From Projects to Practice:

Building Integrated Urban Governance in Chalandri

Hydro~ Heritage Cities

URBACT

Co-funded by the European Union

Interreg

Δήμος Χαλανδρίου

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City Profile

Χαλάνδρι (Halandri or Chalandri- pop: 77.102) is the largest municipality in the northern part of the Athens agglomeration, in Greece. It is part of the Region of Attica and is situated about 12 kilometres from the centre of Athens. Halandri is a vibrant city that is still developing, with a mix of residential and commercial areas. It is mostly known for the Rematia creek and for the summer cultural festival of Rematia, organised by the municipality.

Halandri sits between three of the largest and most busy transport highways in Attica (Attica, Kifisias and Mesogeion highways) and within its limits lie three Metro stations and one suburban train station connecting the city to Athens International Airport. Halandri's economy benefits from its proximity to Athens, with many residents commuting to the city for work, and some embassies are based in the city. While mostly residential, its location makes Halandri a key node in the economic, transport and cultural life of Metropolitan Athens. Key sectors include retail and commerce, with numerous shops and shopping centres, and a robust service industry encompassing restaurants, cafes, and personal services, making it the largest retail market and leisure centre in Northern Athens. As such the area attracts thousands of visitors daily and most recently tourism too. Thus the real estate market is strong, driven by high demand for residential properties and the hospitality industry.

Although the city enjoys a higher standard of living compared to other areas in Attica, it still faces disparities and issues related to income and risk of social exclusion. Halandri hosts two of the largest Roma settlements in the Athenian Metropolis while the uneven expansion of the city has resulted in discernible divergencies (and challenges) among its various quarters. Hence, the city's development and municipal policies are determined by diverse actualities and interests creating a complex and demanding terrain of urban policy planning. Moreover, the externalities created by rapid (patchwork and unruled in past decades) urban development and the effects of the economic (ongoing) crisis have significantly undermined the city's living standards and the citizen's wellbeing, fostering new pressing challenges.

The municipality has responded by creating an array of policies and innovative projects to improve social cohesion and inclusion, the city's urban and natural environment and its educational, sports, health and recreational services across age groups. Noteworthy is Halandri's persistence in engaging local communities and residents in its quest of a more sustainable, community and environment driven mode of urban development.

The thematic policy challenge being addressed

Over the past years, the Municipality of Halandri has ensured the stable and effective operation of essential municipal services and infrastructure, including waste management and recycling, schools, facilities for the elderly. In addition it ran targeted interventions supporting the most vulnerable groups of the population (Roma, low income families, immigrants).

Building on this solid operational basis, the municipality has been actively implementing a wide range of initiatives supporting the green, digital and social transition and has increasingly positioned itself as a pioneer in urban innovation and sustainable urban development. Through both national and European projects, the municipality has been experimenting with new approaches that address more strategic and forward-looking aspects of city development. These initiatives aim to shape a city that is greener, smarter and more pedestrian-friendly, while consistently prioritising citizens' well-being and strengthening the sense of belonging within local communities.

Yet, while the Municipality of Chalandri implements numerous green, digital and social transformation projects, those develop independently from each other due to:

- an established 'silo model' of planning and working
- scattered data or lack of them
- luck of appropriate human resources
- limited and fragmented participation of citizens and intermediary stakeholders, including civil society organisations, community groups, cultural organisations, educational institutions and local businesses
- lack of a strategic transformative vision

As a result, the knowledge, partnerships and governance practices developed through these projects often remain project-specific and risk being lost once external funding ends, limiting their long-term institutional impact. Municipal policies and interventions remain fragmented, reducing opportunities for cross-sectoral collaboration, increasing the cost and complexity of implementation, and limiting the municipality's capacity for institutional learning, strategic planning and sustained engagement with citizens and local stakeholders.

This challenge is not unique to Chalandri but reflects structural issues faced by many Greek and European urban authorities as we realised during our EU-wide URBACT process. In Greece, evaluations of Integrated Territorial Investments (ITIs), for example, emphasise the need for stronger place-based strategic planning, better coordination across levels of government and funding instruments, and more integrated governance approaches to maximise territorial and social impact.

1.2: The policy response

Addressing the challenges outlined above requires an enabling mechanism -**an urban lab/city agency**- capable of supporting data-informed policy design, cross-departmental collaboration, and structured engagement with residents and civil society.

The *Cultural H.ID.RA.N.T.* (CH) project demonstrated that the municipality can operate differently. By creating the space to work beyond the constraints of everyday administrative routines, it enabled municipal departments, researchers, civil society organisations and citizens to collaborate around a shared urban challenge using integrated and participatory approaches. More importantly, it demonstrated that this way of working can produce more coherent, holistic and effective urban solutions.

Figure 1.: *School Learning Walk along the Hadrian Aqueduct, Cultural H.ID.RA.N.T. project – engaging the local community in the design and transformation of the city*

Building on this experience, the ambition is to institutionalise these governance practices beyond the project's thematic focus. Rather than replicating a single policy intervention, the concept for an Urban Lab is to transfer the partnerships, governance model, collaborative processes and tools developed through CH into a permanent municipal mechanism that can be applied across different policy areas.

Its purpose is to strengthen the municipality's institutional and technological capacity to design and implement integrated, evidence-informed public policies. In doing so, it seeks to

move from ***project-based interventions towards a systemic way of working embedded across municipal governance and decision-making***. At the same time, by fostering multi-level governance and community-driven policymaking, the Urban Lab will create the processes, tools and collaborative spaces needed to strengthen active citizenship, transparency, democratic participation and a shared sense of ownership. These are considered fundamental conditions for achieving a socially just, inclusive and resilient green and digital transition.

The Urban Lab is therefore conceived not as another project, but as a permanent enabling mechanism that transforms how the municipality plans, collaborates and delivers public policy. Acting as a facilitator, it connects municipal departments, data, knowledge, stakeholders and communities, enabling integrated decision-making and ensuring that innovation generated through individual projects becomes embedded in everyday municipal practice.

The proposed intervention aligns with the governance direction of **EU Cohesion Policy,** which increasingly promotes integrated and place-based approaches, strengthened institutional capacity, and citizen-centred delivery. It also responds to EU's **Policy Objective 1 (A more competitive and smarter Europe)** and **Policy Objective 5 (A Europe closer to citizens)**. Under **PO1**, the creation of an Urban Lab, increases the city's administrative and digital capacity through the establishment of a structured, cross-departmental facilitation mechanism that enables integrated policy design, systematic monitoring, and coordinated service delivery. By addressing data fragmentation and organisational silos, the Urban Lab enhances the municipality's ability to design, implement, and evaluate policies in a more coherent and evidence-informed manner. Under **PO5**, the intervention operationalises participatory governance at neighbourhood level, transforming co-creation, transparency, and multi-stakeholder collaboration into a standing practice rather than a project-based exception. Through continuous engagement with residents, civil society, and local knowledge ecosystems, the Urban Lab reinforces local democracy, accountability, and place-based decision-making, contributing to more inclusive, resilient, and sustainable neighbourhoods.

In the Greek context, the proposal is fully consistent with the strategic priorities of the **Partnership Agreement (ESPA 2021–2027)** and supports implementation through both **Sectoral Operational Programmes (Τομεακά Επιχειρησιακά Προγράμματα)** and **Regional Operational Programmes (Περιφερειακά ΕΠ – ΠΕΠ)**. In particular, it directly supports the logic of Sustainable Urban Development and Integrated Territorial Investments (Βιώσιμη Αστική Ανάπτυξη / Ολοκληρωμένες Χωρικές Επενδύσεις – ΒΑΑ / ΟΧΕ) and is reflected in the Impact Assessment of Spatial Instruments in Greece (2014–2020), which require integrated packages of actions, cross-sectoral coordination, and measurable territorial impact.

The proposal is also consistent with the strategic priorities of **Chalandri's 2024–2029 Operational Programme**, particularly digital transformation, participatory governance, and the strengthening of administrative capacity and internal coordination, while also building on the municipality's climate and energy commitments under the **Covenant of Mayors** and its engagement in European networks and programmes.

The Urban Lab would function as a horizontal and cross-enabling structure that increases the maturity, coherence, multiplying effect and long-term impact and sustainability of such integrated urban strategies. By investing in it the Municipality of Chalandri seeks to:

a. create an apparatus that links data, participation, and integrated planning,
b. strengthen its ability to design, implement, and sustain complex urban interventions over time, and
c. remain responsive to local needs while aligned with European and national policy frameworks.

Ultimately, the Continuity Plan is not about creating another organisational unit; it is about creating the conditions, capacities and governance structures that enable integrated, participatory and data-informed ways of working to become embedded in the municipality's everyday practice.

SECTION 2: The investment proposal

2.1: Background to the proposal

As mentioned earlier, Cultural H.ID.RA.N.T. (CH) was Halandri's first coordinated effort to implement a large-scale urban intervention in an integrative, place-based, and participatory manner. It was an unprecedented challenge and experience for anyone involved: administration, project's partners and stakeholders, local citizens. CHs importance lies in demonstrating in practice the added value of moving beyond fragmented and sector-specific actions, towards more holistic approaches to urban development.

Beyond the specific intervention, CH enabled the municipality to operate in a different mode - one that temporarily moved beyond the "business as usual" imposed by everyday administrative demands. It created the space to explore tools, methods and forms of collaboration that are often missing from the way we analyse, understand and engage with the city and its challenges.

The URBACT process came at this point helping us to reflect on, refine, modularize and expand the ingredients and methodology of Cultural H.ID.RA.N.T. Putting us in a position to think through our 'best practice', in order to be able to transfer it for adaptation to other cities, has been an extremely fruitful and learning process – neither an even one, not without surprises, as we will see below, e.g. ULG formation, continuity vision definition etc. URBACT, also, provided us with a set of tools, training processes and, indeed, opportunities that enabled us to overcome bottlenecks in the process of transforming the Cultural H.ID.RA.N.T. practice into a coherent vision and potential operational policy.

