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JUNE 3-7, 2025

Nantes, France



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LOCAL AUTHORITIES, ARTISTS AND INTERMEDIARIES WORKING IN SYNERGY TOWARDS JOINT GOALS: CAPACITIES NEEDED FOR PURPOSEFUL COLLABORATION WITHIN THE CCI4CHANGE FRAMEWORK

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ABSTRACT | This research focuses on establishing purposeful collaboration between local authorities, artists, and intermediaries working in synergy. Drawing on insights from the co-creation of the emerging CCI4Change collaboration model and five case studies, the study advocates for a systematic approach to local authority-driven partnerships with artists to achieve enhanced sustainability. The research examines the key factors required to foster collaboration, addressing the key capacities of each actor, local authorities, artists, and intermediaries, while also identifying the prerequisites and obstacles for a purposeful and successful collaboration. The study underscores the importance of motivation on the part of local authority, which must possess the capacity to contextualise the novel collaboration in a

meaningful and strategic way. Artists, in turn, need strong professional artistic skills and the motivation to work in a goal-oriented way. The intermediary's expertise within the CCI (Culture and Creative Industries) community is critical in fostering dialogue and trust between the two parties. The study employs a qualitative approach with a limited number of case studies. While the findings provide valuable insights and offer valid considerations for fostering purposeful cross-sectorial collaboration, they also suggest transferability to similar initiatives. This knowledge supports the application of the CCI4Change collaboration model, as well as other similar models, aimed at facilitating the systemic implementation of novel, local authority-driven creative collaborations to foster community sustainability and innovation.

KEYWORDS | SUSTAINABILITY, ARTS-BASED COLLABORATION, CROSS-INNOVATION, PARTNERSHIPS, ACTION RESEARCH

1. Introduction

The world is facing a climate crisis. Europe is striving to become carbon neutral by 2050, a cornerstone of the European Green Deal (European Parliament, 2021). Art and design are called on to take a stronger stance in providing solutions and redefining their role in addressing ecological and societal conflicts (Ciravegna et al., 2022). Ethical design leadership is crucial in cross-innovation efforts aimed at integrating creative competencies, guided by sustainability principles, UN 2030 goals, and the urgency of tackling wicked problems, and new forms of collaborations are needed to find synergies and unexplored possibilities to enhance sustainability and the green shift (Bandarin et al, 2011; Hasagharar, 2017; Soini & Birkeland, 2014; UCLG, 2018).

A diverse range of skills and approaches from different disciplines is essential for finding new solutions and creating robust knowledge, e.g. research with and for society via stakeholder integration (Nowotny et al., 2003; Weingart, 2017). The research is based on the CCI4Change (CCI as in Culture and Creative Industries) collaboration model, a novel approach created via participatory means (Robertson & Simonsen, 2012; Spinuzzi, 2005). This study explores the essential factors required for fostering a purposeful collaboration between local authorities and professionals in the field of culture and creative industries, and especially artists, within the context of the green shift, sustainability transition and transformation.

The study resonates with the growing interest of both parties, local authorities (city, municipal and regional public officers) and artists from diverse fields of arts: visual arts, performing arts, media arts and more, to explore new ways to collaborate to create positive impacts on the sustainability of their communities. The power dynamics between artists and local authorities are inherently distinct, often leading to discord and misalignment in working cultures, where communication barriers and differing priorities create challenges. Artists play a crucial societal role in critiquing, influencing, and shaping their surroundings, while local authorities hold the mandate to direct societal development and stir citizen behaviour. Despite their respective influence, meaningful collaboration between these two entities remains uncommon. Harnessing their complementary strengths for shared objectives could, however, yield significant societal benefits. To a large extent, artistic and creative actors consist of individuals or small organisations that often occupy a precarious position and operate with limited resources.

In contrast, the local authority is a powerful and strongly structured entity constrained by legal requirements and rigid internal processes to which a collaboration must adapt. To help balance this power dynamic, the role of the intermediary is introduced as a key facilitator, bridging the two parties to enable purposeful and productive collaboration.

2. Research questions

The emerging CCI4Change collaboration model explores the potential of cross-sectoral partnerships between local authorities, professionals from the culture and creative industries (such as artists), and intermediaries, working in synergy to influence citizens' energy consumption behaviours. This study examines the key capacities of each stakeholder—local authorities, artists, and intermediaries—while identifying prerequisites and obstacles for a purposeful collaboration.

3. Key concepts

The study contributes to sustainability sciences by examining the role of the arts in sustainability, as in challenging the power dynamics and facilitating futures visioning (Heras et al., 2021). Cultural actions are commonly integrated into sustainability transitions and are recognised as relevant both for short-term experiments and long-term systemic change (Concilio et al., 2023). Art has some potential to act as a catalyst in promoting environmentally positive values, systemic thinking and sustainability initiatives, and cultural sustainability transformation (Huhmarniemi & Jokela, 2025).

Sustainable development has traditionally been defined by three core pillars—economic, social, and environmental—as outlined in Agenda 21 for Sustainable Development adopted by members in 1992 (Agenda 21, 1992). The role of culture in this sustainability framework is widely discussed: how culture contributes to the three existing pillars as an instrument to achieve sustainability, and cultural sustainability as the fourth pillar of sustainability (Soini & Birkeland, 2014; Sabatini, 2019). A conceptual framework for relating culture with sustainability consists of Culture in Sustainability, Culture for Sustainability, and Culture as Sustainability (Soini & Dessein, 2016). This approach has also been adopted in the UNESCO agenda, which is incorporating the framework in its narratives as: (1) culture as an independent pillar of sustainability; (2) culture as a driver of sustainability containing development assets; and (3) culture perceived as a prerequisite for sustainability (Dobrosława, 2020). The first notions of the role of culture are more adopted, such as acts of preservation and integration of cultural values, traditions, and heritage within broader sustainability efforts. Culture as a driver of sustainability is acknowledged as part of areas like health and wellbeing, urban planning, and the role of culture in awareness-raising for desired change. The third perspective, culture as sustainability, relates to a transformative approach that has yet to be adopted and lacks efficient tools to create the needed change (Siivonen, 2020). However, sustainable development has been widely criticised as a politically charged concept with several weaknesses in its approach (Jackson, 2009; Raworth, 2012).

