

# BUILD

B I L B A O  
URBAN · INNOVATION  
LEADERSHIP · DIALOGUES

## BREAKOUT BRIEF



### Session Information

#### Speakers & Facilitators

Matthew Freeman,  
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## Dialogue for Change: Talking about Equity and Inclusion

It takes active engagement and leadership to change the framework of equity and inclusion policy at a local level. In this session, participants from Europe and North America enhanced and altered their interpretations of how to define equity, inclusion, and equality, which led to an open discussion on how to best approach these issues in each participant's community. The participants became not only aware of their own misconceptions and notions of race, ethnicity, and identity, but also how enmeshed these cultural and political tropes can be in equity and inclusion policy outcomes. As participants actively examined these policy issues in small peer groups during the session, many of their observed notions of race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and nationality evolved and shifted based on engagement with their peers. By breaking down these invisible socially constructed barriers, participants began to solidly identify how to better engage their communities to create more equitable and inclusive cities.

### Key Takeaways

- Global engagement on these very difficult and delicate issues creates mutual understanding across borders and enables learning. Many barriers can be broken down for the individual by creating mutual understanding and safe spaces to discuss challenges.
- While breaking down barriers and reversing mindsets on these issues within communities takes time, trust, and leadership, cases like Richmond, Amsterdam, Atlanta, and Eindhoven illustrate that change occurs through engagement.
- Creating inclusive and equitable cities is a constant and slow-moving process at times. When cities become more diverse, the level of trust within those communities begins to break down. Understanding these challenges and mitigating for them is important when leading change.
- Definitions of equity and inclusion are not static from one neighborhood, city, or country to the next. Therefore, engaging with citizens and understanding their hopes and fears is vital for the health of the community.

### Things to Think About

- Frame conversations to stakeholders in a way that makes sense to them helps to create support and buy-in.
- Equality and equity are not the same. Equality means that everyone has the same thing; equity means that everyone has what they need. Defining and explaining these differences is important when engaging your stakeholders.
- Leadership is necessary to reshape a community's perceptions around equity and inclusion. You can lead the change that you want to see in your city.
- Europe and the United States are rapidly becoming more diverse; statistically, diversity fuels conflict. Be aware that creating dialogues in high-risk areas and fostering understanding can help to alleviate tensions and misconceptions.

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