

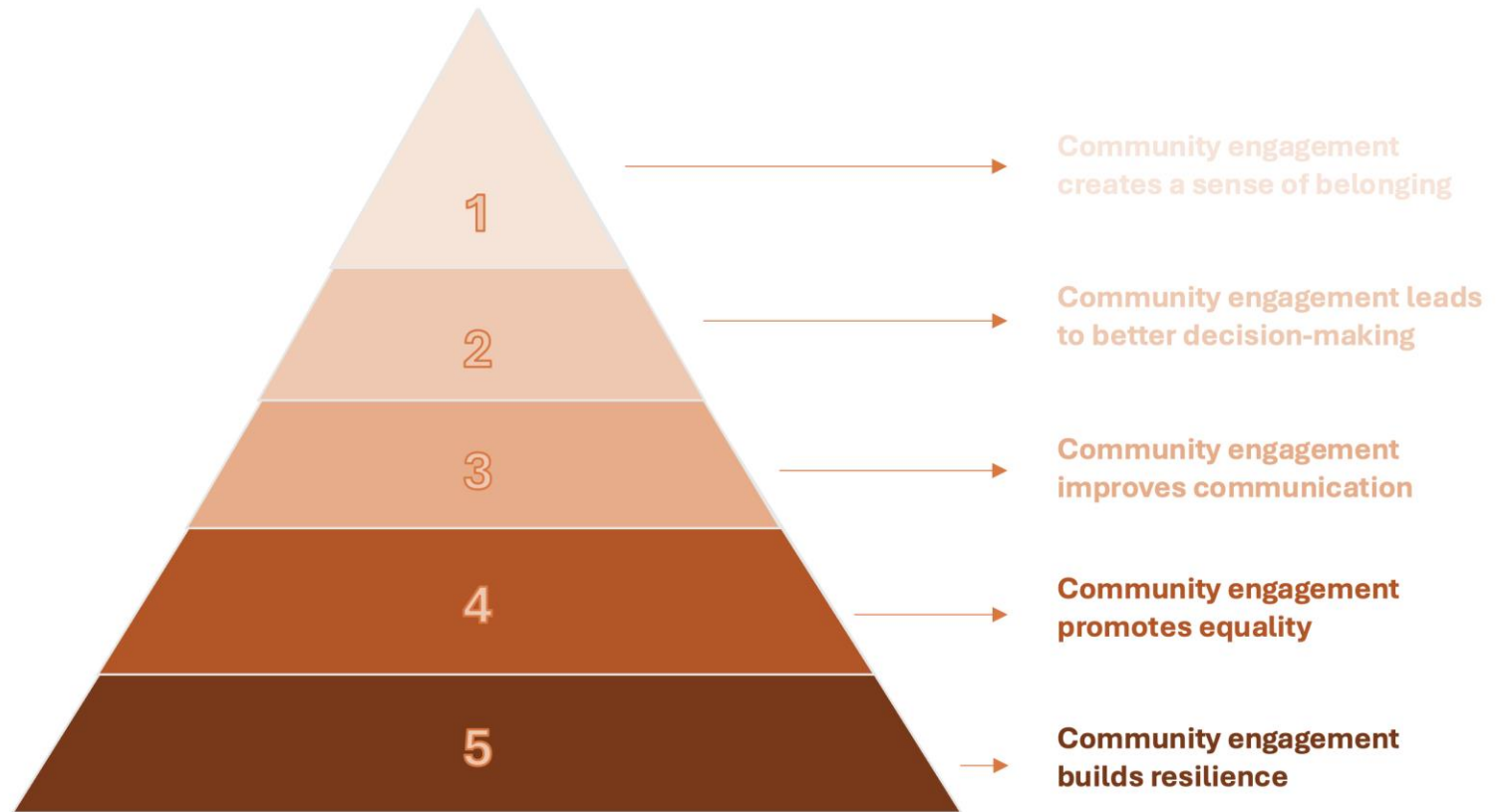
How to Engage People in Our Neighbourhoods? How do you ensure that climate measures reach the people who need them most?

Tiny Maenhout
Municipality of Middelburg
09-10-2025



Why Engagement Matters?

