Narratives of Change

D6.4

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LOCALISED

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List of Abbreviations

BCN	City of Barcelona, Agenda 2030 Department
BeC	Barcelona en Comú
CAST	Climate Action Strategiser
CMF	Climate Media Factory
CoM	Covenant of Mayors
D	Deliverable
ECCA	European Conference of Climate Change Adaptation
FZJ	Forschungszentrum Jülich
IMP	Szewalski Institute of Fluid-Flow Machinery, Polish Academy of Science
IREC	Catalonia Institute for Energy Research
M	Project Month
MAGGS	Metropolitan Area Gdańsk-Gdynia-Sopot
ÖGUT	Österreichische Gesellschaft für Umwelt und Technik
SECAP	Sustainable Energy and Climate Action Plans
T	Task

Executive Summary

This report presents the outcomes of Task 6.4 (T6.4) of the LOCALISED project, which develops "narratives of change" to support citizen engagement in local and regional climate action.

Grounded in narrative theory and participatory research conducted across three diverse contexts—Vienna, Barcelona, and the MAGGS region—the report demonstrated that effective climate communication must move beyond behavioural messaging or moral appeals. Instead, it must connect to lived experience, address structural barriers, and support democratic legitimacy in times of transition.

The reports central contribution is five key change narratives that local actors can use alongside LOCALISED tools. Each narrative includes essential structural elements—actors, motivations, barriers, antagonists, and leverage points—providing a strategic framing resource rather than prescriptive templates. Local actors can adapt, expand, and contest these narratives to fit their specific contexts and needs.

The narratives aim to foster agency, build trust, and bridge the gap between abstract policy goals and tangible, equitable futures. This deliverable offers a practical framework for repositioning citizens not merely as beneficiaries of climate policy, but as vital protagonists actively shaping equitable and locally rooted climate transitions.

1 Introduction

The overarching goal of LOCALISED Work Package 6 (WP6) is to empower citizens to engage meaningfully and impactfully in local and regional climate action. Task 6.4 (T6.4) contributes to this aim by developing and delivering corresponding "narratives of change". This deliverable is about these narratives, what they are, and what they're not supposed to be. It documents and reflects on how the responsible partners—Climate Media Factory (CMF) and ÖGUT—approached and collaborated on this task, predominantly during the second half of the project.

The need to work on narratives, rather than exclusively on technical solutions, stems directly from the project's scope and ambition. LOCALISED aims to co-design and develop user-friendly tools and services for municipalities, regional administrations, policy makers, and small- and medium-sized enterprises. These tools are intended for use at local and regional levels, supporting the development and implementation of mitigation and adaptation strategies, including Sustainable Energy and Climate Action Plans (SECAPs). On the backend, LOCALISED develops and provides downscaled national decarbonisation trajectories—aligned with Europe's net-zero target—disaggregated to the European NUTS-3 level (see D3.1 for more detailed information). This downscaling is necessary for translating national climate plans into local realities and supporting their implementation. As Patil et al. (2024) put it: "National-level climate action plans are often formulated broadly. Spatially disaggregating these plans to individual municipalities can offer substantial benefits, such as enabling regional climate action strategies and assessing the feasibility of national objectives." (p. 1)

However, downscaling is not solely a technical or data-driven task—it is also a socio-political, and with that also a narrative one. To engage broad segments of the population—or at least critical masses—in local and regional climate transitions, it is essential to tell compelling, honest, meaningful, and mobilising stories about the envisioned change and how it is supposed to be achieved. But, while global narratives and high-level storylines often dominate the climate discourse, they are frequently misaligned with the lived realities at subnational and local levels—precisely where the impacts of climate change, and responses to it, most tangibly unfold. This partly also a problem of existing narratives about how local climate politics can be effective. They either focus on international frontrunner (mega)cities or are being misused as city marketing campaigns. These narratives typically promote theoretical and fragmented approaches—such as the *sponge city* or the *15-minute city*—while overlooking and overwriting already existing narratives and experiences of different actors in the diverse political ecologies on-site.

Put differently: What does "net-zero by 2050" mean at the local level? What does climate adaptation imply for everyday life in each municipality? How will it reshape individual and collective experiences? And who gets a say in shaping these

processes? Who acts, with whom, for what reasons and motivations, against which barriers and antagonists, and using what kinds of leverage? What narratives of change resonate locally, while remaining aligned with broader climate goals?

Based on participatory activities and research conducted in the project's partner cities—Vienna (VIE), Barcelona (BCN), and the Gdańsk-Gdynia-Sopot Metropolitan Area (MAGGS)—we have sought to explore these questions and translate the findings into outputs with practical value for the project's target groups. One aspect of this work is the question of who is ultimately meant to disseminate the developed narratives and who is supposed to be influenced by them—aspects that should not be neglected in narrative-focused endeavours.

LOCALISED addresses this challenge by developing the narratives in close relation to the Climate Action Strategiser (CAST), the Citizen Engager (CE), and the broader communication activities associated with these tools. The aim is to demonstrate to CAST users—i.e., members of local and regional administrations, businesses, and professionals responsible for decarbonisation and/or adaptation planning and implementation—the co-benefits of actually integrating citizens' interests and perspectives in their work; to encourage them to think beyond administrative silos and consider multifaceted social pathways to net-zero beyond purely technical as well as purely lifestyle- or behaviour-oriented approaches.

The following chapters dive deeper into the process of narrative development. Chapter 2 presents key definitional and theoretical considerations about what narratives are, why they matter in urban climate planning, and how they can—or cannot—foster socio-political change at the local and regional level. Chapter 3 reviews the research conducted in the three partner cities and regions, extracts narrative elements, and connects them to earlier activities in WP6. Based on this research, chapter 4 then proposes five narrative templates to be further developed in practice. The deliverable closes with concluding remarks.

2 How narratives can (not) foster change

When working on and with narratives, one of the first and most crucial questions is: what do we mean by "narrative"? The term is widely used across disciplines and contexts, but it often carries different connotations and implications. What's more, the term is also often conflated or even confused with other concepts frequently used in political communication such as "storytelling", "framing", "messaging", "values", and "worldviews".

