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GLOBAL DLAB PROTOCOL WITH SPECIFICATIONS FOR EACH PILOT CASE



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Abbreviations

DLABS	Democracy Labs
ICMZ	Intercoastal Management Zone
ICNF	Instituto da Conservação da Natureza e das Florestas
MSP	Maritime Spatial Planning
NBS	Nature-Based Solutions



Deliverable's Short Description

This deliverable presents a structured yet adaptable framework for implementing Democracy Labs in the context of nature-based solutions for coastal climate adaptation. It combines a clear methodological foundation with a flexible protocol to guide future implementations, alongside detailed pilot specifications that illustrate how the approach can be tailored to different local contexts. By linking participatory design processes with policy and implementation needs, it provides both practical guidance and actionable insights for supporting inclusive, context-sensitive climate adaptation strategies.

Executive summary

This deliverable signals a first insight output from the co-learning process among INCORE-MED project partners. The [School of Digital Technologies of the Tallin University](#) (TLU) leads the transferring and mentoring of DLABS methods to INCORE-MED and lead the writing of this deliverable. Pilot area partners' roles from Algarve region, the association [Sciaena](#), and Dalmatia county, the [Pl. RERA S.D](#)¹ and [PAP/RAC](#), have participated in this delivery by jointly adapting the DLABS into the pilot areas and planning them to be tested since July 2025 to March 2026. INCORE-MED coordinators ([NKUA](#), [eco-union](#)) has reviewed the delivery to ensure consistency with the INCORE-MED objectives.

This deliverable describes how the Democracy Labs methodology—originally developed to foster democratic participation—has been adapted to address the challenges of **climate adaptation and nature-based solutions (NBS)** in Mediterranean coastal areas. Focusing on two pilot cases in Kaštela (Croatia) and Ria Formosa (Portugal), it examines how a participatory design approach can be meaningfully transferred to a domain shaped by environmental complexity, uncertainty, and multi-stakeholder dynamics in two distinct places - urban and wetland - with diverse participatory and planning cultures.

At their core, **Democracy Labs are structured, generative participatory processes** designed to bring together citizens, experts, and institutional stakeholders to collaboratively explore challenges and co-create responses. They combine a set of facilitation tools and staged activities—ranging from sensitisation and problem framing to ideation and prototyping—with an emphasis on inclusiveness, dialogue, and collective sensemaking. Within the INCORE-MED context, their value lies in their ability to **bridge tacit and latent knowledges, scientific expertise, and policy perspectives**, supporting not only the generation of nature-based solutions insights but also a deeper understanding of how coastal challenges are experienced and defined by communities. In doing so, they contribute to more grounded, legitimate, and actionable pathways for climate adaptation.

The deliverable is structured in three interconnected parts. It first provides a **methodological grounding of the Democracy Labs**, outlining their core principles, tools, and logic as a generative participatory design approach. This is followed by a **global protocol for the Democracy Labs**, intended as a flexible guide for future implementers, which translates the methodology into a structured yet adaptable process. The final part presents the **pilot specifications for Kaštela and**

¹ Public Institution for the Coordination and Development of Split-Dalmatia County.



Ria Formosa, illustrating how this global protocol is interpreted, adapted, and enacted in practice. Together, these sections position this document as both a conceptual and operational resource, bridging theory, method, and application.

Rather than applying the methodology as a fixed protocol, both pilot teams engaged in a process of **situated adaptation**², retaining key elements of the Democracy Labs while reshaping them to fit their local contexts. Shared adaptations included the development of tailored sensitising questionnaires and a stronger involvement of key institutional stakeholders in defining the direction of the labs. At the same time, each case introduced specific adjustments—such as spatially grounded workshops in Kaštela and temporally distributed sessions in Ria Formosa—demonstrating how the methodology evolves through practice.

These experiences highlight that the value of Democracy Labs lies not only in their structure, but in their capacity to **support collective sensemaking**. In the context of coastal climate adaptation, where challenges are interconnected and often contested, the labs create space for communities, experts, and decision-makers to jointly explore issues, align perspectives, and co-create responses. Importantly, the process contributes as much to **reframing problems and identifying opportunity areas** as it does to generating solutions.

The present document also emphasizes the importance of translating participatory insights into **actionable outputs** that can inform policy and planning. Formats such as policy-oriented syntheses, solution portfolios, and opportunity mappings enable decision-makers to engage with the results in meaningful ways, while maintaining a connection to the participatory process that produced them. In this sense, outputs are not simply end products, but **continuations of the process**, bridging collective inquiry and institutional action.

Overall, the findings suggest that Democracy Labs offer a **flexible and robust framework** for engaging with the complexity of coastal climate adaptation. Their successful transfer depends on careful adaptation, reflexivity, and strong connections to local contexts and stakeholders. By combining a clear methodological foundation, a flexible protocol, and context-specific implementations, this deliverable demonstrates how Democracy Labs can support not only the co-design of nature-based solutions, but also the development of more **inclusive, grounded, and effective pathways for policy and decision-making** in coastal places.

² A situated practice presupposes that participatory methods are not fixed but become as such when used in specific contexts and embodied by its participants. This is a feminist proposition acquired in INCORE-MED to deploy a territorial capacity building and participatory action research project oriented to produce contextual insights to transfer and adopt methods into specific climate adaptation planning contexts.

Introduction

Coastal regions across the Euro-Mediterranean are on the front line of climate change, facing escalating risks such as sea-level rise, coastal erosion, biodiversity loss, and increasing pressures from tourism and urbanisation. Addressing these complex and interdependent challenges requires not only sound scientific knowledge and effective policy frameworks, but also inclusive and participatory governance approaches that actively engage citizens and stakeholders in decision-making processes. Despite the existence of frameworks such as Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) and Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP), implementation often remains constrained by limited public participation, fragmented stakeholder engagement, and low levels of societal ownership of climate adaptation strategies.

Within this context, the INCORE-MED project seeks to strengthen coastal resilience by promoting ecosystem-based adaptation and embedding citizen participation at the core of governance processes. Achieving these objectives requires practical, tested methodologies capable of bridging the gap between institutions, scientific expertise, and local communities. Within INCORE-MED, this need is addressed through the transfer and adaptation of the Democracy Labs (DLABS) methodology, originally developed in the INCITE-DEM project. Based on the results of a large-scale generative design research study (Sanders & Stappers, 2012; Sanders, 2008; Sanders & Chan, 2007) conducted during INCITE-DEM that involved over 160 participants across six different countries, the DLABS provide a practical, facilitation-based framework for organising deliberative and co-creative processes involving citizens, experts, civil society organisations, and decision-makers.

Their strength lies in combining structured dialogue with generative activities, enabling stakeholders to move from individual experiences towards shared problem framing and collectively supported actions. The DLABS then serve as experimental, generative, collective creative sensemaking and ideation spaces for developing democratic innovation insights and future possibilities.

The DLAB approach is based on the Generative Design Research methodology. This approach stems from the well-established participatory design practice and theory, and focuses on evoking and sustaining creative thinking and systematising the transformation of the generated ideas into tangible innovative outcomes. As Figure 1 shows, Generative Design Research is situated firmly in the participatory mindset and balanced between design-led and expert-led approaches, combining the best of each mindset while still oriented towards design outcomes. This positioning



renders the approach particularly effective for democratic innovative thinking (Corbett & Le Dantec, 2021, 2019; Lavender et al., 2020).

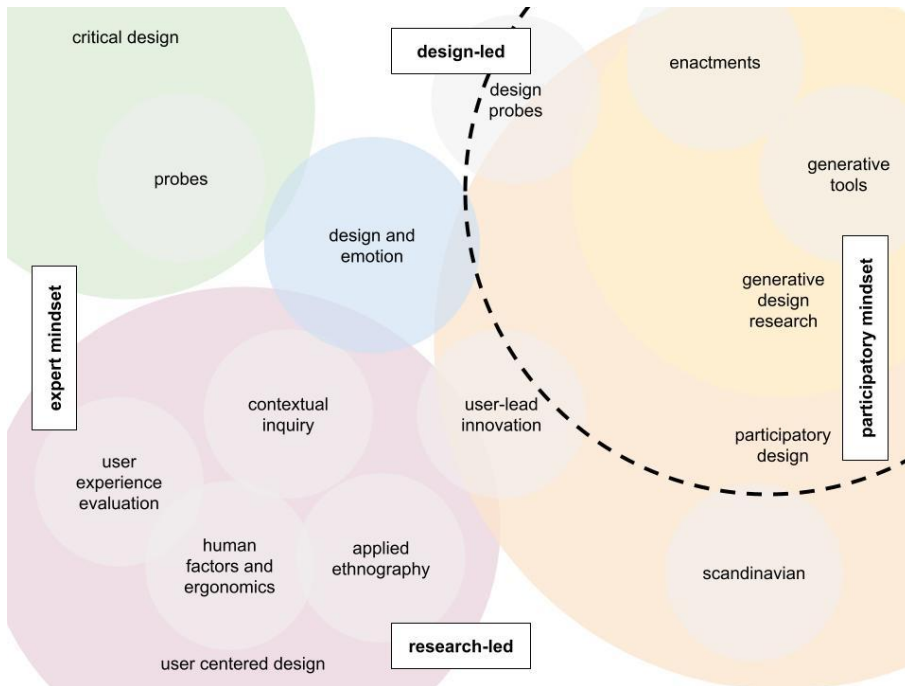


Figure 1. Design Research Landscape

Transferring the Democracy Labs methodology from INCITE-DEM to INCORE-MED is therefore not simply a methodological choice, but a strategic step toward making participation more operational, effective, and impactful in coastal governance. By adapting DLABS to the specific challenges of urban and wetland environments, INCORE-MED seeks to equip practitioners with approaches that are both tested and flexible, and that can be integrated into existing planning and decision-making processes.

This deliverable introduces the Democracy Labs methodology with a focus on its practical application within INCORE-MED. The structure of this document is organised around three key sections: First, a methodological overview of the DLABS; then, a Global Protocol explaining in detail the different components of the DLABS and how to organise a DLAB for potentially interested parties; and finally, a review of how this global protocol was appropriated in two pilot cases within INCORE-MED. Ultimately, it aims to support those working in the Mediterranean and Atlantic coastal zones in designing participatory processes that lead to more inclusive, accepted, and durable climate adaptation policies and outcomes.

The rationale for developing a Global Protocol instead of a set of particular ones is twofold. First, a shared protocol ensures that all pilot activities contribute to INCORE-MED's overarching

objectives of strengthening participatory governance and ecosystem-based coastal adaptation. Second, showcasing the tailoring of the methodology to each pilot case acknowledges the diversity of Mediterranean coastal contexts, where differences in governance structures, stakeholder landscapes, and climate risks require context-specific implementation strategies.

This means having access to:

- A clear, step-by-step participatory process that can be integrated into coastal planning and decision-making
- Concrete facilitation tools and formats to engage stakeholders effectively
- Guidance on how to adapt the methodology to local realities, including stakeholder dynamics and policy frameworks
- A structured way to link participation outcomes with policy and planning processes such as ICZM and MSP

This deliverable therefore serves a dual purpose. It establishes a shared operational framework for implementing Democracy Labs across INCORE-MED, and it provides detailed specifications for each pilot case, illustrating how the methodology is translated into practice in different coastal settings.

By combining a global protocol with local adaptations, INCORE-MED aims to demonstrate how participatory methodologies can be both consistent and flexible, ultimately supporting more inclusive, legitimate, and effective climate adaptation in Mediterranean coastal zones.

The DLABS Methodology

Democracy Labs (DLABS) provide a structured, generative design methodology to engage citizens, stakeholders, and public authorities in addressing complex societal challenges—such as coastal adaptation. The approach is particularly suited to situations where problems are not clearly defined, require multiple perspectives, and demand solutions that are both innovative and grounded in local realities.

