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Insight notes on co-producing value-added governance instruments for restorative NbS

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Introduction

Urban policy currently faces multifaceted challenges that extend beyond administrative boundaries, encompassing issues ranging from climate change impacts to social equity concerns. Collaborative efforts are imperative to address these issues in order to ensure that relevant actor groups (including e.g. different ministries, the general public, private sector, etc.) work together to develop solutions that are accepted, sustainable, and effective with nature-based solutions (NbS) emerging as promising strategies (EU Commission et al., 2023a). Given the importance of collaboration and the utilisation of co-creation methods, this document aims to provide insights that can be useful for fostering more participatory and collaborative processes in the design and implementation of NbS.

To this aim, Task 2.3 (Work Package 2) in the INTERLACE project sought to categorize and co-produce local governance solutions. This task aimed to foster ecologically coherent urban planning and decision-making for urban ecosystem restoration and rehabilitation and green space planning through improved governance. It was achieved by 1.) Developing the Urban Governance Atlas (UGA) and 2.) Co-producing and testing city-specific governance instruments for the INTERLACE partner cities (i.e. CBIMA (Costa Rica), Chemnitz (Germany), Envigado (Colombia), Granollers (Spain), Krakow Metropolitan Area (KMA) (Poland) and Portoviejo (Ecuador)). This document aims to clarify part 2 of Task 2.3, hereafter referred to as Task 2.3b.

The document delves into the implementation process of Task 2.3b, focusing on the co-creation of governance instruments with partner cities, as part of the activities outlined in WP2 of the INTERLACE project. Drawing from structured exchange with city representatives and the expertise of the task team, it serves as a reflective piece and sheds light on the practicalities of co-creating NbS. The process resulted in the co-creation of 19 governance instruments across the six cities. A total of 18 governance instruments were planned, i.e. three per city, but Chemnitz developed four instruments. Governance instruments can be understood in this context to refer to organizational, financial, political, or legal instruments that guide and organize the interactions among and collective actions taken by public and private actors involved in developing and implementing NbS for restoration and rehabilitation of urban ecosystems. In the case of the INTERLACE cities, examples include a regulation for pocket parks or a Green Space Design Guide.

Structured systematically, the report outlines the similarities and differences in the design and co-production processes across partner cities in the EU and CELAC regions. It provides insights into the practicalities of co-creation processes and offers valuable considerations for planning collaborative governance implementations in cities. Furthermore, it reflects on the use of project resources such as the co-creation protocols, fiches and interviews, and complementary deliverables like UGA and the city policy analyses conducted in Task 2.1. The document also includes key lessons learned from the process, providing essential considerations for future projects. The primary audience is the INTERLACE project team, serving as an internal reflection method on learning around co-creation of NbS governance instruments.

Co-governance describes a collaborative approach to designing, implementing, maintaining or monitoring NBS, where the active involvement of the local community, including NGOs and other stakeholders such as private sector actors, is encouraged to empower individuals to develop a sense of ownership for their local environment and equip them with new capacities and knowledge.

Co-creation or co-production is defined in different ways but emphasizes the joint collaboration of stakeholders and can be considered as systematic process of creating new solutions with people (not for them) involving citizens and communities in policy and service development (Mahmoud et al. 2021). The process of co-creation uses participatory methods, which can be enabled and fostered by co-governance processes.

Approach and methodology

This section provides an overview of the methodologies developed to support the task implementation and how those were used by partner cities in practice in co-creating their governance instruments. Given the complex task of supporting co-creation processes in cities with diverse contexts and needs, the work team developed a series of tools to support the cities' processes allowing them to systematically gather information on the process but also to actively learn and reflect during the co-creation process. Additionally, the project design foresaw a series of deliverables to inform the task implementation process such as the Policy Coherence Analysis Report (D2.1), the Governance Performance Assessment Report (D2.2) and the Urban Governance Atlas (D2.3). Cities were encouraged to take these resources into account in their co-creation processes, consisting of three different stages:

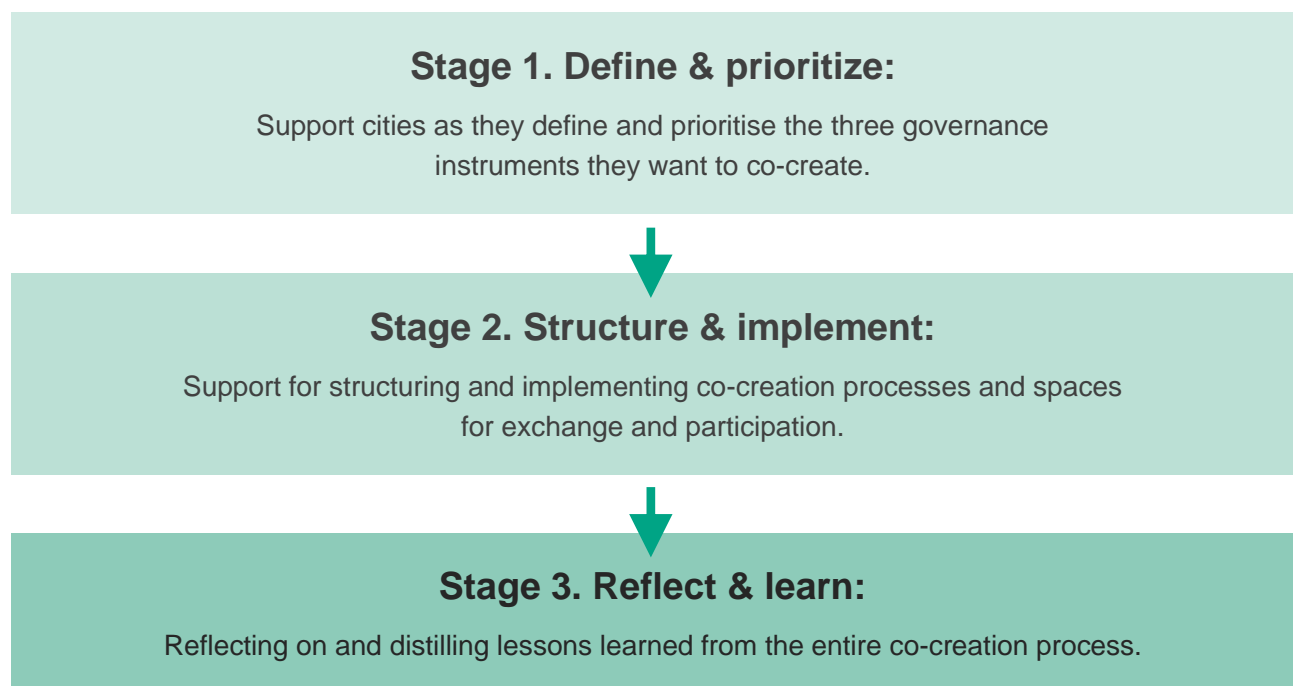


Figure 1: Different stages of the co-creation process.

During the first stage, the team developed tailored tools that could be adapted to each city's needs, including the clarification of priorities, work scales, and collaboration objectives. A template was created to keep an internal overview the selected policy instruments by the cities. This enabled feedback alignment with the co-creation aim in policy instrument design. Discussions took place during the City Focal Point meetings, facilitating mutual learning and exchange among cities. Additionally, a Question & Answer document was crafted to kick-start the process, offering key information, examples, steps, timeline, and contact points. The ambition was to co-create three governance instruments per city. Their implementation within the project lifetime was not a prerequisite, but the aim was to develop a set of actionable instruments to address the identified windows of opportunity and needs identified in each INTERLACE partner city. The instruments should have reached a “ready-to-be-implemented”-stage during the project duration.

To systematically present process learnings, the team furthermore developed “**co-creation fiches**”. A fiche can be understood as a type of working document summarizing targeted information. In the case of the co-creation processes, these fiches outline the governance instrument's framework, objectives, and scope and served to provide municipalities with a clear vision of the purpose of the co-creation processes.

