

Climathon

POWERED BY:  ClimateKIC

Climathon Training

Module 2: Creating Your Challenge

25/06/2025





What is Climathon?

“Tackling climate change from the ground up”

Climathon events **bring citizens together to raise awareness and inspire local climate action.**

A Climathon event is **planned and coordinated by independent organisers.**

Climathon is an **in-person** event and it typically lasts **12-48 hours.**

Climathon has been organised since 2015 with about **600 organisers, 1,000 events and over 30,000 participants worldwide.**



Climathon
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Training overview

Module 1 Climate Crisis is Systemic

Understanding Systems approach

Understanding complexity

Start to identify the right vision for your Climathon

Module 2 (June 25) Creating your challenge

Understanding Systems

Building the Climathon ecosystem

Creating challenge statements

Module 3 (July 9) Hosting your Climathon

Understanding what kind of facilitation is needed

Choosing the right people to support you

Building the blocks of a systems informed Climathon

Module 4 (July 16) Engaging Citizens

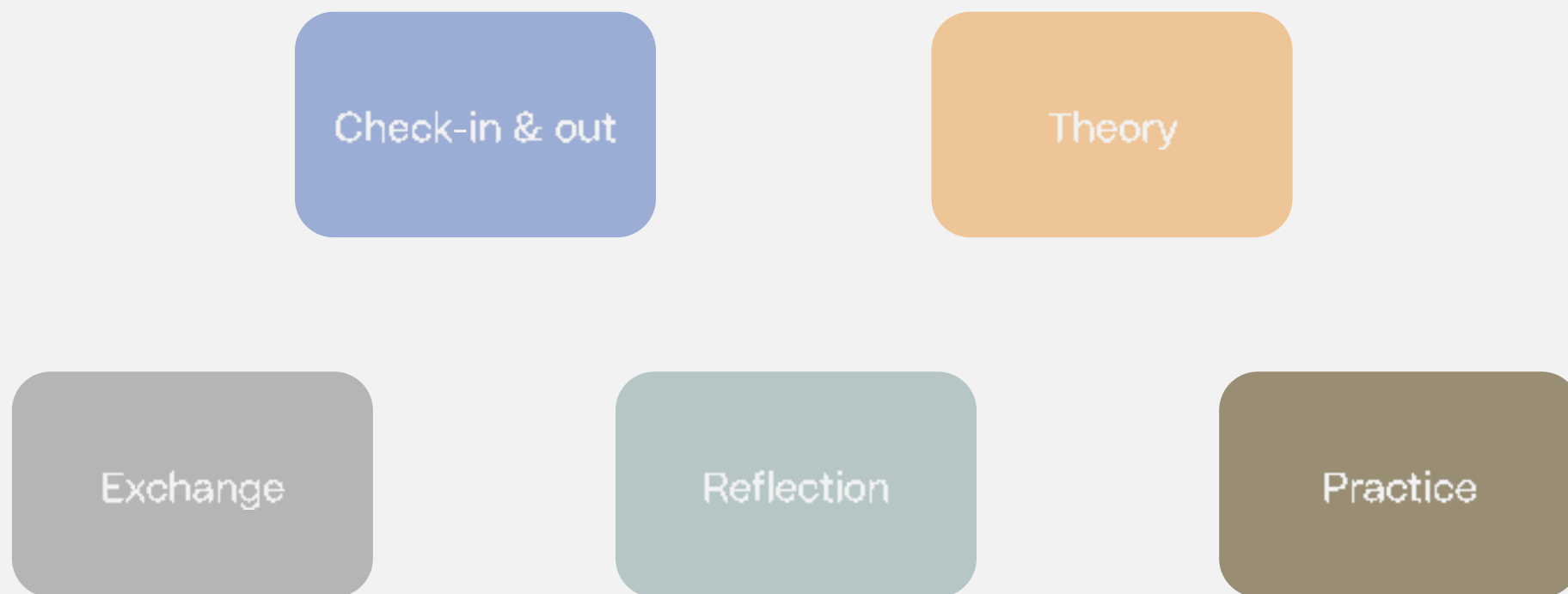
Understanding how best to promote your Climathon

