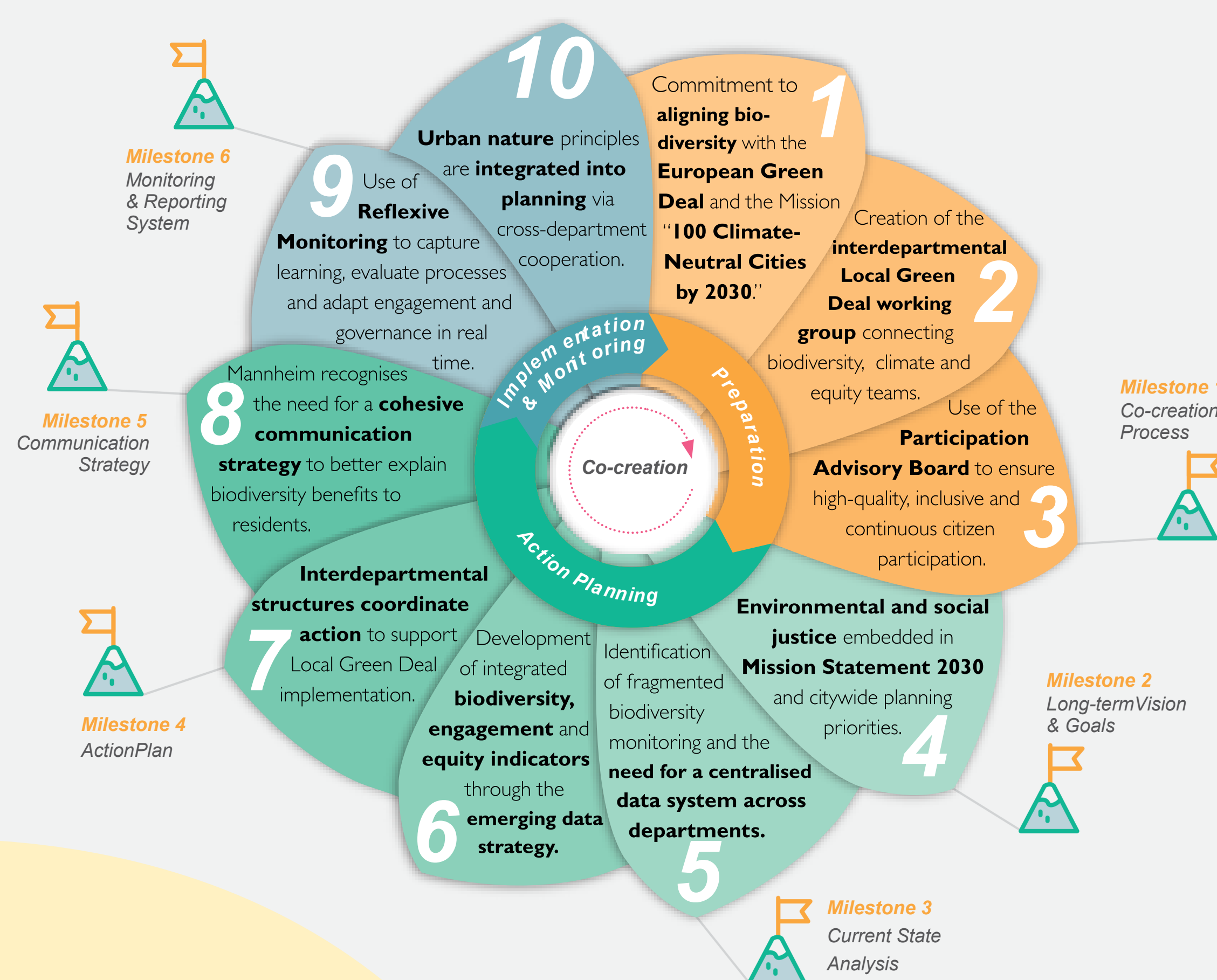


UNP+ Case Study: Mannheim

How Mannheim aligns social justice, climate action and biodiversity in its Urban Nature Planning

As a UNP+ **Greening City**, Mannheim is building a **strong foundation for integrating nature** into all areas of urban life. Known for its progressive local governance and innovation networks, Mannheim **strives to balance economic growth, housing development and biodiversity enhancement**. Through partnerships, inclusive engagement and cross-departmental cooperation, the city demonstrates how environmental and social goals can reinforce one another.



Challenges

Conflicting land-use objectives: Mannheim faces tensions between the need for public spaces for events and the desire for greener, more natural urban areas. As a major transport hub with dense development, it must carefully balance land use between housing, industry, infrastructure and green space

Fragmented monitoring systems: Biodiversity data collection is dispersed across different departments. While the city monitors air, soil and trees effectively, there is no central species registry, making it difficult to assess ecosystem trends.

Engagement fatigue: Sustaining citizen participation over time is challenging. Many residents are keen to support one-off projects but struggle to commit to long-term engagement or maintenance activities.

Communication and expectation gaps: Without cohesive, citywide messaging, residents often lack clarity on why management practices differ - for example, long grass for biodiversity versus short grass for safety - which can create confusion and misaligned expectations.

Enabling Factors

- **Local Green Deal working group:** To break down silos, Mannheim created an **interdepartmental working group** focused on implementing the **European Green Deal** and the **EU Mission "100 Climate-Neutral Cities by 2030"**. This structure **encourages collaboration between departments** on biodiversity, climate and equity.
- **Justice-centred governance:** Biodiversity is explicitly linked with social and environmental justice in the **Mission Statement 2030**.
- Mannheim recognises the **importance of data** and is **developing a comprehensive data strategy** to improve the coordination and accessibility of environmental information.
- A permanent **Participation Advisory Board** plus **reflexive monitoring** processes **strengthen inclusive engagement** over time.

Good Practices

- **Institutionalised participation:** Mannheim embeds co-creation throughout its planning cycle - from the design of public spaces to long-term maintenance and governance.
- **Interdepartmental cooperation:** Departments work closely together to align technical planning (e.g. infrastructure, housing) with ecological priorities, ensuring green and grey infrastructure evolve hand in hand.
- **Data-driven management:** By improving data consistency and accessibility, Mannheim aims to make environmental monitoring a shared resource that informs all departments.
- **Balancing green and social priorities:** The city's approach demonstrates that biodiversity initiatives can advance social justice, climate resilience and quality of life simultaneously.

Key Learnings

- Strong **interdepartmental structures** are **key** to aligning diverse policy goals.
- **Citizen participation** should be **continuous**, not one-off.
- A **unified data system** supports **smarter decision-making** and accountability.
- **Urban nature planning** succeeds when **environmental and social justice** go hand in hand.