



# Bridging the Gap between SSH Research and Local Policywork Realities: The SSH CENTRE Knowledge Brokerage Programme

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## Executive Summary

The SSH CENTRE Knowledge Brokerage Programme was launched in April 2023 with the goal of bridging the gap between Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH) research and policymaking. Working with more than 30 SSH researchers and six European municipalities, the Programme created a platform to foster collaboration between SSH research and policymaking around specific climate, mobility and energy challenges at the local level.

The SSH CENTRE Knowledge Brokerage Programme successfully supported SSH researchers in navigating the complexities of policymaking and understanding the daily reality and challenges of local and regional authorities' policywork. This Programme, rich in research-policy exchanges, was crucial because it highlighted how academic research can contribute to developing and implementing more effective and efficient public policies and how SSH disciplines and methods can support the decision-making process at the local level.

A key element of the Programme was a series of six workshops held during April and May 2024. The workshops brought together 42 local and regional authorities in total, as well as 33 researchers. Following months of preliminary desk and online work, the workshops were the occasion for the researchers to present the advancement of the Knowledge Brokerage Initiatives they had been undertaking with each of the six municipalities directly involved. The workshops also created the opportunity to collect feedback and strengthen the SSH CENTRE network, creating peer-to-peer learning opportunities around using SSH methods and knowledge in policywork.

The benefits of the Knowledge Brokerage Programme were threefold. At first, it helped policy-makers grasp the potential and limitations of SSH in supporting policymaking at the local level. Secondly, it provided tools and knowledge to establish an adequate communication flow between municipal staff working on local policies and academia. Finally, it exposed researchers to the reality of local-level policy-making and the challenges the municipalities face when working on energy, climate and mobility.

In each of the six initiatives, researchers and city representatives engaged in constructive dialogues, diving into the realities of policywork and the needs and opportunities to establish a fruitful collaboration between municipalities and academia. Four main aspects structured the discussions, allowing us to delve into the reality of the policywork and its main constraints. The topics and the main findings were:

**Stakeholders and hierarchies:** We discussed the key stakeholders that policymakers engage with and their hierarchies. In this topic, we identified that across all municipalities, a collaboration between diverse stakeholders, such as the local authority staff from different departments, utility providers, and citizens, is crucial for the success of the policy-making process but also very challenging. Breaking hierarchical boundaries and silos inside public administration and the inclusion of marginalised groups, like migrants, elders and those with low digital literacy, remains a pivotal challenge.

**Politics and narratives:** We examined how political contexts and political narratives impact policymaking processes. Political cycles and narratives strongly influence decision-making, sometimes being counterproductive. There is a common struggle to balance short-term political agendas with long-term sustainable goals, requiring more substantial political commitment and independence from the political instrumentalisation of topics such as energy, mobility and climate.

**Decision-making process and tensions:** We explored how the decision-making process for policymaking is structured and the tensions that emerge from it. The decision-making process is usually slow and complex - often requiring multiple validation steps and collaboration across departments. Tensions can arise when there are divergent technical opinions or conflicting political narratives.



**Resources:** We discussed the resources that policymakers require to deliver the best results, including those that policymakers currently lack. Among the different workshops, we identified that data and expert knowledge on the various policy subjects are critical resources. Nevertheless, municipalities often lack dedicated staff, technical expertise, and financial resources to implement initiatives effectively, leading to delays and tensions in the other dimensions previously discussed.

Throughout the Knowledge Brokerage Programme and during the workshops, the research teams were exposed to and able to develop an understanding of policywork realities. This report outlines the different experiences and some of these realities. The Knowledge Brokerage Programme has not only advanced the application of SSH in the Green Deal local policies but also laid the groundwork for further cooperation between research and policy-making both at the local and EU levels. This report targets researchers interested in policymaking and knowledge brokerage processes with local and regional authorities and policymakers willing to improve their collaborations with SSH research for better public policies.



# 1. Introduction: exploring policywork realities via research-policy exchanges

## 1.1. Six sustainability-focused Knowledge Brokerage Initiatives within one Programme

The SSH CENTRE Knowledge Brokerage Programme's objective was to connect Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH) researchers with municipalities. This connection is crucial to allow both stakeholder groups to better collaborate in the field of public policy. The Programme aimed to help researchers navigate the reality of policymaking drawing upon the experiences of local and regional authorities, whilst also supporting local and regional authorities to understand how academia can support them in doing better policy.

Knowledge brokerage (KB) can be defined as a set of approaches and practices favouring intermediation among diverse social groups and social actors to facilitate knowledge transfer, mutual engagement, mutual learning, and coordination. The SSH CENTRE project's Knowledge Brokerage Programme aimed to support the decarbonisation of urban policies and foster better collaboration between SSH researchers and policymakers.

Six priority sustainability topics were addressed in the Programme, and each one was allocated to a team of researchers and a city hub:

- Local climate strategies – five SSH researchers from across Political Science, Sociology, Environmental Social Science, and Science and Technology Studies worked with Valencia (Spain).
- Resource efficiency, sufficiency and circular economy – four SSH researchers from across Urban Planning, Economics, Human Geography and Business Sciences worked with Grenoble (France).
- Energy communities – five SSH researchers from across Geography, Architecture, Economics, Law and Ethics worked with Arnhem (The Netherlands).
- Fossil-free heating and cooling – three SSH researchers from across Political Science, Sociology and Environmental Social Science worked with Rijeka (Croatia).
- Mobility communities – five SSH researchers from across Industrial Design, Planning, Sociology, Environmental Social Science and Economics worked with Porto (Portugal).
- Digital mobility platforms – five SSH researchers from across Science and Technology Sciences, Human Geography, Planning, Social Anthropology, and Economics worked with Čačak (Serbia).

Thus, 27 researchers engaged with the Programme and were exposed to different policywork realities. Each team have been supported by a senior researcher from the SSH CENTRE consortium, acting as a mentor.



## 1.2. How our SSH research teams were exposed to policywork realities

The Knowledge Brokerage Programme lasted from September 2023 to July 2024. As part of the Programme researchers received tailored training to prepare them to act as brokers between research and policy. Insights from this training were then applied when the researchers undertook their Knowledge Brokerage Initiative with their city hub. For these Knowledge Brokerage Initiatives, the six researcher teams engaged with their respective city hub to define the specific challenges they would work on, collect data and information, identify the relevant SSH insights useful for tackling the problem, and produce a report for the city hub in the form of a research response brief.

As a mid-term step, in-person workshops were hosted by the city hubs between April and May 2024, whereby the researcher teams met their city hub representatives and other local and regional authorities. Each workshop - co-organised by Energy Cities with support from K&I - lasted around 2 days and involved the respective researcher team, their mentor from the SSH CENTRE consortium, representatives of the city hub that hosted the workshops and external local and regional authorities that were invited to enrich the discussion. The workshops provided an opportunity for the research teams to receive intermediate feedback on their work so far, gather information from the ground, and enrich the discussion with inputs from a large diversity of stakeholders. These workshops allowed the research teams to adjust their next steps and tailor the initiative deliverables to their respective city hub.

