

# **CIVIC eSTATE**

**new models of urban  
co-governance based  
on the commons**

**July 2021**







**CIVIC eSTATE: new models of urban co-governance based on the commons**

**July 2021**

Civic eState Final Network Product



**EUROPEAN UNION**  
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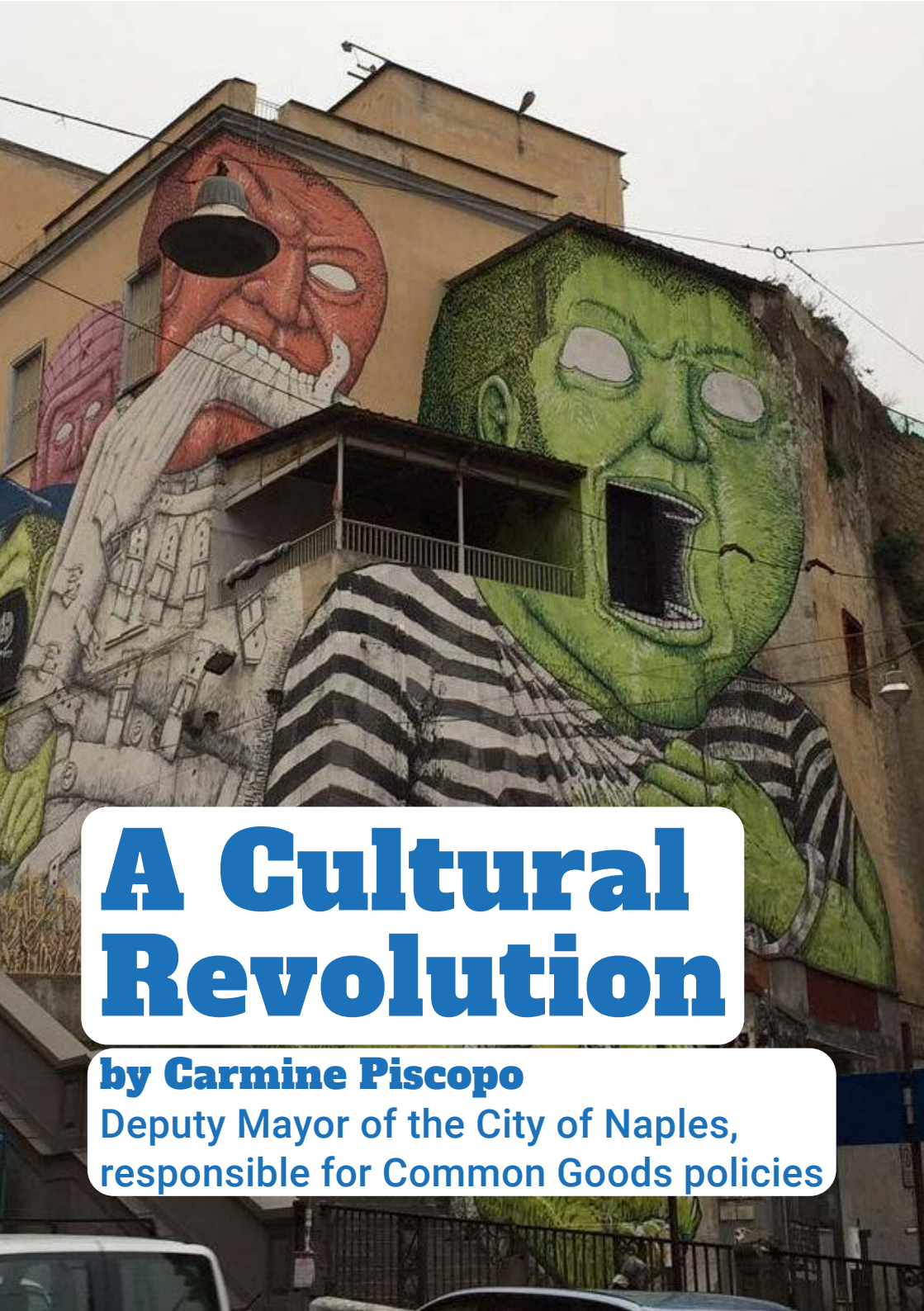
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# A Cultural Revolution

**by Carmine Piscopo**

Deputy Mayor of the City of Naples,  
responsible for Common Goods policies

**T**he URBACT Civic eState project led by the city of Naples was an important opportunity to work and discuss on the commons and civic use of city owned heritage, but also an opportunity to consolidate the Naples experience of policies to enable urban commons, for which the City has been awarded the URBACT Programme Good Practice Award in 2017.

The project, through an exchange and learning path, allowed to transfer Naples' governance model of commons (based on civic and collective urban uses), to the network's partner cities (Barcelona, Gdansk, Ghent, Amsterdam, Prešov and Iași). It also allowed the City to work on the implementation and improvement of this model through the involvement of existing communities.

For years the City of Naples has been fostering new forms of self-government and experimenting the communities' direct management of public spaces, becoming an example for many Italian and European cities.

Naples is one of the first Italian municipalities to have established a Department of Common Goods, to

have introduced the legal category of "commons" into the Municipality Statute and to have established an Observatory of Commons, whose work has led to pass resolutions concerning the procedures for the identification and collective management of public assets.

Under the Mayorship of Luigi de Magistris, the City administration recognized the value of existing experiences of informal management of publicly owned buildings, carried out by groups and / or committees of citizens, and recognized eight buildings as commons, namely: the Ex Convento delle Teresiane / Giardino Liberato, ex Lido Pola, Villa Medusa, former Monastero di Sant'Eframo Nuovo / former OPG, former Convento delle Cappuccinelle / Scugnizzo Liberato, former Conservatorio di Santa Maria della Fede, former Schipa school, former Asilo Filangieri.

The communities that inhabit and live these spaces have built the URBACT Local Group (ULG), with the active participation of representatives of the Permanent Observatory on Commons and several activists. The work of the ULG has been coordinated by a dedicated municipal

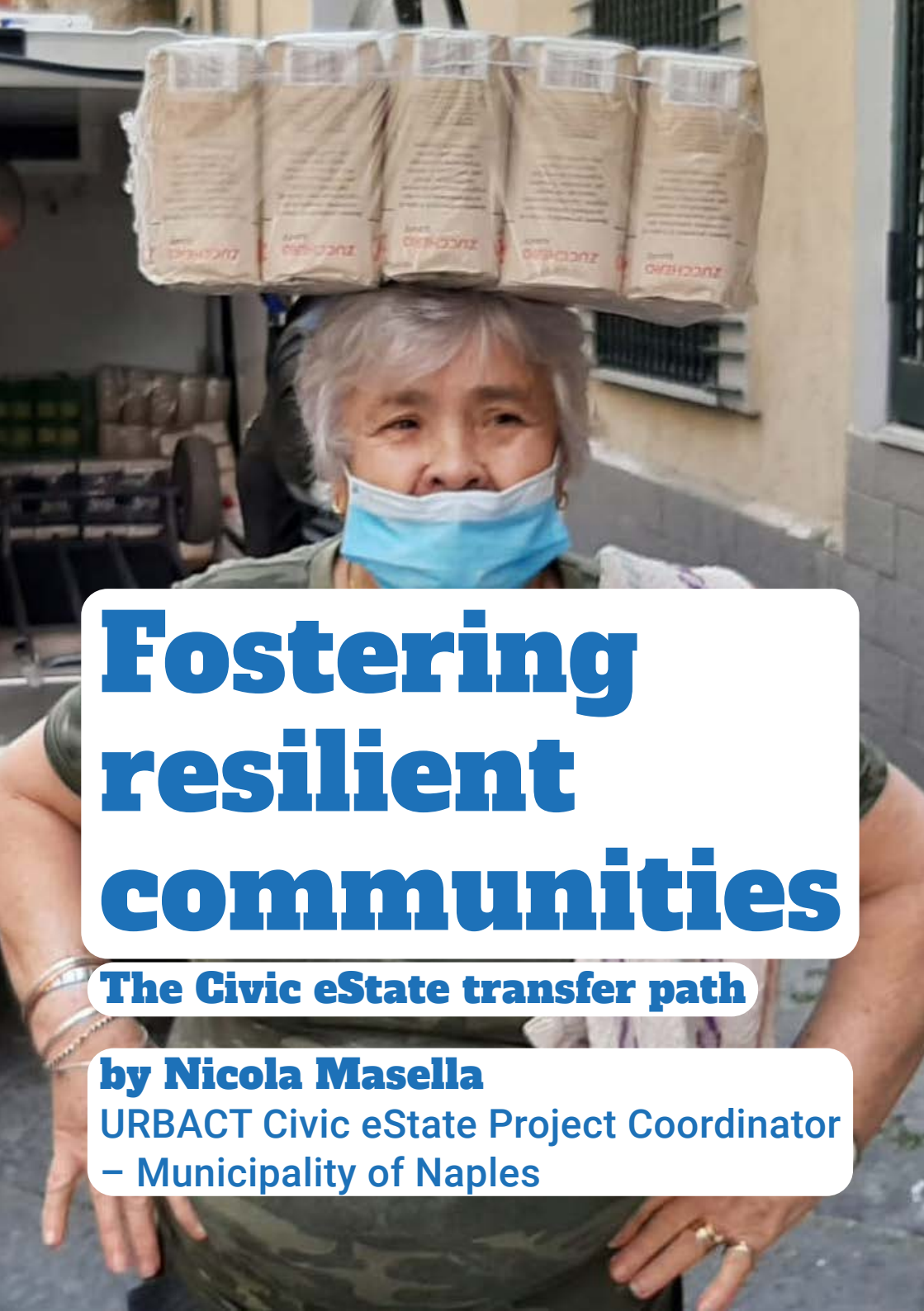
"URBACT Projects Unit", together with two Departments of the City of Naples: the Urban Planning and Commons Councillor and with the Urban Planning and Common Goods Service.

In particular, the Civic eState project allowed to strengthen the network of commons in Naples through a clearer storytelling/self-narration scheme and by improving the skills and competences of local communities on the topics of self-financing (solidarity fundraising), mutualism, cooperation and also through practices of co-design, self-construction, and self-recovery of spaces. The Civic eState project has therefore made possible not only to transfer the Naples commons' good practice to other European cities, through a continuous exchange with other local authorities and by providing shared tools of action (i.e. City Governments and City Council resolutions and administrative acts), but had also and above all the great merit of boosting our local network, making it more aware of its strength, as well as of its weaknesses. All this, together with the communities, the institutions, the experiences of other cities and ultimately with Europe.

For this I really want to thank everyone who worked on this project, Christian Iaione, Nicola Masella, Roberta Nicchia, Giuseppe Micciarelli, Daniela Buonanno, Renata Ciannella, Chiara Abbate, Andrea Ceudech, Nicola Capone, all the commons' activists and the Observatory of Commons' members. But, above all, I wish to thank Mayor Luigi de Magistris who has always believed in these battles and bravely made them possible, giving life to what can genuinely be defined a cultural revolution. A revolution that launched a national debate and that is nowadays widespread around Europe, also thanks to the URBACT Secretariat to which goes all our heartfelt thanks for the commitment, trust and passion invested in the Civic eState Transfer Network •







# Fostering resilient communities

**The Civic eState transfer path**

**by Nicola Masella**

URBACT Civic eState Project Coordinator  
– Municipality of Naples

**S**ince 2018, *URBACT Civic eState - Pooling urban commons* is a network led by the City of Naples (Italy) with six partner cities: Amsterdam (Netherlands), Barcelona (Spain), Gdansk (Poland), Ghent (Belgium), Iași (Romania) and Prešov (Slovakia).

URBACT, in fact, is the European Territorial Cooperation programme aiming to foster sustainable integrated urban development in cities across Europe and its mission is to enable cities to work together and develop integrated solutions to common urban challenges, by networking, learning from one another's experiences, drawing lessons and identifying good practices to improve urban policies.

#### **THEMATIC CHALLENGE**

The partnership's first objective was the transfer, through adaptation, of urban *self/collaborative governance* principles, as successfully experimented in Naples, by setting up a process of mutual exchange and learning but also running trial pilot projects.

In fact, the profound socio-economic and urban changes that

communities have faced over the last few decades, but also these challenging pandemic days, have generated a new type of demand and new mechanisms for the use and management of public spaces. The growing desire for a pro-active participation and for the re-appropriation of the neighborhoods, has reinforced the international debate focused not only on the architectural component of the public space but - mainly - on the environmental, cultural, ethical and legal aspects concerning the *right to city*.

In this perspective, the vibrant confrontation established between the Neapolitan communities and the municipal administration since 2012 has allowed the adoption of an administrative mechanism inspired by the ancient institution of "civic use" and aimed at overcoming traditional urban policies. It is in fact thanks to the impulse of informal groups of inhabitants that the municipality of Naples has adopted new forms of participatory government that go beyond the classic "concession model", based on a public-private partnership, and which strengthens the role of citizens in the care of common goods and of the city in general. In particu-

lar, this was the output of a “creative use of law” that communities promoted by subverting the classic scheme where citizens pose a claims and institutions provide solutions (Micciarelli G., *Path for new institutions: Urban Commons in Naples*, Naples, 2021) The civic use recognizes the existence of a relationship between the community and these public assets, fostering self-governance schemes and making community-led initiatives recognizable and institutionalized, ensuring the autonomy of both parties involved: on one hand the citizens engaged in the reuse of the urban commons and on the other hand the city administration that enables the community self-governance practice.

At EU level, in 2017 this administrative model has been awarded the *URBACT Good Practice award*, giving Naples’ the possibility to build a network for exchanging and transferring this governance scheme to other EU cities.

### **THE TRANSFER JOURNEY**

The Civic eState exchange and learning path was brilliantly guided by Christian Iaione, as Lead Expert,

who designed an ad-hoc experimentalist transfer methodology to strengthen the connection between the local level and the transnational level. In this multi-layer scheme, each partner set-up both a Network working group (EU network level) and *Local* administrative working group (city level) composed by city administrative cross-sectorial competent staff, local actors, citizens, experts and creative/hacker lawyers. The scope was to facilitate the *transplant* of the EU network’s learnings but also and mainly to boost the adaptation of innovative governance scheme in the existing legal local frameworks and, therefore, to kick-start the pilot projects within the project lifetime.

Yes, we had to walk through the pandemic and our exchange has been strongly affected by distancing measures! In fact, after the first 5 transnational *physical* meetings, we had to switch our transfer methodology in a fully digital format, but this also represented an opportunity to explore new tools, to expand our thematic discussion and to involve experts from all over Europe in the Civic eState family. Along 8 digital meetings, commoners, urban practitioners, service designers

and various ethical, social, patient, long-term investors brought food for thoughts, enriching our path.

Based on the results of the practice and experimentation phase, of the training and learning activities, all the cities have extracted guidelines and have been engaged in a co-design phase with ULGs (URBACT Local Groups) that led to a prototype of a self/collaborative governance mechanism shared and defined with local actors.

Barcelona, for instance, has a long history of municipal public assets being used for community purposes and during our journey acted as a *Lighthouse city*: this by sharing knowledge and ongoing initiatives, such as the *Citizen Assets Programme*, but also working to build a renewed proposal for the community management of facilities and services based on the assessment of the social impact through indicators and objective data.

Amsterdam, Ghent and Gdansk, the so-called *Mature cities*, could count on existing innovative governance mechanisms that allowed them to quickly progress in the implementation of Civic eState shared princi-

ples. Amsterdam is already testing the *concept commons policy* developed during the project in the Czaar Peterbuurt while Ghent is following up on the open call for the management of the St-Joseph church as a common. Gdansk, on the other side, does not have a single policy dedicated to commons but its team is working to transform the Dolna Brama Centrum into an experimental municipal asset where formal/informal groups of inhabitants can ask to make use of the place and adopt a different participative democracy scheme.

Iași and Prešov are the partners that performed best in relative terms because, starting from their position of *Learning cities*, they made the major advancements on participative governance. Lacking of municipal and national legislation regarding the participation of civic entities in the management of public goods, one their main challenges was to build an URBACT Local Group with representatives from the Quituple Helix (cit.: Iaione C. and De Nictolis E., *Urban Pooling*, 44, Fordham Urb. L.J. 655, 2017): Social innovators, Public authorities, Knowledge institutions, Businesses, Civic society organiza-

tions. In both cases, the ULGs have successfully promoted a debate on participatory government schemes and pilot assets have been identified for implementing such models.

#### **VISUALIZATION OF NETWORK'S RESULTS: CIVICESTATE.EU**

The set of governance models developed at network level are contributing to forge a new generation of EU public partnership: it's the *public-commons or public-civic* partnership (PCPs) as defined by our URBACT Lead Expert, Christian Iaione (cit.: Iaione I., *Governing the urban commons*, Italian journal of public law, 2015, Vol.7, Issue 1, p.170). PCPs are aimed at transforming city assets into sustainable social infrastructures that produce public value and social impact through social & solidarity, cultural & creative, collaborative, digital and circular economy initiatives.

This heritage of tools, governance mechanisms and pilot projects is what you can explore @ [civicestate.eu](http://civicestate.eu) and through our *visualization platform*. In fact, to keep track of the progress made by each city during the transfer journey, to enable self-evaluation, future planning and communication of the work, a *Map-*

*ping Tool* and a web-based platform have been developed. The *Mapping tool* is the result of a retrospective and scenario exercise carried out in strict collaboration with Liat Rogel, service designer and URBACT Expert, that allowed to transform the insights collected into a Prezi visualization. The scope was to offer a different way to communicate the journey, both internally and to a larger public, not focusing only on the results but also keeping track of the starting point and of the actions put into practice by each city during the project lifetime. For those willing to understand how challenges were overcome and objectives reached, the tool transforms a city's journey into a coherent and complete story, which enhances both the experience of the viewer and the ability to demonstrate the context and environment surrounding a city's path throughout Civic eState, including its inevitable challenges, its accomplishments and current status. The viewer is able to choose the level of detail for each phase of a city's journey insofar as having the ability to click on links outside of the visualization itself and view individual sources, while being guided along. As you can see, in our idea the [civicestate.eu](http://civicestate.eu) platform, hosting

the *Mapping Tool* and all the other network outputs, is not intended as a mere repository but as place where to take an interactive journey around the *Civic eState world* and self-evaluate your city/region performances with reference to the implementation of participatory government policies. To allow a wider comprehension of our challenge, a “mission” section is also dedicated to describing Civic eState mission and theoretical framework, aiming to clearly explain what the main objectives of Civic eState were. The “network” section, instead, is dedicated to the cities that participated in the project. In this section it is possible to see how the cities have carried out urban co-governance projects and what results were achieved, through easy-to-understand data visualization tools. It is also possible to download the official documents produced by the cities that participated in the network in order to disseminate the good practices carried out by Civic eState and to make possible for other social innovators to experiment with urban co-governance projects. Furthermore, the site has been designed as a landing place for actors interested in carrying out urban co-governance projects and

in the last section (“your contribution”) users may answer a form in order to receive a self-assessment evaluation on their project on urban commons and understand how it is proceeding. Our ultimate goal is therefore to create an open data platform for urban commons, highlighting how these experiences are key for the achievement of UN Sustainable Development Goals •



# Path for new institutions

**Urban Commons in Naples,  
Legal and political acts from the  
occupation of emerging commons  
to the recognition of Urban Civic  
and Collective Use as Urbact best  
practice**

**by Giuseppe Micciarelli**  
ad hoc URBACT Expert



**I**n the theory of the commons, there are constant references to the concept of self-organisation. Self-organisation can be declined in many forms. Stefano Rodotà suggest that if we want to find one of the historical antecedents of the commons, we should look at those experimentations of self-management and reversed nationalisation and plans for the gradual transfer of business ownership to the workers that have not been so successful since the 1970s (Rodotà, 2013). Here, the question is why have these experiences been “not so successful”? There are two reasons for this. Firstly, because those extraordinary experiences clashed with the difficulty of involving workers in democratic forms in a wider environment, such as the market in which they were embedded, which is not democratic, where the industrial and entrepreneurial tradition are instead deeply characterised by management and hierarchy. The second reason is that the self-management experiences were without valid public support; so their being outside the traditional logic of the market did not, however, en-

sure that they could survive in the market. There are numerous not-so “lucky” flashes in history that recursively attempt to achieve this goal: a social, political and economic democracy that does not only pool the means of production and a space in which to work, but also different relations between individuals, opportunities and conditions for obtaining greater rights than can be found in “normal” forms of production. This mutualistic basis of self-organisation is one of the foundations of the challenge of the commons.

Now, since the management of the commons is crucial because it teaches a practice of democracy that we so desperately need, we must then find tools to support self-management *in* and *from* the State and the market, thus said both in the economic and legal realm.<sup>1</sup> From this second perspective, is no longer those that only question the level of co-governance and ‘political decision-making’, but also that of ‘community-making’, and of put in common means of economic and social (re)production (Caffent-

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1 This is what I called the first reasonable aporia of the commons

zis and Federici, 2013).

