

# *Nature in the City*

*EDEN Engagement: Amsterdam  
Seed City Curriculum  
Lisa van der Weij*

**MARCH - APRIL 2022**



International Teaching Artists Collaborative (ITAC)  
and  
Joyce DiDonato's

## EDEN ENGAGEMENT

### ABOUT

Three-time Grammy Award winning opera superstar Joyce DiDonato has created the global tour of EDEN, her major concert hall performance about environmentalism. Her personal commitment and partnership with ITAC has launched a re-imagining of the impact of a concert experience through teaching artist-led workshops in every city. The International Teaching Artists Collaborative (ITAC) is the world-wide network of artists who work in community and educational settings, who have the skills to bring change to communities. Together ITAC and EDEN Engagement will pilot a new approach to prove that touring can be a legitimate and powerful tool for change in communities.

Cities on the tour are designated either "Root Cities" or "Seed Cities". Seed Cities are a 1-4 day(s) event that engages the youth with one of three specific environmental issues; Urban Gardens, Urban Trees, Food Choices:

- Urban Gardens: They are youth-friendly. Among many social benefits, they bring these environmental benefits: reduce carbon use (reduced food transport); reduce water runoff; help pollinators; plants absorb CO<sub>2</sub> and pollutants and produce oxygen; health benefits in the food and the community building (reduced stress and blood pressure).
- Urban Trees: Trees are omnipresent and overlooked in cities—kid friendly. They can plant them, and the EDEN performance encourages that. Trees are powerful answers to heat mitigation (reduce temperatures by 8 to 10 degrees and need for air conditioning), carbon and pollution sequestration and oxygen production, water flow pollution reduction, biodiversity, and food insecurity. Health benefits include healthier air, psychological benefits, lowering blood pressure and stress.
- Food Choices: Scientists have proven that small choices make a big difference. Because many foods with a high health burden, including processed meats or red meats, also have high environmental costs, switching out 10 percent of a person's daily caloric intake can cut a person's food-based environmental footprint by over 30 percent. Between growing it, packaging it, moving it around, cooking it, and often wasting it, food production makes up about one-fifth to one-third of all annual greenhouse gas emissions globally. Eat less red and processed meats, eat more veggies and fruits, reduce food waste, and if you have a way...compost.

Teaching Artist: Lisa van der Weij

Duration: 5 days

Where: Amsterdam, Netherlands

Goals: This workshop aims to activate two things in the young participants:

1. Their sense of personal connection to and grasp of the specific environmental issue
2. Their ability to make a difference regarding that issue—their sense of agency



# WORKSHOP 1

## Opening (7 minutes)

- TA sings and plays "Big Yellow Taxi – Joni Mitchell" with the lyrics on a screen so the children can read along.
- After the singing the TA and the children talk about the translation and meaning of the lyrics part and practice the refrain.

*Don't it always seem to go that you don't know what you've got 'till it's gone*

*They paved paradise, put up a parking lot*

*Oo bop, bop, bop, bop*

*Oo bop, bop, bop, bop*

## Welcome (3 minutes)

- TA introduces our goal: Working on our own song about "Nature in the city"
- We will write and sing about why we think nature (trees, gardens, parks, birds, flowers) in our city is important

## Introduce a key question (7 minutes)

- Take two carton papers stuck together; this will become a mood board where the children can collect their ideas and inspiration. This can be anything: Think about ideas written down in text or lyrics, pictures and drawings or items out of nature the children have found

Ask questions to stimulate the children to think about the subject, answers and ideas can be written on the mood board

- Why do we need green area's in our city?
- Why is it important to plant trees and flowers and to take care of them?
- How does it make you feel if you are outside in nature?
- Why is it important to take care of bees and how can we do this in your city?

## Outside activity (20 minutes)

- Go outside to plant the EDEN seeds with the children in the school garden. If children find something they like they can collect it for the mood board.



## Warm-up activities (10 minutes)

- Activities that can help warming-up creativity and musicality.

