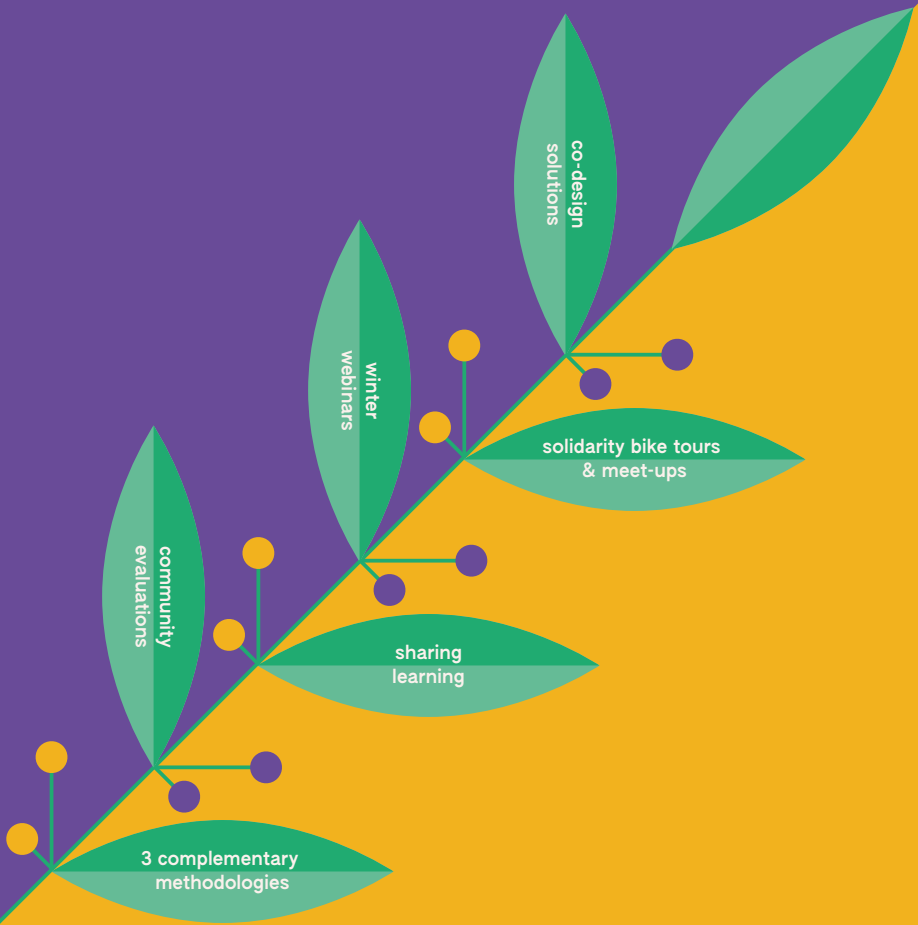


# A how to guide on: Seeding & Nourishing a P2P Solidarity Network



**Author**

Toby Jones

**Graphic Design**

Tessa de Boer

**Dutch version/Translation**

Annet van Hoorn

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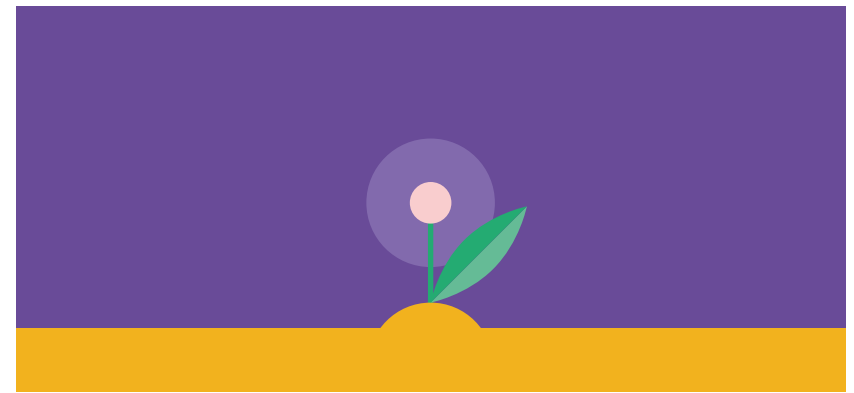
# WELCOME

Welcome to this **'how to guide'** on seeding and nourishing a P2P solidarity network. The guide is by no means definitive, but an explanation of 'a way to' that's still in process. It is an attempt to share how we are, and how others can, co-design and facilitate a peer-to-peer (P2P) process of collective learning and mutual support. A sharing of our simple and innovative working method to form the Solidariteitsnetwerk Buurttuinen in Amsterdam. A solidarity network that started with 16 community food gardens.

The guide is designed for two purposes and audiences:

→ For current and potential members of the emerging Solidariteitsnetwerk Buurttuinen, the guide gives transparency on the principles and strategies that we as seeders of the network have been applying up to now. We invite feedback and alternative contributions to enrich and decentralise decisionmaking on the participation process (how and why we interact).

→ For people who want to seed and nourish their own solidarity network, the guide shares methodologies, activities, and tips that may be adoptable and adaptable. Although the guide is specific to the context of community food gardeners in a city, the method is general enough to apply to any common interest groups, e.g. neighbourhood organisations.



## Seeding

To us, seeds are carriers of vital knowledge and wisdom (memory) that cross generations, territories and cultures. As seeders of a solidarity network we have tried to cross-pollinate ancient social technologies such as gratitude and reciprocity with contemporary methodologies. The first part of the guide shares the seeds we selected and tried to blend together in a complementary and strategic way.



## Nourishing

We believe the pre-conditions for a successful network of solidarity are trust, empathy and mutual understanding of our commonalities, differences and interconnections. Therefore, we decided to dedicate plenty of time and energy to listening, learning and sharing experiences across the network. We forefront collective P2P learning as a primary and entry-level form of cooperation that can cultivate these preconditions. The second part of the guide details the nourishing activities that make fertile ground for the planting/launching of a well-rooted and healthy solidarity network.

## Core Beliefs

If we can learn together, we can grow and flourish together.

It takes time to build trust and empathy, lets listen and get to know each other first

Together we are stronger and we have enough in common to be of mutual support

More diversity and unity means more creative and integrated solution-making

## Structure & Flow

After this introduction the guide flows into the **three methodologies (A)** we combined to seed the solidarity network. This combination is applied to the first phase where 16 **'community evaluations' (B)** took place. This enabled the **communication (C)** of common challenges across the groups and also successes that can contribute to solution-making. Then we organised inter-group interactions in the form of **'winter webinars' (D)** to bond, deepen shared understandings, and compose solidarity requests. The guide finalises with the plan for **solidarity tours (E)** and maturing into work groups that **co-design solutions (F)** to common challenges while extending solidarity outwards.

