

METHODOLOGY BLUEPRINT

A RADICAL CITIZEN SOCIAL SCIENCE GUIDE
TO ENGAGE LOCAL COMMUNITIES IN
REGENERATION-DRIVEN SYSTEMS
RESEARCH AND DESIGN.



METHODOLOGY BLUEPRINT

A RADICAL CITIZEN SOCIAL SCIENCE GUIDE TO ENGAGE
LOCAL COMMUNITIES IN REGENERATION-DRIVEN
SYSTEMS RESEARCH AND DESIGN.

AUTHOR: KERSTI RUTH WISSENBAACH
DECEMBER 2025

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.17998324

www.cultivalab.com/permafuturos

Licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution
Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International license.
<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>

*This work has been made possible through the Horizon
Europe Impetus for Citizen Science Kickstarter Grant.*



**Funded by
the European Union**

PERMA FUTUROS IS

**REGENERATION
MADE TANGIBLE**

**FOSTERING LOCAL
CLIMATE RESILIENCE**

**CULTIVATING LOCAL
OWNERSHIP**

**DEEP ENGAGEMENT WITH
RURAL COMMUNITIES**

WHAT DOES PERMAFUTUROS STAND FOR?

REGENERATIVE
CLIMATE RESILIENCE
AND THE ACTIVATION
OF FULL COMMUNITY
POTENTIAL
- THIS IS
PERMAFUTUROS.

PermaFuturos is a radical citizen social science project. It offers a regenerative research and design methodology that empowers local communities to address their climate resilience challenges.

PermaFuturos stands for permanent community futures, and its methods embrace the holistic permaculture framework. We support communities to unite around the challenges they jointly face.

We guide communities to unpack the deep complexities behind these challenges, making complexity tangible, and through this collective process we activate the power of community diversity. Citizens contribute their heritage knowledge, skills, backgrounds, and lived experiences. In a community, everyone matters; our role is to bring community potential to light through collective research and futures design.

THE STORY

Over the course of six months, we collaborated with two villages to develop and apply the PermaFuturos methodology to address locally identified climate resilience challenges through a regenerative, highly participatory process.

To do so, we re-designed the holistic permaculture approach to function as a systems research and design tool for local strategy development and deep understanding of rural community structures and dynamics. This redesign enables practitioners to approach climate resilience challenges from any permaculture domain, whether soil erosion, invasive technological infrastructures, community tensions, or others, while acknowledging the intrinsic interrelations between them.

With the PermaFuturos methodology we wish to support more communities in Spain and beyond in addressing their local climate resilience challenges through regenerative, community-driven approaches.

