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Deliverable 14: Report on implementation of Connecting Nature Frameworks in the Fast Follower Cities

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Executive Summary

The Connecting Nature Framework places the nature-based solution at the core of an interactive process that runs through three distinct phases of development: planning, delivery, and stewardship. Throughout each phase there are seven separate elements that cities and other entities may consider to help them shape their individual nature-based solution: Technical solutions, Governance, Financing and business models, Nature-based enterprises, Co-production, Impact assessment and Reflexive monitoring. The Connecting Nature Framework has been co-produced by scientific partners and a set of Front-Runner Cities (FRCs) – Genk, Glasgow, and Poznan. The experiences and lessons learned by the FRCs have been transferred to a set of Fast-Follower Cities (FFCs) – A Coruna, Burgas, Ioannina, Malaga, Nicosia, Pavlos Melas, and Sarajevo – via the Experiential Learning Framework (ELF). The ELF has fostered peer-to-peer exchange and collaborative learning across all project activities to support the scaling out of the nature-based solutions.

This report details the implementation of the Connecting Nature Framework in the FFCs. Generally speaking, the cities have highlighted that the Connecting Nature Framework report and the narrative are useful tools for internal use, as a mechanism to share information on nature-based solutions (NbS). While the cities highlight the challenges with the concept of NbS, each city has reflected on the how the use of the Framework has provided opportunities to create conditions for a more integrated approach that the multifunctional aspect of NbS demands. For example, Ioannina's experience highlights the role of nature-based solutions as positive, proactive tool rather than (just) a response to societal and environmental challenges.

The exemplars to be discussed in this section are as follows: A Coruna: Weaving an Urban Gardens Network throughout the city; Burgas: The Restoration of Saint Trinity Park; Ioannina: The Restoration of Pirsinela Park; Malaga: Nature-Based Solutions in Lagunillas Neighbourhood; Nicosia: Urban network of Green & Open spaces; Pavlos Melas: Pavlos Melas Metropolitan Park programme – the transition of an ex-military camp into an urban open innovation core with environmental, social, cultural and economic benefits; and Sarajevo: Urban garden and sensory park within the Secondary Vocational Education and Training School. The cities were asked to describe their experiences of working with and implementing the Connecting Nature Framework in support of their exemplars, reflecting on, among other things: the city's experience with nature-based solutions prior to Connecting Nature; a general description of the exemplar selected; how the Connecting Nature was applied to the exemplar, with a focus on key benefits and supports demonstrated by the framework; and, some of the challenges encountered.

Some key city reflections based on the FFC experiences with the Connecting Nature Framework include: the importance of peer-to-peer support via the experiential learning framework, and the reflexive monitoring sessions between FRCs and FFCs in particular¹ (Pavlos Melas, Ioannina); incorporating new ways of working with and in the Framework for exemplar delivery (Burgas, Sarajevo, Ioannina, Malaga); using the Connecting Nature Framework as the foundation for funding applications and NbS recognition via awards (Nicosia, A Coruna); the importance of involvement in EU Projects to embed nature-based solutions in exemplar (Pavlos Melas); the continued difficulties in communicating the objectives of the NbS exemplar, owing to poor or little understanding of NbS in cities (all; with A Coruna and Ioannina highlighting the challenges of communicating the complexities of the Framework in English (i.e. need for translation into local language); and, finally, while the Framework has been beneficial with regards to working cross-departments, it is still difficult to break silos (Malaga, A Coruna).

The **impact of the peer-to-peer support** cannot be understated as a **significant mechanism** for providing the FFCs with the means to apply the framework in each of their cities. While the Framework is challenging, and, as Burgas noted in their city reflections – 'requires a new way of working' - the FFCs benefited from the knowledge and experiences shared by Glasgow, Genk, and Poznan. Specifically, the reflexive monitoring sessions created a space for FRCs and FFCs to ask questions of each other, and in so doing, it created a space for the FFCs to explore the application of the framework to their specific contexts. As the FFCs gained experience via the Framework, there was a noticeable shift in the exchange dynamic between the cities. By the time the third reflexive monitoring sessions were completed the FRCs were actively seeking advice from the FFC experience with the framework. The newly established UrbanByNature hubs in Europe (the first one, in Spain in November 2021), with Glasgow and Genk forthcoming (in February 2022 and May 2022 respectively) are a positive step in creating sustainable peer-to-peer mechanisms to ensure lessons learned are shared widely for the benefit of all cities. That said, without appropriate resourcing and support it will be difficult to sustain

¹ For more detail on the Experiential Learning Framework, and the reflexive monitoring peer-to-peer session, please refer to Report on Knowledge Transfer Between Front Runner Cities and Fast Follower Cities, taking into account the proceedings of the knowledge transfer workshops and mentoring process. More details regarding the key learning outcomes from the reflexive monitoring sessions, will be available in March 2022 (Deliverable 6).



current peer-to-peer mechanisms, and it will be a challenge to establish new ones, or to ensure that these mechanisms flourish.

The narrative element of the framework has provided a space for the cities to consider both their strengths and weaknesses, and to understand the process of planning, delivery and stewardship as a journey, rather than an end. WP 3, in partnership with SME partner Bioazul, are in the process of developing a mini guidebook focusing on the narrative element of the framework. The mini guidebook will provide guidance and tools for building the city narrative for NbS. It is clear, from some of the city experiences with this narrative, that it has helped them to not only better communicate the information involving their exemplar, but also, it has translated into funding for their NbS exemplars e.g. A Coruna and Nicosia. Reflecting on the power of an effective narrative in helping to convey the key principles and objectives of NbS, the cities still struggle with communicating information on NbS owing to the persistence of poor or little understanding of the term in Europe.

That said, **key processes driving the framework, namely reflexive monitoring and co-production, provide the capacity to support the cities in better communicating information specific to their exemplars.** To begin, the reflexive monitoring process is a valuable tool for creating a space to consider the meaning behind the term NbS, and to gather city perspectives. Furthermore, during the discussions with the cities – via workshops, webinars and the peer-to-peer reflexive monitoring sessions between FRCs and FFCs - there are both tangible and intangible elements at play. Some of these are captured in the city reflections and experiences outlined in the report; consider A Coruna’s meditation on the emotional (intangible) aspect of their exemplar which they note is important for the exemplar’s goals of increasing the feeling of attachment to public space (tangible and intangible) and creating a sense of community (tangible), reconnecting with heritage and cultural legacy (tangible). This reflection was shared in the context of their experience of The Sarajevo Process, a new co-production methodology that has been developed as part of Connecting Nature. While there may be a perception that NbS and co-production practices are well known, applied and increasingly accepted in Europe, there is a need to continue funding research and practical application of co-production methods, in order to better understand the drivers for change and transformation with respect to NbS.

Finally, the **matter of scale of NbS** is an issue worth highlighting. Section 3 presents the city experiences with the Connecting Nature Framework – in some cases, it is in the context of large-scale NbS (i.e., Burgas, Ioannina, Pavlos Melas, Nicosia, and A Coruna), and in others, such as Malaga and Sarajevo, the focus has been on smaller-scale, piloting of NbS, with a view to replication (throughout the wider area of Lagunillas in Malaga, and replication of sensory gardens across Sarajevo). The first thing to note is the capacity of the Framework to effectively support the cities in their NbS, regardless of scale. That said, it will be interesting to follow the cases of the NbS piloting in Malaga and Sarajevo to explore how well the framework supports them in their replication efforts. Each city has presented their unique perspective and experience working with the framework and NbS. The Framework is complex and challenging; all the cities have taken up this challenge and it is important to highlight that whether starting from a pilot of a garden, or NbS at a specific neighbourhood-scale, all the cities are working towards large-scale implementation, and this is significant, particularly in cities, such as Sarajevo, where their pilot will represent the first instance of NbS, not just in Sarajevo, but in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Included with this report are the Connecting Nature Figures for each city (Appendix A). The final versions of the city reports will be submitted as part of Deliverable 6 in the first quarter of 2022.

1 Introduction

The Connecting Nature Framework places the nature-based solution at the core of an interactive process that runs through three distinct phases of development for a nature-based solution: planning, delivery and stewardship. Throughout each phase there are seven separate elements that cities and other entities may consider to help them shape their individual nature-based solution: Technical solutions, Governance, Financing and business models, Nature-based enterprises, Co-production, Impact assessment and Reflexive monitoring.

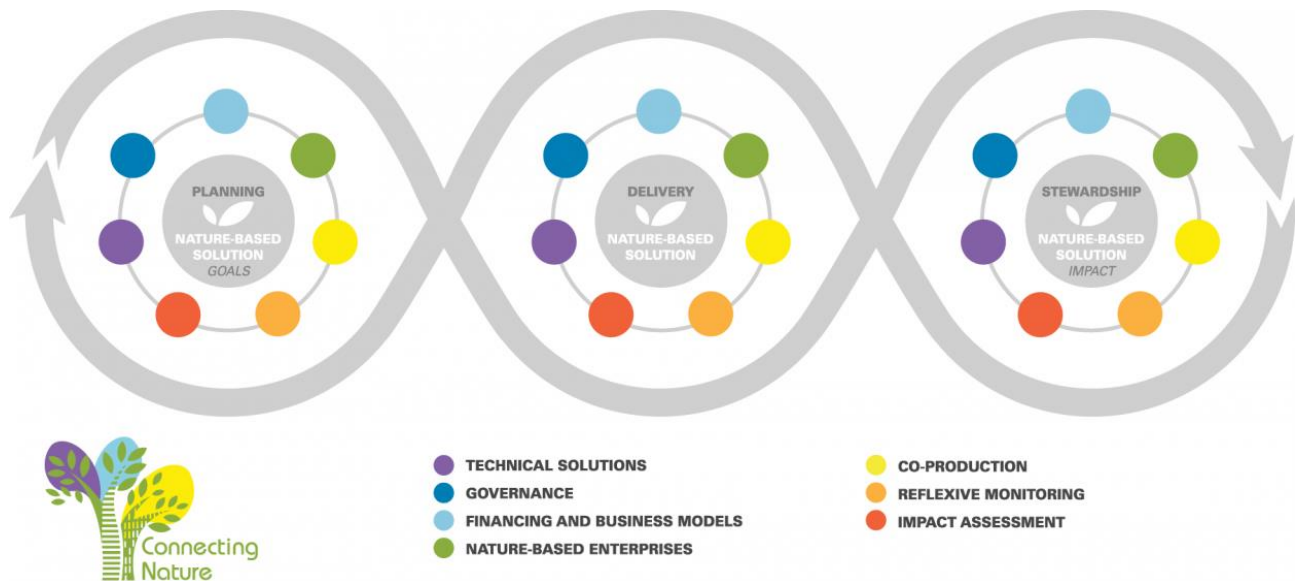


Image 1: The Connecting Nature Framework Figure

Deliverable 12, submitted in July 2021, provided a comprehensive overview of key knowledge transfer activities designed and implemented to support scaling out of experiential knowledge from the three Front-Runner Cities – Genk, Glasgow, and Poznan – to the Fast Follower Cities.

The focus on this report will be on the implementation of the Connecting Nature Framework in support of the planning, delivery, and stewardship of the following exemplars in Fast-Follower City Partners. The exemplars to be discussed in this section are as follows:

- A Coruna: Weaving an Urban Gardens Network throughout the city
- Burgas: The Restoration of Saint Trinity Park
- Ioannina: The Restoration of Pirsinela Park
- Malaga: Nature-Based Interventions in Lagunillas Neighbourhood
- Nicosia: Urban network of Green & Open spaces
- Pavlos Melas: Pavlos Melas Metropolitan Park programme – the transition of an ex-camp into an urban open innovation core with environmental, social, cultural and economic benefits.
- Sarajevo: Urban garden and sensory park within the Secondary Vocational Education and Training School

The cities were asked to describe their experiences of working with and implementing the Connecting Nature Framework in support of their exemplars, reflecting on, among other things:

- the city’s experience with nature-based solutions prior to Connecting Nature;
- a general description of the exemplar selected;
- how the Connecting Nature was applied to the exemplar, with a focus on key benefits and supports demonstrated by the framework; and,
- some of the challenges encountered.

In preparing this aspect of the report, every effort has been made to retain the overall city perspective, voice and experience in recognition of the fact that the framework itself is a novel and innovative tool for communicating and



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framing the narrative around nature-based solutions in each of these cities. With this in mind, when reading Section 3, some of the cities have chosen to frame their input according to the three phases of the Framework (Planning, Delivery, Stewardship), while others have zeroed in on the building blocks (linked with the three phases); in some instances, cities chose to present their information according to the key transformation points (and aligning these to the building blocks and phases of the Framework). This perspective has been retained as it allows for a more enriching report, framed by the cities themselves, and their experiences with the Framework in support of their exemplars.

Section 4 will provide a high-level analysis of city experiences, focussing on some key innovations, benefits, and challenges common to some or all the cities².

Finally, in Section 5, this report will provide conclusions and next steps in relation to the refinement of the Connecting Nature reports, between now and the end of the project (May 2022).

For the purposes of this Deliverable, the Connecting Nature Figures are included as Appendix A. The final versions of the complete Connecting Nature reports will be presented as part of Deliverable 6 in March 2022.

2. Implementation of the Connecting Nature Framework – City Experiences

2.1 A Coruña: Weaving an Urban Garden Network Across the City

2.1.1 City Context

A Coruña is a very compact city, surrounded by the ocean. The city has a scarcity of green areas and open spaces. The coastal area is one of the main elements of the green-blue infrastructure, with a 13 km long sea promenade and two protected areas. Generally, **the concept of nature-based solutions is relatively new in the city, as opposed to the traditional approach of parks and green areas.** There were some highlights in the decades of the 90's and 00's like the transformation of the city's main garbage dump into one of the biggest parks in the city, or the conversion of old military lands into a coastal green area. In terms of blue infrastructure, the city has one of the longest coastal promenades in Europe, which was also built during the 90s and 00s. However, municipal competences regarding coastal spaces are limited, as the regional and national governments are the main responsible bodies for managing those spaces. There are ongoing projects to gradually renaturalize the sea promenade and extend it to the periurban areas and connecting it with neighbouring municipalities. While the city will have a huge opportunity in the future to define blue NbS areas with the reurbanisation of the old harbour, this will involve long-term, very complex projects, with different administrations and government levels involved.

For the Connecting Nature Project, The City Council aims to **weave a network of urban gardens** (urban gardens) (connecting the different initiatives that have been running and expanding them) that can **help connect green areas and provide multiple environmental, economic, and social benefits, such as improving biodiversity and resilience against climate change or promoting sustainable, active lifestyles.**



² Following submissions, we have provided to create a short executive summary that can accompany their longer Framework reports; it is envisioned that this summary, in its final form, will function as a communication tool to convey information regarding the city exemplars in a clear, concise, and meaningful way (irrespective of the audience). The executive summaries will be included in the final version of each city's framework report, as part of Deliverable 6.

Image 2: Link between SDGs and A Coruna exemplar

Some of the societal challenges addressed by this NbS are: strengthening social cohesion and public culture; recovering and preserving for the collective memory the historical and ethnographic agriculture heritage; and, increasing the community's sense of belonging towards the public space. There is also a will to increase social cohesion, promoting intergenerational and intercultural relationships and helping develop the social skills of people in situations of vulnerability and social and/or labour exclusion. As seen in the above image, urban gardens help address at least 11 out of the 17 UN Sustainable development goals, with a particular focus on goals 3, 11 and 12.

Why the focus on Urban Gardens in A Coruna?

Urban gardens are small-scale projects that can be up scaled to a city-wide level; they're cost-efficient and they're aligned with wider scale agendas. They're able to provide benefits at many different levels – enhancing biodiversity and fighting climate change, improving health and wellbeing of citizens, promoting social cohesion, and offering new economic opportunities. They can also help recover and preserve the historical and ethnographic agriculture heritage of the region, which is gradually disappearing in urban areas, and increase the community's sense of belonging towards the public space.

