



RE:START

Boosting the attractiveness
of mid-sized cities

Network journal #1

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October 2026

RE:START is a URBACT Transfer Network on boosting the attractiveness of mid-sized cities. It will capitalize the brilliant experience of Idanha-a-Nova [Portugal] reversing depopulation by creating new pathways for growth, using innovative place branding as a catalyst for change. Along with Idanha, the transfer cities are Jonadi [Italy], Loutraki [Greece], Marina Alta functional area [Spain], Nyborg [Denmark] and Khotyn [Ukraine].

[LinkedIn](#)

Miguel Rivas. URBACT Lead Expert and principal at Grupo TASO.
www.grupotaso.com

Cover: RE:START 2nd transnational meeting in Nyborg.

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IN THIS ISSUE

Setting the basis.....	4
Conceptualisation.....	4
Exploratory visits	5
In-depth questionnaire.....	7
Understanding the Idanha case	8
Making the good practice transferable.....	8
Transnational activities	12
Network activation meeting.....	12
Workshop on innovative place branding	13
ULG progress.....	17
Stakeholder identification	17
Lessons from the URBACT summer university	19
Envisioning local alliances for attractiveness	19
Beyond one-way learning.....	21
Untapping one-to-one conversations	21

Setting the basis

Conceptualisation

The URBACT Transfer Network RE:START ¹ has been shaped around the concept of **place attractiveness**, as the most suitable to encompass the diversity of specific local challenges and expectations from all partner cities. This means this concept can be instrumental to face stagnation or decline— economic, demographic or both— but also to provide greater and more consistent direction to cities in transition or even growing.

As a policy concept, *attractivité* is well-established in France —intersecting city branding & marketing and economic development— where it is mostly focused on unlocking the full potential of the French major cities worldwide. However, and on the contrary, when applied to small and medium-sized cities, attractiveness can be rather instrumental to **counterbalance the current economic and demographic polarisation around bigger cities**. And this is the exploration we are undertaking through URBACT RESTART.

The concept of attractiveness is inherently **multi-target and therefore integrated**, in the sense of embracing city's main target-groups [residents, investment, talent, visitors], helping to build up a compelling value proposition for each of them, while creating a single unifying city narrative for the whole. *Recomeçar em Idanha* —RE:START and Idanha-a-Nova's good practice— has been a groundbreaking strategy on attractiveness, targeting talent, new residents, investment and the existing local population alike.²

Furthermore, while place attractiveness works as an umbrella or overarching approach, other **related policy concepts** can be activated as main drivers of change, such as "rural innovation" in the case of Idanha-a-Nova. The table below shows a number of well-established and emerging concepts that can best suit some of the policy challenges raised up by RE:START network partners.

¹ The aim of a URBACT Transfer Network is the scaleup of a validated good practice through the URBACT transfer principles of Understand, Adapt and Re-use. As a result of their participation in a Transfer Network, partner cities will transfer a good practice, or parts of it, and document the process through a Transfer Plan, while the good practice city will produce an Improvement Plan, seeking to refine and enhance the original practice.

² At this point, it's worth noting attractiveness also brings the capacity to retain —e.g. young people, to stay in the place they were born; firms, taking externalities and comparative advantages from the local environment where they operate; visitors, in the sense of reporting memorable experiences.

Matching complementary policy concepts with RE:START partner cities' policy challenges

Right: Policy challenges -- Below: Policy concepts	Depopulation. Ageing	Left behind territories	Talent development trap	Low urban vibe	Unclear positioning	Uneven development	Destination management [in the age of massive tourism]
Rural innovation							
Urban-rural linkage							
Place-based transformation							
Placemaking							
Cities and places in transition							
Talent attraction & retention							
The "right to stay"							
Smart specialisation							

Exploratory visits

Lead expert alongside lead partner initial exploratory visits to all network cities were carried out between January and March 2026. They pursued a twofold aim. On one hand, getting first-hand information about what's going on in the city, it's main policy challenge and expectations. On the other hand, helping to best anchor the project locally.

LE and LP found local teams deeply committed to their land, as well as a **strong backing from mayors and elected representatives** in the face of the challenge posed by RE:START. The latter will be, without a doubt, a significant asset for the project development.