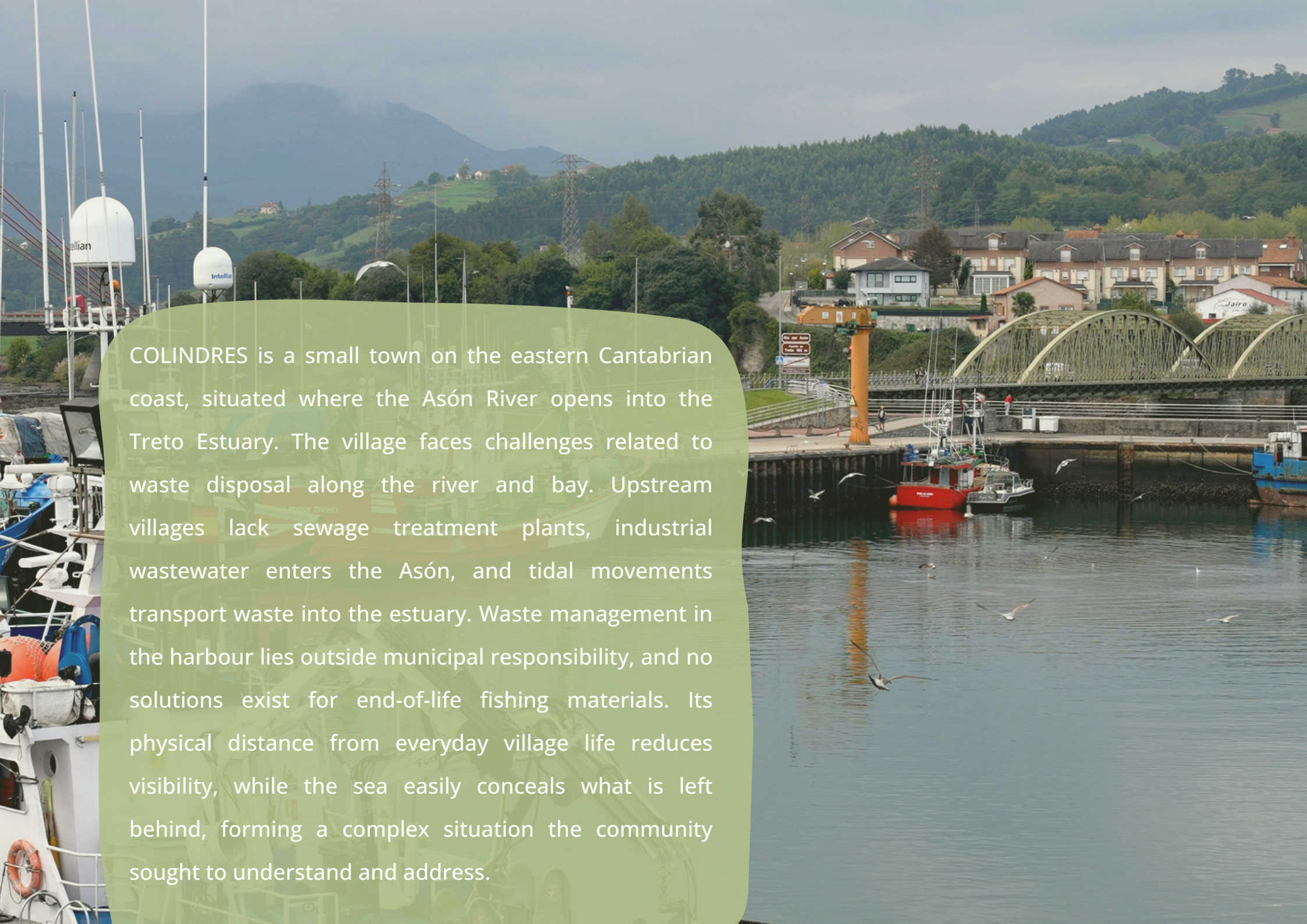
We offer our methodology to all forms of local communities.

PermaFuturos also applies to organisations, networks, and social enterprises seeking to embrace a regenerative organisational strategy.

LIVING LABS 2025

**WE HAVE WORKED WITH TWO
RURAL COMMUNITIES FACING
DISTINCTLY DIFFERENT
CHALLENGES.**

GESTALGAR is a small mountain village on the Turia River in the Serranía de Valencia, with approximately 500 inhabitants. The torrential floods that struck Valencia in October 2024 destroyed the village's food sovereignty infrastructure and its climate refuge zone. The floods removed topsoil and covered the area with rubble and non-degradable waste. Severe ecosystem erosion has hindered restoration efforts and resurfaced long-standing tensions over cultivation practices. The community addressed their central question: How can we respond to the consequences of the DANA floods, as a community, through regeneratively rebuilding our soil, food sovereignty, and climate refuge?

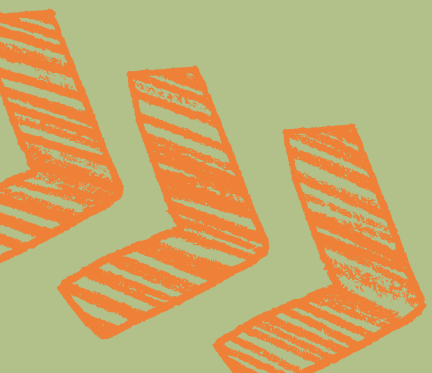


COLINDRES is a small town on the eastern Cantabrian coast, situated where the Asón River opens into the Treto Estuary. The village faces challenges related to waste disposal along the river and bay. Upstream villages lack sewage treatment plants, industrial wastewater enters the Asón, and tidal movements transport waste into the estuary. Waste management in the harbour lies outside municipal responsibility, and no solutions exist for end-of-life fishing materials. Its physical distance from everyday village life reduces visibility, while the sea easily conceals what is left behind, forming a complex situation the community sought to understand and address.

METHODOLOGY BLUEPRINT

This Blueprint is designed for citizen social scientists, community guardians, engaged policymakers, and anyone interested in participatory regeneration-centred systems research and design to address climate resilience challenges.

If you love permaculture and wish to expand your practice beyond land stewardship into broader systemic design, this blueprint is for you.



REGENERATIVE RESEARCH?

