

# CITIES@HEART

TOWARDS A BALANCED CITY CENTRE

## BASELINE STUDY



URBACT



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Interreg

# Cities@Heart Study

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# Introduction

This baseline study compiles the analysis carried out from September to December 2023 in the framework of the URBACT Cities@Heart network, which aims to generate actionable knowledge for the revitalisation of city centres.

The purpose of this Baseline Study is to define the framework for the learning and exchange and capacity building activities that will be developed over the two and a half years of the project.

This document is divided into three sections. The first presents the major challenges that contemporary urban centres are facing, as well as the existing public policy framework and the network's approach thereto. The second chapter presents the city profiles, which delve into the specific challenges of each city centre, existing good practices and individual learning needs. Finally, in the third chapter, the methodology, activities, and work plan are presented in detail, as well as the strategy for capitalisation and dissemination of the results.

# 1. The policy challenge

The Cities@Heart network, formed by 10 urban stakeholders, aims to revitalise city centres that have been grappling with significant functional and social changes for decades. A complex interweaving of historical, economic, cultural, touristic, and symbolic centralities characterises these centres.

# 1. The policy challenge

According to French the sociologist Alain Bourdain<sup>1</sup>, "the center is primarily a mechanism, in the sense that Michel Foucault gives to this term. In other words, it's a configuration that combines materiality - in this case, architectural and urban forms - with institutions, representations (such as images, narratives, symbolism), and actors."

**City centres are probably the most complex places for urban management.** This complexity results from the historical heritage (which superimposes multiple legacies) or their role of centrality within the surrounding territory. Services provided to residents often overlap with those serving the city and metropolitan region. The city centre embodies the identity of its inhabitants and other citizens. Urban centres often face the challenge of accommodating multiple uses, leading to overloading and strain. Citizens can feel detached and may abandon or relocate to other areas. These issues have far-reaching consequences throughout the city, and the proper functioning of the entire metropolis depends on their effective management.

Additionally, in the current trend towards polycentric and mixed-use cities, **it is crucial to equip ourselves with the necessary knowledge to ensure a smooth transition for all neighbourhoods within the city.**

Today, the city centre needs to provide inhabitation to a diverse population (prioritising affordable housing, catering to diverse socio-economic groups and fostering inclusivity) while ensuring accessibility to public spaces -that enrich communal bonds, promote well-being and a sense of belonging. A high quality of life in the city centre also involves healthy environments, efficient infrastructure, and easy access to amenities. Citizens need to have opportunities to develop economic activities that create wealth. **Balancing all of these elements creates vibrant and resilient cities**, which contribute to the progress of a community.

However, the large number of uses and populations that intermingle and concentrate in city centres are the main cause of many of their conflicts, where old and new functions coexist in permanent tension. The new integrates with the old, and the local with the global. Problems such as environmental quality (air pollution, noise, etc.), mobility management, public space saturation, and the massive use of urban centres for tourism are visible consequences of dynamics that transcend the limits of the urban space itself.

These challenges demonstrate complex interactions between historical legacies, current demands, and wider regional or global influences, reflecting the multifaceted nature of urban environments.

Therefore, **there are still significant challenges in public policies and urban planning to comprehensively address the diverse range of issues present in urban centres.** These challenges often overlap and represent the interests of different groups. Integrated urban planning is the only way to address all the problems that converge in urban centres. It is important to recognize that addressing each of these issues separately will not solve the overall challenges and may even lead to negative outcomes. It is crucial to understand that all situations within these centres are interconnected and responsive to one another.

**The unique nature of urban centres requires the coordinated deployment of various decision-making tools**, such as urban planning and complementary public policies, multi-level stakeholder engagement, and an approach based on decision-making tools (based on data technologies).

1. Bourdin, A., 2019. Faire centre: la nouvelle problématique des centres-villes. Éditions de l'Aube.

This approach supports the analysis, formulation, and monitoring of implemented actions. By using these various tools together, urban centres can better address their complex challenges, resulting in a more comprehensive and responsive approach to urban development.

In this context, Cities@Heart (C@H) proposes to create among a network of cities of different sizes and backgrounds, a shared methodology adjustable to each territory to support the decision-making process, implementation, efficiency and smooth run of cross-cutting sustainable urban policies, relying on a bottom-up approach and the collection and analysis of factual data, easy to understand and use.

After years of prioritising policies focused on growth and urban expansion, there is now an opportunity to shift the emphasis to the established city. This presents a chance to deploy policies that not only promote proximity and community ties but also support ecological transition and social and economic prosperity. Urban centres can thus become a laboratory for implementing new, innovative urban practices that can be scaled to the rest of the city.

The focus on established urban areas presents opportunities for testing and implementing innovative strategies that can improve urban life and serve as examples of sustainable development on a larger scale.

### 1.1 The current challenges of urban centres

The urban centre is a symbol shared by all inhabitants and represents the heart of the city. It is where metropolitan, local, and neighbourhood uses intersect, creating complex dynamics. Additionally, it is the area of the city that faces the most challenges in the ecological transition, while also dealing with significant social imbalances.

Throughout the second half of the 20th century, European urban centres became a prominent target for urban regeneration initiatives. As cities grew rapidly from the early 1900s, they gradually endowed themselves with new, more modern infrastructure and services. Ultimately, peripheries offered a higher standard (new urban developments) and quality of life than the historic centres – dense, unhealthy, and obsolete.

Thus, this process of contemporary city development marked the beginning of the decay of historic centres, which continues today in many European cities. The space occupied by high-income social groups in the city centre became available to less prosperous social classes. This process of abandonment and population replacement initiated a cycle of decay, joined by other factors such as the loss of functional centrality due to new communication systems that did not reach into historic centres, structuring the new socioeconomic life of the city and leaving the historic centre behind.

However, starting from the second half of the 20th century, an awareness of the importance of historic centres within the urban structure and their social role began to emerge. From the 1970s, city management refocused on inner cities, and obsolete and abandoned central spaces gained importance amidst the contradictions of unlimited urban development in the preceding decades. In response to this renewed concern for urban areas, city centres are primed to be the focus of urban transformation and revitalisation initiatives.

Today, contemporary city centres are addressing the following **15 challenges**:

## Metropolitan dimension

The concentration of highly relevant public facilities, such as cultural, civic, and administrative buildings, as well as commercial or recreational services and productive spaces like offices and tertiary sectors, often causes urban centres to serve a much larger population, extending beyond the neighbourhood and acquiring a metropolitan dimension.

The interaction between the city centre and its periphery creates negative effects on mobility (both daily and occasional travel) and the intensive use of public space, resulting in a deterioration of environmental quality with noise and air pollution. Conversely, as stated by the urban planner Joan Busquets<sup>2</sup>, the creation of new centralities in other parts of can lead to a polycentric model, characterised by functional specialisation.

## Proximity vs centrality

Configuring urban centres as proximity environments and fostering identity involves addressing a significant paradox. Despite typically offering all necessities for daily life, urban centres often fail to reduce mobility generation; on the contrary, they tend to increase it.

The abundance of amenities and services in urban centres acts as strong attractors of the population, resulting in heightened mobility. To mitigate this, urban planners must consider the impact of their decisions on mobility and strive to create a polycentric city that offers amenities and services in multiple locations, reducing the need for long-distance travel.

However, these attractive uses also displace other essential services for residents, forcing them to seek these necessities elsewhere. This presents a challenging balance between daily life and occasional activities, between the advantages of proximity to everything and the lack of basic services.

## Population loss

Urban centres are facing a challenge in retaining inhabitants due to demographic decline and an overall ageing population, as well as a lack of adequate housing supply for diverse contemporary family structures. This often results in the displacement of residents towards the periphery. Outward migration leads to land consumption and urban sprawl.

This trend may be worsened by the absence of proximity services or tensions in the housing market related to tourist housing, short-stay accommodations (such as those for students or talent attraction), or global real estate dynamics.

<sup>2</sup> Busquets, J. and Correa, F., 2006. Cities: X Lines: Approaches to City and Open Territory Design.

## Climate change adaptation

Climate change adaptation in the city centre presents multifaceted challenges. The heat island effect, driven by the extensive mineralization of public spaces and the densely packed urban fabric, escalates temperature spikes and disrupts local climate dynamics (creating a disadvantage to the rest of the urban fabric).

Besides the adaptation of the building stock, the capacity to deploy mitigation strategies in the public space is indeed key to maintaining the environmental quality in the city centres.

## Building degradation

Many urban centres have urban infrastructure, including buildings and basic supply networks, originating from historical sources. This results in deficiencies in the conditions of the built environment, where structures are inadequately adapted to contemporary space and comfort needs.

The lack of space for necessary infrastructure clashes with the historical context of buildings, originally unequipped for such modern electrical elements or eco-friendly adaptations (like installing photovoltaic panels or heat pumps on roofs).

Consequently, a greater effort is required to adapt the built environment to energy standards and achieve net-zero energy requirements necessary to address climate change.

Furthermore, preserving heritage in historical districts to safeguard and enhance cultural value may create additional obstacles to retaining inhabitants. This is due to the rigidity of certain conservation regulations.

## Transition to new mobility

The need to reduce private mobility in urban centres (driven by climate change and in pursuit of improved environmental quality, collective health, and the expansion of public space) is another key challenge for urban areas.

Parking management (both interior and peripheral), the promotion of sustainable mobility modes such as public transportation (sometimes insufficient or with variable demand), cycling (with its unique infrastructural logic), or the emergence of new forms of individual or shared transportation (scooters, bike and car sharing) are among the strategic actions that must be addressed in the short term.



### New consumption habits

The evolution of consumption patterns with the surge of e-commerce (picking and deliveries) represents a significant transformation in the commercial attractiveness of city centres. It calls for a renewal of marketing strategies, the exploration of complementarities between online sales platforms and physical stores in the city centre and the necessity to change the commercial mix (loss in purchasing power, less money to be spent on non-essential goods like clothing, more demand for convivial places like restaurants, coffee shops).

### Public space degradation

Another common factor in the deterioration processes of urban centres is the loss of quality in public spaces, often linked to perceptions of insecurity and a lack of social cohesion. Enhancing public spaces is a key challenge for many cities as it addresses multiple issues such as the introduction of ecosystem services and strategies for climate change adaptation, urban design with a gender perspective, universal accessibility, and support for social integration networks.

### Overuse of public space

Another relevant issue is the demand for common space, which, in some cases and due to the historical configuration of the urban fabric, tends to be a scarce resource. The occupation of public space by mainly private activities through terraces or other pieces of furniture, parking of vehicles in central areas, or the loading and unloading of goods (exponentially accelerated by online shopping and new forms of logistics) can compromise its environmental quality and its primary role as a place for social gathering and interaction (highlighted by Manuel de Sola-Morales<sup>3</sup> and Jan Gehl<sup>4</sup>).

Thus, many urban centres today experience coexistence conflicts related to noise and overcrowding (especially during the night) as well as other negative environmental externalities, with air pollution being the most significant, having serious effects on people's health.

### Over-tourism

The extended increase in the number of tourists associated with low-cost models has a major impact on urban centres; especially the historic ones that condense heritage and other symbolic value and receive massive flows of visitors (even in middle and small cities). The proliferation of tourist apartments (fuelled by collaborative digital platforms) is another factor that threatens the very residential condition of the town centre itself. Other negative effects include a shift in commerce and hospitality favouring foreign audiences; the congestion of public space and the landscape standardisation. Coexistence struggles between residents and visitors exacerbate, deteriorating the quality of life for local communities.

<sup>3</sup>. Solá Morales, M., 2008. Espacios públicos, espacios colectivos. 1992. De cosas urbanas. Barcelona: Gustavo Gili.

<sup>4</sup>. Gehl, J., 2011. Life between buildings.

## Social disparities

Urban centres are often home to a population of diverse origins, and in many cases are the main arrival point of new inhabitants. This social mix with very positive values in terms of mutual support, integration and coexistence between different communities can be compromised when there is segregation of part of the inhabitants in the space, especially for reasons of income (associated with the placement of social housing or mass immigration) or other ethnic issues.

In this sense, urban centres are also associated with populations with fewer economic resources, a fact that can hinder urban regeneration dynamics.

## Identity

the city centre embodies a hybrid identity, which encompasses the entire city while simultaneously embodying the sense of attachment and pride of the neighbourhood's inhabitants.

It is a space where celebrating a local festival with neighbours is inseparable from the city-wide celebration. A place where the historical legacy may carry more weight than the current moment. In this context, the collective identity that encompasses the broader community holds greater significance than that of the smaller communities within it.

## Integrated approach

The governance challenges within town centres stem from a lack of evidence-based policies and the difficulty of translating data into actionable information. Siloed approaches within public administration hinder integrated governance, leading to disjointed decision-making and disconnected initiatives.

Top-down methodologies often overlook local context, resulting in policies detached from community needs. Addressing these issues requires a shift towards data-driven decision-making, integrated governance structures, and inclusive, well-coordinated planning that prioritises community needs and addresses complexity.

## Commercial desertification

Resulting from the paradigm of compact and mixed cities in many European urban centres, commerce shapes the ground-level urban landscape and, with its 'public' service character, contributes to enhancing social control of public space and building community bonds. The progressive desolation of local commerce, the rise of franchising, and the emergence of vacant premises are shared trends.

Caused by the rise of shopping centres and other alternative (and sometimes more economic) offerings on the outskirts, it can lead to a loss of urban diversity (a key characteristic for quality of life as emphasised by several urban thinkers).

## Skills in the local economy

The loss of productive character is a common feature in many European urban centres, resulting from the establishment of new office hubs or industrial poles on the urban peripheries since the 1970s.

The tertiary transformation of the city centre, specialising in the service sector, poses another significant challenge that may contribute to the decline in population due to a lack of spaces for traditional and remote work (the dimensions of many residences make it difficult to accommodate specific areas for this new function). This transformation may also amplify some negative externalities, such as the increased need for work-related mobility between the centre and the peripherals or vulnerability when the centre specialises in a single productive sector, such as tourism.

However, the quality of the urban centre can also represent an opportunity for talent attraction (new professional profiles linked to knowledge and digital nomadism) and circularity.

It is difficult to describe the challenges facing urban centres without describing them as overlapping with one another. Multiple dimensions interconnect and sectoral policies (developed through isolated actions responding to the interests of different departments) are not the necessary solution to a highly complex reality.

On the next horizon, the need for a decarbonised and sustainable society is clearly outlined. However, this future scenario won't be possible without an egalitarian society (genders, ages, races, etc.) and a necessary democratic maturity towards a more participative and more organised society. Indeed, these steps cannot be addressed without the technologies that humankind develops (as is the city itself), which today are undoubtedly computer technologies and data.

## 1.2 The policy dimensions of urban centres

### 1.2.1 Defining a framework of thought and action for urban centres

Perhaps the greatest challenge in urban diagnosis lies in avoiding the confusion of symptoms with the underlying issues, let alone the treatment. Therefore, it is crucial to perceive urban centres as a blend of diverse uses required by the various populations that intersect within them.

Regarding the intricate dynamics of contemporary city centres, we will approach their revitalization as a complex issue: understanding it as a systemic challenge that addresses various urban problems and policy domains. This approach has the potential to cut across and act as a catalyst for other transformations on a city-wide scale.

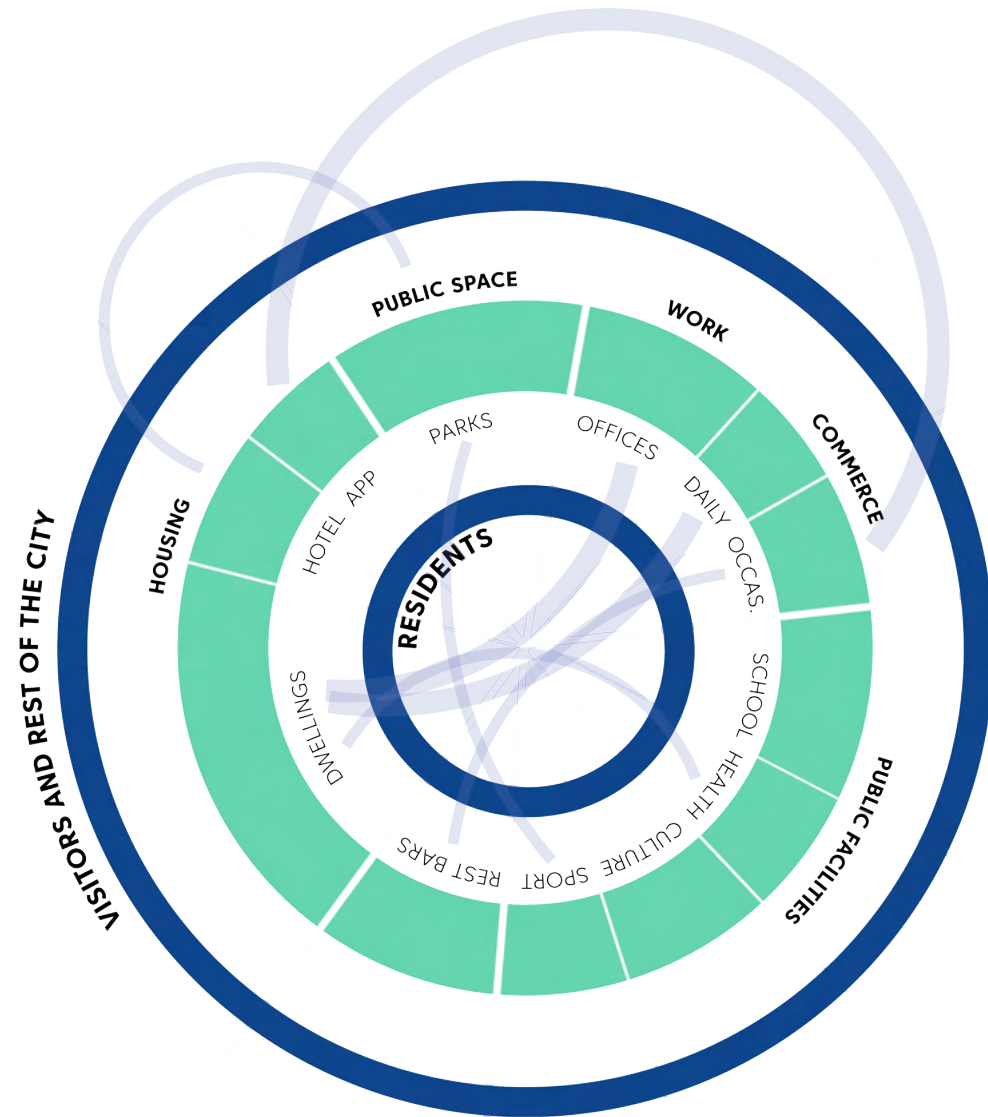


Diagram of the city centre as a complex issue

### The current frameworks

First and foremost, it is essential to define the dimensions that enable us to describe and act holistically. At present, there are several approaches in the scientific literature and urban planning practice aimed at developing global frameworks (applicable to the city centre) as well as sectoral approaches that delve into specific aspects. Among the most noteworthy are:

- **From global to local:** Some frameworks acknowledge that well-being relies on balancing human needs, enabling every person to lead a life of dignity and opportunity while safeguarding the integrity of Earth's life-supporting systems. For example, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide a comprehensive framework. Another relevant example is the Doughnut model, which illustrates the two boundaries: a social ceiling based on SDG indicators and an ecological ceiling. Beyond these boundaries lies the risk of overshooting the pressure on Earth's life-supporting systems, including climate change, biodiversity loss, or air pollution.

- **Proximity:** This concept has recently gained international attention with Carlos Moreno<sup>5</sup> formulation of '15 minute city' that complements other frameworks (Melbourne 20 Minutes<sup>6</sup>). As highlighted in the IPCC AR6 WGIII report, urban areas that develop effective 15-minute city strategies are very likely to reduce urban energy use and emissions. By placing people at the centre of the urban plan, the proximity concept aims to ensure an equitable distribution of all essential social functions – for living, working, supplying, caring, learning, and enjoying – so that all residents can benefit from shorter access and the city benefits from free space from vehicular traffic reduction.
- **Density and diversity:** Other frameworks (like the Recent Atlas of Centres<sup>7</sup> developed by the Fédération des Agence d'Urbanisme in France) resume concepts from Thierry Paquot<sup>8</sup> or Jane Jacobs<sup>9</sup> understanding that a city centre is characterized by the diversity of its functions (residential, work, amenities, education, leisure, etc.) and its density.

5. Moreno, C., 2020. Derecho de la ciudad, de la "ciudad-mundo" a la "ciudad de los 15 minutos".  
6. <https://www.planning.vic.gov.au/guides-and-resources/strategies-and-initiatives/20-minute-neighbourhoods/20-minute-neighbourhood-projects>

- **Sustainability and circularity:** Cities are at the forefront of our battle against climate change, with 70% of global greenhouse gas emissions generated by cities, but they are also the solution as walkable, vibrant urban neighbourhoods can significantly reduce emissions and bring co-benefits for health and wellbeing. Directly addressing these challenges and opportunities, some frameworks like the C40's Green and Thriving neighbourhoods propose to connect dimensions like people-centred mobility, capacity and mixed-use, physical and digital connectivity, social inclusion and engagement, clean construction, green buildings and energy, circular resources, nature-based solutions, sustainable lifestyles and green economy.
- **Commerce:** Several European experiences, aiming to monitor commercial health, link other aspects related to the quality of life in cities. Censuses or commerce observatories contribute to this effort.

7. FNAU. Atlas des centres villes. 2023. <https://www.fnau.org/fr/publication/atlas-des-centres-villes/>

8. Paquot, T., 2009. L'espace public. Lectures, Les livres.

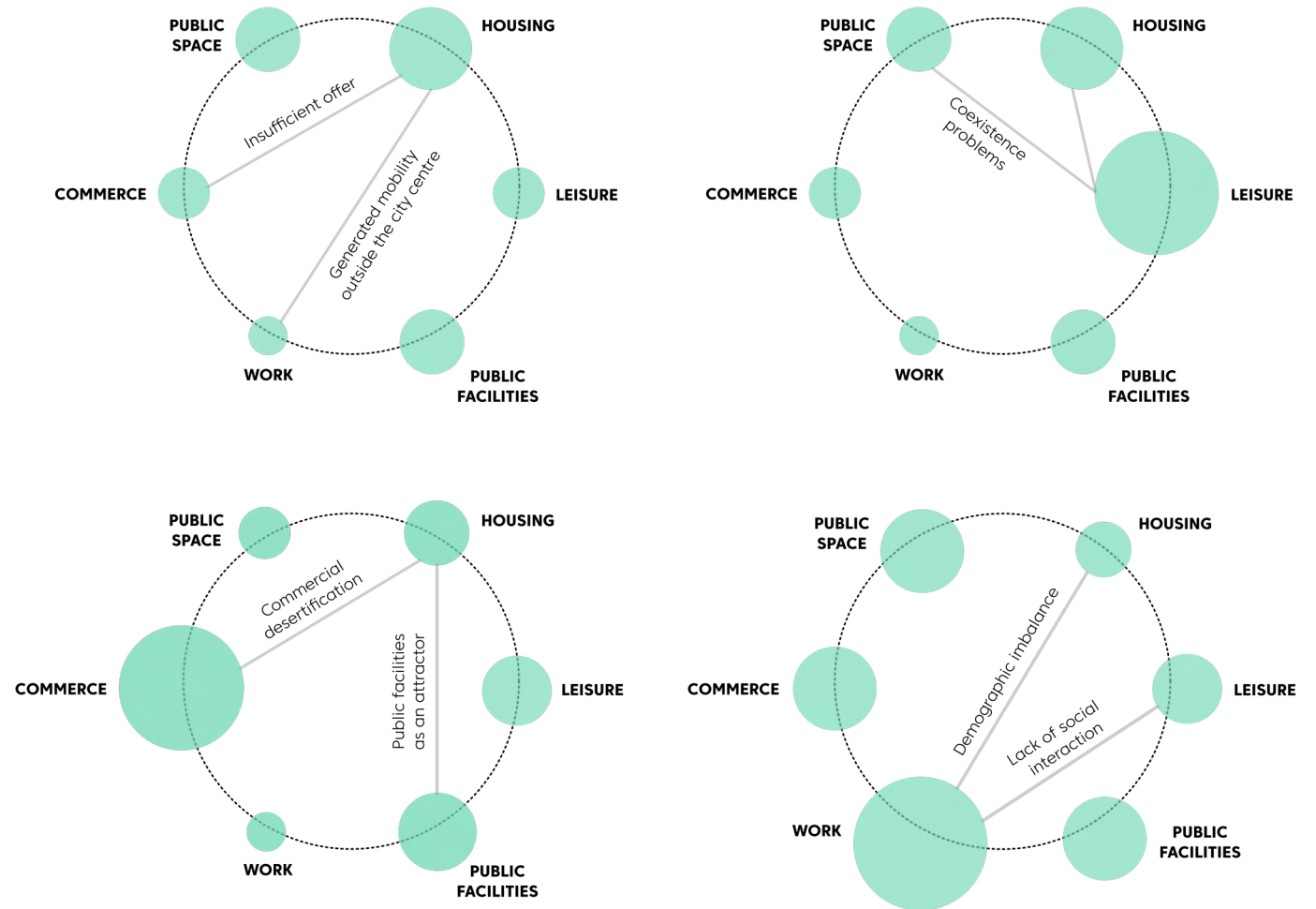
9. Jacobs, J., 1961. The Death and Life of Great American Cities. New York.

### The Cities@Heart framework

Although these frameworks can be partially applied to address the problems of urban centres, it is necessary to create a framework that allows all these dimensions to be understood collectively. Based on these references, a specific framework has been developed for the project, consisting of six main functions (which can be subdivided) to explain the different balances/disequilibria present in urban centres. Each dimension corresponds to a sphere of action within urban policy and planning and collectively constitutes the comparative study framework for this baseline study.

The six main functions are as follows :

- **Housing:** One of the main functions of an urban centre is to provide housing for its residents. This primary housing is complemented by other forms of residential accommodation, such as short-term accommodation like flats or student residences, as well as accommodation for tourists.
- **Work:** The presence of productive spaces in the urban centre is essential for retaining local talent, promoting local economies, and maintaining residents. It also helps to reduce commuting as a result of the decentralisation of work.
- **Public facilities:** Access to various amenities in proximity (healthcare, education, culture, sports, administration, etc.) promotes individual autonomy and social diversity.
- **Commerce:** Ensuring the availability of essential goods (food and other everyday or occasional consumer items) is crucial for ensuring the quality of life for residents. Ground-floor activities also contribute to walkability, the perception of safety, the enhancement of the urban landscape, and social bonding.
- **Leisure:** Leisure activities also represent a significant space in the urban centre that contributes to its vitality, encouraging the use of public spaces throughout the day and creating places for social interaction.
- **Public space:** This is the basis for ecosystem services (green spaces, biodiversity), mobility in its various forms (vehicles, pedestrians, bicycles, etc.) and the coexistence of different social groups. It is therefore a space subject to considerable tensions.

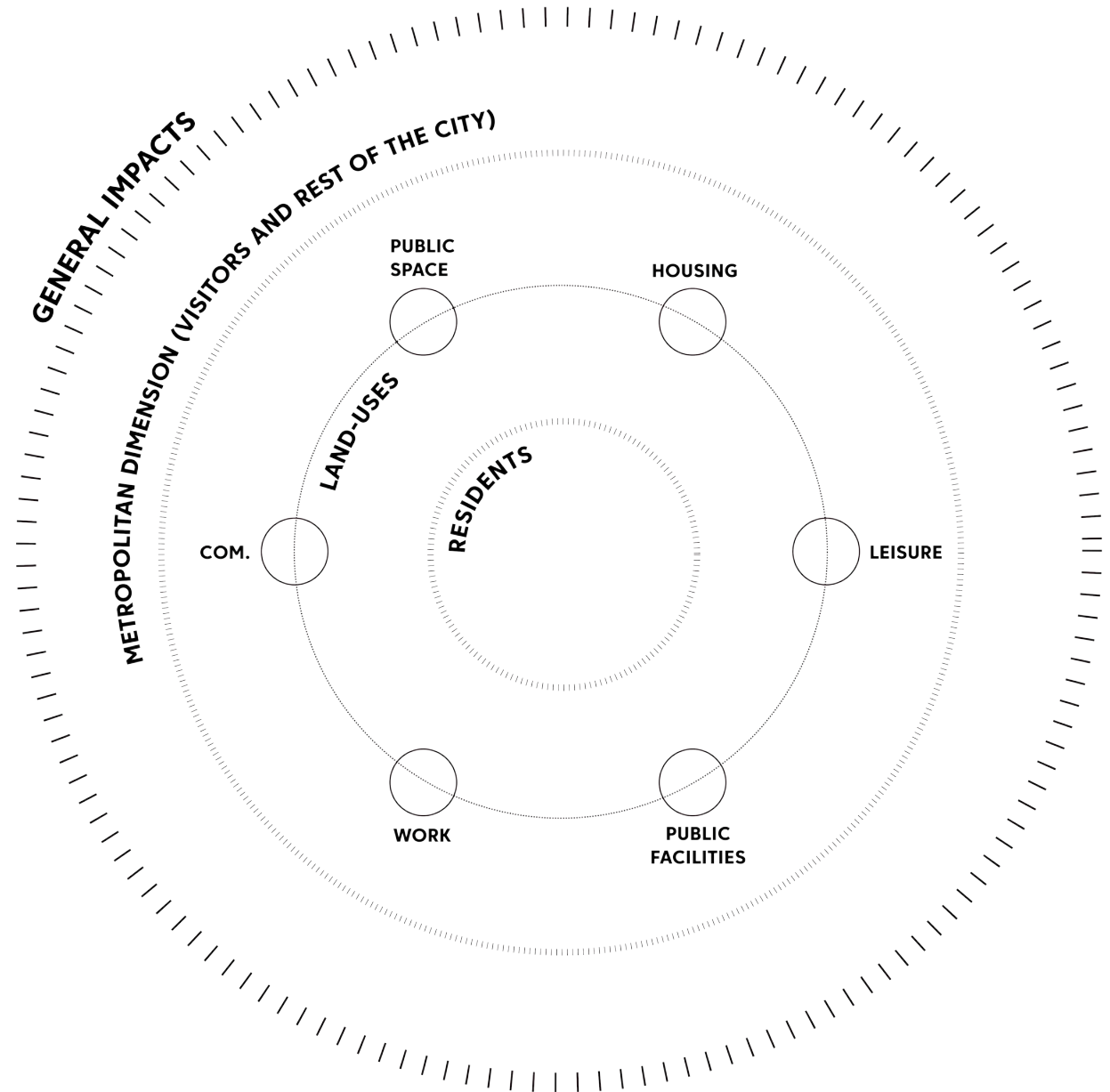


Examples of the problems generated by the imbalance of the functions.

## ♥ 1.2 The policy dimensions of city centres

The combination of these various dimensions allows us to describe the different dynamics and challenges mentioned above concerning their influence on residents (the inner circle) and the external population (visitors and rest of the city's inhabitants).

Additionally, the framework takes into account broader-scale impacts at the metropolitan and planetary scale (air quality, climate impacts, etc.).



The Cities@Heart framework includes various dimensions and scales to describe the complexity of city centres.



### 1.3 Policy response

Given the complexity of the issues and interests in urban centres, and the challenges of establishing multi-level governance models and developing integrated, evidence-based policies (all of which were described in the previous chapter), Cities@Heart proposes to work on five fundamental pillars:

- **Integrated Public Policies:** how to deploy policies that cut across various policy domains (housing, public services, mobility, public space, commerce, etc.).
- **Governance:** exploring existing models of town centre management (public vs private, formal vs informal) and new paradigms of participatory pacts agreement among stakeholders (multi-level partnership).
- **Decision-Making Tools:** integrating data and indicators to support the analysis, formulation, and monitoring of implemented actions.

- **Sustainability:** ensuring that urban centres can adapt to climate change despite facing greater difficulties compared to the rest of the city (such as scarcity and limited space in public areas, poorly maintained built environment, incomes incapable of coping with transformation, etc.).

- **Inclusion:** providing optimal living conditions for all residents (regardless of gender, age, or background) and promoting personal autonomy, including care for others.

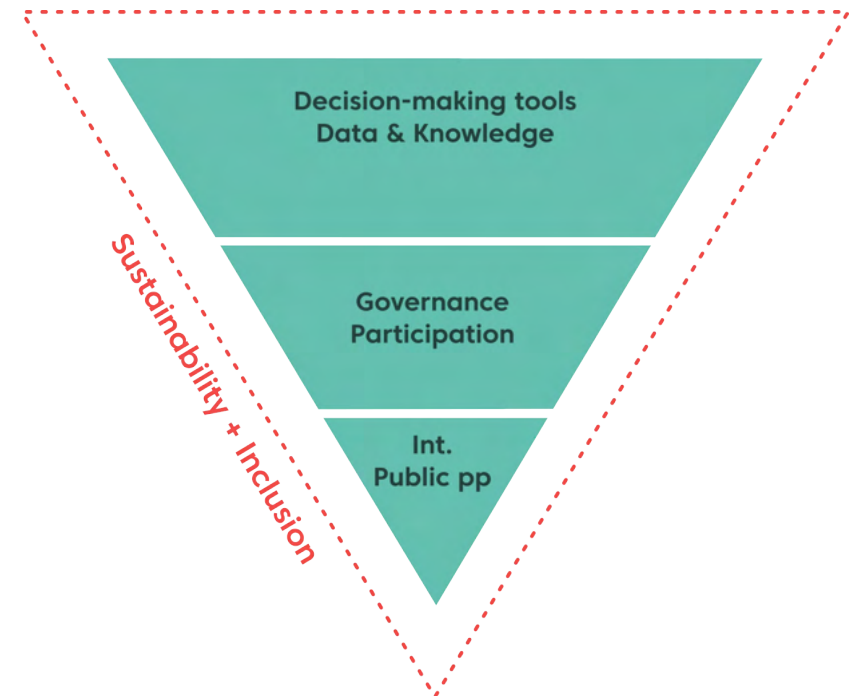


Diagram of the five pillars.

## Policy Overview

The current European legal framework unfolds a set of public policies that directly influence each of the five pillars. It is within this context that the Cities@Heart network aims to explore new models and strategies.

### 1.3.1 Integrated urban policies

#### The introduction of an integrated approach in EU policy

Currently, there is no specific European policy that operates at the urban centre level, although various legal frameworks support sustainable development at the urban level.

At the global level, the **Sustainable Development Goals** (established by the United Nations in 2015) set specific priorities for cities. Specifically, SDG 11 aims “to make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.”

In the case of city centres, this means ensuring universal access to adequate, safe, and affordable housing and basic services (11.1); providing access to safe, affordable, accessible, and sustainable transport systems for all (11.2); reducing the adverse per capita environmental impact of cities (11.6); providing universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible, green and public spaces, particularly for women and children, older persons, and persons with disabilities (11.7).

There are also several ‘urban-critical’ targets under other goals essential to the attainment of good urbanisation.

At the European level, the **Urban Agenda for the European Union** (adopted in 2016 and revised in 2021) is the reference document on urban issues. It presents a vision based on increased involvement of urban and local authorities to enable better regulation, funding, and knowledge in the EU.

Thus, this agenda promotes a balanced, sustainable, and integrated approach to the urban environment and its challenges.

Several thematic partnerships involve policies directly related to city centres, linked with potential funding opportunities supported by the ERF Funds. They include, among others: sustainable tourism, greening cities, cultural heritage, security in public spaces, urban mobility, and equality.

## Local level plans

At the local level (from broader to detailed planning), various strategies for intervention in the urban centre exist, each with its particular regulatory context.

These include:

- **General Urban Plan:** A scheme that structures the main land uses for the entire city and, in some cases, recognises the urban centre as a unique area with its own urban classification or specific determinations.
- **Urban Agendas:** While defining priorities for the entirety of the city, their development provides a framework for thinking and planning actions that can directly impact the urban centre.

- **Special or Strategic Plan:** Typically developed as a result of superior planning when there is consideration for a specific area. In some cases, comprehensive strategies go beyond urban considerations, incorporating social aspects, economic development, etc., with a view to the future.
- **Heritage Protection or Management Plan:** Given the historical nature of many European urban centres, cultural architectural heritage has driven urban regeneration strategies and other management and promotion instruments.
- **Comprehensive Urban Regeneration Plan and Programmes:** Specific instruments to address the coordinated rehabilitation and revitalisation of particularly degraded areas within urban centres. They stand out for their cross-cutting approach.
- **Land Use Plans:** They allow for defining conditions for the implementation of different types of activities (e.g., commerce or public gatherings) and addressing potential situations of monoculture or saturation.

## Focus

### Ciutat Vella Land-use Plan

The land-use plan (promoted by the Barcelona City Council in 2017) is part of an integrated policy framework that seeks to maintain the quality of life in the city's central district. Although it uses urbanistic tools, its impact is transferred to other dimensions like the economic and environmental, providing a cross-cutting view throughout the drafting process (from analysis to monitoring). The plan regulates the implementation of public businesses, food trade and tourist services in Barcelona's central district.

Over recent years, business activity in this district has increased and become more specialized due to excess tourist pressure and the ensuing displacement of businesses aimed at locals. Residents' quality of life has been negatively impacted as a result, thanks to greater noise levels (which can seriously affect

health), the saturation of public spaces, insufficient cleaning, and increased logistics.

The plan used cutting-edge spatial analysis techniques based on big data and predictive models, as well as citizen participation to shape dynamic regulations that can be simulated and assessed to ensure that both businesses and residents can thrive simultaneously in the district.

The land-use plan is the result of the collaboration between multi-disciplinary technical teams and citizens on a co-creation process that included online and on-site spaces for dialogue.

[https://300000kms.net/case\\_study/ciutat-vella/](https://300000kms.net/case_study/ciutat-vella/)

- **Public Space Remodelling:** Public space (individual urban projects or coordinated strategies) has been a vector for strategic change in many urban centres, whether through the opening of new streets and squares, improved connections with the rest of the city, pedestrianisation, increased green space, or the expansion of the urban fabric.
- **Heritage Protection or Management Plans:** Given the historic character of many European urban centres, architectural and cultural heritage has been the vehicle for urban regeneration strategies and other management and promotion instruments.
- **Sustainable Mobility Plans:** They serve as a vehicle to transform urban centres into vehicle-free areas (through controlled access zones, low-speed areas, or low-emission zones), improving environmental conditions while reinforcing sustainable transportation modes and active mobility infrastructure.

- **Public Facilities:** The strategic placement of facilities (cultural, educational, administrative) has also been a successful policy for the regeneration of certain areas and the introduction of new population dynamics.

As observed, at the local level, there are a wide range of strategies addressing various scales and priorities, involving various levels of supramunicipal governance. However, this variety of strategies, without a cross-cutting approach, may prove insufficient.

Therefore, even though EU policies touch upon several issues related to city centres, their integration and successful implementation at the local level are not as successful. Similarly, local policies for city centres would benefit from cross-cutting and integrated approaches between different policy dimensions.

### 1.3.2 City centre governance models

As recognised in the scientific literature and in policy practice over the last quarter of a century, a variety of governance models have made a significant contribution to the regeneration of town centres, leading to notable improvements through area marketing, sustainable development, the engagement of disadvantaged socio-economic groups, frameworks for place-making and regeneration, and the establishment of integrated area-based partnerships.

These governance models have resulted, on the one hand, in urban centre management systems involving both the public and private spheres and, more recently, in the introduction of participatory approaches aimed at involving local communities.

#### 1.3.2.1 The Town Centre Management Schemes

Today, we can identify various management paradigms according to the different forms of partnership between diverse stakeholder types.

On the one hand, public administrations or sectoral associations can promote **formal agreements**. On the other, actors themselves can commit to carrying out actions in a bottom-up manner, resulting in **informal pacts**.

Another factor in determining governance relates to the stakeholder who supports and funds the initiative, either the **public or private sector** (or a mix of both).

The most widespread **formal management** models include<sup>11</sup>:

- **Town Centre Management (TCM):** The TCM scheme brings together public, private, and associative sectors. It aims to ensure that all the cities' functions (life, work, leisure, culture, education, health and other public services, shopping, etc.) meet the needs of citizens and users. Initially promoted in England, it has spread to other countries (Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, and Sweden, among others) with the respective local adaptations. While continental approaches prioritise retailer involvement and business aggregation, the UK model emphasises the competitive differentiation of central districts, aiming for a better quality of life, diverse retail options, and attractions for visitors.

- **Main Street Programmes:** Coined in the United States, it combines historic preservation and economic development with the central aim of reducing the physical deterioration of commercial thoroughfares, whereas economic questions are a secondary motivation.

- **Business Improvement District (BID):** This North American model involves private sector investments and collaboration with the ultimate goal of stopping and reversing the dramatic decline in the economic health and environmental quality of cities by offering “clean, green, and safe” services.

Regarding **informal schemes**, the development of a plan for a place management initiative is designed by the local community for all the different stakeholders. The initiative may follow the principles of social entrepreneurship (with the potential support of the local authority) and, in time, develop into a more formal scheme with legal recognition and statutes.

11. Ozoduru and Guldman (2013) quoting Robertson (2007), and by De Magalhaes (2012) Other models include: Community Business Centres, Neighbourhood Renewal Schemes, Suburban Centre Improvement Schemes, Market Town Initiatives, Business Area Improvement schemes and Trade Improvement Zones.

## Focus

### Town Centre First (TCFP)

In the UK, earlier resistance to new business forms (1960-1970) shifted to a market-driven approach that allowed for the development of new commercial formats. By the 1990s, the focus was once again turned toward town centres, underscoring the competition with suburban shopping centres.

The goal of the TCFP (1996) was to ‘redirect development, not just in retailing but in all “key Town Centre uses” (including leisure, office development and other uses, such as restaurants) to Town Centres’ under the premise that locating businesses in central, well-communicated areas would reduce the need for travel. In practice, this means that economic activities should be introduced in the town centre first. Then, only if ‘the lack of scope for them in town centres’ is demonstrated, they can move sequentially to sites ‘adjacent to town centres, then the

edge of town centres, before finally considering out-of-town sites as a last resort’. As has been demonstrated by several studies, this focused policy on economic activities moderately boosted town centre development. It also pushed some businesses, like large retailers, to adjust their formats to suit the detailed urban setting of city centres.

### Action Coeur de Ville

A national plan (which started in 2018) promoted by the French government through the National Agency for Territorial Cohesion). This programme pursues two objectives: improve the living conditions of medium-sized cities and consolidate the role of the 234 participant towns as engines of regional development. Today, medium-sized towns are home to 23% of France’s population and comprise 26% of the country’s total employment.