At the time the exemplar was selected, there were different options being considered, including the creation of a new park in the periurban area, or the restoration of a river course in the outskirts of the city. However, the local government changed after the elections in May 2019. This meant some of the political priorities shifted, and there was a risk that some of the potential projects wouldn't be developed in the short term, and some wouldn't be developed at all. This is why it was decided to opt for a project whose implementation had already started, which was also backed by another EU project (Urbact Ru:rbán), and which had a pressing citizen demand, with long waiting lists and proposals for more gardens being selected in the participative budgets.

There is a high demand in the city for the creation and implementation of this type of space; the existing urban gardens have long waiting lists, and the set-up of urban gardens is often among the citizen proposals for the Participatory Budgets.

2.1.2 Overview of exemplar

The implementation of the gardens started as an open participatory process, involving citizens and associations in a **co-production process** which selected the most suitable spaces, framed how these spaces should be designed and identified the services to be provided. Some abandoned plots with suitable characteristics for their use as urban gardens were detected, alongside several underused spaces in some parks with high water requirements for maintenance (lawn areas). Both types of spaces were used to develop urban gardens (abandoned plots in the case of Mesoiro and Agra gardens, areas of parks in Eirís and the new urban garden planned in Adolfo Surez Park.)

The Urban Gardens Network started with three urban gardens open to all citizens; three smaller community gardens open to NGOs and associations; and five school gardens in primary schools. The intention has always been to gradually increase these numbers, reaching more families, more children, and more communities.

The gardens that started the network were all built in 2018, after the Connecting Nature project had started. The design process for the network started in parallel to the city's participation in the Connecting Nature project. Thus, the gardens were understood from the beginning as a NbS providing multi-level benefits. However, the first gardens of the network weren't initially designed following the Connecting Nature framework and using its tools because the Connecting Nature framework itself didn't exist yet. As a FFC, during the first two years of Connecting Nature, A Coruna's involvement was limited; however, the city was part of the process of co-creating the final framework figure (in year 3 of the project). That said, the city recognizes that certain elements involved in the initial design and planning of the urban gardens are still in need of improvement. Specifically, the governance model (individual administrative concession, top-down), the maintenance model (same as green areas in the city), and the lack of common areas for socializing and promoting the creation of communities are all aspects that the city has reflected on and is working to enhance - both for the existing gardens and for the new ones, building on the Connecting Nature framework.

2.1.3 A Coruna's application of the Connecting Nature Framework



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The Connecting Nature Framework, with its seven elements, helped A Coruna design their NbS in the three phases (planning, delivery and stewardship). Table 1 outlines some specific activities linked to each phase; specific support related to building blocks is also noted where relevant.

Phase	Activities	Building Blocks
Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The selection of the exemplar and the first meetings with the Connecting Nature Partners. -The workshops on the Business Model Canvas to explore funding opportunities, and with Osmos, which helped us engage key stakeholders, helped us define the exemplar goals and provided the team with the basis for the development of the exemplar. - The support of the Technical solutions team was important for developing a biodiversity plan, making sure that the new urban garden in the Adolfo Suarez park is also part of a more ambitious project to change the way the park is managed, enhancing biodiversity, which will in turn be beneficial for the urban garden. 	Financing Governance (External) Technical Solutions Co-production
Delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This included the exchange sessions with peer cities like Glasgow or Poznan, which were very useful to detect shared challenges and possible solutions. -We also had some key high-level meetings with the political responsible persons from the different areas (Environment, Education, Tourism and Markets, Employment), and managed to secure their support for the exemplar. -Together with the UDC team, we also developed the Impact Assessment Plan for our exemplar, defining and measuring key indicators for the exemplar as a tool for quantifying the environmental, social and economic benefits 	Reflexive Monitoring Governance (Internal and External) Impact Assessment
Stewardship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -This involves the maintenance of the exemplar, but also the upscaling of the network, multiplying the number of urban gardens in the city. We have been working on improving the governance model of the gardens, and the new maintenance tender for the city's green areas will have a separated lot for the maintenance of urban gardens, aimed at social integration enterprises. The previous approach was that all gardens were maintained just like the rest of green areas of the city, tendered by big enterprises, divided in three geographical areas. Now the gardens will all be together in a separated lot and this tender is only open to enterprises whose main aim is promoting social integration. A social integration enterprise is a legal figure, and enterprises have to comply with several requisites to be recognized as such. We are also exploring possibilities to engage some corporates to sponsor some of the school gardens and their maintenance. 	Governance Entrepreneurship Financing

Below, A Coruna details their experience with an innovative co-production methodology that has been developed during the Connecting Nature project to help cities capture their stories of nature (The Sarajevo Process; more details on the process are part of Deliverable 12).

Building Block Focus: Co-Production – Application of The Sarajevo Process

During the first week of June 2021 A Coruna organized the first part of the Sarajevo Process (memory work), with the goal of showing the important role played by heritage, culture, people's memories, and connection with nature, through a co-created, art-based, engagement approach. This was, from the beginning, one of the priorities of the city for the development of the exemplar, looking to enhance the sense of attachment towards public space and the creation of cohesive communities.

The process, which was first tested in the city of Sarajevo, uses the following methods: Memory-work, Immersion in Nature and Embodied Reflection, Eco-therapy practices, and Body Mapping.

In A Coruña, for the first exercise, the city gathered a group of urban gardeners, coming from different ethnic and



cultural backgrounds, different age groups and different gardens (urban gardens and school gardens). Every participant brought a picture from their childhood, and they reflected on the memories it brought back. The session also had the help of two artists. One of them is Yolanda Castaño who is a writer and a poet; Yolanda facilitated the writing exercise and then she wrote a poetic text translating these individual memories into a collective output. In addition, Iria Fafián, who is an illustrator helped translate the texts and the experiences of the day into images.

The **texts produced by the participants were compelling and moving**. It was interesting to find some common topics, like **a sense of nostalgia for the old times**, or **the concept of change**, as most people expressed that when they were children, **they had more contact with nature, there was more nature, and nature was more present in their lives**. But also, interestingly, **many of them said that having an urban garden was a way for them to reconnect with nature** and with those happy memories. This exercise was valuable as it reinforced our belief that **urban gardens can provide benefits also on that emotional level**, which is important for the exemplar's goals of increasing the feeling of attachment to public space and creating a sense of community, reconnecting with heritage and cultural legacy. This has been highlighted as part of the city's Connecting Nature narrative figure – see Appendix A – where the terms attachment, heritage, ownership, and memories, are prominently displayed.

The two artists are working on the artistic outputs, which were showcased in an exhibition in November 2021. A second Sarajevo Process was completed, focusing on body-mapping; the results are currently pending, and the city aim to showcase them as part our exemplar Connecting Nature narrative during the final Connecting Nature Summit in Genk in April 2022.

2.1.4 The benefits of the Connecting Nature Framework narrative and report

The Connecting Nature Framework report and the narrative **are useful tools** for internal use, to **make sure that other colleagues are familiar with the concept of nature-based solutions**, which is quite a new word in our context, and to **advance towards the interdepartmental and integrated approach that the multifunctional aspect of NbS demands**.

In addition, it can also be **extremely helpful as a means for public dissemination and increasing citizen awareness and engagement**. For example, the city recently used the narrative supported by the Framework to explain the project in an event of the URBACT Program, in which decision makers, professionals from other municipal departments and stakeholders from various cities participated. With A Coruña's narrative **the city felt that they could convey their information in a more accessible way**. It was useful as a starting point to make new contacts and networking with different stakeholders.

The Framework provides a means for the city to have all the **information about exemplar registered and organized**, which is very **handy when applying for financing or to enter competitions/awards**. For instance, a few months ago, A Coruña used the Connecting Nature Framework to apply for an award at national level. Having all the information written and organized in the framework document made it easy to write the application for the award, and thanks to this the city managed to prepare quite a strong entry that won the prize. This was the **award for Best Local Practices on Climate from the Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces (FEMP) and the Spanish Network of Cities for Climate**. This year was the VIII edition of the Prizes, and the **first edition to have a category for Nature-based Solutions, in which A Coruña won**. The city also built on the framework to submit our project to a European award, the Transformative Actions Award, granted by the Sustainable Cities Platform, organized by ICLEI, the Basque Government, and the city of Aalborg, with the support of the European Committee of the Regions and the European Investment Bank. A Coruña's Connecting Nature exemplar, our Urban Gardens Network, was selected among the three finalists, and the winner is to be announced on Nov 23rd.

2.1.5 The challenges of the Connecting Nature Framework

During the implementation of the exemplar and the development of the Framework, the team faced the following challenges:

- NbS is a new concept in our context and policy makers and technicians are not sufficiently aware of its meaning and its implications.
- Linked to the above, NbS are not recognized as one of the priorities in local and regional strategic documents, even though they are aligned and can contribute to most of the wider goals of these documents.
- The local administration works in silos, and the different departments aren't used to working together. They often share information, but they don't really co-develop projects, each department tends to develop their own.
- Policy makers are used to EU projects that fund direct investments on infrastructures, which means a project like Connecting Nature which rather focuses on the development of an innovative process is something new for them,



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and sometimes they struggle to understand.

- The language of the Connecting Nature Framework report and the guidebooks is also a barrier, as many of our colleagues, and of the elected politicians, don't speak English. This sometimes makes it harder for us to communicate the work that we have been doing, and the importance of the framework and its elements.

2.2 Burgas – Restoration of Trinity Park

2.2.1 City Context

The location of the city of Burgas has determined its development through the years. The city is located between three lakes and the Black Sea, as most of their territories fall within the scope of Natura 2000 and are designated as Ramsar sites under the Ramsar Convention. In addition, the city is an important industrial and economic center, where the sectors of production, construction and services are constantly evolving and make the largest contribution to the city's GDP.

Why focus on Trinity Park in Connecting Nature?

The challenge for the local authority is to find **the right balance between economic development and the protection and enrichment of the city's unique natural and biodiversity**. All interventions that would disturb the fragile balance in the ecosystem are prohibited around the territory of the Burgas wetlands, and in partnership with the Ministry of Environment and Water and environmental organizations, lake management plans have been prepared and are being implemented. In the urban area, the local administration invests in the improvement and landscaping of gardens, streets, inter-block spaces, as well as the construction of green infrastructure (green roofs and walls). Although the territory of the city can be defined as "green", there are very few big parks in the city where people can spend and enjoy their time.

This was the reason why we chose Saint Trinity Park as an exemplar within the Connecting Nature project. The park is a vast green area located in the heart of the city in a highly urbanized area. In close vicinity there are large residential complexes, sports playgrounds and big sport facilities, hospitals, office buildings, church, shopping centers and more. The park is **popular among the older population of the city (+50), who share their memories of the time spent in it**. Unfortunately, the lack of maintenance over the years is the reason for its current state, an area that is only used for crossing, where people are afraid to stay up late and where there are no conditions, and no services are offered to keep visitors.

With its renovation and bringing back its popularity among the population we will make an important step towards:

- the creation of big green area within the city, which is of high quality and safe for its visitors;
- make our city more resilient towards climate changes;
- strengthen the cooperation with citizens and business in realization of significant public projects;
- apply new business models contributing to the financial sustainability of the projects;
- encourage the development and/ or attract nature- based enterprises in Burgas.

2.2.2: Overview of Exemplar

Saint Trinity park is located in the middle of Burgas on an area of 155 hectares. From the beginning of the 20th century up to around 1960, the territory of the park was a cemetery, but due to the rapid development of the city the cemetery was moved between 1960 -1975, after which the park was established in its present form.

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Image 3: Location of Saint Trinity Park

Nowadays, park "St. Trinity" occupies a central place in the urban structure. The park is surrounded by main city arteries, several residential districts "Zornitza", "Slaveykov" and "Bratya Miladinovi", Burgas University Hospital, former industrial zone, which for years has been developing as a mixed multifunctional zone with the construction of new residential, commercial and business buildings. In 2018, swimming sports complex 'Park Arena OZK' was opened in the western part of the park; the swimming pool is adapted for international competitions in swimming with a capacity of over 1200 seats.

Despite its relatively central location between large residential complexes, the park is not well integrated into the city and does not serve as an area for daily recreation and a place to contribute to the physical and mental health of visitors. To some extent, this is due to the gloomy legacy of the park, known by its nickname "Old Cemetery", but to a greater extent the problem is rooted in the outdated park development plan, poor maintenance and weak connections of the park with the residential structures around it. Restrictions for the development of the park in the urban sense are the busy city boulevards and railways, which make the park difficult for citizens to access. The lack of attractions in the park further aggravates its socialization with residents and guests of the city.

2.2.3 Burgas's application of the Connecting Nature Framework

Prior to the inclusion of Burgas Municipality as a partner in the Connecting Nature project, the local administration was quite traditional in communicating its investment initiatives with the public. A date and time (during working hours) were set for public discussion and the information was published on the website of the Municipality and several national / regional media. Unfortunately, this approach often proved to be inappropriate, as the discussions were attended by a very small number of stakeholder representatives, and subsequently the implementation of projects led to tensions between local authority and citizens regarding various aspects related to the implemented measures.

The Connecting Nature project and the **implementation of the Connecting Nature Framework for a specific site, Holy Trinity Park, contributed to a positive change in the work of the administration in several aspects.** These are listed below in Table 2, organized by phase, and linked to Connecting Nature building blocks as appropriate.

Phase	Activities	Building Blocks
Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - when choosing technical solutions, more and more attention is paid to the NbS. These solutions contribute to the improvement of the quality of the urban environment, the reuse of obsolete materials, the use of natural resources (wood). - Particular importance has begun to be given to the biodiversity component. The planning of activities began to take into account what impact they will have on biodiversity in the area and how future interventions will contribute to its conservation and enrichment. - Co-production becomes an integral part of the work of the local administration with stakeholders. In the preparation of municipal sites 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Technical Solutions (with a focus on biodiversity) Co-production Impact Assessment/availability of indicators with explanations

	<p>and strategic documents, a much more careful and in-depth analysis of stakeholders is made, and subsequently different approaches and tools are sought and applied (face-to-face meetings, online meetings, holding several meetings to be able more people to participate) to conduct the consultations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Impact assessment - to assess the results achieved during the various phases of implementation of our exemplar, appropriate indicators have been selected from the list of pre-defined project indicators. The availability of a prepared base of indicators with detailed explanations for their implementation is extremely useful for Burgas and the city is using them in the preparation of project proposals for various programs. -Burgas Municipality applies the Connecting Nature Framework in a new project funded by the Horizon 2020 program, GoGreenRoutes project (https://gogreenroutes.eu/). For the 2 sites included, meetings with stakeholders have been held so far (co-creation) and planned measures (technical solutions) will be fully NbS. 	
<p>Delivery</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The implementation of technical solutions with environmentally friendly and / or used materials is already applied in the development of green areas in the city of Burgas; - Involving stakeholders in the implementation of projects is a good approach to creating a sense of ownership among users and will contribute to the preservation of what is constructed. 	<p>Technical Solutions Co-production Governance</p>
<p>Stewardship</p>	<p>Currently, Burgas Municipality continues the maintenance process in the same way as it has done for years. Unfortunately, this is not effective enough and requires too much human and financial resources. With the implementation of our exemplar project, we hope to test some of the ideas we have, namely:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ‘outsourcing’ parts of the park to nature-based enterprises, which can promote their business there, but in return maintain these areas; - development of sustainable and innovative businesses on the territory of the park, thus generating revenues in the budget of the local administration, which can then be used for maintenance of the park and its infrastructure. 	<p>Entrepreneurship Financing</p>



Image 4: Discussion with stakeholders on issues and possible measures for identified areas. 28.09.2021 GGR project.

2.2.4 The benefits of the Connecting Nature Framework for Burgas



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The implementation of the Connecting Nature project and the implementation of the Connecting Nature Framework **accelerated the process in the administration to search and apply NbS in investment measures and projects implemented in the city, focusing on biodiversity**, where through relatively cheap but well thought out measures, good results can be achieved. In addition, we started thinking about **how to combine the nature-based solution with the commercialization of urban spaces in order to create an opportunity for revenue generation** thus easing the municipal budget for their subsequent maintenance and facilitating their further development.

2.2.5 The Challenges of the Connecting Nature Framework

The main challenge for us as an institution was to **change the way we think and accept the fact that we can do things differently in several main areas**, namely:

- the need for more in-depth discussions of our investment intentions with local stakeholders;
- the demand and application of NbS in the implementation of our projects;
- paying special attention to the biodiversity component in the measures we plan and implement;
- to start thinking more commercially with the idea that the things the city realize (i.e. plan and implement) must have the potential to be – to some extent or completely – self-sustaining.