Across these visits, they also appreciated the potential of [natural and cultural] **landscape valorisation** for small and medium-sized municipalities to feed uniqueness, raise sense of place and reconnect people with their places. It can even work as a cohesive force. That's very clear in the Idanha case,³ a municipality which works as a territorial system indeed, but it applies to the other RE:START partner cities as well. In fact, the smaller the municipality is, the more interesting it is to go beyond the city limits, activating the entire municipality as the most meaningful scale in terms of attractiveness.

“ The visit was very productive and meaningful for us, for the in-depth understanding of the process, core issues and not least getting the one-on-one relation started, which we consider essential for understanding each other's tasks and context.

Karen Edle Vestergaard, Fundraiser at the Department of Strategic Development and Business, Nyborg Kommune

Due to the full-scale invasion, the exploratory visit to Khotyn [UA] was replaced by an online exchange



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Lead expert & lead partner online exchange with KHOTYN
March 4th 2026. 10:00 – 11:30 CET

Intro. Who are we in the meeting? 5'

Part I. Khotyn's state of play & ambition. 15' [Khotyn team takes the lead]
Intro [facts & figures], problem area(s) concerning the project's theme, initiatives & achievements, ambition and expectations

Part II. Learning from Idanha... and from Khotyn likewise. 15' [LE and Khotyn take the lead]
Idanha's good practice in a nutshell
What do you appreciate most and would like to transfer? Anything you could contribute to?
Khotyn's capacities and learning needs

Break time. 10'

Part II. Working on place attractiveness with the URBACT method. 45' [LE takes the lead]
RE:START Transfer Journey. The Transferability Study
Attractiveness as a policy concept. What's in it for Khotyn?
Approaching Khotyn's URBACT Local Group
Wrap-up: How to support on local development to a city under wartime conditions? Next steps

³ Within an area of 1,416 km² [second largest municipality in Portugal], Idanha-a-Nova has a population of 8,541 distributed in 13 small towns and villages, out of which Idanha-a-Nova is the most populated with 2,200 inhabitants.

In-depth questionnaire

Along with the exploratory visits, an in-depth questionnaire was designed to be carefully completed by the network cities. Both were pivotal to inform the [transferability study](#), as the first project milestone. Nonetheless, the questionnaire's usefulness has gone far beyond that. By working on it, the involved city officers began to work systematically on:

- **Evidence-based policy challenge** identification.
- **Local framework conditions** (enabling and hindering factors) and ongoing related initiatives.
- Existing practices and potential on **vertical multi-level governance** (to help with an attractiveness strategy).
- **Stakeholder mapping**.
- **Background and experience** on the one hand, and **learning needs** on the other, regarding topics that could be brought to an attractiveness agenda.





Understand phase | Transferability study
Questionnaire to partners cities

Main purpose of this in-depth questionnaire is to source the RE:START transferability study, as the main Network output of the "understand phase", the first out of our URBACT transfer journey. It comes once the LE-IP exploratory visits and the Network activation meeting in Idanha-a-Nova have been completed. That is, when the Idanha's good practice is now duly framed, even prototyped, as an experience on boosting the attractiveness of mid-sized cities, which can equally serve to face demographic and economic decline but also to provide greater and more consistent direction to cities in transition or even growing. It also comes once you have taken the time to think about how all the above applies to your city and mould your expectations inside this project accordingly. Thus, I guess you are in better position to tackle this survey now rather than 2 or 3 months ago.

As said, main goal is to gather relevant and precise information in order to profile your city in our transferability study, but it should also work far beyond that. The questionnaire is designed in a way that by working on it will be helpful for you to set more solid foundations regarding your participation in the project. So, the time invested now in fulfilling it will be time saved afterwards.

That is why having quality responses to this survey is pivotal for our project, now and later on. Please be informative, clear and accurate, avoiding too succinct answers. If necessary, involve those city officers and local experts with the appropriate expertise to fill it in.

Before starting, take an overall look at the whole questionnaire. There can be overlaps between some questions. So, don't be afraid of repeating some contents and arguments. You may also reuse the material of your presentations in Idanha or already included in the RE:START application form. Use as many pages as necessary.

When submitting your questionnaire, you may attach complementary material that can be relevant, preferably in English (policy papers, hyperlinks...) and some images in good resolution that might be used in the study (with copyright indications if applies). Once submitted, I might give you proper feedback in case any relevant information was missing or scarce.