Despite being sources of economic, cultural, and social dynamism, some face challenges in attractiveness, degraded housing, and commercial vitality – addressed by the programme. They benefited from diagnoses, a multi-stakeholder partnership, and funding from key partners (with contributions from different entities) for a total of €2.4 billion directed at five dimensions: an adequate housing stock; balanced economic and commercial development; better mobility and accessibility; the improvement of urban forms, public spaces, and heritage; and better access to facilities, public services, and cultural and leisure activities.

From 2023 to 2026, a second edition will bring another €2.5 billion to continue this policy with three additional dimensions that will be covered (ecological transformation, demographics, and local economy), focusing on a perimeter larger than the city centre itself.

### 1.3.2.2 The participatory approach in city-centre governance

As is evident in the articulation of governance in the more formal schemes, the management approach to town-centre governance could encourage greater participation of citizens (including the young, the elderly, immigrants, and socio-economically disadvantaged groups) in decision-making processes that affect their area and others beyond it.

In this regard, several European policies advocate the active engagement of citizens in urban planning. Since the Leipzig Charter (joining the principles of sustainability, integration, and participation in 2007), participatory approaches have been included in EU policy through the EU Cohesion Policy and its associated funding mechanisms (ERF and EDS).

In the current EU Cohesion Policy 2021-2027, the Commission has introduced a Policy Objective advocating 'A Europe closer to citizens', supporting local development strategies and sustainable urban development across the EU with tailor-made instruments backing up local authorities in their integrated approaches.

Additionally, the New European Urban Agenda and the New European Bauhaus incorporate participatory processes as a cross-cutting working principle (developed through consulting, co-developing, and self-government processes)<sup>12</sup>.

### How to include participatory logic in the governance of the town centre

Gradually, the experiences of participation developed in this framework have evolved. Whereas initially, participation had an institutionalised character (different levels of administration or government agencies together with social partners such as business organisations and trade unions), there has been a shift towards community-based approaches, specifically involving citizen organisations.

Likewise, these principles have been translated onto the urban scale with an increasing number of experiences at the neighbourhood level.

There has also been an increase in the culture of participation within the institutions themselves, breaking the silos between departments and fostering vertical and horizontal collaboration.

Building on principles derived from the Open Innovation movement, the rise of design thinking continues to shape how policymakers approach the issue of good governance and city innovation, and it is reframing stakeholder relationships.

Finally, the disruptive impact of digital transitions evident in the past decade continues to unfold. Digital tools offer great potential, particularly for strengthening the interface between city government and citizens.

This shift includes the opportunity to improve the dialogue between elected officials and citizens and the chance to improve services and make them more accountable. As evidence, it also provides a platform to engage citizens in decision making and budget allocation.

The consequence of this is a more collaborative culture, in which citizens' insights and inputs are sought and valued.

12. NEB Compass. P.15 [https://new-european-bauhaus.europa.eu/system/files/2023-01/NEB\\_Compass\\_V\\_4.pdf](https://new-european-bauhaus.europa.eu/system/files/2023-01/NEB_Compass_V_4.pdf)

All these factors are key to understanding how to consolidate greater citizen participation in the revitalisation of urban centres. Often in these areas, there is a sense of community and belonging (reinforced by the compactness and proximity of the urban fabric itself), which is a good starting point for a shared city model.

However, the centrality of the city centre and its use by multiple people (the rest of the city, immigrants, workers, visitors, etc.) presents a challenge in defining a shared identity and balancing diverse interests.

### City Centre Doctor, URBACT

The cities of this City Center Doctor were challenged to identify the urban issues relate to their city centre, analyse perceptions and reality of those areas. Considering the city centre as a nodal point for social, cultural and economic development, the small cities in the network shared practices and knowledge to strengthen its revitalisation.

The key feature of the network is their necessity to rely not in a resource-intensive race, but in local creativity and distinctiveness. Thus, they focused on the existing retail businesses, on enhancing the attractiveness of the urban space or on emphasising the cultural dimension to foster better city centres.

<https://urbact.eu/networks/citycentredoctor>

## Focus

### Active Citizens, URBACT

The aim of ActiveCitizens is to rethink the place of the citizen in the local governance by finding a balance between representative democracy and participatory democracy.

Led by the City of Agen (France), this Action Planning Network of European small and medium-sized cities, with the same expectations and the similar challenges, will take into account, to do this, new digital tools while integrating the issue of citizens away or not comfortable with digital tools.

<https://urbact.eu/networks/activecitizens>



### 1.3.3 Relation to the decision-making tools

#### The challenge of digitisation

As introduced above, the complexity of problems that unfold in urban centres forces us to rethink decision-making processes, from analysis to the design of solutions and their subsequent evaluation.

In this sense, the increasing datafication of the urban environment is an opportunity to provide new capacities in the institutional sphere and to promote urban public policies based on data and knowledge. Similarly, these tools can facilitate interaction with urban stakeholders and citizens and their inclusion in the decision-making cycle.

However, the current state of the digital transition in European cities is very diverse. Large cities tend to be at the forefront of digitalisation due to higher demand for more complex services and interactions and their greater capacity to develop and provide those services.

Smaller cities and towns often lack the financial capacity and skills to develop digital services at the same rate.

Enhancing the capacities of cities of all sizes to tackle digital challenges and deliver digital services to their inhabitants and businesses requires policy responses at all levels and by all actors, specifically targeting the cities that are lagging behind in their digital transformation.

This is why, within the **EU Cohesion Policy 2021-2027** (promoting a ‘smarter’ and ‘more connected Europe’) there are a range of public policies that support digitisation, such as the Digital Single Market Strategy for Europe, the European Commission’s Digital Agenda (one of the seven pillars of the Europe 2020 Strategy), and the EU eGovernment Action Plan 2016-2020.

These include the Digital Skills Partnership of the Urban Agenda for the EU, which specifically addresses this challenge at the urban level through various tools.

#### The cycle of decision-making

Within this framework, several areas are identified in which the revitalisation of urban centres can benefit:

##### Data gathering

Currently, there are several methodologies for obtaining relevant information from the urban environment. Thus, within administrations, traditional statistics (demographic and socio-economic data collected through surveys or administrative actions) have been complemented by the existence of massive data, generated through the Internet of Things (IoT) and machine to machine (M2M) solutions, businesses, private companies delivering urban services (externally), and private citizens through the use of digital networks and interaction with public bodies.

For example, this ‘casual’ data can be crucial for preventive measures supporting public health and safety, improving urban traffic management, or managing the energy supply.

### Data by and for participation

The use of data-based approaches in participation processes focused on the city centre enhances transparency, supports the identification of problems – especially in the early stages of planning, and helps to increase acceptance of the resulting projects among citizens.

On the other hand, the rapid development of modern technology has opened up new possibilities for organising processes in more modernised and innovative ways: for example, by actively engaging citizens in data collection campaigns or in the evaluation of the urban environment quality.

### Data analysis and visualisation

The capacity to analyse and represent information is key to converting information into actionable knowledge for urban policies, especially if it incorporates a geographic component. In recent years, profiles have been incorporated within administrations to take on these roles, although there is still little penetration in the public sphere.

In this sense, the role of the urban centre as a test-bed for some analytical questions that can later be standardised and scaled to the rest of the city is particularly interesting.

## Focus

### IoTChange, URBACT

IoTChange incorporated smart technologies to help communities on a daily basis: from car traffic live updates, to solving living issues, for instance via smart health care monitoring, to meeting friends, and ongoing follow-up of smart & solar system bins.

IoTChange proposed tools operating with data gathered from all over the city in order to improve people's quality of life and implement needed infrastructure.

<https://urbact.eu/networks/iotxchange>

### Digi Place, URBACT

Digi Place aims to set up an acceleration mechanism to enable cities to catch up with the digitalisation opportunities in hard and soft infrastructure linked to all sectors of activities from tourism to city services, small shops, local entrepreneurship, city marketing & promotion.

The goal is to remove the obstacles encountered by mid-sized cities in their digital journey: a lack of strategic and global vision; a lack of technical and engineering capacities; or difficulties in incorporating the digital innovation. Municipalities need to guarantee the uptake of digital innovation by the local stakeholders, citizens, and potential entrepreneurs.

<https://urbact.eu/networks/digiplace>

**Policy drafting**

The creation of evidence from data allows for more informed and transparent decision making. In addition, the possibility to cross different dimensions/layers allows for exploring new options (where joint action would otherwise be difficult to assess), prioritising actions strategically according to urgency, strengthening the relationship with the territory (spatialising policies), and anticipating the possible consequences of implementation. All of this can have a transformative impact on how policies are developed at the urban level.

**Policy implementation and monitoring tools**

Similarly, local actors are equipping themselves with operational tools to visualise and monitor the functioning of the city, both in real-time (dashboards, control rooms, etc.) and in the long term through data observatories and monitoring indicator platforms.

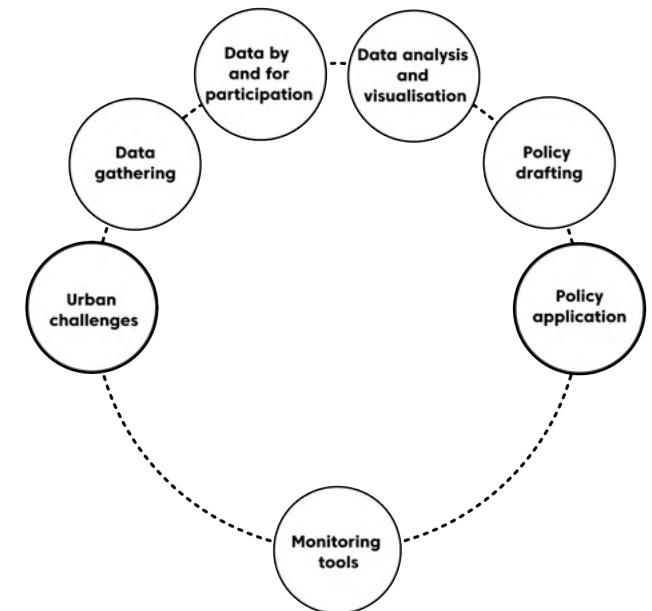
The latter tools can be particularly effective in monitoring progress in the implementation of public policies in the city centre, adjusting strategies dynamically according to the results obtained.

**Data infrastructures and technology sovereignty**

In conclusion, decision-making tools based on data could be strategic for the daily management of the town centre as well as for the development of new and innovative services and solutions for citizens and strategic future visions. They support local authorities' decision-making processes and the provision of essential services to citizens.

However, one of the current challenges in this field lies in the public governance of data infrastructures, analysis and monitoring processes, as well as the management tools and technology necessary for the deployment of all these processes.

City authorities often outsource the management of data services to private companies. It is necessary to ensure that public governance and leadership can establish the proper partnerships with these private agents, as well as involving citizens actively.



Cycle of decision-making.  
Source: 300.000 Km/s

### 1.3.4 Sustainability

As recognised by the **European Green Deal** (adopted in 2020), climate change and environmental degradation are an existential threat to Europe and the world. To overcome these challenges, the European Green Deal aims at transforming the EU into a modern, resource-efficient, and competitive economy.

This set of policies will ensure **no net emissions of greenhouse gases by 2050, economic growth decoupled from resource use, and no person and no place left behind**. Indeed, one of the five strategic priorities of the EU Cohesion Policy 2021-2027 (supported by corresponding funding schemes) is to achieve a greener, low-carbon Europe transitioning towards a net zero-carbon economy<sup>13</sup>.

In the urban sphere, and more specifically in town centres, the concept of sustainability<sup>14</sup> is translated into very specific issues that are included in both the European Urban Agenda (Greening Cities, Climate Adaptation, Sustainable Use of Land and Nature-Based Solutions, and Air Quality Pacts) and the New European Bauhaus (reduction of environmental impacts, fostering durability, adaptability, recyclability, and enhancing rather than depleting biodiversity, incentivising the restoration and expansion of nature).

These include:

- **Climate change adaptation measures:** to anticipate the adverse effects of climate change and take appropriate action to prevent or minimise the damage it can cause to city centres due to the need for renovation of the built fabric (poor quality, deficiencies in comfort, and excessive density) and deficits in public space (excessive mineralisation, lack of green spaces, etc.). Phenomena such as heat islands can have a very negative impact on the quality of life in these areas, increasing the vulnerability already inherent in some cases.
- **Sustainable Use of Land and Nature-Based Solutions:** aimed to promote the liveable compactness city model and mainstream and promote nature-based solutions for a more resilient and liveable urban space. As seen above, although the compactness of urban centres favours sustainable land use, their metropolitan dimension can generate a series of dynamics of population expulsion that can increase land consumption at the territorial level.

<sup>14</sup>. According to the definition set out in the Green Comp: 'Sustainability means prioritising the needs of all life forms and of the planet by ensuring that human activity does not exceed planetary boundaries'. [https://green-comp.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/jrc128040\\_greencomp\\_f2.pdf](https://green-comp.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/jrc128040_greencomp_f2.pdf)

- **Air Quality:** reducing greenhouse gas emissions helps curb climate change and immediately translates into better air quality and better health conditions in our cities. Mobility reliant on fossil fuels stands as a primary contributor to poor environmental conditions in city centres, closely linked to their density and intricate layout. Streamlining mobility and opting for decarbonised transportation are key to breathing cleaner air while emitting fewer greenhouse gases. This challenge can only be addressed by deeply engaging with the various aspects that shape the city centre.

<sup>13</sup>. Other important framework documents to be taken into account at the global and European level include: the UN New Urban Agenda, the Paris Agreement, the European Green Deal, the New Leipzig Charter, the EU Cohesion policy, the EU Biodiversity Strategy, the EU Green Infrastructure Strategy, the EU Climate Adaptation Strategy, the EU Climate Law, the Zero pollution action plan, the European Digital Strategy, the Farm to Fork Strategy, the European Pillar of Social Rights, the EU Mission: Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities and the EU Mission: Adaptation to Climate Change, EU Soil Strategy, EU Renovation Wave Strategy & Affordable Housing Initiative, New European Mobility Framework, European Partnership Driving Urban Transitions of Horizon Europe, Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy, Green City Accord, European Green Capital and Leaf Awards, and Intelligent Cities Challenge.

### 1.3.5 Inclusion

**Gender mainstreaming is still a challenge in Europe** despite the policies deployed in recent decades to reduce inequalities between women and men. The Treaties and the Charter of Fundamental Rights make gender equality one of their core values. On this basis, the European Union has introduced legislation in its areas of competence<sup>15</sup>.

It has also used ‘soft instruments’ such as recommendations, funding, and exchanges of good practices to support action in the Member States and established structures to promote and monitor progress. In the next EU budget (2021-2027)<sup>16</sup>, gender-equality-related projects will be supported and funded through several EU programmes: from dedicated grants under the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values Programme to the larger structural, social, and cohesive EU funds.

Regarding the monitoring dimensions of gender policies, the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) and other EU agencies are helping to gather gender-disaggregated statistics and indicators, but these are **not yet available for all policy areas with sufficient spatial resolution** (such as the city scale).

Achieving equality requires mainstreaming it throughout EU, national, and city policy domains. Regarding the urban dimension, gender mainstreaming objectives are included in the European Urban Agenda (Thematic Partnership Cities of Equality<sup>17</sup>) and the New European Bauhaus (NEB), under the idea of Inclusion.

As foreseen in the NEB approach, gender-related inequalities can be extended to encompass other characteristics such as race or ethnic origin, disability, religion and beliefs. In general terms, the notion of equality/inclusion means ensuring that every individual has an equal opportunity to make the most of their lives and talents.

#### Gender dimension in the city-centre

The gender dimension within city centres is a critical lens through which to address various facets of urban life. Housing accessibility, encompassing adequate and affordable housing, demands consideration of eligibility criteria to ensure equitable access and support systems, especially for marginalised groups, addressing issues like homelessness and housing insecurity.

Universal design in accessibility is pivotal, particularly in urban mobility and transportation systems, enabling ease of movement for all genders. Access to essential services, including health, education, transport, and care facilities, needs to be geographically and financially accessible, catering to diverse needs and fostering inclusivity.

<sup>15</sup> Since the introduction of the first directives in this area in the 1970s, the EU has developed extensive legislation in the field of employment, covering equal pay, social security, employment, working conditions and harassment (Directive 2006/54/EC); self-employment (Directive 2010 / 41 /EU), and guaranteed rights to maternity and parental leave (Directives 92/85/EEC and 2010/18/EU). The EU framework also includes legislation on equal access to goods and services (Directive 2004/113/EC) and protection for victims of trafficking and crime (Directives 2011/36/EU and 2012/29/EU). This binding EU law prohibits direct and indirect discrimination, victimisation and harassment and allows for affirmative action. Today, the Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025 presents policy objectives and actions to make significant progress by 2025 towards a gender-equal Europe. Link: [https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/gender-equality/gender-equality-strategy\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/gender-equality/gender-equality-strategy_en)

<sup>16</sup> The EU strategy for gender equality for 2016-2019 states that a total of €6.17 billion has been allocated for achieving its gender equality goals under eleven different funds.

<sup>17</sup> [https://www.urbanagenda.urban-initiative.eu/sites/default/files/2023-07/Background%20Document%20Cities%20of%20Equality\\_1.pdf](https://www.urbanagenda.urban-initiative.eu/sites/default/files/2023-07/Background%20Document%20Cities%20of%20Equality_1.pdf)

Public spaces play a significant role, demanding equitable access and design considerations that cater to diverse genders, ensuring safety and comfort. Addressing spatial segregation, both at the city and neighbourhood levels, is essential to combatting social exclusion, ensuring equitable distribution of resources and opportunities.

Moreover, acknowledging the digital gap is crucial, with efforts directed at bridging technological disparities and enabling equal access to information and services for all genders.

In addition, gender mainstreaming in urban planning, employing specific indicators to analyse and monitor the gender gap (as proposed by the EIGE at the national level), is key to ensuring an equal deployment of knowledge-based policies. Integrating a gender dimension across these urban aspects is imperative, fostering inclusive, safe, and equitable city centres that cater to the diverse needs of all inhabitants.

## Focus

### Gender Map of Bologna

Comissioned by the EIB in collaboration with the City Council of Bologna (2023), this innovative document provides a comprehensive view of the gender gap in the city.

It illustrates various aspects of citizens' well-being, needs, and overall quality of life. It delves into the characteristics of public spaces, examining the sense of security and the perceived quality that our residents experience. Additionally, it offers insights into how mobility functions within our urban landscape, and the infrastructures that underpin it; together with a novel Quality of Life Index.

[https://www.comune.bologna.it/myportal/C\\_A944/api/content/download?id=6576e53aa6c4ea009ae411c7](https://www.comune.bologna.it/myportal/C_A944/api/content/download?id=6576e53aa6c4ea009ae411c7)

The vision:

## **A balanced city centre:**

‘All things,  
to all people,  
at all time’

Cities@Heart will mobilise ten European urban areas. Led by The Greater Paris Metropolis (a public entity with a sound track record in downtown revitalisation policy), network partners will work together to understand the way city centres function and create a new framework to be used in city centre improvement initiatives.

♥ The partnership





# Partner profiles

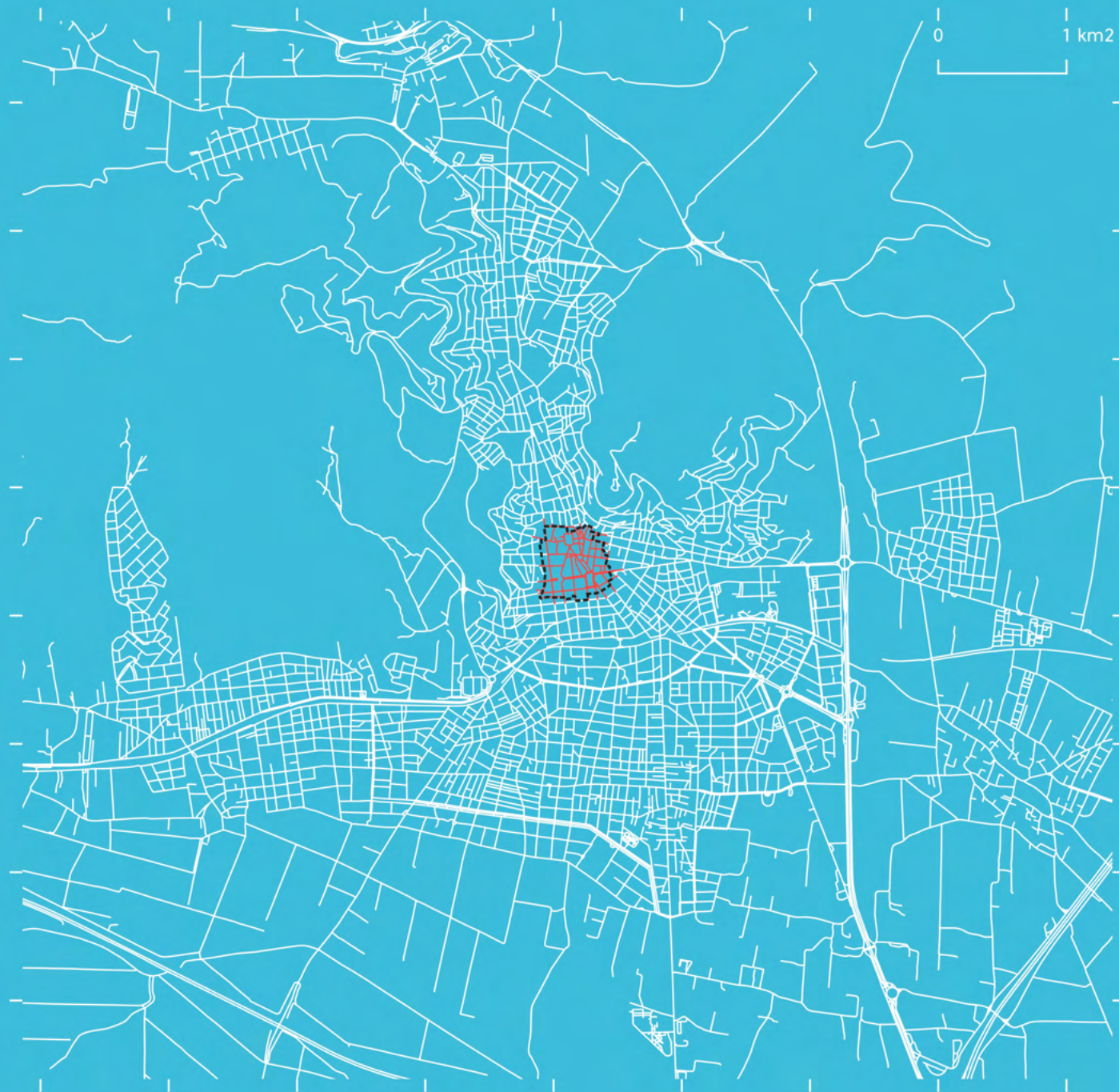
Partner cities represent different territorial, demographic and socioeconomic realities: Cesena (Italy), Granada (Spain), Osijek (Croatia), Lamia (represented by Amfiktyonies business development organisation from Greece), Celje (Slovenia), Fleurus (Belgium), Sligo (Ireland), Krakow (represented by Krakow Metropolis Association in Poland) and the intermunicipal area between Guimaraes, Braga, Famalicao and Barcelos (Quadrilátero Urbano Association, Portugal).

They are presented in the following section in order of the surface of their respective urban centres.

# Lamia

Lamia is located in the region of Central Greece and is the capital of both the Central and Phthiotis regions. It is located on the slope of Mount Othrys near the river Spercheios.

Amfiktyonies S.A. is a development agency based in Lamia (established in 2020), comprising the municipalities of Lamia, Amfikleia-Elateia, Domokos, Makrakomi, and Stylida as its main stakeholders. The agency supports members and local government bodies, promotes business and sustainable development, manages funded programmes, and aids in the development of the rural economy, tourism and SMEs.



Greece

# 1. Overview of the city

Lamia is located in the region of Central Greece and is the capital of both the Central and Phthiotis regions. It is located on the slope of Mount Othrys near the river Spercheios. It serves as the agricultural centre of a fertile rural and livestock area.

The city is home to 66,657 inhabitants, equivalent to a density of 193.5 inhabitants/km<sup>2</sup>. Despite a predominantly youthful demographic (with 22% under the age of 24 and 12.5% over 75), the city has seen a decrease in its population, with a decline of 12.9% over the decade spanning from 2011 to 2021. Today, less than 50% of Lamia's residents live in the city centre.

The average income is €12,742 per capita, lower than the national average (around €20,000 per capita). Given the importance of the primary sector in the area, 21% of the population is dedicated to agriculture, forestry, and fisheries, the largest sector in the region.



Surface

**413.5**

Km<sup>2</sup>

Population

**80,000**

inhabitants

Density

**193.5**

inhabitants/Km<sup>2</sup>

## The limits of the city centre

The city centre of Lamia is defined by four historic public spaces (Plateia Parkou, Laou, Eleitherias, and Diakou). These historic squares delimit an area of 15 Ha, characterised by diverse architectural influences ranging from Renaissance elements (with a significant influence on the city's structure) to post-war structures and developments that have contributed to shaping the centre.



Surface

**0.15**  
Km<sup>2</sup>

## 2. The current situation of the city centre

### Housing

While there are an adequate number of dwellings in the centre of Lamia, their poor state of conservation has led many inhabitants to relocate away from the urban centre. The condition of these properties, coupled with the aforementioned issues, has resulted in the overall housing prices in the city centre being lower than in other areas of Lamia. Consequently, the vacant or abandoned properties present a challenge in terms of maintenance and upkeep.

Furthermore, ethnic minority groups are present within the urban public sphere, and yet, substantive efforts towards the formulation of robust integration strategies that facilitate their inclusion in civil society remain notably scarce.

### Public Space

The public spaces in the centre of Lamia consist mostly of hard-surfaced squares, lacking green areas or adapted vegetation to mitigate the effects of climate change (especially in summer). Moreover, these spaces are underutilised and fail to attract activities in keeping with their potential. These public spaces operate as areas of social exclusion, marked by degradation and severe security issues.

This situation is exacerbated by a lack of inclusivity in the spatial design, with significant deficiencies in accessibility (for example, narrow sidewalks and a lack of urban furniture for seniors or children), and the occupation of public space by private elements (chairs and covered terraces associated with leisure activities).

Consequently, there is a heightened reliance on private transportation, leading to traffic issues within the fabric of the city centre (car-pedestrian conflicts, traffic congestion at peak hours, etc.).

### Facilities

The city centre of Lamia lacks a proper balance of public facilities. While it possesses a favourable ratio in terms of cultural amenities (such as theatres, museums, and art galleries), there is a deficiency in the educational system regarding quantity and, notably, the quality of the built environment.

Regarding healthcare buildings, their number is adequate to accommodate a small city like Lamia. However, basic health services like pharmacies are not accessible to everyone. Also, the administrative system in the city centre is quite limited, making it difficult for the majority of citizens to manage their administrative affairs in an efficient way.

## Commerce

The commercial offer in the centre of Lamia adequately fulfils the basic needs of both residents and tourists. However, the dearth of contemporary stores and facilities undermines the city's appeal to a broader audience.

On the other hand, the restriction of the commercial schedule (shops open just three afternoons during the work week) creates a lack of vitality in the streets, resulting in a lack of social interaction and control of public space.

## Leisure

Lamia's city centre is specialised around tourism and services. These activities are notably characterised by a significant impact on public space (particularly from cafés), generating problems with accessibility and noise.

## Work

The labour market distribution in the centre of Lamia is divided among three sectors, with 50% allocated to commerce, 40% to offices and other workspaces, and 10% dedicated to services.

A significant percentage of these workers do not reside in the city centre. It lacks a substantial number of job opportunities, and, in fact, most of the inhabitants commute to other areas for work.

### 3. Governance, policies and decision-making tools

#### Current approach/model

The approach of Lamia to the revitalisation of the city centre is conducted through urban planning policies.

#### Integration between local and national strategies

Greece lacks a specific policy addressing city-centre revitalisation or promoting town-management schemes.

Therefore, at the local level, the municipal government has implemented general plans and other sectoral local strategies, which could benefit from a higher degree of integration and involvement of various stakeholders.

#### Existing policies in the city centre

First of all, the spatial strategic plan (OSBBA/OCHE) encompasses ‘urban intervention areas’. Primarily, it aims to promote sustainable mobility systems in the city, while fostering the creation of new jobs and investment opportunities with a special emphasis on leveraging culture and the creative economy.

Second, the Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan promotes sustainable multimodal urban mobility as part of the transition to a net-zero carbon economy, introducing new innovative mobility services, active transport infrastructure, and accessibility for all.

Finally, the Sustainable Urban Development plan takes advantage of the positive external factors that can flow from these activities, promoting growth and development while reducing pollution and greenhouse gas emissions, minimising waste and inefficient use of natural resources, maintaining biodiversity, and strengthening energy security. This allows Lamia to adopt ecosystem-based approaches to climate change adaptation and disaster risk prevention.

#### Governance model

The municipal bodies have solid experience in interdepartmental cooperation. Given that the responsibility for the development and management of plans impacting the urban centre lies with the municipality, the council members and the respective departments collaborate intensely during the formulation process.

In contrast, the level of citizen engagement could be enhanced with novel citizen participation protocols, multi-stakeholder consulting groups, civic and public partnerships, or other similar strategies.

#### Decision-making tools

Although they lack a specific body dedicated solely to data collection and analysis for the establishment of knowledge-based policies, the city council of Lamia has conducted certain data measurement efforts, on-site analyses, and surveys primarily focused on mobility and accessibility.

Specifically, there is a need for a system of monitoring or indicators to evaluate the city centre policies.

## 4. The ULG

### ULG Coordinator: Athanasia Koutsi

Director of Administrative and Financial Services, Amfikyonies Agency

### ULG Members

The ULG has been created within the framework of URBACT. The initial core group consists of representatives from the public administration, such as the Lamia City Council (through Amfikyonies Agency and several departments of the municipal organisation), the Region of Central Greece, the Technical Chamber of Greece and the Chamber of Commerce. The private sector is also represented (mobility agency), as well as the academic sector (University of Thessaly).

Organisation	Sector
Amfikyonies S.A	Public sector
Municipality of Lamia	Public sector
Region of Central Greece	Public sector
Urban transportation of Lamia S.A.	Private sector
Technical Chamber of Greece / Regional Department of Eastern Greece	Public sector
Chamber of Commerce	Public sector
School of Science, Dep. Computer Science and Biomedical Informatics, University of Thessaly	Public sector



ULG kick-off meeting in Lamia with representatives of the public and private sector.





Composition of the ULG.

## 5. Learning needs and contribution to the network

### Contributions

Lamia can contribute to the network with its previous experience in promoting the city’s heritage and identity assets, both to retain inhabitants and to reach new visitors (under a sustainable tourism destination strategy).

### Learning needs

Regarding specific challenges facing the city centre, the city council wishes to explore an inclusive approach to public space design that adheres to modern EU standards (universal accessibility, climate adaptation, and social cohesion) as well as best practices in the mobility transition, including a greener approach to transportation and a more prominent urban planning scheme.

Enhancing other key capacities requires collaboration between local policymakers and local stakeholders at multiple levels towards an integrated planning approach.

In addition, developing digital management tools to support local policies and monitor their positive impact is critical. Digital decision-making tools will enable efficient governance and facilitate informed, data-driven strategies to ensure effective implementation and ongoing improvements.

### Synergies

Although this is Lamia’s first European network experience, the city is engaged in other transformation projects at the national level.

### Contributions

- C09\_01 My Lamia app (Inform newcomers in a modern and efficient way about Lamia' spots)
- C09\_02 Destination Management Organization
- C09\_03 Knowledge platform of the DMO

### Learning needs

- L09\_01 Comprehensive design and implementation of sustainable integrated urban action policies
- L09\_02 Data analysis and knowledge-base policies
- L09\_03 Best practices in public space (ensure a safe, clean and inclusive environment)
- L09\_04 Tools to evaluate the impact of best practices

# Best Practices

## My Lamia app

The 'My Lamia' app, launched between 2021 and 2023, stands as a collaborative effort between Amfiktyonies and the municipality. Serving as a mobile and web application, its primary focus lies in offering informative, historical, tourist-oriented, and marketing content.

The app serves as a comprehensive guide, prominently featuring Lamia's monuments and attractions while providing up-to-date information about events and news within the city. A key feature is its ability to tailor information according to the specific interests of various types of tourists, offering insights into hotels and notable landmarks.

The app will establish a distinctive experience for residents and tourists, fostering loyalty among users. This future differentiation strategy will cater to the unique needs and preferences of each user segment, ensuring a personalised and engaging experience.

## DMO and DMS

The Destination Management Operation (DMO) is an essential component of the Operational Program 'Solid Greece 2014-2020,' falling under the scope of 'Protection of the environment and promotion of resource efficiency.' It is financially supported by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF).

DMO activities involve establishing and managing specialised tourist, cultural, and business destinations within Lamia.

It promotes the city among tourism agencies in the local and foreign markets; and communicating Lamia's identity, among others.

In particular, the efforts focus on the development of appropriate big data analysis tools in the field of tourism for intelligent prediction (digital integration tools and visualisation platform), attraction, and sustainable management of urban tourist and cultural flows in the city of Lamia.

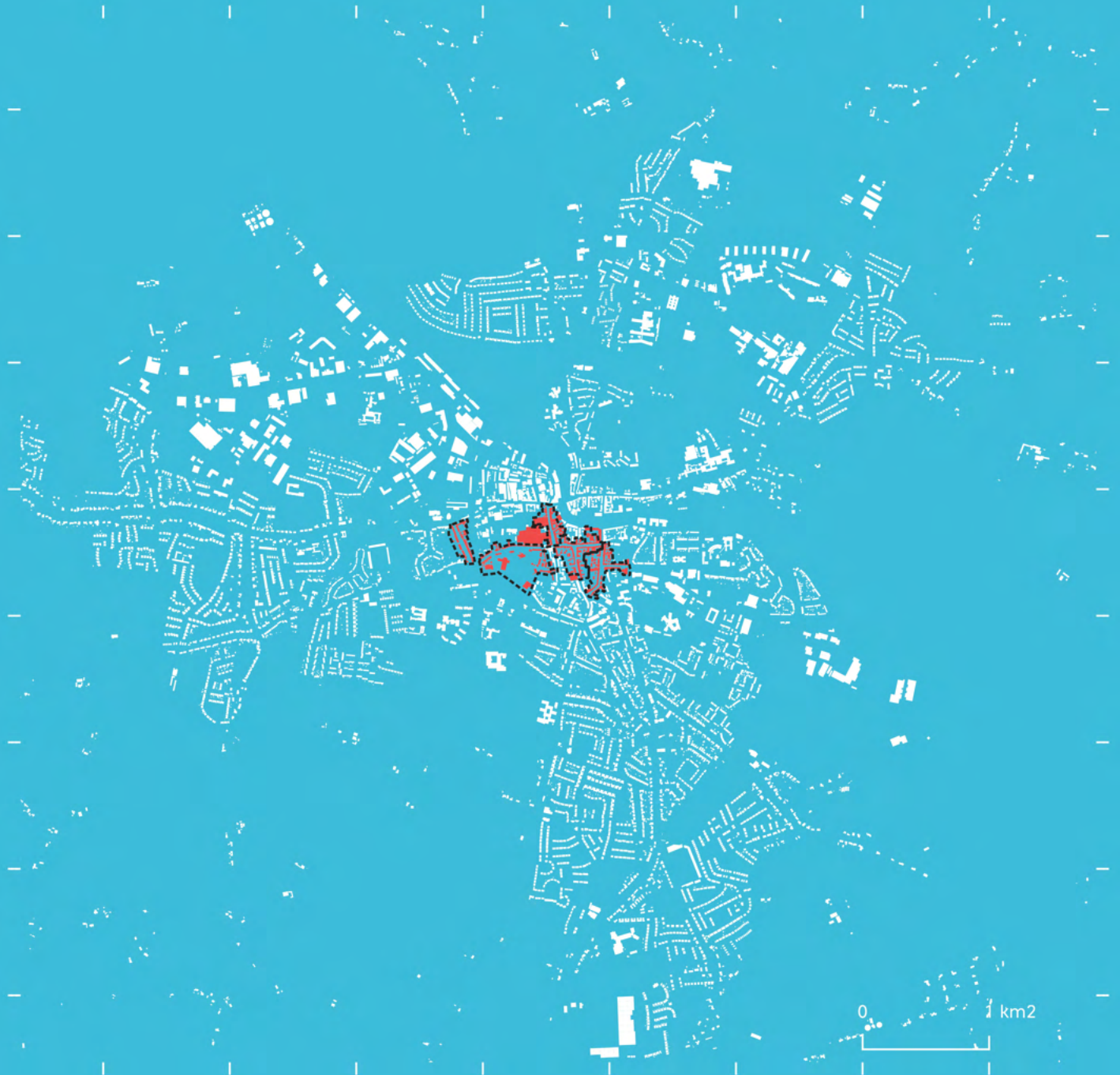
My Lamia mobile application.



# Sligo

Located along the Atlantic Coast, Sligo has a lake that flows into a river, which in turn flows into the Atlantic Ocean, all within 3 km.

Sligo County Council is the authority responsible for administering local government in County Sligo. It is governed by the Local Government Act 2001. The Council is responsible for urban planning and development, housing and community, roads and transportation, environment and culture. The Council has 18 elected representatives; democratic elections are held every five years. The head of the Council holds the title of 'Cathaoirleach'. The Council Executive is headed up by Chief Executive Martin Lydon and the Council has approximately 350 employees.



Ireland

# 1. Overview of the city

Located along the Atlantic Coast, Sligo has a lake that flows into a river, which in turn flows into the Atlantic Ocean, all within 3 km. Historically it has been an important commercial port, which is now used mostly by recreational boats. It is one of the largest towns in the northwest of Ireland and has a significant tourism sector.

With a growth since 2016 of 7.34%, its population stands at 20,608, which translates to a density of 1,649 hab/km<sup>2</sup>. 16.7% of its population is over 65 years old, while 16.4% of the population is under 14 years old.

It has a household median gross income of €34,802, below the national average, with a labour market very focused on the service sector (with more than 50% of the existing jobs in professional services, public administration, commerce & trade, etc.).



Surface

**10**  
Km<sup>2</sup>

Population

**20,608**  
inhabitants

Density

**1,649**  
inhabitants/Km<sup>2</sup>

# The limits of the city centre

The urban centre of Sligo is characterised by a compact urban fabric, minimal elevation differences, and a well-distributed array of services. The boundaries for its study have been established considering the concentration of vacant premises and the economic impact of various festivals, events, and the Night Time Economy (NTE).



Surface

**0.13**  
Km<sup>2</sup>

Population

**3,184**  
inhabitants

Density

**24,492**  
inhabitants/Km<sup>2</sup>

## 2. The current situation of the city centre

### Housing

A slowdown in new residential builds, combined with immigration/increase in new communities and single-occupancy dwellings, has resulted in a shortage of supply. Also, the housing price in the city centre is higher than throughout the rest of the county.

Also, in recent years, there has been a move towards upgrading and refurbishment of older housing stock. However, this is more prevalent in the suburbs rather than within the city centre where many older buildings, in particular upper floors of city centre buildings, lie vacant/derelect.

### Public Space

While Sligo boasts a number of high-quality parks/public spaces around the periphery of the city centre, unfortunately there is a dearth of high-quality public spaces within the city centre. These parks on the periphery contain children's playgrounds, football pitches, bowls, basketball and tennis courts, running trails etc.

These public spaces support the enhancement of the community, serving as spaces of social cohesion. These spaces are also inclusive and accessible, but sustainability has not been a significant feature of public space design over the past decade.

Despite moves to reduce the width of city centre streets to improve pedestrian safety, the city is dominated by vehicles. Even so, footfall through the city centre is quite significant.

### Facilities

Given its size, Sligo centre is well served in the provision of public facilities. The team is currently working on an innovative solution in the provision of public toilets that has worked successfully in other destinations.

Whilst the public amenities of parks and recreational activities are within walking distance of the centre, the advent of a new plaza/square in March 2024 will present additional opportunities to build a community gathering hub.

## 2. The current situation of the city centre

### Commerce

While considering Sligo's commercial distribution as appropriate, with a balance of small and larger shops, there is an 18.2% vacancy rate.

Coupled with the post-COVID dynamics still under investigation, this scenario suggests that there is potential for improvement in the commercial situation of the Sligo town centre.

### Leisure

In recent years, efforts have been made to enhance the economic activity of businesses beyond certain hours.

Initially, this led to conflicts between residents and visitors regarding the adjustment in the usage of various spaces within these areas.

### Work

Overall, Sligo's downtown area features an economic mix in terms of the labour market, encompassing specific zones that are specialised in hospitality venues such as pubs, clubs, cafes, and restaurants.

Sligo's retail offering surrounds the hospitality cluster across neighbouring streets.



## 3. Governance, policies and decision-making tools

### Current approach/model

In Sligo, there is a mixed system, with the administration having competence in certain areas, defined by specific plans such as the Climate Adaptation Strategy, the Disability Inclusion & Access Strategy and others at the national level such as the County Sligo Development Plan or Housing for All – A New Housing Plan for Ireland. At the same time, there is a national strategy to support the emergence of town centre management schemes, known as the National Town Centre First Policy. This involves a Town Centre Manager who is responsible for directing proposals to improve the local economic sectors and integrating the commerce and business sectors.

### Integration between local and national strategies

The alignment between strategies addressing Sligo’s urban centre at both national and local levels results in the emergence of themes that create certain synergies. While national directives support the resolution of certain issues, such as housing, or provide the necessary resources for municipalities to integrate specific schemes, like Town Centre Management (TCM), within their urban centres.

In the case of Sligo, this has led to national-level support from the existing Business Improvement District (BID).

### Existing policies in the city centre

In addition to the existence of the Business Improvement District (BID) in downtown Sligo, several plans have been formulated with a focus on the urban centre’s commercial activation. These plans include specific policies and thematic strategies such as the Active Travel Plan, Climate Action Plan, Smart-Digital initiatives, and Housing for All, among others. Moreover, there are more comprehensive strategies like the Sligo 2030 Local Economic & Community Plan, which outlines a vision for a smart, sustainable, and socially inclusive Sligo, emphasising vibrant communities, a rich cultural milieu, and innovative growth and development.

Multiple departments within the municipality are tasked with managing various themes in downtown Sligo. These departments continually complement each other, striving to generate cross-cutting projects. Furthermore, there are six local representatives from the city centre involved in the acceptance of policies, ensuring the inclusion of the community in decision-making processes.

