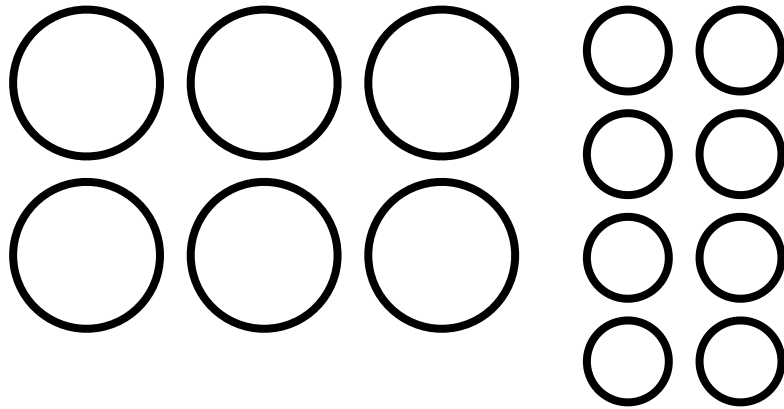


# THE CO-DESIGN CANVAS

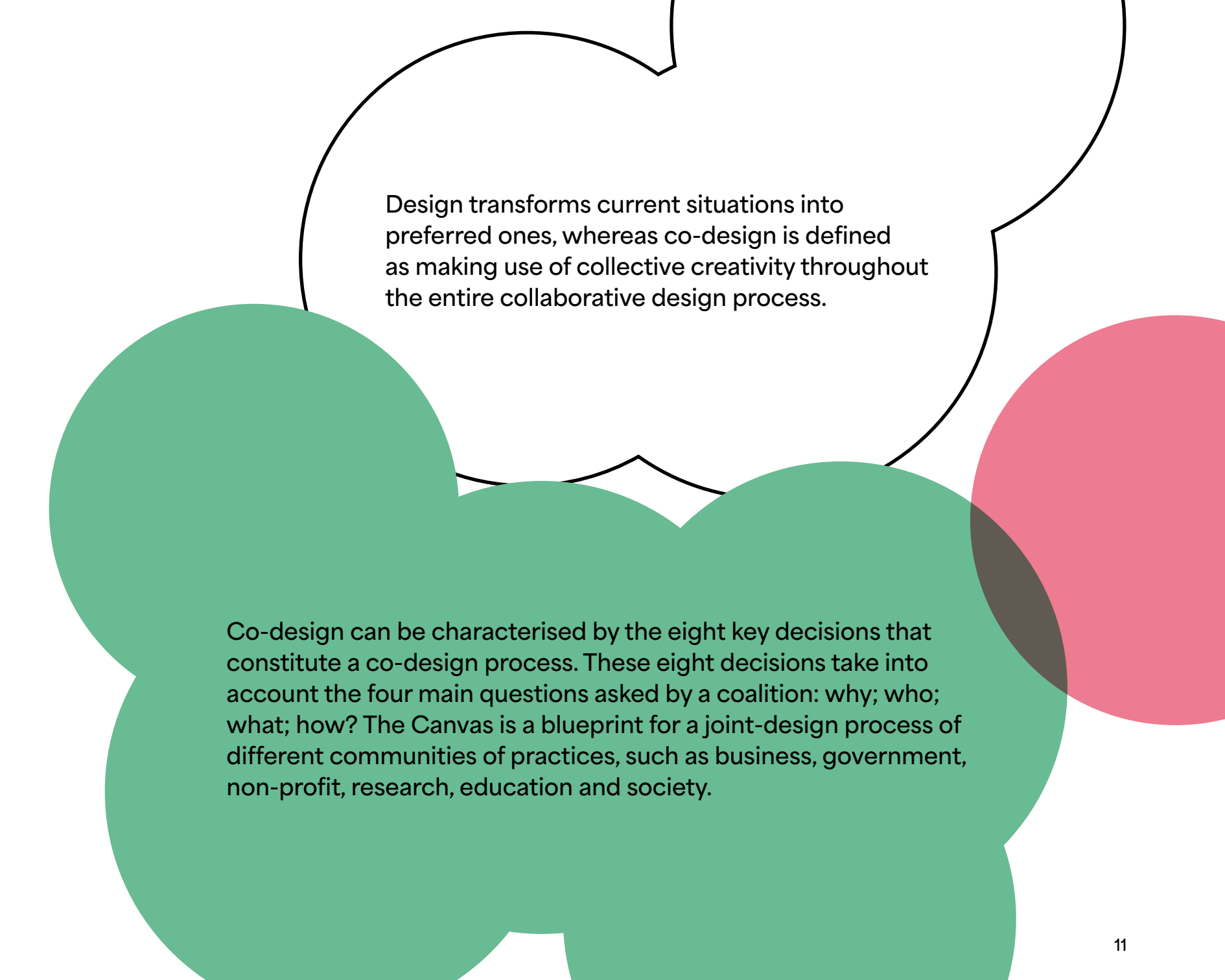


A proven design tool  
for societal impact

Wina  
Smeenk

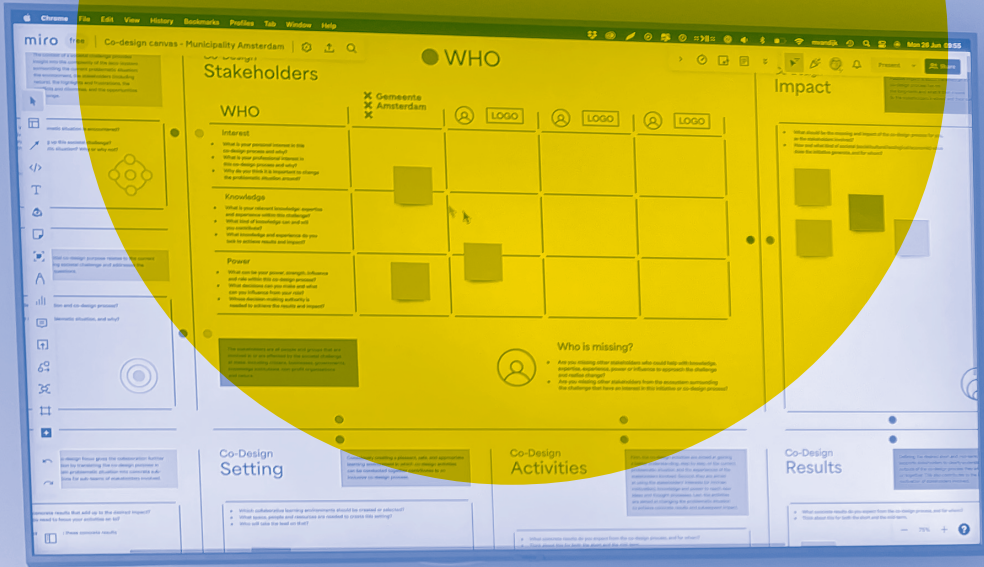
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Design transforms current situations into preferred ones, whereas co-design is defined as making use of collective creativity throughout the entire collaborative design process.

Co-design can be characterised by the eight key decisions that constitute a co-design process. These eight decisions take into account the four main questions asked by a coalition: why; who; what; how? The Canvas is a blueprint for a joint-design process of different communities of practices, such as business, government, non-profit, research, education and society.





