Social Innovation capability building service

Deliverable D 9.6

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Abbreviations and acronyms

Acronym	Description
WP	Work Package
NZC	NetZeroCities
CCC	Climate City Contract
CBP	Capability Building Programme
CTM	Climate Transition Map
SGA	Specific Grant Agreement
SI	Social Innovation

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Summary

Social innovation is known as a practice which triggers deep changes in those who participate in its process. It is recognised for scaling impact to large magnitudes while meaningfully integrating local specificities and powering collective action. In a context where GHG emissions are produced by distributed micro-choices across entire social ecosystems, this makes social innovation an essential capability for cities to have in order to accelerate their way to climate-neutrality, making full use of bottom-up dynamics. Social innovation is thus at the centre of the actions of Net Zero Cities, the platform supporting European cities in the 100 Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities Mission. This report presents the approach NetZeroCities has created to develop Mission cities' social innovation capabilities. Sharing the process, it has deployed to understand better the exact barriers and needs social innovation would help city practitioners overcome, NetZeroCities suggests key principles to build cities' social innovation capabilities. Combining a deep understanding of cities' needs and of principles for effective learning, this report puts forward a full capability building service, including how it is experienced by city practitioners (user journey) and how NetZeroCities deploys the necessary means for its delivery (service blueprint).

Keywords

Social Innovation, Systemic Innovation, Stakeholders Engagement, Participation, Climate-Neutrality, Cities, Learning, Capabilities, Service

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Introduction

Social innovations are “new ideas (products, services and processes) which simultaneously satisfy social needs more efficiently than existing ones and create new and long-lasting social relationships and collaborations. Not only are these innovations good for society, they also improve its ability to act.” (Hubert, et al., 2010). Characterised by using experimentation and prototyping, social innovation de-risks the solutions it produces, rapidly evidencing their limitations and potential. Being a deployment of creative capacities in a collaborative process, it enables synthesis towards innovative concepts uniquely meeting societal needs (both in their human and social dimensions as well as their ecological and economic constraints). Social innovation is rooted in the participation of stakeholders - whether workers, public servants, communities, business owners or others - leveraging their experience and creativity to fuel the conception of new solutions. This makes social innovation practice particularly indicated to facilitate action and change, shifting participants’ own perceptions and willingness or ability to act as they contribute to addressing a challenge (Grimm et al., 2013).

With the European Green Deal and the launch of the 100 Climate-neutral and Smart Cities Mission, the European Commission has made a statement that any climate transition cannot happen without being a just transition, thus emphasising the need for and the role of social innovation in accelerating transformation:

*“This transition must be just and inclusive. It must **put people first,** and pay attention to the regions, industries and workers who will face the greatest challenges. Since it will bring substantial change, **active public participation and confidence** in the transition is paramount if policies are to work and be accepted. A new pact is needed to **bring together citizens in all their diversity, with national, regional, local authorities, civil society and industry** working closely with the EU’s institutions and consultative bodies.”*

The European Green Deal, European Commission (2019)

*“This will require **testing, piloting and demonstrating innovative solutions**, including social innovation in governance in areas such as public procurement for future scale-up and deployment, citizens’ involvement, and holistic city planning. […] These local social innovations will in turn **contribute to the important process of gaining sufficient “buy-in”** from local, regional, national and EU level for both the preparation and the implementation of the CCC”*

EU Mission Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities Implementation Plan, European Commission (2021)

A key to trigger the magnitude and depth of change needed, to integrate finely local specificities and to power collective action (see D9.1 Social Innovation for Climate-Neutrality), social innovation is thus at the centre of the actions of NetZeroCities (NZC), the platform supporting European cities in the Mission. Tasked with supporting the 112 Mission Cities on the specific matter of social innovation, NetZeroCities WP9 deploys the necessary means to most effectively build cities’ capacity to draw on social innovation for climate-neutrality. The Social Innovation Capability Building Programme WP9 has designed is precisely intended to this effect.

The following presents a comprehensive outline of NetZeroCities Social Innovation Capability Building Programme, detailing the purpose and objectives of this service and revealing the experience cities will embark on as well as the processes deployed by the NetZeroCities partners to deliver the necessary support.

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1. Purpose of the service

In its effort to support 112 European cities in reaching climate-neutrality by 2030, NetZeroCities has developed a central tool to articulate the journey ahead and what it demands: the **Climate Transition Map**. A key navigation element for cities within the platform - both on the NZC portal and in discussions - the Climate Transition Map (CTM) describes the work towards climate-neutrality as an iterative journey strengthening 7 ingredients (or phases) for an accelerated transition: a strong mandate, an understanding of the system, a co-created portfolio, action, learning and reflection, institutionalisation and activation of an inclusive ecosystem for change (see Figure 1 and Appendix 1 for detailed explanation). Social innovation practice is well positioned to contribute to this journey. It increases the overall local ecosystem's capability to create and sustain change from the bottom-up, strengthening the mandate for change in return, through its collaborative nature; contributing methods, tools and heuristics to understand the system; facilitating the co-creation of new portfolio solutions; enabling collaborative action and quick learning through experimentation and making new solutions the new normal with its particular attention to scaling impact.

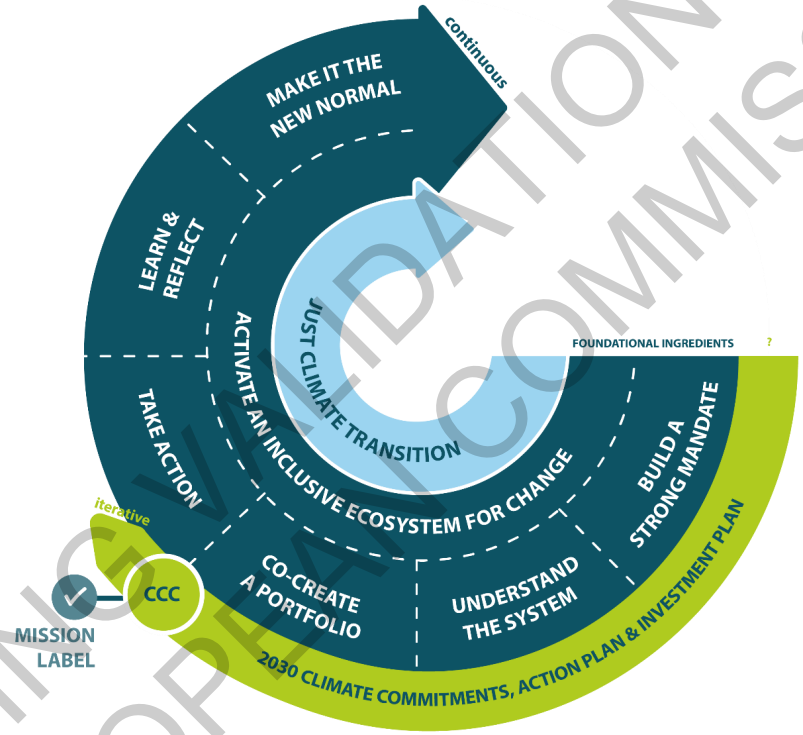

Figure 1: the Climate Transition Map

Making the most of the Climate Transition Map's value in facilitating work with cities, the NZC Capability Building Programme builds (CBP) on the CTM's structure to provide **learning journeys** which bring forward the knowledge, services and peer-to-peer spaces to foster a collaborative learning process (see D3.2 Capacity Building Framework). Intended to support the type of continuous learning and reflection necessary for cities to sustain transformation at scale and speed, the CBP isn't meant as a form of training but rather as a **collection of modules** (each being a learning journey), aligned to the CTM, in which to explore through action different necessary capabilities to lead this journey through uncertainty and urgency. These modules are:

- Building a shared understanding
- Activating an ecosystem for change
- Setting up a baseline for action
- Experimenting with a portfolio of actions

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- Building a strong economic case
- Developing a financing strategy