Choosing the target group

Using the branding and brand guidelines



Training methodology





Check-in





Introduction to your trainer

- **Name:** Bjarke Kovshøj
- **Function/Role:** Head of Citizen Engagement at Climate KIC
- **Location/City:** Copenhagen Denmark
- **What's one unique thing about the location you are in right now?:** You can swim in the harbour (in the middle of the city)
- **Why are you here?** Sharing my learnings and insights
- **What do you want to take away from today's session?** All your great questions
- **What is your relationship to Climathon?** I have been leading Climathon globally for more than 6 years





Exchange





Your current reality

Based on what you've learnt in the first module, **what focus will your Climathon have?**

What was the most significant learning that has stayed with you since the last session? What are you looking forward to from this session?



Theory





What is a system?
And what isn't?

Bicycle example

If you deconstruct the parts of a
bicycle, would you be able to achieve
the goal of moving from A-B?



The whole is more than the sum of its
parts



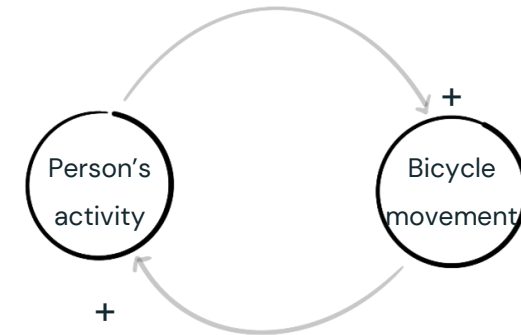


What is a system?

Systems are systems because of the interactions between the parts.

Simple example:

The relationship between a bicycle and a person, when combined you can do things which neither you nor the bicycle can do separately.

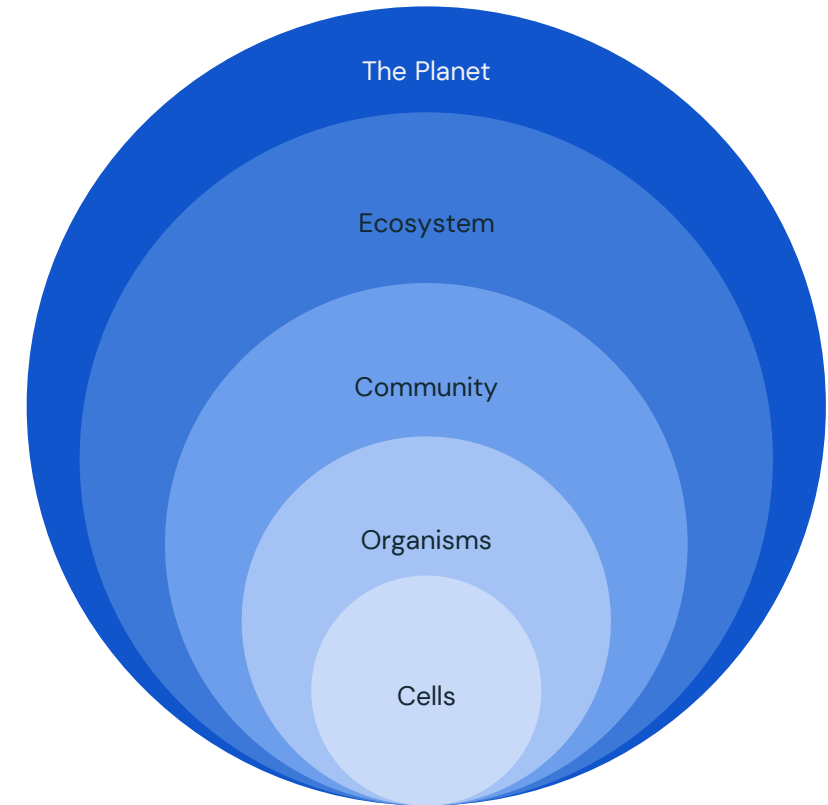
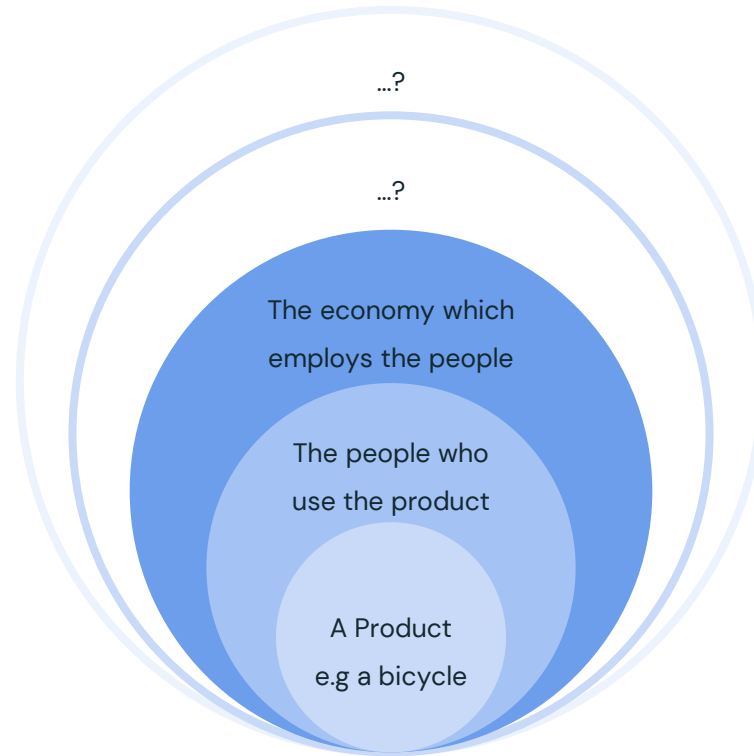