# A.

## Seeding a solidarity network with 3 complementary methodologies

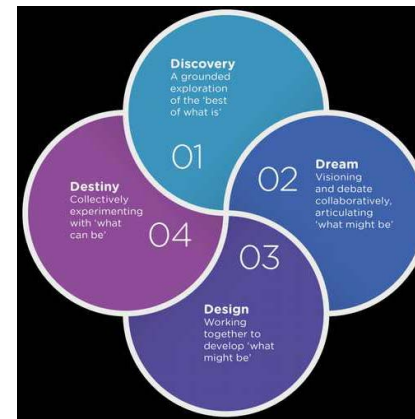
From the outset we felt the need to accommodate and respond to the needs and inputs of the participants who want to be part of a solidarity network. We chose to learn and apply methodologies that are known for being highly participatory and that work to equalise likely power inequalities.

Our concern is that by organising and facilitating the seeding of the Solidariteitsnetwerk Buurttuinen as an initiating group, we already made inequalities in who directed the network's formation and therefore in senses of ownership and/or belonging. To counter this we combined three methodologies where participants increasingly become co-creators and 'co-deciders' of the network's contents and functioning.

### 1. Appreciative inquiry

Appreciative inquiry is a methodology that originates from social and health care. In contrast to a typical sequence of an external expert diagnosis of a group's problems followed by external input solutions, appreciative inquiry investigates what gives life to a community or a system (web) of relations.

It inquires into what is energising us, what do we most care about, and what are we as a group already doing very well? Rather than identifying deficits, deliberate attention is given to appreciate (celebrate, understand, and build on) the successes and strengths of a group, in our case a community food garden.



We chose this methodology because as community gardeners ourselves we are aware of the accumulated fatigue and disappointment in our groups with external initiatives. We give our free time to answer the questions of researchers and larger platforms. Too often they tell us what's wrong and what we need to get or do to meet their vision for the future, i.e. their version of what it means to be more sustainable, productive and publicly valuable.

Appreciative inquiry offers a 4D learning and action cycle that starts with **discovering** the 'best of what is' and then **dreaming** collaboratively of 'what might be'. We integrated these 2Ds into the heart of the 'community evaluations' which constitute the first phase of seeding a solidarity network and are elaborated in the next section. We feel this approach to be more respectful and generative of constructive knowledge exchanges that different groups will feel proud to share and willing to build on later.

A large part of our motivation to form a solidarity network between community food gardens stems from the intuition that are common challenges, to a large extent, can be resolved by the successes of other gardens within the network. Appreciation is a key to positive exchange, identifying community assets, and raising group-esteem.

## 2. Participatory Action Research

Participatory Action Research (PAR) is a methodology that makes use of research to decide what we need to learn to realize the actions we want to happen in this world. By reflecting together on our needs and our challenges we can generate and decide learning questions or quests that we can explore to make solutions and build on successes. In a PAR process the boundaries between the researcher and the researched are deconstructed. Instead, everyone is a co-researcher or colearner who democratically engage in cycles of collective inquiry and action.

We chose this methodology because it is ethically structured to enable horizontal and collective learning experiences. The methodology offers activities for peer to peer learning with the collective generation of questions that we can explore and answer. In this process we co-produce knowledge that is useful for members of the solidarity network and we build trust by gaining experience in working/learning together.



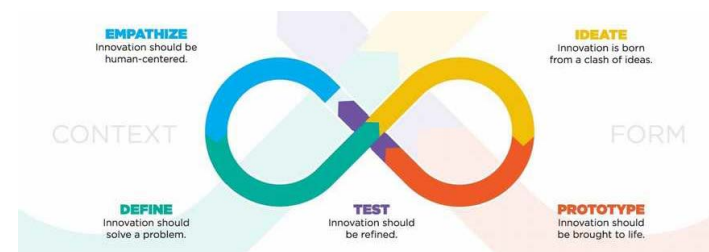
PAR becomes more present in the 'winter webinars' phase where different gardens come together and deepen understandings on our common challenges and generate future learning questions to resolve the challenges. As we progress, we can decide our core (most necessary) learning questions and how we can best answer them, for example, by complementing the different interests, capacities and spaces of the participating groups in the network.

We can also invite local universities and technical colleges to support our learning needs and solidarity proposals. This way research and innovation can be more people and community-centred in contrast to current trends of serving private, high-tech and corporate interests that are profit-driven and harmfully extractive.

## 3. Design Thinking

Design Thinking is an accessible design methodology that provides an experimental and solutions-based approach to resolving problems. We decided to shift slightly from problems to common challenges as we feel a challenge-orientation gives more attention to what we can learn from and overcome.

This challenge-orientation complements Appreciative Inquiry as an alternative motivation to learn and collaborate. Yes, we can bond by sharing and celebrating each others successes and we can also bond around the challenges and barriers we share. Furthermore, after the dream phase of Appreciative Inquiry is the design phase. Design thinking offers more tools and considerations for people to design together without requiring professional disciplining.



Of particular value to our seeding phase of the solidarity network, is the **empathise**, **define** and **ideate** sequence of design thinking. The 'community evaluations' generated **empathy** and social learning within individual garden groups by sharing and agreeing on, i.e. defining, their most important challenges. The 'winter webinars' extend the collective **defining** process and empathy building by facilitating dialogue between the garden groups. Here gardeners personally elaborate on common challenges and sharing relevant successes as beginning steps to solidarity. By being vulnerable in sharing challenges and listening to a broader range of experiences empathy is built, understanding deepened.

The **ideate** phase starts to emerge with the making of solidarity requests in the webinars and also via the 'solidarity tours'. From here we form working groups that prototype and test a sequence of co-design sessions according to the group's capacities and wishes. Instead of rushing to act in solidarity we try to nourish the network first by experimenting in the making of our own collaborative design methods to overcome common challenges. We believe that **how** we overcome challenges is key to a healthy and sustainable solidarity network.

### Appreciative Inquiry

- Builds confidence that together, we are the solution
- We have successes to share that we can nourish further to realise our dreams

### PAR

- We learn to understand each other and make questions together to resolve common challenges
- We build trust and know how we want to be in solidarity

### Design Thinking

- We are challenge-oriented and co-design potential solutions
- We take our time to decide together and learn new ways to cooperate and realize action plans

# B.

## Community Evaluations

It was only after a year of designing, experimenting and tweaking that we decided to settle with the name 'community evaluations'. We started with 'social learning workshops' as an opportunity for members of a community garden to reflect together. Then we changed to 'reciprocity and collaborative action workshops' to evaluate the state of giving and receiving in the gardens and decide actions to reciprocate further and overcome challenges cooperatively. Finally, we settled with 'community evaluations' and dropped workshop, although we did practically share our simple and successful way of doing an evaluation and seeding an action plan for a group.