Figure 2.: Hydro-Heritage Cities Network visit to Chalandri to explore the Cultural H.ID.RA.N.T. practice and exchange on its transferability

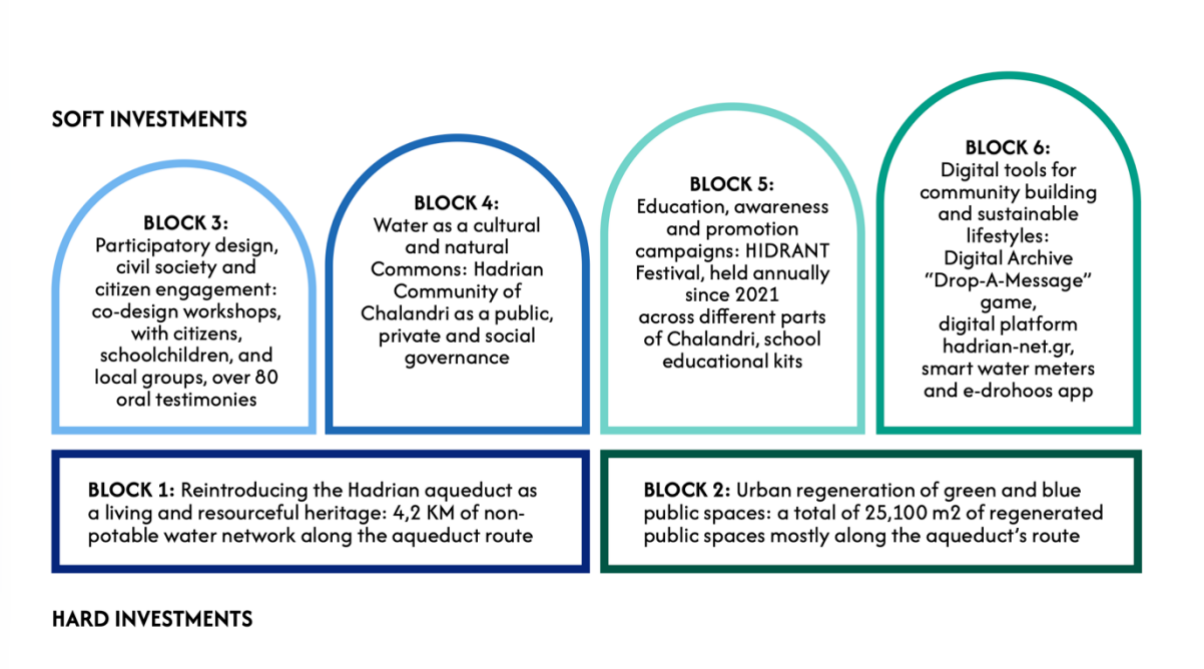


Figure 3: The 2 + 4 innovative building blocks of Cultural H.ID.RA.N.T.
Source: Transferability Study, Sandra Rainero

The initial training on the URBACT Method was particularly important in this process, introducing us to different dimensions of integrated urban development: horizontal, vertical and territorial integration, as well as the need to balance physical investment with softer governance, capacity-building and community-oriented measures. This helped us look beyond the integrated character of Cultural H.ID.RA.N.T. itself and consider how integration could become a broader principle of municipal policy design. In particular, horizontal integration reinforced our focus on cross-departmental collaboration, which subsequently became one of the central pillars of the Urban Lab concept.

Working with other cities in our Hydro-Heritage URBACT Network benefited considerably Chalandri and our Continuity Plan in two ways: a. Firstly, it brought us in touch with paradigms and alternatives that our partner-cities had developed in different contexts, fields of action and scale. Their examples, added to those examined on our Hydro-Heritage Cities URBACT webinars, enriched our vision, instruments and implementation potential. b. Secondly, it allowed us to move from a project intervention (Cultural H.ID.RA.N.T.) to a policy conception (Hydro-Heritage management), by defining along with other cities and URBACT experts both the notion and a set of practices related to addressing water related heritage as living heritage and a tool to counter contemporary climate related urban development challenges.

Figure 3.: URBACT ITN meeting in Paris: working together on the Hydro-Heritage Framework

This proposal has been, therefore, shaped by deep-diving more on CH vis-à-vis the local conditions and requirements for expanding its methodology, and also by expanding its prospect and potential through the knowledge exchange generated by the Hydro-Heritage Cities URBACT journey. With regard to Chalandri's continuity perspective, both CH and Hydro-Heritage Cities have helped to reach a dual recognition: In one hand, they affirmed the Municipality's capacity to design, deliver and transfer innovative, integrated interventions when appropriate frameworks and resources are in place. In the other, the impediments posed by persistent organisational silos, fragmented data systems, and limited systematic monitoring and coordination to informed decision-making, policy coherence, and long-term impact came, even more, under the spotlight. Challenges that are not specific to a single policy field, but occur across the city's departments and planning domains.

2.2: Our starting point

This experience led to a simple but fundamental question: *how can the municipality move from delivering a successful project to working differently with and for the city?*

While the municipality has accumulated valuable experience in participatory processes, cross-departmental work, and partnership-building, these practices remain largely project-

based and dependent on ad hoc arrangements, individual capacities, or external funding opportunities. As a result, the knowledge, instruments, and working methods developed through innovative projects risk remaining isolated rather than being mainstreamed into everyday municipal administration.

In this context, we aimed to capitalize on the momentum generated by CH and to **direct our URBACT process into rendering CH's integrated and participatory logic into a permanent governance and operational capacity**. We invest in establishing an **Urban Lab** to support the transition from a project-based innovation and working method to a systemic operational practice. In this way, the continuity plan responds to the municipality's need for greater organisational maturity, institutional memory, and coherence across policy areas.

The starting point has been **the need to (co-)imagine and describe such support structure** in its various aspects (e.g. digital means, co-design processes) and to **mature the conditions** that would make the adoption of CH's methodology and work routines feasible within the municipality. These considerations informed the formation of the URBACT Local Group (ULG) and its first task. However, **c**ommunicating the initial idea (for an Urban Lab) and engaging the ULG members in a co-designing process proved quite ambitious. Three main challenges emerged.

1. First, there was a need to **clarify the concept at a practical level**, translating an abstract idea into **concrete examples, functions, and implementation steps**. In other words, the vision needed to become tangible in order to be understandable and appealing to municipal staff and elected officials invited to participate in the ULG.
2. The second challenge concerned **how to connect an objective that appeared to be "internal"**—relating to governance and municipal operability—with the **everyday concerns and priorities of Halandri's citizens and communities**. In essence, the question was how to generate interest and participation around an initiative that aims to introduce a **different, more democratic mode of policy design and municipal operation** rather than a topical urban intervention with immediate felt impact to inhabitants.
3. A **third, more structural challenge** also emerged during the process. The suggested changes were, by nature, **systemic and institutional**, raising questions about **scale, mandate and responsibility**. We were confronted with the issue of whether it was within the remit of a project-based partnership, and of the ULG itself, to propose such far-reaching changes to the established municipal operation. This reflection required to carefully position the Continuity Plan **not as a top-down institutional reform /expert proposal**, but as a **facilitating, exploratory and incremental framework**, grounded in and building upon existing practices, competences and initiatives of the municipality.

At the same time, the process highlighted that its successful implementation depends on a number of enabling conditions, including political commitment and continuity, administrative leadership, collaboration across departments, and the willingness of municipal staff and local stakeholders to engage in long-term organisational change. **Such conditions were present throughout the implementation of CH and have been instrumental to its success. However, as our experience in setting up an operational ULG taught us, they cannot be taken as given.** One of the objectives of the Urban Lab is therefore to embed these collaborative practices, capacities and governance arrangements within the municipality so that they become less dependent on individual leadership, project funding or favourable institutional circumstances.

2.3: The continuity version of the UIA project

CH convinced us that a sustainable mode of urban development aiming at citizens' wellbeing demands more cross-sectoral, inclusive, synergetic and accountable forms of urban planning and governance. The Continuity Plan is not designed to replicate CH's thematic focus or interventions. Rather, it focuses on **transferring and institutionalising its methodology.** What we want to scale-up is not a specific urban intervention but a way of working -the main driver of change- across Halandri's policy areas. In doing so, we deliberately retain what we consider to be CH's key ingredients of success.

What we keep from Cultural HIDRANT is its:

- integrated approach and cross-sectoral thinking,
- participatory methods, with focus on social innovation and citizen engagement,
- collaborative governance scheme, between policy makers, expert knowledge and civil society.

Through our URBACT journey and exchanges those three pillars of our CH experience have been enriched and expanded further. The experience of other URBACT partner cities in deploying citizen science and/or dashboards as tools for community participation and data-based decision making respectively, or, the co-governance scheme of Arrangiera between local community and the City of Rome, are some examples that added content and spanned our understanding and re-designing of those key elements of CH.

What we change is that we attempt to move:

- from place/field-specific interventions → to across city/issue planning
- from pilot(ing) → to mainstreaming (structural) change
- from project based coordination → to systemic governance practice
- from external (temporal partners) → to internal, embedded in municipality expertise and capacities.

As above, during our URBACT process we learned from, similar attempts e.g. in Elche to move from site-specific (the Moli Real, the Acequias) to more holistic approach and management of diverse water heritage resources and infrastructure, or, Roeselare's inhouse capacity building and project alignment with the City's strategic goals and development policies.

***Figure 4**.: ULG Working Together to Share Key Learnings from the URBACT Network and Reflect on the Cultural H.ID.RA.N.T. Approach and Its Future*

The novelties of the Continuity Plan

The main difference, compared with the CH project, is that we attempt the deployment of a structural (system governance) approach across the fields and responsibilities of Halandri's municipality operational and urban planning demands. This includes the development of instruments, skills and settings that enable the transition from the current "silo" operation to a collaborative culture, and from evidence-poor to data-based policy making. Thus the **focus has shifted** around two main questions/challenges:

a. how (through what activities) to introduce and enable cross-sectoral working method, as prerequisite for integrated urban planning and,
b. how to embed (and maintain citizen-) participatory practices in data-management and policy-design.

Responding to these issues prompted our Continuity Plan's **novel features**:

- CH's integrated methodology was performed largely by external (expert) partners, with administrative only support of Halandri's City departments. Now, the latter occupy the central stage, via the ULG, in defining and designing the roadmap towards establishing an Urban Lab.