What is a system? Nested systems

Systems are fractal,
nested within each
other.

Whole systems that
perform a **function**, nest
within another system
that also performs a
function





What is a system?

Nested systems

Examples:



Healthcare System

- Inside the System boundary: Hospitals, doctors, insurance providers, patients.
- Outside the system boundary: Social determinants of health, government policies, pandemics.

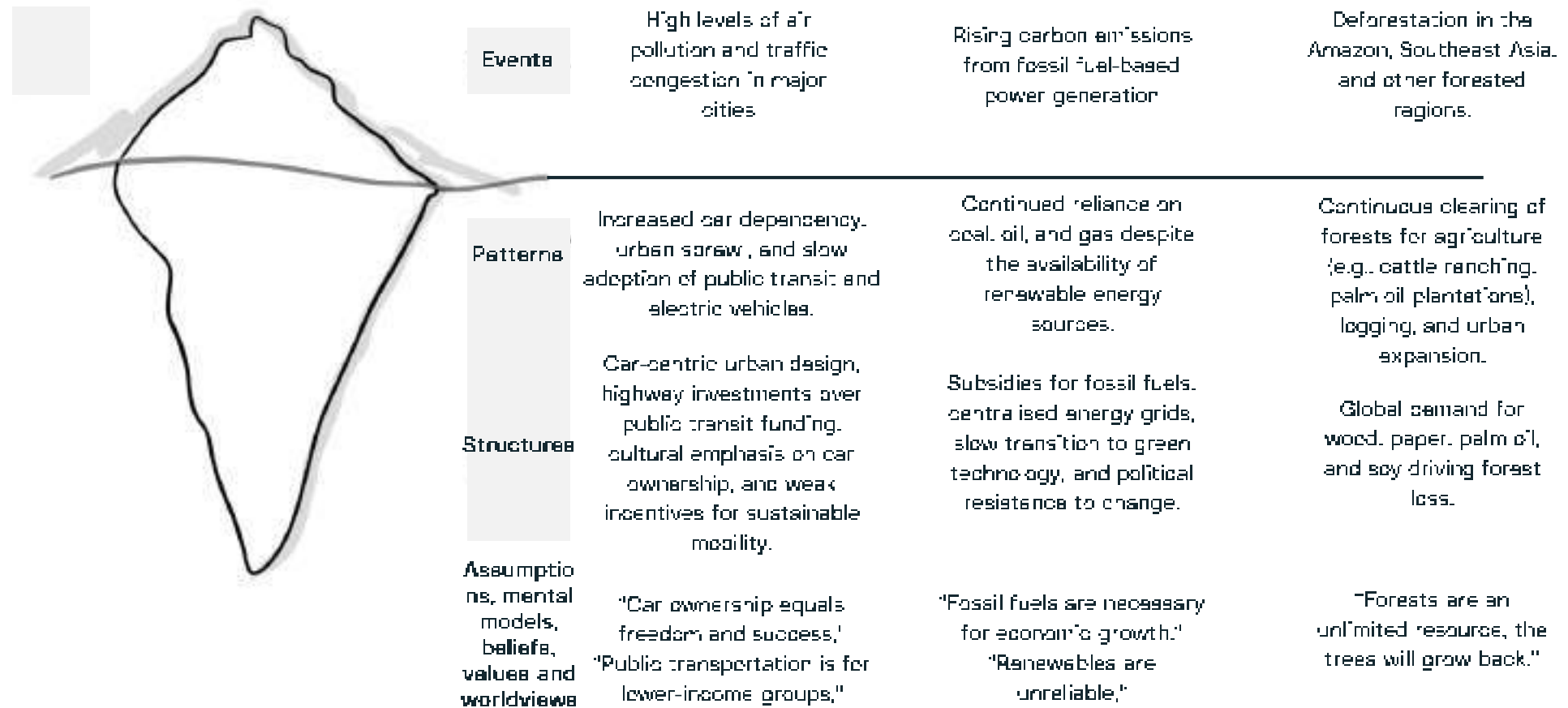


Local food system

- Inside the System boundary: Local farms, farmers' markets, food cooperatives, restaurants, local grocery stores, transportation networks, consumers.
- Outside the system boundary: Climate change, national food regulations, large-scale agribusiness competition.



What is a system? Mental models





What is a system?
A city as a system

A city is a complex system. It has a boundary, which contains the attributes that make it unique.

- **Nested Systems**
 - **Infrastructure System**
 - **Transportation System**
 - **Economic System**
 - **Healthcare System**
 - **Housing System**
 - **Environmental System**
 - **Education System**
 - **Governance and Policy System**
- **Mental models (cultural beliefs)**
- **Interconnected**





Reflection





Any new insights about how systems work?

Anything surprising?



Climathon – A micro-ecosystem

Hosting a Climathon isn't just about creating the time and place for people to come together. It's also about creating the space for real change to happen.

To create long lasting change for your city, you need a variety of different collaborators to ensure it represents the whole picture.





Who's your inner circle?

Find collaborators who understand and share the vision of the Climathon, can offer something unique that drives the mission forward (knowledge, money, expertise, agency).

Consider these questions:

- Who they are?
- What value do they bring?
- What roles they have?
- What is their perspective on climate action?





Speaking the right language

Start with shared purpose

"We are organising a climate action event to drive real systems change in urban sustainability. Your expertise in renewable energy can help shape solutions that work at a city-wide level."

Emphasise mutual benefits

"By joining us, you can connect with policymakers, funders, and innovators driving climate action in this region."

Speak their language

For businesses → "This event can showcase your leadership in green innovation."

For community leaders → "Your insights can ensure frontline communities are heard in climate planning."

Foster an inclusive & collaborative mindset

"We want to co-design this event with partners like you to ensure it's impactful and inclusive."

Make the first step easy

"Let's schedule a 20-minute call next week to explore how we can collaborate!"



Shared purpose: A directional goal





Exchange





Your future city

What does a thriving city look like that is home to thriving people, while respecting the wellbeing of all people and the health of the whole planet?



The purpose of the challenge statement

To frame the creative direction of the Climathon, that other people get inspired by and that will allow you to engage the right partners.

The challenge statement is the guide rails that give the participants enough framing to walk their own road to climate action.

