



Methodological report

Lessons learned from the project Postgrowth S.A.: Pontevedra

Citizen science on the role of innovation
in the ecological transition of Pontevedra

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AT A GLANCE

Executive summary

Postgrowth S.A.: Pontevedra was the first project in the Postgrowth S.A. series and a citizen science project in the social sciences. Its scientific aim was to generate knowledge about the role of innovation in the ecological transition of Pontevedra and its surrounding area. Lower and upper secondary students and their teachers were part of the research team and took part in identifying problems, choosing the topics, designing the interviews, carrying out the fieldwork, discussing the results and presenting them in public.

The project was coordinated by the Post-Growth Innovation Lab at the Universidade de Vigo, with funding from the Spanish Foundation for Science and Technology (FECYT) and the collaboration of Pontevedra City Council. Five schools in the municipality took part, together with 230 students, more than 20 teachers and a network of at least 20 organisations.

5 schools	230 students	55 sessions in 11 groups	467 challenges identified
90 interviews	4 case studies	28 student presentations	10 policy agenda proposals

The main lesson

Young people's participation in citizen science can produce rigorous and socially useful knowledge when it is supported by close and stable coordination, a clear and gradual design and genuine spaces for public feedback. This participation takes time, and the school calendar, the workload of the interviews and the lack of follow-up on the proposals set its limits.

The process was organised into fifteen linked activities. Students identified 467 challenges, which the team arranged into seven areas of action and twelve possible cases. Four of these were chosen, the transition towards clean water systems, greener cities, a living countryside and greener jobs. Between March and April 2024 students conducted 90 semi-structured interviews. After a first analysis by the professional team, the results were reviewed and completed with the students in group sessions.

Public feedback took place in two stages. On 18 June 2024 a focus group of 19 people from politics, research, teaching, technical fields, entrepreneurship and the general public compared the four cases, guided by the students, and drew up ten cross-cutting proposals. During those same days, students gave 28 presentations at the international conference ESEE2024, held in Pontevedra. The proposals became a policy agenda and a social recommendations guide, sent to 21 municipalities in the Pontevedra area.

The final evaluation gave an overall rating of 8.47 out of 10 and an overall average of 8.45, based on 51 responses. 88% of respondents had never taken part in a citizen science project before. The most highly rated aspects were the closeness of the coordinating team, the clarity of the phases and the participatory activities. The main weaknesses were the lack of time to explore

topics in depth, the overlap with exams, the workload of transcribing the interviews and the limited visibility of the analysis for students.

CHAPTER 1

What is the project?

Purpose and meaning of the project

Postgrowth S.A.: Pontevedra is a citizen science project in the social sciences. Its scientific aim was to generate knowledge about the role of innovation in the ecological transition of a specific territory, the city of Pontevedra and its immediate surroundings. The acronym S.A. stands for Social Actions and underlines the practical orientation of the project.

The project starts from a simple and demanding idea. Major ecological challenges require expert knowledge and technology, and they also require an understanding of how people experience these problems, what priorities they identify, what conflicts they perceive and what changes they consider fair and feasible. For this reason the project organised a process of shared knowledge production in which citizens take part in several phases of the research. Students and teachers were part of the extended research team, and this decision shaped the whole organisation of the project.

Territorial and social context

Pontevedra offered a particularly suitable context. It is a municipality with visible public debates on mobility, urban space, water, links with the countryside and forms of economic development, and with an internationally recognised urban model. The project could also build on an earlier collaboration between the Universidade de Vigo, Pontevedra City Council and IES Luís Seoane, which predated the application to FECYT.

Working with lower and upper secondary students reflected a logic of intergenerational justice. The transitions being discussed today will directly affect those who are now of school age, and their involvement was consistent with the kind of problems addressed.

Project objectives

- Immerse lower and upper secondary students (ESO and Bachillerato) in a real process of social research and citizen science.
- Generate knowledge about the role of innovation in the ecological transition, with a territorial and action-oriented approach.
- Document and analyse the process itself to identify what works and what should be improved in future citizen science experiences.
- Channel the demands and visions of young people into public spaces for discussion and knowledge transfer.