- While CH's innovative character was based predominantly in Halandri's citizens physical participation, emphasis now is given on **the development of digital tools/interfaces and of city servants - experts - citizens synergies** as enablers of the operational culture change needed. Examples that we came across during our Hydro-Heritage Cities meetings (e.g. citizen science and policy dashboards in Roeselare, water, or, palm-tree related data monitoring in Elche and Serpa) or webinars (e.g. on governance in a digital age) were critical in doing so.
- Given the importance of laying the appropriate instruments and processes that support cross-department and multi-sectoral collaboration within the municipality, our Continuity Plan attempts to tackle an emerging challenge: how to **devise formats of citizen engagement that are not by-stepped by institutional or technology centred processes** (e.g. data-banks, digital dashboards, AI etc.), but rather become instrumental for just and transparent urban policy making.
- The above entail a second big challenge (and innovation), that is: **outlying the governance scheme** that would make such enterprise inclusive, operable, effective and sustainable. Once more, the Hydro-Heritage Cities Network webinar on 'building sustainable structures of governance for systemic transformation' has been a reference point to address this issue.

2.4: The integrated approach and the participative process. Or, the ULG as an active learning practice.

Forming a working URBACT Local Group apt to the scope of our initial proposal, of our CH experience and of applying the URBACT method, has not been so straightforward. It required method adaptation and modifying expectations, before we gradually managed to define the vision and the composition of the ULG. URBACT's in person meetings and workshops, the Network's webinars but mostly the modularization of our CH experience (to be transferred) provided a great opportunity to delve into and refine further our practice-based integrative methodology. By breaking it down to its main dimensions (strategic, governance, citizen engagement) we were able to identify the critical fields for our continuity targets and course of action, and design our Testing Actions accordingly. At the same time, our introduction to the URBACT approach and toolkit equipped us with ways to work through the deficiencies and challenges we faced following this path. Eventually, the development of this Continuity Plan relied on an iterative participatory process of the ULG involving city councilors, municipal departments, local stakeholders, experts, and public institutions. It has been a maturing process for our Continuity Plan, that tested a working method and helped forming a dedicated team to lead its implementation.

Initial stakeholder mapping and first ULG composition

The process began with a brainstorming and mapping exercise to identify relevant actors, within and outside the municipality, who could contribute to the development of the proposed Urban Lab. The first ULG meeting brought together a broad group of stakeholders, including:

- Four Municipal departments: Technical Services (Public Works and Urban Planning), Programming & Development, Environment, Culture–Education–Sports. Among the participants were two City Councillors and a Deputy Mayor
- Two Municipal organisations: Halandri's Development Agency and FLYA Municipal Agency
- Two Civil society groups: Halandri's Parents Association and Halandri Energy Community
- Experts and professionals: GetMap (geo-mapping), Commonspace and Participatory Lab (citizen participation and urban co-design experts)
- Public institutions: Management Organisation Unit of Development Programmes (Ministry of Finance)

This broad composition provided valuable insights into the relevance of establishing such an apparatus, as our proposed Urban Lab, despite the vagueness of its visualisation. At the same time, the discussion quickly expanded to a wide range of issues, making it difficult to focus on concrete objectives. The need to clarify the proposal's direction and illustrate a common vision emerged as a primary step. To make the process more manageable the project team decided to restructure the ULG into a smaller core group, which would refine the concept and define a concrete strategy, before re-engaging a wider and more diverse group of stakeholders, including civil society organisations, local stakeholders, businesses, educational and research institutions, cultural organisations and community representatives, to consolidate a broader multi-stakeholder ULG.

The core ULG included: the project team (including one City Councillor), representatives from two municipal departments (Social Services and Technical Services) and, the head of Halandri's Development Agency. This group worked on analysing the underlying challenges and clarifying the objectives of the Continuity Plan.

Analytical tools and diagnosis

To support the process, several URBACT Toolkit methods were applied, including the Problem Tree, Five Whys, and Newspaper of Tomorrow. These tools helped participants unpack the underlying causes of the municipality's difficulties in adopting integrated, participatory and data-informed planning practices.

The analysis showed that these difficulties do not stem from isolated shortcomings but from structural organisational constraints. Municipal action is often shaped by bureaucratic workload, pressure for immediate results, and limited time for strategic reflection, leading to fragmented and short-term interventions. These conditions are reinforced by siloed departmental structures, insufficient mechanisms for cross-sectoral coordination, insufficient human resources, and a lack of institutionalised processes for integrating data and citizen participation into policy design. As a result, innovative practices most often remain one-off project-based endeavors rather than becoming embedded in everyday municipal policy-design and management. Consequently, the successes, know-how, and experience gained during project implementation does not spread to the everyday operation and working culture of the municipality. Hence, the impact of such innovative endeavors remain temporal and restricted and do not feed in a systemic way a capacity building process.

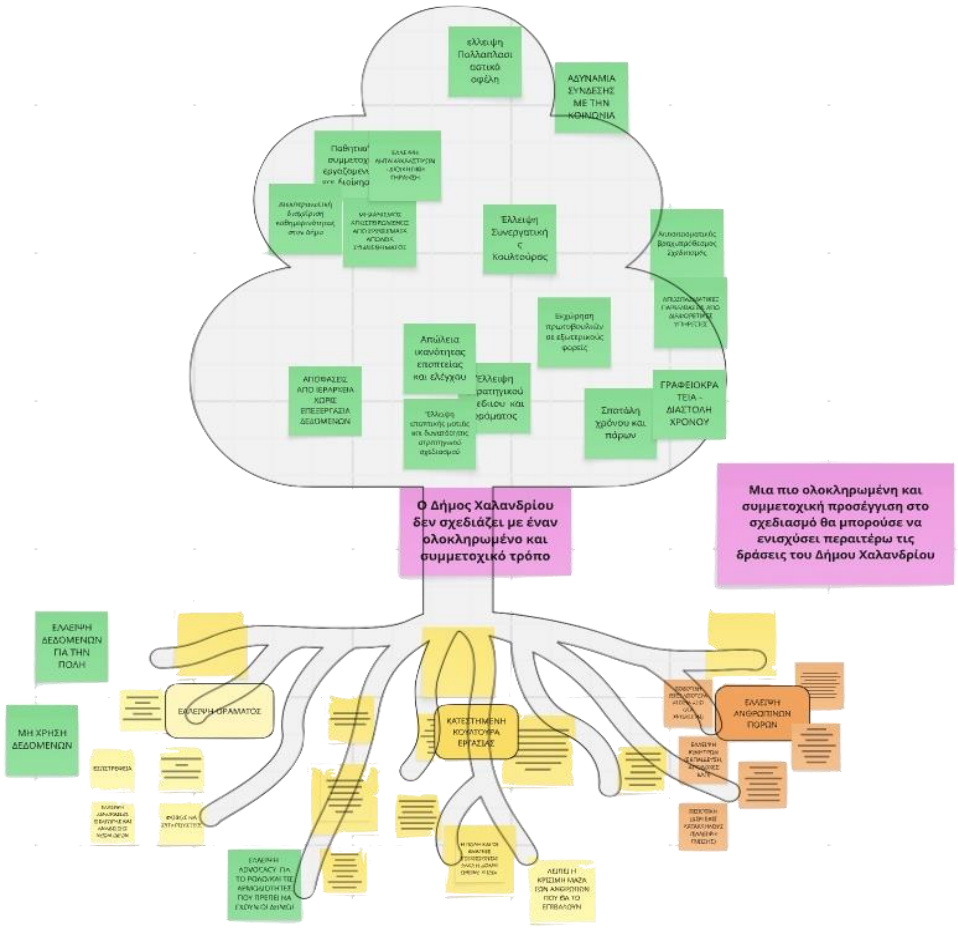


Figure 5.: ULG applying methods from the URBACT Toolkit, Problem Tree

Having delved into identifying the root causes that obstruct the adoption of cross-department, data-informed, integrated approaches to policy design and implementation by the municipality, we used the Newspaper of Tomorrow in order to co-configure the vision, function and shape of the Urban Lab. The result added lucidity in how we imagined it, moulding a common perception of the Urban Lab among the ULG members. This made, also, easier and more specific the roadmap design towards achieving such a goal.

Albeit the chaotic and difficult at times process, mostly in regard to maintaining focus, the outcome while highlighting the challenges and difficulties ahead, it also multiplied both our conviction and inspiration for the benefits that an Urban Lab would bring to the Municipality of Halandri and mostly to its citizens.

Defining the testing approach

Once the concept became clearer, it was agreed that our idea -of data-informed, integrated and participatory policy design- should be tested in a specific location and around a concrete issue. In this way, we could pilot Urban Lab's methodology at **a small scale based on a hypothetical planning scenario**. At this stage more municipal departments and experts were invited to participate henceforth in the ULG meetings which focused on co-designing a testing action that could demonstrate the value of the proposed Urban Lab working method. The expanded ULG was composed by:

- the Social Services and Technical Services departments, including a City Councillor, a Deputy Mayor and a legal advisor of the municipality,
- the head of Halandri's Development Agency
- external experts (GetMap and Participatory Lab)
- representatives from the Halandri Energy Community and the Hadrian Community of Halandri.

The contributions of the participants were crucial. Rather than contributing independently, municipal departments and external experts worked jointly throughout the process, combining technical, social, legal and spatial perspectives to define the pilot area, identify relevant datasets, agree on common indicators, and co-design both the digital tools and the participatory process. This collaborative way of working anticipates the operational model of the future Urban Lab, and has been informed by examples brought forth in our HHC webinars. All these helped:

- identify existing datasets within the municipality
- propose digital tools and participatory methods
- define the locus (city quarters) of the testing action
- refine the policy issue to be explored

***Figure 6**.: ULG Working Together to Define the Neighbourhood and Thematic Focus for the Testing Action*

Through this process the kind of testing action and the city area to be performed was decided. The location - Halandri's former Planning Unit 5 (xPU5) - was chosen by the ULG after considering a number of factors (e.g. scale, social composition, urban features, etc.); but primarily due to Halandri's current innovative and traffic redesign projects in the vicinity, which so far run apart from each other. Initially, our working hypothesis was how we could re-imagine such interventions through an integrated framework of urban design, enhancing their impact in the area. Yet, this idea needed further unpacking and proved not realistic within the limits of a pilot action.