“ It is important to create trust between policy makers and practitioners. It takes time, so start by openly sharing your goals, visions, and doubts without fear of showing vulnerability. ”

Workshop participant

“ We had a really good discussion. People got excited and stayed engaged – it was extremely inspiring! ”

Participating citizen

“ I think we initially communicated at different levels and had different expectations. If we would have had this Canvas at the beginning, at our first introduction, we would have gotten off to a much stronger start. ”

Municipal official



# Abduction

Abduction differs from induction and deduction. While all three pertain to the logic of scientific thinking, deductive research is the logic used in comparative research. A research team will typically search through literature to form a picture of a given challenge, on the basis of which they will then formulate and test hypotheses. Inductive research, meanwhile, is bottom-up research. By observing, exploring and asking questions, the research team will formulate a theory. With abduction, the research team will alternate between theorising about what is going on and testing whether their assumptions are correct. This thinking resembles design. Dorst (2011) defined the concept of abduction in design, as it relates to open-ended wicked challenges, as follows: The sum of ‘what’ and ‘how’ is ‘value’. Abduction is then an iterative and creative process of exploring, creating, testing and adjusting ‘how’ and ‘value’ combination possibilities, which Dorst called frames. The idea is that, provided enough frames (combining different values with different mechanisms) are considered, identified and weighed-up against one another, the most desirable and realistic alternative futures will inevitably emerge in the ‘what’. For his part, Cockton (2009) said: ‘The context of choice makes it credible’. Yet, this begs the question: ‘How can we find these multiple frames (with which to experiment) consisting of latent individual and collective values and accompanying sphere-of-life mechanisms?’





**Design needs to adopt new, flexible strategies that support stakeholders like non-designers in adaptively and empathically responding to dynamic and systemic contexts and value-network collaborations.**





# Impact

Positieve impact gaat over veel een initiatief of proces bereikt voor en welk effect het heeft op de betrokken mensen en hun omgeving.



lerent het initiatief idealiter aan het lokale maatschappelijke sociaal cultureel initiatief hoe op en voor wie?



## Res

Het penonomen van resultaten op de kernrijke behoeften om samen te werken. Dit draagt tot de betrokkenen.

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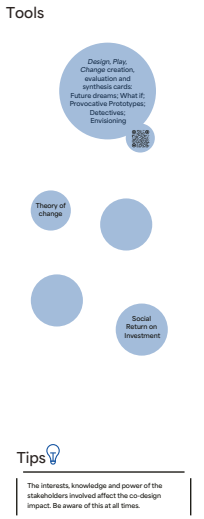


# The CO-DESIGN CANVAS back

## Co-Design Impact

Positive Impact stems from both the concrete results and the process. It is about the meaning and the effect of both of them on the people involved.

Impact can develop as early as the kick-off meeting. It could mean a different mindset, understanding and empathy for each other, a change in behaviour, or a change in culture or future perspective.



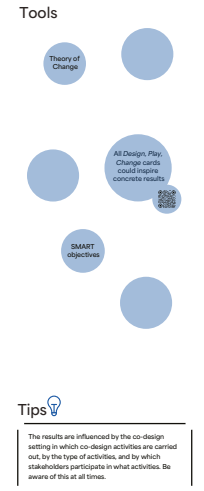
## Co-Design Results

It is important to define immediate concrete results to establish what each stakeholder involved expects from the cooperation and to manage these expectations.

Collectively defining the desired short-term results and their longer term significance for people (see also the impact cards) not only benefits stakeholders' intrinsic motivation, but is also key to assessing the success of a co-design process later on.

By formulating the desired results at the start of the co-design process, you can better determine which insights, ideas and resources are needed and who can do what.

A result can be a plan, an idea direction, a work process, an experience, a product, a service, etc.



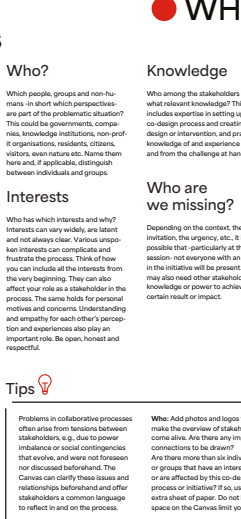
## WHAT

## Co-Design Stakeholders

The stakeholders are all people and groups that are involved in or are affected by the societal challenge at stake. They can come from different spheres of life, disciplines, domains and communities of practice. Think of including or representing citizens, business professionals, governmental officials, volunteers and others. They can be present at the co-design session or not.