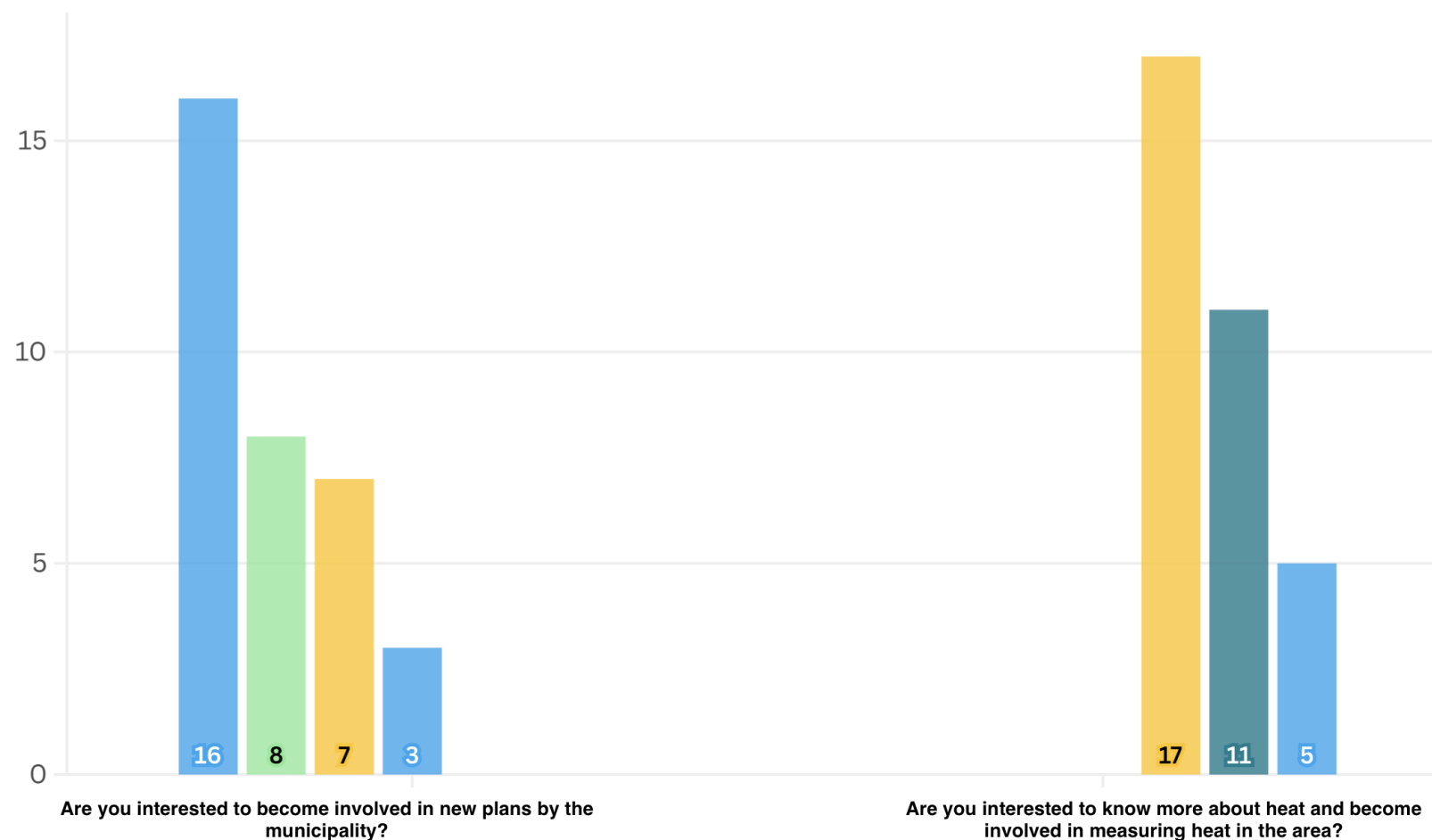
- Heat stress is not only an environmental issue, but also a social one.
- If we want cooler, more sustainable neighbourhoods on the long term, people need to be involved.
- Engagement makes solutions stronger and more lasting.
- Creating a sense of ownership. Social contacts, neighbourhood cohesion, and gaining interest in the local community leads to a sense of ownership.



