



**C O N U N D R U M**

# CONUNDRUM: Co-creating sustainable community mobility

Sustainable Local-Area Transport Planning Lunch and Learn, Irish Planning Institute Cork Branch

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# Introducing CONUNDRUM

## Key Challenges:

- Need to reimagine how we **examine transport and mobility outside of our cities**. Key in Irish context given demographics and challenges with current service provision and transport infrastructure.
- Traditional approaches to planning in Irish towns often exclude local communities and businesses, can fail to capture place-specific challenges, and can result in solutions being implemented that are controversial, ineffective, poorly understood by residents and fail to encourage behavioural change.
- Statutory public consultation processes happen late in decision-making timelines and can fail to meaningfully engage communities or generate effective dialogue, often failing to capture support for proposed plans. **This is a major barrier in current transport planning processes**.
- Achieving **just transitions** of sustainable transport and mobility is key - a push to decarbonise mobility has the **potential to marginalise our most vulnerable groups**.

## CONUNDRUM:

- **Interdisciplinary**: geographers, transport engineers, urban planners, and data and social scientists.
- Guided by the belief that the development of more resilient urban areas and sustainable communities **requires government, citizens, enterprise and service providers to work together**.

# Democratising governance through co-creation

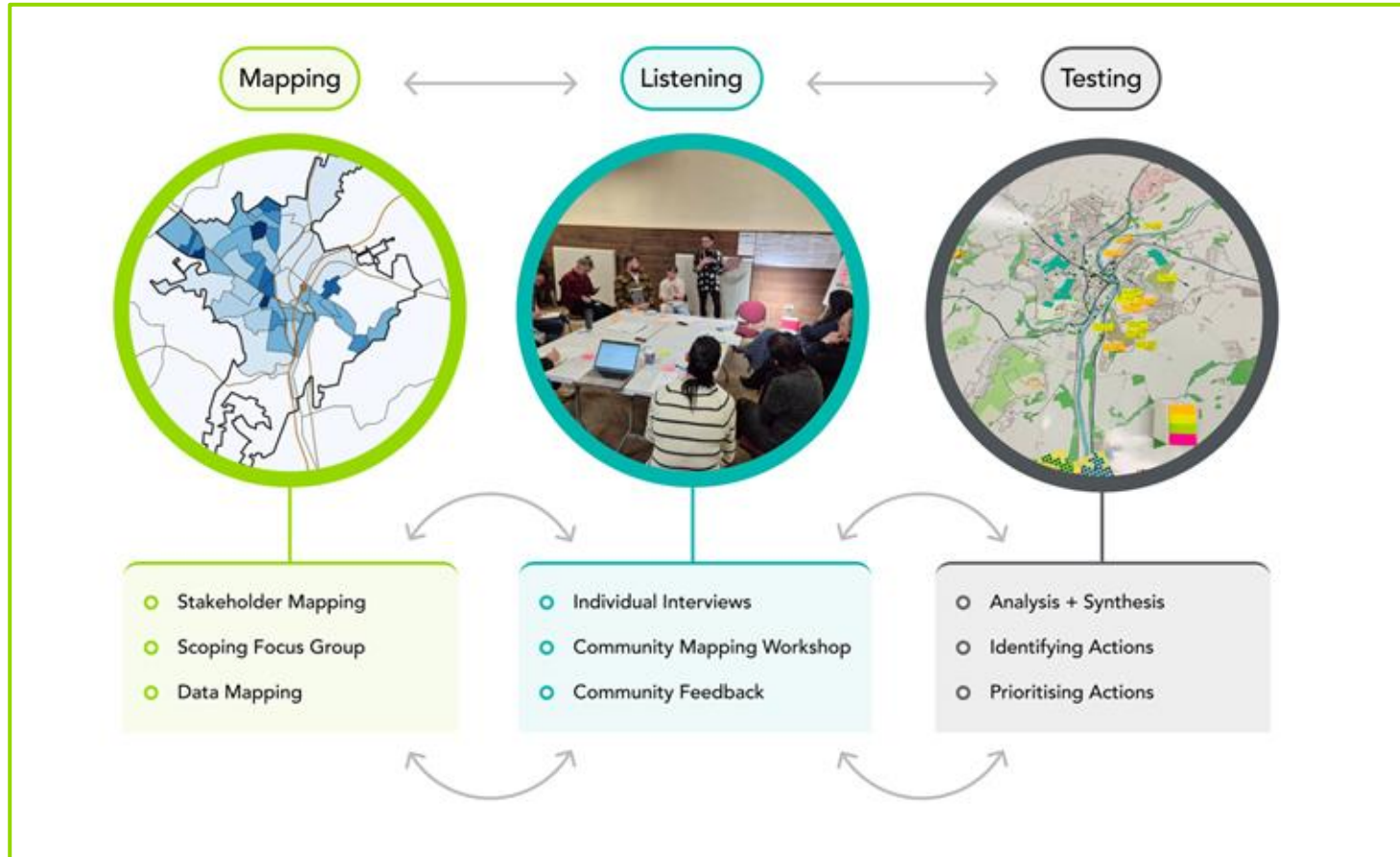
- CONUNDRUM aims to address this challenge through **democratising governance through co-creation**. Rooted in Participatory Action Research [PAR] & Community Engaged Geographies.
- PAR is “a collaborative and integrative approach to research, education, and action that is...Committed to **working ‘with’ rather than ‘on’ communities**” (kinpaisby-hill, 2020: 9).
- Ziervogel et al. (2021: 607) argue that “if capacity building processes **shift from the top-down transferal of existing knowledge to the co-creation of contextual understandings, they have the potential to deliver more transformative adaptation**”.
- Drawing on Clavin et al. (2021), propose a co-creation approach that surfaces, acknowledges, and highlights conflict, dissent, and injustices as an important first and necessary step to enable meaningful interactions and forward thinking. The idea of **productive tension**.
- Hedensted Lund (2018, p. 5) highlights importance of creating mechanisms for “citizens themselves [to] invent or articulate new services or products of public value and **new ideas about which institutional structures may support such activities**,” and argues for co-creation processes that move beyond the engagement of professional citizens to **adopt more creative and inclusive forms of civic engagement**.