In order to make this perspective concrete, the commons should be differentiated into two macro-categories based on different types of participation and self-organisation involvement: the necessary commons and the emerging commons. Necessary commons are goods that are functional to the exercise of fundamental rights. Their public ownership must be preserved. Where they are private, they should be subject to collective use, through easement or else exceptions should be made or licenses and/or patents granted to allow for be established for non-commercial purposes. In order to guarantee and reinforce their 'common' dimension, international treaties and laws must recognise participatory governance, which includes those for whom those goods are indispensable via their representatives, associations, groups or public and private institutions. They might be tangible, intangible or knowledge commons. Examples include water resources, vaccines and all life-saving drugs.

Emerging commons are goods that are functional to the direct exercise

of social, economic, and political rights, used in non-exclusive forms and through collective governance that distributes rights between an open community of commoners in a non-rival and cooperative way. The legislative context must enable their special governance regime, encouraging and guaranteeing the establishment of collective civic management and popular assembly bodies, which constitute a new horizon of democratic self-government. Examples are ex-urban or rural places re-functionalized as spaces for the claiming and exercise of rights and of collective fulfilment.

As is evident from these definitions, the issue of qualifying rights of use and forms of governance of the commons has become crucial. There is no common without a commoning, however, this statement has very different weight depending on the distinction between necessary and emerging commons. Urban commons are a paradigm of emerging commons. An urban commons foster commoning practices and give the opportunity to create projects and propose activities that would be difficult to accomplished in the realm of the

state and the market, because the mainstream mentality of the *homo economicus* is not capable to grasp its contradictions. Indeed, urban commons are a testimony of a social revolution (De Angelis 2017).

In this sense, commoning practices of self-management are essential to qualify a common as such. But many other questions arise. Can only a public good be a common? Are the citizens who care for it public or private subjects? If a common good is behind the state and the market, its governance needs new instruments, hybrids between public and private law. This legal-transformative capacity is distinctive of commons' theory.

Moreover, using and managing goods in common is then an occasion, and not the objective, to create community and territorial cohesion, to claim new rights starting from the mutualistic satisfaction that citizens themselves are able to develop in autonomous and solidarity-based forms. The key approach used in Naples was to combine horizontal subsidiarity with policies of substantial equality (De Tullio 2020). In this way the abuse was countered. This gives local administrations the opportu-

nity to support commoning experiences also economically. If this is not possible for budgetary reasons, these administrations have the duty not to repress them at least. In fact, due to a perverse idea of legality, local authorities are too often guilty twice over: firstly, by neglecting public space and being co-responsible for the degradation of private property; secondly, by repressing those who try to revitalise it through occupation practices. In this respect, Naples has certainly been in the vanguard.

Neapolitan experience it has a constitutive link with rights of civic use. These types of rights are still in force today in various parts of Italy, even though if they may seem anachronistic. Among these we find the right to collect wood, mushrooms, or water, and similar. These are, in a broader sense, rights due to an organised community settled on a territory and recognised to each of its members, *uti cives* and *uti singuli*; their content extends not only to the *uti* but also to the *frui* of the utilities of a common land. The history of civic uses (which take different names in different parts of the country) and their regulatory framework are troubled. They

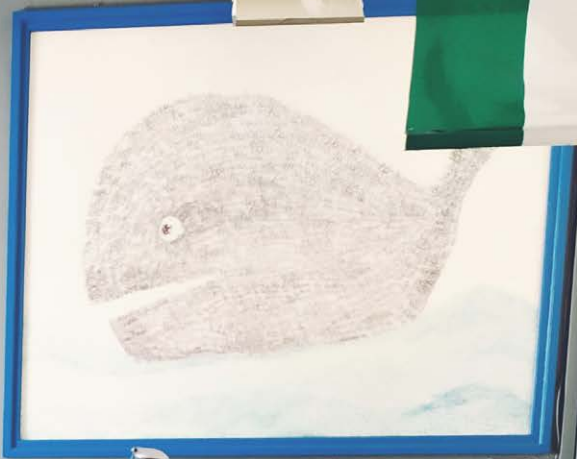
have recently been reformed by Law n.168 of 20.09.2017. Here, it suffices to point out that civic uses impose a relational coordination between the subjects who share the same bundle of rights. Goods ruled by civic uses may be public or private, but their rights (and in many cases management) are collectively imputed to a community of reference territorially identified. Certainly, there are also civic use regulations that jealously guard, and sometimes even in an exclusionary manner, the right to access and exploit land. But this should not make us forget the precious potential of their history; the emergence of collective and in certain way participatory governance structures that are institutions functionalised by the conservation not only of the good, but even of the environment. In Naples we have tried to reinterpret and adapt the civic uses into the sphere of urban space. From the right to collect wood in forest or livestock grazing (“traditional” civic uses), to the right to use spaces to perform like theatre rehearsals in an underused public building, among others. This was the output

of a “creative use of law”: or in other words to “hack” the legal proposals made by local authorities or private owners (Micciarelli, forthcoming) To do this, we subverted the classic scheme where citizens pose claims and institutions provide solution, in alliance with researchers and activists<sup>2</sup> •

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2 [exasilofilangieri.it/approfondimenti-e-reportage/](https://exasilofilangieri.it/approfondimenti-e-reportage/)

TEATRO





# The Civic eState policy transfer process

by **Christian Iaione** Lead Expert

**T**he Civic eState transfer network final product (TNPR) shows the progress made by the 7 partner cities from the kick-off throughout the evolutions and to the final endpoint. The Civic eState Transfer Network was supposed to end by December 2020, but its completion was postponed to 2021 due to the Covid-19 pandemic that hit significantly Italy and Naples, as well as other EU cities involved in the network, in the first pandemic outbreak and connected national lockdown (March-May 2020). Notwithstanding the postponement in the project's timeline, the 7 partner cities learned from the pandemic and nurtured their understanding about two crucial factors: first of all, the reaction to the pandemic at the local level improved the cities' understanding of the crucial role played by mechanisms of civic collaboration and therefore the essential role played by the cooperation between urban communities, private actors, knowledge actors, civil society organizations and city governments.

Second, the role of neighborhoods and neighborhood-based networks of social and informal economy emerged as a critical factor to en-

sure an effective and widespread response to the pandemic.

The Civic eState TNPR allows the reader to elaborate a critical assessment of the overall results of the policy transfer process carried out within the Civic eState network. Building on the basis of the cities' self-assessment of the Institutional Design Principles, this contribution will introduce the reader to the metrics used by the network to measure the progress made through the transfer journey towards the achievement of an urban co-governance approach for governing the urban commons. It is one of the first attempts to define a common policy framework and measure its adaptive transfer to different cities in the implementation of urban commons governance. Thus it has to be read as an effort that the Civic eState has put on generating true impact on the policy landscape at the city and EU level, rather than limiting itself to the ordinary best practice sharing approach.

This introduction will briefly outline a critical evaluation of the progress made by cities, the results achieved in terms of the transfer but also the skills acquired by City officers and

ULG members and draw an agenda to pursue this experimentation further.

## **MEASURING THE TRANSFER PROGRESS**

*A key step in the transfer process was the self-assessment of the potential of the Civic eState to match the goals and targets that the EU foresee for cities in the EU Green Deal and in Horizon Europe.*

In the 2018 transferability study, the Civic eState network placed Naples' Good Practice into the EU policy context. The creation and collective management of urban commons according to democratic and participatory principles, was seen as contributing to the goals of European and worldwide conventions including the Urban Agenda for the EU, the Aarhus Convention, European Structural and Investment Funds, the United Nations Sustainable Goals, and the Faro convention on collective governance of cultural heritage. Moreover, the network was seen as advancing the role of cities as catalysts for change and problem-solvers of some of the most difficult problems of our time, including the fight against poverty,

inclusion of migrants and providing good quality public services for all. Three years later, the network was able to prove how urban commons can deliver tangible benefits to residents and help advance European and global agendas. The progress made thus far by the partners can help contribute to more recent European and global agendas that have been drafted in the past three years including the New Leipzig Charter as well as new funding programs Horizon 2021-2027. Moreover, a participatory approach to urban commons can also be instrumental to achieve smart and inclusive cities.

At the heart of the Civic eState transfer methodology was the use of an analytical framework developed by a global network of urban scholars, including myself (as the Lead expert). The proposed framework, the Co-City Approach is composed by five institutional design principles (co-governance; enabling state; pooling economies; experimentalism; tech justice) that constitute enabling conditions to trigger urban commons in cities and achieve some of the objectives related to urban sustainable development as stated in the EU policies



mentioned above. Analysing the pilot results through these lenses is a way to measure how urban commons can contribute to the URBACT participatory approach to urban development. The Civic eState adapted this approach and carried out a self-assessment and then an impact measurement exercise based on such principles. A rough overview on the principles allows us to make the link between urban commons and URBACT - and EU urban policies in general - clearer.

### **CO-GOVERNANCE**

*Co-governance refers to the presence of a multi-stakeholder governance scheme whereby the community emerges as an actor and partners (through sharing, collaboration, cooperation, and coordination) with four other possible categories of urban actors in a loosely coupled system.*

At the heart of Civic e-State is a multi-stakeholder to governing civic assets. In line with the quintuple helix theory, all partner cities have catalyzed collaboration with the following types of actors either through ULG or LAWG meetings: public, private, knowledge institution, so-

cial organizations and commoners (or civic innovators). In all of the pilots carried out by cities within Civic eState, civil servants from the municipalities were the main trigger of the institutional change process, but the urban communities were proactive actors. The self-organization and emergence of the community had in Gdansk and its solidarity movements enabled by a long-standing tradition in collective action and unionizing one of the best examples. The initiatives of the foundation for social innovation, the neighborhood houses activities, the energy put in the creation of a civic hub are all signals of the same social activism that led cities like Naples, Barcelona, Gent, Amsterdam to devise policy solutions that leverage the power of civic collaboration.

### **ENABLING STATE**

*This expresses the role of the State (usually local public authorities) in facilitating the creation of urban commons and supporting collective governance arrangements for the management and sustainability of the urban commons.*

The partners of Civic eState were

conscious of the pivotal role that governments can play in creating the conditions for participatory and collectively managed urban commons.

Naples, Barcelona, Gent, Amsterdam, Gansk have a long-standing and widely celebrated tradition of public policies and publicly funded projects enabling the collective action. For this reason, we focus here on cities like Iasi and Presov which invested heavily in simplifying the bureaucratic and legal procedures for civic uses regulation, as well as creating a procedure for an open call that was welcomed very positively by the actors. In particular, the city of Presov is probably the partner that learnt the most from the innovative approach of the city as an enabler of urban commons that Naples embodies. The goal that Presov set for itself was to learn how to encourage city residents to cooperate between themselves and with the City, which proves hard in her experience as a post-communist city, with very little experience in civic engagement and public participation. Presov decided to focus

on identifying legal measures and policy tools to promote the civic use of public space and city owned real estate. While the City recognizes that the need for simplification of administrative burdens is still there, along with the hesitancy of civil servants to be involved in disruptive projects, they managed to simplify legal rules for the use of abandoned or unused real estate.<sup>1</sup> The City also identified a range of acceptable plots of land, as well as solutions suitable for communication with the city residents. Iasi was no less active in trying to trigger a civic empowerment process creating both a spatial and a governance infrastructure. Indeed, beyond the implementation of an integrated scheme for the active involvement of local stakeholders for the collaborative management of commons, the City identified a former school canteen where to experiment forms of collaboration.

### **POOLING ECONOMIES**

*This refers to the presence of autonomous institutions (e.g., civic, financial, social, economic, etc.) that are*

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1 URBACT. 2021. Enabling co-governance in a post-communist city: Prešov Transfer Story. URBACT (Blog), Last Edited on May 31, 2021. <https://urbact.eu/enabling-co-governance-post-communist-city-pre%C5%A1ov-transfer-story>

*open, participatory, and managed or owned by local communities operating within non-mainstream economic systems (e.g. cooperative, social and solidarity, circular, cultural, or collaborative economies, etc.) that pool resources and stakeholders often resulting in the creation of new opportunities (e.g. jobs, skills, education, etc.) and services (e.g. housing, care, utilities, etc.) in underserved areas of the city or for vulnerable inhabitants.*

Some of the partners' pilots rely on non-mainstream economic systems. For example, Amsterdam's Commons Agenda to support civic use of assets rely upon supporting different areas of activity that have the potential to develop cross-cutting social economy networks: energy, food, poverty/care, public space/housing, finance and sharing knowledge.<sup>2</sup>

Moreover, Amsterdam's MAEX and Barcelona's Community Balance tool provided excellent examples of

ways to measure the urban social value generated by the commons activated in the City.<sup>3</sup> Municipalities encourages the adoption of social value measurement mechanisms in urban commons mostly to ensure accountability towards the urban residents' population. Within Civic eState though, the partner cities started to look at those mechanisms as useful tools to use when applying for funding. They might contribute to attract the attention of institutional investors within social finance schemes, such as for example social outcome contracting, or EIB and European Structural and Investment Funds Financial Instruments that require 'bankability'. The Civic eState network shaped its activities also in light of the EU efforts to build a taxonomy for social finance. Social finance is a fundamental pillar for the Civic Estate experimentations, as only socially sustainable revenues and investments enable innovation and growth for organizations and networks seeking to better-off issues

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2 URBACT. 2021. Energy and food as commons: Amsterdam Transfer Story. URBACT (Blog), Last Edited on June 4, 2021. <https://urbact.eu/energy-and-food-commons-amsterdam-transfer-story>

3 URBACT. 2021. Shifting from Civic Management to Community Management: Barcelona Transfer Story. URBACT (Blog), Last Edited on June 3, 2021. <https://urbact.eu/shifting-civic-management-community-management-barcelona-transfer-story>

and challenges set by EU and global urban policies. Differently from mainstream investment where there is an expectation for income of profit, social finance's main focus is on organizations which actively contribute to social, environmental and cultural initiatives.

The EU's Employment and Social Innovation Programme pioneered a guarantee scheme for social enterprise finance. Under the European Fund for Strategic Investments, innovative social impact instruments were launched to support, for example, investments in social incubation and acceleration. Based on this experience, the new EU multi-annual financing arrangements (2021-2027) envisage a substantial increase in support for social investment.<sup>4</sup> The Civic Estate network is particularly suitable for experimenting with social financing both for the societal and cultural range of its local activities, as explored [here](#) and [here](#).

## EXPERIMENTALISM

*This is the presence of an adaptive, place-based and iterative approach to design legal and policy innovations that enable the urban commons.*

At the heart of all the partners' work there is a commitment to experimentalism. Throughout the three years, the cities have iterated possible legal frameworks and administrative arrangements that can support urban commons. The urban commons they created themselves are places where experimentalism thrives. For instance, St-Joseph Church in Ghent is envisioned to be a place where residents come up with solutions that address the specific needs of the neighborhood it is located in.

Embracing experimentalism aligns well with the New Leipzig Charter, which recommends that "neighborhoods should be regarded as potential laboratories for innovative

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4 For more information see: European Commission (2019) A recipe book for social finance. Second edition: A practical guide on designing and implementing initiatives to develop social finance instruments and markets. Authors: Eva Varga and Malcolm Hayday. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. ISBN 978-92-76-11976-0 doi:10.2767/765977 KE-01-19-804-EN-N

approaches covering all fields of urban development”.<sup>5</sup>

## TECH JUSTICE

*This highlights access, participation, co-management and/or co-ownership of technological and digital urban infrastructure and data as an enabling driver of cooperation and co-creation of urban commons.*

All cities have thought about how to make the digital and technological infrastructure around the commons equitable and accessible to everyone. Barcelona for example, with its development of the Citizen Assets Catalogue, it has made available to any citizen a list of assets that have been – or are available to – let and be managed by the community. This includes information on the neighborhood, characteristics of the assets and project features. The City of Naples’ ULG paved the way by creating a digital tool that city residents in Naples that are currently involved in an urban commons institution, or are planning on creating one, can use to share

their journey with a global community: [commonsnapoli.org](https://commonsnapoli.org). The step ahead, for Naples as well as other cities, would be to create digital solutions that enable virtual collaboration, that allow for the co-creation and delivery of services and support the impact assessment of the urban commons experimentations and the related policies.

## **Expanding synergies. potential connections between civic estate and other networks of the urbact galaxy**

The second aspect that needs to be stressed about the Civic eState network is its potential to produce impact after the end of the UR-BACT-funded project and develop its pilots into concrete policies at the local level. It will also explore the possibility for Civic eState cities to work together as a larger city network, or to participate to EU or global level city networking/city diplomacy activities.

*The main aim of this contribution is*

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5 European Commission 2020. The New Leipzig Charter, the Transformative power of cities for the common good. Adopted at the Informal Ministerial Meeting on Urban Matters on 30 November 2020. [https://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/sources/docgener/brochure/new\\_leipzig\\_charter/new\\_leipzig\\_charter\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docgener/brochure/new_leipzig_charter/new_leipzig_charter_en.pdf)

*to demonstrate if and how the Civic eState transfer network could join forces with a handful of other transfer networks to identify potential synergies and pursue further opportunities for collaboration unveiling some key impact pathways.*

The December 2020 meeting of the Civic eState partners to discuss possible next steps highlighted an emerging consensus on the necessity to continue to exchange knowledge and amplify the potential of urban commons for cities across the world.

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Many of the themes addressed by Civic eState are also faced by other existing URBACT networks. For example, the [Active Citizens](#) network led by the city of Agen, France, has attempted to rethink the place of the citizen in local governance by piloting digital platforms for participatory democracy. Another possible network to liaise with is [Com. Unity.Lab](#), a network led by Lisbon that has tested co-governance and bottom-up participatory approaches to mitigate social, economic, environmental and enhance social-territorial cohesion. Finally, the [ALT/BAU](#) network also has a lot of synergies with Civic e-State. Led by

the city of Chemnitz, Germany, this network has piloted strategies to activate and revitalize unused and decaying housing stock by connecting administrations, owners, investors and users to collaborate. Finally, the [Active NGOs network](#) led by the City of Riga is an important potential future partner for Civic eState. In [this](#) article written by Levente Polyak, the project's Lead Expert, the connections with Civic eState emerge clearly as the ACTIVE NGOs network worked on establishing a set of conditions that allow for the creation, in different urban contexts, of civic nodes or "NGO houses". Many of those principles overlap with those experimented by Civic eState: mapping civic initiatives and organisations to better understand the activities, needs and ambitions in a city or neighbourhood; exploring potential links and building incentives to construe strong local civic ecosystems; mechanisms to support civic actors in the access and sharing of public or private spaces; innovative economic models; inclusive and participatory governance structures to regulate the shared use of spaces and resources, connecting a myriad of institutions across the cities; capacity building programs.

Some of the strategies that Civic eState could pursue, alone or in collaboration with other networks, include:

- **Applying to new programs with the partners of the Civic eState Network:** the partners identified Horizon Europe, the European Urban Agenda, Urbact III and IV, the European Urban Initiative, and the International Urban Cooperation as possible programs to apply for funding for.
- **Amplify the network transfer at global events:** the city partners expressed the willingness to disseminating the results of the project at global city events. These include the Urban Future Global conference, the Global Parliament of Mayors, the World Urban Forum, all of which take place in 2021. Beyond sharing the results of the network, the cities could make connections with other European and global cities that can help advance the knowledge of commons even further.
- **Establishing an urban commons city network:** another idea that the cities discussed is to create a permanent network to continue exchanging knowledge and best practice on urban commons. This

could eventually be broadened to other European cities who are interested in creating commons. By creating a larger coalition, the network could hope to attract more funding for future activities.

### **Civic estate and the eu policy landscape on urban innovation, climate change and sustainability**

Urban commons, by reframing citizens as protagonists of urban life and catalyzing collaboration across all sectors of society, can help achieve EU's climate neutral and smart cities goals, as well as abide by the New Leipzig Charter which emphasizes the importance of cross-sectoral collaboration and public participation:

"New forms of participation should be encouraged and improved, including co-creation and co-design in cooperation with inhabitants, civil society networks, community organisations and private enterprises. Experimenting with new forms of participation can help cities manage conflicting interests, share responsibilities and find innovative solutions while also reshaping and maintaining urban spaces and

forming new alliances to create integrated city spaces. Public participation is central to the successful delivery of a high-quality built environment.”<sup>6</sup>

Also, the Civic eState design principles of pooling economies and tech justice advance the New Leipzig Charter’s dimension of ‘the just city’. According to the charter, justice is one of three core elements (together with green city and productive city) that ensures the development of resilient cities that can deal with social, economic and ecological challenges. Justice means providing “equal opportunities and environmental justice for all, regardless of gender, socioeconomic status, age and origin – leaving no one behind [...] and opportunities for everyone to integrate in society.”<sup>7</sup> Especially during times of COVID-19, the network has shown that

tech and digital can help reach out to all members of society, including the most vulnerable, and help cities to create inclusive policies.