Regenerative design envisions human and natural systems co-existing and co-evolving over time. It goes beyond sustainability by actively restoring and enhancing social and ecological systems. PermaFuturos considers economic, governance, social, educational, infrastructural, technological, and land-based systems. Building sustainable resilience requires addressing root causes, not just symptoms. Identifying root causes demands collective research in which communities unite knowledge and networks to understand the underlying dynamics of their challenges.

SYSTEMS RESEARCH AND DESIGN?

A systemic approach reveals the relationships between different dimensions of a challenge - for example, how governance structures may hinder regeneration, or how education shapes behaviour. Mapping interconnections and power dynamics enables communities to design action that addresses the situation as a whole, rather than in silos.

LOCAL COMMUNITIES?

For us, local communities take many forms. The methodology works with citizens of small rural villages, segments of towns, or groups spanning several villages affected by a shared climate resilience challenge - such as communities living along the same river. PermaFuturos also applies to organisations, networks, and social enterprises seeking to embrace a regenerative organisational strategy.

WHAT IS THE PERMAFUTUROS METHODOLOGY BLUEPRINT?

THE BLUEPRINT IS AN ACCESSIBLE
INTRODUCTION TO THE
PERMAFUTUROS SYSTEMS
RESEARCH AND DESIGN
METHODOLOGY. IT:



explains how we have
translated the holistic
permaculture approach
into a systems research
and design methodology
that fosters locally
owned regenerative
climate resilience action;



introduces the
methods we use
to engage civil
society in
regenerative
approaches to
climate
resilience;



offers insights into
different use
cases and the
conditions needed
to maximise
impact;



provides
previews of the
materials used
for online and
offline
facilitation;



shares important
lessons learned
from the
communities we
have worked with.

HOW TO USE THE BLUEPRINT

CULTIVA LAB OFFERS THREE LEVELS OF ENGAGEMENT WITH THE PERMAFUTUROS METHODOLOGY, EACH REQUIRING DIFFERENT TIMEFRAMES AND LEVELS OF COMMITMENT.

While the methodology is best suited to offline, in-person settings, we also offer an online environment and digital materials for educational and exploratory use.

INSPIRATION DIPS

We offer introductory talks, experiential classes, and blended seminars with research institutes and universities, allowing participants to try the methods or work through a simulated case study.

DEEP-DIVE AND TACTICS JOURNEYS

We work with communities to apply the full systems research and design approach to their climate resilience challenge. In minimum 2 workshop days, participants use the methods and develop concrete tactics.

STRATEGY DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION ROUNDTrip

We offer full-scale strategic support for communities, municipalities, or organisations seeking long-term regenerative strategy design and implementation. Together, we co-determine the level of support and develop a proposal tailored to the community's needs.

BOOK A CONSULTATION CALL WITH US TO EXPLORE HOW WE CAN SUPPORT YOUR COMMUNITY-DRIVEN CLIMATE RESILIENCE JOURNEY.



THE METHODOLOGY

The PermaFuturos process is a **gradual community engagement pathway grounded in ownership and local relevance**. This Blueprint outlines the **steps at the core of PermaFuturos**. It presents the pathway used for the ‘Deep Dives and Tactics Journey’, guiding a community through the identification of their core climate resilience challenge and the systems research and tactics design process.

When accompanying communities beyond the co-creative phase into long-term implementation, additional desk research, cross-disciplinary collaboration, training, and coordination activities are added.

The Blueprint provides concrete ‘To Do’ steps for each phase and shares key lessons learned from our Living Labs.

THE PATHWAY





RECRUITING A COMMUNITY & SETTING UP A KNOWLEDGE COALITION

GOAL: ESTABLISH THE FOUNDATIONS FOR A SUCCESSFUL, LOCALLY OWNED PROCESS.

A committed community is essential for the success of the PermaFuturos journey. When working with the citizens of a village or a group united by a shared concern, it is vital to establish clear expectations regarding commitment and realistic participation numbers.

Knowledge Coalitions play a key role in cultivating local relevance and ownership. Knowledge Coalitions are small groups of key local stakeholders deeply embedded in their communities - municipal councillors, association leaders, ecologists, activists, or other influential voices.

Often, engagement begins with a single key citizen who helps identify further coalition candidates through recommendations.

They are structurally involved in research design, implementation, and evaluation, and play a central role in trust-building and engagement. Most important, they set the agenda by identifying the central climate resilience challenge to focus on. Recruiting the right members is critical: their motivation significantly shapes workshop momentum.