At its core, DLABS create facilitated environments for collective sensemaking and idea generation, enabling participants to move from individual experiences to a shared understanding and, ultimately, to concrete and actionable insights.

DLABS are grounded in generative design research, a methodology rooted in participatory design traditions but specifically developed to address complex, systemic challenges. Generative design research is a methodology that arose from the more extensive participatory design methodologies that aimed to close the gap between the different stakeholders involved in the design process (Bødker & Kyng, 2018). Developed within the Scandinavian design tradition, participatory design



is anchored in the lean hierarchy and democratic customs and has long been hailed as a valuable approach to democratic innovation and engagement (Bødker & Zander., 2015; Björgvinsson et al., 2010).

Generative design research, as proposed by Sanders and Stappers in their Convivial Toolbox (2012), is well placed within the participatory design tradition but has a more profound commitment to both the participatory mindset, in common with the Scandinavian tradition and shares a deep commitment to design-led orientation, in common with other approaches like Critical Design (Bardzell et al., 2018, Bardzell & Bardzell, 2013) which are not intrinsically participatory. This combination of orientation and mindset places generative design research strongly in a democratic but critical and innovative-minded position.

Sanders and Stappers identify four levels of creativity, namely:

- **doing**, which refers to problem-solving;
- **adapting**, which refers to improving or personalising something;
- **making**, which requires skill and enjoyment, either a hobby or specific professional skill that we enjoy exercising; and finally
- **creating**, which is the highest level and requires commitment to "dream" something novel. Within generative design research, "all people are capable of reaching higher levels of creativity, but they need the passion and the experience to do so" (Sanders & Stappers, p.40, 2012).

Thus, the question for fostering creativity is how to generate and sustain it better. For generative design research, "individual creativity is not only in the head but in the heart as well", and careful consideration to prepare a time and environment appropriate for creativity is vital. Within generative design research, careful orchestration and materials form the scaffolding environment that generates the creative mindset.

Key to the assertion of preparing a time and a space for creativity is the idea that "creativity requires time" and "we cannot expect everyday people to be instantly creative" (Sanders & Stappers, 2012, pp.50-51). Thus, a key consideration for generative design research approaches is the preparation and incubation process required not only to prepare the mindset but also to prepare and prime the productive mindset.

Following this point, a second foundational idea from generative design research is acknowledging the different levels of knowledge we all possess and the critical importance of a diverse set of participants that bring their additional wealth of knowledge to the co-creation activities.

Thus, generative design research identifies four different levels of knowledge, depicted on the right side of figure 2, present in all of us:

- **Explicit:** which we know that we know and can express confidently;

- **Observable:** which is the one that can be ascertained from observation of our actions (either self-observation or by a third person),
- **Tacit:** which refers to things we know but don't have the words or tools to express and finally,
- **Latent:** which refers to things we don't know we know. Generative design research was developed to give people the means to ascertain and make tangible their tacit and latent knowledge (Morrison, 2023; Sanders & Stappers, 2012), which is a key output from DLABs

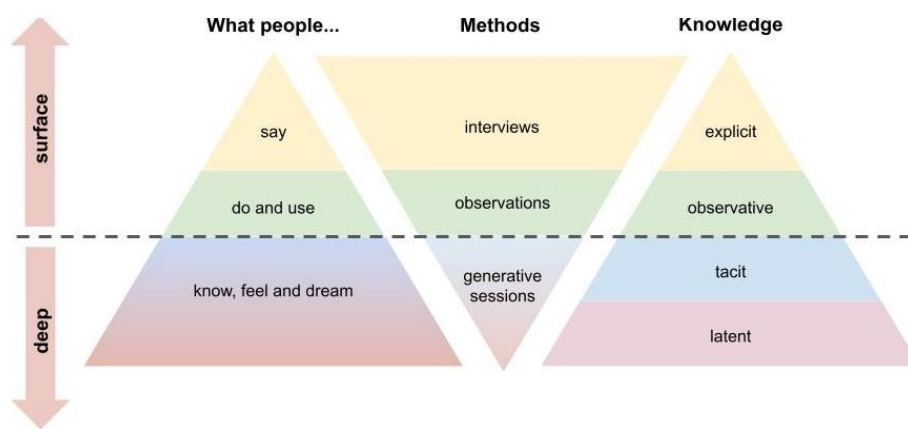


Figure 2 Generative Design Research Activities, Methods and Types of Knowledge

Generative design research therefore offers a way to elicit and generate knowledge from these elusive sources via **sensitising activities** and **generative workshops**.

The concept of "**sensitising**" was adapted to design research as a way for designers to situate their mindsets within a specific context and design space and to articulate their design knowledge in a directed way (Waern & Rajkowska, 2022; Waern et al., 2020). In the context of generative design research, sensitising is the process of immersing participants into the process and challenges at hand. It uses tools like diaries or workbooks that empower and motivate participants to engage in self-observation and emotional preparation for a creative workshop. This period is vital to allow participants to awaken memories, associations and dreams that will offer them a "path of expression" depicted in Figure 3, allowing them to find ways to express and crystallise their tacit and latent knowledge (Sanders & Stappers, 2012, pp. 54-55).

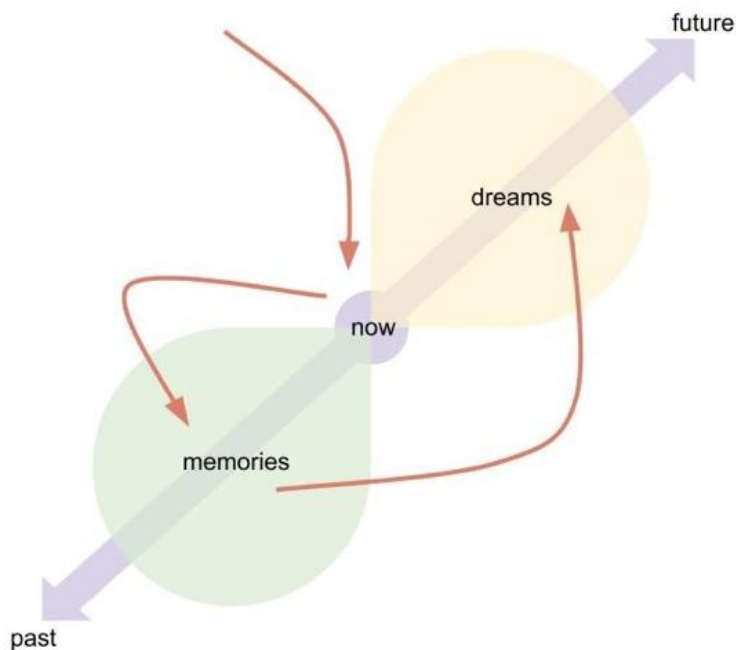


Figure 3 The path of expression.

Generative Design Research offers an overall approach to the implementation of the Democracy Labs. As such, Generative Design plays also the function of weaving together the different methods and tools that are planned to be used in the INCORE-MED Democracy Labs, while allowing for flexibility to adapt or replace any of the tools and methods here described to the local context and goals.

The Democracy Labs Structure

In the case of the INCORE-MED Democracy Labs, the generative design research structure comprises pre-workshop activities already involving the participants, conceptualised as a preamble where participant recruitment and organisation happens, a period of two weeks for sensitising activities, a two-day generative workshop, and a postamble providing a temporal one-week window for eventual post-DLAB retrospective interviews if deemed useful / necessary. Figure 4 attempts to capture this configuration and map it against a backdrop representing the path of expression and the periods of predominant divergent and convergent thinking typical of a design process.

As such, generative design research serves as the creativity scaffolding process to empower citizens to come together and express their whole knowledge in creative, tangible ways that can inspire others and themselves. It allows all the participants of the process to engage with their

creativity by creating an environment and offering them tools to discover and express ideas and insights they may not have known they knew.

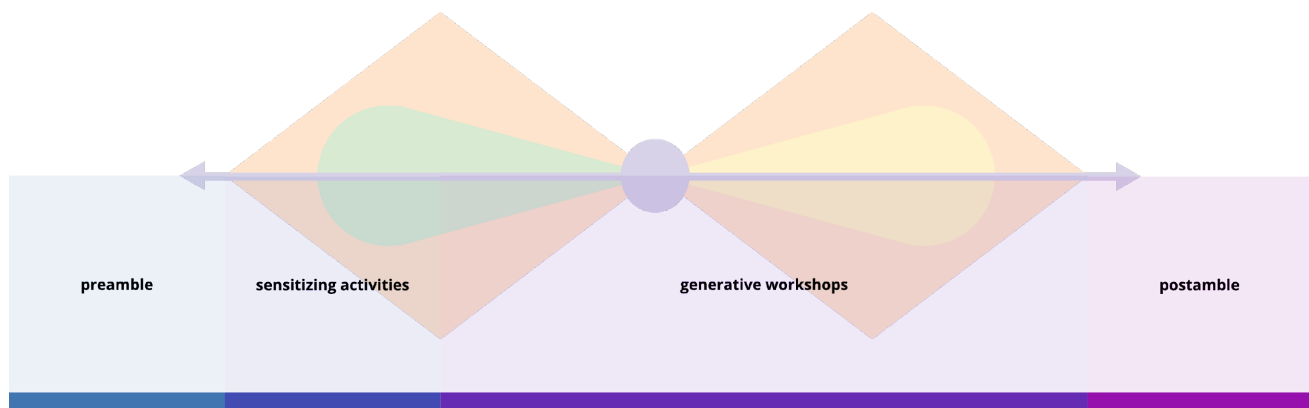


Figure 4 Scaffolding individual and collective paths of expression

1. Preamble:

For the **sensitising activities**, the main tool is the **sensitising booklet**, which welcomes the participants to the Democracy Labs and kickstarts their path of expression with simple activities and guided prompts that encourage active observation and self-reflection that surfaces the relationship of the participants with their living environment and coastal community. Other tools, like questionnaires and surveys can be added as a closing activity for the booklet. The sensitising period happens before the generative workshop and is essential to prime participants for the workshop activities.

2. Sensemaking workshop.

The DLAB first day starts with the **collective sensemaking** workshop. **Sensemaking** is the complement of sensitising. Tacit and latent knowledge is, to a degree, experiential, therefore pre-linguistic, and often unstructured. Sensemaking activities involve embodied experiences that connect feelings and cognition through expressions that can serve as exploratory structures that enable individuals and groups to *make sense* of ambiguous issues, complex situations, hidden patterns, or critical insights (McCarthy & Wright, 2004; Blackler et al., 2018). The set of **collective sensemaking** activities of the workshop enables participants to build a common ground for understanding and communicating with each other. It gives them the confidence, tools, and space to engage in constructive collaboration and adopt the co-creation mindset required for the generative workshop. Thus, sensemaking, the opening activity of the generative workshop, serves as a lens to focus the vision and efforts of the participants, as well as a trust-building activity preparing them for the remaining activities of the workshop. The sensemaking toolkit plays a



crucial role in establishing trust, creating a shared language, and enabling participants to engage constructively with one another. It is comprised of two main tools:

- a. the **Democratic Principles Cards**, that offer a foundation for each team to build a common language and define their priorities,
- b. the **Experience Canvas** where participants can spatially share their lived experiences and see how they relate to each other, enabling a collective sensemaking of the different perspectives, challenges and hopes of their shared living space.

3. Provotyping:

An activity that will support them in challenging assumptions and preconceptions that may impede or constrain their creativity in subsequent workshop activities. Using a provocative prompt, a relevant case for their community, participants are encouraged to question existing approaches and explore alternative possibilities through the use of tools like the **provotyping timeline** and the question **cards**. This step helps open up the solution space and prepares participants to think more creatively and critically in the next stage.