By developing policies that adhere to these principles and implement them adapting to the local contexts, Civic eState cities as much as any other EU city investing on a similar approach can contribute to EU and worldwide agendas that are relevant for sustainable urban development. Among the potential opportunities to create an impact we can indicate the EU Green Deal, the 100 Climate Neutral Cities’ Mission and Horizon Europe more broadly.

1) The European Green Deal: The EU Green Deal is the European Commission’s growth strategy to become the world’s first carbon neutral continent.<sup>8</sup> The commons of the city of Amsterdam have shown that

6 European Commission.2020. The New Leipzig Character, the Transformative power of cities for the common good. Adopted at the Informal Ministerial Meeting on Urban Matters on 30 November 2020. [https://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/sources/docgener/brochure/new\\_leipzig\\_charter/new\\_leipzig\\_charter\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docgener/brochure/new_leipzig_charter/new_leipzig_charter_en.pdf)

7 European Commission.2020. The New Leipzig Character, the Transformative power of cities for the common good. Adopted at the Informal Ministerial Meeting on Urban Matters on 30 November 2020. [https://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/sources/docgener/brochure/new\\_leipzig\\_charter/new\\_leipzig\\_charter\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docgener/brochure/new_leipzig_charter/new_leipzig_charter_en.pdf)

8 European Commission. n.d. A European Green Deal Striving to be the first climate-neutral continent. European Commission (Website). Last accessed September 28, 2021. [https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal_en)



is possible to engage in collective management of housing, food and energy to make the city more environmentally sustainable. Creating new urban commons that promote environmental sustainability and environmental awareness can help achieve the EU Green Deal goals.

2) Horizon Europe and the 100 Climate Neutral Cities' Mission: with the €94.1 billion funding for Horizon Europe (2021-2027) being available soon, urban commons can form the basis of innovative proposals.<sup>9</sup> Among the mission areas identified by Horizon Europe, there is a huge potential for Civic eState partners to take part in initiatives as part of the Climate Neutral and Smart Cities mission.<sup>10</sup> The 100 Climate-neutral Cities by 2030 – by and for the Citizens aims at supporting, promote

and showcase 100 European cities in their systematic transformation towards climate neutrality by 2030, making these cities innovation hubs for all. The 100 cities signing the Climate City Contracts will develop and implement an innovation concept: system innovation in governance, transport, energy, construction, and recycling, supported by powerful digital technologies. To achieve this mission, the European Commission recommended a new role for citizens: "Pivotal for the mission's success is the involvement of citizens in their different roles as political actors, users, producers, consumers or owners of buildings and transport means"; citizens, need to be "given priority to mobility, energy, urban infrastructures/buildings, circular economy and behavioural change".<sup>11</sup>

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9 European Commission. n.d. Mission area: Climate-neutral and smart cities What this mission area is, how missions will be chosen, mission boards, meetings, news, events. European Commission (Website). Last accessed September 28, 2021. [https://ec.europa.eu/info/research-and-innovation/funding/funding-opportunities/funding-programmes-and-open-calls/horizon-europe/missions-horizon-europe/climate-neutral-and-smart-cities\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/research-and-innovation/funding/funding-opportunities/funding-programmes-and-open-calls/horizon-europe/missions-horizon-europe/climate-neutral-and-smart-cities_en)

10 EU Science and Innovation. 2020. EU missions – Climate-neutral and smart cities. European Commission (Video). Last accessed September 28, 2021. <https://youtu.be/HoqZ7QeEIHU>

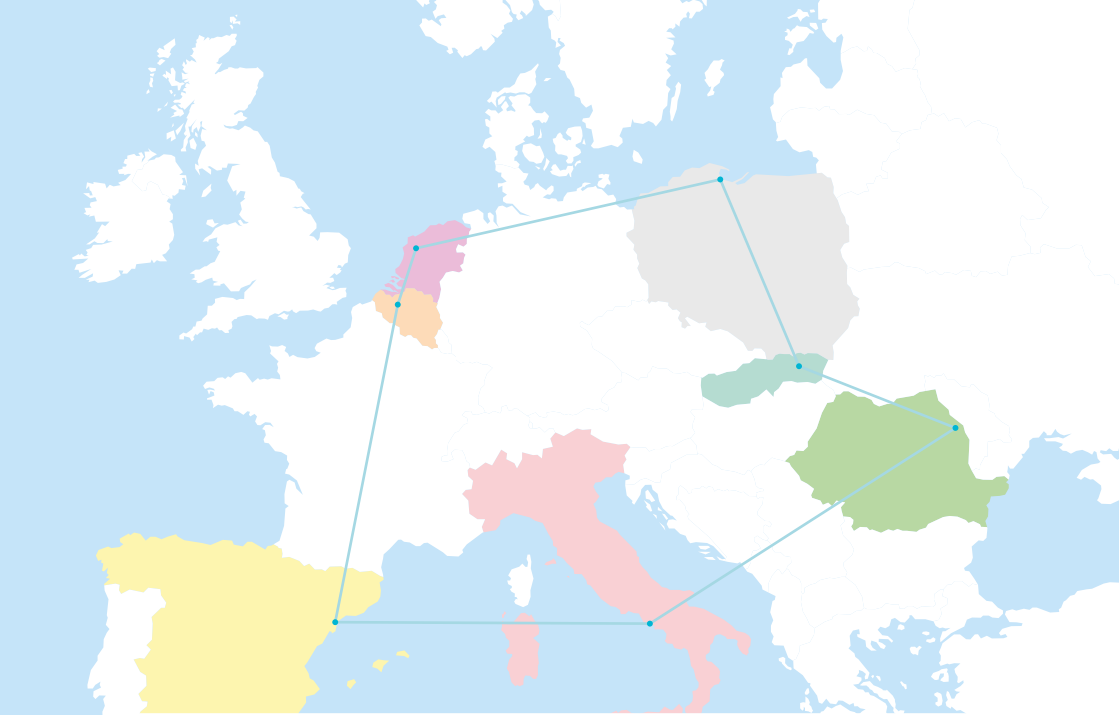
11 European Commission Directorate-General for Research and Innovation. 2020. Proposed Mission: 100 Climate-neutral Cities by 2030 – by and for the Citizens Report of the Mission Board for climate-neutral and smart cities. European Commission Independent Expert Report. [https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/research\\_and\\_innovation/funding/documents/ec\\_rtd\\_mission-board-report-climate-neutral-and-smart-cities.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/research_and_innovation/funding/documents/ec_rtd_mission-board-report-climate-neutral-and-smart-cities.pdf)

## **A DIGITAL TOOL TO SELF-ASSESS AND MEASURE URBAN CO- GOVERNANCE**

34 A critical step to achieve the agenda that the Civic eState cities committed to even after the end of the project's timeline requires communication and dissemination capacities as well as a high degree of replicability of the pilot experimentations. Therefore, Civic eState created a digital tool to allow all this: <https://www.civicestate.eu/>. The Civic eState digital tool is built on three digital layers, corresponding to three goals. The first digital layer is a storytelling of the Civic eState transfer journey and collects the materials produced by partners: "Mission", "Network", "People". The Mission section is dedicated to describing Civic eState's mission and the theoretical framework used to carry out the project. The "Network" section contains a digital profile of Civic eState partner cities, to disseminate the transfer-related material with accessible data visualization tools. This would make possible for other social innovators to replicate and adapt the experimentations. The "People" section shows the people involved in the project and their roles in the project. This layer has been designed

as a showcase not only to disseminate the results of the Civic eState project, but also similar projects carried out by the City of Naples and other EU actors. The second digital layer is composed by the section ("Your Contribution"). Here, users may answer a form in order to receive a self-assessment evaluation on their project on urban commons and understand how it is proceeding. The third digital layer was designed by the platform web designers but is still to be finalized through co-creation sessions with relevant stakeholders. The goal of the third digital layer, also the most innovative, is to create an open data platform for urban commons highlighting how these experiences are key for the achievement of both SDGs and ESGs. This is to demonstrate how urban commons can generate economic value. In this regard, the platform will be a valuable tool for finding new lines of funding for urban commons •





# Mapping the Transfer Journey

**A retrospective and scenario  
exercise for the Civic eState  
network**

**by Liat Rogel** Ad Hoc Expert

*When the most important times are occurring, we don't even recognize them or notice. We are just busy living our lives. Only looking back do we know what was a great moment in our lives.*

*Federico Fellini*

**C**ivic eState URBACT network cities are now concluding a process to transfer a governance model for urban commons based on best practices from the city of Naples. The transfer journey methodology and themes were led by Christian Iaione as Lead Expert, and by the Naples municipality team as lead partner.

This article describes a retrospective and scenario exercise that adapts a tool from the discipline of Service Design to enable self-evaluation, future planning and communication of the work done.

During the Journey Mapping, the cities of the URBACT Civic eState network took a look back at their unique journeys to find perspective and reflect on their paths. Looking back allows the partners to look forward confidently, to focus on their outcomes and to map in real-time their steps and scenarios for the future to come. This exercise lasted 10 months (from March 2020

to December 2020) and included meetings, individual reviews and collective feedback sessions.

### **LOOKING BACK AT THE JOURNEY. A RETROSPECTIVE EXERCISE**

Generally, a **retrospective** (from Latin *retrospectare*, “look back”), is a look at events that took place or at works that were produced in the past. Retrospective also has specific and varied meanings in medicine, software development, popular culture and the arts.

For example, in Agile software methodologies, Retrospectives are frequently used by teams to quickly verify what went well, what did not and how things may be improved.

Similarly, creating a specific exercise and process for Retrospectives within the Civic eState network was useful for self-evaluation, future planning and dissemination.

The Retrospective is intended to reveal facts, actions or feelings which have measurable effects on the performance of a city until a certain point. It is made to construct ideas for improvement based on these observations. Retrospectives promote ownership and responsibility by the project team with respect to all aspects of the journey, and

participants can understand the rationale behind all decisions. This process and its final results are a complementary tool to the Learning Logs. I chose a tool from the Service Design discipline to guide this Retrospective: the User Journey Map.

**USER JOURNEY.  
A SERVICE DESIGN TOOL**

Journey mapping is a schema used widely in Service Design. It allows designers to visualize the path of a user in a specific service and understand the actions and interactions a user engages with in order to reach a specific objective. For example, a Journey Map for a hotel would map every time a customer

interacts with hotel staff or products, including searching for a hotel and leaving a review after the visit. In parallel to these specific actions, emotions like satisfaction and frustration are evaluated at each point to empathise and recognize the various pain and gain points for the user during their journey.

User journeys utilize a high level of detail to describe exactly what steps different users take to complete a specific task within a system, application, or website. This technique displays the actual (as-is) user workflow and reveals areas of potential improvement for the to-be workflow. When documented, this artefact is often referred to as



Customer Journey Map ...  
uxplanet.org



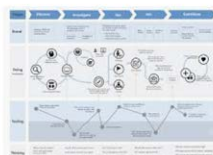
How to build a customer journey map ...  
uxdesign.cc



Why you need Customer Journey Mapping ...  
robertacinus.it



Nielsen Norman Group: UX Research ...  
nngroup.com

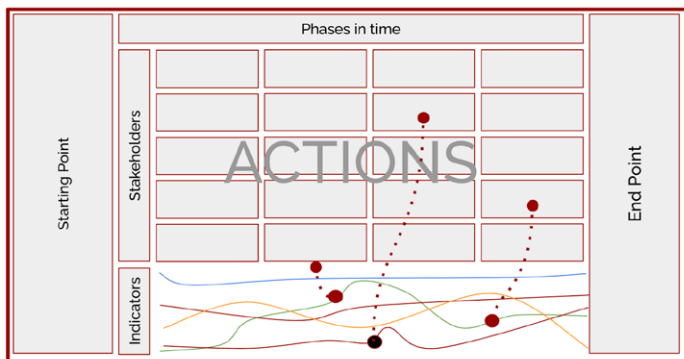


Customer Journey Map for SaaS Source: 1 ...  
pinterest.com



Customer Journey Mapping in E-commerce ...  
uxpressia.com





a User Journey Map.

User Journey Maps may come in different forms. The basic shape is a linear timeline, where time is divided into specific phases of the journey horizontally, while vertically we find one or more types of users or tasks.

#### **ADAPTING THE TOOL TO A BEST PRACTICE TRANSFER AND INTEGRATING WITH DESIGN INDICATORS**

The cities in the Civic eState transfer network were more than half-way through their journey when we introduced the Journey Mapping tool. The idea was to adapt the tool in order to help each city reflect on its journey, understand the most important points and what there is to learn from their challenges along the way. The tool was built by fol-

lowing a traditional user journey structure and then adapting it to the specific context of Civic eState. Starting and Ending Points were included to evaluate the progress of the cities. The set of indicators chosen for the evaluation were derived from the Co-Cities Open Book, a research project carried out by LUISS and Guglielmo Marconi Universities aimed at providing methodological principles, case study analysis, and quantitative tools to help implement and measure the level of implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and the New Urban Agenda.<sup>1</sup>

The **Starting Point** describes the city and various aspects of its individual context as it was when it entered the project such as the reason for participation, the avail-

<sup>1</sup> <https://labgov.city/co-city-protocol/the-co-cities-open-book/>

able assets, the challenges and the objectives. It also described the current policy in place and the stakeholder(s) already involved. Lastly, it included a self-evaluation tool following the Design Indicators derived from the Co-Cities Open Book,<sup>2</sup> described below.

- **Co-Governance** refers to the presence or absence of a self-, shared, collaborative or polycentric organization for the governance of the commons in cities;
- **Enabling State** expresses the role of the State in the governance of the commons and identifies the characteristics of an enabling state that facilitates collective actions for the commons;
- **Social and Economic Pooling** is the distinction between an urban governance scheme based on co-governance, and an urban governance scheme based on urban pools, This variable is maximized when civic actors adopt a more entrepreneurial approach;
- **Experimentalism** is the presence of an adaptive, place-based and iterative approach to design legal and policy innovations that enable the urban commons;
- **Tech Justice** highlights the po-

tentiality of digital infrastructures and access to technology in particular for vulnerable people and communities as an enabling factor of collaboration, local development and social cohesion.

The **Journey** in the middle section highlights the main actions done by separate stakeholders in different phases of the project. These phases followed those of the transfer process itself. Beneath the actions, the cities had to evaluate their state in a specific phase, or bring attention to a specific event that influenced their progress using the Design Indicators described above.

Finally, the **End Point** describes the changes in the assets, in the policy, and in their ULG's composition. It also describes effective strategies for overcoming challenges and the evaluation and evolution of their initial objectives. This is where the partners were given the opportunity to reflect on their lessons learned and imagine a realistic, future scenario. Self evaluation results were meaningful for defining the present and future steps and detailing new objectives.

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<sup>2</sup> <http://commoning.city/>



## FILLING IN AND SHARING EXPERIENCES

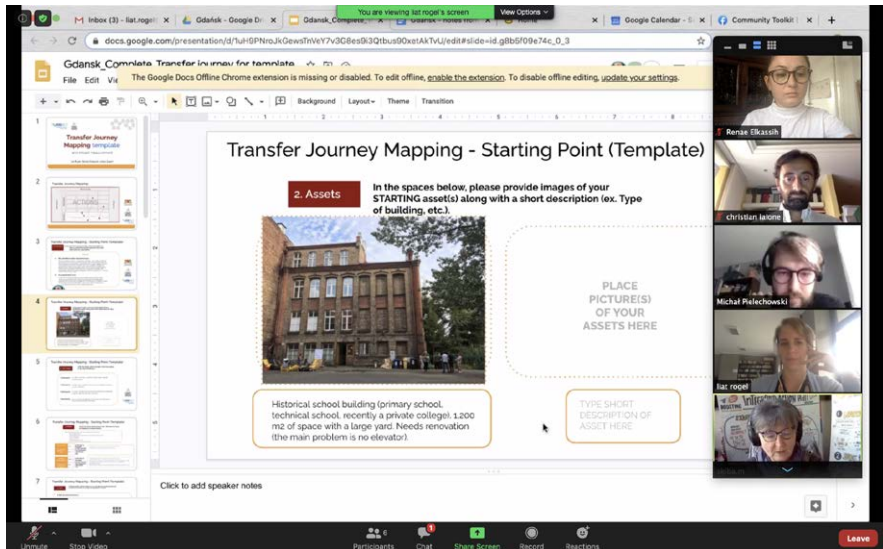
Using this tool to fill out their unique journey became a good time to share a moment of reflection with the cities. The tool was introduced during an online meeting with all partners and each participant had the opportunity to begin. Then, 1-on-1 meetings were held with each city to deeply explore their journey, going into more detail and, most of all, to enable a better understanding of the effect that the journey (or part of it) had on the city administration, policy and ULG.

During these 1-on1 meetings, participants were asked to describe the “story of their journey,” verbally,

as if to an outsider. They then summarized this story in a one-pager and finally, delved into the details, step by step. Looking back at the journey with the eye of an external observer resulted in a fun and interesting exercise and proved to be extremely useful for extracting insights.

The End Point was filled in by the partners before another transnational meeting online. During this meeting, the partners shared their end points with each other and exchanged perspectives and results from the outcomes of the experiences.

Working closely with the partners to fill out their journey using the tool

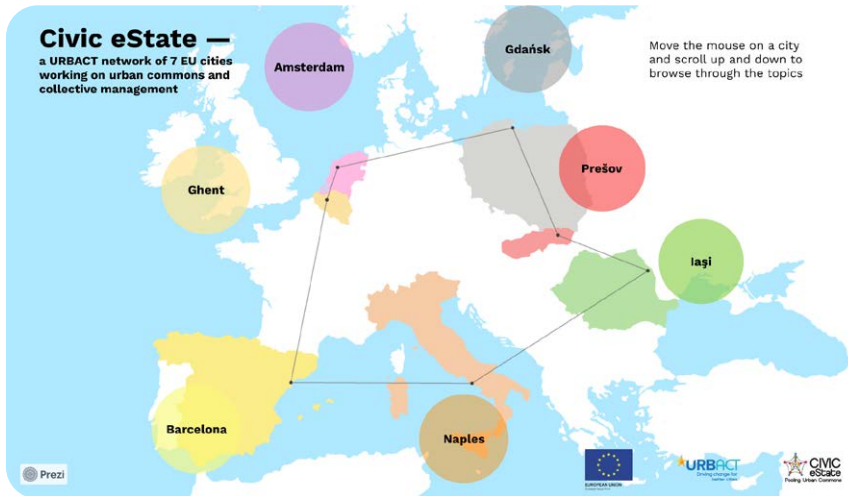


guaranteed that the tool was not only an analytical or visualisation aid, but a co-produced, shared reflection on the whole process.

### VISUALIZING THE JOURNEY

The last part of the Exercise was about transforming our insights into a visualisation; a way to communicate the journey both internally and to a larger public. It was important not to focus only on the results, but to also give space to the starting point and the process in order to more deeply understand how challenges were overcome and objectives reached. To this end, the online interactive presentation software Prezi was used for the visualization of each city's journey. It is a tool that allows you to observe

the whole process, or zoom into some of the details. This makes it accessible to different target audiences. Using a visualisation tool in this way transforms a city's journey into a coherent and complete story, which enhances both the experience of the viewer and the ability to demonstrate the context and environment surrounding a city's path throughout Civic eState, including its inevitable challenges, its accomplishments and current status. The viewer is able to choose the level of detail for each phase of a city's journey insofar as having the ability to click on links outside of the visualisation itself and view individual sources, while being guided along a general path at the same time •





Move the mouse on a topic and scroll up and down to browse

# Naples

Background

Starting Point

The Transfer Process

Journey Results

Transfer Outcomes



## Background

Fact



Policy History

Barcelona's **political history and modern attitude towards community** contributed greatly towards the eventual results and outcomes of the **Civic eState** project.

Transfer Potential

Check out the subtopics below to learn more about our Policy History and Transfer Potential.



Transfer Assets



# **Transfer Stories**

**How Naples' Good Practice  
has been adapted**



# Barcelona

**Shifting from Civic Management  
to Community Management**



**Looking at the other cities of the network, Barcelona continued to work to support new forms of interaction between the public municipal institution and community citizen initiatives, based on the recognition of the right to public management and use of public resources by the people.**

**B**arcelona has a long history of municipal public assets being used for community purposes, including real estate, plots of land or facilities managed by non-profit organisations, and this “community-use” is administered through a variety of participatory management models.

This long-standing tradition of community-managed property and non-profit associationism is linked to the opposition against the dictatorship in Spain in the 1960s and 1970s, and the sudden growth due to the immigration experienced during the same decades: the city council did not provide the basic welfare services to the newcomers, so the neighbourhoods developed their own spaces and institutions in response. This historical background has influenced how the city is managed to this day and led to the insistence of neighbourhood services.

