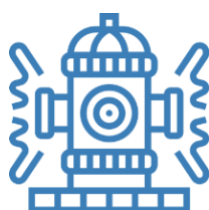
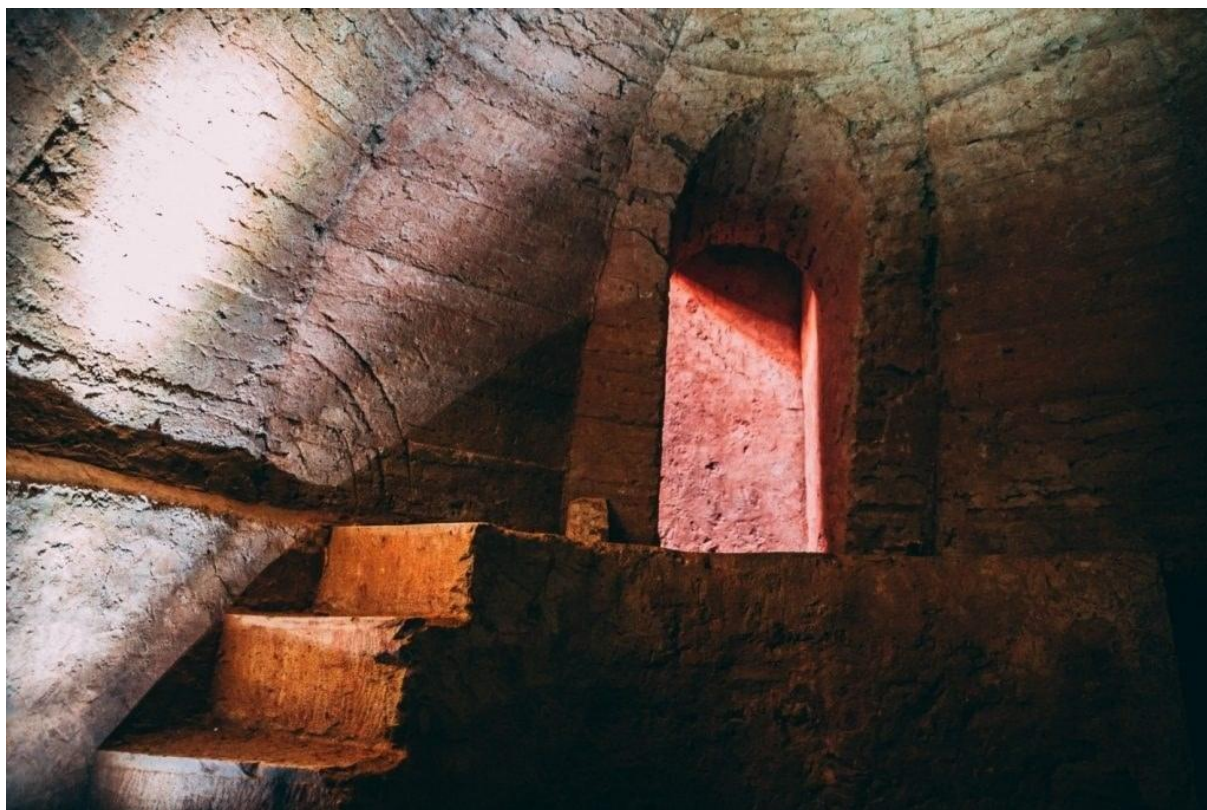


Hydro~Heritage Cities

Journal nr 4



Sandra Rainero

Hydro-Heritage Cities ITN Lead Expert

With the support of all the Hydro-Heritage Cities' partners

URBACT



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From Raindrops to Ripples - From a joint learning adventure to a legacy flow

How can cities transform hidden waterways and forgotten infrastructures into engines of sustainability, culture and community resilience? This is the driving question of the Hydro-Heritage Cities Innovation Transfer Network, inspired by the award-winning Cultural H.ID.R.A.N.T. UIA project in Chalandri. Alongside Chalandri, the network brings together Elche (ES), Serpa (PT), Sombor (RS), Roeselare (BE) and Rome (IT) - each reimagining their unique hydro-heritage as a catalyst for urban change.