Participation, reach and main outputs

Indicator	Confirmed figure
Participating schools	5
Participating students	230
Teachers involved	More than 20 people
Organisations in the support network	At least 20

Indicator	Confirmed figure
In-person sessions in the core process	55 sessions of 50 minutes in 11 groups
Challenges initially identified	467
Final case studies	4
Interviews conducted	90 anonymised semi-structured interviews
Participants in the multi-sector focus group	19
Student presentations at the conference	28
Attendance at the conference from the schools	326 people
Municipalities that received the agenda and the guide	21

The five participating schools were IES Luís Seoane, IES Frei Martín Sarmiento, IES Sánchez Cantón, IES Valle-Inclán and Colegio Los Sauces. In addition to the research process, the project produced its own website, teaching materials, ethical and legal documentation for the interviews, results for each case, a policy agenda, a social recommendations guide, an audiovisual documentary and a final evaluation from the schools.

CHAPTER 2

How was the project organised?

Governance structure and division of roles

Overall coordination was the responsibility of the Post-Growth Innovation Lab at the Universidade de Vigo. The professional team defined the methodological framework, produced the materials, ensured ethical and legal compliance, supported the schools in every session, carried out the first qualitative analysis and coordinated the cross-case comparison and knowledge transfer. One person hired with FECYT funds worked exclusively on the project.

Teachers acted as an essential link. They helped integrate the project into the classroom, adapted timing and needs to each group, supported students day to day and served as the link with the university coordination. Their commitment was a critical condition for the project to run well.

Students played an active role in almost every phase. They identified problems, chose the topics, refined the questions, found the people to interview, conducted and transcribed the interviews, discussed the results, drew up proposals and presented them in public. Citizens and local experts took part first as interviewees and then as members of the multi-sector focus group.

Collaboration network

The support network brought together the Universidade de Vigo, Pontevedra City Council, the five participating schools, CEIP Curros Enríquez, groups such as Eco-Étika, the Club contra o cambio climático at IES Sánchez Cantón, FEMUPO, Plataforma Salvemos o Rural, PDR Arousa, CIDEL Galicia and Paisaxea, companies and technical organisations such as Trespés, Prisma, Iproma, Eurofins and ViaNai, and the Unidade de Cultura Científica e Innovación of the Universidade de Vigo. These organisations contributed by taking part in the process, in the Espazo Xove at the conference or in dissemination.

Recruitment combined public mailing lists, existing institutional contacts and successive referrals through snowball sampling. The City Council helped build the network of schools and organisations, and the team visited the schools in person to explain the project. Of the ten schools invited, five joined. Municipal support depended on the people who had championed it, and after the elections of May 2023 it was interrupted while the new government got organised.

Overall timeline

Phase	Period	Activities	Purpose
1. Launch and preparation	July – October 2023	A1 – A2	Set up the network of schools, the materials and the ethical groundwork.
2. Identification of challenges and choice of topics	October 2023 – January 2024	A3 – A6	Detect problems, organise them and choose the case studies.
3. Co-design and fieldwork	February – April 2024	A7 – A8	Design the interviews and gather information from social actors.
4. Preliminary analysis and collective validation	April – May 2024	A9 – A10	Analyse the data and test the results with the students.
5. Preparation of knowledge transfer	June 2024	A11 – A12	Prepare the conference and the multi-sector focus group.
6. Cross-case comparison and dissemination	June – November 2024	A13 – A15 and closure	Draw up proposals, return results and finalise the outputs.

Resources and funding

The project had a total budget of 89,000 euros. FECYT was asked for 38,000 euros and granted 31,750. Monetary funding was complemented by substantial in-kind support, such as school and university spaces, internal support from the schools, institutional backing, City Council support for participation in the conference, and the coordination time, materials and equipment provided by the university.

The experience shows that a project like this can work with simple tools, such as email, shared folders, school computers, mobile phones, sticky notes and printed materials. It does, however, need a stable base of funding and dedicated time. School citizen science can be low-cost in material terms, and its cost in time, support and institutional backing is high.

CHAPTER 3

How was it done? Methodology step by step

Methodological principles

The project was designed as a co-creative citizen science process aimed at generating actionable knowledge. The aim was to understand problems and also to produce diagnoses and proposals capable of informing public decisions and social debates in Pontevedra.

The design was inductive. The process began with the challenges perceived by participants, and from these the case studies were built, the questions designed and the analysis specified. The project agenda emerged from the bottom up, within a carefully designed and supported methodological framework. Neither sustainability nor the cases were defined in advance.