In "Seduced by Story", the literary scholar Peter Brooks (2022) explores how the tools and insights of narratology—the study of narrative form, structure, and function—can help us better understand the pervasive role of narrative in contemporary culture. Drawing on his decades of work in literary theory and psychoanalysis, Brooks argues that while narrative is essential to how humans

make sense of the world, its current ubiquity across domains like politics, law, journalism, and therapy has led to a kind of cultural overvaluation, sometimes at the expense of definitional clarity and critical thinking. Brooks argues that the „proliferation of storytelling throughout social institutions of all types may have trivialized the notion of narrative, but narrative isn't itself a trivial phenomenon. It responds, however obtusely or exploitatively, to a new awareness that reality as we experience it is to a large degree narratively constructed." (p. 9-10)

In essence, Brooks argues, while narratives are and have always been everywhere around us—a central component of the human condition—we now live in a social formation that has been developing an almost inflationary awareness of narratives: „What's new is an increased recognition of the permeating cultural importance of narrative." (p. 10) So, how do we make sense of thinking about and working on and with narratives in this socio-cultural context?

One starting point to understand what a narrative is and what it isn't, is the textbook definition by Merriam-Webster, which describes a narrative as "a way of presenting or understanding a situation or series of events that reflects and promotes a particular point of view or set of values." (Merriam-Webster, n.d.) This basic partial definition (there are others) emphasises the interpretive and value-laden nature of narratives, distinguishing them from mere factual recounting.
Shiller (2019), in "Narrative Economics", further refines the concept, noting that a narrative is "a particular form of a story, or of stories, suggesting the important elements and their significance to the receiver." (p. 36) In this view, narratives are not just about the events themselves but about *how* those events are presented and framed to convey meaning, often through selective emphasis.
Porter Abbott (2002), finally, distinguishes narratives and stories: "A story is the series of events at issue, while narrative is the story 'mediated' through how the teller presents it." (p. 21) From these definitions, narratives appear as something that isn't just neutral containers for facts but socially-shaped constructions that influence how events are perceived and understood.

The "Waves Model", developed and used by Narrative Initiative (2020), is a conceptual tool that illustrates how stories, narratives, and values interact to shape public understanding and drive social change. Inspired by work from the Grassroots Policy Project and others, it was developed in response to the disorienting influence of political messaging—such as Donald Trump's tweets around the 2016 US election—which often draw on deeper ideological currents. The model uses the metaphor of the ocean: stories are surface-level waves, narratives are the underlying currents that give these waves power, and values or worldviews are the deep waters that generate and sustain those currents. For example, individual stories of shark attacks can feed into a broader narrative that sharks are dangerous predators, which in turn draws on deep-rooted worldviews such as fear of nature or the belief in human dominance over the natural world.

The Waves Model has been used in training and narrative development across multiple contexts, including climate justice, public health, and racial equity. It helps activists and organisations identify dominant narratives and intentionally develop new, value-based narratives that can lead to durable cultural and political change. The model emphasises that narratives are not static: values and worldviews are dynamic, often contradictory, and shaped by historical, material and cultural forces. Effective narrative work must operate across all levels—from crafting compelling stories to challenging and reshaping underlying worldviews.

Figure 1 illustrates the Waves Model as introduced by Narrative Initiative:

Figure 1: The "Waves Model" by Narrative Initiative

Another concept that must be distinguished from and put in relation to narrative is "framing". Narrative and framing are closely related but distinct concepts. Narratives are underlying structures that explain how the world works, why things happen, and what roles different actors play—they link events over time, give them meaning through values and worldviews, and are mediated in the form of messages and stories. Framing, on the other hand, refers to *how* messages and stories are presented to shape perception—what is emphasised, what is left out, and how information is categorised. While, for instance, a narrative might describe the role of citizens in driving local climate action, framing determines whether citizen participation is presented as 'essential democratic engagement' or as 'potential delay to efficient implementation.

So, what are "narratives of change" then, as the title of this deliverable says? In the literal sense, they can be narratives that (a) mediate and promote understandings of how change occurs, and/or (b) actively foster social, political, cultural, or economic transformation. That means, they do not merely describe change—they can serve as instruments of change themselves. Both these meanings can, but don't have to be connected, as the following subchapters show.

2.1 Why narratives matter for urban climate planning

Cities are among the most important sites *and* actors in the global fight against climate change. Currently responsible for approximately 60% of global energy consumption and 70% of greenhouse gas emissions (Revi et al., 2022), urban areas face mounting pressure to act. With projections indicating that by 2030 more than 60% of the world's population will reside in cities, cities and regions of all sizes must not only reduce emissions but also address the urban adaptation gap (Reckien et al., 2025) —the shortfall in preparedness for climate impacts such as heatwaves, flooding, and food insecurity.

At the global level, this dual role of cities is increasingly recognised. International agreements, scientific assessments, and policy frameworks consistently emphasise the importance of urban actors in climate governance (Calvin et al., 2023; Rosenzweig et al., 2018). This aligns with a broader historical trajectory that frames cities not merely as administrative units, but as autonomous political actors with the capacity to shape transnational agendas (Oosterlynck et al., 2018) —although with strong differences across countries, depending on the constitutional distribution of competences and financial power.

Yet, from a local perspective, the picture is far more complex. Conceptually, cities are not only climate political actors, but they are also contested arenas in which the production of space (Lefebvre, 2014) takes place through cooperation and confrontation between actors with different and often conflicting interests.

Also. municipal climate managers often find themselves in a difficult position: while they are expected to act on climate change, they must navigate fragmented governance landscapes, limited competencies, and constrained budgets. As Goh (2021, p. 6) notes, these and other challenges frequently "deny planning its traditional core modes and methods." Translating global climate targets into locally relevant, actionable strategies requires working across administrative boundaries and timescales, while also addressing the deeply embedded social and infrastructural legacies of high-emission development paths.

For urban citizens, engaging with urban climate planning is even more fraught. Existing participation mechanisms are often limited in scope, accessibility, and decision-making power. Moreover, the abstract nature of climate policy—focused on technical pathways, long-term goals, and performance indicators—can fail to connect with the immediate concerns of everyday life—especially for vulnerable groups without the necessary resources to engage with institutionalised politics. Issues such as heating costs, access to mobility, or the unequal distribution of care responsibilities are rarely framed as part of climate discourse, even though they are closely intertwined with questions of justice and sustainability.