Do not hesitate to contact for any query.
 Thanks so much in advance for your valuable collaboration!

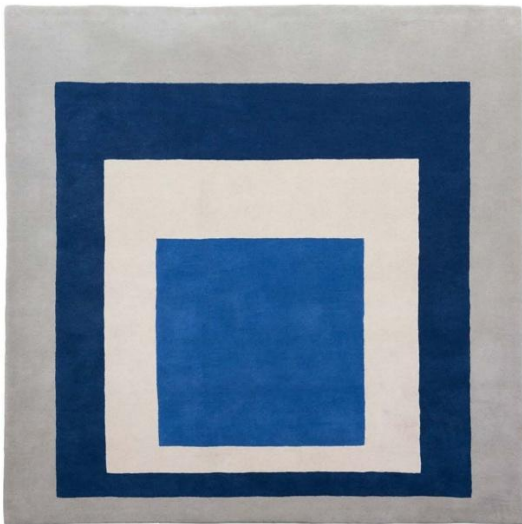
Miguel Rivas, URBACT Lead Expert for RE:START
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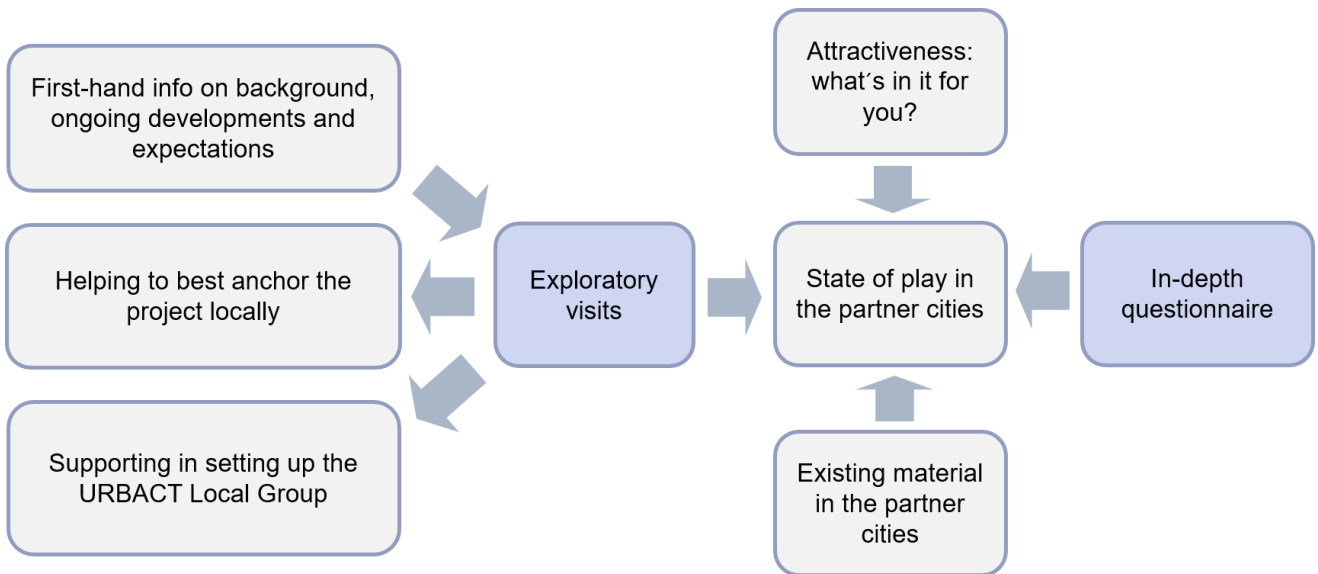


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TRANSFERABILITY STUDY





Understanding the Idanha case

Making the good practice transferable

Recomeçar em Idanha [Restart in Idanha] has been a place branding-driven long-term strategy, launched in 2015, to reverse strong depopulation by creating new drivers for growth and reenergizing the local community. Based on the ideas of rural innovation and new lifestyles closer to nature, the initiative has created, among other achievements, a **distinctive positioning** for Idanha in the bioeconomy sector as a fertile ground to spark green projects, green investments and green jobs.

