

RegenerAction Path Handbook

**URBAN COMMUNITY BUILDER
PROFESSIONAL PROFILE
AND COMPETENCY FRAMEWORK**

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Glossary

Regeneration

Actions of urban regeneration (regenerations) are seen as collective processes of democratic dialogue, participation and civic engagement in the search for shared uses and meanings for common spaces, facilitated by Urban Community Builders.

Urban areas

Our understanding of “urban areas” encompasses any space where people live collectively. Our use of the term “urban” does not exclude rural areas, as people live collectively also in rural settings.

Urban Community Builders (UCBs)

Urban Community Builders are agents of physical, social and cultural changes in urban contexts that result from the collaborative and cooperative processes based on a relationship of care, combining bottom-up and top-down processes through a holistic and multidisciplinary approach, embracing the new challenges of participation as an opportunity. UCBs interacts with different kinds of actors and aims to facilitate processes and mediate interests.

Urban Regeneration

Urban regeneration is the super-discipline to transform cities into more democratic, inclusive, sustainable and beautiful places.

Foreword:
Urban Community
Builders for
Regeneractions

The Urban Community Builder (UCB) can be described as an *ecological* figure: *ecological* is here used in the sense given by Félix Guattari in the *Three Ecologies* (1989), one of the most influential books for contemporary ecological studies. It is there that the french psychiatrist, activist, and philosopher reframed the notion of *ecology* in a broader sense which fits perfectly, in our views, the main goal of the Regeneration project, that is to define the role and the aims of new agents for the ecological transition: Urban Community Builders.

Etymologically, the term ecology comes from the ancient greek (*oikos-logia*, the science of the house) and it is normally used to describe the science of the material fluxes and of the relationships between humans and non-humans within their physical environment. But, as Guattari argued, we cannot fully understand our present epoch and the issues arising from the ecological state of emergency if we do not also analyze the *mental* and *social spheres*—that is to say the psychological, cultural, organizational, and technical features of our way of living—in a strict relation to the *environmental* one.

This framework is very fruitful for understanding the possible role played by UCBs within *urban regeneration*

actions (regenerations), as well as the kind of co-designed activities that these figures could locally implement in order to tackle contemporary urban issues (from the redesign and reuse of architectural spaces, to the redesign of proximity services). The three levels of analysis (mental, social and environmental) proposed by Guattari are equally important to be taken into account:

1. For when we imagine the possible regenerative actions for the ecological renewal of our cities and our ways of living in urban contexts;

2. As well as for individuating the necessary characteristics (skills, knowledge) needed by UCBs that this project aims to empower—or better, to capacitate (A. Sen, 2000; B. Stiegler, 2020), that is to say, to improve their ability to act, individually and collectively, in their environment.

Hence, UCBs are major vector-figures for a democratic, inclusive, and just ecological transition. They are intended here as both a moral or juridical person (NGO, association, innovation hub, and the like) who plays a pivotal role in urban spaces through the creation of trans-sectorial and trans-disciplinary activities in a territory with a strong connection with local net-

works of trust that are often already present but need to be supported for rethinking and enacting new relationships between cities and the peri-urban areas.

When these networks are not already established, UCBs work toward that direction. The aim? Taking care of individual, social and environmental local issues in strong collaboration with private and public territorial actors. This new professional profile could be inserted within already existing public institutions or recognised by (and strongly collaborate with) them from the exterior. Given the different forms of collaboration that are already existing in many territories and which have been studied by the RegenerAction project so far, we do not want to restrict the possibilities for these new forms of work that are needed in our territories. Physical presence, proximity, and knowledge of the territorial actors are key features for (re)building the sense of belonging and a new territorial model of economic and social development.

The experimentation of such activities is urgent and necessary to found new political-institutional, socio-economic, as well as new technological imaginaries against the closure of the possible that is conceptually embodied in what has been called the Anthro-

pocene era. In the climate and social emergencies that characterizes our contemporary era, this reinvention requires close collaboration between active inhabitants and institutions within these territories that are bearing imagination, energy and possibility for a better future.



REFERENCES

A. Sen, *Development as Freedom*, Oxford University Press, 1999.

B. Stiegler, *Bifurcate. There is no alternative*, Open Humanities Press, 2020 (free-download available at the following link: <http://www.openhumanitiespress.org/books/titles/bifurcate/>)

F. Guattari, *The Three Ecologies*, UNKNO, 2001.

About the Project

RegenerAction is a two-year Erasmus+ project that aims to recognize and support the emerging professional profile of the 'Urban Community Builder' (UCB). This profile directly contributes to urban regeneration actions across Europe, which, within the context of this project, are referred to as regenerations. Regenerations involve collective processes of democratic dialogue, participation, and civic engagement to find shared uses and meanings for common spaces.

The project results include:

A Handbook defining and recognizing the tasks, challenges, knowledge, and skills of UCBs as professionals in the context of regeneration.

An interdisciplinary training package, developed and tested, with the aim of strengthening UCBs' competencies.

A policy recommendation report aimed in particular at local public administrations to understand the advantage of starting up participatory urban regeneration processes in their cities.

A Digital Manifesto to provide a visual, innovative and interactive synthesis of the vision, values and policy recommendations by UCBs across Europe.

For more information visit:
www.regenerationproject.eu

Welcome to the Handbook

The Handbook was developed through a combination of desk research and focus group discussions conducted by project partners in their respective countries. It aims to establish a clear definition of the Urban Community Builder (UCB) profile and essential competencies necessary to successfully drive transformative regeneration processes within urban contexts.

Continue exploring the RegenerAction Path Handbook if you find yourself belonging to any of the following groups:

Individuals actively engaged in urban community building for regeneration processes, regardless of their expertise or experience, aiming to enhance their understanding, raise awareness, and adopt a more systematic approach to their work and development.