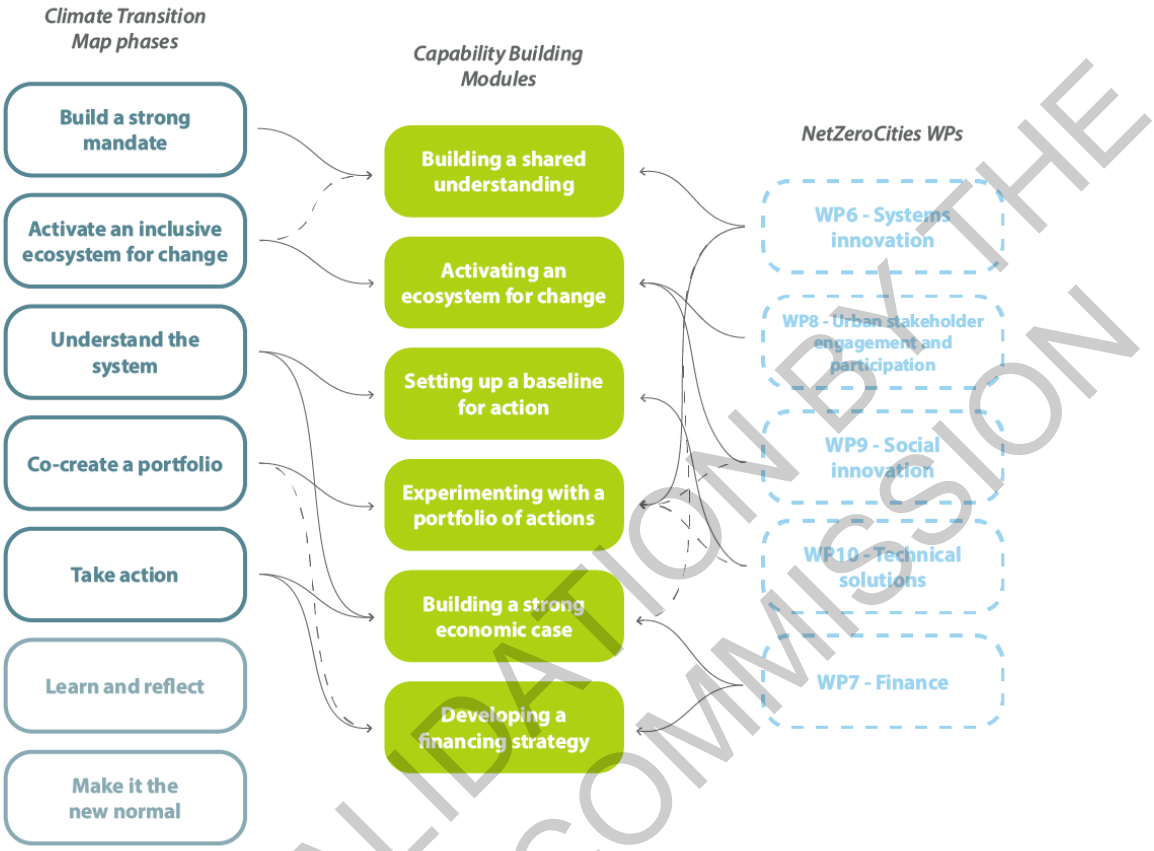

Figure 2: Climate Transition Map, Capability Building Modules and WP links

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All these modules' content interacts and together contribute to the development of the transition leadership capabilities required of Transition teams in cities (see D6.4 Leading systemic transformation). They gather the best and essential knowledge, services and peer-to-peer spaces created in collaboration by WP3, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10 (see Figure 2).

Social Innovation Capability Building, though supportive and necessary for the entirety of the CTM's journey, proves particularly central to the *Activate the ecosystem* module. Focusing social innovation's perspective on this particular module has proved beneficial to build a clearer case for social innovation in the eyes of cities, has made tangible the connection with stakeholder engagement and provides a clear space to address the specific challenges related to having collaborative relationships with stakeholders. However, we recognise it doesn't yet give to see the full breadth of contribution social innovation practice can make across the journey, semantic challenges meaning concepts of social innovation, systems innovation, governance innovation and stakeholder engagement overlap for city practitioners and the broader community of practice. The *Activate the ecosystem* module hence concentrates social innovation capability building under an action-oriented title, positioning efficiently social innovation's value and impact for practitioners in their work, without embarking them in unnecessary theoretical discussions.

2. Development of the service

The development of the Capability Building Programme, including the content of the *Activate the ecosystem* module, fits into a design process which has been deployed over the course of a year, mobilising experience and knowledge across the entire NetZeroCities consortium. In this way, the development of the Capability Building Programme was, in itself, a demonstration of a social innovation process and its benefits to the consortium of partners. One could argue this process has rehearsed within the NetZeroCities consortium the type of *modus operandi* and benefits expected to be brought to cities themselves as they grasp the full potential of this practice.

The following table recounts the process undertaken and its key steps:

Phase	Activity	Approach	Output	Stakeholders involved
Prompts	**Identify areas of needs**	**Needs assessment (D13.1):** Analysis based on 10 focus groups and a survey	Cities needs, barriers and drivers around social innovation, stakeholder engagement and capability building identified (visual facilitation)	10 groups of 5-10 cities from different typologies, geographies and level of maturity. Focus groups and survey led by WP13 with contribution from WP1, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10
		Workshop n°1 of Design workshop series: Cities' challenge definition and prioritisation in collaborative process	Identification of the challenges cities face when going through the CCC process and prioritisation toward 28 key areas of needs, including 6 directly concerning social innovation	50+ participants across the entire NZC consortium of partners, with varied expertise on climate transition and varied experiences working with cities. Workshop designed and led by WP9 (POLIMI, DML)
Proposals	**Idea generation**	**Workshop n°2 and 3 of Design workshop series**: Idea generation and definition in coproduction	Development of 26 concepts for specific services to be realised and provided to Cities, including 5 directly target at social innovation capability building	50+ participants across the entire NZC consortium of partners, with varied expertise on climate transition and varied experiences working with cities. Workshop designed and led by WP9 (POLIMI, DML)
	Set principles	**Weekly working group**: Definition of service specifications and overarching framework in a collaborative process	Synthesis of needs and opportunities brought by previous steps. Identification of audience's characteristics. Development of a set of 3 principles (see section 3.2) and an initial service framework integrating concepts previously developed.	WP3 + WP6-10 partners
Prototypes	**Testing ideas and framework**	**2 City Practitioner Panels**: User testing with first cohort on 24/11/22 and second cohort on 31/01/23 + survey	Direct insights and comments from cities to integrate best suggested service framework with their work	WP13, WP6-10 partners
	Collaborative iteration	**Capability Building Design Days**: In-	Integration of Practitioner panel insights and iteration of the service framework with City	City Advisor representatives, WP3 and WP6-10 partners

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		person 2 days iteration sprint	Advisors expertise towards a V1 framework to deploy	
	Beta event	**Como in-person Summer School**: Deployment of the V1 service framework for validation of hypotheses	2.5 days event including 6 sessions aligned to the modules to be delivered, allowing to test the value of the content in real delivery conditions with cities. Including a *Social Innovation* session	15 facilitators, 2 logistics support staff, 2 City Advisors, 48 participants from Mission cities
Sustaining	**Online initial development**	**Portal delivery**: Opening of 7 modules on NZC portal	7 groups created with their P2P, media gallery, calendar and channels features, ready for future use, including the *Activate the Ecosystem* page	POLIMI, UPM, DML + WP3
	Online continuous development *(in progress)*	**Content delivery on portal: D**evelopment of the 7 online modules	Preparation of an animation plan, including for the *Activate an ecosystem* module	WP6-10
	Summer schools organisation	**Santander summer school: D**eployment of a V2, iterated based on V1	2.5 days event including 6 sessions aligned to the modules. Including an iterated *Social Innovation* session.	18 facilitators, 4 logistics support staff, 2 City Advisors, 31 participants from 19 Mission Cities
		Planning of November 2023 Winter School ***(in progress)***	TBD	WP6-10 partners
Scaling	**Upcoming**	TBD	TBD	TBD