2.3 Ioannina: Restoration of Pirsinela Park

2.3.1 City Context

Ioannina is the capital and largest city of the Ioannina regional unit and of Epirus, an administrative region in north-western Greece. One of the main axes for the development of the city is the sustainable management of its resources and the development of ecotourism, as well as the intelligent and sustainable urban development on the basis of the city's particular spatial and socio-economic characteristics. Specifically for Ioannina's exemplar, one of its main goals is to restore, upgrade and provide a public green space, safe, inclusive and accessible by all citizens, women and children, older persons and persons with disabilities

What Nature-Based Solutions are important for Ioannina

In that framework, the nature-based solutions have the potential to play a crucial role for fulfilling these targets.

Although the concept of nature-based solutions is new in the city, the Connecting Nature Project is an excellent opportunity to introduce them to Ioannina and showcase their importance and effectiveness in the sustainable development of the city.

The exemplar project for Ioannina city is the restoration of Pirsinela Park, which is the largest and most historic park of the city but is been neglected during the last years due to legal disputes. Historically, this region used to serve as the green and entertainment hub of the city, offering opportunities for physical activities and access to nature. Moreover, apart from its environmental and cultural significance for the city, Pirsinela Park was selected because the municipality is the sole managing authority of it and it isn't governed by strict environmental protection laws which may restrain the possibilities for intervention (as is the case in other significant environmental landmarks in the area, e.g. Lake Pamvotis, or Ioannina's suburban forest, where different agencies have overlapping jurisdictions and the legislation doesn't allow significant changes).

2.3.2 Overview of Exemplar

Pirsinela Park is a neglected park located in the urban boundaries of the city. It is considered to be the largest area of existing greenspace (almost 250.000 m²). –The site contains a forest and several built infrastructures, which are currently in decay. Historically, this region used to serve as the green and entertainment hub of the city, offering opportunities for physical activities (running, tennis) and access to nature. However, the last fifteen years the park has been totally abandoned, due to a legal dispute between the Municipality of Ioannina and the Greek State over the ownership of the land, a dispute that is now over and the Park is in the full jurisdiction of the Municipality. **The municipality of Ioannina has the ambition to make the park more accessible and to revive its cultural use, while doing so in an environmentally friendly and sustainable manner.** One of the most important goals for the Park is to protect, restore



Image 5. Pirsinela Park

2.3.3 Ioannina's Application of the Connecting Nature Framework

The Connecting Nature Framework, with its innovative approach in project management, proved to be a valuable tool in the implementation of the exemplar in its three phases (planning, delivery, stewardship). Table 3 provides an overview of key activities across all three phases. Links to specific building blocks are noted where appropriate.

Phase	Activities	Building Blocks
Planning	<p>-The planning phase of our exemplar coincided with the introduction of our team to the Framework and as a result we had the opportunity to implement the methodology and the various aspects of the Framework in action.</p> <p>-The Business Model Canvas helped us identify funding opportunities and determine key stakeholders, while the workshops in co-production gave us the means and knowledge to engage the citizens of Ioannina in a very successful open consultation process that determined the key parameters for the restoration of the Park.</p> <p>-Regarding the main opportunities faced in the co-production process conducted in accordance with the Connecting Nature Framework, the process has a positive impact both internally in the municipality and externally in the communication and interaction of the municipality with the public.</p> <p>-Internally, the process provided an opportunity for various Departments of the municipality to work together and more closely in the implementation of a project, bypassing barriers of bureaucracy and responsibilities.</p> <p>-Externally, the Project, through its Open Consultation Process, provided a mean and a place for the citizens to express their opinion for a project that will have a positive impact in their everyday life. Moreover, the inclusion of many suggestions of the open consultation to the Final Design of the Park strengthens the relationship and trust between the citizens and municipality.</p> <p>The reflexive monitoring process is an innovative approach for monitoring the development of the project.</p>	<p>Financing Co-Production Reflexive Monitoring</p>
Delivery	<p>During the delivery phase of the Project, the Connecting Nature Framework provided the base, structure and narrative for our team in order to prepare a proposal and secure a funding of 10M € for the implementation of the exemplar.</p>	<p>Financing</p>
Stewardship	<p>The stewardship phase of the project includes the maintenance of the</p>	<p>Financing</p>



	<p>exemplar, but also the management of the park. The Connecting Nature Framework provides the tools and means in order to investigate new and innovative alternatives for the management of the park and also to identify alternative funding opportunities for its maintenance.</p> <p>Currently, due to bureaucratic restrains, ineffective legislation and lack of flexibility in the management models for green spaces, all the parks of the city are managed exclusively by the municipality. The Connecting Nature Framework is an opportunity for the city to try and implement in a pilot scale new approaches for the management of the Park.</p>	Governance
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2.3.4 Benefits of the Connecting Nature Framework for Ioannina’s Exemplar

Throughout the three phases in the development of the project, the Connecting Nature **Framework helped us to develop a methodology for the impact assessment of our exemplar with the determination of appropriate indicators, in order to quantify the environmental, social and economic impact of it in the city life.** Moreover, the **narrative that was developed in the base of Connecting Nature Framework proved to be a valuable asset in the meetings with key stakeholders of the Project**, either internally in the municipality in order to gain political support for our project and the cooperation of different Departments, or externally during the meetings with the university, Chamber of Commerce, Technical Chamber environmental NGOs and other stakeholders.

The principles of the Framework led to the **creation of a multidepartment team in the municipality for the management of the Project and became a best-case example on how to incorporate different Departments in a project**, a novelty for the city, which continues in the management of following European Projects.

Building Block Focus: Reflexive Monitoring

The reflexive monitoring process is an innovative approach for monitoring the development of the project. Through the identification of critical turning points and the formulation of learning questions, the project team can be more proactive and anticipate possible problems, in contrast to the traditional way of managing a project, where a substantial amount of time is dedicated in dealing with problems after their appearance. The team was introduced to the reflexive monitoring methodology through the knowledge transfer workshop in Nicosia, while the various reflexive monitoring webinars helped us further understand its philosophy. The knowledge transfer workshop in Malaga was an opportunity to put all the theoretical knowledge of the reflexive monitoring in practice. Finally, the frequent meetings with the team in Poznan (as our ‘mentor’ city) provided valuable insights and guidance in the implementation of reflexive monitoring in our city and exemplar

2.3.5: Challenges of the Connecting Nature Framework for Ioannina

The main challenge was the innovation of the process for the Connecting Nature team, as the Connecting Nature Framework is a new approach on managing a project.

- In the beginning, every member and stakeholder involved in the Project had to be persuaded in participating in the process. As in every novel approach, we had to overcome an established situation imposed by bureaucratic restrains, ineffective legislation, traditional methodologies, and fears that the new approaches will affect the effectiveness and ease of work. Eventually, with everyone on board, we find the methodology of the Framework to help us be more focused in the targets of the project and every member of the team be constantly aware of all the critical points of the project.
- Apart from the innovation in processes, **another challenge was the new terminology that the Framework utilizes.** In many occasions through our meetings with various stakeholders we were in the position to try and explain to them various terms of the Framework, such as **nature-based solutions, nature-based enterprises, reflexive monitoring.** **The challenge of trying to explain an innovative term to outsiders is even more difficult when you try and doing it in your native language with only a reference in English.**

Nevertheless, despite the challenges of adopting an innovative approach in project management, the Connecting Nature Framework proved to be a valuable tool in implementing our exemplar.

2.4 Malaga

2.4.1 City Context

Malaga's urban development challenges derive from the importance of real estate movements and tourism in this city. While these two economic activities have contributed prominently to Málaga's impressive revival over the last two decades, the city's development model now needs to diversify to become more sustainable. The impact of the financial crisis in the late 2000s and examples of "overtourism" taking over city centres in other cities should motivate the city not to depend on tourism alone for its prosperity. The city also experiences environmental challenges that have not received sufficient attention: climate change will exacerbate water management issues, which are central to keeping the city cool in the summer and urban parks and gardens attractive. More generally, the management of the coastal line brings a host of environmental challenges, the most important one being the protection of the coast as a resource for the future development of the city and its inhabitants.

The nature-based solutions that have been developed most ardently in Málaga are green infrastructure projects in public space. Firstly, The University of Málaga has developed a participatory and multidisciplinary program to design and create dozens of new green spaces on its Teatinos campus, which will also feature innovative open-air teaching facilities. The next step was to implement small scale innovative developments in other areas of the city. **Connecting Nature is an innovative project for Nature Based solutions through a framework methodology.** Prior to joining the project Malaga had little experience developing and executing projects of Nature based solutions. The best examples we have are the Aqueduct, the green islands from the University of Málaga, the vertical wall from a square in the city center and a few community gardens.

Even though there were few ongoing NbS projects the Municipality of Malaga through its department for urban development had invested considerable energy into research and planning for green infrastructure in and around Málaga. The green infrastructure planning mainly evolved around the challenge of connecting green spaces through rings and green corridors. These planning activities have been documented in the book "Green infrastructures of the City of Málaga" that provides a comprehensive plans and information for the development of different types of green interventions in Málaga, ranging from general principles (access and connectivity) to specific interventions on individual sites. This book can be considered as the starting point for developing future projects using Natures Based Solutions. Now the city had to decide where to try to develop a project of Nature based solutions.

2.4.2 Overview of Exemplar

Why this exemplar?

Málaga is looking to **incorporate nature-based solutions in small-scale interventions across a neighborhood** (street crossing, publicly owned vacant lots or abandoned buildings, small public spaces). At the time of selection (2019), Lagunillas was the perfect target since the neighborhood had greatest need with regards to revitalization. →The area was deteriorated, physically (abandoned buildings, roads, and squares in need of renovation, illegal use of public spaces), socially (high unemployment rates, social exclusion, low schooling levels) and economically (lack of commercial activity). The potential benefits of developing a nature-based solution project were mainly:

- Environmental: increase ecological integration and connectivity, ensure urban climate comfort during the hot and dry summers, better water management.
- Social: Strengthen the local community, provide access to a wider territory thanks to improved/easier mobility.
- Economic: support the economic development of the neighborhood by building on existing commercial activities and local resources with the possibility of executing several projects in small scale developments.

2.4.3 Application of the Connecting Nature Framework for Malaga's Exemplar

The Connecting Nature project in Lagunillas is a pilot as part of a wider effort for urban revitalization of this area. **To ensure that the economic revitalization will not take precedence over residential revitalization, the envisaged interventions in public space will focus on amenities targeted at the local residential population: local playgrounds, urban gardening initiatives, spaces for families and the elderly.** The initial idea was to develop an urban garden in one of the plots belonging to the city using the framework methodology. This urban garden is called La Yuca Garden and is around 400 square meters.

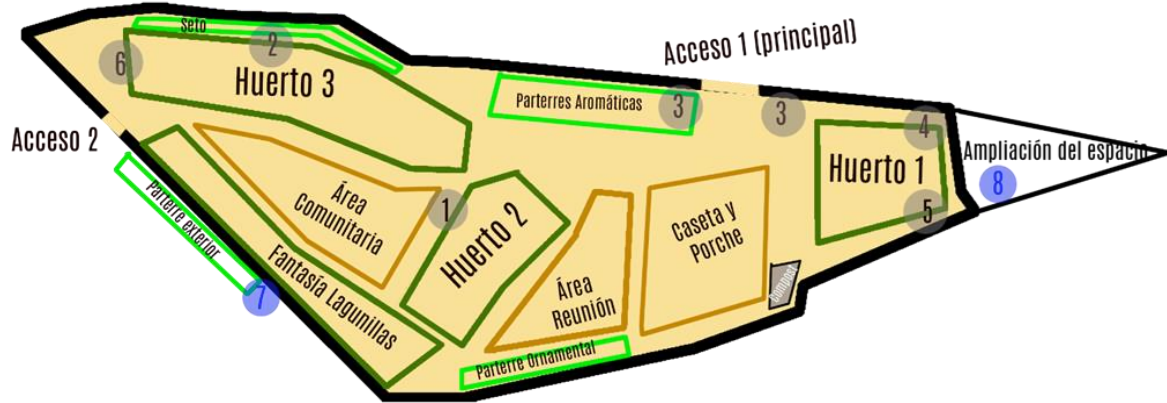


Image 6: NbS in Lagunillas – La Yuca Garden

In order to start with the Connecting Nature Project and to develop Nature based solutions in the plot the **City created the first Nature based solution cluster in Malaga** and probably in Spain. The cluster was made up of a combination of public administrations like Promalaga, IUCN and the university of Malaga and several private companies like Bioazul also member of Connecting Nature and Social Climate. This is for sure one of the first transformation points. **The Cluster-SbN was created to promote NbS application and contribute to the development of more resilient, healthy, livable, and lively cities.** With the cluster on board, the planning and developing phase of the urban garden was getting to a new phase of development introducing for the first time a coproduction process where several actors were engaged in. Usually in any development, the structure of it is a top to bottom approach where planning execution and maintenance usually fell under the responsibilities of several city departments not always cooperating among them and are already set at the planning phase with no possibilities for monitoring and change. This time the development phase of the Yuca Garden included Promalaga, Omau, Cluster NbS, Lagunillas Neighbors Association and the municipality environmental department. It took in total six meetings in order to plan the development, use and maintenance of the Yuca Garden. (see picture above). **It is to say that the framework burst silos enabling for more flexibility in the decision-making process.**

Building Block Focus – Financing and Application of the Business Model Canvas in Malaga

Another relevant transformation point is the BMC Canvas. BMC is a useful tool to explain Connecting Nature methodology and a “vertebrate” path to follow. It shows how to engage NbS through entrepreneurship, partnerships, governance and how to look for financing NbS projects. The Municipality usually finance projects with its own funds.

In the political model of Spain there are three layers of public financing. Local, regional, and national, some of the regional and national funds are usually linked to infrastructure projects which have to be sustainable. European funds is also a source of financing for many projects of infrastructure (Horizon, FEDER, etc...) but also for urban development neighboring relationships (Interreg...). Private companies are also a source of financing, and the city always tries to incorporate new entities like Innovative companies, local business and/or associations like the cluster to ensure the development and stewardship of the project.

The BMC canvas is helpful to break down the key activities, resources, partners, and beneficiaries as well as establish a cost structure a governance model and a value proposition. With this tool in hand, cluster companies have been able to establish partnerships through Connecting Nature in order to promote and develop Nature based activities. In the case of Málaga, Promalaga and a cluster company have been having talks with the city of Glasgow in order to develop a Nature based accelerator as well as NbS activities like the Young Ecopreneurs Climathon. This climathon has been produced with the help of several entities in order to disseminate the creation of the accelerator giving a free spot to the best selected project to the accelerator program.

The accelerator program has already been developed and it is currently looking for financing. Part of this financing is already secured with the fees applied to the companies that will take part in it, but another part still needs funding.

In the delivery phase the most important turning point was the Málaga public event and AGM in 2019. Connecting Nature gave the opportunity to bring together the Connecting Nature Family to Malaga, and to showcase several NbS projects



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undergoing in Malaga and several other cities from Andalucía. The Public event has allowed the city to put together a participatory project in Andalucía about NbS. The call has been a success since many cities from Andalucía (Sevilla, Almería and Cadix) came to Malaga to present their NbS projects giving an overview of green and blue infrastructure outcomes. The Public Event was also a call for dissemination of the Lagunillas neighborhood and all the possibilities of development of the neighborhood. The organization of the Public event is the result of a coproduction process between Promalaga, Ciedes Foundation, urban planning, and the environmental department. As a result of this coproduction process the event was able to bring together the “city makers”, that together could make nature-based solutions happen and could lead to future collaborations.

Another important turning point was the delivery of the urban garden la Yuca and the following steps toward stewardship. Once the planning is done and the execution of the garden has been made and turned in to be ready for use, many questions arose about the use and the maintenance of the exemplar. This was a good opportunity to do things a different way than the usual way. The usual way is to deliver the project and give away an assignment for 5 years, renewable at the end of the same period. For the Yuca garden we had a meeting with the OMAU, City Hall Center District and environmental department, Lagunillas Neighbors Association and Association Fantasia which are all interested parts in the project. In that meeting the stewardship use of the garden was split among the associations to guarantee the activities for schools and for the elderly.