Organizations seeking to hire UCBs Builders, enhance their regeneration and community building capabilities, or advocate for and raise awareness about regeneration initiatives.

Policy- and decision-makers interested in understanding the contributions and influence of UCBs.

Organizations interested in developing training programmes for UCB capacity building.

1.0 The State of Urban Community Building for *Regeneractions*

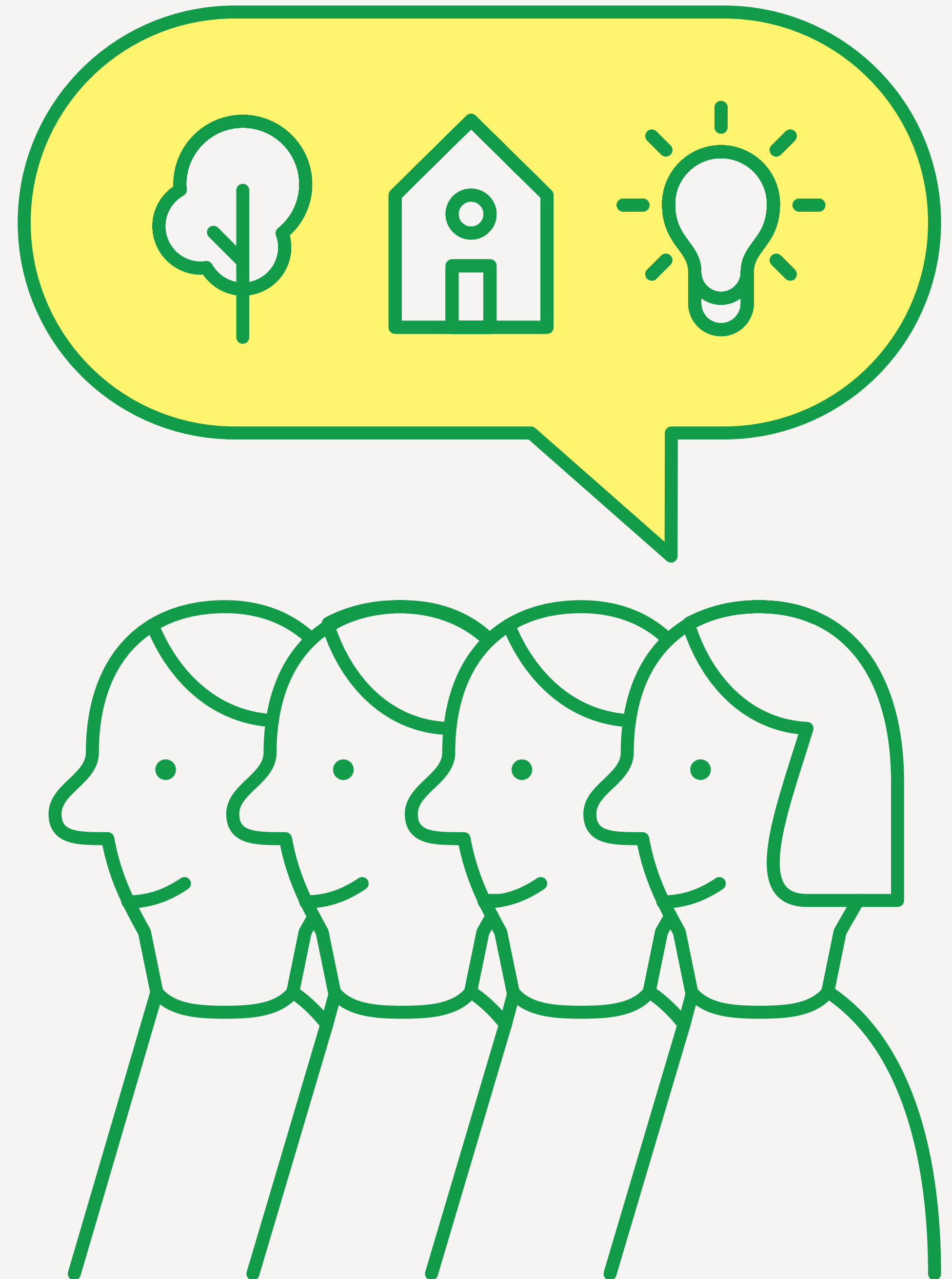
The State of Urban Community Building for Regenerations

Urban community building plays a crucial role in regeneration actions that redefine urban spaces and foster community engagement. Regeneration actions involve designing novel ways of living within urban settlements i.e. everywhere where people live collectively. This includes revitalizing underused or abandoned buildings and publicly owned spaces classified as common goods. Regeneration, as understood by the RegenerAction project, goes beyond the mere economic impact generated by these new spaces in our communities. **The focus lies in breathing new life into these common goods through participatory processes.** Consequently, the existence of regeneration actions hinges on the presence of a **community deriving social, economic, and cultural value from the space.**

The research conducted by project partners in their respective countries has identified that the understanding and terminology surrounding the concept of regeneration across European countries can vary, with terms like urban rehabilitation, reconstruction, regeneration, and revitalization used interchangeably. Indications also show that regeneration actions often prioritize economic and physical changes, sometimes at the expense of social and community well-being. While community participation often stems from independent initiatives rather than public sector actions, in some European countries such as Italy participatory processes related to urban regeneration have strong government backing. In general, participatory approaches and community-led initiatives are growing across Europe aiming to foster social cohesion and improve the quality of life and relationships between humans and non-humans within their physical environment. Environmental sustainability is a key consideration, with a focus on integrating green spaces and eco-friendly infrastructure.

