Context

The context of a societal challenge provides insight into the system surrounding the current situation: the environment, the stakeholders, conflicts and dilemmas, and the opportunities for change.

> Why was this meeting arranged, and who took the initiative?

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> Does everyone recognise this situation and context? Why or why not?

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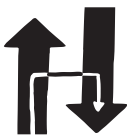
The initial purpose of change relates to the current pressing societal challenge and addresses the WHY question.



> Why are we starting this collaboration?

> What is the urgency?

> What would we like to change about the current situation, and why?

Context

The initiator or facilitator explains why a particular societal issue requires change. The question to the participants is whether they recognise this issue in their context.

Does the issue affect an entire ecosystem (e.g., the street, the neighbourhood, the town or even the entire municipality), specific groups (teams, organisations, collectives) or individuals and the participants themselves?

Is the challenge related to one or more other initiatives or projects?

Context mapping

Mind map

SISCODE Toolbox Local Context

When discussing the societal challenge and the system surrounding a current problematic situation, the interests of different stakeholders and the desired impact and results are often also discussed. Make sure everything said is included on the canvas.

Wina Smeenk, Anja Köppchen based on Lee et al., 2018

Initial purpose of change

What is the purpose of change that the participating stakeholders pursue with respect to this particular context; for themselves (individually), for the organisation (collectively) and from the role they represent?

Specifying common goals also helps determine the desired results and impact and who else should be involved to define the co-design focus.

SISCODE Toolbox Problem Definition

5 Whys

Shake-it exploration cards

Who, what, when where, why, how

The initial purpose of change is the first opportunity for the initiators and participating stakeholders to transform a current pressing situation into the desired future situation. During the co-design sessions, this initial purpose of change will gradually become more defined in the co-design focus (see FOCUS card).

Wina Smeenk, Anja Köppchen based on Lee et al., 2018

Impact

Positive impact is about the effect an initiative or process has and what it means to those involved and their surroundings.

> What should be the meaning and impact of the initiative for the stakeholders?

> How and what kind of societal (socio-cultural/ecological/economic) value does the initiative generate, and for whom?

Impact

A co-design project's positive impact stems from both the results and the process; it is about its meaning and the effect on the people involved.

This can develop as early as the kick-off meeting. It could mean a different mindset, understanding and empathy for each other, a change in behaviour, or a change in culture or future perspective.

Theory of change

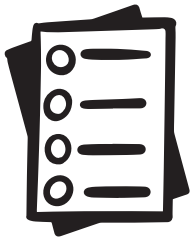
Social Return on Investment

The interests and power of the participating stakeholders affect the final positive impact. Be aware of this at all times.

Wina Smeenk, Anja Köppchen based on Lee et al., 2018

Results

Defining the desired short and long-term results supports stakeholders to clearly understand the outputs of the co-design process they are embarking on together. This also contributes to the intrinsic motivation of those involved.



> What are the concrete results of the initiative and co-design process, and for whom?

> Think about this for both the short and the long term.