The lease was set for a year with a calendar of meetings between both associations and the environmental department with the aim to control the development of the activities. This is probably the first time that the management is done jointly between three different organizations following the idea of coproduction and reflexive monitoring from the Connecting Nature framework.

2.4.4 Benefits of the Connecting Nature Framework for Malaga’s exemplar

The Connecting Nature framework with its 3 phases and a seven building blocks per phase is a tool that allows for a structured methodology to develop any nature based project. This is an important issue since the Connecting Nature framework breaks down the elements in a project and allows to visualize from the beginning most part of the project all the way throughout its three phases.

The Connecting Nature framework applies new collaborative methods like cocreation and coproduction that focus on interdepartmental and interorganizational collaboration throughout the process (governance) which is a new way to set bases at least here in Spain where collaborative approaches are usually top to bottom approaches and are limited to information exchange. In Malaga the Connecting Nature framework has allow to carry a true cocreation and coproduction process throughout the development of the Yuca Urban garden involving collaboration between several departments but also several organizations (OMAU, Promálaga, UIConnecting Nature, Cluster SbN) also setting a new way of governance ensuring that way that all the different needs and interests are considered in the process and resources are mobilized.

The Connecting Nature framework also introduces new concepts that in the long run maybe beneficial in project developments like reflexive monitoring. This concept is an internal analysis tool to evaluate project management and development. In the case of Malaga reflexive monitoring has enabled the Connecting Nature team to analyze and realize the ideas gathered in order to develop the accelerator following the talks with the City of Glasgow. It is also a process of continuous improvement in the stewardship phase since it allows after a reflexive process for adjustments.

Technical solutions have been also very helpful in the development of The Yuca urban garden. In the meetings during the planning phase, it was decided following the Framework to choose the right elements to build up the urban garden selecting only autochthonous plants and following the technical principles from Nature based solutions to plant them assuming that they will generate the desire impact. Then we had to select indicators in order to measure and evaluate results. This later phase called impact assessment is very useful in the sense that it allows for data analysis and decision making.

The BMC canvas is another benefit for the Malaga’s exemplar. The BMC is helpful to break down the key activities, resources, partners, and beneficiaries as well as establish a cost structure a governance model and a value proposition. It enables to map all actors and actions that play a role in the phases of the exemplar.

Finally, nature based enterprises play an important role in the Málaga’s exemplar. As told earlier Malaga has been able to create a cluster for the Nature based solutions which is very active not only in the production of the exemplar but in the dissemination of Nature based solutions as well.



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2.4.5 Challenges of the Connecting Nature Framework for Malaga's exemplar

Malaga's urban garden exemplar has been the first step in the implementation of Nature based solutions, through the connecting Nature Framework. This framework is **challenging because it sets up an inclusive methodology that differs from the classic way of doing things**. Usually in Málaga projects are developed from top to bottom and from the beginning (planning) to the end (stewardship) with no margin for changes and with no views for monitoring and adaptation.

Working with the framework is very challenging in the co-creation and co-production because of the city's decision-making processes. It is difficult to reach an agreement among multiple stakeholders (both internally and externally), to set up planification and implement reflexive monitoring where the way of doing things is usually more rigid.

To implement the Connecting Nature framework, it would be useful to detect all the stakeholders needed to develop a project and create from the start a group of experts that will lead that project. In Malaga one of the **most challenging issues working with the framework has been to bring together experts, technicians, citizen, and neighbors in the participatory meetings to talk and design the future development of Lagunillas**. The result has been reflected in a report on Lagunillas development.

2.5 Nicosia

2.5.1 City Context

NbS – What's in a name?

The term NbS is not so widely known or used in the urban planning context of Nicosia. Although NbS have been and are being implemented in efforts towards improving living standards and quality of life, they are not labelled as such. **This new term has not been incorporated into development plans or adopted to the extent where planners, designers, policymakers, urbanists, and other experts in the field can easily comprehend its meaning and impact**. Since there is no familiarity with the term 'nature-based solutions', projects/practices that fall under the NbS umbrella are often not acknowledged or considered as such solutions.

The **implementation of such ideas and solutions in Nicosia is not an easy task**. Many of the planning tools at the disposal of the central and local levels of government and administrations are outdated, and there is an absence of participatory culture in urban planning in the city.

The main aim was to include NbS as policy theme in national and local strategies, using Connecting Nature Framework as a tool, which in turn would prepare and facilitate projects on the ground. Nicosia Development Agency (NDA) decided to work further on the implementation of a very ambitious large-scale project: Network of open and green spaces that will cover the district of Nicosia, which will promote the health and wellbeing of people, improve their quality of life, and enhance the environmental quality of the area of intervention (air quality management actions to reduce air pollution and its associated health impacts).

The wider goal of NDA team is to help delivering NbS as part of a strategic plan that places environmental objectives and healthy, attractive, and natural surroundings for the local population higher on development agendas.

2.5.2 Overview of Exemplar

Nicosia Development Agency aims to create a thriving urban network of high-quality green and open spaces. The core of the park network will be the National Forest Park of Athalassa. The different parks will be linked with each other, but also provide new mobility options to get around in the city, from residential areas to business and commercial districts, and university centres (integrated bicycle and pedestrian network). The network will also be open to different users and uses, and offer a series of environmental, social and economic benefits.

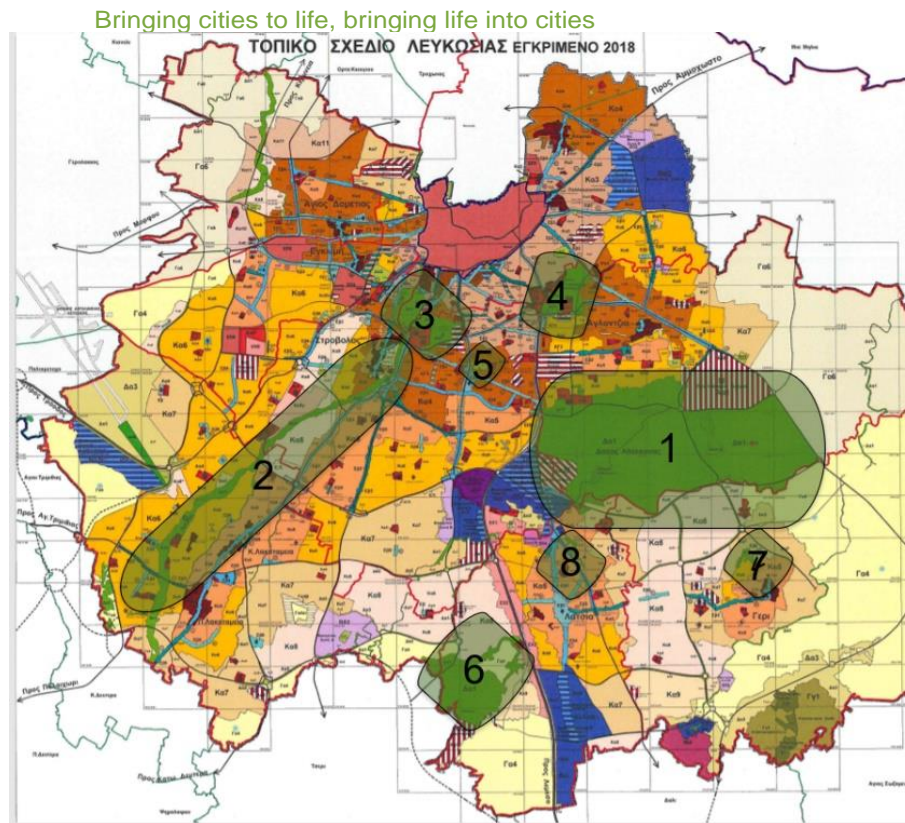


Image 7: Nicosia's Exemplar

The creation of a better park network will involve different work streams. Firstly, is the **identification of a number of big and small green & open spaces that can be used for the enrichment of the existing (poor) urban network of O&G spaces and the choice of the most appropriate ones based on the certain criteria that have been set from the early stages by the core project team (such as proximity, condition, landscaping, population coverage area, number of visitors etc)**. Following the collaborative selection process of the parks, physical interventions were planned in each of the selected parks. The municipal parks are of varying size, as can be seen in the image. Some of the larger parks with poor landscaping or equipment need upgrades; this was also the case for some smaller green spaces, but a series of smaller parks does not yet exist and needs to be developed. In other locations the parks will be extended, or their function will be redefined.

The second work stream was the **exploration of mobility solutions (reflecting a good example of collaboration across silos, i.e alignment of sustainable transport policy, health and well-being and NbS**. More specifically, the development of active mobility connections between the parks. These **will take the form of interconnected trails, greenways, and paths that support bicycling, running, walking, skating, skiing, wheelchairs etc., reaching all the way from home to work for some users**.

In order to achieve the best possible results and most efficient planning solutions, a number of individual and group meetings were arranged, with the involved actors aiming to engage in the process all interest groups. In addition, a number of **innovative co-production processes were introduced and applied throughout the implementation of the project (all phases) to the team with significant success and outcomes**. These processes are **the Sarajevo Process, the Business Model Canvas workshop and OSMOS workshop**. More information on the positive outcomes of these co-production processes will be analysed further down.

2.5.3: Application of the Connecting Nature Framework for Nicosia's Exemplar – Focus on Transformation Points

Nicosia's approach for reporting on the application of the framework differs from that provided by the other cities in that it focusses on key transformation points (which were introduced and incorporated as part of the Connecting Nature Figure and Narrative)³.

³ This structure has been retained as it demonstrates an aspect of novelty in relation to the framework, namely its capacity to be flexible

For the case of Nicosia, the Framework was used in the wider strategic planning and development processes, as well as a tool for finding funding. For instance, some of the projects (parks) developed in the context of the Nicosia Exemplar, have been included in the Integrated Spatial Development Strategy (OXA) plan for Nicosia, to receive funding. These projects were included in order to contribute to the realisation of the goals and actions highlighted in the development plan. The OXA plan (proposal) was submitted in February and **was approved for funding in September 2021**.

For the purposes of this report, we will briefly present some of the transformation points of Nicosia’s Connecting Nature journey. To begin with, the co-production methods (Business Model Canvas and Sarajevo Process) applied in Nicosia was agreed to be surprisingly useful and helpful processes for the Nicosia Development Agency and the core team of the project. They were both seen as very innovative techniques which helped Nicosia’s team to move one step forward, to broaden up its knowledge and to develop further its skills. Both processes supported in a very comprehensive and holistic way the project’s implementation and added significant value to the project itself.

Specifically, the **Business Model Canvas** was seen as a very useful tool which helped the team to understand and structure better the Exemplar, to prioritize immediate actions and resources, to identify the involved actors in each phase, to set priorities regarding implementation and the tasks to be delivered. Additionally, it helped to build a **common understanding** as well as a **common language** among all, in order to communicate more efficiently as a team but also with the involved stakeholders and actors in each phase of the project. Complementary to the Business Model Canvas Workshop, OSMOS workshop helped the team to start working on this common understanding and language by working in more detail with the involved stakeholders (i.e. forest department, department of environment, municipal officers, engineers and urban planners involved, academics from University of Cyprus and NGOs) in two of the projects (parks) of the proposed network, Lourka Forest and Ayios Demetrios Park. This process gave us a more structured understanding on how to approach each of the project and who to involve in the process.

Sarajevo Process was also a significantly useful process for Nicosia Team. Through the Sarajevo process, the participants (Core team of ANEL) had the opportunity to work in a very different manner. Art and nature helped the team to unlock a new perspective, utilize personal experiences and memories, approach the project and express in a very fruitful way, thus contributing to the overall team’s tasks. After the three days session, Nicosia’s team saw the Exemplar in a very different perspective. The Sarajevo Process is planned to be used to engage other groups of people as well such as professionals working on nature (e.g. people working for the Forest Department or the Department of Environment) who are often lost in the paperwork, screens and offices and rarely have the opportunity to connect with nature through their work.



Image 8 and 9: Artistic outputs from Nicosia’s experience with *The Sarajevo Process* (September 2020).

To sum up, the experience of using both co-production methods has significantly impacted the way Nicosia’s team works and **thus the team is planning to apply the methods to other relevant projects of the Agency**.

Another transformation point was the decision of developing the “**Adopt a park scheme**”. The idea for the “Adopt a Park” Scheme was born due to the main challenge that Nicosia faces to involve the private sector in these kind of initiatives, as larger parks in Cyprus are all financed and operated by the Government (Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Development, and Environment – Department of Forest and Department of Environment). The identified opportunity was the existence of lots of small green spaces, most of them underused or abandoned, in the neighborhoods, which had the



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potential for pocket parks. These spaces are owned and supposed to be designed and maintained by Local Authorities (Municipalities) which are more open to private sector involvement in investing and developing these smaller green spaces. Currently, 200 such spaces have been identified and the adoption scheme for these parks is being developed. The objectives of this scheme are to: Provide shady areas in summer, facilitate co-design with citizens, enhance and improve parks, increase recreational and cultural opportunities and preserve natural areas in the district of Nicosia, boost pride and stewardship for municipal parks, involve actively the private sector and increase first, people's sense of personal responsibility towards the sustainability of their neighbourhood parks and second, create a spirit of cooperation between the city and the local companies.

Concluding, another important transformation point for Nicosia was the **Public consultation sessions**. They were seen as a great opportunity first, to communicate the Local Strategic Sustainable Development Plan and the proposed Green Network to citizens, NGOs, Municipal Officers and Private Sector and also, to receive feedback and suggestions in order to improve the plans. Nicosia Development Agency approach the Connecting Nature Framework as a **living document** that will be continually updated and revised according to the city's and people's changing needs.

2.5.4: Benefits of the Connecting Nature Framework for Nicosia

The Connecting Nature Framework for Nicosia was an opportunity for ANEL to work in parallel in different levels and in collaboration with various actors/stakeholders. The Framework has been used as a **tool for securing funding**. More specifically, as mentioned above, some of the proposed projects (parks) developed in the context of the Nicosia Exemplar, have been included in the Integrated Spatial Development Strategy (OXA) plan for Nicosia, to receive funding. The OXA plan (proposal) was submitted in February and **was approved for funding in September 2021**. In addition, it was an opportunity to develop a common understanding and language on NbS.

Another benefit of the Connecting Nature Framework is the introduction, application, and outcomes of a number of **innovative co-production processes (throughout all phases of the project)** such as **the Sarajevo Process** and the **Business Model Canvas workshop**. Both processes can be applicable in other relevant projects of the Agency and help significantly throughout their implementation. The positive outcomes of these processes have been analysed in more detail at the section 3.5.3.

2.5.5 Challenges of the Connecting Nature Framework for Nicosia

The main challenges raised by the application of the Connecting Nature Framework in Nicosia were:

- Limited understanding of NbS and related concepts; Since there was no familiarity with the term 'nature-based solutions', projects and examples that fall under the NbS umbrella were often not acknowledged or considered as such solutions.
- Limited knowledge on the NbS implementation process;
- Lack of clear policies and legislation on co-production;
- Lack of a "common language" that caused troubles in communication between the involved actors, especially at the very early stages of the project.
- Limited funding for this scale of projects.

All these challenges were identified throughout the process and additional actions were taken in order to overcome them. For example, when we realised the importance of building a common language and understanding among the core team of the project, before proceeding deeper to the implementation of the project. NDA team was focused on this new task aiming to have a more efficient communication in all phases of the project.

Another challenge that was managed well was the limited funding. The team worked towards the inclusion of NbS as policy theme in national and local strategies. Nicosia's Connecting Nature Framework was used as a tool, which in turn would prepare and facilitate projects on the ground. Nicosia Development Agency has worked closely with the Directorate General for European Programmes, Coordination and Development of the Ministry of Economy as well as with its member municipalities to find the best possible way to achieve that. After several discussions, brainstorming sessions and meetings with several key people (policymakers), Nicosia Development Agency has managed to include the majority of the projects (parks) developed in the context of the Connecting Nature Framework, in the Integrated Spatial Development Strategy (OXA) plan for Nicosia. The OXA plan (proposal) was submitted in February 2021 and **was approved for funding in September 2021**.