During the workshops, the Policy Arrangement Model (Arts, Leroy, & van Tatenhove, 2006) was used to structure the sessions and the discussions. This model focuses on facilitating the study of the governance of policymaking arrangements and their impacts on implementing such public policies. This framework presents four dimensions that inextricably affect governance and decision-making on policymaking, which were adapted to our context: **Decision-making process and tensions** (rules of the game), **stakeholders and hierarchies** (actors), **resources required to address challenges identified** (resources), and **politics and narratives** (discourses).

More broadly, the workshops and the Knowledge Brokerage Programme exposed the SSH researchers to the different realities of policymaking. Throughout the Programme, the researcher teams collaborated with policymakers and other involved stakeholders from their city hubs, discovered public policy documents and processes, and understood the challenges of policymaking at the municipal level. The in-person workshops provided the opportunity to interact with other relevant stakeholders about their policymaking experiences, including gaining insight into decision-making processes and associated tensions.

The workshops facilitated knowledge exchange and peer-to-peer learning between the different stakeholders present. This exchange promoted sharing best practices and innovative solutions from diverse perspectives. It also allowed the participants to better understand the advantages of the Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH) approach in policymaking processes, especially those related to the sustainable transition of urban areas and the delivery of the EU Green Deal, starting from the local level.

Finally, the workshops strengthened the SSH CENTRE project's networks related to SSH disciplines and policymaking. The events fostered new links and future collaborations among the participants by connecting individuals, research institutions, and local and regional authorities.

## 1.3. Navigating this report and connected resources

This report presents six briefs about the different Knowledge Brokerage Initiatives undertaken as part of the SSH CENTRE's Knowledge Brokerage Programme. These briefs outline the activities undertaken by each of the researcher teams and the content of the in-person workshops, reflect upon the policywork realities about the four thematic topics introduced previously (stakeholders and hierarchies, politics and narratives, decision-making process and tensions, resources required to address challenges identified), and set out the main lessons learned and next steps for the researcher teams and municipalities.



This report is not the only output related to the Knowledge Brokerage Programme. Indeed, there are several other connected resources which may be of interest:

- **Research Response Briefs:** As part of the Knowledge Brokerage Programme, each researcher team generated research response briefs. The nature of these briefs varied between the researcher teams, as there was the flexibility to produce briefs that reflected the context and needs of their city hub. The research response briefs are available at the [SSH CENTRE's Open Library](#).
- **Knowledge Brokerage Programme Resources:** Resources from the training programme are available on the [SSH CENTRE's website](#).
- **Online Knowledge Brokerage Training Course:** The SSH researchers' training before commencing their KB initiatives has been developed into a short online course so others can develop an understanding of and skills in Knowledge Brokerage. The online course is accessible [here](#).



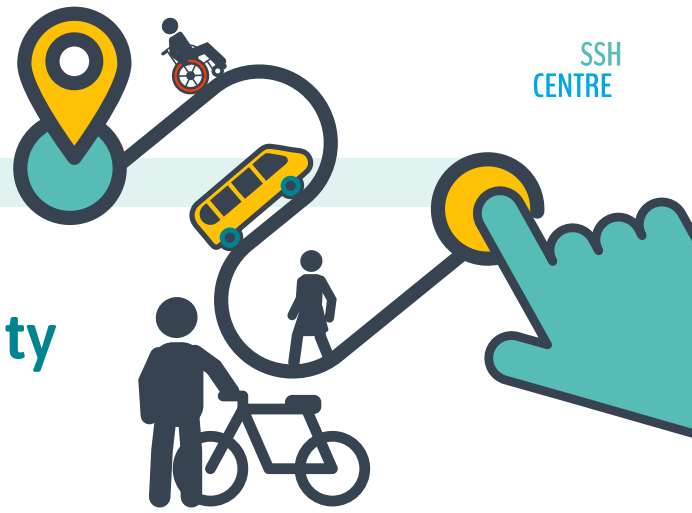
## 2. The City-Hub Workshops

**Figure 1.** Map showing the Knowledge Brokerage Initiative City Hubs that hosted the workshops (orange) and the municipalities that attended these workshops (blue).



## 2.1. Čačak, Serbia

# Digital Platforms mobility



### Venue

Science Technology Park – Startup Centre (Trg narodnog ustanka 2 – central square in Čačak, building of Cultural Center).

### Workshop date

3-4 April 2024.

### Research team

Hannah Hook (Ghent University, Belgium), Lluís Martínez (Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Belgium), Andre Capaccioli (Deep Blue, Italy), Mihajlo Djukic (Institute of Economic Sciences, Serbia), Kanika Tuteja (Université de Technologie de Troyes, France).

### SSH CENTRE consortium partners

Eduardo Blanco (Energy Cities); Samyajit Basu, (Vrije Universiteit Brussel).

### Host city participants

Eight stakeholders from the municipality of Čačak (RS).

### Guest municipalities

Anderlecht (BE), Antwerp (BE), Bucharest (RO), Herceg Novi (ME), and Ploesti (RO).



Figure 2: Group activity during the workshop in Čačak, Serbia.

The workshop, part of the Knowledge Brokerage Initiative in Serbia, was designed to build local authorities' capacity to catalyse the deployment of accessible and inclusive digital mobility solutions at the municipal level. Discussions revealed that the local authorities seem to prioritise investments in physical infrastructures, with short- and medium-term works potentially reducing their availability to acquire knowledge and implement innovative approaches, like digital solutions. Moreover, it became evident that there is a significant need for awareness regarding digital mobility and inclusivity. Finally, the knowledge and implementation gap between Western and Eastern European municipal representatives was apparent, highlighting that the EU could facilitate knowledge sharing through funding such as mutual knowledge exchange projects.



## What activities did the research team undertake as Knowledge Brokers?

The team of researchers undertook several preparatory activities before the workshop. First, they **conducted desk-based research** using secondary data on the city's socioeconomic, cultural, and technological landscape, which was fundamental to tailoring the workshop content to local needs and conditions. Following this, they **reviewed the digital mobility literature, focusing on knowledge brokerage, capacity building, and inclusivity and accessibility**, to gather insights and best practices from various global contexts, providing a foundation for discussions and planning the next steps.

Additionally, the team conducted **five in-depth interviews** with city stakeholders from Gradac Čačak (public enterprise for urban and spatial planning), the Čačak Parking Service, the City of Čačak Social Affairs, the Science and Technology Park, and the Čačak Youth Organization to identify local perspectives, specific challenges, and opportunities, to help ensure the workshop's objectives align with the city's priorities. A qualitative **thematic analysis of these interviews** was performed to describe the current and future mobility landscape in Čačak, as well as inform the critical discussion undertaken in the workshop. The team used this work to **design engaging and productive workshop sessions**, to facilitate hands-on learning and collaborative problem-solving among participants. The workshop sessions included an introductory session, findings on capacity building literature review, a site visit, sharing of good practices, a future-oriented workshop, and a workshop on the realities of policywork.