This fourth and final journal covers the last stretch of the Hydro-Heritage Cities journey from the transnational meeting and final event in Rome to the completion of testing actions, the refinement of Investment Plans and the collective definition of the Hydro-Heritage Cities Charter. We revisit the key actions envisioned by each city, celebrate the creativity and dedication of partners through the final testing activities, and introduce Hydro-Heritage Cities in Play, a playful legacy product designed to keep water stories flowing beyond the project.

Hydro-heritage has become a new way of looking at cities and their relationship with water...stay with us!

From source to legacy



When we first shaped the methodology of our network, the water cycle emerged naturally as a guiding metaphor, helping us reinterpret the URBACT transfer journey through the lens of hydro-heritage. From the first springs of inspiration in Halandri to the streams of ideas flowing through five transfer cities, water has accompanied us as both theme and method.

In this final journal, we reach the delta, the place where different currents converge before continuing their journey beyond the project. The experimentation, learning and collaboration of the past two years now come together in concrete plans, shared commitments and future investments. The focus is now on defining what comes next. This edition looks back at the closing chapter of Hydro-Heritage Cities and ahead to the legacy it leaves behind:

1. **The Final Transnational Meeting in Rome**
2. **A Public Celebration of Hydro-Heritage**
3. **Final Testing Actions**
4. **The Investment Plans at a Glance**
5. **Hydro-Heritage Cities in Play**
6. **Final Reflections from the Journey**

Under the pines of Villa Celimontana



Some places seem destined to host certain conversations. The final gathering of Hydro-Heritage Cities began in **Villa Celimontana**, a historic oasis in the heart of Rome and home to the **Italian Geographical Society**. Beneath its centuries-old trees, overlooking a city shaped by water, aqueducts and layered histories, partners found the perfect setting to reflect on how far the journey had come.

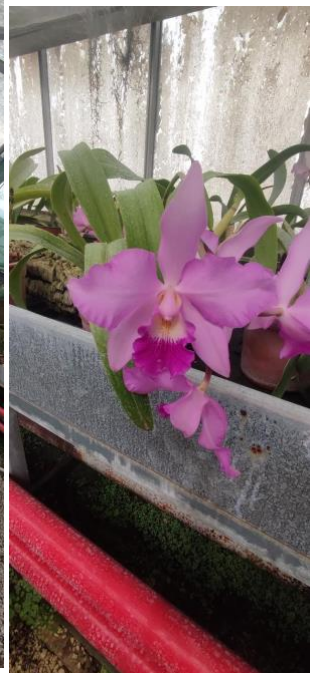
The morning unfolded as a dialogue between local and international perspectives. Researchers, teachers, students and cultural actors shared their experiences around the Aranciera and the hidden water heritage of Rome, reminding everyone that regeneration starts not only with places, but with the people who care for them.