2.6 Pavlos Melas

2.6.1 City Context

The municipality of Pavlos Melas is considered as an environmentally deprived area that faces challenges in addressing issues of continuing poverty, high rates of vulnerable social groups and lack of opportunities for economic growth. Through nature-based solutions, Pavlos Melas municipality intends to achieve environmental, social and economic benefits.

The flagship nature-based solution of Pavlos Melas municipality is the creation of Pavlos Melas Metropolitan Park on a former military camp. Pavlos Melas ex-camp is a natural resource of 33 hectares, located in the dense urban fabric, with 300.000 people living around. At the same time, Pavlos Melas camp is an important historical place for the community memory and local identity. The camp was established by the Turkish army at the end of the 19th century. It was used as a concentration and execution camp during the Nazi occupation and as a military site up to 2006 when it was abandoned. Nowadays it is an ‘Urban Gap’ contributing to the deprivation of the area. In order to reverse the situation, the municipality has focused on a co-created strategic regeneration plan that was co-created with key stakeholders and citizens through an extended public consultation process. The transition will be achieved unleashing its potential as a valuable natural resource, historical site and driving force for economic growth, job creation, social cohesion and environmental sustainability.

2.6.2 Overview of the Exemplar

The aim of Pavlos Melas Metropolitan Park programme is the transition of an ex-military camp into an urban open innovation core with environmental, social, cultural and economic benefits. Considering the scale of the area, the programme will be implemented in phases:

- The first phase, with secured budget, focuses on the environmental upgrade and the creation of auxiliary network infrastructure: lighting, kiosks, paths, accessibility & security upgrading etc. The ecological, functional and aesthetic value of the existing vegetation in the ex-camp will be maintained and upgraded with the planting of 6000 native plants of low-cost maintenance and energy requirements and high ecological value. The project goal is the protection and "harmonization" of the ecosystem balance, aiming at the conservation of natural resources and biodiversity in the urban area.
- Next phase(s) will focus on the renovation of buildings, loading the Metropolitan Park with a diversity of uses & functions, among which the new Town Hall, museums, environmental sustainability center, sport & leisure, social/creative/nature-based economy, etc.

2.6.3 Application of the Connecting Nature Framework to Pavlos Melas’s Exemplar

The start of the journey to the Metropolitan Park of Pavlos Melas was the concession of the former camp to the municipality of Pavlos Melas, after 15 years of claims by the local community and the administration mechanism (2017). “The strategic plan for the regeneration of the former camp towards a green space of metropolitan scale” was co-produced and approved by the municipal council, setting up the ambitions, objectives and aims of the regeneration programme. **The programme vision is the transformation of a historic site into a multifunctional green space, public and open, a driving force for cohesion and well-being and a lever of development for the city, where people relax, participate, have fun and return.**

The Most Crucial Transformation Point: Pavlos Melas involvement in Connecting Nature

The participation of Pavlos Melas municipality in the CONNECTING Nature partnership (June 2017) as a fast-follower city was the most crucial transformation point, as the nature-based solution concept was embedded in Pavlos Melas Metropolitan Park programme, offering new dimensions in the programme vision and its realization. In this context, the CONNECTING Nature framework has been applied by the municipality as a novel process of strategic planning to transform the former military camp into the flagship nature-based solution of the city.

During the Planning phase, **Technical Solution** and **Business Model** were the prioritized structural elements of the framework. However, priority changes from step to step of each phase and during the transition from left to right of the framework (Planning–Delivery–Stewardship).



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The first CONNECTING Nature Open Workshop and Steering Committee Meeting in Pavlos Melas municipality (June 2018) was the first opportunity for Pavlos Melas team and stakeholders to come across with innovative processes of urban planning and to brainstorm on the potential of Pavlos Melas Metropolitan Park as a nature-based solution.

Based on opportunities and goals, the Technical Solution - the nature-based solution, its details and features were identified. Considering the local needs, multiple functions were embedded into the technical solution to deliver environmental, social and economic benefits both to the Municipality of Pavlos Melas and the wider metropolitan city of Thessaloniki. In order to create a metropolitan park that will be a natural resource in the urban environment and not just a green infrastructure with sports and recreation facilities, emphasis was given to technical planting projects and their maintenance. Preservation of the physical characteristics of the former camp, such as ground, view, lighting, physical ventilation and conservation, utilization and enhancement of existing vegetation in order to improve biodiversity and promote the urban ecological role of the park were the basic design principles. However, through peer-to-peer meetings and communication with Genk, as a Front Runner City, other cities and UEL, it was recognized that ongoing adaptation of the technical solution will ensure long term sustainability and resilience.

Taking into account the importance of the cultural and historical identity of the place, its protection and promotion were incorporated as another basic design principle. In addition to the protection of the preserved buildings and the historical character of the place, all the technical designs, such as pathways, rest areas, planting plans, etc., were aligned to this concept. The same concept will be approached in terms of all the social and economic activities that are going to be developed in the park. The cultural and historical identity of Pavlos Melas Metropolitan Park is the key element for the place ownership and social inclusion development.

In the framework of the project, the Business Model Canvas workshop, the **Nature Based Enterprises** Platform webinars and the ongoing calls with the related partners emerged new perspectives for the sustainability and resilience of Pavlos Melas Metropolitan Park. **The Business Model Canvas of Pavlos Melas Metropolitan Park was developed and used as a novel guiding tool in order to capture the programme goals.** New financing models were identified for the Metropolitan Park. Through co-production workshops with key stakeholders, it was concluded that the programme funding will be achieved through a multi-phase funding model, that offers flexibility and acts as a framework to secure initially financing of the planning and implementation phases and to support innovation in financing of the stewardship phase.

In addition, Connecting Nature processes (Co-production and Reflexive Monitoring) and knowledge transfer procedure helped Pavlos Melas team to recognize that multi-level synergies are necessary to support this multi phases programme of such a big scale. The development of a multi-level synergy of municipal, regional and national scale key actors illustrates as a transformation point, directly related to the **Governance** building block. In this framework the programme is being planned, funded and implemented in phases through a phase-modified model of governance, totally novel for the municipality and its extroversion and at the same time effective during the planning and implementation phases, as well as oriented towards collaboration with citizens and city-based partners during stewardship phase.

Throughout the project timeline, planning, delivery and stewardship, interrelation of the structural elements is co-produced and monitored through the framework process elements, **Co-production** and **Reflexive Monitoring**. Drift and OSMOS workshops and visits were an opportunity to accomplish a deep understanding of the **co-production** process, to start breaking silos, to map stakeholders and to engage key stakeholders and experts. During CONNECTING Nature implementation, the co-creation concept was approached, developed and incorporated in the business - as - usual work process, boosting the Pavlos Melas team capacity. In parallel, **the creation and involvement of the open innovation team of internal key stakeholders from the planning phase was determinant for the effective implementation of the project, as well as the project sustainability. This cooperation created new perspectives for an effective interdepartmental way of working.**

In order to achieve the goals of Pavlos Melas Metropolitan Park as a multipurpose place with environmental, social, cultural and economic benefits, the **need for an innovative learning process, compared to a regular planning process,** was obvious. **Reflexive Monitoring** was adopted as a process to reflect on the project in real time, to identify barriers and solve problems, to fill in gaps, to correct mistakes and to adapt it to new conditions, from the beginning of the Metropolitan Park of Pavlos Melas project and throughout all the project phases. At the same time, RM offered a structured framework with methodology and tools to adapt the established way of working in Pavlos Melas team, which included daily reflection and adaptation but in an empirical way. Tools and methods of RM save time and offer flexibility to use learning outcomes and translate them in actions at any time during the project evolution.

At the same time and taking into account the minor monitoring and evaluation capacity in Pavlos Melas Municipality, the

Impact Assessment Plan training program was a great opportunity to identify the most appropriate indicators and to design the evaluation plan of Pavlos Melas Metropolitan Park in order to support nature based solution impact towards future funding.



Image 10 and 11: Pavlos Melas Exemplar – Ex Military Site

2.6.4 Benefits of the Connecting Nature Framework for Pavlos Melas Exemplar

CONNECTING Nature has crucially improved the capacity of the municipality to handle major Nature-Based Solution issues related to technical solution, governance and financing, as well as it has strengthened the ability to cope with nature-based solution challenges. In parallel, the team accomplished a deep understanding and built important experience on co-production and reflexive monitoring procedures.

The CONNECTING Nature framework figure of Pavlos Melas Metropolitan Park presents all the transformation points and trademarks during the transition from left to right of the figure (refer to Appendix A for Pavlos Melas's Connecting Nature Figure). It summarizes how the city have tailored and fit concepts and processes of Connecting Nature project to the city context in order to design, implement and operate Pavlos Melas Metropolitan Park in order to bring city to life and life to city.

Based on the CONNECTING Nature framework, concepts and processes of Connecting Nature project were tailored and fit to the city context in order to plan, implement and operate Pavlos Melas Metropolitan Park and to bring city to life and life to city.

As a result of the work of Pavlos Melas team together with key stakeholders in applying the Connecting Nature Framework, Pavlos Melas Metropolitan Park is being developed as the first big scale nature-based solution in the municipality and the wider metropolitan city of Thessaloniki. Besides to its strategic goals as a green space within the urban fabric to bring nature in the city, to promote social inclusion, to boost economic growth, to promote the historical and cultural identity of the place, the adoption of Connecting Nature framework methodology, during the transition from planning and implementation to the stewardship phase, transforms Metropolitan Park of Pavlos Melas in a model of urban NbS of city, regional and national level.

2.6.5: Challenges of the Connecting Nature Framework for Pavlos Melas Exemplar

The main challenges from applying the Connecting Nature Framework on Pavlos Melas Metropolitan Park were:

- Insufficient knowledge on NbS and its related issues;
- No experience on NbS projects;
- Lack of co-production culture;
- Lack of political support towards NbS due to lack of NbS and their benefits awareness;
- Lack of funding towards NbS due to lack of NbS and their benefits awareness;
- Difficulties to break silos;
- Different language between academic and city partners;

These challenges consumed time and resources to be initially identified and then commitment and constant work from the partners to be envisaged. However, common barriers identified by the cities created conditions for collaboration and support between the partners. In addition, knowledge transfer processes, experience sharing, practice and familiarization with the Connecting Nature framework helped to address difficulties in an effective way. It was also recognized that the city context is a factor that determines the Connecting Nature framework adaptation in each city.

2.7.1 City Context

Sarajevo is a city in the heart of Europe that is specific in historical, cultural, and natural aspects, a city that unites east and west and that is open to the new and different. The citizens of Sarajevo, taught by experience, appreciate the opportunities afforded to them, especially taking into account the premise that everyone is equal.

Sarajevo is characterised by several problems that other European cities face, such as climate change, pollution, deforestation. It also faces the problem of traffic and heating which also affect pollution, and this problem requires systematic changes rather than short-term solutions. Also, the urban area is characterised by lack of multifunctional green areas, which need to be developed respecting balance between urban development and environmental protection with special emphasis on responsible management of the environment, space, natural and infrastructural resources (in line with strategic goals of the canton, city and city municipalities and in line with UN SDG 3, Good health and well-being, 8 Decent work and economic growth, 11 Sustainable cities and communities and 16 Peace, justice and strong institutions).

NbS for resilience and pleasant city living for all

The development of a resilient city, pleasant for the life of citizens of all ages and meeting their needs is one of the goals of Sarajevo. Thus, the Sarajevo exemplar - urban garden and sensory park – will provide the inhabitants of the city a place for relaxation, entertainment, learning and play, not forgetting people with special needs - children with intellectual and/or physical disabilities. This garden will enrich biodiversity of this area, with different plants and trees planted at the location, with special focus on trees which help fight the air pollution, which is main environmental problem in Sarajevo.

Beside of contribution to the biodiversity of the urban area through the urban garden, the NbS will provide support to the NBEs and their innovative and sustainable products which are environmentally friendly and integral part of the NbS.

The exemplar, as first NbS in Sarajevo and probably in BiH, with added value elements, will also raise awareness of its multiple benefits for the urban areas.

2.7.2 Overview of Exemplar

The Sarajevo exemplar is the creation of an urban garden and sensory park within the Secondary Vocational Education and Training School. The exemplar will have multifunctional purposes and will be opened to all citizens, but it will be adjusted to special target groups. The exemplar was created taking into account real needs of the City and its habitants, containing elements which will contribute to the city challenges solving. Main actors from public and private sector participated in process of determining Sarajevo issues and in creating innovative solutions for economic, environmental, and societal development.

The co-production process applied ensured to hear voices of the inhabitants and various target groups: children, elderly people, experts in urban planning, architects, experts for work with children with disabilities, their parents, with active involvement of the municipality, city and representatives of the NGOs and companies dealing with environment.

The exemplar will serve a double purpose:

- provide multipurpose area for the pupils⁴ of the School (urban garden will be used for learning and sensory park will be used for developing motoric skills of the pupils)
- include numerous activities (e.g. educational programme for children about biodiversity, workshops on urban agriculture for unemployed, mentoring programme for SMEs etc) for various target groups in order to provide economic opportunities for NBEs and their promotion, societal activities such as intergenerational exchange through innovative tools and activities aimed to contribute to biodiversity increase and creating a sustainable, replicable model which can contribute to solve abovementioned issues of Sarajevo, but also other cities in BiH.

⁴ School attendants are children

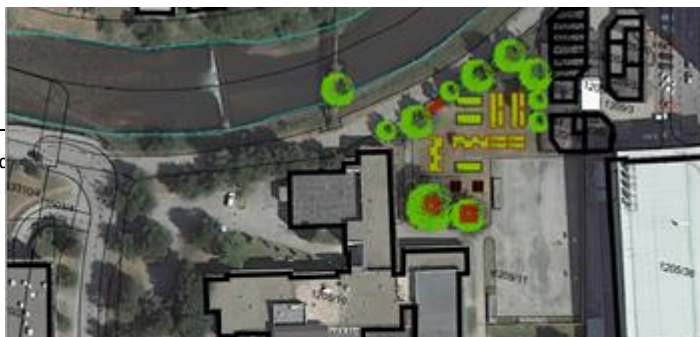


Image 12: Site of Sarajevo Exemplar

2.7.3 Application of the Connecting Nature Framework to Sarajevo's Exemplar

Sarajevo's Connecting Nature Framework represents comprehensive approach in planning, delivery and stewardship of main project activity - defining and implementation of the Sarajevo exemplar with its main elements. The Framework was applied in defining all 7 elements and helped the Sarajevo team in communication, better defining ideas, involvement of relevant stakeholders and engagement of the people in the process of the exemplar development, which contributed to the exemplar with multiple elements and purpose. Table 4 provides an overview of key activities across all three phases. Links to specific building blocks are noted where appropriate.

Phase	Activities	Building Blocks
Planning	<p>-ideas for the exemplar and its financing – defining the exemplar provided the Sarajevo team basis for further work, including peer-to peer sessions with FRC Glasgow – sharing experience and best practices helped the Sarajevo Team in many learning questions</p> <p>-stakeholder mapping – gave the Team wider picture in key actors for the exemplar;</p> <p>-Business Model canvas helped the team to define key elements for the financing the exemplar (e.g. to provide institutional support from the government, to include international organizations for providing financial contribution etc) and to define environmental, social, economic values the exemplar will provide.</p> <p>-Co-production via The Sarajevo process – artistic based approach firstly tested in Sarajevo, used as a tool in the exemplar activities. The co-production, as one of the elements of the Framework was great tool for the Sarajevo team to get reflections, opinions, to ex-change ideas and good practices and to apply in the exemplar defining. It helped the team to solve certain dilemmas on the exemplar (e.g. financing, involving experts etc – were topics with peer to peer sessions with City of Glasgow).</p>	<p>Financing Reflexive Monitoring Co-production</p>
Delivery	<p>-Funding opportunities and financing the exemplar, ex-change of good practices in similar activities (Glasgow, Poznan, A Coruna) and inputs for the exemplar – stakeholder needs and opportunities for cooperation; indicator assessment training programme – defining key indicators for the exemplar as important method for measuring the benefits. These activities provided the Sarajevo Team basis for in-depth development of the exemplar by including additional aspects of the exemplar (which stakeholders to involve, how to measure benefits of the exemplar etc) which will be taken into account in implementation phase (expected in spring 2022)</p>	<p>Financing Reflexive Monitoring Impact Assessment</p>
Stewardship	<p>-involve maintenance of the exemplar and its replication in other areas of the city, but also ambition to create sustainable model for the design and implementation of the urban gardens and its recognition as strategic project of the city/canton. Therefore, the Sarajevo team recognized need of</p>	

including NbS in strategic documents of the local governments in order to provide legitimacy as a first step in NbS implementation.