### Body-percussion

- Start with tapping the legs (not in a rhythm yet); the group will automatically join you. Make a game out of it by introducing silences; the children have to pay attention to when you start tapping again.
- Build this out to clapping your hands, patting your arms, stomping on the floor and making beats on your chest (or anything else you can think of). As you go try to add a very simple beat to the sounds, so in the end the children are making a rhythm together.
- Give a "stop-sign" and introduce a couple of calls; you make a body-percussion and the children imitate you

### 8 count warm-up round

- A warm-up that consists of four parts of 8 counts
- Demonstrate the round and practice the different parts with the children; work non-verbal by showing and inviting the children to join
  - Count to 8 before you start
  - Make circling movements with the shoulders while counting to eight
  - Make sounds with the lips: ff - ff - ssss (two times). Every "ff" is one count, every "ss" is two counts
  - Tap on the legs while saying: "pitte-patte-pitte-patte" (two times). Leg rhythm is the same as spoken rhythm
  - Stomp on the floor; first with your left leg (1 count) and then with your right leg (1 count) and clap your hands while calling: "Hey!" (1 count) Last count is quiet (two times).

### Boom-chicka-boom

- Call & response game; you do the call and the children imitate you.
- After each verse you can think of a new way to do it (in a high voice, in a low voice, very angry/sad/happy, very slow/very fast). Let the children come up with ways to do it.

*I said a boom chicka boom (I said a boom chicka boom)*

*I said a boom chicka boom (I said a boom chicka boom)*

*I said a boom chicka rocka chicka rocka chicka boom (I said a boom chicka rocka chicka chicka boom)*

*Uh huh (uh huh)*

*Oh yeah (oh yeah)*

*One more time (one more time)*

*Whisper style*

### Round and round the earth is turning

- Learning a song with the children in a Dorian Mode, so the children explore their melodic possibilities and inspiration. Can be done as a round.

# Round and Round the Earth is Turning

English folk song



Optional: Start to foster creativity in consisting structures

- Let the children make a body-percussion for the first two sentences of the song and a movement for the last two sentences. Ask them for ideas and put it together on the spot. Keep it simple.

Main activity (10 minutes)

- Children will start to work on their own text in small groups (of 2 children).
- Keep the mood board visible and remind them of their own ideas at the start of the lesson. Keep the key questions somewhere where the children can read them (on a screen or carton) and remind them to think of the questions if they don't know where to start.
- Their ideas can contain lyrics, but if they want also a rhythm or a melody.
- Ideas can be written on small colored papers. When the children are finished they can put their lyrics on the mood board.
- If there are rhythmic and melodic ideas; make sure to record them.

Reflection (5 minutes)

- What did we do today?
- How was it to start writing lyrics out of nothing?
- What are the subjects we discussed that you would like to hear back in our song?

Materials Needed:

- One big colored carton to serve as a mood board
- Pencils
- Smaller colored cartons for the children to write lyrics on and put on the mood board
- A screen on which you can project text, lyrics and questions
- Guitar/piano

# WORKSHOP 2

## Opening (7 minutes)

- TA sings and plays "Big Yellow Taxi – Joni Mitchell" with the lyrics on a screen so the children can read and sing along with what they know.
- After the singing the TA and the children talk about the translation and meaning of the lyrics part and practice the first verse. Sing the whole song again and let the children sing along!

*They paved paradise,  
Put up a parking lot  
With a pink hotel a boutique and a swinging hot spot*

## Welcome (3 minutes)

- TA discusses our goal with the children and reflecting on what we did and wrote last time:  
Working on our own song about "Nature in the city"
- Make sure to make the mood board visible

## Warm-up activities (5 minutes)

- Repeat some of the warm-up activities from the first workshop. If there are children that can take the lead already in parts of the warm-up, let them do so.

## Improvisation circle (15 minutes)

*Exercise to foster creativity and to train how to do something when you don't know where it will lead to*

- Reflecting with the children on how they experienced the "writing-something-out-of-nothing" assignment last workshop. Explain to them that all ideas are welcome.
- Ask if anyone knows what improvisation means, and discuss it with the group. Stress the fact that there is no need to do something that sounds immediately beautiful or that leads to something. We are exploring.