We put a lot of care and intention into preparing activities that have intrinsic value in themselves. By this we mean that the participants benefit from the experience in itself and are not merely used to reach the next planned phase. For example, we knew we wanted to listen to and document each gardens' greatest challenges and successes. This data harvesting was instrumental to deciding the most relevant topics (most common challenges) for inter-garden dialogues in the 'winter webinars' phase.

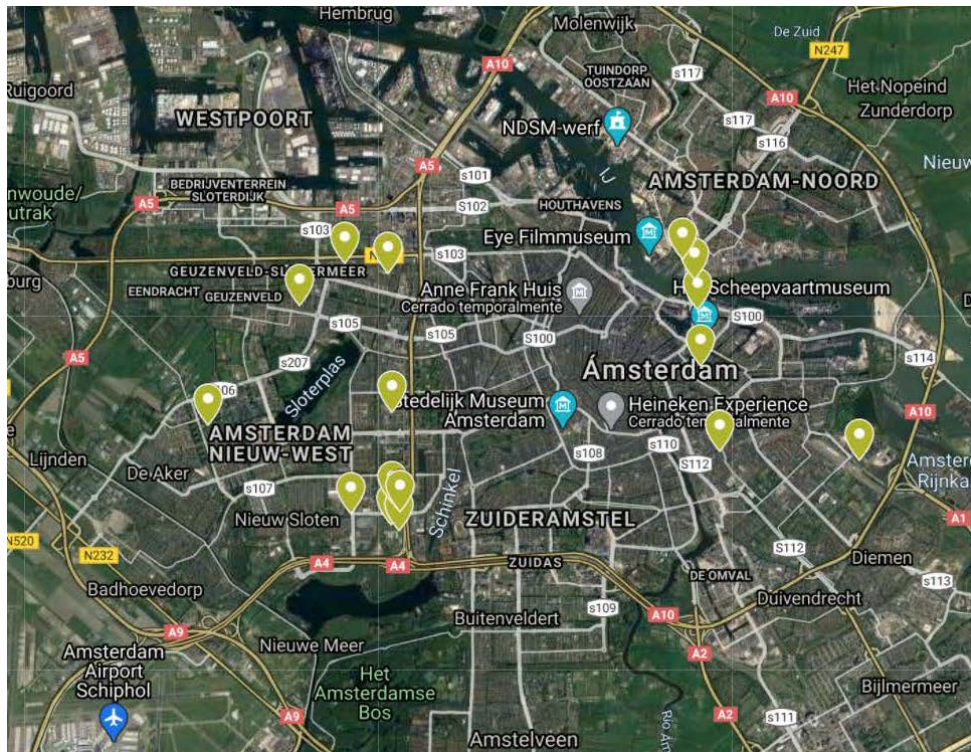
So to make the evaluations worth doing regardless of webinar or not, they support gardens to reflect on their internal and external relationships, to celebrate their achievements and to generate actions to sustain themselves and flourish into the next growing season. We are pleased to have received so much thanks and positive feedback from the evaluations, ecstatic that some gardens used the writeups in their end-of-year meetings and future planning.



## Garden selection and invitation

We knew we did not have capacity or funds to evaluate with more than 60 community food gardens we know to exist in Amsterdam. We decided to start with the districts we live and work in and with community food gardens we had some prior connection with. A district focus gives more possibilities for funding, e.g. Fonds voor Nieuw-West, and for engagement with local governments.

The map below shows the 16 gardens we did the evaluations with. We chose gardens that are physically close together to make later solidarities easier to achieve. We also missed districts we did not know so they would not be misrepresented. We encourage other citizens to use and adapt our evaluations and funding proposals and do a similar process in their own district or spatial unit.



[click here to see the map](#)

## 6 mutually-supporting activities

The community evaluation consists of 6 progressive activities that were co-designed by Toby Jones and John-Luca de Vries when part of Eetbaar Amsterdam. This meant an incremental process of prototyping, testing, and tweaking in response to feedback. The activities, their sequencing and ideas for adapting to different solidarity networks are below. The evaluation is 1.5 – 2.5 hours dependent on group size and break.



### 1. The Seed of Appreciation

This is an icebreaker or heart-warmer where a seed is passed around the circle participants (if online, bring a seed). Each participant says one thing they are grateful for or appreciate about the community garden (or group focus) before passing the seed onto the next participant.



## 2. Greatest Successes to Grow & Flourish

This activity builds on the positivity with an appreciative inquiry into the successes of the group. We used the 5-petal template that represents 5 vital dimensions of experience (ecological, economic, political, social, and technological) in each garden. You can of course change these to what's most relevant for your community and/or network focus.

For maximum participation we recommend giving each participant two post-it notes to stick onto a relevant petal that represents a theme of success. We then recommend that each participant makes a dot with a pen/pencil on the greatest success for each petal ('*dotmocracy*'). This makes it possible to identify the most popular (greatest) successes then write them onto the first half of each petal. Discuss them in detail by asking what made the success possible and fill in the second half of each petal.