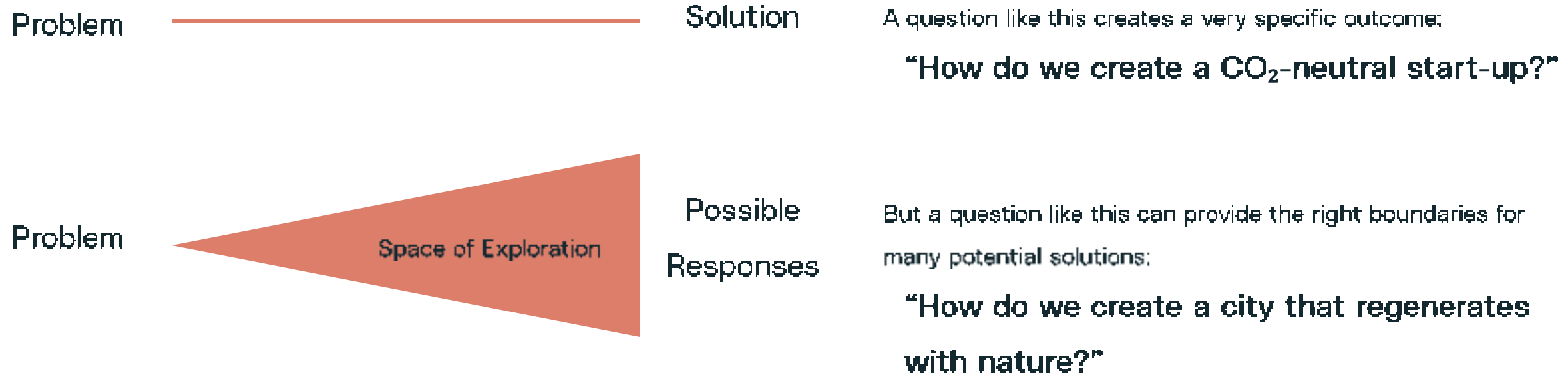




What is a good challenge statement?

NO SOLUTION dictated in the statement, focus on what the challenge is

The challenge statement should allow for EXPLORATION of multiple responses

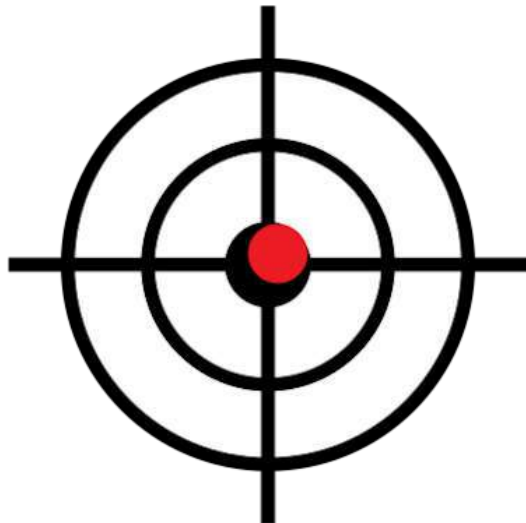




What is a good challenge statement?

Constrain the challenge space: Not too narrow not too broad

Good challenge statements need a focus so the participants aren't trying to solve everything at once. (Not overwhelming but not too narrow)



Too broad

“How might we take meaningful action toward climate resilient city?”

Too narrow

“How might we make trash sorting easier?”

Not too broad, not too narrow

“How might we empower citizens to take neighbourhood-based initiatives around waste?”



Challenge + Impact Map

Directional Goal

Provides a direction of intent + ambition



Challenges

Coherent fields of action + innovation that create momentum towards the goal



Portfolios of Projects

Sets of coherent innovation / learning activities that provide part of the learning needed to achieve a challenge