The project combined qualitative research, participatory activities and arts-based expressive tools. Visual activities, sticky notes, guided debates and group work made a complex process understandable for non-experts without giving up rigour. Transparency was a cross-cutting principle, with a documented pathway, teaching materials, informed consent and public return of results.

Operational summary of the fifteen activities

Act.	Timing	Main content	Immediate result
A1	July 2023	Project launch	Website, initial materials, ethics documents and recruitment of schools
A2	Sept. – Oct. 2023	Preparation with teachers and students	Teaching material, coordination meetings and signed commitments
A3	October 2023	Session 1. Identification of challenges	467 challenges identified by students
A4	After A3	Refinement of challenges	7 areas of action and 12 possible case studies
A5	January 2024	Session 2. Research training	Shared grounding in interdisciplinarity, interviews and ethics
A6	January 2024	Selection and preparation of cases	4 final cases and materials for each one
A7	February 2024	Session 3. Co-design of the research	Refined interview guides, informant profiles and logistics
A8	March – April 2024	Fieldwork	90 anonymised and transcribed interviews
A9	April 2024	Qualitative preliminary analysis	First system of codes, themes and categories
A10	May 2024	Session 4. Collective analysis	Validation and adjustment of the results for each case
A11	Early June 2024	Organisation of the final steps	Presentations and focus group prepared
A12	June 2024	Organisation of the focus group	Invitations, profiles and materials

Act.	Timing	Main content	Immediate result
A13	18 June 2024	Cross-case comparison through a focus group	Ten shared strategic proposals
A14	June 2024	Organisation of participation in the conference	Four parallel sessions at ESEE2024
A15	June 2024	Student participation in the conference	28 presentations and public presentation

Project launch (A1)

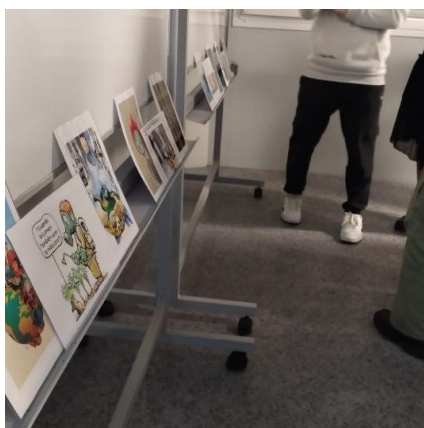
The project began in July 2023 with the setting up of its basic infrastructure. The project identity and website were created, communication materials were prepared and ethical and legal documentation was drawn up for working with underage students and for interviews with members of the public. Between July and September the documentary that would follow the whole process was organised with the production company Trespés. The invitation to the secondary schools in the municipality was open and voluntary, and student participation was not linked to academic assessment.

Preparation with teachers and students (A2)

In October 2023 the five schools signed their commitment to take part. Teaching materials were distributed to teachers, meetings were held to adjust timetables and needs, and the documents that had to be signed before data collection were handled. The material introduced the scientific method, explained what citizen science is and included short activities so that each group could get into the subject before the in-person sessions.

First session. Identification of challenges (A3)

The first session, in October 2023, opened up the range of problems and connected the ecological transition with everyday experiences. Images, press cuttings and small-group conversations were used. Students then worked with sticky notes to name local and global challenges, group them and discuss them. The combined result of the eleven groups was a list of 467 challenges.



First session. Images to prompt reflection and sticky notes to name challenges.

Refinement and organisation of the challenges (A4)

The professional team inductively arranged the 467 challenges into seven areas of action, nature, mobility, health, food, water, housing and energy, and distinguished problems and possible

solutions within each area. The result was a set of twelve possible case studies, open enough for students to choose afterwards which topics to work on.

Second session. Research training (A5)

In January 2024 the second session provided a shared grounding in how to do research. Students worked with perspectives from economics, ecology, the social sciences and political science and reviewed methods ranging from statistical analysis and modelling to qualitative techniques. The project opted for semi-structured interviews, and this choice was explained and practised together with the ethical issues of informed consent, confidentiality, anonymisation and the right to withdraw.

Selection and preparation of the cases (A6)

The twelve possible cases were put to a vote and the final topics were allocated according to the interest expressed and the size of the groups. IES Luís Seoane worked on the transition towards clean water systems, IES Frei Martín Sarmiento on greener cities, IES Sánchez Cantón on a living countryside, and IES Valle-Inclán and Colegio Los Sauces on greener jobs. Each case received specific materials with theoretical content, suggested classroom activities, ethical reminders and guidance for preparing the research.