For stage 2, a “**co-creation protocol**” was created, a tool adapted to the specific needs of each city, derived from work done particularly in WP3 on co-creation in the project. This document is a practical tool that allows municipalities to plan how to carry out the co-creation of instruments, reflect on the actors to involve, and define participation spaces and objectives. It is a dynamic document that evolved during the design and implementation process of the instruments, and where the aspects of the process are detailed.

For stage 3, a **questionnaire** was designed for interviews with each of the partner cities to understand how the process was approached, the challenges, learnings, and achievements. Interviews with all six INTERLACE cities were conducted during the annual consortium meeting in November 2023 in Colombia. These results are part of the information and reflections that will be outlined in this document.

Learnings from the co-production process

Despite differences in regional contexts, city partners in both the EU and Latin America (CELAC) regions have employed similar co-production processes to develop their governance instruments within the INTERLACE project. However, there are several notable variations as well. Learnings from this process are outlined in this section.

The cities started the development of the governance instruments based on their identified needs through a co-creative process in order to value the experiences and perspectives of those likely to be affected and of those who are foreseen to use the generated knowledge (EU Commission et al., 2023b). The main objective of the co-creation process for all municipalities was to involve local stakeholders in the development process of most governance instruments to increase the commitment to policy action. Another objective, especially in Granollers, was to establish solid governance mechanisms for the instruments in the form of regular meetings with stakeholders, the formation of working groups or the development of a work plan to structure the implementation process.

A common element in both the CELAC and European cities was the **inclusion of diverse stakeholders**. Cities such as CBIMA, Envigado, and Portoviejo, as well as Chemnitz, Granollers, and the Metropolitan Region of Kraków (MR Kraków), encouraged the participation of community members, experts, municipal technicians, civil society organization representatives, and, in some cases, private stakeholders. This diversity of perspectives enriched the process and ensured that the instruments responded to the challenges identified with regards to urban ecosystem restoration (see Knoblauch et al. 2021).

Transparency throughout all stages of the process was another shared feature. Information was openly shared to keep all stakeholders informed about decisions and progress, fostering trust and collaboration. Both CELAC and European cities emphasized the importance of transparency to maintain stakeholder engagement and trust.

Flexibility and adaptability were also crucial in both regions. The co-creation process required significant flexibility to adapt to changes and incorporate new ideas and information. In Latin American cities, changes in authorities posed a challenge that slowed down the processes, similar to the administrative and financial challenges faced by European cities like Chemnitz and Granollers due to the COVID-19 pandemic. At KMA, a change of the team responsible for the project resulted in a shift in the stakeholder group and a re-analysis of the priorities and objectives of the task.

The co-creative methodology has given a voice to all stakeholders involved, allowing them to contribute meaningfully to the decision-making process as well as in the design and implementation of the instruments. This **empowerment** was particularly important for the CELAC countries, where participation processes are both, less common and less institutionalized. In this context, the **professional facilitations** provided by the INTERLACE project teams have been a key element in the process of co-creation, systematization, and implementation of the initiatives.

Despite these shared approaches, both regions faced unique challenges. In CELAC cities, a **lack of knowledge or non-use of previous products** developed by the INTERLACE project, such as the Urban Governance Atlas and the Policy Coherence Analysis, was noted. Only one city used the Urban Governance Atlas, and none used the Policy Coherence Analysis. Similarly, KMA did not use these tools because they were not communicated well to the new team after the change in personnel. In contrast, Chemnitz and Granollers, although familiar with these tools, did not find them fully applicable to their contexts. Both cities preferring to use their existing tools. In contrast, the **co-creation protocol** was used by all the cities and proved helpful in structuring and rethinking existing instruments, especially in relation to stakeholder involvement.

Diverse interests and perspectives among stakeholders posed a challenge in both regions. Reaching consensus was difficult, especially when multiple local government agencies with different responsibilities and visions were involved. **Power inequalities** also affected the co-production process, with organized groups and communities often having less influence on decision-making.