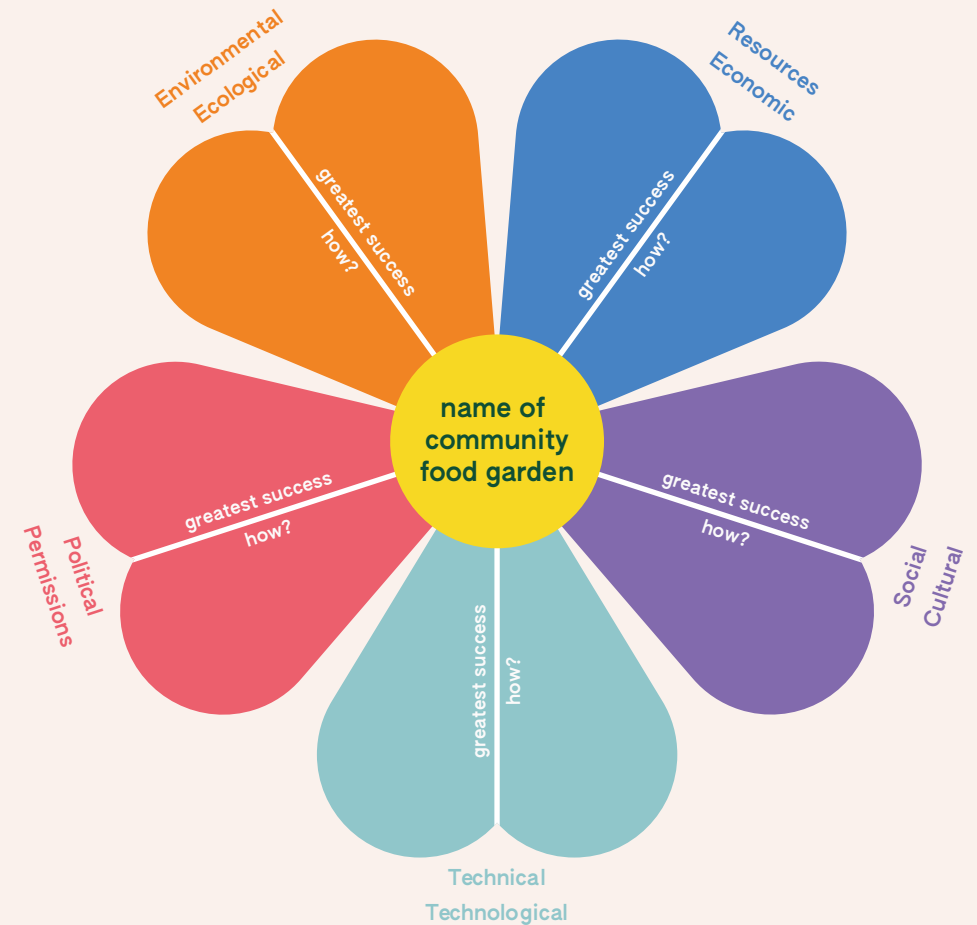
### Top tip

→ Encourage group to fill in the template and rotate responsibility. If equal votes do both!

### Adapt

→ In a small group of 5 you can do a more liberal approach. Instead of predetermining the types of successes (e.g. political, social, etc.) you can leave blank and ask each person to share a success.

## 5-petal template



### 3. Remembering Reciprocity

After sharing greatest successes and understanding how they worked and happened, the participants evaluate the state of reciprocity in their internal relations (as group members) and external relations (neighbourhood, other community gardens, local government, and knowledge institutes). We chose these groups based on our understanding of who are the main groups or ‘reciprocators’ that affect a community food garden. Who would you choose?

Another easy-to-make template is used where participants are asked to write down what each each group gives to the community food garden (or other subject of solidarity) and also receives from it. We found it valuable to remind participants to only write what has happened, not what might happen (hopes and dreams). It’s not necessary to fill in all the boxes, in fact, when some are empty it shows where there are imbalances in reciprocation or where new collaborative relations can sprout. This activity also is great way to inventorize what collaborations are possible.

*Top tip*

→ In big groups 2-3 participants can write on the template at a time then rotate. Share healthy snacks.

Reciprocators	Giving to the garden	Receiving from the garden
Community Food Gardeners	...	...
Neighbourhood (e.g. neighbors, school gardens, associations, centres, business)	...	...
Other Community Food Gardens in Amsterdam	...	...
Gemeente	...	...
Universities, Colleges, Schools	...	...

### 4. Greatest Challenges to Sustain & Flourish

This activity enables the challenge-orientation that resonates with design thinking and also structures the ‘winter webinar’ themes. The focus is on what is challenging the sustainability and flourishing (realization of full potential) of community food gardens. This activity is completed in the same way as activity 2 (successes) with an almost identical template. However, the second half of the petal is dedicated to documenting perspectives on the root causes of the challenge; more focused on ‘the why’ of the challenges than ‘the how’.

### 5. Enhancing Reciprocity for Relational Solutions to Challenges

The penultimate activity is solutionsoriented and integrative in nature. The written products of activity 2, 3 and 4 (the reciprocity table and the success and challenge flowers) are brought back into focus. We ask how social relations, both internal and external, can be enhanced and improved so they become part of future solutions to overcome the identified challenges. We ask participants to go wild and imagine dream relationships with the groups in activity 3. They do not need to be realistic. The aim is to generate new ideas on cooperative relations that are desirable and mutually-supportive.

*Top tip*

→ As a facilitator make links back to the challenges and successes if they are not happening organically.

## 6. Practical First Steps

The community evaluation is completed by filling in the last column of the template below. After dreaming of ideal relations (activity 5/ middle column) to overcome challenges (activity 4) and build on successes (activity 2) it's time to get action-oriented. What small steps can the group take to enhance their relations or grow new ones (many gardens were to cooperate with other gardens)? Can communication be started to deepen reciprocity and collaborate in more strategic and complementary manners?

*Top tip*

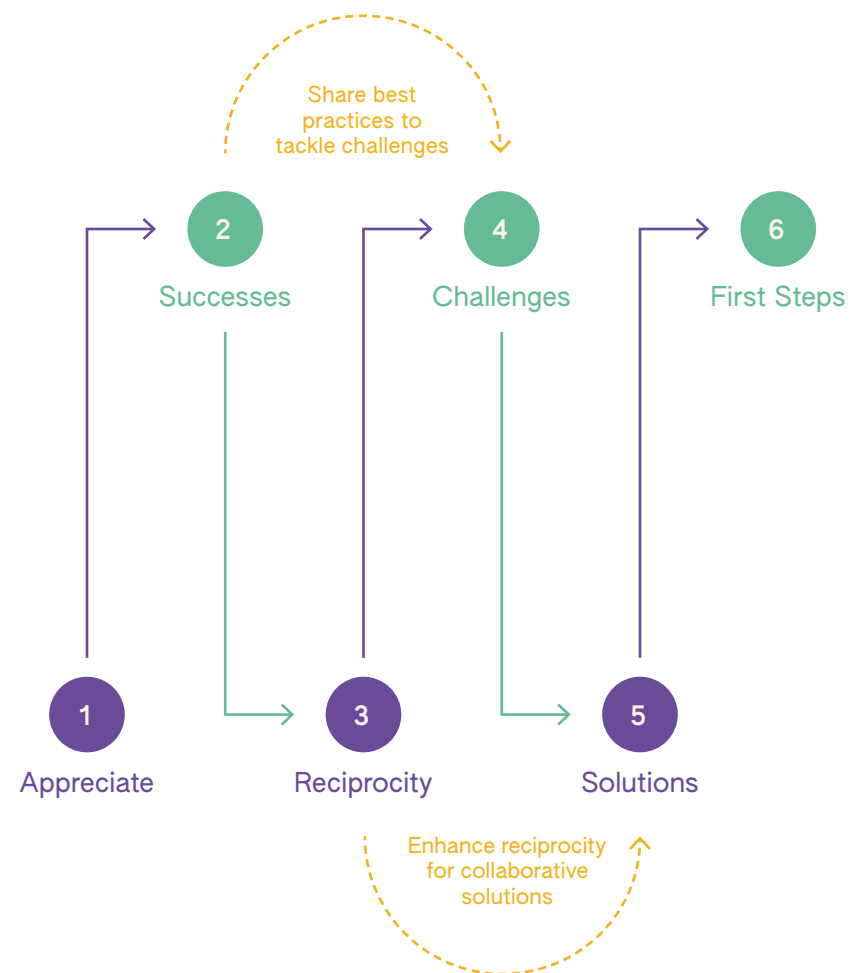
→ Type up the actions and send them back to the group as part of a 'write-up'. The document can serve as a reminder and record to implement the first steps.