4. Futuring Workshop.

The second day, participants engage in the collective dreaming of democratic innovations jointly imagining and speculating about hypothetical future democratic innovations. These activities are set up as a space for opportunity and innovation in democratic thinking. It is when tacit and latent knowledge can be expressed and turned into **concrete proposals**, empowering the participants to follow their path of expression and ideate about novel means for democratic participation and innovation. The examples of such tangible proposals may include institutional features of citizen involvement mechanisms and the principles to be applied in the implementation of such a mechanism (e.g., a participatory budget). The proposed mechanisms may be also supplemented by enablers, including technology and infrastructure. Furthermore, democratic innovation proposals are guided by the Democratic Principles dimensions, building on the work from the collective sensemaking session. These principles / dimensions³ ensure that the participants dreams and ideas can be functionally appropriated and incorporated into existing policy frameworks. It is scaffolded the futuring toolkit organized around a set of **Future Scenarios**, the **Democratic Innovation Wheel** and **Storyboard** templates and, the complementary **Thinking Hats** and **Storytelling** card sets. The Future Scenarios tangible artefacts that offer fictional visions of potential utopian futures, in this case, a collection of headlines and news pieces showcasing a world where democratic participation and decision-making are in a virtuous reinforcing loop, making the world a better place. These images of a future world serve as a framework for collective

³ Principals are taken from the work of Smith and Sorice on democratic innovations (Smith, 2009; Sorice, 2020)

exploration of democratic innovations that could accomplish such futures.

After familiarizing and discussing these Future Scenarios, participants are presented with **a challenge**, dreaming their own democratic innovation with the Democratic Innovation Wheel and the Storyboard, that they can use to build their own future artefact / democratic innovation, to make their ideas, aspirations and hopes tangible. If the facilitation team deems it necessary to support the participants' teams, the auxiliary card sets can be introduced: the Thinking Hats cards to support the Democratic Innovation Wheel and the Storytelling cards to guide the Storyboard generation.⁴

The collective dreaming workshop makes large use of **Design Fictions** within the context of the generative design research.⁵ "Futuring" is an alternative design approach that does not aim to solve immediate problems but to probe possible futures and to produce not only artefacts or proposals but a body of knowledge of creative and even radical future possibilities (Kozubaev et al., 2020; Søndergaard et al., 2023). The fictional visions of potential utopian futures serve as the inspiration for generating and eliciting such a body of knowledge that can then be reappropriated and become the inspiration and sensitising material for future iterations of generative workshops or even practical innovation projects.

Taken together, these phases create a coherent process that supports participants throughout their "path of expression"—from initial reflection, through shared understanding and creative exploration, to the development of concrete and usable solutions.

Democracy Labs Global Protocol

Building on the methodological approach and structure outlined in the previous sections, organising a Democracy Lab (DLAB) involves translating these principles into a practical and well-coordinated process. From recruiting participants to preparing materials and facilitating activities, each step plays a role in creating the right conditions for collaboration, creativity, and knowledge sharing. Careful preparation is particularly important, as the quality of the process depends on

⁴ The Thinking Hat cards are based on the thinking hats method based on the work from creativity scholar Edward de Bono (De Bono, 2017) and the Story Cards are based on Activity Theory by Engeström (Engeström, 2001) to support future world building and storytelling in a grounded way.

⁵ Design fiction as a method originates from the tradition of Research Through Design but focuses not on the world as it is, but as what it could be (Grand & Wiedmer, 2010) through the creation of tangible artefacts or experiences that project their audiences into a possibility space that they can explore, engage, and reflect upon. These are artefacts that focus on presenting a potential future and not a fixed narrative (Coulton et al, 2017) and can be either utopian or dystopian.



how well participants are engaged and supported throughout.

This section provides practical guidance on how to design and implement a DLAB, covering key considerations such as team composition, participant selection, timing, tools, and facilitation. It aims to help practitioners translate the methodology into practice, ensuring that each phase, from initial preparation to follow-up, is effectively organised and aligned with project goals, local contexts, and available resources.

The Facilitation Team

Successfully organising and facilitating a Democracy Lab (DLAB) requires a well-defined and coordinated team that combines organisational, facilitation, and subject-matter expertise. Rather than relying on a single role, DLABS benefit from a **multi-disciplinary team** where responsibilities are clearly distributed but closely aligned throughout the process. Depending on available resources, one person may take on multiple roles, but it is recommended that the role of DLAB Coordinator and Lead Facilitator are not taken by the same person in the team.

At the core of the team is the **DLAB Coordinator**, who oversees the overall process. This role is responsible for planning the timeline, ensuring that all phases are properly prepared, coordinating logistics, securing the venue and catering, manage administrative matters and maintaining alignment with project objectives. The coordinator also acts as the main point of contact between the team and the partners, stakeholders, and participants, ensuring continuity across the different phases of the DLAB.

Equally important is the **Lead Facilitator**, who takes appropriates the methodology and leads the adaptation of the materials and tools to the local context, defines the facilitation needs for conducting the generative workshop, trains the rest of the teams and ensures that activities are delivered in line with the generative design approach and that the flow between phases and exercises is coherent and effective. They also set the tone of the session, creating a safe, inclusive, and engaging environment where participants feel comfortable sharing ideas and perspectives. They introduce activities, provide clear instructions, and manage time and group dynamics. While they may be supported by additional facilitators, the lead facilitator maintains an overview of the process, ensuring that discussions remain focused and productive, and that participants are supported in moving from reflection to idea generation.

In addition to these core roles, a number of **supporting roles** contribute to the effective delivery and impact of a DLAB. These roles ensure that the process is well-documented, contextually adapted, and that its outputs are properly captured and translated into usable insights. Depending on the scale and context of the DLAB, these functions can be distributed across several team

members or combined within a smaller team. Together, they reinforce both the operational and methodological quality of the process, helping ensure that the outcomes are meaningful, accessible, and actionable. Table 1 presents the recommended roles for organising a Democracy Lab.

Table 1 Team roles for the Democracy Labs

Role	Main Responsibilities	Key Contribution to the DLAB
Coordinator	Plans and manages the overall process, coordinates phases, handles logistics, stakeholder communication, and recruitment	Ensures coherence, continuity, and alignment with project objectives
Lead Facilitator	Adapts methodology, leads facilitation, trains team, manages workshop flow and group dynamics	Creates a safe environment and supports participants from reflection to idea generation
Designer	Adapts or creates materials (toolkits, templates, visuals), ensures clarity and usability of tools	Enables effective engagement and supports creativity through well-designed materials
Data Collector	Documents discussions, gathers outputs (notes, artefacts), organises raw data	Ensures all insights and ideas are captured and preserved
Data Analyst	Interprets and synthesises data, identifies patterns, extracts insights and recommendations	Translates outputs into actionable knowledge for decision-making
Translator / Localiser	Translates materials and discussions, adapts content to local cultural and contextual needs	Ensures accessibility, inclusiveness, and contextual relevance
Supporter	Provides logistical and practical support (materials, venue, participant assistance, communication)	Ensures smooth operation and allows facilitators and participants to focus on content

Participants

Within INCORE-MED, the Democracy Labs are implemented with the aim of engaging local citizens and stakeholders in coastal adaptation and resilience planning. The recommended number of participants for a Democracy Lab approximately 25–30 participants, to ensure a balance between diversity of perspectives and effective facilitation. This number should be treated as flexible, allowing adaptation to local conditions, stakeholder availability, and logistical constraints.

Recruitment: Participants are recruited by the local organising team or, where relevant, with the support of specialised organisations familiar with participants recruitment in the area (i.e. research consultancy firms, local authorities). Participants are expected to take part in the different phases of the DLAB process (sensitisation, workshop, and follow-up), and the recruitment



team should therefore actively inform potential participants of the necessary commitments while establishing mechanisms to support participant engagement and motivation. This is specially important in the case of participants from marginalised backgrounds.

Rewards: Decisions regarding participant compensation (e.g. travel reimbursement or small incentives) are left to the discretion of the pilot organisers, in line with local practices and project resources, although it is recommended to consider some kind of compensation as part of the ethos of the Democracy Labs to recognize the creative labour of the participants. All activities should follow appropriate ethical standards, including the use of participant information sheets, informed consent, and data protection procedures.

Selection: The selection of participants should aim to reflect the diversity of the local context, including variation in age, gender, professional background, and socio-economic conditions. Particular attention should be given to involving a mix of stakeholders relevant to coastal adaptation, such as local residents, public authorities, technical experts, civil society organisations, and practitioners involved in planning and risk management. While ensuring diversity, the composition of the group should remain flexible and responsive to the specific characteristics of the location, including existing governance structures, local challenges, and ongoing initiatives related to climate resilience. Table 2 presents the recommended mix of participants' profiles.

Table 2 Participants' Profiles.

Number of participants	Profile	General requirements	Required commitment
15	Undifferentiated citizens	The selection of the participants should ensure diversity of age, gender, ethnicity, faith, socioeconomic status, education level, occupation, and geographical residence (which should be within commuting range of the workshop's location). People unable to consent cannot participate.	Participants commit to joining and actively participating in a two-day workshop (7 hours per day, including breaks and lunch) and consent to be photographed and recorded in video. Participants also commit to spending 2 hours and 30 minutes in study-related activities during the ten consecutive working days (weekends and national or regional holidays excluded) preceding the workshop. Participants should also be informed that they might be invited for an interview in a few selected cases.
10	Representatives of democratic innovations	These participants either (1) lead or contribute to designing, implementing, or deploying democratic innovations or (2) whose	Participants commit to joining and actively participating in a two-day workshop (7 hours per day, including breaks and lunch) and consent to be

		institution or role relies upon existing or emerging democratic innovations.	photographed and recorded in video. Participants also commit to spending 2 hours and 30 minutes in study-related activities during the ten consecutive working days (weekends and national or regional holidays excluded) preceding the workshop. Participants should also be informed that they might be invited for an interview in a few selected cases.
5	Policymakers and bureaucrats	These participants make decisions about, support, or enforce the execution of the policies, laws and rules that govern society.	Participants commit to joining and actively participating in the activities (7 hours, including breaks) on the second day of the workshop and consent to be photographed and recorded in video.

Venue

A fundamental part of the Democracy labs is the two-day generative workshop. A sketch of the recommended setting is provided in figure 5 to ensure adequate conditions. This is a fully accessible 60 to 100 m2 room facility with plenty of natural light and well-lit, good sound quality in a quiet location, and naturally or mechanically ventilated. Wi-Fi needs to be effortlessly accessible, and there should be enough electricity outlets for everyone to charge their devices. This room should be easily accessible within the broader facility, and lavatories should not be too far away. Clear signalling should be deployed if needed, to guide participants to the relevant room in the venue.

