



PART 1: BASIC DATA

Title of the experience: Democratic Climate Model		
Name of the city/region: The first cohort of city partners during the 2019-2020 programme were Amsterdam, Edinburgh, Kraków, Leuven, Madrid, Malmö, Milano, Orléans, and Vienna, as well as Future Cities South East Europe city partners, Križevci, Maribor, Niš, Sarajevo, and Skopje.		
Country: pan-European		
Institution presenting the candidacy: Democratic Society		
Start date of the experience: September 2019		
End date of the experience: ongoing		
Type of candidacy	New experience	x
	Innovation on an existing experience	x
Type of experience (you may choose more than one)	Other (specify): Democratic governance for climate resilience	x
Objective of the experience (you may choose more than one)	To improve the quality of public decision-making through the mechanisms of participatory democracy	x
Territorial area	All the territory	x
Thematic area	Governance	X
	Transport	X
	Urban management	X
	Health	x
	Environment and/or urban agriculture	X
	New social movements and associationism	X
	Housing	X
	Economy and/or finances	X
	Social inclusion	x
Other: Models and tools	x	



PART 2: DESCRIPTION OF THE EXPERIENCE

Objectives

Main objective of the innovative experience:

Choose the one you consider the most important out of the objectives mentioned in part 1 Democratic Society have developed a prototype for a Democratic Climate Model to show the impact of putting citizen at the center of local climate action. It responds to the gap in pan European efforts to democratize climate action, providing terminology and models to shift cities from a solely technocratic to a democratic approach to climate resilience. It is evolving ‘climate democracy’ discourse with funders, public sector and civil society by scaling local initiatives to European potentials.

How have you achieved this objective?

There are three parts to the Model:

- ‘City Canopy’: a tool for measuring and visually representing a city's climate resilience based on four categories: diversity of actors, participatory culture, subject matter expertise, and resources.
- Actor Framework: considers types of actors involved in local climate action, their roles, and how their roles must evolve for just and sustainable climate futures.
- Rooted vs Weak collaboration: big picture view of what collaboration and strengthened citizen participation enables for climate resilience.

We use the City Canopy to illustrate Deep Demonstrations cities’ achievements and areas for growth, showing percentage of “growth” based on qualitative indicators including extent of participatory culture. We anticipate adding more metrics including the number of citizens involved, and ‘crowd sourced’ quantitative measures for plotting and comparing City Canopies.

For example, we plotted the climate resilience of Orléans, France, revealing how far the city has come with participatory culture as it develops a transition governance approach.

Public sector leaders in Krakow, Vienna and Leuven are discussing how they can use the City Canopy in more collaborative ways, scale it up to other levels of government, and use what they learn to better shape their work for democratic climate action.

To what extent has this objective been achieved?

The Model focuses on understanding conditions for democratic climate action, AND ways to strengthen climate action. The latter goal is challenging to measure. To what extent and through which mechanisms do democratic governance models enhance climate action? Empirical analysis shows that an absence of democratic engagement on climate blocks progress. Beyond the removal of barriers, gathering evidence to prove this link and understand mechanisms through which shifts happen is something the field and public sector leaders are grappling with.

While the need of a democratic approach to climate action has been part of the work and discussions in several of the cities, more and ongoing work is needed to achieve the outset objective. Demsoc are also connecting existing thinking and learning across actors and sectors to understand the connection between climate and democracy better.



Dimensions of the experience

Which is the most innovative aspect of the experience?

The Model is an innovation for climate action at a local level, aimed at fostering higher quality of democracies and more participatory democratic approaches. It does so by providing accessible terminology and concepts to forge shared understanding between diverse actors – including public sector, civil society and communities – to engage in climate action in more democratic, participatory ways and become effective agents for change.

It intentionally encourages cross-border collaboration and reframes ‘innovation’ in climate action as being built on the ethos of deep collaboration and democracy-driven governance, not technology only. It takes a systemic perspective on pathways towards climate action and promotes a design justice approach to the climate challenge, making explicit the relationship between design, power and social justice by calling out where inequity and citizen disempowerment weaken governance and climate resilience.

To what extent is the procedure transferable?

We are rolling the Model out to Deep Demonstrations cities for ongoing feedback on its validity, feasibility and scalability.

Funding partners such as EIT Climate-KIC are republishing the Model in their global networks and looking for similarities in how the consortium approaches the climate challenge from more systemic perspectives.

We anticipate civil society adapting the Model within their approaches to building capacity and capability in democratic methods with all levels of government.

We also observe the growth of ‘climate democracy’ discourse amongst community groups, governments and academics, who are drawing upon and evolve the terminology, concepts and principles.

Why do you consider that the experience is feasible?