A Knowledge Coalition may vary in size. In our Living Labs, four members per community provided a good balance of diversity and agility. In longer-term processes, a slightly larger Coalition may be beneficial. Active participation from all members is essential.

***These steps are essential for communities seeking to develop systemic tactics or full strategies. For inspirational or exploratory use, they may be skipped.*





RECOMMENDED STEPS

- Identify, through initial contact, the type of PermaFuturos support the community seeks.
- Clearly outline the responsibilities and commitments expected from Knowledge Coalition members.
- Identify potential candidates. Speak with each candidate to ensure full understanding of objectives, tasks, and time commitments.
- Sign a detailed Memorandum of Understanding with each member, outlining commitments and a preliminary timeline.

LEARNINGS FROM THE LIVING LABS



A fully committed Knowledge Coalition is essential; passive members or drop-outs reduce project quality and increase the burden on remaining members.



Policymaker participation increases the likelihood of long-term structural support.



In small communities, policymaking roles are often voluntary and combined with other responsibilities, which can result in varying levels of engagement.



For certain challenges, adding researchers or other thematic actors can enrich the Coalition.



CLIMATE RESILIENCE CHALLENGE IDENTIFICATION

GOAL: DEFINE A COMMUNITY-RELEVANT CLIMATE RESILIENCE CHALLENGE TO BE ADDRESSED DURING THE SYSTEMS RESEARCH AND DESIGN WORKSHOPS.

This workshop is conducted with the Knowledge Coalition and forms the foundation of the regenerative journey. People naturally gravitate toward solutions; this workshop guides participants to stay non-solutionist and identify a challenge that truly impacts both human and non-human well-being.

STEP 1: BRAINSTORMING

Participants individually collect visible challenges in their community related to climate resilience and share them on a collective workspace.

STEP 2: SYSTEMATISATION

Participants collaboratively group the identified challenges into clusters and define higher-level category headings.

STEP 3: CHALLENGES RANKINGS

Participants identify an overarching theme that addresses a key issue in the community, using a relevance scale to support discussion and selection.

STEP 4: SPECIFY

Participants develop three versions of a research question addressing the final focus and merge them into one coherent guiding question.



2 LEARNINGS FROM THE LIVING LABS



Full participation from all Knowledge Coalition members is crucial.



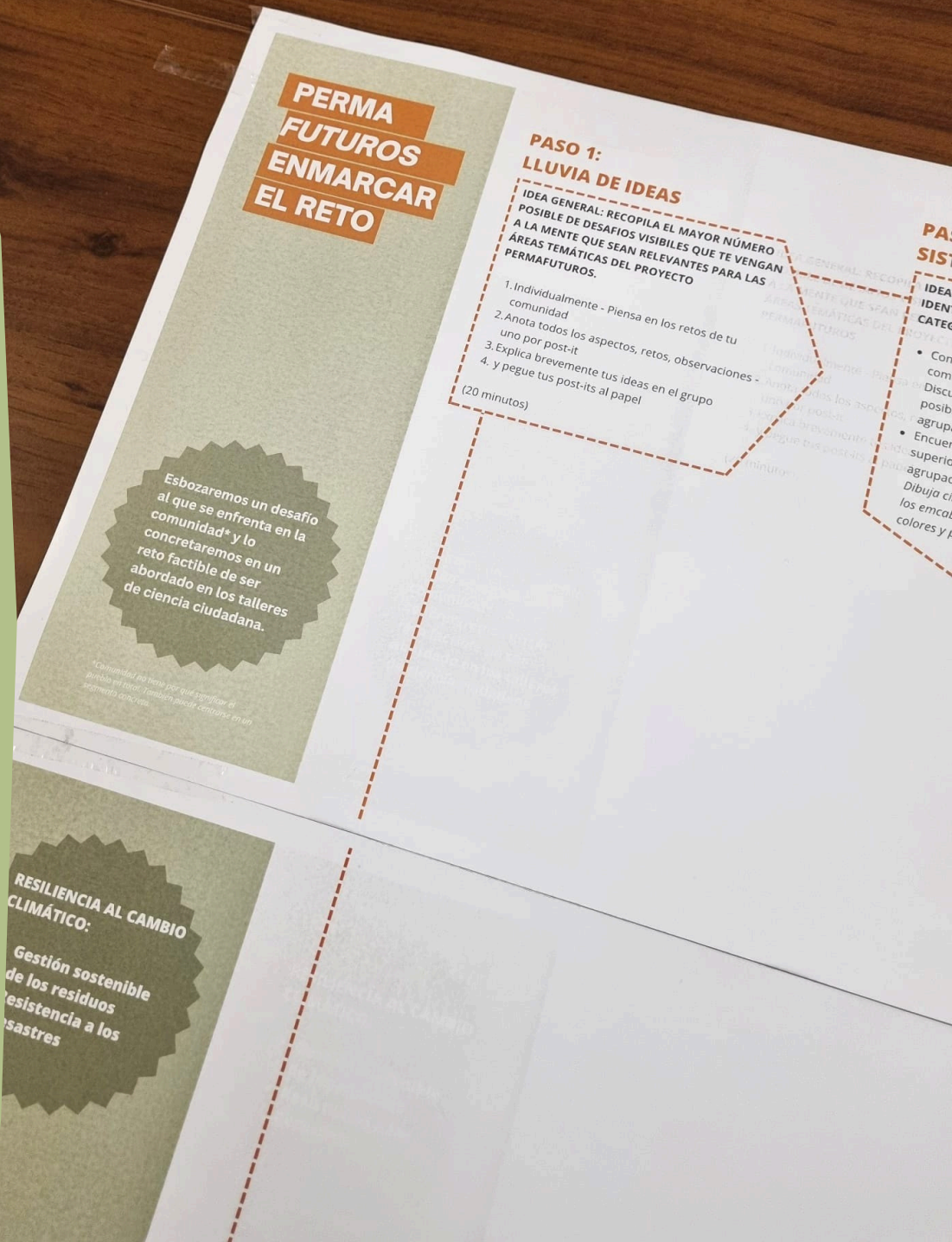
Partial attendance may require additional steps to ensure shared ownership.