The integrated character of "sustainable development" comes along with plenty of potential conflicts between its different dimensions (Simon, 2016). Some climate measures, for instance, do not necessarily lead to an equitable or transformative distribution of their effects, but may serve the profits of a few instead of the common good. They sometimes even worsen the situation for disadvantaged groups (Arendt et al., 2023; Swanson, 2021). To speak with the communication scholar Bennett (2020, p. 89), sustainable development is an example of a successful, yet non-transformative narrative itself: "there is little evidence that sustainable development has achieved the kind of policy success needed to create anything approaching true balance between its two competing ideas. However, the idea has been highly successful as a classic example of […] 'words that succeed and policies that fail.' The most damning feature of the idea of sustainable development is that it invites trade-offs between economy and environment, rather than finding a communication format that makes them inseparable."

From this perspective, urban climate planning thus operates in a space of deep tension. Given its cross-sectoral complexity and the need to navigate between the local and the global, between reaction and future-orientation, between detailed policies and overarching budgets, between private and public interests, urban climate politics is characterised by both epistemic and political challenges and conflicts over who has the right to decide between radical change, moderate change or radical blocking of change, expanding on Harvey's question of who has the right to „change and reinvent the city [...] in a fundamental and radical way" (Harvey, 2012, p. 5).

In light of these and other challenges, calls have emerged for a new urban narrative—one that "recouples urbanization with social progress, and within planetary boundaries" (Keith et al., 2023, p. 116). Such a (global) narrative would go beyond technocratic planning to integrate diverse social realities, collective aspirations, and ecological limits—and it would leave space for more specific, localised narratives within its overarching framework. Much of the current planning discourse, however, lacks a nuanced understanding of how existing planning and participation infrastructures can accommodate multiple layers of meaning, facilitate deliberation across difference, and open space for imagining and enacting structural change. Addressing this gap, also requires looking at how "narratives of change" can fail on the local level.

2.2 How urban change narratives can fail

The following subchapter is based on a presentation held by CMF at the European Climate Change Adaptation Conference (ECCA) 2023 in Dublin. It briefly discusses two recent examples of failed change narratives in urban climate politics: the case of Vitoria-Gasteiz and the Berlin climate referendum. Although there are, of course, multiple different answers to the question why the presented examples failed, narrative aspects are an important part of their story. This should not,

however, lead to the impression that better narrative work alone would have evaded the described failures.

2.2.1 Branding kills culture: The case of Vitoria-Gasteiz

In 2012, Vitoria-Gasteiz, the capital of the Basque Country, received the prestigious title of *European Green Capital.* As Neidig et al. (2022) reflect in their study "'We are the Green Capital': Navigating the political and sustainability fix narratives of urban greening", the city had already cultivated a strong green identity rooted in local sustainability efforts for over three decades.

Initially and correspondingly, the recognition by the EU was embraced by many citizens as a confirmation of local pride and ecological ambition. But over time, the "green city" narrative shifted from being a political project to a marketing asset. In their study, Neidig et al. (2022) describe how the once locally grounded narrative became increasingly depoliticised and instrumentalised. Green branding overtook green transformation. This shift manifested in several ways:

- From political to technical fixes: What had begun as a strategy to reduce regional political tensions (especially linked to the "Basque Question") evolved into a sustainability fix focused on securing funding and prestige. Policy borrowing—especially from cities like Barcelona—replaced locally rooted innovation.
- Participation without impact: Participatory forums were initially introduced to foster democratic planning. However, they became repetitive and technocratic, often dominated by the same individuals with time, access, and influence. Rather than empowering marginalised voices, they risked reproducing existing power imbalances.
- Commodification of sustainability: Following the Green Capital award, political leadership began using the sustainability agenda more as a tool for economic promotion than structural reform. Short-term gains and international visibility took precedence over long-term commitments and equity-based planning.

As Neidig et al. (2022) argue, the case of "Green Capital" Vitoria-Gasteiz illustrates how at first glance successful environmental narratives can drift into superficiality if they are not continually re-politicised, contested, and democratically re-grounded. Their conclusion is clear: "Vitoria-Gasteiz's green trajectory thus shows that it must be a collaborative and inclusive process of deciding the narrative and future vision of what it means to be a Green Capital." (p. 11)

2.2.2 Too abstract: The case of "Berlin 2030 klimaneutral"

The Berlin climate referendum of March 2023, launched by the initiative "Berlin 2030 klimaneutral," aimed to legally commit the city to achieving climate neutrality by 2030—fifteen years earlier than previously planned. The proposal sought a 70% reduction in emissions by 2025 and 95% by 2030 (compared to

1990 levels), alongside concrete measures such as mandating renewable energy in public buildings, protecting tenants during green renovations, and significantly investing in sustainable energy and transport infrastructure. Before the final vote in March 2023, the campaign had gathered over 260,000 signatures, indicating strong grassroots mobilisation. Yet the final vote ended in disappointment. Not only did the campaign fail to reach the quorum required for success; it also sparked an unexpectedly high turnout of opposing votes. Many Berliners appeared at the polls not to support climate action, but specifically to reject the proposal. Although 50.9% of those who voted supported the measure, it failed because it did not meet the required quorum of 25% of all eligible voters—only around 442,000 of the necessary 607,000 "yes" votes were cast. Several technical and narrative factors contributed to this failure as many analysts pointed out in the aftermath:

- A credibility gap: The campaign struggled to convince voters that the ambitious 2030 target was actually feasible. Rather than addressing this concern directly, the organisers leaned into moral urgency—while political opponents seized the opportunity to cast doubt on the plan's realism.
- Abstract goals, missing pathways: The campaign emphasised bold, long-term targets but lacked clear, concrete measures for how they would be achieved. As a result, voters were left without a tangible sense of what changes would occur—or how these would impact their daily lives.
- A failure to resonate beyond the urban core: In contrast to the successful 2021 referendum "Deutsche Wohnen & Co enteignen", which won broad support by linking transformative policy to widespread and uniting suffering from living under a financialised housing market, the climate referendum remained centered in Berlin's inner districts. It failed to connect with residents across the city's more socioeconomically diverse outer areas.

Following the failed vote, activists shifted to what they called "Plan B": an organising platform for individual-level climate action. While this pivot preserved momentum, it also reflected a retreat from the original ambition of structural transformation. In hindsight, the Berlin case serves as a cautionary tale: even narratives that emerge from within the urban society and try to build on collective agency may falter if they don't resonate with the lived realities, perceptions, and political concerns of a larger majority of people.