### Governance model

In Sligo, there is an effort underway to enhance project transversality by fostering collaboration among various departments and integrating the Business Improvement District (BID) into the development of diverse strategies. The administration also consistently endeavours to incorporate bottom-up analyses and strategies. Moreover, there is an ongoing interaction with the local commercial sector facilitated by the BID, aiming to ensure the input of its members within municipal policies remains a constant consideration.

### Decision-making tools

Sligo City Council has a data observatory enabling policy formulation and decision-making based on data, particularly when the Business Improvement District (BID) is involved in these strategies. Data collection is thematic and often centred on the urban centre, encompassing surveys on pedestrian mobility, attendance at various events, traffic data, consumer perception surveys, business issues, and more.

Various methods are employed for data collection, ranging from automated counting (using footfall counters, for instance) to conducting surveys and interviews.

## 4. The ULG

### ULG Coordinator: Gail McGibbon

The ULG coordinator is the CEO of Sligo BID, leading an organisation with 758 cross-sector businesses and coordinating four different voluntary committees drawn from both business and resident members.

### ULG Members

The group is built on a pre-existing partnership involving Sligo Business Improvement District, Sligo County Council, Sligo Summerfest Committee, and Sligo St. Patrick's Day Festival Committee.

Organisation	Sector
Sligo City Council	Public Sector
Sligo BID	Private Sector
Shop owner	Private Sector
Restaurant owner	Private Sector
School of Engineering	Public sector
Sligo County Council	Public sector
Politician	Public sector



Meeting with the ULG members during the First Transnational Meeting in Sligo.



The local group consists of representatives from a pre-existing partnership.

## 5. Learning needs and contribution to the network

### Contributions

In Sligo, various thematic policies can contribute to the network, such as the creation of shared governance for the town centre through the development of the Town Centre Management Strategy, and outcomes such as best practices in the evening and night-time economy, and the economic impact of festivals and events on business performance and local employment. It is interesting to note the development of an annual land use survey by the Town Centre Property Use Survey.

### Learning needs

In Sligo, there is a learning need to broaden citizen participation methodologies and establish protocols for developing participatory budgets. Additionally, there is a demand for a compendium of best practices in urban planning, data collection, and a global perspective focusing on data analysis/tools and knowledge-based policies/decisions. Furthermore, there is a call for a catalogue of Act Local Best Policies.

### Synergies

Sligo holds representation on the National Oversight Advisory Group for the Town Centre First policy, the government Night Time Economy Stakeholders group, and the government retail roundtable. Sligo County Council is currently involved in Interreg Europe and Horizon 2020 projects.

### Contributions

C10_01	Strategy for Town Centre Management (Public-private, Town Centre First, Town Manager)
C10_02	Town Centre Property Use Survey
C10_03	Best practices in the evening and night-time economy. Economic impact of festivals and events on business performance and local

### Learning needs

L10_01	Citizen participation methodologies (expand) Need for a protocol (related to participatory budget)
L10_02	Best practices on Urban Planning, Data Collection and Think Global, Act Local
L10_03	Data analysis and knowledge-base policies
L10_04	Commercial vacancy best practices

# Best Practices

## Queen Maeve Square

This project, anticipated to be completed by March 2024, focuses on the transformation of an underutilised area currently designated for parking in the heart of Sligo. Its primary aim is to convert this space into a cultural hub conducive to hosting events, thereby enhancing the commercial and cultural vibrancy of the city centre. This endeavor seeks to reinvigorate the surroundings by repurposing the space for cultural activities, thereby fostering a more dynamic local environment.

## Purple Flag

The Night Time Economy Team, established in 2014, has been dedicated to orchestrating activities and conflict resolution within the city centre. Their efforts have resulted in setting a benchmark of excellence concerning the establishment of family-friendly, safe, non-reliant on alcohol, and culturally diverse spaces (Award for the Evening and Night Time Economy).

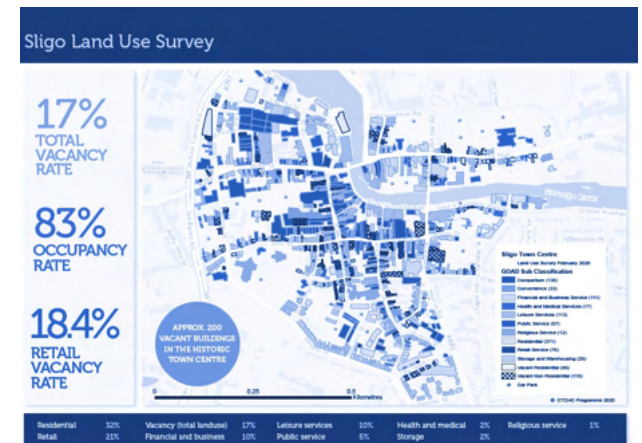
## Reopening of the Tourism Office

The collaborative and bottom-up process initiated by Sligo BID stands out prominently in facilitating the reopening of the tourist office (which closed in 2022), engaging various stakeholders across multiple scales in their collaborative efforts.

## Grant scheme conversion vacant property

This strategy, nationally funded, aims to refurbish low-density buildings (typically comprising two to three storeys) with ground-level commercial spaces by providing financial assistance to property owners through a collaborative framework. The collaborative efforts of Sligo County Council and Sligo BID are noteworthy in conducting surveys to identify eligible buildings and property owners for participation in this assistance program. Additionally, they have streamlined administrative processes to facilitate and expedite this initiative.

Vacant properties survey in the city centre.



# Celje

Located in the central-eastern Slovenia, Celje is the country's fourth largest city. The Savinja River, which runs along the urban area to the south, defines the city's extension.

The City Council of Celje (Mestni svet mestne občine Celje), with 33 members from 10 political parties, is the central authority for local matters. It oversees the adoption of the municipality's statutes, decrees, budget, and strategic development documents. The council functions through committees and commissions, with key decisions made in approximately seven annual meetings, driving the city's ongoing progress and development.



Slovenia

0 1 km<sup>2</sup>



# 1. Overview of the city

Located in the central-eastern Slovenia, Celje is the country's fourth largest city. The Savinja River, which runs along the urban area to the south, defines the city's extension. Celje is recognised as a centre of national and regional significance, an important centre for employment, production and services, as well as a major regional transport hub.

Celje has a population of 48,776 inhabitants, which translates into a density of 513.4 inhabitants/km<sup>2</sup>. These figures contrast with the urban centre, which is home to almost 6.5 % of the city's population and presents a higher density: 7,351.1 inhabitants/km<sup>2</sup> (corresponding to a population of 3,149 inhabitants).

Although the whole region is losing inhabitants (0.14% since 2011), the urban centre has seen a population increase of 8%. In the same regard, the city overall has an ageing population (22% of inhabitants are over 65 year in contrast to 14% under 14), while this changes slightly in the urban centre, where the senior population drops to 18%.



Surface

**95**  
Km<sup>2</sup>

Population

**48,776**  
inhabitants

Density

**513.4**  
inhabitants/Km<sup>2</sup>

## The limits of the city centre

The functional area of the city centre comprises the Medieval city centre (a 0.56 km<sup>2</sup> zone protected as a local heritage site), framed by the train station to the east and a city park over the river to the south. This unique polarity influences a broader area: all the surrounding neighbourhoods located to the south of the highway.



Surface

**0.56**  
Km<sup>2</sup>

Population

**3,149**  
inhabitants

Density

**7,351**  
inhabitants/Km<sup>2</sup>



## 2. The current situation of the city centre

### Housing

The urban centre of Celje features an adequate distribution of housing, currently undergoing a rehabilitation process (principally, façade and roof renovations). The historic character of most of the urban fabric may stand as a hindrance to climate adaptation and mitigation policies.

The housing stock is also in a transitional phase: although most dwellings are structured as long-term rentals, they are transitioning to short-term rentals due to the increasing number of student flats or external investments (in most cases conducted by private owners).

The housing prices in this area are below the city average, with approximately 10% corresponding to non-profit/social housing (210 units, including sheltered housing).

### Public Space

Celje boasts a variety of public spaces ranging from squares to markets and cultural venues, encompassing diverse open spaces. They support social cohesion through activities and uses that complement each other at different times. This results in a well-established city centre identity with which many residents feel connected, particularly those dwelling in adjacent areas.

However, the design of these spaces does not account for the parameters of inclusivity, accessibility, or sustainability. Some areas present high levels of degradation and minor security issues.

### Leisure

The celebration of various events in the centre of Celje (30 big events for between 300 and 5,000 people and 120 smaller events for fewer than 300 people) has caused some coexistence conflicts with residents, specifically regarding noise-related concerns and mobility problems (in particular, related to parking).

### Commerce

The distribution of essential goods in the centre of Celje is adequate, with 20% of its businesses dedicated to this purpose. However, within the remaining 80%, there is a notable lack of commercial diversity, especially regarding occasional shopping.

Approximately 10% of shops are vacant along the city's main streets. The premises remain empty due to the ambiguity surrounding their ownership status, reflecting a challenge that persists from historical legacies (unfinished Yugoslavian denationalisation process).

### Work

The urban centre of Celje exhibits a mixed labour market distribution, comprising a predominant business sector, alongside a substantial number of service establishments and offices. While a large part of this workforce does not live in the city centre, this creates particular pressure on mobility systems, leading to conflicts in public spaces.

## 3. Governance, policies and decision-making tools

### Current approach/model

The approach to the revitalisation of Celje's city centre operates in a mixed manner. On the one hand, several city council departments deploy public policies affecting the area. On the other hand, there is an activation of various stakeholders and a willingness to coordinate civil society and private entities with the administration through a TCM scheme, which was guided by a local strategy for the city centre through 2020.

This TCM scheme has an annual budget of €49,000 to develop general activities and projects in collaboration with different institutions and the city council.

### Integration between local and national strategies

While there are currently no national strategies for the revitalisation of urban centres or for generating specific TCM schemes in Slovenia, the Integrated Territorial Investment Mechanism (ITI) offers recommendations for the regeneration of urban fabrics.

At the local level, Celje has an urban planning document defining land uses for the city-centre. The plan has been in place since 1986; it has undergone modifications that have adapted the land uses according to different challenges over its lifespan. The regulations generated by the plan focus mainly on heritage conservation.

### Existing policies in the city centre

Besides the TCM scheme, the city council promoted various thematic strategies and policies with a prime influence on the city centre. First, the public rental housing program comprises 142 dwellings and underground garages and the rehabilitation of existing social housing units.

Furthering their commitment to sustainable urban development, the city has implemented public transportation strategies powered by compressed natural gas. The sustainable mobility strategy also enabled the creation of 30 kilometres of bike lanes, charging stations, and bike-sharing systems, among other initiatives. Additionally, the city has engaged in the POCITYF project, which aims to improve the energy efficiency of buildings in the centre.

Finally, through the URBcult strategy, a large building in the city's heart is being renovated, preserving the heritage quality and avoiding degradation. Along similar lines, the municipal authorities financed the renovation of façades and roofs of buildings in the city centre, helping to retain inhabitants.

### Governance model

A dedicated public servant centralises the role of the Town Centre Manager at the Celeia Institute for Cultural Events, Tourism and TCM. She coordinates with the different departments with competence in actions in the town centre (administration, environment and urban planning, social affairs, and inspectorate). In addition, there is an official and administrative representative especially for the city centre.

Furthermore, the Town Centre Manager is in charge of coordinating with private actors and attracting investment to the city centre. These various actors propose different activities to be held in the city centre's empty spaces (both public and private), such as promotional activities, decoration and branding activities, etc.

From the public side, the TCM scheme has enabled the revitalisation of commerce through the creation of a season ticket system to reward consumption in local shops. Events in specific venues and public spaces targeting diverse population groups have encouraged private investment in certain parts of the city while improving the attractiveness of the city centre.

The revitalisation of vacant or dormant spaces through their temporary occupation has sparked increased activity in specific areas of the city centre. The TCM has launched various initiatives within these spaces to amplify their use. For instance, it has organised events like 'Tuesdays for families', which offer weekly themed activities suitable for various age groups. Additionally, gastronomy festivals and similar events have played a pivotal role in diversifying activities within these reactivated spaces, promoting vibrant community engagement and use.

Although the Town Centre Management scheme represents the principal governance mechanism, achieving coordination among all the entities involved in management remains a challenge.

On the other hand, the municipal administration lacks a developed citizen participation protocol – although a participatory budget is in the planning stages for the coming years. The local administration uses digital tools (social media and surveys) as a channel for stakeholder activation.

### Decision-making tools

Regarding knowledge-based tools, Celje does not have a specific department or data observatory. However, several departments gather data sporadically through surveys, on-site observations, and technical and financial data. Recently, the city council has implemented an app to collect data about parking, public city bus use, and bike sharing (Centralka), which is the first step towards implementing a structured approach to data analytics.

In terms of data visualisation, the administration has a geographic system platform where they internally manage a certain amount of information to help in the urban planning processes.

## 4. The ULG

**ULG Coordinator: Larisa Potokar**  
Smart city project manager, city administration

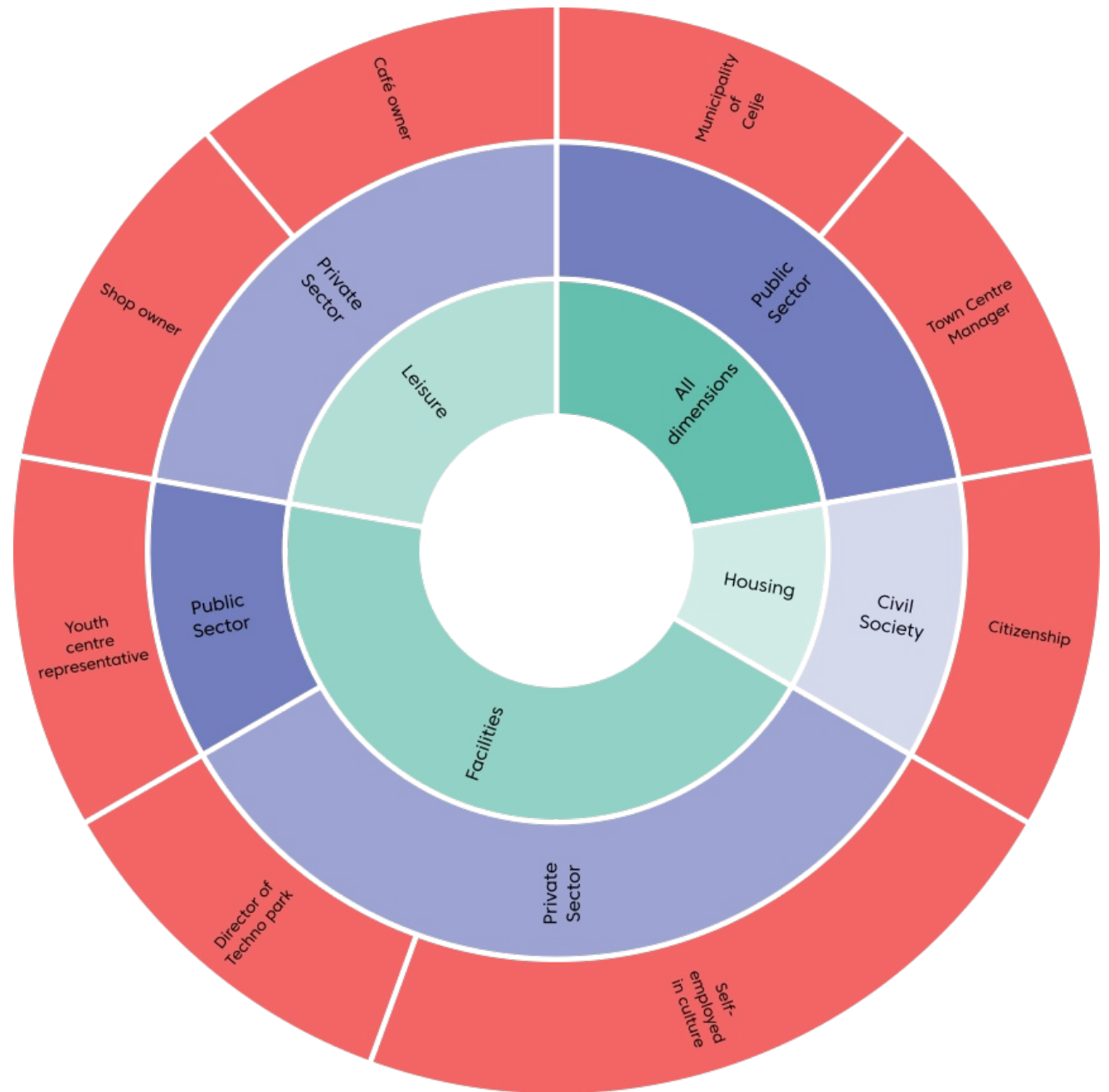
### ULG Members

The ULG participants have been identified based on their interest in the city centre and other activities, although this is the first time they have come together as a single group. The ULG comprises several members from the public sector, the private sector, and civil society.

Organisation	Sector
Municipality of Celje	Public sector
Celeia Institute for Cultural Events	Public sector
Citizenship	Civil society
Self-employed in culture	Private sector
Director of a Techno park	Public sector
Youth centre representative	Civil society
Self-employed in culture	Private sector
Shop owner	Private sector
Café owner	Private sector



The ULG members have been identified based on their interest in the city centre



Comprises several members from the public sector, the private sector and the civil society.

## 5. Learning needs and contribution to the network

### Contributions

Various thematic policies deployed by the Celje City Council have offered substantial contributions to the Cities@heart network: for example, the commercial revitalisation policies through the deployment of temporary events; the creation of a dedicated space for citizens or associations; and a collaborative city centre voucher system. Equally significant is the establishment of public governance mechanisms via a robust TCM strategy.

Moreover, heritage preservation – supported by co-financing schemes for building renovations and the enhancement of energy efficiency measures – makes another interesting contribution. Finally, the development of city management indicators through digital applications presents an innovative channel worth exploring.

### Learning needs

On the one hand, the municipality demands broader methodologies regarding citizen participation and setting up specific protocols. On the other hand, Celje’s city council acknowledges the necessity of establishing a comprehensive system for data collection, processing, and analytical tools, integrating them into actionable public policies through cohesive action plans (the methodology for drafting an Integrated Action Plan also being a focus of learning).

Moreover, the local administration would like to expand their knowledge of examples concerning commercial diversification and housing policies, specifically those aimed at population retention strategies.

### Contributions

C05_01	Strategy for Town Centre Management overuse of public space by private owners (terraces)
C05_02	System of joint city centre voucher
C05_03	Place-making events for different users (families, gastronomy, occasional branding in empty shops, etc.)
C05_04	Temporary use of empty shops
C05_05	Creation of a dedicated space for the city centre
C05_06	URBcult - Renovation of a major building in the heart of the city's
C05_07	Co-financing the renovation of facades/roofs
C05_08	Centralka - app management parking
C05_09	Energy-positive buildings and districts
C05_10	Public space and Terraces regulations

### Learning needs

L05_01	Citizen participation methodologies/budget
L05_02	Data collection and processing
L05_03	Data analysis/tools and knowledge-base policies
L05_04	Integrated Action Planning
L05_05	Best practices in commercial diversification climate change
L05_06	Best practices in housing (retain population)
L05_07	Best practices in commercial diversification

# Best Practices

## Reactivation of vacant premises for community activities

The concept of a temporary use space, transforming a once empty shop into a vibrant experience, was initially driven by proactive residents deeply engaged in the creative and marketing spheres within the city centre.

The municipality welcomed the idea, which required minimal investment, primarily for cleaning and management. As each new event unfolds, the necessity for such spaces becomes evident — a need for pop-up shops, innovative service presentations, intimate indoor events, and workshops. An additional advantage lies in their locations on prominent streets or major squares. The overarching goal remains the revitalisation of commerce within the area.

## Co-financing for building renovation and promotion of accesible housing

The co-financed renovation of façades and roofs of buildings in the city centre, together with a policy of non-profit housing for young people, demonstrates the importance of housing policies in improving the intensity of the city centre.

## Sustainable Mobility Week

Since 2003, during Mobility Week, specific streets within the city centre have been temporarily closed to vehicular traffic – transforming them into pedestrian zones hosting diverse activities and events. This week serves as a testing ground for making these closures permanent fixtures. There is a gradual progression, including the closure of additional parking lots or streets, allowing authorities to evaluate the functionality and impact on the surrounding environment before implementing permanent changes.

New space for community activities in Celje's city centre.



# Osijek

Osijek is the fourth largest city in Croatia and the administrative, economic, educational, and cultural centre of its eastern part, the region of Slavonia and Baranja.

The City Council of Osijek in Croatia is the local governing body responsible for municipal administration, policymaking, and decision making within the city. It oversees urban development, infrastructure, public services, and community initiatives, ensuring the city's effective governance and development.



Croatia



# 1. Overview of the city

Osijek is the fourth largest city in Croatia and the administrative, economic, educational, and cultural centre of its eastern part, the region of Slavonia and Baranja. It is located in the Pannonian basin, running along the banks of the Drava River, around 25 kilometres from the confluence of the Drava and the Danube.

The cityscape encompasses over 1,750 hectares of forests and 72.5 hectares of vibrant public green spaces. It boasts an impressive array of 20 city parks spanning over 40 hectares, complemented by two expansive urban forests. The architectural panorama echoes a rich and diverse heritage, resonating with the city's vibrant and captivating history, tracing its roots back to the Roman Era.

With a population of 96,313 inhabitants, the city has experienced a significant decline, with an 8.9% decrease in population since 2011. Consequently, the current population density stands at 553.9 inhabitants per square kilometre. The demographic composition illustrates an ageing population, with 18.3% aged over 66 years and 13.5% falling within the age group of 15 years or younger. Osijek boasts an average income of €15,544, slightly below the national average.



Surface

**174**  
Km<sup>2</sup>

Population

**96,313**  
inhabitants

Density

**553.9**  
inhabitants/Km<sup>2</sup>

## The limits of the city centre

The Osijek city centre is divided into two different polarities: the first corresponds to the perimeter of the historical heritage protection area (the 17th century settlement, Tvurda, to the east of the city); the second is the downtown area, characterised by a mix of historical and modern buildings, as well as significant green areas.

In this last case, many of the historic buildings are rather neglected, having lacked systematic maintenance. The green areas in the centre mostly need renovation, in which case they will contribute significantly to upgrading the surrounding areas and improving the climate resilience of the city centre.



Surface

**0.88**  
km<sup>2</sup>

## 2. The current situation of the city centre

### Housing

The city centre boasts a variety of typologies, including blocks of flats and single-family houses, some of which are old and protected as heritage, while others are of more recent construction. These properties are usually either owner-occupied or in long-term rental arrangements. Osijek's location within the national context results in housing prices being higher than in the surrounding areas, although specific data for the urban centre is unavailable.

In general, the built-up area requires comprehensive renovation and updates to enhance sustainability, energy efficiency, and accessibility.

### Public space

In Osijek, two prominent central squares stand out as public spaces that, when interconnected, host various events in the city. Additionally, there are open spaces within the housing blocks and sizable green areas protected for both environmental and historical reasons.

These spaces serve as meeting points and foster social cohesion. Particularly through the organisation of diverse events and through their role as distinctive landmarks that attract the population, they engender a unique identity within these areas.

Generally conceived as inclusive and accessible, the public spaces offer dedicated areas for children and young people. They are secure spaces, often car-free; however, these areas lack integrated sustainability aspects in their design.

### Commerce

The distribution of essential goods is adequate, with approximately 50% of businesses dedicated to this purpose.

However, this contrasts with the lack of variety in other types of commerce, which has generally moved to the outskirts or into shopping centres.

This situation has also resulted in some commercial spaces being vacant (due to legal constraints regarding the unclear ownership of some premises), although there is a trend toward reversing this.

## Leisure

There is a significant tourism cluster in the urban centre, along with annual events that utilise the public and green spaces within the city centre.

Despite the concentration of the tourism sector in the city centre, there is an absence of nightlife activities, which are instead located in other areas of the city.

## Work

While precise data is unavailable, estimations suggest an approximate allocation of space within the urban centre, with roughly 15% dedicated to commercial activities, 20% to services, 30% designated for offices or workspaces, and 35% reserved for residential areas. This allocation showcases a notable diversity in its composition.

This distribution implies that a significant portion of the workforce operating in the urban centre does not necessarily reside within its limits; workers are dispersed across the city. As a result, there is substantial labour mobility among different neighbourhoods and their surrounding regions.

## 3. Governance, policies and decision-making tools

### Current approach/model

Although there is currently no national or local strategy to activate Town Centre Management schemes, the revitalisation of the city centre is managed through planning.

Mainly, the urban design plan prescribes the land use and construction potentials and obligations in detail for each part of the city, while some other sectoral strategies are in place to support specific questions (e.g., to manage the impacts generated within the city centre by external agents such as traffic, tourism, and the impact of restoration activities, among others).

### Integration between local and national strategies

In addition to the town centre use regulation plan, a national urban regulation strategy addresses broader issues.

### Existing policies in the city centre

During the preparation of the Territorial Strategy (the development strategy for the functional urban area of Osijek, 2017), all relevant stakeholders were involved in strategic decisions on urban issues.

In particular, Osijek has been involved in several projects at the European level covering many of the issues presented in the Urban Agenda of the EU.

This has resulted in the development of various thematic strategies, such as the Waste Management Action Plan, the Air Quality Action Plan, the Strategic Noise Map, the Climate Change Mitigation Programme, Green Infrastructure, etc.

Although these documents do not focus only on the city centre, their thematic approach can be significant in solving several of the detected challenges.

### Governance model

As previously mentioned, Osijek currently lacks a public-private Town Centre Management scheme, with revitalisation strategies primarily overseen by the city council. However, a city representative assumes a principal role in managing policies and stimulating investment in the town centre. While overseeing a slightly larger area, this representative manages and promotes policies to foster growth and investment in the city centre.

### Decision-making tools

Although the city council lacks a dedicated system of indicators specifically tailored for the city centre, they operate a Geographic Information System (GIS) that gathers fundamental data encompassing the entire city. This system primarily focuses on administrative boundaries, infrastructure, and related aspects across the city.

However, a specialised team within the council diligently collects data on energy consumption within public buildings, allowing for informed decisions and targeted strategies to enhance energy efficiency and sustainability.

## 4. The ULG

**ULG Coordinator: Helena Neff**  
Osijek Culture Centre

### ULG Members

The ULG builds on the existing group of stakeholders established through the previous URBACT project BeePathNet. The group is composed of representatives of the public administration (municipal and county), professionals in the realm of urban planning and architecture (the Institute of Spatial Planning and the Society of Architects), academia (university), and several organisations and institutes focusing on culture (such as the Conservation Department of the Ministry of Culture and the Osijek Cultural Centre) and tourism, among others.

Organisation	Sector
Ministry of Culture Conservation Department	Public sector
Institute of Spatial Planning Society of Architects	Civil society
Renewable Energy Sources LTD	Public sector
Osijek-Baranya County administration	Public sector
NGO Green Osijek	Public sector
UNIKOM LTD, communal company	Civil society
Osijek-Baranja County Tourist Board	Private sector
Institute for Urban Planning and Construction	Private sector
Faculty of Civil Engineering and Architecture Osijek	Public sector
City of Osijek	Public sector



The ULG builds on the existing group of stakeholders established through the previous URBACT project BeePathNet



The group is composed of representatives of the public administration, professionals in the realm of urban planning and architecture, academia and several organisations and institutes

## 5. Learning needs and contribution to the network

### Contributions

In Osijek, various thematic policies offer valuable insights for the network, particularly concerning public space quality improvement in the city centre through regeneration and greening strategies. Hosting temporary events has proven instrumental in sustaining the city centre's population and reducing car usage within this area.

Moreover, the city council contributes to knowledge generation to engage citizens and evaluate public policies. Leveraging social media networks (surveys) has proven to be a powerful tool for disseminating information, fostering citizen awareness, and facilitating transparent evaluations of various public policies.

The City of Osijek also boasts extensive expertise in EU-funded initiatives, participating in over 50 projects as a lead partner, beneficiary, or associate partner.

### Learning needs

Regarding knowledge-based policies, the city council needs to reinforce the use of tools for data collection and analysis. Specifically addressing the challenges within the city centre, there is a crucial need for a comprehensive catalogue of best practices related to commercial revitalisation.

### Synergies

The municipality will connect its participation in URBACT with other European initiatives, primarily the New European Bauhaus (Eyes Hearts Hands Urban Revolution and DG RegioTechnical assistance for the implementation of NEB in urban planning).

### Contributions

C06_01	Eyes Hands Heart Strategy Regeneration of Public Space
C06_02	Eyes Hands Heart Strategy Place-making events"
C06_03	Social networks survey
C06_04	Integrated Action Plan Previous URBACT

### Learning needs

L06_01	Best practices in revitalising commerce (empty premises)
L06_02	Data collection and processing
L06_03	Data analysis/tools and knowledge-base policies



## Best Practices

### Urban mobility and net zero emissions in the built environment

On the one hand, the municipality is deploying a series of strategies tackling urban mobility (car-sharing and bike/e-bike public service), enabling easier access to the city centre without using a private vehicle. Other programs such as REGIAMOBIL aim to enhance demand-responsive public transport systems for mainstream adoption, while SHAREPLACE focuses on integrating shared mobility and regional transport planning, enhancing connectivity across Central Europe.

On the other hand, I-Share Life seeks to evolve electric car-sharing services, tailored for less densely populated areas, fostering replicable models in similar cities, and E-mobility involves implementing a substantial bike-sharing system to complement public transport within city centres.

GReENERGY targets have improved energy efficiency in public buildings via green roofs and solar panels, promoting renewable energy usage in city centre infrastructure.

### Eyes Hearts Hand Urban Revolution

This project, part of the New European Bauhaus initiative, seeks to transform Osijek's cityscape inclusively and sustainably. Conducting research and surveys via social media and face-to-face interactions, the project engaged citizens in reconstructing four key city locations. Over 130 proposals were collected, generating 3,500+ reactions on social posts.

Face-to-face surveys recorded some 30 coherent comments, mostly from women over 50, transcribed into a detailed report.

The online questionnaire, shared widely on social networks, gathered 113 citizens' opinions, totalling 452 specific reconstruction proposals.

This inclusive approach empowered citizens to share opinions and suggestions, highlighting a diverse engagement in reimagining Osijek's urban spaces within a creative and interdisciplinary movement promoted by the EU.

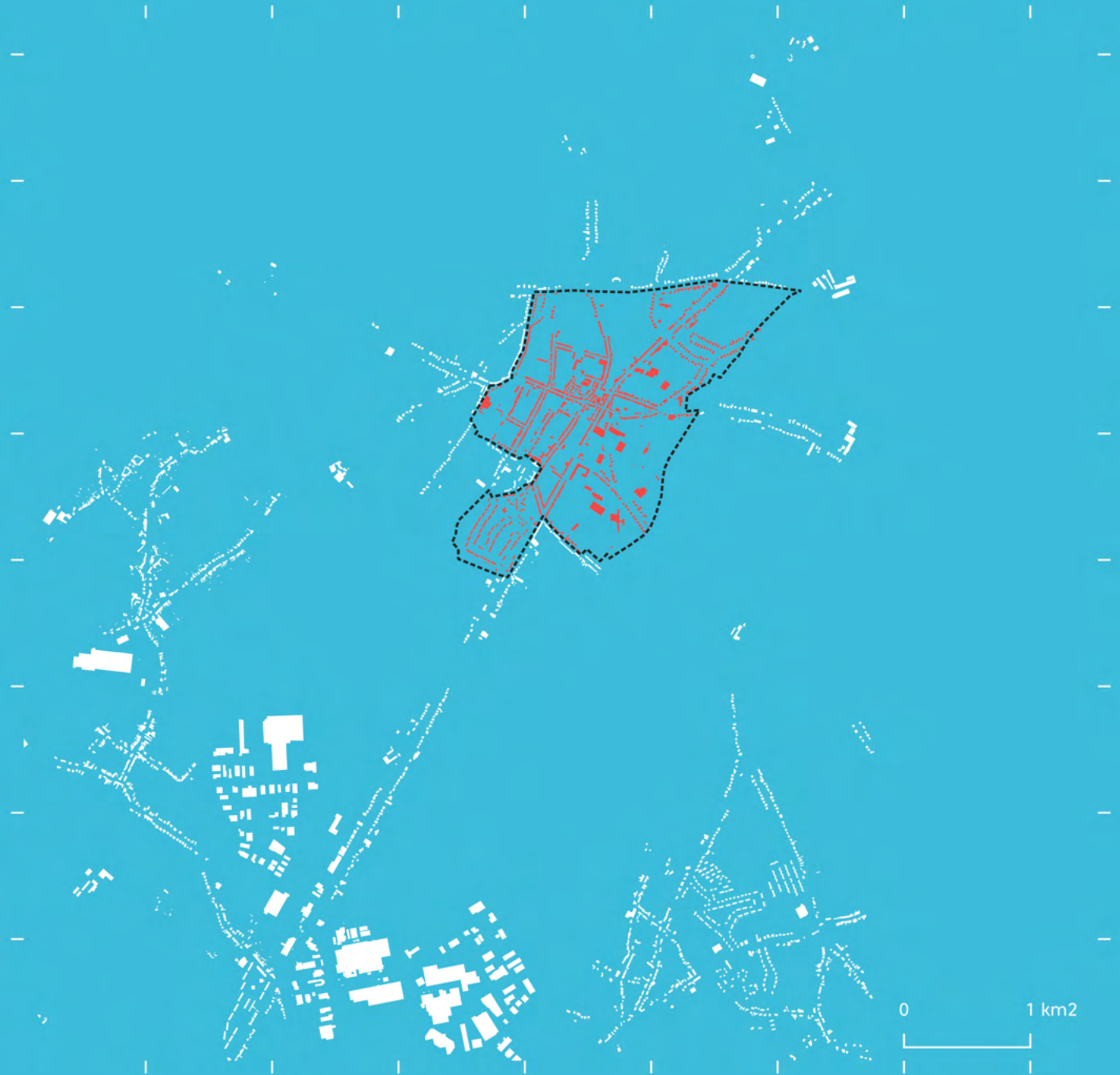
Eyes Hearts Hand event to promote the city centre.



# Fleurus

Fleurus is situated in the north of Wallonia, the southern region of Belgium, placing it in proximity to the country's geographic centre and under the metropolitan influence of Charleroi.

The College and Municipal Council of Fleurus aspire to modernise the city by enhancing communication methods, revitalising the city centre, creating community spaces through citizen collaboration, and promoting both municipal and private building renovations. Priorities include supporting local associations and education. Citizen participation is central to consultation, co-construction, and exchange.



# 1. Overview of the city

Fleurus is situated in the north of Wallonia, the southern region of Belgium, placing it in proximity to the country's geographic centre and under the metropolitan influence of Charleroi.

It is located in a primarily agricultural area, bordered by expansive urban zones. Functioning mainly as a 'bedroom community', a majority of its residents commute to work outside Fleurus. With approximately 22,293 inhabitants (19.3% are aged over 65, while 22.6% are under 20), its population has recently grown roughly 1.8% owing to urban developments.

The average income stands at €23,829 per household, falling below the national average of €34,000.



Population

**22,923**  
inhabitants

Surface

**59.28**  
Km<sup>2</sup>

Density

**385**  
inhabitants/Km<sup>2</sup>

## The limits of the city centre

The city centre comprises a main polarity (hypercentre), corresponding to a bustling hub with numerous businesses in the central territory of Fleurus; the municipality extends outwards to encompass seven small villages where commercial activity is scarce.



Surface

**1.33**

Km<sup>2</sup>

## 2. The current situation of the city centre

### Housing

While there is not a lack of housing per se, Fleurus suffers from a notable deficiency in typological diversity, particularly evident in the scarcity of varied low-density housing options and blocks of flats. A substantial number of flats are leased by owners residing outside Fleurus, contributing to this shortage.

Regarding the condition of buildings, multiple renovations of the existing building stock are underway. This includes refurbishments and, occasionally, complete demolition and subsequent reconstruction projects.

In recent years, the city centre has experienced an impoverishment (concentration of low-income residents), although there are indications of a shift as newcomers settle in. Anticipated developments in the city centre and surrounding areas (novel administrative pole) could further diversify the residential mixture.

### Public Space

There are a wide variety of public spaces in the historic centre of Fleurus, ranging from parks with playgrounds, promenades, and areas for strolling or gathering to sports facilities or community vegetable gardens, which, in general, play a vital role in promoting social interaction and community integration.

These spaces enable inhabitants from different social backgrounds to interact, contributing to the strengthening of social bonds, while ensuring the safety, cleanliness, and accessibility of these areas. Public space aims to facilitate the equal inclusion and participation of citizens – regardless of gender, age, mobility, and other characteristics.

However, the urban centre is articulated by two main axes, making the relationship with cars complex (no car-free zones). Efforts are being made to enhance the efficiency of car usage and increase the number of pedestrian areas.

### Facilities

The ratio of public facilities in Fleurus is sufficient to meet the needs of the inhabitants. The city centre is attractive for certain segments of the population (such as seniors) looking for an environment characterised by proximity and good accessibility to public facilities and services. The concentration of public facilities (public transport, railway station, municipal buildings, etc.) in the city centre also attracts people from other areas of the municipality (where the offer is non-existent).

In contrast, other profiles (families or people with higher incomes) tend to prefer the first or second ring (offer of single family houses). The balance between these different demographic profiles could be tailored to create an enhanced offer according to each group.

## Commerce

Fleurus boasts a diverse mix of businesses, ranging from small commercial establishments (like hairdressers, bakeries, cafes, florists, and opticians) to larger outlets and supermarkets, alongside specialised businesses (clinics and construction entrepreneurs). However, notable vacancies persist, particularly in historically significant shopping areas.

Efforts to revitalise the city centre seek to transform this landscape by reclaiming parts of the public space for pedestrians. This revitalisation initiative aims to significantly decrease car traffic, thereby aiming to breathe new life into these commercial zones and reduce vacancy rates.

## Leisure

The promotion of the city as a tourist destination (taking advantage of the synergies of Charleroi) is an opportunity to enhance some aspects of the city centre. The city council is actively developing a Tourism Strategic Plan (TSP) to highlight several heritage assets, with ongoing and newly planned initiatives to enhance these treasures. Today, the tourist infrastructure remains underdeveloped, marked by a deficiency in upscale hotels and a concentration primarily around the airport.

In addition, the city promotes an array of annual events spread across its city centre and beyond. These gatherings showcase diverse themes: some are aimed at bolstering commercial activity, while others celebrate unique festivities and traditions. This panorama of events adds vibrancy to the city's landscape and fosters a dynamic cultural milieu, engaging both residents and visitors in social and celebratory experiences.

## Work

The central area of Fleurus is predominantly residential; thus, there isn't a significant job market there, leading residents to commute to various areas either within Fleurus or nearby cities.

Nevertheless, there is a notable area in the heart of Fleurus that is dedicated to dining and leisure, forming a modest cluster for the local job market. Moreover, the presence of prominent supermarket chains along the central axes further contributes to the economic activity in this area.

## 3. Governance, policies and decision-making tools

### Current approach/model

The management of the urban centre of Fleurus is carried out through the figure of the Town Centre Manager, promoted by the city council. From this position, the manager is responsible for coordinating actions between the administration (through its various plans) and the different local stakeholders. Recently, a dedicated space has been created as a point of reference in the heart of the city centre to augment the strategy's visibility among inhabitants and various urban actors.

The municipality also seeks investment strategies and revitalisation of the urban centre by promoting various activities, workshops, etc.

### Integration between local and national strategies

At a national level, the Belgian Association of Town Centre Management (AMCV) is a significant entity. For 25 years, this association has been instrumental in formulating strategies aimed at the advancement and revitalisation of urban centres.

Through its focus on governance and place-making, the AMCV has been pivotal in spearheading initiatives for the development and regeneration of these vital urban spaces. While other Belgian cities have created a specific entity to manage town centres (dependent on the local administration), the model in Fleurus centres on an internal public-led approach through the Town Manager profile.

### Existing policies in the city centre

During the last mandate, the City Council administration has developed different plans for the revitalisation of the centre of Fleurus.

The most important strategy is the 'Transform Fleurus' plan, which aims to restructure the fabric of the city's heart via real estate operations and interventions in public space. It responds to the objectives identified in the Transversal Strategic Plan through a dual approach: responding to citizens' need for anchoring and points of reference by strengthening social cohesion and building a true territorial identity. Ultimately, the plan consists of developing public spaces for temporary uses (renewable street furniture and enlargement of terraces in the Horeca sector during the summer months).

As a complement, the Tourist Development Plan integrates various components of interest for the city centre: the development and enhancement of the built environment and heritage, economic and commercial promotion, and the enhancement of the social, cultural, sports, environmental, folkloric, and event sectors.

### Governance model

There is coordination among various stakeholders for the development of public policies. To achieve this, the coordination is facilitated by the Town Manager through weekly meetings with different departments in the administration to address critical issues and collaborate on long-term strategies.

### Data and indicators to measure TCM

While there is no policy for data collection and indicator analysis in the city centre, some of the city council departments collect data. Several indicators are defined but not systematically collected.

## 4. The ULG

**ULG Coordinator: Martin Megal**  
Town Centre Manager

### ULG Members

The ULG is formed by stakeholders from the private and private sectors.

Organisation	Sector
Ville de Fleurus	Public sector
MTF	Private sector
IGRETEC	Private sector
SPP-architectes	Private sector
Étude Société Notariale Ghigny & Associés	Private sector
Assit PC	Private sector
Agences immobilières David Robin	Private sector
Servimat	Private sector
Taverne Le Nil	Private sector
Pierre Blanc	Private sector
Banque ING	Private sector
Matexi	Private sector
Charleroi Metropole	Public sector
L'alternative (Maison de Jeunes)	Public sector



Local meeting with the ULG.





The local group consists of representatives from different groups of stakeholders

## 5. Learning needs and contribution to the network

### Contributions

Various thematic policies can be identified in Fleurus that can offer valuable insights for the network concerning the establishment of a sense of belonging within the local community and the creation of a public governance system through a dedicated space for the Town Centre Manager.

### Learning needs

The city council identifies the need to establish integrated action plans, along with methodologies for citizen participation. Additionally, there is a requirement for a catalogue of best practices regarding commercial revitalisation strategies, the reinterpretation of public space, and sustainable mobility.

### Synergies

This is the first time the City of Fleurus is working on an EU project related to urban development. That said, Fleurus has several twin cities in Europe (in France, Italy, and Ireland) and also has experience in international cooperation, notably with Burkina Faso.

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### Contributions

C02\_01 Creation of a dedicated space for the city centre

C02\_02 Strategy for Town Centre Management

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### Learning needs

L02\_01 Integrated Action Planning

L02\_02 Citizen participation methodologies

L02\_03 Best practices in commerce revitalisation

L02\_04 Best practices in public space

L02\_05 Best practices in mobility

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# Best Practices

## Management of environmental impacts

The development of a specialised program for major infrastructure projects is pivotal for effective project management and cohesive coordination within our city.