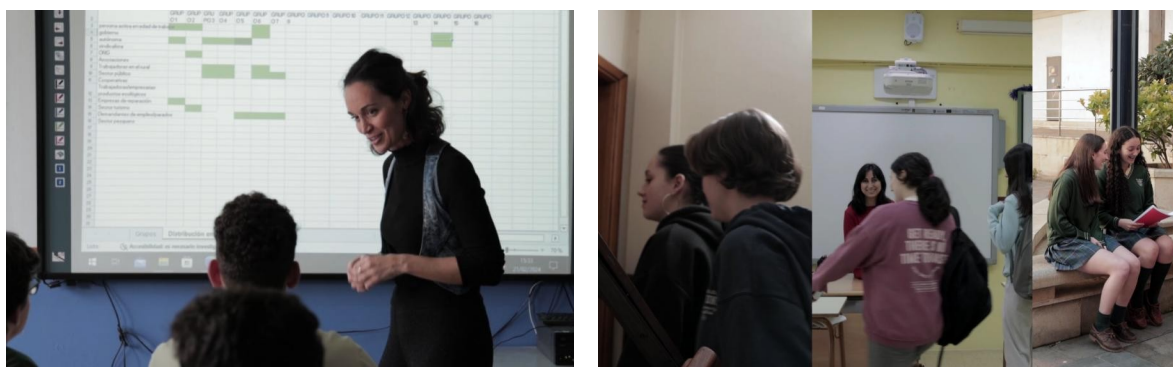
Second session. Cards for working with different disciplinary perspectives.

Third session. Co-design of the research (A7)

In February 2024 the team brought draft interview guides for each case, conceived as a minimum standard, and reviewed them with the students, who were able to refine, add or rephrase questions. Informant profiles were identified and small teams were formed with specific tasks covering finding interviewees, logistics, division of responsibilities and scheduling.

Data collection (A8)

Between March and April 2024 students conducted the interviews in small groups, with the professional team available to answer questions. Information sheets and consent forms were handed out before each interview. The conversations were recorded with permission, and students transcribed them in anonymised form and shared them through secure platforms. The final set comprised 90 interviews, 23 on clean water, 17 on green cities, 13 on a living countryside and 37 on employment. Interviewees included members of the public, public administration staff, teachers, self-employed workers and employees, members of the municipal government, healthcare staff, Navy personnel, and people from the fishing sector and traditional trades.



Co-design of the interview guides and students during fieldwork.

Qualitative preliminary analysis (A9)

The professional team carried out a first round of inductive analysis with NVivo. It coded relevant excerpts, grouped them into second-order themes and synthesised them into main categories for each case. The aim was to build a basis for precise discussion in the classroom, leaving the results open to collective scrutiny.

Fourth session. Collective analysis (A10)

In May 2024 students reviewed the preliminary results through individual reflection, sticky notes, comparison with the categories and plenary discussion. The session validated, nuanced and extended the initial interpretation. In the water case it became clear that many answers were shaped by the position of each interviewee, which opened a debate on the importance of including diverse perspectives. In the countryside case it became visible that protecting rural areas also requires transforming conditions so that they are attractive and liveable for young people. Teachers and students also contributed new ideas, such as the 3-30-300 rule for green cities or basic income in the employment case.



Fourth session. Collective analysis of the preliminary results.

Organisation of the final steps (A11) and of the focus group (A12)

In early June 2024 each case was divided into short presentations on context, methodology, results and conclusions, teams were formed and students practised public speaking and answering questions. At the same time the focus group was prepared. The venue and date were chosen, materials were prepared and attendance was confirmed for 19 people from different fields, policymakers, researchers, teachers, technical specialists, entrepreneurs and members of the public.

Cross-case comparison through a focus group (A13)

On 18 June 2024 the focus group was held in two stages. First, using a speed dating format, participants rotated between subgroups and learned about each case from the students themselves. Then the groups proposed solutions to the challenges identified while a central group of students and researchers detected common patterns. The result was ten cross-cutting proposals to drive several transitions at once in the municipality.



Multi-sector focus group on 18 June 2024.

