

# Recommendations for engaging and supporting local energy communities in alignment with justice principles

Evidence from seven citizen engagement trajectories in Spain, the Netherlands, Poland, Italy and France

**LIGHTNESS**



**DuneWorks**

Towards an inclusive and sustainable climate

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PLACES 2023**



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# Goal of today

1. **Share findings** about just citizen engagement in Lightness with you
2. **Jointly reflect** on the relevance of these findings for engagement in the energy transition

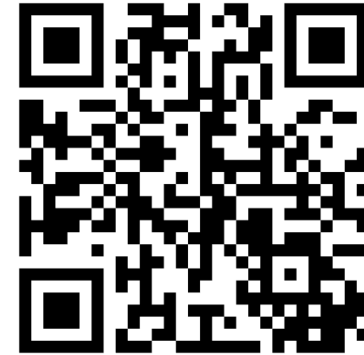


# Your experience with engagement?



Who are you?

What is your experience with engagement?



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# About Lightness

- Aim of the Lightness project is to create local energy communities in 5 different European countries: the Netherlands, Spain, Poland, Italy and France.
- Pilot communities differ in size, building type, legislation and social connections
- End user engagement was very important for initiating communities
- DuneWorks monitored engagement processes, also supported in designing and implementing engagement methods



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# Just engagement

What makes a just engagement process different?