SSSCODE © Wina Smeenk, Anja Köppchen based on Lee et al., 2018

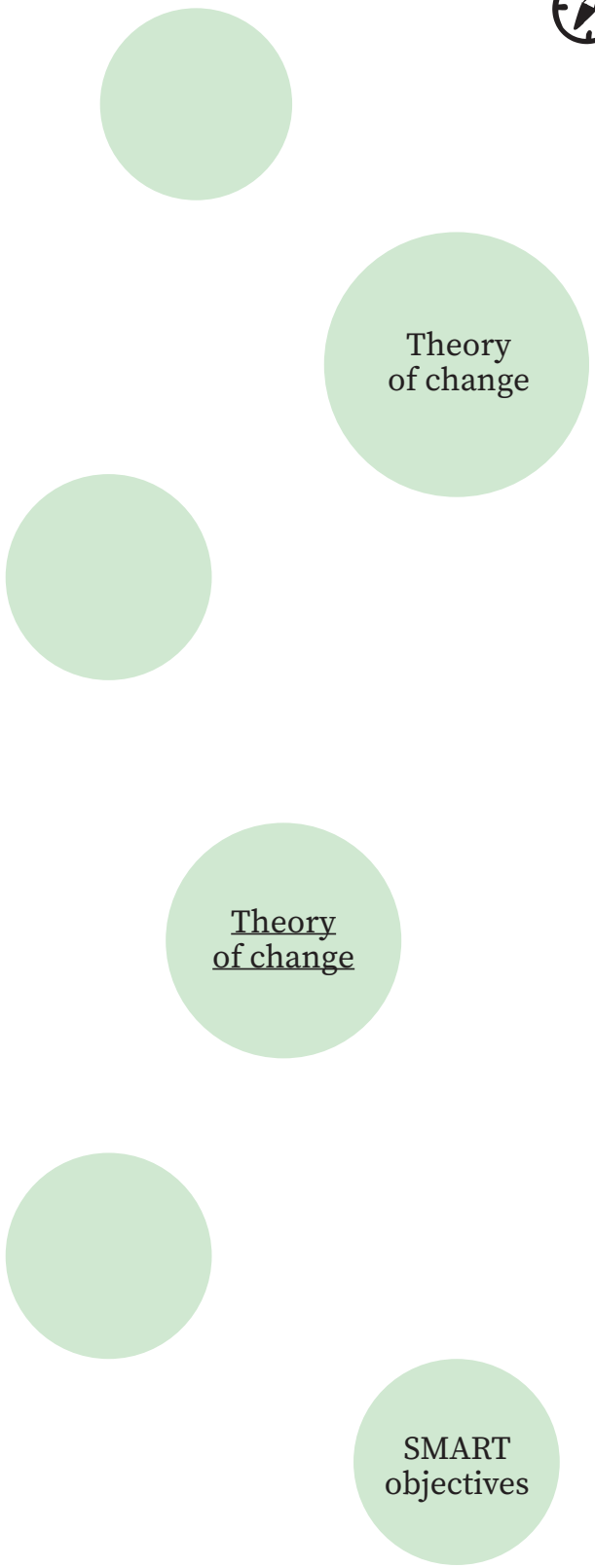
Results

It is important to define concrete desired results to establish what each stakeholder expects from the cooperation and to collaboratively manage these expectations.

Collectively defining the desired short-term results and their long-term significance for people (see IMPACT card) not only benefits stakeholders' intrinsic motivation, but is also key to assessing the success of a co-design process later on.

By formulating the desired results at the start of the process, you can better determine which insights, ideas and resources are needed and who can do what.

A result can be a plan, an idea, a work process, an experience, a product or a service.



The results are influenced by the co-design setting in which co-design activities are carried out, by the type of activities, and by which stakeholders participate in what activities. Be aware of this at all times.

Wina Smeenk, Anja Köppchen based on Lee et al., 2018

Stakeholders

The stakeholders are all people and organisations that participate in or are affected by the initiative, including citizens, businesses, governments, knowledge institutions and non-profit organisations. They want to know the following of each other:

Who	Logo	Logo
Interests > Who has which interests and why? > What is your personal or organisational interest, and why? > Why do you think it is important for something to change?		
Knowledge > Who has what relevant knowledge, expertise and experience? > What knowledge can and will you contribute? > What knowledge and experience do we lack to achieve results and impact?		
Power > Who has what power, strength, influence, role? > What decisions can you make and what can you influence from your role? > Whose decision-making authority is needed to achieve the desired results and impact?		

Who are we missing?

> Are we missing stakeholders who could help us with knowledge, expertise, experience, power or influence to approach the challenge and realise change?

> Are we missing stakeholders from the ecosystem surrounding the challenge that have an interest in this initiative or process?