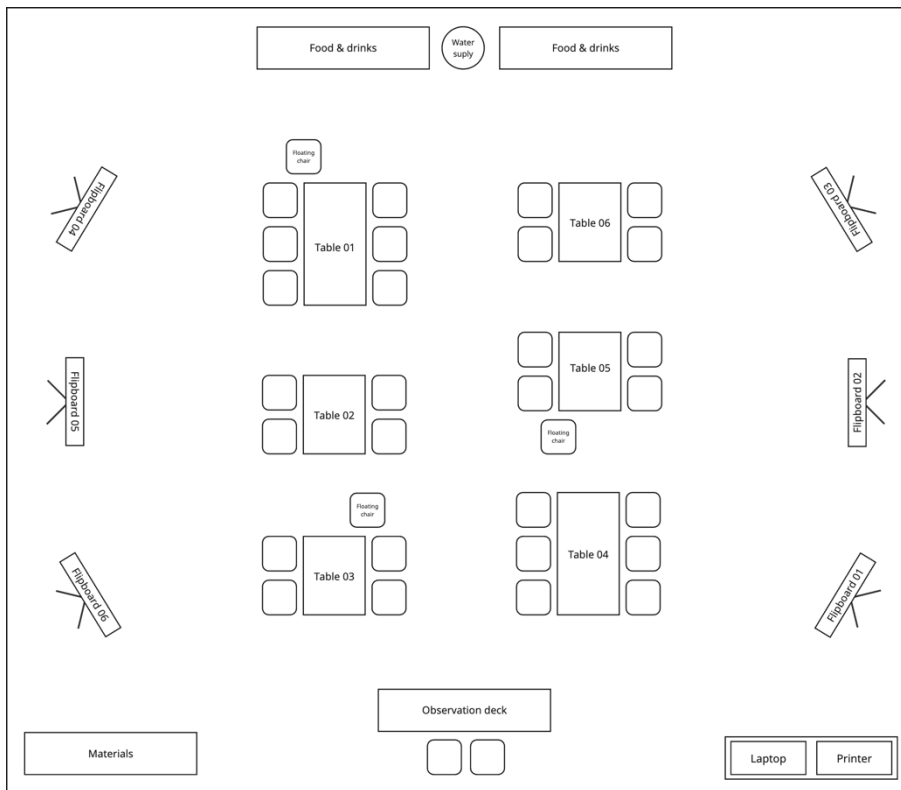


Figure 5 Recommended setting for the generative workshop

Besides the above-mentioned generic requirements, the following details should also be considered:

- **Furniture:** Tables and chairs should be easy to move around, creating little to no noise. Support tables or consoles should be sturdy. Quantities may vary but should meet the setup depicted in Figure 1. Chairs should be enough to seat all those involved in the workshop (participants, facilitators, etc.).
- **Equipment:** A computer with internet access and an A4 colour printer should be available in the room. A copy machine should be available in the broader facility. Six flip chart stands are needed to support group work. The free-standing flip charts can be waived if the room bears walls where material (primarily visual material) can be posted for all to see and act upon.
- **Stationery⁶:** Flip chart paper (to be used on the stands or the wall); six sets of flip-chart markers with at least four colours each; a ream of A4 printer paper; a large enough assortment of black and blue felt tip pens so that all participants can freely use them; six multicolour stacks of sticky notes; six rolls of white adhesive paper tape; and enough sticky

⁶ This refers to basic stationary only and does not include parts of any of the study's materials or data collection instruments.

tack to hold 24 sheets of flip chart paper on the wall, if stands are not available.

- **Catering:** Coffee, tea, water and diverse, quality finger food suitable to various diets and preferences should be available in the room throughout the two-day workshop. Tableware should be as silent as possible (in this case, paper is preferred over plastic or ceramic). A quality buffet-style lunch suitable to various diets and preferences should be served on both days. Ideally, this would be served in a nearby foyer to avoid disrupting ongoing conversations between participants while allowing for some necessary standing time. Tall tables are preferred.

Unrestricted access to the room is needed for the full two workshop days.

Materials

The materials supporting the INCORE-MED Democracy Labs are diverse and adaptable to the specific needs of any local context. As outlined in the methodological approach, the DLABS combine generative design methods with complementary tools and activities to support stakeholder engagement in coastal adaptation and resilience planning. At the same time, the approach remains flexible, allowing the organising teams to integrate additional methods or adjust the use of specific tools depending on the local context and project requirements.

This section provides an overview of the core materials used in the INCORE-MED DLABS, including all the printed and digital materials organised around set of tailored toolkits designed to support the different phases of the process. These materials are intended to scaffold participants' individual and collective "paths of expression," enabling them to reflect on their experiences, engage with others, and progressively develop ideas into tangible and actionable outcomes.

- **Sensitising toolkit:** This toolkit is meant to immerse the participants in the problem space of democratic innovations through memory elicitation, active observation exercises and generative prompts to provoke self-reflection about situations where they felt engaged or disengaged, empowered, or disenfranchised as citizens in what concerns their ability to participate in decision-making impacting their lives. The sensitising toolkit includes instructions and reflection templates organised as an easy-to-use booklet. See Annex 1 for more details.
- **Visions of Democracy Questionnaire** Provided here only as a reference for the organising teams, this tool can be replaced with a generative prompt for the last activity of the sensitising booklet. Teams should evaluate the relevance and value of adding a questionnaire to the sensitising, keeping in mind that it should work as generative probe



about participant's ideas and visions for the future. In the context of INCORE-MED, the questionnaire can be constructed to survey participant's visions of a future about future adaptations and democratic innovations for sustainability of their coastal zone.

- **Sensemaking toolkit:** The sensemaking toolkit scaffolds finding common ground through experience sharing while supporting participants in outgrowing their personal contexts and reflecting on broader challenges. The sensemaking toolkit comprises the Experience Canvas and Democratic Principles Cards. See Annex 2 for more details.
- **Provotyping toolkit:** This toolkit contains a provotype, a diegetic provocative prototype conceived to challenge assumptions and conceptions that invites participants to critique and reimagine an existing democratic process, and the **Provotyping Timeline, Question Cards** and Arrow templates crafted to capture reactions, reflections, and envisioned solutions. See Annex 3 for more details.
- **Futuring toolkit:** This toolkit scaffolds participants when imagining and expressing their ideas and dreams about the future of democracy. The futuring toolkit comprises the **Democratic Innovation Wheel** and the **Storyboarding** templates along with their auxiliary **Thinking Hats** and **Storytelling** card sets and, the **Future Scenarios**. See Annex 4 for more details.

An overview of when these toolkits and materials are used through each iteration of the procedure is presented in Figure 6.

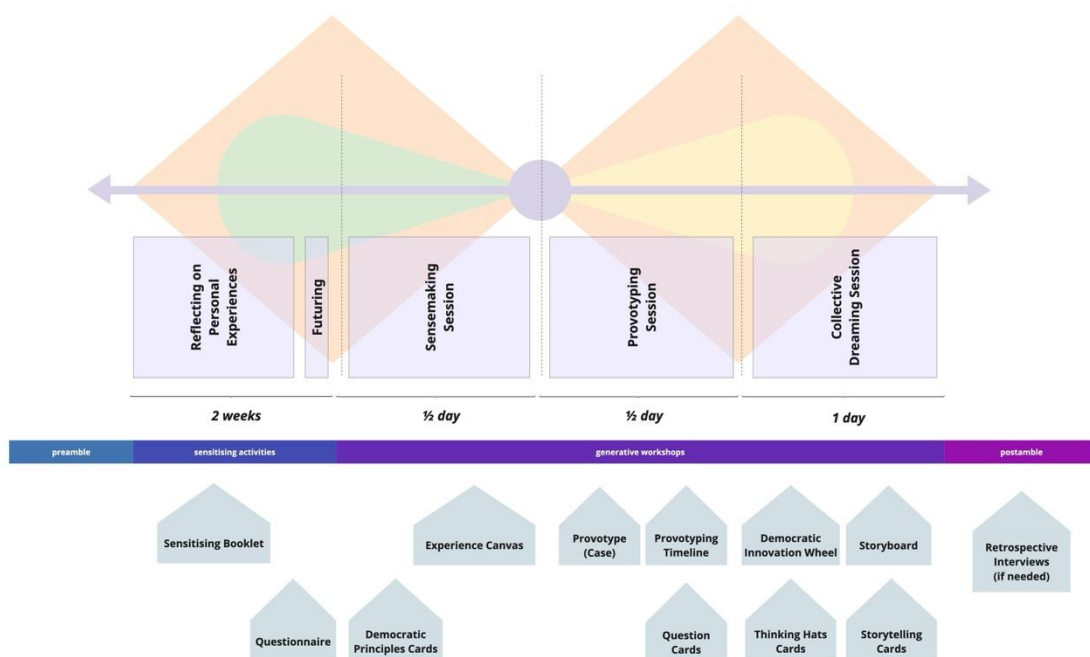


Figure 6 Overview of the procedure with the relevant materials used.

Procedure

The procedure comprises four phases and extends, ideally, over four weeks (see figure 6). The four stages are:

- **Preamble:** During the preamble, participants register and provide informed consent online. The detailed calendar of all activities is delivered, and the instructions about the sensitising activities are emailed. The same instructions and the sensitising toolkit are handed over or sent to participants.
- **Sensitising activities:** This is a period of independent individual work that comprises **exploring scenarios** with the dialogue tool, **reflecting on personal experiences** supported by the sensitising toolkit, and **futuring** by responding to the generative prompt or questionnaire.
- **Generative workshop:** The workshop unfolds over two days and comprises three sessions: a **sensemaking session** where participants get to know each other and, in groups, find common ground based on their personal experiences. A **provotyping session** where participants are provoked and challenged to explore possibilities without triggering too many of their innate psychological defence mechanisms. And a **collective dreaming session** where groups of participants address the challenge of **proposing democratic innovations for coastal adaptations**. The participants will be scaffolded through the process of making their ideas tangible through proposing **concrete democratic innovations** (for instance, participatory budget). All sessions involve sharing viewpoints and ideas, reasoning about them and engaging in constructive critique with peers.
- **Postamble:** After the workshop, when relevant, some participants might be invited to take part in a retrospective interview seeking to capture additional insights.

Additional moments to consider include:

- **Participants and venue secured:** Securing an adequate venue and the required set of participants can be an unexpectedly long process.
- **Stakeholders buy-in secured:** If involving other organisations and stakeholders, the relationships, roles and commitments with them need to be secured and well defined, while keeping the leadership of the organising team.
- **Materials due:** Procedure aside, these are the primary inputs of the procedure. The moment is critical because many materials must be made available or sent to participants very early in the process.
- **Translated data due:** This is the main output of the procedure. Besides translation, it involves digitising, transcribing, annotating, and organising all data.



Table 3 provides an overview of the recommended scheduling of all activities together with a non-exhaustive checklist.

Table 3 Recommended schedule for the Democracy Labs

Timeframe	Moment or phase	Checklist
<i>At least 2 months before the generative workshop</i>	Participants and venue secured	The availability of participants is confirmed. The room is visited, checked for compliance and booked. Equipment, stationery and catering have been rented or ordered.
<i>At least 2 weeks before the sensitising activities begin</i>	Materials due	The Welcome Booklet is translated, localised and ready to be printed and distributed. If used, the questionnaire is finalised and available online. Digital versions of the sensitising, sensemaking, provotyping and futuring toolkits are translated, localised and ready to be printed. Updated instructions for facilitators are ready to be used.
<i>The week before the sensitising activities</i>	Preamble	Participants are registered and provided informed consent. Participants' outreach channels are established and ready with support strategies discussed by the team. The sensitising toolkits are delivered.
<i>10 working days preceding the workshop</i>	Sensitising activities	Participants are nudged into engaging with the sensitising activities. Follow-up contacts take place to ensure active engagement with the sensitising activities. If used, Participants are invited to answer the online questionnaire. Participants are reminded to bring the sensitising toolkit back when attending the workshop.
<i>2 consecutive days</i>	Generative workshop	The room and all that it entails is ready. Access to the room is sign-posted within the broader facility to guide participants. Printed versions of the sensemaking, provotyping and futuring toolkits printed and available on the workshop's premises. Active data collection instruments are ready and have been tested. By-products of the toolkits have been collected (these include reflection diaries, provotyping reflections and design artefacts such as discarded materials, scenarios, mockups and storyboards).

		Photos, video recordings and notes are secured.
<i>The week after the workshop</i>	Postamble	Extraordinary contributions (at the discretion of the facilitator and data collector) are identified. Responsible participants are interviewed for additional insights.
<i>At most 2 months after the generative workshop</i>	Translated data due	Non-digital data is digitised. Audio data is transcribed. Data is annotated and organised. Data is stored in a data container available to the analysis team and is ready to be analysed.

Preamble

The preamble starts with the activation of the registration and informed consent forms. This is followed by several interactions by email between the facilitator and the participants:

Facilitators introduce themselves and the rest of the team, ensuring the participants' smooth and trust-building engagement with the study.

Participants are provided with this study's information sheet and invited to register and provide informed consent to the terms of participation (see Annexes 4 and 5).