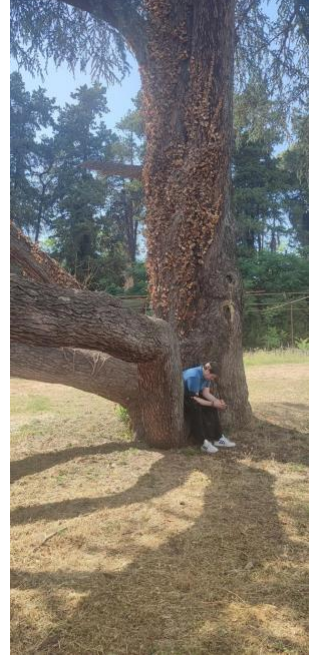




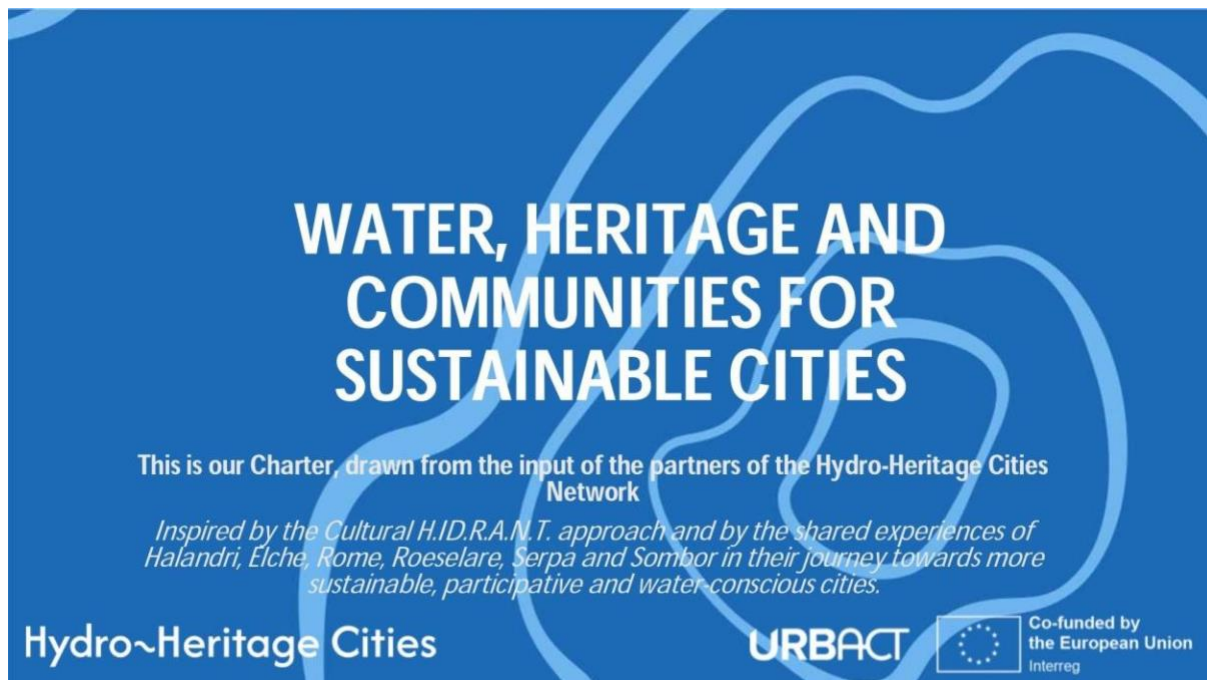
Walking through layers of time

The afternoon visit brought us into the heart of Rome's pilot area: the **Semenzaio di San Sisto and the Aranciera**. As they walked through the site, participants discovered the seedbeds and plants, while the Aranciera is still a project still very much in the making. Renovation works have been slowed by the discovery of **Roman and medieval remains**, a reminder that in Rome every intervention is also an archaeological journey. Yet these unexpected findings only reinforced the value of the site and the importance of imagining its future as a place where water, heritage, education, and community can meet. The visit showcased how contemporary urban projects can reconnect citizens with rivers, transforming neglected spaces into accessible, green and climate-resilient public areas.





A Charter for the Hydro – Heritage Cities



From there, attention turned to the future. Around maps, posters and ideas, partners exchanged the stories behind their Investment Plans—the ambitions, doubts and discoveries that had accompanied two years of work.

After that, another collective piece took shape, namely, the **Hydro-Heritage Cities Charter**.

More than a document, it became a conversation about what the network wanted to leave behind—a shared commitment to seeing water not simply as infrastructure, but as culture, memory, community and a source of inspiration for the cities of tomorrow.



OUR VISION



We envision cities where water heritage is recognized as a **living common good** that strengthens identity, fosters community participation and wellbeing, supports environmental resilience and contributes to sustainable urban development.

We believe that hydro-heritage can help cities address contemporary challenges by connecting past knowledge with future needs, bringing together citizens, institutions, experts and local communities around a shared resource.

OUR SHARED VALUES



LIVING HERITAGE

We recognise water heritage as more than a collection of physical assets
Hydro-heritage includes places, stories, memories, knowledge, traditions and relationships that continue to shape our cities today
We commit to preserving, interpreting and activating this heritage for future generations

PARTICIPATION AND INCLUSION

Water belongs to everyone
We believe that citizens, local organisations, schools, cultural actors, technical experts and public authorities all have a role in shaping the future of hydro-heritage
We value inclusive participation and shared responsibility in decision-making

COOPERATION AND TRUST

- ◆ Complex urban challenges cannot be addressed by one institution alone
- ◆ We promote collaboration across departments, sectors and communities, recognising that trust, dialogue and partnership are essential for long-term success