Barcelona’s administration has

adapted to this bottom-up approach and it has consequently developed various policies which consist of the aggregation of each neighbourhood’s politics. This is one of the main reasons why Barcelona took part in the Civic eState project.

**A SHIFT FROM CIVIC MANAGEMENT TO COMMUNITY MANAGEMENT**

Barcelona City Council wants to promote new forms of interaction between the public municipal institution and community initiatives, answering the demands of the citizens to have public spaces and resources managed in a participatory manner. Barcelona is now developing further governance mechanisms to give access to and redistribution of public goods and services, by adopting and adapting regulatory frameworks developed together with other cities like Naples (e.g. the “civic use”) to enable participatory management inspired by shared criteria, values and vision and guaranteeing universality, ac-



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cessibility, sustainability and transparency and secure the self-governance of the communities in the long term.

While the city has been developing multiple strategies of civic management in the past (that is a community association managing a public resource), Barcelona is hoping to turn this practice into a community management strategy. This meaning that the association managing the public resource should not only serve the purpose of the organization itself but it also should have its own mechanisms to be connected to the surrounding community interests and needs. The shift from

Civic Management to Community Management implies incorporating a form of democratic and participatory governance, understanding that the entire community must be able to participate in the resource.

The transfer of public assets has been a common practice, although without a clear and coordinated (at least until now) commitment between different areas and districts of the municipal administration. The City Council generated a policy program about urban commons where citizens and various stakeholders have the capacity to constantly review both the theory and practice of urban commons. The



Community Balance is a community-based self-evaluation tool that ensures a democratic approach to the urban commons. At the same time, Barcelona aimed to coordinate and provide social criteria for the transfer of spaces and the management of municipal services to community projects promoted by non-profit entities in the city, and elaborated a “Citizen Assets Catalogue”, a census of buildings that can be let to the citizenry.

#### **BARCELONA’S CITIZEN ASSETS PROGRAMME**

As anticipated, Barcelona’s citizens participated in social life through associations, community organizations and movements since the end of the XIX century. During the dictatorship (1939-1975), these organizations were spaces of freedom and mutual aid. Their importance is relevant also after the dictatorship and part of the public services and mobility achievements of the Barcelona city council have been the result of demonstrations, campaigns and other kinds of citizen pressure activities.

To strengthen, support and promote these communitarian experiences, the Barcelona City Council,

with the support of different kinds of social stakeholders, developed in 2017 the Community Use and Management of Citizen Assets Programme. The programme has defined two main guidelines, the Community Balance and the Citizen Assets Catalogue.

The first defines the framework that regulates access to, and transfer of, municipal assets and creates a new self-evaluation mechanism. The Community Balance is being developed by the Solidarity Economy Network (XES) with the collaboration of the different civic neighbourhood entities.

Developing a Community Balance has been the starting tool for self-evaluations and it is vital to share it with the other European cities, as happened in the Civic eState project. It gives an idea of the values needed to monitor commons, and vice versa can reveal gaps and new solutions. Right now, its basic version is too general, too large and it lacks some elements: more pilot tests need to be done, as well as the itineraries, to finish adapting the tool to the diversity of projects. It is also necessary to generate spaces to advise and train organizations to share “common meanings”.

The second guideline, the Citizen Assets Catalogue, is a census of public assets that can be left to the community.

The Local Council has created a municipal body, the Citizen Asset Office, where the most important municipal departments are related to the cession of municipal assets to non-profit organizations. Its main objective is to arrange the criteria and modalities under which collaborative agreements about the provision of services are being carried out by non-profit collectives. The Office is formed by ULG members and has started its activity at the end of 2019. One of the challenges is to let the ULG become a legally and formally working group (the Citizens Assets Participatory space) in the organizational structure of the City Council.

#### **CHALLENGES**

After 3 years of setting up the project, Barcelona's Local Council still faces several challenges. Apart from the ones related to the Community Balance and the Citizen Asset Board, there are other challenges as:

- Need to respond to a growing demand regarding the community

management of public facilities and services.

- Formalize and regularize the Citizens Assets Participatory space in the organizational structure of the City Council.
- It is necessary to provide common criteria that can guide the decisions to allocate resources to community management.
- The procedures for small entities are complicated, they should be simplified and digitized.

Moreover, there is a need to coordinate the relations between the local entities and the City council. Each of the 10 districts has its own responsibilities and has its own relationship with the city council. Districts and areas have different criteria, procedures and modalities.

#### **PLANS FOR THE FUTURE**

In conclusion, Barcelona needs to define a common framework that includes the different municipal policies and community practices under which participative management of resources, spaces and public services are developed, generating shared values and vision that guarantee mechanisms of universality, accessibility, sustainability and transparency.

Beyond the political will, the proliferation of experiences and the diversity of cases makes it essential to arrange the criteria under which collaborative agreements about the provision of services are being carried out by non-profit collectives. Far from willing to homogenize (the experiences are indeed very diverse), it is necessary to provide common procedures that can guide the decisions to allocate resources to community management, based on indicators and objective data,

which allow assessing the social impact and return of the entity to the territory, as well as the community dimension of the proposals to be developed by the communities in these municipal resources. This new framework, which includes the Citizens Assets Programme as well as a renewed proposal for Community Management of Facilities and Services, constitutes the future of the Barcelona City Council Commons Programme •



Can Batlló

# Ghent

**Sharing principles and legal tools  
to enable participation**



## **The Journey of the Belgian city in the Civic eState Transfer Network, and its special exchange with Barcelona, Amsterdam and Naples**

**I**n 2018 the slot conference of the URBACT project Refill concerning the temporary use of vacant spaces took place in the beautiful Saint Jozef Church, in Ghent. At that time, the City was planning on buying this church and 'giving it back' to the neighbourhood citizens. After the positive experience in the Refill<sup>1</sup> project, Ghent decided to participate in the URBACT project Civic eState, concerning the co-management by the city and its citizens of city assets and chose the Saint Jozef Church as its main pilot project

The main goal of Ghent's Team in the Civic eState project was the launch of an open call to find a coordinator for the Saint Jozef Church. This Church is located in the Rabot neighbourhood, one of the poorest and most multicultural neighbourhoods of the City. It has more people receiving benefits, more low incomes, more unemployment and more single-parent families compared to the rest of

the city's districts. Rabot is also known as an arrival district, where there is a general rotation of 10% of the residents each year. In the diverse neighbourhood, 70,5 of the residents are of foreign descent (District Monitor Ghent, 2019) and there are more than 90 nationalities. In this neighbourhood, community development workers assist citizens to become active and organise themselves to respond to issues and opportunities that can help both the neighbourhood and their own personal development.

Exchanges with other Civic eState's cities helped Ghent to think about how to find a good manager in an open, participative way. Ghent is learning from cities like Barcelona, Amsterdam, Gdansk on how to enhance its own city policies in this regard, having a few principles in common such as sustainability and inclusivity.

Following the URBACT methodology, Ghent brought together the

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<sup>1</sup> [urbact.eu/Refill](http://urbact.eu/Refill)



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commoners, citizens, organisations from the neighbourhood to form the Urbact Local Group (ULG), which is actively involved in the project. The ULG defined the needs of the neighbourhood and the guiding principles of the assignment of the future coordinator which were translated in the text of the open call.

Ghent also created a cross-departmental task force within the city administration that works on the project. The task force is composed of civil servants of the policy participation service, the real estate service and the legal service. This cross-departmental approach has

proven to work so well that Ghent decided to use this approach in other projects, such as the *Neighbourhood Budget Project*. Along the way, Ghent's Local Administrative Group stumbled upon several problems concerning the pilot project. Besides the COVID-19 pandemic, there were safety, financial and insurance issues, and all this made it impossible to launch the open call in spring 2020 as planned.

The open call was launched on March 1st, and the coordinator will have to come with a threefold plan that encompasses the organisation of the use of the Church by citizens and organisations, the

maintenance of the Church building and the creation of the democratic and economic management models for the Church. The coordinator must do so in respect of the guiding principles, e.g. all aspects of the plan must be community-oriented and take into account the specific needs of the diverse and colourful neighbourhood the Church is located in.

### **RESHAPING GHENT'S NEIGHBOURHOODS THROUGH CITIZENS PARTICIPATION**

Ghent has a long tradition in participative approaches, with the former Mayor Daniel Termont as the strongest supporter in participation and co-creation. Since the 90ties the City created a policy participation service within its administration that enables policy-makers to integrate a bottom-up approach in planning and decision making processes. The service still exists and has developed different instruments (a participation and crowdfunding platform, the Fund of Temporary Use, the Participatory Budget, Neighbourhood Management Projects, ...) to enable and support citizens' ideas and initiatives. The political will and support in participation were extended after the elections (2018) with the

assignment of a Deputy Mayor of Participation in the Board of Mayor and Deputy Mayors.

In order to connect with citizens and with society, neighbourhood managers (civil servants of the policy participation service) are building networks in the 25 neighbourhoods of the City. They deliver tailored work to create a more livable, more social and more sustainable neighbourhood, taking the role of middleman between various stakeholders to find solutions to urban challenges existing in the neighbourhood. *Neighbourhood managers* represent this link between the City council and the citizens.

Ghent has also been experimenting with the temporary use of brown-field sites and empty buildings for over a decade. Often, this happens in response to urban renewal projects. The period between the development and implementation of the plans is usually very long, therefore the City of Ghent stimulates its citizens to use the sites and buildings in the interim. This brings a new dynamic to neighbourhoods and offers added value for the city's development. DE SITE, the first iconic temporary use, started 10 years ago: allotments, a greenhouse, two

urban horticultural plots, a football field, a bike playground and an urban farmstead were created on the site of the former Alcatel Bell factory in the district of Rabot. The residents rolled up their sleeves and helped to reshape their neighbourhood.

The city council provides subsidies via the Fund of Temporary Use (€300,000) and offers (cheaper) spaces to initiators of temporary use projects to help entrepreneurship of citizens to start. A lot of new temporary initiatives (each year more or less 25) occurred thanks to

this Fund.

To make this possible, the neighbourhood managers in each of the 25 districts of Ghent play a pivotal role. As connectors, they are often the drivers for finding (new) solutions to urban challenges in the neighbourhood. They look for the necessary links between policy, administration and the various stakeholders on the basis of a helicopter view inside and outside the city. While they certainly were pioneers for this approach in the City, they are now backed by a vast political will to facilitate participation and co-creation and by a growing num-





ber of initiatives and (legal) instruments at the various departments of the city administration. The resulting mix consists of initiatives such as the participation platform and instruments such as city regulations and subsidy agreements, untangling this complex mix so that citizens and also civil servants find their way, together with the simplification of the administrative and regulatory procedures are now the challenges the City is facing. The sharing of information and knowledge and the collaboration between various departments is the first step in this process.

#### **SHARING PRINCIPLES AND TOOLS WITH NAPLES, BARCELONA AND AMSTERDAM**

During the Transnational meeting in Ghent (May 2019), all the Civic eState's partners had the opportunity to have a look at the experiences from the existing initiatives in the city: they visit a volunteer-run bazaar' with a giveaway shop, second-hand shop and social grocery; they heard the experience of the complementary currency "Torekes" as a tool to create a network between inhabitants, local economy and civil society organizations and to promote participation in the neighbourhood; they also visited

the Saint Jozef Church, the pilot project of the City. Residents of the Van Beveren Square unfolded to Civic eState partners their plans to turn their square into something more than a parking lot. They met the volunteers of the Food Bank that dispatch unsold products from supermarkets to local welfare initiatives and social restaurants, and the volunteers from Bloemekensforum, a non-profit association formed by inhabitants, presented their challenges in looking for a new location to carry out their temporary use projects.

These inspired the City of Amsterdam to think of an incubator for civil servants and citizens, such as a 'commons in residence', to nurture the layer around the government with a network of new and established civic initiatives and to create the necessary humus for local democracy.

Although it's clear that Ghent already has a lot of experience in participative approaches and the political will to push this forward, it feels it still has a lot to learn. Participating in the Civic eState Project gave the City the opportunity to learn from other European cities, which

was very enriching.

The main goal of the Civic eState Project was the transfer of knowledge about the co-management by the city and its citizens of city assets between the participating cities. In order to reach that goal, the cities had to follow the URBACT methodology. This methodology prescribes choosing pilot projects, creating ULG's and LAWG's, organising and participating in (transnational) meetings, sharing knowledge and delivering diverse outputs.

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In order for Ghent to be able to share knowledge and to make this knowledge transferable to its partner cities, it started by inventorying the (regulatory) tools they use and presented the short version during the Transnational Meeting. It got a lot of positive responses and questions from the partner cities, and on the other way around, Ghent received lots of valuable input. The Belgian city made a point of thoroughly analysing these inputs and discussing questions with the partner cities. This was necessary to be able to filter out the inputs that are transferable to the specific context of the city.

Ghent learned a lot from the legal documents (city regulations and agreements) received from Napels and Barcelona. These documents contained interesting definitions and principles. Some of these principles, like sustainability and inclusivity, has been injected into the open call of Ghent's pilot project. At the same time, Barcelona and Amsterdam opened Ghent's eyes to the importance of measuring the social return of certain projects.

#### **PLANS FOR THE FUTURE**

Ghent plans to bundle a lot of ideas and work towards a kind of step-by-step plan of how as a city they can improve their organization for the benefit of the commons.

The city will follow up on the open call for the St-Joseph church, assuring the selection of a coordinator for the church to be as participative as possible, and the future filling in and organisation must also comply with the "Civic eState" values.

In addition and for the city-wide level, a "catalogue" will be elaborated to sum up the work done with the open call, and what forms of involvement the city organizes for

and with the neighbourhood. In this "catalogue", the Local Administrative Working Group will make a concrete step-by-step plan together with the two services: the Policy Participation Service & the Real Estate Service of the city.

The LAWG will keep existing and make a regular consultation between different services involved in making urban real estate accessible, for example encouraging the double use of urban buildings and develop the necessary tools for this.

It is establishing a legal-administrative incubator, which will offer

support to starting residents' initiatives for business issues involved in starting an initiative. In the first place, this incubator will be set up for the many new projects that are submitted via the [wijkbudget.gent](http://wijkbudget.gent) project, but it can also play a role in other initiatives.

To conclude, the positive influence of Civic eState network can be felt at many levels in Ghent. It has given a boost to the cooperation between city services and in the cooperation between residents' initiatives and the city administration •



# Iasi

**Enabling co-governance in  
a post-communist city**



**As “learning city” of Civic State Transfer Network, Iași was motivated to see the good practices of the mature cities – like Naples, Barcelona and Gdansk – on participative approaches and understand how these could be adapted in the local context to better use the local urban goods, by involving actors of the local community in the process. For Iași, commoning and urban commons are quite an innovative approach to governance, being the first time the city is facing this kind of challenge.**

**I**ași’s objective was to learn from the other partners in this field, to understand concepts, principles, methodologies and general legal framework regulating this type of approach, therefore how to engage local actors and gradually involve them in the process. Thus, the main goal was to find ways of valorizing urban assets, by involving local stakeholders and civil society in their administration. The transfer aimed to improve the degree of awareness of the local community regarding the role of civic patrimony in Iași.

The city planned, within its Local Administrative Group (LAWG), to identify and discuss the legal context and barriers regarding the property, the involvement of civil society and co-administration of urban assets.

Iași’s URBACT team motivated the active involvement of the different actors in debates, by asking for their feedback and by sustaining their ideas and initiatives, but also by making them aware of their role and responsibilities. The contribution of each category of stakeholders is important: their feedback regarding the legal issues, the conditions of use of public spaces, possible activities and functionalities and the community needs were essential to put into practice the measures designed during this learning process. Also, the Municipality set out to identify a space to use as asset in the project, and, within the ULG, to define possible functionalities to give to this space.

#### **IMPLEMENTING COMMONING IN A POST-COMMUNIST CITY**

At the start point, the local public authority, who was the initiator of

this approach, has engaged in dialogue with local stakeholders – NGOs, private actors, schools and universities – and tried to give a structure to a URBACT Local Group (ULG). It was not an easy job as it took a while to have a reaction from these actors. The different representatives of the public sector have been involved by internal discussions between departments of Iași Municipality, while the private sector representatives, the schools, universities and the NGOs have been involved gradually by individual discussions. This communication work went well, creating a good dialogue framework, between these 4 categories of stakeholders.

Civic eState's Transnational meetings gave answers to some of Iași's

common challenges and were useful for the city to share ideas and obstacles encountered during the transfer process. Iași could see how the other partners faced the challenges, such as ULG composition changes and communication difficulties between different components of the ULG, or those related to the particularities of the national legal context (exchanges with partners from ex-communist countries, such as Presov or Gdansk, showed similarities with the context of Iași).

Through this learning process, we have also realised a comparison with the legal instruments of the mature cities. From this point of view, the *Declaration of Urban Civic and Collective Use* of the urban commons l'Asilo in the City of Na-



ples provides a definition of the term “common good”, which is the base of all the principles concerning the public-civic management of common goods. *The Agreement between the City of Barcelona and the Can Batllo Self-Managed Community and Neighbourhood Space Association in the City of Barcelona* established a program to support the community use and management of municipal public assets under an institutional and legislative framework that enables citizen participation in the use of public assets. *The Regulation on Collaboration between Citizens and the City for the Care and Regeneration of Urban Commons* of the City of Bologna gave Iași some ideas and provides a series of definitions and a framework of principles that can regulate the public-civic management of commons.

The asset identified for the transfer process was a former high-school canteen, but the building needs renovation. The Municipality plans to carry out some rehabilitation works in order to use it to its full potential, but for now the city is facing administrative and financial issues. Regarding the functionality of this space, the intention of the Munic-

ipality, following the discussions within ULG, is to use the building as a Municipal Robotics Center for children and young people.



To involve more representatives of the local community in the design of a creative concept of Iași main asset, the Municipal robotics centre for children and young people, the idea of launching an open call/contest of ideas was suggested by Civic eState’s Lead Expert. The good practice example of the open call launched by the City of Turin, and also the initiative of an open call shared by the city of Ghent, was discussed during ULG meetings, as a start point of inspiration.

#### **THE CHALLENGES**

Since the start of the project, there has been difficulty in involving civil society in debates regarding the co-administration of urban assets. The LAWG group set a strategy to

contact each stakeholder individually and to explain the benefits of the good practice transfer.

The local administration had also to face the legal barriers regarding public-private-community partnership and thus analyzed the national and local legal context by comparison with the “commons” regulatory framework proposed by mature cities of the Civic eState Network. The city of Iași lacks a definition of “common goods” and does not have a similar conceptual and practical framework, supporting the community use and management of municipal public assets under an institutional and legislative framework that enables citizen participation in the use of public assets, and that generates a lot of difficulties regarding the creation of public-civic management structures. Contextually, the building initially identified to experiment was not technically available, needing renovation works, and the administration had to face issues in finding financial resources to support their rehabilitation.

The general context of the pandemic obviously generated a series of difficulties concerning the smooth

running of the journey. At the partnership and local level, Iași started to reflect on the possible adaptations to the COVID crisis and how to motivate the community to identify new ideas and solutions. Consequently, within the ULG, the city discussed the possibility of shifting some of the activities carried out through this project to an online environment.

Besides the pandemic, the City administrators must mention other obstacles to take into account, generating a series of risks for the transfer in the future, such as difficulties encountered regarding the direct dialogue with citizens - in the local context practice, the decision making process is commonly oriented top-down (generally, the local administration takes initiatives, these being accepted or not by the citizens, not vice versa) and difficulties to identify funding mechanisms.

#### **PLANS FOR THE FUTURE**

Co-governance or co-ownership of urban assets was a new concept to be introduced in Iași. The administration is optimistic because is understanding the basis of this approach and is actively working



to engage other representatives of the community in this process. Iasi hopes that, in the future, they can enlarge the ULG structure and make this initiative attractive also to citizens.

The form of co-governance proposed by Civic eState's partners within the project is not common in Romania. In this context, Iasi will have to continue the strategic direction acquired during the transfer journey. It will also be necessary to substantiate public-private/public-civic partnership legal instruments, which must go beyond the classic model of the concession agreement of a space made available by the Municipality and develop a public debate on the normative framework of public-private/public-civic partnerships before preparing and proposing a legislative change.

The asset proposed by the city is imagined as a robotics program aimed towards youth. This project was already existing with the intention of the local administration as a lucrative concept, but using it as a mean to gain traction with Civic eState has proven useful. Now it's important to try to find financial re-

sources in order to make the building available for the development of activities.