Over six years, more than 15 projects focused on the city centre have demanded meticulous planning to address mobility issues, noise, dust, and other inconveniences. Our integrated program not only incorporates logistical coordination but also emphasises communication with residents and businesses.

## Public-private partnerships

Implementing a public-private strategy has proven beneficial, fostering increased investments while maintaining project coherence.

For instance, the city centre hosts a rapidly growing ophthalmological clinic and recently renovated railway station alongside ongoing private developments such as housing, commercial spaces, and parking areas. A clear urban vision and strong partnerships with private entities have been crucial in facilitating these investments.

## Public space renovation and animation

Simultaneously, enhancing public spaces through renovation, street art, and mobility improvements, coupled with an upsurge in free city centre events, enriches the living environment and elevates the city's image.

Emulating successful strategies from Mons and Lille, cultural events, sports, and community gatherings (folklore, concerts, seasonal markets, and year-round events) breathe life into our city centre, fostering a vibrant and engaging atmosphere.

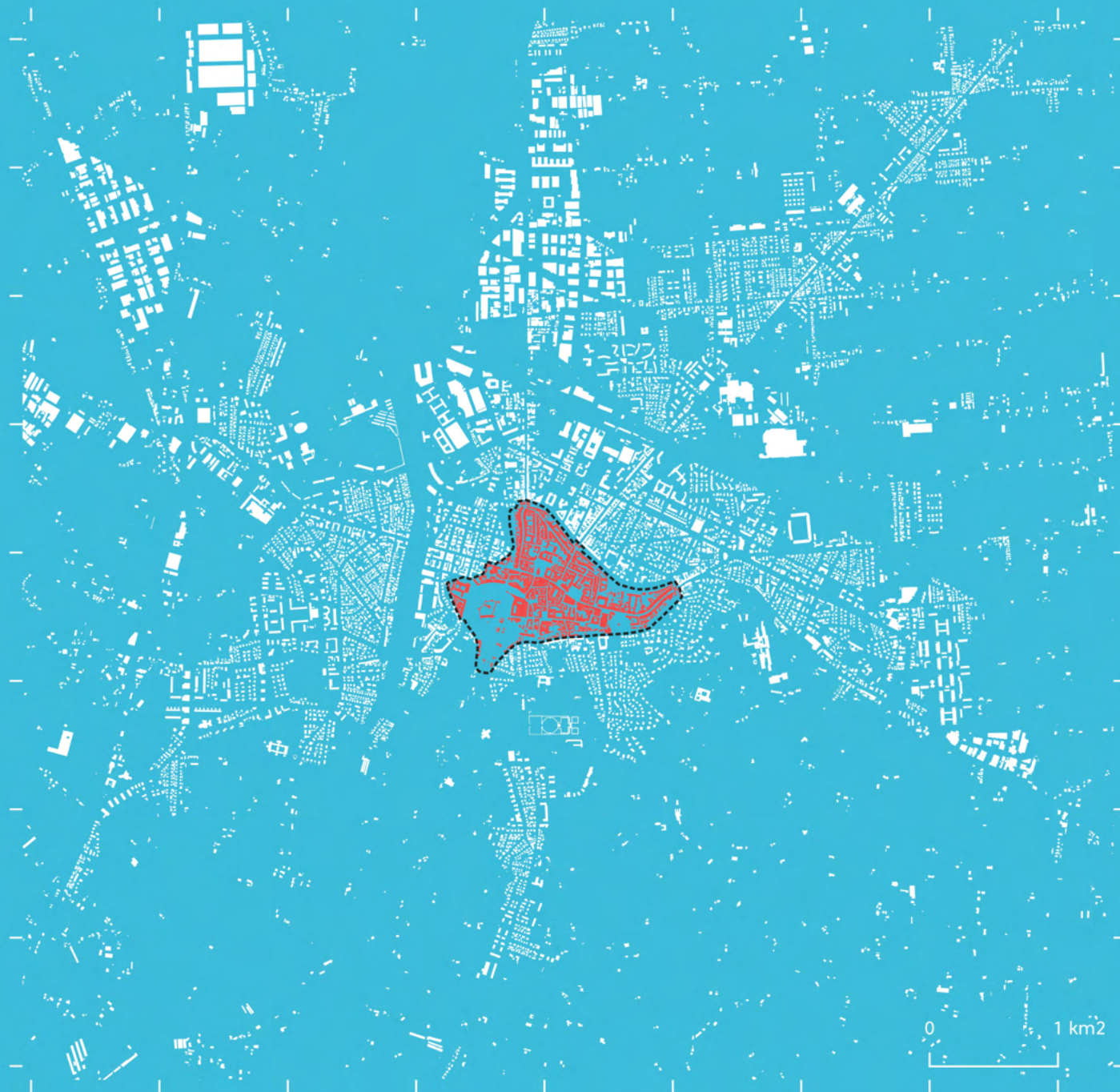
The dedicated space in the city centre acts as a reference point of the TCM scheme.



# Cesena

Cesena is located within the Emilia Romagna region, between the Apennine Mountains and the Adriatic Sea.

Cesena is situated in northern Italy within the Emilia-Romagna region, near the Adriatic coast. It has a population of about 95,660 inhabitants (31-8-2023). The city council is responsible for a broad range of services such as education, social services, cultural services, and the environment.



Italy

# 1. Overview of the city

Cesena is located within the Emilia Romagna region, between the Apennine Mountains and the Adriatic Sea. It belongs to a polycentric system of small and medium-sized towns around Bologna (as its capital), situated along the historical route of the Via Emilia and the coast at a distance of some 20-30 km from one another (e.g., Forlì, Rimini and Ravenna).

The municipality comprises the historic city centre and many hamlets over a fairly extensive territory. Until two decades ago, it had a reputation for agriculture and fruit and vegetable processing.

Cesena has a population of 95,660 inhabitants (2023). The demographic trend is largely stable with a slight increase (0.2% since 2011) and a regressive population pyramid with 32.5% of the population over 60 years old and 12% under 14.

The average income of the population is €21,853 per capita (2021), which places it below the national average (around €30,000 per capita). The labour market is focused half on services and commerce (around 40%) and half on the primary and secondary sectors (another 40% between agriculture, industry and construction).



Population

**96,541**  
inhabitants

Surface

**249.5**  
Km2

Density

**287.2**  
inhabitants/Km2

## The limits of the city centre

The city centre has a unique polarity characterised by the presence of many historical buildings and is surrounded by mediaeval walls. Its area of influence includes all the spaces within a radius of 500 metres, which shows a concentration of many leisure activities related to food, entertainment, and shopping .



Surface

**4.72**  
Km<sup>2</sup>

Population

**5,990**  
inhabitants

Density

**1,269**  
inhabitants/Km<sup>2</sup>

## 2. The current situation of the city centre

### Housing

Given its historical character, the housing within this central area could be improved, as many buildings need extensive renovation. In addition, the dwellings are not adapted to 21st-century building standards, but preservation rules make this difficult since the general aesthetics must be maintained.

Nevertheless, the city centre has an adequate housing inventory, with over 50% of residences occupied by long-term tenants, surpassing the city's average of 36%.

### Public Space

Amid the intricate fabric of streets, the main public spaces in the city centre are several squares of varying sizes. Despite their former role as shared plazas for community interaction, some of these spaces are now almost completely occupied by private activities (and the corresponding urban furniture and terraces). There are just a few spaces for children and families.

Therefore, they cannot be considered spaces for social cohesion – except for Piazza del Popolo and Viale Mazzoni because of the existing uses related to traditional open-air markets. Some central zones show a slight degradation (in particular, the area from the public gardens to Porta Santi, parts of the Valdoca and Via Chiaramonti area, and Piazza Isei).

Other areas in the town centre and its vicinity (such as the connection with the train station) are characterised by some insecurity, subject to incidents of vandalism and petty crime, partly linked to youth gangs and recent immigration.

Finally, most of the internal movements take place on foot and by bicycle, since the city centre is mainly a car-free area. The existing public car park is a point of conflict between different stakeholders, intensified by the increasing pressure of freight logistics in public space.

### Facilities

The centre of Cesena has a proportioned ratio of public facilities. In terms of educational infrastructure, while the quantity and distribution meet standards, certain buildings need refurbishment. There is no shortage of cultural and healthcare facilities.

## Commerce

The city centre has a diverse commercial offer, with approximately 10% of shops dedicated to groceries (according to the 2012 census).

Since 2016, the disappearance of historic and local commerce has been a major challenge. Following an all-time low in 2019, trade, services and construction have shown a significant recovery since the second half of 2021.

## Leisure

A concentration of economic activities primarily in the restaurant sector has led to some noise disturbances for residents in the city centre.

Additionally, the intensity of activities organised by the cultural sector and commercial entities sometimes leads to the overlapping of different events in public space. In response, the city has introduced a shared programme of events for the centre so all the different activities can be coordinated.

## Work

The economic synergies between the centre and the periphery create labour mobility.

The predominant sector among businesses in the centre of Cesena is commerce, with 43.6%, represented by food and beverage establishments. Businesses dedicated to services follow closely, with 39.1%, while the rest is divided between offices and alternative workspaces.



## 3. Governance, policies and decision-making tools

### Current approach/model

Although Cesena has experience with various governance strategies and town centre revitalisation programmes, it does not have a specific TCM scheme in place. The approach is public led, articulated mainly through public policy and planning, and it involves multiple stakeholders.

### Integration between local and national strategies

Italy has many regulations in place for revitalising historical centres and a tradition of heritage preservation. For instance, various historical districts boast UNESCO-protected monuments, underscoring the country's commitment to safeguarding cultural heritage.

At the local level, the municipality of Cesena has promoted diverse strategies for the revitalisation of the historic centre. For example, 'Cesena Rigenera' aimed to empower and regenerate spaces and communities, co-managing places and co-producing value for the city. It introduced new scenarios for associations and other stakeholders to generate relationships for the common good.

### Existing policies in the city centre

In addition to 'Cesena Rigenera', other strategies have dealt with the revitalisation or regeneration of public spaces such as 'Cesena, Avanti', 'C'è spazio' or 'Cesena, Spazio Comune'. Likewise, the city council has implemented specific policies on the revitalisation of commerce, such as 'I am Cesena'.

Moreover, various strategies have received support at the European level. On the one hand, the city is part of the Eurocities Environment Working Group. Through this engagement, the Sustainable Energy Action Plan (SECAP) and other related initiatives have been promoted. On the other hand, the KAIRÓS URBACT project offered an opportunity to work with different stakeholders on the development of a project at the train station, which included a large investment in regenerating the area.

### Governance model

The city council has a specific department (Property and Expropriation and Participation Service Office) responsible for promoting public participation and establishing relations between the 12 neighbourhoods and civic associations. There is also a political representation for each district, which includes a representative for the city centre.

In addition, the municipality of Cesena promotes cross-cutting cooperation among internal departments and different public participation initiatives, as well as the development of transdisciplinary projects.

### Decision-making tools

Despite the extensive experience in integrated action planning, the municipal administration lacks a culture of knowledge-based policies for the diagnosis, drafting, implementation, and monitoring of urban transformation either at the level of the city or the town centre. Currently, the data collection is articulated through the statistical office of the Unione dei Comuni Valle Del Savio.

## 4. The ULG

### ULG Coordinator: Anna M. Uttaro

The ULG coordinator is an external professional who is familiar with the city of Cesena and the relevant actors and main projects of the territory. She liaises weekly with the municipality’s working group (consisting of officials from the economic development sector and the European projects office) and coordinates the continuous feedback with the stakeholders.

### ULG Members

The members of the ULG have been selected from a previous cohort of stakeholders in participatory research activities focusing on the historic centre (held between late 2020 and 2021), complemented by some additional actors.

Organisation	Sector
Comune Cesena, settore ambiente	Public sector
Comune Cesena, settore governo del territorio	Public sector
Comune Cesena, settore cultura	Public sector
Comune Cesena, settore mobilità	Public sector
Comune Cesena, ufficio partecipazione	Public sector
Quartiere Centro Urbano	Civil society
University of Bologna	Academia
Chi non ha contrada non ha casa	Civil society
Confcommercio Cesena	Private sector
Confartigianato Cesena	Private sector
Consiglio ordine architetti	Private sector
Confesercenti Cesena	Private sector



The local group consists of representatives from different groups of stakeholders, based on a pre-existing forum.



The members of the ULG have been selected from a previous cohort of stakeholders in participatory research activities focusing on the historic centre

## 5. Learning needs and contribution to the network

### Contributions

In Cesena, different thematic policies can offer contributions to the network regarding the management of public space (car access restrictions and landscape guidelines for private use of streets) and the upgrading of the building stock.

The city has also generated spaces of governance and, through participatory processes, created knowledge that is accessible to the public. The city council has sound expertise at the European level (previous involvement in URBACT projects), which translates into solid knowledge of designing Integrated Actions Plans.

### Learning needs

As a necessity, the collection and analysis of data on the city centre must be improved to establish data-driven policies and to enable a better exchange of knowledge between the administration and citizens.

On the other hand, it is necessary to establish management models for the city centre that involve all the relevant stakeholders, integrating recommendations on last-mile delivery strategies as well as climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies.

### Synergies

Cesena is participating in another URBACT IV Network focused on cultural heritage as a driver for sustainable urban development and regeneration.

<https://urbact.eu/networks/kairos>

### Contributions

C04_01	Catalogue of interventions to manage the overuse of public space by private owners (terraces)
C04_02	Parking strategy in the outskirts of the city
C04_03	Events coordination strategy
C04_04	Participatory process City Centre
C04_05	Integrated Action Plan Previous URBACT
C04_06	Co-financing the renovation of facades and roofs to improve the appearance of buildings facing the main streets

### Learning needs

L04_01	Data collection and processing
L04_02	Data analysis/tools and knowledge-base policies
L04_03	Best practices in TCM models
L04_04	Best practices in last-mile delivery
L04_05	Best practices in greening strategies related to climate change

# Best Practices

## Parking Bus

Since 1998, this policy has aimed to improve the accessibility of the historic centre (declared a pedestrian zone) through the affordability of parking and public transport. It does this by strategically locating park-and-ride facilities at the city limits, as well as by coordinating the various events that take place in the city.

## Abacus

Because of the increased use of public space due to the pandemic, Cesena developed a project to manage the aesthetics, perception, and usability of the spaces, reorganising them and establishing an overall strategy.

This detailed project generates unity in diversity, establishing a catalogue of interventions at different levels for each type of space, identifying materials, colours, and finishes to organise the use of the different spaces in the city centre (squares, streets, and arcades) in perceptual, visual and practical terms.

## Renovation of the building stock

Other policies with an interesting impact include the co-financing of the renovation of façades and roofs of the city's main arteries to improve their aesthetic appearance. In addition, an integrated action plan (URBACT) was developed to implement integrated policies with programmed actions.

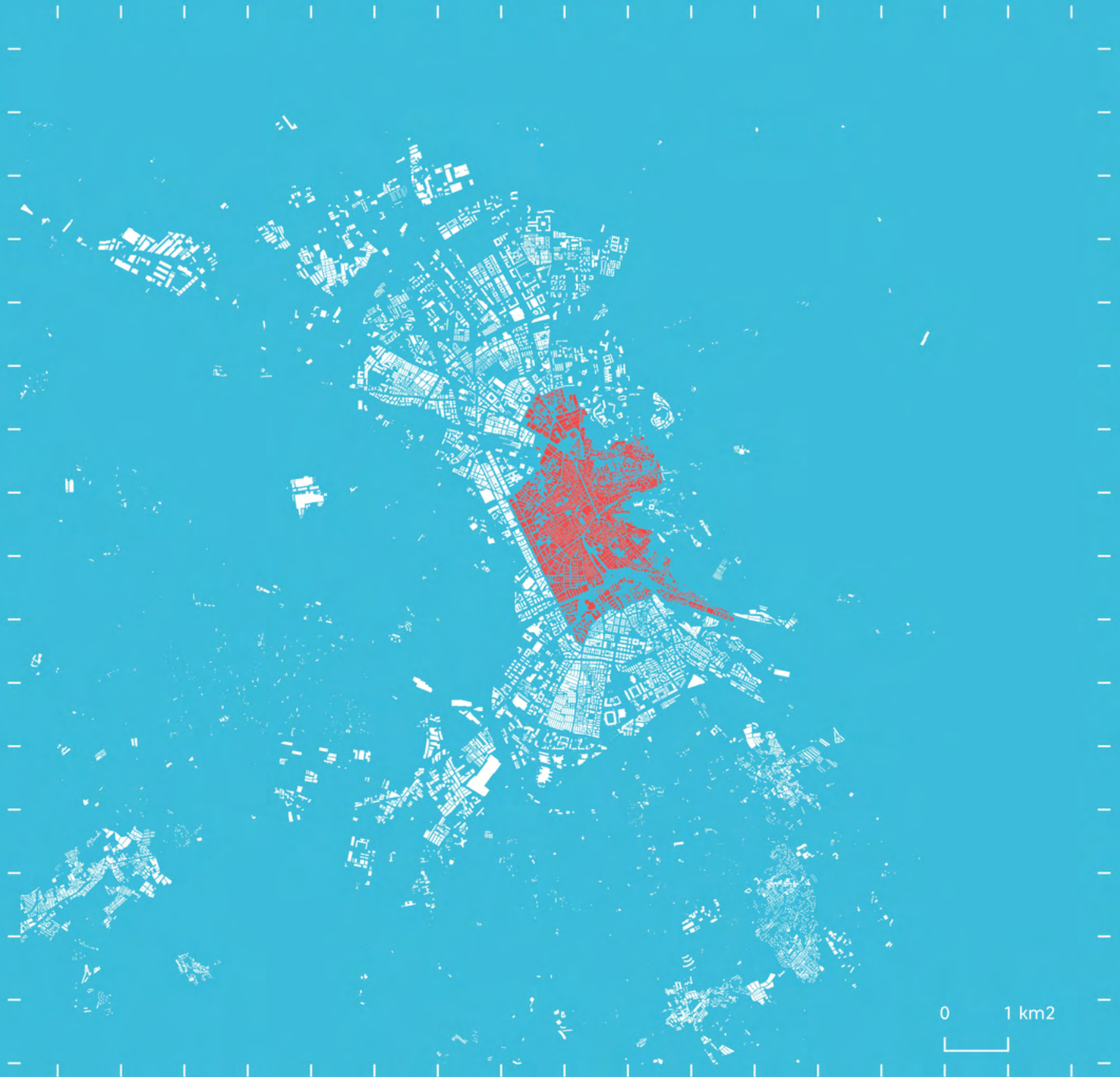
Public space renovation linked to parking facilities in central locations.



# Granada

Granada is a historic city located in southern Andalusia, at the foot of the Sierra Nevada and half an hour from the Mediterranean coast.

The Ayuntamiento de Granada (Granada City Council) is the local authority of the City of Granada, and its main figure is Mayor Marifrán Carazo (elected in June 2023). The Councillors Board is made up of 27 elected representatives, 15 of whom are part of the government team. In terms of territorial divisions, there are eight districts, which have their own representative among the government team members..



Spain

# 1. Overview of the city

Granada is a historic city located in southern Andalusia, at the foot of the Sierra Nevada and half an hour from the Mediterranean coast. The city is known for its UNESCO World Heritage sites: the Alhambra, Generalife, and Albaicín neighbourhood.

It hosts a population of 228,682 inhabitants, which has experienced a decrease over the past decade at an annual rate of 0.4%. The demographic structure exhibits a trend towards regression, with 54% of the population falling within the 35 to 75 age bracket and 18% surpassing 75 years of age.

The local economy primarily relies on the service sector, constituting 72% of the local market and serving as a pivotal point within the region. This city acts as the nucleus of a metropolitan area encompassing 34 cities and half a million residents. However, its GDP per capita stands at €21,784, which is lower than the national average in Spain.

Regarding the city centre, it represents a historic area that has retained its status as the city's focal point since the 16th century. Initially, civil and administrative power was situated uphill in the Alhambra and Albaicín, while this flat area was merely the final extension within the defensive walls. Only in the latter half of the 20th century did it begin experiencing depopulation due to an exodus towards the peripheries, partially attributed to substandard housing conditions and neglected maintenance of older buildings.



Surface

**88**

Km<sup>2</sup>

Population

**231,777**

inhabitants

Density

**2,633**

inhabitants/Km<sup>2</sup>

## The limits of the city centre

The city centre of Granada covers an area of 5.3 km<sup>2</sup>, with a functional area of 1.50 km<sup>2</sup> and a surrounding area of influence spanning 2.7 km<sup>2</sup>. The primary functional area extends from the base of the Albaicín and the Alhambra to the city's 1950s extension.

The city centre comprises three distinct poles: Alhambra, Albaicín, and Centro, aligning with different town planning sectors.



Surface

**5.3**  
Km<sup>2</sup>

Population

**20,000**  
inhabitants

Density

**3,773**  
inhabitants/Km<sup>2</sup>



## 2. The current situation of the city centre

### Housing

The tourist occupancy within the city centre, characterised by tourist apartments and hotels, has displaced residential communities from the central area towards the periphery.

This phenomenon has contributed, in part, to an escalation in housing prices, which double the prices in the rest of the city.

### Public Space

The centre of Granada exhibits a dense urban fabric in its occupation, limiting the emergence of ample public spaces, typically arising from the demolition of certain existing buildings. Consequently, the scale of public space falls short of meeting the needs of the downtown population. This inadequacy, coupled with the occupation of public spaces by outdoor dining areas, engenders functional issues within these areas.

These challenges are exacerbated along the main streets, which, due to their non-pedestrian nature, experience high vehicular traffic, compounded by the presence of narrow sidewalks.

In certain areas of the city centre, and specifically at some times during the day, there are tourist flows that overcrowd streets, making normal pedestrian mobility difficult. Some actions are in the works (already ongoing in other capitals) concerning redirecting or even restricting large tourist groups.

### Facilities

There is a lack of educational facilities in the city centre, including small and medium-scale sports centres, which are also linked to educational amenities.

These deficiencies are accentuated by the characterisation of Granada's downtown as a space primarily catering to tourism. This designation is perceived by local residents as a negative influence on the transformation of commerce and public space.

## Commerce

In the city centre, businesses are distributed as follows: 40% commerce, 40% services, and 20% offices/workspaces. While residents not involved in the service sector often commute outside the centre for work, clustering is observed in night-time activities and prominent brand commerce. Tourism dominates the economic landscape.

Regarding commercial desertification, the city centre features 15% basic necessities commerce, 65% occasional commerce, and 10% other. Although the commerce meets demand, prices are higher than in other city areas.

Despite the recovering image after the COVID crisis, recent articles have indicated a reduction in vacant shops, notably from 144 to around 64 in most commercial areas (for example, on calle Mesones, 20.3% of premises are vacant).

## Leisure

The economic activities in the city centre of Granada exhibit a concentration and specialisation, with tourism primarily centred around key landmarks such as the Cathedral, art centres, information points, and restaurants. The night-time economy is notably clustered on specific streets, particularly the area around Ángel Ganivet, where nearly all ground floors are occupied by pubs.

However, this economic clustering has led to conflicts with residents, particularly related to noise associated with the night-time economy. Additionally, occasional complaints arise regarding the noise from wheeled suitcases in groups during the night. Moreover, crowds are frequently concentrated on certain streets, especially during events.

The city actively plans events in the city centre, organised on a near monthly basis, contributing to the vibrancy and dynamics of the area.

## Work

The labour market structure in downtown Granada is divided into three main sectors: 40% dedicated to commerce, another 40% dedicated to services, and the remaining 20% allocated to offices or other workspaces.

The aforementioned tourism occupation results in many workers, particularly those not engaged in the service sector, residing outside the city centre. Consequently, there is a tourism-oriented clustering within the downtown area, as well as smaller zones specialised in nighttime entertainment.

Likewise, most of the traffic entering the city is related to work trips for the service and administrative sectors, connecting metropolitan towns and peripheral neighbourhoods with the city centre itself.

### 3. Governance, policies and decision-making tools

#### Current approach/model

The city currently approaches the revitalisation of the city centre through urban planning and other Smart City initiatives for a period of over 10 years. The local administration does not allocate resources to TCM schemes, as they do not fall within the current strategic focus. In this regard, there is an absence of a designated TCM manager or managing body within the city's organisational structure.

#### Integration between local and national strategies

While the current legal framework in Spain lacks specific programmes or policies to develop TCM schemes (which exist in other countries like France, United Kingdom, or Ireland), there is an ample spectrum of urban planning policies, including specific programs for neighbourhood revitalisation (focused on vulnerable areas), heritage conservation, or the Spanish Urban Agenda Action Plans.

In the case of Granada, the city has implemented several pivotal policies as part of its comprehensive urban development strategy. First, the EDUSI Programme has been initiated in the Boquerón quarter and Alhacaba area, focusing on sustainable urban development in these specific regions.

Second, a Smart City initiative is underway with a primary focus on the historic centre. This initiative involves the integration of advanced technologies for urban management and prioritises data collection for informed decision making. Lastly, the city has formulated a Strategic Municipal Commerce Plan spanning from 2023 to 2027. This strategic plan outlines key policies aimed at fostering sustainable economic growth and development within the municipal commerce sector.

#### Existing policies in the city centre

The current primary focus revolves around the implementation of the Low Emissions Zone project, addressing various facets such as mobility, greening, parking, logistics, and education. According to regulations, the implementation is slated for 2024, with ongoing efforts in participation and evaluation. In addition, tourism-related initiatives involve projects to monitor people flows and real-time air quality. These endeavours aim to enhance resilience and resources for both visitors and residents.

The city centre's land-use plan, governed by the Plan Especial de Protección y Reforma Interior del Área Centro [Protection and Interior Renovation Plan for the Centre Area] since 2002, aims to preserve its heritage. Its flexibility permits the conversion of listed heritage buildings into commercial spaces, impacting housing.

Residential uses are dominant (85%), along with additional commercial, office, and restaurant spaces (up to 40%), and hotels or tourist apartments (up to 100%). Challenges include managing tourist-related vehicle flows, confusion about restricted areas, and noise issues from the night-time economy, currently under study.

### Governance model

The local governance model exhibits notable experience in integrated planning, particularly through recent participation in EU programmes (URBACT II and III initiatives, including Gen-Y and URGE APNs). Collaborative efforts among local departments are evident.

The governance structure demonstrates proficiency in public participation, with a dedicated department for this purpose. Mechanisms for sharing public policies and information with citizens and stakeholders are well-established, utilising official channels, social media platforms, and the Granada Mejora app.

Experience in stakeholder activation is demonstrated through successful URBACT projects in recent years.

### Decision-making tools

The city presently lacks a structured system for monitoring or employing indicators to assess the efficacy of its city centre policies, and these policies do not currently adhere to a knowledge-based framework.

Despite the absence of a dedicated data observatory or the integration of knowledge into public policies, the city is engaged in active data collection efforts focused on the city centre. Utilising a multifaceted approach, this includes the deployment of live and artificial intelligence (AI) cameras, microphones, air quality sensors, and on-site observations.

The data collection scope encompasses critical aspects such as mobility, environmental parameters, and urban flows within the city centre.

## 4. The ULG

The local action group is composed of representatives of the public sector, representatives with private interests, representing the business sector and various associations, as well as representatives of the academic sector.

### ULG Coordinator: Ángel Luis Benito

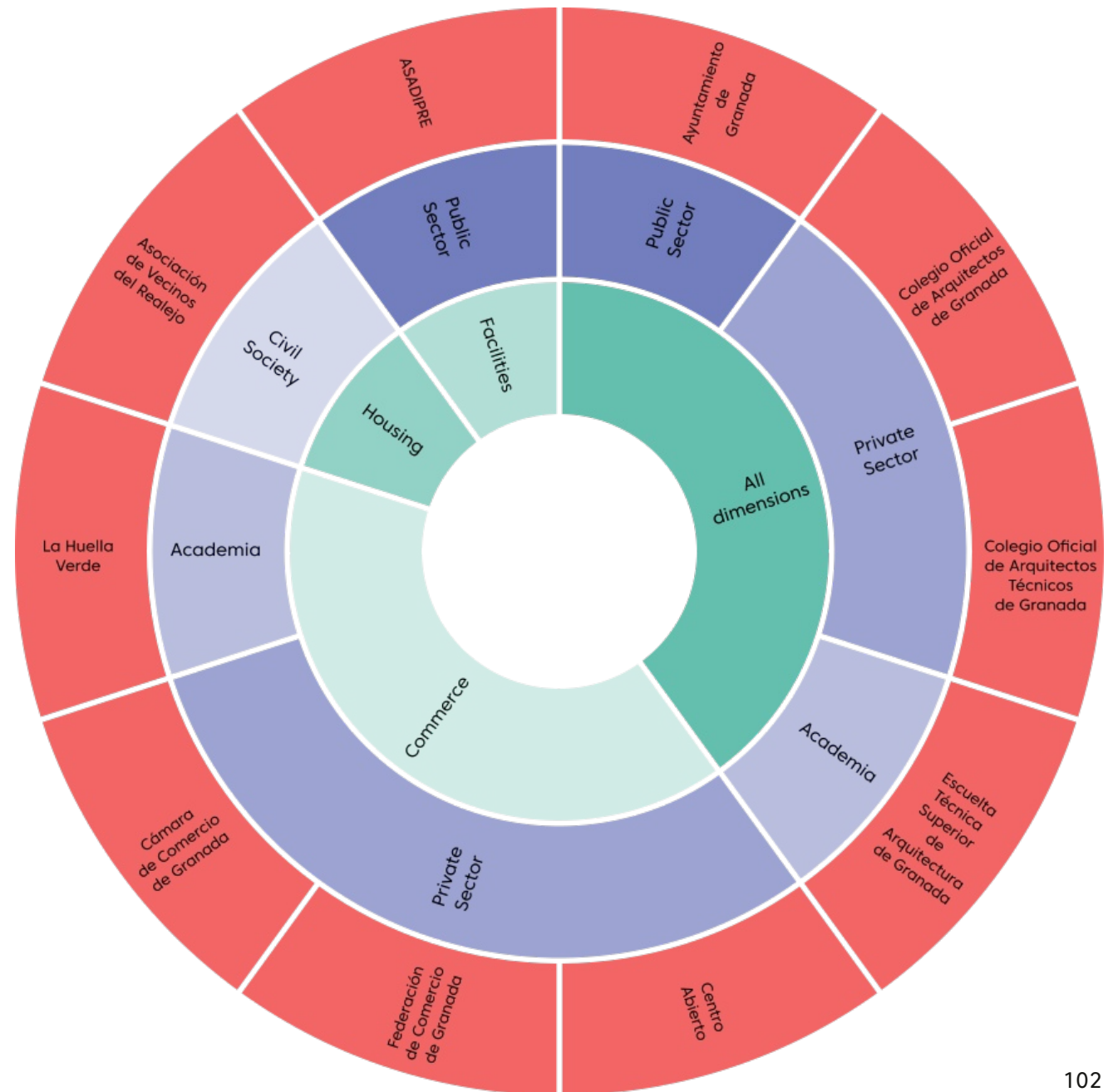
Technical Director of Sustainability, Urban Agenda, and European Funds, serving as a member of the city council.

### ULG Members

Organisation	Sector
Mobility and Sustainability Department (Granada City Council)	Public sector
Commerce and Tourism Department (Granada City Council)	Public sector
Smart City Departments (Granada City Council)	Public sector
Maintenance Department (Granada City Council)	Public sector
Centro Abierto (Commerce Association – Granada City Centre)	Private sector
Federación de Comercio de Granada (Provincial Commerce Association)	Private sector
Cámara de Comercio de Granada (Chamber of Commerce of Granada)	Private sector
Colegio Oficial de Arquitectos de Granada (Official Association of Architects)	Private sector
Colegio Oficial de Arquitectos Técnicos de Granada	Private sector
Escuela Técnica Superior de Arquitectura de Granada	Academia
La Huella Verde (Association between University and Horeca)	Academia + Private sector
Asociación de Vecinos del Realejo (City Centre Residents' Association)	Civil society
ASADIPRE (Asociación Andaluza de Director@s de Infantil, Primaria y Residencias Escolares)	Public sector



The ULG comprises representatives from various sectors.



Composition of the ULG

## 5. Learning needs and contribution to the network

### Contributions

The city of Granada can provide its expertise in various thematic policies regarding the maintenance and management of heritage quality through municipal programmes and town planning.

Additionally, the ability of the municipality to enhance infrastructure and mitigate risks by managing over-tourism using digital tools is crucial.

### Learning needs

From Granada, there is a need to establish tools for data collection and analysis, and for the implementation of knowledge-driven policies, along with protocols to define their role in public policies.

There is also a requirement for a catalogue of best practices related to last-mile delivery programmes, reducing car accessibility to the city centre and enhancing public-private collaboration to complement public strategies.

### Synergies

The city of Granada has sound experience in EU-funded projects (previous participation in URBACT networks Gen-Y and URGE, from URBACT II and III, respectively). Currently, the city is also engaged as a partner in the network LET'S GO CIRCULAR.

### Contributions

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C07_01	Municipal program for renovation of listed buildings
C07_02	Management of overtourism
C07_03	Integrated Action Plan Previous URBACT
C07_04	Citizen participation
C07_05	Town planning experience on Heritage preservation (since 1976)

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### Learning needs

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L07_01	Data collection and processing
L07_02	Data analysis and knowledge-base policies
L07_03	Best practices in last-mile delivery
L07_04	Best practices in reducing car accessibility to the city centre / metropolitan-local integration of mobility
L07_05	Best practices in management of public space overuse (terraces) and urban lanscape
L07_06	Best practices in management of public space overuse (terraces) and urban lanscape

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## Best Practices

### Municipal programme for renovation of listed buildings

The municipal programme for the renovation of listed buildings in Granada spanned the years 2000 to 2010, during which 850 homes situated in heritage buildings were renovated. With 1,200 listed heritage buildings constituting 70% of the total, the initiative aimed to address the surge in abandoned structures and population exodus during that period. The primary objective was to retain the population and preserve heritage.

The policy involved funding ranging from €5,000 to €10,000 per housing unit, with the stipulation that the units would remain residential for a minimum of 10 years. Technical requirements were established to ensure the proper restoration of all buildings. The city council invested €6.5 million, complemented by contributions from the ERDF, EIB, and regional funds.

### Smart City and data collection in the city centre

Within the framework of the Human Smart City project, the Granada City Council implemented initiatives to enhance mobility, promote heritage dissemination, and manage tourism in the historic centre. A recent pilot project tracked tourist flows in the Albaicín quarter to optimise itineraries, public transport, and civil protection facilities.

Additionally, a national pilot programme has been initiated to deploy a platform and sensor system for comprehensive data collection throughout the city over the next three years.

### Strategic Municipal Commerce Plan

In the previous year, Granada approved a Strategic Municipal Commerce Plan (2023-2027) after conducting an assessment of the current state of the commercial sector. The plan outlines four main lines of action to modernise and revitalise the sector. As of 2020, traditional commerce in Granada constitutes the primary economic activity, contributing 29% to the GDP and employing 16,000 people.

Municipal programme for renovation of listed buildings.





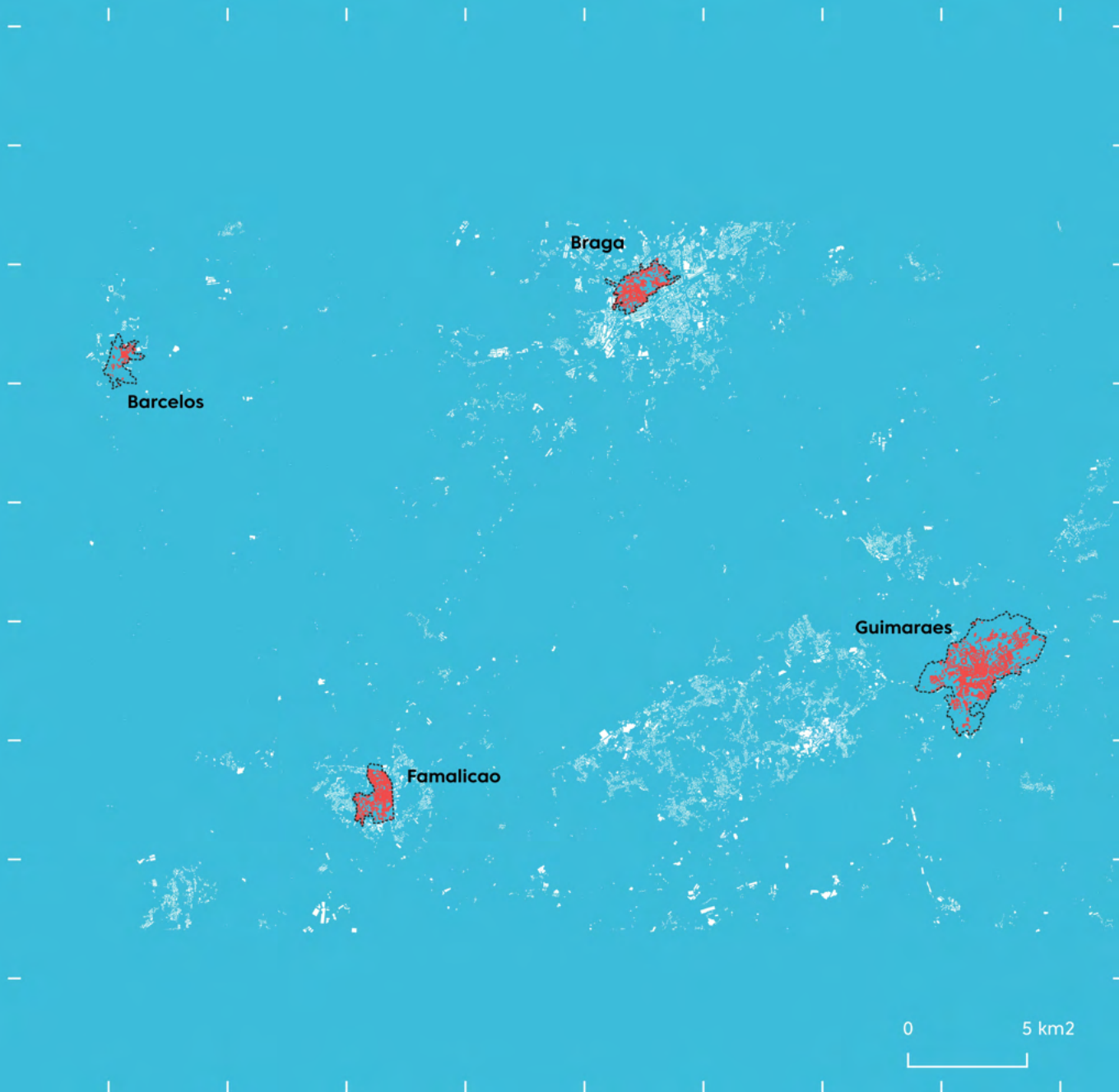
# Quadrilatero

Quadrilatero comprises four municipalities in the north of Portugal, in the Minho region. Barcelos, located next to the Cávado River.

Situated in the north of Portugal, the Quadrilatero Association aims to be 'the pole of territorial competitiveness of excellence in the northwest peninsula and a benchmark as a laboratory of urban and business innovation, resulting from the cooperation between businesses, the scientific-technological fabric, the local administration, and end users, integrated in international networks', with the clear mission of 'promoting the innovative ecosystem and the Quadrilatero brand by raising funds for cooperation projects that promote innovation, creativity, and research applied to companies and cities'.



Portugal



# 1. Overview of the city

Quadrilatero comprises four municipalities in the north of Portugal, in the Minho region. Barcelos, located next to the Cávado River, has a very strong ceramic tradition. Braga is a historic city with a renowned heritage, as is Guimarães, where the historic centre has been part of the UNESCO World Heritage List since 2001. Vila Nova de Famalicão hosts the largest companies in the country.

The urban area collectively houses approximately 600,000 residents, showcasing a population density of roughly 650 inhabitants per square kilometre. Notably, the demographic composition leans towards an ageing population, with 19.3% of inhabitants aged over 65 years, while 13.0% fall into the age bracket of 15 years or younger (PT: 23.4% over 65 and 12.9% under 15). Regarding economic indicators, the Quadrilatero cities display an average income of €14,322.12 per capita, notably lower than the national average of €23,588.

The labour market within this region is primarily centred on key industries such as textiles, manufacturing, commerce, ceramics, and tourism. These sectors represent the core segments contributing significantly to the region's economic landscape.



Surface

**1,005**

Km<sup>2</sup>

Population

**600,000**

Km<sup>2</sup>

Density

**597.5**

inhabitants/Km<sup>2</sup>

## The limits of the city centre

The cities of Barcelos, Braga, and Vila Nova de Famalicão are marked by a very great centrality, where the urban core is very clearly defined and filled with commerce, services, and varied infrastructures (hospitals, schools, courts, etc.).

The city of Guimarães has a more dispersed centrality, characterised by the presence of very dense villages. The urban centre is designated as UNESCO heritage and is also home to all types of commerce, services, and essential infrastructures.



Surface Guimaraes

**7.19**  
Km2

Surface Barcelos

**0.99**  
Km2

Surface Braga

**1.67**  
Km2

Surface Famalicao

**1.51**  
Km2

## 2. The current situation of the city centre

### Housing

The Quadrilatero region falls under the influence of Porto's demographic trends. The proximity to this large city and the high quality of life standards make the region attractive to inhabitants displaced by increasing gentrification in larger Portuguese towns.

The four cities are experiencing a generalised housing shortage (for sale and rent) that has persisted for the past decade. This situation is further exacerbated by a rise in housing prices in city centres compared to other areas, leading to the deterioration of certain buildings.

Furthermore, there is the emergence of social and ethnic ghettos within the city centre.

### Public space

Public spaces are often associated with existing facilities in city centres, including hospitals, schools, courts, shops, infrastructure for cultural and creative industries, mobility infrastructure, squares, gardens, and areas for public interaction.

While these existing spaces foster a sense of belonging within the population, they lack inclusive design and, at times, are not accessible for individuals with reduced mobility or older adults.

Additionally, despite certain pedestrian areas and the regeneration of central public spaces (former parking areas or empty plots for large events and open markets), conflicts persist between pedestrians and vehicles.

### Facilities

The ratio of public facilities in Barcelos, Braga, Guimarães, and Famalicão meets the basic needs of the population, despite the presence of railway infrastructure in some places, and other infrastructure that is missing or needs improvement.

However, the current situation may become unbalanced due to potential tourist pressure (still considered a positive vector for the development of the region), especially in Braga and Guimarães, where the main flows of visitors are concentrated.