It was then that we opted for walkability as a more tangible policy concern, and the topic on which we could test Urban Lab's data-based, cross-department, integrated and participative methodology in a designated area. Our pilot regarded thus testing a potential Urban Lab's methodology to map/assess the state of walkability in Halandri's xPU5. It did so by combining the digital and data-related aspects of our plan with participatory processes on an imagined working scenario performed by the Urban Lab.

Firstly, it focused on the development of a GIS-based geospatial database and policy dashboard to assess walkability conditions in xPU5. Putting together data existing on Halandri's GIS already used by the Technical Department, in Social Service's lists or ELSTAT's (National Statistics Service) datasets, this digital system captures and visualises indicators related to pedestrian infrastructure quality - such as sidewalk continuity and width, surface condition, crossings, lighting, accessibility and street furniture - as well as environmental

quality parameters including air pollution, noise levels, urban greenery and thermal comfort. Furthermore, these datasets feed a user-friendly dashboard enabling spatial comparison, multi-criteria analysis, and the prioritisation of public space interventions. This digital ‘experiment’ aims to showcase a new -common to all departments- instrument, serving as a proof of concept for the municipality’s transition from monothematic, project-based innovation, and silo-style operation to a more systemic, data-informed, and cross-sectoral working practice.

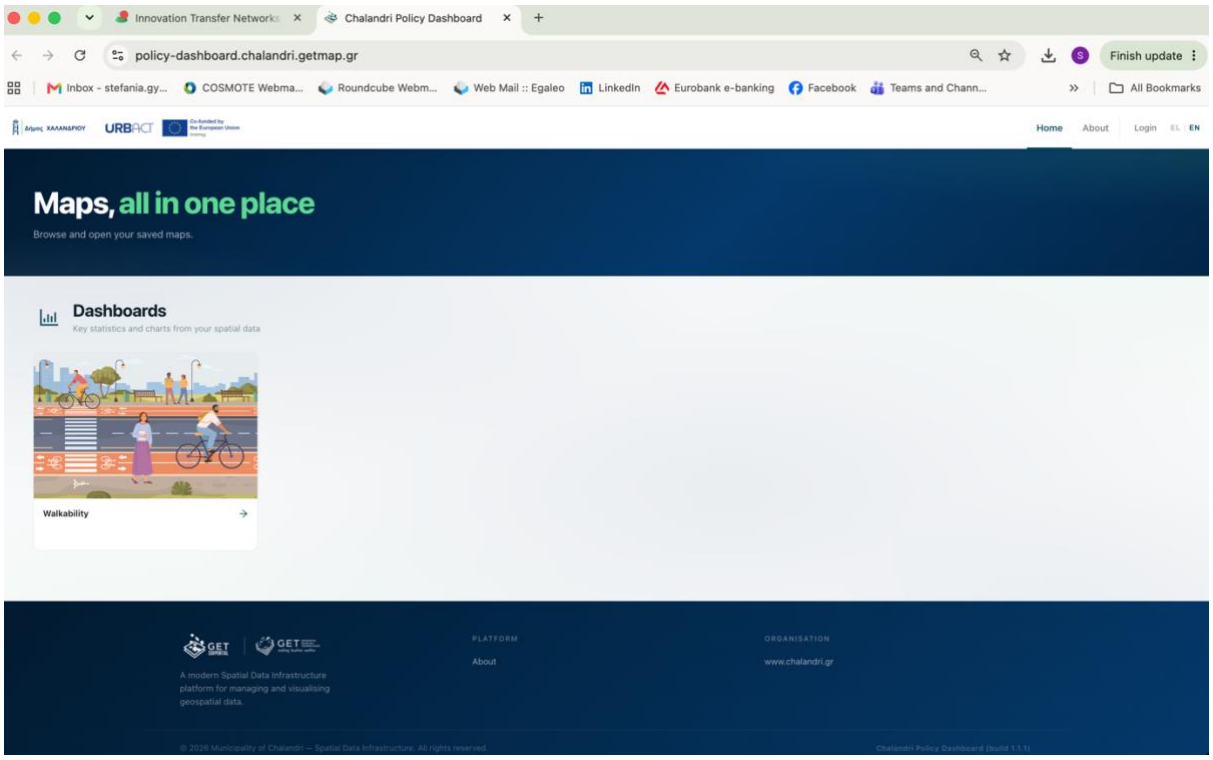
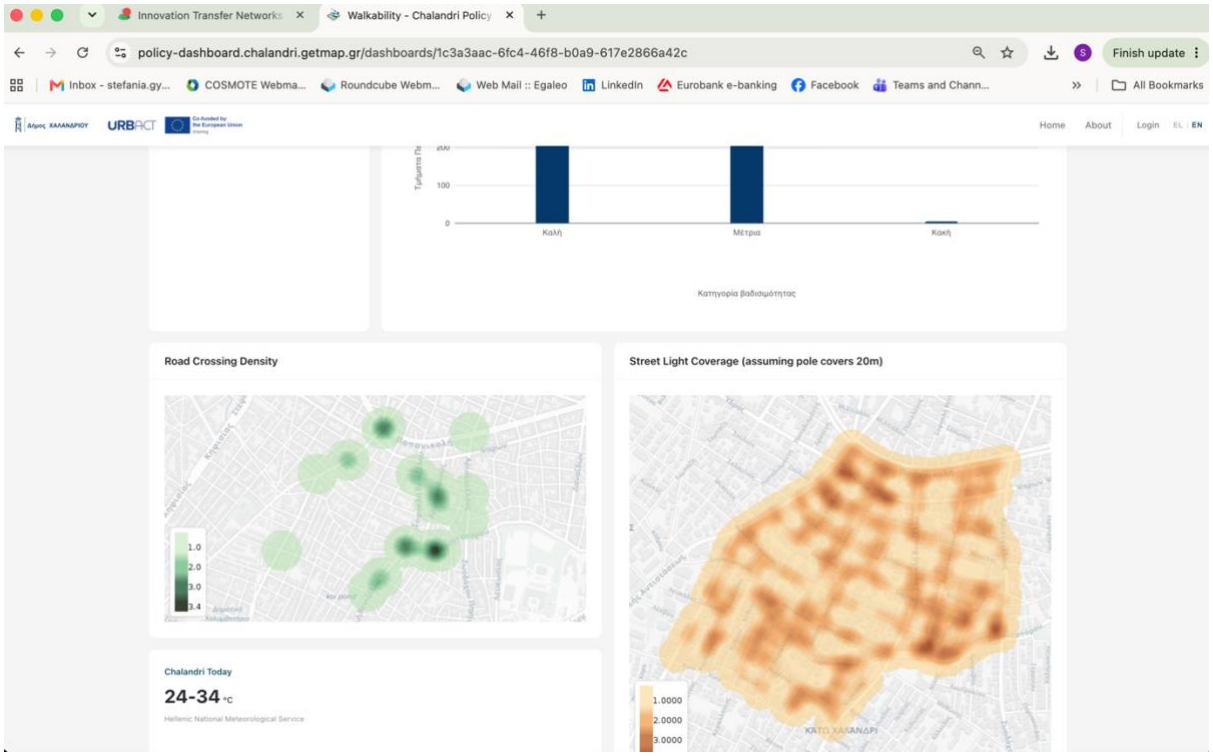


***Figure 7**.: Screenshot of GIS-Based Policy Dashboard for Walkability*



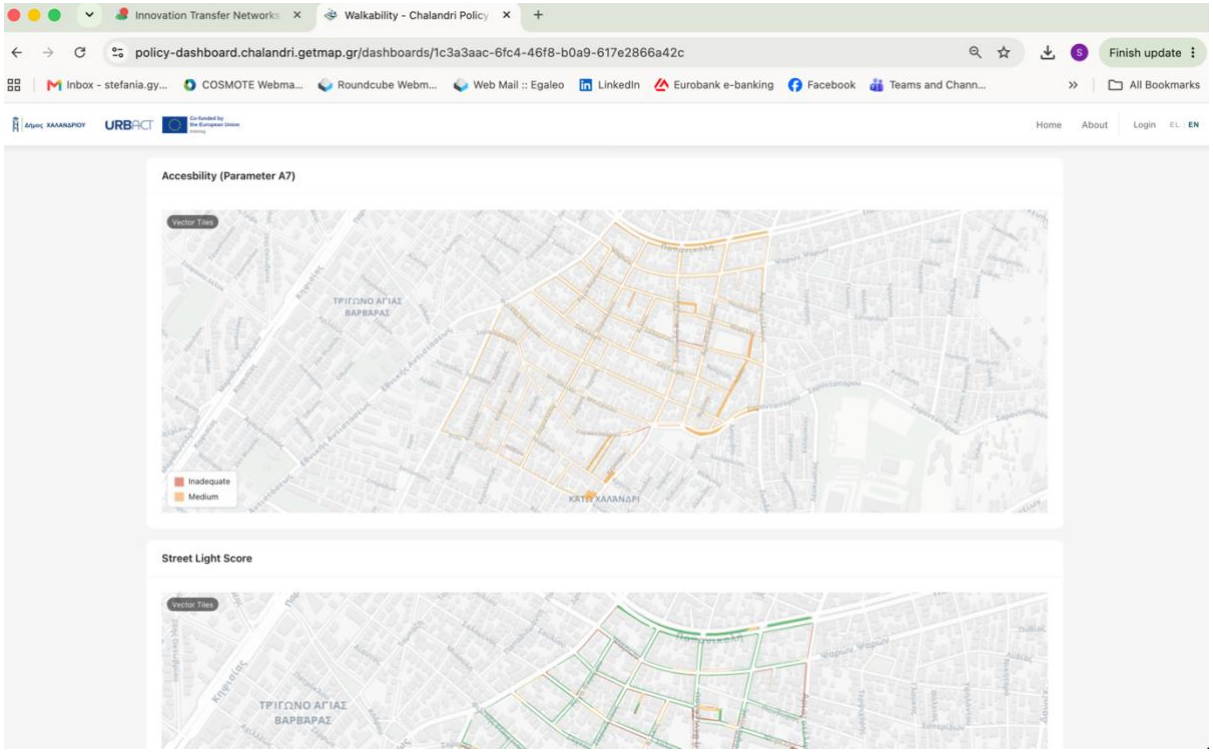


***Figure 8 & 9**.: Screenshot of GIS-Based Policy Dashboard for Walkability*

Besides its technical dimension, the pilot also served as a testing ground for new governance practices. Two complementary participatory activities were pursued in order to try out collaborative monitoring and policy-making processes:

1) A community workshop with residents and local stakeholders in the pilot area, aimed at validating findings, discussing everyday experiences of walkability, and reflecting on priorities for intervention.

