



Territorial Dialogue | Climate Conversations | Community Dialogue | Climate Dialogue | Neighbourhood Parliaments

**WEBINAR | WEDNESDAY 10th FEBRUARY 2021 | 17.00 – 18.30 CET**

# DEEPENING CIVIC DIALOGUE

**An invitation to a conversation on the power of dialogue for community-led transitions**

- What approaches to dialogue helps us build more thriving communities
- How do we ensure meaningful participation and that marginal voices are heard?
- What approaches to dialogue enable local action, and especially climate action?
- What would it take to catalyse more and better dialogue?

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## GENERAL QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

- **What approaches to dialogue help us build more thriving communities?**
- **How do we ensure meaningful participation and that marginal voices are heard?**
- **What approaches to dialogue enable local action, and especially climate action?**
- **What would it take to catalyse more and better dialogue?**

Jorge Sánchez-Cruzado

*An example of community activation and co-design to strengthen the resilience of socio-ecosystems in the 'Valles de Omaña y Luna' and 'Ordesa-Viñamala' Biosphere Reserves.*

## PRESENTATION SCRIPT

- **What did you do? - What was/is the project?**

Our project carried out in two Spanish Biosphere Reserves: “Ordesa-Viñamala” in the Pyrenees and “Omaña y Luna” in León focused on fostering community dialogue for reinforcing eco-social resilience. Thus, weaving new connections among different stakeholders of the communities.

These areas have a small population, specially Omaña y Luna and there is not so much cohesion in the community, they live in spreaded towns all around the land, and usually are immersed in their personal activities and not many in community actions.

So the goal was to bring them together and start talking about a common future, beyond their personal interests, and creating a common vision of healthy and sustainable livelihoods in the regions.

As an outcome, an Action Plan was created for each Biosphere Reserve. As the project focused on community action, it was very important that the types of actions co-designed were feasible, not depending on high amounts of funding. At the end, it was not about solving all the challenges that the territories face in the current situation and climate change scenarios but to start increasing community collaboration and dialogue.

The types of actions co-designed were:

- Training and capacitation programmes
- Community volunteering actions for ecological and cultural regeneration
- Recover communal management of resources
- Promote land stewardship agreements
- Promotion of new sustainable economic activities
- School programmes for sustainability
- Recovering traditional knowledge and inter-generational dialogue

- **What did you do to include diverse people?**

Participation in rural areas is a critical challenge, as usually there is many old people that don't use IT technologies and also internet is not reachable in many places, so bringing the call to those small towns takes a big effort. It was helpful for us to bring the voice through the local municipalities and their noticeboards. But then also moving from town to town it is not that easy for many people.

Then if you really want to hear all the voices, it is important to put resources to reach them, might be by phone calls or even personal interviews.

When having them in a room, good facilitation techniques are a key to really listen to all the voices. Many people in these environments are not very used to speak in public, and also power dynamics interfere in the conversations, so is good to explore different ways of expressing through different techniques like conversations in small groups, writing ideas personally and using creative dynamics and games that let participants express themselves.

It is so important to hear all voices, everyone has something important to bring to the conversation from their personal experience. Specially, voices from minorities are not given full attention in general, but their message it's fundamental for having an inclusive, united and resilient community.

- **What have you learnt about which processes work well?**

Usually when these types of processes happen, they start framing the challenges and difficulties of the region, everyone bring their own problems and challenges for their personal interest, so they focus on themselves and not in the community as a whole. When this happen, conflicts emerge from the starting point and thus, collaboration among different participants becomes difficult.

At Altekio we always try to go deep in human needs, emotions and feelings, and we try to reach that level that goes beyond personal interests (related to daily activities) from the very beginning. With different techniques, like bringing creative games that connect us to

deep feelings and our experience of life, the conversation starts from a very different approach, instead of practicalities for daily life that bring tensions between different stakeholders, from a human needs framework what means that, at the end, we humans have the same needs and then we can talk the same language: healthy environments, decent jobs for all, children in the towns and active schools, social and cultural activities, good social services, etc.

From that level of conversation, then we start to create a common vision that goes beyond everyone's personal interests, and then a better framework for collaboration happen.

- **What would it take to catalyze more and better dialogue?**

For some stakeholders it is really difficult to go beyond their personal interests and conflicts with other stakeholders. Sometimes it is good to work only with them so that their needs are listened and they can express their wishes, interests, angers and fears, before bringing them to the whole conversation.

There are always common points between different stakeholders, but to reach them, first it is good that every stakeholder can express themselves, and it is important to listen without judgements, acknowledging that everyone has a personal experience in their lives that made him/her think or act the way they do.

A general difficulty also in participative processes is that funders do not consider appropriately the amount of resources needed to really reach all voices and bring participants to the table.

Another mistake that has been happening with participative processes is that there is no devolution for their participation. If you spend your time and energy in a process, it is so important that you feel rewarded afterwards, and this reward might be very different: you can make new friends or potential collaborators that can help in your profession, some improvements on social and cultural life can be achieved, that can benefit your children or grandchildren, or even help to bring them back to the town if they left! But we have been years asking people for their thought without giving a reply, and that frustrates motivation to participate; usually what you heard when you come to these processes is something like "we have done loads of processes like this and it served for nothing."