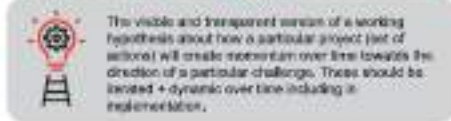


Impact Projects

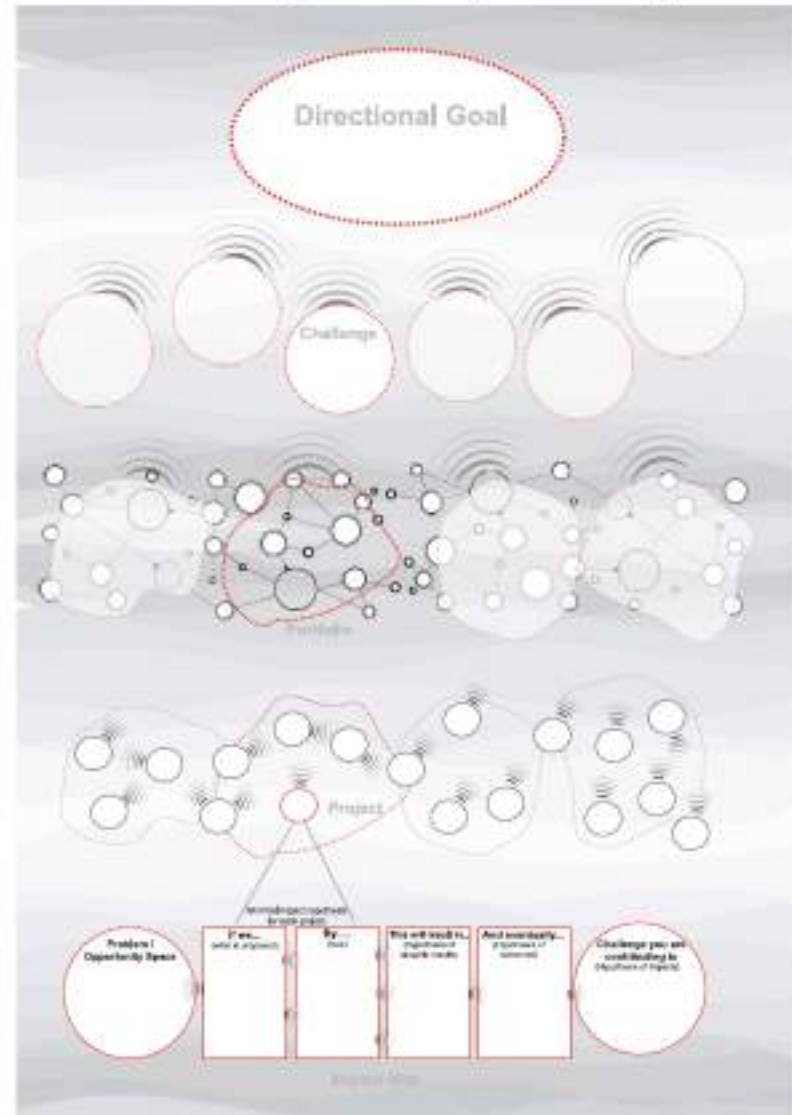
Intentional, time limited innovation / learning projects that design, test, iterate elements of 'solutions' needed to achieve a challenge



Project Impact Hypothesis Maps



The visible and transparent version of a working hypothesis about how a particular project (set of actions) will create momentum over time towards the direction of a particular challenge. These should be iterated + dynamic over time including in implementation.



Direction of Travel



The travel is directed towards the goal - however the focus is mostly on the challenge + more specifically on projects + portfolio. This is an innovation journey - so in many respects the learning shapes the speed + nature of the travel. On the journey we need to be open to both the constraints of the territory AND to novel pathways along the way, which may change not only the journey but the ultimate destination. We can use our directional goal to orient + coordinate where we put our energy in the journey + that in turn will influence the direction of travel.

Innovation relies on sensemaking + signals rather than indicators + targets



Innovation is built on practice-based evidence. We hypothesize our way forward, look, learn and listen. So at each level we need to develop ways in which we can make sense of what we are learning + what signals indicate that this learning is nudging towards the challenge ultimately creating momentum towards the directional goal.

Our Orientation to the Map



There are at least two orientations to this map and to the mapping process. Our approach aligns with the second orientation.