## Commerce

In general, the region is well served in terms of trade and proximity supply, both in number and in quality and type.

There are however, several deficiencies identified and diagnosed, some in the process of being resolved, such as the deficient digitalisation of local commerce (currently being addressed through the National Program – Digital Commercial Districts) and others that, despite being diagnosed, are still pending resolution, such as the lack of entities representing local commerce in some of our cities.

## Work

In the city centre, there is primarily an abundance of services and offices, alongside a significant number of shops, typically employing workers who reside outside the city centre. Moreover, in recent years, certain cities have experienced a clusterisation in the textile sector.

In general, there are insufficient productive/work spaces in the city centre to respond to the new economic boost in the four cities. The cities of Guimarães and Braga are very active in culture investment as an attractability option. Guimarães was the European Capital of Culture in 2012, which resulted in a major urban requalification of the city centre with an investment of over €95,000,000.

The city of Braga was shortlisted for ECOC 2023 and was nominated by the Portuguese government for the Portuguese Capital of Culture 2024. In both cities, the cultural strategy has highlighted the importance of the cultural dynamisation of town centres as an economic and social development priority.

The promotion of creative industries is also increasingly more visible in the present. Social innovation in Braga, Famalicão, and Guimarães is also leading to the creation of coworking and collaborative spaces, like the Human Power Hub in Braga, the 'Laboratório da paisagem' in Guimarães, and the AuLab in Famalicão (experimental phase).

## **3. Governance, policies and decision-making tools**

### **Current approach/model**

In the case of the cities in the Quadrilatero, the approach to town centre revitalisation mixes sectoral policies with TCM schemes resulting from the Portuguese tradition of using retail urban projects to activate central districts.

### **Integration between local and national strategies**

Portugal has implemented a strategy focused on revitalising town centres by channelling investments into the retail sector. This initiative, stemming from the evolution of the PROCOM programme (later known as URBCOM or Comercio Investe), aims to facilitate the nationwide revitalisation of town centres by funding projects that foster the growth of commercial infrastructure.

### **Existing policies in the city centre**

Notably, Quadrilatero members have formulated strategic urban development plans and sustainable mobility strategies through participation in the Intelligent Cities Challenge (ICC). For example, Braga and Guimaraes have established an affiliation with Eurocities, a collaborative platform aimed at exchanging knowledge to enhance the well-being of their respective populations.

Furthermore, Guimaraes has been an active participant in initiatives such as Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities and NetZeroCities. These programmes are specifically designed to assist municipalities in surmounting the prevailing structural, institutional, and cultural obstacles, enabling them to achieve climate neutrality by the year 2030.

### **Governance model**

The TCM schemes, as generated by national strategies, share significant similarities with the concept of Open Air City Centres. These models employ shops and their strategic placement as pivotal elements in urban planning and the formulation of project proposals. Typically, they are formulated in a top-down fashion, with the Portuguese Ministry of Economy providing financial backing for initiatives involving retail planning and commercial urbanism.

The four cities in the Quadrilatero Association have developed their strategy based on this model. The role of the TCM manager is not established, although there is a councillor in the administration dedicated to managing this scheme. As an integral part of the administration, coordination primarily occurs internally by involving departments focusing strongly on urban development and economic growth.

### **Decision-making tools**

All cities are committed to the digitalisation of processes and, in all of them, responses to and interactions with citizens are conducted through digital means.

The cities of Guimarães and Famalicão already have their own Urban Management Platforms, with the creation of data observatories within their respective municipalities for carrying out measurements. The cities of Barcelos and Braga are currently in the process of contracting for the acquisition of similar platforms. These observatories measure data from the city centre through various means, such as surveys, sensor networks, and environmental stations. This comprehensive approach allows for the collection of diverse data sets to inform decision-making processes.

At the Quadrilateral level, we are currently implementing a platform that aggregates all types of data related to mobility, from traffic flows to parking. In this way, in addition to providing data from the region to the Portuguese National Access Point, we intend to take the first steps towards a regional platform, which will also have a data observatory for the shared collection, processing, and availability of data.

## 4. The ULG

ULG Coordinator: Carlos Santos

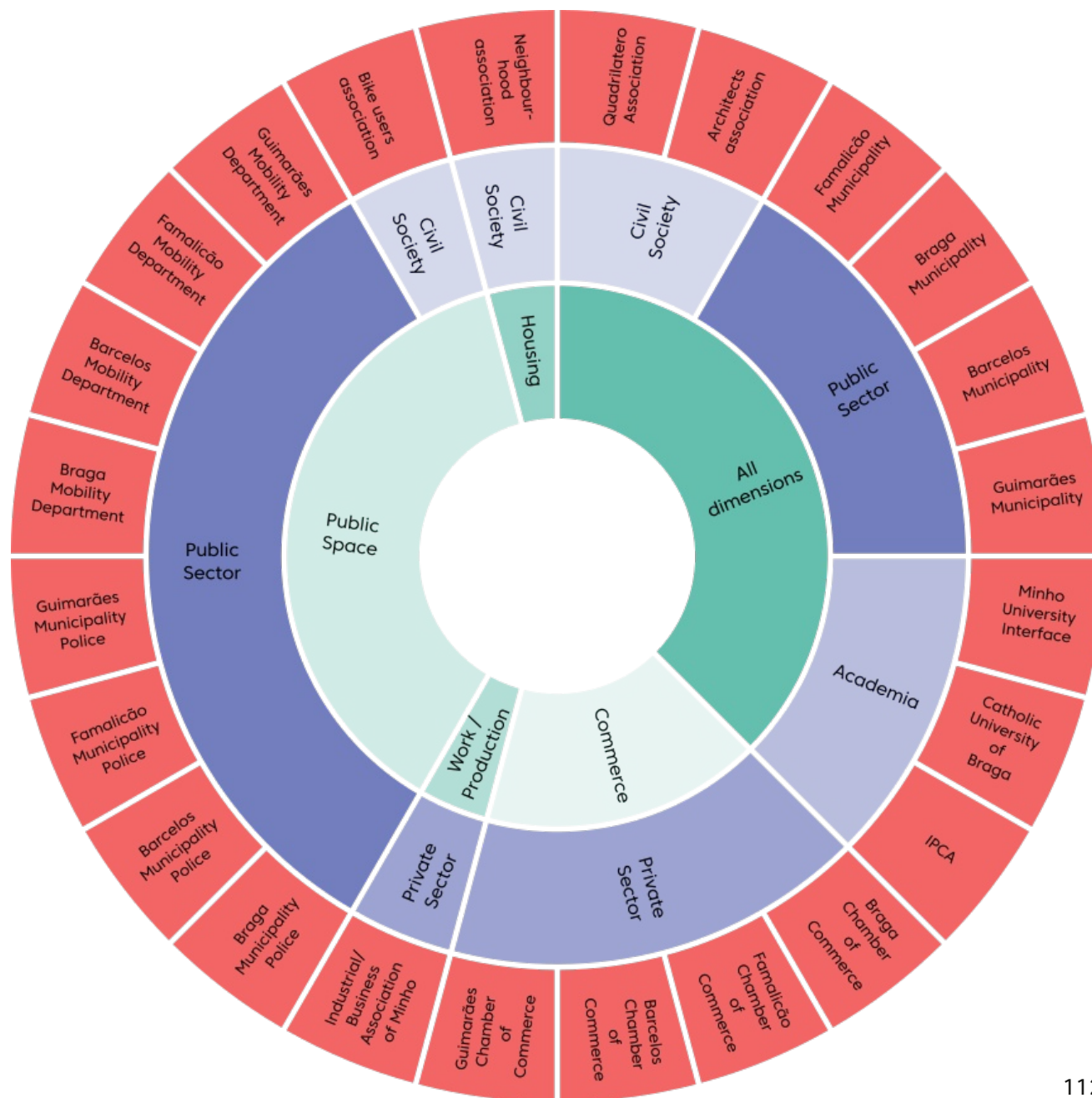
### ULG Members

The members of the ULG have been selected based on their interest in the city centre, and it comprises several members from the public sector, the private sector, local centres of excellence (knowledge), and civil society.

Organisation	Sector
Quadrilatero Association	Public sector
Chambers of Commerce (Barcelos, Braga, Guimarães and Famalicão)	Private sector
Industrial/Business Association of Minho   AEM	Private sector
Urban Management Officers (Barcelos, Braga, Guimarães and Famalicão)	Public sector
Municipal Police (Barcelos, Braga, Guimarães and Famalicão)	Public sector
Architects' association	Civil Society
Neighbourhood representatives' association	Civil Society
Minho University Interface - Algoritmi	Academia
Minho University Interface - Tecminho	Academia
Catholic University of Braga	Academia
IPCA	Academia
Bike users' association	Civil society
Mobility Departments (Barcelos, Braga, Guimarães and Famalicão)	Public sector



The ULG kick-off session in Braga. The meetings will take place in different locations, corresponding to the four cities that are part of the Quadrilatero Urbano Association.



The local group consists of representatives from different groups in the four municipalities from the Quadrilatero Urbano Association.



## 5. Learning needs and contribution to the network

### Contributions

The contributions to the network arise, on the one hand, from the participation of the Quadrilatero association and its members in previous European projects (including URBACT). The members have sound experience in Integrated Action Planning.

Regarding best practices in policy making, the members work on the urban renovation of central public spaces, the fostering of local economy circuits (market refurbishment and digitisation of commerce), and cultural strategies to promote and enhance historic city centres all offer added value for the network.

Furthermore, the high level of maturity in the deployment of data gathering and visualisation tools to create metrics and knowledge to inform public policies is relevant for the rest of the partnership.

### Learning needs

The city partner's learning needs revolve around fostering peer relations with other members of the network to inspire the Integrated Action Plan. Understanding urban models like Town City Management schemes or Business Improvement Districts and city paradigms like the 15-Minute City is pivotal.

### Synergies

Currently, the different municipalities in Quadrilatero Urbano are involved in other URBACT projects.

On the one hand, Braga is the lead partner for Cities at Dark, working to reinforce the nighttime economy and governance as a basis for growth, sustainability, and recovery and a partner in Cities for Sustainability Governance, aimed at creating locally adapted governance processes and tools by using the SDGs as a strategic vehicle.

On the other hand, Famalicão is the lead partner in the GenProcure network (developing gender-responsive public procurement processes) and a partner in the In4Green network (implementing the green transition in industrial areas/cities while remaining competitive and inclusive).

Guimarães is also a partner in BiodiverCITY (measuring urban biodiversity and related ecosystem services by exploring community-based approaches for valorisation and measurement of nature-based solutions, greening plans and pro-environmental behaviours) and LET'S GO CIRCULAR!, elaborating integrated circular economy action plans for a sound circular transition.

### Contributions

C08_01	Local market refurbishment
C08_02	Data management and visualisation tools Famalicão BSMART, Guimarães Urban Lab)
C08_03	Data observatory Famalicão
C08_04	Digital neighbourhoods
C08_05	Social innovation facility
C08_06	Braga Cultural Revival Strategy based on Braga24 and UNESCO Creative Cities
C08_07	Guimarães Cultural Revival Strategy
C08_08	Barcelos Local shops revival
C08_09	Integrated Action Plan Previous URBACT

### Learning needs

L08_01	Capacity Building and Empowerment of Actors
L08_02	Traffic Control Centres and Data analysis/tools and knowledge-based policies/decisions
L08_03	Learning on Baseplacement, 15 Minutes City and TCM
L08_04	Living Labs, Public Labs, Civic Labs and Citizenship engagement methods mobility
L08_05	Citizen participation methodologies (expand) Need for a protocol (related to participatory budget)
L08_06	Best practices in commercial diversification
L08_07	IAP (co-designed, co-constructed and comprehensive design and implementation of sustainable integrated urban action policies)

# Best Practices

## Digital Neighbourhoods

The Digital Neighbourhoods strategy, introduced in 2023 by the Portuguese government, aims to foster the digitisation of the economy at the local level. It pursues this goal through two primary avenues: first, by encouraging technological adoption among economic entities and the digital transformation of their operational frameworks, and second, by raising awareness levels and providing training for workers and entrepreneurs within the community.

## Local Housing Strategy

Launched in December 2022, the Local Housing Strategy (Estratégia Local de Habitação) focuses on addressing housing challenges at the local level. Specifically tailored to assist individuals residing in inadequate housing conditions and facing financial constraints in securing alternative accommodations, this strategy outlines targeted housing policy interventions. It involves a comprehensive analysis of the municipality's current housing landscape and delineates the necessary measures to be undertaken for the development of viable housing solutions.

## Public Renovation Initiatives

The Public Renovation Initiatives strategy has a primary aim of bolstering resilience and territorial cohesion while concurrently enhancing the competitiveness of the local productive framework. A pivotal facet of this strategy involves fostering advancements in road traffic management, strategically liberating specific urban zones from vehicles and redirecting traffic through designated corridors designed to heightened safety standards. This dual approach improves the overall traffic organisation within urban areas and contributes to creating safer, more navigable thoroughfares.

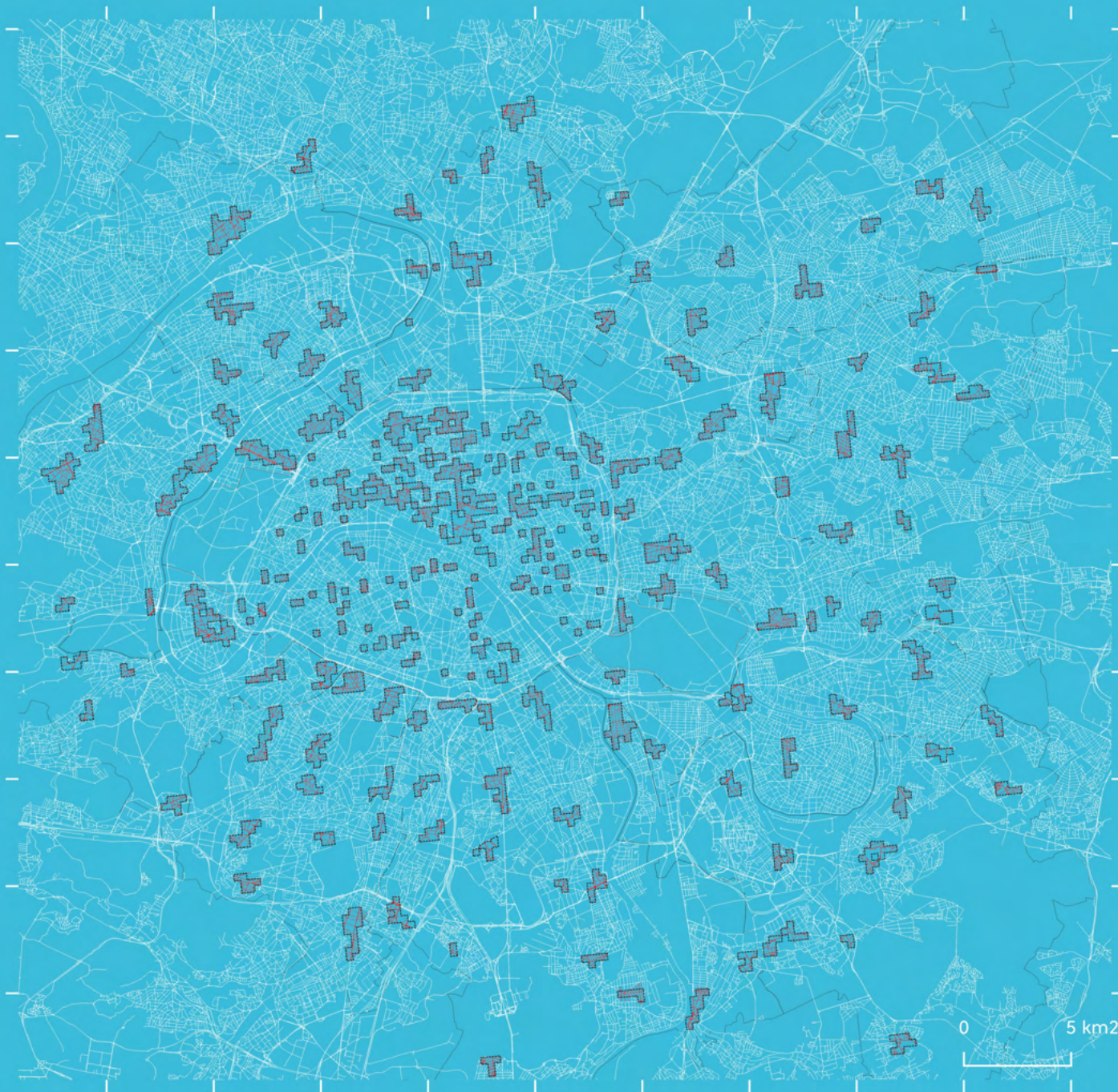
Data gathering and visualisation tools in Guimarães.



# Paris

Paris is located in the northern part of France, in the Île-de-France region. It lies at the centre of the Parisian basin and is crossed by the River Seine.

The Métropole du Grand Paris (Greater Paris Metropolis) is an intermunicipality created in 2016. By redefining the competencies of territorial collectivities and strengthening the role of metropolises, it has encouraged intermunicipal cooperation. Its three main objectives are to improve the quality of life in a very urban dense city, to reduce existing and lasting inequalities between the west and the east sides of the metropolis, and to develop a sustainable urban social and economic model.



France

# 1. Overview of the city

Paris is located in the northern part of France, in the Île-de-France region. It lies at the centre of the Parisian basin and is crossed by the River Seine. The Greater Paris Metropolis is made up of 131 cities, with a contiguous urban fabric with multiple centres and remarkable contrasts between small and large cities.

This is the densest area in all of France, with some 7 million inhabitants in an area of 814 km<sup>2</sup>. Paris is also the city that receives the most visitors in Europe. As a concentrated urban setting, the Paris region is characterised by great contrasts, and there can be various typologies of city centres, related to the urban diversity: small villages, medium-sized cities, and large cities sharing borders with Paris on the outskirts. Fragmentation can also be observed within individual cities, notably around areas with a high percentage of public housing.

The Greater Paris Metropolis is an area with a complex demographic environment, with a population pyramid that tends to be stationary, with 18% of the population under 14 years of age and 20% over 60. It is also undergoing a slight demographic growth, with an increase of 0.2% since 2014. It concentrates 25% of the National GDP and incomes vary; the area contains some of the richest municipalities in the country as well as some of the most disadvantaged.

Population

**7**

million of inhabitants

Surface

**814**

Km<sup>2</sup>

Density

**8,703**

inhabitants/Km<sup>2</sup>



## The limits of the city centre

The city of Paris is the main polarity within the Greater Paris Metropolis, providing a wealth of commerce and services. There are almost as many ground floors in Paris (60,000) as in the whole metropolitan area outside Paris (80,000). One specificity of the Metropolis is that its continuous urban fabric, along with the hubs created by public transport stations, sometimes give rise to multiple commercial polarities within each municipality's territorial limits.

While a municipality may have a historic city centre, it can be composed of several commercial hubs. Moreover, the proximity of two adjacent municipalities may result in the city centre of a given town being geographically closer to residents of the neighbouring city, freeing them from being captive to a single polarity. This encourages city centre governance to increase efforts towards maintaining an appealing local commercial offer and, more broadly, quality of life in a very dense context.



Max surface

**13.48**

Km<sup>2</sup>

Average surface

**0.29**

Km<sup>2</sup>

Min surface

**0.03**

Km<sup>2</sup>

## 2. The current situation of the city centre

### Public space

Given the number of urban centres, there is a heterogeneity of public spaces: parks, squares, commercial streets, markets, and spaces adjacent to communication hubs (train stations, etc.), which, in general, are not considered spaces for social cohesion. First, because of their association with mobility, as many of these cities have a mainly residential function, many of these spaces are purely transitional and do not form part of the social life of urban centres. In some cases, cities in the metropolitan area are pure products of urban planning, such as the villes nouvelles or new towns built during the second half of the 20th century. The slab urbanism promoted during this era has since become obsolete, leaving such communities void of an organic street life and social structure in public space.

On the other hand, these spaces are characterised by limited accessibility and the failure to generate their own identity within their surroundings (with some exceptions). These characteristics are

further accentuated as the distance from Paris increases, giving rise to cities where private cars are the primary mode of transportation, and they invade the urban centre en route towards work centres. In many of these peripheral cities and communities, not only are inhabitants farther away from Paris, but they are often also farther away from public transport in general. The map of public transport 'deserts' often correlates with a lower income bracket.

There is also a general problem of security in public spaces within urban centres, with small areas experiencing a high level of decay, especially in areas with heavy traffic, poor lighting, etc. In this regard, the inclusion and gender mainstreaming aspect could be further enhanced.

### Facilities

This is a territory with contrasts, where the western part of Paris has better coverage of facilities than the northeast, with a deficit of child care throughout the region and a lack of medical services, especially in the Seine Saint Denis Department. A tool named l'Equipomètre has been created by the Institut Paris Région (urban planning agency) to indicate the number of facilities in each city.

This deficit is due to an imbalance between the number of facilities and the large population. We also observe a disparity in cultural facilities, especially in terms of accessibility and quality in the surroundings of urban centres.

## Commerce

There is a general trend in the appearance of businesses within the town centres at the metropolitan level: proximity services tend to emerge in the wealthier parts of urban centres, while restaurants, especially fast food establishments, appear in areas with a lower average income.

Moreover, there is an existing gap between the focal points of public policies and reality. While policies aim to promote more specialised businesses (such as fine product sellers, bookshops, craftsmanship shops, etc.), there is a shortage of workforce in this domain, and these craftsmen and freelancers face difficulties in running a viable business, especially due to high real estate prices. This also contrasts with the economic reality of the population, which predominantly conducts most of its shopping in supermarkets, with affordability being a major challenge for commerce in the city centre.

Consequently, there is an estimated vacancy rate of 5 to 20% for commercial spaces, with low commercial vitality and significant difficulty for different cities to adapt their usage plans and offerings to meet the actual demand. Additionally, the trend of online shopping cannot be ignored. As shared by other regions than Paris, the shift to online retail has negatively impacted small business networks. On a more positive note, businesses are now expected to offer an added value, not only a service. It is not enough to sell a product; selling a lifestyle and becoming a social hub is now central to small business strategy.

### 3. Governance, policies and decision-making tools

#### Current approach/model

In the environment of the cities that constitute the Greater Paris Metropolis, the management of urban centres is carried out through the figure of the Town Centre Manager, whose function is to activate and coordinate the different stakeholders working in urban centres, involving municipal departments, investors, private agents, etc., according to the reality of each urban centre.

Additionally, there is co-funding from the Metropolis, which can offer initial support of €20,000 for two years for their establishment, with the potential for ongoing budgetary support from the municipalities.

#### Integration between local and national strategies

There are different strategies at the national level that promote the emergence of various TCM schemes in terms of public-private partnerships for the renewal of certain areas of the urban fabric. The first of these is Action Coeur de Ville. At the national level, medium-sized cities with populations ranging from 20,000 to 200,000 inhabitants receive a budget to devise strategies for the regeneration and preservation of city centres, along with a set of implementation guidelines.

Initiated in 2018, it was developed jointly between the administration (elected officials) and economic actors from various regions, aiming to address issues related to urban fabric degradation, commercial vitality, etc.

Given that the scope of this strategy does not encompass the Greater Paris Metropolis, the Centres-Villes Vivants [Living Downtowns] programme was created to provide knowledge and funding to Metropolis cities regarding the improvement of commercial areas and public spaces. This program has been providing expertise with key institutional partners in the commerce and artisanal sectors by providing diagnoses on city centres' health for small towns in the Metropolis, pedestrian counting, legal advice and more.

Additionally, in the urban planning domain, it provides funding for market hall renovation and construction, land and shop acquisition, technical and commercial studies, improvement of shop fronts, training on digital matters for shopkeepers, events, urban furniture, etc.

#### Existing policies in the city centre

Complementary to the Living Downtowns strategy, the MGP promotes several thematic policies that deal specifically with sustainability issues, such as the reduction of energy consumption by 50% by 2050 according to the Climate Air & Energy Plan; mobility issues, such as plans on Bike Sharing Systems and the cycling plan for the Metropolis, and the implementation of 5,000 charging stations to foster the use of electric vehicles, etc.

The MGP also has drafted plans to increase biodiversity, with funding of €80 million, and various policies aimed at enhancing urban innovation, including the urban innovation program that provides different municipalities with innovative and digital solutions and the competition 'Invent the Greater Metropolis' that promotes the development of urban and architectural projects supporting innovation and mixed-use planning.

Finally, the metropolitan authority has developed plans for territorial justice based on programming cultural events in the 130 municipalities and allowing access to these events for all residents, as well as plans to enhance the quality of the local economy.



Landmark projects include funding for the ‘Microfolies’, centres for digital culture concentrated in zones with limited access to cultural programming. The Metropolis also pilots an emerging ‘third spaces’ or tiers-lieux programme to encourage municipalities to rehabilitate abandoned or defunct land and buildings for social use, highlighting projects with local associations in the sectors of circular economy and culture.

All these plans ultimately develop the themes presented in the Territorial Coherence Scheme, which is the backbone of the Metropolis’ missions.

**Governance model**

The strategies incorporated in the Greater Paris Metropolis schemes are mostly public, in terms of their origin, management and funding, although there are participatory processes in which public consultations are conducted.

The person in charge of developing these strategies is the City Manager, who is responsible for implementing the policies and objectives at the municipal level, acting as an intermediary between the city councils and the stakeholders, etc.

The coordination method varies among different cities: while some operate independently, in others, this figure serves as a bridge between the administration and various stakeholders.

Furthermore, according to French law, a public scrutiny process is mandatory for the approval of major urban projects. This is the reason why most of the cities that make up the metropolitan area have experience in the co-construction of urban projects.

The aforementioned multilevel governance is also a reason that cities have experience working in cooperation on urban projects. In many cases, the urban planning authority realising major projects in a city will be coordinated at a higher level, such as the urban agglomeration or region.

Finally, there is also a body in the metropolis, the Development Council, made up of 48 citizens and 48 experts, who are consulted when generating any strategy that affects the Metropolis.

**Decision-making tools**

The level of maturity of decision-making tools in the Paris metropolitan area is advanced. Data collection occurs at several levels. At the first level, a national open data portal allows the information to be delimited down to certain levels of detail.

At the municipal level, the availability of open data portals is heterogeneous. Finally, at the local level, with delimitation, especially in urban centres, we find sectoral observatories focusing on commerce or the use of public space (developed by public authorities like the MGP in collaboration with other stakeholders like the Chamber of Commerce).

The combination of all these levels makes it possible to obtain, in city centres, data on commerce, public space, economic development, and housing. The data is obtained from various sources: from an internal data manager in each municipality, consulting studies, private services (real estate, commerce transactions, etc), and specific projects that obtain data through public consultation. As a last step, the data is translated into knowledge using tools that facilitate decision-making through indicators and spatial visualisation.

## 4. The ULG

**ULG Coordinator: Ronan MAHEO**

Responsible for the Living Downtowns Program and team.

### ULG Members

The ULG consists of members from the selection committee for subsidies attribution, the municipalities within the network, and new members.

Organisation	Sector
MGP Dep. Living Downtowns	Public sector
MGP Dep. Living Downtowns Olympic Games	Public sector
MGP Dep. Tourism	Public sector
MGP Development Council	Public sector
MGP Dep. Public Participation	Public sector
MGP Dep. Innovation & Digital Matters	Public sector
Institut Paris Région (Association)	Civic sector
Association Centre-Ville en Mouvement	Civic sector
APUR (Association)	Civic sector
Cap Digital (Association)	Civic sector
ANCT (Action Coeur de Ville)	Public sector
Banque des Territoires	Private sector
Municipality of Pierrefitte-sur-Seine	Public sector
Municipality of Aubervilliers	Public sector
Municipality of Le Plessis Trévisé	Public sector
Municipality of Charenton le Pont	Public sector



Local meeting with one of the municipalities that are part of the ULG.



The local group consists of representatives from different groups of stakeholders

## 5. Learning needs and contribution to the network

### Contributions

In Paris, we can find different thematic policies from which to draw contributions for the network regarding the establishment of a public governance system for the city centre through the Town Centre Management strategy. This also involves the creation of indicators and data collection to support city management and the exchange of knowledge with citizens through the Retail Observatory or revitalisation strategies for commerce using programmes such as Empty Shops and the My Traffic app.

Working with partners such as the Paris Île-de-France Chamber of Commerce, Greater Paris Metropolis has a keenly developed sense of how local commerce functions across its member cities. The Metropolis is also the principal shareholder in the Living Cities Property Company, which aims to give metropolitan cities more leverage to execute pre-emptive rights or purchase property.

### Learning needs

As a necessity, Paris requires an enhancement of its citizen participation system, as well as an update to its TCM models to monitor citizen perception regarding city centres. Additionally, there is a need for data collection and its

translation into effective policies related to a compendium of best practices, encompassing both commerce and public space.

### Synergies

The Greater Paris Metropolis joined URBACT III networks: INNOVATO'R (focused on digital innovation, fostering a community around citizen engagement, and data-driven management) and RICONNECT (aimed to integrate mobility across eight EU metropolises, applying practices in Livry-Gargan to enhance transitions around highways, rethink local commerce, connect natural spaces, and improve mobility and residential areas).

The Greater Paris Metropolis engaged in the SLOADZ project, collaborating with the EU Institute of Innovation and Technology on Smart Loading and Delivery Zones in partnership with Argenteuil. Additionally, the Digital Innovation and Data department joined AI4Cities, working with Cap Digital to use artificial intelligence to reduce cities' carbon footprints across five TGPM cities, aiding in policymaking on air quality, heating systems, and traffic management.

### Contributions

C01\_01 Strategy for Town Centre Management

C01\_02 Observatory of commerce

C01\_03 Programme for empty shops

C01\_04 Analysis of footfall

### Learning needs

L01\_01 Association Centre-Ville en Mouvement

L01\_02 Monitoring and assessment of perception

L01\_03 TCM Governance models

L01\_04 Evaluation strategies of public policies

L01\_05 Data analysis/tools and knowledge-base policies

L01\_06 Best practices in commerce

L01\_07 Best practices in public space

# Best Practices

## The observatory of commerce

In collaboration with the Chamber of Commerce, MGP has established the Commerce Observatory, vital for addressing commercial vacancies and intricate property landscapes in city centres.

This tool aids informed decision-making and public intervention, overseen by Town Centre Managers, promoting a more varied commercial landscape. With data from over 80 cities, it visualises commercial diversity, vacancies, and property ownership, offering a dynamic monitoring system with continual updates.

Additionally, it fosters a collaborative environment, encouraging active participation through personal notes, where local insights shape commerce strategies.

## Pedestrian counting

The Greater Paris Metropolis opted for My Traffic to analyse footfall in 77 city centres. First, it empowers city centre managers by providing insights into retail dynamics and aiding informed decisions to enhance commercial vitality. Second, it evaluates the impact of the Living Downtowns program, assessing the strategies' effectiveness and identifying areas for improvement, like market hall renovations and public space enhancements.

My Traffic's analytical capabilities offer dynamic visualisations of downtown traffic, including pedestrian flow heat maps. The data offers insights on five key downtown locations, studying seasonality, daily traffic averages, shopping routes, and the socio-demographic profiles of visitors. Both initiatives prioritise

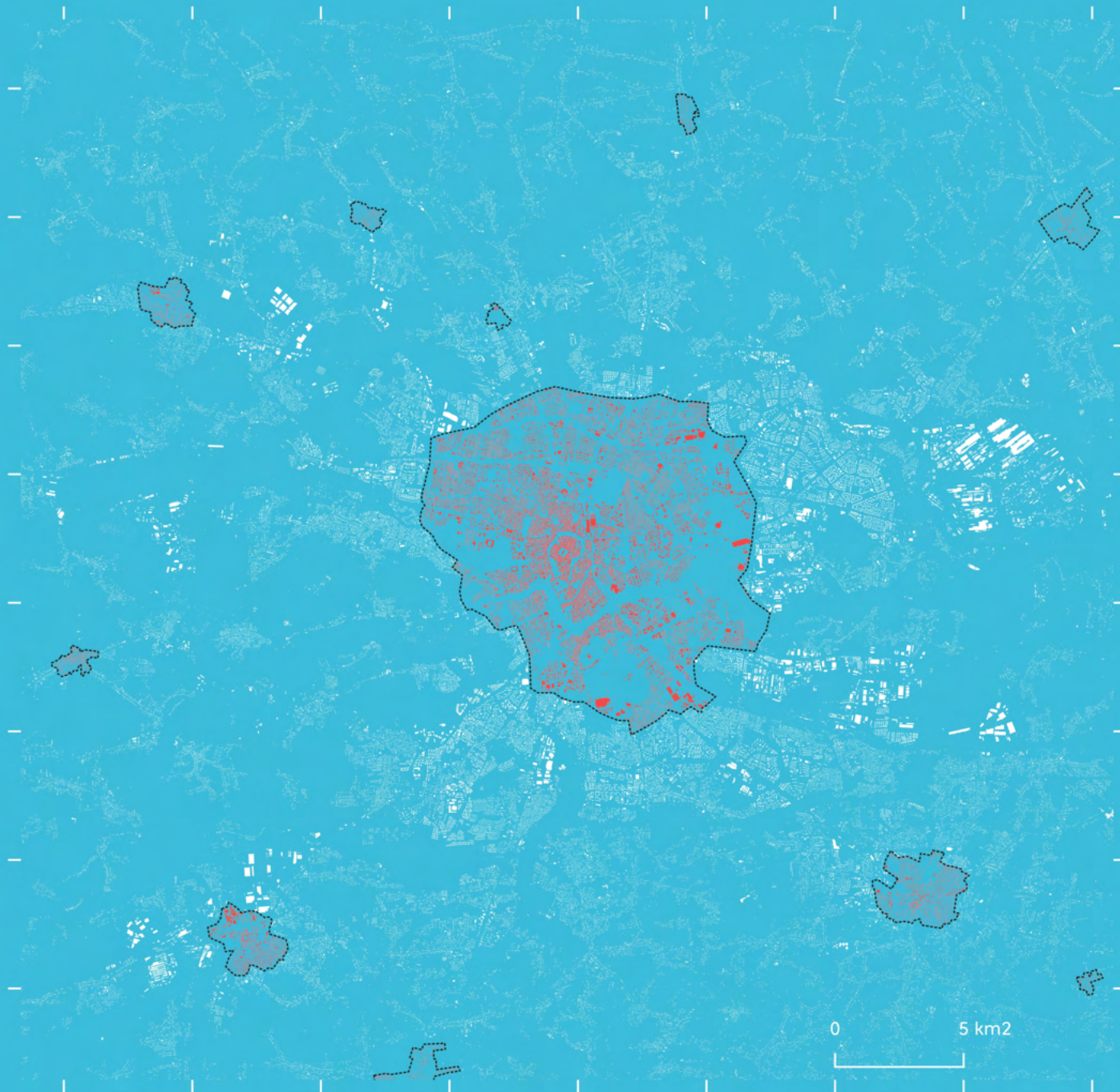
The Commerce Observatory developed by the MGP.



# Krakow metropolis

The Krakow metropolitan area, located in the southern part of Poland and traversed by the Vistula River, is the second largest and oldest urban area in Poland.

The Krakow Metropolis Association is a non-profit organisation created in 2014 that institutionalised a platform for cooperation among municipalities. It supports members with technical expertise related to sustainable development and integrated planning. The association focuses on creating supra-local strategies for cohesive development that take into account the diverse needs and challenges of the Krakow metropolitan area. Its activities include analysing issues related to ecology, infrastructure, mobility, and social matters to effectively support decision-making at the local level.



Poland

# 1. Overview of the city

The Krakow metropolitan area, located in the southern part of Poland and traversed by the Vistula River, is the second largest and oldest urban area in Poland. Krakow was once the capital of Poland and its historic centre has been designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 1978, making it an important destination for both local and national tourism.

The Krakow metropolitan area comprises 15 municipalities, with Krakow serving as the primary centre and service nucleus. Currently, this area with more than 1 million inhabitants is undergoing notable demographic growth, ranging from a 4% increase within Krakow itself to 33% in specific municipalities. Notably, the population segmentation shows a similar percentage of seniors (21.13% over 65) and young people (18.08% under 17). The metropolitan area is home to a diverse population, including both local residents and a significant number of immigrants. Krakow's universities attract students from different parts of the country and the world, contributing to the city's cultural diversity.

In terms of economic indicators, the region boasts an average income that is higher than the national average. It contributes significantly to the Polish GDP, accounting for 8.2% of the nation's total economic output. It is also a centre for education and research, with several renowned universities and academic institutions as well as knowledge industry companies (outsourcing and IT), which have helped boost the local economy.

Population

**1.1**  
million  
inhabitants

Surface

**1,277**  
Km<sup>2</sup>

Density

**883.2**  
inhabitants/Km<sup>2</sup>



## The limits of the city centre

The Krakow Metropolitan Area is characterised by multiple polarities: each city or municipality within the region has its own focal point or central district. The city of Krakow itself boasts a well-preserved Old Town with a rich cultural and architectural heritage. In contrast, the surrounding municipalities (like Niepolomice and Skawina) feature a mix of residential, commercial, and industrial fabrics, along with natural landscapes and green spaces, reflecting more contemporary urban planning models and lifestyles.

Observing the broader region, the most robust functional interconnections are notably concentrated within the central area of Krakow. However, at a local level, the cores of individual municipalities or towns also demonstrate significant connectivity, functioning as smaller yet impactful hubs within their respective areas.



Surface Krakow

**52**  
Km<sup>2</sup>

Surface Niepolomice

**1.81**  
Km<sup>2</sup>

Surface Biskupice

**0.19**  
Km<sup>2</sup>



## 2. The current situation of the city centre

### Public space

In this dichotomy of situations, Krakow's historic centre is heavily focused on tourism, which results in various issues (such as noise, overuse, etc.) that emerge in public space, leading residents to feel disconnected. Problems related to accessibility or degradation further contribute to this disconnect, particularly in some areas undergoing major transformations such as the Wesola district (a former 9-hectare hospital and university site in the middle of the city centre). Moreover, there is a lack of an inclusive and gender-related design of public spaces.

On the other hand, in other urban centres like Niepolomice, residents have maintained a sense of belonging despite the presence of the tourism sector. This area is characterised by more inclusive and accessible spaces, albeit with a higher level of insecurity.

### Facilities

While Krakow is a large city, it has a significant number of public facilities. At the same time, this high ratio is undercut by the overexploitation of tourism and the lack of easy accessibility for permanent city residents. Furthermore, while each neighbourhood has its facilities, the city centre is characterised by a concentration on the metropolitan scale and cultural facilities (museums, cinemas, etc.). The other smaller cities in the metropolitan area, in contrast, do not have all the necessary facilities for their populations. Thus, they are either interdependent or dependent with respect to Krakow.

### Commerce

While the presence of specialised tourism shops (souvenir shops, gift shops, etc.) is notable in Krakow, there is generally a balanced mix of shops catering to basic needs – as is the case for the other town centres in the metropolitan area. Some commercial areas in minor polarities are showing a decline, although significant vacant areas are not observed.

### Work

Due to the tourist specialisation of Krakow's centre, its labour market is divided between commerce and services. However, the significant influence of the business process outsourcing (BPO) sector is also notable in the city centre, which hosts a multitude of dedicated office spaces specifically tailored to accommodate these services.

Additionally, given the metropolitan nature of the area and the lack of other productive activities in the inner city, significant labour-related movements occur between districts. Workers in the downtown area associated with these economic sectors (both in Krakow and smaller cities) typically do not reside in the vicinity. This creates everyday external and internal mobility fluxes that can have a significant environmental impact (especially on the air quality).

The tourist specialisation of Krakow's centre leads to a dependency on the sector that is not present in the urban centres of other cities.

## 3. Governance, policies and decision-making tools

### Current approach/model

The approach in the Krakow metropolitan area is primarily managed by public entities, employing stakeholder collaboration strategies and urban planning.

While there may not be specific TCM schemes or dedicated TCM managerial roles within the cities in the metropolitan area, several spatial policies are tailored to address specific challenges encountered by city centres (e.g., the Sustainable Tourism Strategy 2021-2028 for the city of Krakow).

### Integration between local and national strategies

Although there are no specific strategies for the creation of TCM schemes in Poland, there is the National Urban Policy. Among other aspects, it highlights the need to regenerate and intensify urban fabrics, especially town centres.

### Existing policies in the city centre

Several policies in the Krakow metropolitan area include actions in city centres. On the one hand, the Krakow Metropolitan Area 2030 Strategy has created a working methodology that has enabled cities of different sizes and contexts to partner together to support the creation and implementation of sustainable urban policies.

This includes a focus on city centres, which has resulted in a range of public interventions such as creating local but shared management tools, improving air quality and enhancing the energy transition, planning mobility solutions, and improving refugee absorption capacity.

In addition, the majority of municipalities in the metropolitan area have their own development strategy, some of which include a focus on inner-city development.

### Governance model

Although the region lacks specific representatives for the different city centres, the Krakow Metropolis Association is in essence a governance mechanism for the different administrations that co-manage the overall development.

At the general level, the association uses a system in which there must be consensus between the different administrations when making decisions. At the local level, several departments deal with the issues affecting urban centres (enterprise, tourism, urban planning, heritage conservation, etc.).

There has been prior experience in some municipalities of cross-cutting collaboration in the development of investment plans or the resolution of different problems.

On the other hand, the Krakow Metropolis Association has extensive experience in public participation, gained from investment planning and socio-economic development strategies involving public consultations and citizen participation.

In addition, when it comes to sharing public policies and the results of planning processes, the association has effective communication channels.

Regarding the activation of different stakeholders, each city has its own independent experience. For example, Niepołomice has involved citizens of all ages, as well as international companies, in the design of its main public spaces.

### **Data and indicators to measure TCM**

There are no specific decision-making tools to analyse, plan, and monitor the city centre. However, as far as data collection is concerned, there are specific bodies (such as the Krakow City Information Technology Service Centre) responsible for gathering both objective and subjective data and indicators (through surveys).

To this end, the Metropolitan Association carries out annual monitoring of a series of indicators. An annual report assessing the state of the Kraków metropolitan area is consistently compiled, primarily relying on comprehensive statistical data. This report encompasses a wide array of indicators, including but not limited to demographic profiles, financial metrics, substantive aspects concerning environmental conservation, mobility, social welfare, and other pertinent factors.

In addition, the Krakow Barometer is developed biannually to include citizens' opinions and needs in the discussion about the city, which serves to support the decision-making of the different public administrations.