In both regions, the **lack of resources and capacities** hindered effective participation and the successful implementation of governance instruments. Additionally, municipal staff changes significantly affected the process, as seen in Envigado and Portoviejo where over 80% of the technical staff involved in the development of governance instruments changed mid-way through the process. Similarly, Chemnitz, Granollers and KMA experienced disruptions due to administrative changes and external factors.

Overall, a key component of the co-creation process is **public participation**. However, Chemnitz preferred to involve experts or other stakeholders rather than other citizens, as the latter were seen as less constructive and experts as more important for the implementation and the credibility of the instruments. Granollers also focused on including experts in participation processes and then changed to focus on citizen participation. For the KMA, participation processes were already in place before INTERLACE initiated the co-creation process.

There is an overarching consensus in all the municipalities that they have had positive experiences with the co-creation process, especially in terms of stakeholder involvement. In Chemnitz, the process is still ongoing, but the co-creation approach is perceived as crucial for cross-sectoral topics like the interactive map on climate-related matters. In the KMA, however, broad and overlapping topics were perceived as detrimental to the co-creation process as it overwhelmed stakeholders. Instead, a more focused selection was found to be more effective. Also, the process of developing a list of actions and the discussions with local government officials sharpened the methodology of the selected governance tools. In Granollers, the co-creation process led to a "climate of complicity and cooperation" between the city council's departments. INTERLACE has brought about a change in procedures from a top-down process towards more joint work with experts and citizens and has also had a positive impact on the design of governance instruments. Another relevant factor highlighted by Granollers is the impact of the personal commitment of the administrative staff who kick-started the implementation of the instruments.

Overview of and learnings from the design of the governance instruments

The governance instruments developed by the six CELAC and European cities in INTERLACE exhibit both similarities and differences in their design, reflecting regional priorities and challenges. This section provides an overview of the governance instruments that were designed through the co-creation process as well as derived learnings.

In both regions, the instruments aimed to address environmental management, biodiversity, and climate change challenges. Four cities – CBIMA, Chemnitz, Envigado, and Portoviejo – tailored their instruments to local needs, encompassing agreement-based or cooperative instruments as well as legislative, regulatory, and strategic instruments. Granollers and KMA adopted a multi-level approach, implementing instruments at various government levels.

In total, 19 instruments were produced. Envigado started working on four instruments, but after the political change, it continued with three, as originally envisaged. In Chemnitz, the city worked on three instruments, but a fourth one emerged from this work, which is why there are a total of 19 governance instruments. 42 % of these are regulatory instruments. 32 % of the instruments are agreement-based or cooperative instruments, with Granollers implementing only this type. Out of the 19 instruments, not one fiscal instrument is implemented (see Figure 2). For a list of all the different instruments, see Table 2 in the Annex.

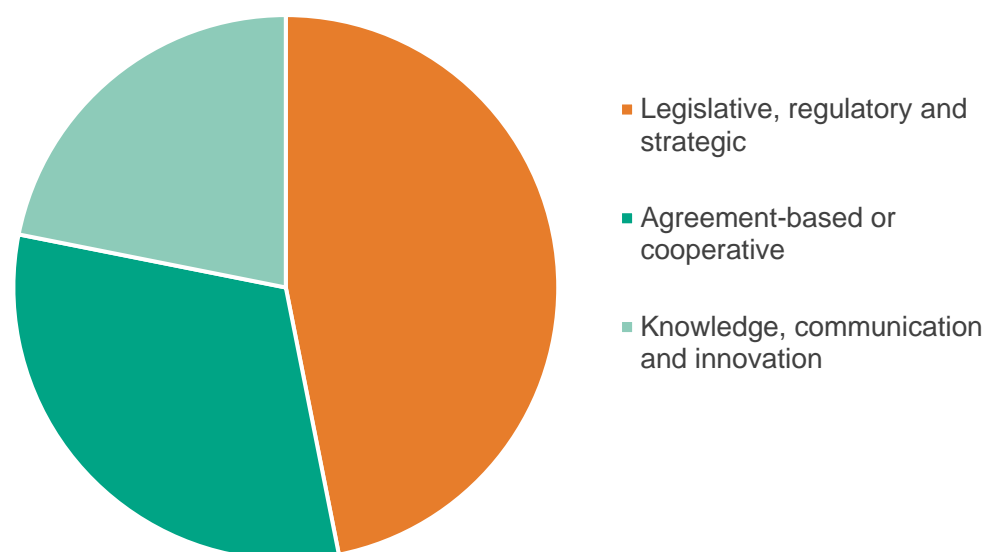


Figure 2: Distribution of instrument types.