SUSTAINABILITY AND STEWARDSHIP

- ◆ We are custodians of water heritage for future generations
- ◆ We commit to managing water resources and hydro-heritage assets responsibly, balancing environmental, social, cultural and economic dimensions

OUR PRINCIPLES FOR ACTION



MAKE WATER VISIBLE

- ◆ We will reveal and communicate the stories, places and networks that connect our communities to water
- ◆ Through mapping, interpretation, storytelling and cultural activities, we will help citizens rediscover the role of water in shaping their cities

PUT PEOPLE AT THE CENTRE

- ◆ Hydro-heritage initiatives should improve quality of life and strengthen community wellbeing
- ◆ We will prioritise approaches that create opportunities for learning, participation, creativity and social inclusion

INTEGRATE HERITAGE INTO URBAN DEVELOPMENT

- ◆ Water heritage should not stand apart from city policies
- ◆ We will seek connections with climate adaptation, biodiversity, public space, tourism, education, culture, health and local development strategies

FOSTER SHARED GOVERNANCE

- ◆ We will encourage long-term cooperation between public authorities, citizens, civil society organisations, educational institutions and private stakeholders
- ◆ Hydro-heritage is strongest when responsibility is shared

LEARN THROUGH EXPERIMENTATION

- ◆ Testing actions, pilot projects and practical experimentation are valuable tools for innovation
- ◆ We will continue to explore new approaches, learn from successes and failures, and share knowledge across cities and communities

OUR COMMITMENTS



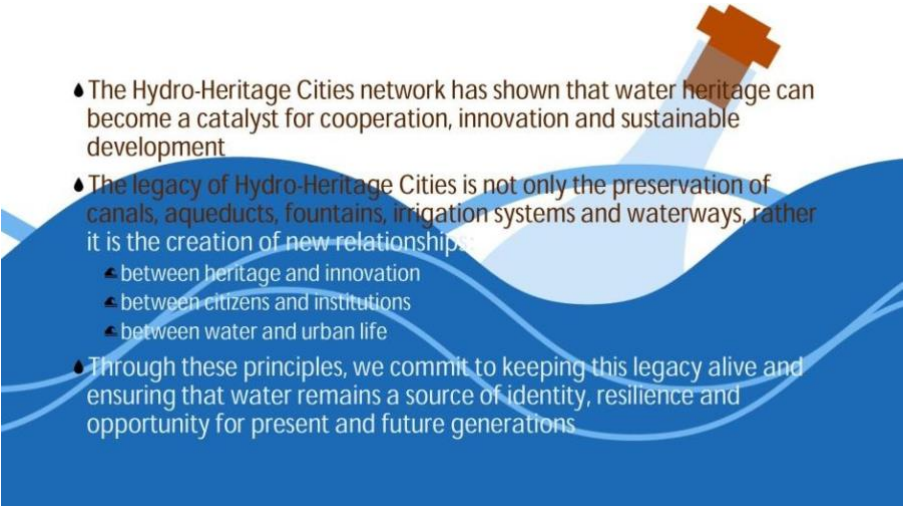


As Hydro-Heritage Cities, we commit to:

- ◆ Protecting and enhancing our hydro-heritage assets
- ◆ Strengthening public awareness of water heritage and its value
- ◆ Engaging citizens and stakeholders in meaningful participation
- ◆ Promoting collaboration across municipal departments and sectors
- ◆ Supporting education and intergenerational learning about water
- ◆ Using digital and creative tools to make water heritage accessible
- ◆ Integrating hydro-heritage into long-term planning and investment decisions
- ◆ Sharing knowledge and experiences with other cities and territories
- ◆ Leaving our hydro-heritage in better condition than we found it



OUR LEGACY

- 
- ◆ The Hydro-Heritage Cities network has shown that water heritage can become a catalyst for cooperation, innovation and sustainable development
 - ◆ The legacy of Hydro-Heritage Cities is not only the preservation of canals, aqueducts, fountains, irrigation systems and waterways, rather it is the creation of new relationships:
 - ◆ between heritage and innovation
 - ◆ between citizens and institutions
 - ◆ between water and urban life
 - ◆ Through these principles, we commit to keeping this legacy alive and ensuring that water remains a source of identity, resilience and opportunity for present and future generations