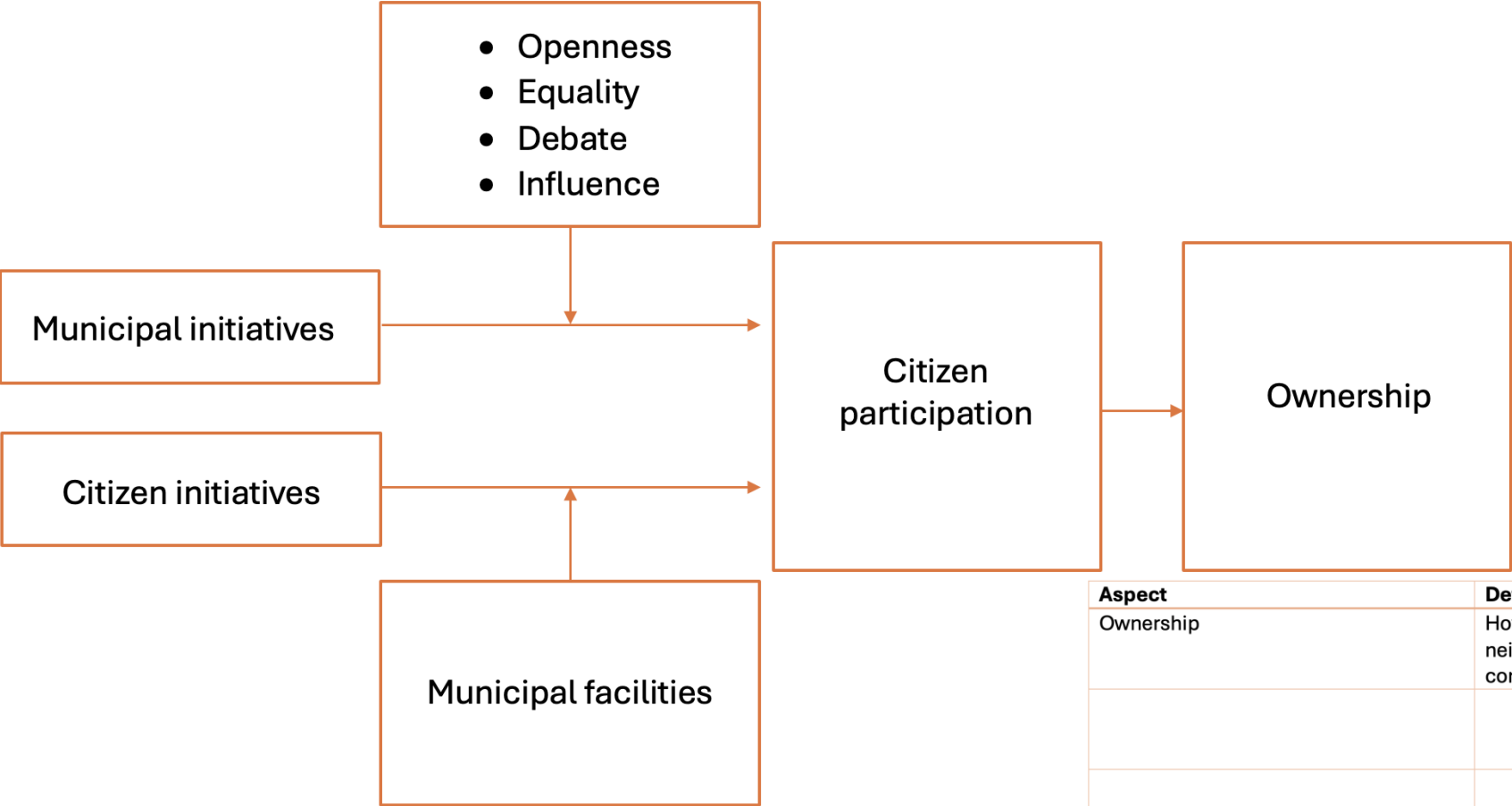
Willingness to Participate

■ No ■ Yes, responding to a plan ■ Yes, providing ideas and discuss with neighbours and experts ■ Maybe/don't now yet
■ No, I do not ■ Yes, I would like to learn more and participate ■ Yes, I would like to learn more

Numbers= Numbers of People



How Participation Leads to Ownership



Aspect	Definition	Indicators
Ownership	How residents experience their neighborhood as their own, feel connected to it, and act accordingly.	Position on the participation ladder (sharing responsibility for facilities)
		How residents perceive co-production (working together with the city)
		How residents feel about their level of involvement
		How residents perceive their connection with the neighborhood
		How residents experience their living environment

What Do Citizens Need to Feel Ownership?