Reciprocators	Dream relationship (to overcome challenges & build on successes)	Practical First Steps (to enhance relationships & grow new ones)
Community Food Gardeners	...	...
Neighbourhood (e.g. neighbors, school gardens, associations, centres, business)	...	...
Other Community Food Gardens in Amsterdam	...	...
Gemeente	...	...
Universities, Colleges, Schools	...	...

## Self-congratulatory Summary

The beauty and utility of the evaluation is that groups gain an often rare opportunity to share personal reflections together and to reach shared and broader understandings on their collective strengths and priorities for the future. Their successes are recalled and celebrated allowing for the sharing of great practices between gardens. They think how to improve reciprocity in their relations. They dream how new and external collaborators can be in solidarity to achieve personal and broader societal and environmental goals.

## Workshop Activity Sequence



# C.

## Organising and Communicating Learning

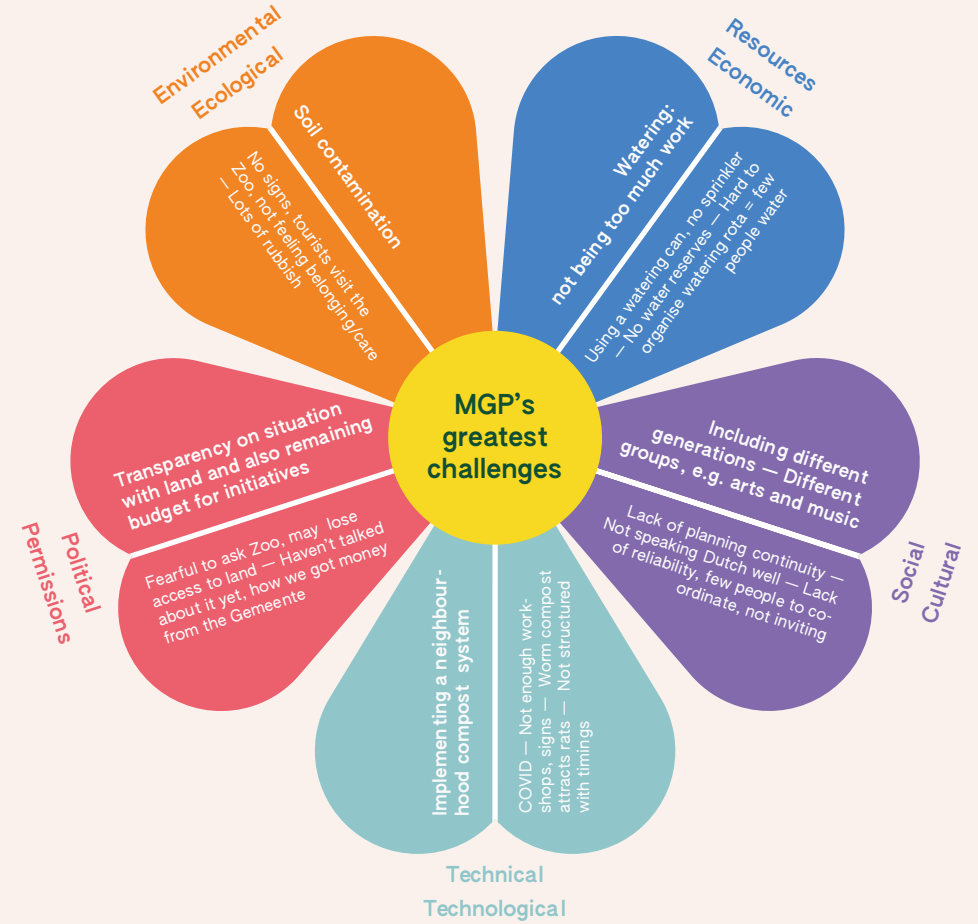
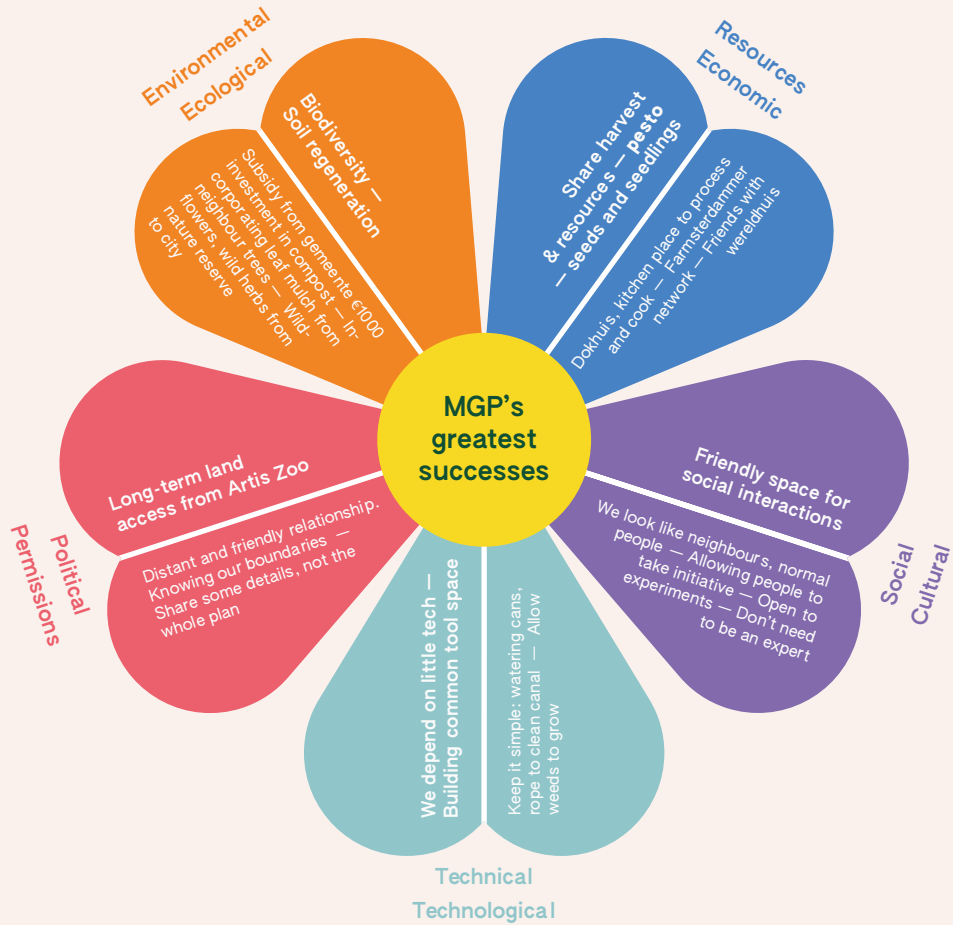
A valuable way to nourish a solidarity network is digesting the information into learning and then sharing in a unifying form. We try to interconnect and reference as many members contributions as possible and share knowledge that is general enough to be valuable to all and specific enough to encourage decentralised cooperation. A lot of care work goes into portraying the diversity of voices while also distilling and synthesizing the learning.