Table 1: Development of the Capability Building Programme: a social innovation process. Actual process analysed based on the Six Stages of Social Innovation (Murray et al., 2010)

Outcomes of this development process in the NZC consortium can be described as:

- **Rapid evidencing** of the value of in-person events and interaction, of the need for an integrated and action-based learning experience
- **Responsivity** of the learning content thanks to **richer interactions** with cities and City Advisors
- **Strengthening of relationships** between partners and with City Advisors thanks to the long continuous collaborative process
- Light-touch **diffusion of the value of social innovation and of social innovation practices** among involved consortium partners through the collaborative process

3. Development objectives

At the core of the development of the CBP service was the definition of strong principles and specifications for development, grounded in a synthesis of cities' needs. Based on a cities' needs

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assessment (see D13.1) and several workshops (see table 1), the **audience** for capability building was defined clearly, **3 core service specifications for lasting impact** were set and a clear **value proposition** for the service was defined.

3.1. Audience

Social innovation is a collective capability, rather than an individual one (Nilsson, 2023). Because it is based on co-creation and generative relationships, one cannot do social innovation alone. This means coaching individuals about social innovation is nowhere near as effective as coaching a team, a network, even an entire organisation. Individual training may only lead to individual change that is unsustainable when back in a collective setting, to new skills that can hardly be applied.

At the heart of NZC's approach to supporting cities towards climate-neutrality by 2030, one can find the concept of **Transition Team** to be not only central for cities to develop the type of cross-sector collaboration and collective needed for their transformation (see D6.4 Leading systemic transformation in cities), but to also be central for capability building in cities. A Transition Team is a team spanning across traditional organisational and sectoral boundaries, with the role of creating a favourable context for collective action and alignment between local actors, to justly and collaboratively drive emissions down to zero. It leads the orchestration of local actors in transformative action. In this role - and especially when it has a multi-disciplinary, cross-sector, cross-organisation composition - this team also adopts a unique position in the local ecosystem to absorb and diffuse new ideas, practices and mindsets. It is connected to and influences the local ecosystem, in a stewardship role. This makes the Transition Team a particularly efficient audience for a Capability Building Programme. It is the core vector of our capabilities diffusion model (see Figure 3, see also D6.4 Leading systemic transformation in cities, section 2.1), as a team, as a network of organisations and even in the most promising cases, as an organisation itself.

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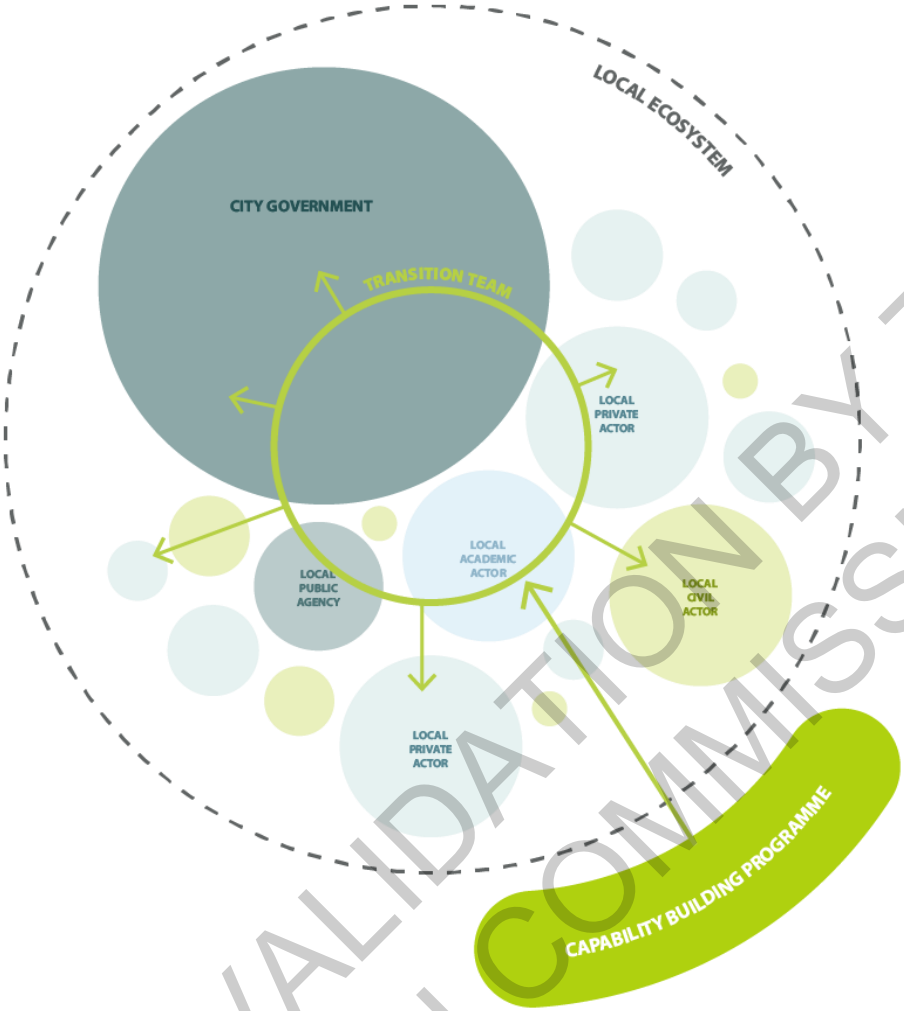

Figure 3: Capabilities diffusion model

3.2. Learning sustainability and impact

Change resistance, change fatigue and learning resistance are critical barriers faced when trying to bring new skills and practices to an organisation or ecosystem. There are several principles which can be understood as critical to easing learning and embedding new practices, skills and structures locally for the long term.

1. **Action-based learning**: Social innovation, like many of the essential practices to accelerate climate-neutrality, is innately practice-based. Its value is revealed through its practice (Young, 2011), its principles - needs and systems awareness, collaborative governance, co-creation, experimentation - only become tangible through its practice. Focusing on practical actions and solutions to real challenges is a key way for new capabilities' value to be demonstrated, by creating real impact. This means basing the learning journey on learning by doing and learning through local practices. Many small changes in daily activities are key to success. These range from changes at the individual to the team and organisational levels. Acquiring new capabilities, including in social innovation, thus requires the flexibility to be connected as much as possible to a specific local context, as this will guide the immediate task at hand. Learning is thus based on the daily activities and responsibilities of the Transition Team. This helps to map out how

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incremental capabilities changes can result in a successful whole city pathway to climate neutrality.

2. **Community-based learning**: Social innovation is also an innovative practice, making it challenging to adopt in environments characterised by a need for stability and a reluctance to process innovation. Cities across Europe, however, are already mobilising to increase the pace towards climate neutrality. Many cities are ambitious in their climate transition work and have developed and amassed a vast array of innovative skills and knowledge. They offer to exchange with other cities around them on their lessons learned. Although city contexts may differ, learning from peers through group dynamics is more fruitful: "the value of adoption [of new norms, institutions] by a given individual is an increasing function of the number of his neighbours who have adopted" (Young, 2011). Multiple lived experiences and viewpoints can be presented and assumptions challenged. Reflectivity and comparative discussions are key to foster change within and beyond individual teams or organisations. NZC's Capability Building Programme, including the *Activate an ecosystem for change* module, takes advantage of creating spaces for networking, peer-to-peer connection, exchange and collaboration, both on and offline. This intends to create moments for discussion and exchange with peers, enabling inspiration, reflection, learning and adaptation for Mission Cities practitioners.