Work on broad themes everyone cares about

Topics like green space or sustainability bring people together, because almost everyone supports them.



Involve children and families

When children join activities, parents also get enthusiastic and participate.



Show visible and direct results

People want to see change in their own street — like new gardens, vegetables, herbs, or improved playgrounds. This gives real motivation.



Create something concrete together

Working together on a clear, shared outcome builds pride and ownership. Abstract goals alone are not enough.



Give citizens choice and control

People want to decide for themselves how much they participate and how responsible they feel.

Challenges in Engaging People



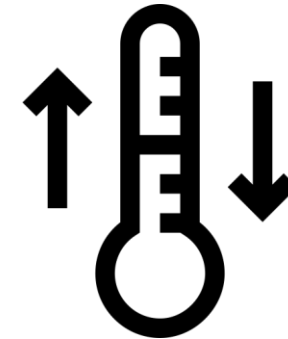
Busy lives, little
free time



Limited
resources and
spaces



Not interested in
climate change
topics

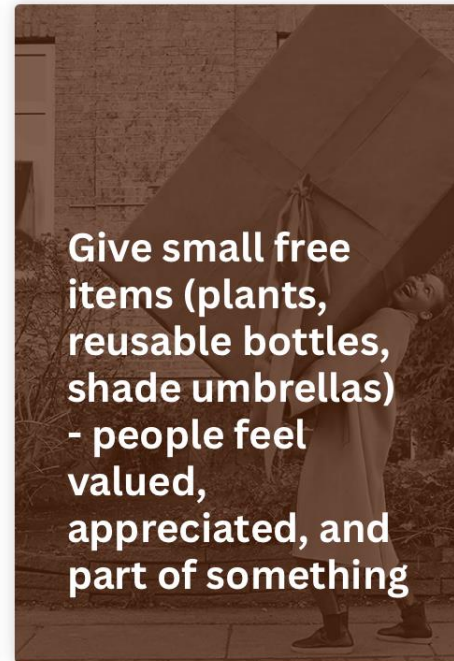


Climate change feels
“far away”