# CONUNDRUM Approach

- Co-creating **community-led mobility strategies** but the approach can be used for engaging communities in other planning processes.
- Engagement with >570 diverse stakeholders who have **lived experience** of the existing challenges and opportunities. Three main groups:
  - Residents and civil society groups;
  - Businesses and service providers;
  - Government and policymakers.
- **Iterative process** with engagement across all stages is key.
- This offers an opportunity to co-create transport strategies that:
  - Are place-based;
  - Empower to local communities;
  - Fill knowledge gaps for policymakers and planners;
  - Enable plans and decision-making that is place-appropriate.
  - Integrate diverse expertise.



# CONUNDRUM Process



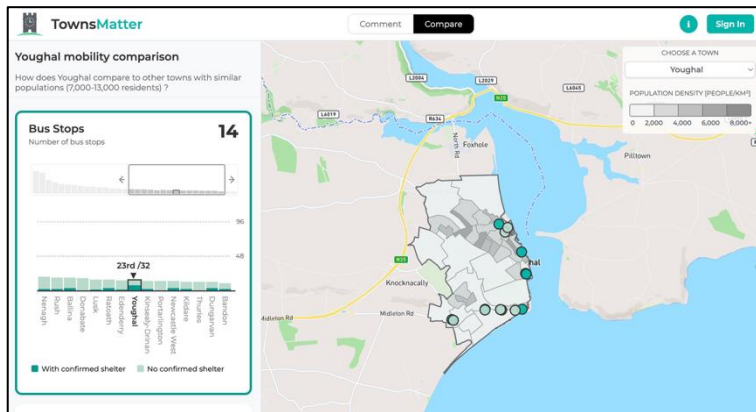
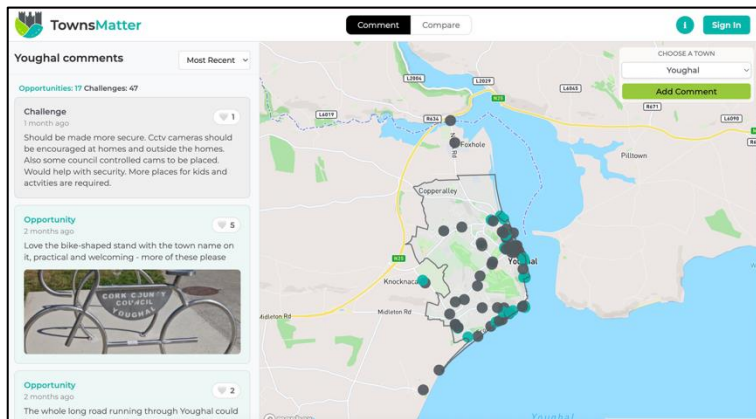


Enniscorthy	Tramore	Youghal
Population of 12,300 in 2022.	Population of 11,277 in 2022.	Population of 8,564 in 2022.
Dec '23 to Nov '24	Jun to Oct '25.	Jun to Oct '25.
≈139 local stakeholders participated.	≈134 local stakeholders participated.	≈136 local stakeholders participated.
132 perceived challenges were identified.	129 perceived challenges were identified.	99 perceived challenges were identified.
44 specific locations within the town.	28 specific locations within the town.	53 specific locations within the town.
102 opportunities.	88 opportunities.	65 opportunities.
20 possible solutions.	22 possible solutions.	20 possible solutions.
9 actions	9 actions	9 actions

