

# Daring Cities Quarterly Network Journal

Q4 June-August 2025

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## Introduction

Daring Cities is an URBACT Innovation Transfer Network, building on Ravenna's experience of the collaborative urban regeneration of the Darsena area in the EUI Innovation Action project DARE. The network concentrates on co-producing new spaces and services with local initiatives, supported by new narratives about the participating cities' focus areas and evidence-based definitions of quality of life.

This Journal, prepared by Lead Expert Levente Polyák, covers the period of June-August and introduces the key activities of the Daring Cities network in this period, with a particular focus on the Den Helder Transnational Meeting that shaped the consortium's work in this period.

## The Daring Cities Trajectory

In Daring Cities, transfer partners (Altea, Den Helder, Dunaújváros, Kragujevac, Olomouc and Piraeus) follow the trajectory developed in DARE. After the definition of local challenges corresponding to Ravenna's experience and the identification of local strategies that can provide the framework to address these challenges, each city will focus on collecting proposals from citizens and community initiatives through an open call. The proposals are organised in different clusters of projects or "tactics" and a vote is organised to select the one tactic to be implemented. The winning tactic's implementation will be supported by an investment plan.

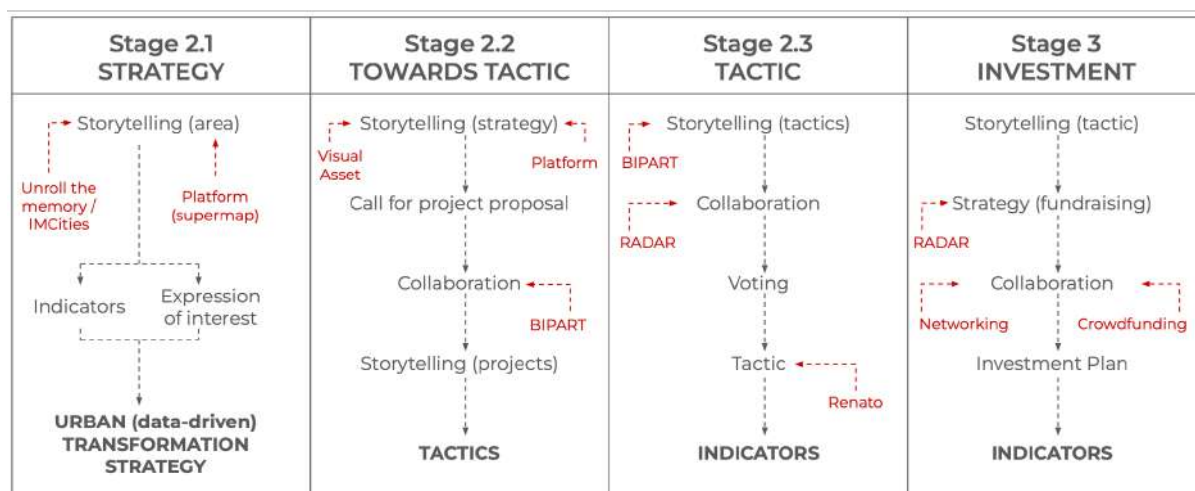


Image by Saveria Teston

After the first Transnational Meetings, Daring Cities experts continued to refine this trajectory and break it down to each city, identifying the key themes of the meetings

in all three thematic streams of the network (placemaking and collaborative urban transformation, storytelling, data management). Besides structuring the focus topics of Transnational Meetings, the trajectory also defines the key steps cities have to take between the meetings. The trajectory, following the DARE project structure, offers a structure for each city that can be adjusted according to changing needs and emerging new necessities.