Different cultures
and languages

Possible Engagement Methods



Example 1 of Good Practice

Molenwaterpark

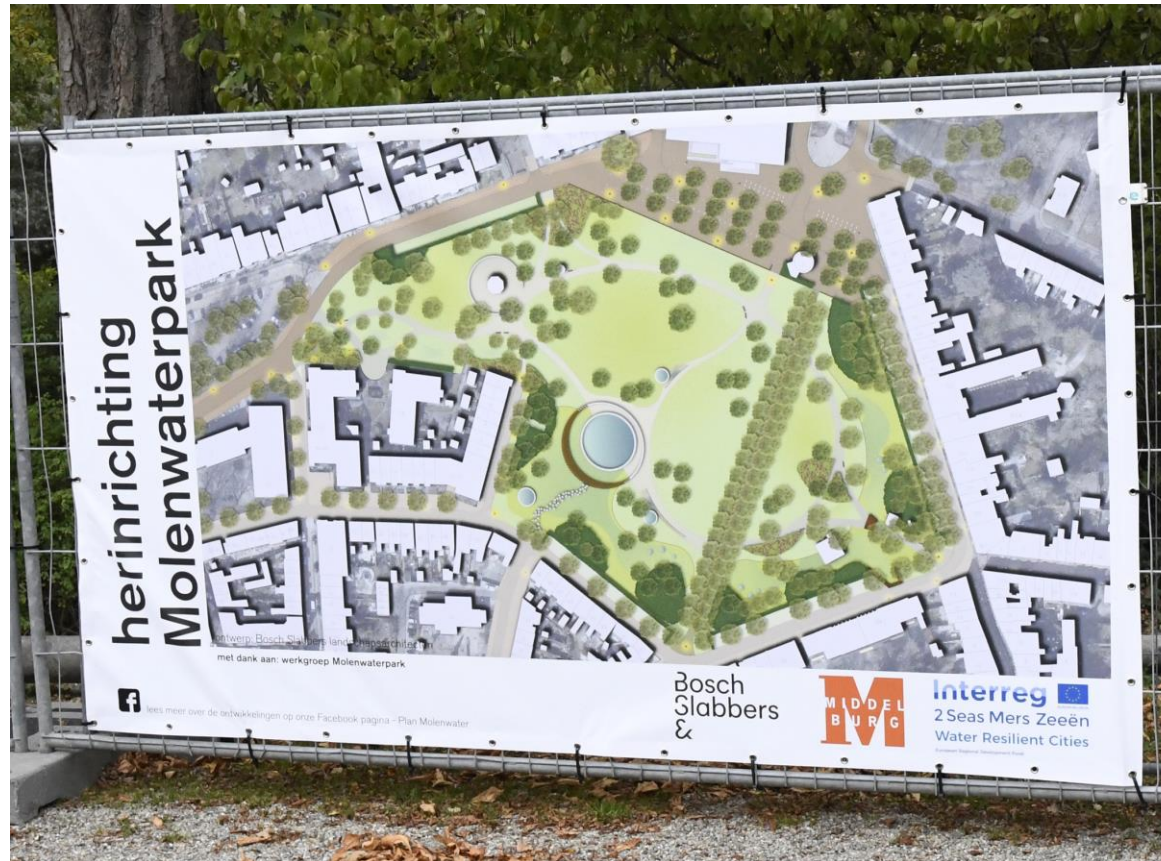
- The city park of Middelburg
- 17th century: area part of the canal system
- 20th century: various separate areas and functions
- Lower area of the city, vulnerable for floods



New vision: Molenwaterpark: a park for everyone

A Blue-Green Park

- Climate resilient interventions for rainwater capture
- Green areas with attention to biodiversity and heat stress mitigation



A Park for All Residents

- Co-creation process
- Space for healthy activities, meeting and fun
- Connection with nature



Green-blue park

Rainwater capture

- *European project Water Resilient Cities*
- Sustainable Urban drainage (SUDS)
- Cascade of wadis and mirror pond to capture rainwater
- 2000 m3 extra space to store and retain water
- Rainwater drainage from surrounding buildings and streets is disconnected from the sewer system.

Green interventions

- Wadis created with attention to biodiversity
- Many trees and green areas, which also reduces the temperature

Interreg



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the European Union

North-West Europe

Cool Neighbourhoods



herin
Molenwaterpark

ontwerp: Bosch Sluys, landschapsgedesign
met dank aan: werkgroep Molenwaterpark

Bosch
Sluys

MIDDEL

Interreg





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Key Aspects of Molenwaterpark

Social

- Various places to sit and meet up

Health

- Enough space for sport activities
- Close to nature

Fun

- playgrounds for children
- Space to organise activities

Mobility

- Accessible
- Room for pedestrian and bicycle traffic



Past – Goal – Current

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Co-Creation Process

Location Exploration



Collecting Ideas



Excursion
(Example park in Bergen op Zoom and Breda)



Taking Ownership – A Park for All People



Example 2 of Good Practice

Edelstenenbuurt, Middelburg

- Deprived neighbourhood facing heat stress & livability challenges
- Aim: involve residents directly in shaping solutions
- Speaks the language of the neighbourhood
- Co-creation as the central method
- Project managers form the bridge between what residents want and what the council has in mind.