Logo

Stakeholders

The stakeholders are those present and any interests (similarities and differences), knowledge (experience and expertise), and power (authority, roles, influence) they may or may not have regarding the initiative or process. In other words: what can everyone contribute and what is important to everyone.

In co-design and participation processes, you want everyone to have an equal say; you want everyone's voice to be heard and included. However, there are always differences in interests, knowledge, role, social and organisational background, etc.c.

Who?

Which people and organisations (which perspectives) are part of the context and affect the purpose of change? This could be governments, companies, knowledge institutions, non-profit organisations, residents, citizens, etc. Name them here and, if applicable, distinguish between individuals and organisations.

Interests
Who has which interests and why? Interests can vary widely, are latent and not always clear. Various unspoken interests can complicate and frustrate the process. Think of how you can include all the interests from the very beginning. They can also affect your role as a participant in the process. The same holds for personal motives and concerns. Understanding and empathy for each other's perception and experiences also play an important role. Be open and honest.

Knowledge
Who among the stakeholders has what relevant knowledge? This includes expertise in setting up a co-design process and creating a design or intervention, and practical knowledge of and experience with and from the challenge at hand.

Power
Who among the stakeholders has what power, strength, influence or role? There is often a power imbalance in collaboration processes, though it is not always explicitly mentioned and experienced. Power or influence is not only determined by a person's position or the organisation they represent; sometimes it is about financial power or authority, but power can also stem from someone's network, knowledge, skills or personality. Failure to explicitly acknowledge or account for existing power relations and associated interests can lead to frustration among those involved.

To collaborate respectfully and on equal footing, clarifying and expressing these differences is crucial, as is the space to share or not share power. It is important to create space to question existing power relations, discuss inequalities and take a step back if necessary.

Who are we missing?

Depending on the context, the invitation, the urgency, etc., it is possible that—particularly at the first session—not everyone with an interest in the process or initiative will be present. You may also need other stakeholders' knowledge or power to achieve a certain result or impact

Wina Smeenk, Anja Köppchen based on Lee et al., 2018

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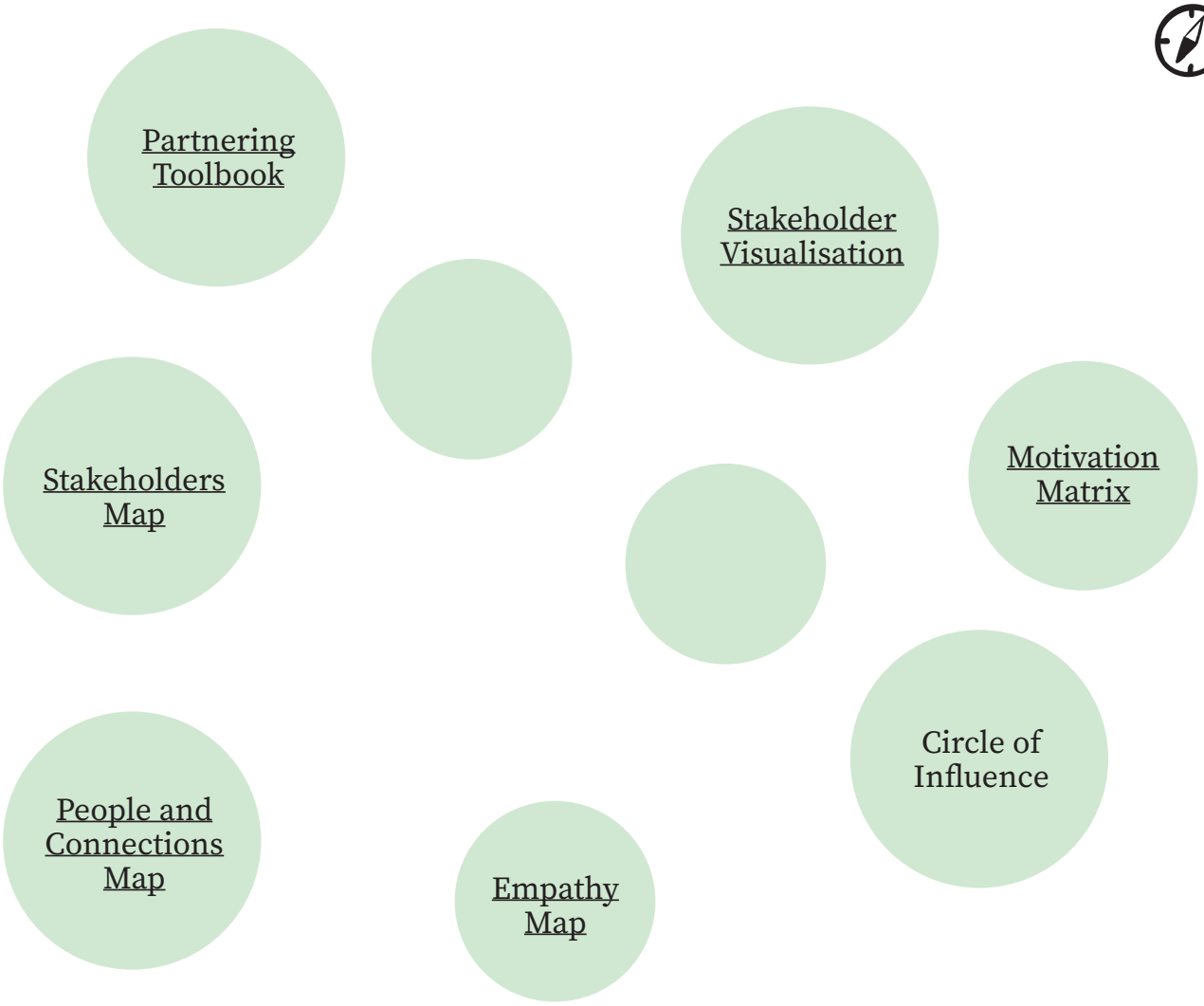