Urban community building encompasses a diverse range of collaborative initiatives undertaken by various stakeholders. It incorporates collective goals and responsibilities that require the formation of local alliances: collaboration among government authorities, private investors, NGOs, and citizens' initiatives is crucial for holistic regeneration outcomes. This process serves as a unifying force, bringing together multiple stakeholders within a specific framework and enabling the development of tangible actions that foster transdisciplinary and cross-sectoral collaboration.

Challenges include financial constraints, legal issues, and the need to build trust in formal bodies. Despite these challenges, bottom-up community initiatives empower citizens to actively participate in shaping their environment and contribute to inclusive and sustainable communities.



2.0 Urban Community Builder Profile



2.1 Agents of Change: The Emerging Role of Urban Community Builders

Agents of Change: The Emerging Role of Urban Community Builders

Urban Community Builder (UCB) is an emerging profile across Europe, reflecting the need to drive change through collective processes. Defining this profile is necessary as it provides tangibility to actions that are often intangible and underestimated. By acknowledging and understanding the contributions and impact of UCBs in fostering social cohesion, promoting inclusivity, and driving positive change, communities and decision makers can better appreciate the need to develop and professionalize the UCB profile.

UCBs embody a multitude of roles and qualities that are essential for effective community building that may vary significantly depending on the context. In general, their primary focus is to guide and nurture regeneration processes. They embrace an expansive landscape of intervention, related however to the unique needs of a territory and its inhabitants. By fostering meaningful relationships and cultivating a profound sense of unity among community members, UCBs weave a vibrant fabric where neighbors transcend mere strangers. They

are skilled communicators, adjusting their approaches and language to seamlessly connect with individuals at all levels, effectively serving as dialogue moderators.

UCBs recognize the significance of social cohesion, inclusivity, and equity in community initiatives. They advocate for underrepresented facets of the community and facilitate consultations that amplify citizen voices in decision-making processes, ensuring that local priorities and developmental activities reflect the collective aspirations and reach decision-makers. UCBs act as connectors between the community and other stakeholders, building local partnerships to encourage collaboration between organizations and residents.

Through participatory processes, UCBs assist communities in co-designing and constructing new public spaces, focusing on social, economic, and cultural value of these shared resources. Their actions extend beyond physical spaces to encompass human behavior, feelings, and lifestyles, as well as the impact on the broader ecosystem and natural surroundings. The UCB can be a passionate and dedicated individual or a collective.

While they are recognized by national policies in some EU countries, they

do not figure as a unique category, reflecting the diverse nature of the UCB role. UCBs can assume both non-professional and professional roles, and their involvement can be paid or unpaid. The level of implication and the amount of time devoted to their tasks often depend on the nature of their role. In certain cases, building community for regeneration is their primary mission, whereas in others, it may be a provisional role or just one aspect of their broader responsibilities.

→ **ROLE OF THE UCB**

→ **UCB: AN INDIVIDUAL OR COLLECTIVE?**

→ **WHO EMPLOYS UCBs?**



The Role of the Urban Community Builder is Enhanced by Community Acceptance & Support from Public Authorities

Community acceptance indicates that the community recognizes and values the efforts of the UCB, which fosters trust, collaboration, and engagement in community-building initiatives. For UCBs, bottom-up authority means that their legitimacy and influence come from the recognition and support of the community they serve. They gain authority by actively engaging with community members, listening to their needs and aspirations, and effectively representing their interests. By empowering the community and involving them in decision-making processes, UCBs can harness the collective agency of the community, leading to more inclusive and sustainable community development.

Support from public authorities is equally important. When public authorities acknowledge and endorse the work of the UCB, it brings legiti-

macy and resources to their efforts. This support can come in various forms, such as increased funding opportunities, streamlined bureaucratic processes, supportive policy environment, access to information and data, and infrastructure support.

Achieving maximum impact with minimal resources relies significantly on political will to prioritize and support community initiatives. It is the driving force behind the allocation of resources, funding, and the implementation of policies and programs that align with the goals of the UCB.

Whether working within the public system or advocating for change from outside, the ability to influence political will becomes crucial. Building relationships, advocating for community needs, showcasing successful outcomes, and fostering partnerships are some strategies that UCB can employ to garner political will and maximize their impact.



TOP-DOWN AUTHORITY

Authority is understood as the official permission or right to act, often on behalf of another. It is associated with formal positions, titles, or organizational power structures.