- Participants receive a detailed calendar of all activities.
- Participants receive instructions about the independent sensitising activities to be carried out.
- Finally, participants receive the exact instructions by post or are personally handed over on paper with the sensitising toolkit.
- Towards the end of the period set aside for the preamble, the facilitator supports otherwise challenged participants and thanks all once these initial activities are verified and deemed completed. The registration and informed consent forms are de-activated.
- At the facilitator's discretion, the interaction by email can be replaced or complemented with face-to-face or online meetings.

Sensitising Activities

Sensitising activities are individually conducted over the ten working days preceding the generative workshop. Sensitising activities have two activities:

Reflecting on personal experiences: This activity is supported by the sensitising toolkit introduced under the Materials section and it is organised around the path of expression: looking



back where they engage with their past and recent relationship with coastal management decisions and reflect on their experiences and engagement to surface insights on its multi-faceted, multi-level implications. We estimate participants will spend 10 minutes per day, over eight workdays, to address the toolkit's challenges.

Futuring: In this activity, participants provide individual insights into innovative democratic approaches that can address complex changes through inclusive deliberation. This activity is supported either by the generative prompts at latest sections of the booklet where they are prompted to reflect on their beliefs and expectations for the future; or by a **questionnaire** which participants respond online. For the questionnaire, we recommend to design it in a way that participants will need about 20 to 30 minutes to address all questions.

The facilitator triggers the start of the activities and occasionally monitors the participants' progress over email. Table 4 provides a detailed schedule and non-exhaustive checklist of the sensitising activities.

Table 4 Recommended schedule of the Sensitising Activities

Time	Action	Checklist
Day 1	Kick-start the sensitising activities	Thanks again, participants, for their willingness to participate in the study. Recall the instructions sent by email, post or delivered in person.
Day 1	Get participants to engage with the sensitising toolkit	Guide participants to reflect on personal experiences with the sensitising toolkit, summarising the instructions and encouraging them to engage with the task at hand.
Days 2 to 9 (10 minutes per day)		Occasionally, nudge participants into sharing their progress and any eventual challenges when dealing with the sensitising toolkit.
Day 10 (20 to 30 minutes)	If used, get participants to engage with the questionnaire	Activate the questionnaire. Guide participants to futuring supported by the questionnaire available online summarising the instructions and reminding all about how to get to it
Day 14 (end-of-day)	Conclude the sensitising activities	Close the questionnaire. Thank participants for their engagement so far. Evoke the instructions sent by email. Remind all about the location and schedule of the workshop.

Recall the need to bring the sensitising toolkit to the workshop, irrespective of each and everyone's degree of engagement with it.

Generative Workshop

The generative workshop takes place ideally over the course of two consecutive days to prevent participants from dropping out and to keep the momentum and creative mindset developed during day 1 into day 2. It consists of two half-day sessions and one full-day session. These are the sensemaking and provotyping sessions for day 1, and collective dreaming session for day 2. These sessions are addressed in detail addressed in detail in the following sections. Table 5 presents a recommended schedule for the two days organisation, but the hours should be taken as a suggestion. Other times may be more suitable for particular contexts.

Table 5 Recommended schedule of the Generative Workshop

Period	First day	Second day
8:30 to 9:00	Welcoming participants	Welcoming participants
9:00 to 10:20	Sensemaking session (part 1)	Collective dreaming session (part 1)
10:20 to 10:40	Morning leg-stretching break	Morning leg-stretching break
10:40 to 12:00	Sensemaking session (part 2)	Collective dreaming session (part 2)
12:00 to 13:00	Lunch break	Lunch break
13:00 to 14:20	Provotyping session (part 1)	Collective dreaming session (part 3)
14:20 to 14:40	Afternoon leg-stretching break	Afternoon leg-stretching break
14:40 to 16:00	Provotyping session (part 2)	Collective dreaming session (part 4)

Sensemaking Session

This is the first session of the generative workshop, and as such, it is a crucial moment for the entire procedure. It might also be the first time participants meet the facilitator in person, with whom they have been interacting by email for more than two weeks.

During this session, participants get to know each other, team up and, share their thoughts about the challenges adapting to the new and rapidly changing conditions of coastal areas and the increasing deficit of democratic access and engagement by the citizens. It is also the key moment



when participants will build a common space for creativity and build mutual trust with their teammates and the facilitation team. They will navigate and negotiate the initial common vocabulary presented in the Democratic Principles Cards and expand it to reflect their experiences and aspirations, to then move to building a common understanding of the multiplicity of experiences, perspectives, challenges and emotions of living in a coastal area with the Experience Canvas, where they can see how their different experiences relate to each other and surface the complexity of the problems. The main purpose is to engage participants in outgrowing their personal contexts and reflecting on the broader challenges of participatory democracy. Table 6 provides a detailed schedule and non-exhaustive checklist of the sensemaking session.

Table 6 Schedule of the half-day sensemaking session

Time	Action	Checklist
30 minutes	Introductions	Coffee and biscuits are available at the arrival. The facilitator lead and team are introduced, as well as any other team members in the room, with a clear description of their role. A brief overview of the facilities is provided with a review of the workshop. Participants are invited to briefly introduce themselves. Participants are then distributed into 5 or 6 groups, which will remain the same throughout the workshop.
10 minutes	Introduction to the sensemaking session and description of the first group activity.	The goal of the session is stated with its timeline presented. Basic rules (such as "you are the expert of your personal experiences" and "only constructive criticism is allowed"). The Democratic Principles and the blank Democratic Principles card sets are presented and shared with every group. Participants are invited to read and discuss critically the Democratic Principles and use the blank cards to add any principle they feel it may be missing
20 minutes	Group work	All participants actively engage in group work.
10 minutes	Description of the second group activity	The Experience Canvas are now shared with the participants and explained. A new task is introduced, select the two principles each team find more relevant and map where their individual experiences can be placed within the Canvas..
40 minutes	Group work	All participants actively engage in group work.
20 minutes	Leg-stretching break	
30 minutes	Group work	Participants refine and finalise their work on the Experience Canvas, synthesising their learned insights.

40 minutes	Group discussion	All groups present and react to each other's outcomes.
10 minutes	Closing comments	All experience-sharing, personas and scenario templates are collected. Participants are thanked, and directions are provided about where lunch is served.

Provotyping Session

During the provotyping session, participants are exposed to a narrative provotype crafted especially to provide alternative and thought-provoking experiences. The provotype to be used in this session is intentionally designed to provoke resistance and reflection, and while the results may result in ideas for products or services, this is not its main purpose.

The main purpose is to take participants further in their reflections on the challenges of democracy within a context of socio-ecological crises and rapid technological transformations. Further, the provotype is based on a masked real case of regional planning and major development project and includes several environmental dilemmas. This is supported by the provotyping toolkit mentioned earlier in this protocol.

Table 7 provides a detailed schedule and non-exhaustive checklist of the provotyping session.

Table 7 Schedule of the half-day provotyping session

Time	Action	Checklist
10 minutes	Introduction to the provotyping session	The goal of the session is stated. The timeline of the session is presented. Basic rules (such as "only constructive criticism is allowed").
20 minutes	Presentation of the Provotype	The Provotype is presented to the group by the lead facilitator, with thorough explanation of how a relevant decision-making exists today while connecting it with Democracy Labs overall theme.
10 minutes	Description of the first group activity	The Provotyping Timeline is shared with the participants. Teams are then challenged by the facilitators to appraise the extent to which the decision-making process was open, transparent, and promoted inclusiveness and citizen participation and engagement, stimulating critical thinking and participants' questioning of existing norms and practices.
40 minutes	Group work	All participants actively engage in group work.



20 minutes	Afternoon leg-stretching break	
10 minutes	Description of the second group activity	The Questions Cards are now shared with the participants to further their critique of the decision-making process and asked then to ideate about alternative open, transparent, and inclusive decision-making processes that potentially stimulating citizen's participation and engagement.
30 minutes	Group work	All participants actively engage in group work.
40 minutes	Group discussion	All groups present and react to each other's reflections about the proposed ideas.
10 minutes	Closing comments	All reflection forms are collected. The Lead Facilitator or a member of the team, offer a closing reflection of the work of the day, and the value of everyone's contributions. Participants are thanked and dismissed for the day.

Collective Dreaming session

Finally, during the collective dreaming session and, building on the insights enabled by the previous sessions, participants engage in imagining and expressing their ideas and dreams about the future of democratic coastal management processes, co-producing concrete proposals of inclusive democratic innovations that ensure constructive and informed dialogue and a sharing of control between citizens, stakeholders and traditional institutions of representative democracy .

This session will harness the collective imaginaries of participants about democratic innovations capable of enabling meaningful participation for citizens from all ages, faiths, ethnicities, gender, and educational and socioeconomic backgrounds. Participants will address a challenge triggered by hypothetical utopian futures shared with the group, supported by fictional news excerpts (the **Future Scenarios**), and informed by their personal experiences and the lessons learnt through their engagement with all preceding activities in this process. This is supported by the **Futuring Toolkit** introduced before in this protocol.

These collective imaginaries of democratic innovations are co-created by participants working in groups and expressed conceptually and process-wise. Conceptualizations are captured through multifaced mind-mapping scaffolded by the **Democratic Innovation Wheel** template (presented in Annex 4). Processes and inherent procedures, enablers and barriers are then further developed and expressed through comprehensive storyboarding supported by the **Storyboard** template (presented in Annex 4).

This is the last session of the generative workshop so the facilitator will debrief participants (see Annex 4) before dismissing them.

Table 8 provides a detailed schedule and non-exhaustive checklist of the collective dreaming session.

Table 8 Schedule of the full-day collective dreaming session

Time	Action	Checklist
20 minutes	Introduction to the collective dreaming session	The goal of the session is stated, inviting the participants to be as optimistic and utopian as they can be. Examples of democratic innovations may be presented, to better frame the discussion. The general timeline of the session is presented. Basic rules such as "you are the expert of your personal experiences", "only constructive criticism is allowed" and "this is just an exercise, there are no hills worth dying for" are reiterated.
20 minutes	Description of the first group activity	Visions of hypothetical utopian futures are shared with the participants, supported by Future Scenarios, fictional news excerpts from the future. In groups, participants are empowered and challenged to imagine a democratic innovation bringing us closer to their visions of an utopian future. The Democratic Innovation Wheel template, along with its associated materials, is shared with the participants, with instructions about how to use it. Participants are then asked to describe their idea for a democratic innovation using the Democratic Innovations Wheel.
40 minutes	Group work	All participants actively engage in group work.
20 minutes	Morning leg-stretching break	
10 minutes	Description of the second group activity	Facilitators introduce the Thinking Hat Cards to the teams and explained. Teams are then challenged to critique their own work and to iterate their ideas until a consensual understanding is achieved. Groups are asked to update their ideas in the Democratic Innovations Wheel.
40 minutes	Group work	All participants actively engage in group work.
30 minutes	Group discussion	All groups present their idea for a democratic innovation and



		react to each other's.
60 minutes	Lunch	
10 minutes	Description of the third group activity	The Storyboarding template together with associated materials, an instant camera or collage-proper materials are shared with the participants. Groups are now asked to illustrate their idea for a democratic innovation in action and describing it through an episode they can portrait through the Storyboard template. To achieve this, participants are asked to portrait key moments of the innovation in action, whether by drawings, collages or by enacting those key moments and documenting them with the instant camera.
60 minutes	Group work	All participants actively engage in group work.
10 minutes	Group work	All groups wrap-up and tend to last minute details.
20 minutes	Afternoon leg-stretching break	
10 minutes	Group work	All groups prepare to present their ideas about democratic innovations.
60 minutes	Group discussion	All groups present their imagined democratic innovations and react to each other's ideas.
10 minutes	Closing comments	All the Democratic Innovation Wheels and Storyboards are collected. Participants are debriefed, thoroughly thanked, and dismissed.

Postamble

As mentioned before, the postamble of this procedure is reserved for carrying out retrospective interviews or follow-up surveys at the discretion of the facilitator or the data collector.

