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Why Cooperation Matters

Storytelling for City Stakeholders

EU Cities Gateway Community webinar
5 October 2026

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Welcome - who is in the room?

1. **Type your city and country in the chat**

2. **Tell us which programme you are joining from**

3. **Live transcription in French or Spanish is available**
   Zoom controls: Show captions / Afficher les sous-titres.

A first for the Community

This is the first EU Cities Gateway activity open to the whole Community — across all four thematic clusters and across programmes.

Colleagues from IURC Latin America and IURC Asia-Australasia are with us today.

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Agenda

17:00	**Welcome and opening** EU Cities Gateway and the Community
17:10	**The power of storytelling** Why stories work, and three structures you can reuse
17:25	**Three cooperation stories** Hamburg · Atlanta · St. John's
18:10	**Questions and discussion** Shared lessons and practical recommendations
18:30	**Recommendations and close** Takeaways, resources and follow-up

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The Power of Storytelling

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What will you remember tomorrow?

“I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.”

Maya Angelou

✗ **Probably not the statistics**

✗ **Probably not even our names**

✓ **But the stories**
— and how they made you feel.

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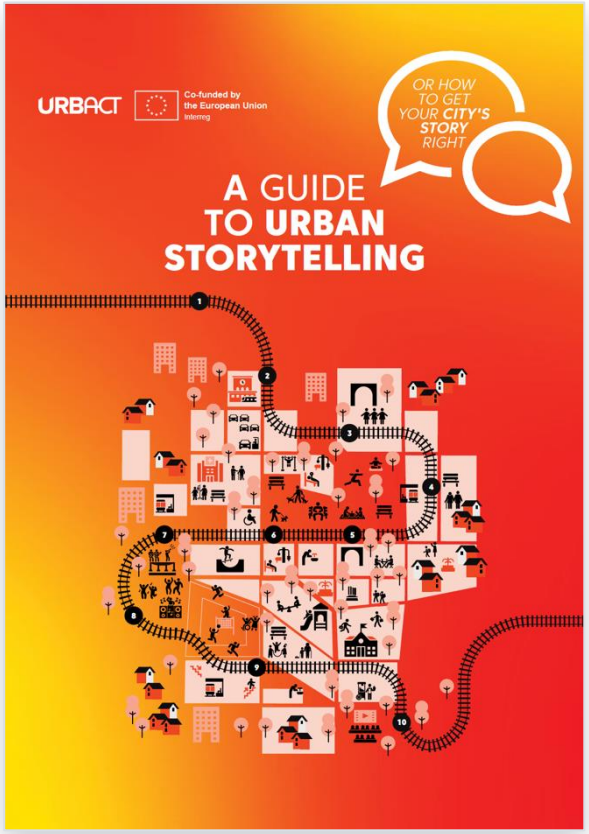
FROM THE URBACT GUIDE

Why stories work for cities



1 **Plans alone rarely move people**
Strategies, data and technical language do not change minds on their own.

2 **A story carries the essentials**
What is changing, why it matters, and who is part of it.

3 **Stories travel**
Between departments, with partners, with residents and elected officials.

4 **Not only for communications people**
Anyone who wants to change how something is understood can use it.

Source: URBACT (2026), A guide to urban storytelling, https://urbact.eu/knowledge-hub/storytelling

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KEY CONCEPTS OF URBAN STORYTELLING

Three ways to work with a city's story

Storymaking

Make meaning together

Co-creating a shared meaning with residents and local groups.

Storytelling

Say it clearly

Communicating clear, structured messages, free of technical and administrative jargon.

Storydoing

Bring it to life

Embodying the narrative through hands-on experiences, critical walks or performative tours.

Source: URBACT (2026), A guide to urban storytelling, Paris.

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FROM OUR DIGITALISATION CLUSTER

Storytelling is how culture changes

> *"It's a lot to do with storytelling — that's how you change culture: solve an achievable problem, and then tell everybody about it."*
>
> Kris Andreychuk, City of Edmonton

The point of telling it

"The goal is not to brag about your work. The goal is to tell a story in such a way that other people can see themselves reflected in it."

~80
AI applications deployed today

5 → 9
Data scientists in the shared team

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BEFORE YOU WRITE A WORD

Start with purpose, then audience

Purpose	Audience	Message
What do I want people to think, feel or do afterwards?	What do they already hear, believe and need?	What is my one message, and what proof supports it?

A story without a purpose is an anecdote. A purpose without a story is a memo.

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Story Structures

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WHERE STORY STRUCTURE COMES FROM

From Aristotle to the stage

Aristotle, Poetics (c. 335 BC)

"A whole is that which has a beginning, a middle and an end."