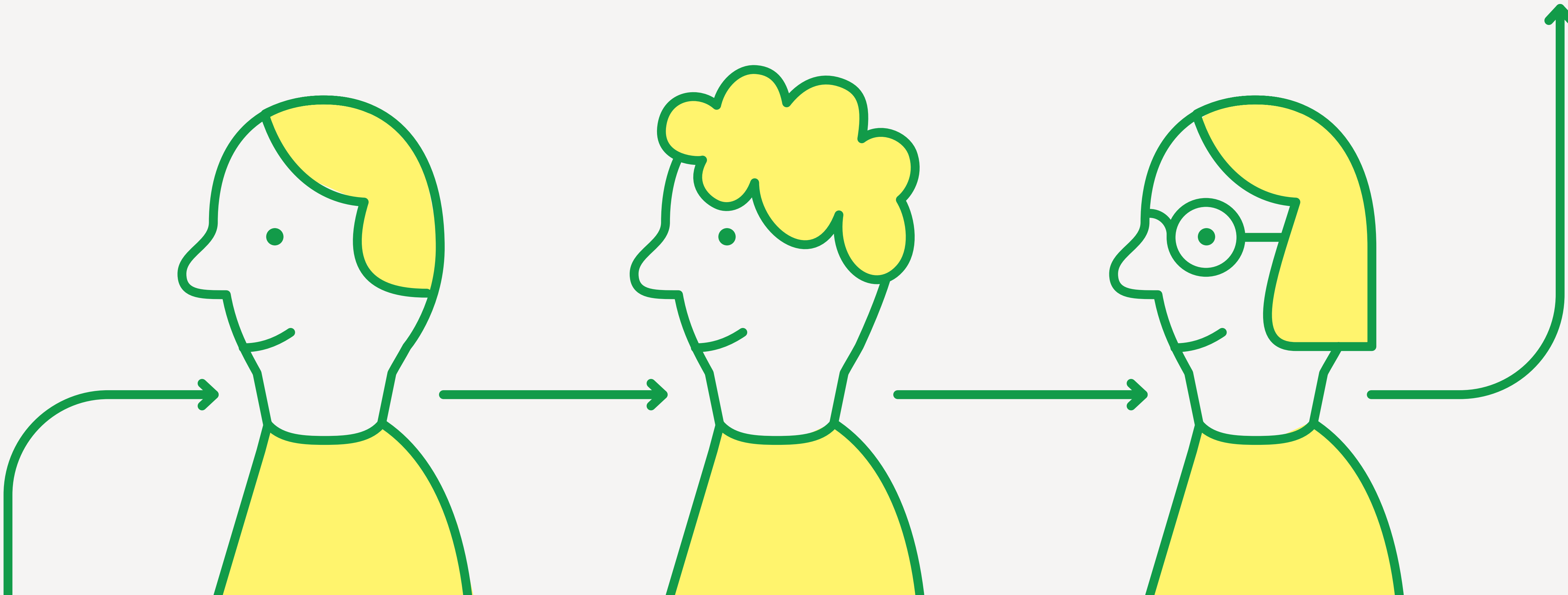
BOTTOM-UP AUTHORITY

The concept of bottom-up authority or empowerment recognizes that authority can emerge from within the community itself. Authority is not solely based on formal titles but is earned through expertise, experience, and contributions to the community.



2.2 Navigating Three Levels of Expertise and Impact

The Urban Community Builder profile comprises three progressive levels of expertise and engagement. Each level represents an increasing depth of knowledge, skills, and impact, guiding UCBs from Community Catalysts to Empowerment Enablers and ultimately to Urban Regeneration Specialists.



Level 1
**Community
Catalyst**

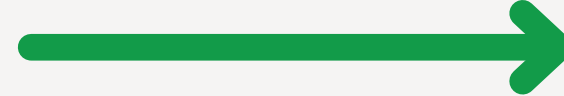
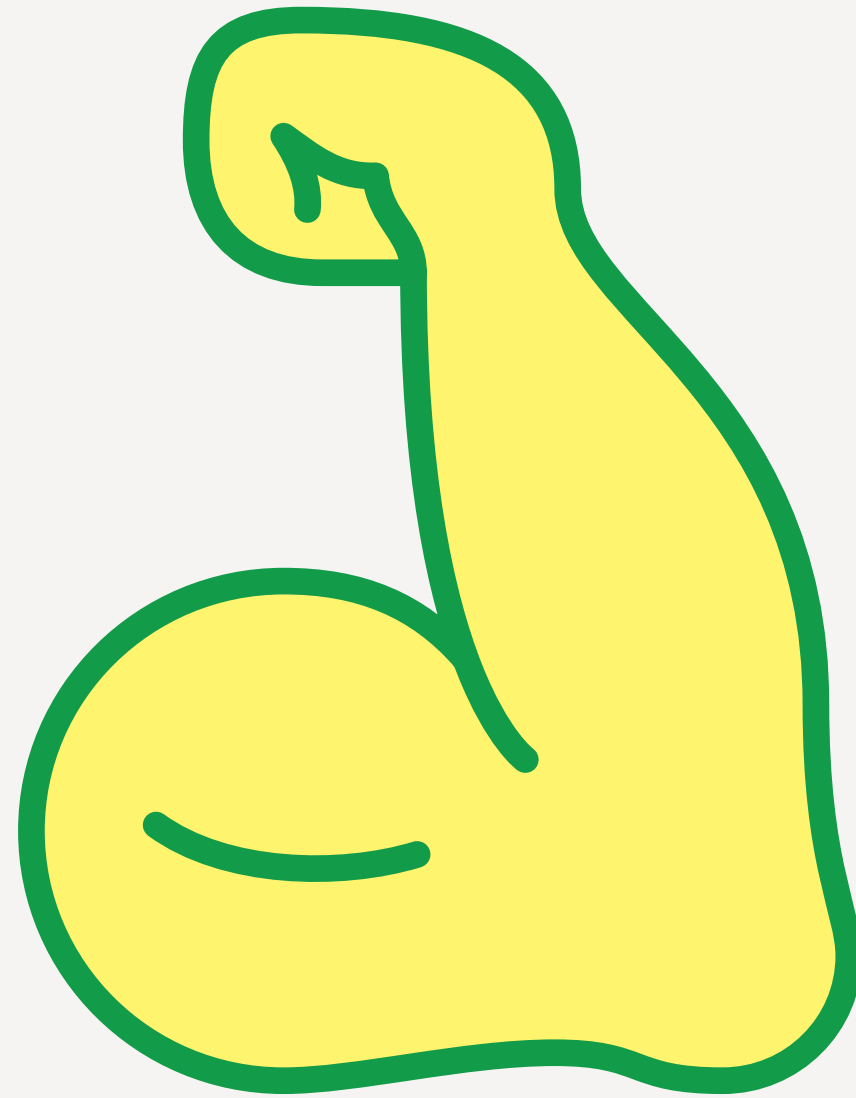
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Level 2
**Empowerment
Enabler**

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Level 3
**Urban *Regeneration*
Specialist**

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Level 1

Community Catalyst

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Level 2

Empowerment Enabler

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Level 3

Urban *Regeneration* Specialist

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Level 1

Community Catalyst

Open-minded and explores new ideas. Is adaptable to changes and open to new ideas and perspectives. Listens actively to understand diverse perspectives.