A PAR ethic supports this careful balancing act by committing to make the ongoing research and learning as accessible and democratic as possible. This also means giving many opportunities for feedback and evidencing integration of feedback. Therefore, each participating garden received a concise 4 page write-up of their community evaluation (see following page) that also serves as a useful organizing document (see following page).<sup>1</sup>

We shared the write-up as a PDF and a word document, and asked the gardeners if we could share their evaluations as open commons resources. After edits from the gardens, we upload the PDFs onto a secure server and then made a link to them on a Google map of all the participating gardens (visible in section B). This makes the learning transparent and enables anyone with a link to read the success, challenges, and dream relationships of a food garden and independently make contact with them.

1. This intention for a useful and accessible write-up stands in contrast to reports from gardens of university researchers not sharing interviews, transcripts and outputs of their data extractions from gardeners. The few who have shared their outputs have been in the form of academic theses or articles inaccessible to most.





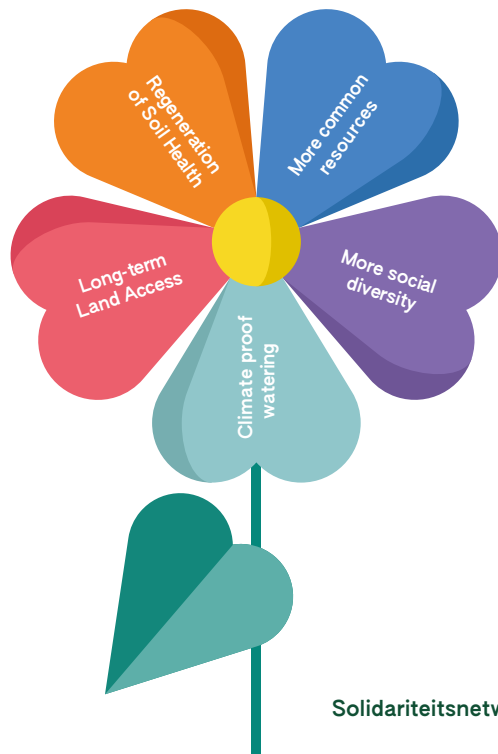
Reciprocators	Giving to the garden	Receiving from the garden
Community Food Gardeners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>time</li> <li>energy</li> <li>love</li> <li>care</li> <li>seeds</li> <li>knowledge</li> <li>bulbs</li> <li>dog poo</li> <li>bokashi</li> <li>soil compaction</li> <li>momentum</li> <li>encouragement</li> <li>tool shed</li> <li>protected growing beds</li> <li>table (with compartments)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>peace</li> <li>less stress</li> <li>social interaction</li> <li>sense of belonging</li> <li>hope</li> <li>learning</li> <li>experimentation</li> <li>food and flowers</li> <li>seeds</li> <li>beauty</li> <li>place to eat and read</li> </ul>
Neighbourhood (e.g. neighbors, school gardens, associations, centres, business)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>rubbish (plastic, cigarettes)</li> <li>encouragement</li> <li>questions</li> <li>sceptic curiosity</li> <li>bokashi (Artis)</li> <li>food waste (neighbors and TBYW)</li> <li>arts and sculpture (Papa &amp; Roy)</li> <li>participate in activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>pleasant and peaceful</li> <li>meeting point</li> <li>free and open space</li> <li>nature space, a bit wild</li> <li>learning</li> <li>feel of local climate and food production</li> <li>worm compost workshop</li> </ul>
Other Community Food Gardens in Amsterdam	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>plants (Claudia, Farmsterdammers)</li> <li>solidarity and appreciation</li> <li>seedlings and seeds (Pluk)</li> <li>knowledge</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ideas</li> <li>plants</li> <li>seeds and seedlings</li> </ul>
Gemeente	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Permission to use the space</li> <li>non-intervention</li> <li>worm hotel</li> <li>bokashi (starter-kit/workshop — Artis)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>free maintenance</li> <li>labour</li> <li>public image</li> <li>green marketing</li> <li>greentrification?</li> <li>lots of old, local people still live here</li> <li>social cohesion</li> </ul>
Universities, Colleges, Schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>attention</li> <li>valuing — doing small research</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>spirituality, religion and ethics department of UvA came to visit and do research</li> <li>workshop to 10 school children — harvesting and weeding</li> </ul>

Reciprocators	Dream relationship (to overcome challenges & build on successes)	Practical First Steps (to enhance relationships & grow new ones)
Community Food Gardeners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>more coordination and consistency</li> <li>shared responsibility</li> <li>more events (art, social)</li> <li>demonstration bed for a climate adapted food garden</li> <li>more self-sufficiency</li> <li>multifunctional garden</li> <li>more community feeling, know people are coming</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ask if there are 1-2 coordinators for the garden, or different responsibilities (bokashi?)</li> <li>meeting in February to make a proposal and decide how to animate new gardeners</li> </ul>
Neighbourhood (e.g. neighbors, school gardens, associations, centres, business)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>neighbourhood picnics</li> <li>invite to ask how they would like to use the space</li> <li>marriages and burials</li> <li>silent disco/rave</li> <li>Taste Before You Waste — shares space</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>an open meeting in March which includes neighbours in the design and planning (5 came last time)</li> <li>explore alternative ways to input (not needing to attend the meeting)</li> <li>activate Facebook</li> </ul>
Other Community Food Gardens in Amsterdam	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Visit other gardens</li> <li>garden exchange</li> <li>garden swingers</li> <li>workshops exchange</li> <li>solidarity tours — with requests to support and learn</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Toby setting up a solidarity tour in Spring between different local gardens in Oost</li> <li>conversation with Rafa and Farmsterdammers (1000 network of food growers in Amsterdam)</li> </ul>
Gemeente	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>transparency of future plans</li> <li>making future plans together</li> <li>we keep our autonomy</li> <li>non-intervention</li> <li>give back Lutkemeer polder</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>meeting with Roy to discuss strategy to communicate with Artis after losing a lot of land with new fences and having a new director</li> <li>take time with this and get information on the long-term plans</li> <li>inviting for visits, letting them know our social and ecological program</li> </ul>
Universities, Colleges, Schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>workshops with school children</li> <li>Uni/Micropia do research with us on bokashi and restoration of fertility for sandy soil</li> <li>volunteers coming from the universities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Start talking about a workshop/program for school children</li> <li>Contact Marijn and ask if he wants to use the space for classes</li> <li>Ask Taste Before You Waste if they are interested</li> <li>Make a flyer</li> <li>CEDLA</li> </ul>

## Common Challenge Report

We also made a report on the two most common challenges for each of the dimensions of experience (social, ecological, etc.) shared amongst the 16 gardens who did community evaluations. For each challenge we combine a common description with specific experiences gardens. We also did a match-making of relevant successes from other gardens to support processes of resolving common challenges. This way we make a collective document of our learning and appreciate different gardens contribution to the network.