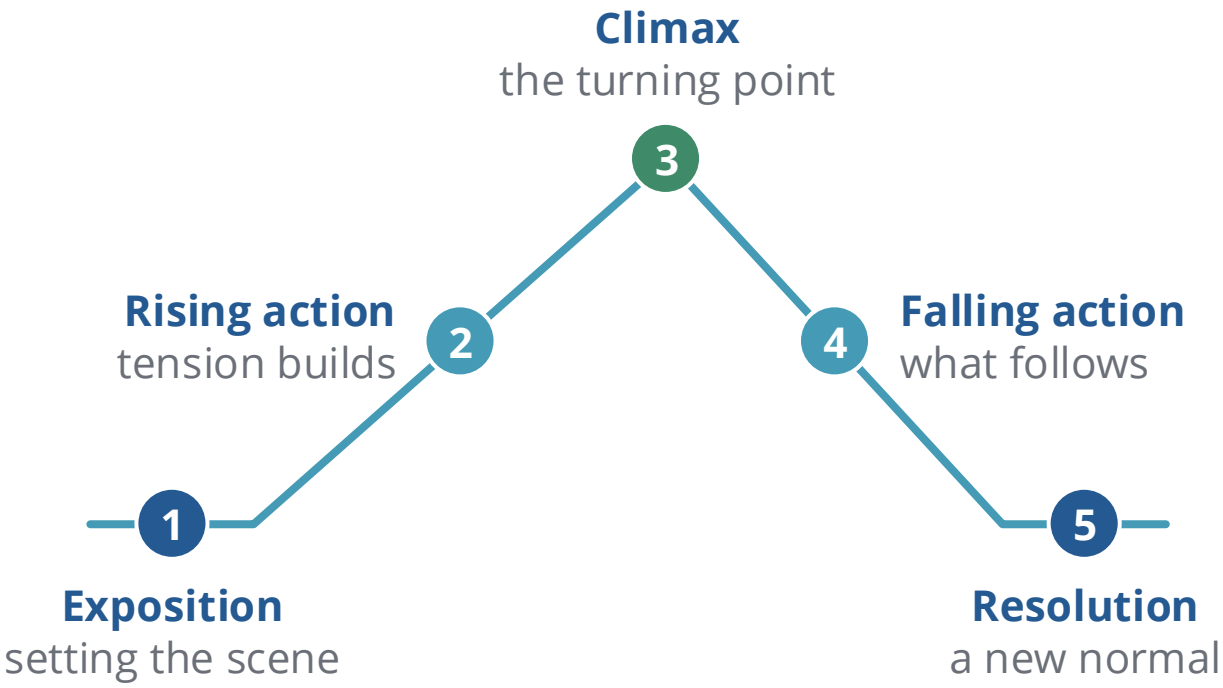
Reversal: the moment fortune turns

Recognition: from not knowing to knowing

Catharsis: the audience feels it, too

Every structure that follows is a variation on this shape.

Freytag's pyramid (1863)



Sources: Aristotle, Poetics, ch. 7 (c. 335 BC), trans. S. H. Butcher; Gustav Freytag, Die Technik des Dramas, Leipzig, 1863.

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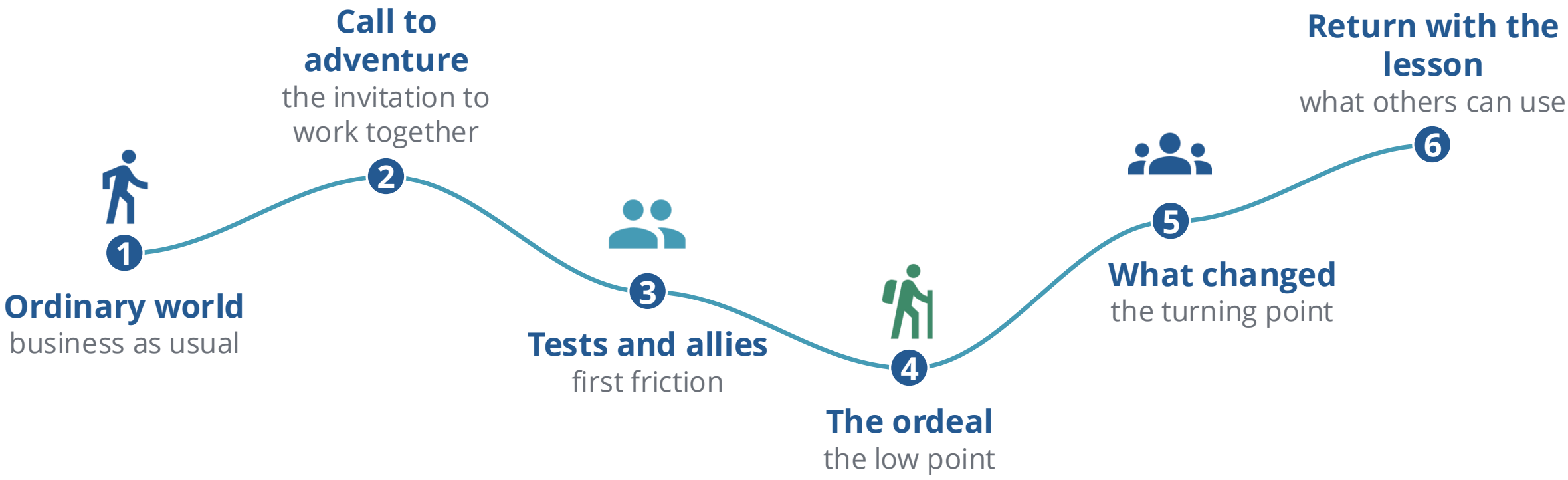
STRUCTURE 1