This study contributes to sustainability sciences and the role of arts in sustainability, as in disrupting power dynamics and facilitating futures visioning (Heras et al., 2021). Cultural

actions are commonly integrated into sustainability transitions and are recognised as relevant for short-term experiments and long-term systemic change (Concilio et al., 2023). Art, especially social and pedagogical artistic practices, can initiate sustainability transformations, a systemic change, and shift towards a sustainability orientation (Huhmarniemi & Jokela, 2025). However, there is a lack of standardised methods among public, private, and non-governmental sectors for monitoring and evaluating their progress in integrating culture into development-oriented initiatives (British Council, 2020).

When artists are invited to move beyond their traditional domains to collaborate with professionals from other sectors and adapt their objectives accordingly, these interactions have been examined within the contexts of health and wellbeing, social sciences, corporate environments, and frameworks of organisational learning. Artistic interventions in organisations, or arts-based initiatives, integrate elements from the art world into non-arts-based organisations to foster learning and innovation (Darsø, 2004; Berthoin Antal, 2012; Schiuma, 2011; Schiuma, 2017). However, there has been limited research on collaborations between artists and local authorities.

Huybrechts et al. (2017) state that participatory design and design in the public realm operate primarily at the micro level, yet they generate many direct and indirect effects on meso- and macro-level institutional frames. As an emerging collaboration model, the CCI4Change responds to the call for research, art, and design to support the necessity and potential of more systemic radical transitions, making them accessible to a wider audience to adopt. It also highlights the role of cultural organisations and universities in demonstrating leadership by actively engaging with radical transition practices in their urban or regional contexts through action research and research-by-design (Loorbach, 2022).

Systemic approaches are crucial for investigating the factors that enable productive collaboration between local authorities and artists. Such an approach can generate the necessary number and quality of initiatives to identify actions that have the potential to tap into leverage points within the system, and through limited interventions, create significant impacts (Meadows, 1999).

4. Methodology and data gathering

4.1. Action research

The research framework is based on action research. Action research is participative and collaborative. Its methods involve action, evaluation, and reflection in an iterative cycle (Cohen et al., 2017; McNiff, 2013; Avison et al., 1999). This methodology is increasingly being applied to foster sustainability transformations (Bradbury, 2022) and the sustainability impact of arts and culture (Jokela & Huhmarniemi, 2018; Jokela et al., 2019).

The data is collected through two parallel processes. Firstly, data is gathered from the service design process conducted to develop the CCI4Change collaboration model. Secondly, data is drawn from five case studies that tested the collaboration model in practice. Therefore, the model provides a comparative framework for all five case studies, each of which follows the same structured approach outlined by the model, contributing significantly to the research.