Key Findings:

- *Alignment between data and lived experience*: The workshop findings broadly confirmed the results of the digital platform, indicating a high level of consistency between objective data and residents' perceptions of pavement quality. However, participants tended to assess conditions somewhat more negatively than the quantitative data alone suggested.
- *Lived experience helps prioritise action:* While the digital platform identifies where problems exist, the workshop revealed which issues residents consider most disruptive to their daily lives. This qualitative evidence provides an important additional criterion for prioritising future interventions and investments.
- *Participation strengthens accountability and trust*: Beyond generating valuable evidence, the workshop demonstrated the importance of participatory processes in municipal governance. By inviting residents to contribute to decision-making, the municipality signals its commitment to respond to identified needs, strengthening its accountability towards the community, building trust, and fostering more transparent and collaborative governance.

***Figure 8**.: Community Mapping Walk: Gathering Residents' Input on Walkability and Everyday Experience of the Neighbourhood*

***Figure 9**.: Community Mapping Walk: Gathering Residents' Input on Walkability and Everyday Experience of the Neighbourhood*

***Figure 10**.: Community Mapping Walk Poster*

2) A cross-departmental workshop, where municipal staff jointly interpreted the data, tested and reviewed a newly developed digital dashboard as a shared supporting tool;

Key Findings:

- **Limited internal awareness, strong external identity:** Although only a small proportion of participants reported being very familiar with the Cultural H.I.D.R.A.N.T.'s practices, this project is strongly associated with the city's identity, history and the Hadrian Aqueduct, suggesting that its achievements have been recognised despite limited internal dissemination.
- **Cross-departmental collaboration is the project's most enduring legacy:** Participants identified improved collaboration between municipal departments as the most valuable outcome of the project, followed by participatory planning methods and collaboration with external experts.
- **Positive assessment of the digital tool and methodology:** The walkability tool was considered user-friendly, reliable and useful for supporting evidence-based decision-making. Participants also recognised the added value of combining digital tools with participatory processes.
- **Potential for wider application:** There was broad agreement that similar digital tools and methodologies could be applied to other municipal policy areas, particularly mobility, parking, urban green spaces, public spaces, municipal infrastructure and asset management.
- **Staff capacity remains the main challenge:** A lack of human resources was consistently identified as the biggest barrier to collecting and maintaining data, supporting informed decision-making and implementing new initiatives.
- **Need for stronger governance and data management:** Participants highlighted the importance of clearer governance arrangements, improved data quality and well-defined responsibilities for maintaining and updating municipal datasets.
- **Strengthening collaboration during project planning:** While collaboration during project implementation was rated relatively positively, participants noted that cooperation is weaker during the planning and design stages. They emphasised the need for stronger institutional coordination, a shared vision across departments, and greater leadership support to embed collaborative ways of working.

***Figures 11&12**.: Cross-Departmental Workshop: Municipal Staff Jointly Interpreting Data and Testing the Digital Dashboard*

The outcomes of these workshops feed in both ends of the tested digital apparatus. Inhabitants observations and comments enter qualitative information in digital datasets /dashboard, while municipal staff highlight from their own post needs and competences participating, in effect, into co-designing a digital policy-making tool.

In this way the two pillars (integrated and participatory) of Urban Lab's methodology were tested, while we experimented with phygital (physical meets digital) processes of collaborative policy design, governance and citizen empowerment. The participatory process is intended to remain open and adaptive, allowing the composition of the Urban Lab and its stakeholder network to evolve over time as new policy priorities, partnerships and community needs emerge.

Halandri's ULG focus primarily on municipal departments, city councilors and technical experts was a deliberate choice. As the Urban Lab represents a new manner to work for the municipality, a new way of working, the first priority was to build internal consensus, strengthen cross-departmental ownership and align municipal actors around a shared vision before broadening participation. During implementation, the Urban Lab will progressively expand its stakeholder network to include representatives of the local business community, educational and research institutions, cultural organisations and other intermediary stakeholders whose activities shape the city's social and economic development. Their involvement will ensure that the Urban Lab reflects the city's diverse social, economic and institutional interests, while strengthening its long-term legitimacy, enriching the knowledge and resources available to the municipality.

The Chalandri Urban Lab Continuity Journey: A 7-Step Roadmap

1. Modularisation & Transferability Study

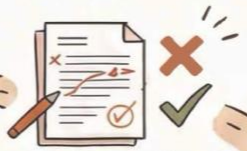
Based on Cultural H.ID.R.A.N.T., this initial URBACT phase focused on modularising the practice and assessing its transferability [Chalandri CH team, URBACT expert and HHC partner cities]

2. ULG Formation & Strategic Vision

The core Chalandri ULG refines the CH practice through the URBACT toolkit, leading to the final ULG composition and the development of the Continuity/Urban Lab strategic vision.

3. Co-Design & Testing Exercise

Enlarged ULG co design testing action, informed by URBACT and HHC learning, leading to case study selection and two participatory activities.



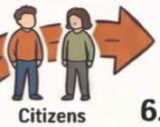
4. First Draft Feedback

URBACT experts and HHC partners provide critical feedback on the first draft of the Continuity Plan (CP).

5. Testing Action 1: Digital Tool Development

(Parallel Part A)

Development begins on a digital tool/dashboard designed for urban management and data visualisation.



6. Testing Action 2: Community Mapping

(Parallel Part B)

Citizens participate in a "mapping walk" to gather local data, which feeds directly into the ongoing digital tool development.

Municipality Feedback Workshop

(Parallel Part C)

Following the citizen mapping, a co-design workshop is held with the municipality to provide feedback on the digital tool and Urban Lab method.

7. Final Review & Plan Update

Final review and feedback from URBACT experts leads to the official update and completion of the Continuity Plan

NotebookLM

SECTION 3: The continued innovation project

3.1 The Value Proposition

City authorities today confront multiple interrelated challenges in their effort to cope with climate change, digital transition and sustainable urban development without leaving anyone behind. Yet, established structures and operational culture delay or overshadow the need for a systemic change towards an integrated approach to urban policy-making anchored in data-based, cross-sectoral and citizen involvement processes. In the case of the Municipality of Halandri a **lack of a data monitoring and management mechanism,** combined with a **silo operational culture**, hinders informed and integrated planning, cross-department collaboration, participatory decision-making and accountable governance. By setting up an **independent, but embedded within the municipal frame and policy priorities body,** an Urban Lab, we attempt to respond to these challenges and instigate a process of operational transition. The proposed **Urban Lab will act as an accelerator** of data-based policy design and cross-departmental collaboration, **connecting** the administration with experts, inhabitants and civil society. By developing digital tools and co-creation processes, this autonomous body will support the alignment of city services, research institutions, local communities and stakeholders. This will strengthen local democracy and accountability, improve governance efficiency, and create more sustainable, resilient, and inclusive neighbourhoods. Finally, the process of building such an Urban Lab, and its experience in enabling integrated and participatory policy-making by developing novel operational, digital, social and institutional capacities, could be **a useful and transferable precedent** for other urban and regional authorities facing similar issues.

3.2 Overall project schedule

Given the weight of embedded silo-operational culture, achieving a systemic change on this front might seem overambitious – and maybe beyond the scopes of an URBACT Continuity Plan. Yet, as our testing with Municipality staff, vice mayors and elected councilors showed, there is an agreement on the need for -and the benefits of a- more effective cross-department collaboration and data-informed decision making. Devising a roadmap based on a 'learn-by-doing' approach and, also, on a 'think big – act small' practice (combining strategic vision with specific steps and results) that we drew from our URBACT webinars and visits to our HHC partners, was our way to respond to the 'immensity' of our final scope: to mainstream an integrated, data-informed and participatory way of urban policy design in the Municipality of Halandri.

Thus, the implementation of the Urban Lab follows a progressive **three-phase approach** that introduces collaborative practices, digital tools and participatory governance mechanisms through experimentation and practical application. Such scheme reflects and expands further the three key dimensions of the CH practice, as analysed in **Hydro-Heritage Cities**

Transferability Study. Rather than establishing a new organisational structure from the outset, the Urban Lab **initially operates as a methodology**: the municipality builds on existing initiatives and ongoing European projects, using them as operational environments for integrated, data-informed and participatory ways of working to be tested, refined and progressively embedded into everyday practice. This incremental approach is particularly suited to municipal administrations, where established routines and responsibilities require organisational change to be introduced progressively. By embedding new approaches within ongoing projects, the municipality can demonstrate their value in practice, strengthen internal ownership and reduce resistance to change.

Several enabling activities run throughout all three implementation phases. Capacity building, cross-departmental collaboration, stakeholder engagement, organisational learning and the continuous development of the Urban Lab's digital platform accompany the initiative from launch to institutional consolidation. As new European projects are implemented, their data, knowledge and results progressively feed into the platform, expanding the municipality's shared knowledge base and supporting integrated planning and evidence-informed decision-making. The three phases therefore represent shifts in emphasis rather than strictly sequential stages, with each phase building upon and reinforcing the previous one.

The implementation schedule is structured in three main phases.

Phase 1 – Launch and Experimentation (2026)

The first phase focuses on launching the Continuity Plan and consolidating the lessons learned from the URBACT pilot action. The objective is to introduce the Urban Lab concept, demonstrate its practical value through the pilot results, and initiate the first operational collaborations across departments and projects.

During this phase, the methodology developed through the pilot action begins to be applied within selected ongoing European projects implemented by the municipality. These projects act as initial testing grounds where the Urban Lab approach can be experimented with and refined in practice.