## Using the Policy Arrangement Model to explore the policymaking realities of digital and inclusive mobility

Interactions with the city hub over the course of the Knowledge Brokerage Programme and discussions between municipalities during the workshop provided insight into the experiences of developing and implementing policy and related initiatives. These insights can be summarised in relation to four key topics of the Policy Arrangement Model:

**Stakeholders and hierarchies:** To identify digital and inclusive mobility solutions, there is a need to engage with different stakeholders, including public transport providers, mobility providers, citizens, and different municipal departments. Sometimes, the roles and boundaries are unclear among them, requiring extra effort in cooperation. Those with low digital literacy, people with disabilities, and marginalised populations are often left behind.

**Politics and narratives:** Mobility is quite tangible for civil society, so it presents a substantial risk of instrumentalisation in politics – whereby politicians can use mobility works and solutions to gain visibility and to disseminate a political agenda. This instrumentalisation often leads to misalignments between the different policymaking levels and discontinuity in the narratives and actions done on the ground by a municipality. Another identified difference in the narratives was between Western and Eastern European countries. Among the participants, it was evident that Western European countries had thoroughly integrated inclusion and accessibility by digital mobility solutions into their narratives and strategies, while Eastern European countries are still in the early phases of discussion and need to increase the overall digital skills of public administration staff.

**Decision-making process and tensions:** The decision-making process around digital and inclusive mobility solutions seems to be non-linear and long, with several validation steps. Furthermore, this process can tend to be top-down (with a strategic decision being made by a politician or by a single department) rather than more democratic (e.g. with the involvement of citizens or a co-creation process among the different involved departments), creating frustrations.

**Resources required to address challenges identified:** Data availability is a central resource to develop digital mobility policies and solutions. Nevertheless, digital mobility remains a technocratic

As the representative of  
Anderlecht mentioned,

“When engaging  
with civil society,  
we always find the  
same usual suspects  
participating.”



field, and contributions from the social sciences and humanities are lacking, such as the involvement of professionals with an understanding of minorities and accessibility questions. To move from the strategic plans and engagements to use digital mobility platforms to increase accessibility and inclusion in mobility systems to the concrete implementation, local authorities lack knowledge, dedicated staff and financial resources to deploy their initiatives.

## Lessons learnt and next steps

Exchanges with local authorities throughout the KB Initiative, including during sessions at the workshop, enabled the research team to tailor their final output report on the needs of local authorities willing to work with digital and inclusive mobility solutions. This final output covers the key findings from the literature review, the workshops and the surveys with the participants. The surveys showed improved stakeholder understanding of digital mobility solutions and readiness to implement them after joining the knowledge brokerage initiative. The report concludes with recommendations to enhance sustainable mobility, emphasising the importance of ongoing engagement, collaborative workshops, and stakeholder partnerships.

Reflecting on their experience of the Knowledge Brokerage Programme, one of the researcher team members commented:



*“My experience in the SSH knowledge brokerage programme was truly transformative. The preparatory training not only deepened my understanding of knowledge brokerage but also exposed me to diverse approaches and invaluable insights shared by both researchers and practitioners. In the second stage, I participated in the knowledge brokerage initiative on digital mobility solutions, where our team investigated the practices of policymakers in Čačak (Serbia) and other European cities. This experience gave me a clearer understanding of how local policymaking processes are developed, as well as the challenges officials face when implementing innovative solutions. It allowed me to identify how social sciences can contribute to such processes and reinforced my interest in bridging research and policy.”*

The municipality of Čačak has gathered more understanding of the possibilities and challenges of digital and inclusive mobility solutions, envisioning exploring their potential for current mobility priorities and works, namely the development of pedestrian zones and bicycle paths, traffic and parking management, and the availability of city facilities and services for vulnerable persons. The representative of the municipality leading the knowledge brokerage initiative at the local level commented:

*“The realization of this project was significant for the City of Čačak in several different aspects, primarily as an exchange of experiences with researchers and with other cities that took part in the workshop in Čačak. The document that we received from the researchers is valuable and usable for us and will certainly be a good reminder and guide in the future determination of priorities and activities in the direction of the transition of local urban mobility.”*



## 2.2. Grenoble, France



# Resource efficiency, sufficiency and circular economy

### Venues

Town Hall of Grenoble: 11 bd Jean Pain, Grenoble and Maison de l'international: 1 rue Hector Berlioz, Grenoble.

### Workshop date

10-11 April 2024.

### Research team

Laura Niessen (Maastricht University, The Netherlands); Danijel Baturina, (University of Zagreb, Croatia); Valentin Auboio-Liogier (University of Tours, France); Timothy Marcroft (Western Norway University of Applied Sciences, Norway).

### SSH CENTRE consortium partners

Marta Arosio (Energy Cities); Daniele Mezzana (K&I).

### Host city participants

Around ten stakeholders from the municipality of Grenoble (FR).

### Guest municipalities

Bruxelles (BE), Cork (IR), Turin (IT), Amsterdam (NL), Forest (BE), Laboratorio da Paisagem, Guimarães (PT).



Figure 3: Study visit during the workshop in Grenoble, France.

The workshop in Grenoble, part of their knowledge brokerage initiative, focused on two interrelated challenges around the concepts of resource sufficiency and circularity. The first relates to the citizens' behaviour toward circularity and sufficiency locally. The second concerns the need to overcome knowledge and implementation siloes in the municipality, fostering transversality<sup>1</sup> and cross-cutting coordination among the different departments.

<sup>1</sup> Transversality here means the coordinated action and exchange of information between multiple sectorally or professionally specialized departments or services that are otherwise siloed off from one another. It often takes the form of projects involving employees from multiple services at similar hierarchical levels under an ad-hoc governance and decision-making structure. Transversal approaches are thought to be more effective in addressing multi-systemic problems such as climate change; those whose causes and consequences cross the traditional thematic boundaries of departments inside of public administration.



## What activities did the research team undertake as Knowledge Brokers?

The researcher team, during their pre-workshop meetings with the City of Grenoble, **identified two key needs** to be tackled in the Knowledge Brokerage Initiative: i) encouraging citizens to adopt circular living and sufficiency, and ii) maintaining a comprehensive approach to municipal projects beyond the implementation phase. Before the workshop, the researchers **conducted a survey** on transversality and engagement practices that were shared within the municipality. It received 21 responses and informed the discussion during the workshop. Afterwards, they **prepared the workshop structure** and basis for the discussions and prepared the participation of the external cities representatives by sending specific instructions and templates to the six selected cities, who then presented their insights in the session during the city-hub workshop. All the above was informed by a **literature review** on the topics of transversality, behaviour change, and sufficiency carried about by the research team ahead of the workshops.

The researchers **prepared two simultaneous sessions** during the workshop. The first session was French-speaking and brought in stakeholders within Grenoble municipality to discuss the barriers and opportunities for transversality and cross-cutting coordination in the context of citizens' behaviour change. The second session was English-speaking and focused on the external cities (with some local participation), bringing in their experiences on transversality and citizen behaviour change.