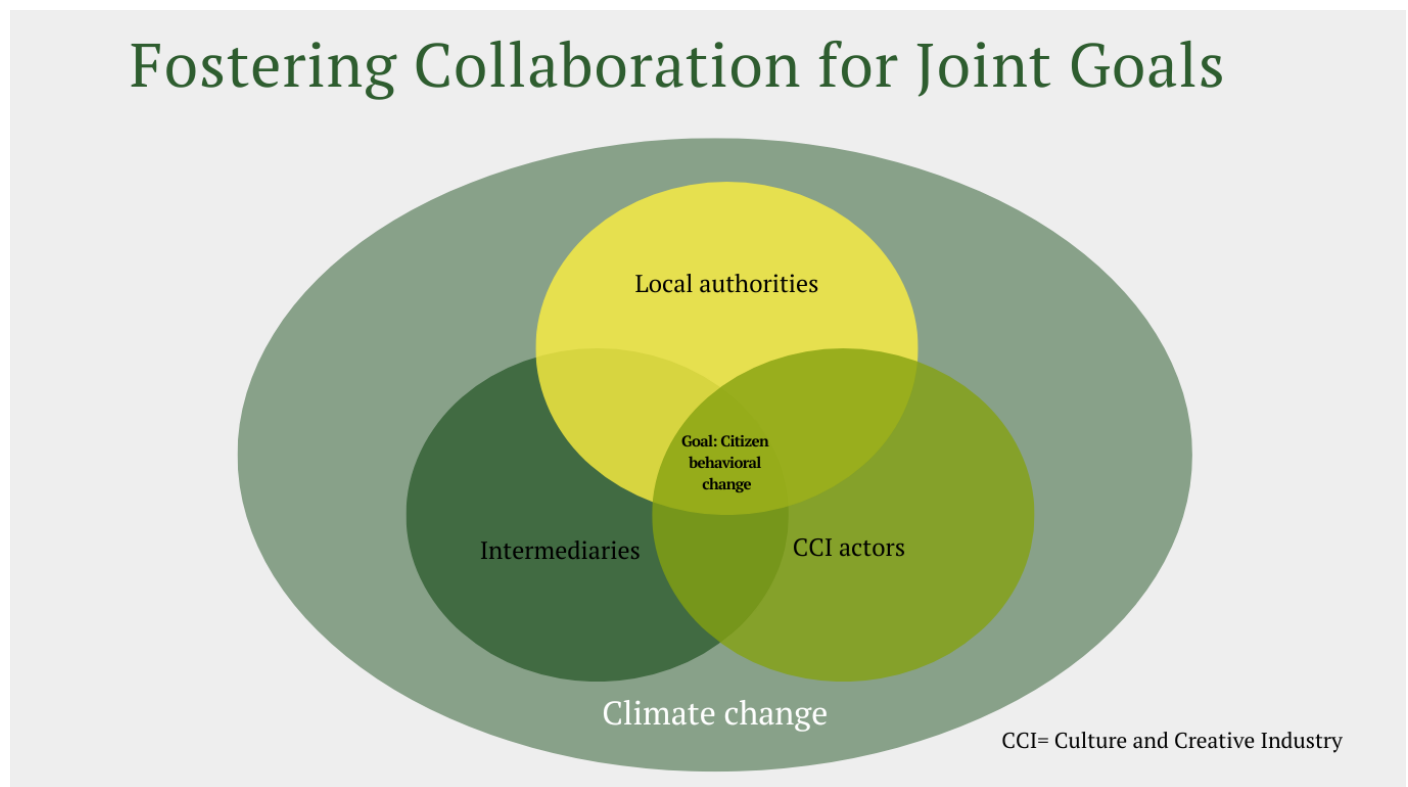


Figure 1. Framework of the CCI4Change Collaboration model.

The research stems from the CCI4Change collaboration model (Figure 1). Despite the CCI4Change collaboration model not being within the focus of this study, it is essential to understand the framework it provides for the research premise, highlighting the roles of the local authority, artist, and intermediary. The research data is derived from the context of the CCI4Change collaboration model, which aims to support local authorities by providing a tool to influence citizens' energy consumption behaviour through the skills and approaches of artists and creatives. The model is based on three key stakeholders—local authorities, CCI actors, and intermediaries—whose ability to work together may be crucial for fostering sustainable solutions. This development work and the research were conducted as part of the EU Interreg Baltic Sea Region Program co-funded project 'CCI4Change: Facilitation of Citizens Energy Consumption Behavioural Change in Baltic Sea Cities and Municipalities' implemented in Latvia, Finland, and Sweden (August 2023, July 2025).

Aligning with the action research approach, the researchers were integral partners of the co-creation and its working groups and facilitated, designed, observed, and participated in the process. While participating and co-designing, they observed and took field notes. The researchers observed the entire service design process and were involved in all co-creation workshops as participants.

4.2. Service design tools

The action research utilised diverse service design methods (Stickdorn et al., 2018). The objective of the service design process was to develop the CCI4Change collaboration model and to test it across five practical case studies. Additionally the objective was to produce a toolkit to support the adoption and dissemination of the model. Co-creation, grounded in participatory principles, provided a central approach that actively seeks to

understand the perspectives of users and stakeholders (Vargas et al., 2022; Spinuzzi, 2005). Various service design methods were employed to gather user insights throughout the process (Stickdorn et al., 2018). A key element was a series of co-creation workshops (September 2023–April 2025), where the model was developed and prototypes were tested at different stages in collaboration with users and stakeholders both in online and onsite settings (Figure 2).