|                 | Den Helder meeting                                                            | homework 1                                               | Altea meeting                                                           | homework 2                         | Piraeus meeting                                                  | homework 3                                              | Dunaújváros meeting                                             | homework 4                                | Olomouc meeting                                    | homework 5                             |
|-----------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| placemaking     | Essentials of placemaking and adaptive reuse                                  | map spaces, ideas and potential interest                 | Preparation of "call for action" with forms of public-civic partnership | design call and invite initiatives | Clustering initiatives and building synergies for adaptive reuse | cluster initiatives and build synergies towards tactics | Defining the one tactic and test actions to activate places     | define governance model and select tactic | introduction to different funding sources          | investment plan                        |
| storytelling    | ONLINE Essentials of storytelling and tools for storytelling                  | collect memories and ideas and identify comms platforms  | Storytelling the "call for action" towards defining tactics             | invite narratives / communication  | Narration of the collected projects and creating synergies       | connect narratives to tactics                           | Storytelling tactics and testing actions                        | support tactic with narrative             | Storytelling to support fundraising                | stories to support the investment plan |
| data management | Essentials of data management and quality of life indicators                  | Establish life quality indicators and map available data | Data management system based on indicators                              | create a data management system    | Using citizen science to support new activities and spaces       | call for citizen data                                   | Data education: how to bring citizens closer to data            | organise a data education process         | Indicators and data supporting the investment plan | data to support the investment plan    |
| local theme     | youth placemaking + mapping + storytelling + missing services + relevant data |                                                          | reconnecting areas + gender perspective + investment plan draft         |                                    | citizen science + adaptive reuse of railway area                 |                                                         | cultural and natural heritage + tree cadaster + local festivals |                                           | regional scale + mobility + railway spaces         |                                        |

Image by Levente Polyák

## Transnational Meeting in Den Helder

Transnational Meetings are key milestones in the Daring Cities trajectory. In June 2025, Daring Cities organised the network's 3rd Transnational Meeting in Den Helder. The Meeting's objective was to enable transfer partners to share their experiences in developing their trajectories, to support them with recommendations and good practices as well as to explore Den Helder's challenges and support the city in addressing them. The Meeting was organised to coincide with the signing of the Vulnerable Neighbourhoods Covenant by key actors of Den Helder's civil society, social services and municipal departments, an important proof of engagement towards Den Helder's focus neighbourhood Visbuurt.

The consortium spent the days on Willemsoord, which used to be the shipyard and maintenance yard for the Royal Navy. The site originates from 1822 and is now a beautiful monumental part of Den Helder that is gradually developing into an open city district. From the perspective of Den Helder's ITN challenge, Willemsoord is conceived as an area of opportunities.





*Photo by Levente Polyák*

The Meeting began on 5 June, Thursday morning at De Medemblikkerloods, a wood workshop located in Willemsoord. The wood workshop, managed by the Stichting Scheepstimmerwerf (Shipyard Foundation) and the Nautical Monuments Foundation, is open to anyone interested in traditional shipbuilding. The facility, which was originally used to dry wood, is now a working space primarily for the restoration and refurbishment of old ships, including a century-old fishing boat. Stichting Scheepstimmerwerf provides space for maritime activities, including a partnership with a company that sails goods using only wind power, as well as involving youngsters and schools to preserve traditional skills like working with wood.

Visiting the Stichting Scheepstimmerwerf served as an illustration of how civil society organisations can manage spaces and provide services that fill gaps in public welfare provision. The visit also highlighted ways in which civic partners of municipalities can engage with disadvantaged kids and youth by sharing specific know-how with them – in this case, shipbuilding. Furthermore, the visited initiatives told the story of Den Helder's relationship with the sea and sea-related crafts such as shipbuilding.



*Photo by Rob van der Sande*

Besides the discussion with the president of Stichting Scheepstimmerwerf, De Medemblikerloods also served as the location for the morning workshops, focusing on testing actions and good practices, as explained later in this Journal.



*Photo by Levente Polyák*

After the workshops and lunch break, participants joined representatives of the Den Helder Municipality to the assembly hall of the City Council, also located in Willemsoord, to join the Vulnerable Neighbourhoods working group. The working group was established to work towards the signature of the Vulnerable Neighbourhoods Covenant by officials from the municipality of Den Helder, the Den Helder Housing Association, the police, the Municipal Health Service (GGD Hollands



Noorden), Triade, healthcare and welfare organizations (Tellus Care Group, iHub Education and Family Care, MEE & de Wering), schools (Collaboration of the Kop van Noord-Holland, Scholen aan Zee), and the KopGroep Libraries Foundation. The Covenant was conceived to express the partners' commitment to turn the vulnerability of specific disadvantaged neighbourhoods into opportunities.