## Using the Policy Arrangement Model to explore the policymaking realities of sufficiency and circular economy

Interactions with the city hub over the course of the Knowledge Brokerage Programme, and discussions between municipalities during the workshop, provided insight into the experiences of developing and implementing policy and related initiatives. These insights can be summarised in relation to four key topics of the Policy Arrangement Model:

**Stakeholders and hierarchies:** Processes of transversal coordination, knowledge sharing, and even informal collaboration naturally involve a wider range of stakeholders and cut across hierarchical boundaries. This generally requires the buy-in of a high number of managers and elected officials. In projects involving citizens, taking the interests and preferences of outside stakeholders into account requires a more flexible hierarchy and greater upstream buy-in internally.

**Politics and narratives:** A landscape of conflicting narratives, where departments operate in silos, can be found frequently in municipalities and policymaking processes. Though EU orientations provide valuable direction, some contradictions remain, namely regarding which priorities to address, adding to the complexity of local-level policymaking. Incorporating more research into policymaking would be beneficial, as it would help navigate these challenges by providing crucial knowledge, data, and context analysis, creating a cohesive internal narrative and strategy.

**Decision-making process and tensions:** The decision-making process in the municipality can be complex; the municipal departments have different interests and priorities, which can lead to tensions or slow processes. The objectives and desired changes can influence the process, as some shifts might not be aligned with the city's goals or with public opinion. Initiatives like reducing traffic can be unpopular, yet they are necessary for long-term urban planning success. Our researchers gained insight into how balancing these diverse interests to create the best possible outcomes is a continual challenge.

**Resources required to address challenges identified:** Delivering the best results on sufficiency and circularity policymaking relies on a variety of resources, including dedicated time, human resources, political support, and the ability to foster interpersonal discussions and relationships. Additionally, having space for collaboration and continuity in political backing are crucial.

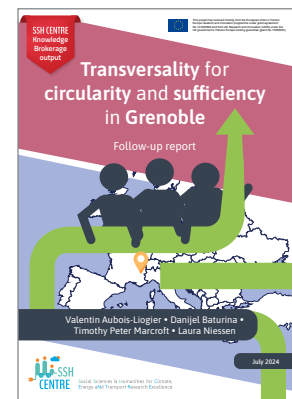


## Lessons learnt and next steps

The researcher team gained a better understanding of both transversality and citizen behaviour change practices within the municipality. Obtaining the perspectives of other European cities beyond Grenoble (through the in-person workshop discussions) was particularly valuable, as it became evident that each of the cities represented had some dimensions of sustainability in which they were quite advanced and others that they felt behind on. In the case of Grenoble, this outside perspective helped to reinforce confidence in the city's status as a frontrunner on these topics and to identify new opportunities for improvement.

The researcher team also observed that dealing with cities whose sustainability management is at a higher level requires closer collaboration between the city and researchers. Relatively simple forms of knowledge brokerage, like benchmarking studies, are appropriate for municipalities that are just beginning their efforts in this direction, but for municipalities like Grenoble, which already have experience, it is necessary to go further and deeper into the specifics of the local context and past lessons learned. This encourages a posture of humility and mutual learning for all parties. The learnings have been formalised in a document which shows the existing maturity on the topic at the municipality of Grenoble and provides recommendations, emphasising the need to empower frontline employees, strengthen community partnerships, and create spaces for knowledge exchange to drive sustainable practices across the city.

Reflecting on their experience of the Knowledge Brokerage Programme, one of the researcher team members commented:



*The SSH-CENTRE Knowledge Brokerage programme was a great chance to put research into practice with the municipal elected employees and elected officials that are making the transition real through their everyday work. Collaborating with a city as advanced on issues of circularity and citizen engagement as Grenoble was a challenge and an opportunity, as it forced us to go beyond the standard literature review or benchmarking approaches to really try to co-create innovative responses to their needs. Working closely with a motivated and creative research team, plus supportive mentors and expert practitioners was a new experience for me, and one I now hope to repeat.*

For the city of Grenoble, the workshop was an opportunity to discuss issues that are difficult to address in existing working groups within the administration. These issues included, on one hand, enhancing cross-functionality across departments, teams, and projects, and, on the other, building a shared foundation of knowledge and skills around green transition, sufficiency, and circularity. This is especially relevant given the local authority's wide-ranging public policies in these areas.

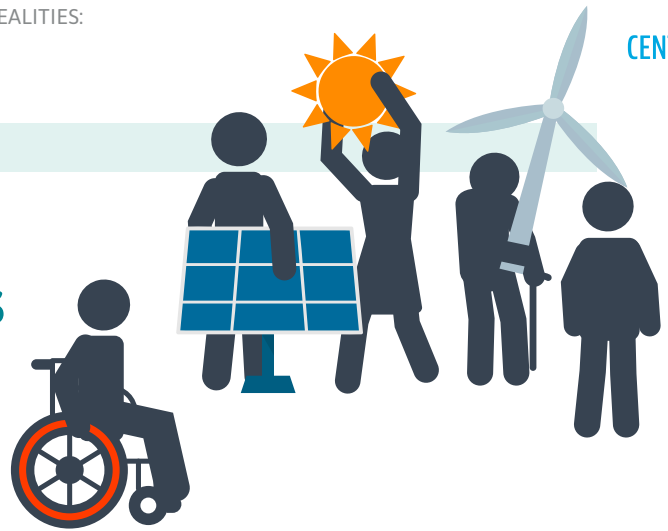
The representative of the municipality leading the knowledge brokerage initiative at the local level commented:

*“The discussions, and probably the researchers’ report that will be produced, will feed into the Grenoble City Council’s 2023-2026 Administration Project and its various ongoing projects: on training for staff, information-sharing forums, cross-functional tools, etc. This can provide additional arguments for experimental actions, for example. Links with academic players can also be activated for future research carried out internally by the administration, via doctoral students in particular”.*



## 2.3. Arnhem, The Netherlands

# Energy Communities



### Venue

Transformatiezaal, Van Oldenbarneveldtstraat 90, 6827 AN Arnhem.

### Workshop date

10-11 April 2024.

### Research team

Nathan Wood (Utrecht University, The Netherlands); Rihab Khalid (University of Cambridge, United Kingdom); Pepijn Quast (Utrecht University, The Netherlands); Shary Heuninckx (Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Belgium); Maria Kola-Bezka (Nicolaus Copernicus University in Torun, Poland).

### SSH CENTRE consortium partners

Eduardo Blanco (Energy Cities); Ami Crowther (Anglia Ruskin University).

### Host city participants

Around ten participants from the municipality of Arnhem (NL).

### Guest municipalities and energy communities

Valencia (ES), Arkalochori (GR), Pordenone (IT), Heerlen (NL), Zagreb (HR), Liège (BE) and Roma (IT).



Figure 4: Opening session in the workshop, highlighting the role of SSH in policymaking.