At the end of the transfer process, Iasi can be an ambassador at the national and European level on the policy of involvement of local actors in debates regarding the co-governance of urban spaces. Also, identifying and solving regulatory issues allowing to valorize urban commons will be an idea largely promoted by the city of Iași •

# Prešov

An aerial photograph of the city of Prešov, Slovakia. The image shows a dense urban landscape with numerous buildings featuring red-tiled roofs. In the center, a large, light-colored church with a prominent, tall, dark spire stands out. The church has a large, arched entrance and a red-tiled roof. The surrounding area is filled with smaller buildings, some with grey roofs, and a few trees are scattered throughout. The overall scene is a typical European town square or churchyard area.

**Introducing the concept  
of “commons” in Slovakia**

**Previously to Civic eState, Prešov was unaware of the possibilities offered by URBACT. Moreover, the Slovakian city devoted itself to a minimal extent to projects based on the active participation of communities, which was the core of the project. This was the reason why the Local Administrative Group got involved in the network, to gain a chance not to repeat the mistakes and to lay new foundations for effective cooperation, based on proven ways of participation that have been “tried and tested” in the other European cities.**

**T**he City of Prešov decided to take part in the project to revitalise in a participatory way the former “City Oasis”, a small but remarkable public space abandoned near the city centre, as well to lay the foundation for a new policy tool for the management and the participation of private persons in the performance of property and legal activities of the city. The Civic eState network gave the opportunity to activate community entities for this co-design process, being inspired by other city partners – Naples, Amsterdam, Barcelona, Ghent, Gdansk and Iasi.

Prešov strived to participate and use empty locations and work with the Lead Partner, Naples: the opportunity to participate was provided through the Ministry of Transport

and after reflection, the Slovakian city chose to participate to benefit from the international cooperation.

The city was aware the transfer was not possible in its entirety: it is important to realize that the mindset of the population is still partly affected by communism, and it is not common for citizens to take care of city management issues, although these settings are changing with generations. Cultural and social differences, as well as valid legislation, should also be considered – the Slovak Republic has strict rules for public procurement and disposal of municipal property. Prešov’s team knew that it would not be possible to use the way Naples went; however, they believe that they are able to implement the “spirit” of participatory forms of de-

mocracy into the awareness of the inhabitants and to set up internal processes within the city office.

With the pandemic in mid-March, most projects came to a halt. People couldn't come into the office. The team had to re-work the communication and focused on the question of its goals, which became a focus on the quality and not the number of goals. However, the pandemic helped to narrow the city focus and organize even better.

The first big question Presov's team managed to solve thanks to Civic eState partners was to match their goals to the capabilities in the

city in terms of law and ULG participants and management through the pandemics. They had the cooperation of the University of Prešov, which was a great benefit.

The open call, land preparation and legal documents for the City Oasis have progressed from the beginning. In Slovakia, there is an overall complex bureaucratic system that places various demands on the administration of the agenda of municipal authorities and therefore many processes take much longer. The priority was to simplify this system, especially in terms of administration, so that access to such solutions could be quick. Thus, the





conditions with the operator after open-call evaluation are set as simple as possible, but the process of legislative creation of such rules takes longer, and therefore Presov's team firmly believe that by summer, when the implementation of the pilot project should begin, there will be ready legislative and legal documents will be approved by the authorities concerned.

#### **ULG ACTIVITIES**

As indicated above, the creation of the ULG was initially extremely difficult, both in the administrative structure, where there was a lack of legal support and at the level of experts and community and citizen participants. Progress in this respect was much slower than the

rest of the network, it was necessary to create the right communication manual and method of creation, especially with an emphasis on pursuing common goals, which were not precisely specified at the beginning, and the promotion of ideas was difficult. Many risks were only eliminated when the town hall changed the people of project management. The entry of the University of Prešov had a very positive impact on the project through the Memorandum of Cooperation, which also had a positive impact on the activities of ULG from a professional point of view.

To date, three basic components of ULG have been created - administrative, legal and organizational. The number of members has stabi-



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lized from the initial 3 to 11 stable members and around 10 people in the wider base, who help to create a pilot project partly as possible.

ULG is not yet institutionalized as a separate organizational unit but operates under the project management department at the municipal office.

### **CHALLENGES**

The city of Prešov had basically no common urban rules and did not meet many of the basic principles discussed within the network in practice. The city, like the nation, did not have any comprehensive legislation for commons. The rules after the closure of the community foundation a couple of years before were basically non-functional and civic participation was not coordinated with very bad attitudes towards the city in the matter of civic participation.

On an internal level, there is the need for simplification of administrative burdens by creating rules of presumption and direct access, while simplifying and finding direct processes and simpler tools. Personnel involvement and mutual thought connection are also to be improved. The pandemic forced the

LAWG to focus more on the quality of people than on quantity and direct and open communication was paramount.

On the external level, open communication with the public is bearing fruit, but the challenge is still not met.

### **BEYOND THE TRANSFER JOURNEY**

The legal rules for the use of abandoned or unused real estate in the city of Presov have been simplified and made more available, and the Local Team has also created an annuity tool for drawing on the ideas and opinions of the public to maintain them and verify the correctness of its procedures.

A range of acceptable plots of land has been identified and defined, as well as their solutions suitable for communication with the public, even this range is being expanded with new and new ideas.

It is the most difficult to work in public opinion, but the city is all the more pleased that it was able to start participating in public affairs with many ordinary citizens within the ULG •

# Amsterdam

**Energy and food as commons**





**Amsterdam is a municipality that harbours creativity and social innovation. Winning the Icapital award(link is external) in 2016, Amsterdam aims to stay a frontrunner in (social) innovation. The city adopted an ambitious 'democratisation' agenda in 2018 to practice new forms of -local- democratic citizenship and agency. Facilitating the local commons as part of a transformative worldwide movement is part of this agenda.**

In the *May 2018 coalition agreement*, Amsterdam Municipal Executive Board indicated its intention to support urban commons:

*Residents have ideas that are as good as, if not better than, those of the city council. We aim for an open and transparent administration, an organisation that focuses on the outside world and is open to social initiative, and employs an area-specific working method. We consider it our responsibility to increase our residents' level of control. Not through new systems, but by entering into a dialogue and a debate with the city about how this can be achieved*

The system challenges deal with changes in the working method of the municipal bureaucracy, which help to realize initiatives. Three system challenges, in particular, have been identified and are work in progress:

#### 1. *Integrated financing*

The realization of an umbrella subsidy, making subsidizing of cross-sectoral initiatives structurally, to quickly respond to multiple faceted initiatives. In other words, one arrangement for an initiative that is active in several (governmental) areas (for instance: youth unemployment, culture and public green).

#### 2. *Right to Challenge experiments*

With "Right to Challenge", a neighbourhood initiative or entrepreneur can challenge the municipality to take over part of a regular government task, including resources and responsibilities.

#### 3. *Omgevingsvisie Amsterdam 2050 (Environmental vision Amsterdam 2050)*

Amsterdam has a great attraction and it is growing fast. This raises all kinds of questions for the future:



how does the city remain liveable? Where can it find space for new homes and parks? And how does the city prepare for the challenges of the future? These are questions that we answer together in the Environmental Vision for Amsterdam in 2050.

#### **THE COMMONS AGENDA**

Today, the new administration continues to support these initiatives developing new tools: the “Neighbourhood Rights”, the “Co-Creation Spaces” and the “Commons Agenda”. Through Civic eState Amsterdam focused on the latter.

The Commons Agenda is a pro-

cess leading to a “commons agreement” through which Amsterdam wants to identify possibilities for the civic use of assets or the support of municipalities in different areas: energy, food, poverty/care, public space/housing, finance and sharing knowledge. One of the city’s partners, the “Commons Network(link is external)”, helped during the research phase by identifying key strategies for creating room for commons, which were later discussed in bigger working group meetings. The goal is to identify key policies and find means – where possible – to implement them within the administration.

From a design-thinking perspective, Amsterdam is working towards a *samenwerkingsloket*, a 'cooperation desk' for public-civic partnerships in the broad sense. Citizens (and entrepreneurs) can get financing for their initiatives, but can also ask/challenge the city for assets or ask for support or start some form of cooperation with the city or the administration.

Whilst the first pilot to experience this agenda was a traditional public square, the interest secondly shifted to energy and food. The Municipal Executive Board of the City of Amsterdam has indicated its intention to actively support the establishment of commons in the energy transition, healthcare and community activities. This is an important part of the democratisation ambition where the municipality sets out to organise more ownership and control for Amsterdam residents. The notion of energy as a commons is supported in the national climate agreement where the ambition is formulated to organise 50% local ownership of renewable energy sources. Food as a commons is

not only a quite visible movement in Amsterdam, it is also a very popular movement for many reasons with both city residents and policymakers: ranging from health to climate and 'ownership' perspectives.



#### **TOOLS FOR CO-CITY DEVELOPMENT: MA.AK – SOCIAL AGREEMENT**

Ma.ak<sup>1</sup> is a social agreement to enable cooperation between active Amsterdam residents to sustainably increase the city's fairness, inclusivity, health, innovation and initiatives. What is remarkable about this agreement is that it was created by many parties in the city over the course of several months.

#### **TOOLS FOR CO-CITY DEVELOPMENT: MAEX**

MAEX<sup>2</sup> is an online tool created by the city makers and initiator

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1 <https://ma.ak020.nl/>

2 <https://maex.nl/>

community, that offers insight into the value (and needs) of social initiatives. The municipality supports this initiative and is exploring how it can play a role in Amsterdam policy for the commons. MAEX developed a 'social handprint', a tool based on "Sustainable Development Goals", for visualising the value and impact of initiatives. This may be comparable to the 'community balance' developed in Barcelona in collaboration with commoners, and it turned out to be of great value in terms of enabling the policy in the Catalan city.

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#### **THE WAY FORWARD: TOWARDS MORE COLLABORATION WITH AND FOR THE URBAN COMMONS**

What inspires the city of Amsterdam is the lively local democratic practices that emerge from the perspective of the commons. Urban commons imply more local democracy in addition to increased ownership and control. Amsterdam does not organise public value as a government nor leaves it to the market; it gives citizen collectives the opportunity and tools to create public value themselves. As anticipated, administrators are co-designing policies together with commoners on different themes: food (Kaskantine/NoordOogst), energy

(Gaasperdam Groen Gas) and cultural free space (Vrije Ruimte).

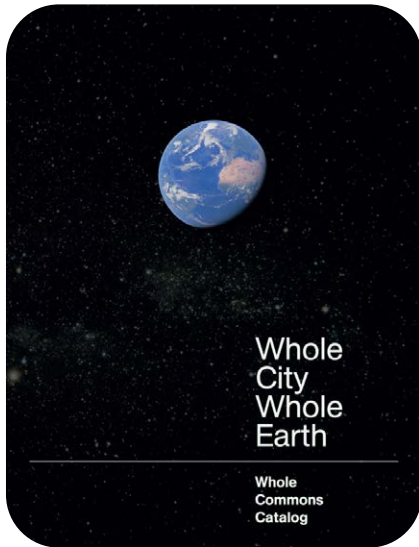
Based on the knowledge and experience of the city's commoners and inspired by the 'community balance' in Barcelona, Amsterdam is working on a 'value case' in order to facilitate integral financing as well as more public-civil partnerships and in other locations and domains as well.

#### **HOW TO TALK ABOUT 'COMMON GOODS'?**

One of the first questions of Amsterdam's Local Administrative Working Group was how to 'organise' a URBACT Local Group in a meaningful way, and how to truly involve residents and commoners. Amsterdam's LAWG worked to make the meetings a two-way and 'natural' step both in the project and in the process of participants by following their pace and interests. At the same time, the internal organisation developed into a new way of working, sharing the concept policy and developing an action plan together with other departments and directorates.

Commons are not widely known in the Netherlands, so administrators

face two challenges: how to talk about 'common goods'? And how to talk about the organisational model of the commons? The narrative on the commons is an ongoing challenge. For this reason, the "Amsterdam's Whole Commons Catalog" has been created, an online and printed guide with all kinds of tips and tools, ideas and projects,



people and books for everyone who is or wants to work collectively and know more about commoning. This said, Amsterdam needs a different perspective and understanding of the city on both "commons" and "commoning", as well as understand how to organise financing

and assets for commons, something that can be achieved by the above-mentioned measures and first steps.

At the moment Amsterdam is testing its concept commons policy that it developed during Civic estate in the Czaar Peterbuurt, together with the University of Applied Sciences HvA. The *Omgevingsvisie* envision a 'public-commons partnership model' for Amsterdam in the next couple of years, and in several domains – housing, food, energy (both solar and heat), free space, Amsterdam is experimenting and daily improving practices of public-commons partnering •

# Gdansk

**Incubating commons**



**The main challenge for Gdansk is the execution of inhabitants' rights to the city related to common management of public spaces and local democracy. On one hand, there are a lot of active citizens who get involved in the policy, decision-making processes... but on the other hand, the administrators and citizens are not used to the concept and practice of commoning and co-governance of public spaces. The particular interest seems to impact the common good. The implementation of principles of self-management, cooperation and mutualism, and strengthening individual and collective responsibility makes a big challenge but is also a chance for positive social change.**

**G**dansk joined Civic eState to learn from already existing and functioning models of pooling urban commons, learning about the factors of success and the conditions that determine the successful co-management of shared places, obtaining support in the proper conduct of participatory processes in decision making and reaching common solutions on a neighbourhood level. Gdansk administrators first thought to open to the public an abandoned building and allow citizens to manage it. However, when Civic eState actually started, other assets appeared, as the “neighbourhood houses”, which represented a

good fit where to transfer this NGO model of governance. During the creation of Civic eState’s transfer plan, Gdansk was influenced by Barcelona’s case study and included them in the process.

#### **GDANSK’S NEIGHBOURHOOD HOUSES**

Gdansk's interest in “urban commons” started with the URBACT project Boostinno<sup>1</sup>, during which the city discovered an abandoned building that it thought it could adapt as a community public space. Gdansk followed the proposal made by Naples<sup>2</sup> regarding repurposing spaces and it led the city to join Civic eState: having dif-

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1 [urbact.eu/boostinno](http://urbact.eu/boostinno)

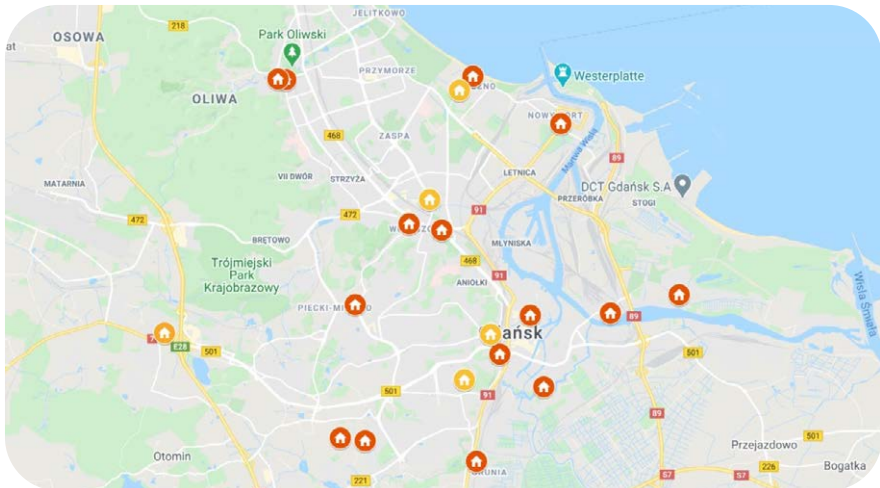
2 [urbact.eu/lost-found](http://urbact.eu/lost-found)

difficulties with allowing people to enter the space Gdansk decided to reorient from focusing on one single point to our purpose public spaces to many points all over the city (the *neighbourhood houses*).

The “civic use” of empty buildings carved by the City of Naples resolutions implied, on one hand, a temporary use and it represented a starting point for the “renaissance” of such places and, on the other hand, it created a stimulus to start searching for innovative mechanisms for the use of such spaces as a community-managed or a community-managed estate. This legal tool was theorized from the grassroots, claimed by commons activists that revisited the ancient

Italian legal institution of “civic uses” forged in rural areas and applied it to the city to institutionalize the collective and informal management of buildings used by local communities to provide cultural and even urban welfare services in neighbourhoods.

In this sense, the City of Gdansk was first thinking to open one of its main assets to the public – Dolna Brama, a historical school building (more recently a private college) with 1,200 square meters of space with a large yard – and allow citizens to manage it, with the development of a legal tool to enable self-governance. But after the start of the project, other assets appeared to be suitable for “com-





moning”: Gdansk’s neighbourhood houses seemed fitted to transfer this NGO model of governance.

Gdansk’s interest in “urban commons” started with the URBACT project Boostinno, during which the city discovered an abandoned building that it thought it could adapt as a community public space. Gdansk followed the proposal made by Naples regarding repurposing spaces and it led the city to join Civic eState: having difficulties with allowing people to enter the space Gdansk decided to reorient from focusing on one single point to our purpose public spaces to many points all over the city (the neighbourhood houses).

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ments: on participatory budget, on the legal framework for cooperation with civil society organizations, on citizen assemblies, on urban regeneration plans and advisory bodies. So Gdansk's main objectives became to create a legal framework for urban commons.

The second level of concern was building a community around the physical space ready for co-management and taking responsibility for the place according to the principle of public-civil partnership. At the same time, there was the need for the renovation of the main assets, the further school building. Eventually, the procedure with the building took long and this is why the focus shifted to the *neighbourhood houses*.

In the beginning, the core ULG members were related to the school building placed in Dolna Bra-ma. Firstly the Gdansk Team asked innovators, NGOs and makers to join the process, but thanks to the meeting with the city of Naples, Civic eState's Lead Partner, and Ghent, it was clear that a "creative lawyer" was needed to create the foundations for a legal framework. Gdansk was then deeply influ-

enced by the Barcelona model, as neighbourhood houses also exist in a similar way in the Spanish city. Therefore, a lot of Gdansk's strategy came from adapting Barcelona's Community Balance and self-assessment of how they run these neighbourhood houses. It's not a co-management of entities and individuals, but a place run by a local NGO, so there is one leader and it is their responsibility to involve individuals. Gdansk is now working with Barcelona on how to implement this in Poland and reflect on how much of its project is rooted in these neighbourhood houses and encourage them to involve local communities and attract people to become interested in the aims of the project.

#### **CHALLENGES FACED**

Gdansk's journey in the Civic eState project had two major critical events. The assassination of Gdansk's mayor Paweł Adamowicz was an enormous difficulty that stopped the whole city for 3-4 months. Unlike his predecessor, the new mayor was not so interested in the project, so Gdansk URBACT Team had to rethink its process. The pandemic as well affected deeply the work in progress, since

it struck in the middle of legal developments on the first asset, stopping the processes again for 3-4 months.

At first, Gdansk Team had 3 pilots in mind – Dolna Brama as the main asset, the neighbourhood houses, and a third minor public space –. After many stops, the Gdansk Team start working with its creative lawyers to define its “state of play” and understand what it could be done to create a framework for the first asset. It became much more technical, so it became necessary to create even a communication framework and co-create with the leaders of neighbourhood houses a common brand that would homogenize values, goals, approaches.

Beyond these two milestones, there were other challenges Gdansk had to face:

- building a community around the physical space ready for co-management, and building a community based on local leaders and local residents;
- tackle legal challenges: the transfer needs legal hacking to be properly carried out – the invitation to cooperate with lawyers

from outside the city hall was a success;

- the renovation of Dolna Brama 8 building and forming a sustainable model for using it by the local community. The cooperation with experts in the renovation of historic buildings;
- the popularization of the ideology of commons and fostering the common understanding of commons (commons is a rather new concept in Poland).

#### **AN INCUBATOR FOR COMMONING**

Gdansk does not have a single policy dedicated to commons, but the Local Administrative Working Group has analyzed all activities in this area and collected them into one document. The team plan to combine participatory activities and those dedicated commons in one place – Centrum Dolna Brama Incubator – and a set of tools and tricks.

In the Gdansk case, it will be innovative to combine all the activities in one place, despite the dispersion of these issues in various documents •

# Naples

Enhancing the care of the city



**In 2018 the city of Naples was awarded by URBACT for its model of “civic uses”, a policy tool that enables communities of citizens to manage and take care of public assets – known as urban commons – in a democratic way. Naples has recognised the “Urban Civic Use Regulation” of common goods in the city itself, and thanks to the good practice's governance model, more than 250 projects came to life, breaking down the production costs by using free and shared spaces, resources, knowledge and skills.**

**D**uring the last decade, the City of Naples has been experimenting with this new governance model to get back in use abandoned or underused buildings subtracted from the life of the city. Conflictual actions of occupation and bottom-up rule-creation were turned into an opportunity.

This legal tool was theorized from the grassroots, claimed by commons activists that revisited the ancient Italian legal institution of “civic use”, encourages the ability of citizens to find innovative solutions for the reuse of public abandoned assets and guarantees autonomy of the communities involved.