In a similar way, we organise and communicate learning on the 'winter webinar's (detailed in next section) with the addition of video recordings, further learning questions and solidarity requests. As nourishers of a solidarity network, we commit to offering communications of collective learning and reminders of suggestions for cooperation. We will collect and share learning questions and solidarity requests from the 'solidarity tours' and make a guide from our efforts to 'co-design solutions'. Finally, we commit to compiling a seasonal letter of learning quests, solidarity requests, and social events generated by members of the network.



# D.

## Winter Webinars

When seeding a P2P solidarity network its worth attuning with the cycles and seasons of your peer group. In our case of food gardeners, we learnt that autumn is an ideal time for reflecting and evaluating (community evaluations). Winter is the season with more time to come together and plan for the year ahead. Most of the growing beds are sleeping under a green manure cover crop and there is not a lot of physical work to be done. Ideal time for webinars<sup>2</sup>. Are there seasons of action and reflection in your community?

2. Due to COVID-19 restrictions we chose to do online webinars whose design is adaptable to physical meetings.

The main aims of the winter webinars are to facilitate interaction between the carers of community food gardens and potential allies. To promote meaningful dialogue and opportunities for solidarity we chose to focus on the 10 most common challenges derived from the 16 community evaluations. On the first webinar in December we centred on common challenges in the political and ecological dimensions of experience. The second webinar in January, the social and technological. The final webinar, we centre on the economic and also added the educational due to feedback from a gardener requesting its inclusion as a challenge theme.

Challenge Theme & Webinar	Common Challenge in Dutch	Common Challenge in English
Ecological (webinar 1)	Companion planting with biodiversity	Regeneration of soil health
Political (webinar 1)	Civic movement with resource-access	Long-term land access
Technological (webinar 2)	Less labour, more self-sustaining	Climate proof watering
Social (webinar 2)	Sustaining community with COVID-19	More social diversity
Economic (webinar 3)	Sharing harvests with the public	More common resources
Educational (webinar 3)	Bilingual conversation, deciding collective learning quests	

We decided to have two parallel conversations at the same time, one in English language covering two challenges and the other in Dutch covering two other challenges. This is because of the cosmopolitan and globalised reality of Amsterdam where there are many gardeners who do not speak Dutch and also many Dutch-speaking gardeners who cannot express themselves fully in English. Another motivation is to decentralise the network from outset. This means encouraging different groups to take initiative and sprout into working and learning groups that most correspond with their personal passions and their gardens' priorities.

As nourishers of this P2P solidarity network we facilitated the webinars. We decided to apply a standard structure and flow for every common challenge to build familiarity and encourage solidarity. In the 2 hour webinar we dedicate 45 minutes of attention to each challenge with the following components:

### 1. Challenge Elaborators

After the briefest of introductions possible we ask representatives of 2 gardens to elaborate on their specific experience of the common challenge for 2-3 minutes. We invite them to speak at least a week before and make a call if they want to prepare and practice.

### 2. Success Sharers

We then ask representatives of 2 gardens to share successes for 2-3 minutes that are relevant to the common challenge we are exploring in the webinar. We do our best to ensure that as many gardens as possible can share on challenges and successes across the webinars.

### 3. Unstructured dialogue

We then open up the conversation for 10-15 minutes to anyone in the conversation and ask participants to use fingers to account the order of who speaks instead of shouting out. The aim of these 3 components is to deepen understanding on the challenge and appreciate the value of members coming together and exchanging.

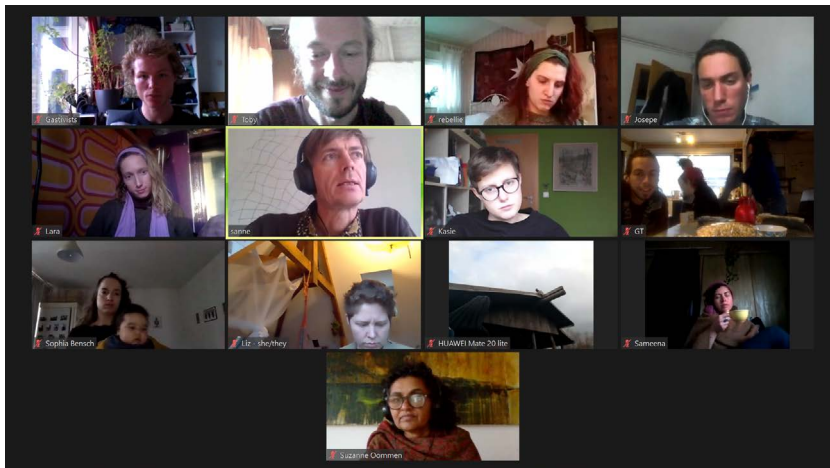
### 4. Collective learning questions

We then ask the participants to gather their thoughts and reflect on the sharing so far. We put on an instrumental song for 5 minutes and ask participants to write learning questions into the chat that will move us closer to overcoming the common challenge. This a moment where there is no speaking. Don't forget to save the chat to collect the questions!

### 5. Solidarity requests

For the last 10 minutes we ask participants to either offer solidarity, e.g. resource share, visit and advise or invite solidarity, e.g. ask for help, propose a collaboration. These request with the learning questions are recorded and re-communicated later as follow-ups to the webinars.





Screenshot of Winter Webinar 1  
English-language conversation, December 2020

### Collaboration Rooms

Each webinar concludes with the welcoming of 1-2 potential allies (included in the Common Challenge Report) who co-host a thematic ‘collaboration room’ for the last 20 minutes. For example, we asked ASEED and the Commons Network to co-host the political collaboration room on the first webinar. We facilitated a preparatory meeting where we informed them of the two most common political challenges. We suggested they could share the webinar space and make concrete/grounded collaboration requests to the network.

ASEED offered to facilitate a process of making collective political statement to the Gemeente on the precarious situations of community food initiatives on municipal land. The Commons Network invited gardeners to co-write a plan for a ‘food commons transition’ in Amsterdam that the Gemeente agreed to engage with. Considering there are only 20 minutes in this room, we suggested the main purposes are to introduce, share your work’s correspondence with common challenges and invite to collaborate. From this encounter, contact details are shared of those willing to cooperate further. From this a decentralised working group can emerge in partnership with allies who made grounded collaboration and solidarity requests.

### Collective Learning Quests

We grow in the direction of the questions we ask and strive to answer. On the last winter webinar we decided to add a 6th challenge theme, educational. Most community food gardens are islands in a fragmented city where valuable knowledges, context-appropriate solutions and skilful practices have yet to meet and cross-pollinate. Doing educational exchanges (horizontal learning) is a challenge that we directly address by seeding and nourishing this P2P network solidarity network.