2.3 How urban change narratives can be transformative

So, how can urban change narratives be transformative then? This question was also at the center of the symposium "Transformative Climate Media for Urban Futures: Imagination, Interaction, Impact" (24-25th January 2023, Brandenburg Center for Media Studies, Potsdam) that CMF co-hosted with the Film University of Babelsberg as preparatory work for T6.4. A particular focus lied on aspects of fostering structural instead of individual change. Despite the multifaced social and

political impact that audiovisual media can have (Eder et al. 2025; Eder 2023; Gralke 2021), most research still focuses on individual-level, micro-psychological effects. What yet remains underexplored is how media can support systemic transformation, functioning as tools not only of communication and dissemination, but also of collaboration, organisation, and change.

This aligns with a broader gap in the discourse of how the socio-ecological transformation can be achieved. While individual behavioural change plays a role in addressing climate change, it is insufficient on its own. What's needed is a deeper transformation of the systems that shape our lives—economies, infrastructures, governance—and it must be guided by compelling narratives about what matters, what's possible, and who society is for.

Climate scientist Michael E. Mann, in "The New Climate War" (2021), critiques how the fossil fuel industry has strategically promoted the idea of personal responsibility—focusing attention on individual carbon footprints—to deflect pressure from systemic reform. This "fixation on voluntary action alone takes the pressure off of the push for governmental policies to hold corporate polluters accountable. In fact, […] the emphasis on small personal actions can actually undermine support for the substantive climate policies needed." (p. 3) The danger of this individualistic framing is that it distracts from collective political action, masking the structural causes of the climate crisis beneath layers of consumer guilt.

David Hiss (2021) explores why individual behavioural change often fails to resolve the psychological tension caused by the climate crisis. Drawing on cognitive dissonance theory, Hiss argues that people frequently experience discomfort when their awareness of climate change clashes with their day-to-day actions. Rather than adapting behaviour, many resort to psychological defence mechanisms—such as denial, minimizing the problem, or steering away from climate information—to reduce dissonance. He emphasises that behavioural change alone is typically insufficient to alleviate dissonance because such changes may be difficult or costly. For example, giving up practices like flying or meat consumption conflicts with entrenched lifestyles. Consequently, individuals often find it easier to alter their beliefs ("Climate change isn't that serious") or ignore the issue, rather than make significant lifestyle adjustments. Hiss concludes that to promote genuine behaviour change, we must go beyond individual psychology and address structural and societal dimensions—providing accessible alternatives, building collective efficacy, and shifting narratives so that sustainable actions become both feasible and credible. Without this broader framework, appeals to individual responsibility are unlikely to overcome the deep psychological and systemic barriers he describes.

Transformative narratives then are not just simply "bottom-up narratives that tell a positive and engaging story, articulate a vision of "where we want to go" and provide solutions for attaining this vision, rather than articulating problems to

avoid" (Hinkel et al., 2020, p. 495). They rather emerge from and help organise social movements that push for and prefigure structural change. In other words, transformative narratives "create collective identity […] [and] for movement members a sense of belonging to a group and place of the member in relation to the group. Narrative also defines the origins of the movement, and also connects movements to other past movements and victories. The use of narrative can be an important way for movements to overcome setbacks or maintain identity, ideology and tactical know-how over time." (Christiansen, 2011, p. 11)

The most effective narratives, then, are not just stories that inspire—they are stories that help organise. Transformative narratives must do several things:

- Confront existing power structures and inequalities
- Help build coalitions around shared goals
- Offer tangible pathways for change
- Foster practices that extend beyond the individual
- Leave space for local ownership, co-creation, and meaning-making

In sum, transformative urban climate narratives do not simply raise awareness. They make change imaginable—and achievable. They connect individual experience to structural realities, and they provide frameworks through which people can act together, challenge dominant systems, and build something new. Ultimately then, this boils down to questions of power. Beyond narratives' socio-cultural resonance, there must be spaces—social, political, digital—that allow for meaningful participation and collective decision-making power. As Oomen et al. (2022) argue, "the politics of the future revolve around who can make their imagined futures authoritative in the scenes and stages that matter." (p. 266)

3 Developing LOCALISED change narratives

Cities are no blank slates. They are historically-grown and contested spaces with their own cultures and narratives (Barbehön 2015). The development of locally grounded narratives thus begins with a mapping of existing narrative elements that already shape how people understand climate change and societal transformation. This initial step is critical: before proposing new narratives, we must first explore the landscape of existing meanings, assumptions, and emotional undercurrents that influence public attitudes, behaviours, and policy debates.

The following chapter thus briefly recaps the previous work from LOCALISED Deliverable 6.1 and then turns to case studies from Vienna, Barcelona, and the MAGGS region, extracting observable narrative elements from them and illustrating how different contexts come along with distinct narrative dynamics.

3.1 Narrative Mapping

3.1.1 Narratives in LOCALISED Deliverable 6.1

D6.1 explored how low-carbon lifestyles intersect with social vulnerability and the principles of a just transition. This earlier research highlighted that individual lifestyle changes, while important, are constrained by systemic barriers such as unequal access to resources, power, and decision-making.

Vulnerable groups—differentiated by income, gender, age, ability, education, among others—are both potentially more exposed to the negative impacts of climate change and more likely to be excluded from the policy processes meant to address them. The study found that equitable policies tend to receive greater acceptance among individuals facing multiple forms of disadvantage, suggesting that justice-oriented approaches are not only ethically necessary but also strategically effective.

Using Q-methodology, D6.1 identified distinct citizen perspectives across partner regions—such as social, technological, and self-centred views in Vienna; regional economic and participatory perspectives in Catalonia; and participatory versus neoliberalist outlooks in the Polish MAGGS region. These perspectives were developed into narrative profiles that informed the design of subsequent citizen engagement activities, including those documented in the CE (D6.3).

3.1.2 Case Studies

A comprehensive narrative mapping would require in-depth and engaged on-site research over a longer period of time than it has been possible in the context of this project. To partly illustrate how narrative mapping can work, however, this section presents three case studies from the LOCALISED project: Vienna, Barcelona, and the MAGGS region. These case studies are based on the participatory observation of different citizen engagements as part of WP6.
Each case offers a distinct socio-political and cultural setting, with its own history of environmental discourse, governance structures, and public engagement. By examining the narrative landscapes in these locations, we can better understand how perceptions of climate action are formed, who is seen as responsible or affected, and what kinds of futures are imagined or resisted.

