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D6.1

Co-Creation Methodology

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INTRODUCTION

1.1 THE ENCODE PROJECT

The ENCODE project, titled "Unveiling Emotional Dimensions of Politics to Foster European Democracy," aims to explore and decode the role of emotions in political discourse and their impact on democratic processes. Recognising that emotional appeals have significantly influenced political movements and voter behaviour, ENCODE seeks to understand the interplay between emotions, values, and identities. The project's primary goal is to create new positive narratives that can foster trust and engagement in European democratic processes, thereby counteracting the negative emotions that often dominate political discussions. Through innovative methodologies, including social media sentiment analysis, biometric research, and surveys, ENCODE aims to provide policymakers with tools and strategies to better incorporate the emotional needs of citizens into governance, ultimately enhancing democratic resilience and fostering a more inclusive political environment.

1.2 OBJECTIVE OF THE DELIVERABLE

As first deliverable of work package 6, D6.1 is a co-design methodology for future emotional narratives. This deliverable presents a structured, replicable co-design methodology for conducting citizen innovation labs within the ENCODE project in four core countries (Poland, Austria, Denmark and Bulgaria) and based on feasibility two EU-candidate countries (Bosnia and Herzegovina and North Macedonia). Its primary objective is to equip the case study country partners with a theoretically grounded, procedurally clear, and ethically robust framework. This will enable partners to facilitate labs with confidence, ensuring consistency and quality across national contexts while allowing for necessary local adaptation.

The methodology is synthesised from multiple robust sources to ensure both intellectual rigour and practical efficacy. It integrates insights from a targeted review of citizen science and public engagement literature, analyses of relevant EU-funded projects, and the proven participatory frameworks of the Center for the Study of Democracy (CSD)'s CIVISTI-based approach and Re-Imagine Europa's REFRAME methodology. This foundation is then critically informed by ENCODE's own theoretical work, particularly concerning affective polarisation, agonistic democracy, and affective pluralisation; to tailor the process specifically to the project's goal of engaging with emotional politics.

Consequently, this document places a co-creative approach at its core, moving beyond traditional consultation. It is designed to position citizens as active agents and producers – not merely subjects – of emotional narratives. The structured process of diagnosis, imagination, and prototyping outlined herein is intended to generate future-oriented narratives that possess the necessary emotional resonance, democratic legitimacy, and practical applicability to contribute durably to a more pluralistic European public sphere.

1.3 STRUCTURE OF THE DOCUMENT

This deliverable is organised into three core chapters and a practical annex to guide implementation.

- **Chapter 2: Conceptual Landscape situates** the methodology within its theoretical foundations. It reviews the principles of co-creation and citizen social science, establishes the deliverable's resonance with relevant literature, and positions it in relation to proven methodologies from which it draws.

- **Chapter 3: Co-Design Methodology for Future Emotional Narratives** presents the procedural framework for the Citizen Innovation Labs. It details the essential preparatory steps, provides a session-by-session breakdown of the two-lab process (including objectives, activities, and facilitation guidance) and outlines the final synthesis and closing procedures.

- **Chapter 4: Conclusion synthesises** the key contributions of the methodology, reflecting on its role in advancing ENCODE's objectives of fostering affective pluralisation through participatory narrative work.

- **Annex 1: Facilitator Framework** is a complementary practical guide that supports the preparatory phase. It offers a focused toolkit for facilitators, outlining core principles, role-specific responsibilities, and practical techniques to ensure effective and confident delivery of the labs.

1.4 RELATION TO OTHER TASKS

The co-design methodology presented in this deliverable is not a standalone intervention but a **structurally integrated component of the ENCODE research and innovation framework**. Task 6.1 is designed to ensure continuity across work packages, facilitate bidirectional knowledge flows, and translate analytical insights into participatory and narrative outputs. This section clarifies the points of overlap, complementarity, and mutual reinforcement between Task 6.1 and other ENCODE tasks, work packages, and deliverables, ensuring coherence and avoiding duplication.

Task 6.1 builds directly on the analytical foundations developed in the early phases of ENCODE.

- **WP2 (Heightened understanding – a theoretical framework and an empirical review)** provides the foundational conceptual lens for Task 6.1. By advancing theoretical insights into emotional framings, affective polarisation mechanisms, and emodiversity across political and media contexts, WP2 establishes the analytical vocabulary and interpretative frameworks that underpin the Citizen Innovation Labs.

- **WP3 (Analysing Social Media Communication)** contributes essential insights into how emotions are embedded in political narratives and how they shape engagement on social media platforms. By identifying emotional dynamics, narrative patterns, and amplification mechanisms in online environments, WP3 provides an important mediated counterpart to the face-to-face co-design activities conducted in WP6.

- **WP4 (Understanding Citizen Emotional Responses – Biometrics and Qualitative Research)** focuses on observational and experimental analysis of how emotional responses are elicited, as well as the mutual influence of emotions, values, and

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identities. Using biometric and qualitative methods, WP4 captures emotional reactions in controlled or semi-controlled settings. The insights from WP4 serve as guidelines for the design of workshop scenarios in WP6, particularly in relation to emotional elicitation, sequencing, and ethical safeguards.

- **WP5 (Explaining the effects of Emotions)** examines the consequences of positive and negative emotions in politics through large-scale, multi-country data collection. By studying how emotions elicited by political narratives and campaigns influence cognitive, identity-related, attitudinal, and behavioural outcomes, WP5 provides an evidence base on the effects of emotional communication.

Insights from analytical deliverables (Tasks 2.2, 2.3, 3.4) inform the design and facilitation of the Citizen Innovation Labs. Across WP2–WP5, ENCODE combines theoretical analysis, digital observation, biometric measurement, and experimental testing. Task 6.1 occupies a distinct and complementary methodological space within this ecosystem by focusing on **participatory sense-making and narrative co-creation**.

This deliverable (D6.1) documents the methodological framework and initial implementation logic of the labs. Subsequent deliverables within WP6 and WP7 draw on the narrative outputs and methodological lessons generated here, including refined narrative typologies, policy-relevant storylines, and dissemination materials. This sequencing ensures that citizen contributions are **neither extractive nor symbolic**, but meaningfully integrated into ENCODE's knowledge production pipeline.

2. CONCEPTUAL LANDSCAPE OF CO-CREATION AND CITIZEN SCIENCE

2.1 THEORETICAL GROUNDING

The theoretical framework of the ENCODE project, established through the foundational research of Work Package 2, **positions "emotional politics" at the heart of contemporary democratic discourse**. This grounding moves beyond a purely procedural understanding of participation, instead operationalising a dual-pronged approach that integrates both positive and normative theories of affect. By acknowledging that emotions are the primary drivers of political action and social interaction, **the methodology seeks to transition from an analytical understanding of emotional drivers to a practical application that fosters democratic stability**.

Central to this framework is the challenge of **affective polarisation**, defined as the emotional distance and burgeoning antipathy between political opponents. While acknowledging top-down perspectives that highlight elite rhetoric, **Work Package 6 prioritises a bottom-up approach that addresses the psychological roots of this polarisation at the citizen level**. Here, political decision-making – whether at an institutional or individual scale – is understood as a process of choosing between alternatives shaped by diverse emotional values and collective perceptions (Nowakowski & Zieliński 2024).

A cornerstone of ENCODE's theoretical architecture is Chantal Mouffe's agonistic theory, which provides the normative basis for "radicalising democracy" within the European context (Nowakowski & Zieliński 2024). This perspective posits that a vibrant democracy does not require the elimination of conflict but rather its transformation. By shifting the political relationship from one of "enemies" (antagonism) to one of "adversaries" (agonism), **the methodology creates a space for respectful contestation where opponents recognise each other's legitimate right to exist within the same political sphere**. This shift is essential for shaping a cohesive European identity that remains resilient in the face of fragmentation. The Citizen Innovation Labs established under this project function as the practical arenas for this transformation, empowering citizens to move from passive subjects to active agents and producers of future emotional narratives.

The methodology further addresses the critical tension between modern connectivity and genuine collectivity, as explored in Deliverable 2.1 (Nowakowski & Zieliński 2024). In an era where digital interactions often fail to translate into lasting social structures, particularly during times of crisis, the project focuses on **how shared perceptions and collective experiences form the basis of political identity**. This involves a conscious effort to dismantle digital echo chambers – enclosed environments that amplify homogeneous messages while shielding individuals from counterclaims. By curating diverse perspectives within structured dialogic spaces, the co-design process models a micro-public sphere that encourages healthy discursive contestation and exposure to dissenting views.

Furthermore, the framework incorporates the development of emotional resilience and competence as adaptive responses to social adversity. By fostering emotional intelligence, the methodology equips participants with the necessary skills to navigate complex political landscapes without succumbing to polarising rhetoric. This leads to the ultimate normative goal of the project: **affective pluralisation**. Unlike the divisive logic of polarisation, affective

pluralisation represents a positive emotional shift that upholds political pluralism by recognising the ineradicably emotive nature of the public square. Through this approach, **the methodology aims to generate a state of "emodiversity," where shared emotional narratives reflect a complex and inclusive social fabric** rather than a binary "us-versus-them" hostility, thereby ensuring that political rivalry remains compatible with the principles of mutual tolerance and equal status as detailed in Deliverable 2.2 (Nowakowski & Zieliński 2024).

This theorisation positions the ENCODE co-design methodology as a practical synthesis of **positive and normative theories of emotional politics**. It accepts that affect drives political action and interaction, and it seeks to shape those affects towards democratic ends (Nowakowski & Zieliński 2024). Therefore, the methodology does not merely gather citizen input; it is a deliberate **pedagogical and political process** to:

1. **Make emotions legible and negotiable** within the political sphere.

2. **Foster affective pluralisation** by transforming antagonism into agonism.

3. **Generate new, shared emotional narratives** that reflect a complex **"emodiversity"** rather than a binary us-versus-them hostility.

These theoretical foundations are translated into concrete methodological choices – such as dialogic formats, and facilitation principles – as detailed in chapter 3 and the Facilitator Toolkit.

2.2 LITERATURE REVIEW

The conceptual understanding of co-creation and citizen social science is evolving, synthesising traditions from environmental sciences, social sociology, and participatory democratic theory. Citizen social science functions as an umbrella term, encompassing diverse methodologies that position citizens not merely as data contributors, but as substantive co-producers of knowledge and co-designers of policy responses. This review examines the core principles, democratic ethos, and critical power dynamics inherent in these collaborative practices.

At its core, co-creation is defined as a creative, iterative process involving diverse stakeholders across all stages of research and policymaking—from problem-framing and ideation to implementation and evaluation (Bason, 2021). It is distinguished from linear, expert-driven models by its inherently **relational** nature, which emphasises shared ownership over both the process and its outcomes. This process-oriented view finds a concrete methodological expression in the concept of Urban Living Labs. As highlighted in their literature review, Steen and van Bueren (2017) note that such labs are consistently defined by their innovative purpose and their grounding in a **real-life context**. They identify four foundational pillars for these labs: clearly defined objectives, a sustained process of experimentation, the use of an actual context with its surrounding dynamics, and the involvement of a diverse array of participants. This structured framework provides a valuable scaffold for designing and analysing co-creative methodologies, bridging abstract principles with practical implementation.

From a democratic theory perspective, co-creation derives its legitimacy from **pluralism**. A healthy democracy, as Graeme (2016) contends, thrives on a "multiplicity of competing

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publics." This view is complemented by Fraser's (1990) seminal work on the public sphere, which posits that robust democratic discourse depends on open contestation between civil society and institutional actors. Citizen laboratories, as argued by Giraldo Gutiérrez et al. (2023), epitomise this advancement in participation, positioning citizens as creative, knowledgeable collaborators at the heart of a cooperative progression. This process is seen to "engender inventive responses that are finely attuned to the requisites and concerns of the community whose experiences are deeply rooted in tangible spaces of everyday life." Consequently, the study of such labs holds significant promise for enhancing our comprehension of how citizen participation can broaden and fortify political decision-making within contemporary democracy. However, a significant critical tension emerges: while designed to broaden engagement, co-creation processes can inadvertently narrow plurality through the risk of "**mini-public homogeneity**," where participant selection or group dynamics fail to represent truly diverse publics.

The deliberative ideal of co-creation is frequently mediated by persistent social inequalities. Factors such as gender, education, socioeconomic status, and perceived expertise can create invisible hierarchies that shape dialogue, leading to the uneven distribution of confidence and legitimacy (Aldridge et al., 2012; Leino & Puumala, 2021). Participants may self-censor or defer to those seen as experts, undermining the principle of equitable input. Consequently, the role of the facilitator becomes paramount in mitigating these dynamics and actively creating the conditions for what Fraser (1990) terms "**participatory parity**".

A comprehensive approach to co-creation requires a re-evaluation of what constitutes valid knowledge. Emotions and personal narratives should not be dismissed as biases but recognised as foundational to how individuals interpret political and social issues. These **emotional narratives** mediate public engagement, shaping perceptions of what is plausible, just, or threatening. This recognition aligns with initiatives like ENCODE, which seek to understand the emotional undercurrents of democratic discourse as critical, yet often overlooked, "democratic data".

For participation to be meaningful, it must create spaces where individuals can "**speak in one's own voice**" (Fraser, 1986), articulating identities and lived experiences authentically. The benefits of such an approach are twofold:

- **Divergence:** It generates richer, more nuanced insights by incorporating lived experience, surpassing the often-abstract analysis of traditional expert-driven models.

- **Realisation:** It fosters greater ownership and legitimacy among participants, making co-developed solutions more resonant, socially robust, and feasible in implementation.