Taking into account the specifics of the city, as well as the needs and challenges it's faces, and the current problems has, the exemplar is recognised as one of the key steps, but also a way to contribute to solve the city problems and to improve the quality of life. Thus, the team started from the exemplar goal, activities that are needed to achieve the goal, and through the definition of activities, the team came to a set of needs that will enrich the exemplar and implement it in a way that has multiple purposes.

Building Block Focus: Co-Production – Application of The Sarajevo Process to foster accessibility, inclusivity, and inter-generational exchange.

The Sarajevo process will be key part of the Sarajevo exemplar in order to enable key stakeholders and in the city to tell the story of nature/NbS in Sarajevo, to engage with citizens to tell their stories and to use these stories to help the co-creation process for NbS and to design NbS to address a particular challenge in the city.

The Sarajevo process will be tested during public consultations on the exemplar and implemented within exemplar implementation with multiple purposes: to provide inclusiveness of the specific target groups into society (children with disabilities/other marginalized groups), to provide intergenerational exchange (youth and elderly people) and to raise awareness on nature importance for health and well-being.



Image 13: The final body-maps from the pilot testing of the Sarajevo Process (March 2020).

2.7.4 Benefits of the Connecting Nature Framework for Sarajevo's Exemplar

Connecting Nature framework allowed the team to expand their imagination, and to go a step further and think long term and to see the exemplar as one of the steps in its development and upgrading. The innovative aspect has been there from the beginning of the development of the framework, through the participation of various experts and departments, sharing ideas and brainstorming, but also considering exemplar from more angles and what effects we achieve with its implementation.

As a result of the joint work of the Sarajevo Economic Region Development Agency and the City of Sarajevo in applying the Connecting Nature Framework, the exemplar is developed which satisfy more factors: it is in line with local, city and cantonal plans (as wider objective), it is in line with EU recommendations, contributes to health and well-being, can contribute in solving Sarajevo's issues (pollution, lack of green areas in the urban area), it promotes importance of the green zones in every day's life of the city habitants and it is also focused on inclusive approach to the children with disabilities/marginalised groups and their integration into society.

The exemplar is developed with huge support of the project partners, by listening, learning and exchanging ideas and experiences.

2.7.5 Challenges of the Connecting Nature Framework for Sarajevo's Exemplar

During project implementation and development of the Connecting Nature Framework, the team has faced the following challenges:

- NbS is relatively new term and there is insufficient knowledge on it in operational, technical and practical aspect;



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- Awareness on NbS multiple benefits is low within governance which affects support to NbS and NBE;
- NbS is not recognised as one of the priorities in local and regional strategic documents.

These challenges directly influenced the development of the Sarajevo exemplar and the implementation of the project in a way that the team encountered a lack of support. It is also **important to emphasize that the acquisition of new knowledge required commitment and constant work of the team in order to achieve the full effects of the project** and make the most of the opportunities provided by the project (knowledge of project partners, adoption and application of new tools, etc.).

3. Analysis of FFC experiences with the Connecting Nature Framework: Key Reflections

Section 2 has provided a fulsome description by the FFCs of their experiences with the Connecting Nature Framework and the work each city has undertaken in the planning, delivery, and stewardship of their exemplar during the timeframe of the Connecting Nature project. Below, the report will provide a short summary of some of the key reflections highlighted by the cities, based on their workings with the Framework.

Reflection 1: The importance of peer-to-peer support and the reflexive monitoring process

To begin, the cities have been supported by an in-depth and extensive knowledge transfer process, wherein the cities have benefited from the experience of the FRCs. It is heartening to see a number of the FFCs (**Pavlos Melas and Ioannina especially**) noting and **acknowledging the importance of the peer-to-peer exchanges, and in particular, the role of the reflexive monitoring sessions** as a significant contributor to their overall understanding and subsequent application of the Framework in their city contexts.

Reflection 2: Incorporating new ways of working

It is evident that the cities have been challenged by the Framework – and have **pushed themselves to incorporate new ways of working** across the various elements and phases of the Connecting Nature Framework. Specifically, **Burgas** has noted that the Framework has “change(d) the way we think and...(we) accept the fact that we can do things differently in several main areas”, listing indicators and co-production as two key areas that have evolved based on their workings with the Framework. **Sarajevo** highlighted that for them, the Framework is an opportunity to expand their imagination and “think long term and to see the exemplar as one of the steps in its development and upgrading”. **Ioannina** shared that principles of the Framework led to the creation of a multidepartment team in the municipality for the management of the Project and this has become a best-case example on how to incorporate different Departments in a project, a novelty for the city. Finally, **Malaga** noted that ‘this framework is challenging because it sets up an inclusive methodology that differs from the classic way of doing things’; nevertheless, the city recognizes its benefits, and speaking specifically about the Business Model Canvas, Malaga described its usefulness in explaining [the] Connecting Nature methodology and a “vertebrate” path to follow. It shows how to engage NbS through entrepreneurship, partnerships, governance and how to look for financing NbS projects. The Municipality usually finance projects with its own funds.

Reflection 3: Use of the Framework for Awards (Recognition of innovation) and Funding

Nicosia and **A Coruna** have both showcased how the Framework can be used to gain recognition of the innovations present in their exemplars (A Coruna has received national-level award for their Urban Gardens network, while Nicosia successfully applied the information gathered in their framework to secure substantial funding for their exemplar in September 2021). More recently, **Ioannina** was also successful in securing 10 million euros towards delivery of their exemplar. Finally, **Burgas** are also using the Framework for future funding applications.

Reflection 4: Involvement in EU Projects to embed nature-based solutions in exemplar

Pavlos Melas highlighted that for them, the most critical point towards the planning and delivery of their exemplar was their involvement in Connecting Nature as this allowed the nature-based solution concept to be embedded in Pavlos Melas Metropolitan Park programme, offering new dimensions in the programme vision and its realization. In the city’s view, ‘the CONNECTING Nature framework has been applied by the municipality as a novel process of strategic planning to transform the former military camp into the flagship nature-based solution of the city. In addition, **Burgas** are also linking their work with the Framework across multiple Horizon2020 projects (i.e. GoGreenRoutes) to support their exemplar.

Reflection 5: Difficulties in communicating objectives of exemplar, owing to poor or little understanding of NbS in cities

Generally, all of the cities noted that NbS is not well-known or understood as a concept in their cities. This can make it difficult to communicate benefits of NbS, and to have it be seen as a priority and garner support. Compounding this is the issue of language. Here, both A Coruna and Ioannina offer meaningful reflections: '[t]he language of the Connecting Nature Framework report and the guidebooks is also a barrier, as many of our colleagues, and of the elected politicians, don't speak English. This sometimes makes it harder for us to communicate the work that we have been doing, and the importance of the framework and its elements.' (A Coruna); '...trying to explain an innovative term to outsiders is even more difficult when you try and doing it in your native language with only a reference in English' (Ioannina). That said, Nicosia saw the Connecting Nature Framework as an opportunity to build a common language, to begin to address this lack of understanding with respect to NbS: '[t]hrough Connecting Nature project, we had the opportunity to build a common understanding as well as a common language among the core team, the stakeholders and in general all involved actors aiming to communicate more efficiently in all phases of the project.'

Reflection 6: While the Framework has been beneficial with regards to working cross-departments, it is still difficult to break silos.

Many cities acknowledged that the Framework (and in particular the support they received from Osmos with respect to the innovation cluster workshops) were beneficial in helping them work in a more holistic manner across departments and with multiple stakeholders, it is still the case that silos of working are challenging and difficult to break. Specifically, Malaga noted that for them, 'one of the most challenging issues working with the framework has been to bring together experts, technicians, citizen, and neighbors in the participatory meetings to talk and design the future development of Lagunillas'. Similarly, in A Coruna the local administration works in silos, and the different departments aren't used to working together. They often share information, but they don't really co-develop projects, each department tends to develop their own.'

Reflection 7: Time is a valuable resource

In summing up their challenges with the Framework, Pavlos Melas noted that **challenges encountered consumed time and resources to be initially identified**; furthermore, these required commitment and constant work from the partners to be envisaged. However, common barriers identified by the cities created conditions for collaboration and support between the partners. In addition, knowledge transfer processes, experience sharing, practice and familiarization with the Connecting Nature framework helped to address difficulties in an effective way.

4. Scaling out: Reflecting on the Implementation of the Connecting Nature Framework in the FFCs

The focus of WP 4 is to support the scaling out of the Connecting Nature Framework to a group of Fast-Follower Cities. A key aspect of this scaling out has been described as part of Deliverable 12, the focus of which was to share the work done to foster meaningful peer-to-peer exchange and knowledge transfer between the Front Runner Cities (Glasgow, Genk, and Poznan) to the seven cities that comprise the Fast-Followers (A Coruna, Burgas, Ioannina, Malaga, Nicosia, Pavlos Melas, and Sarajevo). The impact of the peer-to-peer support cannot be understated as a significant mechanism for providing the FFCs with the means to apply the framework in each of their cities. While the Framework is challenging, and, as Burgas noted in their city reflections – 'requires a new way of working' - the FFCs benefited from the knowledge and experiences shared by Glasgow, Genk, and Poznan. Specifically, the reflexive monitoring sessions created a space for FRCs and FFCs to ask questions of each other, and in so doing, it created a space for the FFCs to explore the application of the framework to their specific contexts. As the FFCs gained experience via the Framework, there was a noticeable shift in the exchange dynamic between the cities. By the time the third reflexive monitoring sessions were completed the FRCs were actively seeking advice from FFC experience with the framework. **A more detailed reflection of the lessons learned from the peer-to-peer exchanges established during the reflexive monitoring sessions will be provided in Deliverable 6; however, it is worth highlighting the importance of establishing and maintaining a process that creates a space for city dialogue and exchange to enhance the planning, delivery and stewardship of nature-based solutions, particularly in the context of new and emerging challenges and criticisms** (for example, NbS



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and ‘green-washing’) that may inhibit city and regional implementation of NbS.

WP 4 sees **the newly established UrbanByNature hubs in Europe (the first one, in Spain in November 2021), with Glasgow and Genk forthcoming (in February 2022 and May 2022 respectively) as a positive step in creating such a peer-to-peer mechanism to ensure lessons learned are shared widely for the benefit of all cities.** That said, without appropriate resourcing and support (refer to Deliverable 12 for a full report of activities and the importance of collaboration across WPs and multiple partners and associated resources to ensure an effective knowledge transfer process spanning the full timeframe of the project), it will be difficult to sustain current peer-to-peer mechanisms, and it will be a challenge to establish new ones, or to ensure that these mechanisms flourish. **In much the same way that the Connecting Nature project has highlighted the need not just for capital costs (i.e. start-up costs) but costs to support long-term management and maintenance of NbS, the same consideration should be given to support the long-term sustainability of peer-to-peer networks.** The Connecting Nature project has, in the view of WP 4, applied its resources effectively and efficiently in establishing a successful network for peer-to-peer exchange; however, funding and resources are necessary to maintain and sustain these networks beyond the end of the project.

As noted by several cities – including A Coruna and Ioannina – the **Connecting Nature framework and figure are viewed as a powerful tool for the cities to share the narrative/story of their NbS journey (in general), and the specific details related to their exemplar in particular.** Specific to this report, as outlined at the onset, every effort was made to retain the city voice; from a WP 4 perspective, it is in reading the experiences and reflections of the cities themselves, highlighting their successes and challenges, that demonstrates the power and impact of the framework. Specifically, in reinforcing the framework as a narrative tool, there is a richness in the city perspectives and experiences that offers space for meaningful reflection. For example, it is heartening to read Burgas’s reflection specific to the need to transform the way in which the city ‘works’ in the context of the framework (which requires a multi-pronged and cross-organizational approach to achieve objectives and goals). **The narrative element of the framework has provided a space for the cities to consider both their strengths and weaknesses, and to understand the process of planning, delivery and stewardship as a journey, rather than an end. WP 3, in partnership with Bioazul are in the process of developing a mini guidebook focusing on the narrative element of the framework. The mini guidebook will provide guidance and tools for building the city narrative for NbS.** It is clear, from some of the city experiences with this narrative, that it has helped them to not only better communicate the information involving their exemplar, but also, it has translated into funding – A Coruna and Nicosia – for their NbS exemplars.

Reflecting on the power of an effective narrative in helping to convey the key principles and objectives of NbS, WP 4 notes that the **cities still struggle with communicating information on NbS owing to the persistence of poor or little understanding of the term in Europe.** While one aspect of this lack of understanding can be due to weakness in translation from English to local language of the term ‘nature-based solutions’ – and in fact, it is worth reflecting on whether or not the term does a disservice to what it meant by it, even in English – WP 4 would like to share a few reflections, linked to the key processes driving the framework, namely reflexive monitoring and co-production, and their capacity to support the cities in better communicating information specific to their exemplars. To begin, **the reflexive monitoring process is a valuable tool for creating a space to consider the meaning behind the term NbS, and to gather city perspectives.** More information on this will be provided in Deliverable 6.

Furthermore, during the discussions with the cities, there **are both tangible and intangible elements at play.** Some of these are captured in the city reflections and experiences outlined in the report; consider **A Coruna’s meditation on the emotional (intangible) aspect of their exemplar which they note is important for the exemplar’s goals of increasing the feeling of attachment to public space (tangible and intangible) and creating a sense of community (tangible), reconnecting with heritage and cultural legacy (tangible).** This reflection was shared in the context of **their experience of The Sarajevo Process, a new co-production methodology that has been developed as part of Connecting Nature.** While there may be a perception that NbS and co-production practices are well known, applied and increasingly accepted in Europe, **there is a need to continue funding research and practical application of co-production methods, in order to better understand the drivers for change and transformation with respect to NbS.**

WP 4 initiated **the development of the Sarajevo process to help the cities better communicate the impact of NbS in their contexts. From this initial aim, the co-production process has evolved to offer the cities a space to design and deliver a meaningful co-production process that considers both the tangible and intangible elements that comprise peoples’ lived experiences, and to better understand their motivations for (a) agreeing to participate in a co-production process; and (b) engaging in co-production processes specifically designed to support the planning, delivery, and stewardship of nature-based solutions.** During the design and testing of the Sarajevo Process, WP 4, in partnership with WP 3, have had the opportunity to work with three cities – Sarajevo, Nicosia, and A Coruna. Following a meeting in A Coruna in November 2021 to reflect on The Sarajevo Process as an effective co-production methodology,



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WP 4, 3 and 2, are continuing their reflections, particularly vis-à-vis evaluating the process according the co-production principles (Inclusivity; Openness; Legitimacy; Empowering; Alignment; and Actionable). The results will be captured in the up-coming Connecting Nature Co-production guidebook and will include tips and guidance on how to structure and deliver meaningful co-production for NbS. That said, some key reflections specific to the city experiences worth noting include:

- A Coruna: the application of the Sarajevo Process has reinforced the underlying **values** driving their exemplar, as listed in their figure - attachment, memories, heritage; while the process didn't unearth anything 'new' it, nevertheless has brought these words (and their meanings) into sharper focus. Furthermore, in follow-up discussions with A Coruna, the city shared that the urban gardeners are not motivated to have an urban garden because of the NbS benefits (be they related to health and well-being, environmental or economic), but rather, it is primarily because the gardens offers the gardeners an opportunity to re-connect with their childhood (and the happiness and joy that they connect with nature, and that particular moment in their lives). Consideration should be given to funding focused on exploring peoples' motivations for engaging in co-production, and how to better foster engagement to render meaningful results,
- Sarajevo – reflecting on the outputs from the pilot testing of the process in March 2020, the idea of '**circularity**' continues to persist as a driver for framing the intangible elements that are at the foundation of the tangible aspects of their exemplar (i.e. their focus on sensory gardens, and fostering intergenerational exchange seems to be bringing this idea of a circle (on two fronts) center stage - the metaphorical circle as a garden - from seed, to plant, to seed again; and then the circle of exchange between and among generations. Furthermore, the memory works that were produced in Sarajevo still carry an emotional element worth and worth exploring, particularly as it relates to how co-production can help shed light on what is meaningful and important in peoples' lives (and how this can then be threaded through the various phases of planning, delivery and stewardship of NbS). In particular, one of the memory work tests noted that 'after the war, it was possible to grow flowers in the garden, alongside tomatoes and other vegetables'. This reflection, on the role and significance of **beauty**, requires further exploration, with a view to ensuring nature-based solutions, in addition to contributing benefits across health and well-being, economic development, and environmental impact, do so in a way that considers beauty as a cross-cutting element, vital for creating and contributing to livable, lovable, and accessible/inclusive cities where all people can thrive. In this vein, co-production is a valuable process for uncovering the meanings that people carry with and in themselves, with respect to their relationship to and with nature (this can also help in further understanding individuals' motivation for engaging in co-production processes, as well as reinforcing a sense of connectedness, care, and ownership specific to outcomes of the process).
- Nicosia: the Sarajevo process was viewed as a valuable **team-building** tool. In sharing the city experience, Nicosia continue to focus on the process – and have never shared the specific outputs (in particular the memory work texts). While more reflection is required to understand the way in which Nicosia present their experience, it seems clear that 'certain elements of the process stayed in the room in which they were shared' and this speaks to the care that is required when developing and implementing a co-production process. It is important to understand that not everything will be shared; that the success of some co-production processes rely on the fact that the information exists in a particular time and space, and that it cannot be replicated, or relayed, outside that time/space. Nevertheless, the city has found it a valuable experience and is planning to replicate it with other stakeholder groups.