3. **Multiple touchpoints learning journey**: Social innovation is deeply concerned with putting people and their needs at the centre of problem-solving (Mulgan, 2006). To develop a social innovation practice is also to embrace the diversity of needs that can coexist at the same time within a complex system. This same condition applies to capability building in the Cities Mission, where cities are as diverse in their intrinsic and extrinsic characteristics as they are in the needs they express. Mission Cities are at different stages of the journey towards climate-neutrality and face a breadth of barriers heavily influenced by their own local, regional and national context. This means there is no unique prescribed content package or fixed delivery format which can respond adequately to the needs of all. Multiple models of learning, learning styles and learning goals are to be accommodated with the CBP and the *Activate the ecosystem* module. This implies a diversity of on and offline learning formats, from experts roundtables and workshops to peer exchanges, offering a diverse library of visual, auditory, kinaesthetic learning experiences covering a range of practical questions.

3.3. Value Proposition

In an effort to guarantee the sustainability and impact of its activity, the Capability Building Programme's value proposition has been strongly anchored in the previously introduced three principles. The Capability Building Programme is a learning experience shared by several cities in a **group setting**, guiding them through several modules which allow new attitudes, skills and ideas to be developed locally through action. It **accompanies cities through their on-the-ground experience** of leading climate action and developing their Climate City Contract (CCC) with the help of a **curated collection of media and interactive formats**.

In particular, the *Activate the ecosystem* module and its social innovation content supports cities in:

1. **Positioning the role of social innovation in their Climate City Contract** by providing ways to create the so-called "social innovation infrastructure" necessary to build local platforms for climate action. Sharing how to create favourable conditions (financial, material, data-sharing related…) for social innovation processes to emerge and crowd-in diverse stakeholders through collaborative problem-solving to accelerate impact, strengthen resilience and increase wellbeing.

2. **Enabling inclusive pathways to action** by sharing the type of relational and experiential practices, collaborative methods and collective governance which characterise social innovation to enable greater inclusivity and a just transition.

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3. **Responding to emergent needs from the transition** by bringing forth the creative collaboration skills, people-centred mindset and experimental process which can build the solutions needed to answer the emergent needs of communities in the transition and inform the iteration of the city's overall approach.

This can otherwise be visualised in a Value Proposition canvas (see Figure 4), presenting the value proposition of the Capability Building Programme and its Activate the ecosystem module (left), in relation to cities' needs (right).

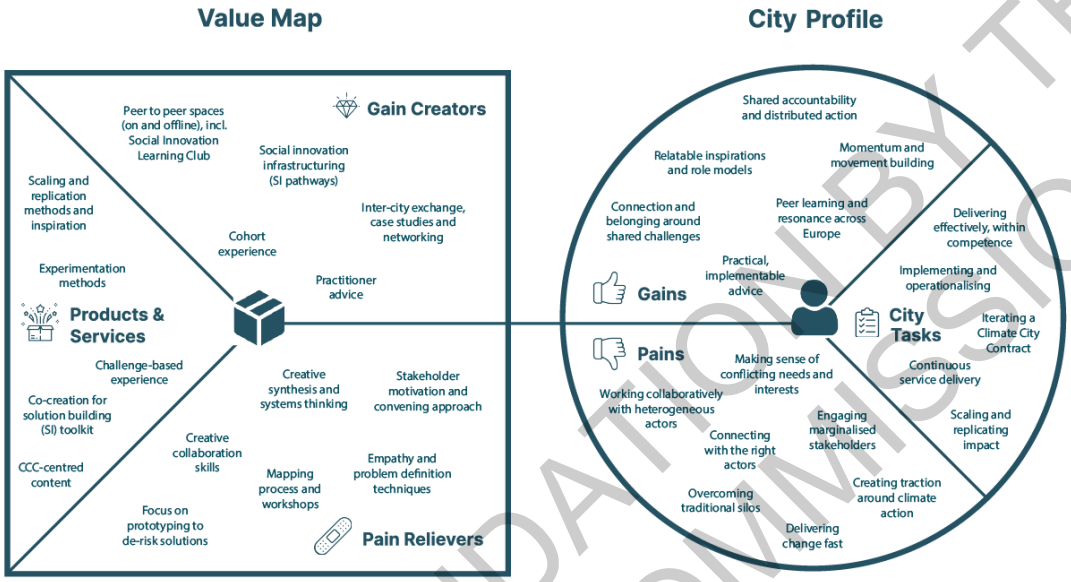

Figure 4: Value proposition of the *Activate the ecosystem module* and its social innovation content, based on the Social Innovation toolkit Value Proposition canvas

4. User journey

4.1. Overview

The user journey (see Figure 5) represents a city's experience in using the Capability Building Programme. It takes the perspective of the Mission City to detail the actions the city undertakes in its use of the service, the needs and emotional state it faces in using the service as well as the touchpoints between the city and the CPB service. This is a crucial representation to understand how the service functions and how it strategically integrates with other programme elements deployed by NZC.

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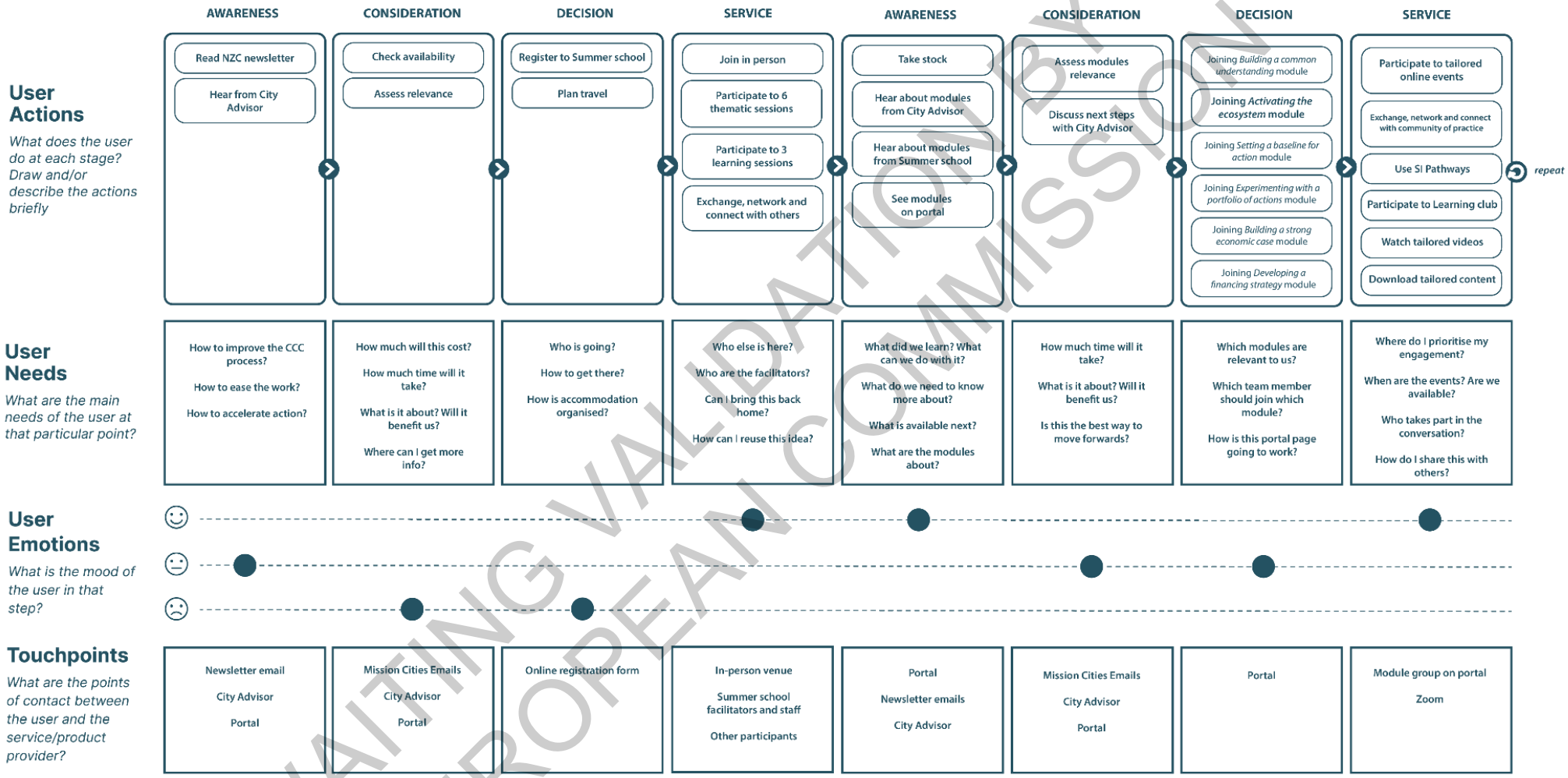