2.2.1 CIVISTI

To operationalise these conceptual commitments, ENCODE draws inspiration from the CIVISTI methodology, a widely recognised model for future-oriented citizen participation, improved and used by the Center for the Study of Democracy (CSD). CIVISTI provides a structured architecture that ensures citizens remain both the point of departure and the final arbiters of the process.

The methodology unfolds in three core stages:

1. **Citizen Visioning:** Citizens articulate visions, concerns, and emotional orientations about the future. They are the uncontested origin point of the process.

2. **Expert Translation:** Experts interpret these visions, converting them into policy-relevant analyses or recommendations without altering their core intent. Experts act as *translators*, not leaders.

3. **Citizen Validation:** Participants review and validate expert interpretations, ensuring fidelity and legitimacy. Citizens are thus the final evaluators.

This deliberate sequence—**Citizen Visioning → Expert Translation → Citizen Validation**—forms a closed loop that protects epistemic integrity by consistently positioning citizens as the primary authors and final evaluators of their own visions. It thus aligns seamlessly with ENCODE's core commitment to treating participants as **producers of future-oriented emotional narratives**, not as passive respondents to researcher-driven agendas.

ENCODE will integrate several CIVISTI-derived principles into its engagement model:

- **Diverse Panels, Not Statistical Samples:** Recruiting for a plurality of perspectives and lived experiences over statistical representativeness.

- **Dedicated Deliberative Spaces (ENCODE Citizen Innovation Labs):** Creating structured, facilitated environments that support in-depth reflection, creative dialogue, and co-creation.

- **Expert Role Redefined:** Positioning experts as interpreters and sense-makers, not as agenda-setters.

- **Mandatory Feedback Loops:** Institutionalising the return of all outputs to participants for validation, thereby reinforcing procedural legitimacy.

The table below summarises the adapted stages, actors, and outputs for ENCODE's implementation:

Phase	Key Actors	Primary Activity	Output
Citizen Visioning	Diverse Citizen Panels	Deliberative, long-term future visioning informed by findings from WP2/3/4/5.	A set of "citizen visions" expressing needs, wishes, and concerns for the future (e.g. 69 visions in the original project).
Expert Translation	Experts & Stakeholders	Analysis of citizen visions to extract and frame actionable policy options and research agendas during the inter-	A list of prioritised recommendations for policy, derived directly from the citizen visions.

		lab synthesis and after both labs	
Citizen Validation	Original Citizen Panels	Validation and prioritisation of the expert-translated recommendations.	A finalised, citizen-endorsed set of policy agendas presented to policymakers to be reflected in WP7.

Table 1 - CIVISTI Framework

CIVISTI's mandatory validation step is a hallmark of rigorous participatory practice. It enhances transparency, strengthens democratic legitimacy, and crucially ensures that policy-relevant outcomes remain anchored to participants' original intentions. This step also builds and sustains participant trust, an essential factor when engaging with emotionally charged and potentially polarising topics (Jacobi et al., 2011).

For ENCODE, adopting this mechanism is critical. It will ensure that **the emotional narratives co-created within the citizen innovation labs are accurately reflected in subsequent analytical phases**, and that they genuinely represent authentic citizen contributions, not researcher inference.

This **dual-level architecture**, citizen-led creation underpinned by structured expert sense-making, is central to ENCODE's integrative design. It provides the methodological backbone for cross-work package synthesis, ensuring that empirical findings from WP2–WP5 are brought into a principled and productive dialogue with citizen-generated material. Ultimately, this approach constructs a coherent engagement model where conceptual commitments to pluralism, equity, and emotional validity are given concrete procedural form.

2.2.2 REFRAME

While CIVISTI provides the structural backbone for the ENCODE process, the Re-Imagine Europa's REFRAME methodology offers the interactional toolkit necessary for working productively with emotions, narratives, and polarisation. As REFRAME was developed by Re-Imagine Europa, the **NODES** project, co-funded by the EU and coordinated by RE-Imagine Europa, built on the pre-existing REFRAME methodology to identify, analyse and address narratives fostering disinformation and polarisation.

REFRAME operationalises the core insight that many social and political divides stem not from fundamental incompatibilities, but from misunderstanding, miscommunication, misperception, and unexamined cognitive habits. Rather than suppressing emotions, **REFRAME treats them as legitimate forms of knowledge and central drivers of how individuals' reason, judge, and engage**, an approach rooted in psychology, philosophy, behavioural sciences, neurosciences, semiotics, and communication theory. Its purpose is not to neutralise emotional expression but to redirect attention toward the substantive issues at stake, preventing discussions from being derailed by defensive reactions or entrenched positions.
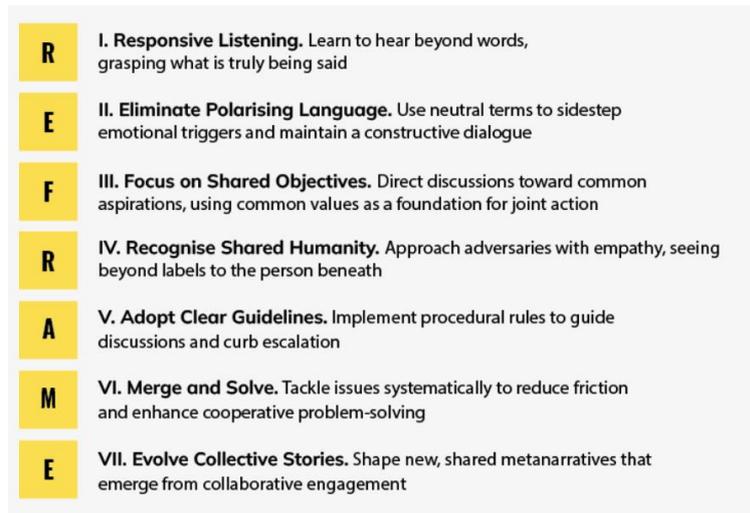
Figure 1 - REFRAME Framework

NODES builds directly on insights generated by Re-Imagine Europa's REFRAME which established essential diagnostic tools for understanding the narrative ecosystems in which participants operate. **Narrative Maps make visible the broader landscape of worldviews, values, symbolic cues, and emotional anchors that shape public debate**. They offer a structured picture of the discursive context that participants bring with them into co-creation spaces from which this methodology aims to draw (Staël von Holstein et al. 2024).

Complementing this, **Narrative Traps capture the cognitive shortcuts and biases through which individuals and groups interpret complex issues**. Drawing on Kahneman's work on heuristics and cognitive fallacies, NODES treats these traps as a form of "human black-box thinking": deeply ingrained interpretative patterns that operate below the level of conscious reflection. Like opaque algorithmic systems, these internal shortcuts can yield distorted or overly simplified interpretations of reality. Disinformation strategies often exploit precisely these vulnerabilities, amplifying mistrust and polarisation. By identifying and framing these traps, REFRAME and NODES create the conditions for participants to surface their own interpretative filters and engage in more nuanced, reflective dialogue.

Building from these diagnostic elements, REFRAME introduces a suite of **bridge-building tools** designed to support communication across divergent narrative communities. These bridges focus on shared concerns or values identified through Narrative Maps and help counteract adversarial dynamics often seen in polarised debates, which were effectively used in the narrative analysis, and prototyping of long-term sustainable measures in NODES. Two key practices operationalise this approach:

- **Responsive Listening**, which reduces defensiveness and fosters interpersonal trust by ensuring participants feel heard and understood.

- **Eliminating Polarising Language**, which interrupts escalation patterns, enhances psychological safety, and broadens the space for collaborative reasoning.

A further dimension of REFRAME, one that is particularly central to the ENCODE co-creation model, is its focus on **Empowering Collective Action**. Rather than merely analysing existing narratives, REFRAME encourages participants to co-design shared narratives that transcend

existing divides and orient the group toward future common purpose. This generative step ensures that emotional and narrative tools culminate in actionable, forward-looking outcomes (Nowak et al. 2023).

Taken together, the **REFRAME methodology provides the interpersonal scaffolding required for meaningful co-creation**. Its emphasis on techniques such as responsive listening, emotion recognition, and the removal of polarising cues directly supports ENCODE's aim to cultivate emotionally aware, psychologically safe participatory environments. By foregrounding emotions as key determinants of narrative plausibility and political meaning-making, a central finding from WP2 and WP3, REFRAME ensures that co-creation processes are attuned to the affective dimension of democratic engagement. Participants are encouraged not only to articulate their own viewpoints but to understand the emotional logic behind others' perspectives, reducing defensiveness and fostering trust. These tools collectively reinforce the core affective and cognitive conditions required for ENCODE's citizen innovation labs: openness, curiosity, vulnerability, and creative collaboration.

2.2.3 DOUBLE DIAMOND STRUCTURE
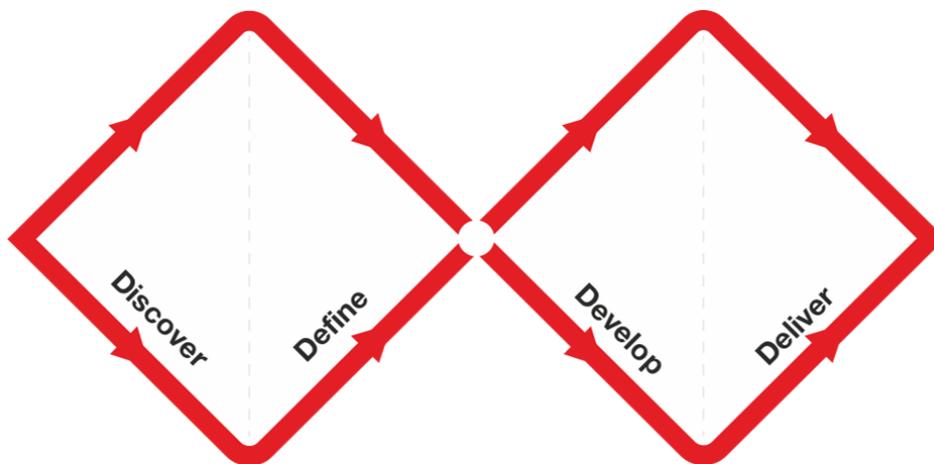
Figure 2 - Double Diamond Structure (retrieved from Design Council)

The Double-Diamond structure offers a clear visual and conceptual model for understanding the iterative logic that underpins effective co-creation processes. Originally developed by the UK Design Council in 2005 for start-ups and private sector productivity processes, it captures the **natural rhythm through which groups move as they engage with complex problems: alternating between phases of divergence and convergence**. The initial process hold 4 phases: Discover, Define, Develop, and Deliver.

The discover phase involves establishing an idea or user need and requires a wide perspective and minimal formalisation to foster innovation. Actions in the Discover phase should generate innovation, so a wide perspective and minimal formalisation is required. This phase aims for divergence in thought, allowing designers to explore a multitude of sources and ideas.

The define phase focuses on refining ideas, problems, and needs towards end goals in line with corporate objectives and interests. This stage synthesises information from the Discover phase into actionable tasks related to product or service development. The Define phase also

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involves assessing the project's context, including financial considerations, investment, and competing products.

The develop phase focuses on development, iteration, and testing, using design methods such as brainstorming, visualisation, prototyping, and scenarios. The project is focused on producing the product or service agreed upon in the previous stages, with less room for exploration. This stage often involves close collaboration within a multi-disciplinary team including engineers, material specialists, and manufacturers.

Finally, the deliver phase involves final testing, sign-off, production, and launch of the product or service. This phase includes feedback collection to identify any problems, opportunities, or new ideas for future products. Marketing, packaging, and branding are key aspects of this stage, ensuring brand consistency (Gustafsson 2019).

Adapted to the frame of citizen science by the university of Gent, the **EU co-funded ACCOMPLISSH project** converted these four phases into the first diamond begins with **divergence**, a deliberate opening up of the problem space in which participants are encouraged to generate a wide spectrum of ideas, surface diverse perspectives, and articulate the full breadth of their lived experiences without premature evaluation. This phase aims to expand the collective understanding of the issue by revealing underlying assumptions, values, and emotional drivers that might otherwise remain implicit. It is followed by **convergence**, during which the group works to refine, cluster, and interpret the material generated. Here, participants collaboratively identify core challenges, define shared priorities, and select the most meaningful or actionable insights. This convergent step itself contains two distinct but interrelated components: an **analytical phase**, focused on building a shared understanding of the problem, and a **conceptual phase**, dedicated to generating and shaping potential solutions (Vandael et al. 2018).

The second diamond repeats this cycle, shifting from problem-definition to **solution development**. Once again, participants diverge by exploring multiple pathways, testing narratives, modelling scenarios, or envisioning alternative futures; they then converge by evaluating options, prototyping ideas, and collectively deciding which future-aligned emotional narratives or policy directions to pursue. Crucially, the Double-Diamond structure is not linear but cyclical. Each analytical phase should be treated as iterative, allowing participants to return to earlier stages when new information, emotional insights, or shifts in group understanding emerge. This flexibility is essential in contexts such as ENCODE, where co-creation involves navigating affective complexity, evolving perspectives, and dynamic group interactions. By embracing repeated cycles of expansion and synthesis, the Double-Diamond model ensures that the process remains both grounded in collective meaning-making and capable of producing coherent, actionable outcome (Vandael et al. 2018).

Complementary to this structure, Thomas et al. (2021) propose four interlinked dimensions that help sequence and deepen co-creation:

1. **Participation:** Opening spaces for social encounters and connection (e.g. ice-breaking and group formation activities).

2. **Transdisciplinarity:** Establishing communicative practices that bridge diverse perspectives (e.g. emotional triggers chart).