# Suggested actions implemented and impacts to date

- Designed and ran a survey with TFI Local Link Wexford to build an evidence base for an application for a town specific service; more than 1,200 respondents (almost 10% of the town's population) **(Action 4; 1)**.
- TFI Local Link Wexford's route 384 Enniscorthy-Wexford has already been improved **(Action 6; 1)**.
- Supported Wexford Co.Co. with an application for additional funding (ECUCF) to do a feasibility study. Expectation that a mobility hub will form part of future solutions for the town **(Action 5)**.
- Bi-annual forum being considered by the Enniscorthy Community Inter-Agency Team **(Action 3)**.
- A number of infrastructural projects are underway by Wexford Co.Co. to improve walkability and safety in the town which align with findings from our project, specifically in areas that were identified as challenging **(Action 8)**. These works include:
  - Improved linkages of footpaths.
  - 4 junctions are being improved including speed control measures.
  - 6 pedestrian crossings are being installed, including 3 at schools as part of a safe access to school scheme.
  - Footpaths are being widened in areas.
  - Some bus stops are being upgraded.
- Wexford Co.Co. have received funding for the electrification of their fleet which aligns with project findings.
- Received replication requests to support Local Transport Plans.
- Cited as part of a key recommendations in a new report by the Just Transition Commission (2026).

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- Recently announced as runner-up prize winners.
- Continuing and expanding collaboration with local authorities and stakeholders to further test and validate our process (2-3 new case study towns nationally), and continue developing our digital tool in preparation for national scaling.
- Digital tool with 5 key functions:
  - **Comment:** Citizen science data collection via an interactive map (Live).
  - **Compare:** Comparative tool mapping chosen town against similar sized towns nationally in terms of key indicators (Live).
  - **Our Training:** UCD accredited micro-credential training and mentorship to enable capacity-building and upskilling for planners and consultants.
  - **Replicate our Process:** A Decision Support Tool to enable our process to be replicated by local authorities while drawing from key datasets and citizen science data.
  - **Case Studies:** Detailed case studies of how our process has been used nationally and its impacts to date.

# Key learnings

Based on this proto-typing, we identified the following lessons:

- Communities are frustrated with traditional governance mechanisms and **desire a greater role in policymaking and planning** that adequately recognises their local expertise grounded in lived experience of particular places;
- There is significant – and sometimes duplication of - work going on across a range of formal stakeholders and agencies but currently **no framework to bring various strategies and work together into an integrated plan**;
- While local authorities desire to engage with a greater diversity of stakeholders, they **do not currently have the tools or capacity to do so**;
- There is a **need to enhance the skillset and capability** within public and private sector organisations tasked with transport and mobility planning, and climate action, to engage effectively with communities to deliver real and meaningful change.

# Thank you.

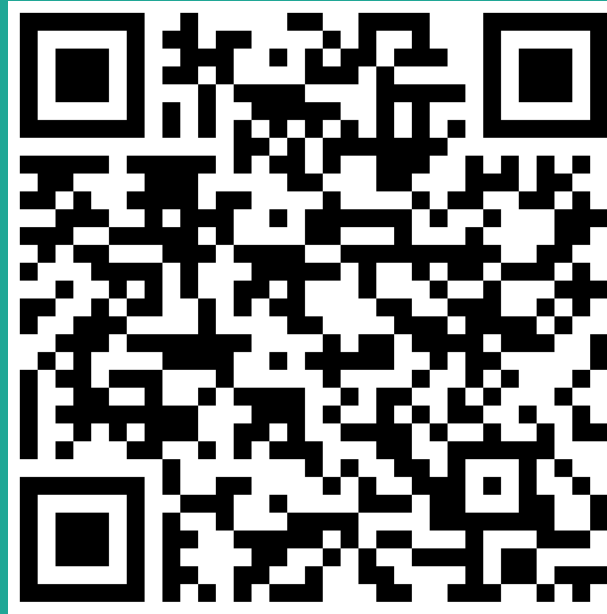
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For project resources see:

Website: <https://citiesgovernancesustainability.eu/conundrum/>

Platform: <https://www.townsmatter.ie/>



# References

- Clavin, A., Moore-Cherry, N., & Mills, G. (2021). Mapping Green Dublin: Co-Creating a Greener Future With Local Communities. *Urban Planning*, 6(4), 96-109. <https://doi.org/10.17645/up.v6i4.4533>
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- Ziervogel, G., Enqvist, J., Metelerkamp, L., & van Breda, J. (2022). Supporting transformative climate adaptation: Community-level capacity building and knowledge co-creation in South Africa. *Climate Policy*, 22(5), 607–622. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14693062.2020.1863180>