Running a retrospective interview involves asking participants to recall and describe their past experiences, actions, or decisions related to specific moments or by-products of the sensemaking, provotyping or collective dreaming sessions.

These interviews allow for additional insights into extraordinary phenomena observed during the generative workshop. Adequately supported by prompts extracted from the data collected through the workshop, they can provide detailed data about the participants' personal histories, motivations, challenges, and achievements.

They can reveal the processes and strategies participants used to engage with the activities

throughout the workshop.

Ideally, all retrospective interviews will be carried out through videoconferencing, enabling the simultaneous recording of the prompts used to guide the conversation and the conversation itself.

If a post-hoc questionnaire is preferred, this should be designed as a reflective tool that captures insights emerging after participation, rather than repeating what was already discussed during the workshop. It should focus on participants' personal learnings, shifts in perspective, and ideas that developed through reflection. Questions should explore different dimensions of learning—what participants understood, how they might apply it, and how their views of others or the process evolved. Open-ended prompts are particularly valuable to surface tacit or latent insights, such as ideas that only became clear after the event or thoughts that stayed with participants over time.

At the same time, the questionnaire should assess the perceived value of the process, including what worked well, what was challenging, and how participation could be improved. It should also encourage forward-looking reflections by asking participants about next steps, potential barriers to implementation, and ways to strengthen democratic participation in their context. A balanced mix of open and structured questions, kept concise and accessible, will help ensure meaningful responses while avoiding fatigue. Overall, the questionnaire should act as a second layer of insight generation, extending the impact of the DLAB beyond the workshop itself.

Data Collection

Data collection takes place throughout each iteration of this study. Data collection aims to document the process leading to generating collective imaginaries of democratic innovations.

In each iteration, there are 13 data collection moments. These moments are identified in Figure 9 through downwards pointing arrows. Data collection is classified as passive or active:

- **Passive data collection:** Passive data collection relies on participants' compliance in filling in structured data collection instruments such as forms and questionnaires and in providing input into semi-structured templates.
- **Active data collection:** Active data collection occurs through observation and occasional retrospective interviews. Observation comprises mapping the room's composition, taking notes of relevant attitudes and behaviours, photographing the co-creation of design artefacts, and recording videos of critical moments, such as presentations.

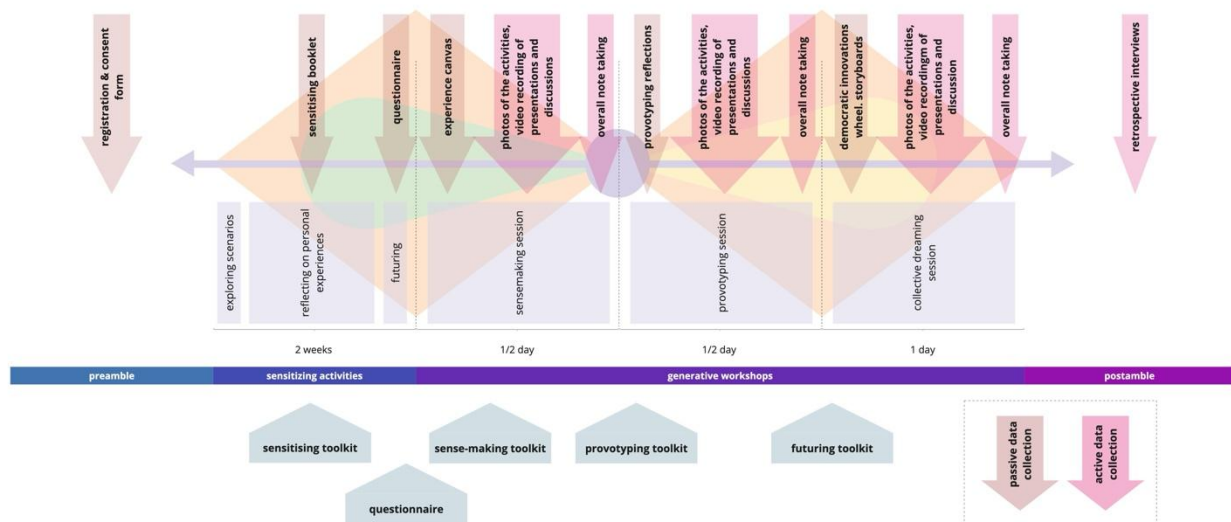


Figure 7 Data collection instruments used throughout the procedure

Passive data collection moments are when data is collected through:

- Answers provided on the **registration and informed consent form**, recorded digitally.
- Contributions written in the **sensitising booklet**, later collected during the generative workshop.
- Answers provided on the **questionnaire**, recorded digitally.
- Co-creation of sets of **experience canvases** and **personas**, gathered at the end of the generative workshop.
- Writing-up **provotyping reflections**, collected at the end of the generative workshop.
- Co-creation of sets of **democratic innovations' wheels** and **storyboards**, collected at the end of the generative workshop.

Active data collection moments are:

- **Photos of the activities, video recording of presentations and discussions**, digitally recorded during the sensitising, provotyping and collective dreaming sessions.
- Purposeful **notetaking**, during the sensitising, provotyping and collective dreaming sessions.
- Eventual **retrospective interviews or post-hoc questionnaires** can be conducted after the generative workshop if the organising team deems it valuable.
- Whereas passive data collection is achieved through the materials supporting each iteration of this study, active data collection requires additional instruments such as:
- A logbook to sketch annotated maps of the room's composition and to take notes of relevant moments, attitudes, and behaviours.
- A photo camera or mobile phone with a suitable camera to photograph the co-creation of

design artefacts.

- A video camera on a tripod with a microphone suitable to record presentations and discussions from a static viewpoint.
- A voice recorder or mobile phone with a suitable microphone, or a videoconferencing solution that allows to record eventual retrospective interviews.

Upon conclusion of activities, all data collected through physical artefacts is annotated, organised, and digitised so that it can be easily handled. Digital data is also annotated and organised.

All collected data will be transcribed (when relevant), translated and stored in a digital data container available to the whole team and compliant with the broader project's data management plan.

Data Analysis

Following the Democracy Labs, data analysis should be approached not as a detached or purely technical step, but as a **continuation of the participatory process itself**. Rather than extracting insights from participants' contributions, the aim is to **engage with the material in a way that respects, preserves, and deepens the collective sensemaking that took place during the labs**. In this sense, analysis becomes part of how the organising team reflects on, learns from, and carries forward the process.

The first step is to consolidate all relevant materials produced before, during, and after the labs, including recordings, notes, facilitation artifacts (e.g., canvases, maps, post-its), and participant-generated outputs. These should be organized in a way that reflects the flow of the sessions, allowing the team to revisit not only what was produced, but **how discussions evolved and meanings were constructed over time**.

A **thematic analysis** can then be conducted within the organising team, combining structure with openness. A light analytical framework—such as the phases of the Democracy Labs (e.g., framing, ideation, prototyping, reflection)—can help guide the process, but should remain adaptable. The emphasis should be on **staying close to participants' perspectives**, avoiding over-abstraction or reinterpretation that disconnects findings from their original context. Particular attention should be paid to:

- How participants framed challenges, opportunities, and priorities
- The range and nature of solutions proposed, including nature-based approaches.
- How different forms of knowledge (explicit, observational, tacit, latent) interacted
- Moments of convergence, disagreement, or reframing that shaped the discussion



In parallel, a **process-oriented reflection** should be carried out to understand how the lab unfolded. This involves revisiting key moments, transitions between activities, and facilitation choices that influenced participation and outcomes. Visual tools such as timelines or journey maps can support this effort by making the progression of the lab more tangible. This step helps the team **recognize how insights emerged**, rather than treating them as static outputs.

Importantly, analysis should be treated as a **reflective and interpretive practice**, where the organising team critically engages with both the material and its own role in shaping it. This includes acknowledging how facilitation decisions, framing of questions, and interactions with participants influenced what was expressed and how. Such reflexivity strengthens the credibility of the analysis while maintaining alignment with the participatory ethos of the methodology.

Recommendations

- Treat data analysis as a **continuation of the participatory process**, not an external evaluation phase
- Avoid extractive approaches; instead, focus on **deepening and honoring participants' contributions**
- Organize materials to preserve the **temporal and processual nature** of the labs
- Use **flexible analytical frameworks** that support interpretation without constraining it
- Combine thematic analysis with **process reflection** to understand how outcomes emerged
- Use **visual tools** (e.g., timelines, maps) to support collective sensemaking
- Stay close to participants' perspectives, avoiding unnecessary abstraction
- Incorporate **reflexive practices** to examine how the team's role influenced the process and results

By adopting this approach, data analysis becomes a meaningful extension of the Democracy Labs, one that **respects the integrity of the participatory process while supporting ongoing reflection, learning, and future action**.

Pilot Case Specifications and Methodological Adaptations

Both pilot teams have engaged in a process of **situated adaptation of the Democracy Labs methodology**, while maintaining its core structure and principles. A shared adaptation across both contexts is the choice to use of the **sensitising questionnaire**, but reimagined by each organising team. This tool is intended to prepare participants for the workshops by introducing the overarching theme and local framing of the Democracy Labs. In both cases, the questionnaire is not simply adopted but **actively redesigned**, reflecting each context's priorities and stakeholder relationships.

A second shared characteristic is the strengthened role of **key institutional stakeholders in shaping the labs' direction and priorities**. In Ria Formosa, this involves the ICNF (Instituto da Conservação da Natureza e das Florestas), while in Kaštela it involves the town's council (Gradsko vijeće Kaštela). Compared to the original protocol, both cases show a more explicit effort to **embed the labs within existing governance structures**, with stakeholder input playing a more prominent role in defining goals and thematic focus. This represents a meaningful adaptation, aimed at increasing relevance, legitimacy, and potential uptake of outcomes.

Both teams also retain the core methodological toolkit of the Democracy Labs, including the **Sensitising Booklet, Democratic Principles cards, Experience Canvas, Democratic Innovation Wheel, and Storyboard**. At the same time, they are selectively adapting key elements to better fit the INCORE-MED context. In particular, the **Provotype is being redesigned** to reflect nature-based solutions and coastal climate adaptation challenges, while the **Future Scenarios are being reframed as utopian coastal futures**, helping participants imagine long-term transformations in their environments.

In terms of contextualization, the Kaštela pilot introduces a particularly strong spatial anchoring. The workshops are planned to take place in proximity to **urban green spaces that serve as the central thematic focus of the lab**, making nature-based solutions more tangible and directly connected to lived environments. This spatial embedding is expected to strengthen participant engagement and the relevance of outcomes.

Kaštela Pilot Specificities

The Kaštela team led by RERA, with the support from PAP/RAC, has articulated ambitious and practice-oriented expected outputs, including the development of a **public green infrastructure register and a participatory map of green spaces in Kaštela Bay**, combined with citizen education on nature-based solutions. Additional anticipated outcomes include a **communication platform and policy recommendations** aimed at supporting municipal decision-making.



In terms of data collection, the team is also considering **alternative approaches to video and audio recording**, in response to potential participant sensitivities regarding being recorded. This reflects an important contextual adaptation that prioritizes trust, consent, and inclusivity in the local setting.

Ria Formosa Pilot Specificities

The Ria Formosa team led by Sciaena has primarily adapted the **sensitising questionnaire**, making it shorter and more qualitative to better suit local engagement conditions. In addition, the structure of the generative workshops has been modified: rather than running on consecutive days, sessions will be **distributed over a seven-day interval**, allowing participants more time for reflection and integration between workshops.

A central objective in the Ria Formosa case is also explicitly process-oriented: the team aims to **demonstrate the value of the Democracy Labs to key stakeholders in a way that fosters their ownership and long-term appropriation of the methodology**. This emphasis positions the pilot not only as a participatory design exercise, but also as a capacity-building and institutional learning process.

Learnings from the adaptation process.