Figure 5: Capability Building user journey, based on the Social Innovation toolkit Customer Journey canvas

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4.2. Summer schools

Summer (and Winter) Schools are one of several turning points in Mission Cities' journey towards climate-neutrality, as they make up the **in-person component of the CBP**. A component of the CBP directly enabled by NZC-SGA WP4, Summer schools are a key entry-point into a learning journey for a Mission City. The aim of this in-person 2.5 days format is to kickstart and build sustainable relationships among Mission cities and with NZC learning facilitators, leveraging networking moments and spaces, facilitated and non-facilitated, as well as interactive sessions and workshops. This enables long-term resonance learning, reflective learning and strengthens the community feeling necessary for the Cities Mission to carry momentum.

Through its 6 thematic sessions and 2 collective learning sessions, Summer schools also take participants through an immersive journey along the CCC process, diving into the practices, attitudes and examples that enrich this undertaking. Capability building is unlocked as good practices are shared by all, pain points are discussed and tension released, new methods are rehearsed together and case-by-case situations are discussed individually. Typically, a Summer school uses the following format:

<table>
<tr><th>Day 1</th><th colspan="2">Day 2</th><th colspan="2">Day 3</th></tr>
<tr><td>Free for travel</td><td colspan="2">Welcome</td><td colspan="2">Welcome</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Welcome reception</td><td>Session 2A (2h)
Portfolio co-design</td><td>Session 2B (2h)
Transition team</td><td>Session 5A (2h)
Social innovation</td><td>Session 5B (2h)
Stakeholder engagement</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Break & networking</td><td colspan="2">Break & networking</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Inauguration keynotes</td><td>Session 3A (2h)
Pathways and indicators</td><td>Session 3B (2h)
Investment planning</td><td>Session 6A (2h)
Stakeholder engagement</td><td>Session 6B (2h)
Social innovation</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Lunch</td><td colspan="2">Lunch</td></tr>
<tr><td>Session 1A (2h)
Transition team</td><td>Session 1B (2h)
Portfolio co-design</td><td>Session 4A (2h)
Investment planning</td><td>Session 4B (2h)
Pathways and indicators</td><td colspan="2" rowspan="4">Individual coaching sessions (2h)</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Break</td><td colspan="2">Break</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Collective learning session 1 (1h)</td><td colspan="2">Collective learning session 2 (1h)</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Free time</td><td colspan="2">Free time</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Diner</td><td colspan="2">Diner</td><td colspan="2">Free for travel</td></tr>
</table>

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Table 2: Santander Summer School programme (July 21-23rd 2023),
based on a two simultaneous tracks system

Summer schools provide the capability building facilitation team with a number of insights essential to refine the content of the capability building modules, including the *Activate the ecosystem* one. By getting to know the participants within Mission Cities, needs can be further precised to adapt the capability building module content, but also to inform NZC programme design, particularly on the Climate City Contract process. The below presents a synthesis of the feedback collected from cities which will inform further developments of the CBP.

Cities emphasise the added value and the need for **community-based learning**. In this regard, city representatives articulate the benefit of being in close contact with their City Advisors as well as the NZC Consortium. This type of third-party support helps creating perspective, identifying blind spots and finding synergies. Moreover, they increase the sharing of knowledge and best practices across European cities. City representatives express their desire for regular peer-to-peer exchange and sharing of best practices and lessons learned. Coming together with their peers across Europe during a Summer School makes them feel as part of the bigger Mission movement and empowers them to persevere and create a strong narrative around the Cities Mission. Accordingly, we observe a need to increase the understanding of how to use the **CCC as a strategic tool**, as a leverage for engagement, communication and dissemination. With regards to the *Activate the ecosystem* module, the following themes are frequently mentioned as points to take forward:

- **Building a better understanding of the available tools.** In order to engage the local ecosystem, processes of co-creation and participation are often mentioned as successful methods. However, not all cities have the resources and/or the expertise to set-up and orchestrate these processes. A generic pitfall is that these processes end-up being rather superficial and do not result in a shift in mindset and away from existing dynamics. A frequently asked question therefore is: How to get a grip of available tools in a way that city representatives can use them to facilitate participative or co-creation sessions themselves?

- **The changing role and adaptive capacity of the municipality with regards to social innovation.** When dealing with a variety of social innovation initiatives, the municipality needs to have the capacity to either lead, engage, participate, enable and/or facilitate and needs to know how to act and shape their own role according to a specific context and how to empower other stakeholders in their roles. The question that arises is: How can the municipality adapt their role in the best suitable way for different types of initiatives?

- **Social inclusion.** More specifically the engagement and empowerment of unusual suspects such as marginalised stakeholders. Marginalised groups often do not have the time or capacity (e.g. in terms of language or lifestyle) to join social innovation processes, while these are specifically aimed at forming connections and dialogues between different groups. For that reason city representatives pose questions such as: How to specifically address and empower marginalised groups while avoiding stigma? How to keep people engaged over time? How to create a narrative on what the Cities Mission means for peoples' daily life and let them experience the added value of social innovation?

- **Creating enabling conditions to increase the self-capacity of civic stakeholders**. Common questions are: How to empower stakeholders to act on their own initiative to accelerate the transition? What are the main barriers social innovators come across and what preconditions (e.g. laws and regulations and funding schemes) need to be taken into account? What is the role of policy in influencing behavioural change?

- **Strategically combining ongoing activities and initiatives.** Finally, cities are challenged with establishing engagement with other ongoing initiatives, both locally as well as globally. It is found difficult to grasp the comprehensiveness of the Cities Mission and to identify and interact

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with numerous related (and overlapping) activities, groups and initiatives in an integral way. Leaving cities with the following questions: How to make existing initiatives coherent with the mission? How to connect strategically to ongoing activities and initiatives and how to create a link with the portfolio of actions? How to take advantage of these initiatives also in a way that resources are efficiently used and combined?

4.3. Activate the ecosystem module

In the CBP, the *Activate the ecosystem* module concentrates social innovation capability building in an action-oriented learning journey, encompassing more broadly the necessary skills, attitudes, methods and processes to build the capacity of the local ecosystem of stakeholders to engage in and act for the climate-neutrality target. Alongside a stakeholder engagement and citizen participation perspective focusing on how to build and steward a shared vision with stakeholders, how to cultivate and nurture collaboration, how to understand the local civic environment and how to create spaces for encounter, particular attention is brought to providing essential social innovation capabilities. To this end, several elements come together:

- The Social Innovation Pathway
- The Actionable pathways tool and its Social Innovation Toolkit
- A series of videos
- A series of events
- The Social Innovation Learning Club

4.3.1. Social Innovation Pathway

The Social Innovation Pathway has been designed to assist Transition Teams in what we call “social innovation programming”. In other words, it aims to **support city practitioners in amplifying and scaling social innovation impact**, that is, in supporting innovators - within the public administration but also all local stakeholders - in bringing their ideas to life through the means of social innovation.