*Work non verbal; don't say anything, just do and make yourself clear with gestures*

- Start by taking the first instrument out of a bag. This can be for example two drumming sticks
- Make a rhythm with them
- The children will probably clap along, if they do so; stimulate that and pick a child that is clapping along to come to the front and take over your instrument
- Let other children (maximum of four) stand behind the one child who is making the rhythm and give them the same instrument (in this case drumming sticks). They are following the one who is in front.
- Make clear that the leader can change or decide to leave the improvisation spot again, the children behind the leader will then put one step forward so there is a new leader that can come up with rhythms
- Make clear that the rhythm can change; it doesn't have to stay the same

- Take a place opposite from the line of drumming stick-children
- Introduce a new rhythmic instrument, for example a shaker
- Make a new rhythm with this through the existing rhythm
- Invite a child that wants to join to make a new rhythm with the shaker
- Follow the same principles: children can join and stand behind the child with the shaker, they will also get their own shaker from you
- The children will probably understand it now; make sure they understand that they can come into the improvisation circle and leave it as they like
- Create two other places like this so you have circle with four leaders in it, behind the leaders there are other children following
- The other two places can consist of a body-percussion place and a singing place; give examples and stimulate the children to join. Keep it very simple! Set the tone with simple and joyful examples.
- If someone in the group has an idea but doesn't take place in the circle yet; stimulate them to try out their ideas in the circle
- Make sure the circle flows as a dynamic moving body

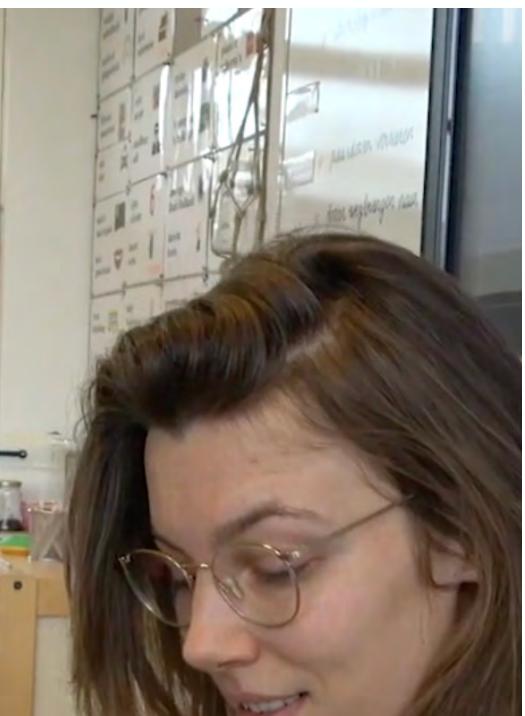
The more the children repeat this activity in the next workshops, the more familiar it will be. If there are rhythmic or melodic ideas that take a shape; record them and remember them for the song!

At the end of the activity you can discuss with the children how it was to make something out of nothing and how it was for them to come up with something; did it go easy? Did it just happen, or had they been thinking about it for a long time?

#### Outside Activity (30 minutes)

- Go for a walk in a city garden or park. Give the children the assignment to think about their lyrics, and come up with ideas. Tell them that you will record and write down their ideas for the next workshop.
- While walking, collect the ideas of the children and record them. The longer they walk the more creative and free they will be!





# WORKSHOP 3

## Opening (7 minutes)

- TA sings and plays "Big Yellow Taxi – Joni Mitchell" with the lyrics on a screen so the children can read along.
- It is time to practice the second verse! Discuss the lyrics of this verse and let the children sing along!

*They took all the trees, put them in a tree museum  
And they charged the people a dollar and a half just to see 'em*

## Reflection on last time (3 minutes)

- Talk with the children about what we did last time (improvisation circle and collecting lyrics).
- Today we will start making our own song come to life.

## Warm-up (5 min)

- Repeat some of the warm-ups from the first workshop

## Improvisation circle (10 minutes)

- Repeat the activity from last time and make sure to remember or record new or existing rhythms and ideas
- Reflect on the improvisation part; how was it this time to start improvising? How did you feel about bringing in your own ideas? Stress the fact that nothing is right or wrong. There is room for all of our ideas.