3. **Reflexivity:** Encouraging self-understanding and critical reflection on individual and collective positions.

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4. **Impact:** Engaging outputs within broader (counter-)public discourses and linking positive emotions to actionable behaviour.

Using the Double Diamond structure, the citizen innovation labs will aim for both labs to follow the following overarching structure:

- Discover -> Emotional diagnosis
- Define -> Narrative tensions
- Develop -> Narrative Prototyping
- Deliver -> Validated emotional narratives

Together, these frameworks ensure that ENCODE's co-creation process is **systematic yet flexible**, balancing structure with creativity and reflection.

2.2.4 PSYCHOLOGICAL ENGINE OF CO-CREATION

To move from a structured participatory architecture to a genuinely generative process, the ENCODE methodology must engage the psychological and rhetorical dynamics underpinning collective meaning-making. When the structural clarity of a model like CIVISTI is animated by the interactional tools of REFRAME methodology, a distinct collaborative engine is activated. In this environment, participants do not merely exchange opinions but actively **construct meaning together**; staking out positions, negotiating interpretations, and iteratively refining emerging ideas (Dryzek, 2000; Nabatchi & Leighninger, 2015). Individual expressions gradually merge into a shared narrative endeavour, where perspectives are tested, counterarguments are articulated, and new meanings are collaboratively stabilised. This dynamic, communicative process is foundational to democratic engagement, transforming citizens into co-authors of political knowledge (Nowakowski & Zieliński, 2024), but also requiring facilitators to be trained and aware of this psychological dimension to guide towards the smooth development of the citizen innovation labs.

A number of psychological processes structure this transformation. Social identity formation is central. As participants engage with one another, they often shift from speaking as isolated individuals to experiencing themselves as part of a collective "we". This is consistent with **Social Identity Theory** (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Nowakowski & Zieliński, 2024), which suggests that group belonging fosters trust, solidarity, and willingness to consider shared futures. In ENCODE citizen innovation labs, this identity shift is not imposed but emerges organically through shared emotional labour, collaborative problem-solving, and the recognition of common concerns.

Another dynamic is **cognitive dissonance**, a well-documented mechanism (Festinger, 1957) triggered by exposure to divergent or unfamiliar viewpoints. In co-creation settings, this discomfort is not a barrier but a productive force. Through facilitated reframing and supportive dialogue, participants may reinterpret their assumptions and integrate elements of others' perspectives. This aligns with theories of transformative learning (Mezirow, 1991), which emphasise that encountering dissonance is the catalyst for deeper cognitive and emotional shifts.

Emotional contagion and empathic resonance also shape group interactions. Research from social and affective neuroscience (Hatfield, Cacioppo & Rapson, 1992; Immordino-Yang, 2016; Nowakowski & Zieliński, 2024) demonstrates that **emotions spread rapidly in collective environments, influencing mood, energy, and capacity for cooperation**. In ENCODE citizen

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innovation labs, these flows of emotion can either foster cohesion or undermine safety if not carefully monitored. REFRAME's techniques, particularly responsive listening and the elimination of polarising language, help stabilise these affective dynamics, ensuring the group remains in a cooperative rather than defensive emotional register.

A further mechanism is moral imagination, which is especially activated during speculative or future-oriented exercises. **Moral imagination involves the ability to envision alternative futures, empathise with others' lived realities, and consider what is ethically desirable** (Johnson, 1993; Marková, 2016). In the labs, moral imagination is essential for moving beyond critique and towards the creation of shared emotional narratives that articulate actionable, future-facing possibilities.

Thomas et al. (2021) capture the broader political significance of these intertwined processes. By transforming private attitudes and emotions into generalisable knowledge and shared visions, participants become "political subjects in the political sphere." In other words, **co-creation does not only generate narratives; it generates democratic agency**.

To ensure these mechanisms unfold in a constructive and empowering manner, this methodology incorporates a set of monitoring, reflective, and analytic tools that help facilitators track and support group processes.

Rhetorical Mapping Tools can be used to visualise emerging arguments, identify where tensions arise, and highlight evolving points of consensus. These maps draw inspiration from discourse analysis, rhetorical cartography, and participatory action research methods, helping both facilitators and participants become aware of how meaning is co-constructed. **Affective Climate Tracking** (through facilitator observations, brief emotional check-ins, or post-session reflections) enables the team to **detect shifts in mood, fatigue, enthusiasm, or anxiety**. Tools from group psychology (e.g. emotional climate scales; Barsade & Knight, 2015) could be adapted to support this.

Narrative Role Analysis involves **identifying recurring communicative archetypes within the group** (for example, the sceptic, the visionary, the mediator, or the emotional anchor). These roles draw on traditions from organisational psychology and group dynamics (Benne & Sheats, 1948) and can **help facilitators maintain balanced participation, ensuring no role dominates or goes unrecognised**.

Finally, reflective intervals, implemented as **structured pauses within or between sessions, offer participants space to articulate what has shifted for them cognitively or emotionally**. These align with practices in deliberative pedagogy and mindfulness-infused facilitation (Boyd & Markowitz, 2021), allowing participants to metabolise dissonance and integrate new insights.

3. CO-DESIGN METHODOLOGY FOR FUTURE EMOTIONAL NARRATIVES

3.1 METHODOLOGICAL OVERVIEW

The preceding chapter has established the conceptual and methodological foundations underpinning the ENCODE co-creation approach. Drawing on literature and theories of emotional politics, affective polarisation, and agonistic democracy, alongside insights from citizen social science and participatory design form previous EU-co-funded projects, it has articulated why emotions must be treated not as peripheral influences but as constitutive elements of democratic life. Through the examination of CIVISTI and REFRAME, the chapter has further demonstrated how citizen-led, emotionally attentive processes can generate legitimate, pluralistic, and future-oriented public narratives.

Chapter 3 translates these foundations into a **concrete, operational co-design methodology**. It details how the theoretical principles of affective pluralisation, epistemic inclusion, and participatory parity are embedded within the practical design of the ENCODE Citizen Innovation Labs. Rather than presenting co-creation as an abstract ideal, the methodology specifies **how emotions are surfaced, negotiated, and transformed into shared narratives** through structured facilitation, deliberative sequencing, and creative exercises.

The co-design framework presented in Chapter 3 is intentionally **procedural, replicable, and adaptable across national contexts** (Wilczyński et al. 2024). It defines the preparatory conditions required for effective implementation, including participant recruitment, ethical safeguards, accessibility measures, and facilitator training. It then outlines a two-stage lab process that guides participants from emotional diagnosis and narrative exploration to collective imagination and prototyping of future emotional narratives. Throughout, facilitation tools derived from REFRAME support psychologically safe dialogue, while CIVISTI-inspired feedback loops ensure that citizens remain the primary authors and validators of the outputs.

In doing so, Chapter 3 positions the citizen innovation labs as **micro-public spheres** in which democratic contestation is not suppressed but productively re-oriented. These labs operationalise ENCODE's core ambition: to move beyond the analysis of emotional dynamics and toward the **co-creation of emotionally resonant, democratically legitimate narratives** that can inform subsequent research, policy reflection, and dissemination activities across the project.

Based on the CIVISTI methodology, REFRAME and other findings outlined in the literature review, the citizen innovation lab will aim to place participants in their position as active creators of an emotional narrative, ensuring them the structured environment for them to channel their imagination, real-life experience and reflections into the process. The concrete outputs of both citizen labs are various dimension of narrative components directed to compose final emotional narratives.

3.2 GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The co-design methodology underpinning the ENCODE Citizen Innovation Labs is guided by a set of core principles that ensure methodological rigour, democratic legitimacy, and ethical robustness. These principles translate the conceptual foundations outlined in Chapter 2 mainly building on the theoretical grounding of work package 2, into **concrete quality criteria** that shape the design, facilitation, and evaluation of the labs. They also provide a shared reference framework to support **replicability and contextual adaptation** across different national and socio-political settings. The methodology is aims to be applied in **four core countries** (Poland, Austria, Denmark and Bulgaria) and potentially **two EU-candidate countries** (Bosnia and Herzegovina and North Macedonia). The implementation of the citizen innovation labs for the two EU-candidate countries is not considered mandatory and can be adapted to an online version if necessary.

The methodology is grounded in the principle that all participants enter the co-design process as **epistemic contributors of equal legitimacy**. Citizens' lived experiences, emotional responses, and narrative framings are treated as valid forms of knowledge, rather than as inputs to be filtered or corrected by experts. This principle draws on citizen social science approaches and directly informs the facilitation design, which actively mitigates power asymmetries linked to education, confidence, or social status. More concretely, the methodology aims for **participant selection that prioritises diversity of experiences on top of representativeness**, facilitation techniques ensure balanced speaking time, and expert involvement is limited to sense-making and translation phases rather than agenda-setting or validation.

Rather than aiming for consensus or harmonisation of views, the ENCODE methodology explicitly seeks to foster **affective pluralisation**. Emotional disagreement, tension, and ambivalence are recognised as constitutive elements of democratic life and are treated as productive resources within the co-design process. The labs are therefore structured to allow multiple emotional narratives to coexist, even when they are incompatible or unresolved. This implies that during implementation lab activities will prioritise the articulation and mapping of divergent emotional positions, and outputs are documented as narrative clusters rather than unified statements. Facilitation will aim to avoid premature convergence and instead supports reflective engagement with difference. Building on the *Cycle of Distrust*, an outcome of Re-Imagine Europa's narrative research and used previous in NODES, facilitators will aim to tackle the different stages of the distrust process through **facilitation techniques to encourage participants to go beyond existing polarising narratives** and focus on elements that can foster a positive emotional turn.

Given the centrality of emotions to the methodology, particular attention is paid to **emotional safety and ethical reflexivity** throughout the process. The labs are designed as psychologically safe spaces in which participants can express emotionally charged perspectives without fear of stigmatisation, exposure, or instrumentalisation. Ethical considerations extend beyond formal compliance to include ongoing reflexive assessment of emotional risks. In this regard, **facilitators are trained to recognise emotional escalation, establish clear participation norms, and intervene when necessary**. Informed consent procedures explicitly address emotional engagement, and participants retain the right to withdraw or refrain from specific activities at any stage.

Additionally, **transparency is treated as a core condition of legitimacy**. Participants are informed about the objectives of the labs, the use of collected materials, and the pathways through which outputs will be integrated into subsequent ENCODE work packages. This transparency supports trust and helps prevent extractive forms of participation. This means

that each lab begins with a clear explanation of its purpose and ends with a reflexive feedback moment. Documentation practices ensure traceability from citizen contributions to synthesised outputs, in line with CIVISTI-inspired feedback loops.

The ENCODE co-design methodology is designed to be **procedural rather than prescriptive**. While the overall structure, sequencing, and quality criteria remain consistent, the specific content, examples, and facilitation tools can be adapted to different national contexts, languages, and thematic focuses. This balance supports both scientific robustness and local relevance. This is addressed in the shared methodological framework through facilitation guidelines, to be provided across implementation sites, while allowing partners to adjust recruitment strategies, narrative prompts, and contextual references in response to local socio-political dynamics informed from findings from work package 3, 4 and 5.

Finally, the methodology is informed by a commitment to reflexivity and continuous learning. The **citizen innovation labs are not treated as fixed interventions but as evolving processes that generate insights** into both democratic narratives and participatory methods themselves. Therefore, facilitators and organisers document methodological challenges, unexpected dynamics, and lessons learned. These reflections feed into iterative adjustments of the lab design and inform cross-WP learning within ENCODE.

3.3 PREPARATORY PHASE

3.3.1 PARTICIPANTS RECRUITMENT

Each partner holds the primary responsibility for managing the recruitment process within their respective pilot country, ensuring that the participants gathered reflect the local socio-political landscape in case study countries which entails **four core countries** (Poland, Austria, Denmark and Bulgaria) and **two EU-candidate countries** (Bosnia and Herzegovina and North Macedonia).

The methodology requires the assembly of two distinct cohorts for an in-person workshop, with each group comprising a minimum of ten and a maximum of twenty participants. This specific scale is designed to be large enough to reflect a variety of perspectives, yet intimate enough to foster the deep, structured dialogue necessary for building emotional competence.

The first cohort, designated as **Group 1**, is composed of **"ordinary" citizens** who represent the general population. The recruitment of this group seeks to encompass a broad demographic spectrum, including a wide range of ages, genders, ethnicities, career paths, and educational backgrounds. The sample will include individuals **aged 18–65**, of **all gender identities**, and from **diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds**, reflecting national population characteristics, for instance including members of the German minority, Indigenous Greenlandic and Faroese populations in Denmark; or Roma community members for Poland, Austria and Bulgaria. Recruitment will ensure variation in **educational attainment** (secondary education, vocational education and training, undergraduate and postgraduate levels) and **professional status** (students, employed, self-employed, unemployed, and individuals in career transition). Particular attention will be paid to achieving **balanced representation across age groups and genders** within each country.

By bringing together such a cross-section of society, the methodology aims to simulate a micro-public sphere where a diverse array of emotional narratives can intersect. This

diversity is considered a central pillar for guaranteeing a rich workshop experience, as it directly counters the homogeneity found in digital echo chambers and provides the raw material for emodiversity.

While achieving a perfectly representative demographic sample is the ideal ambition to ensure the depth of the co-design process, the methodology adopts a pragmatic approach to its implementation. Recognising the significant logistical challenges inherent in grassroots outreach, **partners are expected to make every concerted effort to recruit diverse profiles as a priority**. However, this is not framed as a strictly mandatory criterion in a rigid statistical sense; rather, it is a guiding principle that acknowledges the practical constraints of the recruitment process. This flexibility ensures that the workshops can proceed effectively while still striving to create an inclusive arena for agonistic contestation, where citizens of all backgrounds can engage as active co-creators of new political narratives. This broad participation in Group 1 provides the essential social context against which the more specific insights from Group 2 can be understood.

