

# Methodology

**CRE THINK**

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# METHODOLOGY FOR CO-CREATION

## Developed for the CRETHINK Project

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## INTRODUCTION TO THE METHODOLOGY

The CRETHINK Methodology - Co-creation Methodology - is part of a vision that opts for cross sector and interdisciplinary teamwork as a contemporary response to complex problems in urban context. Innovation and creativity require both individual and collaborative thinking to be successful, and are the essential part of the transformative engine within the dynamics of a group in action.

The objective of this document is to propose methods and techniques connecting moments of creative thinking and group dynamics by building a process of elaboration shared by the individual and the group for successfully implementing and managing local projects based on the paradigm of co-creation. Proposed methods and tools are elaborated based on the concept of design thinking, which is a solution-based and user-centric approach to problem solving, providing guidelines for the appropriate management of a working group characterised by the coexistence of different skills and capabilities

The CRETHINK Methodology has been developed along a line of other tools for the CRETHINK project. As supplements to this methodology, you can also find the CRETHINK Living Lab Facilitation Guide and CRETHINK Toolbox.

The CRETHINK methodology is structured according to the different stages of group work and dynamics of the co-creation process from how to kick-start activities and facilitate discussion, to the improvement of motivation and the solution of internal conflicts. Attention is also paid on the importance of the engagement of the community and the general public. For each stage, the document provides effective approaches, practical tools and directions that complement guidelines and principles for process facilitation of living labs contained in the Facilitation Guide.

This methodology is a prototype version, developed for testing in the CRETHINK project. We know that there might be things that we missed or that could be done better and we therefore invite you to hack the document and provide us with feedback about its usability and suggestions, so we can make it better for future use. At the back of the document you can find contact information for the CRETHINK project partners from each partner country.



## THE GOOD START

Multi-stakeholder engagement processes and co-creation activities have major advantages: they produce results that are tailored to the reality of the participants to the co-creation, and thus enable more sustainable changes. However, co-creation between various stakeholders is not an easy path and needs a good start to thrive. For this reason, it is crucial to build a common understanding about the local project and set appropriate boundaries, creating a safe and respectful space in which people can work together productively.



Proper planning, organization, and documentation are important constituents of effective team work processes. To this aim, it is advisable that the following suggested procedures are completed by the entire team together:

**Information:** Collect the following information from each team member and provide it to the others: name, telephone number, email address, preferred time and method of contact, and times available for meetings.

**Competences:** Define each member's background to determine their knowledge about the topic and personal contribution they can make, accommodating single inclinations to build on existing knowledge and increase motivation.

**Tasks, sub-tasks, outcomes:** Plan all major tasks to be completed, such as research, idea generation, analysis and synthesis, writing, editing, and presentation. Identify, in a priority order, subtasks to be completed immediately and determine which subtasks must be performed by the team as a whole at a team meeting, and which subtasks can be performed by individuals or subgroups independently. Identify desired outcomes of the process, for the team as a whole and for each team member. If the goals of team members diverge, negotiate how conflicting individual goals can be accommodated and the overall team goals achieved.

**Timeframe:** Establish realistic timeframes for completing each major task, allowing time for unforeseeable or uncontrollable events, such as illness, unavailable resources, COVID-19 pandemic, computer failure and determine a tentative order in which they should be completed.

**Roles & Responsibilities:** assign them to each member in accordance with their strengths. Participants may serve in more than one role simultaneously, share roles, or function in different roles during different stages of the project. The number of appropriate roles may also vary depending on the complexity of the project.

**Building trust:** Let participants talk/interview each other one-by-one to make them feel safe and support them in expressing themselves (see tools from the section ‘starting your session’ in the Seeds for Change Facilitation Guide, which can be found in the CRETHINK Toolkit)

Trust and relations among participants may be supported through trust-building exercises that aim at evoking the participants as individuals (see ‘trust building exercises’ in the Seeds for Change Facilitation Guide, which can be found in the CRETHINK Toolkit).