The expected outcome of this phase is the creation of the first coordination mechanisms across projects and departments, as well as increased awareness and engagement among municipal staff and stakeholders.

Phase 2 – Operational Embedding (2026–2028)

The second phase focuses on embedding the Urban Lab approach within the municipality’s operational practices. During this stage, the methodologies and tools tested during the pilot phase are gradually expanded and integrated into a wider range of municipal activities and projects.

Particular emphasis is placed on strengthening cross-departmental collaboration, expanding the use of digital policy tools and developing systems for collecting, managing and analysing urban data. The Urban Lab working group plays a key role in facilitating coordination across projects and departments and in supporting the development of a shared operational culture.

The expected outcome of this phase is the progressive integration of data-informed and participatory approaches into municipal decision-making processes, as well as increased collaboration across departments and policy fields.

Phase 3 – Institutional Consolidation (2027–2030)

The final phase focuses on consolidating the Urban Lab as a permanent enabling structure supporting innovation, collaboration and citizen engagement within the municipality.

During this stage, organisational capacity is strengthened through the development of a dedicated operational team and the establishment of more stable coordination mechanisms between municipal departments, research actors and local stakeholders. In parallel, the municipality explores the creation of a physical hub that will function as a space for experimentation, training and community engagement related to the city's green, digital and social transition.

The expected outcome of this phase is the institutionalisation of collaborative and data-informed working practices within the municipality, as well as the strengthening of long-term partnerships between the administration, citizens and local knowledge ecosystems.

Through this gradual process, the Urban Lab evolves from a project-based experimentation into a **stable governance and operational framework** supporting integrated urban development and participatory policy-making in Chalandri.

The implementation of the Urban Lab may face a number of structural challenges typical of municipal innovation processes. These include potential political changes at the level of municipal leadership, resistance from established administrative routines and decision-making cultures, and uncertainties related to the long-term availability of funding. The phased implementation approach described below is designed to mitigate these risks by embedding the Urban Lab gradually within ongoing projects, operational practices and institutional partnerships, allowing the initiative to demonstrate its value and build internal ownership over time.

This gradual approach reflects one of the main lessons from the URBACT process: organisational change requires time, trust and ownership. Rather than announcing a new structure from the outset, the municipality progressively demonstrates the value of the Urban Lab through ongoing projects and practical collaboration.

3.3: The workplan

Hence, our workplan adopts an **incremental approach** to establishing the Urban Lab. Rather than creating a new organisational structure from the outset, it builds on existing municipal initiatives and ongoing European projects, using them as **living laboratories** in which collaborative, data-informed and participatory ways of working can be tested, refined and gradually embedded into everyday municipal practice.

This process is already underway. When the municipality joined the URBACT Innovation Transfer Network, the initiative was led by a core team of three people building on the legacy of CH. Today, it has evolved into a multidisciplinary team of ten members, supported by an NGO specialising in co-design and participation and a private company with expertise in digital technologies and data management.

The Municipality has developed and is currently implementing a diverse portfolio of European projects addressing interconnected urban challenges, including climate adaptation and nature-based solutions, energy transition, affordable housing, sustainable water management, youth and citizen participation, cultural heritage and urban governance. While these projects originate from different European programmes and policy fields, they increasingly intersect at the local level, often involving the same municipal departments, stakeholders, datasets and neighbourhoods. Taken together, they provide a valuable portfolio through which synergies can be identified, knowledge and data shared, and more integrated approaches to urban policy design tested in practice.These projects provide the practical environment through which the Urban Lab methodology is tested, demonstrates its value, and is progressively institutionalised across the municipality. Additionally, the data, knowledge and evidence generated through these projects will progressively feed into the Urban Lab's digital platform, creating a **shared municipal knowledge base** that supports integrated planning, cross-sectoral decision-making and long-term monitoring across policy areas.

According to the above, a roadmap of activities can be drawn for the operational and institutional consolidation of the Urban Lab and its working method.

Activity 1 – Public Presentation of the Continuity Plan and Pilot Action
Timeframe: September 2026
A public presentation will introduce the Continuity Plan and showcase the pilot action developed through the URBACT process. The event will present the GIS-based walkability policy dashboard and the participatory workshops carried out during the testing phase as concrete examples of integrated, data-informed and participatory practice.

The presentation will serve to: communicate the vision and benefits of the Urban Lab, share lessons learned from the testing phase, position the Continuity Plan as a practical roadmap for gradually embedding these approaches into municipal operations.

Activity 2 – Applying the Methodology Through Ongoing EU Projects
Timeframe: 2026–2028
The integrated methodology and tools developed through the pilot action will be gradually applied within ongoing European projects implemented by the municipality.
These projects will function as practical implementation grounds where the Urban Lab approach can be further refined and embedded. Current examples include projects focusing on: transforming schoolyards into climate shelters (DUT), affordable housing initiatives (LIFE), energy transition (EUI), activation of unused spaces for cultural activities (DUT), youth participation in urban planning and decision-making (ERASMUS+), sustainable water management(Urban Agenda).

By working across multiple projects and policy fields, the municipality will progressively develop a shared operational culture based on collaboration, data-informed decision-making and citizen participation.

Activity 3 – Convergence of Projects and Formation of a Synergetic Working Group
Timeframe: 2026–2027
To facilitate coordination across projects and departments, a synergetic working group will be established building on the existing URBACT Local Group (ULG).
This group will gradually evolve into a potential Urban Lab core structure, bringing together municipal departments, project teams and external partners working on related initiatives.

Activity 4 – Urban Data Infrastructure and Digital Policy Tools
Timeframe: 2026–2028

Building on the GIS-based database and policy dashboard developed during the pilot action, the municipality will progressively strengthen its capacity to collect, manage, integrate and analyse urban data. This will include mapping available municipal datasets, gathering data from administrative, spatial and participatory sources, and developing arrangements for sharing and linking data across departments.

In parallel, the pilot dashboard will be refined and adapted for use beyond the initial neighbourhood and walkability focus. The aim is to progressively establish shared digital tools that enable departments to combine different types of evidence, support integrated analysis and use data more systematically in policy design, prioritisation and monitoring.

Activity 5 – Capacity Building and Peer Learning for Municipal Staff
Timeframe: 2026–2028
To support the gradual adoption of the Urban Lab tools and methodology, targeted hands-on workshops and peer-learning activities will be organised for municipal staff.

These activities will focus on: the use of the GIS-based policy dashboard and digital tools, participatory planning and co-creation methods, data-informed policy design and cross-departmental collaboration.

Training will combine workshops, hands-on sessions and learning-by-doing activities linked to ongoing municipal projects. The aim is not only to introduce new tools, but also to strengthen internal capacities and confidence in collaborative and data-driven working practices.

Activity 6 – Strategic Development and Resource Mobilisation
Timeframe: 2026–2028

A dedicated staff member will be engaged to support the further development of the Urban Lab initiative. The role will include: supporting the refinement of Urban Lab's governance scheme, identifying relevant funding opportunities and programmes, preparing and coordinating applications for future projects aligned with the Urban Lab approach.

Activity 7 – Dedicated Team and Neighbourhood Interface
Timeframe: 2027–2029

To ensure continuity and long-term engagement, the Urban Lab will gradually develop a dedicated operational team and establish a physical presence within selected neighbourhoods. This will include: coordinating activities across departments and projects, acting as an interface between municipal services and citizens, supporting participatory processes and local experimentation.

Activity 8 – Establishment of a Physical Urban Lab Office and Citizen Interface
Timeframe: 2028-2029

As the Urban Lab becomes operationally consolidated, a physical office will be established to provide a visible and accessible interface between the municipality, citizens and local stakeholders. Rather than requiring the development of a new dedicated facility, the Urban Lab will operate from an appropriate existing municipal or partner space.

The office will provide a physical base for the Urban Lab team and serve as a point where citizens and stakeholders can access information on ongoing initiatives, contribute knowledge and proposals, participate in co-design and consultation processes, and engage with the municipality around emerging urban challenges.

Activity	Timeframe	Key outputs	Implementation indicators
A1. Public Presentation of the Continuity Plan and Pilot Action	2026	Launch event; pilot/dashboard presentation	No. participants; no. departments represented
A2. Applying the Methodology Through Ongoing EU Projects	2026-2028	Urban Lab methods applied; methodological guidance; lessons learnt	No. projects applying approach; no. departments involved
A3. Convergence of Projects and Formation of a Synergetic Working Group	2026-2027	Working group; coordination meetings	No. departments participating; no. meetings/year
A4. Urban Data Infrastructure and Digital Policy Tools	2026-2028	Data inventory; integrated datasets; operational dashboard	No. datasets integrated; no. departments using tools; no. policy areas supported
A5. Capacity Building and Peer Learning for Municipal Staff	2026-2028	Training and peer-learning activities	No. staff trained; no. departments participating
A6. Strategic development & resource mobilisation	2026-2028	Dedicated strategic coordination capacity; funding opportunities mapped; new proposals prepared	No. proposals submitted; external funding leveraged
A7. Dedicated Team and Neighbourhood Interface	2026-2028	Operational team established; participatory workshops/meetings; stakeholder and community engagement	No. of staff involved; no. of participatory processes; no. of citizens participating; no of stakeholders participating
A8. Establishment of a Physical Urban Lab Office and Citizen Interface	2028-2029	Urban Lab office established in an existing municipal space; regular public opening/contact hours; information and engagement point; space for small-scale meetings and consultations	Office operational (yes/no); no. of public-facing sessions/activities; no. of citizens/stakeholders using the office

Implementation risks and mitigation

The implementation of the Urban Lab may face several interconnected challenges, including limited staff availability, uneven engagement across municipal departments, resistance to new collaborative and data-informed working practices, technical and organisational constraints related to data management, and uncertainty regarding long-term funding and political support. These risks will be addressed through the **gradual implementation approach** of the Continuity Plan: embedding activities within ongoing municipal and EU-funded projects, linking cross-departmental collaboration to concrete operational needs, introducing new tools through learning-by-doing and targeted capacity building, progressively developing data-management arrangements, and diversifying funding sources. The phased approach will allow the Urban Lab to demonstrate its added value in practice, build internal ownership and progressively reduce its dependence on individual projects, funding opportunities or political circumstances.

