we belong to

The CitizensLab is being organised by its own members and coordinated by Alice Priori and Lisa Schulze. Its organisation itself will be a microcosm of the system of influence it wants to see on a wider scale. Therefore it is transparent, participatory and accountable.

## NEXT STEPS

The second Network Meeting ended with Alice Priori setting out the next steps:

- Translocal Initiative teams to draw up their action plans and resource requirements so that the existing budget can be utilised
- Applying for the next phase of the CitizensLab to get funds after the pilot phase (ending in August 2017) will take into account all the input from this Network Meeting, Lumen discussions, mobilities, etc.
- Members can continue applying and implementing mobilities to learn and get to know each other's practices on the local level
- To continue exchanging information using digital means, e.g. Lumen, webinars, etc.
- The website will be launched in April [www.citizenslab.eu](http://www.citizenslab.eu)



# CITIZENS LAB

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