*Photo by Levente Polyák*

Focusing on parts of Stad binnen de Linie (Visbuurt, Sluisdijk, Oostsloot), parts of Nieuw Den Helder (Falga, Jeruzalembuurt, Schepenbuurt) and Tuindorp Oost, the ambition of the signatories is to assure that children and youngsters in all neighbourhoods can enjoy a healthy and happy life. The Covenant is an important success for Daring Cities: it provides the policy framework and the local cooperation to ensure that Den Helder's local ambitions are met and that the impact of the city's interventions in Daring Cities are maximised.

After joining the Vulnerable Neighbourhoods Working Group meeting, partners



The site visit in Visbuurt was concluded by a Peer Review session that allowed partners to reflect on the visit, collecting their questions, ideas and recommendations. Participants agreed that the neighbourhood is missing larger spaces and needs more centralities to connect the otherwise fragmented initiatives across the area. Fragmentation and the lack of social infrastructure were seen as a general issue in the Visbuurt's public realm: the lack of shops, gardens and other spaces of aggregation reveals an area with little public life. As a response to this fragmentation, the municipality needs to work on breaking down walls and barriers, and needs to find ways to establish markets, playgrounds, parks and other possibilities for locals, and in particular children and youngsters to gather.



*Photo by Levente Polyák*

On the other hand, the way local residents took pride in opening new community venues is a promising sign. The Blue Schools and other existing initiatives can join forces with the municipality to change the neighbourhood's narrative and imagination through choral storytelling, as demonstrated by Ravenna's DARE project. The testing actions articulated for the Daring Cities project can build on this analysis.



*Photo by Levente Polyák*



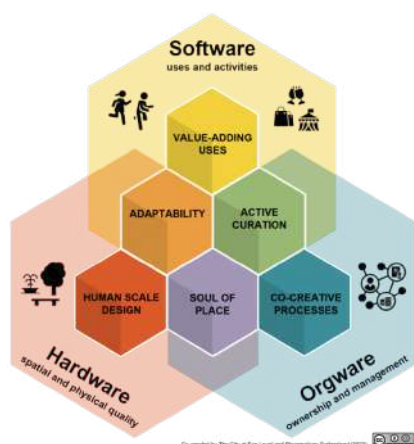
Day 2 of the Transnational Meeting began with a tour of Willemsoord, exploring the history and current institutions of the area. The tour, led by a volunteer tour guide of the City of Den Helder, helped participants understand the evolution of the former military complex and the strong relationship between the city and the sea. After the visit, the partnership moved to the National Rescue Museum Dorus Rijkers where partners used a workshop room to focus on quality of life indicators, data management and their theory of change.



Photo by Levente Polyák

## Good practices to inspire Daring Cities

Good practices play an important role in Daring Cities: strategic design methods, community engagement models or governance structures can offer helpful examples to partner cities to address their own challenges. Good practices (and bad practices) can also give insights into particular aspects of transfer partners' work, helping them overcome particular challenges.



Developed by The City of Eye Level and Planning Subsidized (2020)

Images by Cities at Eye Level and Project for Public Spaces

### WHAT MAKES A GREAT PLACE?



PROJECT FOR PUBLIC SPACES



At the Den Helder Transnational Meeting, partners were introduced to a series of good practices related to public spaces (the Darsena in Ravenna, the Danube quay in Budapest, the Linnahall in Tallinn, Campo de Cebada in Madrid), adaptive reuse (Almagià in Ravenna, KÉK in Budapest, Starà Trznica in Bratislava, Lazareti in Dubrovnik, Cascina Roccafranca in Turin, ExRotaprint in Berlin, Cité Fertile in Paris), third places (Inspirál in Budapest, Aparaatidehas in Tartu, Keilepand in Rotterdam), spaces for climate adaptation (the Jardins do Bombarda in Lisbon, Free Riga in Riga, Vacaresti Park in Bucharest, De Ceuvel in Amsterdam, Le Hasard Ludique in Paris), transitory uses (Darsena Pop-up in Ravenna, Hengermalom in Budapest, Das Packhaus in Vienna, Césure in Paris), spaces for youth (Neighbourhood Houses in Gdansk, the Maisons Folie in Lille, Allee du Kai in Brussels, Müszi in Budapest, Studio Noord in Tilburg), as well as methods for mapping spaces, initiatives and resources.

