



# LET'S DO IT ONLINE!?

## LESSONS LEARNED FROM MOVING PARTICIPATIVE PROCESSES ONLINE

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# WHAT'S IN THIS GUIDE?

This is a guide breaking down the key learnings from the study '**Let's Do it Online?! Challenges and Lessons for Inclusive Virtual Participation**' by **Manderscheid et al.** (2022).

The Edible Cities Network project is a large-scale **multi-stakeholder project** working with **non-governmental organisations (NGOs), community groups, small/medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), city authorities, academics, and individuals**. One part of the project focuses on using **participatory planning approaches** to help city authorities anchor **nature-based, food system innovations** into their urban planning in order to tackle environmental and social challenges. This process was initiated in six cities: Berlin (Germany), Carthage (Tunisia), Sant Feliu de Llobregat (Spain), Šempeter pri Gorici (Slovenia), Lomé (Togo), and Letchworth (UK). One year into the project, the Covid-19 pandemic forced the **face-to-face participatory planning process to go online**.

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# THE MASTERPLANNING PROCESS

A process is used called the '**Transition Pathway Methodology (TPM)**', which is participatory approach for strategic planning engaging various stakeholders.



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There are three phases:

1. **System development:** The creation of a 'system model', to better understand the challenges in the city
2. **Scenario development:** The design of several scenarios that show how challenges can be overcome using nature-based food system innovations
3. **Transfer development:** The development of concrete strategies and action plans, detailing how the most preferable scenario can be reached.

# #1

## MOVING A PROCESS ONLINE CAN CREATE NEW BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION

Online tools are often considered a **suitable and cheaper** way to manage former face-to-face activities. However, **working online challenges participation** and it raises questions about **user capability, accessibility of technology,** and whether there is **available infrastructure** to support it. In participatory processes, we need to be aware of these obstacles that online participation can bring up.



# #2

## TRANSFERRING A PROCESS ONLINE TAKES A LOT OF ADMINISTRATIVE WORK

The transfer of a face-to-face process to online demands **intensive preparation**. The new tools and requirements of online working must be **aligned with the needs and capacities of your stakeholders**. It also involves working out basic issues such as time zone differences. These new formats **were challenging in all cities and required extensive preparatory work**.



# #3

## PARTICIPATORY PROCESSES CANNOT BE 'ONE-SIZE-FITS-ALL'

Piloting and introducing participatory processes **online took more time and needed individual adaptation according to local demographics** - even in cities with good infrastructure and high rates of digital literacy. **What participation means may have to change**; in areas with limited internet access and connectivity, participation may focus simply on access and connectivity to the platform you are trying to use.



# #4

## DIGITAL EQUITY IS MORE THAN ONLY ACCESS TO TECHNOLOGY

**Structural disadvantages** manifest in the **technological sphere**, too. **Transitions to online work must consider participants' specific situations and the structures within which they exist.** Even in areas with good technological infrastructure, **identities such as gender can hinder participation**, for example, due to caring duties. **Structural identities** may mean that the **quality of time a participant can spend online may be lessened**, even if they can access technology. Interactions and opportunities need to be tailored and designed in conjunction with the group.



# #5

## DON'T FORGET NON-DIGITAL MITIGATION MEASURES

Organisational measures - **extending deadlines, splitting up tasks, providing more support** - were crucial for our transition to online processes. These were locally adapted and helped **ensure equity, access, and participation**. This **allowed time for participants to familiarise themselves** with the necessary tools and get used to new forms of interaction.





# STAY CONNECTED!

This guide is based on the paper 'Let's do it Online?!', written by **Maximilian Manderscheid** et. al. You can read the full paper [here](#), and contact the author at **[maximilian.manderscheid@boku.ac.at](mailto:maximilian.manderscheid@boku.ac.at)**.



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