Problems in collaborative processes often arise from tensions between stakeholders, e.g., due to power imbalance or (social) contingencies that evolve, and were not foreseen nor discussed beforehand. The canvas can clarify these issues and relationships beforehand and offer stakeholders a common language to reflect in and on the process.

- **Who:** Add photos and logos to make the overview of stakeholders come alive. Are there any important connections to be drawn? Are there more than six individuals or organisations that have an interest in or are affected by this process or initiative? If so, use an extra sheet of paper. Do not let the space on the canvas limit you.
- **Interests:** Include quotes and visualisations, and establish the similarities and differences between people and organisations.
- **Knowledge:** Make an overview of the necessary knowledge and document who has what knowledge, why it can be useful and what knowledge is still lacking.
- **Power:** Outline the ecosystem and indicate who has which role, influence and decision-making authority.
- **Who are we missing:** Depending on the context, the invitation, the urgency, etc., it is possible that—particularly at the first session—not everyone with an interest in the process or initiative will be present. You may also need other stakeholders' knowledge or power to achieve a certain result or impact in the system. Add pictures and logos of people and organisations and state why they should be involved. Discuss why they are not present now and how they can be involved in the follow-up process.

Focus

The co-design focus gives the collaboration further direction by translating the common purpose of change in a certain situation with certain stakeholders into concrete HOW MIGHT WE questions.

> What do we need to focus on to achieve the desired impact and concrete results?

> How might we ... to achieve ...?

> How do we collectively decide who will do what to achieve results and impact?