Group 2 comprises a selection of **"vulnerable" citizens** within each respective pilot country, specifically targeting those individuals who are most susceptible to the psychological roots of affective polarisation or who find themselves on the periphery of mainstream political discourse. In alignment with the theoretical findings of Work Package 2, this group includes citizens whose **socio-economic circumstances, digital exclusion, low educational background or minority status may lead to heightened feelings of alienation and fragmentation** (i.e individuals with a migrant or refugee background, single parents, elderly people living alone, people with disabilities, residents of socio-economically disadvantaged urban areas, or rural areas and in some instances LGBTQI+ individuals). The recruitment of this cohort is essential for operationalising the project's commitment to affective pluralisation, as it ensures that the citizen innovation labs do not merely replicate existing power dynamics but instead function as inclusive micro-public spheres. By involving those who are often isolated within digital echo chambers or sidelined by elite-led rhetoric, the methodology seeks to build collective emotional resilience and foster a more complex emodiversity. Partners are tasked with identifying these participants through the lens of local context – considering factors such as economic precariousness, linguistic barriers, or political marginalisation – to ensure that the resulting emotional narratives are truly representative of a pluralistic society. While the project recognises the inherent challenges in engaging these harder-to-reach demographics, their participation is a prerequisite for transforming antagonistic political relations into agonistic ones.

3.3.2 ETHICAL AND DATA PROTECTION FRAMEWORK

The establishment of a rigorous ethical protocol is particularly vital given the involvement of "vulnerable" citizens in Group 2 and the emotional risk the practice of the labs represents. This requires the development of **comprehensive informed consent forms** that clearly outline how participant data will be handled, stored, and anonymised in accordance with **GDPR**, institutional ethical standards and ENCODE's D1.4 Personal Data Management Plan (Walczak-Gomuła et al. 2024). Given the project's focus on emotions and political identity, the consent process must explicitly address the sensitivity of the information being shared. Furthermore, a specific safeguarding policy must be in place to support participants who may experience emotional distress during discussions on polarising or sensitive topics, ensuring that the "safe space" promised by the methodology is maintained both ethically and practically.

3.3.3 ACCESSIBILITY AND INCLUSION MEASURES

The practical execution of the citizen innovation labs requires a **physical environment that mirrors the theoretical commitment to creating a safe and inclusive dialogic space**. All workshops will be conducted in person at **accessible, neutral venues** to ensure that participants from both groups feel comfortable engaging in potentially emotive political contestation. To facilitate this, partners must provide a comprehensive suite of tools designed to make emotions legible and negotiable. This includes high-visibility materials such as large-format flipcharts and heavy-duty paper to allow for the collective mapping of ideas, alongside an ample supply of pens, markers, and stationery for real-time brainstorming. Sticky notes or colour-coded cards are particularly essential, as they serve as the primary medium for categorising different affects and identifying points of agonistic tension during the co-design process.

Beyond the primary facilitation tools, the setting must provide participants with the resources necessary to remain informed and connected to the wider project. Each workshop station should be equipped with professional **leaflets** that outline the ENCODE project's objectives and the specific role of the citizen innovation lab. To ensure the process is transparent and grounded in evidence, partners must also provide clear links – ideally through printed QR codes or easy-to-read URLs – to the project's theoretical findings and evolving results. This **ensures that participants understand how their contributions feed into emodiversity**, the project seeks to cultivate. Furthermore, the provision of **refreshments** is a mandatory requirement to foster a sense of collective experience and shared perception, helping to mitigate the intensity of political disagreement. Finally, where appropriate, the use of **recording** equipment or digital tablets is encouraged to document the sessions, ensuring that the momentary connectivity of the workshop is accurately captured for future policy development.

To truly uphold the principles of affective pluralisation and emodiversity, the preparatory phase must include a accessibility check. This extends beyond physical wheelchair access to include cognitive and linguistic accessibility. For Group 2, in particular, partners must consider **whether the technical language of "emotional politics" needs to be translated into "plain English"** or the local equivalent to avoid creating new barriers to participation (Wilczyński et al. 2024). If a pilot country has significant linguistic diversity or minority groups with specific language needs (e.g. Bosnia and Herzegovina), the provision of professional interpreters or translated stimuli is a mandatory preparatory step to ensure that the "equal political status" mentioned in the theoretical grounding is reflected in the workshop's execution.

3.3.4 FACILITATOR TRAINING AND ROLE DEFINITION

The role of the facilitator in an ENCODE workshop differs significantly from a standard focus group moderator; therefore, **a dedicated facilitator briefing is essential** (*refer to Annex 1: Lead & Process Faciliators' Toolkit)*. Facilitators, in their reflexive role must be trained in the nuances of "agonistic moderation", the skill of allowing conflict and disagreement to surface while ensuring it remains respectful and channelled towards "adversarial" rather than "antagonistic" ends. This involves selecting lead facilitators **with previous experience** in similar or relevant positions and **preparing facilitators to recognise the "bottom-up" psychological roots of polarisation, emotional escalation management** and equipping them with techniques to de-escalate binary hostility without suppressing the emotive character of the political discourse.

Facilitators are also required to familiarise themselves with all the **'Facilitator Notes'** for all activities and segments, ahead of the citizen innovation labs. Additionally, partners are requested to adapt the prompts of the citizen innovation labs to the local relevance of their country. This preparation ensures that the labs function as intended: as arenas for the radicalisation of democracy through structured contestation.

3.4 CO-DESIGN PROCESS ARCHITECTURE

The ENCODE co-design methodology is operationalised through a **structured, multi-stage process architecture** that translates theoretical principles into a replicable participatory sequence. The **Citizen Innovation Labs** are designed as **temporally and functionally distinct yet interconnected stages**, allowing participants to move from emotional diagnosis to the co-creation of future-oriented emotional narratives. This sequencing ensures both depth of reflection and continuity of participation, while preventing premature convergence or superficial consensus.

The overall process consists of **two Citizen Innovation Labs**, separated by an inter-lab synthesis phase. Each lab has a distinct objective, set of activities, and expected outputs, while collectively forming a coherent methodological pathway. The architecture draws inspiration from the Double Diamond design logic, adapted to the specific requirements of democratic co-creation and emotional inquiry. Rather than focusing on problem-solution dynamics typical of innovation contexts, the ENCODE adaptation prioritises **narrative exploration, emotional articulation, and pluralistic imagination**.

3.4.1 PROCESS SEQUENCING

The co-design process unfolds across three core phases:

1. **Citizen Innovation Lab 1 – Emotional Diagnosis and Narrative Exploration**

   This initial lab focuses on surfacing participants' emotional experiences, values, and perceptions related to the thematic focus of the ENCODE project. It enables the identification of dominant emotions, latent tensions, and existing narrative framings that shape democratic engagement.

2. **Inter-Lab Synthesis and Sense-Making**

   Outputs from the first lab are analysed and synthesised by the project team and associated experts. This phase serves a translational function, transforming raw emotional narratives into structured materials that can support collective imagination in the subsequent lab, without filtering or re-authoring citizens' contributions.
3. **Citizen Innovation Lab 2 – Narrative Co-Creation and Prototyping**

   Building on the insights generated in the first phase, the second lab supports participants in co-creating future emotional narratives. This phase emphasises imagination, reframing, and the articulation of alternative affective trajectories that can foster democratic resilience.

The temporal separation between labs allows for reflection, analytical processing, and methodological quality control, while maintaining continuity through consistent participant involvement wherever possible.

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3.4.2 FORMAT

Each citizen innovation lab is designed as a **two and a half hours facilitated session**, depending on contextual constraints and implementation settings (Wilczyński et al. 2024). Labs are conducted with **small, diverse groups**, typically ranging from 10 to 20 participants, to balance inclusivity with the depth of interaction required for emotional and narrative work.

Group composition is intentionally heterogeneous, bringing together participants with differing experiences, perspectives, and emotional positions. This diversity is treated as a methodological asset rather than a challenge, enabling the exploration of affective pluralisation in practice. Where necessary, participants may be divided into smaller working groups during specific activities, before reconvening in plenary sessions.

Prompts, exercises and examples supported in this document are aimed to **be adapted to reflect up-to-date findings** from currently pending tasks such results of local biometric experience of work package 4, at the time of the execution of the citizen innovation labs.

3.4.3. PROCESS DOCUMENTATION AND CONTINUITY

Throughout the co-design process, systematic documentation ensures continuity between stages and traceability of outputs. Notes, visual artefacts, and narrative materials generated during the labs are recorded using predefined documentation templates. This documentation supports both inter-lab synthesis and later integration of outputs into subsequent ENCODE work packages.

By combining clear sequencing, structured facilitation, and rigorous documentation, the co-design process architecture provides a **robust and transferable framework** for the collective development of future emotional narratives. It establishes the conditions under which emotional plurality can be explored constructively and translated into outputs with relevance for democratic research and practice.

3.5 CITIZEN INNOVATION LAB 1

Citizen Innovation Lab 1 constitutes the **foundational phase** of the ENCODE co-design process. Its primary function is to surface, externalise, and collectively analyse the emotional landscapes and narrative framings that currently shape democratic engagement. Through a carefully sequenced set of activities, the lab guides participants from individual emotional expression to shared diagnostic insight, establishing the analytical and relational groundwork for subsequent narrative co-creation.

All Citizen Innovation Labs conducted in person follow a common structure, adapted to local context and thematic focus. Lab 1 is designed as a **single, extended facilitated session** lasting approximately **2 hours and 30 minutes**, structured into onboarding, trust-building, exploration and elicitation, synthesis, and closure phases.

CITIZEN INNOVATION LAB 1 STRUCTURE	
ONBOARDING	15 min
SEGMENT 1: TRUST BUILDING	15 min

SEGMENT 2: EXPLORATION & ELICITATION – ACTIVITY 1 *EMPATHY MAPPING*	30 min
SEGMENT 2: EXPLORATION & ELICITATION – ACTIVITY 2 *EXPERIENCING TOMORROW*	45 min
SEGMENT 3: SYNTHESIS & SENSE-MAKING	30 min
LOGISTICS AND CLOSING STATEMENT	15 min
TOTAL	2h30

Table 2 - Citizen Innovation Lab 1 Structure

3.5.1 OBJECTIVES

Citizen Innovation Lab 1 pursues four interrelated objectives:

1. To establish a **secure, respectful, and creatively generative space** that enables participants to engage as agents and producers of emotional narratives.

2. To elicit a **diverse range of emotional experiences, perceptions, frustrations, and hopes** related to democratic discourse and key ENCODE thematic areas.

3. To diagnose the **emotional drivers, narrative gaps, and pluralisation barriers** embedded in current political narratives.

4. To generate a **shared analytical foundation** that can be translated into a concrete design brief for Citizen Innovation Lab 2.

3.5.2 INPUTS

The design and facilitation of Citizen Innovation Lab 1 are informed by multiple inputs:

- Insights from preceding ENCODE work packages, including identified narrative traps, emotional framings, and polarisation dynamics.

- Contextual adaptation by local partners to ensure relevance to national and thematic debates (e.g. climate, immigration, Russian invasion of Ukraine).

- Facilitation materials, including empathy map templates, sticky notes, visual mapping tools, and future-oriented narrative prompts.

3.5.3 CORE ACTIVITIES

Onboarding

The lab opens with a structured onboarding moment. Facilitators welcome participants and outline the overarching aims of the ENCODE project, the specific objectives of the lab series, and the role of the Citizen Innovation Labs as **practical arenas for agonistic engagement**. Participants are explicitly positioned as co-producers rather than respondents.

Ethical safeguards are communicated in clear, participant-centred language, including:

- The voluntary nature of participation and the right to withdraw.

- Commitments to confidentiality and anonymisation.

- Shared ground rules for respectful communication that acknowledge emotion while channelling it constructively.

SEGMENT 1 – FOUNDATION AND TRUST-BUILDING

This introductory segment establishes the **relational and emotional conditions** necessary for meaningful co-design. Its purpose is to build trust, affirm participant agency, and implicitly model the principles of affective pluralisation.

Phase 1 – Individual Reflection and Manifestation

Participants respond individually to a positively framed, locally adaptable prompt (e.g. a place holding positive emotional resonance). Responses are written on sticky notes and placed on a shared board, externalising personal affective narratives.

Phase 2 – Engaging with the 'Other'

Participants select a sticky note that is not their own and locate its author, initiating an encounter with an unfamiliar emotional perspective.

Phase 3 – Dialogue and Connection-Building

Guided one-on-one exchanges encourage participants to explore the meaning, values, and emotional significance behind the chosen note, fostering curiosity and relational trust.

Phase 4 – Collective Mapping (Optional Plenary)

Notes may be clustered on a shared visual representation (e.g. a city map or thematic board), producing a collective affective map that illustrates emotional plurality within a shared civic space.

This exercise initiates a shift from isolated positions to relational engagement, building emotional competence for later, more challenging dialogue.

SEGMENT 2 – EXPLORATION AND ELICITATION

This segment constitutes the central analytical and creative engine of the Citizen Innovation Lab. Its objective is to facilitate a structured transition from **critical diagnosis of the current affective-political landscape** (Activity 1) to the **collaborative prototyping of future emotional narratives** (Activity 2). By engaging the same participants in both phases, we ensure analytical depth, narrative continuity, and the evolution of trust, allowing raw insights from the present to be transformed into deliberate, future-oriented co-creations. This process directly operationalises the project's move from analysing **affective polarisation** to actively fostering **affective pluralisation**.