1. Planning + Strategy

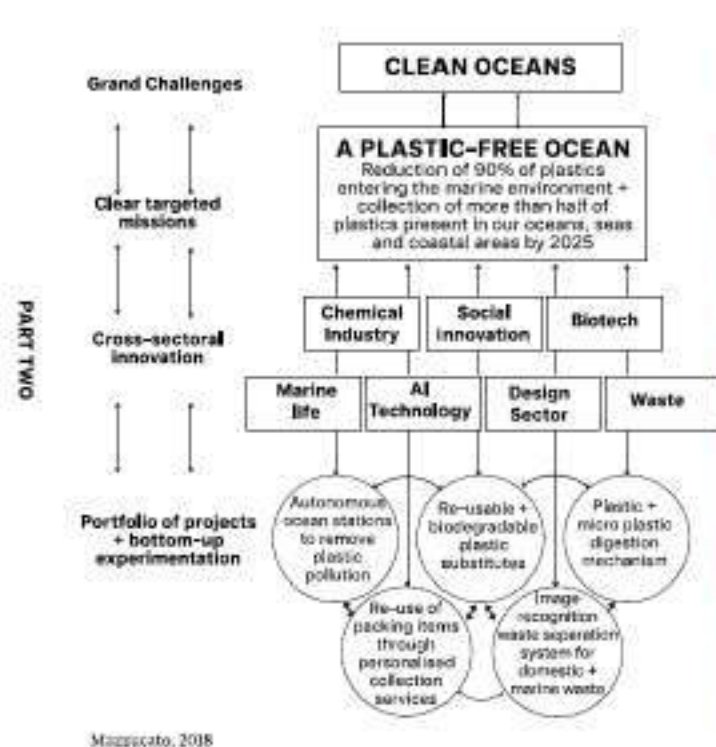
We could use the map as a planning artifact, whereby we outline each dimension for the purposes of strategizing action. This turns the map into a managerial artifact. This is perhaps the dominant interpretation of maps such as this, however we think this orientation has significant limitations in terms of innovation in the context of complexity though it can be helpful in more complicated contexts.

2. Learning + Systems Capability

We approach the map as a navigational learning framework. The map and the mapping process help us to visualize relationships and grow our capability to see both the dimensions and complexity of experiments that would encourage learning that nudges us along the way towards the directional goal. From this perspective the mapping process is not a 'one-off' and the map is more like a dynamic chart, as navigation of learning in the context of uncertainty, variance. The map should be alive and changing and ultimately it remains a hypothesis about how we learn to generate change in complex, adaptive environments.



From Mission-Oriented to Challenge-Led



Shifting towards navigational framing at the top level that creates a 'direction' for progress

Moving away from 'missions' language and placing 'challenges' below the directional goal + defines them as 'fields of action'. Moving away from targets and pre-determined outcomes towards learning infrastructures. Framing less as linear + more as complex systems innovation through learning questions

Sectors are not separately identified, but are, instead, embedded into both challenges and portfolios to emphasise the inter- + cross- + between sectoral + disciplinary nature of innovation towards directional goals

Portfolios as organising infrastructure for coherent learning across innovation projects where intersecting projects can create more than a sum of parts. In Challenge-led innovation we start 'measurement' at this level + this measurement is framed around learning signals + lead indicators rather than targets + lag indicators

Projects as innovation infrastructure - where we can create learning hypotheses for particular aspects of a portfolio that need to be framed, designed + developed in order to move forward

Directional Goal

Provides the direction of intent + ambition



Challenges

Coherent fields of action + innovation that create momentum towards the goal



Portfolios of Projects

Coherent sets of innovation projects that together provide part of the learning needed to achieve a challenge



Impact Projects

Innovation projects that design, test, iterate elements of 'editions' needed to achieve a challenge



CHALLENGE-LED APPROACH + MAPPING

GCN, 2020



Challenge Statement Scoping Conversations

What is the challenge you are addressing?

When speaking with your challenge provider/partner, they will usually show up with a solution with which they would like your collaboration. For this step accept this solution but explore beneath to understand what the challenge is that they are trying to address. Explore:

1-Underlying challenges

- What are the underlying challenges that were prompting the ideas/solutions the challenge provider were bringing? What isn't working well that is leading the partner to seek the solutions?
- What problem are they trying to solve?
- What undesirable outcomes does the current system produce?

2-Context

- What is happening in the current situation?
- What are the important facts that are known, or insights already gained, that set context and explain the challenge at hand and why it matters?

3-For whom

- For/with what group of people are you trying to address the challenge?
- Who are they working in service of?

4-Goal: The Direction of the Future State

When you have achieved wild success in meeting the challenges we just talked about, what would be taking place?