## 4. The ULG

**ULG Coordinator: Julita Ewert-Stawowy**  
Deputy Director of the KMA office

### ULG Members

The local group consists of representatives from different groups of stakeholders, based on a pre-existing forum that includes deputy mayors of municipalities in the KMA or heads of strategy or investment divisions. The initial core group consists of representatives from the Krakow Metropolitan Association and representatives from the municipalities of Niepołomice and Skawina. The core group acts as a leader of the multilevel ULG configuration, which also includes representatives of local public administration, residents, local urbanists and spatial planning experts, local culture and education sector representatives, entrepreneurs, mobility experts and authorities, and local NGOs.

Organisation	Sector
Krakow Metropolitan Development Forum	Public sector
Krakow Metropolitan Association	Public sector
Municipality of Niepołomice	Public sector
Municipality of Skawina	Public sector
Local public administration	Public sector
Residents	Civic sector
Local NGO's	Public sector
Urbanist and spatial planning experts	Private sector
Culture sector	Private sector
Greenery management	Public sector
Public transport authority	Public sector



The local group consists of representatives from different groups of stakeholders, based on a pre-existing forum.



Includes deputy major of municipalities in the KMA or heads of strategy or investment divisions.

## 5. Learning needs and contribution to the network

### Contributions

The Krakow Metropolis Association contributes different thematic policies for the network with the aim of establishing a mixed governance system in the city centre, while connecting previously isolated municipal departments and supporting their ability to engage in cross-departmental coordination.

A further contribution would be the implementation of integrated policies through programmed actions.

Finally, the KMA association can provide expertise in cooperation at the European level, arising from its participation in the Regional Operational Program 2021-2027 – Integrated Territorial Investments, URBACT, Horizon2020, LIFE.

### Learning needs

A notable requirement among the needs of the Krakow metropolitan area is to enhance its capacity to collect and analyse data, improving its data collection tools, to make it possible to formulate policies that respond to urban data.

Other needs include the creation of reference catalogues regarding the management of over-tourism, as well as best practices related to the transition toward a sustainable mobility model.

### Contributions

C03\_01 Participatory process Wesola

C03\_02 Intermunicipal cooperation

C03\_03 Drafting of the IAP of Krakow metropolis

C03\_04 Smart City Data Management in Krakow

### Learning needs

L03\_01 Data collection and processing

L03\_02 Data analysis/tools and knowledge-base policies

L03\_03 Best practices in overtourism management

L03\_04 Best practices in transition of mobility model

# Best Practices

## Krakow Metropolitan Area 2030 Strategy

The first strategy, the Krakow Metropolitan Area 2030 Strategy, developed by the Krakow Metropolis Association team, serves as an exemplar of a participatory process. It involves the application of various tools such as workshops, interviews, surveys, etc., ensuring the inclusion of the entire metropolis. This strategy proposes seven primary objectives, specific goals, lines of action, and action plans. These action plans serve as the implementation tool for the overarching strategy and entail a detailed list of specific projects, indicating their schedule, financial plan, and performance indicators.

Very closely linked to this process are the tools developed by the Krakow Metropolis Association for inter-municipal cooperation, including specific teams, thematic forums, an online knowledge exchange platform, etc.

## Development Strategy of Niepołomice

On one hand, the Development Strategy of Niepołomice Municipality for 2024-2035 focuses specifically on creating a resident-friendly municipality, irrespective of age. Among other objectives, it aims to establish a comprehensive list of the most crucial distinguishing features and principles to guide the municipality's future development.

To achieve this, an extensive participatory process was organised, incorporating various interactive methods that promoted co-determination and inclusion, towards building the future envisioned for the municipality.

## Smart City Data (Krakow)

In this context, it is worth highlighting the Smart City Data Management in Krakow, which focuses on three major directions: data transfer; data processing and analytics; and simulations and real-time data processing (digital twin).

This initiative involved establishing an IT Service Centre organised by a team of analysts working with data in specific domains. It is important to mention that while this team originates from the city of Krakow, it maintains constant collaboration with the Krakow metropolitan area.



The 2030 Strategy serves as an exemplar of a participatory process.

## 3. Methodology

This section synthesises the Cities@Heart network methodology and details the proposed activities during the two years and a half of the URBACT programme (January 2024-December 2025).

Based on the analysis of the major drivers of the revitalisation of city centres, it includes the capacity-building activities and work plan and the potential dissemination and capitalisation of learnings.



## 3. Methodology of learning and exchange

### 3.1 Introduction

The partnership of Cities@Heart is based on the shared ambition of facilitating decision-making and locally integrated urban policies for the revitalisation of town centres, which respond to the demands of the territory and the needs of its inhabitants. The exchange and application of diverse and complementary skills and best practices among the network aims to provide a comprehensive framework for governance involving multiple levels and stakeholders, supported by co-created management schemes, transversal policies and decision-making tools.

There is a need for transnational cooperation to bring these various competencies together to create and implement robust tools to support the transformative capacity of cities through more inclusive, gender-aware, and environmentally conscious urban policies, while bringing the EU closer to citizens and governing bodies.

The partnership gathers expertise across various domains from town centre management with different governance levels to innovative approaches to economic development, marketing, environmental sustainability, heritage preservation, etc. This collective expertise extends to knowledge-based urban policies, monitoring mechanisms, and public engagement strategies.

Transnational collaboration will nourish each participant's knowledge and disseminate it among other urban actors outside the network. The aggregation of lessons will facilitate the development of effective methodologies and easily transferable implementation processes across Europe.

## 3.2 Synthesis of the Partnership Challenges

### 3.2.1 Dynamics of change

#### Socio-economic and demographic dynamics

The dynamics of demographics and socio-economic factors significantly shape the challenges faced by the diverse partners comprising the Cities@Heart network.

The partnership is heterogeneous, including small cities with populations ranging from 20,000 to 100,000 inhabitants (such as Sligo, Fleurus, Celje, Cesena, Osijek, Lamia), medium-sized cities with populations ranging from 200,000 to 600,000 (Granada, Quadrilatero), and large metropolises like Krakow and Paris (with cities having populations exceeding 1 million and 7 million inhabitants, respectively)

In terms of land area, the urban areas vary from 10 km<sup>2</sup> in Sligo to 1,005 km<sup>2</sup> in the Quadrilatero region. Urban centres range from the 0.13 km<sup>2</sup> of Lamia to the 326 km<sup>2</sup> of Krakow.

Despite the differences in population and surface area, cities with highly diverse populations often share similar population dynamics.

We can divide the partnership into **two major**

**groups: urban centres experiencing population growth** at varying rates (Krakow, Fleurus, Cesena, Sligo) and those witnessing **population decline** (Granada, Celje, Lamia).

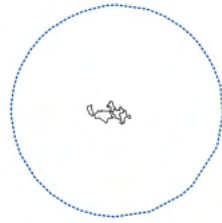
In many cases, there is a shared dynamic between the urban centre and its metropolitan area. This can result in the phenomenon of urban sprawl, which has been particularly noticeable since the 1970s when historic centres across Europe began experiencing a widespread decline. The loss of inhabitants towards the periphery is a contributing factor to this phenomenon.

In terms of socio-economic levels, many participating cities exceed the national average income of their respective countries, despite significant variations due to the partnership comprising regions with distinct levels of territorial development. Examples include Paris and Krakow.

**Lamia**  
0.13 km<sup>2</sup>



**Sligo**  
0.16 km<sup>2</sup>



**Celje**  
0.56 km<sup>2</sup>



**Osijek**  
0.88 km<sup>2</sup>



**Fleurus**  
1.33 km<sup>2</sup>



**Cesena**  
4.72 km<sup>2</sup>



**Granada**  
5.3 km<sup>2</sup>



**Quadrilatero**  
11.36 km<sup>2</sup>



**Paris**  
55.38 km<sup>2</sup>



**Krakow metropolis**  
326.8 km<sup>2</sup>



Figure above: The administrative boundaries of each partner and the boundaries of their urban centres influence

Lamia

Sligo

Celje

Osijek

Fleurus



Top image: 2020 population. Middle image: urbanised land cover 2020. Bottom image: population change between 1975 and 2020 (in blue decrease and in red growth). Based on data from the Global Human Settlement Layer (European Union).

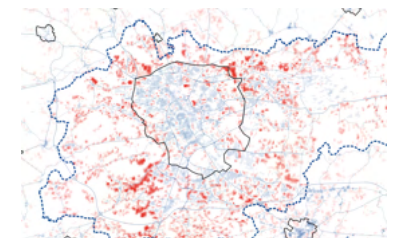
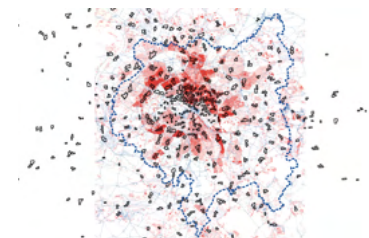
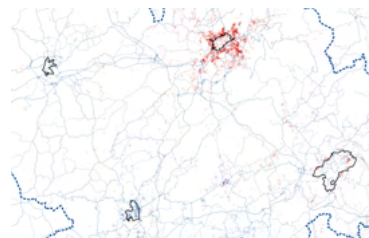
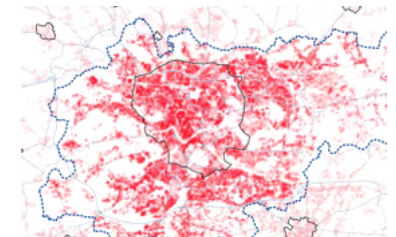
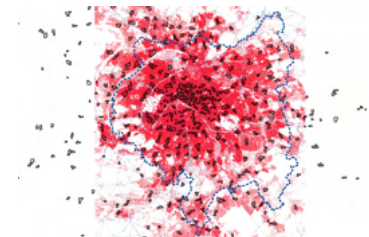
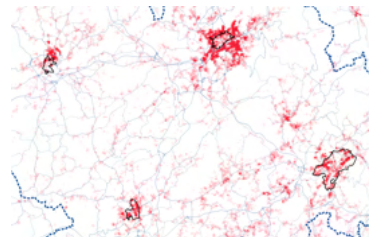
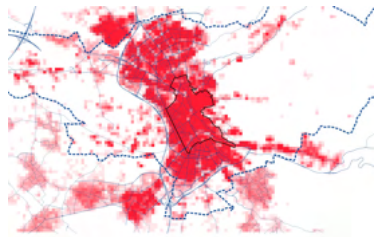
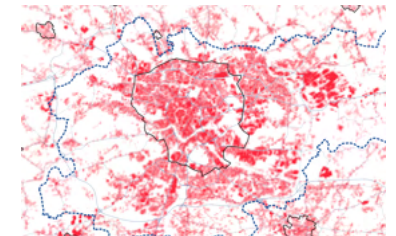
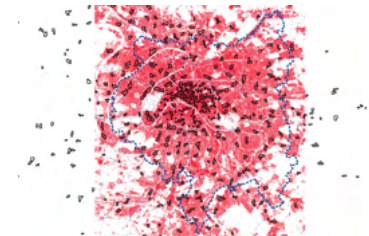
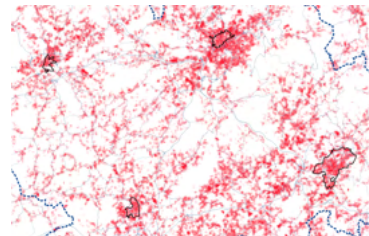
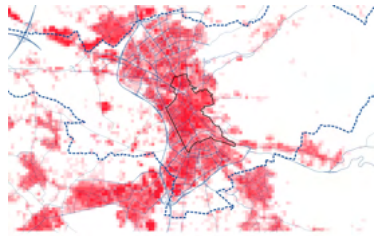
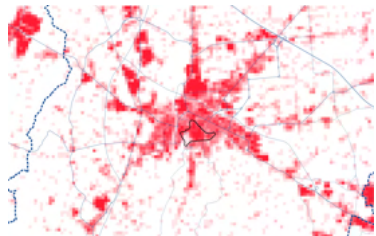
Cesena

Granada

Quadrilatero

Paris

Krakow



Top image: 2020 population. Middle image: urbanised land cover 2020. Bottom image: population change between 1975 and 2020 (in blue decrease and in red growth). Based on data from the Global Human Settlement Layer (European Union).

### Climate dynamics

Another important aspect of the strategies to be deployed for the revitalisation of city centres is determined by the climatic region in which each city is situated and the projected climate scenarios.

Hence, there are cities within the network that will experience more severe climatic conditions in the near future, either due to heat (Granada, Lamia, Cesena) or increased precipitation (Sligo, Paris, Krakow, etc.). In such cases, it is necessary to expedite policies for mitigating and adapting to climate change, which can significantly affect the maintenance and improvement of urban life quality.

However, adapting the built environment to net-zero emissions standards, as well as other climate mitigation and adaptation actions – such as green infrastructure, public spaces, and the introduction of new modes of mobility – may pose a challenge in urban centres with a strong historical and heritage dimension, such as Paris, Cesena, Krakow, Celje, Quadrilatero, and Granada.

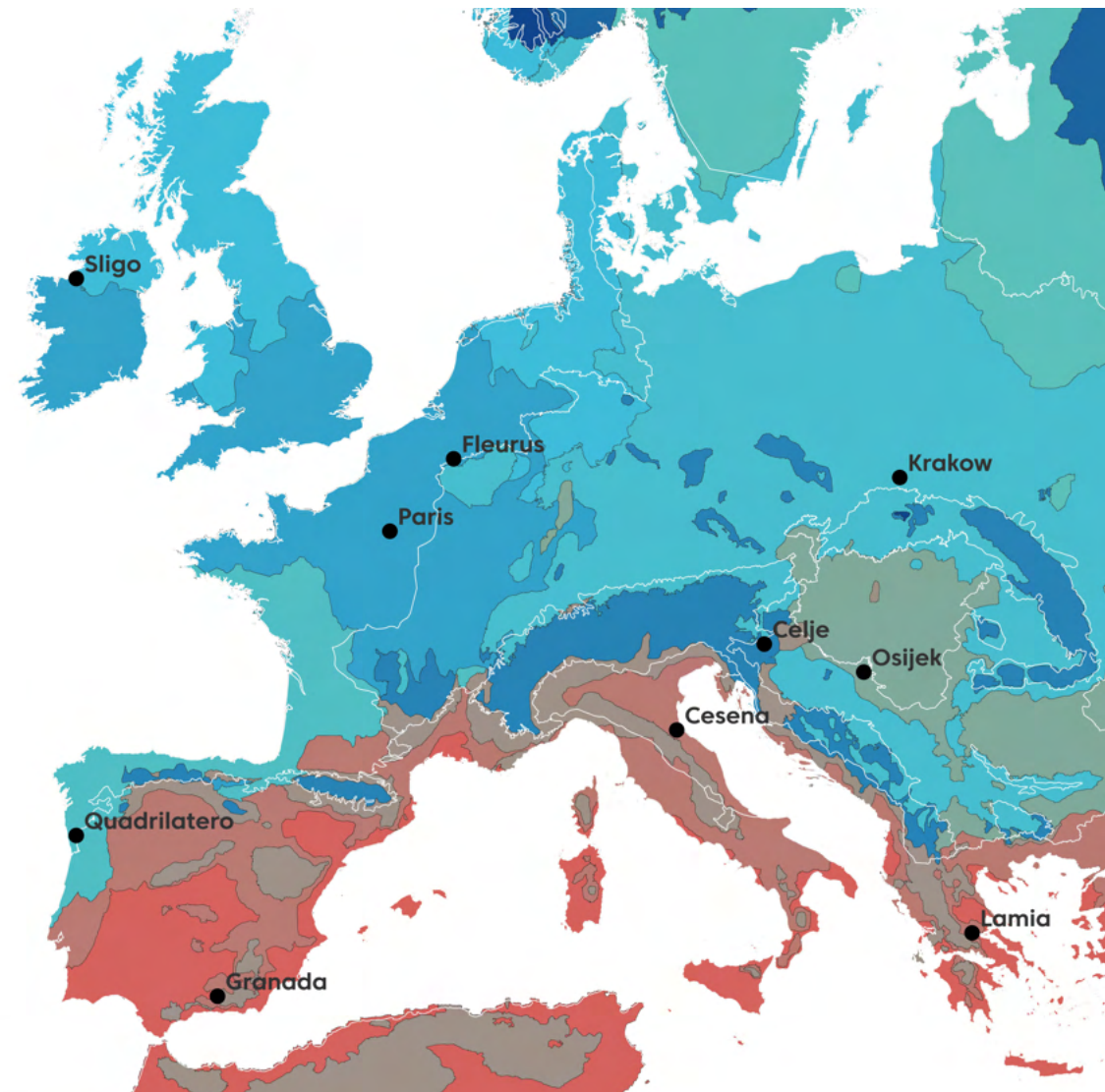


Image: Environmental Zones in Europe. Based on data from Metzger, Marc J. (2018). The Environmental Stratification of Europe, [dataset]. University of Edinburgh.

### Integrated public policies

In terms of the integrated dimension of public policies, there is heterogeneity within the partnership. Several cities in the network are revitalising their urban centres through sectoral public policies, such as heritage, commerce, and public space. These policies involve collaboration between various departments or supra-local governance levels. Cities such as Granada, Krakow, and Quadrilatero are notable for their previous experience in developing Action Plans at the local level, resulting from their participation in previous URBACT networks and European or international projects.

Other partners, such as Fleurus and Lamia, lack prior experience in developing Integrated Action Plans and express the need to incorporate a comprehensive approach to planning and actions to be taken in the urban centre.

Overall, across all partners, **there is a need to increase collaboration between different levels of governance, deconstructing the established and often rigid framework in order to better integrate innovative policies.**

### Governance

Different approaches exist regarding governance strategies within the network. On the one hand, some urban actors direct the revitalisation of the urban centre through urban planning and complementary public policies (see section above). On the other hand, several partners have implemented Town Centre Management (TCM) schemes, which are led by public entities (such as the Greater Paris Metropolis and the city councils of Fleurus and Celje) or through public-private partnerships (Sligo BID).

These strategies are based on national policies, with some exceptions such as Celje or Fleurus, where the TCM approach is promoted by local entities. The management formulas employed may vary, ranging from the figure of a Town Centre Manager (either an individual or a dedicated team) to the existence of public entities with the capacity for interdepartmental coordination.

In the field of citizen participation, there is a varying level of maturity within the network. Partners such as Granada, Krakow, and Cesena have extensive experience in creating spaces for the active involvement of local agents, partly due to their participation in earlier editions of URBACT and previous experiences with local stakeholder groups. Other urban actors within the network, such as Lamia or Sligo, aim to expand their skill level in this area.

In this regard, **the composition of the URBACT Local Groups mirrors the different models in place.** In some cases, the ULG arises from previous participation forums (at the local or European level), while other partners have created it specifically for the project. The proportion of representatives from public and private sectors, academia and civil society differ in each of the cities. In any case, **several ULGs bring together more ‘unusual suspects’ for the purpose of working in a more transversal manner.**

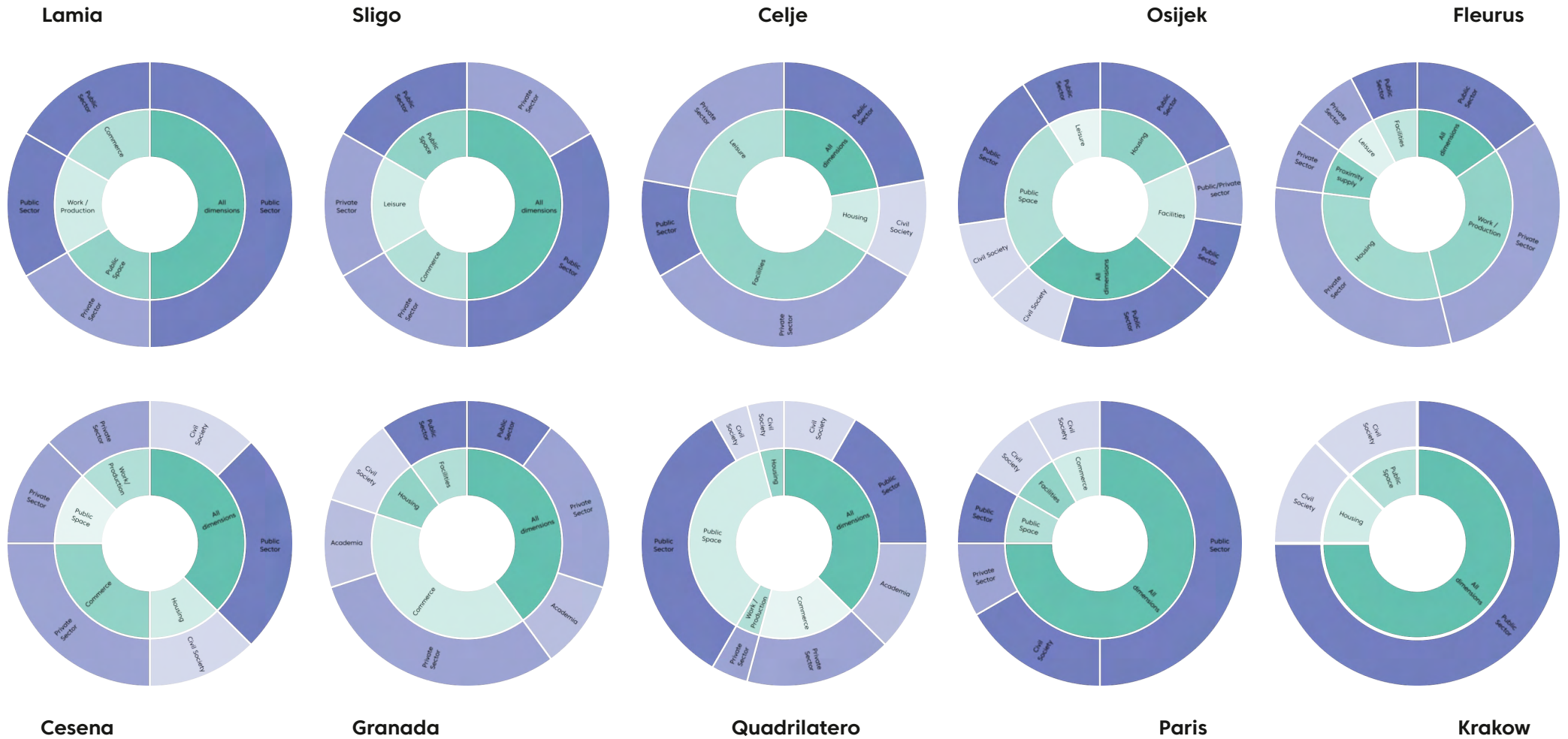


Image above: Composition of the different ULG and the proportion of representatives from public and private sectors, academia and civil society.



### Decision-making tools maturity

The network comprises cities with varying levels of maturity in using data-driven tools and knowledge for decision making. Some cities, such as Fleurus, Cesena, and Osijek, express the need to strengthen their capacities through learning and exchanging with other network members.

Other cities, such as Lamia, Celje and Granada, have embarked on initial experiences. For example, they have developed mobile applications for managing urban services, promoting the city, and gathering citizen feedback through social media platforms.

On the other hand, partners like Paris, Sligo, and Quadrilatero can contribute proven strategies for data gathering through surveys, sensor systems (such as footfall and vehicle counters), sector-specific censuses (commerce), or other methodologies involving collaboration with private enterprises. These same partners have also implemented tools for the analysis and visualisation of strategic information at the city level (not exclusively focused on the urban core) through data observatories or dashboards that can support both short-term and long-term decisions.

Nonetheless, there is a need to continue exploring the use of these tools and to generate specific monitoring indicators related to deployed public policies, enabling their evaluation and improvement.

**The partnership provides an opportunity to develop guidance based on the network's best practices for implementing these tools.** This includes addressing issues such as public data governance, technological sovereignty, and training for local technical teams.

### Lack of gender approach

Overall, the network lacks a gender perspective when addressing the revitalisation of urban centres.

**This approach is necessary across various urban dimensions**, including housing (planning for care activities and improving accessibility), public space (ensuring inclusive urban design), and the distribution of facilities (ensuring personal autonomy). Public policies within the urban centre do not specifically address the gender dimension, nor is it integrated into the various governance models deployed within the network.

Additionally, there is a lack of gender mainstreaming in decision-making processes, even among partners that exhibit a higher level of maturity in using indicators, tools, or processes for urban environment data analysis. As an aspect that cuts across different areas, **gender should be one of the main points of learning for the entire network.**

### **Previous EU project experience at a network level**

It is of significance to recognise the profound knowledge held by specific partners in addressing socio-economic complexities via urban planning, exemplified by the Sligo case study within the PEACE IV programme. Equally noteworthy is Osijek's active engagement in the Eyes Hearts Hands Urban Revolution, aimed at formulating an inclusive methodology that harmonises established practices with NEB (New European Bauhaus) values and the guiding principles of the EU Mission.

### **Several partners have participated in thematic networks that can provide data and methodologies related to specific objectives.**

For example, Paris and Krakow have both been involved in the RiConnect project within the URBACT network.

This participation has allowed them to gain expertise in integrating sustainable mobility systems into public policies. As a result, they can apply this experience to improve urban mobility and share insights with other partners.

Cesena was involved in the KAIRÓS project, which developed a compendium of best practices for the urban regeneration of declining city areas. The project aimed to create attractive hubs of particular significance for residents.

The knowledge gained from this network can be used to enhance the understanding of partners whose urban centres are visibly declining or harbour problematic zones in terms of their socioeconomic status.

### 3.2.2 Main challenges

The partnership members are addressing the following challenges.

#### Paris

##### **Increase commerce vitality**

The greatest challenge lies in maintaining the vitality and commercial diversity of urban centres, especially within a specific socioeconomic context that hinders the emergence of local proximity commerce.

##### **Inclusive public space**

The difficulty in creating public spaces with a high intensity of activities, safe and inclusive, which in many cases coexist with transportation infrastructures, especially cars, as some of these areas have low connectivity in public transport and are therefore highly dependent on automobile transportation.

##### **Stakeholder collaboration**

Given the heterogeneity among different cities, one of the main challenges remains coordinating and establishing strategies in which, supported by the collection of quantitative data, stakeholders from across the metropolis collaborate.

To illustrate this example, one can observe the governance of a city in the Greater Paris Metropolis. The City of Orly is part of the urban agglomeration of Grand-Orly Seine Bièvre. This agglomeration covers two départements (county-sized administrative areas) and is also dependent on policies administered by the Île-de-France region. For any given city in the Metropolis, there could be up to five levels of governance concerned in various decision making processes.

#### Fleurus

##### **Revitalisation of commerce**

The increase in vacant commercial spaces and the potential displacement caused by the presence of large supermarket chains, along with the lack of mixed-use development in Fleurus city centre, has resulted in the decline of downtown commerce. More empty spaces are appearing, particularly in typically commercial areas. Therefore, the transformation of the associated public space is necessary for its revitalisation.

##### **Renovation of urban fabric**

In Fleurus, several residential buildings remain vacant due to diverse reasons, including the unsatisfactory condition of the buildings, rendering them unrentable, subpar energy efficiency, and the conversion of upper-floor residences into ground-floor businesses. To combat this issue, the city has implemented a tax on unoccupied housing, though its impact on reducing vacancy rates remains somewhat limited.

##### **Transformation of public space**

The need to transform public space is especially apparent in commercial areas, where interaction with transportation infrastructure is critical to creating more pleasant environments that support the emergence of businesses linked to public spaces.

##### **Improvement of mobility**

Transportation infrastructure requires improvement, particularly in association with automobiles, which occupy a significant portion of public space due to deficiencies in design; for example, there are surface parking areas in need of upgrading alongside public spaces. There is also an emphasis on reducing the number of car journeys by fostering mixed urban developments and enhancing public transportation efficiency.

## Krakow

### Demographic Balance

It is essential to draw attention to suburbanisation and excessive population growth in suburban areas. The contrasting population trends at the metropolitan level show a depopulation of Krakow's centre, related to gentrification processes fuelled by over-tourism and a rising tension in the housing market.

In this context, the surrounding cities will attract new residents, which may challenge their current balance and quality of life standards.

### Transition of mobility modes

The high dependence on private vehicle transport in many of the cities around Krakow conflicts with the historical layouts of city centres.

This results in various mobility issues in the city centre (traffic congestion, excessive presence of private vehicles versus pedestrian areas) and the degradation of public spaces located on the fringes of these infrastructures.

### Overtourism

Especially in Krakow's historic centre, there is a conflict between access to facilities and services and the excessive occupation by tourism. This situation also leads to a specialisation of commercial premises at the expense of shops offering essential goods, alongside various issues such as noise, degraded spaces, etc.

## Cesena

### Overuse of public space

There is a need to redefine public space and the relationship between private and civil uses, engaging private stakeholders and civil society alike. Balancing public space allocation between private activities, tourism, and residential uses is a challenge, demanding improvements in safety, inclusivity, and sustainability.

Moreover, linking the urban centre with the university campus and the train station is a major issue in terms of the city centre's connection with the rest of the city and the larger metropolitan area, which can help optimise the utilisation of several public spaces while addressing feelings of urban insecurity.

### Lack of commercial viability

The lack of commercial vitality in the city centre is derived from the increasing use of online channels for retail and shopping, like in other European cities.

Additionally, the specialisation of spaces within the city centre contributes to the displacement of traditional shops, paving the way for an influx of restaurants and leisure establishments. There has also been a conversion of the commercial fabric for use as single-person dwellings.

These trends have undercut the quality of the remaining commercial fabric, posing a challenge to maintaining the traditional retail landscape while accommodating the community's evolving preferences and demands.

### Mixed urban fabric

There is a lack of a strategic instrument to offer practical actions within the sphere of political strategy aimed at making the city centre a mixed and liveable space for all inhabitants, enhancing its role as a space for meeting and exchange rather than a centre for commerce and food service.

### Celje

#### **Fostering economic development**

Especially considering the lack of diversity in the urban centre, there is a need to establish a more heterogeneous urban fabric. This involves enhancing the mixed urban fabric and increasing the existing commercial diversity. It requires considerations for activities operating throughout various time frames (including nocturnal activities and public-owned facilities operating after hours), addressing pedestrian-vehicle relations, and engaging all stakeholders, among other pertinent aspects.

The enhancement of city marketing (promoting diversity in events to cater to all visitor segments and implementing a dedicated audience development strategy) and town centre management strategies (already in place) could have a positive impact on economic development.

#### **Improving governance**

Activating all stakeholders in decision-making processes involving Celje's city centre is considered a challenge. This includes decisions regarding budget allocation, investment choices, public participation, and interactions among various administrative departments responsible for the urban centre.

#### **Lack of knowledge-based approach**

Even if the city council started collecting data by implementing public-led urban services, the local administration demands a more solid approach to knowledge-driven urban planning and integrated policy. This would help the municipal departments address and monitor the city centre's challenges accurately. Moreover, the information could be used to contrast citizen's perceptions of several issues.

### Osijek

#### **Increase commerce diversity**

The emergence of shopping centres on the outskirts of the city has contributed to the loss of diversity of traditional commerce in the city centre (especially for non-essential products), which has been displaced. There is a need to enhance and enrich the existing offer to support the daily needs of inhabitants as well as to increase the attractiveness of the area among workers and visitors.

#### **Enhancing public engagement**

The local administration demands a higher degree of public engagement, especially concerning the decision-making process and the coordination among various stakeholders involved in the decisions that impact the urban centre of Osijek.

### Granada

#### **Improving local space quality & mobility**

By managing the interplay between private utilisation of public spaces – largely influenced by tourism – and the requirements of the resident population, the aim is to enhance the quality of these spaces in terms of accessibility, inclusivity, and sustainability, specifically, regarding the landscape aspect and the impact of private activities in public space and the logistics of last-mile delivery.

#### **Retaining local commerce and population**

The need to transform public space is especially apparent in commercial areas, where interaction with transportation infrastructure is critical to creating more pleasant environments that support the emergence of businesses linked to public spaces.

### Quadrilatero

#### **Managing common spaces in the transition towards sustainable mobility modes**

A shared challenge among the four cities concerns the conflicts arising from transportation infrastructures and the quality of public spaces. The volume of travellers commuting in and out of urban centres daily exacerbates these tensions.

#### **Dynamisation of specific areas**

The revitalisation of socially and economically degraded areas remains a challenge, as well as the improvement of the housing market.

### Lamia

#### **Increasing public safety**

The underutilisation of public spaces (lacking in typological diversity, accessibility, and variety of users), the loss of vitality during certain time frames due to commerce schedules (exacerbated at night), and the progressive loss of population in the city centre (a moderate rate of vacant dwellings) creates a sense of insecurity among the population.

#### **Enhancing multi-level governance and citizen participation**

Although the city is facing a variety of economic, environmental, social, and political challenges, there seems to be a dearth of innovation and engagement from civil society. The municipal government will benefit from learning and exchanging experiences regarding stakeholder involvement and from implementing integrated policies regarding sustainable development and transformation of the urban environment.

#### **Improving gender mainstreaming in urban policies**

Gender mainstreaming is a major challenge, especially in maintenance, facilities for daily use, and the design of public spaces. Different groups of people (women, seniors, ethnic minorities) could benefit from a more inclusive approach.

#### **Greening the city**

The reinforcement of green infrastructure and the implementation of transversal mitigation and adaptation strategies is a major challenge for the city to address the effects of climate change.

### Sligo

#### **Commercial vacancy**

Despite the quality of the commercial fabric in Sligo's downtown area, the occupancy rate of premises remains at 81%, predominantly specialising in the restaurant sector, occasionally leading to conflicts with residents.

This, in turn, intertwines with the subsequent challenge, resulting in the abandonment of certain buildings and consequently posing difficulties in their maintenance.

#### **Lack of use of upper floors**

Notable characteristics of this area include a primarily residential utilisation, hosting a distinctly defined population demographic (young students, singles, and the elderly), as families have been relocating from the city centre to its outskirts.

This pattern leads to a depletion of the upper floors of commercial spaces, often without diversification into alternative uses besides residential, culminating in inadequate maintenance of certain buildings, among other issues.

### 3.2.3 Synthesis of contributions and learnings

Specifically, each member of the network contributes a specific approach to the revitalisation of urban centres, whether through addressing a particular urban issue (such as tourism management or commercial diversification), the governance model, or the use of decision-making tools. Likewise, each partner has expressed its learning needs and capacity-building requirements.

These various contributions have been compiled in a synthesis table, which is crucial for the methodology's development (see next section) as it enables the identification of challenges and cross-cutting learning needs across the entire network, as well as the strengths each partner can contribute. It also delineates groups of cities/urban agents with shared interests.

After categorising the contributions and learnings into different groups, we synthesised them into seven common challenges for all cities:

#### **Managing complexity (t1)**

This overarching challenge involves the need for a wide range of strategies to address the complexity of issues in urban centres, focusing on the development of tools to enhance public engagement and town management. This includes multi-level governance, inter-municipal collaboration schemes, citizen participation, data analysis, policy evaluation, and integrated urban action plans.

#### **Gentrification (t2)**

The primary aspects of this phenomenon are the loss of inhabitants due to housing shortages, a lack of adaptation to current family models, or the decline of local services and commerce, as well as the management of the impacts of tourism.

#### **Adaptation to climate change (t3)**

Urban centres, particularly those with historical components or inhabited by more vulnerable populations, may face greater climate risks compared to more modern urban fabrics. This vulnerability may arise due to the fragility and condition of the built environment and the socio-demographic characteristics of its inhabitants.

#### **New supply models (t4)**

This topic focuses on revitalising and diversifying commercial offerings. Strategies include identifying and managing vacant spaces, strengthening local and proximity consumption circuits, including digital marketplaces, and exploring new commercial models such as e-commerce and last-mile logistics.

#### **Building a city centre identity (t5)**

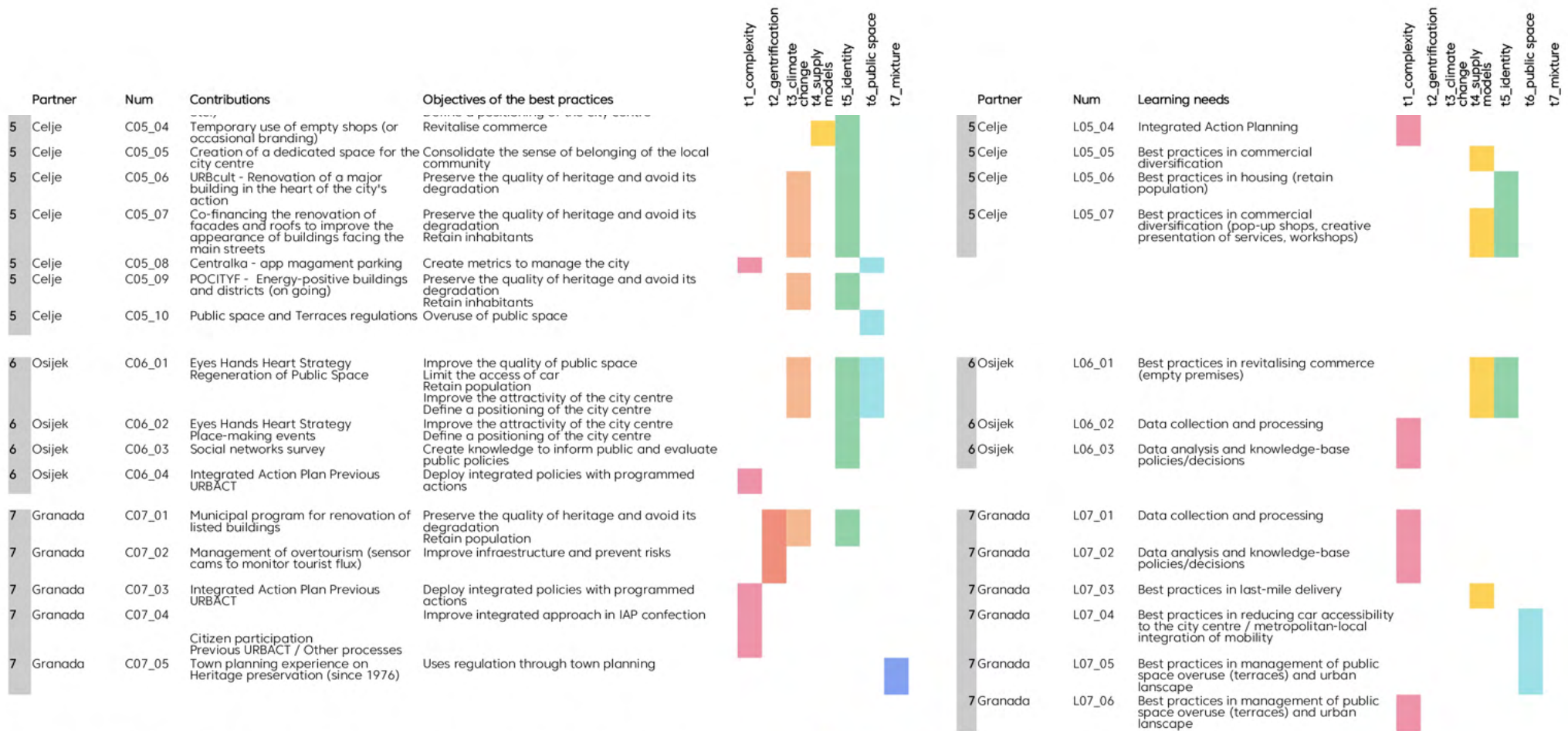
Defining the various roles of the urban centre, whether as a meeting place, service hub, or space for differentiated experiences, through strategies like place-making or animation is fundamental. However, it is important to consider how these strategies may complement or conflict with the primary role of the centre as a living environment for local communities. It is also essential to reflect on the shared identity of multiple users, with heritage and public space being key elements.