3.4: Governance and delivery model

The Urban Lab will operate as a **facilitating and coordinating structure** supporting the Municipality of Chalandri in the design and implementation of integrated urban policies and projects. To maintain operational flexibility while ensuring strong alignment with municipal priorities, the Urban Lab will operate in close collaboration with the municipality and its

development agency. This model allows the Urban Lab to act as a platform connecting municipal departments, external experts, research institutions, civil society and citizens. Rather than replacing existing municipal structures, the Urban Lab will complement and support them, providing coordination, methodological support and operational capacity for the development and implementation of projects.

Institutional positioning of the Urban Lab

While the Urban Lab stands as an operationally **autonomous structure**, it remains institutionally embedded within the strategic framework of the Municipality of Halandri. The Lab does not replace existing municipal structures nor assume formal decision-making authority over municipal policies. Instead, it functions as a facilitating platform that supports the municipality in the design, coordination and implementation of innovative projects and integrated policy initiatives.

Operational autonomy allows the Urban Lab to mobilise external expertise, develop experimental tools and coordinate cross-sectoral collaborations with greater flexibility than traditional administrative structures. At the same time, strategic direction and accountability remain anchored within the municipal governance system through the participation of municipal representatives and the Development Agency in the Lab's steering structure.

In this way, the Urban Lab acts as a bridge between the municipal administration, research actors, civil society and local communities, strengthening the municipality's capacity to develop and implement integrated urban policies.

Organisational structure

The governance model follows a multi-tier structure combining strategic oversight, operational coordination and project-based collaboration.

1. **Strategic Steering Board**

At the highest level, the Urban Lab will be guided by a Strategic Steering Board responsible for the overall direction, institutional alignment and financial oversight of the Lab. The board will ensure that Urban Lab activities remain aligned with municipal priorities and strategic plans while supporting the development of new initiatives and projects.
The Steering Board will include representatives from:

- the Urban Lab operational team
- the Municipality of Halandri (representatives from key municipal departments such as technical services, social services, environment and finance)
- the City Development Agency
- where relevant, representatives of elected officials.

The Steering Board will provide strategic guidance, approve key initiatives and ensure coordination between the Urban Lab and the municipal administration.

2. Urban Lab Coordination Team

The day-to-day management and operation of the Urban Lab will be ensured by a dedicated coordination team composed of permanent staff and collaborators working with or for the municipality, particularly through European and other innovation projects.
The coordination team will be responsible for:

- coordinating Urban Lab activities and projects
- facilitating collaboration between municipal departments
- managing digital tools and data systems
- supporting participatory processes and stakeholder engagement
- identifying funding opportunities and preparing project proposals

The team will act as the operational engine of the Urban Lab, ensuring continuity and coordination across activities.

3. Thematic and Project-Based Working Groups

At the operational level, the Urban Lab will activate project-based working groups depending on the initiatives at work. These groups will function as flexible collaboration platforms bringing together the actors relevant to each project or policy field.
Each working group may include:

- Urban Lab staff responsible for the project
- representatives from relevant municipal departments
- external experts and researchers
- civil society organisations and stakeholders
- citizens and community representatives affected by or interested in the project

The working groups will support co-design, knowledge exchange and collaborative problem-solving, ensuring that projects benefit from both institutional expertise and local knowledge.

Decision-making and coordination

Strategic decisions regarding the orientation and priorities of the Urban Lab will be taken by the Strategic Steering Board, in coordination with the municipal administration. Operational decisions related to project implementation will be managed by the Urban Lab Coordination Team, in collaboration with the relevant municipal departments and working groups.
This governance structure ensures that:

- the municipality maintains strategic oversight,
- the Urban Lab retains operational flexibility,
- projects are implemented through collaborative and participatory processes.

Citizen and stakeholder participation

Citizen engagement is a core principle of the Urban Lab model. Participation will not be limited to consultation but will take place through active involvement in project-based

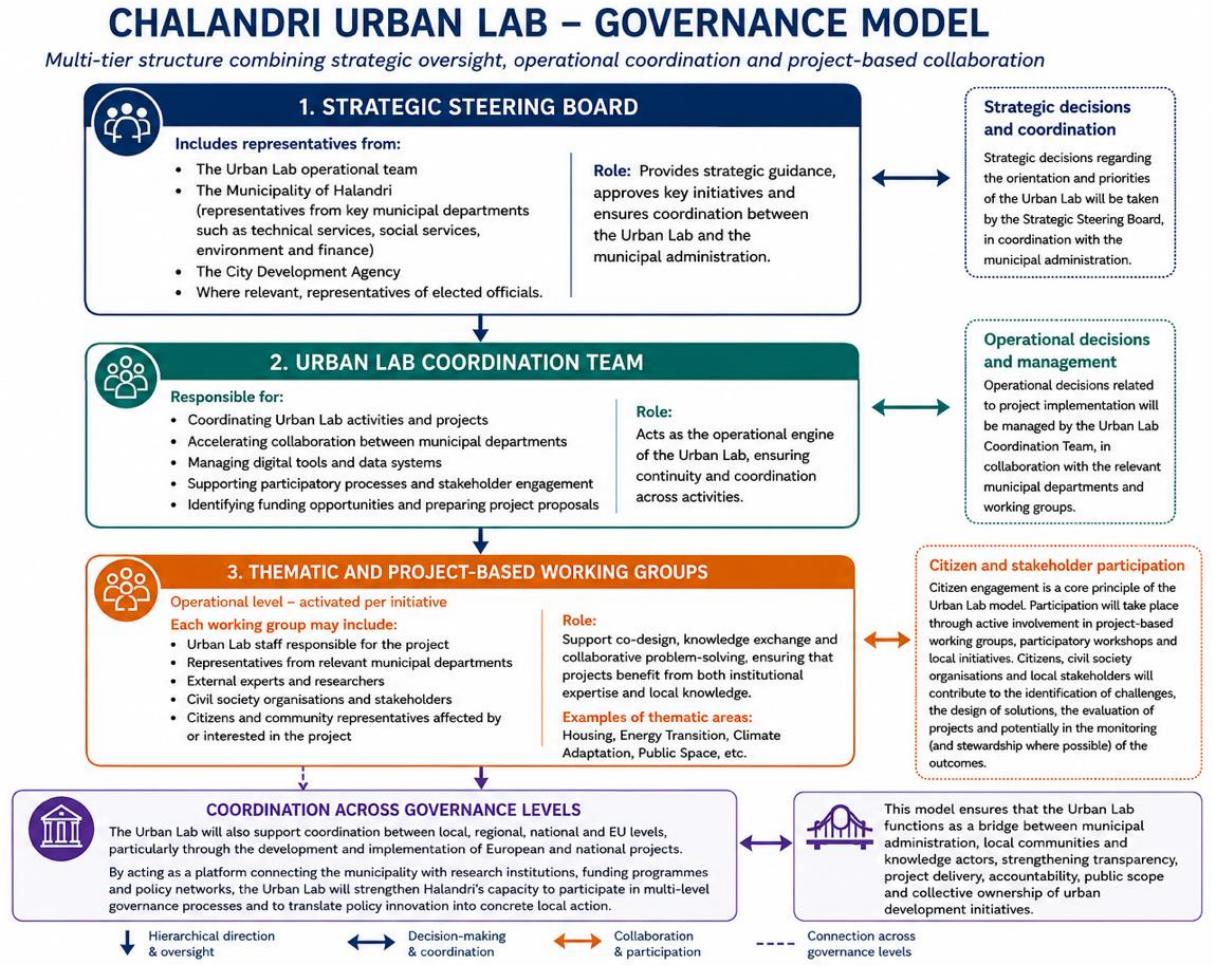
working groups, participatory workshops and local initiatives. Through this approach, citizens, civil society organisations and local stakeholders will contribute to the identification of challenges, the design of solutions, the evaluation of projects and potentially in the monitoring (and stewardship where possible) of the outcomes.

This model ensures that the Urban Lab functions as a **bridge between municipal administration, local communities and knowledge actors**, strengthening transparency, project delivery, accountability, public scope and collective ownership of urban development initiatives.

Coordination across governance levels

The Urban Lab will also support coordination between local, regional, national and EU levels, particularly through the development and implementation of European and national projects.

By acting as a platform connecting the municipality with research institutions, funding programmes and policy networks, the Urban Lab will strengthen Halandri's capacity to participate in multi-level governance processes and to translate policy innovation into concrete local action.



SECTION 4: BUDGET

4.1: Project costs

The establishment and progressive development of the Urban Lab requires a combination of human resources, digital infrastructure, operational capacity and participatory activities. The investment reflects the objective of creating a facilitating structure that supports integrated urban planning, data-informed policy design and collaborative governance across municipal departments and stakeholders.

The estimated investment is distributed over the implementation period **2026–2030**, following the phased implementation approach described in Section 3.4. This phased structure allows the municipality to progressively develop the Urban Lab's operational capacity while aligning investments with the development of digital tools, governance mechanisms and collaborative practices. The core operational team of the Urban Lab is expected to consist of three staff members:

- Urban Lab Coordinator / Director
- Data / GIS / Digital Tools Specialist
- Communications and Stakeholder Engagement Manager

Each position is estimated at approximately €30,000 per year, resulting in an annual staffing cost of approximately €90,000. In addition to staffing costs, the Urban Lab will require resources for the development of digital tools, participatory activities, training of municipal staff, data collection and operational costs. In the longer term, the municipality will also explore the development of a **physical hub for experimentation, training and community engagement**, as described in the workplan.