The first half of this segment aims to elicit a wide range of emotional experiences (such as fears, frustrations, hopes, and perceptions of political discourse) and to synthesise these insights in order to identify key challenges embedded in current emotional narratives. These challenges may include polarisation trigger points, narrative gaps, or emotionally charged framings that shape political engagement. The second half of the segment builds on this diagnostic phase by inviting participants to collaboratively imagine, design, and refine new emotional narratives capable of supporting more constructive and pluralistic political futures.

This segment is grounded in findings from earlier work packages, with facilitation prompts explicitly aligned to the narrative traps and emotional dynamics identified through ENCODE's prior research.

Activity 1 - Empathy Mapping

An Empathy Map is a collaborative visualisation tool used to **articulate a deep understanding of a particular stakeholder or persona**. It moves beyond demographic data to capture the lived experience of an individual, including their thoughts, feelings, motivations, and environment. Traditionally used in design thinking to understand users, it is perfectly suited for ENCODE's goal of accessing the emotional and narrative layers of citizen experience.

To utilise empathy mapping as a structured, co-creative sense-making tool, this activity aims to **externalise and analyse the distinct emotional narratives, pains, and gains of archetypal citizen personas**, transforming abstract political sentiments into concrete, discussable elements. The ultimate goal is not just to understand these positions, but to use them to diagnose where and why the capacity for agonistic respect breaks down, identifying key barriers to pluralisation. The standard model is divided into key quadrants that build a holistic picture:

Says	What are the direct, verbatim quotes from the citizen? What do they say in interviews or discussions?
Thinks	What do they *really* think? This may be unspoken due to politeness, fear, or lack of awareness.
Feels	What are their emotional states? What excites them? What worries them? What are their frustrations and hopes?
Does	What observable actions do they take? What behaviours have they exhibited?
Pains	Their fears, frustrations, and obstacles.
Gains	Their wants, needs, hopes, and measures of success.

Table 3 - Empathy Mapping Framework

Participants will be divided into breakout groups, and then redivided in smaller groups, pairs or trios for specific exercises. Each smaller group will be assigned one of the following archetypal personas, adapted for their prevalence in the case study country and their distinct relationship to topics such as climate, immigration or Russian invasion of Ukraine. These personas serve as diagnostic lenses, not stereotypes.

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1. **The Disillusioned Partisan:**

   o *Profile:* A voter, potentially of any age, who is firmly aligned with one political tribe. They experience politics as a high-stakes conflict, feel deep distrust towards opposing camps and institutions, and are motivated by a strong sense of defending their "side" against perceived threats.

   o **Pluralisation Challenge:** This persona helps map the **emotional logic of affective polarisation**; the "us vs. them" mentality, the role of perceived threat, and the narratives that sustain in-group loyalty and out-group antipathy.

2. **The Anxious Pragmatist:**

   o *Profile:* Often (but not exclusively) a younger citizen. They are engaged and hopeful about civic ideals but are frustrated by what they see as the performative, gridlocked, and dysfunctional nature of formal politics. They may oscillate between issue-based activism and political disillusionment.

   o **Pluralisation Challenge:** This persona reveals the **narrative gap between institutional politics and lived experience**. It highlights frustrations with binary debates that ignore complex realities, helping identify yearnings for new, constructive forms of political discourse that this lab aims to prototype.

3. **The Detached Sceptic:**

   o *Profile:* The tired, apolitical, or habitual non-voter. They feel that politics is irrelevant, corrupt, or incapable of addressing their core concerns. Their primary political action is withdrawal, driven by cynicism, feelings of powerlessness, or a focus on private life.

   o **Pluralisation Challenge:** This persona is crucial for understanding the **emotional costs of polarisation and disengagement**. It maps the pains of alienation and the perceived absence of a genuine "gain" from political participation, challenging the lab to design narratives that reconnect with the disenchanted.

FACILITATOR NOTE

These notes gather indication and support for facilitators to frame the session and activities in an efficient and coherent way. These notes should be reviewed and taken into consideration by the facilitators ahead of the citizen innovation lab, in the preparatory phase. Facilitators are invited to contextualise these profiles with local, non-partisan examples.

A. **Introduction & Framing**

The facilitator introduces the personas, framing them not as caricatures but as composite "characters" representing powerful currents in public feeling. The task is framed as **diagnostic empathy**: "We are not advocating for these positions, but we must first understand their internal emotional logic to design narratives that can bridge divides".

B. **Group Mapping Exercise**

Each smaller group is given a large template (physical or digital) of the empathy map with the six quadrants: **Says, Thinks, Feels, Does, Pains, Gains.** They are prompted to collaboratively populate the map for their assigned persona.

The facilitator circulates, using **provocative prompts** to deepen the analysis and steer it towards pluralisation barriers:

- For **The Disillusioned Partisan:** *"What does this persona fear they would lose if they acknowledged a valid point from the other side? What deep need or value is their political tribe protecting for them?"*

- For **The Anxious Pragmatist:** *"What specific political behaviour or language makes them 'tune out'? What would a political conversation look like that they would feel hopeful about joining?"*

- For **The Detached Sceptic:** *"What would have to change for politics to feel 'real' or relevant to their daily life? What story about politics are they rejecting?"*

C. Synthesis & Plenary Harvest

Each group presents their completed empathy map in a concise 2-minute summary. The facilitator then leads a targeted plenary discussion, synthesising across the three maps to extract **Diagnostic Insights for Pluralisation**. Key questions include:

- **Connections:** *"Looking at all three, what is a common 'Pain' that cuts across these very different positions?"* (e.g. a shared feeling of not being heard by elites).

- **Divergences:** *"Where do we see the most stark divergence in 'Feels' or 'Gains'? What does that tell us about the fault lines in our current emotional landscape?"*

- **Barriers to Engagement:** *"Based on these maps, what appears to be the biggest emotional obstacle preventing a more pluralistic, respectful public conversation?"*

This activity yields a rich, visual diagnosis of the current affective ecosystem. It identifies not just positions, but the **emotional drivers and narrative needs** behind them. This sets a perfectly informed, empathetic stage for Activity 2, where participants will shift from analysing these archetypes to **designing new narratives** that can speak to the Pains and Gains they have just mapped, directly tackling the identified barriers to pluralisation.

Activity 2 – Experiencing Tomorrow

To transition from diagnostic analysis to generative creation. Using the "News from the Future" exercise, participants will collectively imagine and craft concrete, emotionally resonant narratives set in a positive democratic future. This activity aims to bypass current constraints and cynicism, allowing groups to **prototype the emotional core and narrative substance of a more pluralistic public sphere**, directly informed by the needs and pains identified in Activity 1.

Where Activity 1 dissected current affective barriers, Activity 2 asks participants to imagine a future where those barriers have been overcome. This requires them to implicitly define

what affective pluralisation looks and feels like in practice. By crafting "news," **participants work backwards from a desired outcome, a method proven to enhance creative agency and solution-focused thinking**. It makes the abstract goal of "better emotional politics" tangible and actionable.

Each breakout group will be assigned one headline, these are **not predictions, but deliberate provocative statements** designed to stretch imagination and anchor it in a shared, aspirational European context. They serve as the creative starting point or "future scenario" for the narrative. Groups will act as "time-travellers from the future," using the provocative headline as their starting truth. Guided by the 'Future Memory Worksheet', their goal is not to explain *how* we got there, but to **describe *what it feels like* to live in that reality, creating a visualisation of future news story** and present as a testimony to the wider group at the end of the activity. The format of this final testimony is to be decided by the participants, it can be done as a monologue, speech, interview or other enacted scene.

Experiencing Tomorrow Worksheet

Your Headline: _____

Your Task: You are a time-traveller from the future where this headline is true. Describe a "memory" of that moment as a short news story. Answer the prompts below to build your narrative.

1. **The Scene:** *Where does this story take place? (e.g. a family dinner, a public square, a local council meeting, an online forum, a workplace).*

2. **The Sensation:** *What is the dominant emotion or atmosphere? Use all the senses. (e.g. "There was a palpable sense of patience in the air", "The online debate felt like a puzzle we were solving together", "You could smell rain on pavement cleaned by electric buses.").*

3. **The Dialogue:** *Include one line of dialogue spoken by someone that exemplifies this new norm. (e.g. "I disagree with your plan, but I see why you care so much about it", "Let's check what the regional citizen assembly proposed", "Grandpa, tell us again about the 'polarization' wars.").*

4. **The Connection to the Past:** *Briefly hint at what has changed from 'the old days' of the 2020s. (e.g. "It's funny to remember when we thought political opponents were enemies", "We no longer just shouted into our own echo chambers", "Back then, we called them 'problems', now we call them 'shared projects.").*

The drafted headline below aims to inspire partners on how to personalise, and adapt these prompts to topics and local context; this is an example for climate:

1. "Climate Refugee" Term Retired in 2047 as New UN Pact Guarantees Right of Pre-Emptive Relocation.

2. In 2035, the "Great Green Wall" of Africa is Declared a Self-Sustaining Biome, Halting Desert Expansion.
3. "Carbon Negative" Status Achieved by Major Economy, Announces Era of Atmospheric Repair.
4. "The Adaptation Generation": Youth Born Post-Paris Accord Report Lowest Levels of Climate Anxiety on Record.
5. Mediterranean Diet 2.0 Goes Global: EU-Funded "Climate-Resilient Superfoods" Reverse Rising Diabetes Rates.

FACILITATOR NOTE
A. Introduction & Framing

The facilitator reframes the task: *"You have just diagnosed the emotional weaknesses of our current political body. Now, let's write the prescription. Using this headline as your truth, you are time-travellers from that future. Your job is not to explain how we got there, but to tell us what it feels like to live there. Describe a news from that future."* The link to Activity 1 is made explicit: *"Let the Gains you identified be your guide and let your narrative soothe the Pains you uncovered."*

B. Group Narrative Prototyping

1. **Divide** participants into breakout groups (4-5 people each).
2. **Assign** each group one "Provocative Headline".
3. **Distribute** the **"Experiencing Tomorrow Worksheet"** and instruct groups to craft their story by answering the prompts.

The facilitator circulates, acting as a "future editor," pushing groups to be **specific and emotional**, not just political.

- *To a group being vague:* "Don't tell me 'institutions are better.' Show me a regular person experiencing that. Where are they? What are they holding? What's the light like?"

- *To connect to Activity 1:* "How would the **Anxious Pragmatist** from our map feel in this scene? What about the **Detached Sceptic**? Imagine them living in this future."

- *To deepen the narrative:* "What's a small, surprising detail of daily life that proves your headline is true? A meme? A change in a school curriculum? A new ritual?"

C. Story Sharing & Affective Feedback

- Groups do not present analyses; they **perform their narrative**. One member of each group reads or enacts the narrative aloud in the group's chosen format, aiming to convey its emotional tone.

- After each reading, listeners provide feedback using the **"I Feel, I Notice"** method:

  1. **I Feel…** *"Hearing that, I felt hopeful/curious/calm."* (Emotional impact).

  2. **I Notice…** *"I notice the story focuses on shared space/respectful disagreement/practical outcomes."* (Narrative mechanism).

- The facilitator synthesises: *"Look at the common emotional tones and narrative devices across these futures. These are the building blocks for the new stories we need to start telling now."*

This activity generates a set of compelling, citizen-authored narrative prototypes for affective pluralisation. These are not policy papers but **emotional blueprints, concrete examples of what trust, hope, and respectful conflict could sound and feel like in practice**. They serve as a powerful reference point for the final stages of the lab, where these narrative seeds can be developed into concrete communication tools or policy story ideas.

SEGMENT 3: SYNTHESIS & SENSE-MAKING

To formally conclude the first lab by synthesising the collective insights from the diagnosis and prototyping activities, and to frame them as the foundational 'design brief' for the subsequent lab. This segment aims to create **a coherent narrative of progress, solidify the group's shared purpose, and transition participants from active workshop contributors to invested stakeholders in the ENCODE process**. It ensures methodological continuity and honours the participants' intellectual and emotional labour by explicitly valuing their output.

FACILITATOR NOTE

A. Synthesising the Narrative Challenge

The facilitator opens this segment by visually aggregating key outputs from the day (e.g. the three Empathy Maps and the three "Experiencing Tomorrow" headlines/narratives). Slides can also be prepared ahead of the workshop to clarify key closing elements.
The facilitator poses the core, synthesising question to the whole group, which can also be written on a slide: *"Based on everything we've mapped and imagined today, what is the central narrative challenge we are facing? If our Empathy Maps show us the landscape of current pain, and our 'Memories' show us the destination of hope, what is the key gap we need to address and bridge in Lab 2?"*

Using a whiteboard or digital platform, the facilitator clusters participant responses. The goal is to converge on **2-3 Framing Challenges** for the next lab and to guide the group from abstract challenges ("distrust", "polarisation") towards actionable, narrative-focused gaps. These should be phrased as "How Might We…" (HMW) questions that are informed by the day's work. For example:

- If the cluster was about "not feeling heard": **"HMW translate the shared 'pain' of not being heard into public rituals or stories that make people feel legitimately acknowledged?"**

- If the cluster was about the "feeling" of the future: **"HMW make the 'sensation' from our 2050 experience – that calm patience – tangible and credible to someone feeling cynical today?"**

- If the cluster was about "dehumanising the other": **"HMW create narratives or experiences that help a Disillusioned Partisan sense the shared 'gain' – like security or dignity – in their adversary's position?"**

B. Reflective Closing Circle

To honour the emotional and intellectual journey, the facilitator leads a short, reflective round. This is not a discussion, but an opportunity for each voice to be heard in closing.