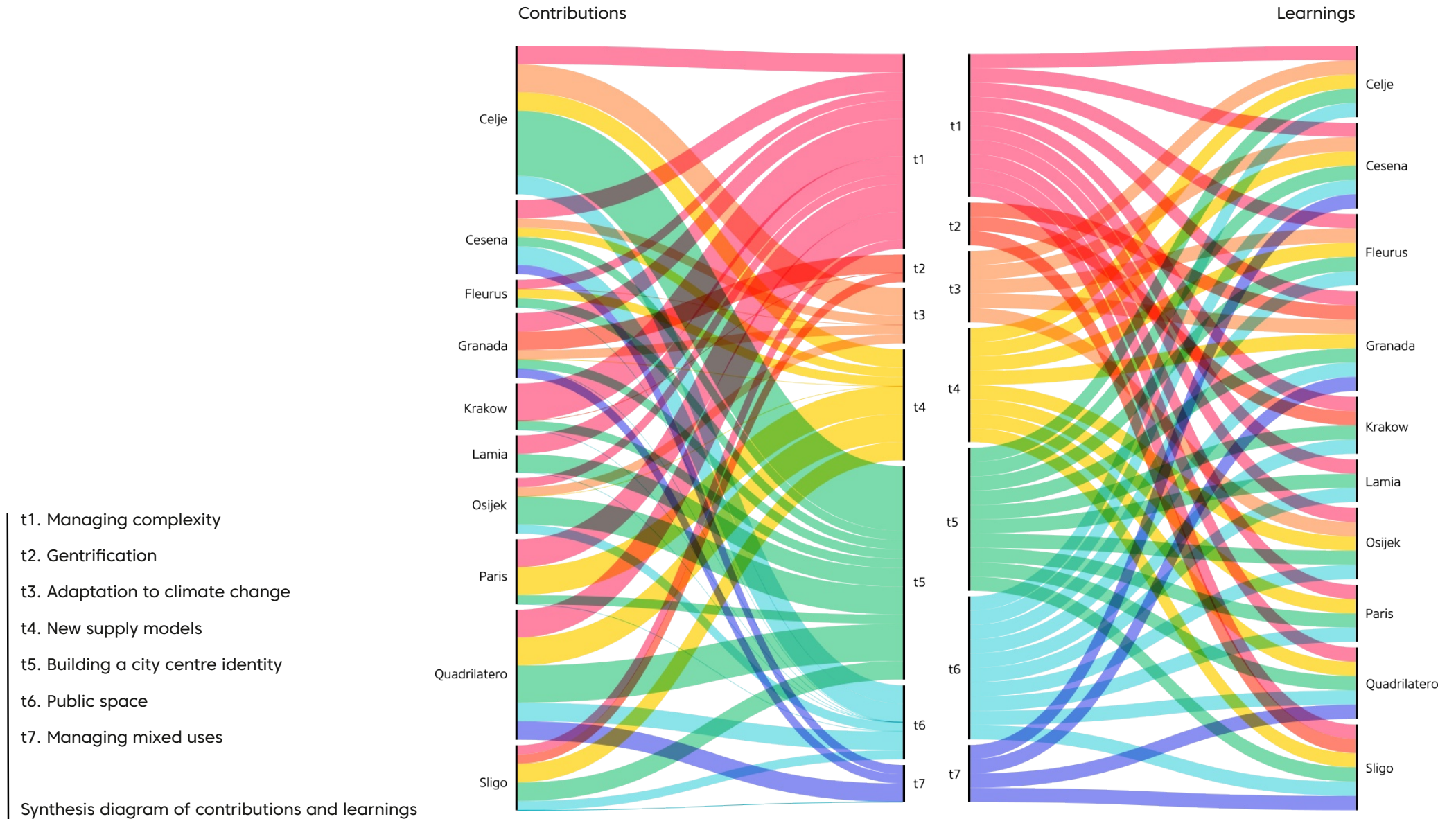


## ♥ 3.2 Synthesis of the Partnership Challenges



## ♥ 3.2 Synthesis of the Partnership Challenges

Partner	Num	Contributions	Objectives of the best practices	t1_complexity	t2_gentrification	t3_climate change	t4_supply models	t5_identity	t6_public space	t7_mixture	Partner	Num	Learning needs	t1_complexity	t2_gentrification	t3_climate change	t4_supply models	t5_identity	t6_public space	t7_mixture
8	Quadrilatero	C08_01	Local market refurbishment	Urban renovation and urban requalification Improve the quality of public space Consolidate the sense of belonging of the local community							8	Quadrilatero	L08_01	Capacity Building and Empowerment of Actors						
8	Quadrilatero	C08_02	Data room (Famalicao BSMART / Guimaraes Urban Lab Platform)	Create metrics to manage the city							8	Quadrilatero	L08_02	Traffic Control Centres and Data analysis/tools and knowledge-based policies/decisions						
8	Quadrilatero	C08_03	Data observatory Famalicao	Create knowledge to inform public and evaluate public policies							8	Quadrilatero	L08_03	Learning on Baseplacement, 15 Minutes City and TCM						
8	Quadrilatero	C08_04	Digital neighbourhoods (Marketplace + Public space regeneration)	Consolidate and revitalise local commerce Improve the quality of public space Limit the access of car							8	Quadrilatero	L08_04	Living Labs, Public Labs, Civic Labs and Citizenship engagement methods						
8	Quadrilatero	C08_05	Social innovation facility and the development of Attractability Competence Centre	Promote innovation and new forms of work							8	Quadrilatero	L08_05	Citizen participation methodologies (expand) Need for a protocol (related to participatory budget)						
8	Quadrilatero	C08_06	Braga Cultural Revival Strategy based on Braga24 and UNESCO Creative Cities	Improve participation based culture							8	Quadrilatero	L08_06	Best practices in commercial diversification						
8	Quadrilatero	C08_07	Guimarães Cultural Revival Strategy	Improve Participation based culture							8	Quadrilatero	L08_07	IAP (co-designed, co-constructed and comprehensive design and implementation of sustainable integrated urban action policies)						
8	Quadrilatero	C08_08	Barcelos Local shops revival	Revitalise Local commerce and attract new Actors							8	Quadrilatero	C08_09	Integrated Action Plan Previous URBACT						
8	Quadrilatero	C08_09	Integrated Action Plan Previous URBACT	Deploy integrated policies with programmed actions							9	Lamia	C09_01	My Lamia app Inform newcomers in a modern and efficient way about Lamia's sight worthy spots						
9	Lamia	C09_01	My Lamia app Inform newcomers in a modern and efficient way about Lamia's sight worthy spots	Create metrics to manage the city							9	Lamia	C09_02	Destination Management Organization						
9	Lamia	C09_02	Destination Management Organization	Improve the attractiveness of the city centre Define a positioning of the city centre							9	Lamia	C09_03	Knowledge platform of the DMO						
9	Lamia	C09_03	Knowledge platform of the DMO	To raise awareness about DMO policies Create metrics to manage the city							9	Lamia	C09_04	Tools to evaluate the impact of best practices						
10	Sligo	C10_01	Strategy for Town Centre Management (Public-private, Town Centre First, Town Manager)	Create a shared governance of the city centre							10	Sligo	L10_01	Citizen participation methodologies (expand) Need for a protocol (related to participatory budget)						
10	Sligo	C10_02	Town Centre Property Use Survey	Baseline and annual land use survey. Impact of incentivised/government investment supports in refurbishment of vacant stock.							10	Sligo	L10_02	Best practices on Urban Planning, Data Collection and Think Global, Act Local Best Policies						
10	Sligo	C10_03	Best practices in the evening and night-time economy. Economic impact of festivals and events on business performance and local employment .	Improve the attractiveness of the city centre Define a positioning of the city centre							10	Sligo	L10_03	Data analysis/tools and knowledge-based policies/decisions						
											10	Sligo	L10_04	Commercial vacancy best practices						

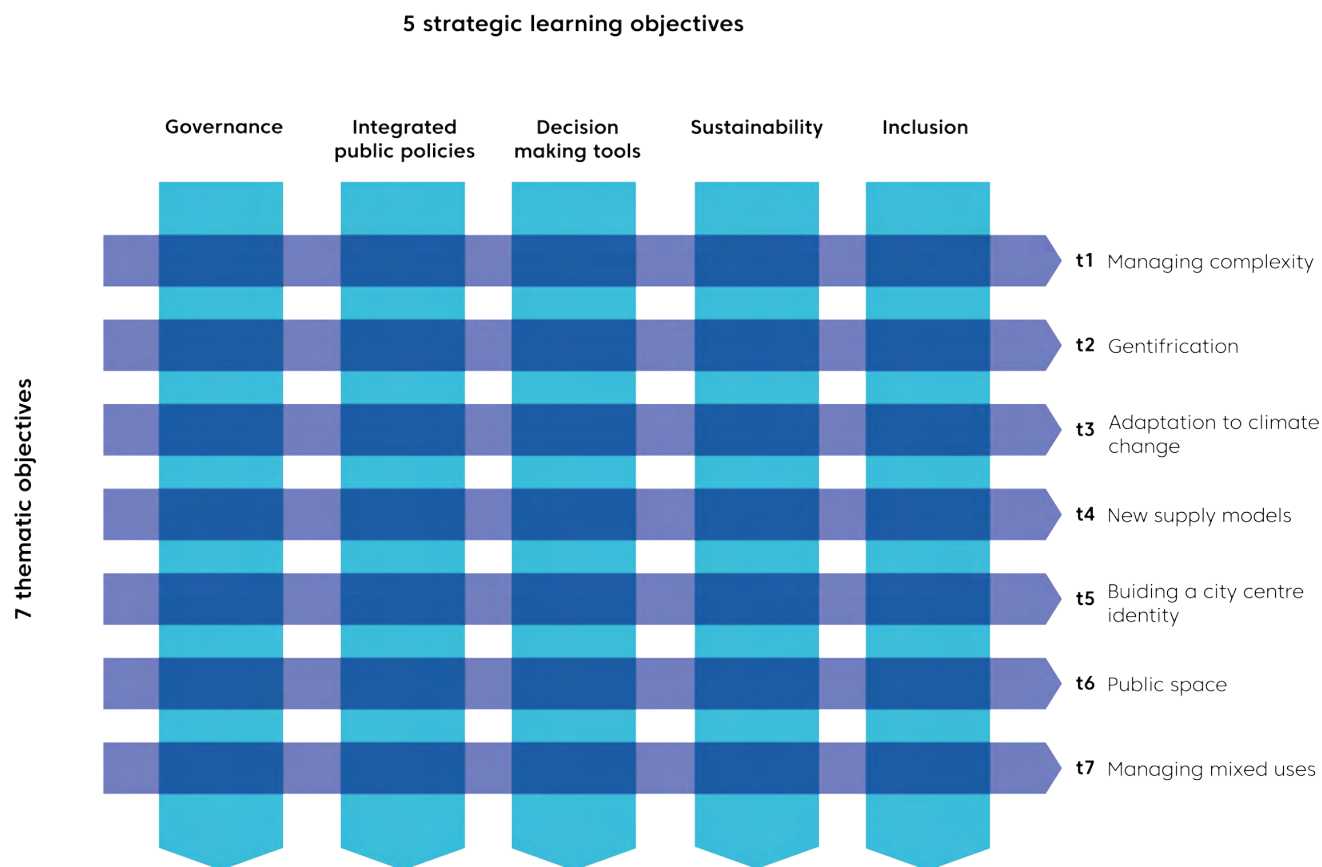


### 3.3 Methodology Approach and work plan

#### 3.3.1 Methodological framework

The analysis of the 10 partners has led to the identification of a roadmap derived from the contributions and capacity-building needs (both individual and collective). This roadmap is translated into a two-dimensional matrix. On the one hand, the **thematic objectives** are outlined based on the seven major challenges identified during the analysis phase (managing complexity, gentrification, adaptation to climate change, new supply models, identity, public space, and mixed uses). On the other hand, the **strategic learning objectives** emphasise the implementation of integrated public policies, the development of governance models, decision-making tools, sustainability, and inclusion.

The parallel work over two and a half years is intended to facilitate reflection on the challenges facing urban centres and the tools needed to address their complexity. Therefore, the planned exchange activities will focus on these two types of objectives, dividing them into four main categories: Transnational Meetings, City-to-City Exchanges, ULG meetings, and Deep Dives (detailed descriptions of which are provided below).



### 3.3.2 Capacity-building and exchange activities

Cities@Heart will apply the methodology and tools learned through URBACT Summer University, and other URBACT training throughout the project.

Among others, the partnership will work with templates, self-assessment tools, peer review tools, and learning grids. During the process, different URBACT ad hoc experts will be involved in capacity-building sessions and workshops.

#### Transnational meetings (TNM)

There will be **seven Transnational Meetings (TNMs)** throughout the project. Representatives of each partner and designated members of the ULG will attend each meeting.

The Managing Authorities of each Host Partner will also be invited to attend the TNMs. Their participation serves the dual purpose of ensuring coherence between the Integrated Action Plan (IAP) and national/regional strategies, as well as identifying potential sources of funding for the implementation of tested actions in the final stage of the project.

During the first four TNMs (2023-2024), the

focus will be on the **seven thematic and strategic objectives**. This will allow for a deep dive into these objectives in 2025 or the addition of new themes and tools to the toolbox resulting from the first year of learning and application<sup>1</sup>.

Each meeting will focus on two key themes directly linked to the experience of the host city, from which the five strategic dimensions will be developed. At the end of each transnational meeting, the thematic and strategic learning outcomes will be compiled.

These outcomes will form part of a methodological guide (policy framework, governance scheme, and decision-making tools focusing on the cross-cutting dimensions of sustainability and gender). This guide will facilitate the dissemination of the project results.

Each transnational meeting will have a similar structure combining different activities:

- **Site visits** with the active involvement of local stakeholders in the hosting city (ULG) to present best practices centred on the challenges and to raise the issues to be addressed using the toolbox.

If needed, working templates will be provided to take notes and offer feedback (learning grids and peer evaluation) during the site visit.

- **Structured discussions, group problem-solving, and analysis sessions** using dynamic facilitation techniques.
- **Workshops & in-depth working sessions**, aiming to draw lessons from the exchanges and to apply them at the local level (and vice versa).
- Transnational exchange of the **evolution of the ULG**.
- **Peer review exercises**, especially after each partner has completed the Integrated Action Plans.
- **Review of the roadmap** and planning of next steps.

The last TNM will end with a **final event open to all target groups** to disseminate the main findings of the network to a wider audience.

1. The themes of two TNMs have intentionally been left unspecified.

### City-to-city exchanges

Within the thematic areas identified in the network, some urban actors will wish to deepen their knowledge of specific actions or public policies or to be trained in specific tools or processes. For this reason, in both the first and second year, we have allocated a space to facilitate these exchanges, which will take place online (webinars and masterclasses) during the first two quarters of 2024 and the second quarter of 2025.

These activities will be based on input from a range of experts. These experts may include lead experts and/or ad hoc experts involved in the project, local experts specialised in a particular topic, or guest speakers from previous URBACT networks and organisations.

### ULG meetings

Local activities at the partner level rely on transnational activities at the network level and vice versa, feeding on each other via an ongoing mutual nurturing process throughout the lifecycle of the project.

In parallel with the transnational exchange, each city will work with its ULG to co-construct the Integrated Action Plan.

The ULG will meet regularly (with a recommended frequency of two months) and ideally before and after TMs.

As the major link between local and network levels, the ULG coordinator will participate in all activities and meetings. For instance, she/he will attend the TM and provide the ULG with input provided by the transnational work, findings, and results.

With the ULG members, she/he will organise diverse activities focusing on each of the thematic challenges (tackled in the TNMs) under a local infield perspective and submit them to the next TNM, collecting partners' feedback.

All these outputs will then be reported to the ULG (see capitalisation results in section 3.4), tested on the ground, monitored, and assessment brought back to the network level, until the final development of each IAP.

This will lead into activities that will be locally driven, using materials from the network level to feed local working plans and activities. In the same way, the work undertaken with the ULG will contribute to instilling local field experience and tested practices.

## City to city exchange

The following topics of interest are identified:

### Night-time economy

*In here the interest resides on how to foster nocturnal activity, beyond leisure clustered activities, adding opportunities for social and cultural encounters, providing 24-hour public facilities, the sharing of public and private spaces, etc.*

### Circular economy and last-mile logistics

*Where the interest resides in trying to balance of uses and avoiding the conflict between economic activities and residents on one side, and trying to boost and improve the relation between the economic stakeholders in the city centres.*

### Overuse of public space

*The interest resides in balance the uses and their users providing spaces that improve the feeling of security, enhancing its use by all kind of people.*

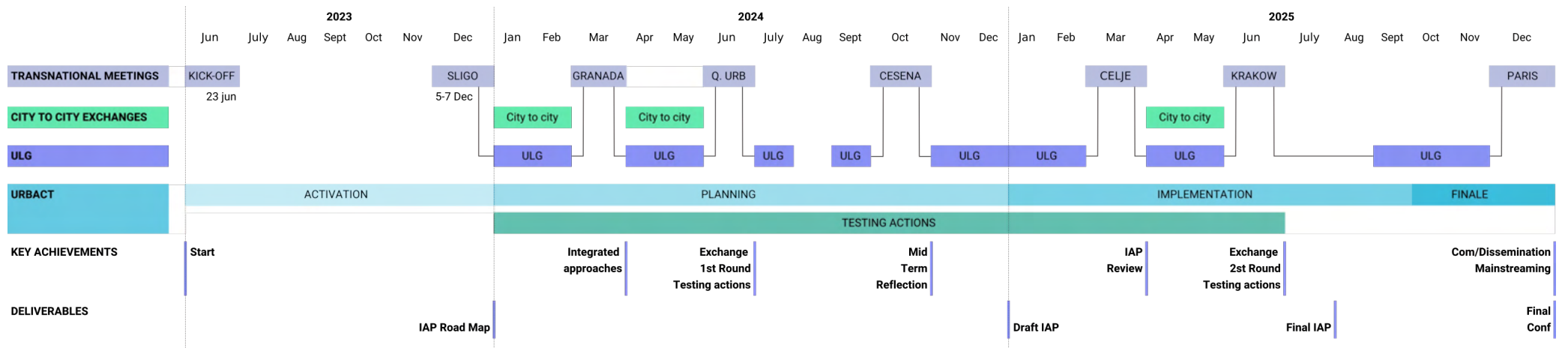
### 3.3.3 Work plan

Along this path, several iterations will be carried out to generate a learning process based on iterating these phases:

**A. Activation phase (Sharing):** To explore solutions and foster the exchange of experiences among partners; the main output of this phase is a foundation of good practices from the network (topics and toolbox), from which the road map for the network will be articulated.

**B. Planning (Learning + Applying+Prioritising):** To strengthen the practical knowledge and skills of partners in the defined policy areas, draw lessons from the exchanges on an ongoing basis, and apply them at the local level (first round of testing activities). The main outcome will be the IAPs.

**C. Implementation (Evaluating+Up-scaling):** To test activities (second round), inform action definition and scaling, identify resources, stakeholder responsibilities, and risk analysis for effective implementation of the IAP. The principal result of this stage will be the framework/guidelines for the revitalisation of city centres, to be disseminated among other cities and urban stakeholders in Europe.





## A. ACTIVATION PHASE

### 2023

The activities in this phase will be dedicated to elaborating the roadmap. Based on thematic visits to the cities and the elaboration of a common questionnaire, this process will allow for tailoring the capacity-building activities.

### 2024

The transnational activities in this stage focus on the thematic inputs related to the policy challenges tackled by exploring solutions, practices, case studies, and inspiration for partners to take away and integrate into the IAPs. There will be a first round of small-scale action testing, developed individually in each city under common guidance to be able to compare results among the network.

### 2025

The activities in this stage will consist of peer review of draft IAPs, an additional round of testing actions (to confirm the suitability of specific actions defined in respective IAPs, notably with the particular target groups) and the synthesis of lessons learned to create the network final output and define further needs for funding, dissemination, communication, and mainstreaming of the project results.

### First Transnational meeting

December 2023, Sligo

#### Activation

This first meeting (Ready for Action Meeting) serves for the activation of the network, officially starting the planned activities with the validation of the Road Map by the partner. In terms of thematic objectives, this first TNM will address the first of the challenges (**Managing complexity**) through two workshops dealing with the toolbox for the revitalisation of urban centres, mainly integrated public policies, governance, and decision-making tools.

These workshops will draw on the best practices of the organising city, Sligo, a partner with experience in TCM schemes (at both the local and national levels), public policies in specific areas (such as the night-time economy or housing), and the mapping of various aspects of the city centre for the design and monitoring of actions.

### 2nd Transnational meeting

March 2024, Granada

#### Integrated approaches

In the second TNM, the thematic objectives will be aligned with the challenges of the city of Granada, mainly focused on **Gentrification and Climate Change Adaptation**. Visits will be made to specific areas concerning the themes deployed or in which relevant policies have been developed. The plan also includes organising a workshop to discuss the toolbox and its application to these two themes.

The workshop aims to gather a comprehensive set of policies, governance examples, data, and indicators, taking into account gender and sustainability perspectives. These insights will be shared by each partner and their respective ULG before the TNM. On the other hand, a specific workshop on integrated approaches (with tailored exercises, methods and tools) will be developed to prepare the implementation of IAPs at the local level.

## B. PLANNING PHASE

### 3rd Transnational meeting

June 2024, Quadrilatero Urbano

Introducing Testing actions

In Quadrilatero, the primary focus will revolve around the essential goals of the thematic objectives 'New supply models' (revitalising and diversifying the commercial offer, specifically addressing the issues of vacant shops and digital marketplaces) and 'Building a city centre identity' through the reinforcement of local communities or place-making and animation.

The agenda includes targeted site visits to areas where relevant policies have been implemented (involving the local ULG) and a workshop, emphasising these themes and involving stakeholders to ensure comprehensive insights. The data dimension will be especially emphasised in relation to the high level of maturity of the existing practices in several of Quadrilatero's cities.

Another specific session will aim to craft innovative strategies, discuss possible actionable solutions (individual and network level), and introduce methodologies tailored to these specific objectives.

### 4rd Transnational meeting

Fall 2024, Cesena

Mid-term reflection

This 4th meeting will close off the first round of approaching the seven themes of the network. In the case of Cesena, the issues of public space and mixed uses will be addressed, repeating the pattern of previous TNMs (best practices and workshops for the creation of knowledge for the network).

Therefore, it will be the moment to consolidate the thematic and strategic learnings, through a mid-term reflection that will allow, on the one hand, to readjust the roadmap of the network (choosing new topics to deal with or the possibility of delving further into some of them) and, on the other hand, to generate a possible first output (synthesis of the first year).

In addition, local progress in the elaboration of the IAPs and the evolution of the ULGs will be reported.

## C. PLANNING IMPLEMENTATION

### 5th Transnational meeting

Winter 2025, Celje

Peer review-drafts

In the Celje TNM, the primary focus is to converge and compare the draft Integrated Action Plans (IAPs) among partners. This collaborative gathering aims to meticulously review and refine these plans, seeking final improvements, particularly concerning action definition. We intend to leverage the collective experience gained from testing to enhance these plans, identifying focal areas for further potential actions.

Furthermore, we will dedicate a part of the agenda to exploring the challenges intertwined with communication, potential funding, and policy advocacy surrounding these IAPs. This includes refining techniques like pitching, negotiations, lobbying, and other advocacy methodologies.

The thematic focus will respond to the results of the mid-term reflection (new topics or deep-dives). The possibility of implementing a second round of testing actions will also be discussed in this meeting.

### 6th Transnational meeting

Summer 2025, Krakow

The TNM in Krakow will serve to evaluate URBACT's journey, gathering the partners' diverse perspectives and the key features of the Integrated Actions Plans.

This meeting, a mix of thematic visits and workshops, will also help to gain insights into the added value of the URBACT experience and the learning points from partners.

We will devote a substantial part of the agenda to defining the project's final outcome and its presentation during the final meeting, which will be also profiled during this TNM.

### 7th Transnational meeting

December 2025, Paris

The final meeting of the network is envisaged as an event that mixes closed-door activities (for network participants) with an open-door event, with the participation of political and technical representatives from other cities to communicate and disseminate the results of the project to as wide an audience as possible.

Town centre managers of all cities composing the Greater Paris Metropolis will also be invited to get inspired by the results of the Cities@Heart network and apply them in their own cities.

Host city	Date	Type of meeting	Key Topic and subtopic	Thematic Learning objectives	Strategic Learning objectives	Key achievements
SLIGO	5-7 Dec, 2023	Transnational	<b>Activation meeting</b> <b>Managing the complexity</b>	Present governance models, participation experiences and data collection techniques	Review the Road Map of the Partnership Present the tools to manage complexity	IAP Road Map
GRANADA	Mar 2024	Transnational	Gentrification  Adaptation to the climate change	Retain inhabitants, manage overtourism  Adaptation and mitigation in the build environment and public space	Introduction to Integrated Approaches and Actions Plans	Integrated approaches
QUADRILATERO URBANO	Jun 2024	Transnational	New models of supply  Build a city centre identity	Revitalisation and diversification of the commercial offer (from vacant shops and digital marketplaces)  Reinforce local communities, Place-making and animation		Exchange 1st Round of Testing Actions
CESENA	Fall 2024	Transnational	<b>Mid-term Reflection</b> <b>Public space</b>  Manage mixture of land-use	Overuse of public space, active mobility and transition to decarbonisation  Mixture, conflict and balance of uses	Consolidate the methodology of managing complexity	MTR
CELJE	Winter 2025	Transnational	<b>IAP Review</b> <b>Open-ended</b>	To be defined after the MTR	Present de IAP per city and define the methodology to review them	IAP Review
KRAKOW	Summer 2025	Transnational	Open-ended	To be defined after the MTR	Synthesis, upscale and future prospects Plan the final meeting	Exchange 2nd Round of Testing Actions
PARIS	Dec 2025	Transnational	<b>Final meeting</b> <b>Knowledge Exchange and Capitalisation</b>	Framework and conclusions presentation	Disseminate project results and communicate policy messages and recommendations	Final conference Final guideline

### 3.3.4 Relation with other URBACT networks

Some of the partners capacity-building needs coincide with existing URBACT networks, with which different synergies can be created. For example, Braga (Quadrilatero) is lead partner of the Cities After Dark network, coinciding with the needs presented by Sligo. Another case is FEMACT-Cities. Krakow is part of this network, which introduces knowledge on the development of local action plans on gender equality and integrates it into the different strategies for revitalising the city centre.

With the idea of generating plans that ensure accessible and inclusive environments, it is also interesting to create synergies with the WELDI network, of which Osijek is a part and whose objective is to put human rights at the centre of public policies, especially focused on the arrival of new migrants.

The Cities@Heart network will envision regular exchanges with these networks that can also be opened to include other partner cities and the rest of the URBACT community.

### 3.4 Learnings' capitalisation and dissemination

The capitalisation and dissemination strategy of the project will be implemented progressively (in line with the activities foreseen in the communication plan), generating the first results from the beginning of 2024.

The strategy is based on the following aspects:

- **The added value of the network**, which is composed of urban actors who want to give specific visibility to the city centre as an urban figure with its own entity, problems, and public policies. The network aims to be a reference for other entities at the European level that can adhere to the good practices provided.
- **A toolbox based on five pillars** (integrated public policies, governance, decision-making tools, sustainability, and inclusion) and seven cross-cutting challenges that will be the basis for the development of written materials, such as a manifesto for the revitalisation of historic city centres. This publication, aimed at a wide audience, will lay out the main steps to achieve the different objectives.

This manifesto will build on the conclusion documents developed at the end of each TNM (including indicators and concrete examples of best practices), which can also be disseminated in the form of an article. Technical booklets, how-tos and information fact sheets will also be developed for other urban actors with similar challenges. Another important element for capitalisation will be the audiovisual or transmedia materials resulting from the global journey of the network, with a more communicative approach.

- **Policy advocacy:** the knowledge and toolbox developed by the network aims to influence the better integration of multi-agent multi-level, and better informed policies that will be aligned not only with the local needs but also with the European policies. It will take advantage of its own networks at the local and European level to disseminate key policy messages, directly or indirectly, involving political representatives during events and meetings within the framework of the project and beyond.

This document also aims to establish a clear link between local-level challenges and EU-level strategic objectives. This will facilitate more effective policy development and a clearer dissemination strategy, which this

network will propose. It will integrate press coverage and networking opportunities (conferences, symposia, EU-level prizes) to better disseminate its message.

Additionally, the network members are tasked with reaching out to their national contacts in order to achieve better coverage of the network activities in the national languages of each member state.

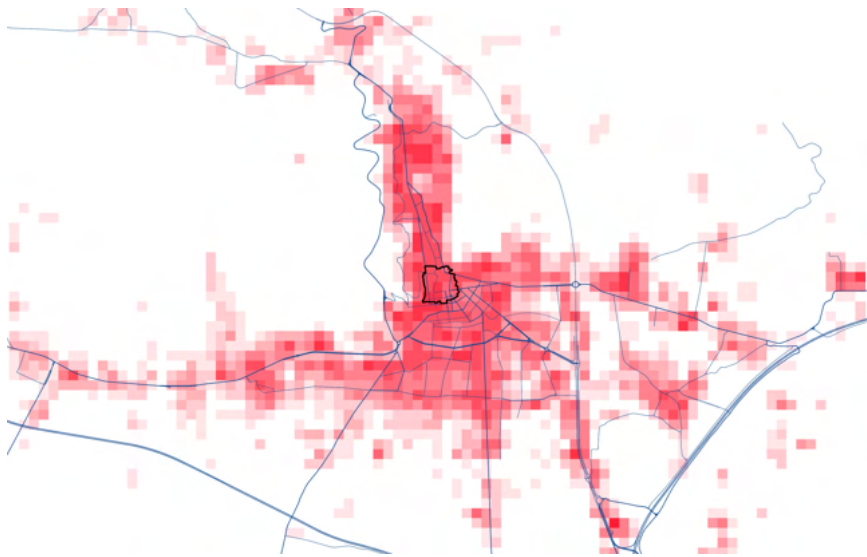
- **Funding opportunities:** from the initial stages, the possibility of accessing resources through other European programmes and funding opportunities at the local level for the implementation of the actions foreseen in the IAPs will be pursued. This will be enhanced as the relationship between the challenges addressed by this network and some European programmes becomes clear, making the process of identifying these opportunities more feasible for the partners.

All these actions should contribute to generating a legacy for the Cities@Heart network by achieving the objectives of territorial cooperation and European outreach embodied by the URBACT programme.

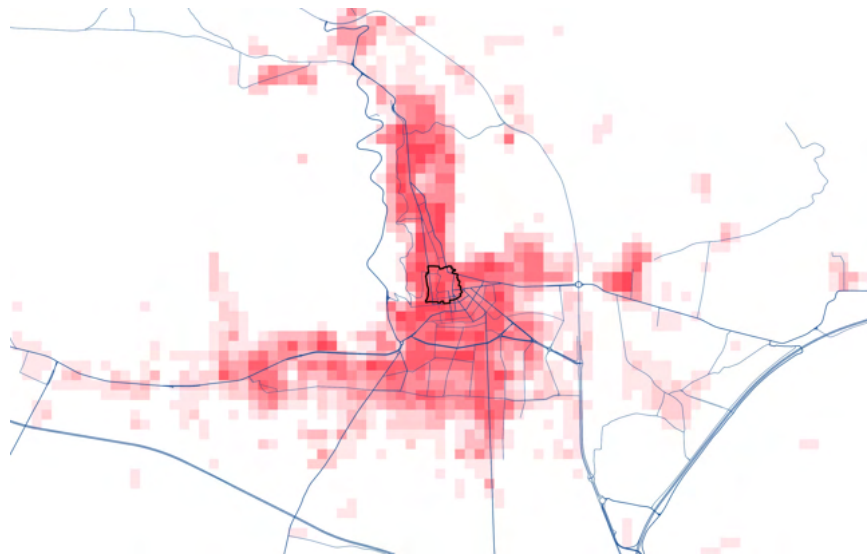
# Appendix

# Lamia

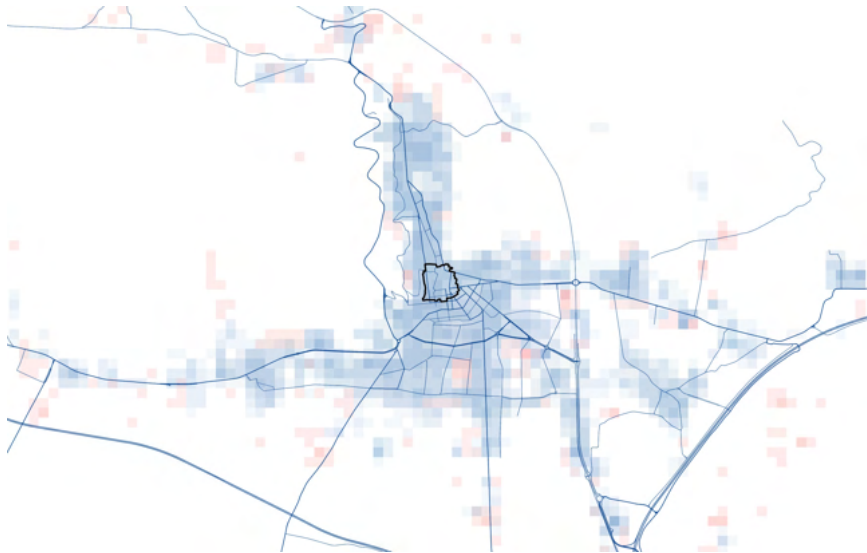
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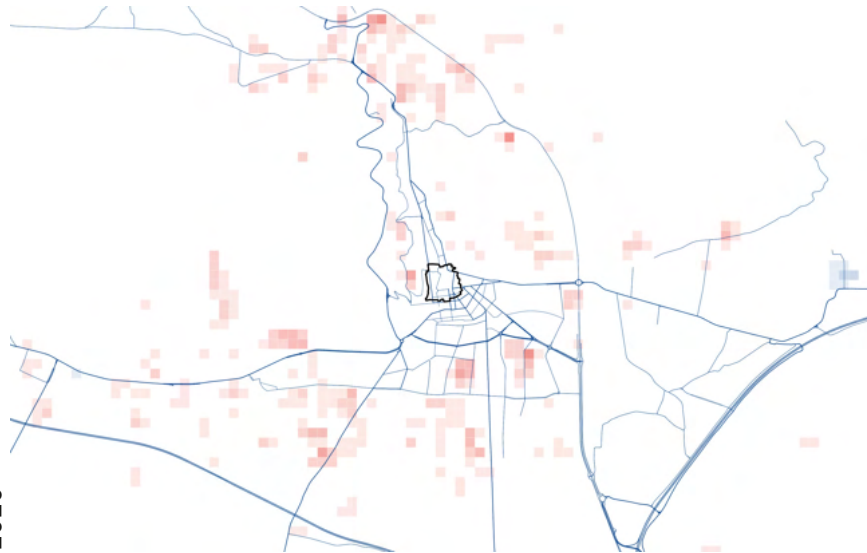
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03. Urbanised Land cover change between 1975 & 2020



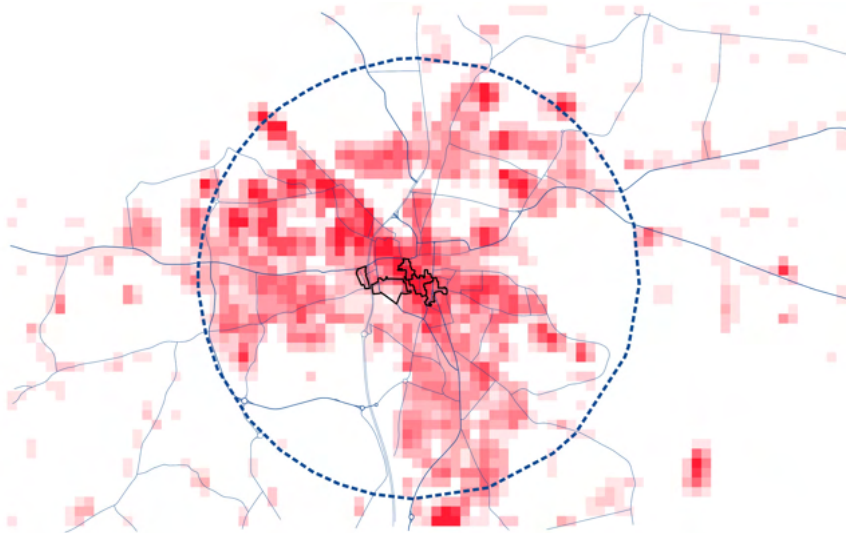
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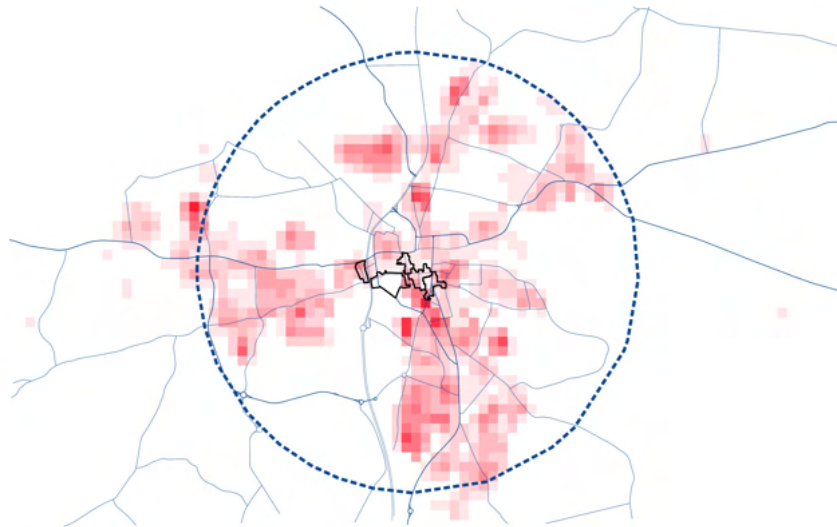


# Sligo

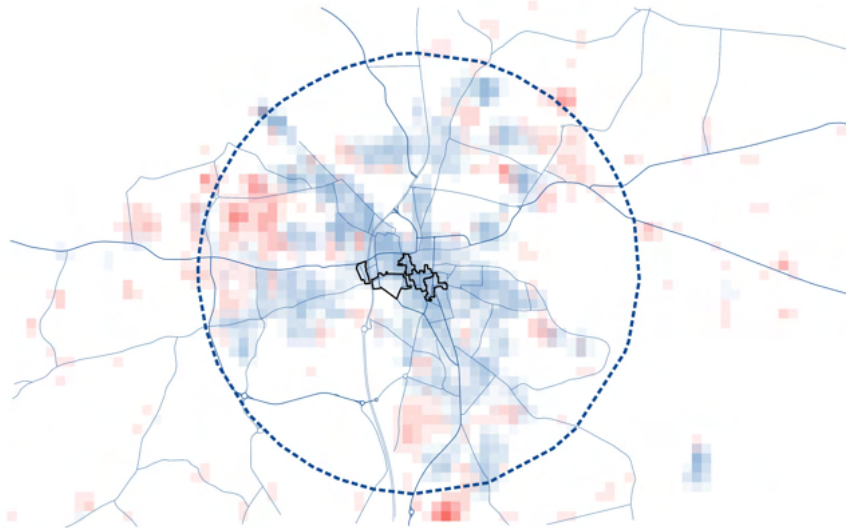
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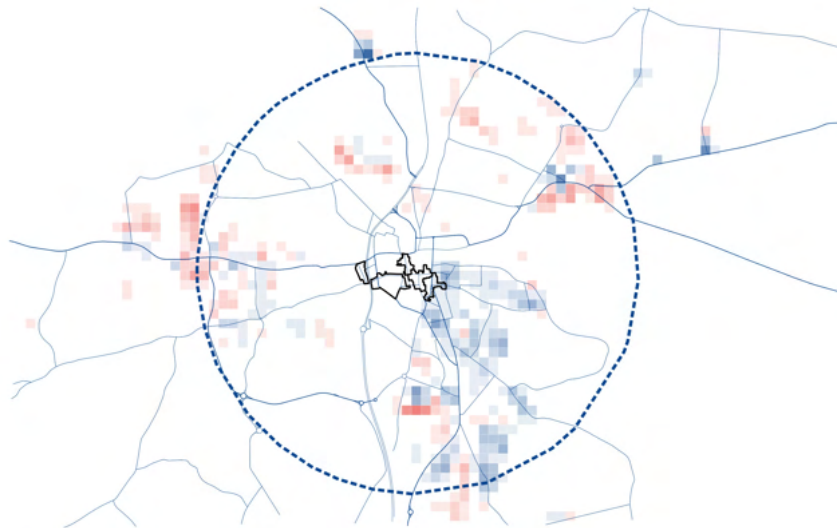
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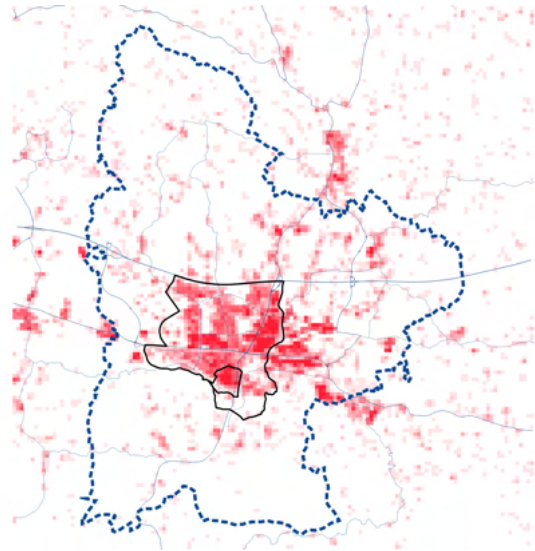


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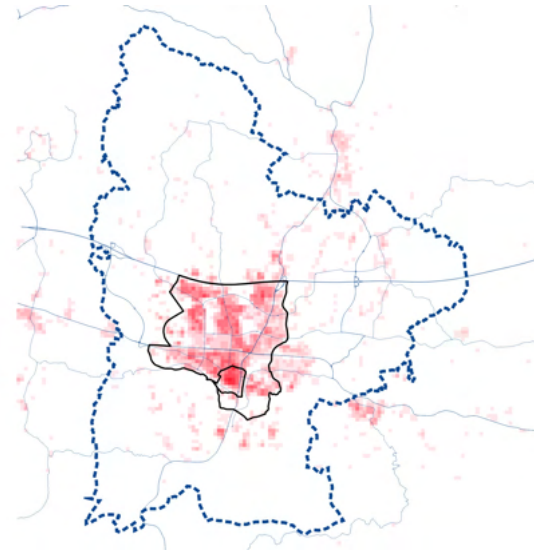


# Celje

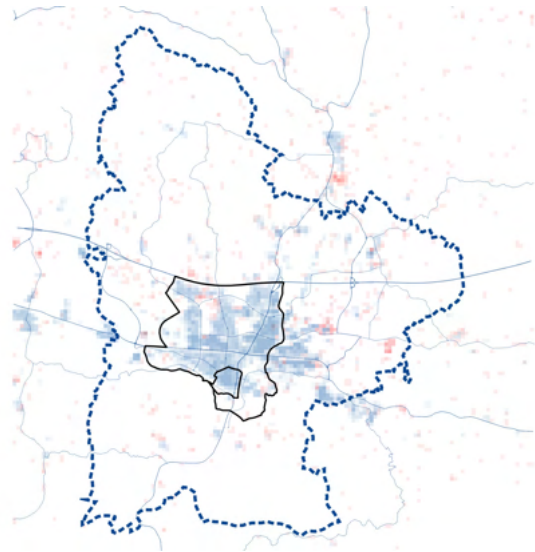
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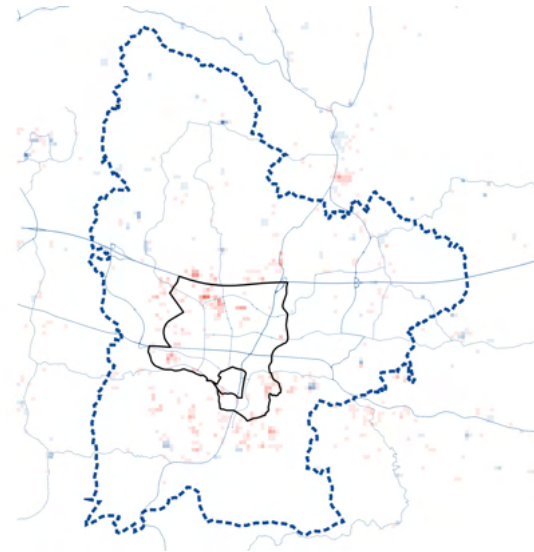
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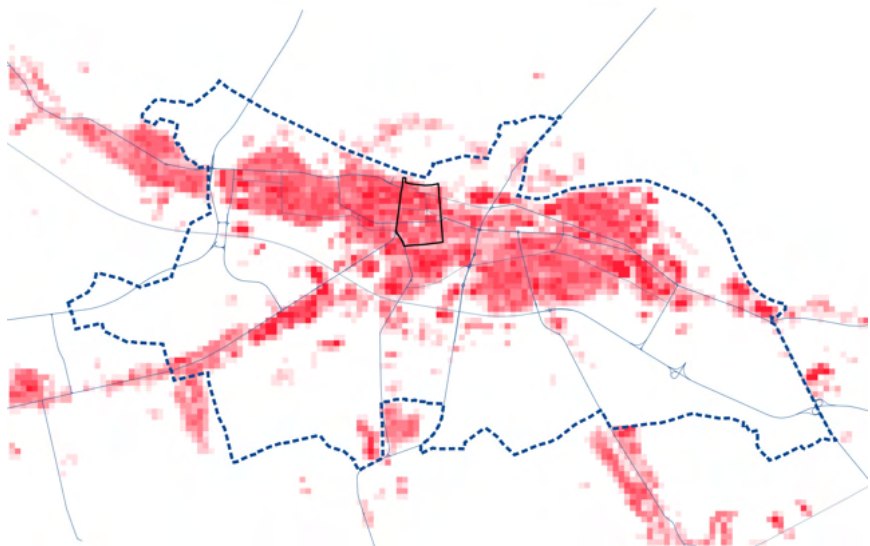