The workshop's central theme was the crucial issue of inclusivity in energy communities, a topic of utmost importance for a just and fair future of the EU energy transition. A highlight from the workshop was the participants' significant awareness of the need for greater inclusivity in energy communities. However, there was a noticeable gap in understanding the role of municipalities in designing, operating, and acting as key players in achieving this desired inclusivity.



## What activities did the research team undertake as Knowledge Brokers?

The researcher team, working with the municipality of Arnhem, **crafted a guide for European city municipalities** to help enhance their understanding of inclusivity within energy communities. This guide aimed to identify equitable pathways for future energy transitions and was an important resource that supported the workshop and its discussions. Concurrently, **interviews with Arnhem's energy network stakeholders were conducted** to grasp specific challenges and opportunities on the topic, tailoring the inclusivity guide with contextual recommendations for Arnhem. Additionally, **a serious game interactive session was designed** for the workshop. It employed a persona-based approach and energy scenarios to foster empathy and insight into the participation barriers faced by vulnerable groups in energy communities, generating key actions and recommendations for more inclusive practices and policies. **An exploratory session was also designed** to assess participants' perceptions of inclusivity with the aim of developing an inclusivity checklist.

## Using the Policy Arrangement Model to explore the policymaking realities of inclusive energy communities

Interactions with the city hub over the course of the Knowledge Brokerage Programme, and discussions between municipalities during the workshop, provided insight into the experiences of developing and implementing policy and related initiatives. These insights can be summarised in relation to four key topics of the Policy Arrangement Model:

**Stakeholders and hierarchies:** At the municipal level, when discussing policymaking for inclusive energy communities, key stakeholders include the municipality's energy and social departments, and social housing organisations. Moreover, citizen initiatives also strongly influence the debate, but they struggle to collaborate effectively with the local authorities. When talking about inclusivity, marginalised groups, like migrants, are still largely left behind.

**Politics and narratives:** Municipalities have a strong role in fostering inclusivity in energy communities, but they must demonstrate a strong and lasting political commitment. We observed that there are currently funds to tackle energy poverty, but municipalities often focus on short-term and isolated support measures (such as discounts of energy checks) rather than more structural actions (like fostering energy communities with a strong inclusivity perspective or developing social business models for the energy market).

**Decision-making process and tensions:** There is still a strong misalignment between the policies at different levels (EU, national, and local), creating regulation bottlenecks and tensions in the decision-making process. Moreover, cultural and social aspects hindering inclusivity seem to have a lower weight than technical and economic aspects in decision-making regarding setting up and operationalising energy communities.

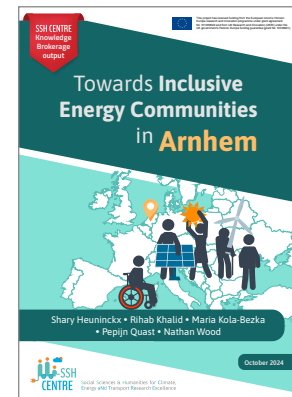
**Resources required to address challenges identified:** Knowledge and expertise, ranging from energy topics to citizen engagement and outreach, are central to developing policies for inclusive energy communities. As the representative of Valencia shared, we need legal experts to understand in which legal framework we will operate, energy experts designing and operating the energy community, and social departments supporting the engagement with vulnerable groups and citizens willing to take part in the initiatives.



## Lessons learnt and next steps

The Initiative was useful for helping the research team better understand the challenges from the practitioners' perspective. Insights from the workshop supported the development of an inclusivity framework for energy communities, as well as a document outlining challenges, opportunities, and recommendations for the municipality to foster inclusive Energy Communities. The serious game used within the workshop has been made available online, with a guide and resources for adaptation and replication, to support others to critically reflect on challenges of inclusivity in energy communities.

Reflecting on their experience of the Knowledge Brokerage Programme, one of the researcher team members commented:



*“Participating in the SSH-Centre KB programme has reinforced my dedication to impactful policy research. The KB initiative encouraged me to adopt a more innovative approach to engaging policy stakeholders. During the city workshop, my team and I had the invaluable opportunity to develop and test a serious game designed to enhance empathy and inclusivity within energy communities. This experience not only broadened my approach to research but also enriched my understanding of the practical challenges and solutions in building inclusive energy policies.”*

The municipality of Arnhem was able to obtain insights into the experiences from research and other EU cities and organisations regarding setting up and supporting energy communities. The municipality now plans to determine what possible ‘models’ could be set up locally to give energy communities a more formal role in the energy transition.

The representative of the municipality leading the knowledge brokerage initiative at the local level commented:

*“The work was very useful and interesting because it gave us insights into the experiences other EU cities and organisations have regarding setting up and supporting energy communities. We were also able to present our vision on the role of energy communities in our city and present some of the initiatives already present aiming maybe in becoming an energy community. The works helped us in determining the next steps for our city and the role of EC’s in an inclusive energy transition.”*



## 2.4. Porto, Portugal

# Mobility communities



### Venue

Porto Innovation Hub - Largo do Dr. Tito Fontes  
15, 4000-538 Porto.

### Workshop date

17-18 April 2024.

### Research team

Maria Alonso Raposo (CambiaMO, Spain); Juliana Carvalho (University of Porto | INESC TEC, Portugal); Rebecca Rossetti (University of Bologna, Italy); Emma Lawlor (University of Glasgow, United Kingdom); Máté Lőrincz (University of Reading, United Kingdom). An invited researcher from the University of Bologna (Italy), Selene Tondini, joined to guide the group through the serious game adapted to sustainable mobility in Porto.

### SSH CENTRE consortium partners

Marta Arosio (Energy Cities); Julius Wesche (Norwegian University of Science and Technology); Tereza Prášilová (CzechGlobe).

### Host city participants

Around 10 representatives from the municipality of Porto and Porto Ambiente (PT); representatives from Porto Digital, Centre of Engineering and Product Development (CEIIA), and STCP.

### Guest municipalities

Beringen (BE), Braga (PT), Guimarães (PT), Prague (CZ), Ramnicu Valcea (RO), Schaerbeek (BE), Sofia (BG) and Suceava (RO).



Figure 5: Study visit during the workshop in Porto, Portugal

The Knowledge Brokerage Initiative focused on the mobility-related challenges faced by the city of Porto and the strategies leading to a more sustainable urban mobility in line with its strong climate ambitions, from a SSH perspective. The core purpose was to boost the design of a collaborative network where various stakeholders in Porto's mobility landscape can actively engage in sharing knowledge through the creation of a Community of Practice (CoP) on mobility. The city of Porto engages with environmental issues, and its intervention towards carbon neutrality has different axes of action. In the city of Porto, mobility represents 40% of the city's carbon emissions, making it a highly relevant topic for the climate transition. The workshop promoted the co-creation of knowledge and the participation of different stakeholders essential to improving mobility in the city.