The international conference (A14 and A15)

The project was integrated into the 16th International Conference of the European Society for Ecological Economics (ESEE2024), held in Pontevedra in June 2024. Four parallel sessions were organised, one for each case, in a continuous time slot to make it easier for other schools and academics to attend, in the assembly halls of the Schools of Forestry and Physiotherapy on the Pontevedra campus. Students gave 28 presentations to their classmates, teachers, families, the local community and international academics. Counting registrations and invitations, 326 people from the schools attended the Espazo Xove and related activities.



Presentation of the conclusions of the employment case at ESEE2024.

Ethics, data protection and quality control

The project met the requirements that the Universidade de Vigo sets for research with people and with personal data. These requirements are set out in the protocol of its Ethics Committee for Research with Human Beings and the Environment (CEISHMA), in the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and in Spanish Organic Law 3/2018 on personal data protection.

- The five schools authorised their participation in writing before the project began.

- Participation was voluntary and did not affect academic assessment. Anyone could withdraw at any time, without giving reasons and without consequences.
- Students, families, teachers and interviewees received an information sheet written in language suited to each group.
- Each student signed the informed consent together with their family or guardian. The form set out separately the consent to take part, the consent to data processing and the image and voice authorisation.
- Each interviewee signed their informed consent and authorised the recording before the interview.
- Students and teachers who worked with the interviews signed a confidentiality agreement.
- Transcripts were anonymised and only two members of the team had access to the original audio recordings.
- Data and signed documents were stored in the Universidade de Vigo institutional cloud, with access restricted to the team and protected by password.
- Primary data were deleted once the analysis was complete.
- Participants knew their rights to access, rectify and erase their data and how to exercise them before the Universidade de Vigo.
- Results are disseminated in aggregated or anonymised form, and images of students are published only with their authorisation.

Quality control was shared. The team prepared instruments and reviewed materials, teachers supported the work in the classroom and students checked the results in group sessions.

CHAPTER 4

What did the project investigate and what did it produce?

The four case studies

Case	Underlying question	Data	Summary conclusion
Clean water	How to integrate justice into the transition towards clean water systems	23 interviews	Water quality is a technical standard and also a matter of health, livelihoods, leisure, ecosystems and territorial justice.
Greener cities	How to relate green spaces, mental health and urban equity	17 interviews	Green spaces serve functions of socialising, rest and exercise and should be planned inclusively.
Living countryside	How to integrate rural justice into the urban transition	13 interviews	Caring for rural areas requires valuing their ways of life, improving their material conditions and preventing their environmental degradation.
Greener jobs	How to integrate social justice into the employment transition	37 interviews	The labour transition must guarantee good-quality local jobs and include the groups who are usually left out.

The four cases made it possible to study problems that intersect with one another. Water, urban planning, the countryside and employment appeared as connected dimensions of a single territorial transition. Students placed social and territorial factors at the heart of the urban transition, such as the depopulation of rural parishes and the loss of services, and so broadened the view beyond the compact city towards the parishes that surround it and the relationships that link the two.

The information gathered revealed cross-cutting barriers, such as inaccessible bureaucracy, a lack of coordination between actors, inequalities in access to services, tensions between private profit and collective goods and a shortage of stable spaces for deliberation based on justice criteria. The interviews brought in knowledge from people who are living the transition. A small producer explained to the students that she could not afford the bureaucratic costs of the hygiene requirements for her products, and testimonies of this kind support the proposal to reduce the bureaucratic burden on small producers.

Cross-cutting results and policy agenda

The comparison between cases produced an agenda broader than the sum of the four studies. Instead of isolated recommendations for each sector, the focus group generated proposals capable of improving several transitions at once. The recommendations combined technological measures, such as sensors to monitor water quality, with social measures, such as the shared use of abandoned land to produce more local food.

Area	Strategic proposal	Practical meaning
Common basis	Shift from private profit to the collective good	Prioritise decisions with long-term public value.
Public sphere	Robust public guarantees	Secure basic rights such as water, mobility, green spaces and care through enforceable mechanisms.
Public sphere	High-quality public services	Raise standards and make them transparently verifiable.
Public sphere	In-depth citizen participation	Institutionalise deliberative processes and citizen science networks with continuity.
Community	Promote shared community life	Strengthen social cohesion, mutual support and meeting places.
Community	Create and revitalise community spaces	Recover multifunctional places for care, culture and collective action.
Private activity	Set ecological and social limits	Reduce negative externalities and establish fairer rules.
Private activity	Promote sustainable local initiatives	Support cooperatives, small projects and locally rooted enterprises.
Cross-cutting	Increase interconnectivity and resilience	Connect local initiatives across sectors to multiply synergies.
Cross-cutting	Improve communication and education	Increase public understanding of problems and their solutions.