The matter of **scale** of NbS is an issue worth highlighting. Section 3 has presented the city experiences with the Connecting Nature Framework – in some cases, it is in the context of large-scale NbS (i.e., Burgas, Ioannina, Pavlos Melas, Nicosia, and A Coruna), and in others, such as Malaga and Sarajevo, the focus has been on smaller-scale, piloting of NbS, with a view to replication (throughout the wider area of Lagunillas in Malaga, and replication of sensory gardens across Sarajevo). The first thing to note is the capacity of the Framework to effectively support the cities in their NbS, regardless of scale. That said, it will be interesting to follow the cases of the NbS piloting in Malaga and Sarajevo to explore how well the framework supports them in their replication efforts. Each city has presented their unique perspective and experience working with the framework and NbS. While the focus of Connecting Nature is on the implementation of large-scale NbS, it is important to caution against making it a requirement of all cities to reach that level of implementation by the end of the project. The Framework is complex and challenging; all the cities have taken up this challenge and it is important to highlight that whether starting from a pilot of a garden, or NbS at a specific neighborhoods-scale, all the cities are working towards large-scale implementation, and this is significant, particularly in cities, such as Sarajevo, where their pilot will represent the first instance of NbS, not just in Sarajevo, but in Bosnia and Herzegovina.



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5. Conclusion

In the lead up to the submission of their final Connecting Nature reports, as part of Deliverable 6, WP 4, in collaboration with other WPs as needed, will continue to support the cities in the refinement of their reports; specific to the material presented in this report, WP 4 will work with the cities to refine their input to create a short executive summary that can be presented at the front of their reports; this summary will provide an overview of their experience with the Framework and communicate, in a non-academic way, some of the key objectives, activities, and ambitions for their exemplars.

Appendix A – Connecting Nature Figures

A – 1 A Coruna

Workshop on Business Model Canvas in A Coruña

To better understand how to finance our exemplar, not only relying on municipal funds (Nov. 2019)

Annual General Meeting in Malaga

1st presentational meeting for our new CN team. It was really important to learn and put in practice new concepts, such as the CN Framework and the Reflexive Monitoring (Oct. 2019)

Selection of exemplar: urban gardens

Urban gardens network had a great potential as a first step for the green infrastructure strategy (Sept. 2019)

Connection with Employment department and URBACT RU:RBAN project

The Employment dpt. was involved in another EU project on urban gardens, working already with a group of stakeholders developing school gardens (Dec. 2019)

High level meeting with the City Councillors for Environment, Education, Employment and Tourism and Markets

This helped us secure political support to develop our exemplar and collaborate with the different departments (March 2020)

CN Exemplar awarded as National Best Practice

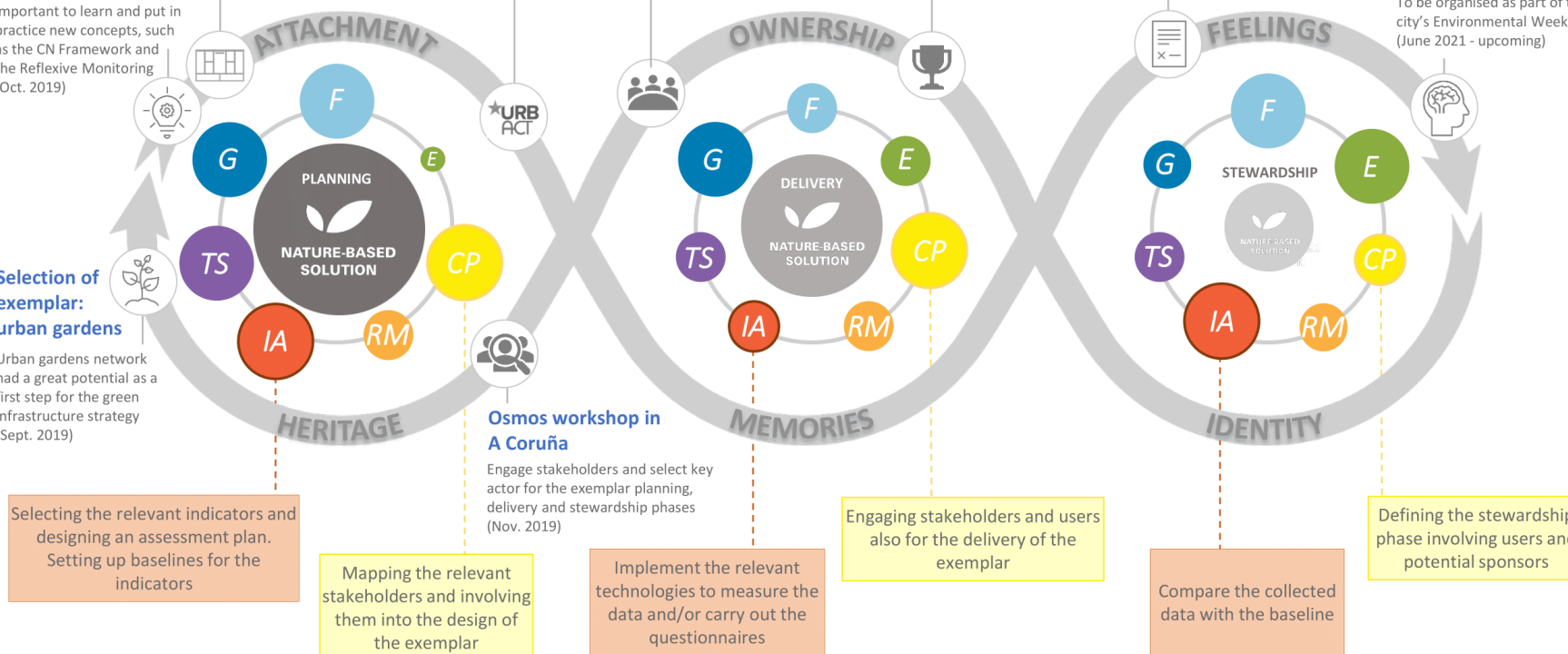
1st prize in the category of NBS, helpful to further secure political support and increase citizen awareness (May 2021)

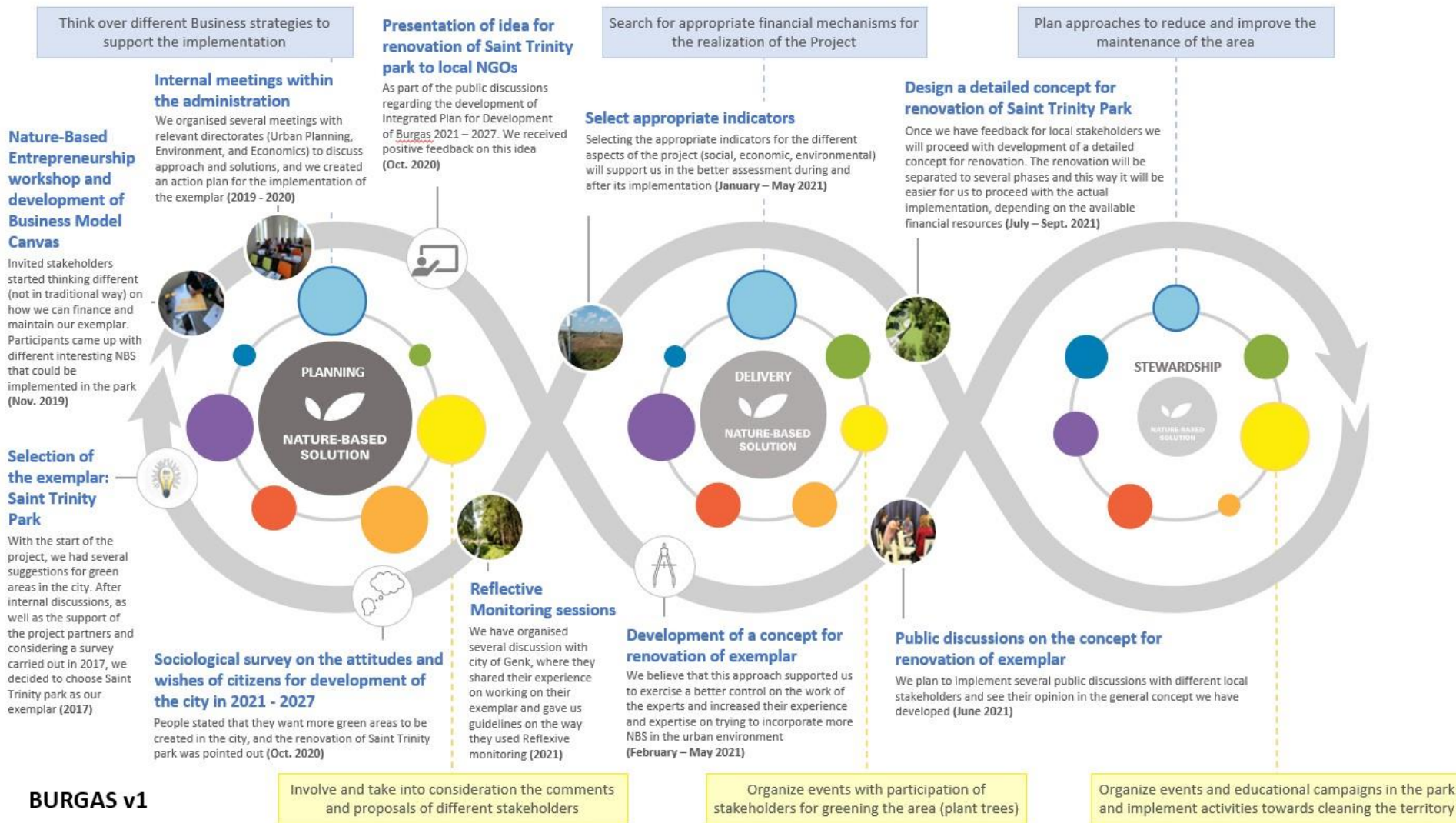
New maintenance tender for the city's green areas including UG

With our inputs embedded for the green areas of the city, which will have a separated lot for the maintenance of urban gardens, aimed at social integration enterprises (May-April 2021)

Sarajevo process

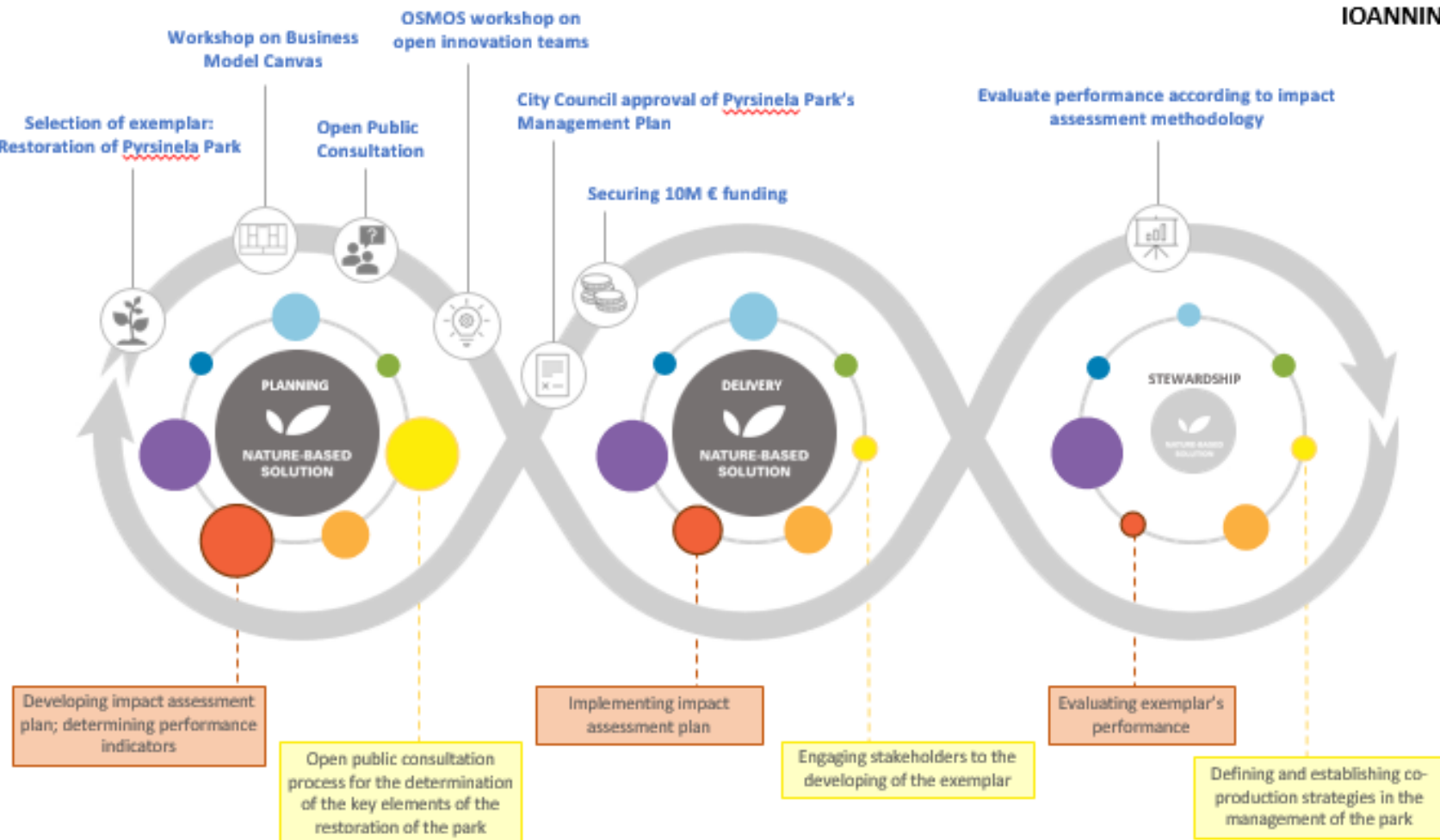
To be organised as part of the city's Environmental Week (June 2021 - upcoming)