The civic use of empty buildings, in fact, implies a temporary use and represents a starting point for innovative mechanisms of regeneration as a community-managed

or a community-managed estate. Therefore, the legal model adopted by the municipality therefore represents an overturn of institutional learning: participatory democracy tools were created by direct civic imagination and implemented by the City Government.

The Civic eState Network gave Naples the possibility to share this experience with other 6 cities – Amsterdam, Barcelona, Gdansk, Ghent, Iasi and Presov –, and learn from them on how to strengthen its “Good Practice”.

Drawing from the detailed analysis of the Good Practice, the object of the transfer was the following: the urban co-governance principle in the use, management and ownership of urban commons and the creation of public through local legal hacks (such as the example of

the urban civic uses successfully experimented in Naples).

Naples' URBACT team tried to imagine what were the potentials and shared values behind the commons of the city by maintaining the freedom to act in terms of the groups recognized as users of the shared spaces, which can manage without interference from the Municipality.

With the urban planning counsellor, the URBACT Local Team identified 3 main points of improvement:

- the good practice itself: how can these places be self-financed and self-managed?;
- determine the shared responsibility in terms of maintenance, safety (fire), etc.;
- create an exchange with other EU cities and strengthen the model of the urban commons, avoid fragmentation between the spaces and the risk of institutional isolation. The overall objective was to understand how to make sure this becomes an administrative practice not confined within one department but able to go beyond political cycles.

These are the 3 main topics the city

imagined at first, but they grew as Naples's LAWG and the URBACT Local Group recognized more points to improve. URBACT has one key advantage: gives opportunities and exchanges to realize local action plans, and freedom to experiment with different social projects. Naples wanted to select both cities that have experience and expertise (like Barcelona, Amsterdam and Ghent) and cities that have different goals and could add different values. The cities that can get ahead are the cities that have an initial boost of support by the local government, but at the same time, this has the risk of keeping the practice contained within. When there are big changes during the transfer journey (a new mayor, for example) they lose speed: therefore, as Lead Partner, Naples needed to encourage experimentations on policies on a network level.

#### **ENHANCING THE CARE OF THE CITY**

Naples' Good practice was born from an innovative dialogue between administration and citizens, which built a process of legal co-creation. Civic eState helped to maintain this dialogue, vital for the existence of the local network of urban commons.



The civic use model is a system of “direct administration” structured as a form of participatory governance that intends to go beyond the classic “concession agreement model”, based on a dichotomous view of the public-private partnership. This model recognizes the existence of a relationship between the community and the public assets that trigger the formation of a social practice eventually evolving into a “civic use”, which in essence is the right to use and manage the resource as shaped by its users.

To let this governance model grow, one of the main objectives of the Civic eState project has been how to create economies of scale and better management of urban com-

mons, eventually by pooling resources and establishing forms of cooperation between the different urban commons.

By enhancing commoners' proposals and their active role in the “care of the City”, the Administration is also willing to promote new forms of “Urban Civic Communities” and to define schemes to gain the interest of long-term investors. In this way, the designed Civic Development environments would become a driver to boost the overall economic sustainability of the process and to promote innovative financing schemes.

As a matter of fact, according to empirical evidence, collective gov-

ernance is more sustainable and long-enduring when resource pooling and cooperation between five possible categories of actors is in place: social innovators or the unorganized public, public authorities, businesses, civil society organizations, and knowledge institutions.

Right now, there is motivation to show that self-sustainability projects are a strong trend within different EU cities, not confined to just a few examples. Barcelona's self-evaluation of co-managed spaces impressed Naples as a powerful tool to monitor urban commons and improve their transparency, but its implementation is challenging for the Italian city, where technical and political parts of the administration just started to talk to each other on the topic. During the Transfer process, it became clear the necessity to build a round table that included technical, political, and urban common stakeholders, to allow the city to focus on a few key objectives:

- building a strategy to promote this narrative;
- self-recovery of the assets;
- community empowerment and self-financing.

All those who participated in the process were not new to the topic of urban commons. What was new was this collaborative approach with the administration, and the urban common network worked together again after the collective writing of the Declaration of Use. The narrative of the urban commons movement was made clearer and shared within the URBACT Local Group.

#### **LOCAL GROUP ACTIVITIES**

The URBACT Local Group of Naples is composed of the "Urban Planning and urban commons Department" of Naples (the first department in Italy to have a specific mandate on urban commons), the Permanent Observatory on Urban Commons of the City of Naples (a consulting body composed by researchers and activists who are experts on the topic) and, last but not least, also the community of inhabitants of the urban commons of Naples were involved and hosted the meetings of the ULG. The URBACT Local Group has been crossed by 73 participants only in the co-design phase.

The participatory process was organized in two main steps: the first





year (from May 2019 to April 2020) was dedicated to the co-design of a *Local Action Plan*, while the second step (from May 2020 to June 2021) is being dedicated to the realization of the proposed actions.

The Local Action Plan identified 3 specific objectives and the relative actions that will be implemented within June 2021, in order to strengthen the urban commons network.

### **COMMUNICATE THE COMMONS NETWORK**

The first identified objective was to improve the “Communication” of the urban commons of Naples, not

only as a way to inform but also to involve actively other citizens in the network and also to help the “reproduction” of the network of the urban commons itself. In fact, the perception at the moment, more than a network, is of many different urban commons, each one with its specific mission, its peculiar activities and its own communication means, mostly on social networks.

Therefore, the first action that has been realized was aimed at improving the communication means of the network, through the realization of one shared website<sup>1</sup> of the Urban Commons network of Naples, whose editorial committee is

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<sup>1</sup> [commonsnapoli.org/](https://commonsnapoli.org/)

composed of activists belonging to the different commons of the city. The website is still in the trial version, its structure and contents are still being discussed by the urban commoners, but within the end of June it will be fully operational and translated in English in all its parts. Moreover, some communication contents were produced, in order to present the peculiarity of the urban commons network of Naples. Up to now, in fact, many legal and administrative documents have been produced but the storytelling of what the urban commons are was actually missing – how the self-management system works and how anyone can become part of it. Therefore, a set of documents for the general public is being published: Giuseppe Micciarelli – UR-BACT expert and also an activist of the urban commons network in Naples – offered his expertise to produce “an introduction to the urban commons practices” in English, in order to explain to local and international non-experts what has been achieved up to now in Naples on this topic; A documentary (already available on commonsnapoli.org) has been produced, with interviews to 14 activists of 7 different urban commons, to enjoy in-depth

emotional storytelling of the reasons, desires and aspirations of the commoners of Naples.

#### **ENABLING SELF-CONSTRUCTION AND SELF-RECOVERY**

The second objective of the Local Action Plan is to recognize institutionally the practices of co-design, self-construction and self-recovery in the urban commons. Many urban commons are historical, listed buildings that belong to the built heritage of the city and most of them are in a very bad conservation state. The aim is to strengthen the local capacity (both administrative and of the local communities) in finding solutions to the physical deterioration of the urban commons. These solutions should be compatible with collective management and civic uses that are being experimented by the commoners.

The plan is to create a “Permanent roundtable” where the local communities of inhabitants are involved in the decision-making process related to extraordinary interventions on the urban commons and in the co-design and implementation of these interventions. A second step is to identify procedures for the maintenance and ordinary manage-

ment of the building complexes, that involve both the administration and the commoners.

The final challenge is to allow self-construction/self-recovery interventions by the “community of inhabitants” themselves. This possibility at the moment does not exist according to the local regulations. Therefore, with the help of an urban expert, the ULG explored the procedural innovations already experimented on this topic by other Italian cities and we promoted a network of experts and leading actors of innovative self-construction experiences in Italy, in order to discuss this topic through interviews and public events. This research activity was preliminary to the elaboration of a document of guidelines for the local regulation of self-recovery and self-construction interventions for the urban commons, to introduce these innovative practices in the regulations of the city Naples.

### **COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT**

The third Objective of the local action plan is related to “Community empowerment”. During the participatory process the activists of the urban commons expressed the

need to improve their capacities and competencies in managing the urban commons. Self-assessment exercises highlighted first of all the need for capacity building on self-financing and grassroots fundraising. For this purpose, a very intense capacity building programme was offered to the activists, that included:

- a workshop of 24 hours on community fundraising, whose beneficiaries were 46 activists belonging to 22 urban commons and other non-profit organizations;
- tutoring of the activists in the operational planning of 5 pilot fundraising campaigns for 5 urban commons, for a total amount of almost 350.000 euros;
- a document elaborated by a senior fundraiser, who followed the whole training process, that contains specific guidelines for the fundraising of urban commons. This document will be widely disseminated as a useful toolkit for the commoners who want to try their hand at fundraising campaigns.

The communities of inhabitants of the urban commons have been involved by experts in workshops and focus groups that aimed at

strengthening their capacities in community organizing and conflict resolution. These, in fact, are some pressing issues that emerged also by the bottom-up management.

All the activities of the ULG have been designed and implemented within 2 years with the limited budget offered by the URBACT programme (almost 40.000 euros in total). The general idea of the Local Action Plan was to define some guidelines for the further development of the urban commons' experience in Naples, by putting seeds in the very short term.

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#### **VISION**

The mechanism proposed by the City of Naples, although routed in the Italian legal system, is characterized by a high degree of adaptability to other European urban contexts as it is based on largely shared ethic, legal and social values, already widespread in other countries (especially in UK, France, Belgium Spain and Portugal). Both civic uses and the basic design principle of this policy and legal tool are already at the core of many local policies. In these years, moreover, many meetings, conferences and working groups arose between

the Neapolitan community of civic users and Italian and European commons movements.

The mobility of this good practice encourages a mutual learning process on innovative tools to foster an integrated approach in urban regeneration and redevelopment processes.

The transfer cities help build and establish generating new community-led sustainability models through a non-conflictual process of dialogue with and cooperation among citizens. As already noted, this process makes bottom-up initiatives recognizable by the city administration for their inner value, ensuring the autonomy of both parties involved, on the one hand, the citizens engaged in the reuse of common goods and on the other hand the city administration •





159 €

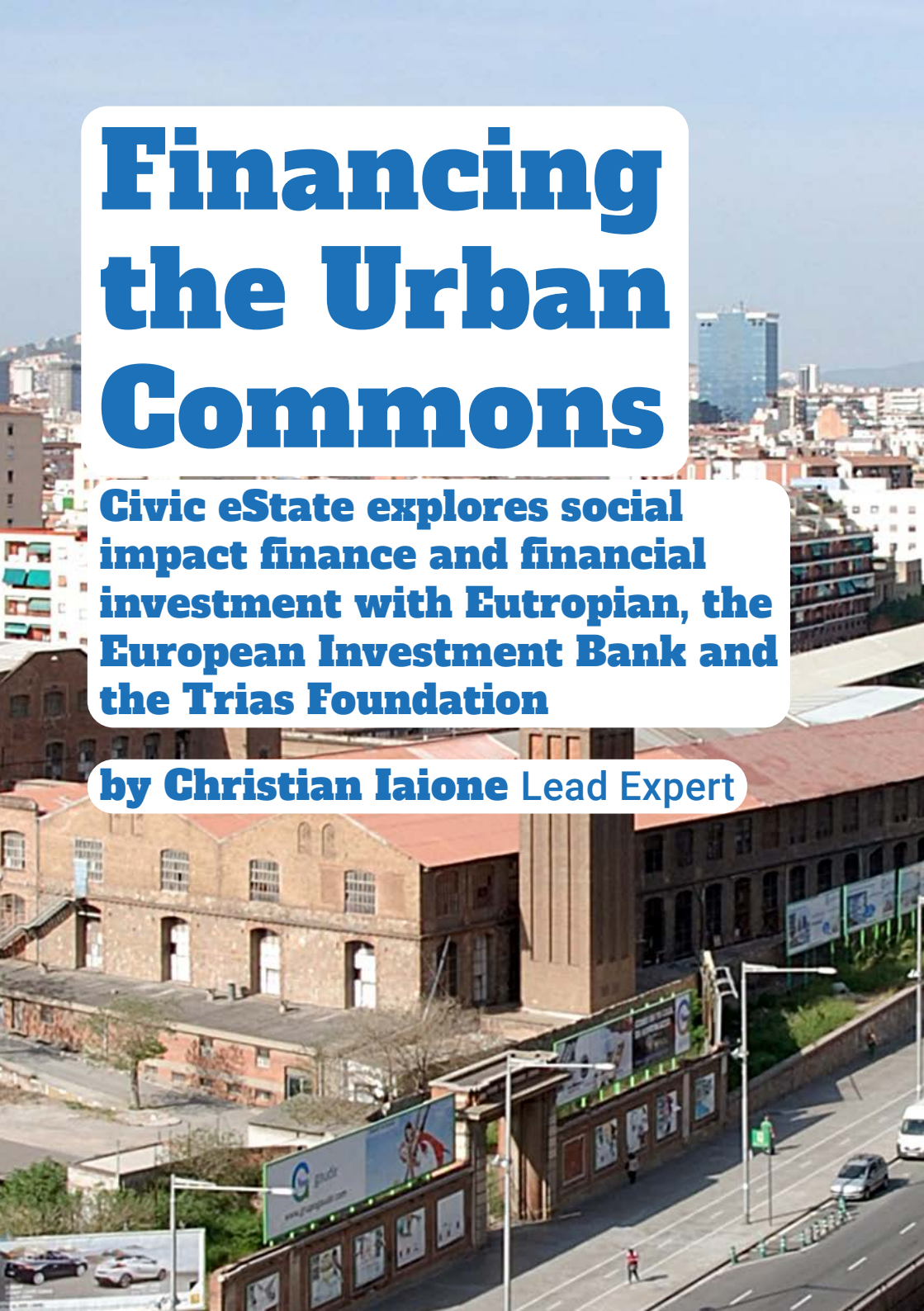
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NUEVO FORD FOCUS

# Financing the Urban Commons

**Civic eState explores social impact finance and financial investment with Eutropian, the European Investment Bank and the Trias Foundation**

**by Christian Iaione** Lead Expert



**D**espite the challenge posed by the pandemic for relational projects like Civic eState, the seven cities involved have not stopped working together – albeit digitally – and collaborating on shared horizons. Since the beginning of the lockdowns in various European countries, the Civic eState Network embarked on an exploration of possible financing instruments – like *social outcome contracting* and other social tools under the *European Structural and Investment Funds* – to support the creation and management of urban commons in Covid and post-Covid times.

Through a series of online meetings with various experts, the Civic eState network analyzed modalities of cooperation between potential long-term investors, cities, and urban commons initiatives. These meetings highlighted the importance of impact measurement through performance indicators, considered various investment and legal strategies, and identified models that urban commons can adopt to be financed.

Civic eState project has three com-

ponents: first, the implementation of a public-private-community partnership; second, a regulatory effort to build a common understanding of how to enable civic management, use, and agreement; and finally, raising awareness on how these projects can reach financial independence and long-standing sustainability to go past the start-up phase.

For the third component, Civic eState involved the participation of Levente Polyak, an expert in the financing of community projects and co-editor of *Funding the Cooperative City*,<sup>1</sup> a book that presents stories and models of community finance and civic economy. Polyak organized a workshop to introduce Civic eState partners to European-scale fund and invited two guest speakers: Rolf Novy-Huy from Stiftung trias and Wojciech Deska from the Urban Development Division of the European Investment Bank.

#### **FINANCING OPTIONS THROUGH THE EUROPEAN INVESTMENT BANK**

The European Investment Bank (EIB) is a non-commercial bank owned by all member states of the

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<sup>1</sup> [cooperativitycity.org/product/funding-the-cooperative-city/](https://cooperativitycity.org/product/funding-the-cooperative-city/)



EU (operating similarly to the World Bank). The EIB drives its policy, and it represents 20% of the urban lending of the EU. Its investment strategy is based on three pillars: inclusive, sustainable, and smart growth. More recently, the EIB has become the climate bank of the EU, with and sustainability investments representing 50% of the investment portfolio. EIB is a long-term lending institution, with maturities (duration of the loan) of 20 to 30 years. Beyond climate projects, today the EIB is also focusing its efforts on the Covid-19 crisis.

There are two main limitations to direct financing urban commons projects, as explained by the guest speaker Wojciech Deska, Senior Urban Development Specialist at the EIB. First, given the bank's large size, it only finances projects of at least 50 million € or more (usually 100 million), a size that commons will probably never reach. Second, the EIB only finances high-quality projects, meaning there is typically no transaction with organizations without track records.

Nevertheless, the following four tools or products could be used for urban commons projects:

- *Investment loan*: the city can get a loan for a larger project, part of which can fund the commons initiative (for example, the EIB would agree to finance a mixed project in the neighbourhood).
- *Framework loan*: this is probably the most popular service at the EIB. The city can get a loan to implement a broad strategy in a set period of time (for example, what is the city going to do in the five next years?) Within this framework, projects do not necessarily have to be identified from day 1 and they can include support for a variety of sectors, including social housing, healthcare, education, and energy efficiency. Cities could seek funding for urban commons under the umbrella of a framework loan.
- *Intermediated framework loan*: rather than financing only one city, the EIB can finance a group of smaller cities. In this case, the project would involve the EIB working with local commercial and specialized banks as intermediaries to provide a credit line for a bundle of projects. Given the significant pipeline of commons initiative, these can be established as a product and attract EIB funding through com-

mercial banks (specialized or international). This can be done on a cross-border, pan-European basis.

- *Equity fund*: this is a fund of funds. While not directly funding urban commons, it could support them through the European investment funds

Social impact bonds: (SIBs) there has been a considerable increase in the use of social bonds for instance for sustainability and social impact investments. SIBs have been used especially to encourage innovation in public service delivery. Although SIBs are still in their infancy some empirical evidence suggest that there are risks associated with their use: the financial and reputational for public sector commissioners remain high even with the involvement of social investors and private capital; the redistribution of risks among investors vary significantly between different model of SIBs' contracts, so careful consideration is necessary; finally, it still remains hard for small NGOs to access SIBs projects, that are more likely to involve large NGOs that are considered investment-ready. (Edmiston and Nicholls, 2018) now reaching 200 billion € annually. In this case,

the EIB would be an anchor investor and it would attempt to attract other funders to invest in bonds that are linked to solutions to social problems with a tangible social effect.

Wojciech Deska's speech stressed the importance of size for the EIB, which is why Civic eState chose the title "pooling the urban commons", pursuing the idea of creating a larger pool of projects to meet the EIB's threshold. On the issue of the reliability of the investment, Christian Iaione remarked that cities should take the lead in these processes because they are reliable institutional actors: municipalities can create a joint vehicle and venture to interact with the EIB and other long-term investors.

#### **THE TRIAS FOUNDATION AS A POSSIBLE FUNDER**

Before co-founding *Stiftung trias* (or Trias foundation), Rolf Novy-Huy worked with German banks for over 30 years, specializing in social financing, commons and other civic projects. The Trias foundation is a great example of financing self-organisation and circular economy, which started 18 years ago with 74.000 €. Today it has equity of

around 12 million € and 43 projects, including 16 real estate projects.

“Trias”, taken from the Greek language, stands for the three pillars of the foundation:

- *Land question*: the creation of commons that pre-empt speculation, land grabbing, and land devastation.
- *Sustainability*: use of sustainable building material that does not damage health; energy savings; shared facilities.
- *Cooperative housing*: support for housing projects and circular economy.

Entities that work with the Trias foundation are non-profit oriented groups, associations, cooperatives, construction co-housing fields (for example, Mietshäuser Syndikat-Construction, non-property-oriented housing). All of them have idealistic aims – Trias put a strong emphasis on this, and on the democratic structure of its interlocutors – but nonetheless, they have to be commercially sound and be a stable entity, otherwise it would be difficult to cooperate with them.

These groups usually ask Trias

foundation for help to acquire the land they want to build on, seeking liquidity. However, Trias foundation often does not have sufficient liquidity because of its previous investments. Therefore, cooperation between the foundation and the group in question is required to raise new and fresh liquidity.

To start a collaboration, the Trias foundation looks for strong proof of concept and a team of people stable enough to bring their project from idea to impact and to handle the investment frame – usually between 3-4 million €. This includes the ability to raise money, invest it, and address friends of the project to gain the necessary support and the equity needed. Besides having the expertise to evaluate the groups, Trias foundation also checks the land or building site. Trias requests these conditions to make the project more attractive to additional funds from a third-party (usually a bank, another foundation, or a private subject).

Rolf Novy-Huy presents three examples of projects funded by Trias:

- StadtGut Blankenfelde, a housing complex in the northern part

of Berlin hosting nearly 1000 in a multi-generational living space. The land is the property of the foundation and a cooperative from Berlin possesses the lease.

- Leuchtturm, a new building in the center of Berlin for multi-generational living, focused on sustainability and energy-saving.
- KunstWohnWerke in Munich, which combines housing and work for artists (ateliers and living spaces), and secures affordable rents for all.