As a true **compass** for practitioners to build an impactful and distributed social innovation capacity within their team and local ecosystem, the Social Innovation Pathway sits at the core of the *Activate the ecosystem* module. It recognises there might be two user pathways: one for cities’ own transition team and one for local social innovators and that both can be supported by the iterative, learning-oriented process the Social Innovation pathway suggests.

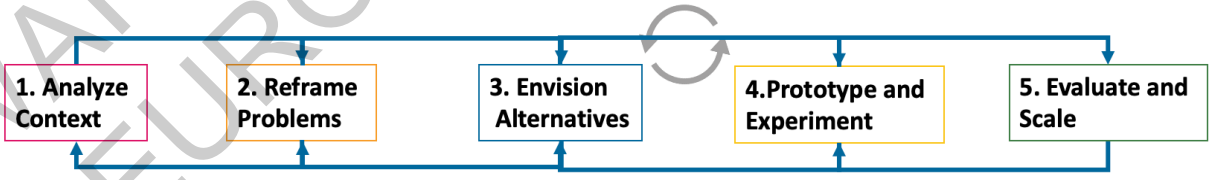

Figure 6. NZC’s Social Innovation Pathway

For detailed information about the Social Innovation Pathway, see D9.5.

4.3.2. Actionable Pathways and Social Innovation Toolkit

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The Social Innovation Actionable Pathways Tool, building on the Social Innovation Pathways above, has been developed as a service component with two main features: **readiness assessment** and **signposting to relevant elements of a Social Innovation Toolkit,** based on said assessment.

First, the tool is developed to help policymakers and relevant stakeholders assess to what extent their city is ready to support and scale up local social innovation initiatives, particularly those dealing with climate neutrality. Through a series of questions, it identifies key areas in which a given city can develop their social innovation capability (improvement of financial support, of data infrastructure, of entrepreneur networks…). The tool enables cities to have a snapshot of their current status on social innovation and gauge whether they have sufficient resources and infrastructure in place to bring local social innovation initiatives to the next level.

Based on this assessment, the service then points towards resources from the module's Social Innovation Toolkit which might help them become more prepared. This toolkit:

1. Provides tools that allow for a **human-centered approach** to transition projects.
2. Offers a process to engage diverse actors in the mission with **participatory and service design tools** to explore local ecosystems, get to the core of the challenge, envision new alternatives, prototype for validity and impact, evaluate for effectiveness and scale meaningful solutions for broader transformation.
3. Prompts to reflect and act in an **iterative cycle** of divergent and convergent phases, aligning bottom-up initiatives with larger objectives or vice versa.

For detailed information about the Actionable Pathways tool and the Social Innovation Toolkit content, see D9.2/3.

4.3.3. Videos

Videos are supportive of learning in that they present information in a visual, compelling and condensed format. The *Activate the ecosystem* module uses videos to transmit **introductory and inspirational content which motivate city practitioners to dive deeper** into social innovation and the rest of the module's content. Currently, these videos are targeted at:

- An introduction to Social Innovation for Climate-Neutrality
- Case Study on Valencia Energy Communities
- Case Study on Mannheim Lab/Climate Meal
- Why mapping Social Innovation?

Videos become fully part of the *Activate the ecosystem* module as they are uploaded to the module group's media gallery, directly accessible next to the general peer-to-peer discussion on how to Activate ecosystems for change. Additional videos will keep being uploaded as NZC's understanding of cities needs continues to grow.

4.3.4. Events

The *Activate the ecosystem* module is organised around events, as they are the best format for learning, supporting a two-ways conversation which provides opportunities for peer sharing, reflective learning and collective sense-making. These events can be facilitated by NZC WP6-10, NZC-SGA WP4, cities themselves or external experts. They allow a focused discussion on a challenging or inspirational aspect of activating an ecosystem, fostering a community of practice. Events currently adopt different styles:

- **Live Q&A** with experts (ex: Energy Poverty with Arthur Hinsch)
- **Roundtables** mixing city practitioners and external experts
- **Peer-to-peer** conversations

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Events are directly available to cities on the *Activate the ecosystem* module portal group, through the module's calendar. Participants are offered to register in advance, with advertising of the events across the portal and through email. The events offer being one of the most effective vectors of learning besides Summer (or winter) schools, it will be continuously revised and added to.

4.3.5. Social Innovation Learning Club

The Social Innovation (SI) Learning Club is a **peer-to-peer space** designed to support cities in learning together about the use of social innovation for climate-neutrality. It puts the spotlight on cities themselves with existing case studies, promoting knowledge transfer among city practitioners, fostering access to social innovation tips, services, initiatives and opportunities, and inspiring novel ideas, replication, and collaboration.

While originally planned to be a dedicated space on the portal, the decision was made to make it a channel on the *Activate the ecosystem* module group in order to work synergistically with the module content, building a community of cities around the topics of Social Innovation and Citizens Engagement. At present, the SI Learning Club is live and hosts initial content:

- **Introductory video** on Social Innovation in NZC
- 3 **curated collections** on Social Innovation (energy solutions; behaviour change; stakeholder engagement) – promoting resources developed in NZC T9.1
- **Social innovation Toolkit** developed in NZC T9.2.

The **Social Innovation Learning Club Discussion Hours** will be the main feature of the space, by also contributing to the dissemination of the resources available for cities on Social Innovation. The service takes the form of 1-hr, monthly events hosted in the *Activating an ecosystem for change* module. It is designed to enable cities to meet, talk and share with each other about how Social Innovation can support them in achieving climate-neutrality. It will be structured as a self-generated activity led by the cities (see D9.5), based on the study and sharing of real-world Social Innovation cases or methods that cities are implementing to enhance and support their climate neutrality journey. Through open discussion and practical real-world cases, participants will leave with a better understanding of what social innovation is and how it can support them in their own climate neutrality goals. What is more, participants will get to interact and strengthen their relationships with other cities, following up on connections made through Summer and Winter Schools.

For detailed information about the Social Innovation Learning Club, see D9.5.

5. Delivery and service blueprint

The service blueprint (see Figure 7) is an operational visualisation which provides a holistic view of the delivery processes of the CBP and its inner workings. It visualises the key activities NZC delivers, both front stage in front of Mission cities and backstage, internally, to enable cities' learning journey. It is obvious the delivery of the CBP and its *Activate the ecosystem* module demand **cross-functional collaboration** and the mobilisation of multiple stakeholders across the NZC consortium, notably for communication and programme management (NZC WP12, WP11, City Advisors) but also for technical delivery of the online aspect of the modules' learning journey (NZC WP3) as well as the obvious content production itself (NZC WP6, 7, 8, 9, 10).