## Seeing and reading their own ideas and creating a refrain out of that (7 minutes)

- Project the ideas and lyrics of the children from last time on the screen and go through it with them
- Make a refrain out of this; trust that the children will come with ideas!
- If it helps you can come up with a very simple chord progression or multiple chord progressions the children can choose from.

Collect the ideas and make a refrain out of it; it can be as simple or as complex as the children and you like!

## Divide the different parts of the song (5 minutes)

- Make groups in which the children will work, depending on how many children are in the group and their interests. Here you can find an example:
  - Verse 1
  - Verse 2
  - Rap
  - Rap

- Make sure to put on the screen the division and the subjects the children will write about.
- Here is an example of what came out of the children in Amsterdam and how the TA divided it:

*Verse 1: Sing about how nature makes us feel*

*Sentences the children already came up with written down: nature makes me feel alive, nature is so beautiful, if we are outside together in nature we are very happy*

*Verse 2: Sing about the things we are worried about concerning nature*

*Sentences the children already came up with written down: Plastics in the oceans cause the fish to die, air pollution because of cars, trees have a right to live*

*Rap(s): Rapping about what we and others can do to help nature*

*Sentences the children already came up with written down: more money from the government, nature-influencers, cutting less trees, more nature, more bees, recycling*

- The children will write a minimum of four sentences, but let them be free in this. It will eventually come together.

Working together in groups on verses and raps (25 minutes)

- Set a time alarm of 20 minutes and let the children work in their groups. Come work with them with a guitar or invite them to the piano to test their ideas and record their ideas.
- Keep a simple chord scheme that you work with, you can always still adjust it later on, but for now it gives the children something to work on. You can play a recorded version of this during their working or play it for them if you stop by the groups.
- Make sure the children practice their ideas so they can show it to the others.

Presenting ideas (10 minutes)

- Collect the groups and play the chord progression, they will all sing and rap what they worked on.

Materials Needed:

- The mood board from last workshops
- Small percussion instruments; like shakers, drumming sticks, woodblocks or even items out of nature that can make a sound (in autumn for example fallen leaves, chestnuts). At least four from each instrument
- A screen on which you can project text, lyrics and questions
- The ideas of the children you collected last time written out; write down all the sentences and lyrics they came up with while walking on a screen/powerpoint/carton
- A division of the ideas the children came up with into different verses and raps (you can see an example in "divide the different parts of the song")
- Guitar/piano



# WORKSHOP 4

Opening (7 minutes)

- TA sings and plays "Big Yellow Taxi – Joni Mitchell" with the lyrics on a screen so the children can read along.
- Practice the third verse and sing the song with the group!

*Hey farmer, farmer, put away that DDT now  
Give me spots on my apples, but leave me the birds and the bees, please!*

Warm-up (5 min)

- Repeat some of the warm-ups from the first workshop

Reflection on last time (3 minutes)

- Talk with the children about what we did last time (improvisation circle and collecting lyrics).
- Today we will start making our own song come to life.

Singing the song with the children (10 minutes)

- Sing the song the children made with them; make sure the lyrics are projected on a screen so they can sing along.
- Probably the children will come up with new ideas or changes; make room for this so the last adjustments can be done.

Working in groups (15 minutes)

- Let the children work in their groups again to finish and practice their own parts.
- Invite them to also come up with a rhythm, this can be either with the instruments or with a body-percussion. They might have come up with this already.

Singing the song together and practicing rhythms and finishing touches (10 minutes)

- Collect the groups and practice the different parts with everyone. The children can demonstrate their parts to the others and help them with learning their parts. Do the same with the rhythms.
- Be creative! Maybe there are parts that can be combined or can sound at the same time, or maybe there are parts where there is only a rhythm or a body movement. Try this and try the ideas that come out of the children.

Reflection (5 min)

- Reflect on the creative process and how it was to make something out of nothing.

Materials Needed:

- The mood board from last workshops
- Small percussion instruments; like shakers, drumming sticks, woodblocks or even items out of nature that can make a sound (in autumn for example fallen leaves, chestnuts). At least four from each instrument
- A screen on which you can project text, lyrics and questions
- The song lyrics the children made last time projected on a screen/carton
- Guitar/piano

# WORKSHOP 5

## Opening (7 minutes)

- TA sings and plays "Big Yellow Taxi - Joni Mitchell" with the lyrics on a screen so the children can read along.
- Practice the rest of the song and sing the whole song with the group.