#### **HOW PROJECT FINANCING WORKS AT THE TRIAS FOUNDATION**

The foundation finances the projects in two ways:

- *Land property*: the Trias foundation tries to acquire the land itself to keep it in the foundation and protect it from speculation. Any land acquired belongs to the foundation and cannot be sold to avoid speculation. The fund used to acquire the land is a mixture of donations, heritage, and loans accumulated over time.
- *Financing the building*: besides the land, the foundation needs to purchase the relevant building and its renovation. This is the same investment that a private

person or company would obtain, needing 25% equity and another 75% from a third-party subject (e.g., a bank).

The Trias foundation, taking the role of supervisor, connects these two components via a land lease contract, which enables to safeguard the original aims of the project and ensures it stays non-profit oriented.

All the projects pay land-lease fees (as part of their rent), which go back to the Trias foundation. Part of this revenue is reinvested in non-profit activities involved in the project, such as kindergartens. The remaining part is used for the Trias foundation's work and to support future projects. It is essential for the foundation to make a surplus to avoid locking capital and ensure that more projects can benefit from its support. Thus, Trias helps projects in the establishment phase and the projects themselves contribute to funding future initiatives.

The Trias foundation is already working to scale-up its model and to initiate a collaboration with the EIB and Civic eState. Its model needs to be adapted to national legal frameworks, and it requires

an enabling legal structure such as heritage building rights.

### **THE COMMUNITY LAND TRUST MODEL**

Finally, during our meetings with the guest speakers, various Civic eState's city partners highlighted the importance of Community Land Trusts (CLT), an ever more popular model across EU projects and cities. The CLT is a community-led development model, where local non-profit organizations develop and manage homes and other vital assets (such as community enterprises, food growing or workspaces). The main goal of a CLT is to ensure that these spaces stay affordable based on the income level of the locals they want to attract. CLTs are strictly non-profit, meaning that they can make a surplus as a community business, but that such surplus must be reinvested in the community.

CLTs originated in the US as a result of the organized fight for civil rights of African American communities (Gordham Nembhard 2014). They are being increasingly recognized in the EU, by both common law and civil law countries. England and Wales enabled the creation

of CLTs by local communities to acquire land and buildings in the Housing & Regeneration Act 2008; the Bruxelles government recognized and encouraged the creation of the Bruxelles CLT in the Bruxelles Housing Code (Bettini 2018). Although similar to other kinds of governance property that can be used for the urban commons, such as cooperatives for example, their governance is designed to explicitly remove the profit motive from building and land use and measuring it on the basis of the community value they create (Huron 2018; Foster and Iaione, 2021).

CLTs are an interesting model for the Civic eState network because, unlike many top-down projects developed inside city partners, these could be truly shaped by local communities and their needs. Some of the cities in the network, like Ghent and Barcelona, are already experimenting with CLTs.

### **A SECOND MEETING WITH THE EIB**

Desmond Gardner, Financial Instruments Advisor at the EIB, presents to Civic eState the work of [fi-compass](#)(link is external), a platform for advisory services on financial instruments under the European Structural and Investment Funds

(ESIF), as well as two initiatives particularly relevant for the urban commons: the *Mutual Reliance Initiative* (MRI), a mechanism by which, when co-financing projects, one of the three partners takes the role of lead financier, relying on its standards and procedures as long as the minimum requirements of the other partners are met, and the case study of the Financial instruments for urban development in Portugal (IFRRU 2020, Instrumento Financeiro para a Reabilitação e Revitalização Urbanas), a financial instrument that has been established to support urban renewal across the entire Portuguese territory.

Jelena Emde, Investment Platform Advisor at the EIB, presents *social outcome contracting* (SOC) options for urban commons projects, an innovative form of procuring services based on outcomes, whose main feature is that improved social and health outcomes lead to a financial return for the involved parties and the saving of public finances.

It is important to note that the EIB resources are raised on the international money market. It is a powerful tool, but it is also why the EIB cannot take more risks with investments. It raises finance by borrow-

ing money. The EIB needs to adopt a commercially based funding policy and be complemented by programmes like the European structural and investment funds (ESIF) to make it work.

The EIB group finances at a very large scale and lends heavily to national and regional governments to support infrastructure: a large amount is invested in the environment to try to tackle the climate challenge.

#### **EUROPEAN STRUCTURAL AND INVESTMENT FUNDS FINANCIAL INSTRUMENTS**

Desmond Gardner explained that part of the resources under the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) are turned into financial products (so-called 'financial instruments') such as loans, guarantees, equity and other risk-bearing mechanisms, which can then be used to support economically viable projects which promote EU policy objectives. Financial Instruments (FIs) therefore are different from grants because they need to be repaid. The EU Member States receive ESIF funding and then they appoint a national body known as the Managing Authority (MA) which oversees the use of the available re-

sources and of FIs.

While grants still have a crucial role to play, FIs can offer significant advantages. Amongst the most important of them, there are: the revolving effect, meaning investments of structural funds through financial instruments are repaid and therefore can be invested again and again, providing more outputs for every euro that is committed in that way; and the leverage effect meaning the capacity to attract additional public and private resources, implying that actors can use relatively small amounts of structural funds to mobilize other resources, both public and private.

Moreover, financial instruments can also contribute to improved impact, because they are managed by independent fund subjects, who make the same judgements about the risk that you might expect a bank to do in terms of the viability and the success of the project.

Finally, FIs lead to what are often called 'bankable' projects – projects that generate revenue, cost savings, or growth in value for equity investments. The rule in the future for member states to choose the tools to use to invest their structur-

al funds should be when a project is bankable and which financial instruments should be used, allowing grants to be used where there is no commercial market. It is important to understand how these tools can apply to urban commons projects, identify the bankable projects. and characterize them to develop possible financing models in the future.

**A CASE STUDY OF A CITY-LED FUND:  
THE MRA-RICE BLUEPRINT CITY FUND**

Desmond Gardner brought forwards the example of an independently-managed city-led financial instrument, developed in 2018 following a pilot with the cities of London, The Hague, and Milan.

In 2015, the EU Commission issued a call for proposals under the Multi-Regional Assistance programme (MRA). The MRA offers EU funding for co-operation projects involving at least two managing authorities from the different EU Member States selected through competitive calls for proposals. The assessment of the possible use of ESIF financial instruments in specific thematic areas of common interest is the objective of the MRA projects. The cities of Manchester and The Hague brought London

and then Milan to apply this call.

Inside the MRA, the Revolving Instruments for Cities in Europe (RICE) project started to develop the Blueprint city fund to look at experiences and key features, aiming to toat further new financial instruments to increase private sector investment in urban development projects. Cities needed to go through this process:

City strategy > Project pipeline > Assessment of financing needs > New city fund (RICE)

First, everything being strategy-driven, they need to define a strategy and identify where financial instruments could play. Then, having an existing project pipeline that can be nurtured and grow is an important contribution that cities can make in developing this fund. Thirdly, they must recognize what the financing needs are, what projects are bankable, when is a grant or financial instrument the right tool, and what type of products is needed from that financial instrument. Finally, this leads to the creation of a platform, the basis to establish the new fund.

With the EIB's help, the MRA-RICE

Blueprint City Fund's project promoters, the four cities, came up with five elements for effective city-led funds going forward: capacity, independent fund manager, structured design, products and investment-friendly.

#### **A CASE STUDY OF POOLING DIVERSE INVESTMENTS: IFFRU 2020 IN PORTUGAL**

Desmond Gardner also presented the example of Instrumento Financeiro para a Reabilitação e Revitalização Urbanas (IFFRU) 2020 in Portugal, a national scheme where the government managed to take a relatively small amount of structural funds and raise a large amount of public and private investments. Three banks are supporting the implementation of this scheme: Santander, BPI, Millenium, and SPGM, the national guarantee institution.

The IFFRU is an urban development fund that pooled resources from the European Regional Development Fund, EIB, Council of Europe Development Bank (CEDB), and from their own resources. After having gathered 702 million in public money, the government reached out to commercial banks, which agreed to match that funding.



The IFFRU is a robust model for urban development schemes in European cities because it successfully attracts both EIB and private sector finance. This financial scheme sets an example of how European investment structural funds can be used to support assets-based urban development such as urban commons.

**ANOTHER OPTION FOR FINANCING  
THE COMMONS: SOCIAL OUTCOME  
CONTRACTING**

Following the conversation on financial instruments, Jelena Emde discussed social impact investing in cities, and specifically Social Outcome Contracting (SOC). SOC is an innovative form of procuring social services, in which the service provider's compensation is linked to outcomes rather than specified tasks (rather than outputs).

Often known as a payment-by-results scheme, it has many sub-categories, one of which is Social Impact Bonds (SIBs). SOC is a partnership between a public authority, which defines desired outcomes and pays for those outcomes, and a service provider, who in turn works to get the beneficiaries to achieve those outcomes. In

some cases, investors also play a role by providing the funding, and they are mostly involved in social impact bonds. Finally, in the structure of the SOC there is often an external evaluator who verifies the achievement of the outcomes.

SOCs are growing in importance because of their focus on prevention. It is widely known that investing in prevention pays off and that the State can save millions, but the available resources are already tied to dealing with emergencies. So this is why investors can step in. They can invest in building fences (for example for the prevention of diabetes, foster care, homelessness, etc.) and help governments save millions in the future. When the results are achieved, the savings can be used to pay back investors. While if they are not achieved, no repayment is necessary.

For SOC to work, there has to be a solid business case behind both social impact and quantifiable savings for the government that can be achieved and generated. This is why we turned next to ways of measuring social value, with Amsterdam's MAEX and Barcelona's Community Balance.

## **EIB ADVISORY SUPPORT**

Desmond Gardner and Jelena Emde are both working at the EIB Advisory department in which three financial instruments can be relevant to Civic eState.

fi-compass: an advisory platform settled by the European Commission in partnership with the EIB. It is designed to strengthen the capacity of managing authorities and other stakeholders to work with ESIF financial instruments.

European Investment Advisory Hub(link is external): a centre to support the identification and feasibility of using investment platforms and financial instruments, combining the European Fund for Strategic Investments(link is external) (EFSI) with ESIF funds.

Bilateral advisory, client funded assignments to Managing authorities and the National promotional banks and institutions(link is external) (NPBIs) for bespoke financial instrument advice.

The opportunity for support from the EIB group includes the possibility to invest in those schemes through the European Investment Fund, which can contribute upfront funding to finance such programmes. The EIB also supports

the development of SOC through advisory services. To support these projects and public authorities across Europe, they have launched in 2019 the Advisory Platform for Social Outcomes Contracting(link is external), funded under the European Investment Advisory Hub (which is itself part of the Investment Plan for Europe(link is external), the so-called Juncker Plan).

## **THE MAEX: A FOUNDATION THAT CALCULATES THE SOCIAL VALUE OF INITIATIVES**

Given the importance of quantifying the value of projects, both for FIs and for SOCs, the Civic e State network turned next to a discussion about how to measure impact. Nathalie van Loon, project coordinator of Amsterdam's URBACT Local Group, talked about MAEX, a Dutch foundation that calculates the value to society of initiatives.

MAEX charts their impact and offers them easy access to public administrations, privates, and individuals by considering how they contribute to a vibrant society and sustainable economy. One tool used in the evaluation is the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This framework forms a sound basis for impact measurement because of

the SDG's broad scope and international recognition.

### **BARCELONA AND THE COMMUNITY BALANCE TOOL**

Another example of measuring the impact of social initiatives is the Community Balance tool, which Elena Martí, Barcelona's project coordinator for the Civic e State Network presented. As part of the city's Citizen Assets programme, Barcelona has developed a series of criteria or principles of what 'community management and use' means, as well as a self-evaluation tool for the value created called or mechanism that is called Community Balance.

The criteria for the Community Balance tool have been developed and agreed upon with communities involved in the community management experience including – the social solidarity economy network (XES), Barcelona city council, and the community spaces network (XEC) – all part of Barcelona's URBACT Local Group. The tool assesses factors such as ties to the territory, social impact and return, democratic, transparent and participation-based internal management, environmental and economic

sustainability, and the care of people and processes. The tool was piloted with ten initiatives and it will be further reviewed by the City following the pilot results •

# **The Power of Civic Ecosystems**

**by Levente Polyak**  
Ad Hoc Expert

**Public-civic cooperation** has never been as important for European cities as today. Fading trust between public administrations and civil society, rising authoritarianism and deteriorating services all make urban life more burdensome, especially for the most vulnerable social groups. NGOs and civic initiatives constitute one of the most important pillars of European democracies. They not only act as critical observers of the evolution of our societies but also fill the gaps left behind by public services, especially since the 2008 economic crisis. While in the past decade, NGOs in Europe had a crucial role in advocating for the most vulnerable groups of their cities or towns by building a parallel welfare net for them, many of them were labelled as foreign agents by their governments, for example, in Hungary, Poland or Turkey.

Many commentators have described this process as a **shrinking civic space** in Europe. Political pressure and recentralisation efforts by governments combined with significant budget cuts in the fields of culture, education, social affairs and healthcare placed many civil society actors in a difficult sit-

uation. The loss of connection with national politics prompted many organisations to look for **new partnerships**, stronger ties with their local and international civic counterparts, as well as with their municipalities.

Civil society refers to a great variety of actors that include informal groups, civic initiatives, volunteer associations, neighbourhood structures, community organisations and professional NGOs. They all have a role in a **well-functioning civic ecosystem** that, in turn, supports the public, private and knowledge spheres with its capacities, skills and expertise. Such an ecosystem is based on connections and collaborations: the more the constituting organisations and initiatives of local civil societies are strongly interconnected and work in a complementary way, the better they can respond to new challenges, by distributing or pooling their resources when needed.

Comparably to civil society actors, many local governments across Europe also suffer from a loss of autonomy and deflating budgets as a result of political recentralisation. While this makes municipalities natural allies of local civil societies,

most of them have no capacities or resources to develop **real instruments for public-civic collaboration** and participatory modes of governance between public authorities and civil society organisations. Despite recognising the importance of NGOs, civic initiatives and social economy organisations in the social and cultural life of cities, most local municipalities do not dispose of the necessary skills, tools and methods to better engage their local stakeholders.

Similarly, in many cities, civil society initiatives acting locally have very limited knowledge of each other, and even less about local actors from the private or institutional sectors. The limited mutual understanding among civil society organisations, local businesses, service providers, institutions and the municipality results in a lack of trust between them, in limited networking opportunities and **incomplete local ecosystems**. In these incomplete ecosystems, where local organisations' activities are not sufficiently transparent to each other and where they compete with each other for funding, spaces and other resources, the possibility for exchanging knowledge, organising

cooperation and sharing resources, needs and decisions among them is rather restrained. Therefore, in the absence of incentives or procedures of cooperation, those who shape these cities, districts or neighbourhoods have no mechanisms nor interests in working together towards shared goals: such as for better public spaces, coordinated health or climate response, stronger local commerce, more accessible public services or more resilient cultural activities, for instance. There are many ways to counter this logic of indifference, distrust and competition with the notions of connection, complementarity and collaboration. Based on a better understanding of the resources and needs of individual organisations and initiatives, we can build stronger and more resilient networks where these organisations and initiatives can rely on and cooperate with each other. The first step towards this is to map local civil actors.

#### **THE IMPORTANCE OF CIVIC ECOSYSTEMS**

Once the composition of a local civil society and its public and private partnerships are known, the question is how to help its members

build ties with each other. The notion of **innovation ecosystems**, borrowed by the business and technology fields from ecology, can help us to better understand how these civic networks function. Ecosystems are more than an accumulation of actors: they are also made up by “enabling policies and regulations, accessibility of finance, informed human capital, supportive markets, energy, transport and communications infrastructure, a culture supportive of innovation and entrepreneurship, and networking assets, which together support productive relationships between different actors and other parts of the ecosystem.”<sup>1</sup>

Following the logic of natural and innovation ecosystems, we can conceive of **civic ecosystems** that – similarly to natural or business ecosystems – “not only foster in-

teractions but facilitate symbiotic relationships among the various initiatives launched within its environment” as well as “optimise the flow of talent and knowledge if they share a geographical proximity.”<sup>2</sup> By developing a certain collective intelligence, such ecosystems move “from a collection of elements to a more structured community.”<sup>3</sup>

There are, however, important differences between (business) innovation ecosystems and civic ecosystems. Business ecosystems are principally growth-oriented and are based on a combination of complementary and substitute relations.<sup>4</sup> Well-functioning civic ecosystems are, by nature, **more cooperative than competitive** and instead of growth, they aim to build systemic resilience, encourage mutual support and enable both individual organisations and the ecosystem as

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1 IDEA (International Development Innovation Alliance) <https://www.idiainnovation.org/ecosystem>

2 Seuillet, Eric and Lima, Marcus (2019) 7 conseils pour développer des écosystèmes innovants et vivants. <https://www.7x7.press/7-conseils-pour-developper-des-ecosystemes-innovants-et-vivants>, 20 May 2019

3 Moore, James F. (1993) Predators and Prey: A New Ecology of Competition. Harvard Business Review, 1993/May-June)

4 Granstrand, Ove and Holgersson, Marcus (2019) Innovation ecosystems: A conceptual review and a new definition. In: Technovation, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.technovation.2019.102098>

a whole to respond to future challenges.

By joining forces and **sharing resources** in the process of developing their activities, individual initiatives can use services with a lower threshold. For instance, if different initiatives in a neighbourhood share a space, equipment or a storage room, develop an online commerce platform to sell their products or jointly organise home delivery, it represents a lower financial and organisational burden for all parties. By following the principles of circular economy, initiatives in the same neighbourhood can use each other's material resources, at low transportation costs. Or an organisation that renovates its office can share its residue materials with other organisations, or community gardens can use the organic waste in their food businesses in order to develop their soil by composting, to mention just a few examples. Such connections are possible when local actors know each other's activities, needs and resources. In order to amplify cooperative relationships, it is important to counterbalance competitive elements within

the civic sphere, generated by traditional funding schemes that set all organisations against each other when competing for resources.

Such interconnectivity shall **not be limited to the civic sphere**, for it is not isolated from the public and private spheres, the worlds of local commerce, research & development organisations or knowledge institutions, for instance. In many processes, civic initiatives or NGOs are situated in longer value chains, at specific stages of value aggregation, which links them to actors from other fields. Knowing better the position of civic actors in these broader collaboration ecosystems is crucial to "understand the gaps, inefficiencies, over-representations or opportunities offered by an environment."<sup>5</sup>

#### **SPACES FOR CIVIL SOCIETY ACTORS**

Collaboration within the civic sphere is not isolated from other sectors, and it does not take place in a vacuum either. It does, instead, unfold in discussions, on online platforms, and most importantly, in physical spaces. Spaces that ena-

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5 Troyas, Ricardo Antón and Gómez de la Iglesia, Roberto (2017) Kultursistema. Matrix for interpreting and mapping cultural and creative ecosystems, p.15



ble “local, face-to-face interactions – at the school, the playground, and the corner diner – are the building blocks of all public life”<sup>6</sup> and they determine whether social capital develops in a neighbourhood or a city. These spaces are the backdrop, where “social cohesion develops through repeated human interaction and joint participation in shared projects.”<sup>7</sup>

Such repeated human interactions often occur unintentionally. Playgrounds become the site of new friendships and local shops become part of a neighbourhood-scale welfare net that keeps an eye on the wellbeing of regular customers. Community spaces, on the other hand, have the capacity to **generate cooperation on purpose**. When the restaurant of a civic centre is open only for one hour at lunchtime, it will encourage the users of the space to meet each other over a meal and share their thoughts and plans. When freelancers in a co-working space bump into each other around the coffee

machine, they might take a moment and update each other about their projects. It is often in these limiting physical settings, that new collaborations are born.

The power of community spaces might grow beyond their walls: taking the role of organising forces in a neighbourhood or beyond, they can become the incubators of new connections and collaborations. Whether they’re owned by a municipality or run by an association, civic venues act as meeting points, as centres of sociability. Once these spaces, “capable of anchoring processes of empowerment and political capabilities as well as social activation,”<sup>8</sup> take a position in the development of their neighbourhood or city, begin to act on their surroundings and embark on “rewiring” the society around them, they become “trigger spaces (...) that collect social energy and at the same time become co-design laboratories and spaces for the production of collective services.”<sup>9</sup>

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6 Klinenberg, Eric (2018) *Palaces for the People*. New York: Penguin Random House, p.11.