- **Prompt 1 (Looking Back):** *"What was one surprising moment or insight for you today; something that shifted your perspective or stayed with you?"*

- **Prompt 2 (Looking Forward):** *"In one word, what is the quality we should carry forward into our next session?"* (e.g. curiosity, courage, patience, hope).

This ritual affirms the group's shared experience and reinforces the **emotional norms** essential for agonistic dialogue. The facilitator then thanks each person with a nod as they share. Conclude the circle by saying: "Thank you. This collection of insights and qualities is our true starting capital".

C. Logistics & Transition to Ongoing Engagement

The facilitator clearly outlines the next steps, framing continued participation as an extension of the co-producer role.

- **The Path to Lab 2:** Confirm the date/time/format of the next session. Emphasise that its agenda will be directly shaped by the Framing Challenges just identified.

- **The Value of Continuity:** Briefly explain how the findings from this lab will be analysed (anonymously) and used to prepare more focused materials for the next deep dive.

- **Channels for Ongoing Connection:** Provide clear, simple instructions for:

  - **Newsletter Sign-up:** As the primary channel for receiving project findings, summaries of lab insights, and updates.

  - **Optional Further Contribution:** Mention any additional ways to stay involved (e.g. a brief online feedback form on today's session, a closed forum for participants).

  - **Thanks and Reaffirmation:** Thank participants for their crucial role as "producers and agents". Reaffirm that their work today is the essential first chapter in building more pluralistic emotional narratives for Europe.

3.5.4 OUTPUTS

Citizen Innovation Lab 1 produces the following documented outputs:

- Visual empathy maps capturing emotional drivers, pains, and gains across archetypal personas.

- A set of future-oriented narrative prototypes expressing emotionally resonant visions of pluralistic democracy.

- A small number of collectively defined framing challenges that serve as the design brief for Citizen Innovation Lab 2.

- Strengthened relational trust and participant commitment to the ongoing co-design process.

3.6 INTER-LAB SYNTHESIS

The inter-lab synthesis phase constitutes a **critical translational step** within the ENCODE co-design methodology. Positioned between Citizen Innovation Lab 1 and Citizen Innovation Lab 2, this phase ensures that citizen-generated emotional narratives are **systematically consolidated, interpreted, and prepared** for further co-creation without compromising authorship, plurality, or ethical integrity. It operationalises the CIVISTI principle of a *closed feedback loop*, in which citizens remain the primary source and reference point of the process.

This phase does not introduce new content or normative interpretation. Instead, it focuses on **structuring and clarifying the outputs of Lab 1** in order to enable deeper narrative development in the subsequent lab.

3.6.1 OBJECTIVES

The inter-lab synthesis phase pursues four objectives:

1. To consolidate and document the emotional and narrative outputs generated during Citizen Innovation Lab 1 in a transparent and traceable manner.

2. To translate raw workshop materials into **structured synthesis artefacts** that can support focused narrative co-creation in Lab 2.

3. To preserve the plurality and internal tensions identified in Lab 1, avoiding premature convergence or expert-led reframing.

4. To prepare participants for continuity and deeper engagement in the next phase of the co-design process.

3.6.2 INPUTS

This synthesis phase draws exclusively on materials produced during Citizen Innovation Lab 1, including:

- Completed empathy maps for each archetypal persona.

- Documented future-oriented narrative prototypes ("News from the Future" testimonies).

- Identified framing challenges formulated as "How Might We" questions.

- Facilitator notes capturing group dynamics, emotional inflection points, and recurring themes.

No external data or expert-generated content is introduced at this stage.

3.6.3 SYNTHESIS PROCESS

The synthesis is conducted by a **small, clearly defined team** composed of ENCODE project partners and, where relevant, associated experts with methodological or thematic expertise. Their role is explicitly framed as **sense-making and translation**, not validation or correction of citizen contributions.

The synthesis process follows three structured steps:
1. **Systematic Documentation and Aggregation**

   All materials from Lab 1 are compiled using predefined documentation templates to ensure consistency across implementation sites. Visual artefacts are digitised, narrative texts are transcribed, and key discussion points are logged.
2. **Thematic and Affective Clustering**

   Materials are analysed to identify recurring emotional patterns, narrative mechanisms, and points of divergence. Clustering focuses on:
   o   Shared emotional pains and gains across personas

   o   Distinct affective logics and tensions

   o   Narrative devices that elicited strong emotional resonance

3. **Preparation of Synthesis Artefacts**

   Outputs are translated into a limited number of synthesis artefacts designed for reuse in Lab 2, such as:
   o   Consolidated narrative clusters

   o   Refined framing challenges

   o   Annotated excerpts from future narratives highlighting emotional dynamics

Throughout this process, explicit attention is paid to retaining minority positions and unresolved tensions.

3.6.4 ETHICAL SAFEGUARDS

Ethical integrity is maintained throughout the inter-lab synthesis phase. All materials are anonymised, and care is taken to avoid attributing sensitive emotional content to

identifiable individuals or groups. Reflexive notes are maintained by the synthesis team to document interpretative choices and potential biases.

Any uncertainties or ambiguities identified during synthesis are explicitly flagged rather than resolved, ensuring transparency and preserving openness for further exploration in Lab 2.

3.6.5 FEEDBACK LOOP AND CONTINUITY

The synthesis outputs are not treated as finalised products but as **working materials**. At the outset of Citizen Innovation Lab 2, participants are presented with a clear summary of how previous contributions from Lab 1 have been synthesised. This feedback loop reinforces trust, affirms authorship, and enables participants to contest, refine, or reframe the synthesis as needed.

By structuring this inter-lab phase as a transparent, reflexive, and citizen-centred translation process, ENCODE ensures methodological continuity and prepares the ground for deeper narrative co-creation in Citizen Innovation Lab 2.

3.7 CITIZEN INNOVATION LAB 2

Citizen Innovation Lab 2 represents the **generative phase** of the ENCODE co-design methodology. Building directly on the diagnostic insights and synthesis artefacts produced during Citizen Innovation Lab 1 and the inter-lab sense-making phase, this lab supports participants in collectively **developing, refining, and validating future emotional narratives**. Its primary function is to translate identified emotional needs, narrative gaps, and pluralisation challenges into **concrete, citizen-authored narrative prototypes** that can inform democratic discourse and subsequent ENCODE activities.

As with Lab 1, Citizen Innovation Lab 2 is conducted as an in-person facilitated session and follows a structured yet adaptable format, ensuring methodological consistency while allowing for contextual relevance.

CITIZEN INNOVATION LAB 2 STRUCTURE	
ONBOARDING	15 min
SEGMENT 1: TRUST BUILDING	15 min
SEGMENT 2: EXPLORATION & ELICITATION – ACTIVITY 3 *"NORTH STAR" OBJECTIVE*	30 min
SEGMENT 2: EXPLORATION & ELICITATION – ACTIVITY 4 *NARRATIVE ANATOMY*	45 min
SEGMENT 3: SYNTHESIS & SENSE-MAKING	30 min
LOGISTICS AND CLOSING STATEMENT	15 min
TOTAL	2h30

Table 4 - Citizen Innovation Lab 2 Structure

3.7.1 OBJECTIVES

Citizen Innovation Lab 2 pursues four core objectives:

1. To enable participants to **co-create future-oriented emotional narratives** that respond directly to the pains, gains, and framing challenges identified in Lab 1.

2. To foster **affective pluralisation** by supporting the coexistence and articulation of multiple, potentially divergent narrative trajectories.

3. To refine narrative prototypes through collective reflection and feedback, strengthening emotional resonance and democratic legitimacy.

4. To produce validated narrative components that can be responsibly integrated into subsequent ENCODE work packages and dissemination activities.

3.7.2 INPUTS

The lab is grounded in a defined set of inputs derived from earlier stages of the process:

- Synthesis artefacts produced during the inter-lab phase, including consolidated narrative clusters, refined "How Might We" framing challenges, and selected excerpts from citizen-generated future narratives.

- Visual summaries of empathy maps and emotional diagnostics from Citizen Innovation Lab 1.

- Contextual facilitation materials adapted to the thematic focus and national setting of the lab.

These inputs ensure continuity while leaving space for reinterpretation and contestation by participants.

3.7.3 CORE ACTIVITIES

SEGMENT 1 - FOUNDATION AND TRUST-BUILDING

Building upon the foundation of the first workshop, and following the onboarding, this introductory segment aims to **(re-)activate and deepen** the lab's core principles. It is designed to (re-)engage participants in their roles as co-producers, strengthen the group's relational bonds, and explicitly advance the practice of **agonistic engagement** from a basic encounter to a more nuanced collaboration.

The facilitator welcomes the group back, acknowledging the work accomplished in the first lab. The opening should briefly reference the outputs of Workshop 1 (e.g. "the emotional maps we built," "the experience of tomorrow we imagined") to create continuity. The facilitator explicitly outlines the progression of the previous lab findings.

Phase 1 – Commonalities: Forging the Collective Foundation

Participants are arranged into small groups of 4-5 depending on the size of the wider group (these can be the same or new groups from Lab 1). Each group is given a large sheet of paper and asked to compile a list of **"what we share"**.

- The facilitator must push participants past superficial traits (e.g. "we all have two eyes"). Prompts should encourage meaningful, affective, or experiential commonalities aligned with the lab's purpose:

  o *"What is a shared hope or concern for our community that emerged in our last session?"*

  o *"What is a value we all seem to hold about what makes a good conversation?"*

  o *"What common experience have we had as participants in this ENCODE lab?"*
  This phase reinforces that they are a group united by more than circumstance; they are a **collective agent** with shared democratic stakes.

Phase 2 – Uniquities: Valuing the Adversarial Asset

Groups are given a second sheet of paper to record **"what each of us uniquely brings"**. The task is to find at least two distinctive traits, skills, experiences, or perspectives for each person.

- **Facilitator Framing:** *"In an agonistic space, our differences are not obstacles; they are our most valuable resources. They are what allow us to stress-test ideas and see around blind spots. Your uniqueness is your contribution to the group's strength."*

- Prompts could include: *"What is a life experience that shapes how you see the world?" "What is a skill you have – from cooking to coding to mediating family disputes – that could be a metaphor for how we solve problems?"*

Phase 3 – Sharing & Synthesis: The Pluralistic Portrait

A spokesperson from each group first shares 1-2 of their most meaningful **commonalities**. Then, the facilitator conducts a brief plenary harvest, asking: *"Hearing these, what does it tell us about the character of our group as a whole?"* Following this, a few volunteers share one particularly interesting or surprising **uniquity** from their group. The facilitator concludes by synthesising: *"This is the engine of our lab: a **shared foundation of purpose** powered by the **unique fuel of your individual perspectives**. This is what will allow us to build together today"*.

This structured opening aims to successfully (re-)engaged the group not merely as returning participants or new participants, but as a more pluralistic assembly. By deliberately mapping both their shared democratic stakes and their distinctive personal assets, participants actively reinforce the citizen lab's core ethos: that **a resilient democracy is built not on sameness, but on the constructive channelling of diverse experiences and perspectives**. The foundation of trust is deepened, and the group's collective identity as co-producers is being re-affirmed with greater intentionality. Having explicitly named the unique resources each member brings to the table, the stage is now optimally set for the collaborative and agonistic work ahead, where these very differences will become the essential tools for prototyping narratives capable of fostering genuine affective pluralisation.

SEGMENT 2: FROM FUTURE VISIONS TO SHARED ACTION

Activity 3 – "North Star" Objective

To transition from speculative visions to actionable narrative strategy, this segment takes the aspirational "News from the Future" from Lab 1 and subjects them to a **structured analysis, distilling their emotional and ethical core into a concrete Narrative Blueprint**. The goal is to produce a shared, strategic framework that defines not just *what* a better future feels like, but *who enables it*, *how they act*, and *what story it counters*, thereby creating a foundational tool for the subsequent design of tangible communication prototypes and policy story ideas.

A. The facilitator presents a curated list of 6-7 headlines from the "Experiencing Tomorrow" generated in Lab 1 as well as new ones developed based on the final comments of the participants in Segment 3 of Lab 1.

B. Each group picks a headline by voting out the least interesting headlines.

C. For each headline, the group is asked: **"What is the core, underlying condition that makes this future desirable and stable? What has been fundamentally healed or established?"**

D. Participants then work in groups to translate one chosen condition into a **"North Star Objective"** a clear, value-driven, and ambitious goal statement with the support of the "North Start Worksheet" drafted below.

"North Star Objective" Worksheet

Group Members: _____

1. Your Assigned 'Experiencing Tomorrow' Headline:

    _____

    _____

2. Core Condition (What is fundamentally healed or established in this future?):

What is the new norm or repaired foundation that makes this headline possible?

Example: Public respect is tied to accountability and bridge-building, not to partisan victory.

Your Group's Answer:

_____

_____

3. Craft Your North Star Objective:

Translate the condition into an aspirational, value-driven goal. Use the formula: **"To make [CORE VALUE] – defined as [CONCRETE ACTION/QUALITY] – the [DESIRED METRIC OF SUCCESS] in [REALM OF PUBLIC LIFE]".**

Guiding Questions:
*   **Value:** What principle is at the heart of this? (e.g. courage, dignity, stewardship, reciprocity)

*   **Action/Quality:** What does living this value look like in practice? (e.g. "the willingness to acknowledge complexity", "the practice of inclusive listening")

*   **Metric of Success:** How would we know this value is winning? (e.g. "the most valued currency", "the primary measure of leadership", "the default expectation")

*   **Realm:** Where does this change happen? (e.g. "in public life", "in our institutions", "in community discourse")

Your North Star Objective:

_____

_____

4. The Counter-Narrative (optional but powerful)

What dominant, unhelpful story does your North Star directly challenge?
Example: Challenges the story that "winning through strength and never apologizing is the only path to respect."