We have worked and are trailing the Model with 11 cities in Europe, weaving it into experiment design and playing back learnings into the Model:

- City Canopy is a tool for measuring and visually representing a city's climate resilience based on four categories: diversity of actors, participatory culture, subject matter expertise, and resources. Based on our research, we believe it can touch upon economical, technical, institutional and socio-political aspects required to achieve incremental change when addressing the climate challenge.
- We have been working with city leaders to design positive ecosystems for citizen participation, based on Model principles. For example, setting up a democratic energy transitions lab to examine agency of different actors and how to build participatory culture in support of energy innovation.
- Bringing internal and external actors together around the Actor Framework, to think about agency for change and pathways to increased diversity and inclusion.

We are also using the Model to galvanize cross-sector, cross-border ‘climate democracy’ discourse, reframing responses to climate action from a civic level, via a EU-wide democratic climate network.



How has the experience been coordinated with other actors and processes?

Demsoc has been working with several actors throughout the process, its insights have led to the development of the Model: Civil society organizations: The Model was co-designed with Demsoc ‘Local Connectors’ (LCs) collaborating with public sector and communities in Deep Demonstrations cities. The LCs reviewed concepts and terminology and helped refine Model narrative ready for publication.

Government officials, industry, academia: we continue to engage city leaders, sustainability experts and design academics on Model development, how to draw a line more clearly from strengthened democracy to climate action.

Which evaluation and accountability mechanisms were used?

The Model was developed over 12 months and builds on an earlier appreciative enquiry tool Demsoc developed for cities focusing on levels and quality of participation and climate action. The current iteration was generated from internal design research in late 2020 with Demsoc’s Local Connectors (LCs) involved in the Deep Demonstrations work. LCs are staff embedded in their cities, living, and working locally, and providing on-the-ground support to the city council in the local language. Each LC has a rich knowledge on feeding innovation into democratic processes, knows the actors on the ground involved in climate action, and collaborates with local and regional government stakeholders. The LCs are connected on a European Union (EU) level, exchanging ideas and learnings, and embedding this knowledge back into local initiatives with public sector, civil society, and community stakeholders.

The Model was developed based on the lessons from the appreciative enquiry tool and a grounded-up research design and carried out by Demsoc’s Research and Design experts. We are steadily implementing, testing and iterating the prototype in early experimental stages collaboratively with public sector leaders, civil society and communities across 11 EU cities – Amsterdam, Kraków, Leuven, Madrid, Orléans, Vienna, Križevci, Maribor, Niš, Sarajevo, and Skopje – as part of our Deep Demonstrations engagement. We are using the prototype to design portfolios of experiments for participatory democracy with public sector leaders to achieve systemic change in areas as diverse as mobility and logistics, housing and the build environment, waste and the circular economy, energy, and urban greening.

Summary of the experience

Cities and communities know urgent, strong, co-operative action is needed on climate, but lack shared terminology of what it will take to make change. Communities are not clear on where or how they have agency to make change and may see it rather as a job for public sector leaders and technical innovation experts more familiar with environmental sectors and sciences. Observing that communication of these concepts is a significant barrier to democratic climate action, Demsoc developed a prototype for a Democratic Climate Model, a descriptive and analytic tool setting out conditions for climate resilience in cities, using accessible terminology and concepts to help diverse city actors forge shared understanding of conditions for climate action and become more effective agents of change. The prototype was developed through our partnership with the public sector, funders, civil society and communities in the multi-city, multi-year EIT Climate-KIC Healthy, Clean Cities Deep Demonstrations project, which seeks to collaborate with cities to find ways of imagining, experimenting, and learning towards achieving carbon neutrality.



The prototype addresses the gap in pan-European efforts to democratize climate action; to date there has been intention and precedence, but a distinct lack of shared terminology and models. It is positively framed around levers we see for climate resilience: diversity of actors, participatory culture, resourcing and subject-matter expertise, and cross-border collaboration at local, regional and national levels. It provides simple tools for city actors to collaboratively measure and assess how much or little each of these things are present, and how they add up to determine the city’s future climate resilience.

The Model is a compass not a map. It is sparking conversations in cities for inclusive, community-led approaches that strengthen participation, governance and in turn, climate resilience, and fostering innovation in participatory democracy approaches for climate resilience amongst public sector, civil society, and community actors.

Krakov public sector leaders have described it as an ‘eye opener’ and are using it to develop a more democratic participation strategy in 2021. Vienna included a diverse set of actors in the city’s financial planning through a participatory budgeting process. In Madrid it led to more diversity in the planning process, influenced establishment of communities of practice, and has sparked conversations about how specific community groups can bring in insights. It has also sparked conversations about changemaking in place with funders and institutions keen to understand how to work with citizens on topics such as retrofit.

More broadly we are using the Model to grow ‘climate democracy’ discourse in Europe.