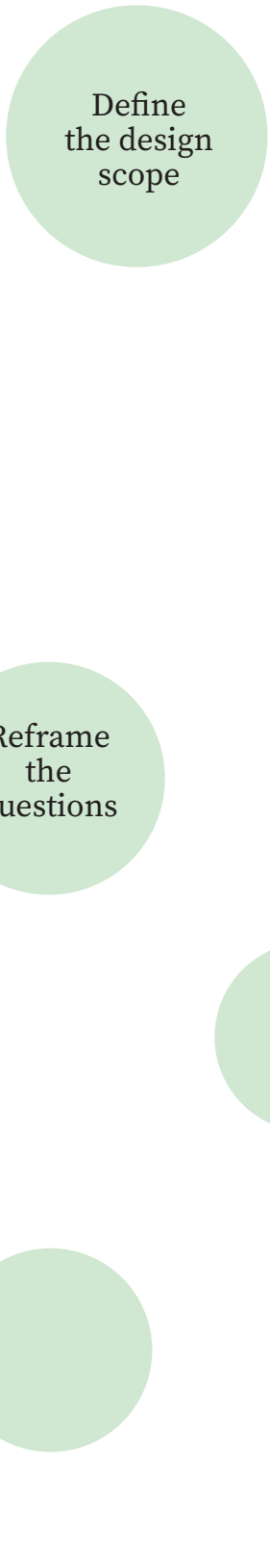
Focus

Once the initial purpose of change, results and impact have been discussed, along with who will participate how, when and why, it is time to examine the collaboration's co-design focus to further clarify and detail the initiative.

This is where you define the question or sub-questions you want to explore together in the coming co-design process (in a certain setting and with certain activities); i.e. the questions for which you want to seek and find design opportunities that will lead to final results and impact.

When participating stakeholders provide a greater variety of knowledge, expertise and experience than the initiators provided at the start of the process, the co-design focus will be more distinct from the initial purpose of change.

The focus also depends on the concrete results and impact that the team aims for and agrees upon.

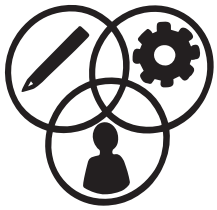


A well-defined HOW MIGHT WE question gives focus, not by starting from a problem but by looking for new possibilities and opportunities within the outlined context and the stakeholders' aspirations.

Wina Smeenk, Anja Köppchen based on Lee et al., 2018

Setting

Consciously creating a pleasant, safe, and appropriate learning environment in which co-design activities can be conducted together contributes to an inclusive and participatory co-design process.



> Which collaborative learning environments should be created or selected?

> What space, people and resources are needed to create this setting?

> Who will take the lead on that?