To understand how it worked, this experience was properly deconstructed, and that led to a prototype, which somehow draws place attractiveness' value chain. **Place branding sits at the core**, providing framework and tools for rethinking the local community's identity [city narrative] in order to make it more future-oriented and engaging. Yet other components are needed likewise to make the wheel turn and get an impact in terms of local development, in particular the following ones:

- **Political momentum.** Political leadership was key to ignite the change —from the simple willingness to face decline to a firm determination to take action— and keep the implementation effort over a long-term period. Before that, the prototype compels a clear, evidence-based identification of the local **policy challenge** to tackle.

- **Action-led work strands.** Idanha’s core narrative was distilled into four operational programmes, namely: Idanha Green Valley, to positioning Idanha in the bioeconomy sector distinctively, in particular in organic food; Idanha Live, aimed at caring and improving conditions for those who live or want to live in Idanha; Idanha Try, as a soft-landing pad to everyone considering a relocation to Idanha; and Idanha Made In, supporting and promoting local firms and high-quality local products.

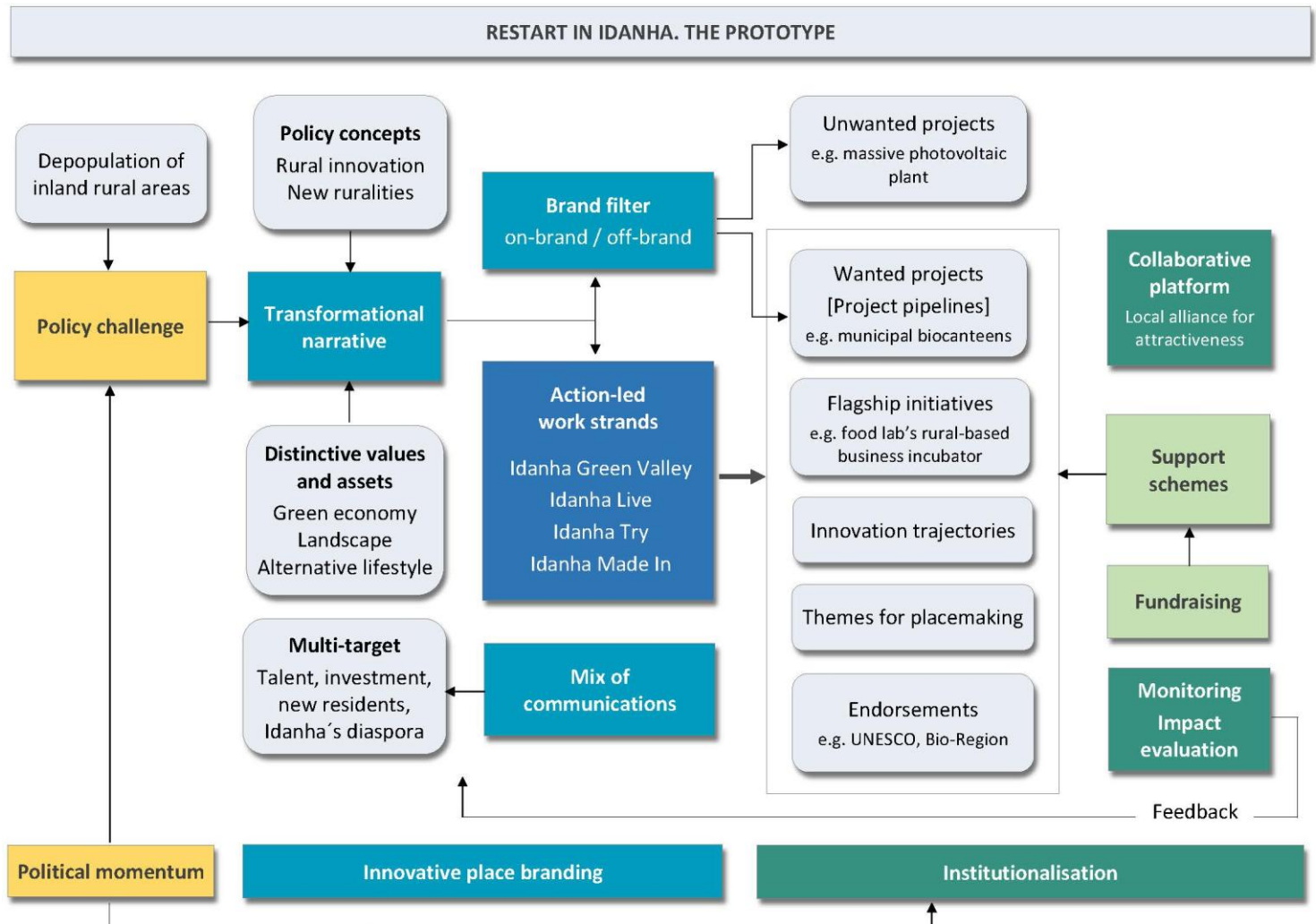
These programmes served as **project pipelines** and, in a way, as local-based innovation trajectories. Hence, it was key to turn the igniting place branding into a form of agile, outward-looking local development strategy.