## Warm-up (5 min)

- Repeat some of the warm-ups from the first workshop

## Song practice (10 minutes)

- Do the last song practice with the children; are they happy with everything?
- Make sure you have their adjusted lyrics and shapes of the song projected on a screen.

## Recording the song (20 minutes)

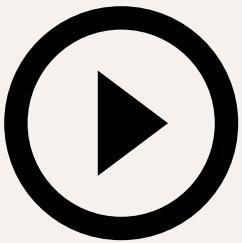
- Record the song; if you have more time and the right gear you can also choose to make a recording with a microphone in which groups of children sing their parts and you mix the end results and send it to the children.
- Otherwise you can make a video-recording of the song.

## Reflecting on the process and goodbye (10 minutes)

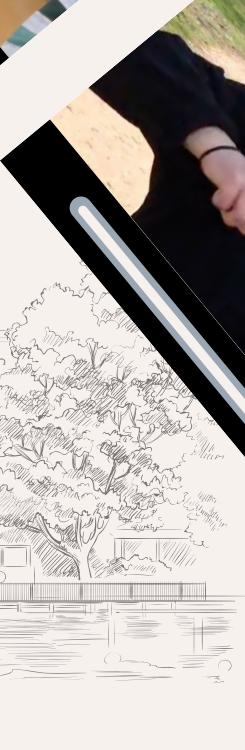
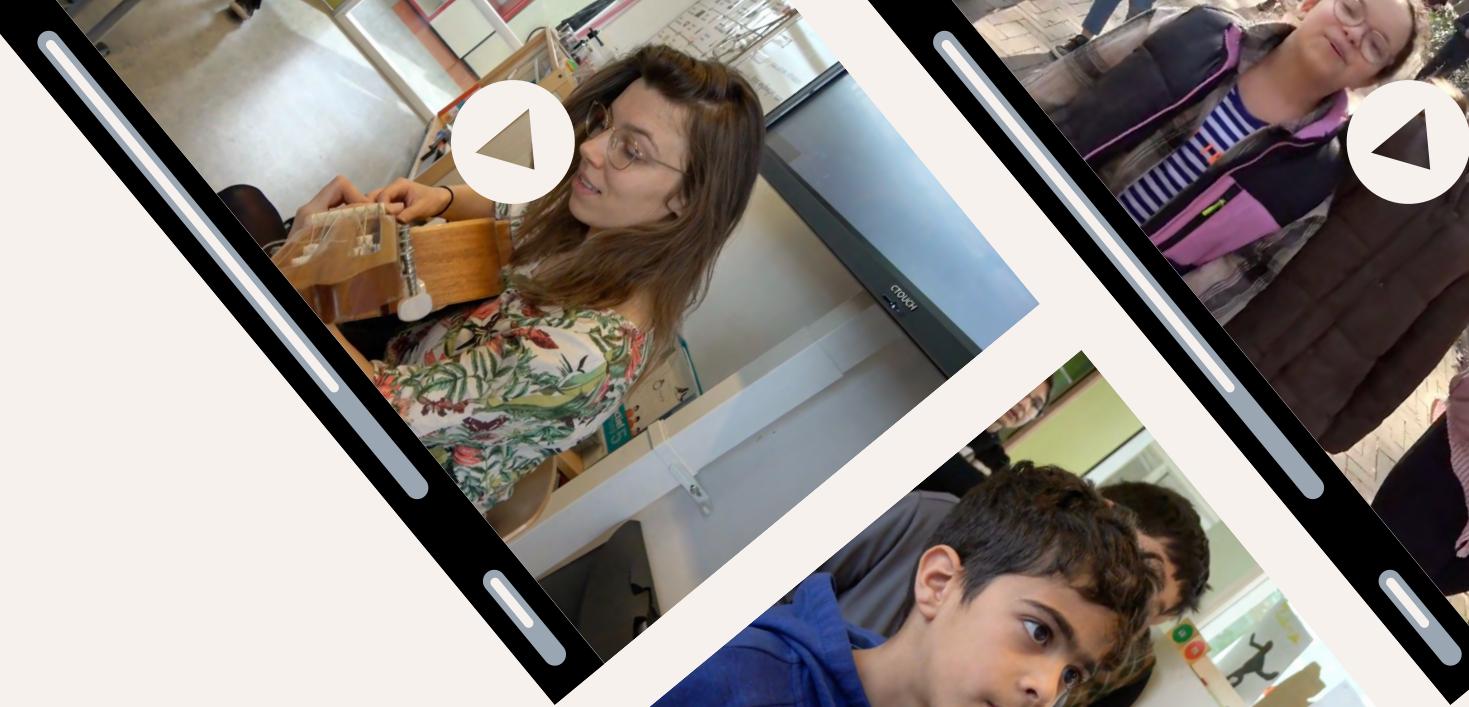
- Discuss the process of making something out of nothing; the growing of our own song like a little seed to a full grown flower.