Has a good understanding of various community aspects, engagement principles, and sustainable development practices.

Knows how to assess community needs and collaborates with local governance structures to promote democratic principles and inclusivity.

Actively contributes to co-designing projects, welcoming new ideas, and analyzing information.

Supports group work and encourages collective participation. Involves group members in decision-making, seeking input and collaboration.

Uses data analysis to draw insights. Makes well-informed decisions using discernment and wise judgment.

Takes initiative and willingly assumes responsibilities.

Uses digital tools to interact, communicate, and collaborate with diverse people.

Applies basic project management skills to sustainable community initiatives.

Level 2

Empowerment Enabler

Possesses knowledge of community concepts, engagement principles, sustainable development practices, and democratic principles.

Understands local, regional, and national political environments, public-private partnerships, and social and political movements linked to community regeneration.

Creates projects that involve the community and promote sustainable development.

Does the mapping and understands the urban environment's impact on regeneration.

Is good in project planning, financial management, and timeline control. Measures and evaluates project impact.

Uses innovative thinking to generate creative solutions. Solves problems effectively.

Analyzes data for insights and informed decisions. Evaluates options and makes informed choices. Adapts plans when facing unforeseen challenges.

Utilizes digital tools for community engagement and regeneration projects, stays updated on digital advancements.

Takes initiative and willingly assumes responsibility for actions.

Pursues continuous learning and personal growth.

Nurtures successful collaboration and teamwork. Focuses on achieving results with a team.

Negotiates and facilitates collaboration among diverse stakeholders. Empowers and involves the community in decision-making.

Aligns efforts with social and political movement goals.

Promotes sustainability and resilience in urban environments.

Level 3

Urban Regeneration Specialist

Possesses deep knowledge of community concepts, engagement principles, sustainable development practices, and democratic principles as well as the local, regional, national and international political environments and public-private partnership processes.

Creates and implements community-oriented plans for sustainable projects with positive impacts.

Develops strategies for collaboration, collective decision-making, and empowering communities.

Demonstrates strong leadership in fostering collective ownership and driving collaborative efforts.

Handles changes and uncertainties effectively to keep projects on track.

Advocates for progressive policies and sustainable development.

Visionary thinking, strategic decision-making, and persuasive communication for positive change.

Utilizes digital tools and technology for creativity, innovation, project management and community involvement.

Integrates feedback and experiences for continuous improvement and personal development.

Provides resources, training, and opportunities for community skill development.

Builds relationships with influential stakeholders and advocates for the community's needs.

Understands advocacy and lobbying methods to influence policies and decisions.

Level 1

Community Catalyst

Job description and job conditions.

Level 2

Empowerment Enabler

Job description and job conditions.

Level 3

Urban *Regeneration* Specialist

Job description and job conditions.

3.0 Regener Action Path

COMPETENCY FRAMEWORK FOR
URBAN COMMUNITY BUILDERS

The RegenerAction Path is a comprehensive journey for Urban Community Builders in the context of urban regeneration. It is designed to equip UCBs with the essential skills and knowledge needed to create positive change and revitalize urban areas.

To successfully carry out their tasks, UCBs are required to possess a combination of competencies. However, if they lack certain competencies, they ensure to include in their team individuals who possess those missing competencies through collaboration.

RegenerAction Path comprises sets of Social, Civic, Cultural, Entrepreneurial, Green and Digital Competencies, same as Human, and Life Skills for the 21st century, organized into four core areas: Foundations for RegenerAction, Being Human and Digital, Nurturing Personal Growth and Transformative RegenerAction. As UCBs follow this path, they must first and foremost be aware of the social, economic, cultural, and environmental values that shape their work. Recognizing the significance of empowerment, inclusion, collaboration, and equality in their everyday work is essential for their success. Embracing a holistic, multidisciplinary, and participatory approach further enhances the impact of UCBs' work, fostering positive change in urban communities.

1) Foundations for Regeneration

The role of UCBs within urban regeneration reflects a profound understanding of community concepts, engagement principles, sustainable development practices, local governance structures, and relevant local and national policies, including interactions with private enterprises. However, this awareness goes beyond the purely human realm. It extends into a more-than-human approach, acknowledging the intricate relationships between humans and their natural environment, including the non-human entities that inhabit these urban spaces. This recognition forms the ecological foundation of their work, emphasizing the interdependence and coexistence of all elements within the urban ecosystem, in line with the principles of a more-than-human perspective.