For longer processes, inviting additional community stakeholders can be beneficial.



Heterogeneous groups require skilled facilitation to converge on a single, collectively held challenge definition.





CHALLENGE CO-INVESTIGATION WORKSHOP

GOAL: SURFACE THE SYSTEMIC RELATIONS UNDERLYING THE IDENTIFIED CLIMATE RESILIENCE CHALLENGE.

This participatory process is open to all community members. Together with the Knowledge Coalition, extensive outreach helps gather a significant participant group (max. 10-15 per facilitator).

The co-investigation spans four steps. A five-hours workshop is the minimum requirement, while a full day allows for a more appropriate analysis and is highly recommended.

The permaculture domains have been translated into a structured research tool with curated explanations and guiding questions across individual, community, and supra-community levels.



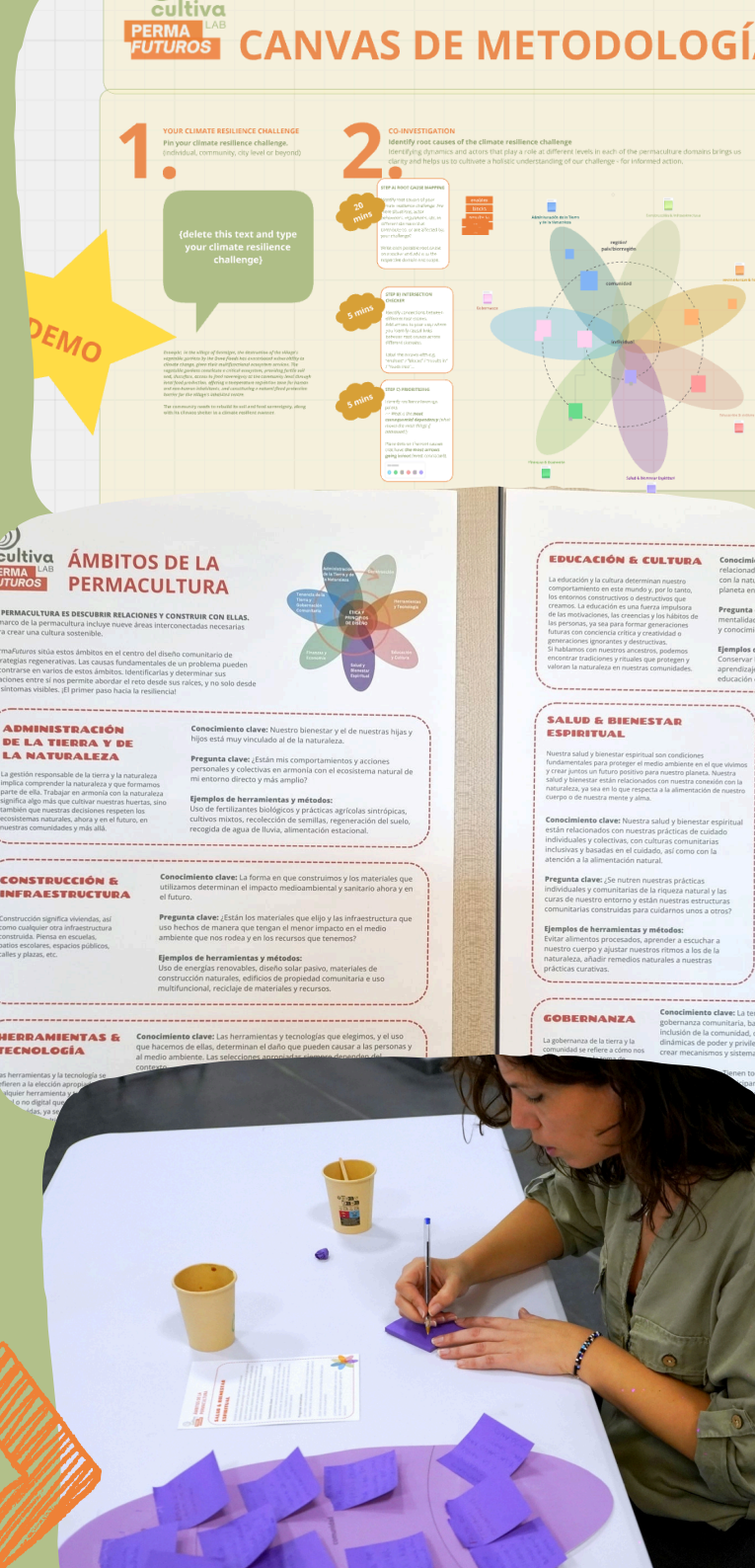
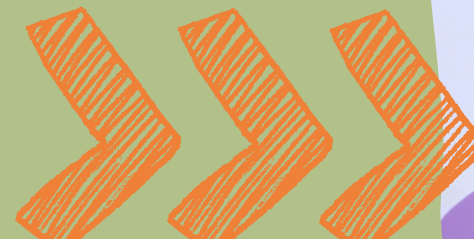


STEP 1: THE PERMACULTURE PETALS WALK

Participants familiarise themselves with the permaculture domains and their interconnected relevance for their climate resilience challenge.

STEP 2: MULTI-DIMENSIONAL DOMAINS INVESTIGATION

Participants rotate through domains (in a world café or rotating group format), identifying root causes, including relationships, knowledge systems, habits, policies, and incentives that uphold the challenge.