- **Mix of communications,** since narrative building is not enough if it is not effectively communicated and disseminated. PR and social media played a wide role in the Idanha case.
- **Support schemes.** Financial and non-financial incentives to projects duly aligned [“on-brand”] to the agreed city narrative can make a difference to an attractiveness agenda, in particular for small and medium-sized cities. Consequently, **fundraising** takes on special relevance, also to enable communication actions with some impact.
- **Embedding attractiveness into city government.** This will likely ask for some adjustments, in terms of staff profiles and capabilities, devoted team, and workflows able to cross silos of competences.
- **Dedicated stakeholder group.** Establishing a strategic partnership —either from scratch or leveraging an existing platform— that can evolve into a duly mandated local alliance for attractiveness.
- **Monitoring and impact evaluation,** since attractiveness needs continuous feedback.

The **RE:START prototype** is presented as a coherent sequence in terms of policy making. That is why the prototype, on the one hand, is perfectly applicable to spatial contexts other than rural areas, and to policy challenges other than demographic decline.⁴

⁴ That’s the case for other partner cities in the network. For instance Loutraki, a mid-sized coastal city located 80 km from Athens, at the gateway to the Peloponnese, which is strongly linked to summer tourism peaks, while year-round vibrancy remains modest. Loutraki’s main challenge is not depopulation but the need for transitioning towards a more balanced urban model, creating better conditions for permanent residents, entrepreneurial talent and innovation-led investments. The same for La Marina Alta County, in Spain, which is widely recognised as a Mediterranean coastal destination. However, this image does not fully reflect the area’s complexity and its true aims and aspirations. That is why MACMA, the county authority, is seeking to move from a predominantly visitor-oriented image and narrative towards a broader, multidimensional concept of attractiveness, where the local population stay at the core.

On the other hand, not all the prototype's building blocks are explicitly formulated nor well developed in the Idanha case. So, it can be helpful for Idanha-a-Nova to improve, or even revamp if the case, its own strategy for the next years.



“ The Idanha-a-Nova case shows how a strong local identity, combined with innovation and a clear vision, can become a driving force for sustainable development. It is inspiring us to explore new ways of unlocking our municipality's potential and making it an even more attractive place to live, work and invest.