**Legitimize different perspectives among the participants:** It is as important, however, to evoke and give legitimacy to the participants for their interests and perspectives on the case. One way to make differences and conflicting interests explicit is by addressing the driving forces and agendas of the participants with questions like:

- 1) What is your motivation for participating in this project?
- 2) What are your hopes and worries about this collaboration/this project?

**Establish inclusive ground rules:** Clarity in terms of the purpose and roles and a framework that allows participants to articulate concerns and doubts, is conducive for collaboration. Therefore, it is important to work with aligning the participants’ expectations in terms of the purpose and desired outcome of the collaboration as well as the roles and frame, e.g. by developing ‘collaboration contract’ among the participants. Developing the contract will clarify to all participants what common task they are working on and what is expected of them during the collaboration. The facilitator of the living lab has the task of ensuring that the contract is continuously re-negotiated among the participants.

## HOW TO FACILITATE GOOD COOPERATION

To help facilitate the discussion, participants should necessarily learn to confront and interact in an open and effective way, overcoming misunderstandings, friction and sometimes different points of view. It means they have to take up the challenge of creating constructive relationships with the other members.

While facilitator’s tasks related to the facilitation of good cooperation among the team members are explored and analysed in a dedicated section of the Facilitation Guide, the following are simple but effective techniques that can be used to make the most out of the combination of the different competences and expertise involved as well as to promote the exchange of information and resources:



**Opening Circle:** having participants sit in a circle facing each other sets the tone for an interactive session, where everyone can feel free to participate and engage with each other. Adding a talking stick to the circle also helps to send the message that although lead roles will be shared, when

someone does have the lead or has asked to talk, the group is expected to give full attention to that individual.

**World Café:** small groups (from three to five people) gather together around tables and discuss a common topic. After the first conversation, someone stays at the table as a “host”, while the others move to a new table. The host summarises what has taken place at that table and those who are new share their previous conversations. In this way, the threads of the various conversations are woven together.

**Artistic Visualisation:** a hands-on art activity that incorporates the themes under discussion and helps to illustrate them.

**Mapping:** this involves collecting information verbally from participants on a given topic area of interest, and then recording it on a flipchart or some type of ‘map’ that the group can logically follow. For example, you might gather information on who might be interested in your project and where or how to reach out to them. A map flows better than a standard chart (with horizontal and vertical columns) and allows you to better see linkages.

**Prototyping:** You can use prototype techniques like scale modelling, storyboarding, simulation, role playing or drawings can be used to share and test your thinking, and gain valuable feedback from relevant stakeholders in order to decide what to do next. Prototyping can help test how something looks, feels, works or behaves, before you do a reallife test.

**Creating a space for different perspectives and opinions:** A common pitfall of facilitating co-creative processes is the urge to reduce complexities and exclude voices in order to reach a quick result. This is counterproductive to obtaining innovative results. Therefore, an important task of the facilitator is to treat diversity as a strength and leave time and space for it to unfold. This is psychologically important, people who experience respect and responsiveness will be more ready to respect and accommodate others’ perspectives – finally resulting in a shared understanding and outcome. Treating differences as a strength means working with differentiation (exploring and acknowledging differences) among participants before beginning to work with integration (finding common ground).

**Develop a holistic image of the challenge:** The facilitator should help the participants develop a shared and holistic image of the challenge by ‘collecting the puzzle’ consisting of all the different perspectives.

Specific tools for obtaining this could be:

- 1) Using go-arounds for sharing perspectives.



- 2) Drawing a shared timeline of the challenging question inviting all participants individually to contribute with their own story.
- 3) 3) Working on a shared mindmap of the challenge, depicting important issues and questions – this will give the participants a shared image of the task ahead.

**Talk openly about agendas and motives:** Avoiding hidden agendas and welcoming differences in terms of interests and perspectives among participants is an important part of handling power asymmetries. This may be done by inviting participants to talk openly about their motivations for participating and the agendas that are important to them in the collaboration. Also, addressing power issues explicitly e.g. by exploring different types of power in collaboration (structural, personal, discursive).