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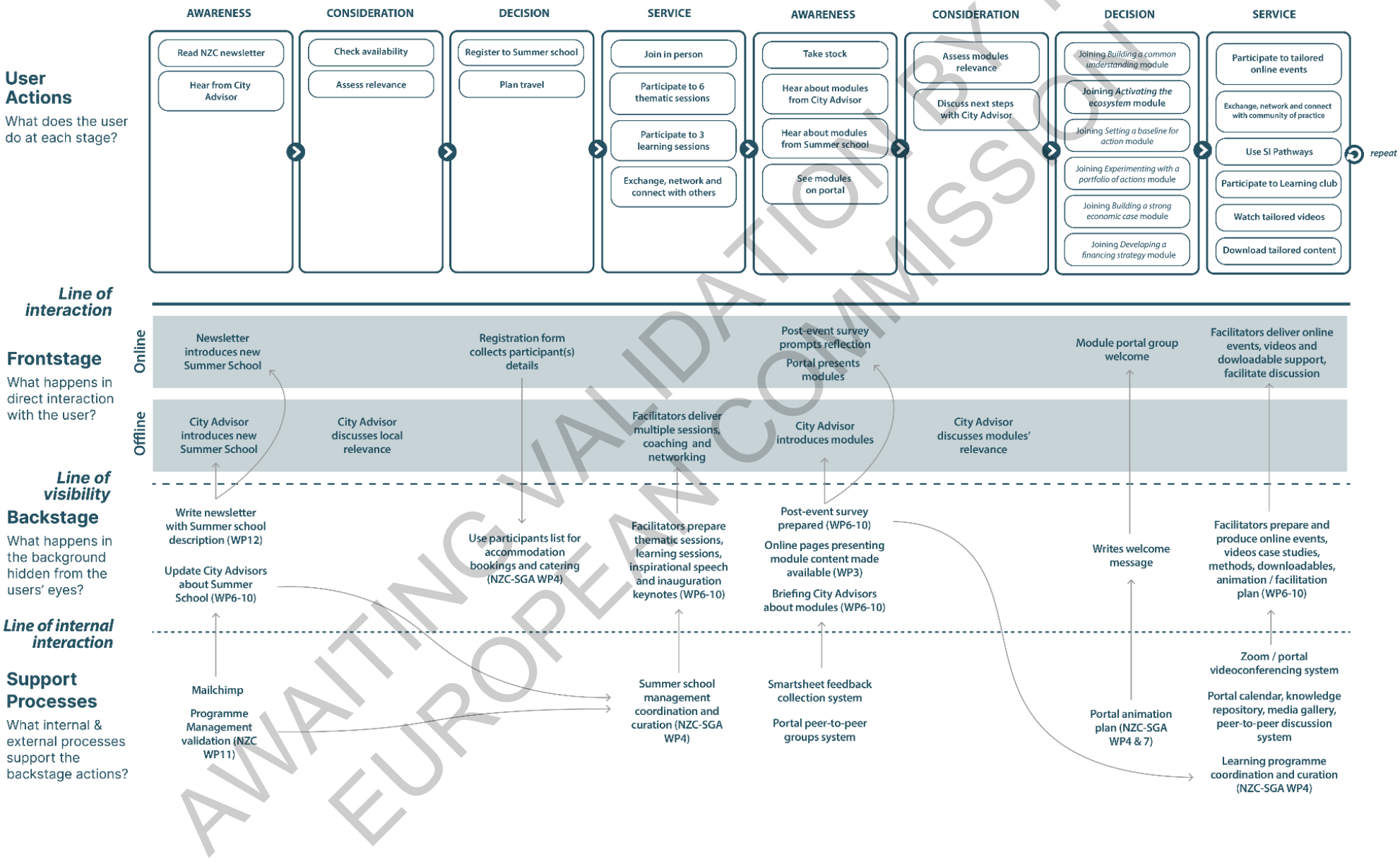
Figure Figure 7: Capability Building Service Blueprint, based on the Social Innovation toolkit Service Blueprint canvas



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For detailed information about the delivery of the Social Innovation Actionable Pathways, Social Innovation Learning club, see D9.2/3 and D9.5.

6. Continuous development

As it stands, we recognise the Capability Building Programme and its *Activate the ecosystem* module are being developed to reach full potential. The **animation and facilitation** of the spaces that have been created online are essential for the full benefit of this service to manifest itself. This point has been particularly emphasised by cities themselves as they have started to engage with this service, including through the Summer schools. The human and individual component of well facilitated spaces - such as the Summer schools - is crucial in building not only the Mission momentum and accelerating the firing of existing networks of individuals and organisations towards climate-neutrality; but it also proves central to the very resilience of the individuals which make up the Mission in cities, and their ability to push this transformation with confidence, leadership and a strong feeling of belonging.

With this in mind, WP9 and WP8 have started elaborating Engagement Plans, to put forward the necessary strategy and activities to effectively engage cities in the Capability Building Programme and its discussion spaces. The deployment of such an engagement strategy will require the mobilisation of NZC-SGA resources and in particular engage with NZC-SGA WP5's work on developing NZC's online community management.

It is our intention for the Capability Building Programme to remain a living and responsive instrument of Mission cities' support. The NZC Capability Building Programme and its *Activate the ecosystem* module are not only key instruments for cities to build their capabilities to lead a systemic transformation towards climate-neutrality, but they are also **a key instrument for the NZC consortium and the broader ecosystem of the EU Cities Mission to learn about cities drivers, barriers, risks and opportunities live**. In this optic, we consider the Capability Building Programme an important point of input for its own continuous development but also for the development of NZC. As City Support Groups emerge through the NZC-SGA and City Advisors push through in their mission to support cities in their day-to-day, it will be central to ensure insights from these 3 channels converge into an internal consortium learning loop consolidating the Mission's proactiveness in front of cities' needs.

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Conclusion

Bringing together insights about cities' needs and principles for effective learning, this report gives an overview of NZC's capability building service for cities of the 100 Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities Mission. Designed as an experience for city practitioners, this service evidences the value of in-person events and hands-on collaboration for the Mission at large. As the Cities Mission enters its 3rd year, it is time for the community of city practitioners and the action-oriented participation which fuel the Mission momentum to be attended to. The development and deployment of the Capability Building Programme demonstrates not only a gap between the potential of social innovation for climate-neutrality and local skills, but it especially shows city practitioners' readiness to move away from the rhetoric into the live practice of social innovation for climate-neutrality. This conclusion reminds the reader that **the main barrier to change is rarely information scarcity and availability but rather a wide implementation gap**. With local contexts often teeming with solidly embedded yet unsupportive practices and processes, on-the-ground learning will be needed to build a sustainable social innovation capacity in European cities. This raises the question of the relevance of Design schools' education methods for this effort, as they have successfully put the emphasis on mentored live projects over lectures for decades, putting into the world generations of problem-solvers.

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Appendice

Appendice 1: the Climate Transition Map

What the Climate Transition Map is about

Climate change affects us all and change is inevitable. Cities are leaders in the transformation of the way we work and live. By joining the European Climate Neutral and Smart Cities Mission, cities are embarking on an ambitious journey to become the first 100 cities to reach climate-neutrality by 2030. Only a new type of collective effort will be up to the task: a transformative approach accelerating decarbonisation. This transformative approach, which NetZeroCities champions, is embodied and described by the Climate Transition Map.

A systemic approach to accelerating decarbonisation

A real challenge, reaching climate neutrality asks all of us to act collaboratively, understanding interdependencies between us as actors and our actions to uncover the barriers blocking change. In a systemic approach, this journey toward net zero is centred around the creation of a portfolio of actions that addresses these barriers to change. In this journey, the Climate City Contract is the key instrument for Mission Cities to launch and accelerate this approach. The Pilot Cities Programme is a tool to explore particular innovation needs and opportunities on this journey.

Across this journey, key themes recur. They are the demonstration that technical solutions alone are not enough to an approach achieving this transition. We need to improve and renew governance structures, democratic participation, finance, learning capabilities and our use of social innovation. Together, these enable a so-called systemic transformation - transformation across domains and sectors with sufficient coherence and impact to shift society toward climate neutrality.

An iterative process

The way to climate neutrality has not yet been paved and cities engaged in the Mission for 100 climate neutral and smart cities by 2030 are pioneers. In this context, learning is crucial to accelerate progress towards the climate neutrality by 2030 goal in each city. Co-creation and testing, to refine strategies and plans progressively, is the only way to discover the way forward when it is not clear. Getting to climate-neutrality will require both quick wins (readily available technologies) and experimentation (in new domains) to refine and evolve strategies towards the necessary full decarbonisation.

The city's journey

- The timeline and starting point of this journey depend on each city's constraints and goals, past efforts and local dynamics (elections, budget and planning cycles...). City Advisors will work with cities to explore these questions in an individual and adaptable process to kickstart their own journey.

- Cities are in the driving seat. The Climate Transition Map is there to support them in undertaking this journey, adapted to their situation as needed. It illustrates a highly context-dependent process, where we are all learning together to discover and pave the way forward. NetZeroCities and the City Advisors will accompany cities to understand where you may be in your journey – in the map – and where you may need to go next. But ultimately, each city's team is the lead explorer on this journey.