This challenge brings all the participants (Dutch & English speaking) into one conversation. In a preparatory e-mail, we introduce our idea of a ‘collective learning quest’: a group agree to work together by deciding and trying to answer 2-3 core questions that strategically combine to resolve a common challenge. The initiating group invites the network to join them on their learning quest as they self-organise to answer the questions later feeding back the results of the quest in whatever form they agree to, e.g. video diary, top-tip article, list of contacts/funds, legal summary.

In addition to the definition of a ‘collective learning quest’ the preparatory e-mail also gives examples of learning quests that have already emerged in the webinar process. Also a document is attached which reminds readers of the 10 most common challenges and the learning questions that were generated in previous webinars. We ask network members to send the learning quests and propose them in the final webinar for feedback and solidarity. We give 20 minutes to generate and/or refine the quests that respond to ecological and technological challenge themes (two break-out rooms) and 20 minutes for political and social.

### Top tips

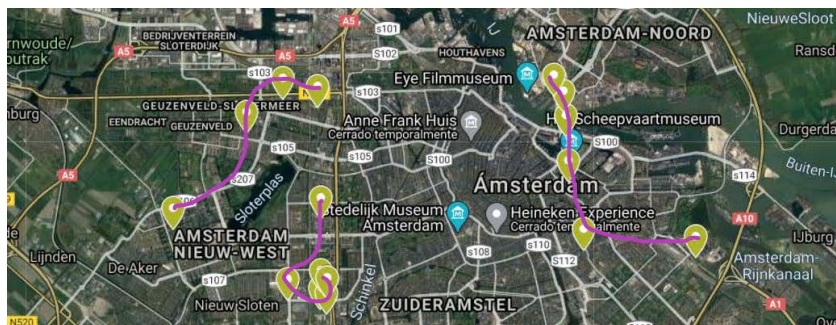
- Asking specific groups to share on relevant challenge/successes is a good way to value their contribution, encouraged active participation, and increase attendance
- If some members are urgent to act or prioritise one challenge, remind them of the value of first deepening and integrating our understanding of common challenges while getting to know each other. There is a plurality of values, priorities, and interests in the network so we give attention to multiple challenge themes.
- Remind participants of the webinars that they can move between the conversations and facilitate that by reminding them of the possibility and sharing the link so they can switch
- Invite and give space for feedback to tweak or transform the process

# E.

## Solidarity Bicycle Tours & Meet-ups

A vital way to nourish a solidarity network is to establish social infrastructure that is valued and decided by participants. After the winter webinar series, we offer to facilitate a general assembly in March where we decide on the form and multi-functioning of the network during the busy food growing seasons (spring & summer). We listen to what different members can offer to sustain and grow the network and we decide on what channels of communication to use and for what purpose. For example do we want a Facebook page, Signal group, YouTube channel, email list? If so what can we agree them to be used for?

Another way is to facilitate the co-creation of social events where we can meet informally and visit each others community food gardens (or initiatives). One manifestation of this is the doing of 3 solidarity bicycle tours where we visit clusters of gardens that are geographically close to each other in spring. At each garden there is a tour from the gardeners with grounded requests for solidarity and collaboration. At the last garden we have some templates to record new learnings, ideas and agreements for solidarity and cooperation. We then enjoy a meal together and hopefully play some music and jig around. Peer-to-peer bonding. We are also really hoping we can visit each others' gardens in person with more herd immunity and less COVID-19 restrictions by April, otherwise we will consider doing online with video tours. Again the form and multi-functioning of the tours are open to the participating gardens. We offer to facilitate a short meeting on the design of each tour. For example, one group of gardens may want to do a half day whereas another a full day where each or some gardens have a solidarity activity to do, such as mass weeding or composting.



### Meet-ups

Meet-ups add to the social glue. Members of the network are encouraged to propose meet-ups at their community gardens or other meeting spaces. Meet-ups are usually open to the public, but can be exclusive/limited to a certain number of people. They can be for many purposes, e.g. to learn a practical skill, such in the form a worm-composting workshop, do a social event such as a folk poetry and a BBQ, or do a knowledge exchange.

KasKantine proposed to do a series of meet-ups with this emergent Solidariteitsnetwerk Buurttuinen on topics relevant to the common challenges. We have agreed to collaborate as well as ASEED in preparing and cohosting this meet-ups. The wish is to share knowledge. We hope that other gardens will propose meet-ups that we can attend and support.

# F.

## Learn to co-design solutions

In this guide to seeding and nourishing a P2P network we have elaborated a 'slow and steady' approach to building sufficient trust, empathy, shared understanding, and familiarity as pre-conditions for more collaborative and transformative forms of solidarity.

By focusing on collective learning in the network we gain experience in 'light' or 'low-risk' forms of solidarity and decision-making. By taking time to listen to our differences we get a better sense of how we can complement and cooperate to resolve our most common challenges. We also dedicate time and resources to socialising and knowing each other in person and in place.



So far the sequence of activities have mostly cross-pollinated the methodologies of Appreciative Inquiry (identifying and sharing successes) and PAR (generating learning quests to resolve challenges). With Design Thinking, much has been done to define our common challenges, build empathy and start to ideate solutions.

We believe that **co-design** is one of these more collaborative and transformative forms of solidarity. It is a method that a peer-to-peer network can learn and successfully practice. The emphasis on the **co-** is to be as horizontal and directly democratic as possible in our designing/deciding of collective solutions to common challenges.

If we do agree to combine our hearts and minds and our resources and energies, how do we co-create a design and realize it? How can we connect our community food gardens and extend solidarity outwards to other community food providers? Can we regenerate community foodscapes in our cities by co-design? We do not know yet, but are motivated to experiment and find out.

We are delighted to have our collective learning quest already supported by gardens in the network and also allies. Ann's Tuin & Ruigte, Commons Network, Groenplatform Zuidoost, Taste Before You Waste & ASEED, and KasKantine have agreed to be pop-up co-design hubs. Each hub will co-host 2 experimental codesign sessions to resolve a different common challenge. Thanks to this broad support we successfully applied for a research grant from Stimuleringsfonds to keep resourcing and nourishing the process.

We aim to broaden the support base of the solidarity network by inviting a diversity of inspiring people experienced in co-design and community foodscape regeneration. We ask for advice on what we anticipate to be our most common challenges with co-design. We reach out to the alternative and progressive design community and the public with digital design challenges. After all this rich collective learning and experimentation we make a co-design manual.

By learning how to co-design solutions well, we build valuable capacities in the network. A group of skilful co-designers emerge who are rooted in the care of community food spaces and sufficiently equipped to ensure their future flourishing. We continue to counteract social isolation and health deterioration in our neighbourhoods by designing how we grow and share food together. We are ready to inspire and secure the protection and extension of edible green spaces when the new Omgevingswet comes into force in January 2022 and new environmental plans are decided.