3.1.2.1 Vienna

This subchapter is based on the observation of six participatory events within the "Vienna Climate Teams" project in 2023 (reported in more detail in D8.5). The Vienna Climate Teams project aimed to invite citizens to co-develop climate-relevant local initiatives across three city districts, with the 2023 phase focused specifically on mobilizing citizens and collecting local project ideas. The observed events were part of 16 public outreach activities (including Klima-Cafés, park

engagements, and festivals) held between April and May 2023 during the idea submission phase. The observations were carried out by ÖGUT (quotes are taken directly or paraphrased from the observation protocols) and analysed by CMF.

Across all six observed participatory events in Vienna, citizens contributed to the development of a multifaceted narrative of how political and social change occurs. At the heart of this narrative lies a recurring belief that genuine change requires direct involvement, not only of policymakers but of everyday residents — especially those who don't typically see themselves represented. Participation is not just about voicing opinions, but about becoming co-authors of urban futures.

Many participants arrived with limited expectations or practical concerns—noise, green space, transit, safety—but the setting of structured deliberation helped to expand their political imagination. As one participant put it: "We must think not just about today, but for the next generation."
This intergenerational perspective was frequently echoed, suggesting a growing sense that climate and urban policies should serve long-term justice, not just immediate convenience. A core element of the narrative was that institutional change needs grounded, place-based knowledge. Citizens repeatedly questioned expert assumptions, proposed alternatives based on lived experience, and drew attention to inequalities between city districts: "Jedlesee already has lots of green. Why add more trees there instead of somewhere with none?" Or: "This might look good on paper, but it's not what we need in *our* Grätzl."

These remarks point to a broader view that top-down policies risk being irrelevant or unfair without deep community input. At the same time, participants gained new respect for the complexity of governance. They often expressed surprise at budgeting constraints, legal hurdles, or implementation gaps: "So €3 million for the whole district isn't actually that much?"

"Who's actually responsible for maintaining this long term?" This growing awareness didn't reduce their desire for change, but reframed it: citizens began to see that change is not just a matter of ideas, but of negotiating constraints and aligning resources. A powerful thread throughout all six events was a shift from personal preferences to shared criteria. Through structured processes—particularly consensus-based decision-making (Konsent) —people moved from "what I want" to "what we, as a diverse group, can agree is fair and effective." For example, when discussing a costly project, one participant reflected: "I'd prefer it personally, but it doesn't fit with the values we agreed on together." This showed that collective deliberation can shift citizens from self-interest toward a more public-minded stance—a key condition for democratic legitimacy.

Another recurring theme was the tension between innovation and realism. Some citizens criticized the lack of boldness in submitted projects: "Where is the courage for real change? Everything is just safe, small improvements."

Others warned against overreach, advocating instead for "projects that really work," even if modest. These dynamics reflect a broader citizen struggle between utopian aspirations and pragmatic constraints, with the best discussions trying to hold both in view. In several cases, citizens advocated explicitly for inclusion and recognition of underrepresented groups. Vulnerable communities, school children, the elderly, migrants, and even global South populations were invoked as stakeholders: "Let's ask: how does this affect someone in Africa or Asia?" "The teachers shouldn't be driving to school—they should be role models." "We need to do more for the kids—they're good multipliers."

Such moments reveal that social change, for many citizens, is also about shifting values—not just infrastructure.

At times, participants expressed frustration about process dynamics. Some felt not all voices were equally heard: "I don't think every opinion is treated the same here." Others questioned whether the format allowed for efficiency and genuine influence. Still, many also described feeling empowered: "I walk through the district with new eyes now." Or: "I never thought I'd be part of something like this. I want to do more." These statements suggest that, for many, being taken seriously by institutions—and taking each other seriously as peers—is itself transformative.

In summary, citizens in these Vienna events conveyed a coherent yet evolving theory of change: It emerges from inclusive, well-structured, and transparent participation. Institutions must value local knowledge and treat citizens as equal partners. Climate justice and urban improvement must be interlinked with social equality. Change is a collective process—slower but deeper when people learn and decide together. They did not see themselves as passive recipients of policy, but as capable agents of complex, place-based transformation. If participation is sustained, fair, and meaningfully connected to actual implementation, these citizens are ready to own and shape the political future of their city.

3.1.2.2 Barcelona

This subchapter is based on participatory observations of the *"Nobody Left Behind: Active Listening to Vulnerable Groups to Guarantee Climate Justice"* project which is a part of LOCALISED (see Ajuntament de Barcelona (2024) for a more detailed evaluation). The observations were organised by the Barcelona City Council -which organised the actual implementation- and supervised by IREC. Quotes are taken directly or paraphrased from the observation protocols and analysed by CMF.

Barcelona has become a globally significant case study in participatory urban governance, partly due to the rise of Barcelona en Comú (BeC), a political platform born from the post-2011 indignados movement. As chronicled by Engler & Engler (2023), BeC's 2015 election victory marked a radical shift: activists moved from

occupying streets to occupying institutions, led by Ada Colau and a platform committed to feminist, anti-austerity, and democratic values. Rather than forming a traditional party, BeC sought to build an open, horizontal structure rooted in transparency and citizen involvement.

The approach to urban design of Barcelona en Comú intended to recover public space for social uses, to promote active mobility (bike, pedestrians) and to make life especially difficult for cars. The latter has generated big resistance from different spaces, such as well-off people, people linked to the car business, but also workers relying on cars to go to work.

Over two municipal terms, the BeC administration delivered notable gains: regulating tourism, launching new public services, expanding social housing, and pioneering environmental reforms. Yet, as both Engler & Engler (2023) and Feenstra & Tormey (2021) observe, these advances came with sharp constraints. Institutional inertia, resistance from media and economic elites, and the limitations of coalition and minority governance blunted some of the more radical ambitions. Efforts to transform the political culture—flattening hierarchies, fostering feminist leadership, and resisting charismatic personalisation—often ran up against the embedded vertical logic of city hall.

Central to BeC's approach was the goal of embedding citizen participation in policymaking, notably through digital platforms like "Decidim". However, as Feenstra & Tormey highlight, these initiatives faced ambivalence: celebrated by officials as democratic innovations, they were often seen by activists as insufficiently transformative. More broadly, the transition from horizontal movement logic to vertical institutional power revealed persistent tensions—between transparency and technocracy, co-governance and bureaucratic inertia, participatory rhetoric and actual redistribution of power.

It is within this political context that the social listening project must be understood. The city's residents—shaped by years of municipal politics and discourse, policy experimentation, and participatory initiatives—have developed complex, and at times contradictory, narratives of how change happens, who drives it, and what role citizens, institutions, and movements play. These narratives reflect not only lived experiences of climate adaptation, mobility, energy use, and public space, but also deeper views on governance, agency, and the limits of participation within the current system.