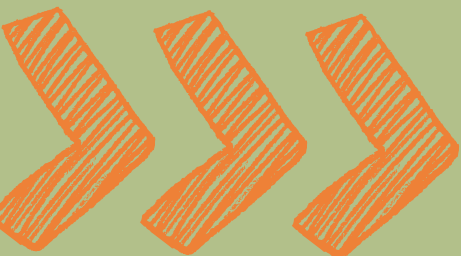


STEP 3: REFLECTION

Participants assemble the domains into the permaculture flower, symbolising interconnection. Key findings are unpacked in a facilitated group process.

STEP 5: POWER MAPPING

Participants identify 'heavy players' - root causes with significant influence - through a power mapping activity.



STEP 4: RELATION MAPPING

In small groups, participants map relationships between root causes (e.g., reinforcing, blocking), creating a visual representation of the system's complexity. A plenary hold space for additions, reflections, shared processing.



LEARNINGS FROM THE LIVING LABS



Investing sufficient time in the Petals Walk builds a strong foundation.



Facilitation is essential to maintain focus on root causes rather than solutions.



Additional facilitators greatly enhance quality. Consider domain hosts.



In longer processes, adding a dedicated actor-focused power mapping activity is valuable.



Identifying relational dynamics (who influences whom, who is affected) strengthens subsequent design phases.



REGENERATIVE RESILIENCE CO-CREATION WORKSHOP

GOAL: DESIGN TACTICS TO WORK TOWARDS A DESIRABLE REGENERATIVE FUTURE WHERE THE CLIMATE RESILIENCE CHALLENGE HAS BEEN ADDRESSED.

This workshop is highly participatory and usually attended by the same participants as the co-investigation. A near full day is required to provide a meaningful experience and relevant results.