4) Transformative Regeneration

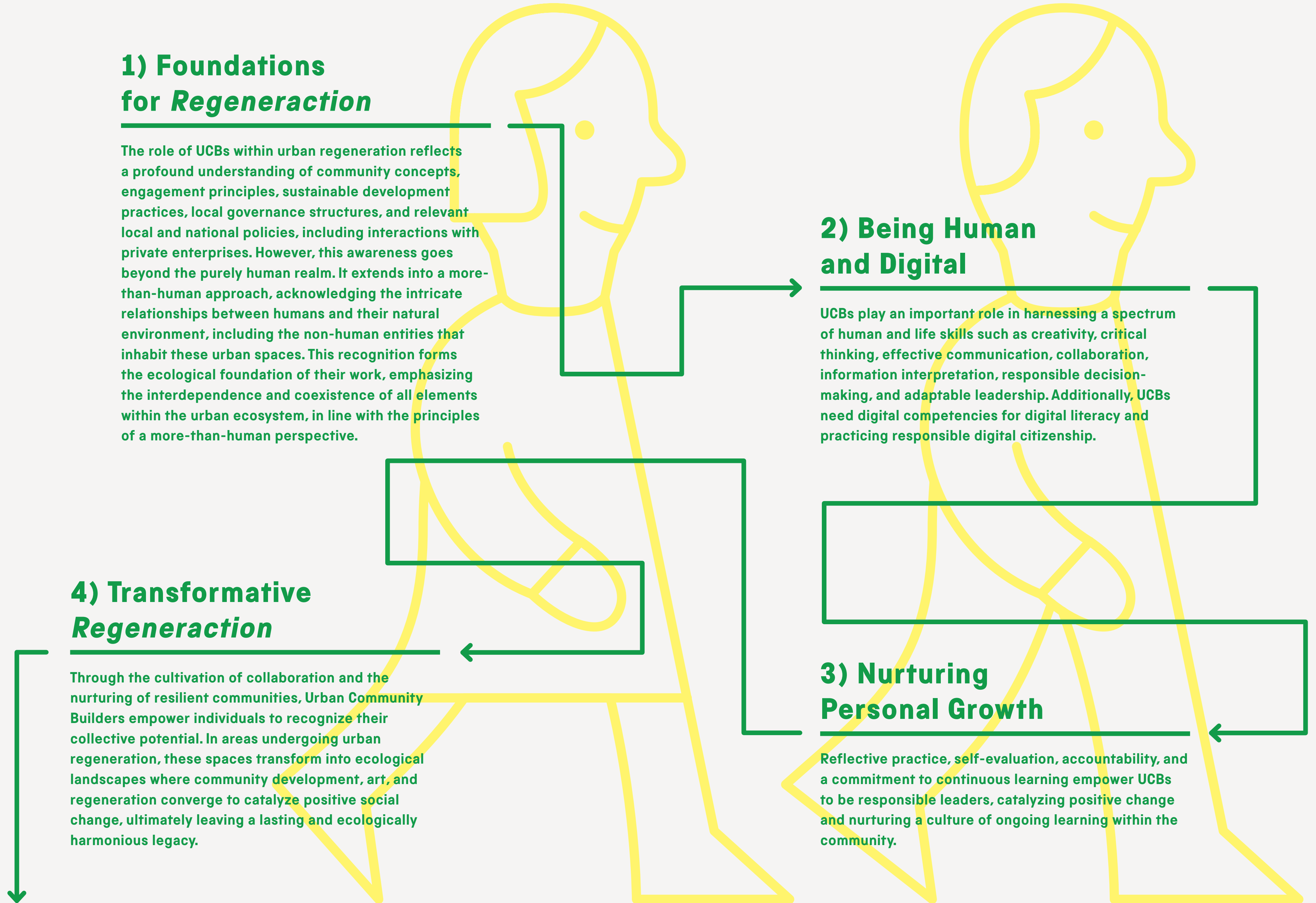
Through the cultivation of collaboration and the nurturing of resilient communities, Urban Community Builders empower individuals to recognize their collective potential. In areas undergoing urban regeneration, these spaces transform into ecological landscapes where community development, art, and regeneration converge to catalyze positive social change, ultimately leaving a lasting and ecologically harmonious legacy.

2) Being Human and Digital

UCBs play an important role in harnessing a spectrum of human and life skills such as creativity, critical thinking, effective communication, collaboration, information interpretation, responsible decision-making, and adaptable leadership. Additionally, UCBs need digital competencies for digital literacy and practicing responsible digital citizenship.

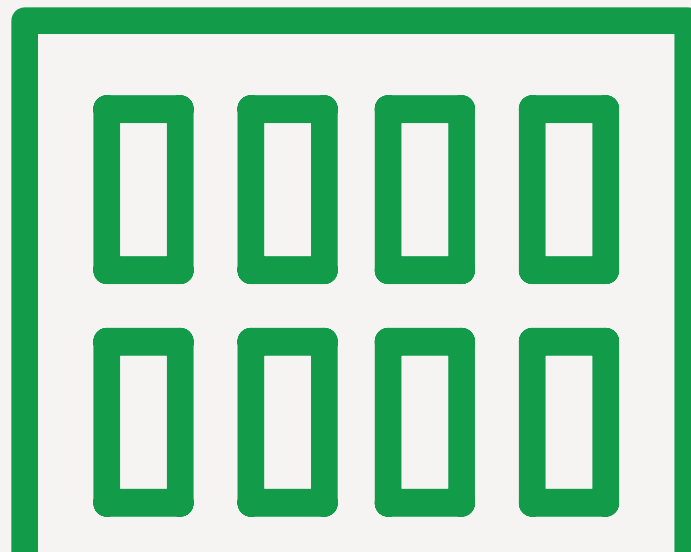
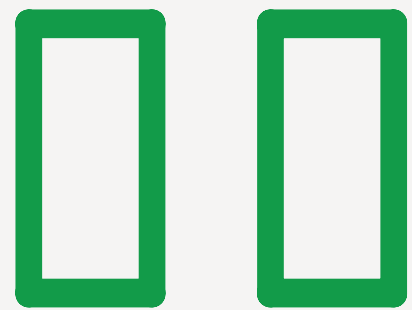
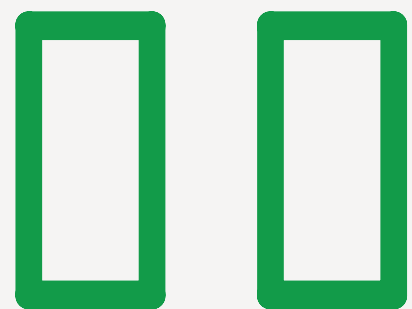
3) Nurturing Personal Growth

Reflective practice, self-evaluation, accountability, and a commitment to continuous learning empower UCBs to be responsible leaders, catalyzing positive change and nurturing a culture of ongoing learning within the community.