What emerges is a portrait of a city still marked by the aspirations and delusion of its radical municipal turn. While BeC's experiment opened political space and shifted public discourse, many residents remain sceptical of institutional capacity to deliver systemic change—and increasingly emphasise the need for renewed community agency, equitable policies, and stronger connections between bottom-up demands and top-down action.

Nine participatory sessions were held between April and July 2024, designend as "Active Listening Sessions" with citizens to gather their perspectives and experiences for informing local climate action planning. The sessions targeted seven specific groups: elderly people, women, individuals from diverse ethnic and language backgrounds, people with health disabilities, homeless individuals, users of Energy Advice Points (related to energy poverty), and children aged 3 to 8, adapted to the characteristics and needs of each group. Sessions took place across various districts and facilities in Barcelona and included a total of 42 adult participants (30 women and 12 men) and 38 children (ages 3 to 8). Participants represented groups particularly vulnerable to climate change, including children, the elderly, women, people from diverse backgrounds, individuals experiencing homelessness, and users of the Energy Advice Points. Their insights were complemented by the perspectives of local stakeholders and service providers.

Sessions with children were adapted to their age and understanding, using games, drawings, and everyday routines to explore topics such as mobility, public space, and climate control at home. Icebreaker activities helped establish a playful atmosphere, followed by group discussions and visual exercises to indirectly gather input on how children experience and perceive their environments in relation to climate. Sessions with adult participants followed a more structured format. Each session began with an individual opinion survey on climate change, followed by an introductory round using the question "Are you worried about climate change? Why?" to open the group dialogue. Discussions then focused on four thematic areas: Climate control in homes, energy efficiency and renewables; Public spaces and climate preparedness; Urban mobility and low-emission zones; Use of municipal spaces and facilities as climate shelters.

These themes were approached from three analytical perspectives: diagnosis of issues and habits; assessment of awareness and use of municipal measures; development of future proposals for city action.

The sessions were predominantly diagnostic but also generated constructive proposals and feedback on current or planned policies, adapted to the reality of each group. The participatory process pursued three overarching objectives: Gather opinions, concerns, behaviours, and obstacles in the participants' day-to-day lives; Identify their level of awareness and familiarity with local climate policies; Collect inclusive and actionable ideas for future climate improvements.

The following paragraphs synthesise key narratives of how participants across the different events understand social and political change in the context of local climate politics. Each narrative is illustrated by a direct quote taken from three participatory observations conducted in spring and summer 2024.

- **Change requires both institutional support and everyday action—but the burden is uneven.** Participants often spoke of personal responsibility for sustainability—managing heat without air conditioning, using water sparingly, or adjusting appliance use to electricity rates. Yet they also highlighted the economic limits of such action without deeper institutional support. *"I do what I can—I ventilate early, wear cotton, use a fan… but I can't afford air conditioning or to renovate my flat."*

- **Bureaucratic fragmentation and institutional inertia are seen as major obstacles to meaningful change.** Citizens expressed clear frustration with the failure of well-intentioned projects due to poor coordination within city administration. Several pointed to repeated instances where approved initiatives were stalled or blocked. *"Projects are approved and then blocked by another department. It's a waste."*

- **Participation is welcomed but often feels symbolic, extractive, or disconnected from outcomes.** While participants appreciated being heard, they often remained sceptical about how their input would be used. The lack of clarity around follow-up or impact contributed to a perception of tokenism. *"We should have been told more clearly what our input will be used for."*

- **Lived experience and everyday knowledge are understood as legitimate and underutilized policy insight.** Citizens brought detailed and practical knowledge to the table—from childhood lessons in resource use to creative coping strategies in under-heated or overheated homes—and emphasized that this wisdom is often dismissed. *"Responsible consumption isn't new—my parents taught me these things, and I taught my daughters."*

- **Tourism is viewed as a structural threat to just urban transformation.** Participants were critical of how public space reforms—such as superblocks and pedestrian zones—have been repurposed by market forces, accelerating gentrification and displacing local life. *"Lifelong businesses are closing because rents rise in pedestrian areas taken over by tourists."*

- **Social change is imagined as incremental and pragmatic, not revolutionary.** Participants rarely called for sweeping transformations. Instead, they focused on tangible improvements—better transit, more public bathrooms, accessible cooling spaces—and saw these as meaningful steps. *"We can't change everything—but more public bathrooms, better transport, those things help."*

- **Fair and targeted regulation is not only accepted but demanded.** Contrary to assumptions about resistance to state control, participants often called for stricter, better-targeted policies—particularly around tourism, vehicles, and subsidies—to address systemic abuse. *"Tourist buses should pay more. Other cities do it, why not here?"*

- **Marginalised groups want policies that address specific, embodied needs.** Elderly and low-income residents identified precise shortcomings in

urban design: lack of shaded areas, benches, or toilets—especially urgent under rising heat. These practical concerns were tied to dignity and accessibility. *"There are benches, but not enough bathrooms—especially for older people like me."*

- **Emotions, care, and moral judgment are central to how people understand climate issues.** Emotions such as sadness, frustration, and pride surfaced frequently. These feelings reflected a moral reading of environmental degradation and a sense of duty to future generations. *"It makes me sad to see how things have gotten. We're not teaching care anymore."*

- **Public services and collective care are remembered as drivers of responsibility and cohesion.** Participants remembered past city programs that encouraged community stewardship—such as joint activities between children and the elderly—and lamented their disappearance. These were seen as essential to cultivating shared responsibility. *"We used to do things with kids and elders together. People took care of the spaces then."*

3.1.2.3 MAGGS

This subchapter is based on the participatory observation of an event with a cohousing cooperative & their change from fossil to renewable heating ("Sustenance") on 19th September 2024 in the MAGGS region. "This subchapter is based on the participatory observation of an event with a cohousing cooperative & their change from fossil to renewable heating ("Sustenance") on 19th September 2024 in the MAGGS region. The event was a decarbonisation consultation workshop with the Housing Association Mickiewicza, involving residents from five buildings (77 flats each) and aimed at discussing the transition from fossil to renewable heating systems. The consultation workshop had 17 participants and was followed by a survey completed at the end of the session. The observations were carried out by IMP (quotes are taken directly or paraphrased from the observation protocol) and analysed by CMF.