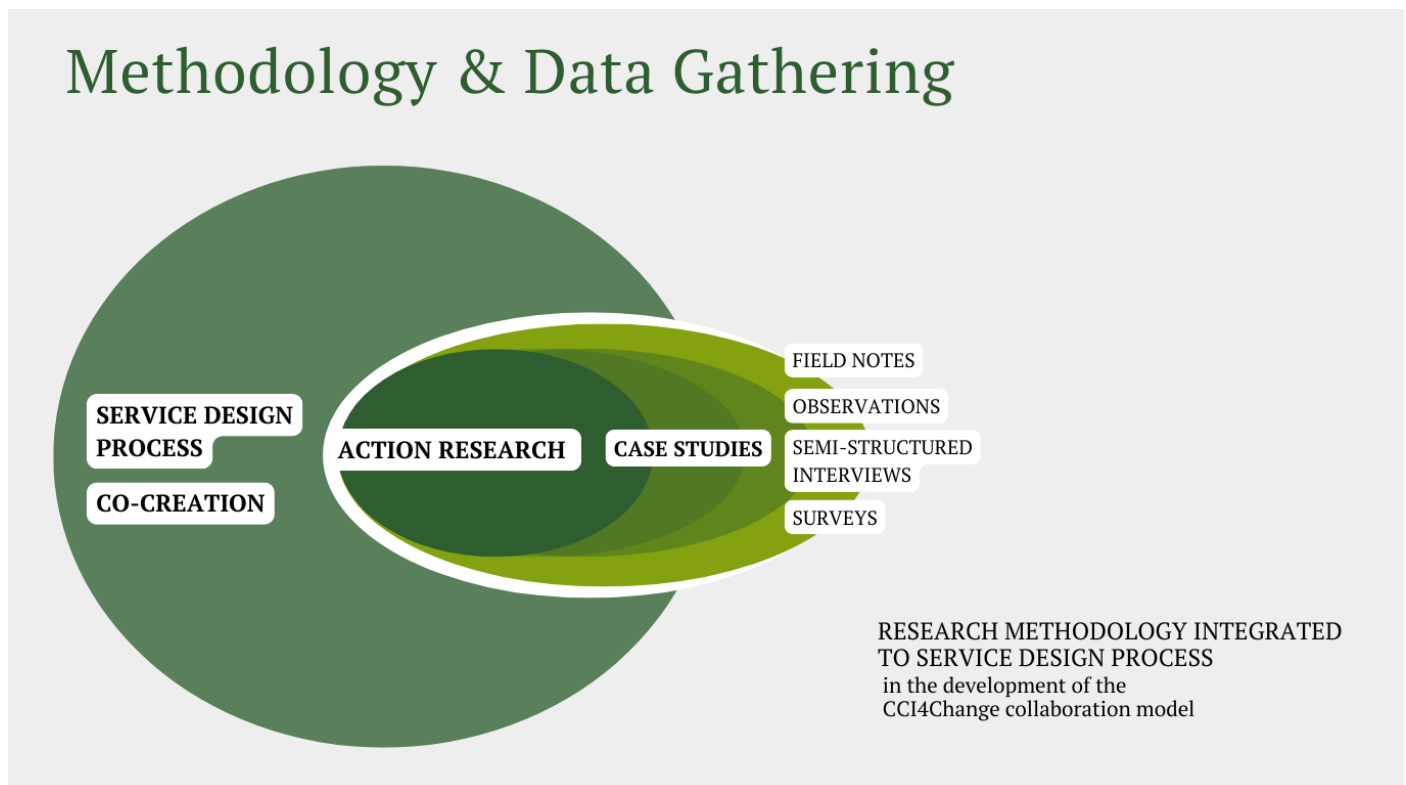


Figure 2. Methodology and data gathering.

Twenty-two individuals from Latvia, Finland, and Sweden contributed to the co-creation. These were grouped into three groups. Firstly, the local authority representatives were public officials mainly working in management or expert positions in cultural departments at the city, municipality, and regional levels. Local authorities also included a director from the city urban development department as well as experts in sustainability and climate issues. Secondly, the intermediaries represented organisations of various kinds, an NGO creative hub, an international public cultural institution, and a public business development agency. Thirdly, a participant group of six artists, as introduced in the case studies, contributed to the research. In addition, five individuals from the universities contributed to the working groups.

User insights and data were collected throughout the process using interviews and surveys to triangulate data-gathering methods (Stickdorn et al., 2018). Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the participant groups of local authorities and artists, which enabled collecting rich qualitative data (Ibid.). In addition, data from the artists participant group was collected through a survey.

4.3. Data analyses

The analysis and conclusions are shaped by the data collected from the co-design process and the five case studies examining the commonalities experienced in them. The results were analysed using an affinity diagram, and the findings were visualised in persona canvases that were created to define key characteristics of the local authorities, artists, and intermediaries—their actions, skills, capacities, and motivations for the collaboration. Additionally, it explored the perceived value and future potential of the model, along with prerequisites for the collaboration as well as barriers that hindered effective collaboration. This process involved identifying key topics, themes, and focus areas that emerged during the co-creation sessions and within the case studies, as well as addressing questions, concerns, and priorities that were emphasised throughout the process. The visualisations served as tools to summarise the key findings capturing the shared experiences and insights of users in the three participant groups. Rather than reflecting individual participants' perspectives, the visualisations synthesise data from multiple stakeholders to present a broader understanding of the collaboration dynamics, thus providing the basis for the analysis.

In this research context, key capacities refer to the essential skills, instincts, abilities, processes, and resources that actors in the collaboration need to possess as relevant for purposeful collaboration. The prerequisites for collaboration refer to the conditions that must be met beforehand and that influence the efficiency of the collaboration. Obstacles are factors that hinder collaboration and negatively impact its success. The case study format was chosen to provide data for comparative analyses across the three contexts and to validate the emerging operational collaboration model (Flyvbjerg, 2011).

4.4. Case studies

The case studies tested the CCI4Change collaboration model in practice, representing a completed collaboration between the three parties (local authority, CCI actor, and intermediary).

All five case studies followed the same process structure and goals provided by the collaboration model from its start to closure. In brief, the collaboration began with the local authority and intermediary preparing to launch an open call for creatives, defining the criteria the applicants were expected to meet. The activities proposed by the creatives were intended to utilise artistic or creative practices to address the goal of reducing energy consumption, ideally in collaboration with civil society by engaging local communities. The outcomes of the creative process could take various forms, such as video, animation, comics, performance, temporary installations, and exhibitions. The expectation was not for artists to provide ready-made solutions to energy-consumption issues, but rather to guide citizens in discovering approaches for behavioural change through creative engagement. The timeframe for the projects was approximately four months, with a financial reimbursement of around €10,000. The open calls were competitive, and proposals that best aligned with the predefined criteria were selected for implementation. Local authorities and intermediaries chose the projects with an emphasis on new thinking and innovative approaches. These artistic pilot projects serve as the case studies for this research.

The study refers to culture and creative industry actors, particularly as artists due to the professional background of the actors represented in the case studies. In summary, the

fields of art and professional backgrounds of the artists participating in this study are music and sonification, cultural productions, ceramic art, game design, media and video art, community art practices, and art installations.

A. Duncan Geere & Miriam Quick: 'On Standby' sonification art

Duncan Geere and Miriam Quick, founders of the Loud Numbers data sonification studio, created a musical composition derived from data collected from individuals about overnight energy consumption. Geere distributed smart plugs that monitored the energy consumption among the participating citizens of Malmö, who collected and shared data. Using data-sonification techniques, this data was turned into a music composition that was 10 hours and 40 minutes in length. The aim of the artwork was to raise awareness of and stimulate discussion about energy use through the simple process of observing and quantifying the electric appliances' energy footprint, which is set to prompt self-reflection of one's own consumption. The activity was enabled by the local authority in the Skåne region and was supported through intermediary functions provided by the creative hub STPLN.

B. Ifö Centre: Zero Sum Residency

Ifö Centre is a free culture house initiated by artists in an old ceramic factory in the small village of Bromölla in southern Sweden. The closed factory property is managed by the international NGO Ifö Centre Association of Arts and Culture, covering 43,000 m², and is being repurposed as a site for art manufacturing and more. hosted a residency for artists with the focus on the Agenda 2030 goals, where creative approaches and solutions for energy saving were produced and discussed together with art exhibition audiences through ceramics and works of industrial design. Teresa Holmberg, ceramic artist, curator, and producer of the Ifö Centre, organised the residencies. The activity was enabled by the local authority Skåne region, and was supported through intermediary functions provided by creative hub STPLN.