- What new activities or behaviours would they be seeing?
- What values and norms would be present?
- What new relationships would be possible?
- What new ways of operating would be possible?

5-The crux / The vital issue

• When it comes down to it, what are you trying to figure out?
What is the key challenge that needs to be unlocked?

6-Desirable Outcomes of the collaboration

- What will be looking to create together given the frame (resources/time) of the current initiative(Climathon)?



Engaging your challenge provider

A good challenge provider is mission-driven, focused on solving the problem rather than simply promoting their existing solutions.

They are actively engaged in the problem space—it's a strategic priority for them. They have the agency, influence, and connections to drive change. In other words, the issue is *hot in their pan*, and they are committed to finding a solution.

Consider these key questions:

- Are they directly connected to the challenge or opportunity?
- Are they genuinely committed to addressing it?
- Are they dissatisfied with the current solutions and eager to explore new ones?
- Are they open to new perspectives, ideas, and methodologies?
- Do they have the time to invest in this collaboration—and are they willing to do so?



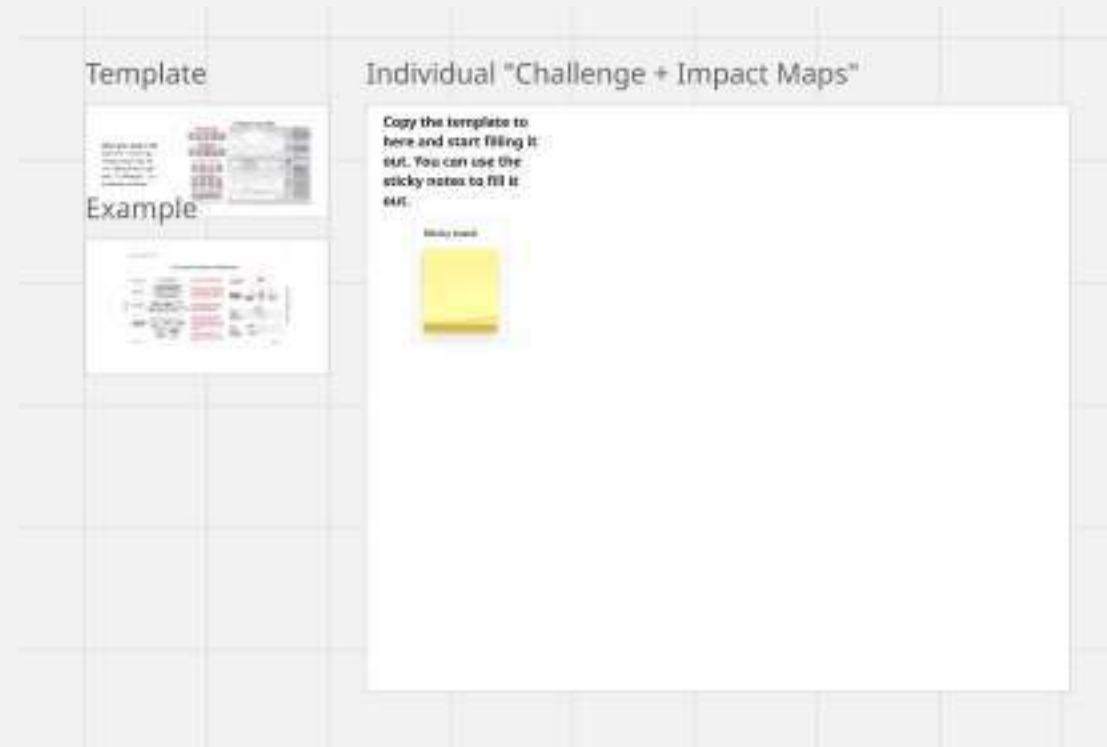
Practice





Your challenge statement

**First draft of directional goal/challenge
statement**



https://miro.com/app/board/uXjVlkzDIwl=?share_link_id=400715961666



Exchange





Your future city

Share a few directional goals/challenge examples



Check-out





Continue the work on the vision and challenge statement created for your city.

Rewrite the vision to align with your context, and along with your challenge provider, develop the challenge statement in line with the guidelines with your colleagues



Thank you

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