



Recruitment & engagement of citizen scientists: challenges & lessons learned

Carina Veeckman
imec-SMIT, Vrije Universiteit Brussel



**Communication
in Citizen Science**

A practical guide to communication and
engagement in citizen science

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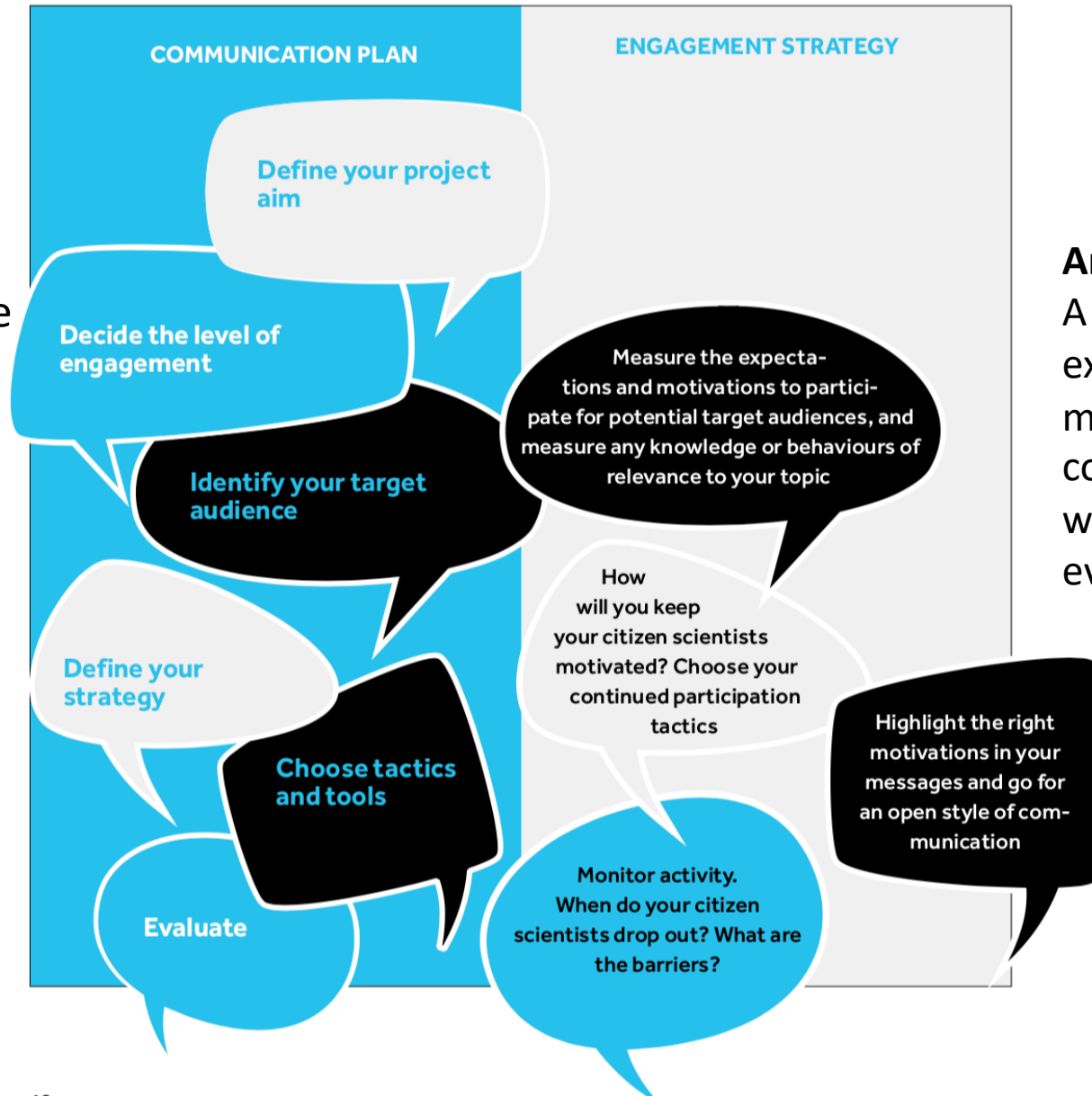
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Indexed RRI tool

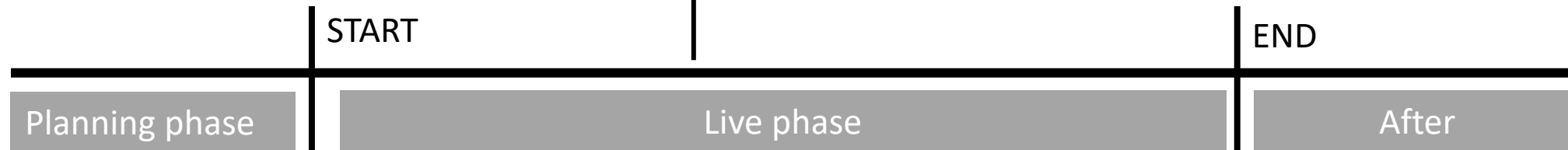
A communication plan =
A detailed description of the communication steps for engaging target audiences during the whole project lifetime.



An engagement strategy =
A strategy that looks into expectations and motivations for initial and continued participation, with monitoring and evaluation activities.