Your Challenge: _____

Facilitator's role here is to **guide groups away from vague ideals** ("more peace") towards **structured and value-anchored objectives** that imply a shift in norms and incentives.

Activity 4 – Narrative Anatomy

Following the identification of the 'North Star', the second activity aims to transform an abstract goal into the architecture of a narrative designed to achieve it. Each group are tasked to take their agreed-upon 'North Star' objective and dissect it by using the narrative anatomy framework. The blueprint goes as follows and remains adaptable to all kinds of objectives.

Narrative Anatomy Blueprint Worksheet

1. **The Protagonist (The "We")**

Who is the main actor in this story of change? Avoid "everyone" be specific about who mobilises first.

Guiding Questions:

- Who has the most direct stake in this change?

- Who has the capacity to take the first concrete step?

- What community, identity, or coalition do they represent?

Our Protagonist:

(e.g. Local community organisers and disillusioned voters forming 'dialogue alliances')

3. The Emotional Engine (Feel)

What is the dominant, mobilising emotion this action channels or generates?
Guiding Questions:
- How do people feel *while* doing this action?

- What feeling makes them want to continue despite obstacles?

- Is this emotion contagious or collective?

Our Emotional Engine:

(e.g. A sense of dignified agency, the feeling of reclaiming the agenda)

4. The Core Value (Believe)

What shared principle or belief does this action and emotion embody? This is the moral bedrock.
Guiding Questions:
- When challenged, what value would protagonists cite?

- What makes this action feel "right" even when it's difficult?

- What deeper belief about human dignity or society is at stake?

Our Core Value:

(e.g. That the dignity of every citizen is upheld when their concerns are synthesized, not just counted)

5. The Counter-Narrative to Overcome

What is the dominant, disempowering story that currently blocks this future?

Guiding Questions:
- What voice of doubt or cynicism do people hear?

- What societal "common sense" makes this change seem naive?

- What story maintains the current broken system?

Our Counter-Narrative:

(e.g. "I can't make a difference" or "People only look out for themselves")

Participants return to their Activity 1 groups, and receive the Narrative Anatomy Blueprint worksheet to fill in. Facilitators act as a narrative editor, they challenge groups if their components don't logically connect: *"If the action is 'hosting deliberative forums,' does the emotion 'playful curiosity' fit, or is it more 'dignified agency'?" "Does your protagonist realistically have the power to take this action?".*

Once the blueprint completed, each group posts theirs on a board on a gallery walk (it can be pasting the Narrative Blueprint worksheets on a wall). The facilitator then leads a walk of the wider groups, asking participants to identify:

1. Connections (use **green** sticky notes): *where do you see a shared emotional engine or core value with your own blueprint? (e.g. 'we also identified dignified agency!')*

2. Tensions (use **yellow** sticky notes): *where do definitions of the protagonist or action differ in interesting or challenging ways? (e.g. 'your protagonist is institutions, ours is citizens; interesting tension!')*

3. Questions (use **blue** sticky notes): *what clarifying questions does this raise? (e.g. 'how does this action scale?')*

This walk allows participants to confront their reflections and discussions to other groups', potentially identifying **a pattern of common emotions, beliefs or reflections on courses of action**. This final step allows the group to come together and take some time to identify how each narrative falls into the others, and whether they join on a multidimensional course of change or diverge in approaching similar issues.

This segment yields a set of strategic Narrative Blueprints. These are the crucial link between abstract future hopes and tangible co-design. They provide a clear, participant-validated "creative brief" for the next stage: using these blueprints to draft actual story scripts, campaign concepts, or policy recommendations that are emotionally coherent, action-oriented, and strategically targeted against specific nodes of disillusionment and polarisation.

FACILITATOR NOTE

A. Interventions During Group Work

To ensure the narrative blueprints are concrete and actionable, specific interventions are required during the group development phase. The facilitator's role is **to challenge vagueness and deepen the participants' thinking at key junctures**.

When defining the protagonist, facilitators listen for broad, universal terms like "everyone," "society," or "the community." The intervention is to ground the group in a tangible image by asking them to visualise the initial meeting where change begins: Who secured the venue? Who drafted the invitation? Participants are encouraged to move from an abstract collective to a defined coalition, describing their protagonist with two or three concrete identifiers, such as "first-generation university students partnering with local retirees". **A narrative gains power from relatable specificity, not universality.**

Groups often mistake internal feelings for concrete actions, articulating goals like "they understand each other better". The facilitator insists on observable, repeatable behaviour by posing the filmmaker's question: if documenting this change, what would you actually film people doing? The task is to translate sentiment into verbs. For instance, "they care more" becomes "they co-host a monthly potluck where personal stories are shared." This shift from noun to verb is the cornerstone of an **actionable narrative**.

Regarding emotional vocabulary, terms like "hope" and "happy" are broad strokes. The facilitator helps groups paint with finer detail by probing deeper: "What flavour of hope? Is it a determined hope that fuels action?" A richer palette is introduced, including terms like righteous determination, sober urgency, or dignified agency. This precision ensures the emotional engine is a potent, mobilising force rather than a passive feeling.

A group's Core Value must be the moral and strategic echo of its North Star Objective. The facilitator listens to ensure a clear lineage between the two. If the North Star is "to make reciprocal listening the primary currency of public debate," the Core Value should be a principle like "the dignity of every voice," not a generic value like "fairness." The group is gently challenged to articulate how their chosen value makes the North Star not just desirable but morally imperative, thereby creating narrative integrity.

A common pitfall is crafting a **weak counter-narrative**, such as "all politicians are evil," which is a caricature. The facilitator steers groups towards internalised, disempowering stories that people genuinely tell themselves. The guiding question is: "What is the voice of doubt a reasonable person might hear in their own head?" Powerful counter-narratives sound like, "Nothing I do will ever matter" or "It's naive to trust strangers". This authenticity makes the narrative conflict compelling and real.

B. Managing the Gallery Walk

The gallery walk is conducted as an active, standing engagement. A firm time limit, such as eight minutes, is announced and enforced with periodic time checks. This brisk pace prevents over-analysis on a single blueprint and **encourages participants to absorb the whole field**, aiming for impressionistic pattern recognition rather than exhaustive critique. Maintaining this momentum preserves cognitive energy for the subsequent synthesis.

Three distinct colours of sticky notes are provided, each explicitly linked to a type of feedback: green for connections, yellow for tensions, and blue for questions. This simple structure focuses the participants' observation, moving them from general appreciation to specific, analytical reading. It generates a visual data set on the blueprints themselves, making emerging patterns immediately visible for the synthesis discussion.

C. Facilitating the Synthesis Discussion

The synthesis is initiated by directing the group's attention to clusters of green sticky notes. The facilitator poses questions that move the group from noticing repetitions to interpreting their meaning, such as, "Looking at where most green notes gathered, what shared emotional fuel seems to be powering multiple narratives?" This process helps **name the foundational themes of the collective work**, such as agency or reciprocity.

When discussing tensions indicated by yellow notes, the facilitator's language is crucial. **Differences are framed not as problems but as the creative friction inherent in pluralistic work.** A typical reframe might be: "This isn't a conflict to resolve; it's a spectrum of change to

explore. How might both perspectives be true in a complete strategy?" This approach transforms potential conflict into strategic insight.

The facilitator then guides the group to look across all the listed counter-narratives to **identify a deeper, underlying story of disempowerment**. By asking, "What is the overarching, toxic story about democracy and agency that we are all ultimately up against?" the group achieves a moment of collective clarity, uniting the diverse blueprints against a common adversary.

To conclude the synthesis facilitators, state clearly that these blueprints are now validated creative briefs. This structured flow ensures participants move systematically from strategic objectives to narrative architecture, creating a shared foundation for concrete creative work while building collective insight about their common challenges and opportunities.

SEGMENT 3: SYNTHESIS & SENSE-MAKING

To formally conclude the final lab by synthesising the co-created outputs into a strategic legacy, solidifying the participants' role as authors of this legacy, and clearly outlining the pathways through which their work will inform the ENCODE project and broader democratic discourse. This final segment aims to provide a satisfying and meaningful closure that honours the full arc of the co-design journey, transforms contributions into a valued collective output, and transitions participants from workshop contributors to recognised co-authors and ambassadors of the project's insights.

A. Synthesising the Legacy

The facilitator opens by visually aggregating the key outputs from the *entire* two-lab series: the Empathy Maps, "Experiencing Tomorrow" and the completed **Narrative Blueprints** from Segment 2 of Lab 2. This can be done on a digital board (e.g. Miro) prepared during the inter-lab synthesis that assembles the outcomes of Lab 1 and has structured space to fill in the final contributions of Lab 2 to input the below legacy contributions. If the room is not adapted with a projector or screen for all the participants to see, a white board or wall with sticky notes can be used to cluster responses.

The facilitator poses the core, synthesising question to the whole group: *"Looking at this full body of our work, what is the central agonistic insight we are leaving for the ENCODE project? If our maps diagnosed the illness of polarisation, and our blueprints are the prescription for pluralisation, what is the most important instruction on the label?"*

Using a whiteboard, the wall or the digital board, the facilitator **clusters responses**, guiding the group to converge on 2-3 **Legacy Statements**. These are concise, powerful takeaways that move beyond challenges to articulate principles for action. They should be phrased as assertions, not questions.

- *Example Legacy Statement 1:* "New narratives must start by validating the emotional truth behind positions before attempting to argue with their political content."

o *Example Legacy Statement 2:* "The most powerful protagonist for change is a 'bridge-building cohort' – a group defined not by a shared ideology, but by a shared commitment to hosting difficult conversations".

o *Example Legacy Statement 3:* "To overcome disengagement, stories must link abstract democratic values to tangible, neighbourly actions".

These statements become the co-authored summary of the lab's contribution.

B. Reflective Closing Circle: From Contribution to Ownership

The facilitator leads a final reflective round designed to cement the participants' ownership of the process and its outputs.

- **Prompt 1 (The Contribution):** *"What is one piece of our collective work here (a specific insight, a phrase from a blueprint, a moment of dialogue) that you feel most proud of contributing to or witnessing?"*

- **Prompt 2 (Carrying Forward):** *"What is one word that describes what you are taking with you from this experience into your own communities or future political engagements?"*

This ritual frame the ending not as a goodbye, but as a dissemination of the lab's ethos.

C. Pathways to Impact & Final Thanks

The facilitator clearly outlines the onward journey of the lab's outputs, providing closure and demonstrating respect for the work.

Explain the next steps within the ENCODE project, particularly the impact for work package 7, e.g. *"These Legacy Statements and Narrative Blueprints will now be analysed alongside findings from other national labs. They will directly inform the project's final toolkit for policymakers and communicators on fostering affective pluralisation".*

Facilitators frame the ongoing connection of the participants as co-authors:

o **Newsletter & Findings:** They will receive the analysed synthesis and the final public report, seeing how their work contributed to the larger European findings.

o **Ambassadorial Role:** Encourage them to share the process and insights within their own networks, if they feel comfortable, framing them as pioneers in this method.

Final thanks and reaffirmation close the session.

o *"You have not just participated in a workshop; you have **prototyped a micro-public sphere**. You have enacted the very principles of agonistic respect and affective pluralisation that ENCODE explores. Your labour, the emotional, intellectual, and creative work on these walls, is the core of our research.*

Thank you for being the essential producers and agents of this experiment in democratic renewal."

This concluding segment ensures the lab ends with a sense of accomplishment, clarity of impact, and dignity, leaving participants feeling valued, heard, and connected to a larger purpose beyond the workshop room.

3.7.4 OUTPUTS

Citizen Innovation Lab 2 produces the following outputs:

- A set of refined, citizen-authored future emotional narratives, articulated in diverse formats and registers.

- Narrative components (e.g. metaphors, storylines, emotional cues) that can inform communication strategies, policy reflection, and further research within ENCODE.

- Documented feedback capturing points of resonance, tension, and contestation.

- Strengthened participant capacity for reflective engagement with emotional difference.

Together, these outputs constitute the primary co-creation contribution of the Citizen Innovation Labs and provide a robust foundation for follow-up activities, dissemination, and cross-WP integration.

3.8 QUALITY ASSURANCE AND RISK MITIGATION

In line with Horizon Europe requirements regarding the *quality, credibility, and robustness of the proposed approach*, the ENCODE co-design methodology integrates a comprehensive quality assurance framework. This framework addresses methodological risks specific to participatory, emotionally engaged research, while ensuring ethical integrity, analytical reliability, and consistency across implementation sites.

Quality assurance is conceived as an **embedded and continuous process**, rather than a post-hoc evaluation step. It operates across three levels: group dynamics and facilitation quality, emotional and cognitive risk mitigation, and reflexive documentation and traceability of outputs.

3.8.1 MITIGATION OF POWER ASYMMETRIES

Participatory methodologies are particularly exposed to risks associated with unequal participation, informal hierarchies, and convergence driven by social pressure rather than substantive agreement. These risks are explicitly acknowledged in Horizon reviewer guidance and are proactively addressed within the ENCODE design.

To ensure *balanced participation and epistemic inclusiveness*, the methodology systematically alternates between individual, small-group, and plenary formats. Individual written elicitation precedes verbal discussion, ensuring that all participants contribute content independently of confidence, rhetorical skill, or social status.