A Conversation beyond our Network



*By the time we arrived at the **Urban Center Metropolitano**, we were ready to share those discoveries with a wider audience.*

The afternoon unfolded less like a conference and more like a collective conversation about how cities relate to water. Through the stories of Sombor, Serpa, Roeselare, Elche, Rome and Chalandri, we reflected on what happens when hydro-heritage is no longer seen as a relic of the past but as a resource for the future. Schools, artists, historians, engineers, citizens and local governments had all played a role in this transformation.

After opening remarks from the City of Rome, URBACT and Chalandri, the conversation moved beyond the network itself. In the first panel, we shared experiences from our cities, discussing how canals, aqueducts, fountains, irrigation systems and hidden waterways can become tools for education, participation and community ownership. Testing actions, school projects, cultural initiatives and storytelling all featured as ways of reconnecting people with places that had often faded from collective memory.

The second panel looked further ahead. Together with policymakers and external experts, we explored how hydro-heritage can support broader urban agendas, from climate adaptation and water-sensitive planning to culture-led regeneration and sustainable development.

Still testing, still learning!



Even as Investment Plans are being finalised, the story does not stop. Across the network, cities have continued to use **testing actions as real-life laboratories**, exploring ideas, engaging communities and gathering evidence to strengthen future implementation. These final pilots are helping partners move from planning to practice, demonstrating how hydro-heritage can become visible, meaningful and relevant in everyday urban life.

Roeselare – Making Hidden Water Visible Again

Roeselare's latest testing action brings hydro-heritage directly into the public realm through a **large mural inspired by historic photographs of the city and its relationship with the Mandel River**. Located in the Canal Zone, where the river now flows underground, the artwork explores how visual storytelling can reconnect citizens with hidden water landscapes. The mural also serves as a first step towards the wider redevelopment of the area and the future Slowtour project, helping collect stories and memories that will inform new heritage routes and public spaces.



1 - Archival photos of Roeselare, used as inspiration the new murals

Sombor – Celebrating the Canal Through a Community Festival

On 8 July 2026, Sombor organised **“Kanalisanje”**, a community festival dedicated to the Great Bačka Canal. Combining children's drawing workshops, a photography exhibition, university projects, boat rides and a public vote on investment priorities, the event transformed the canal into a lively meeting place. Originally conceived as a small-scale testing action, the festival attracted visitors of all ages and demonstrated how culture, participation and enjoyment can strengthen citizens' connection with their hydro-heritage while generating ideas for the canal's future development.

Chalandri – Testing a New Way of Governing the City

Chalandri used the final phase of Hydro-Heritage Cities to test **how the municipality itself makes decisions**. Building on the legacy of the Cultural H.I.D.R.A.N.T. project, the city piloted an integrated Urban Lab approach combining digital tools, cross-departmental collaboration and citizen participation.

The pilot focused on **walkability in the Kato Chalandri neighbourhood**. A new digital dashboard brought together urban data to support evidence-based planning, while two participatory processes complemented the technical analysis: a neighbourhood walk and mapping exercise involving more than 35 residents, and a workshop bringing together 22 municipal staff, vice-mayors and councillors from six departments. Together, they explored how citizens' lived experience could be integrated with spatial data to inform urban decisions.

The testing confirmed the value of combining technology with participation, while also revealing the organisational changes needed to make this new way of working permanent. More than a technical experiment, it became a practical rehearsal for the governance model envisioned in Chalandri's Continuity Plan.



Hydro-Heritage Cities in Play



As the project drew to a close, we faced a familiar challenge. How do we capture two years of exchanges, visits, testing actions, ideas and lessons learned without producing yet another report destined to sit on a shelf? The answer was ... storytelling.

And the result of this reflection is **Hydro-Heritage Cities in Play**, a playful and interactive legacy product inspired by the spirit of the network itself.



Rather than simply documenting results, it invites readers to explore the Hydro-Heritage Cities journey through stories, challenges, games and "messages in the bottle" from all six cities.