Their interests (similarities and differences), knowledge (experience and expertise), and power (authority, risks, influence) are important in a co-design process. In other words, we want to find out what everyone can or cannot contribute and what is important to everyone. In co-design processes, you want everyone's voice to be heard and if possible included. However, there are always differences in interests, knowledge, role, social and organisational backgrounds, etc.

In the matrix on this card, the rows represent the relevant sub-decisions and the columns represent the individual persons and collectives, or collectives. You can think along the lines here of the differences between the spheres of life and the layers of teams-organisations-conditions or streets-neighbourhoods-other-countries.



## Co-Design Activities

The type of co-design activities that will be selected and developed, in what order, and how they will be conducted depends on the time taken for the co-design process, the focus, the context and the stakeholders involved.

In any case, it involves an iterative co-design process of emergence and convergence leading to initial ideas, clearly defined concepts, prototypes, testing and a conclusion.

A co-design process will require multiple sessions and activities, and you should consider an evaluation and test with the community and stakeholders.

Moreover, it is important to start with the most repeating and most relevant 'How can we... in order to...' questions, as previously defined in the co-design focus card. This can be the start of a small co-design project to act as a 'test' which is part of a bigger portfolio of projects. Then, starting from this question, select or develop appropriate methods and materials (settings) to obtain initial design opportunities and ideas to achieve first results that add up to a rapid impact.



## HOW

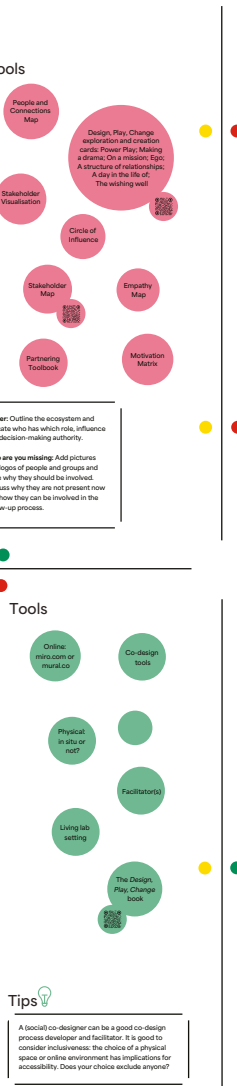
## Co-Design Setting

The learning environments in which the co-design activities will be conducted can be selected in situ (in context) or not (more neutral). This largely depends on the co-design focus, the context and the stakeholders involved.

Also consider who will be facilitating the activities, who you will be inviting and how, whether there will be in parallel sessions in sub-teams or a plenary session, in a place accessible to all stakeholders, whether it will take place online or offline, at what time the activities will take place, how long the process will last, whether refreshments and coffee or tea are needed, etc.

The resources and people needed include the budget for facilitators, the hours for those involved, as well as knowledge, expertise, experience and design materials.

The co-design focus and the diversity (in interests, knowledge and power) of the stakeholders involved affect the co-design setting and activities.

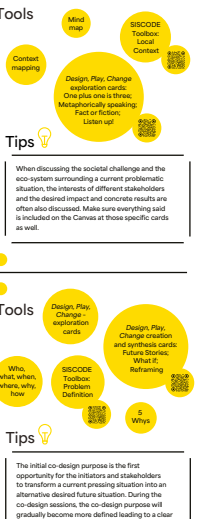


## WHY

## Co-Design Context

The initiator(s) or facilitator(s) of the co-design session explain why a particular societal challenge requires change. The question for the other stakeholders present is whether they recognise the challenge in their own context.