Facilitators are trained to monitor interaction patterns and intervene where dominance, marginalisation, or deference to perceived expertise emerges. Importantly, the methodology does not require consensus as an outcome. Outputs are documented as **coexisting narrative clusters**, preserving disagreement and internal tension. This design choice directly mitigates the risk of groupthink and aligns with Horizon expectations regarding pluralism, inclusiveness, and methodological realism.

3.8.2 EMOTIONAL ESCALATION AND SAFEGUARDING PROTOCOLS

Given the project's engagement with emotionally striking and politically sensitive topics, emotional risk is treated as a foreseeable and manageable methodological challenge rather than an exceptional event.

Facilitators are equipped with clear escalation-recognition and response protocols, including:

- Identification of affective overload, withdrawal, or antagonistic interaction patterns;

- Graduated de-escalation strategies (reframing, reflective pauses, modality shifts);

- Explicit participant rights to pause, withdraw, or selectively disengage from activities.

These measures ensure compliance with ethical standards while also responding to the *capacity* of the consortium to manage sensitive participation contexts without compromising participant wellbeing or data quality.

3.8.3 BIAS AWARENESS

The ENCODE methodology explicitly recognises that emotional narratives, facilitation choices, and analytical synthesis are shaped by cognitive biases and interpretative frames. Rather than claiming neutrality, the methodology operationalises **bias awareness as a quality criterion**.

Co-creation activities are designed to surface implicit assumptions, narrative shortcuts, and affective heuristics. At the analytical stage, synthesis teams clearly distinguish between citizen-generated material and researcher-led structuring, documenting interpretative decisions and clustering logic.

3.8.4 FACILITATOR REFLEXIVITY AS A QUALITY MECHANISM

Facilitators are recognised as active methodological actors whose positionality and emotional responses influence outcomes. Reflexivity is therefore institutionalised as a formal quality assurance mechanism.

Structured facilitator debriefs document:

- Observed power dynamics and participation imbalances;

- Moments of emotional intensity or disengagement;

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- Reflection on recruitment and representation;

- Process quality and methodological learning;

- Facilitation interventions and their perceived effects.

3.9 FOLLOW-UP & EXPLOITATION

A structured post-workshop follow-up is a critical component of a rigorous co-design methodology. It serves a dual purpose: **methodological validation** and **participant-centred ethics**. While the in-session closing segments provide immediate, collective reflection, a follow-up survey allows for private, considered feedback, completing the iterative loop of "design → test → refine." It honours the participants' contributions by formally seeking their evaluation of the *process itself*, reinforcing their role as co-producers of the methodology. It ensures the analytical robustness of the workshop outputs (e.g. Narrative Blueprints, Legacy Statements) by explicitly testing their **clarity, accuracy, and emotional resonance** with those who created them. This prevents researcher interpretation from drifting away from authentic citizen meaning. By soliciting honest feedback on interactional dynamics, it provides vital data on whether the lab succeeded in creating a genuinely pluralistic and respectful agonistic space, or where it may have inadvertently reproduced exclusionary patterns. This is essential for refining the methodology's capacity to host productive conflict. As detailed in the closing segments (3a & 3b), the collective reflective circle and synthesis discussion serves as a first layer of feedback. The prompts are designed to generate participant's own framing of the output's value and accuracy, fostering a sense of shared authorship and providing a collective sense-check.

This next step should be done in a survey format, inspired from the ACCOMPLISSH Project and CIVISTI Methodology will be sectioned in three main parts. The survey should be **brief** (approximately 10-12 questions) and use a mix of scaled responses (1-5 Likert scales) and optional open-text fields for elaboration. **Cognitive dimension** to evaluate the process and outputs made sense and integrated views, **the emotional dimension** to examine the affective journey and the emotional credibility of narratives and finally the i**nteractional dimension** assessing the quality of dialogue, safety, and collaborative norms. This can be concluded with a final open feedback question, opening the floor for the participant to share any other comments.

The survey data will be analysed thematically alongside the workshop artefacts. Discrepancies between facilitator interpretations and participant feedback, especially regarding emotional resonance or clarity, will be flagged for careful review particularly in light of T6.5. A key finding from the feedback will be shared back with participants via the project newsletter, demonstrating that their feedback on the process was valued and acted upon.

4.CONCLUSIONS

This deliverable has outlined a comprehensive co-design methodology tailored to ENCODE's ambition of addressing the emotional dimensions of contemporary democratic politics. By embedding participatory co-creation within a strong theoretical framework centred on affective pluralisation, the methodology offers a concrete response to the challenges posed by affective polarisation, disinformation, and democratic disengagement across Europe.

The Citizen Innovation Labs presented in this document are not conceived as isolated participatory exercises, but as **integral components of ENCODE's broader research and innovation ecosystem**. They translate analytical insights from social media analysis, biometric research, qualitative studies, and experimental data into structured spaces for collective sense-making and narrative production. In doing so, the methodology ensures that citizen engagement is neither symbolic nor extractive but meaningfully connected to ENCODE's knowledge production pipeline and subsequent policy-oriented outputs.

A key contribution of this methodology lies in its deliberate integration of agonistic democratic principles into participatory practice. Rather than seeking consensus or emotional neutrality, the **labs are designed to accommodate disagreement, emotional diversity, and contestation within carefully facilitated and ethically safeguarded environments**. Through this approach, antagonistic dynamics are reoriented towards agonistic engagement, enabling participants to recognise opposing viewpoints as legitimate while co-creating shared emotional narratives rooted in pluralism and mutual respect.

The methodology also foregrounds the ethical and emotional responsibilities inherent in participatory research. By incorporating safeguards related to power asymmetries, emotional escalation, accessibility, and facilitator reflexivity, the framework acknowledges that working with emotions in political contexts requires heightened attentiveness, care, and procedural integrity. These safeguards are essential to ensuring both the quality of the outputs and the well-being of participants.

As a foundational deliverable for Work Package 6, D6.1 establishes the **methodological conditions for subsequent narrative synthesis, validation, and policy translation activities within ENCODE**. The insights and narratives generated through the Citizen Innovation Labs will feed directly into later deliverables, expert validation processes, and dissemination efforts, reinforcing the project's commitment to bottom-up, citizen-centred democratic innovation.

In sum, this co-design methodology provides ENCODE partners with a shared, adaptable, and theoretically grounded framework for engaging citizens in the co-creation of future emotional narratives. By operationalising affective pluralisation through participatory practice, it contributes to the project's overarching goal of fostering more resilient, inclusive, and emotionally attuned democratic processes across Europe.

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6. ANNEX 1 – FACILITATOR TOOLKIT

This toolkit provides the operational protocols for the **Lead and Process Facilitators** within the ENCODE citizen innovation labs. It is designed to translate the project's theoretical focus on emotional politics into a practical, pedagogical environment that fosters affective pluralisation.

This present methodology recommends that the facilitators are selected based on direct **experience or training in facilitating roles** (e.g Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) training; Global Competencies Inventory (GCI); Intercultural Effectiveness Scale (IES)) or similar/relevant positions that would ensure them confidence in their role during the citizen innovation labs. To ensure participatory parity, the facilitator team must maintain a clear division of labour. While the **Lead Facilitator** manages the structural agenda and the multi-modal activities (visual mapping, verbal deliberation, and collective creation), the **Process Facilitator** remains disengaged from the content to focus exclusively on the group's "emotional temperature". This second role is essential for monitoring non-verbal cues, power asymmetries, and the subtle shifts in energy that signal either a move towards productive agonism or a retreat into antagonistic hostility.

Facilitators are encouraged to develop a heightened awareness of the emotional triggers that may hinder constructive dialogue or threaten the continuity of group discussions. Re-Imagine Europa's *Cycle of Distrust* provides a conceptual framework for understanding how emotional responses interact with key elements of trust and distrust. This framework supports facilitators in **identifying moments of emotional escalation, conversational dead ends, or polarising dynamics** that may require redirection, reframing, or de-escalation.

Negative emotions, when left unaddressed, can act as self-reinforcing mechanisms within the cycle of distrust, ultimately undermining the conditions necessary for meaningful co-creation. This toolkit is designed to equip facilitators with practical tools to foster trust in the process itself, creating an environment in which participants feel sufficiently safe and recognised to contribute openly and to the fullest extent of their capacities.
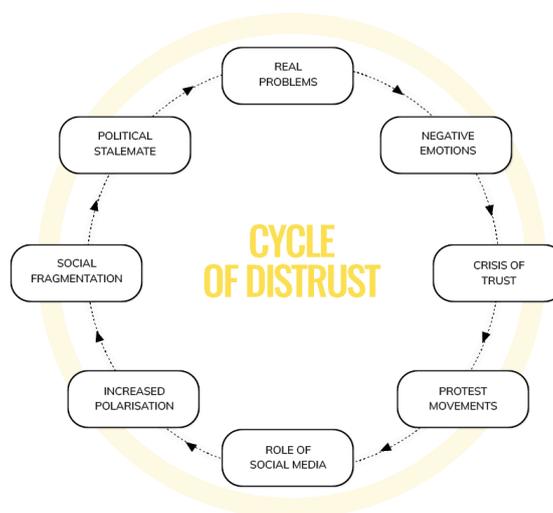

Figure 3 - Cycle of Distrust

The **Emotional Climate Scale** (ECS) is a diagnostic tool used to **measure the collective mood and energy levels of the room** without disrupting the flow of discussion. Facilitators can implement brief check-ins at transition points, such as after a heated debate or before moving to a new co-design activity.

The scale assesses three primary dimensions of the micro-public sphere:

1. **Safety vs. Risk:** Do participants feel secure enough to express dissent, or is there a palpable sense of self-censorship?

2. **Agonism vs. Antagonism:** Are disagreements focused on ideas (adversarial) or are they becoming personal and exclusionary (enemy-centric)?

3. **Engagement vs. Fatigue:** Is the group maintaining the "emodiversity" of the discussion, or is a binary "us-versus-them" narrative beginning to simplify the dialogue?

When the group gathers back together, **facilitators may use non-verbal tools, such as colour-coded cards** (Green for "Constructive/Open", Yellow for "Tension/Caution," and Red for "Hostile/Closed"), to allow participants to report their internal state quickly and anonymously. Once participants show their cards, facilitator offer them the floor to explain shift in their emotional state.

Reflective Intervals are structured pauses that encourage participants to move from reactive emotional responses to deliberate cognitive insights. These prompts are designed to facilitate "affective pluralisation" by making the emotive character of politics legible.
Cognitive Shifts:

- "At the start of this session, I viewed the alternative perspective as [X]. Now, I recognise that it is rooted in [Y]."

- "What is one piece of evidence or one lived experience shared today that has complicated your initial stance on this issue?"

Emotional Shifts:

- "Identify a moment when you felt a strong emotional reaction (e.g. frustration or empathy). What value of yours was being triggered in that moment?"

- "How has the atmosphere of this room changed since we began discussing [Topic Z]?"

To counteract the divisive logic of affective polarisation, **facilitators must model and enforce the "Yes, And..." framework**. This is not a tool for achieving consensus; rather, it is a tool for **constructive contestation**.

When a participant offers a polarising or binary viewpoint, the facilitator should intervene to help the group build upon it rather than simply negating it.

- **The "Yes":** Validates the participant's contribution and the emotion behind it ("I hear that you feel a deep sense of distrust regarding [Policy A]...").

- **The "And":** Introduces the pluralistic dimension ("...and, how can we integrate that concern with the need for collective resilience discussed by the other group members?").

This technique ensures that the dialogue remains forward-moving and creative, preventing the session from descending into a repetitive cycle of rebuttal.

Facilitators must **remain vigilant against "invisible hierarchies"**, where education, confidence, or social status might silence more vulnerable citizens.

- **Wait Time:** The Lead Facilitator should deliberately extend the silence after asking a question to give quieter participants space to formulate a response.

- **Direct Invitation:** If a dominant voice is monopolising the space, the Process Facilitator should gently intervene by stating: "We have heard a lot from one side of the room; I would like to hear an alternative perspective or a different emotional take on this topic."

Additionally, **facilitators might need to anticipate "emotional off-ramping"**, a pedagogical process that ensures participants do not leave the session in a state of heightened agitation or unresolved conflict. This closing protocol should involve a final shared activity that reinforces the equal footing for all attendees, regardless of the disagreements that surfaced during the lab. This might include a collective "narrative harvesting" exercise where the group identifies one shared value or insight that emerged from their adversarial contestation, ensuring the "momentary connectivity" of the lab translates into a lasting sense of democratic contribution rather than lingering resentment.

Finally, the **"safety valve" technique is a pre-agreed set of interventions to de-escalate verbal aggression or personal attacks without silencing the underlying political grievance**. This involves training facilitators to recognise the physiological signs of "flooding" or emotional overload in participants and knowing when to transition the group from a high-heat verbal debate to a low-heat individual writing exercise. By de-personalising the conflict and shifting the mode of expression, facilitators can protect the safety of the micro-public sphere while still honouring the "emodiversity" of the room.

ACRONYM	FULL NAME
ACCOMPLISSH	Accelerate co-creation by setting up a multi-actor platform for impact from Social Science and Humanities
CIL	Citizen Innovation Lab
CIVISTI	Citizen Visions on Science Technology and Innovation
CSD	Center for the Study of Democracy
ENCODE	Unveiling the Emotional Dimension of Politics to Foster European Democracy
EU	European Union
GCI	Global Competencies Inventory
HMW	How might we
IDI	Intercultural Development Inventory
IES	Intercultural Effectiveness Scale
NODES	Narrative Observatory to combat Disinformation in Europe Systematically
RIE	Re-Imagine Europa
UN	United Nations