Georgios Gkionis, Mayor of Loutraki – Perachora – Agioi Theodoroi

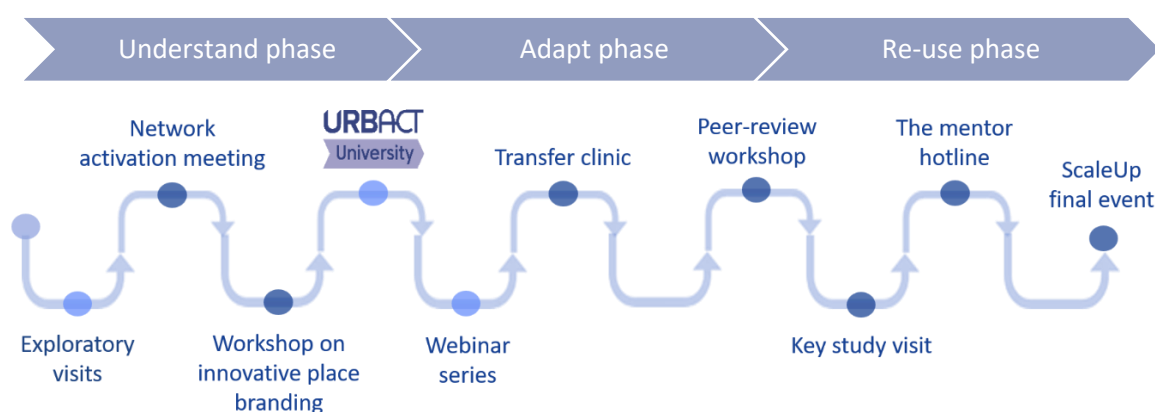
IDANHA-A-NOVA

Estratégia 2015 | 2025



Transnational activities

RE:START is a 30-month transfer journey organized in three main stages —The Understand phase, until August 2026; Adapt phase, from Sept 2026 to August 2027; and the Re-Use phase, from Sept 2027 to April 2028. Within this timeframe, a number of transnational meetings and activities are foreseen to provide the involved cities hands-on learning or just food for thought for their work on drafting their action plans on attractiveness [transfer plans, and improvement plan in the case of Idanha-a-Nova]. Out of this workplan, two transnational in-person meetings have been developed so far.



Network activation meeting

The first gathering was in March 24-25 2026, right after the exploratory visits to all network cities. It was designed as an **immersive learning** on the Idanha-a-Nova's good practice, which has turned the Portuguese municipality into a benchmark on new contemporary ruralities. To that purpose the agenda was a mix of presentations, panel discussions, exchanges with local stakeholders and visits to landmarks. Moreover, this was the first opportunity for network cities to know each other.

“ It was quite amazing to immerse ourselves firsthand in Idanha's four-pillar attractiveness strategy, and truly exciting to understand the inner workings and impact of an event like the Boom Festival.

Sergio Campanella, Special Advisor to Comune di Jonadi



RE:START Network Activation Meeting - Panel discussion with new residents and local stakeholders. Why did you restart in Idanha? How was your landing here? Did you get any specific incentive or support? What should Idanha-a-Nova Municipality do better to retain their people and newcomers? Moderator: Margarida Rossa [Câmara Municipal de Idanha-a-Nova]. Panelists: Tiago Lourenço [Azeite Egitânia], João Ludgero [Quinta dos trevos], Paulo Barata [creative entrepreneur].

“ The meeting in Idanha-a-Nova was simply crucial for building relations and common ground with our partners, and building solid ground and inspiration for our transfer project in Denmark.

Rikke Falgreen Mortensen, Strategic Urban Development Officer, Nyborg Kommune

Workshop on innovative place branding

As place branding was at the heart of *Recomeçar em Idanha*, understanding its real meaning and scope is crucial, since many still view this practice simply as a matter of logos and campaigns. Hence, the 2nd RE:START transnational gathering, held in Nyborg [Denmark] on June 17–18, was largely shaped as a workshop on innovative place branding —understood as a set of approaches and tools aimed at building up and communicating more robust and outward-looking local identities.

The way to this meeting was actually paved beforehand, at the network activation meeting. Then, Bloom Consulting partner Filipe Roquette —a Lisbon-based place branding team— shared a number of insights when reflecting on Bloom’s experience supporting the design and delivery of *Recomeçar em Idanha*:

- Place branding is not only for the powerful.
- **Place branding is a strategic framework** not just marketing, which has to be sustained over time.
- Main output is getting a true, clear and understandable narrative.
- Existing disadvantages [e.g. remoteness in the case of inland rural areas] can be reinterpreted strategically.
- Place branding requires strong institutional backing and political commitment.