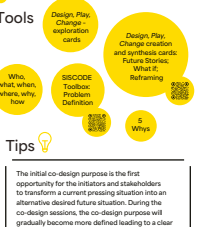
Does the challenge affect an entire ecosystem (e.g. the street, the neighbourhood, the municipality or even the entire country), specific groups (teams, organisations, networks) and/or individuals and the stakeholders themselves? Is the challenge related to one or more of their initiatives or projects?



## Co-Design Purpose

What is the purpose that the involved stakeholders pursue with respect to this particular problematic context for themselves, for their team, organisation or network and from the role they represent?

Specifying a common purpose also helps determine the desired concrete results and impact and who else should be involved to define the co-design focus (see the co-design focus card).



## Co-Design Focus

Once the co-design purpose, concrete results and impact have been discussed, along with who will participate how, when and why, it is time to examine the co-design focus to further clarify and detail the initiative.

This is where you define the question or sub-questions you want to explore together in the coming co-design process, i.e., the questions for which you want to seek and find design opportunities that will lead to first concrete sub-results and desired impact.

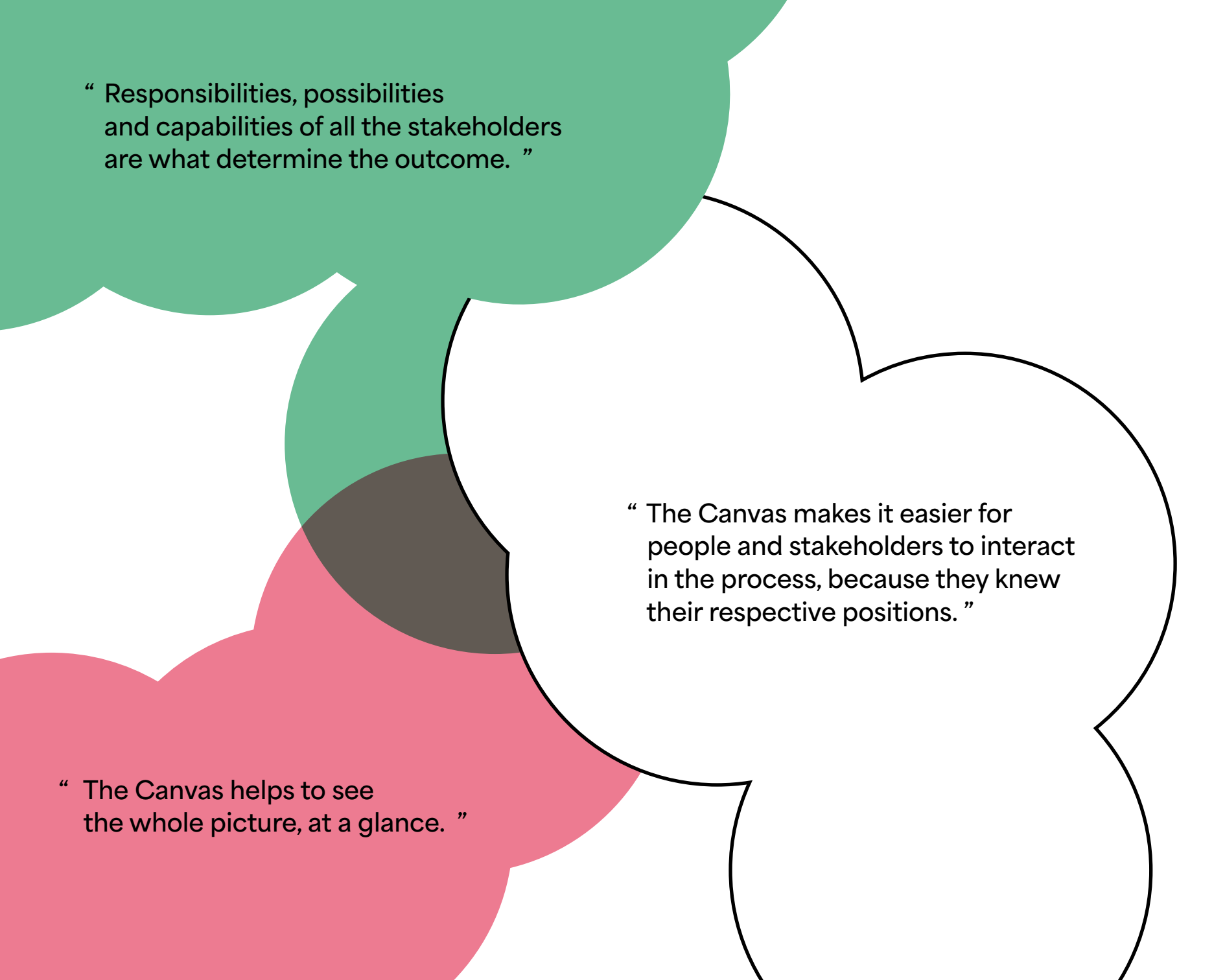
When the stakeholders involved provide a greater variety of knowledge (expertise and experience) than the initiator(s) expected at the start of the process, the co-design focus will be more distinct from the initial co-design purpose.