7 Klinenberg, i.e.

8 Ostanel, Elena (2017) *Spazi fuori dal comune*. Milano: Franco Angeli, p.11

9 Ostanel, i.e., p.42

Community spaces play an important role in their ecosystem: by mobilising resources to meet the needs of their surroundings, by confronting new ideas to spark innovation, and by generating new economic flows with the participation of many local partners, they can become important **nodes in their ecosystems** that stand at the centre of connections and collaborations. Such nodes have a key responsibility in fostering social cohesion and inclusion: by creating encounters between people and groups that rarely meet outside their walls, community spaces enable the “reconstruction of social relations and forms of coexistence through physical spaces.”<sup>10</sup>

There are many ways to build spaces for civil society actors. In some cases, municipalities finance a public structure. In cities lacking designated public venues, civic actors mobilise themselves to develop mechanisms to access unused or underused public or private properties. Overall, all these types of projects act as aggregators of civic energies, by opening spaces for a variety of organisations and help-

ing them in establishing stronger links with each other and their neighbourhoods.

### THE QUEST FOR AUTONOMY

Community spaces that constitute nodes in their civic ecosystems, are also deeply embedded in their local economic contexts. The building that an initiative uses for its activities, the funds it uses to finance its programmes and to pay the work of its members, are all exposed to local economic flows. Community spaces vary in the ways they are run, financed or maintained. There are, of course, many cultural or civic centres that operate according to a straightforward top-down logic, fully financed by public authorities, local or national governments. In order to be able to resist coercion and bring about social change, however, community hubs need a certain degree of autonomy.

Such autonomy can be obtained through **financial independence** or forms of shared governance where civic actors are protected from political or economic pressures of various nature. In contexts where local

<sup>10</sup> Cellamare, Carlo (2020) *Abitare le periferie*. Roma: Bordeaux, p.29

development is hijacked by flagship projects of national governments, cooperation between local administrations and civic initiatives need to focus on existing resources that can be mobilised by opening up municipal spaces for civic use or by channelling local economic flows into civic spaces.

While alternative funding opportunities usually do not propose a systemic change of local public finances, they can help in **pooling existing resources** scattered around in a neighbourhood or a city, and connect civic spaces with broader communities. New financial mechanisms, enabled by ethical actors, can help to overcome obstacles that prioritise short-term political interests, the fragmentation of local bureaucratic systems or the lack of willingness to innovate in public service provision, by showing alternative solutions to local governments. Funding opportunities based on community contributions may give an insight into more efficient expenditures, and also provide feedback for local governments on which areas to focus on. For over a decade, civic initiatives

across Europe have been working on **securing their venues** through shared ownership or long-term lease contracts.<sup>11</sup> In this process, the rediscovery of models based on shared ownership and non-speculative real estate development in the field of collaborative housing has been a source of constant inspiration for community spaces. Besides policy innovation enabling citizens to buy assets of community value before any private bidders are allowed to enter, ethical finance foundations and social banks have been leading the way to help civic initiatives establish a long-term presence in the buildings they use. Enabled by such financial organisations, a variety of mechanisms have been deployed to pool resources from community members or use the revenues of a building's activities to pay back loans. In contexts without such financial infrastructure, initiatives have developed their own peer-to-peer lending systems.

Besides securing spaces, another mechanism to stabilise community spaces is to **use the resources of a broader community**, whether in crowdfunding or in the form of

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11 Patti, Daniela, Polyak Levente. (2017) Funding the Cooperative City. Cooperative City Books, Vienna

a community foundation. Creating close connections between a community, a venue and its local economy initiatives can strengthen the venue's **economic resilience** by enabling the sharing and pooling of resources within the local ecosystem. Impact assessment tools, in turn, help civic initiatives demonstrate the social value of their work and enable municipalities to better integrate them in their welfare service provider networks, but also to provide a more stable funding of their services.

#### **FROM PARTICIPATION TO CO-GOVERNANCE**

There is a great variety of relationships between the public and civil sectors. This diversity is at the core of the debate about public-civic cooperation across Europe: different constellations to run spaces, deliver services and build communities represent **different ideas about the role of the public and civil sectors**, as well as about the ways resources and responsibilities need to be shared. While citizen participation

has been on the agenda of European cities for a while now, according to many observers, participatory processes should go beyond the classic ambitions defined by Arnstein's Ladder of Participation.<sup>12</sup> There is a principal difference between participation and co-governance. As Annibale d'Elia explains in a podcast about Milan's new "neighbourhood schools," participation is a desire without responsibility. Instead of 'what would you like someone else to do for you?' the real question is 'what do you want to do?'"<sup>13</sup>

Concepts for the shared management of spaces in services are not equally widespread in all parts of Europe. The ambition of opening spaces for NGOs and civic initiatives, where public institutions and civil society organisations can better cooperate, presents itself in a different way in every city. The conditions and resources available in some cities to run public structures and related networking events, funding programmes and capacity-building activities, as well as to develop more complex governance

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12 Iaione, Christian (2019) Legal Infrastructure and Urban Networks for Just and Democratic Smart Cities. Italian Journal of Public Law, Vol. 11, Issue 2, p.768

13 <http://www.innovazione2020.it/annibale-delia-la-scuola-dei-quartieri-comune-di-milano-gdb-2019/>

models and cooperation frameworks are far from being available everywhere. Cities in different parts of Europe all represent different welfare state models, with **different possibilities of sharing resources and responsibilities** with their local civil society as well as different capacities on the side of NGOs and social economy organisations.

For reasons of political history, bureaucratic procedures, budgetary deficits or the socio-economic context, each city has to adapt their models for community venues to their own local circumstances. If in some cities public-civic cooperation can be considered as a fairly top-down model, in which most responsibilities and decisions are held and resources are distributed by the municipality, other cities have different possibilities to strengthen public-civic cooperation and open spaces for NGOs. In some contexts, strong public welfare structures enable municipalities to maintain a great variety of public facilities as well as spaces for NGOs. In other policy contexts, entrepreneurialism has been promoted among civic organisations through capacity building, active commissioning, asset transfer and

other policy mechanisms. Some community venues build on decades of activism and a strong position that local NGOs established for themselves in the city's discourse on culture and communities. Others, benefiting from their respective progressive political moments, aim at developing new instruments of governance to facilitate the sharing or responsibilities between the municipality and civil actors.

The modalities of public-civic cooperation also **depend on the histories** that shape the space that their municipalities and NGOs have for manoeuvring. Large infrastructure development projects, badly targeted investments that did not reach the desired impact or discontinued experiences eliminate the trust in public interventions. Spatial fragmentation makes communication and cooperation difficult among civic actors. Tourism and real estate pressure reduce the scope of spaces available for civil society initiatives and organisations.

Therefore, there are no recipes for the public-civic co-management of community venues. In some cases the realisation of structures for the participatory governance of

common spaces is an achievement based on years of experimentation. Forms of shared management offer many advantages to both NGOs and municipalities: by “developing ‘policies for self-organization’, or enhancing the social energies and latent engagements” of civic initiatives, progressive local governments favour “an alliance between institutions and social forces as well as the enhancement of social energies in a context in which institutions are no longer able to bear the burden of managing public services and equipment.”<sup>14</sup> More importantly, sharing resources and giving up power on the side of municipalities is also an investment in the empowerment of civic actors “to foster bottom-up self-organization towards the creation of unprecedented public-private partnerships capable of responding to changes in social needs.”<sup>15</sup>

### **EMPOWERING CIVIL SOCIETY**

When a municipality or an umbrella organisation aims to strengthen its civic ecosystem through the skills, knowledge and capacities of

NGOs, it needs to develop and carry out a variety of capacity-building activities to improve community outreach, communication abilities, management know-how or economic sustainability of civic actors. Through their civic ecosystems, local governments can act as agents of emancipation, helping initiatives extend the scope of their work through the acquisition of new skills, the better use of shared resources, professionalisation or enhanced volunteer involvement. In order to support the work of NGOs and civic initiatives, many municipalities employ **intermediaries** who act as liaisons towards civil society: Brighton’s Community Engagement Officer or Espoo’s Civil Society Coordinator both play the role of translating community needs to the municipality and the other way around. Besides establishing regular contact between initiatives in a neighbourhood or a field and municipal offices, such assistance also helps organisations to establish themselves and apply to funding opportunities or other types of support more successfully. The competences of NGOs and

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14 Cellamare, i.e. p.66

15 Ostanel, i.e., p.48

civic initiatives are further strengthened by **specific programmes which** help the birth of new initiatives or help organisations to work closer together and develop formalised collaboration structures.

In many contexts, this capacity building is connected to the ambition to help NGOs, social enterprises and other civic actors shift their activities **from volunteering to professional service provision**. Institutionalising the activities of civil society organisations is often considered a necessary step to nurture collaboration among municipal-civic actors, on the one hand, and help the emancipation of NGOs, on the other. This shift is also supported by the changing legislative environment, for example, in the case of the “Third sector reform” in Italy. The professionalisation of NGOs often means that they become capable of delivering various services for the public sector, ranging from social and healthcare through inclusion to education and culture.

To enable civic organisations to respond to public (and private) needs and deliver locally embedded ser-

vices, municipalities also need to develop **active procurement** or targeted commissioning principles that help channelling public spending to activities that create local jobs or create other positive social impacts. Challenges are particularly present when it comes to smaller, more informal NGOs, seeking ways to open new revenue streams by developing new services. Unlike large professional organisations operating on a national-level that can secure resources more easily, small organisations are struggling to find a balance between local embeddedness and self-reliance or financial autonomy. Commissioning NGOs to deliver services requires public accompaniment and active procurement to maximise impact and develop jobs in the local communities; the role of local governments is essential for NGOs to reach these goals.

It is not that community spaces by accommodating civic initiatives that fill the gaps of public services with their own amenities become bare service providers. Instead, they serve as “civic centers, (...) centers of services and activities

at the service of their neighborhoods,"<sup>16</sup> or nodes in their civic ecosystems. Civic centres, often run as commons, manage social and cultural activities like "language schools for foreigners, local nurseries and playrooms, cinema forums, employment agencies, study rooms, or services such as those related to sports activities, dance schools, theater schools, (...) and play the role of a local entrepreneurship hub."<sup>17</sup> By connecting such a diversity of services that the public sector is unable to provide and by opening their doors to a variety of social groups and activities, these civic centres also change the nature of these services.

Community spaces and the civic ecosystems built around them are fundamental components of a well-functioning – cooperative, fair and resilient – city. They bring together individuals in neighbourhoods to form groups and engage with the common good. They connect people with similar interests and help them articulate their needs and organise better access to services. They fill the gaps left by the

welfare state and help vulnerable groups fight for their rights. In fact, sharing resources and responsibilities between municipalities and civil society actors has helped cities not only in generating enhanced participation in urban development issues but also in co-producing urban space and co-creating urban services. Spaces for NGOs and civic initiatives like the NGO House in Riga are crucial for citizens and civil organisations to meet each other. They act as platforms for public-civic cooperation: by being at the heart of local civil societies, they offer venues for encounters, events and exchanges, becoming veritable nodes of their local civic ecosystems •

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16 Cellamare, i.e. p.69

17 Cellamare, i.e. p.69





# **Why an integrated action of capitalization for Civic Estate**

**by Simone d'Antonio**  
Ad Hoc Expert

The Transfer Network Civic eState developed a forward-looking approach on collaborative management of urban commons, constantly fueled by the vibrant exchange of practices and solutions among the network partners. The good practice developed by Naples, the Lost & Found model, was the starting point of an experience which went beyond the mere adaptation and reuse of the practice. The model developed by Civic eState crossed the political paths of the cities involved in the network and influenced their strategies for promoting sustainable development at social, economic and environmental level.

The wide range of results achieved by the Civic eState network partners opens the floor to a multifaceted and integrated capitalization strategy, aimed at giving maximum visibility to Civic eState's achievements in different contexts. The elements resumed in this capitalization plan have the objective of taking out the most by the transnational and local activities and promote them at different levels.

The elements recalled by the action of the Civic eState partners, connected to the main layers of

the Co-City model promoted by the network (Law and Policy Experimentalism, Enabling State, Social and Economic Pool, Co-Governance, Tech-Justice) are the guiding points of an action of capitalization which will continue also after the end of the network activities, consolidating the collaborative management of commons for the governance of urban spaces. Policy Tools and Principles developed by Civic eState partners – How to capitalize them?

#### **AMSTERDAM**

In line with policies at the core of the local and national debate Amsterdam focused its action in the framework of Civic eState on citizens housing corporation, food policy and food democracy, paving the way for a relevant action of capitalization.

While at national level the action of Amsterdam can be relevant for the debate about co-governance models and inequalities, at international level the adaptation of Naples good practices by Amsterdam can bring to other contexts experimenting with food policies an interesting point of view. The action carried out

by Amsterdam can be an element of inspiration to complete national or regional positions adding a lateral point of view on the role of communing for urban sustainability. In addition, at European level Amsterdam can act as an ambassador to showcase innovative financing schemes on commons, energy democracy and citizen energy communities.

### **BARCELONA**

Barcelona focused its action on citizens assets as participatory spaces and community balance, fostering collaboration among different city departments and initiatives. Citizens Assets and Community Balance programs, which follow the trajectories of pre-existing policies and initiatives on topics such as citizen participation, are decisive elements to be capitalized at different levels.

At local level, the acquired capacities in commons governance and community management can be promoted in the debate about the use of public spaces and civic activism in the post-Covid era. Whereas, at European and Global level the Civic eState learnings can further

reinforce the position of Barcelona in international forums such as the UN-Habitat initiatives on Global Urban Commons, Spatial Justice and Digital Cities. Furthermore, practices as the Citizen Assets Catalogue, Table and Waiting List and the Community Balance can be interesting examples to be mentioned in the framework of the Partnership of EU Urban Agenda on Public Procurement.

### **GDANSK**

Gdansk focused its action in the framework of Civic eState on the creation of a legal framework for commons and sustainable financial model for commons management. The focus on the creation of neighborhood houses, points of reference for citizens' activism, contributes to a dialogue with other European cities. The connection with similar initiatives at European and global level can contribute not only to the capitalization of results but also to gain knowledge useful to empower grassroots organization to a better use of legal tools emerged in the framework of Civic eState.

The uniqueness of these actions

can be also worth to be valorized in the framework of the World Urban Forum 11 of Katowice, as bottom-up examples of implementation of the principles of the New Urban Agenda and as part of wider strategies of urban development carried out through the collaboration between public authorities and communities.

## **GHENT**

In line with its tradition on participative approaches and with a strong political commitment on collaborative decision-making, Ghent put at the core of its actions the co-management of city assets between local authority and resident. The model of collaborative management devised for the St. Joseph Church has a considerable potential in terms of capitalization, not only for the impact created by the action but also for the peculiar mechanism of selection of the Local Administrative Working Group coordinator.

Enhancing the connection between the actions carried out in the framework of Civic eState and other URBACT networks led by Ghent, can foster the creation of a coherent

narrative of the collaborative process of innovation promoted by the city. Topics and approaches addressed by Ghent partners, including the co-creation of solutions for social challenges and the contrast to social exclusion through innovative housing solutions, can positively enrich a dialogue with international public or private organizations such as Nesta, Cecodhas or Feantsa.

## **IAȘI**

The valorization of urban assets and the refurbishment of spaces for local youth are the most relevant fields of action for Iași in the framework of Civic eState. The city tested an integrated scheme for the active involvement of local stakeholders for the collaborative management of commons.

Experiencing most of the more relevant challenges faced by cities newcomers in terms of testing innovative tools on this matter, Iași was led to take inspiration from more mature schemes such as the ones launched by Naples, Turin or Bologna, but also from other partners' initiatives. As a result, today Iași could be inspiration to other

cities in order to promote a widespread adoption of regulations on urban commons. Furthermore, at national level, Iași can enrich the debate about the right to the city and national strategies for urban regeneration proposing the collaborative management of commons as a possible horizon for innovative governance to tackle social inequalities.

The focus on the active involvement of local actors in co-governance and co-ownership of public spaces and on the identification of the local barriers to the regulation and valorization of urban commons can continue also after the end of the network activities, with the consolidation of the ULG and the subsequent adoption of an approach of governance more horizontal and participatory. The continuation of the local activities can lead Iași to reinforce its potential role of ambassador at national and European level of innovative styles of involvements of local actors in the local debate about co-governance of public spaces.

#### **PRESOV**

The revitalization of the former City

Oasis is the main action undertaken by Presov in the framework of Civic eState. As in the case of Iași, the participation to Civic eState provided an useful opportunity to test approaches of co-management of commons which were not traditionally part of the local administrative action. The reaction of participatory spirit along with the quality of contracts established with relevant urban stakeholders such as local university are important element of capitalization.

Despite the presence of strict national regulations in terms of public procurement and use of urban properties, which limited since the beginning the complete replication of the Lost & Found practice of Naples, Presov showed resilience in proposing normative changes in order to innovate the way different levels of governance operate in the sector. The collaboration with the Ministry of Transport is could be the starting point for a national policy reforming the current regulation on use of public structures.

#### **Naples**

Beyond the consolidation and capitalization of then Lost & Found practice, for Naples the Civic eState activities was a relevant opportuni-

ty to reflect on actions that can improve its role at local and national level.

One of the most relevant challenges faced by the city at different scales was the improvement of the narrative on urban commons. At national and local new type of actors can be involved in the promotion of the model, highlighting the impact on the areas where urban commons subject to the Regulation on Civic Uses are located. Improving the connection between the local innovators and the bureaucracy is another major challenge that Naples could face experimenting the replication of programs and initiatives. Merging the aspects of commons management to the support to innovation could contribute also to reposition the legal framework for urban commons in the local and national debate, consolidating the added value of the experience carried out in Naples but creating an original connection with the topics of innovation.

Most of the aspects of the Naples' experience on collaborative management of commons can be consolidated also in the framework of different Partnerships of the Euro-

pean Urban Agenda: among these, the Partnerships on Public Procurement and on Cultural Heritage.

#### **CAPITALIZING CIVIC ESTATE – FINAL REMARKS AND INDICATIONS**

As shown by the individual analysis of the cities' profiles for capitalization, the wide range of models and activities used to adapt, reuse and implement the Lost & Found practice of Naples paves the way to multiple models and actions of capitalization, from local to global level.

The elements highlighted in the thematic session dedicated to capitalization in the network activities converge towards the creation of multiple national networks which may amplify the impact of the actions carried out within Civic eState notably when thinking about up-scaling opportunities given by the EU 2021-2027 programming period.

The cross-capitalization of the knowledge among different programs is a priority well highlighted by Civic eState. Cities' partners, indeed, already capitalized knowledge produced in other EU pro-

grams for sustainable development such as UIA or Horizon Europe Projects. Continuing this action of contamination with other projects and initiatives on similar topics can be beneficial in view of the consolidation of the debate on collaborative management of urban commons, that emerges as a possible interest topic in different calls of the new edition of Horizon Europe.

The collaborative management of commons can be the crucial topic for further arenas of cooperation at European level, consolidating the action of the partner cities in the thematic partnership of the European Urban Agenda and widening the impact of the topic in the new type of Action Plans and Pilot Actions that will be drafted in the framework of the EU Urban Agenda.

Furthermore, the collaborative management of commons has emerged as a topic on which the development of knowledge and practices is particularly remarkable in Europe to be seen as a cross-cutting topic for different modalities of global cooperation. Programs as International Urban and Regional Cooperation may benefit of the activism of the Civic eState cities, which may establish partnerships with cities from different areas of

the world (such as America, Asia and Oceania).

Reinforcing the collaboration with the Global Urban Commons initiative of UN-Habitat can be crucial for highlighting the role of models of collaborative management of commons as possible solutions for a bottom-up implementation of the UN's New Urban Agenda. In view of the revision of the state of implementation of the New Urban Agenda at the World Urban Forum 11 of Katowice, the cities of Civic estate can capitalize the results of the European and local action also in that venue and in close collaboration with national authorities and parties of interest involved in the UN-Habitat bodies. This action can contribute to highlight the added value of Civic eState to solving some of the most urgent challenges related sustainable development at different scales, and offering its solid set of policies, solutions and indicators as an original contribution to the global debate on urban prosperity •





# **Annex**

**Useful links about the Civic  
eState Network**

- Civic eState URBACT webpage, where to find articles, videos, documents, contacts and all the useful infos:  
<https://urbact.eu/civic-estate>
- Civic eState dedicated website, to approach at the project:  
<https://civicestate.eu/>
- Civic eState Map: Prezi visualization of the transfer journey:  
<https://prezi.com/view/SYq2E1WGOTSKE4MvmuDI/>
- The newborn website of the urban commons network of Naples: <https://commonsnapoli.org/>
- City of Barcelona's Citizen Assets programme  
<https://ajuntament.barcelona.cat/participaciociudadana/en/citizen-assets>
- Civic eState presentation on the URBACT website:  
<https://urbact.eu/civic-estate-0>





# Civic eState Final Result Product

**Two years of eu cooperation  
for promoting urban co-governance  
and experimenting public-community  
partnerships to enable inhabitants  
and local communities constitutional  
rights to self-organize and collectively  
act for the urban commons.**



EUROPEAN UNION  
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