C. Tatu Heinämäki & Camilla Pentti: Community Energy Game: 'Energeezer'

Tatu Heinämäki is a visual artist, game designer, and media arts teacher, while Camilla Pentti is a visual communications professional and game designer. In the city of Kotka, a video game was developed that specifically addresses the issue of energy consumption and encourages its reduction. In total, 29 high school students took part in 'game jams' giving their ideas to the development of the final video game. The main goals of the activities were to inspire the children who participate in the development and to raise interest among the citizens of Kotka for the game and to communicate about the energy consumption theme through video gaming. In March 2025, the video game became open to all citizens of Kotka, inspiring future discussions around energy consumption. The activity was enabled by local authority City of Kotka, Finland, and supported through intermediary functions provided by business development organisation Cursor.

D. Banja Media Ltd: Video Pilot: 'No, that's not how you save the world'

Banja Media's pilot activities were produced together with children of various ages in Kotka schools, producing short, humorous yet informative videos on energy saving, circular economy, and sustainable development. The videos represent educational material provided for the children and co-created with them. The goal was to promote shifts towards more sustainable behaviour and to inspire viewers of the videos to think how energy-saving can be possible. Petri Pietiläinen—a professional in children's art and culture and an author—played a key role in organising the video production, writing the scripts, workshopping with youth groups, and acting in the films. The activity was enabled

by local authority City of Kotka, Finland, and supported through intermediary functions provided by business development agency Cursor.

E. Fonds INITIUM: ‘Neighbourhood House’

INITIUM is a professional arts and culture platform focused on community art projects. It employs theatre and other artistic methods in sustainable initiatives supporting social, educational, and cultural efforts in Latvia and Baltics. In the Kauguri neighbourhood of Jurmala, a site-specific location for the artistic activity, the team created an environmental installation that aimed to spark discussion on energy consumption, highlighting citizen agency. Within a period of four months, the INITIUM work in Kauguri engaged with 170 inhabitants through brief inquiries extending to in-depth interviews. The activity was enabled by the local authority Jurmala municipality and supported by the Northern Dimension Partnership on Culture as the intermediary of the collaboration. The first author of the research acted as the intermediary between the local authority and the artist in this case study.

5. Results

A comparison grid categorises the features, functionalities, and characteristics of local authorities, intermediaries, and artists within the collaboration. This comparison is based on data collected using service design tools, including the Tree of Change, which focuses on the actions, operations, and connections of each actor, as well as key persona templates, where each actor is represented as a persona with specific characteristics, skills, capacities, values, actions, motivations, etc.

Table 1. Comparison grid.

Category	Local Authority (LA)	Artist	Intermediary
Role in Collaboration	Initiates, coordinates, and supports pilot projects. Mediates between CCI and community. Aligns with city strategies. Provides access to communities and practical support.	Designs and implements pilots. Develops creative methods and tools. Engages citizens. Collaborates with local authority and intermediary.	Provides funding, capacity building, and knowledge transfer. Facilitates communication and outreach. Acts as translator and bridge between different stakeholders in the collaboration.
Key Functions	Open calls and contracting. Coordinates multi-department involvement. Communicates with citizens. Promotes sustainability and transformation through culture. Collects citizen	Proposes and executes creative projects. Engages with civil society and diverse audiences. Creates impactful storytelling formats in versatile art forms	Organises training, workshops, and mentoring. Builds networks. Guides CCI towards transformative action. Ensures competence and project quality. Collects citizen experiences and

	experiences and feedback.		feedback.
Methods & Tools	Strategic planning; public procurement; collaboration across departments; questionnaires	Installations; games; art workshops; exhibitions, community art; digital storytelling.	Training webinars; workshops; questionnaires; communication strategies and campaigns.
Citizen Engagement	Provides infrastructure for participation and dialogue. Supports community access to activities.	Facilitates co-creation with citizens. Uses participatory methods and artworks. Implements art-based processes like games, installations, community art, and workshops.	Designs outreach strategies. Builds interest and organises events. Encourages citizen feedback.
Communication & Storytelling	Shares stories of coordination and mediation. Promotes CCI capacity in sustainability. Documents implementation and creative process. Shares results in networks and with the public.	Tells impactful narratives on chosen topics via different art forms. Communicates through engagement and raising awareness. Documents their own creative process.	Tells story of process and capacity-building. Harvests learning to support dissemination. Documents implementation and creative process. Shares results in networks and with the public.
Outputs & Impact	Strategic alignment with city goals. Greater CCI visibility. Community empowerment. Use of toolkits, open calls, and creative procurements in development processes across departments.	Creative pilots, exhibitions, games, community art, installations, and artworks as behavioural change tools. Strengthened connections between CCI and community. Strengthened sense of belonging via community art engagement of citizens.	Toolkits, capacity-building frameworks. Enhanced support models for CCIs. Insights for scaling and replication.
Sustainability Focus	Embeds pilots into city sustainability strategies; long-term engagement.	Drives behavioural change through creativity by designing and taking energy-related content into action.	Facilitates learning and continuity through toolkits and guidelines.

The identified key capacities of the local authority, artist, and intermediary are derived from each party's ability to fulfil the roles outlined in the collaboration grid, which presents functions of a purposeful collaboration in the CCI4Change framework. While these functions are not the focus of investigation in this study, they serve as a foundation for further examining the key capacities each party contributes towards achieving a successful and efficient collaboration aimed at a shared goal.

5.1. Contributions of the local authority

What does the local authority need to drive an innovative collaboration with artists? The artistic products, skills, and knowledge are often unfamiliar (if not foreign) in the organisational domain (Schnugg, 2014). The study indicates that the local authority requires specific capacities to enable innovative forms of collaboration. According to our findings, these capacities can be grouped into three categories: 1) individual motivation, 2) social skills, and 3) the ability to contextualise the work (*valorisation*).