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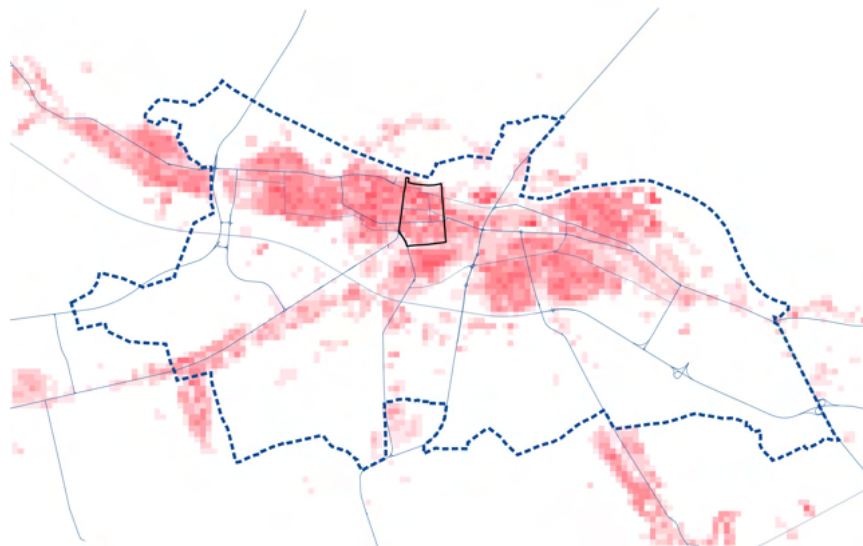


# Osijek

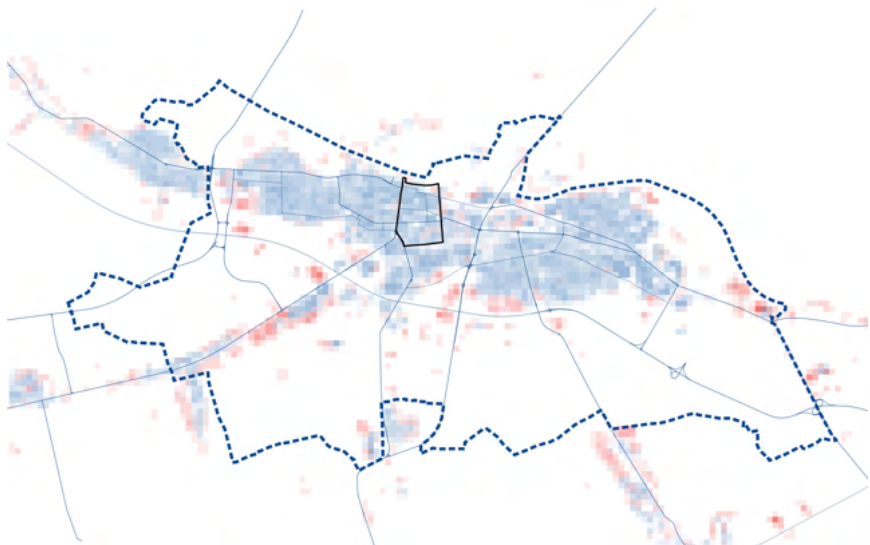
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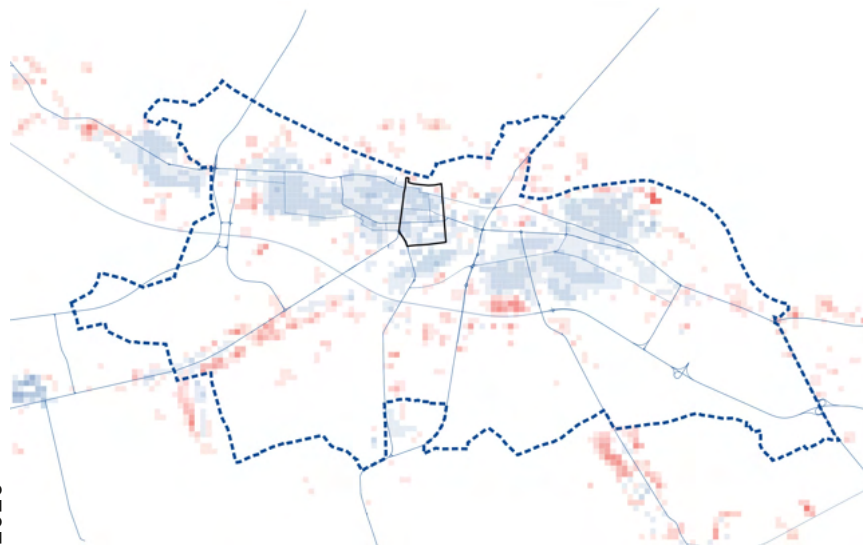
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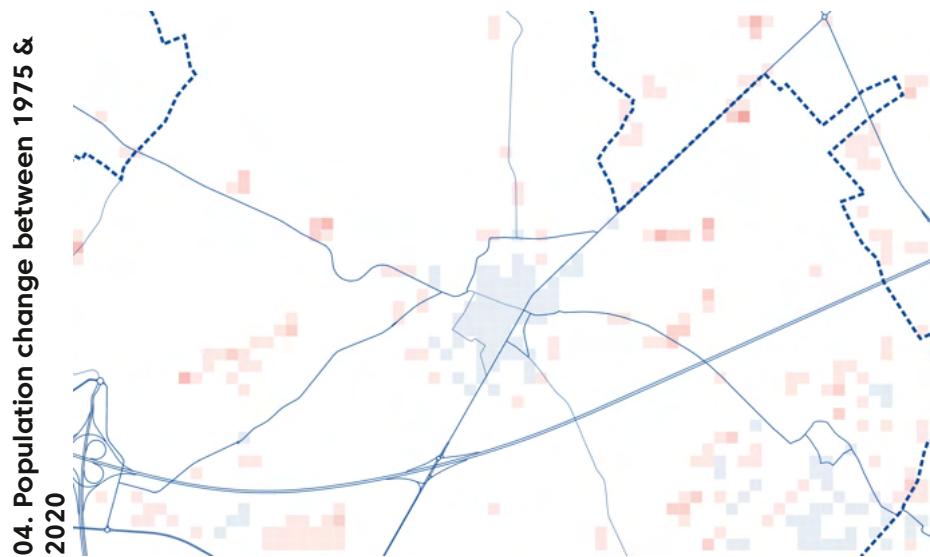
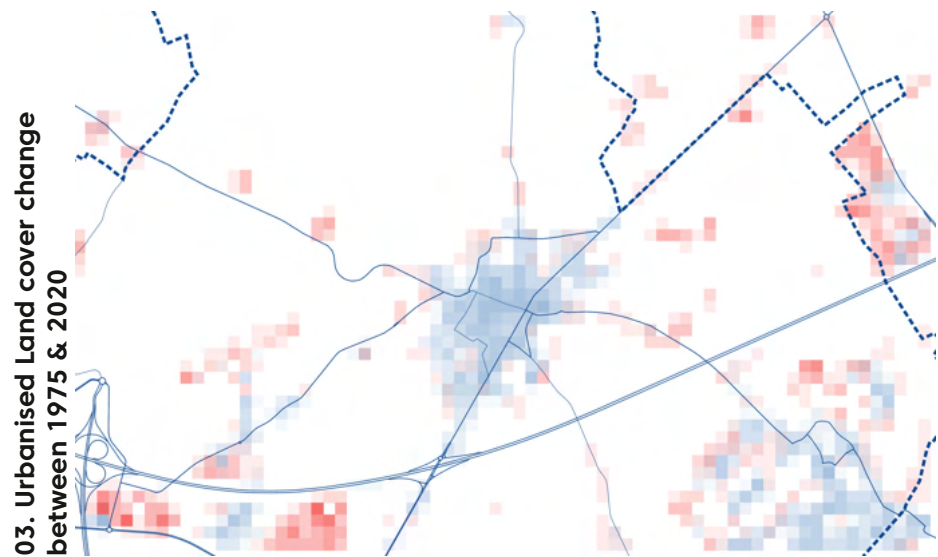
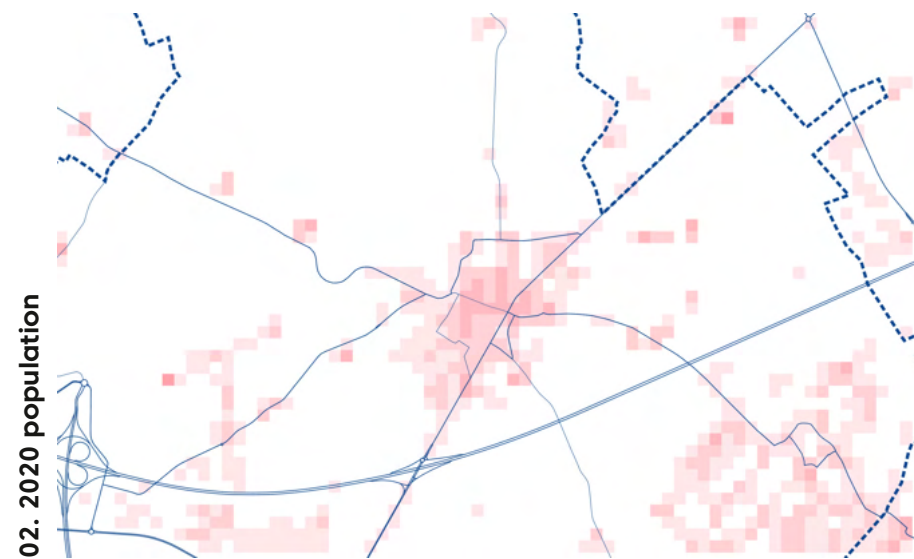
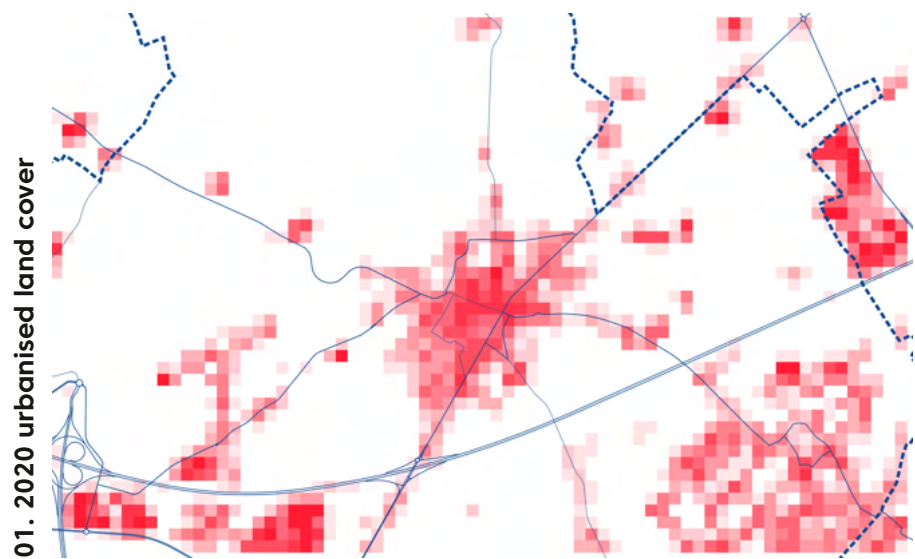
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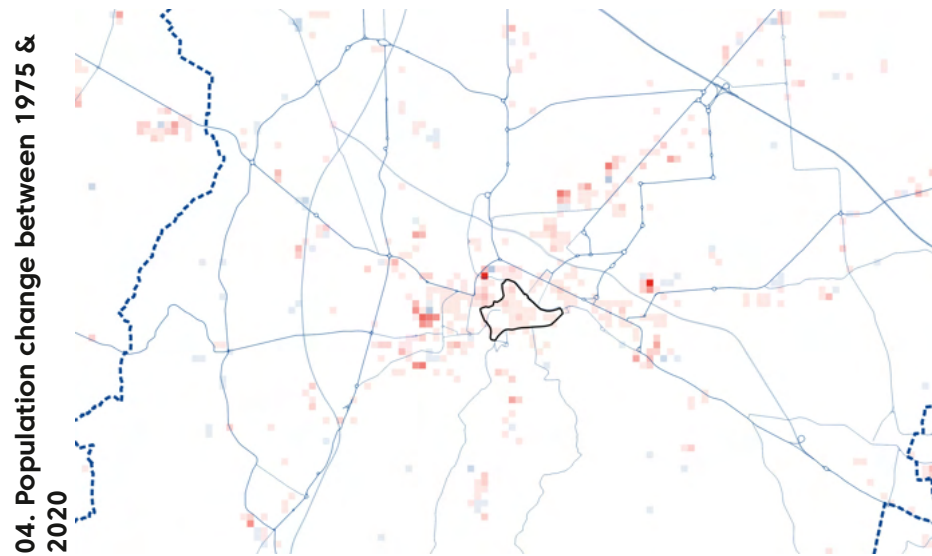
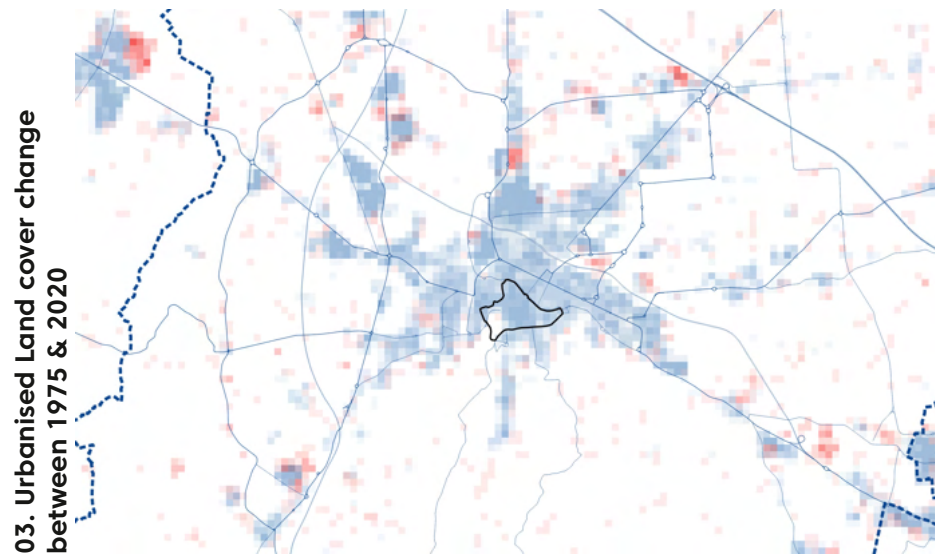
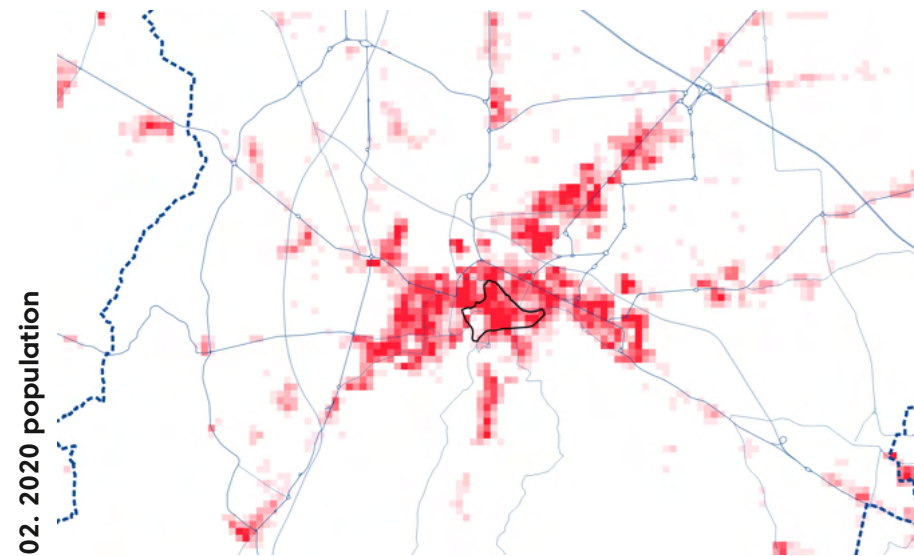
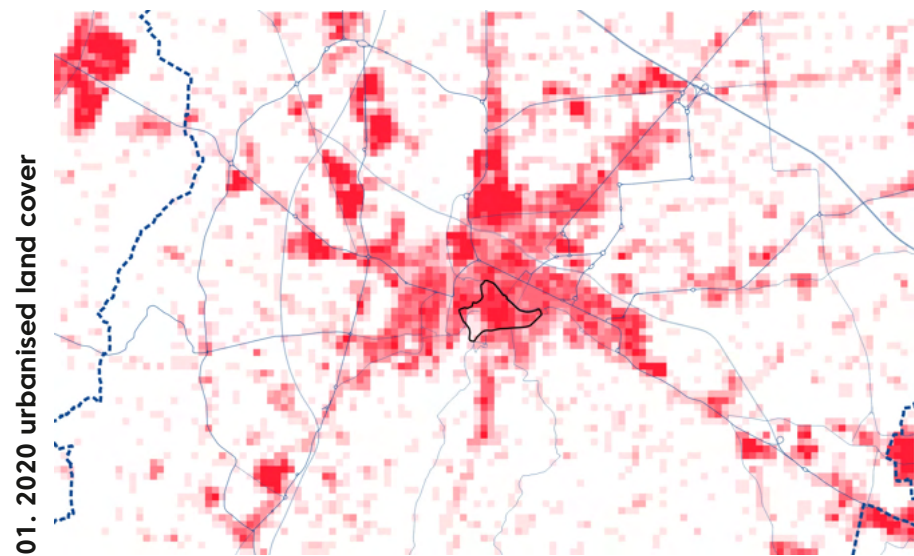
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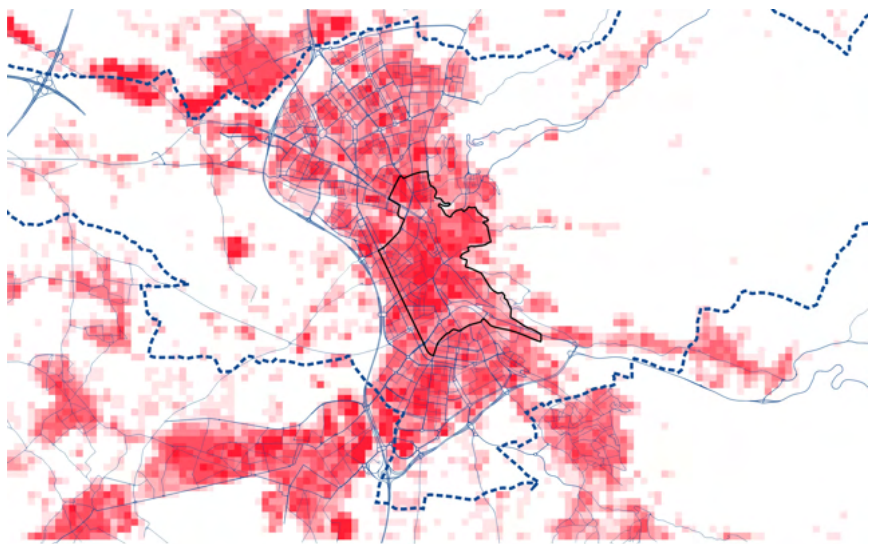


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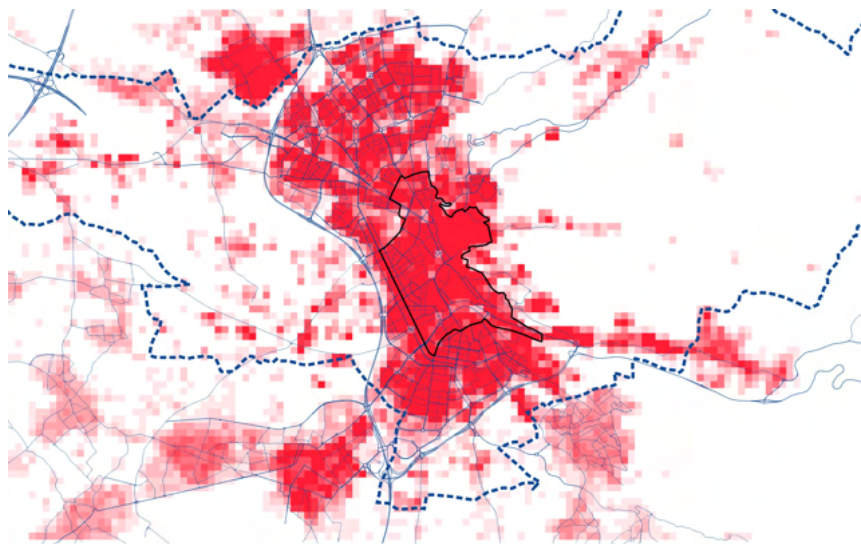


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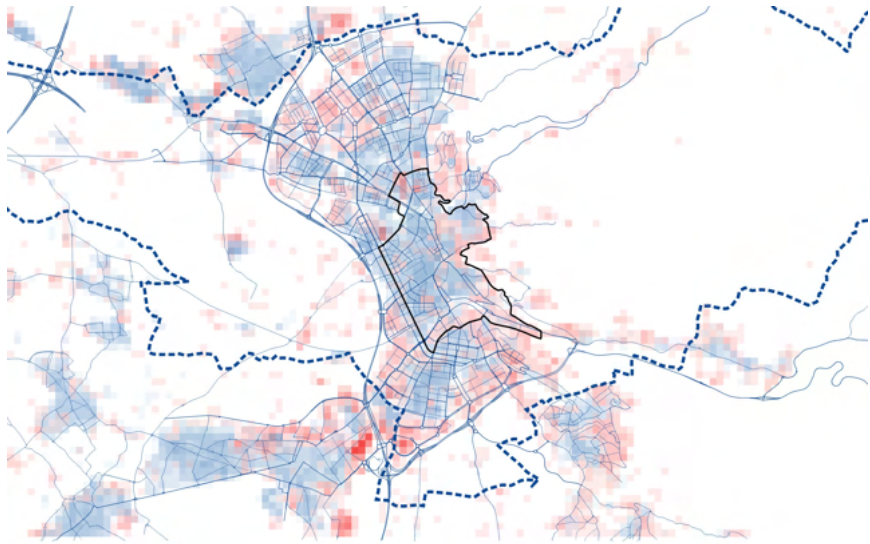
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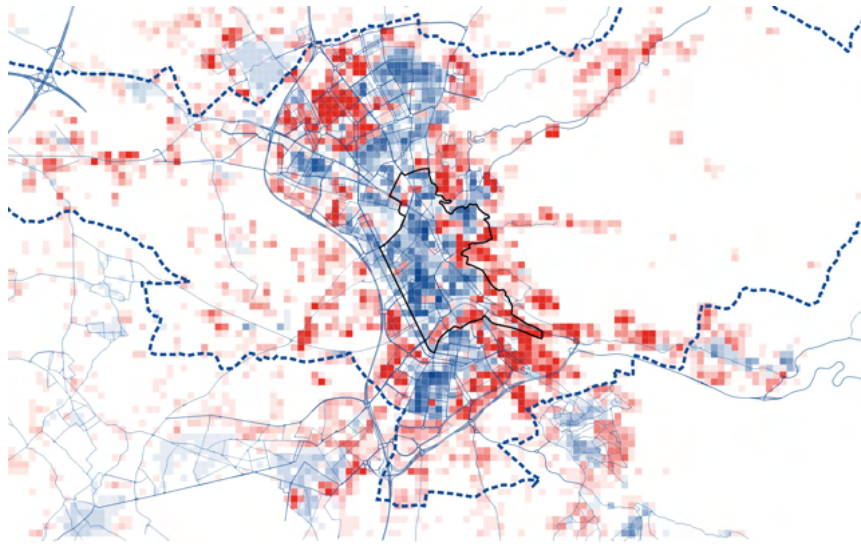
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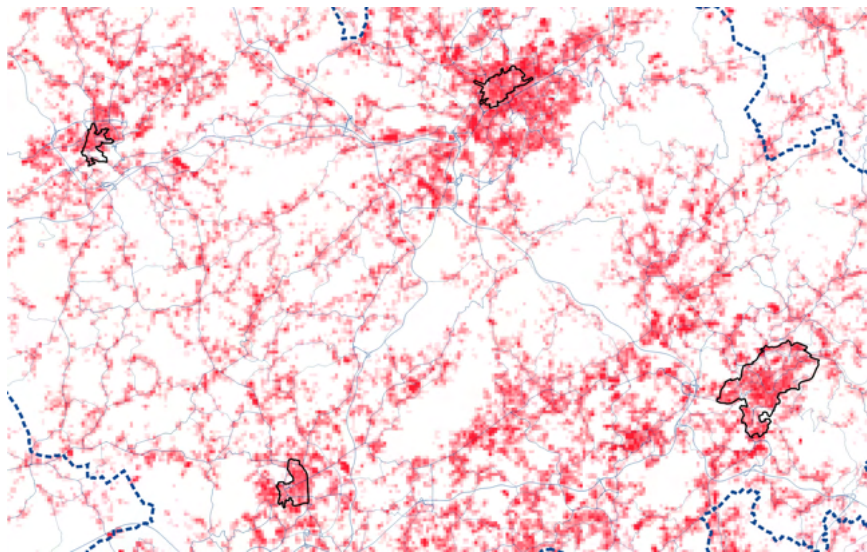


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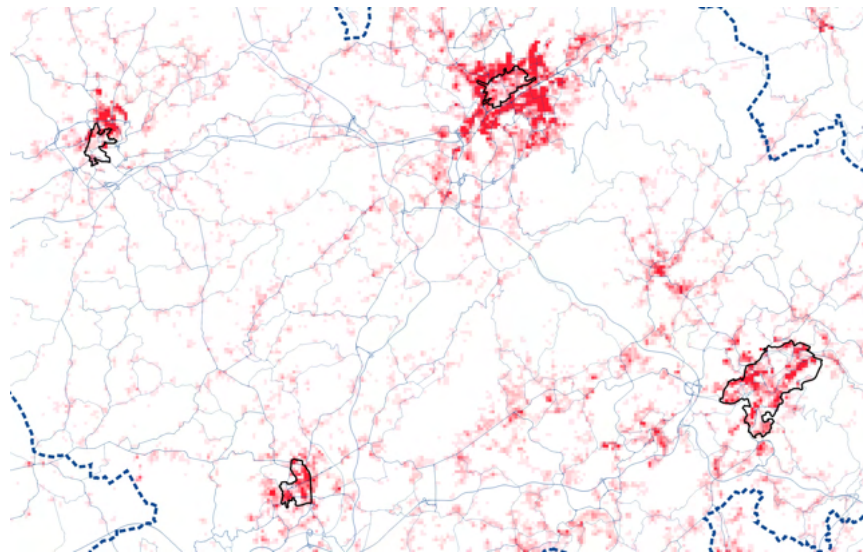


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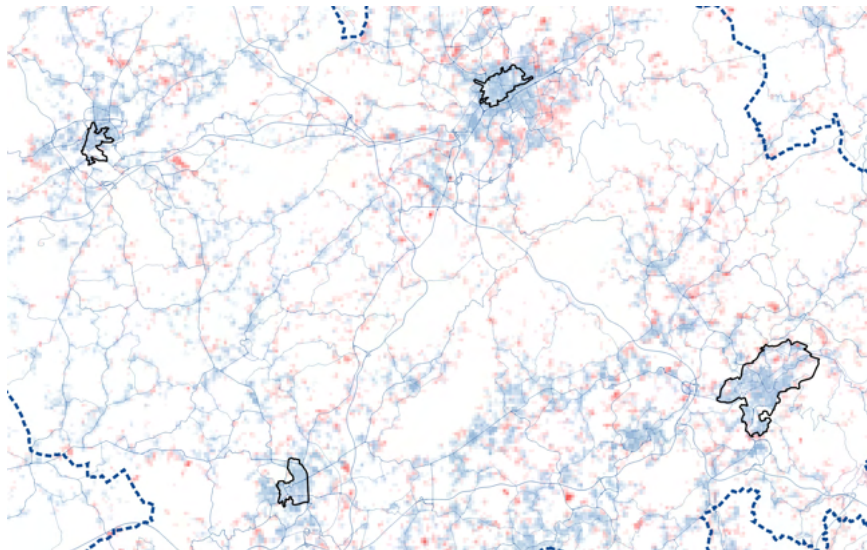
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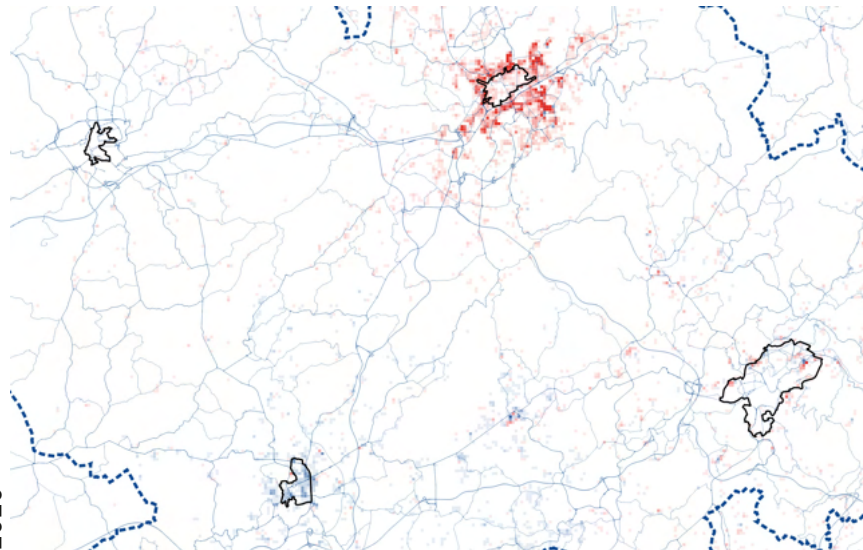
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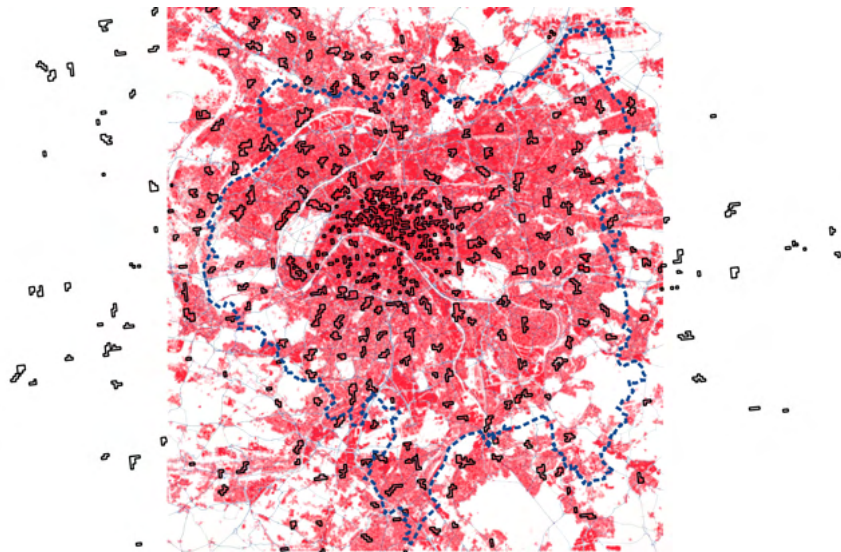


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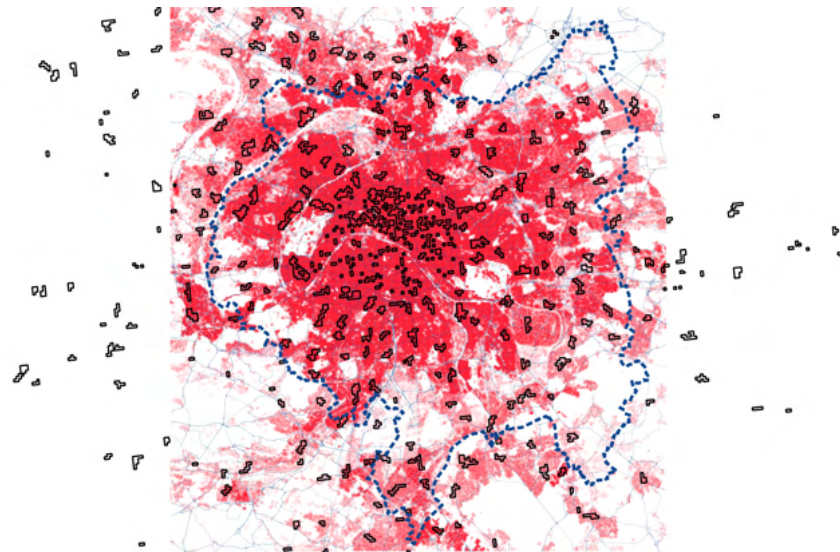


# Metropole du Grand Paris

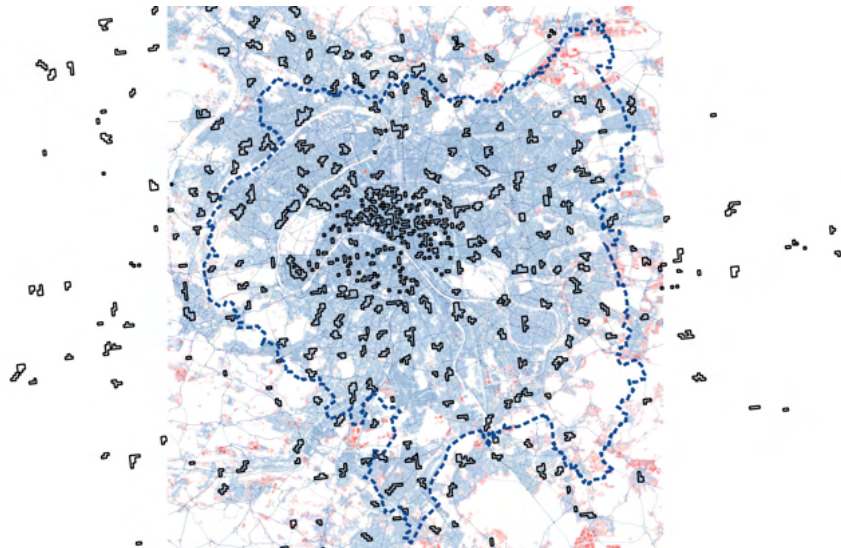
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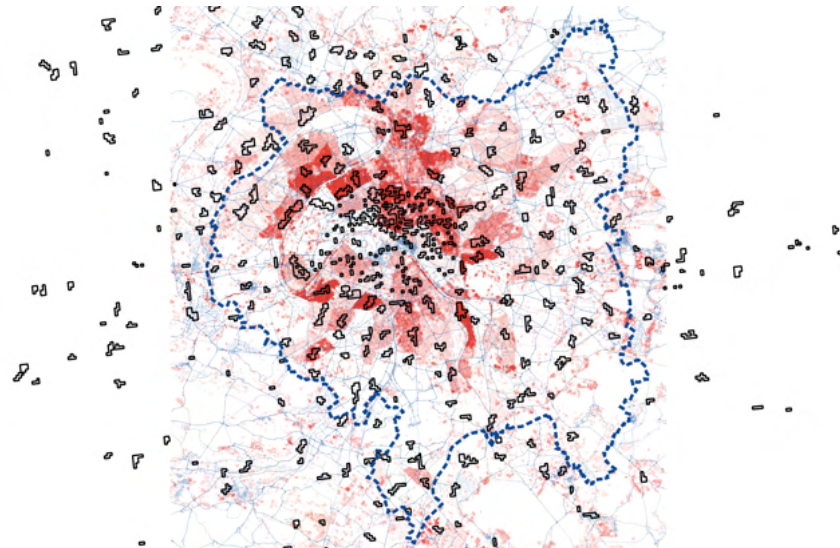
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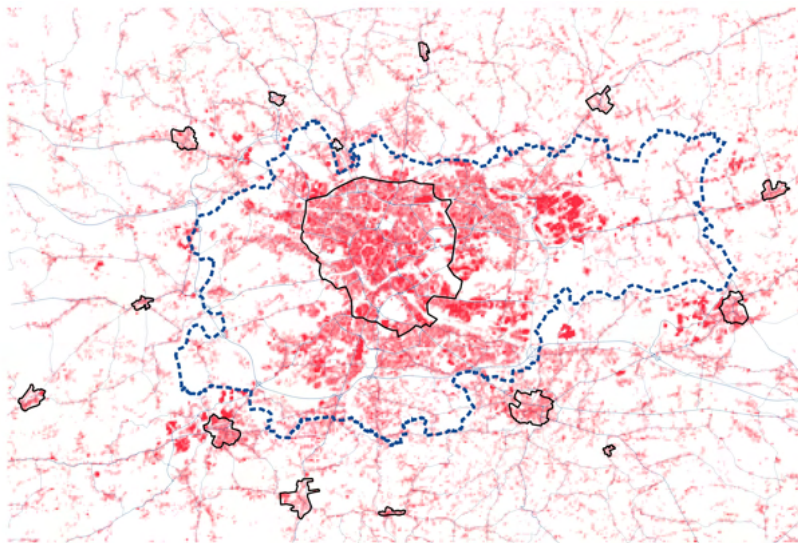
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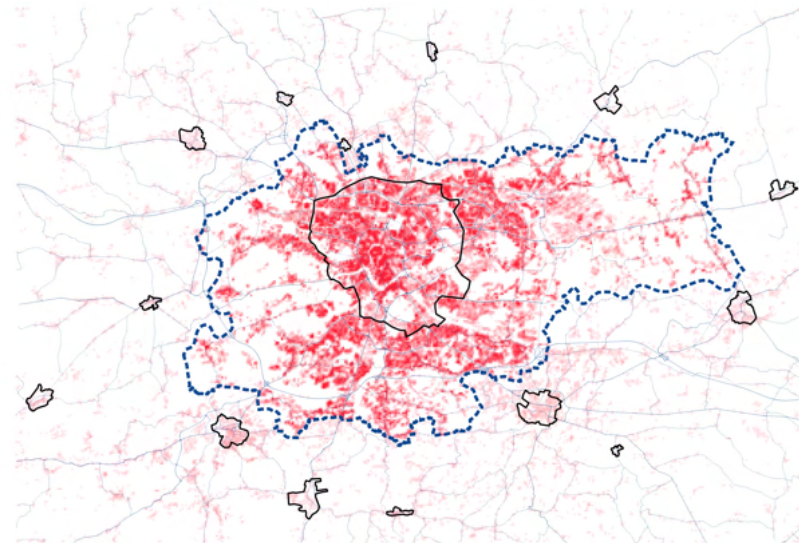


# Metropolia Krakowska

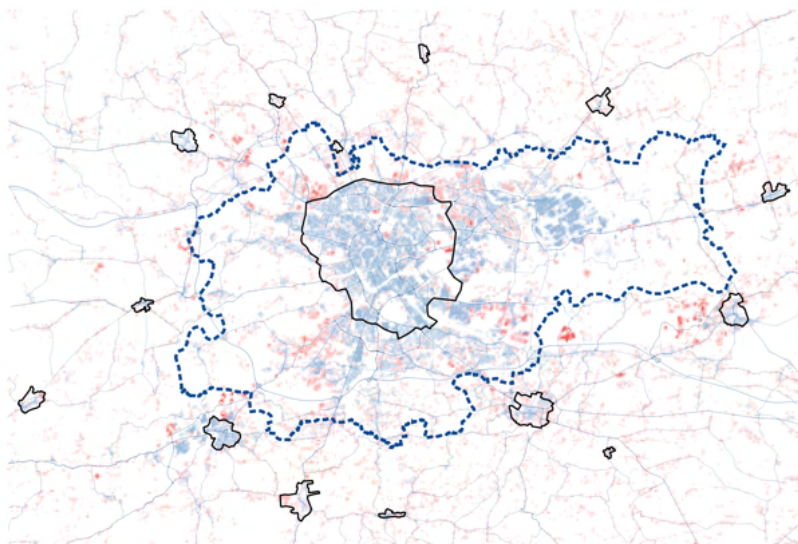
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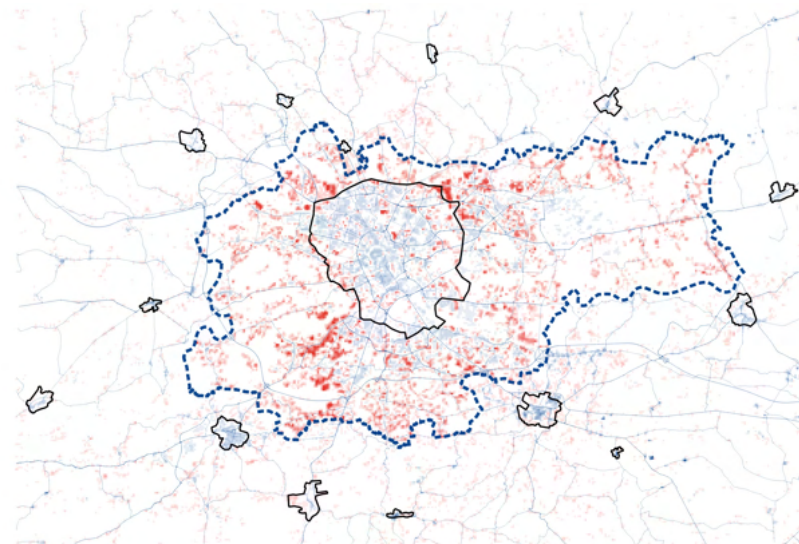
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03. Urbanised Land cover change between 1975 & 2020



04. Population change between 1975 & 2020



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Mar Santamaria Varas

### Lead Partner:

Métropole du Grand Paris

### Network Partners:

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Associação de Municípios de Fins Específicos  
Quadrilátero Urbano  
Celje City Council  
Cesena City Council  
Fleurus City Council  
Granada City Council  
Krakow Metropolis Association  
Osijek City Council  
Sligo City Council

### Proofreading:

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Lead Partner:



Network Partners:



# CITIES@HEART

TOWARDS A BALANCED CITY CENTRE

**BASELINE STUDY**

URBACT



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