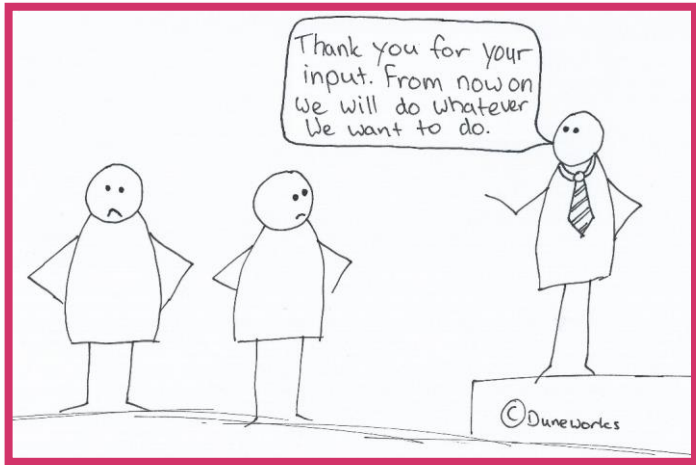


Illustration by © Luc van Summeren

## THE VOICER MODEL

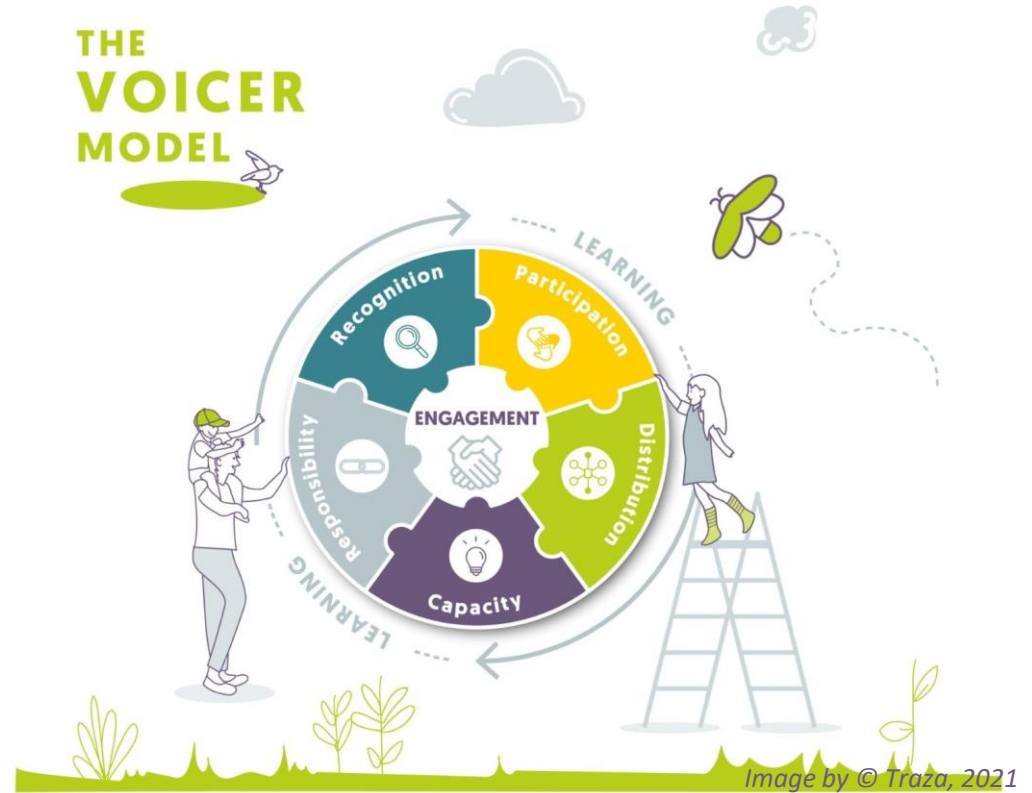


Image by © Traza, 2021

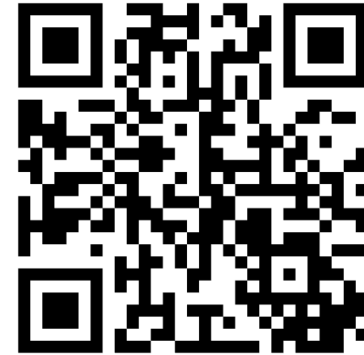
# Recommendations from engagement in Lightness

1. Do field research to know what is important
2. Recognise the benefits and risks of intermediaries
3. Tailor every aspect of your engagement to your target group
4. Focus first on “community”, then on “energy”
5. Engaging the younger generation
6. Be bold, considerate and transparent when recruiting for co-creation
7. Take time to clarify potential costs and benefits
8. Make engagement worth people’s time
9. Create clarity about who does what in the process
10. Empower the willing and unable
11. Cultivate skills, confidence and capacities in engagement leadership
12. Engaging a business(park) means to engage different types of users

# What is relevant for your work?



Which recommendation sounds relevant for your work?



Indicate relevant recommendations on Mentimeter!

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# 1. Do field research to know what is important

## Recommendation:

Perform street interviews, interviews, door-to-door visits and information events. It creates trust, increases the project's visibility and allows to get a rich understanding of the context you are engaging in and with.

## Experiences:

NL: People are distrustful of the government

IT: Residents of condominium have social ties

PL: Some residents are immobile and digitally illiterate

## Relevance:

Getting to know the target area and the target group is key for anticipating the following engagement steps. Without such knowledge engagement runs risk of not reaching people.

Side-benefit of field research: You show your face often which increases trust among residents



## 2. Recognise the benefits and risks of intermediaries

### Recommendation:

Recognise the role of key community intermediaries. Performing an interview in the beginning can help to get an idea of its benefits, interests and power in the community.

### Experiences:

ES: Municipality was important in the beginning, her involvement was reduced throughout engagement in order to give the community more bottom-up legitimacy

PL: (New) decision-maker power of new building manager as a gatekeeper who obstructed citizen engagement, dependency on single intermediary was a disadvantage

### Relevance:

Intermediaries can be key in realizing engagement. Overly high involvement and/or responsibility of certain intermediaries can be obstructive to engagement.

### 3. Tailor every aspect of the engagement to your target group

#### **Recommendation:**

Tailor the goal of the interactions with residents and the communication to the needs, capabilities and interests of your target group. Build forth on existing communication channels and language before trying to deploy a new one.

#### **Experiences:**

NL & ES: Residents were worried about costs savings and were frustrated with issues.

Activities gave space to people to voice concerns.

IT: Personal connection among residents was used to disseminate project information.

#### **Relevance:**

Offering engagement measures that suits the target group lead to a more successful and just recruitment.

## 4. Focus first on “community”, then on “energy”

### **Recommendation:**

Make sure that a community is developed before you starting to deploy highly advanced energy use cases that depend on a large participation rate and on collective action.

### **Experiences:**

NL: No community in residential neighbourhoods existent, but acknowledged that it is important

IT: People in condominium had social ties, easier to introduce topic of energy

### **Relevance:**

Getting to know the target area and the target group is key for anticipating the following engagement steps.

## 5. Engage the younger generation

### Recommendation:

Increase your outreach and representativeness by engaging younger people. You can start initiatives in schools or other local institutions involving the younger children or students.

### Experiences:

**ES:** In Manzanares the 50/50 programme was launched in collaboration with the local school. A number of school students learned about energy and transferred this knowledge to their relatives.