## HOW TO MAINTAIN MOTIVATION

Feeling part of a team is a process that must be built step by step. To guide and support this process, the following expedients may be used according to the context and the internal dynamics of the working group:



**Make clear the goals to achieve:** the first step to understand how to motivate a team is the precise definition of objectives. The most common mistake is to set objectives without sharing them with the team and, above all, without explaining the reasons that drive that goal. To motivate participants and encourage them to give their best, it is important to make them feel an essential part of the project. The initiative's success will greatly depend on the clarity of this message.

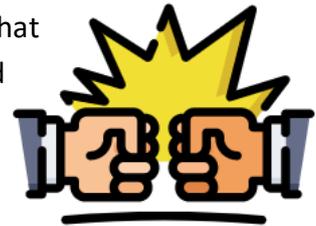
**Show appreciation and provide feedback:** once the goals are clear and participants are motivated to achieve them, do not hesitate to inform them of the achievement of a goal and celebrate it together, showing your appreciation for their contribution, even if it is minimal. Working in a positive and stimulating climate drives people to continue to improve and strive for an efficient and high-quality work ethic.

**Focus on empowerment:** listen to them and give them a voice in the decision-making process. Participation facilitates and stimulates discussion, helping all team members, especially the change agents, to find new and more creative solutions. Trust and listening are two main pillars of a team: if people know they are considered, they will be more inclined to invent, create innovation and propose ideas. To motivate a team, start by listening to them. If someone is wrong, don't make them feel guilty. We all make mistakes. The important thing is to learn valuable lessons from those mistakes so they don't make them again.

**Create a healthy work environment:** an important step is the creation of a space that is pleasant to work and spend the day in. Respect privacy, check for noise, air quality, natural light. It is also important to provide areas to relax. It will create a useful diversion to unplug and relax, which will elevate mood while strengthening cohesion among team members.

## HOW TO MEDIATE INTERNAL CONFLICTS

It is not unlikely that the desired results are not achieved due to conflicts that arise among participants guided by the desire to express their ideas and make them prevail over others. They can also be determined by personal incompatibility or by differences in the approach to problem-solving. These circumstances occur because multidisciplinary groups are characterised by different visions and behaviours, linked to the educational and experiential background of group members, and the interaction triggers a confrontation that, if there are no points of convergence, can turn into a clash.



Conflict can be managed and contained if the change agents have the ability to identify a potentially "explosive" situation and defuse it or, if this is not possible, mitigate the damage and rebuild the harmony of the group. Change agents, therefore, must carefully analyse the conflict, trying to understand its stage of development (is it already underway? Could it be triggered at any moment?) and potential impact. Based on this assessment, they can act in two different ways:

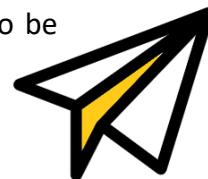
**Indifference:** if the conflict is trivial and can be resolved between the parties involved, without harm to the group. Sometimes conflicts are physiological to decision-making processes and can be interpreted constructively.

**Intervention:** action must be taken if the conflict might compromise the whole project and the cohesion of the group. When the change agents decide to intervene, they should focus attention on the common goal, encouraging people to cooperate in order to achieve the result. They can also "negotiate" to reach a compromise or involve people outside the conflict to ease tensions.

**Feelings meetings:** Conflict reduction may be reached by leaving space for 'feelings meetings' or talks during the collaboration (see "feelings meeting" in the 'Seeds for change' Facilitation guide, which can be found in the CRETHINK Toolkit), allowing participants to talk about feelings related to the collaboration. Often, the possibility to articulate sentiments and be listened to, will reduce frustrations and conflicts.