*Amsterdam*



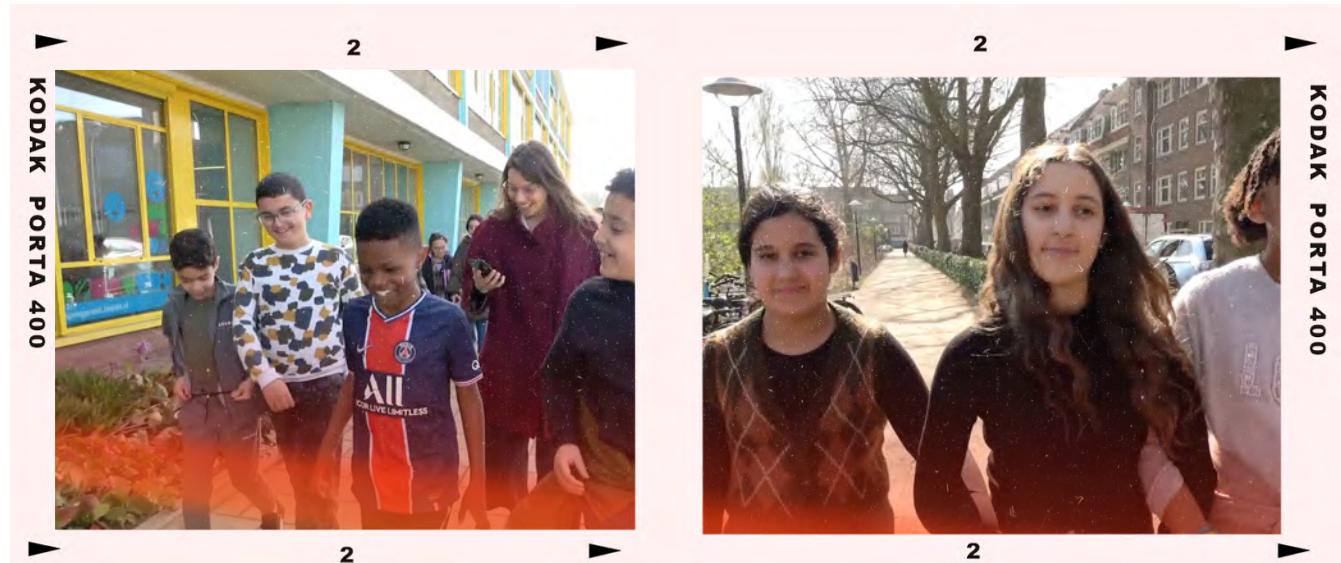
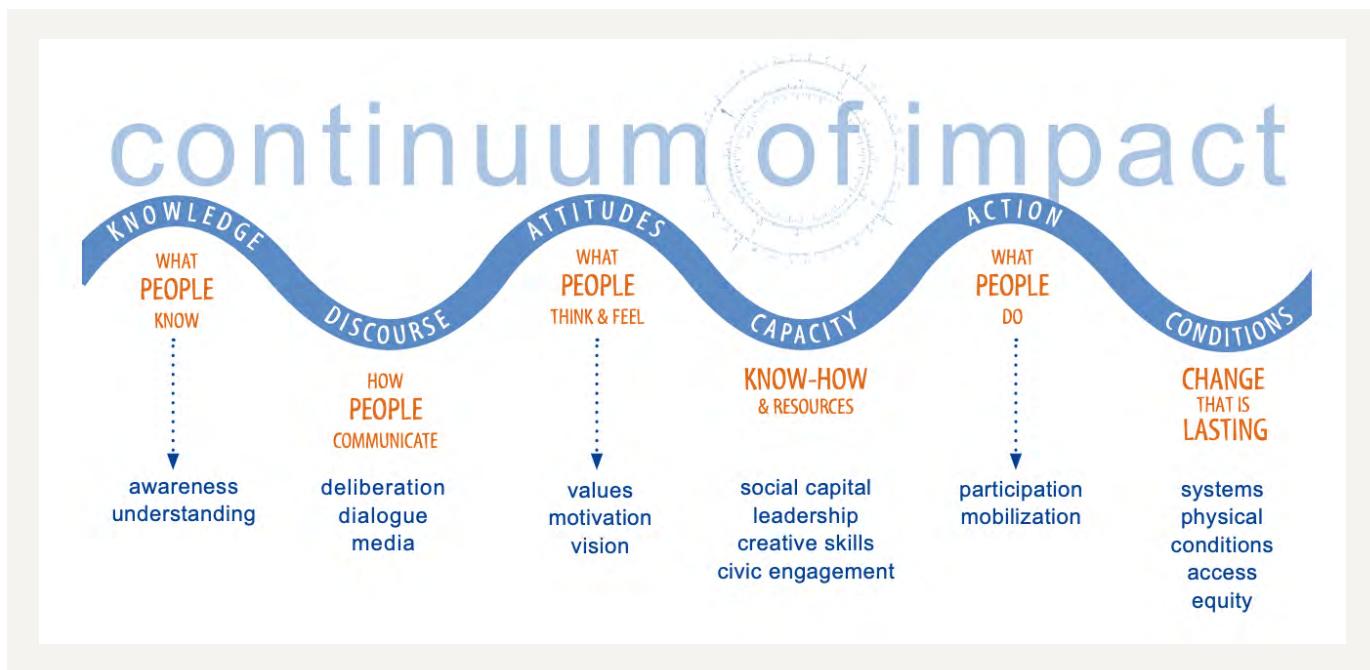
Watch  
the  
Video