The co-design focus also depends on the concrete results and impact that the coalition aims for and agrees upon.



## WHY

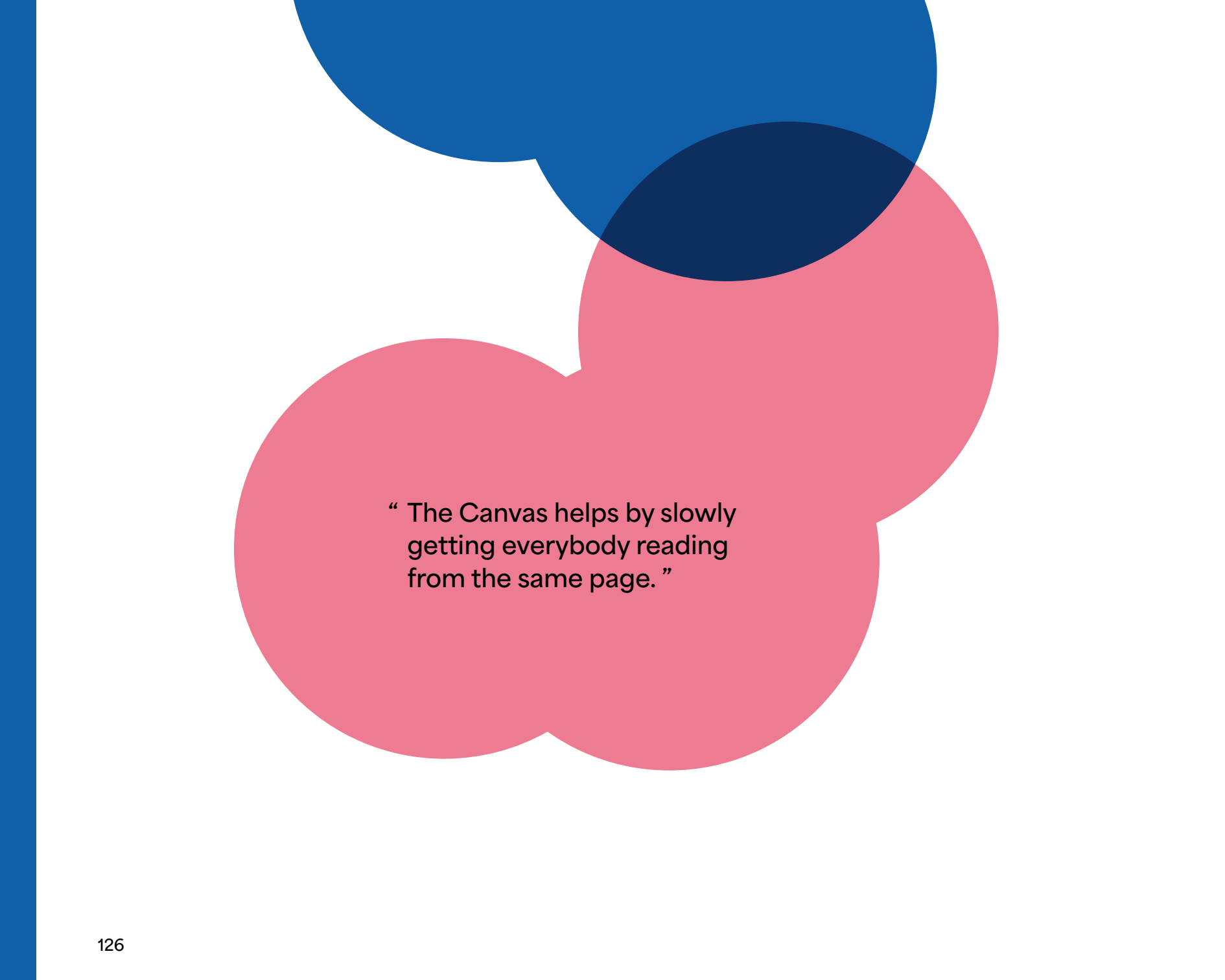




“ Responsibilities, possibilities  
and capabilities of all the stakeholders  
are what determine the outcome. ”

“ The Canvas makes it easier for  
people and stakeholders to interact  
in the process, because they knew  
their respective positions. ”

“ The Canvas helps to see  
the whole picture, at a glance. ”

A decorative graphic consisting of several overlapping circles. At the top, there is a large blue circle. Below it, a smaller dark blue circle overlaps the bottom of the first blue circle. To the right of the dark blue circle is a large pink circle. Below the dark blue circle, another large pink circle overlaps its bottom. The text is centered within this lower pink circle.

**“ The Canvas helps by slowly  
getting everybody reading  
from the same page. ”**