Table 1 shows the distribution of the different governance instruments, i.e. which instrument belongs to which category. As mentioned above, no economic or fiscal instruments were implemented. On the other hand, almost all cities developed one or two instruments in the category 'legislative, regulatory and strategic instruments', e.g. several plans were developed. Two cities (Envigado and Granollers) implemented only one type of instrument, while the other four cities implemented two or three types of instruments each.

	Legislative, regulatory and strategic	Economic and fiscal	Agreement-based or cooperative	Knowledge, communication and innovation
CBIMA	#3		#1, #2	
Chemnitz	#3		#4	#1, #2
Envigado	#1, #2, #3			
Granollers			#1, #2, #3	
KMA	#1, #2			#3
Portoviejo	#2, #3			#1
Total	9 (45%)	0 (0%)	6 (30%)	4 (21%)

Table 1: Distribution of instrument type per city – overview.

Stakeholder involvement was a critical aspect of the design process in both regions. CELAC cities emphasized the inclusion of diverse public and private stakeholders, while European cities like Chemnitz and Granollers preferred involving experts and other stakeholders over the general public, viewing them as more constructive for the implementation and credibility of the instruments. In KMA, established participatory processes prior to INTERLACE focused less on direct citizen involvement. However, while both regions identified early and comprehensive stakeholder engagement as a success factor, CELAC cities faced delays due to changes in municipal authorities, affecting the design and implementation

timeline. Similarly, European cities encountered external challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic and funding issues, which impacted the continuity and effectiveness of their governance instruments.

Monitoring practices varied within and between regions. In CELAC cities, monitoring was integrated into the legal frameworks supporting environmental conservation. European cities like Chemnitz tracked website views for their interactive climate map, while KMA implemented annual indicator evaluations for two of their three instruments. Granollers used regular reporting and multi-stakeholder committee meetings to monitor their instruments.

Key lessons from both regions highlight the importance of **involving stakeholders from different sectors early in the process**. In Chemnitz, the lack of management-level staff hindered progress, emphasizing the need for their involvement in co-creative processes. Granollers argued that projects need to benefit the whole community and gain political support for sustained relevance and performance. KMA and Granollers stressed the importance of allowing sufficient time for developing ideas and maintaining stakeholder engagement without rushing the process.

The governance instruments in the municipalities are all **part of a broader policy framework** at municipal or regional level. Most of them addressed the challenge of ecologic connectivity, one instrument in Granollers put a stronger focus on social equity issues and one in Chemnitz on environmental education, in both cases demonstrating a broader approach to climate change mitigation and adaptation. While several instruments are primarily legislative, regulatory and strategic in nature, three cities also included at least one instrument aimed at improving knowledge, communication and innovation, e.g. through public awareness raising.

Overall, the experiences from CELAC and European cities underscore that early and extensive stakeholder engagement, process flexibility, and a clear focus on local needs and challenges are vital for the successful development and implementation of governance instruments.

Conclusions

A general challenge when cities or municipalities are involved in research projects is to match the political reality on the ground with the work plan of a project. With INTERLACE running over several years, it was clear from the beginning that there were elections to occur in several municipalities at different times during the lifespan of the project. In the case of the three CELAC cities, the change of government was an element that delayed and limited the task.