1) Foundations for *Regeneration*

On the following pages, the RegenerAction Path unfolds across three distinct levels of Urban Community Builders: Level 1 as Community Catalyst, Level 2 as Empowerment Enabler and Level 3 as Urban Regeneration Specialist. Each level represents the evolution of competencies, guiding UCBs on a journey of comprehensive growth and impactful urban regeneration.



Level 1

Community Catalyst

Understanding of community concepts and characteristics; Community engagement principles; Community mapping and needs assessment processes; Space and environment mapping; Sustainable development concepts and practices; Local governance structures; Democratic principles.

Contributing to the co-design of the projects.

Understanding the fundamentals of project management and its application in sustainable community initiatives. Having basic skills to share project progress and updates with team members and stakeholders.

Level 2

Empowerment Enabler

Knowledge of community concepts, characteristics, and engagement principles; Community mapping and conducting needs assessments for urban regeneration projects; Space and environment mapping; Sustainable development concepts and practices in the context of urban areas; Democratic principles; National policies for urban community building and regeneration. Understanding of local, regional and national political environment; Public-private partnership processes; National policies for urban community building with a focus on regeneration; Goals, principles, and policies of social and political movements linked to community regeneration.

Being able to create projects that involve the community and promote sustainable development in partnership with public and private organizations. Having the skills to understand and map the environment, human activities, and urban planning connections that impact urban regeneration.

Proficiency in detailed project planning, financial and timeline management for successful project implementation.

Level 3

Urban *Regeneration* Specialist

Deep knowledge of: Community concepts, characteristics, and engagement principles; Community mapping and conducting needs assessments for urban regeneration projects; Space and environment mapping; Sustainable development concepts and practices in the context of urban areas; Democratic principles; National policies for urban community building and regeneration; Local, regional and national political environment; Public-private partnership processes; National policies for urban community building with a focus on regeneration; Goals, principles, and policies of social and political movements linked to community regeneration.

Creating and putting into action plans that involve the whole community, focusing on sustainable projects with noticeable positive changes. Capable of developing and applying strategies that encourage collaboration and collective decision-making among community members. Skilled at incorporating RegenerAction values into urban planning and design. Able to implement sustainable development guidelines and propose community and urban development policies.

Demonstrating strong management and leadership in fostering collective ownership and driving collaborative efforts. Able to handle changes and use strategies to keep the project on track, even with uncertainties.

2) Being Human and Digital

CREATIVITY

CRITICAL THINKING

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

FACILITATION OF COLLABORATION

INFORMATION INTERPRETATION

RESPONSIBLE DECISION-MAKING

OPEN AND FLEXIBLE LEADERSHIP

DIGITAL



Level 1

Community Catalyst

Open-mindedness to explore new ideas.

Analytical skills to assess information.

Ability to listen and understand diverse perspectives.

Supporting teamwork and collective participation.

Data analysis to draw insights.

Uses discernment and wise judgment to make well-informed decisions.

Ability to adapt to changes, being open to new ideas and perspectives. Ability to show initiative and take on responsibilities willingly. To involve group members in decision-making, always seeking their input and collaboration.

Using digital tools to interact, communicate, and collaborate with diverse people. Participating in public and private digital services to engage in citizenship efforts. Identifying basic needs and challenges in digital environments and helping to solve them.

Level 2

Empowerment Enabler

Ability in generating innovative, creative solutions.

Problem-solving to address challenge.

Ability to negotiate effectively .

Facilitating effective collaboration among diverse stakeholders.

Research skills to gather relevant information.

Ability to evaluate options for informed choices.

Ability to adjust plans and approaches when facing unforeseen challenges. Capacity to foster successful collaboration by promoting collective goal-setting, encouraging contributions from everyone, and effectively managing teams.

Using digital tools to solve problems and improve community engagement and regeneration projects. Ability to find and use digital resources to support sustainable urban development. Participating in society and involving the community through impactful digital projects. Staying updated on the changing digital world and using digital advancements in regeneration projects.

Level 3

Urban *Regeneration* Specialist

Visionary thinking to shape future possibilities.

Strategic decision-making for complex situations.

Persuasive dialogue to influence positive change.

Empowering and orchestrating collaborative efforts for impactful outcomes.

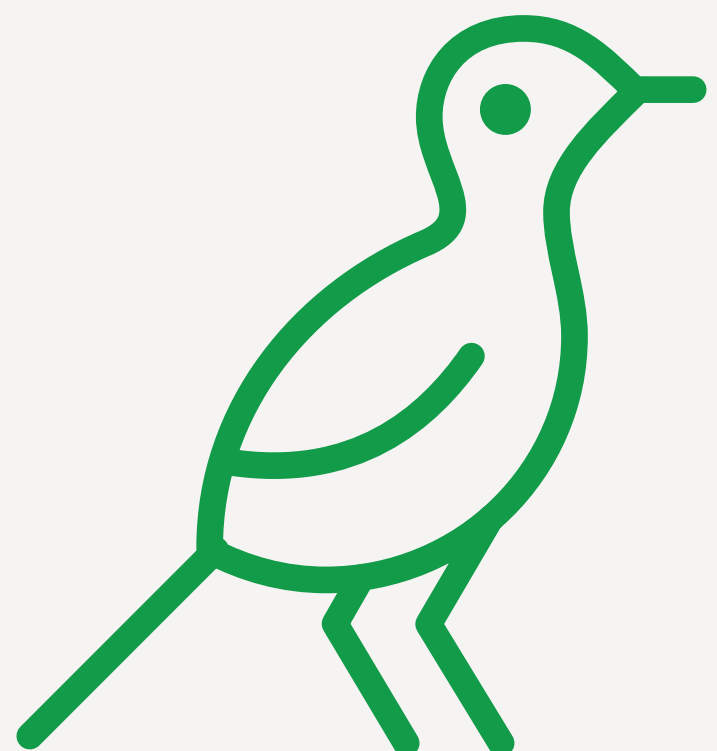
Synthesis and integration of data.