- **Proactive engagement:** Residents view themselves as proactive contributors to energy transition efforts, especially when these are tangible, local, and economically framed.
- **Conditional willingness:** They are willing to engage in behaviour change and consider new technologies if the solutions are understandable, feasible, and financially justifiable.
- **Need for meaningful consultation:** Their engagement hinges on being informed and consulted in a meaningful way. As one participant put it in a discussion around photovoltaics: "If we know what it brings us, and it's worth it, we'll support it. But we need to see the numbers."
- **Community-based trust:** Trust in institutional actors increases when these actors are part of the community and communicate on equal footing.

The fact that the lead moderator was also a resident facilitated honest dialogue and flattened hierarchies. This led to productive exchanges and the surfacing of constructive suggestions.

Economic rationality is central to how participants assess climate action. There was an extended and emotionally charged debate about the meaning of "return on investment." For some, an 8–10-year payback was acceptable; for others, it was far too long. These differing risk and value perceptions reveal that economic framing alone is insufficient—people need options that align with personal financial timelines and values. "It's not worth it if it takes 10 years to see anything back. That's not a return in my eyes", said one participant critical of photovoltaics.

There is a clear appetite for co-shaping future solutions, especially when projects offer flexibility and aesthetic integration. Suggestions like installing e-bike chargers or balcony-mounted photovoltaics were well received, showing residents want influence not only over whether change happens, but how it is implemented.

Residents expressed a strong desire for more accessible, ongoing information about both the technologies involved and the broader purpose of energy transition efforts. One resident stayed after the event to emphasize how little information is available and how critical it is for engagement. "There's a lack of information. People need to know what's going on", said one participant after the event.

Change is seen as achievable and realistic when it happens in familiar spaces, among known people, and with visible results. The neighbourhood context, the shared housing situation, and face-to-face explanations made the technological and policy aspects of the project less abstract and more relatable. While the event was not intended to produce decisions, the format and facilitation empowered residents to voice preferences and objections. Their input was taken seriously, and some questions (e.g. about economic viability) redirected the course of the event. This created a participatory dynamic even in a presentation-heavy structure.

Overall, participants embraced a pragmatic and relational narrative of change: systems can evolve, and new technologies can be adopted if they are introduced with transparency, open dialogue, and clear benefit. Rather than resisting change, residents called for smarter design, earlier involvement, and respect for everyday constraints in decision-making.

3.2 Narratives of Change in VIE, BCN, and MAGGS

Across all three locations, citizens actively engaged with questions of how change happens, who drives it, and what conditions enable or hinder it. Despite different cultural, political, and institutional contexts, several shared themes emerged— alongside important contrasts in tone, structure, and strategic imagination.

Commonalities between the three cities were:

- **Change as participatory, not top-down.** In all three cases, citizens rejected the idea that governments alone can deliver meaningful transformation. Instead, they emphasised the importance of civic participation, everyday knowledge, and grassroots engagement: In Vienna**,** citizens asserted that "projects need to come from real needs in our Grätzl," not just city hall planning. In Barcelona**,** the municipal experience itself grew from movements like the 2011 M15 anti-austerity movement that occupied public squares demanding "real democracy now" and experimenting with horizontal, participatory democratic practices—experiences that later contributed to the city's citizen-led municipal governance—with participants seeing institutions as tools, not engines, of change. In Poland, the transition to renewable heating was seen as a deeply social issue, with "local communities, not ministries," seen as the locus of resilience and justice.
- **The need for structural awareness.** Across settings, participants showed a growing understanding that change is not just a matter of individual will, but shaped by institutional structures, power relations, and historical injustices: Vienna's citizens became aware of bureaucratic limits, resource constraints, and trade-offs, learning to balance ideals with feasibility. Barcelona's activist-governors confronted institutional inertia, media opposition, and internal contradictions of scaling horizontal practices into vertical power. In Poland**,** participants discussed the role of housing policy, cooperative governance structures, and financial barriers to renewable energy transition—calling for "systemic, not cosmetic" solutions.
- **The double role of values and procedures.** Participants everywhere linked *how* decisions are made to *what* changes result. They valued transparency, respect, and fairness—not only in outcomes but in the process itself: In Vienna**,** the use of consensus was seen as a way to build legitimacy and trust. In Barcelona, frustration grew when institutional culture clashed with participatory ideals. In Poland, some saw food sovereignty not just as a policy goal but a procedural principle: local, relational, and democratic.

Differences between the three cities were:

- **Scale and strategy of change.** Vienna's citizens often operated within a pragmatic, municipal frame. Their narrative was grounded in material improvement—more trees, safer streets, better climate policy—with *deep trust in deliberative participation*. Change was incremental but dignified. In Barcelona**,** the ambition was transformative—using city hall as a political platform to reframe power itself. Yet over time, this radical horizon was tempered by realpolitik. The narrative became one of limits of institutional change. It now gave way to a narrative of *inside-outside tension*. In Poland, the conversation merged grassroots organising with global justice.

Participants articulated change in terms of *systemic resistance and local autonomy*. They often critiqued institutions as co-opted or incapable of delivering real food democracy.

- **Who counts as a change-maker.** In Vienna**,** citizens themselves—especially diverse, randomly selected ones—were cast as legitimate agents of change. Expertise was valued, but participation was paramount. In Barcelona, movement-rooted politicians tried to "govern without reproducing governance," drawing legitimacy from activist origins. Yet tension arose over how much could be done *within* the system. In Poland, farmers, food workers, and local communities were centered. Change came from "those closest to the land and the table" —not technocrats or donors.
- **Emotional register and political confidence.** Vienna's events had an optimistic, constructive tone. Participants often said they "felt heard," "saw the district differently," and wanted to keep contributing. Barcelona's narrative was bittersweet: pride in what had been tried, disillusionment with what remained unchanged. The tone was reflective, often critical, but still hopeful about municipal futures. In Poland, the tone was more urgent and activist. There was a strong critique of dominant systems—agribusiness, EU bureaucracy—and a desire for resistance, solidarity, and justice beyond consultation.

Building on this initial narrative mapping, we can now propose five locally grounded and (at least in theory) broadly transferable narratives of change. These narratives are not designed as fixed templates, but as potential storylines that can be adapted to specific urban and regional contexts.