The co-creation phase combines futures design with transversal tactical development, guiding participants through imagination, ethical grounding, and strategic design.



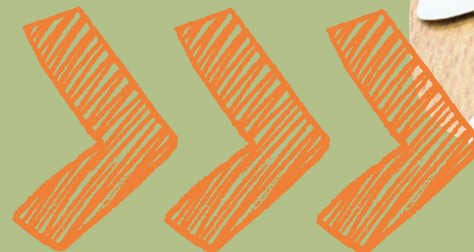


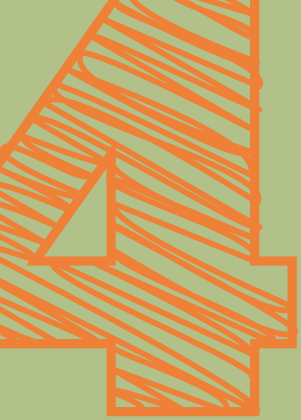
STEP 1: FUTURES SPECTRUM

Using a futures cone-inspired method, participants explore possible futures if no action is taken.

STEP 2: EXPLORING DESIGN PRACTICES ROOTED IN PERMACULTURE ETHICS

Through a quiz dynamic, participants explore the PermFuturos Principles, derived from David Holmgren's 12 permaculture principles and adapted into an intuitive, contemporary ethical framework





STEP 3: IMAGINING DESIRABLE FUTURES

Participants imagine and express desirable future scenarios, ideally in nature and close to the challenge site, using creative techniques such as theatre, drawing, or sculpting.

STEP 4: REGENERATIVE TACTICS ROADMAPPING

Participants learn the essentials of tactics and strategy design and develop clearly framed tactics rooted in the principles, addressing identified systemic root causes and building toward the desirable futures.