Surveys → to collect opinions & experiences



Market-style event →
open-air, easy access
for everyone



Workshops & mapping →
residents shared ideas visually





Example 3 of Good Practice Meanderpark, Klimaatadaptatie

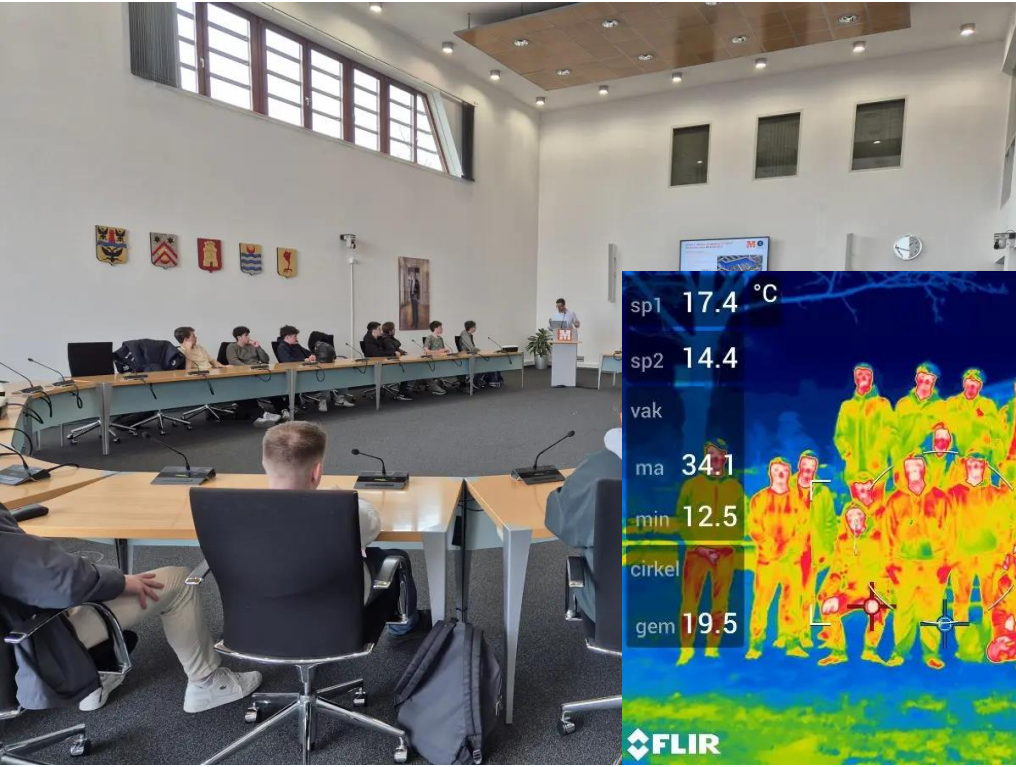
- Area faced heat stress, too much paving, low biodiversity
- Aim: transform into a greener, cooler, and more livable space

Neighbourhood meetings: residents could share ideas and concerns



Bewoners denken mee over inrichting Meanderpark

Field visit by HZ students at Meanderlaan



Flyers & invitations encouraged people to join discussions



Students from local schools and the universities were involved in seeding flowers and greening the area



Neighbourhood party- participation with a social center

Cool Neighbourhoods

Co-creation workshop



Excursion with residents



Bat excursion at the Meanderflat



THE PROJECT

BLOGS

CO



Bottum up Good Practice

Reigerstraat, Middelburg



- Street decorations change with seasons & traditions (umbrellas, Chinese lanterns, Christmas balls)
- Citizens themselves design & make the changes
- Increases tourist attractiveness of the city center
- Makes Middelburg more attractive for residents, entrepreneurs, students
- Contributes to livability and community pride

Multidisciplinary Way of Working

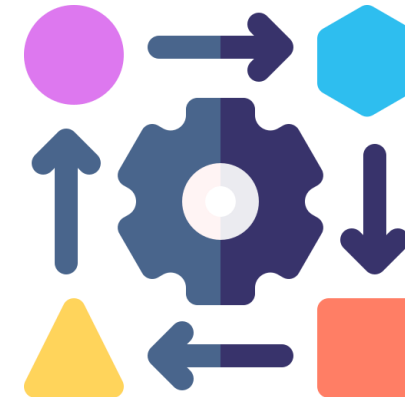
What is Multidisciplinary Way of Working?

Integrated Collaboration



Within the municipality we set up a **‘Multidisciplinary way of working’**: a **structural, cross- departmental collaboration** between different departments. Together, we advise on projects in public spaces.

Learning Network



Within the municipality we create an interactive learning network to optimally exchange knowledge and experience.

What is the Purpose of Multidisciplinary Way of Working?