The Hero's Journey

In cooperation the hero is rarely one city — it is the partnership.



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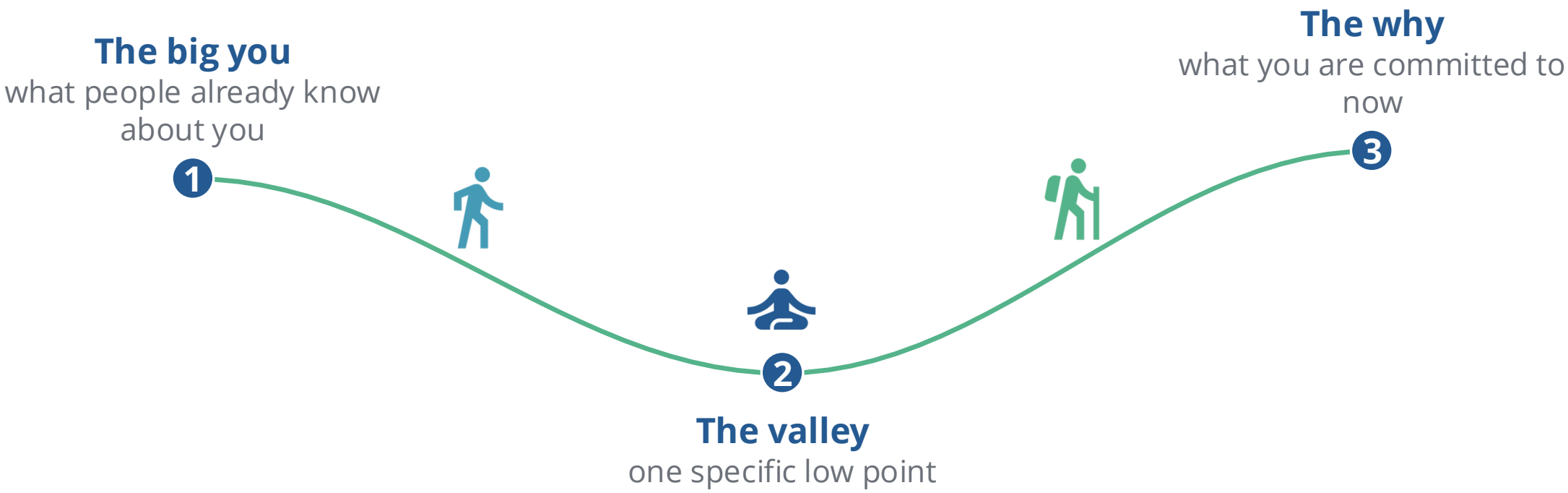
STRUCTURE 2

The Valley (by Lisa Nichols)

Short, personal and honest — three beats, one turning point.



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STRUCTURE 3

Problem and solution

The shape institutions use most: briefings, project reports, funding pitches.

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Not every story is a success story

1. **The detours are what people remember**
   Mismatched pairings, slow progress, misunderstandings along the way.
2. **The frame matters**
   Not failures, but steps towards understanding and better choices.
3. **Lessons travel further than success stories**
   They are the part another city can actually use.

What you are about to hear

Three speakers who talk openly about the parts of cooperation that did not go in a straight line — and what came out of them.

Listen for the turning point in each story.

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COMING UP

Three cooperation stories

Hamburg

Thomas Jacob — six intercontinental partnerships for the City of Hamburg, now EU Cities Gateway Digital Cluster Coordinator.

From matchmaking to sustainable partnerships

Atlanta

Colin Delargy — Assistant Director for Strategy, Housing Innovation Lab, City of Atlanta.

How cooperation brings better results

St. John's and Braga

Edmundo Fausto — Manager, Parks and Sustainability, City of St. John's.

From unlikely match to lasting partnership

What to listen for: Where was the turning point? · What surprised them? · What would they do differently?

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Thank you

Join the EU Cities Gateway Community

- Webinars, masterclasses and thematic exchanges
- Peers across the Atlantic working on similar challenges
- Updates, resources and event summaries

Sign up: eucg.iurc.eu/eu-cities-gateway-community

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