## HOW TO SPREAD THE WORD

Co-creation involves working effectively with people, requiring a lot of effort to be dedicated to the engagement of the community and the general public. Here some approaches that can be used to engage relevant stakeholders are highlighted:



- **Project status updates:** they are a concise summary that allow anyone wanting to find out about the project to understand quickly its key elements. Status updates are the workhorse of engaging internally and with stakeholders who may be directly involved in a project, and should be made available online for anyone to access.
- **Project narratives:** developing a project narrative is important to communicate what the project is about as well as its history, rationale and future. This can be used as much in an exhibition or event as it can for a specific intervention once completed.
- **Social media:** using different social media as a way to engage audiences is highly effective where the mix of content, audience and context makes sense for particular projects. The best option is to combine the power of images with written text that explains the intervention logic or simply contextualizes activities.
- **Project blogs:** they keep an open channel of engagement with interested audiences where resource permits. However, these should be seen as an ongoing engagement rather than a one-off. Blogs could potentially be combined with social media such as Facebook or Twitter.
- **White papers:** this paper is a persuasive, authoritative, in-depth report on a specific topic that presents a problem and provides a solution. It can be a highly effective way to engage with certain types of project stakeholders with a high-profile.
- **Events:** they can be used to increase visibility of the initiative, building new networks and consolidating existing ones. Events are particularly effective in the context of sustainable projects since they give the chance to the general public to experience first-hand the benefits of the initiative and establish a direct contact with the co-creators, eventually building consensus around the project idea and increasing support.



## VIRTUAL ACTIVITIES TO IMPROVE TEAM COLLABORATION

Great teams make it a habit to reflect on projects, group processes and how they work together as a team. Unstructured discussions on subjects like working processes or team dynamics can escalate in the wrong direction if not properly framed and facilitated. Using exercises or activities to facilitate the team reflection process can help ensure your team moves forward productively and spends time effectively. In an online environment, taking the opportunity to reflect as a group is imperative to building bonds and improving the awareness of each member of the team.

### WANT MORE INFORMATION?

On [sessionlab.com](https://www.sessionlab.com) you can also find other great exercises and process, for example to improve team development or team communication, when working online.

<https://www.sessionlab.com/>

Here are some examples:

**Strength Building Exercise:** With the Strength Building Exercise, you'll encourage positivity, mutual appreciation and respect among your team and help build a productive team culture. This method is great for boosting positive energy and creating space for your virtual team to celebrate one another and build a confident, self-aware group. Source:

<https://www.sessionlab.com/blog/remote-team-building-activities/#strength-building-exercise>

**9 Dimensions:** The 9 Dimensions Team Building Activity is a great, remote-friendly approach to structuring a team discussion. Source:

<https://www.sessionlab.com/blog/remote-team-building-activities/#9-dimensions>

**Trust Battery:** With Trust Battery, you invite your team to reflect on their relationships with one another, be open and grow together. In an online environment where face time is limited, checking in and encouraging honest, constructive reflection is essential for healthy teams. Source:

<https://www.sessionlab.com/blog/remote-team-building-activities/#trust-battery>

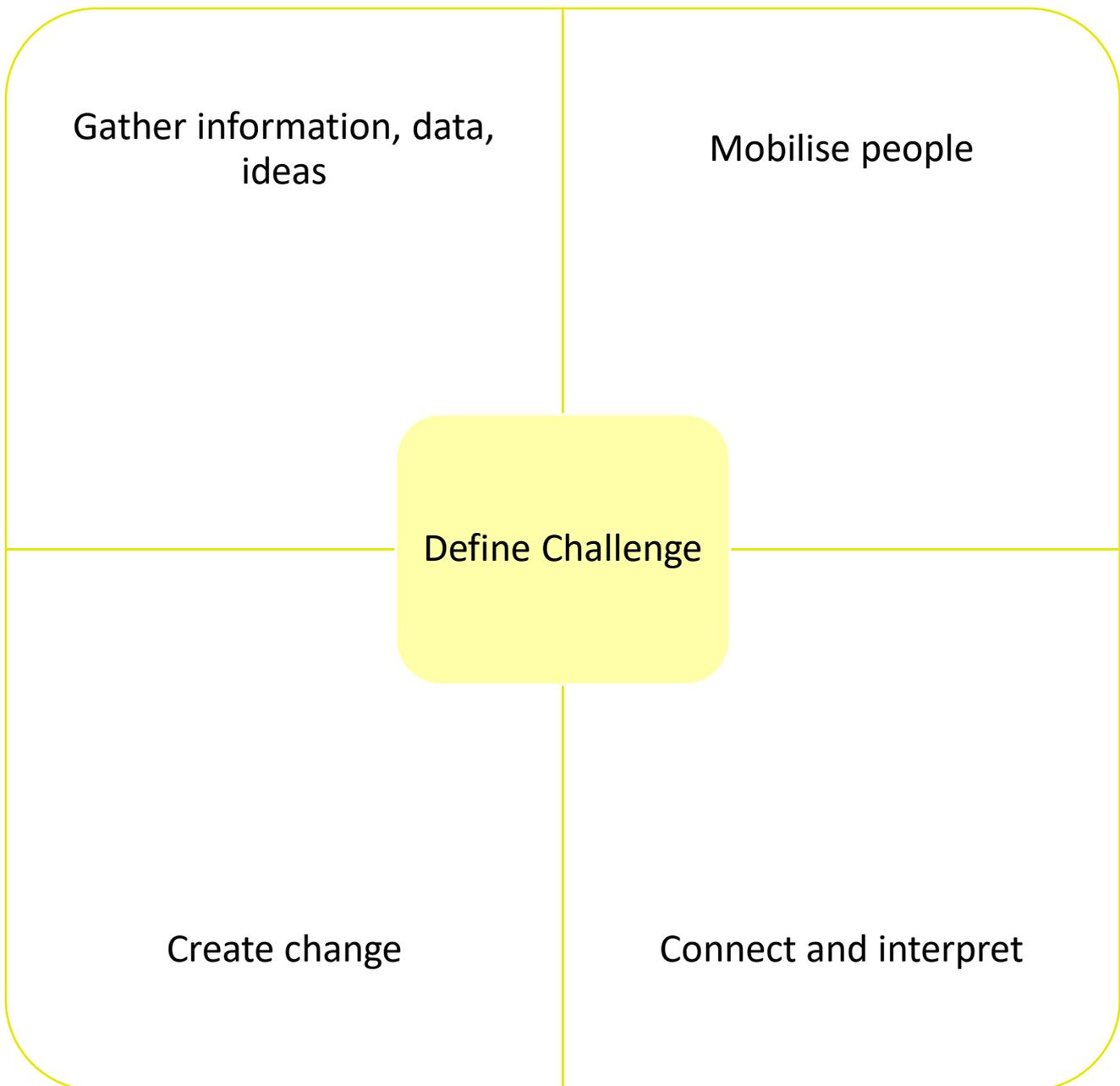
**Leadership Coat of Arms:** Using a remote-friendly exercise like Leadership Coat of Arms is a great way to encourage a creative exploration of the subject that also creates room for different ideas. Source:

<https://www.sessionlab.com/blog/remote-team-building-activities/#leadership-coat-of-arms>