Communication plan

	Target audience I	Target audience II	Target audience III
Social media			
Event			
Campaign			
Printed material			
Website			
Press			
Newsletter			
Other			



Writing of the communication plan

- Launch event
- Press release
- Social media
- ...
- Blog 1
- Blog 2
- Blog 3
- Blog 4
- Event
- Event

Engagement strategy

MOTIVATIONS

Egoistic motivators
Interest, curiosity fun
factor, learning, ...

Social motivators
Attribution,
recognition, meeting
like-minded others, etc.



Invitation to participate

Decision to participate

Initial participation

Continued participation



Lack of time
Lack of interest
Lack of info

Jargon
Non-friendly data protocol
Non-friendly technology

Lack of recognition
Lack of openness

BARRIERS

Long-term engagement of citizens

- **Engagement metrics:**
 - **Activity ratio:** the number of days a participant was active and contributed versus the total days s/he remained in the project
 - **Activity duration:** the number of days a participant is linked to the project versus the total number of days
 - **Lurking ratio:** the proportion of days a participating was lurking to the total number of days visits to the website (browsing content but not contributing)
- **Identify the engagement profiles:** the hardworking volunteers, loyal volunteers, lurking engagement, etc.

Tip 1: 95% of citizen science is communication

- Vital in every step of the research process: recruitment, engagement, information, education, dissemination, etc.
- Have a dedicated budget available
- Have a dedicated team available (a community manager, a science trainer, a science communicator), but inform everyone about the latest developments
- Good communication takes practice: tips and tricks

Tip II: A generic versus specific approach

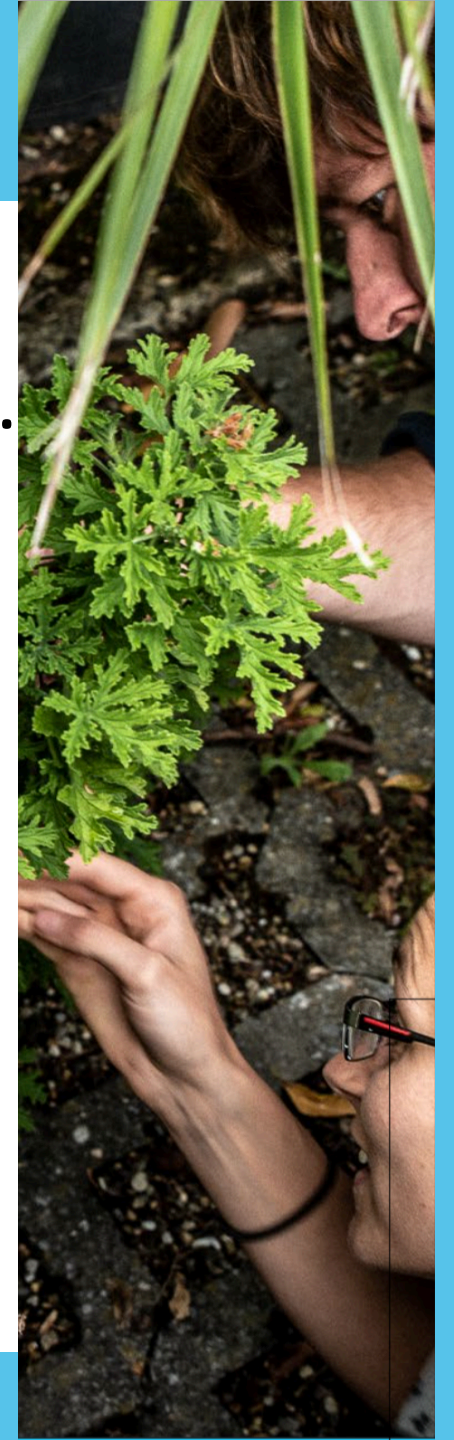
Your choice of strategy will affect the diversity of your project participants.

A generic approach: open call

- Via social media, the press, by handing out flyers, etc.
- A huge number of potential citizen scientists
- No specific profiles or audiences are targeted

A specific approach:

- Personal invitations
- Contact people on member lists
- Intermediary organisations



Tip III: Do not start from scratch

Whether you set up a small or large scale project, the best way to effectively engage your target audience is to start from existing networks or communities:

- Look for partnerships with an existing organisation on your research topic
 - Meet and greet via workshops and events
 - Look beyond borders
- Discuss the win-win
- Discuss a common visual identity and communication strategy
 - Newsletters

Tip IV: Inclusion & citizen science

“The average citizen scientist seems to be white, middle-aged, well-educated and male, with a keen interest in science and research”

- Start by clarifying your project aims: is it achievable, is it your focus?
 - “Science for the general public”
 - “Improve knowledge among the population”
- If not, open - generic calls are sufficient

Inclusion & citizen science

Make explicit choices in your project design phase:

- Search for the relevant intermediary organisations (e.g. poverty organisations, community centres, ...):
formal and informal
- Identify the needs, wishes and requirements in an early stage by consulting representatives
- Choose the best communication channels
- Wording of your message
- Pick a time and place that is convenient for your target group
- ...



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- **Update** your strategy throughout the project lifetime: catch the eye and respond to changes
- **Evaluate your strategy:** perform a baseline and monitor regularly
- **Creativity:** use a diverse set of tools and methods to recruit and engage your audience for continued engagement
- **Available template:** how to draft a(n) communication and engagement plan

Thank you for listening!

carina.veeckman@imec.be

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