INVESTMENT CATEGORY	2026 €	2027 €	2028 €	2029 €	2030 €	TOTAL €
Urban Lab staff (3 positions)	0,00 €	90.000,00 €	90.000,00 €	90.000,00 €	90.000,00 €	360.000,00 €
Development of digital tools & GIS dashboard	50.000,00 €	70.000,00 €	40.000,00 €	30.000,00 €	20.000,00 €	210.000,00 €
Data collection and policy monitoring systems	30.000,00 €	40.000,00 €	40.000,00 €	35.000,00 €	30.000,00 €	175.000,00 €
Training and capacity building for municipal staff	20.000,00 €	25.000,00 €	25.000,00 €	20.000,00 €	20.000,00 €	110.000,00 €
Participatory activities and stakeholder engagement	25.000,00 €	35.000,00 €	35.000,00 €	35.000,00 €	35.000,00 €	165.000,00 €
Communication and dissemination	20.000,00 €	20.000,00 €	20.000,00 €	20.000,00 €	20.000,00 €	100.000,00 €
Urban Lab operational costs (equipment, facilities, services)	15.000,00 €	20.000,00 €	20.000,00 €	20.000,00 €	20.000,00 €	95.000,00 €
Urban Lab physical hub (feasibility studies)	0,00 €	0,00 €	0,00 €	50.000,00 €	0,00 €	50.000,00 €
Urban Lab physical hub investment	0,00 €	0,00 €	0,00 €	0,00 €	600.000,00 €	600.000,00 €
GRAND TOTAL	20.000,00 €	300.000,00 €	270.000,00 €	300.000,00 €	845.000,00 €	1.865.000,00 €

4.2: Investment sources

The implementation of the Urban Lab will require a combination of municipal, national and European funding sources, complemented by research collaborations and partnerships with local organisations. While the exact financing structure will depend on the availability of future calls and programmes, the initiative is well aligned with policy priorities related to digital and energy transition, sustainable urban development, participatory governance and climate resilience.

The funding strategy therefore relies on a diversified financial model, combining different sources that can support the development of the Urban Lab's operational capacity, digital tools, participatory processes and experimentation activities.
Potential investment sources include:

1. Municipal Budget (Own Resources)
The Municipality of Chalandri may contribute to the establishment and operation of the Urban Lab through direct financial support or in-kind contributions. Municipal resources may support:

- part of the Urban Lab coordination team
- operational costs and workspace
- preparatory studies and pilot activities
- co-financing for external funding applications

Municipal support is essential to ensure the institutional anchoring and long-term continuity of the Urban Lab.

2. National Funding Instruments
Several national funding instruments may support specific components of the Urban Lab, particularly those related to environmental sustainability, digital transition and sustainable urban development. In the Greek context, potential sources include:

- **Greek Green Fund**: Supporting environmental monitoring, climate adaptation actions and urban sustainability initiatives.
- **Programmes under the Partnership Agreement (ESPA 2021–2027):**Including actions supporting Sustainable Urban Development (Βιώσιμη Αστική Ανάπτυξη – ΒΑΑ) and Integrated Territorial Investments (Ολοκληρωμένες Χωρικές Επενδύσεις – ΟΧΕ).
- ***Social Economy and Innovation programmes:*** Which may support collaborative governance initiatives, community engagement and innovative service models.

These instruments can complement municipal resources and contribute to the development of Urban Lab's operational capacity.

3. European Union Funding

European programmes represent a key source of support for the development and experimentation phases of the Urban Lab. Potential sources include:

- **European Urban Initiative (EUI):** Supporting innovative urban projects with strong experimentation and replication potential.
- **Horizon Europe:** Research and innovation partnerships focusing on urban transitions, digital governance, climate resilience and data-driven policy design.
- **LIFE Programme:** Environmental and climate-related initiatives, including biodiversity protection, climate adaptation and sustainable resource management.
- **Interreg:** Transnational cooperation projects supporting policy innovation, territorial development and knowledge exchange between cities and regions.
- **Driving Urban Transitions:** Supporting research and innovation actions addressing sustainable urban transitions.

Through participation in such programmes, the Urban Lab can support the municipality in developing pilot projects, testing innovative solutions and strengthening its capacity for integrated policy design.

4. Research and Innovation Partnerships

The Urban Lab may also generate resources through collaboration with universities, research institutions and innovation networks. By participating in collaborative research projects, the Urban Lab can contribute methodological expertise, testing environments and local implementation capacity, while benefiting from research funding that supports experimentation and knowledge production.

Such partnerships can contribute to the development of digital tools, data analysis systems and participatory methodologies.

5. Community and Stakeholder Partnerships

Crowdsourcing would also be a feature of tapping in endogenous resources. Although those may not be necessarily financial, in situ knowledge and expertise, active local networks and civil society groups could leverage and multiply capacities and support to urban policy performance. Co-developing interventions with inhabitants and communities, as well as collaborations with civic groups rooted in the city (cultural, environmental, sports etc.) may be enabling factors and provide key sources for effective and cost-efficient planning, delivery and sustainability of these projects..

Local partnerships are pivotal to generate a sense of co-ownership in/of the city and in nurturing a relationship of mutual trust and common benefits with the municipality.

SECTION 5: Monitoring and Evaluation

5.1 The Monitoring and Evaluation Approach

The Urban Lab will use a **theory-based evaluation approach**. The theory-based approach will test whether the Urban Lab's activities lead to improved cross-department collaboration, stronger use of data in policy design, and more meaningful participatory governance. **Developmental monitoring** will support real-time learning and adaptation during implementation.

The selected framework is designed to assess both the implementation of activities and the systemic changes in municipal governance practices that the initiative aims to generate. Monitoring will occur at two complementary levels.

First, **operational monitoring** will track the implementation of the activities described in Section 3. Each activity includes specific outputs and result indicators (e.g. number of workshops, number of datasets integrated, number of departments participating). These indicators allow the municipality to follow the progress of the workplan and ensure that the planned actions are delivered.

Second, **strategic monitoring and evaluation** will assess whether the Urban Lab contributes to the broader transformation of municipal governance practices. In particular, it will examine whether the initiative succeeds in reducing fragmented decision-making, strengthening cross-departmental collaboration, integrating data into policy design, and institutionalising participatory governance practices.

This evaluation framework is based on the following intervention logic:

Problem: Municipal decision-making is often fragmented due to siloed departmental structures, limited use of data in policy design, and participatory practices that remain project-based rather than institutionalised.

Intervention: The establishment of an Urban Lab as a permanent enabling structure that:

- facilitates cross-departmental collaboration
- operationalises participatory governance practices
- integrates data and digital tools into policy design

Expected systemic change: A gradual transition from project-based and reactive governance to integrated, data-informed and participatory municipal practice.

The monitoring and evaluation framework therefore focuses not only on the delivery of activities but also on the **institutionalisation of new governance practices**, organisational

learning within the municipality, and the strengthening of collaboration between the municipal administration, citizens and local stakeholders.

5.2: The monitoring and evaluation framework

The monitoring and evaluation framework is structured around **three complementary levels of indicators**, measuring institutional development, organisational change and systemic governance outcomes.

LEVEL 1 – Institutional *(What is formally adopted)*
These indicators measure the extent to which the Urban Lab becomes institutionally embedded within municipal governance structures.

LEVEL 2 – Organisational Outcomes (How the municipality works differently)
These indicators measure changes in administrative practices and policy design processes.

LEVEL 3 – Systemic Governance Change (What changes in the system itself)
These indicators capture broader structural changes in governance culture, collaboration practices and citizen engagement.

A baseline assessment will be conducted in 2026 to establish the starting values for the monitoring framework. For most indicators, the baseline will be established through a combination of an internal staff survey, a review of municipal documents and procedures, and a mapping of ongoing projects and governance practices. The assessment will be coordinated by the Urban Lab Coordinator in collaboration with the relevant municipal departments and, where appropriate, external experts.

Monitoring data will be collected through a combination of administrative records, project documentation, digital tools, surveys and structured feedback from municipal staff, citizens and stakeholders. The Urban Lab Coordination Team will coordinate the monitoring process, working with the relevant municipal departments and stakeholders responsible for individual indicators. The specific data source, collection method, frequency and responsibility for each indicator are defined in the monitoring framework below. Digital tools developed within the Urban Lab, such as **GIS databases and policy dashboards**, will also generate monitoring data on the use of spatial information and datasets in policy discussions and planning decisions.

Code	Indicator / Definition	Baseline	Target	Data source	Method / Tool	Frequency	Responsible	Data storage / Evidence
O1	Urban Lab institutional status / existence of a formally recognised Urban Lab structure	0	1 formally recognised structure	Municipal decisions / administrative documents	Document review	Once	Urban Lab Coordinator	Public document repository
O2	Number of municipal departments with regular participation in the cross-departmental working groups coordinated by the Urban Lab.	1 department regularly involved (2026)	≥4 departments with defined roles and meeting schedule (2030) e.g. attendance at ≥50% of scheduled meetings during the year.	Working group decisions, membership and meeting records	Document review + attendance records	Twice a year	Urban Lab Coordinator	Urban Lab shared repository
R1	% of new strategic municipal projects involving ≥2 departments in their design, with documented Urban Lab facilitation	10% (2025)	30% by 2030	Project initiation forms, facilitation logs	Document review	Annual	Urban Lab Coordinator	Municipal /Urban Lab repository
R2	No. of policy proposals, plans or interventions explicitly supported by Urban Lab data products (datasets, dashboards, spatial analysis).	0	≥5 documented cases	Policy documents, dashboards, project records	Document review + dashboard records	Annual	Urban Lab Coordination Team	Digital platform + project repository
S1	% of municipal staff rating cross-departmental collaboration as effective or very effective	20% (2026)	50% by 2030	Staff survey	Standardised online questionnaire	Annual	Urban Lab Coordinator + HR	Survey database / Urban Lab repository
S2	% of participating citizens/stakeholders reporting that their input meaningfully considered in priorities or decisions	10% (2026)	40% by 2030	Participant feedback	Post-workshop questionnaire + focus groups	After each participatory cycle + annual synthesis	Urban Lab participation lead	Survey database / participation records
S3	No. of neighbourhood interventions jointly addressing environmental, social and spatial dimensions	0	≥2	Municipal plans, project documentation	Portfolio/document review against defined integration criteria	Annual	Urban Lab Coordinator	Urban Lab project register

Monitoring findings will be reviewed quarterly by the Urban Lab Coordination Team and annually by the Strategic Steering Board. These reviews will be used not only to assess progress but also to support organizational learning and adaptation. Where monitoring identifies implementation gaps or changing conditions, activities, tools, participation methods and, where justified, indicators may be adjusted. Key decisions and lessons learned will be documented through an Urban Lab learning log.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