Taken together, these adaptations illustrate how the Democracy Labs methodology is being actively **re-embedded into local governance, environmental, and social contexts**. While the core structure of the methodology remains intact, its enactment is shaped by stakeholder relationships, spatial conditions, environmental conflicts and controversies, temporal arrangements, and communication needs. This reinforces the understanding of Democracy Labs not as a fixed protocol, but as a **flexible framework for situated participatory design practice**.

Conclusions

This deliverable has explored the adaptation of the Democracy Labs methodology within the INCORE-MED context, demonstrating how a participatory design approach originally developed for democratic innovation can be meaningfully reinterpreted to address climate adaptation and nature-based solutions (NBS) in the Atlantic and Mediterranean coastal areas. The experiences in Kaštela and Ria Formosa confirm that the strength of Democracy Labs does not lie in methodological replication, but in their capacity to be **situated, flexible, and responsive to local environmental, social, and institutional conditions**.

It is also important to point out that, across both pilots, the methodology has been actively reshaped through stronger engagement with key stakeholders, contextual adjustments to tools and formats, and deliberate efforts to align the process with local governance dynamics and ecological realities. These adaptations highlight that participatory methodologies must remain **open, negotiable, and evolving**, particularly when transferred across domains as complex as climate adaptation.

Relevance for Coastal Climate Adaptation

Coastal zones face interconnected and rapidly evolving challenges, including climate risks, biodiversity loss, urban pressure, and competing land uses. These challenges are often characterized by **uncertainty, long-term impacts, and the need to reconcile diverse stakeholder perspectives**. In this context, the Democracy Labs methodology proves particularly relevant as it creates a structured yet open space for **collective exploration, dialogue, and co-creation**.

Rather than approaching adaptation solely as a technical or planning problem, Democracy Labs enable a shift toward **relational and participatory understandings of coastal resilience**. They provide a framework through which local communities, experts, and decision-makers can jointly engage with complex issues, making visible not only potential solutions but also the values, assumptions, and priorities that underpin them.

Value of Methodological Adaptation and Expansion

A key contribution of this work lies in showing that adapting and expanding Democracy Labs to the domain of nature-based solutions is not only possible, but highly valuable. The introduction of elements such as NBS-focused provotypes, coastal future scenarios, and context-specific sensitisation tools demonstrates how the methodology can be **extended to engage with different environmental and place challenges** without losing its participatory core.

This scale-out enhances the proposition of Democracy Labs to address **multi-scalar and interdisciplinary issues**, bridging local knowledge with scientific and policy perspectives. It also



reinforces the importance of designing methodologies that are not static, but **capable of evolving alongside the challenges they seek to address**.

Supporting More Effective Nature-Based Solutions and Policies

One of the most significant insights from this co-learning stage of INCORE-MED project is that Democracy Labs contribute not only to generating ideas, but to **improving how problems are understood and framed**. By surfacing lived experiences, local knowledge, and overlooked concerns, the process helps reveal **opportunity areas and misalignments** that may not be captured through conventional planning approaches.

This has direct implications for the design of more effective NBS and policies, and for creating more meaningful engagements based on co-learning with communities. The outputs of the labs—when translated into actionable formats such as policy syntheses, solution portfolios, and opportunity mappings—can support decision-makers in developing interventions that are **better aligned with local needs, more socially robust, and more likely to be adopted and sustained**.

Equally important is the role of the process itself in fostering **shared understanding and stakeholder alignment**, which are critical conditions for successful implementation. In this sense, Democracy Labs act not only as design tools, but as **enabling infrastructures for collaboration and informed decision-making**.

Final Reflection

Based on these experiences, the Democracy Labs methodology offers the following key advantages for practitioners, community organisers, nature-based solutions innovators and policymakers:

- Is well-suited for complex, “fuzzy” coastal challenges that require early-stage exploration with multiple stakeholders before defining solutions.
- Strengthens citizen engagement and empowerment, positioning communities as active contributors within generative design processes.
- Provides a robust yet flexible framework, combining clear structure with adaptable tools for different local contexts.
- Guides creative exploration of complex problems toward tangible outcomes, ensuring participatory processes produce actionable insights and results.
- Builds institutional capacity, equipping teams with practical skills in participatory and generative design, and collaborative governance.
- Integrates diverse and underrepresented knowledge sources and types.
- Uses a multi-phase engagement model, enabling deeper reflection, more meaningful

participation, and higher-quality results.

Ultimately, this deliverable underscores that the transfer of participatory design methodologies such as Democracy Labs should be understood as a process of **continuous adaptation, peer reflection and learning**. Their value lies as much in how they are enacted as in what they produce. When approached as living processes, rather than fixed protocols, they offer a powerful means to navigate the complexity of coastal climate adaptation.

By supporting collective sensemaking, reframing challenges, and generating context-sensitive insights, Democracy Labs can play a meaningful role in shaping **more inclusive, grounded, and effective pathways toward resilient coastal futures**.



Annexes

Annex 1 – Sensitising toolkit

The purpose of the sensitising toolkit is to guide participants in revisiting past and recent events where they felt engaged or disengaged, empowered or disenfranchised as citizens in what concerns their ability to participate in decision making processes impacting their lives. This is achieved through the booklet illustrate in Figure.

This booklet invites participants to reflect about four such moments in their past and recent life perceived by them as frustrating or encouraging. Alternating between past and recent times, frustrating or encouraging situations, the booklet invites participants to shortly present each event, to describe their feelings in that regard, and to reflect on what they would change in each case to avoid or further improve similar processes in the future.



Figure 8 Sensitising Booklet

Annex 2 – Sensemaking toolkit

The sensemaking toolkit comprises two tools: The Experience Canvas Template and the Democratic Principles Cards, illustrated in Figure 9

The purpose the sensemaking toolkit is to foster a common ground among participants while eliciting fragments of their past experiences. The structure of the experience canvas allows participants to create a shared experience space and understanding. Participants will be encouraged to synthesise and to find commonalities, but this cannot be ensured.

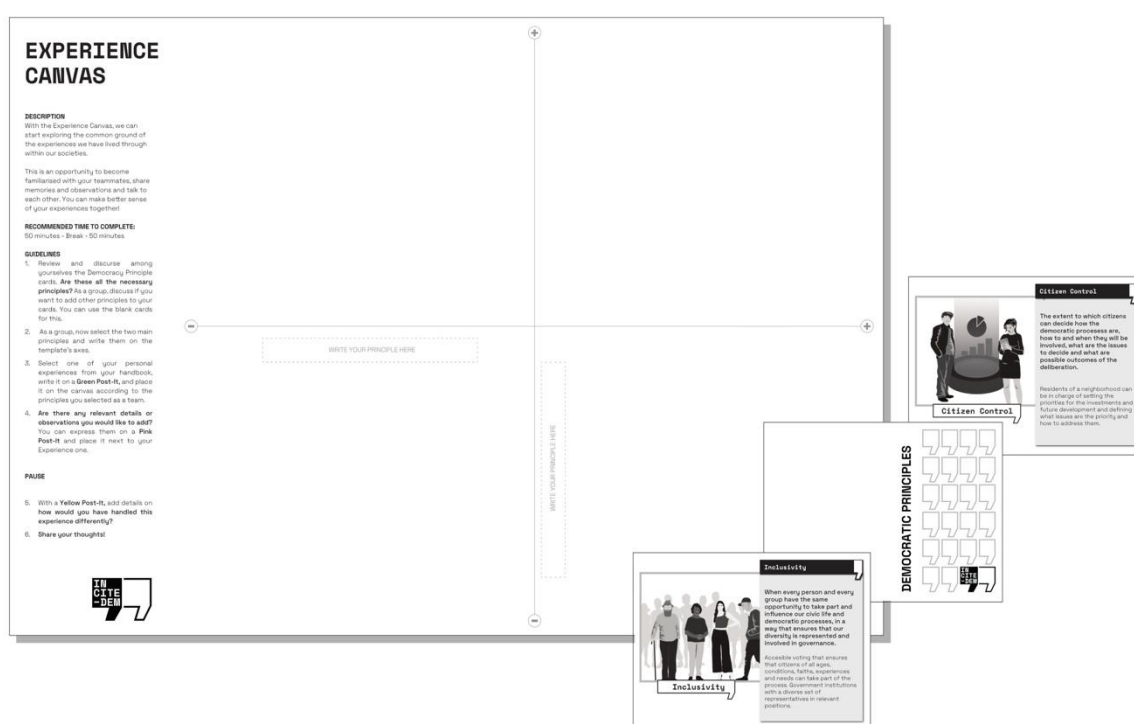


Figure 9 Sensemaking Toolkit

Recommended checklist for facilitators to enable the activity:

- One Experience Canvas template per group
- 6 pens, 6 pencils, 2 erasers per group
- 3 packs of sticky notes of each colour (white, yellow, green, orange, blue, pink) per each group
- Plenty of empty A4 paper



Annex 3 – Provotyping toolkit

The Provotyping toolkit comprises of several tools: First and foremost, a Provotype, a “provocative prototype” in this case, an existing policy decision-making case that became contested when the community found out the results of the process. This case serves as the “provocative prototype” of how decisions are taken and sets the stage for critique and reimagination by the participants. For the context of INCORE-MED it is strongly recommended that each organising team finds a relevant case that matches the local realities and resonates with their participants.

The rest of the toolkit is comprised by the Provotyping Timeline template (with its blank companion to allow modification by the teams), the Question Cards to prompt critical refinement and foliated elements (arrows and caption boxes) to support team discussions if needed.

These tools are presented in Figure 10

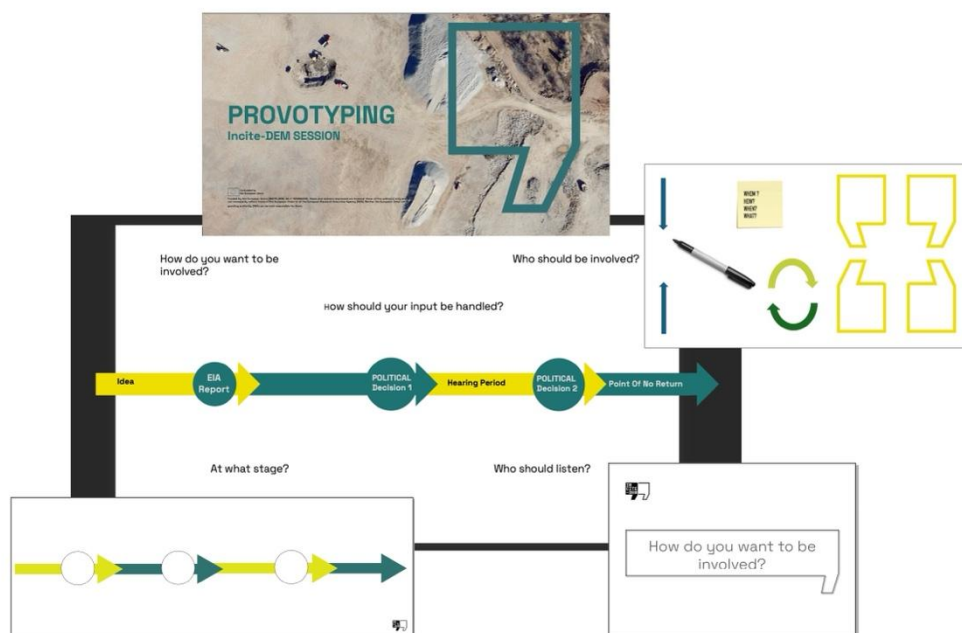


Figure 10 Provotyping toolkit

Annex 4 – Futuring toolkit

This toolkit is comprised of three main tools and two auxiliary ones. The three main tools are the **Future Scenarios** pieces and, the **Democratic Innovation Wheel** and the **Storyboard** templates. The auxiliary tools are the **Thinking Hats** and the **Storytelling** card sets that can be used by the facilitation team to support teams' creativity and critical depth. While these tools are effective, it is strongly recommended that the **Future Scenarios** are adapted to the organising team's chosen theme for their Democracy Labs instance and to better resonate with the local culture and context. It is an opportunity for teams to further appropriate and develop the Democracy Labs for their context and needs.