Outputs and knowledge transfer results

- Policy agenda drawn up from the comparison of cases, sent to Pontevedra City Council and other municipalities.
- Social recommendations guide in accessible language, sent to 21 municipalities in the Pontevedra metropolitan area, compared with the 9 planned.
- Documentary following the process, produced by Trespés and published on the project website on 2 December 2024.
- Student participation in ESEE2024 with 28 presentations and an Espazo Xove open to diverse audiences.
- Project website, teaching materials, ethics documentation and results of the four cases.
- Dissemination on the website, on the social media of the group and the conference, and in media outlets such as DUVI, Diario de Pontevedra, Pontevedra Viva and La Voz de Galicia.
- Participation in fairs and outreach activities, such as the II Feira da Sostibilidade at IES Luís Seoane, Girls in Science Day at CEIP Curros Enríquez and the Universidade de Vigo sustainability fair.
- Methodological lessons that feed into a scientific publication on the methodology of the Network, which brings together several editions of the series.

CHAPTER 5

Final evaluation of the project

How the project was evaluated

The evaluation combined ongoing monitoring with a final review. The overall coordinator and the hired staff member met every month to review objectives and adjust decisions. At the qualitative level, the team used an activity log, which recorded incidents, decisions and lessons, and a final survey of teachers and students sent out in June and October 2024.

Results of the final survey

Indicator	Result
Responses received	51 (44 from students and 7 from teachers)
Estimated response rate	21.7% of all participants
Schools that responded	4 of 5
No previous experience of citizen science	88%
Overall rating of the project	8.47 / 10
Interest of the project	8.67 / 10
Rating of the coordination	8.82 / 10
Impact of the project on society	7.59 / 10
Overall summary average	8.45 / 10

The open-ended responses show conceptual and methodological learning. Many people mention having gained a better understanding of nearby problems, such as water pollution, the decline of the countryside or the relationship between mental health and green spaces, and also having learned how to interview, organise research, select data and prepare a presentation. Several people said they paid more attention to their surroundings and now checked where their food came from. In later conversations with students from the series who took part again, these habits had largely given way to the previous ones.

Most highly rated aspects	Lowest rated aspects
Closeness, friendliness and availability of the coordinating team	Little time to explore the topics in depth
Clarity of the phases and tasks	Overlap with exams
Participatory activities and group work	Long gaps between sessions
Conducting interviews and meeting new people	Workload of transcribing the interviews
Presenting results at the conference and in the Espazo Xove	Lower student participation in some phases of the analysis
Feeling part of real research	Need for more examples to prepare the presentations

Planned and achieved indicators

Indicator in the technical report	Planned	Achieved
Participating secondary schools	5	5
Teachers involved	20	More than 20
Students involved	200	230
Organisations in the support network	20	At least 20
Proposals in the policy agenda	10	10
Proposals in the recommendations guide	10	10
Municipal governments receiving the agenda and guide	9	21
Documentary views	1,000	298 as of 20 January 2025
Presentations prepared by students	10	28
People attending the conference from the schools	200	326
Members of the academic community at the Espazo Xove	20	More than 20
Social media followers	1,000	More than 2,000 on X

CHAPTER 6

Lessons learned and recommendations for future editions

Strengths worth keeping

The first strength was the closeness of the coordinating team, which was present at every session. It is the aspect most highly rated by participants and it has a methodological meaning. In projects with teenagers, trust is the condition that allows them to take on responsibilities, ask for help, stay motivated and dare to speak in public.

The second strength was the step-by-step design. Dividing the experience into recognisable phases helped non-experts understand what they were doing at each moment and why. The project made research accessible without trivialising it, and the visual and artistic formats, such as images, sticky notes and speed dating, lowered barriers to entry and encouraged horizontal relationships.

The third strength was public feedback. The 28 presentations at an international conference and the multi-sector focus group turned the project into something more than a classroom exercise. In the focus group, schools, local government, producers and civil society came together around the results of the students, and one producer highlighted how unusual it is to be able to talk calmly with so many actors at once.

