

An illustration of a diverse group of people shown in profile, facing right. The individuals are rendered in various colors including shades of orange, green, blue, and pink. The background is a mix of these colors, creating a vibrant, multi-colored effect. The overall style is flat and modern.

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**.

THE MASTERPLANNING PROCESS

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



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**.



Want to know more about the Edible Cities Network?

Visit our website to learn more about the project, access our range of resources, sign up for upcoming events and register for free to become a member of the network.



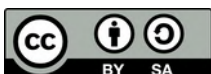
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