The individual motivation of the local authority to work with artists is pivotal. This intrinsic motivation paves the ground for collaboration and all efforts needed to advocate and legitimise its value. This entails an interest and curiosity in artistic work and the benefits from gained expertise related to the role of the arts in citizen engagement, sustainability, and innovation.

Social skills and capacities are indispensable for building meaningful collaborations—firstly, with an intermediary party; secondly, in a cross-sectoral manner within the local authority organisation's diverse departments; and thirdly, in external engagement with the artists and other actors to expand the range of stakeholders and the impact of the collaboration. The local authority needs to integrate the collaboration into other relevant contexts and strategies of governance and build credibility for the artistic activities. In this way, the local authority needs motivation and the skills to support the impact of the collaboration. In other words, the local authority valorises the collaboration with its authority by contextualising the artistic work in a way that creates meaning. The value of the collaboration is created through the local authority's abilities to recognise the meaning and communicate it.

As a prerequisite, the study suggests that an existing and established relationship between the local authority and its creative community provides fertile ground for initiating innovative models of collaboration. A lack of dialogue or existing communication platforms between the local authorities and the creative community can be foreseen as an obstacle for initiation of an innovative collaboration. The collaboration builds on trust between the parties, which is built through continuous exchange and dialogue between the local authorities and the artists.

The obstacles to the collaboration are connected to the prerequisites. The collaboration is cross-sectoral, not only through the involvement of the intermediary and the artist, but also due to its overarching theme (energy consumption), which intersects with multiple departments within the local authority's organisation. The collaboration between diverse local authority departments is crucial. In all five case studies, the collaboration was driven by the cultural departments. But when the collaboration proceeded, it became closely related to other departments such as strategic planning, urban development, and climate action. Also, departments such as technical infrastructure, education, and communications were involved. The role of the local authority officer responsible for the collaboration as a manager and developer of the cross-departmental connections is vital to enable shared ownership between the departments and potential impacts beyond the ones limited only to the cultural department. Another prerequisite considers the readiness of the local authority for creative explorations and innovative approaches. In corporate settings of artistic interventions, the top managers can significantly influence success by actively legitimising the time employees dedicate to engaging with the arts and reinforcing their importance of the actions for the organisation (Berthoin Antal et al., 2019). The case studies indicate this need of management endorsement to support the

legitimation of the artistic actions inside the local authority organisation and, more widely, to raise awareness and promote sustainability and transformation through culture.

One observed obstacle for the collaboration relates to the theme of the collaboration: energy consumption behavioural change of the citizens. At the time of the case studies, there was a lack of clarity regarding the overall responsibility of the local authority in facilitating this change. This uncertainty results in insufficient strategic support to validate the relevance of the collaboration. Since the local authority's role in addressing this issue remains largely unclear, the importance of exploring new means of working toward this goal may be overlooked. This increases the risk for the collaboration to lack strategic backing and remains an experimental curiosity. This finding can serve as a suggestion for the local authorities to use exploratory artistic collaborations to work with goals and topics, in which the local authority responsibility is clear and well-defined.

5.2. Contributions of the artist

As with artistic interventions in organisations (Berthoin Antal, 2012; Lehtikoinen, 2013), successful collaboration demands a high level of expertise and capacity in the participating artists. The artist creates the content that drives citizen engagement and designs a process with the potential for the desired change, making the artist's contributions to the collaboration fundamentally relevant.

The artists in the case studies exhibited a large set of capacities that are grouped into four categories: (1) strong professional artistic expertise and practice; (2) motivation to work in a goal-oriented way; (3) capacity to align with collaboration goals while maintaining artistic integrity; and (4) the ability to apply creative methods with communities and create outreach.

The strong professional artistic practice was highly relevant, providing the basis from which to align with the specific framework and goals of the collaboration provided by the local authority. The high level of professionalism led to a winning stance when competing for a collaboration, resulting in winning the open call with one's tender or proposal.

The artists demonstrated a clear motivation to engage with broader societal and ecological issues, aspiring to generate positive sustainability impacts. Collaborating with local authorities on these issues was seen as highly motivating for the artists, and a shared understanding between the local authority and the artists—that contributing to sustainability through one's work is meaningful—provided a common ground for the collaboration, free of discord. The artistic and creative professional skills are the core competence and contribution that artists bring to the collaboration. However, the capability to comprehend the motivations and needs of the local authority is essential, as it requires contextual skills such as stakeholder awareness and an interest in exploring the relationship between the arts and society (Lehtikoinen, 2013; Lehtikoinen & Siljamäki, 2023). Also, the skill to adequately adjust to the collaboration and the working culture of the local authority was needed to enable the collaboration.

Citizen participation and the evolving role of citizens in public sector innovations are widely discussed (Agger & Hedensted Lund, 2017). The artists adapted their artistic methodologies to align with collaboration goals, such as community engagement and

energy consumption. As professionals in creativity, artists may also possess the skills and tools necessary for citizen engagement (Warren & Jones, 2015), which was evident in the case studies. The artists showed no struggle in creating meaningful engagements with the community and working with the energy consumption theme through their artistic methodologies. However, amplifying the potential impact of the creative work lies with the local authority, supported by the intermediary, in recognising the significance of the artistic contribution and how it can generate further influence. This also presents the potential risk that the local authority and intermediary may lack the necessary skills or resources to seize the opportunity to develop the impact of the artistic work, apply the approaches and solutions it offers, and further promote its findings.

A prerequisite for the collaboration is the artist's sufficient organisational structure (e.g. operating as a company, foundation, or association) and a proven track record of previous projects and initiatives. This relates to the artist's ability to produce and market their own work, which is a common requirement for sustaining a professional artistic practice.