## What activities did the research team undertake as Knowledge Brokers?

The main objective of the Knowledge Brokerage Initiative was to provide the foundations for **setting up a Community of Practice (CoP) on Sustainable Mobility** in the city of Porto. The team of researchers, in collaboration with the city of Porto, **created a set of preliminary proposals** to kickstart the formation of a collaborative network where various stakeholders related to mobility in Porto can actively engage in sharing knowledge and forming a Community of Practice. Priority was given to the challenge of promoting public transport, while also reducing private vehicle usage for urban mobility and engaging diverse stakeholders.

The work undertaken as part of the KB initiative built upon the researchers' and partners' different professional backgrounds and expertise. The process included the **framing of a roadmap** for establishing a CoP, insights on why designing a CoP; what priorities it could address; how it could be a strategic collaboration mechanism; who should be involved; and, how it could promote citizens' engagement. The framing exercise represented the starting point of the work brought forward during the workshop, in which the **inputs from local and external stakeholders were collected and integrated into the framework**. Additionally, during the workshop, the external researcher Selene Tondini (University of Bologna) **facilitated an interactive session using the "serious game" tool**. Participants played together, simulating different scenarios and travel behaviours, imagining how to improve access to sustainable mobility in Porto, underlying the importance of transport justice and inclusion.

## Using the Policy Arrangement Model to explore the policymaking realities of mobility communities

Interactions with the city hub over the course of the Knowledge Brokerage Programme, and discussions between municipalities during the workshop, provided insight into the experiences of developing and implementing policy and related initiatives. These insights can be summarised in relation to four key topics of the Policy Arrangement Model:

**Stakeholders and hierarchies:** Acknowledging that bureaucracy and administrative processes hinder the level of engagement, the need to involve more stakeholder groups was stressed by the researchers, with the municipalities present expressing their will to ease the process. A method to boost the involvement of more stakeholder groups was identifying a common interest among the stakeholders and bringing them to a consensus. Stakeholder groups that could be involved, were identified as: i) mobility operators; ii) universities; iii) students; iv) citizens; v) migrants; vi) commerce and business; and vi) local NGO/associations working with mobility or representing target citizens groups (cyclists, people with disabilities, etc).

**Politics and narratives:** Political cycles and changes in the local government leadership were reported to have had a strong impact on the continuity of the decision-making processes. On the one hand, there are financial resources for municipalities to build effective communication campaigns to create consensus and awareness around sustainable mobility, but on the other hand, finding a common narrative is complex, leading to campaigns with lower results than expected.

**Decision-making process and tensions:** The complexity of the sustainable mobility decision-making process, especially as many interests and needs must be taken into account, emerged through the workshop discussions. Making informed and effective decisions takes time, which can create tensions among the different involved stakeholders. A higher involvement of the academic sector could better support the development of effective public policies and the use of evidence-based decision-making.

**Resources required to address challenges identified:** It was identified that expertise and technical experts were among the most essential and needed resources to facilitate an informed and complete decision-making process. Most of the municipalities at the workshop do not collaborate with universities, meaning they may lack access to the most up-to-date knowledge. Furthermore, increased multi-level cooperation and improved communication are needed, especially between local and national governments, enabling increased interaction opportunities and access to data. Lastly, although several funding opportunities are offered at the EU level, cities lack human resources and time to follow the long and time-consuming processes for bidding.

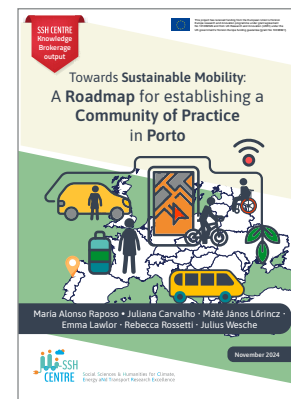


## Lessons learnt and next step

The Initiative provided the researcher team with valuable insights into sustainable mobility, mainly in relation to the implementation of effective public policies. It emerged that city officials and technicians often know the necessary actions to promote sustainable urban mobility from a normative perspective, but struggle in the implementation due to challenges in multilevel coordination and multistakeholder collaboration. Despite the different territorial contexts, the challenges faced by cities are often very similar, providing the potential for exploring policy and knowledge transfer. The importance of narratives and framings attached to certain political issues was discussed. This was perceived as a key aspect where SSH could contribute to KB between researchers and practitioners.

The work has been summarised in a report detailing best practices for fostering collaboration and presenting a preliminary roadmap for Porto's mobility goals and the establishment of a Community of Practice. The report concludes with strategic recommendations, including stakeholder engagement, capacity building, policy advocacy, implementation, and robust monitoring to guide Porto's sustainable mobility efforts and achieve net-zero emissions by 2030.

Reflecting on their experience of the Knowledge Brokerage Programme, one of the researcher team members commented:



*“Being part of the SSH CENTRE’s Knowledge Brokerage initiative has been a transformative and inspirational experience for me. As someone with a background in social sciences - who decided to embrace the challenge of doing interdisciplinary research on sustainable urban mobility planning in a program hosted by the engineering faculty - I cannot say that the knowledge brokerage topic was precisely new to me. However, the SSH CENTRE programme offered me an opportunity to deepen my understanding of the challenges and opportunities of “brokering knowledge”, not only between disciplines, but also between researchers and practitioners. And it highlighted the importance of reciprocal learning throughout the process. I believe it is safe to say that we all learned a lot. From design stages to workshop facilitation, we worked to bring our distinct fields of expertise together and to create positive synergies that can contribute to more sustainable mobility systems and policies. It was an amazing opportunity to learn, to network, and to gain new tools to effectively bridge research and practice.”*

Porto Ambiente and the municipality of Porto stressed the relevance of the mobility communities topic and expressed the will to go beyond the results that emerged from the KB initiative. The city is currently going through a mobility transformation, in terms of both mobility infrastructure and mobility governance, so there is the opportunity to implement some of the ideas presented by the researcher team. The workshop held in Porto was also important for discussing the integration of initiatives to improve mobility into other topics and projects in the city.

The representative of the municipality leading the knowledge brokerage initiative at the local level commented:

*“The promotion of this important conversation between the city’s various mobility stakeholders has even resulted in greater proximity between the city’s transport and mobility stakeholders and the creation of new synergies that are already beginning to take shape. As we discussed the relevance of a Community of Practice, maybe the involvement of these entities contributes to the implementation of this or a similar model in the city”.*



## 2.5. Valencia, Spain

# Local climate strategies



### Venue

Palau de l'Exposició, Carrer de Galícia, 1, El Pla del Real, 46010

### Workshop date

23-24 April 2024.

### Research team

Yann Robiou du Pont (Utrecht University, The Netherlands); Ananya Tiwari (Atlantic Technological University, Ireland); Emilie Etienne (University of Grenoble-Alpes, France) Gulfem Cevheribucak (University of Limerick, Ireland); Carolina Moreno Hernández (University of Freiburg, Germany).

### SSH CENTRE consortium partners

Eduardo Blanco (Energy Cities); Alev Sorman (BC3).