### Relevance:

Younger people are proportionally underrepresented in engagement trajectories while they are most affected by energy initiatives. Their engagement requires different engagement tools and formats, e.g. other communication channels and more playful workshop activities.

## 6. Be bold considerate and transparent when recruiting for co-creation

**Recommendation:** Strike a balance between offering the value of the engagement process while leaving sufficient space for residents to bring in their interests. Manage expectations and choose the appropriate depth of engagement to prevent confusion and irritation.

### Experiences:

NL: Recruitment requires a solid value proposition, on the other hand the precise value created is not yet clear because it is co-created throughout the process. Some residents did not feel attracted by value proposition in Dutch pilots.

ES: People asked for clarity about role of the cooperative, but this was unclear in the beginning. Some residents were disappointed not to get answers.

### Relevance:

Co-creation is always uncertain but if performed right it can unlock tremendous potential.

## 7. Take time to clarify potential costs and benefits

### **Recommendation:**

Be transparent about the costs and benefits that energy-related activities have to offer and how these relate to participation in the engagement process.

### **Experiences:**

**ES and IT:** Residents expressed worries about how the energy was going to be distributed and who would benefit from that

**NL:** Generally a lot of distrust towards P2P energy trading because of fear of wasteful neighbours and reduced self-consumption.

**PL:** Voting rights are distributed unfairly, i.e. based on apartment size instead of household size.

### **Relevance:**

Transparent communication about costs and benefits can help address residents' fears and worries. This can increase participation.

## 8. Make engagement worth people's time

### Recommendation:

Formulate a clear and appealing value proposition. Be sensitive to what is asked of people in terms of time and effort. Be aware that under the right circumstances people are *happy* to give their time and opinion.

### Experiences:

Based on experiences from all pilots with overall low engagement rate.

### Relevance:

Only if people have the feeling their investment contributes to something to the process, to the community and/or to their own welfare, engagement will be fair, sustainable and sufficiently large.

## 9. Create clarity about who does what in the process

### **Recommendation:**

Be clear who is involved in the engagement process and what their role and responsibilities are. Try to create consistency in the people interacting with residents.

### **Experiences:**

**IT:** Double role of R2M made communication difficult which led to frustration

**NL:** Many parties and two international consortia involved created confusion

**ES:** People expected CEA to have a large role in the community although this was not confirmed

### **Relevance:**

Diverse roles and responsibilities of actors involved with the community can be frustrating and confusing for residents.



# 10. Empower the willing and unable

## Recommendation:

Help to build the capabilities that are necessary for engaging.

## Experiences:

**ES:** Engagement approach was tailored to needs of target groups, e.g. phone calls instead of digital communication and house visits because of immobility and vulnerability. Cross-learning was stimulated.

**NL:** Digital literacy needed to be cultivated among participants.

**PL:** Door-to-door visits to reach digitally inproficient households.

## Relevance:

Increasing capabilities among the target group can increase number of participants, improve representativeness and close the gap between the able and the unenabled residents.

# 11. Cultivate skills, confidence and capacities in engagement leadership

## Recommendation:

Cultivate the skills, attitude and knowledge necessary to plan and execute a just engagement procedure in an engagement leader.

## Experiences:

**PL & IT:** Presence of technical and relative absence socio-scientific competences created uncertainty and contributed to stagnation of engagement procedure, NL & ES:  
Complementarity of engagement leaders roles and competences was beneficial for process.

## Relevance:

If necessary competences are absent, engagement leader can lose motivation and/or engagement procedure is prone to injustices and lack of engagement.

## 12. Engaging a business(park) means to engage different types of users

### **Recommendation:**

Make sure to engage the director's, management and ground floor employee level when engaging businesses in an energy community.

### **Experiences:**

**FR:** Facility manager decided about indoor climate, energy management etc. while employees bear the consequences; what is in it for employees?

### **Relevance:**

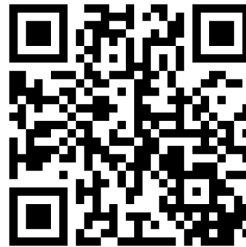
If ground floor employees are insufficiently recognised and involved any decisions on the management level can lead to resistance or be ineffective

# Wrap up



On a scale from 1-10 how much new insight has this presentation given you?

Anything else to share?  
You can do so on Mentimeter!



Thank you for listening!



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