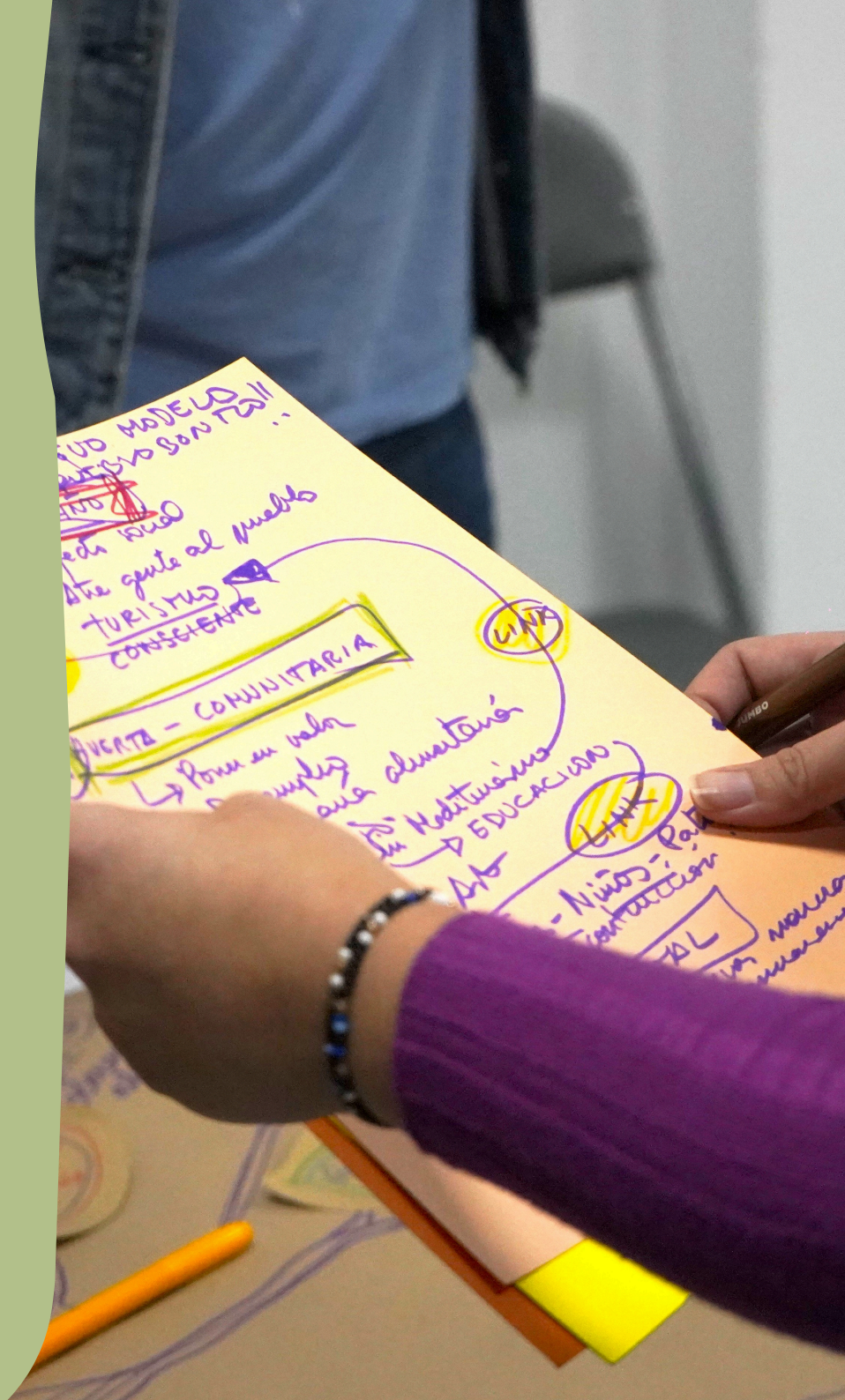
LEARNINGS FROM THE LIVING LABS

➤ In the course of two full days, communities can develop an experiential regenerative roadmap, including realistic tactics.

➤ Clearly explaining the ethical foundations and principles is essential. Futures design activities strongly accelerate the tactics design process.

➤ Participants require strong facilitation and accessible materials when linking investigation findings with the regenerative principles.

➤ Developing implementable strategies require a more time-extensive process





TRANS- VERSAL: CO-EVALUATION

GOAL: ENSURE THAT THE PROCESS RESONATES WITH COMMUNITY NEEDS AND THAT FACILITATION ALIGNS WITH EXPECTATIONS.

PermaFuturos uses a continuous participatory evaluation approach. Knowledge Coalition members define goals at the outset; compliance and outcomes are co-evaluated throughout the process. Success is measured not by process completion but by the community's assessment of whether the workshops strengthened regenerative awareness, practice, and capacity to address their climate resilience challenge.



LEARNINGS FROM THE LIVING LABS



Continuous co-evaluation greatly enhances both participant experience and research quality.



In communities unfamiliar with participatory processes, integrating dedicated check-ins and evaluation moments is particularly beneficial.



Co-evaluation allows for reprioritisation and the addition of capacity-building components where needed.

READY FOR PERMAFUTUROS IN YOUR COMMUNITY?

CONTACT US IF YOU WISH TO:

- use the PermaFuturos methodology in your community,*
- book us for a lecture or training,
- explore other collaborations.



kersti@cultivalab.com

** At present, the methodology is facilitated by Cultiva Lab. We hope to offer the full toolset as an open-source package in the future.*

If you wish to explore the PermaFuturos project more deeply, you can read our [whitepaper](#) or check out our [website](#).



WORDS OF GRATITUDE

We are grateful for the wonderful collaboration with all our citizen scientists.

Knowledge Coalition Gestalgar:

Aitana Camps Gisbert, Angela Rotríguész Ribera, Clementina Domingo Belenger, Pascual Domingo Sánchez.

Knowledge Coalition Colindres:

Lucía Valle Pacheco, Sergio Valle Brígido, Gabriel Zuloaga Martínez, Yolanda Arce Gutiérrez.

All participants of the Living Labs in Gestalgar and Colindres.

PHOTO CREDITS: RUBEN ARROYO VIOR, JRM DRONE

Copyright © 2025 by PermaFuturos project

This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International license. <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>

You are free to:

Share — copy and redistribute the material in any medium or format

Adapt — remix, transform, and build upon the material

Under the following terms:

- **Attribution** — You must give appropriate credit , provide a link to the license, and indicate if changes were made . You may do so in any reasonable manner, but not in any way that suggests the licensor endorses you or your use.
- **NonCommercial** — You may not use the material for commercial purposes .
- **No additional restrictions** — You may not apply legal terms or technological measures that legally restrict others from doing anything the license permits.

Notices:

You do not have to comply with the license for elements of the material in the public domain or where your use is permitted by an applicable exception or limitation.

No warranties are given. The license may not give you all of the permissions necessary for your intended use. For example, other rights such as publicity, privacy, or moral rights may limit how you use the material.