"From Burden to Commons: Reframing Climate Responsibility"

This narrative challenges the framing of climate action as an individual burden and instead positions it as a shared civic project—a commons. It draws on citizens' frustrations with moralising calls for lifestyle change that ignore structural barriers. In all three cities, participants expressed a desire for clearer institutional support, fairer regulations, and recognition of lived constraints. This narrative reframes responsibility from guilt to agency, asking: what if climate action was a shared right, not just a personal duty? What if communities could shape, own, and benefit from transitions together?

- Who acts: Local residents, community groups, and municipal governments
- With whom: Public institutions, NGOs, and vulnerable populations
- For what reasons and motivations: To reclaim agency and redistribute responsibility in climate transitions
- Against which barriers and antagonists: Structural inequality, policy abstraction, and moralising discourse; antagonists include fossil fuel interests and narratives of consumer blame

- Using what kinds of leverage: Collective action, participatory budgeting, and co-ownership of public goods

"Change Happens Here: Making the Local Tangible"

This narrative emphasises the local as the legitimate and effective site of climate action. It is rooted in Vienna's "Grätzl"-oriented comments and MAGGS participants' emphasis on local benefits and feasibility. It challenges the abstraction of climate discourse by focussing on specific places, relationships, and needs. Here, change is not an invisible target like "net-zero by 2050" but a visible, participatory process of reshaping public spaces, mobility, housing, and community infrastructure. It makes climate action concrete and place-bound: it happens here, with us, and for us.

- Who acts: Citizens, district-level planners, and neighbourhood initiatives
- With whom: Local policymakers, urban designers, and social service providers
- For what reasons and motivations: To ensure climate actions are meaningful and aligned with daily life
- Against which barriers and antagonists: Technocratic planning, disconnection from local concerns, and top-down mandates; antagonists include centralised bureaucracies and disempowered planning norms
- Using what kinds of leverage: Local knowledge, district planning processes, and tangible interventions

"Power with, Not Power over: Institutions that Listen and Learn"

Born from Barcelona's experiences with participatory politics and Vienna's deliberative formats, this narrative promotes a vision of governance based on collaboration, transparency, and learning. It counters narratives of institutional control or technocratic distance. Citizens repeatedly asked: Who listens? Who learns? Who decides? This narrative reimagines institutions not as managers but as enablers—learning from community expertise and redistributing power. It invites municipalities to become open platforms for civic agency, where citizens are co-creators, not just consultees.

- Who acts: Citizens, municipal staff, and elected officials
- With whom: Civil society actors, social movements, and advisory bodies
- For what reasons and motivations: To democratize governance and build mutual trust
- Against which barriers and antagonists: Bureaucratic inertia, technocratic dominance, and symbolic participation; antagonists include status-quo political elites and institutional gatekeepers
- Using what kinds of leverage: Participatory tools (e.g. Decidim), advisory councils, and shared governance frameworks

"Repairing the Future: Climate Justice as Everyday Dignity"

This narrative brings together care, intergenerational justice, and everyday needs. Especially prominent in Barcelona's vulnerable group workshops and in MAGGS discussions of relational change, it reframes climate justice as a practice of repair —of relationships, ecosystems, and social cohesion. It links practical demands (e.g. benches, shade, clean transit) with moral imperatives: caring for those most affected, honouring past resilience, and securing dignity for future generations. Rather than distant sacrifice, climate justice becomes the politics of everyday wellbeing.

- Who acts: Elderly residents, caregivers, educators, and children
- With whom: Social workers, urban planners, and health professionals
- For what reasons and motivations: To promote equity, health, and wellbeing in climate adaptation
- Against which barriers and antagonists: Neglect of embodied needs, spatial injustice, and short-term policy thinking; antagonists include austerity agendas, speculative real estate, and climate gentrification
- Using what kinds of leverage: Community consultations, care-centered design, and equity-based planning tools

"We Know What Works: Local Wisdom, Global Stakes"

This narrative foregrounds community knowledge and practical innovation. (Together with "Change Happens Here: Making the Local Tangible" above, it can be seen as a variation of a localist metanarrative.) In all three cities, citizens offered thoughtful, often overlooked solutions grounded in lived experience. This narrative asserts that communities are not passive recipients of expert guidance but active sources of viable, context-sensitive ideas. It aligns with the MAGGS call for "transparent communication" and Vienna's shift from individual to shared criteria. It also resonates with a broader push for epistemic justice in climate policy: respecting non-expert, localised knowledge as crucial to systemic change.

- Who acts: Residents with lived experience, frontline workers, and informal leaders
- With whom: Researchers, technical experts, and policymakers
- For what reasons and motivations: To integrate practical knowledge into systemic transformation
- Against which barriers and antagonists: Expert-driven planning, knowledge hierarchies, and siloed expertise; antagonists include technocratic cultures and exclusionary academic models
- Using what kinds of leverage: Co-production methods, citizen science, and community-based pilots

4 Conclusion & Outlook

This deliverable has explored how urban and regional climate action is not only a matter of data, infrastructure, or governance—but also of narratives.

The narratives proposed here aim to help local actors articulate and animate visions of systemic change, grounded in everyday experience, democratic participation, and justice. They respond to the need for locally resonant narratives that can overcome abstraction, activate agency, and challenge power structures. They invite us to ask not only *how* we reach net-zero, but *who* gets to shape that journey—and *why* that matters. They're not prescriptive templates but rather strategic resources that local actors can adapt, expand, and contest.

In order to make the presented analysis and ideas in this paper fruitful for empowering citizens to engage meaningfully and impactfully in local and regional climate action, they need to be made part of a much longer, more complex trajectory. As Bennett (2020) has argued, successful narrative change does not occur through isolated interventions, but through strategic, long-term coordination. His idea-flow model offers a blueprint for this process, identifying four stages that transformative ideas must traverse: Production, Packaging, Sharing/Networking, Unifying/Political Uptake. He analyses and illustrates how neoliberalism followed this model—produced by think tanks, packaged as market common sense, shared via international networks, and then institutionalised in policy. He argues the same approach can and should be mobilised to advance post-capitalist economic paradigms—i.e., systemic alternatives necessary to address climate and ecological crises. The model rejects single-message mobilisation in favour of coordinated, long-term narrative strategy involving production, packaging, networking, and political translation—a blueprint for communication-driven transformation.

Ultimately, narrative change is not an end in itself—it is a means of reimagining and remaking the world. By engaging with and shaping how people understand climate challenges and envision their own roles in responding, narratives can lay the groundwork for the structural transformations we—and our cities—need.

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