# IMPACT & EVALUATION

The goal of this effort is to learn about the impact that the activities have on participants. We are especially curious to learn if there is any evidence that they have the impulse to take action and/or feel they can make a difference—this is the high goal of the arts-for-climate field, and we believe teaching artists have a particularly strong contribution to the field.

During the EDEN project, teaching artists were encouraged to use the [Continuum of Impact Guide](#) as a model when thinking about impact and assessment in their workshops.





*"I was inspired by the format and ideas for the workshops and also by the EDEN song, this made me come up with the workshop idea, a workshop I can now also use with other groups of participants."*

# REFLECTIONS FROM THE TEACHING ARTIST

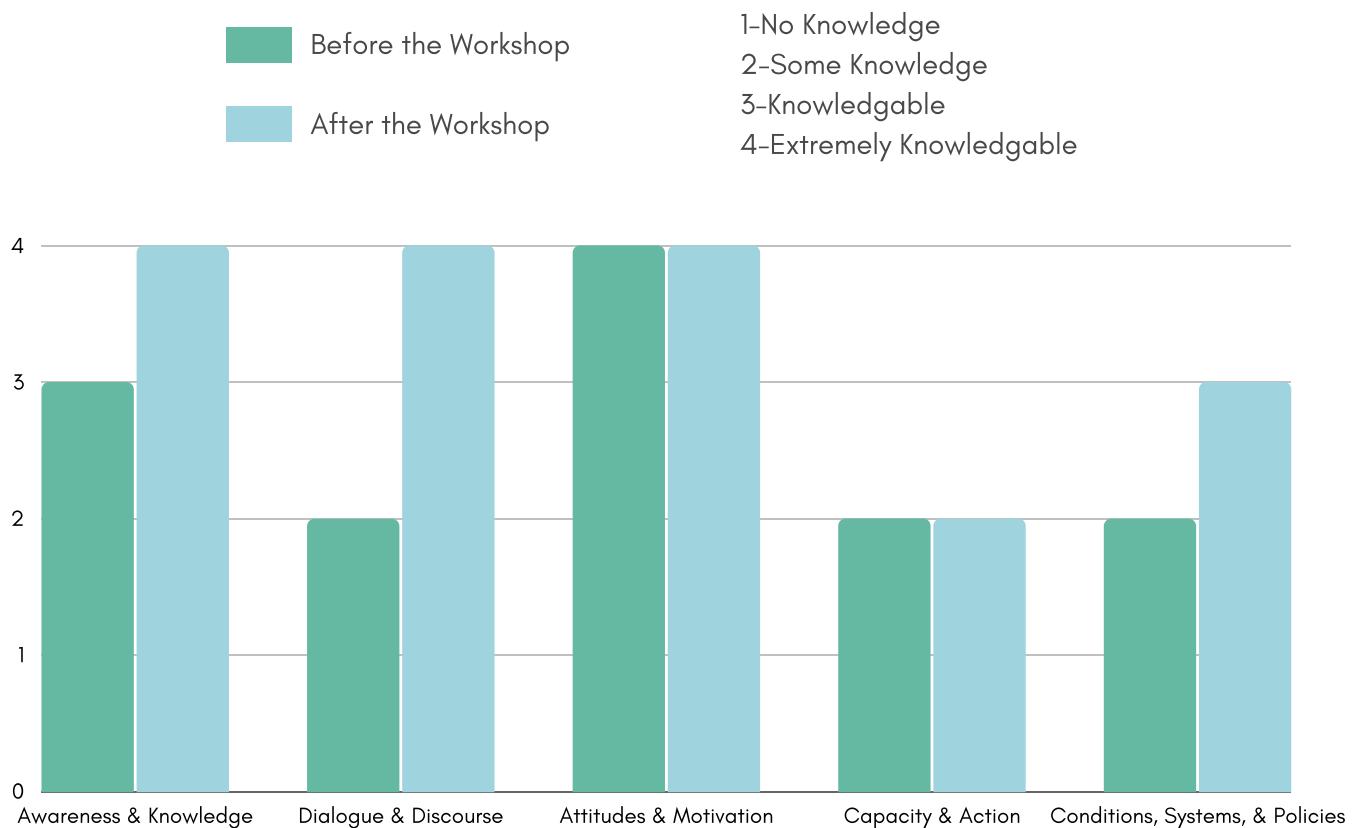
In what ways did you observe change in your participants understanding and engagement of the environmental issue you chose?

*"Participants were actively reflecting and engaging in the environmental issue and came up with ways in which we can save nature"*

What challenges did you face in creating and facilitating your workshop?

*"The fact that we had little time every workshop made it a bit challenging. The school was very busy even though the teachers really fought for the workshop time. The ending workshop was in a really busy time for the children (Ramadan and Easter time with a very full school schedule), so I saw their energy declining a little bit. This was too bad because the workshop before they were so full of energy. But of course this is something that's part of life :)"*

We tasked each teaching artist with evaluating their students based on the Continuum of Impact Guide. They rated their students on a scale from 1 (no knowledge of the subject) to 4 (extremely knowledgeable about the subject). The following graph reflects Natalie's observations of her students.



# ABOUT THE TEACHING ARTIST



## **LISA VAN DER WEIJ**

Lisa van der Weij is a music teacher, singer and choir director from Amsterdam. She graduated from the Conservatory of Amsterdam in the year of 2019 and has since then been working with many groups of children and adults. She has her own choir "Het Batjan Koor", gives singing lessons and works as a primary school music teacher. Lisa has a broad musical interest which ranges from classical music and pop- and jazz to folk - and World music. Next to singing Lisa also plays the French horn and composes and arranges music.



# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Choir  
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Education Partners  
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Concert Venue  
Concertgebouw