### Host city participants

Around ten representatives from the city of Valencia (ES).

### Guest municipalities, part of the EU 100 Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities

Lyon (FR), Porto (PT), Nantes (FR), Mannheim (DE), Valladolid (ES), Vilnius (LT), Bologna (IT), Dublin (IR) and Stockholm (SE).



Figure 6: Site visit in Valencia, following one of the Green Capital routes to see the different initiatives on the ground.

The Valencia Knowledge Brokerage Initiative focused on local climate strategies and specifically on citizens' engagement in the EU Mission Cities and their Climate City Contracts. Throughout the work, a diversity of techniques to promote citizen engagement have been discussed, including citizen assemblies, participatory budgets, citizen science, direct engagement in public spaces, and financing and supporting community-led initiatives. During the workshop, in which 9 EU Mission Cities joined, there was the opportunity to explore how these different methods are being applied at the local level and the associated processes and challenges.



## What activities did the research team undertake as Knowledge Brokers?

As part of the Knowledge Brokerage Initiative, the researcher team working with Valencia **designed a citizen engagement guide** entitled “The citizen user guide: how to engage citizens in the Valencia Climate Alliance?”. The guide is designed as a tool for the Municipality of Valencia and other Mission Cities to strengthen citizen engagement. Its key ideas and initial results were presented and discussed during the workshop. To produce the guide, the researchers combined several data sources. **They analysed** Valencia’s emissions goals and their ambition, **reviewed good practices** in Europe, and **examined scientific literature on citizen participation in climate action**. Additionally, they **analysed grey literature on citizen participation** in Valencia and the city’s current climate action plans. The researchers also **conducted three in-depth interviews** with key stakeholders involved in implementing participatory approaches in Valencia. During the workshop, the researchers organised a world café and a storytelling session to **gather insights from all city representatives**, focusing on best practices and challenges for citizen engagement, which were later incorporated into the guide.

## Using the Policy Arrangement Model to explore the policymaking realities of local climate strategies

Interactions with the city hub over the course of the Knowledge Brokerage Programme and discussions between municipalities during the workshop provided insight into the experiences of developing and implementing policy and related. These insights can be summarised in relation to four key topics of the Policy Arrangement Model:

**Stakeholders and hierarchies:** Several actors are key to ensuring the success of citizen engagement activities, such as neighbourhood associations, local utilities, energy agencies, Non-Governmental Organisations, universities, and schools. Nevertheless, it remains difficult to engage with the parts of the population that are not represented or part of any associations, such as migrants, elderly people, temporary residents, and Small and Medium Enterprises.

**Politics and narratives:** Strong political support at the local level is needed to support citizen engagement, including through mobilising actors and resources, and streamlining decision-making processes. Nevertheless, it is important to keep the initiatives independent from political agendas to avoid shallow or reversible initiatives. It is also important to go beyond “media points” that catch the attention but are without major added value to fair and just transitions.

**Decision-making process and tensions:** The decision-making process seems to rely on proposals from technical teams, which are then validated by the political body. Nevertheless, tensions exist when the initiatives are not planned sufficiently in advance or when they require the collaboration of several departments that are usually siloed. Another common source of tension arises when the citizen’s proposals oppose the political narratives in place.

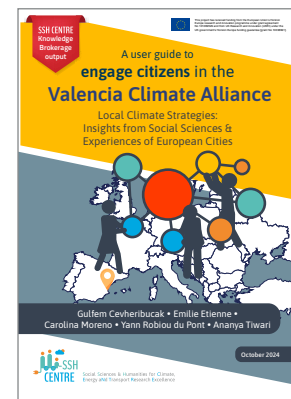
**Resources required to address challenges identified:** Successful deployment of citizen engagement initiatives requires a strong initial political commitment and a good network at the local level. Then, the most important resource seems to be dedicated and motivated staff with the corresponding skillset. Nevertheless, it is still rare, due to financing and lack of human resources, that municipalities manage to have a dedicated team working on the process of citizen engagement in the long term.



## Lessons learnt and next steps

Presenting the results of the initial study to the city practitioners during the workshop validated the findings of the research team and provided insights from the ground. The findings from the initiative were formalised in a citizen engagement guide. Many recommendations present in the guide were raised by city representatives at different moments of the Knowledge Brokerage Initiative and the workshop, highlighting their contextual relevance. These exchanges helped identify the relative importance of the topics tackled in the guide and informed revisions made to the guide.

Reflecting on their experience of the Knowledge Brokerage Programme, one of the researcher team members commented:



*“Participating in this program has been a great asset for my academic and professional development. It was a highly engaging and inspiring experience, as I had the opportunity to observe numerous climate change initiatives implemented by the participating cities. The theoretical knowledge we gained on knowledge brokerage was expertly complemented by hands-on practical experience, creating an optimal learning process for me. In addition, we took satisfaction in having collaborated with the city of Valencia to develop a guide for citizen participation in climate action initiatives.”*

For the municipality of Valencia, the workshop was an opportunity to connect and gain insights from other practitioners and researchers. Leaning on these insights, Valencia will improve participatory or engagement activities that are already in place or planned, such as citizens’ energy communities and the greening of schools together with families. Finally, the municipality plans to define a new participatory initiative called My Neighbourhood in Transition, which will be conducted in late 2024 under the European Green Capital València 2024 framework. This initiative will be a participatory diagnosis of some of the axes of the Green Capital. Together with citizens and social associations of three different districts, the municipality will analyse how ‘green’ these neighbourhoods are and how they can be improved by different stakeholders, focusing on the role that citizens themselves and social entities can play.

The representative of the municipality leading the knowledge brokerage initiative at the local level commented:

*“In the workshop we were able to learn directly from other cities’ experiences, both successes and failures, in organizing citizens’ engagement activities for sustainability projects. Besides, the researchers and other partners presentations and insights were also greatly useful and inspiring.”*



## 2.6. Rijeka, Croatia

# Fossil-free heating and cooling



### Venue

RiHub: Ul. Ivana Grohovca 1/a, 51000, Rijeka, Croatia

### Workshop date

7-8 May 2024.

### Research team

Nicol Stankova (Czech Technical University in Prague, Czech Republic); Jessica Zaphiropoulo (Grenoble-Alps University, France); Aliaksandr Novikau (International University of Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina).

### SSH CENTRE consortium partners

Marta Arosio (Energy Cities); Vlatka Berlan Vlahek (Energy Cities), Giovanni Caiati (K&I), Mojca Drevenšek (Consensus), Varjú Viktor (Institute for Regional Studie - (HUN-REN, CERS).

### Host city participants

3 representatives from the city of Rijeka (HR) and ENERGO.

### Guest municipalities

Leskovac (RS); Munich (DE); Assen (NL); Čačak (RS); Tuzla (BA).



Figure 7: Interactive session with the invited cities during the workshop in Rijeka, Croatia.