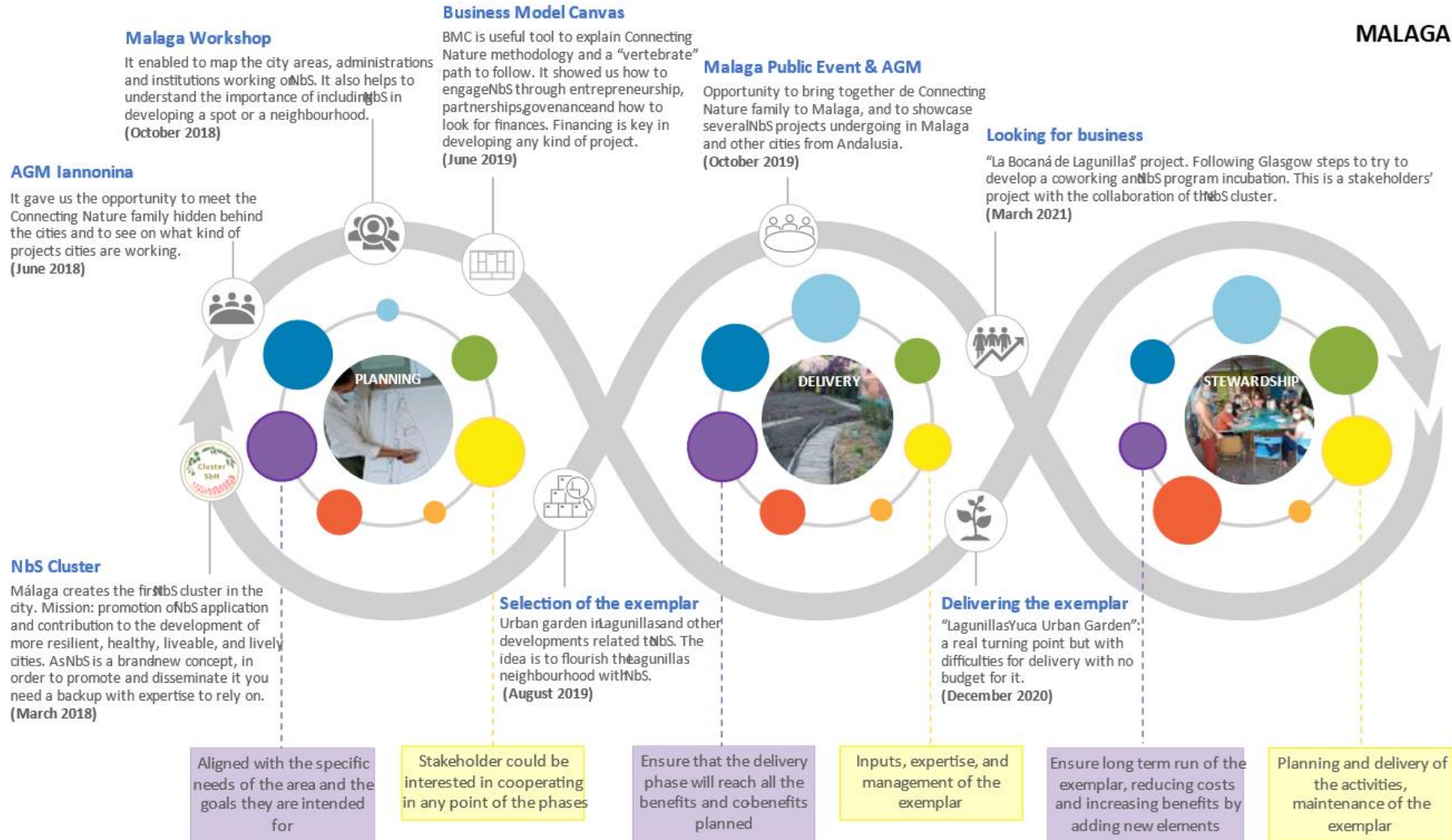




A – 3 : Ioannina

IOANNINA





Business Model Canvas and Local Strategic Sustainable Development

Business Model Canvas

Even though the workshop's main focus was the organisational and funding aspects of the project, it provided a significant opportunity for all the participants and stakeholders to accomplish a comprehensive and deep understanding of the entire project (Oct. 2019)

Developing NBS in Nicosia Workshop (OSMOS)

The workshop brought together the key people involved in NBS in the city in order to facilitate a common understanding about the envisaged project. (Dec. 2019)

Local Strategic Sustainable Development Plan

Finalisation – Submission of Local Strategic Sustainable Development (with the Directorate General for European Programmes, Coord. and Development (secure budget) (Feb. 2021)

Local Strategic Sustainable Development

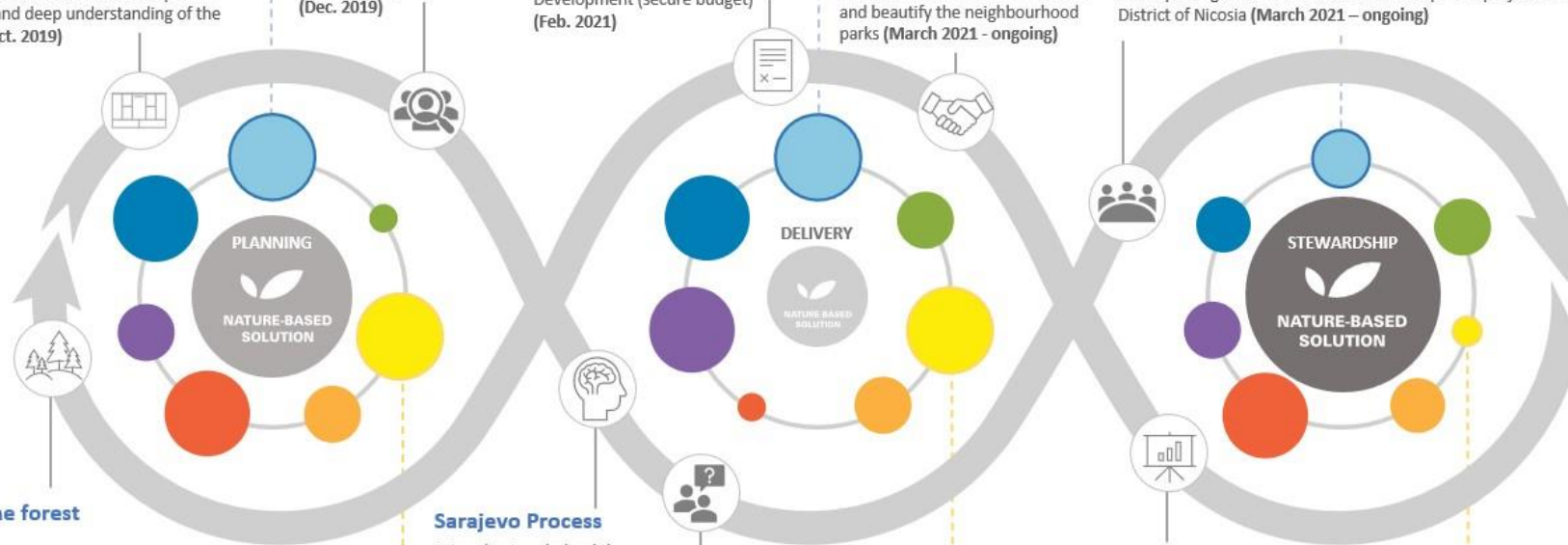
Adopt a Park Scheme

The "Adopt a park" scheme is being developed to promote long term partnerships between Local Businesses/Enterprises and Local Government in order to maintain and beautify the neighbourhood parks (March 2021 - ongoing)

Nicosia NBS Management

This body will be responsible for planning, implementing and coordinating the involved actors/stakeholders, as well as monitoring and reporting of the NBS and other development projects in the District of Nicosia (March 2021 – ongoing)

NICOSIA v1



Meet us at the forest (event)

The Forest Department (Ministry of Agriculture) presented Athalassa Forest Park which is one of the most significant nature-based solution examples in Cyprus and participants had the chance to brainstorm and share thoughts on the proposed Exemplar (January 2019)

Sarajevo Process

Art and nature helped the team to unlock a new perspective, utilize personal experiences and memories, approach the project and express in a very fruitful way, thus contributing to the overall team's tasks. After the three days session, Nicosia's team saw Nicosia's Exemplar in a very different perspective (Sept. 2020)

Public Consultation

We had the opportunity to communicate the Local Strategic Sustainable Development Plan and the proposed Green Network to citizens, NGOs, Municipal Officers and Private Sector (Sept. – Dec. 2020)

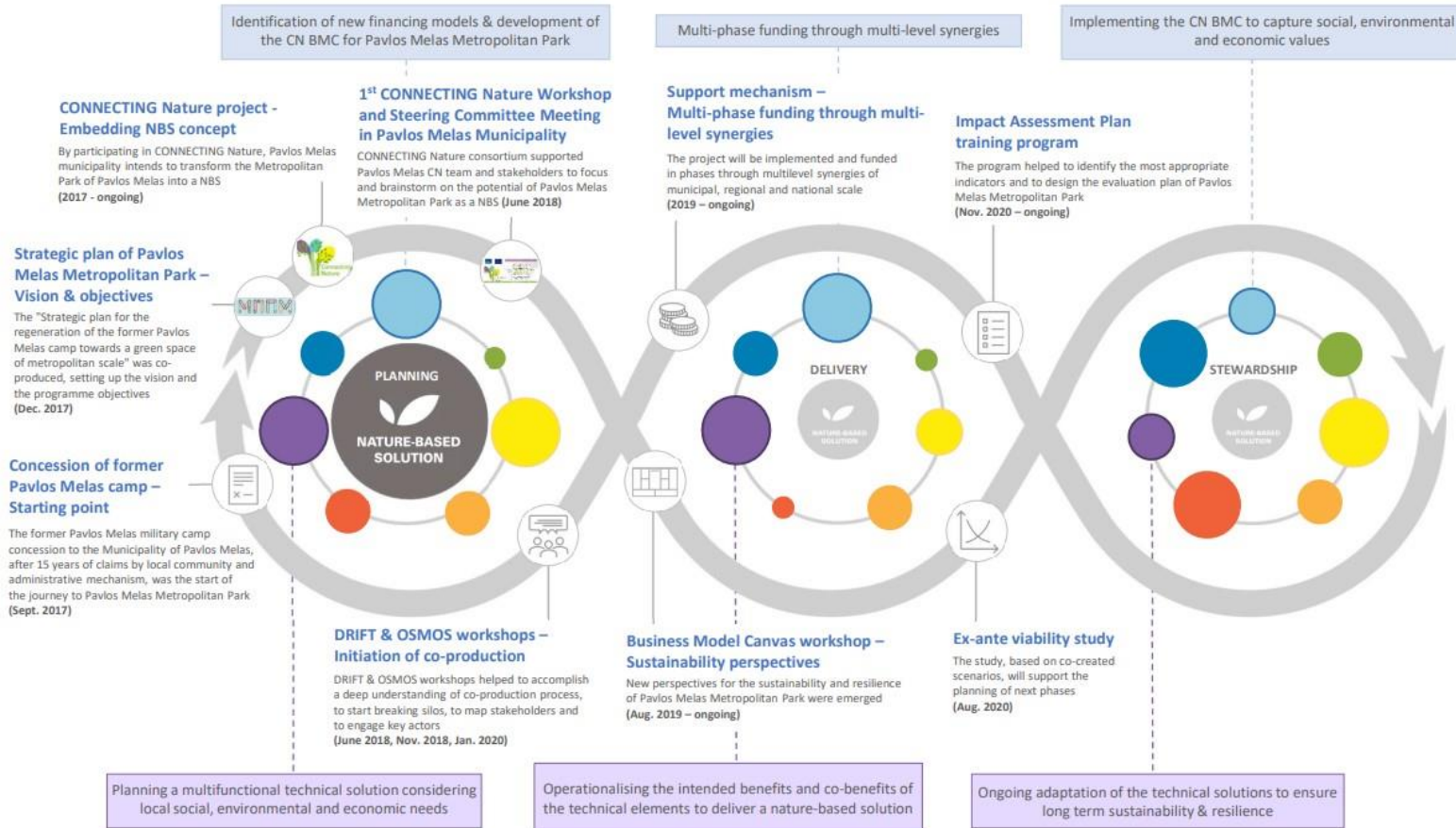
Impact Assessment Plan

Stakeholders' meetings for the Impact Assessment Plan (Local Universities, NGOs, Cyprus Scientific and Technical Chamber, Ministry of Interior, Municipal Technical Departments) (May 2021)

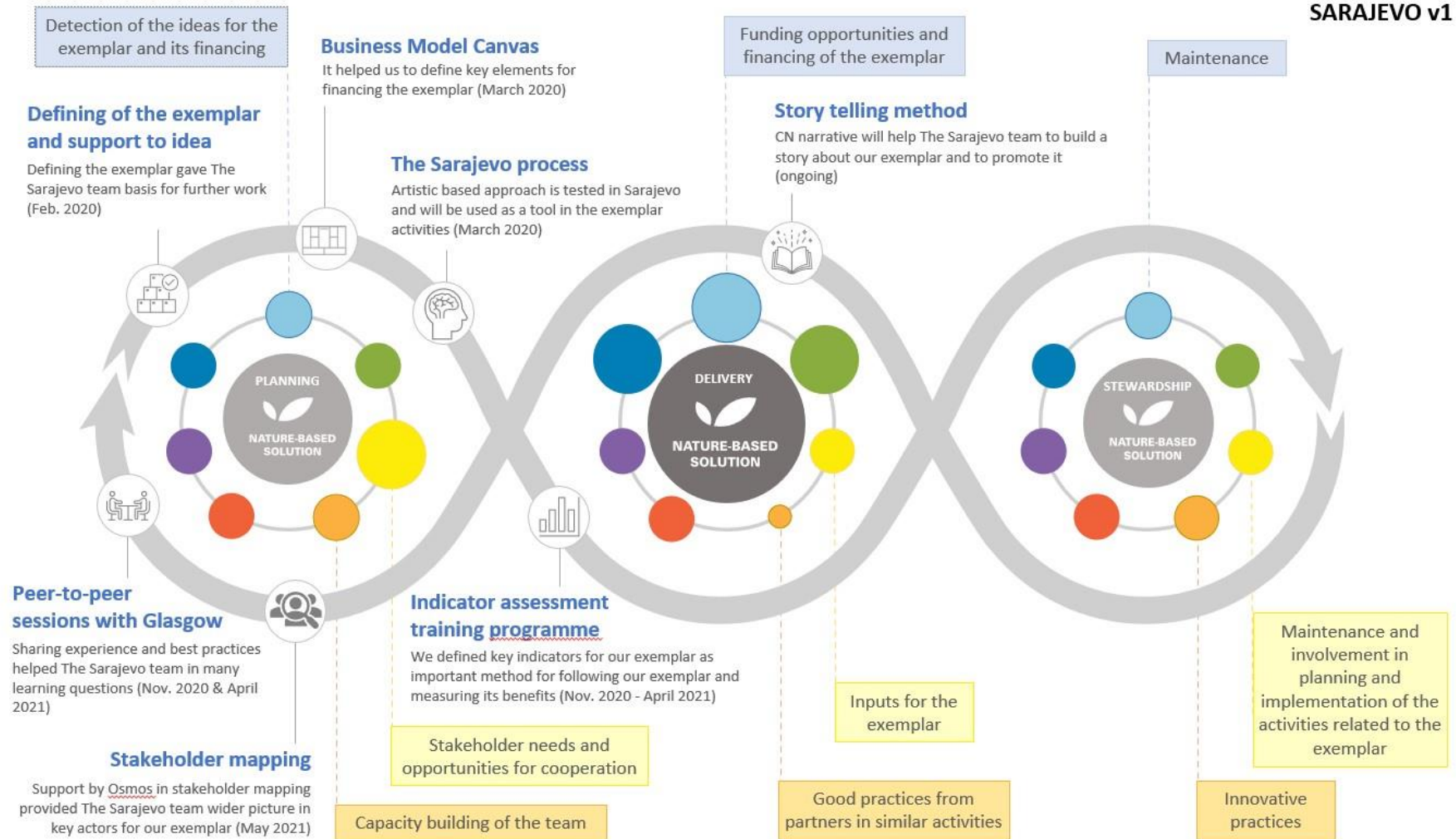
1) Business Model Canvas; 2) Developing Nature-Based Solutions in Nicosia Workshop (OSMOS); 3) Sarajevo Process

Sarajevo Process

Nicosia NBS Agency



A-7 Sarajevo





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