The obstacles encountered were related to the conditions of the collaboration regarding its timespan and financial resources. While the local authority prioritised citizen engagement, a longer collaboration would enable the artists to foster deeper engagements with the communities. Community engagement takes time. Also, financial constraints posed obstacles. The artists indicated that with greater financial resources, the activities could be expanded to create more impact. Limited financial resources pose a potential risk that the goals of the local authority (energy consumption behavioural change through citizen engagement) are not truly met but only addressed in a superficial manner.

5.3. Contributions of the intermediary

The capacities of the local authority are closely intertwined with the intermediary. As with artistic interventions in corporate settings, the role of the intermediary is also indispensable in collaborations between the local authority and the artist (Sandberg, 2016). The case studies provide clear evidence, as corroborated by both local authorities and artists, that strengthening intermediary capacities is essential for fostering purposeful and productive collaboration. The case studies also demonstrate that the intermediary is not necessarily an organisation or a single person, but rather it is a function that must be fulfilled.

The intermediary capacities as contributions are grouped into five categories: (1) Intrinsic understanding of the creative field; (2) Motivation and expertise in artistic cross-collaborations; (3) Knowledge about the local authority context; (4) Skills to facilitate the collaboration; and (5) Ability to support the artist's process.

Aligned with studies of intermediaries in the corporate organisational context (Berthoin Antal, 2012; Grzelec & Prata, 2013), the intermediaries need to be knowledgeable and credible in both domains: the world of art and local authorities. The case studies indicate that the capacity to serve this function stems from inherent expertise in the creative sector, which relates to the identified prerequisites for the work. The intermediary needs to have access to the CCI community (or knowledge of how to arrange the necessary access) and the ability to reach the artists relevant for the collaboration. The study shows that the collaboration provides a meaningful and inspiring context for the artist's work. This needs to be understood in contrast to the more traditional assignments where the

artists need to independently construct or reinforce a contextual framework for their work. Without such a framework—a bridge to the surrounding world and society—the artwork may be isolated and lack dialogue, engagement, and broader societal relevance. The intermediary plays a pivotal role in building this context of relevance and dialogue, translating and expanding it from the local authority to the artistic one, ensuring the appeal of the collaboration and that the mission of the work can be well understood by the artists.

As a prerequisite for the collaboration, the intermediary has expertise in artistic work in cross-collaborative settings, and with this experience, provides relevant support for the process. The artist and the local authority may initially collaborate in this kind of set-up, but the expertise of cross-collaborations of the intermediary provides needed support for the process. The intermediary understands the local authority priorities, constraints, and working processes, as well as supports the artist in a sensitive yet goal-oriented manner, recognising their precarious position and the essential nature of artistic freedom. The capacity to apply the 'arm's-length principle' while also providing clarity and guidance to help artists align with the goals of the collaboration.

With the combination of essential capacities, the intermediary facilitates the collaboration and takes into consideration the required needed agreements and negotiations for securing fair work for both parties. The intermediary is able to facilitate discussions about the goals and expectations for the collaboration. The case studies showed that artistic freedom is a strongly emphasised core value of the collaboration, acknowledged and respected by all parties and brought into discussion by the intermediaries.

There were three acknowledged obstacles in the collaboration. Firstly, obstacles occurred when the intermediary was not capable of fulfilling the function with the needed requirements. This resulted in an unclear division of roles and responsibilities between the intermediary and the local authority, leading to ambiguity and not contributing to a productive collaboration. Secondly, obstacles occurred when the intermediary was too distant from the actual collaboration of the local authority and artist, leading to expanded responsibilities for the local authority.

5.4. Summary

The research examined the key capacities required to foster purposeful collaboration by outlining the capacities of each stakeholder—local authorities, artists and intermediaries—while identifying prerequisites and obstacles for the collaboration.