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Cool Neighbourhoods

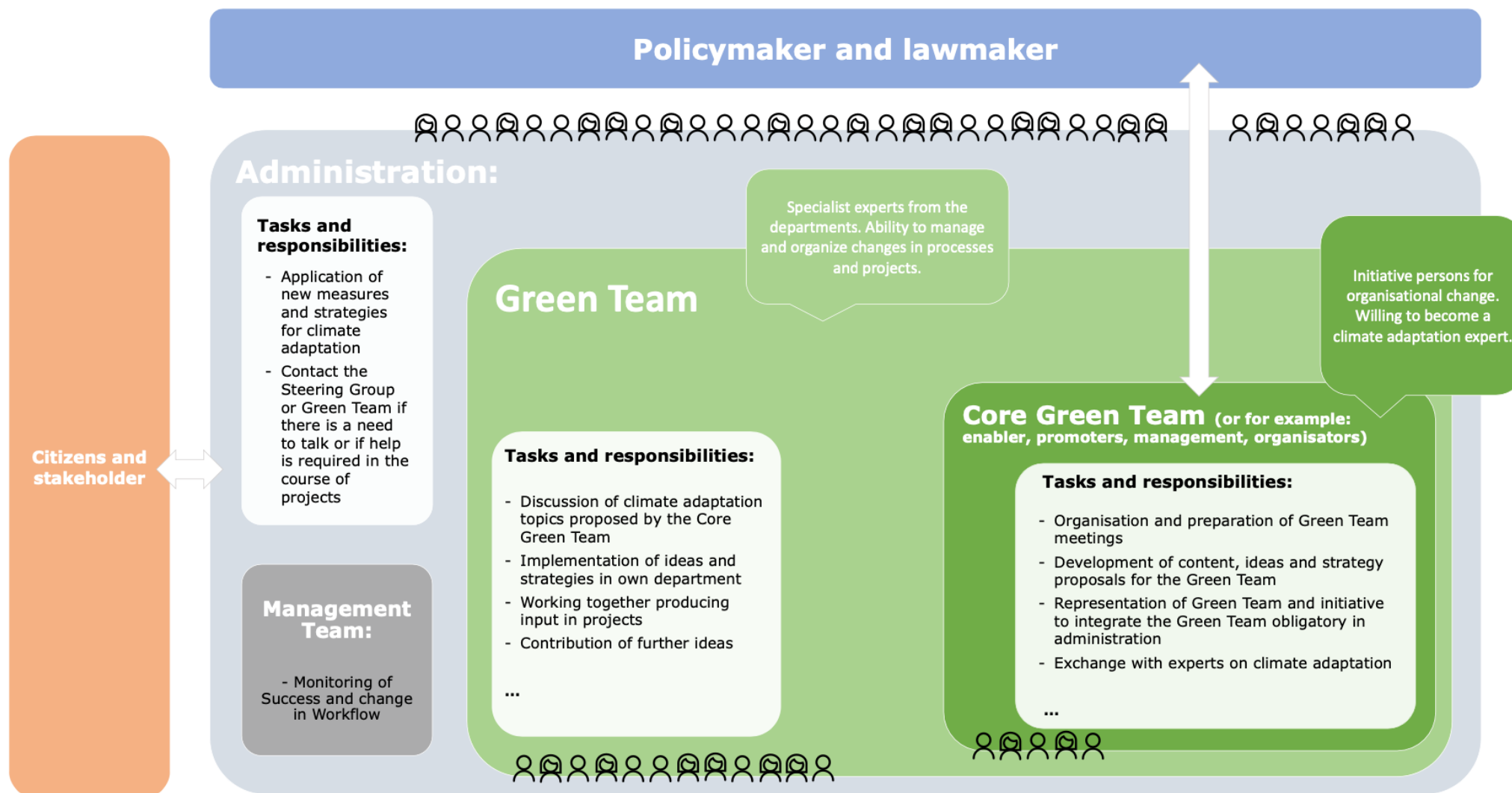
There is a risk of missing opportunities. In Middelburg, we work together to make sure those chances are identified and used in time.

To improve climate adaptation and liveability, it is important to strengthen collaboration within the Municipality of Middelburg. The goal is to encourage integrated cooperation and make it a regular, structured part of the way the municipality works.