The Knowledge Brokerage Initiative focused on the decarbonisation of the District Heating system in Rijeka, by providing an overview of potential policies and best practices from similar contexts, and tackling three main social issues, related to the process: i) the involvement of citizens in the management or ownership structures of District Heating; ii) the perception and use of local resources for heating (e.g. waste heat, wood or solar); and iii) social methods that are available to support District Heating implementation. Over the past few decades, the city of Rijeka has begun transforming its district heating (DH) infrastructure. In 2021, Energo, the local heat operator, launched a new heating renovation project, partially funded by the European Regional Development Fund. This project aims to optimise energy consumption, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and ultimately provide Rijeka residents with a more environmentally friendly and economically viable heating network.



## What activities did the research team undertake as Knowledge Brokers?

The research team's work prior to the workshop consisted of an initial diagnosis phase to identify the city's challenges concerning their district heating (DH) through **exchanges with the city** and a **literature review**. The literature review was useful in summarising existing literature on the topic of DH in Europe. The research team **summarised the learnings** as three draft info sheets, including the usual challenges municipalities face when working with DH systems. These draft info sheets created a base for discussion with the local authorities to be used at the workshop.

During the workshop, information about specific challenges faced by Rijeka and the other participants emerged. For instance, the researchers identified that in Rijeka, narrow streets and rocky ground make infrastructure installation and repairs costly and complex, while underground archaeological remains add further constraints. Additionally, there is a lack of public understanding about DH, differing priorities across city departments, and employee resistance to change. However, the availability of EU funds and the formation of an informal network of DH cities in Croatia provides economic support.

After the workshop, all the collected inputs were analysed by the research team, and the key learnings were then integrated into the three final info sheets, covering the following topics: i) Citizen involvement in DH, ii) SSH methods aiding DH development, and iii) Locality in connection to DH.

## Using the Policy Arrangement Model to explore the policymaking realities of fossil-free heating and cooling

Interactions with the city hub over the course of the Knowledge Brokerage Programme, and discussions between municipalities during the workshop, provided insight into the experiences of developing and implementing policy and related initiatives. These insights can be summarised in relation to four key topics of the Policy Arrangement Model:

**Stakeholders and hierarchies:** The main stakeholders involved in Rijeka's district heating initiatives and policymaking processes include the University of Zagreb, REGEA, the Energetic Institute, Chamber of Commerce, Ministry officials, gas and heating companies, independent consultants, and the mayor. The municipalities present at the workshop agreed alliances with other district heating cities and access to EU funding are key enablers of district heating.

**Politics and narratives:** The decision-making process in district heating is significantly influenced by political context and narratives. For instance, in Rijeka, political considerations have prevented a heating plant from being located 20 km from Rijeka, favouring the use of biogas instead (despite the practical advantages of district heating). Rijeka's experience also underscores the political perception of EU projects as beneficial, contributing to their approval and the city's overall development since joining the EU. These narratives shape decisions by aligning with EU objectives and funding opportunities, influencing choices in energy infrastructure and sustainability initiatives.

**Decision-making process and tensions:** The decision-making process for transforming district heating involves citizen participation, exploring technical options, and securing professional guidance and funding. In Rijeka, this process faced tensions from limited funding, regulatory hurdles, and procedural challenges like installing pipelines over a railroad bridge. Transparent leadership and coordination are crucial in overcoming these challenges and ensuring successful implementation.

**Resources required to address challenges identified:** Experienced staff, data, and digital tools are critical when implementing a district heating project. Rijeka leverages its own technicians, local designers, PR experts, municipal support, REGEA, and external consultants for its DH projects. They use GIS for mapping, though data is fragmented and needs further digitalisation. To improve results, Rijeka needs more financial resources and comprehensive, accurate data to fully digitalise their systems, similar to Munich's digital tools.



## Lessons learnt and next steps

The researcher team faced a major challenge in establishing common ground with the city's stakeholders. The initial activities undertaken by the researcher team facilitated workshop discussions, crucial for clarifying and deepening key topics. The findings were formalised into info sheets. The impact of the info sheets on policy and stakeholder operations remains uncertain, but they initiated dialogue from a Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH) perspective. City visits by researchers provided insights into local challenges, enriching workshop outcomes and prompting updates to the info sheets. A new info sheet focused on Rijeka's specific situation integrates workshop insights, aiming to bridge SSH research with policy stakeholders.

Reflecting on their experience of the Knowledge Brokerage Programme, one of the researcher team members commented:



*“Taking part in the SSH Centre KB programme gave me my first experience of discussion between research and civil society (policy makers). I learned a lot from the other participants and our project supervisors about how to formulate and translate scientific concepts to be discussed. Putting this dialogue into practice via the workshop presented us with other challenges that were instructive in terms of scientific translation and finding the right balance for joint discussion. This experience convinced me of the usefulness of such a dialogue, which I wasn't sure was really practical. I am pleased to think that our work has helped to change the city's approach to the challenges it faces in renewing its heating network, and has shed light on mechanisms already in place to build a local network that is more inclusive in terms of citizenship.”*

Following the workshop, the City of Rijeka and its heating company acknowledge the interest of the experience. The representative of the municipality leading the Knowledge Brokerage Initiative at the local level commented:

*“After the workshop, we the City of Rijeka and ENERGO, realized that in the future district heating will become one of the primary methods of heating in the Rijeka area. The results of the researchers can contribute to this goal”.*



## 3. Conclusions

The SSH CENTRE KB Programme has been effective and successful in several ways. In particular, the Programme has supported SSH researchers in better understanding the complex reality of doing policywork. The multitude of stakeholders, the hierarchies and tensions, the political narratives and objectives, and the available resources can be either a lever or a barrier to fostering policies related to the green transition at the local level. Moreover, the work was useful in helping the researchers identify, through practical experience, which types of content and knowledge brokerage activities are better suited for different municipalities depending upon their context, with this preparing the researchers for further knowledge brokerage opportunities in their academic careers (or beyond).

Moreover, the exchanges between the researcher teams and the municipalities offered a great opportunity for the six city hubs to see the potential of Social Sciences and Humanities methods and approaches in supporting their policy-making. The Programme offered the city hubs a safe space to test such collaboration while also receiving concrete advice and orientation to a real-world challenge they defined with the researcher teams. All the local and regional authorities involved in the program (city-hubs and invited authorities for the workshops) left the Programme with a more mature understanding of their local transition challenges and possible SSH paths to advance toward a better situation.

Finally, the design of the Programme, integrating a series of workshops allowed other local and regional authorities to participate in the discussion, strengthening the SSH CENTRE network, fostering peer-to-peer learning, and catalysing future collaborations around the role of SSH methods and approaches in climate, energy, and mobility policymaking.

If you are interested in running a similar programme or even organising a smaller knowledge brokerage initiative, we have a few resources which may help you. Do not hesitate to take a look at the [SSH Knowledge Brokerage](#) online training at the Local Transitions Learning Centre. You can also take a look at the [SSH CENTRE Open Knowledge Platform](#).



## 4. Acknowledgements

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Social Sciences & Humanities for Climate,  
Energy and Transport Research Excellence



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