The definition of the type of instrument was linked to the needs of the various municipalities involved in the INTERLACE project. Here, we observe some differences between the two regions: Instruments that belong to the category “Agreement-based or cooperative instrument” have in the case of Latin American cities a greater probability of being implemented because they mainly depend on the will of those involved. The willingness of the participants and their interest in moving the agreements forward is a key factor in achieving the level of “being implemented”. This is also true because these types of instruments are easier to implement, i.e. more independent from the elected officials.

In total, all the cities have already reached the status “ready to be implemented” for their governance instruments – or will do so within the rest of this year. In addition, all the cities have already implemented at least one governance instrument and for instance MR Kraków has secured funding to continue with all

three instruments. In contrast, the CELAC cities failed to establish mechanisms for the financing required for the maintenance-implementation of the instrument in the co-creation process. The continuation of the developed governance instruments are thus not secured yet.

A success factor mentioned by the participants is the participation of the various municipal departments in the process of construction and validation of the instrument.

Literature

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Annex

City		Governance Instrument	Type of Instrument	Governmental Level of Implementation
CBIMA, Costa Rica	#1	CBIMA citizen monitoring network in the face of climate change	Agreement-based or cooperative	Intermunicipal Level
	#2	Public-Private Collaboration for Ecological Restoration in La Sabanita	Agreement-based or cooperative	Intermunicipal Level
	#3	Pocket Parks Regulations	Legislative, regulatory, strategic	Municipal Level
Chemnitz, Germany	#1	Campaign for more urban green	Knowledge, communication & innovation	Municipal Level
	#2	Climap (comprehensive map about climate topics)	Knowledge, communication & innovation	Municipal Level
	#3	Climate adopted planning in zoning plans	Legislative, regulatory, strategic	Municipal Level
	#4	Cross-departmental working group on urban green	Agreement-based or cooperative	Municipal Level
Envigado, Colombia	#1	Public Policy for the Conservation and Comprehensive Management of Biodiversity and its Ecosystem Services in the municipality of Envigado.	Legislative, regulatory, strategic	Municipal Level
	#2	Declaration of La Ayurá Micro- watershed as Cultural, Symbolic and Natural Heritage of the city of Envigado	Legislative, regulatory, strategic	Municipal Level
	#3	Formulation of the Management Plan of the Local System of Protected Areas of the Municipality of Envigado – SILAPE-	Legislative, regulatory, strategic	Municipal Level
Granollers, Spain	#1	Forest stewardship by a school in Can Gili forest	Agreement-based or cooperative	Municipal and District
	#2	Instrument to promote local agriculture and organic food applying an inclusive approach	Agreement-based or cooperative	Municipal
	#3	River Congost river stewardship agreement between the Catalan Water Agency and the town councils of Canovelles, Les Franqueses del Vallès and Granollers	Agreement-based or cooperative	Intermunicipal
Krakow Metropolitan Area, Poland	#1	Chapter on GBI development in action plan for transformation into an environmentally friendly region	Legislative, regulatory, strategic	Interregional / Intermunicipal
	#2	Chapter in action plan for spatial development concerning the protection of open green areas, ecosystems and the connectivity of blue/green spaces	Legislative, regulatory, strategic	Interregional / Intermunicipal
	#3	Application of the vulnerability maps (from WP3)	Knowledge, communication & innovation	Interregional / Intermunicipal
Portoviejo, Ecuador	#1	Dissemination and ownership strategy of the Special Plan "River Corridor"	Knowledge, communication & innovation	Municipal Level
	#2	Technical Manual of Urban Trees	Legislative, regulatory, strategic	Municipal Level
	#3	Green Space Design Guide	Legislative, regulatory, strategic	Municipal Level

Table 2: List of governance instruments developed per city.



INTERLACE is a four year project that will empower and equip European and Latin American cities to restore urban ecosystems, resulting in more liveable, resilient and inclusive cities that benefit people and nature.


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INTERLACE es un proyecto de cuatro años que busca empoderar y apoyar ciudades de Europa y América Latina en la restauración de ecosistemas urbanos, resultando en ciudades más vivibles, inclusivas y resilientes para el beneficio de la gente y la naturaleza.

Project Partners



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