



# CO-SHAPE

## CO-SHaping Areas in Peri-urban Environments

### AARHUS, DENMARK

#### Emissions domains addressed by the Pilot Activity



Consumption of non-electricity energy for thermal uses in buildings & facilities



Land use (agriculture, forestry & other land uses)



Consumption of electricity generated for buildings, facilities & infrastructure

#### Key Terms

Energy symbiosis | Sector coupling | Co-creation | Peri-urban planning | Comprehensive planning | Industrial symbiosis | Landscape governance

#### Levers of Change

Democracy and participation | Governance and policy | Learning and capabilities

#### Description of the Pilot Activity

As cities expand into peri-urban areas, balancing renewable energy deployment with local liveability becomes increasingly urgent. CO-SHAPE develops a co-creation model for planning Energy Park Spørring — a 1,000 ha site integrating solar, biogas, biochar, and sustainable agriculture. By involving communities, developers, and planners from the start, Aarhus aims to pioneer inclusive governance and landscape-based climate solutions replicable across similar regions.

Year 1 delivered both engagement and institutional transformation. Over 10 public activities mobilised residents to co-develop visions for the Energy Park, including a landmark visioning event with over 100 participants from local communities, businesses, and city agencies. But the deeper achievement was elevating the Comprehensive Planning methodology from a pilot approach to a core method in Aarhus' 2026 Municipal Plan — meaning the governance innovation will outlast the project. When private developers withdrew due to energy market volatility, the city pivoted to institutional readiness.

#### Year One Highlights

CO-SHAPE's most significant early achievement was institutional: the Comprehensive Planning methodology developed through the project was adopted as a core method in Aarhus' 2026 Municipal Plan, embedding a pilot approach into permanent municipal practice before the project has even concluded. The spatial planning team was brought into the project's core group, signalling a genuine governance shift rather than a token policy reference.

On the ground, over 10 public engagement activities have been held since January 2025, including a landmark visioning event that drew over 100 participants from local communities, businesses, developers, and city agencies. The biogas plant became operational, anchoring the energy park concept. When two private developers withdrew due to energy market volatility, the city continued spatial planning work to keep the area development-ready — a pragmatic response that demonstrates the value of separating planning progress from market conditions. A 3D digital model incorporating citizen input was developed to make complex planning trade-offs visible to residents.

#### Innovation Highlights

The landscape scenario method — a collaboration between Aarhus School of Architecture, the municipality, and citizens — produced visual and narrative scenarios that made abstract energy planning decisions tangible and discussable for non-expert residents. More broadly, CO-SHAPE illustrates how pilot projects can generate governance infrastructure rather than just outputs: the planning methodology now belongs to the city, not the project.

#### Twinning with Cascais (Portugal)

A physical exchange visit (May 2025) focused on climate strategy, circularity, and citizen co-creation. Cascais' cultural and community-centred approach to climate action provided relevant insights for Aarhus' own community engagement ambitions.