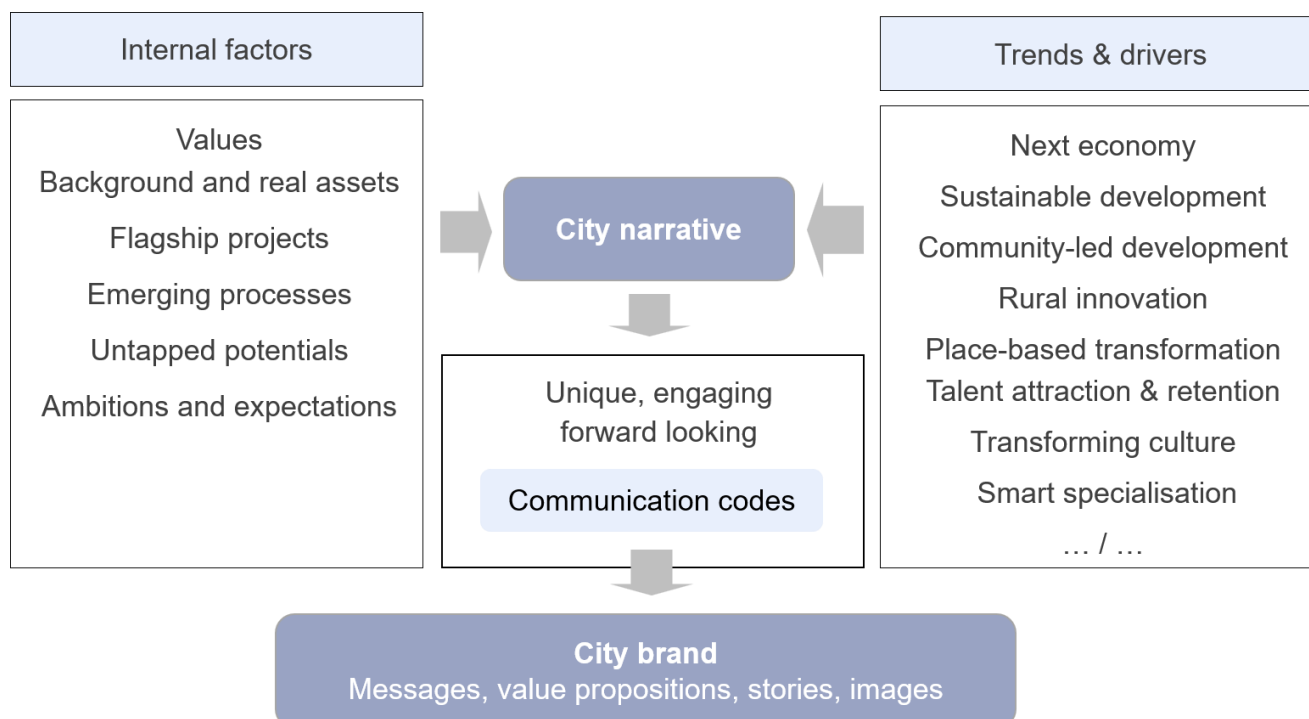


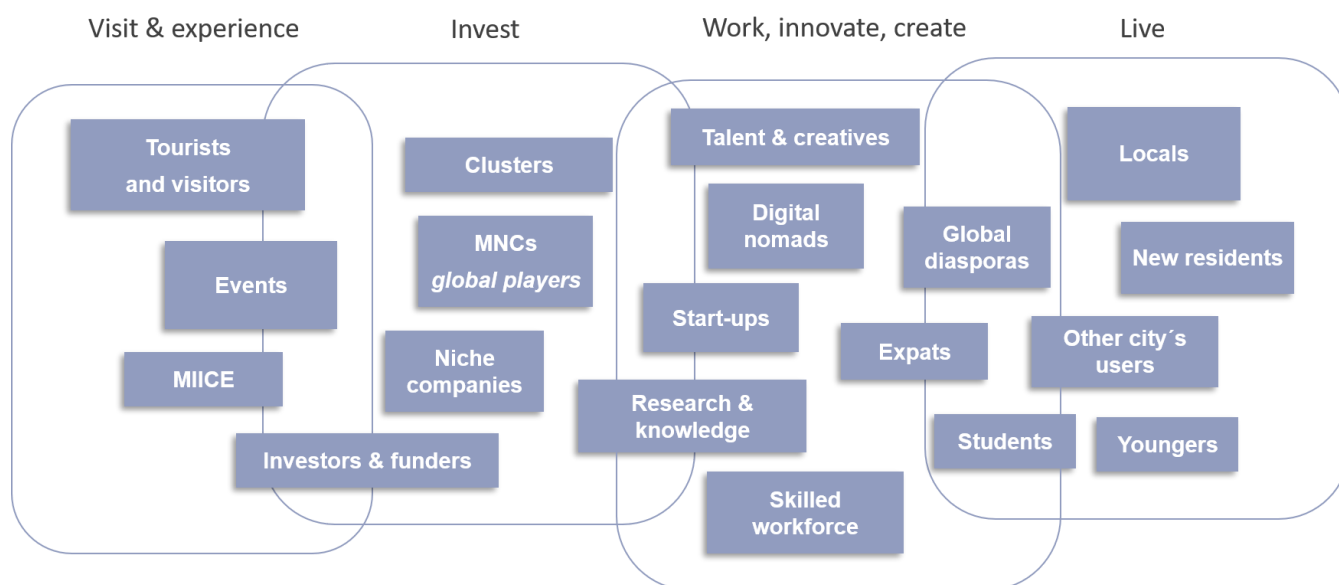
The transnational group at the meeting in Nyborg. Five in the picture are elected representatives, three of them Mayors.

