Municipalities heading for a sustainable collaboration

An applied guide of drivers and barriers for collaborative sustainability initiatives

Legenda

The presented drivers and barriers for a collaborative, innovative, public initiative are best practices for differing types of governance:
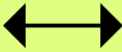
Driver

Barrier

Bottom-up collaborative mode of governance: the municipality supports a citizens' initiative in response to a request

Top-down collaborative mode of governance: the municipality predetermines goals, performance criteria or technical requirements, and persuades the target group of meeting the predetermined goals

The driver or barrier is applicable to <u>all</u> modes of governance

Horizontal partnerships: the municipality collaborates with other parties in a horizontal relationship

Starting conditions

History of satisfactory cooperation

Your municipality brings long-term relationships from the past, that have produced mutual trust and commitment. Maintaining this relationships will enhance opportunities for new cooperations.

Antagonistic history

Some stakeholders distrust your municipality and oppose you fiercely, hindering collaboration. Opening channels for communication and inviting them to an open dialogue might change the hostile dynamic.

Power imbalances

Your dominant role is repeatedly criticized. Securing a more equal playing field for all stakeholders and empowering them will give them a sense of ownership of the ongoing process

You are amid a partnership where stakeholders feel neglected. Granting access, and giving them capacity to influence will give them voice and will reduce opposition to the implementation of the initiative.

Leadership

Facilitative leadership

Facilitative leaders within your municipality invite members of citizens' initiatives, listen to them, identify their needs and facilitate needed resources.

In partnerships, facilitative leaders mediate and steer toward consensus as much as possible.

Co-created vision as symbolic guidance

Your municipality is in a partnership with multiple stakeholders, and you are in need of finding a commitment to shared goals. By co-creating a vision with your partners, and documenting the results, you secure a future referent and a guidance in the implementation phase.

Collaboration

Inclusiveness of a broad range of stakeholders

If you expect risk of resistance in the implementation of your initiative, seek to collaborate with the target group.

If you need to build or enhance political legitimacy of the initiative, form coalitions outside the political arena.

Integral incentive design based on mutual gains

To attract non-state partners, you should focus on their respective values aside from your long-term sustainability goals .
Formulate an overarching goal or incentive to integrate various interests
(e.g. economic gains or opportunities for knowledge creation).
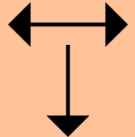
# Innovation

Change agents

Traditional assumptions, perspectives and practices embedded in your organisation prevent you from thinking
and practicing innovative solutions. Be open to citizen's groups and individuals within your organisation or partnership
who dare to create path-breaking visions or have radical ideas.

Create a policy niche or lab

In a highly politicized arena, small-scale experiments secured from political pressures allow for trial and error,
which might help to create useful knowledge and counter the *status quo*.
Promote the creation of policy niches and urban labs which are suitable for experimenting.
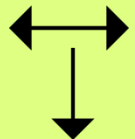
Implementation

Building capacity

To secure the endurance of the initiative in the long run, you need capacity within the local community.
This can be done through involving the target group (e.g. co-investment, knowledge sharing or membership).

Fragmented implementation

Separate parts of your project are being implemented by different actors, yet there is a lack of cooperation
between them or an inability to learn from each other. Coordinating visions might produce alignment.

Feedback loop

Symbolic recognition

Prizes, national fundings or symbolic recognitions bring (non)material rewards, political support and additional partners
to the initiative which favor opportunities for growth. Your municipality should strengthen
the reputation of its initiatives by making them more visible (e.g. joining contests, applying for national funding).

Recursive learning

Your initiatives should be monitored and evaluated regularly in order to adapt to changing circumstances.
Especially if they are experimental in nature, you should take advantage of constant learning and implementing
to make incremental improvements.

Outcomes