

■ Making Utrecht together!

📍 → UTRECHT, THE NETHERLANDS

**KEYWORDS: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT;
PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY**

DURATION: Since 2015

WHO: City Council, citizens and other stakeholders

BUDGET: Unknown

SUMMARY

The Municipality of Utrecht has implemented “**Utrecht maken we samen**” (literally “We make Utrecht together”), an innovative participatory policy-making process involving residents, with the aim to support the city to become carbon neutral. In 2015 a team of experts from the municipality of Utrecht organised three days of debate to develop the city’s 2016 energy and climate plan called “Energieplan” (Energy plan).

GOALS

- Facilitate a participatory policy-making process to co-create an energy plan to support Utrecht to become a carbon-neutral city;
- Enhance the participation and active engagement of different stakeholders in the energy transition process;
- Stimulate active engagement and sustainability awareness around energy consumption among local residents.



HOW IT WORKS

The participatory process was run by a **diverse team** consisting of: a researcher, a communication officer, a project manager (transition manager), an energy expert, an energy project manager, a planning manager, a logistics manager and a project coordinator. An **energy consultant** supported this team to produce information to be distributed to the participants, monitor progress and draft the energy plan based on the participants’ contributions.

The team randomly selected 165 residents equally distributed in terms of geographic area (i.e. neighbourhood representation) and gender. These participants received a financial compensation (a €300 voucher to be used freely or a €600 voucher to be used for energy measures or electric transport).

Three participatory sessions took place between March and April 2015.

“We have followed a unique process. We are curious about the subsequent steps that will follow on the basis of this plan.”

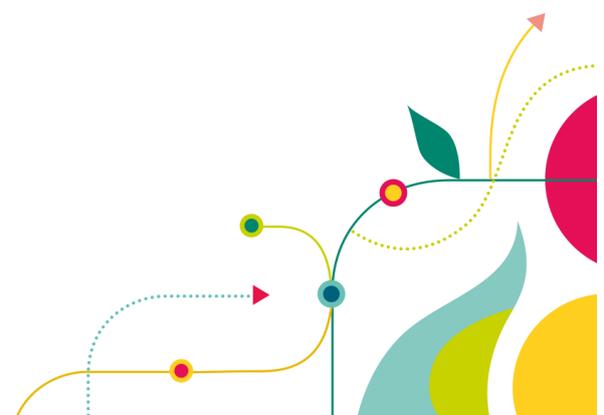
→ Utrecht's residents

- The first session was called **“Dreaming about the future”**. It focused on acquiring knowledge related to the energy transition.
- The second session focused on **building scenarios**. The team of facilitators invited the participants to build two scenarios and provide them with a number of challenges to take into account. Additionally, two independent experts presented their vision of a climate-neutral Utrecht. Participants made a list of 10 priorities for three sectors: housing, work and transport.
- The third session was dedicated to **devising the energy and climate plan**. Taking the feedback of different stakeholders (i.e. business representatives, social housing corporations and energy companies) into account, the participants drew up a provisional energy plan. This plan was presented to the councillor in charge of sustainable development the same day.

The Energy Plan was finalised and it is the result of the **active engagement of residents** and the constructive feedback provided by energy stakeholders.

TRANSFORMATIVE POTENTIAL

The transformative potential of the participatory process organised by the Municipality of Utrecht relates on the one hand to its capacity for actively engaging citizens from different neighbourhoods. On the other hand, such process facilitates the **co-creation of knowledge** and **collaboration** between residents, energy experts and other local stakeholders. Through merging the needs towards sustainable energy futures with a strengthening of local democracy, public participation and inclusive citizens' engagement, this process strengthened local energy democracy.



MORE INFORMATION

[Utrecht Municipality's website](#) (in Dutch)

[Energieplan Utrecht](#) (in Dutch)

[Interpretation of the Energy plan by Utrecht's Municipal Executive](#)

[Energy Cities' website](#)