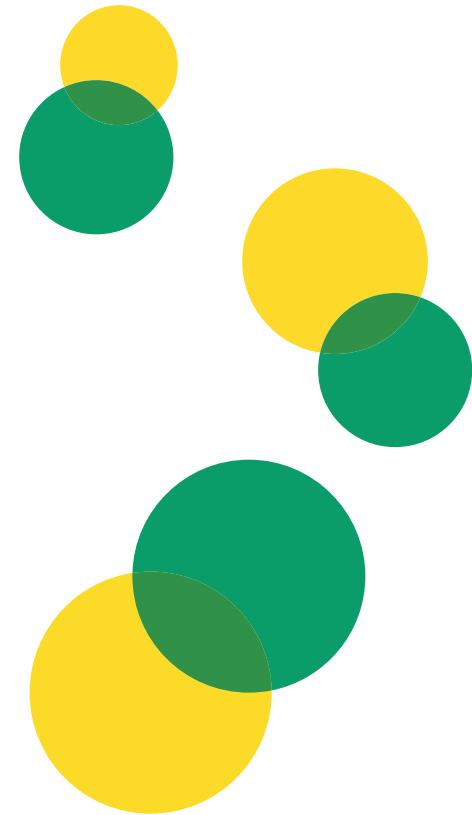


# THE CO-DESIGN CANVAS

Societal challenges are urgent and affect everyone, including politicians, citizens, government officials, business professionals, NGOs, designers, and researchers. Understanding and addressing these challenges is difficult because no single stakeholder or organization is solely responsible. Everything is interconnected and constantly changing, resulting in challenges being neglected and stakeholders being unable or unwilling to make important decisions.

The Co-Design Canvas is a practical and user-friendly tool that supports flexible planning, conducting, and evaluating of co-design processes for multi-stakeholder coalitions and facilitators. It encourages coalitions to discuss and consider the eight co-design variables. The accompanying Manual helps people find common ground and align their perspectives.

**Read off the same page**



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