Ability to be proactive in decision-making to drive progress.

Ability to embrace change and to easily adapt to various situations. To inspire and empower others, encouraging active participation in the decision-making process.

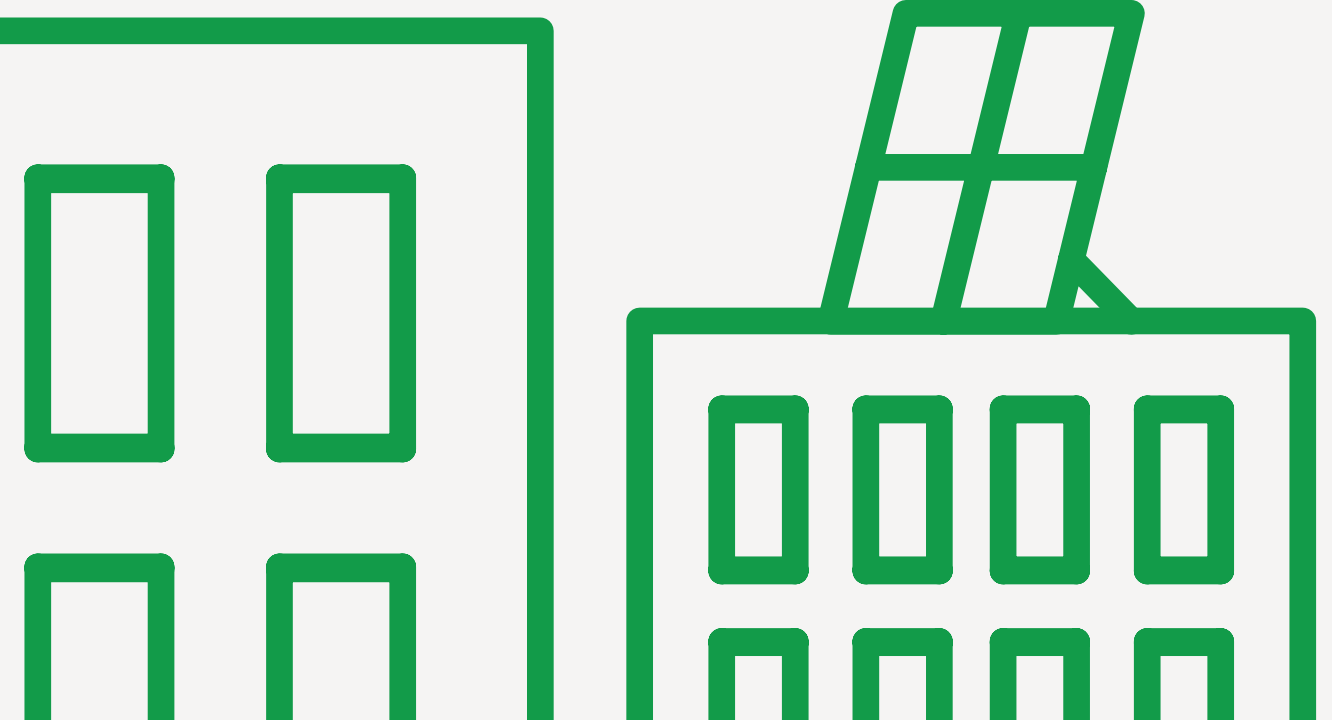
Incorporating digital tools and technology to encourage creativity and innovation, as well as pioneering in sustainable urban development. Being a role model in digital communication and collaboration for social change and urban regeneration. Mobilizing diverse stakeholders through digital platforms for community involvement. Using online presence to advocate for progressive policies and sustainable development.

3) Nurturing Personal Growth



- REFLECTIVE PRACTICE
- SELF-AWARENESS
- RESPONSIBILITY FOR BEHAVIOR
- CONTINUOUS LEARNING

4) Transformative Regeneration



Level 1 Community Catalyst	Level 2 Empowerment Enabler	Level 3 Urban <i>Regeneration</i> Specialist
Ability to engage in self-evaluation.	Analyzing experiences for insights.	Ability to integrate feedback and experiences for continuous improvement.
Ability to recognize personal strenghts and weaknesses.	Ability to identify areas for personal growth and development.	Embracing personal development opportunities.
Demonstrating accountability for actions.	Ability to take ownership of the impact of one's actions .	Ability to lead by example and taking responsibility for others.
Demonstrating curiosity and willingness to learn.	Actively seeking new knowledge and skills.	Promoting a culture of learning and growth within the community.
Understanding the importance of checking and assessing the reuslts of community engagement efforts.	Using data to make decisions and promote positive social change. Being focused on achieving results, working as a team.	Creating long-lasting positive effects an actively working to improve policies that benefit the community's well-being.
Being aware of how regeneration projects can lead to positive changes in society.	Ability to measure and evaluate the impact of community-led projects to improve continuously and achieve lasting results.	Helping the community grow stronger and more self-reliant by providing resources, training, and opportunities to develop skills.
Ability to use community empowerment strategies to encourage people to participate and make decisions together.	Understanding the importance of empowering the community, helping them grow, and involving them in decision-making.	Building relationships with influential people and decision-makers to speak up for the community's needs.
Recognizing the role of community empowerment and engagement in promoting a sustainable and resilient environment in urban areas.	Aligning community engagement efforts with the goals of social and political movements to create positive social change.	Understanding advocacy and lobbying methods to influence local and regional policies. Taking part in lobbying efforts to shape urban development decisions and promote fairness and sustainability.
	Recognizing the role of community empowerment and engagement in promoting a sustainable and resilient environment in urban areas.	Promoting sustainable urban development policies and practices at the local, regional, and national levels.