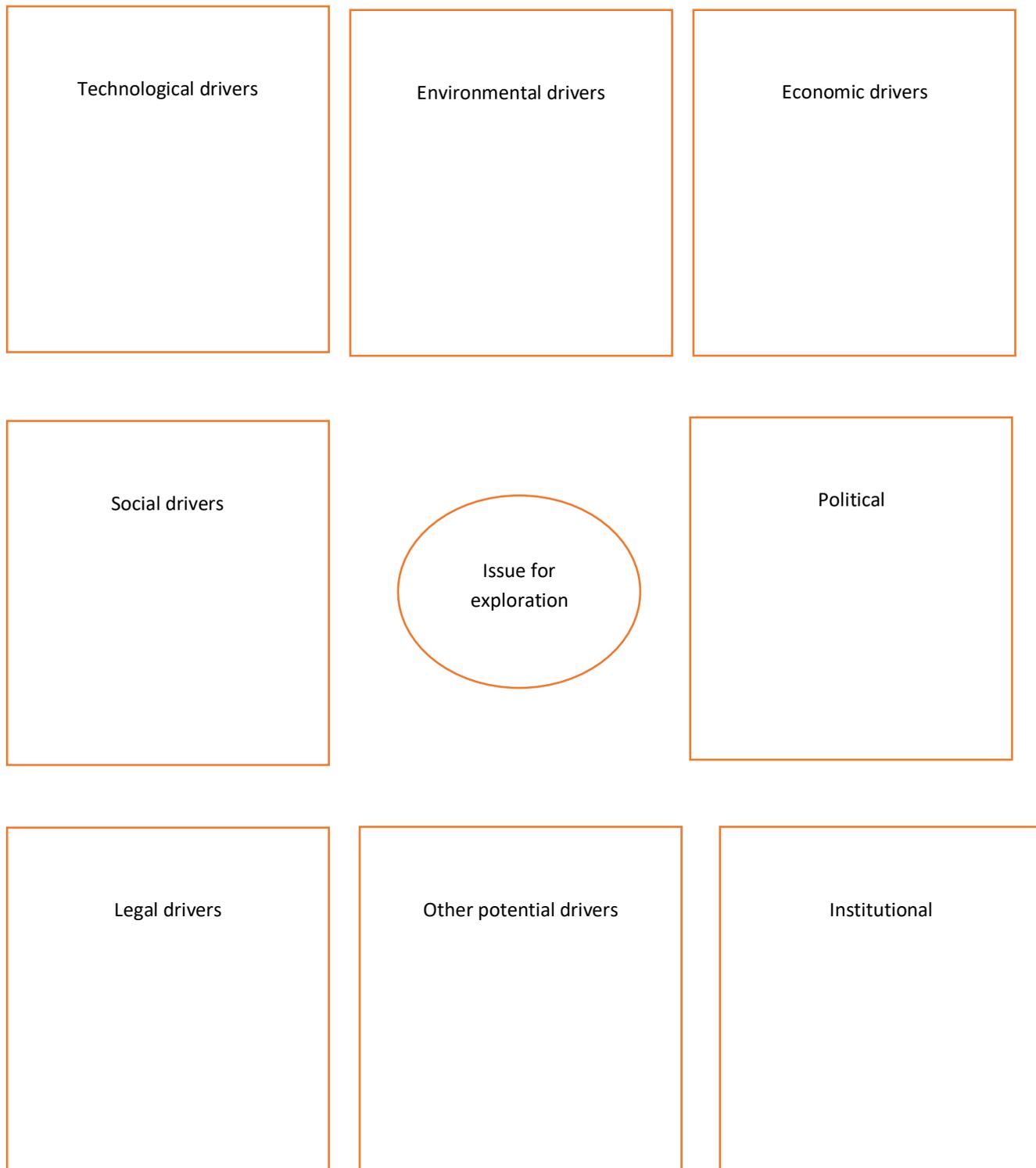
## CRETHINK TOOLS

## LIVING LAB DESIGN TEMPLATE



Source: Nesta – the collective intelligence design playbook, Kathy Peach, Aleks Berditchevskaia, Theo Bass.