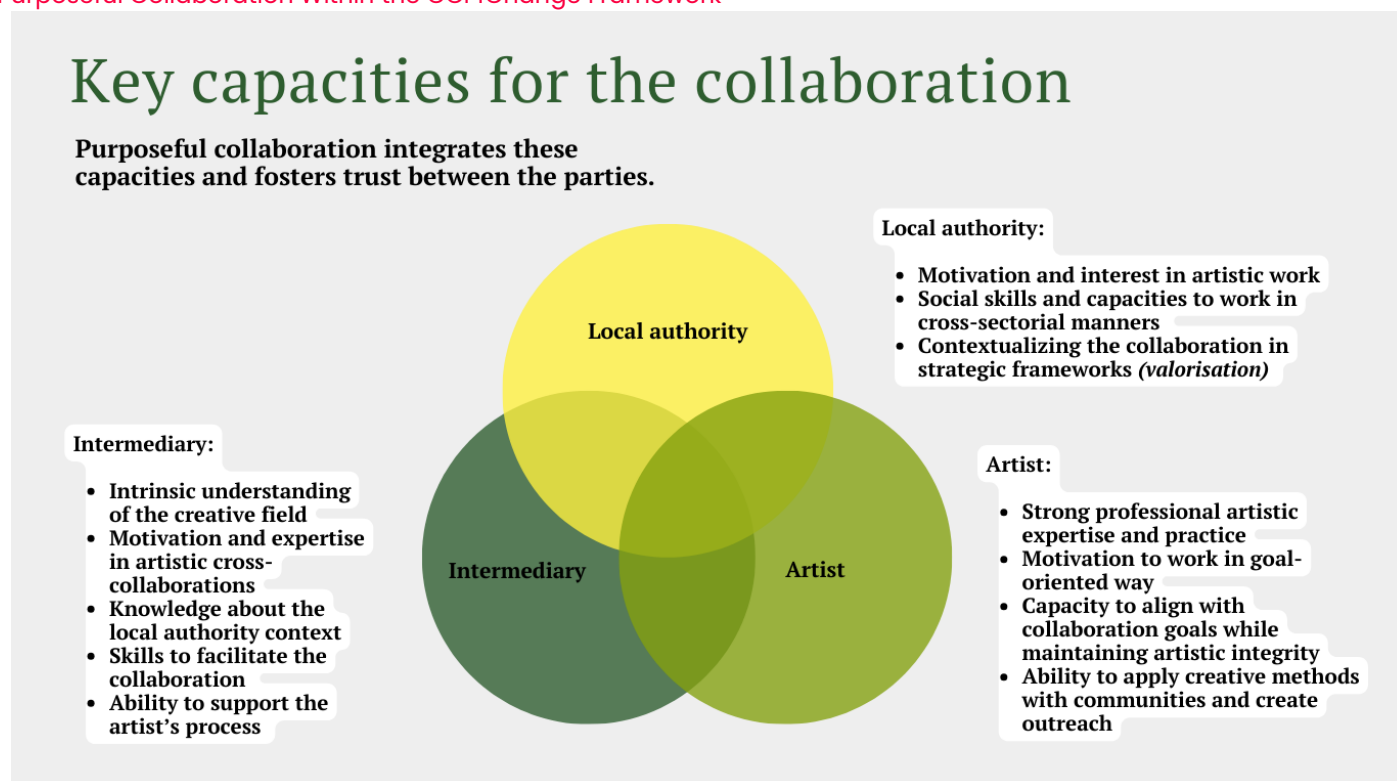


Figure 5. Capacities for the collaboration.

The capacities of the three key actors in the collaboration model relate to motivations to explore artistic cross-sectorial collaborations and work towards sustainability. The local authority plays a pivotal role driving the collaboration and managing its cross-sectorial nature and opportunities within the organisation to enhance its relevance. The capacities of the artists relate to their strong artistic practice and motivation to adjust the practice to the collaboration goals. The intermediary has the expertise and credibility to serve as a bridge builder, understanding the motivations of both parties and supporting the artist's work within the collaboration framework.

The identified prerequisites for collaboration are related to organisational capacities of the parties and access to the CCI communities. As the case studies illustrate, the high quality of professional artistic skills is fundamental for an efficient collaboration, and access to relevant creative communities is vital to ensure the collaboration engages artists with the necessary capacities for the collaboration. The capacity of cross-sectorial collaborations within the local authority organisation is a prerequisite supporting the efficiency of the collaboration.

The obstacles to the collaboration stemmed from difficulties in identifying supportive strategies and policies to underpin the work. The case studies employed a three-party collaboration model, but unclear roles and responsibilities among the participants hindered efficiency. While the artists themselves did not encounter significant barriers, they noted that increased time and financial resources could enhance the effectiveness of achieving the collaboration's goals.

6. Analyses

The study indicates that trust plays a pivotal role in fostering purposeful collaboration. In the case studies, the artists were granted full autonomy and confidence in their ability to produce high-quality artistic content while simultaneously meeting the goals set by the local authority. In turn, both the local authority and the intermediary were committed to respecting and encouraging artistic freedom and expression. The arm's-length principle was recognised by all involved parties as a fundamental prerequisite for establishing a trustworthy and inspiring collaboration. For local authorities aiming to integrate innovative collaborations with artists, the setup must not only consider artistic freedom but embrace it as a source for potential change, innovation, and impact. Supporting the building of trust can be considered a primary objective of the intermediary's role in the collaboration.

The value of the collaboration to all parties is clearly demonstrated in the case studies, and the collaboration seen as essential and inspiring. To enhance the ability of local authorities to foster collaborations with artists working towards sustainability, it is essential to recognise the capacities involved and address potential obstacles. Ensuring that these collaborations are purposeful and suitable for integration into local authority operational systems requires deliberate support and strategic planning. Further investigation is needed into how the creative outputs, processes, artworks, and approaches developed by artists can be supported, and how their value can be better understood and expanded. Additionally, the relevance, impact, and value of collaborations between local authorities, artists, and intermediaries in the context of sustainability need deeper exploration and research.

As this study concludes, the co-creation process of the CCI4Change collaboration model remains ongoing, and additional data may contribute to future research. This study did not focus on the usability or impact of the CCI4Change collaboration model, and therefore, this limitation does not pose a concern.

7. Conclusion

This study focused on identifying the roles, characteristics, capabilities, and connections of three entities: local authorities, artists, and intermediaries. This study employed a qualitative approach with a limited number of case studies. While the findings are not broadly generalisable, they provide valuable insights and transferability to similar initiatives and offer valid considerations for fostering purposeful collaboration between local authorities and artists with the support of intermediary parties. This knowledge supports the application of the CCI4Change collaboration model, as well as other similar models, aimed at facilitating a more systemic implementation of local authority-driven collaborations to enhance sustainability in communities, together with artists and creatives.

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Acknowledgements: This research was supported by the Interreg Baltic Sea Programme (2021–2027) as part of the project ‘CCI4Change: Facilitation of citizens energy consumption behavioural change in BS cities and municipalities’. We thank the project partner organisations in Latvia – Northern Dimension Partnership on Culture and Jurmala Municipality; in Sweden – Skåne Region and Föräningen Stapelbädden (STPLN); and in Finland – the South-Eastern Finland University of Applied Sciences (XAMK), the city of Kotka, and Cursor Oy.

Funding: The research is carried out within the context and funding of the EU project ‘CCI4Change: Facilitation of citizens’ energy consumption behavioural change in BS cities and municipalities’ as part of the Interreg Baltic Sea Region Programme (2021–27). The total project budget is 470,000€ with 80% EU funding and 20% co-financing from project partners.

Data availability statement: The datasets generated during and/or analysed during the current study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.