Weaknesses to address

The clearest weakness was the tension between the intensity of the project and the school calendar. The methodology requires time, the school timetable leaves little room and exams reduce availability. There was little time to explore the topics in depth.

The second weakness was uneven participation in the analysis. The volume of interviews left little time to analyse them with the students, so the first analysis fell to the professional team and students saw little of the step from interviews to conclusions. Transcription also proved costly and, for some students, tedious.

The third weakness was the imbalance between cases. The countryside case gathered 13 interviews and the employment case 37, which gave each case a very different evidence base.

The fourth weakness was organisational. Many tasks fell to a very small core coordination team, with a risk of overload and dependence on individuals. In addition, the proposals delivered to the municipalities had no follow-up mechanism of any kind, and the final evaluation reached few people.

Methodological lessons in depth

1. Human relationships are part of the method.

Close coordination sustained the process. Without it, the clarity of instructions, the confidence to interview and the continuity between phases would have suffered. Recommendation. Set aside specific time and resources for mediation and support.

2. Genuine participation increases motivation and requires more time.

Students responded well when they had real responsibilities, and that same participation makes the process slower and needs spaces for discussion that fit poorly into the school calendar.

Recommendation. Plan co-creation as part of the curriculum and agree a calendar that avoids exam periods.

3. Interviews are powerful and their transcription is a bottleneck.

The interviews connected students with real people and diverse points of view, and transcribing them took a great deal of time. Recommendation. Lighten this workload with technical support, a finer division of tasks or partial samples when methodologically feasible.

4. The analysis has to be made visible.

Students validated the results, but wanted to see more clearly how the interviews led to the conclusions. Recommendation. Include open analysis sessions that show codes, categories and interpretive decisions.

5. Cases need a comparable evidence base.

Allocating cases according to group size produced very unequal datasets. Recommendation. Set a minimum and a maximum number of interviews per case and redistribute fieldwork when a case falls short.

6. Visual formats support inclusion.

Images, sticky notes and rotation-based activities made a complex process readable and gave a voice to those who spoke little in plenary sessions. Recommendation. Keep them, especially with mixed groups.

7. Delivering proposals to an institution does not guarantee their use.

The agenda reached 21 municipalities, and there was no way of knowing what was done with it. Recommendation. Agree with the receiving institutions, before starting, on a mechanism for responding to and following up on the proposals.

8. Evaluation and coordination should be better distributed.

The low response to the evaluation and the overload of the core coordination team show that both functions need more structure. Recommendation. Combine micro-evaluations during the process with a final evaluation during school hours, and share coordination among more people.

Operational recommendations for replicating or scaling up the project

- Secure one person or a small team with dedicated time for day-to-day coordination, and share out tasks to avoid dependence on a single person.
- Integrate the project into subjects or curricular blocks and agree the calendar with the schools.
- Plan support for transcription and balance the number of interviews per case.
- Open up data analysis to students through dedicated sessions.
- Design public feedback and a follow-up mechanism for the proposals from the outset.
- Build evaluation into the process itself.

CHAPTER 7

Future work

The project opened the Postgrowth S.A. series and its lessons were carried over to the following editions. Postgrowth S.A.: Vigo focused the work on a single case analysed from five dimensions to reduce the coding workload created by four cases with interviews, and Postgrowth S.A.: Alimentación tested a model based on teacher training.

In September 2025 the relationships built from Pontevedra were formalised in the Post-Growth Citizen Science Network of Galicia, with member organisations, open lines of research and, since November 2025, a teacher training course. The network offers a place where collaboration can continue from one edition to the next. The accumulated methodological reflection also feeds into a scientific publication on the methodology of the Network.

CHAPTER 8

Conclusion

Postgrowth S.A.: Pontevedra shows that citizen science in the social sciences can be carried out with rigour, educational purpose and public commitment at the same time. The project connected the university, schools, citizens and institutions around concrete problems in the territory, and it did so starting from the challenges identified by the students themselves.

The experience also shows the limits of this openness. Co-creation needs time that the school calendar does not easily provide, analysis tends to become concentrated in the expert team when the volume of data is large, and the proposals, once delivered, depend on institutions that do not always respond.

The final lesson is twofold. Opening up research to young people, teachers and citizens improves the social relevance of knowledge, and this openness must be sustained through design, ethics, coordination and the capacity for feedback and follow-up. When these conditions are in place, citizen science becomes a robust way of doing research and of building the ecological transition from the territory.



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