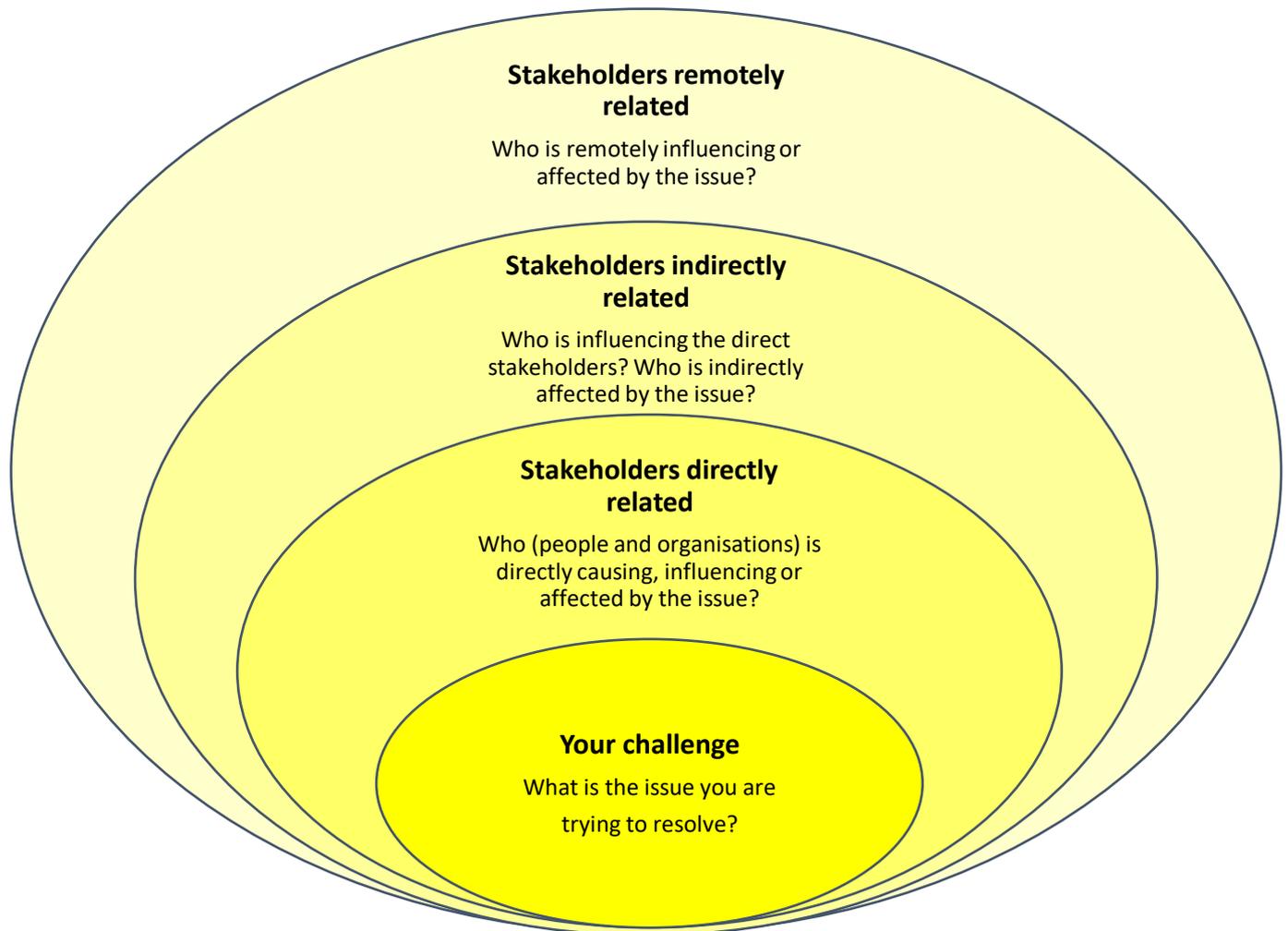
ISSUE MAP TEMPLATE



Source: Nesta – the collective intelligence design playbook, Kathy Peach, Aleks Berditchevskaia, Theo Bass.



## STAKEHOLDER MAP TEMPLATE



Source: Nesta – the collective intelligence design playbook, Kathy Peach, Aleks Berditchevskaia, Theo Bass.



# THE CRETHINK WEBSITE

[www.crethink.eu](http://www.crethink.eu)

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