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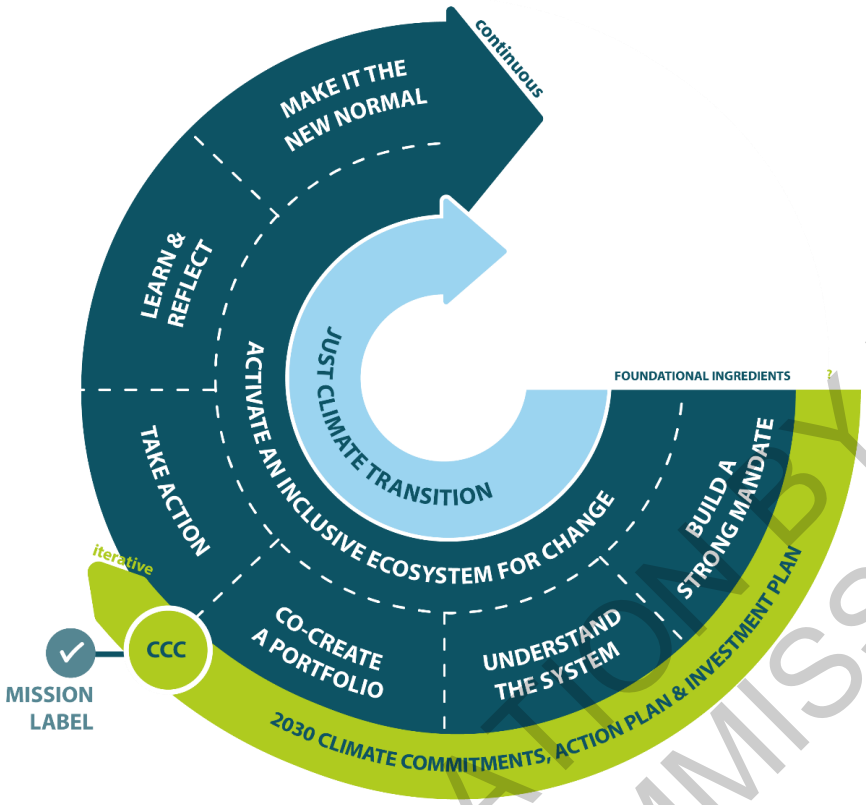

Figure 8 : the Climate Transition Map

The different phases

Activate an inclusive ecosystem for change

A climate transition demands more than what a city government alone can provide. It requires the positive commitment, passion, creativity, and drive of all local stakeholders. It requires everybody's diverse experience and expertise, resources and investments.

As such, it's important to mobilise the city's ecosystem in all its diversity: knowledge institutions, innovative companies and start-ups, as well as grassroots organisations and civic innovators. Leverage one's own and others' initiatives. Create conditions for all actors to have the capacity to act.

Within this inclusive ecosystem, a Transition Team can enable powerful collaborations. It can allow the exploration, deliberation and debate of needs and risks. This collaboration can ensure new opportunities for possible solutions and new alternatives are discovered. This type of concerted and inclusive action matches the climate ambitions and, importantly, secures a healthy and just future for all.

Building a strong mandate

A strong mandate for accelerated climate action ensures alignment of all actors around the actions and investments needed to achieve climate neutrality by 2030. It protects the city's dedication to change, even when elected administrations change.

Citizens' concern regarding climate and willingness to make it a priority has not become a clear direction for practical transformative action in cities. By signing up to the 2030 ambition through the Cities Mission, cities showed a first level of commitment. Now, this needs to be translated into a practical and cross-departmental commitment to climate action.

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The full local ecosystem of actors in the city - including citizens, civic groups and the media alongside the private and public sector - needs to be positively engaged in the challenge. Creating a dedicated Transition Team to align these multiple actors is key. It enables meaningful collaboration, involving the knowledge, skills and perspectives of the different disciplines and actors across the city for the Mission. Communication, radical collaboration and positive engagement across the political spectrum, including with other levels of government will enhance mandate at city level.

Understand the system

Understanding the challenge at hand from multiple perspectives and learning from past actions has real potential to accelerate the impact of climate efforts. The issues cities face in mitigating and adapting to climate change are not straightforward, so uncovering the barriers that block necessary changes is crucial to enable transformation.

This means moving across value chains, sectors and scales, from the micro to the macro to uncover key interdependencies between challenges. Leading this work, a data-driven Transition team strives to actively engage stakeholders across the city in an honest collective reflection on the successes and difficulties of climate action so far. What is required to close the gap between what current policies can achieve and what is needed for climate neutrality? Turning this evolving understanding into future scenarios of what change might tangibly look like can also help inform the different actors about what is possible and what choices entail.

Co-design a portfolio

Achieving the Mission's 2030 climate neutrality target, as well as generating important environmental, economic and social co-benefits, can only be achieved through coherent interventions using multiple levers of change. Isolated solutions and multiple but uncoordinated roadmaps do not trigger the type of transformation reaching climate-neutrality requires.

The co-creation of a portfolio, facilitated by the Transition Team, is an ongoing process that brings together existing policies, actions and programmes with new or accelerated interventions in a set of transformative actions to achieve the 2030 goals. A portfolio of transformative interventions brings together efforts across departmental silos and diverse stakeholders. It assembles a set of coherent initiatives which can strengthen each other and strengthen the connections between the multiple actors needed to co-design and enact such portfolio. The portfolio co-creation process itself can help overcome obstacles and enable positive synergies. Ensuring the integration of the portfolio's actions to create pathways for transformation, co-benefits and learning is challenging though and will require specific attention when taking action.

Take action

Implementing a portfolio of transformative actions for the transition towards climate neutrality is not a linear path. Practical application can be confronted with many operational or financial uncertainties. These difficulties are eased when a city experiments with new collaborative ways of working.

Ongoing communication is critical to combine efforts across the local ecosystem and attract a wide range of resources from the public, private and civic sector. Taking action also requires great strategic commitment and detailed planning, including investment planning. Action involves a high degree of tactical flexibility and experimentation, where needed.

Experimentation makes it possible to explore new technological solutions, new partnerships and ways of resourcing and investing, as well as behavioral and cultural changes (values, attitudes, perceptions, assumptions). Understanding and tracking why some approaches and alternatives work, and others do not, contributes to determining the portfolio's ongoing feasibility, impact and social acceptability.

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Learn and reflect

Collective learning builds the shared knowledge and capabilities necessary to catalyse change at speed. In the current context, the way forward is not always clear and many of the steps towards climate-neutrality are yet to be discovered. It is thus critical to recognise and resource learning, reflexive practice and adaptive management, both within the municipality and between diverse actors.

The ability to generate data, information and knowledge about actions implies having processes of observation, stock-taking and sharing in place. These processes are the basis for a city's Transition team to facilitate sensemaking, reflection and synthesis with its multiple and diverse actors, in order to generate shared insights about where to go next. Acting upon these insights, in an ongoing manner, creates a learning loop which accelerates change by progressively and continuously moving towards the best possible pathway towards climate-neutrality. The continuous application of learning, through pivoting and adaptive decision-making, is what makes implementation resilient and impactful.

Make it the new normal

To accelerate the transition to climate neutrality, cities need to embed new good practices that sped up inclusive decision making, improved multi-actor collaboration and enabled effective implementation. This can include anything from new budgeting and procurement practices to new ways of combining solutions or forming diverse, effective teams.

It is important to work towards a new culture of embedded practices by identifying new processes that make notable differences, fostering leadership, nurturing networks and trustful relationships. This new culture requires to change guidance and training in order to make new ways of working a joint capability and shared value of all involved actors. In the long run, new standards and processes need to be formalised and embedded in practice so that the local stakeholders can recognise how they can benefit from them. This supports a long-lasting resilient approach that can persist over time. Innovative regulations and policy contribute to establishing this new norm, sometimes enabling replication in other or larger urban contexts when involving multiple governance levels.

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