The Future Scenarios are carefully crafted news pieces "from the future" through which participants are temporarily transported to a future where their involvement with coastal management democratic is not limited to elections, but extends to every aspect of social life, such as work, education, culture, and media. People have direct and equal say in the decisions that affect them, and participate in various forms of self-governance, deliberation, and cooperation. After participants engage, interpret and appropriate these future narratives, they are brought back to the present by the facilitation team and challenged to imagine their own utopian future.

It is important to stress to teams not to limit their imagination and ideas by what they imagine plausible but to engage with the task from an utopian point of view. They are asked to then propose a Democratic Innovation that would make such future, closer to reality. This toolkit scaffolds participants when imagining and expressing their ideas and dreams about the future of democracy and coastal zone management and adaptations.

Recommended checklist for facilitators to enable the activity:

- One Democratic Innovation Wheel template per group
- One Storyboard template per group
- A printed set of Future Scenarios per group
- One Thinking Hats card set and one Storytelling card set per group.
- Enough pencils, markers, pens for each participant.
- 3 packs of sticky notes of each colour (white, yellow, green, orange, blue, pink) per each group
- Plenty of empty A4 paper
- Suggested: A polaroid camera loaded with film per each group to support their work for storytelling. As an alternative, magazines and pictures that can be used for making collages, an even a small colour printer in case they prefer to use their phone cameras for the task.



These tools are presented in Figure 11.

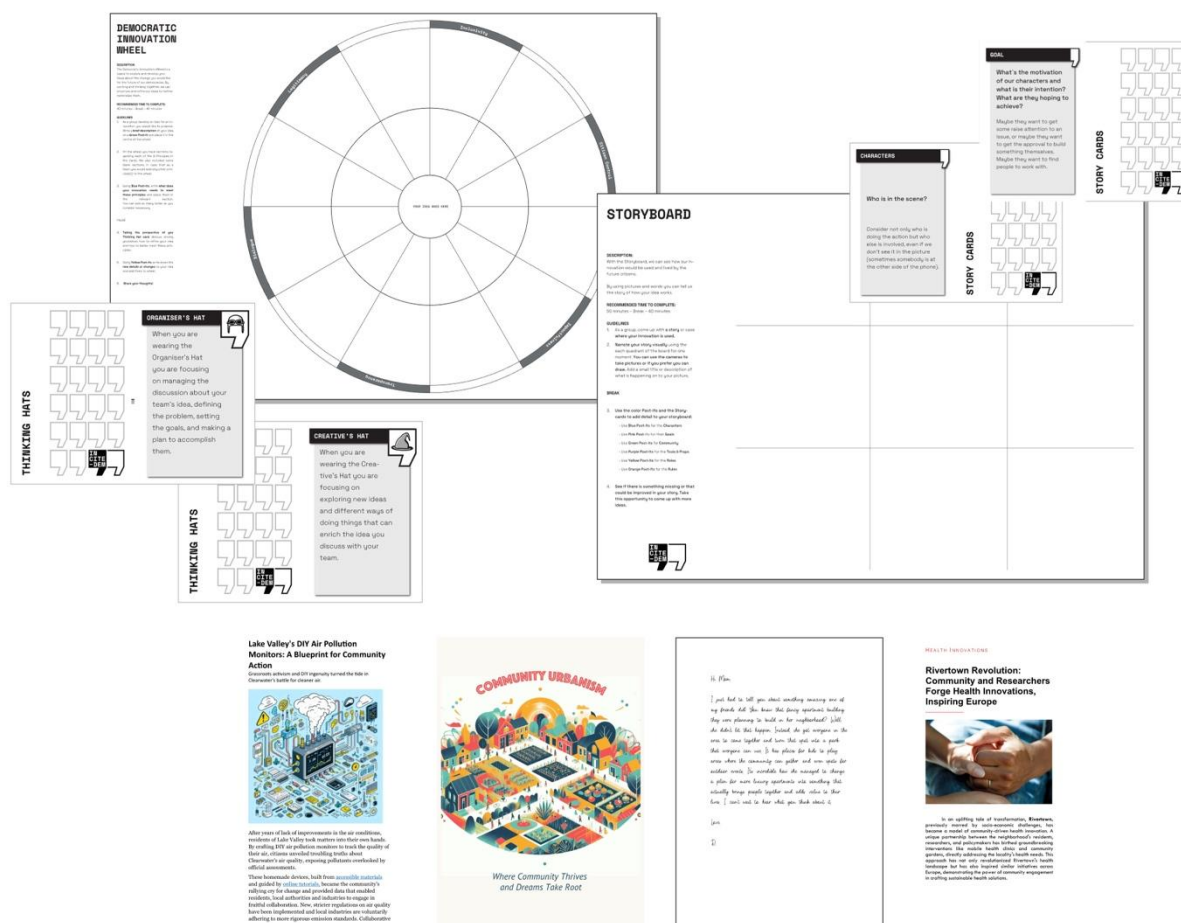


Figure 11 Futuring toolkit

Annex 5 – Information Sheet Example (Adapt to your context)

We are pleased to invite you to participate in our study. Our study is part of the part of the INCORE-MED project, which focuses on understanding the processes and models of civic participation and citizenship engagement within democratic life, with an inclusive focus and targeting social and environmental sustainability. Before you decide whether to participate, we would like to present you with further details about the Democracy Labs, its aims, its potential usefulness and what it implies to participate. A member of the research team will answer any doubts you might have.

1 – What is the aim of these Democracy Labs?

Our aim is to create a structured and facilitated space to where citizens and residents contribute to coastal adaptation processes. Rather than being limited to consultation, participants will engage in shared problem framing, dialogue across perspectives, and the co-design of adaptation solutions, including nature-based approaches. You can learn more about this project online (<https://incore-med.interreg-euro-med.eu/>).

2 – Do I have to participate in this study?

Participation is voluntary. If you agree to participate, you will provide informed consent and receive a copy of the current document as well as a copy of the informed consent form.

3 – What if I wish to back down from participating in the Democracy Labs?

You are free to quit, at any time, without providing any explanation or justification.

4 – What will I have to do as part of the Democracy Labs?

You will participate in an experience that consists of individual and group activities. The individual activities should be completed within the two weeks preceding to group activities. The group activities will last for two full consecutive days.

During the individual activities you will be asked to engage with an activity booklet, to reflect on past and recent experiences and to answer an online questionnaire.

During the group activities you will engage in creating different artefacts with other participants. No specific skills are required.

5 – What are the disadvantages and risks of participating?

No associated risks are anticipated, and the research team's expectation is that the sessions in which you participate will be a pleasant experience for the participants.

6 – What are the possible benefits of participating?

In our experience, people like to participate in activities and experiences that promote



communication with scientists, activists and policymakers. Your involvement will help to understand the conditions for more inclusive citizen engagement and civic participation that will help advance goals for environmental and social sustainability for our coastal zone.

7 – What happens when the research is finished?

Data analysis will end in September 2026. Study results will be published in our website and perhaps academic conferences and journals. If you would like to know details about the results and implications of the study, we will send you a copy of the research report, but not before September 2026.

8 – What if a problem occurs?

If you have any concerns about any aspect of this study, you should speak to the Democracy Labs coordinator, _____, who will do her best to clarify and answer your questions, by phone (_____) or email (_____). If you are dissatisfied or want to file a formal complaint, you can do so by contacting the _____.

9 – Will my information be kept private?

Yes. We will follow all ethical and legal practices and all information about you will be treated with absolute confidentiality. To ensure anonymity, personal records will only be available in their entirety to the researcher in charge, and the members of the research team will only have access to the data they need to know. If your data is used for publications or presentations, it will be completely anonymised, without any direct or indirect reference to your identity. If photographs are taken with the intention to use them in any presentation, you will be asked for prior permission. If you allow us to use photographs or videos for this purpose, we will first ask you to sign specific releases for such objectives.

10 – Did the study go through a review process?

Indeed, the Democracy Labs methodology was reviewed within a previous project, INCITE-DEM, by the Science Ethics Committee (<https://ciencias.ulisboa.pt/pt/comissao-etica-ciencias>). This committee analysed the overall plan, and raised no objections from an ethical point of view.

11 – Who may I contact about this study?

[Add the name and email address of the Project Coordinator and Participant Outreach coordinator in the team]

Thank you for taking your time and for considering participating in this study.

Annex 6 – Informed Consent Form Example (Adapt to your context)

If you have any questions or want clarification regarding this research and/or your participation, please contact:

[Add the name and email address of the Democracy Labs Coordinator and Participant Outreach coordinator in the team]

Democracy Labs Coordinator (_____ at _____)

Participant's Contact Lead (_____ at _____)

We thank you for your interest and willingness to participate in this study. Please fill the following form, checking each statement, marking your agreement with an X and signing it. You will receive a copy of this form and of the participant information sheet.

	Statement	Yes
1	I confirm that I have read and understood the project's Participant Information Sheet, and I am aware of who is organising, who is funding and what are the purposes of the research, and the expected duration of my participation.	
2	I had the opportunity to read and question the presented information, and I have had all my questions answered to my satisfaction.	
3	I understand that the researcher will not identify me by name in any reports using information obtained from this interview, and that my confidentiality as a participant in this study will remain secure. Subsequent uses of records and data will be subject to standard data use policies which protect the anonymity of individuals and institutions.	
4	I understand that the data I provide during the study may be available to other consortium team members, when required for research purposes. I hereby allow the members of the research team to have access to this data.	
5	I am aware of the procedures adopted to ensure my data protection, including the duration of storage of personal data, and I have been informed about what will happen to the results of the research.	
6	I wish to receive the final research report. My email address is:	
7	I would like to be contacted about any further related research, through the above-mentioned email.	
8	I declare I have not mentioned any potential reason that can become a potential risk for my health or physical integrity.	
9	I declare that I will participate in this study without any remuneration or compensation/counterpart, besides eventual required and agreed expenses reimbursement or a symbolic compensation for my time.	



10 I declare that I accept the recording, in audio or video, of my participation and interviews.

11 I declare that I take this decision completely free of any constraints.

12 I agree to participate in the research.

In my opinion the participant understands the relevant aspects of the research information and can make an informed decision.

Participant's name,
signature and date.

Democracy Labs Coordinator name,
signature and date.

Annex 6 – Debriefing Sheet Example (Adapt to your context)

We are very thankful for your participation in this study.

The INCORE-MED project aims at improving capacities to facilitate inclusive participation and manage conflicts and controversies surrounding climate adaptation planning and governance in coastal and marine regions and strengthening public participation, enhance legitimacy and promote inclusive democratic practices in the prevention of climate risk.

Thus, we greatly appreciate your participation.

As stated in the INCORE-MED's information sheet which was handed to you before securing your informed consent to participate in this study, any personal data that has been provided by you will remain confidential, will not be shared with third parties, nor transferred between countries, and will be destroyed at the end of the project.

You have the right to withdraw future participation, or to ask us to redraw from the project the analysis of any or all the data that has been provided and you require no justification for doing so. The results of this study will be provided to you at the end of the project, and we welcome any feedback from you.

All feedback we receive from you will be integrated, as much as possible, and an updated version of the documents will be returned to you.

All research data will be kept at institutional servers. This data includes the final outputs, namely deliverables to the European Union and scientific articles published in mainly open-access peer-reviewed journals. Final deliverables and articles or other publications will be sent to you in digital form if you stated the wish to receive these documents in your informed consent form.

Thank you for your time and interest in participating in this research. We hope this has been a pleasant experience. Please provide us with any feedback you would like to give. Your opinion is very important to us and will be thoughtfully considered.

If you have any further questions or want clarification regarding this research and/or your participation, please contact:

[Add the name and email address of the Project Coordinator and Participant Outreach coordinator in the team]

Again, thank you for your participation.



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