Using the language of play, the publication encourages exploration and discovery, much like the project encouraged cities to rediscover their hidden waterways and forgotten heritage.

Investment Plans, testing actions, moments of success, unexpected obstacles and lessons learned are transformed into a shared experience that can inspire other cities embarking on similar journeys.

You can check it out [here](#).

INVEST, INVEST, INVEST... in resilient, inclusive and sustainable cities

Through testing, stakeholder engagement and peer learning, all cities have shaped a vision for using water heritage to support their future over the past two years. Together, these plans reveal the many faces of hydro-heritage following different paths united by the shared belief that water heritage can help build more resilient, inclusive and sustainable cities.

Highlights of the Plans

Halandri: keeping the URBACT/EUI method alive in the Continuity Plan



- Establish a permanent **Urban Lab** to support integrated, participatory and data-informed urban governance.
- Develop shared digital tools and cross-departmental working methods inspired by the Cultural H.ID.R.A.N.T. experience.

Sombor: A new and different life for the Canal



- Transform the historic pumping station into a memory and interpretation centre for the Great Bačka Canal.
- Develop a network of cycle/pedestrian canal routes, heritage sites and public spaces linked by a shared cultural and ecological narrative.

Serpa: Bringing the Nora back to life



- Restore the historic Nora (waterwheel) and Aqueduct as key landmarks of Serpa's heritage.
- Create new visitor, educational and cultural activities around the site, strengthening its role in local development and tourism.

Rome: Learning through water



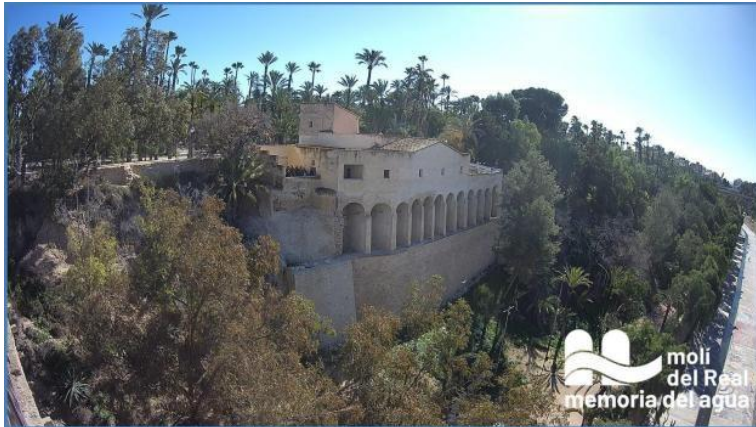
- Expand educational activities with schools around the Aranciera and Villa Celimontana, using water heritage as a learning tool.
- Position the Aranciera project as a **pilot initiative for Rome**, testing new approaches to heritage management, sustainability and civic engagement.

Roeselare : Revealing the hidden Mandel



- Create a heritage walk and digital app to uncover the stories of the hidden Mandel and Sint-Amandsbeek waterways.
- Use artistic interventions and interpretation points to reconnect citizens with the city's underground water heritage.

Elche: Rediscovering the water system of the Palmeral



- Develop educational and interpretation programmes linking the Palmeral, irrigation network and water heritage sites.
- Revitalise key heritage assets, including the historic **Pantano power station**, while promoting traditional water knowledge and community engagement.



Watching the flow- personal reflections of the Lead Expert

Looking back, Hydro-Heritage Cities has been about helping cities discover their own relationship with water, heritage and community rather than copying Chalandri. Each partner started from different landscapes, institutions and ambitions, yet all demonstrated that water heritage can become a catalyst for climate resilience, social inclusion and better governance.

What stuck with me has been the willingness to work across professional and institutional boundaries. Engineers listened to historians, planners collaborated with educators, politicians engaged with citizens, and new conversations emerged where previously there had been silos.

I know that not every ambition will become reality, and implementation will require continued political commitment, resources and partnerships well beyond the URBACT journey. Yet the network has already achieved something that has changed the way these cities think about water heritage. This is no longer a relic of the past, but a living resource for shaping more resilient, inclusive and meaningful urban futures.

Is this the end?



This is the final journal—but not the end of the Hydro-Heritage adventure... its legacy continues to flow.