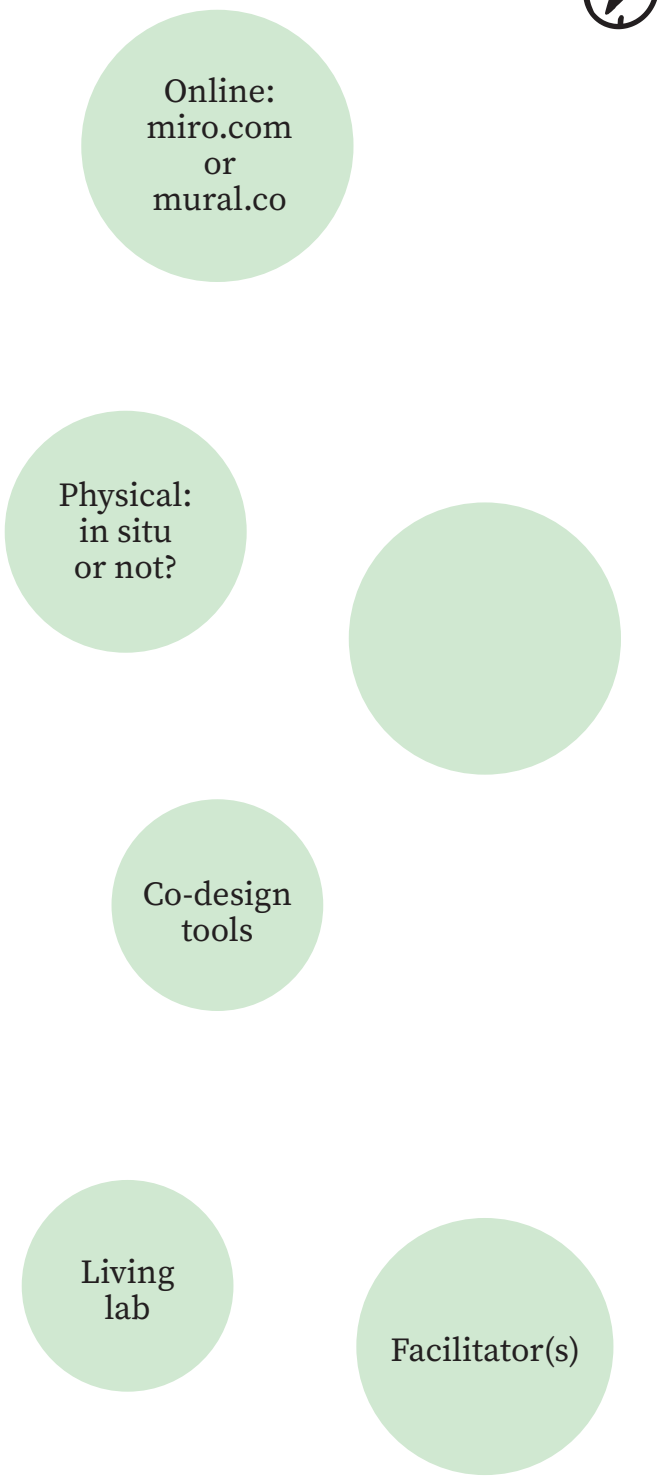
Setting

The learning environments in which the co-design activities will be conducted can be selected in situ (in context) or not (neutral/ safe). This largely depends on the co-design focus, the context and the participating stakeholders.

Also consider who will be facilitating the activities, who you will be inviting and how, whether there will be parallel sessions in sub-teams or a plenary session, in a place accessible to all stakeholders, whether it will take place online or offline, at what time the activities will take place, how long the process will/may take, whether refreshments and coffee/tea are needed, etc.

The resources and people needed include the budget for facilitators, the hours for those involved, as well as knowledge, expertise, experience and design materials.

The co-design focus and the diversity (in interests, knowledge and power) of the participating stakeholders affect the co-design setting and activities.



A (social) designer can be a good co-design process developer and facilitator: both for the setting and activities.

It is good to consider inclusiveness: the choice of a physical space or online environment has implications for accessibility. Does your choice exclude anyone?

Wina Smeenk, Anja Köppchen based on Lee et al., 2018

Activities

The co-design activities are aimed at 1) gaining a better understanding, step by step, of the current situation and the experiences of those involved, 2) using the stakeholders' interests (or intrinsic motivation), knowledge and power to reach new ideas and thought processes, and 3) changing the situation to achieve the desired impact and results.

> What co-design process and associated activities will we develop, set up and carry out together (how long, in what order, simultaneously or in sequence)?

> What resources and people do we need for that?

> When do we make what decision or reach a conclusion?

Activities

The type of co-design activities that will be selected and developed, in what order, and how they will be conducted depends on the time taken for the process, the co-design focus, the context and the participating stakeholders.

In any case, it involves an iterative co-design process of divergence and convergence leading to initial ideas, clearly defined concepts, prototypes, testing and a conclusion.

This will require multiple sessions and activities, and you should consider an evaluation and test with the community and constituencies of the stakeholders.

It is also important to start with the most appealing and most relevant HOW MIGHT WE question, as previously defined in the co-design focus. Then, starting from that question, select or develop appropriate methods and materials to obtain initial ideas to achieve results and impact.

Define the proces (design thinking; SISCODE; Shake It!)

Generate and select ideas and concepts

Use co-design tools

Make prototypes, evaluate and conclude

When selecting and developing the process, consider the methods and materials you intend to or can use, and in what order, to answer the HOW MIGHT WE question or questions creatively. A (social) designer can also support you here.

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This framework is high-level and non-exhaustive and is not, 2019