## Storytelling webinar

In order to complement the Den Helder Transnational meeting, a Storytelling webinar was organised on 24 June. The goal of the webinar was to help partners design their storytelling track within the broader Daring Cities trajectory. In the webinar, storytelling was conceptualized as an embedded device within transformative processes, acting as an active and continuous component of change. In Saveria Teston's interpretation, storytelling takes on different configurations—centralized, enabled, or collaborative—depending on how stories are created and shared. Centralized storytelling involves narratives disseminated top-down by a single actor; enabled storytelling allows others to share their stories using a shared framework; and collaborative storytelling emerges through the interaction and exchange of multiple actors and perspectives. Storytelling serves various purposes: informative (supporting content understanding, such as strategies), evocative (triggering emotional resonance and imaginative potential to awaken the desire to be a protagonist in the transformation), or promotional (generating visibility).

**CONFIGURATIONS OF THE DARE PROCESS'S STAGES**

| Stage 2.1<br>STRATEGY                                                                                                                                                    | Stage 2.2<br>TOWARDS TACTIC                                                                                                                                     | Stage 2.3<br>TACTIC                                                                                           | Stage 3<br>INVESTMENT                                                                                                                           |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Storytelling (area)</b><br>Unroll the memory / IMCities<br>Platform (supermap)<br>Indicators<br>Expression of interest<br>URBAN (data-driven) TRANSFORMATION STRATEGY | <b>Storytelling (strategy)</b><br>Visual Asset<br>Platform<br>Call for project proposal<br>Collaboration<br>BIPART<br><b>Storytelling (projects)</b><br>TACTICS | <b>Storytelling (tactics)</b><br>BIPART<br>RADAR<br>Collaboration<br>Voting<br>Tactic<br>Renato<br>INDICATORS | <b>Storytelling (tactic)</b><br>Strategy (fundraising)<br>RADAR<br>Collaboration<br>Networking<br>Crowdfunding<br>Investment Plan<br>INDICATORS |

The Ravenna case study demonstrated how storytelling changes across the process stages. In the Strategy phase (Stage 2.1), centralized storytelling, which is both informative and evocative, is used to present the new general urban plan and share its direction. Centralized, informative storytelling is also employed to provide a coherent narrative of past transformations using the super map. Promotional storytelling is essential for fostering collaboration and attracting people to Darsena through event communication, thereby implementing the strategy to make the area a "live place". Moving towards the Tactics phase (Stage 2.2), centralized, promotional storytelling is used for calls to create a clear framework and encourage participation. The use of collaborative storytelling follows, engaging owners and stakeholders to describe the potential of areas, making the content evocative and informative. Enabled storytelling is implemented for sharing project proposals, requiring a common format so that proposals can be compared and aggregated to form tactics. The subsequent storytelling of the resulting tactics is centralized, primarily evocative for the collective imaginary, ensuring alignment between the tactics and the overall strategy. Offline, collaborative, and promotional storytelling then aims to increase public visibility for the purpose of voting on the tactics. Finally, in Stage 3 (Fundraising), enabled, promotional storytelling, using clear formats or rules, is used in events or crowdfunding initiatives to involve and engage potential investors and developers in the selected projects.



To design their own effective narrative pathway, partners must systematically answer seven key questions that together form a storytelling plan. They must decide which phases of their process they want storytelling to support and define the objectives (promotional, informational, or evocative). It is also fundamental to identify existing narratives or perceptions that the storytelling needs to acknowledge or transform. Partners must define who they want to involve in shaping collaborative stories and specify the main target audiences at each stage, as these audiences change throughout the process. Finally, they need to establish the timeline for storytelling at each stage and identify the necessary online and/or offline tools, such as the platform, events, or free digital tools.

## Local processes

In the summer period, transfer partners proceeded with the definition of their own interventions, based on the tasks received at the Den Helder meeting. The municipalities participating in Daring Cities organised a series of ULG meetings with local partners to co-design their trajectories. The ULG meetings also served local stakeholders to get to know each other, to develop trust with the municipality and to create cohesion between local actions.



*Photos by transfer partners*