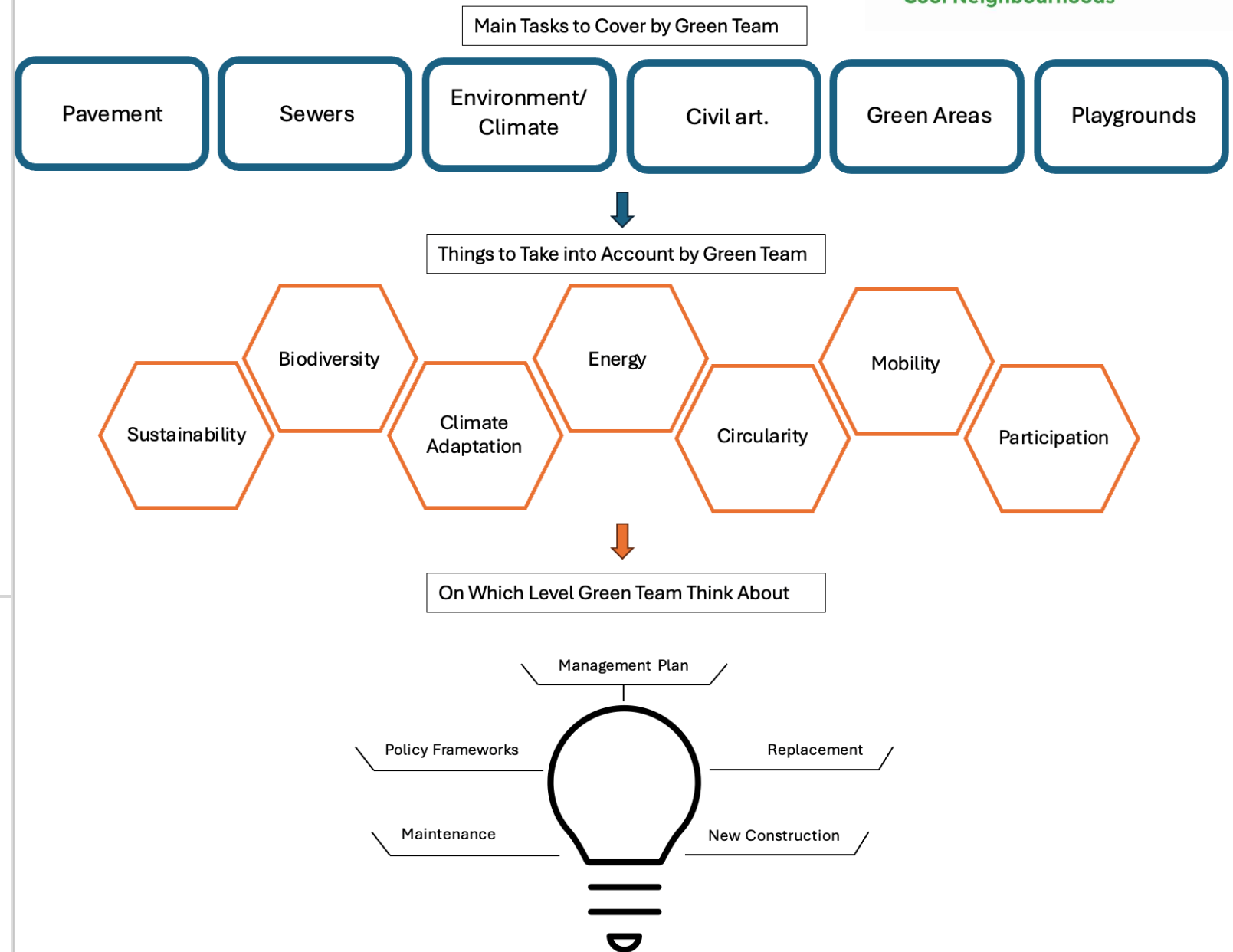
Departments Involved in Multidisciplinary Way of Working



Structure of Multidisciplinary Way of Working



How Does Multidisciplinary Way of Working Work?



**Listen to your
inhabitants. Don't just
make promises, do
something that benefits
the residents.
THANK YOU!**