URBACT lead expert and workshop facilitator Miguel Rivas organized the event in four sessions —narrative building, city imageries and visual communication, segmentation and city’s target-groups, and mix of communications. Four main lessons can be highlighted:

- **Narrative is the first and most fundamental**, and it is not only about the “who we are” but also the “who we want to be”. That’s why place branding is so helpful for places in transition, as a change booster and accelerator.
- To ignite a change, city narrative should be **transformational** —in the sense of breaking with path dependencies— and distinctive, emphasizing where the city is unique and able to outstand. Duly assembled, this can be a gathering of local assets, (major and minor) achievements, flagship initiatives, emerging processes, untapped potentials, as well as bold concepts to work on —in line to the captivating “Idanha Green Valley”.
- **Place branding is a multi-stakeholder task**, and therefore an organisational challenge. At a point that place branding’s new frontier is about crowdsourcing and curating the city story —the “let the city speak for itself”.
- **Cities must expand their understanding of what a communication action is or can be**, stepping away from a [usually costly] campaign-based logic. There are also a number of unconventional ways —maybe subtler— to communicate the city. Significantly, *Recomeçar em Idanha* was publicly launched in Lisbon, at the Higher Institute of Agronomy.

The process of narrative building © Grupo TASO





Segmentation: a kaleidoscope of potential city's target-groups © Grupo TASO

“ The meeting in Nyborg was an insightful experience that helped us rethink our approach to place branding. We realised that our community not only needs to attract new residents but can also make targeted efforts to attract specific groups, particularly young professionals from the creative and IT industries. We also recognised the importance of getting a stronger visual identity.

Liubov Petrova, Head of the Economic Development and International Cooperation Department, Khotyn City Council

“ Nyborg reminded us that place branding is much more than promoting a destination. It is about understanding what makes a place unique and transforming that identity into opportunities for its people. For Loutraki, this means connecting our natural, cultural and thermal heritage with innovation and sustainable local development.

Andriani Beziou, RE:START Local Coordinator, Special Advisor to the Mayor

“ The transnational meetings have shown us that a territory's attractiveness depends not only on its resources, but also on its ability to showcase them and build a distinctive identity. For Marina Alta, the challenge is to turn these lessons into real opportunities for our municipalities.

Núria Gómez, Technical Officer at MACMA

The meeting was also an opportunity to learn from Nyborg Kommune's current efforts in repositioning the city and promoting greater connectedness between the historic city centre, the harbour area, the scenic seafront and the suburban residential areas. In this attempt, they are strengthening strategic urban development and promoting a range of flagship projects.

At the more tactical ground, Nyborg Kommune is seeking to **experiment with placemaking** initiatives, as a way to engage the local population. And at this point, Danish placemaker Kristian Riis was invited to join the RE:START conversation, stating that place branding can provide the necessary strategic framework to get meaningful placemaking initiatives.

ULG progress

Stakeholder identification

The discussion on stakeholder mobilisation, as fundamental part of the URBACT method, started since the time of the exploratory visits —membership, format, and work dynamics, the latter including meeting frequency and way(s) of bridging with the activity at network level.

When it comes to membership, all RE:START cities have identified quite a number of potential stakeholders. In this respect, network partners were encouraged to combine different techniques for stakeholder analysis, notably the interest/influence matrix and other **crossing quintuple helix categories⁵ with RE:START's own thematic strands** —those that are most commonly associated to place attractiveness [see the grid below].

Half of the partners will set up their URBACT Local Groups [ULG] from scratch [Idanha-a-Nova, Loutraki, Khotyn], while the other half will leverage, to a large extent, existing collaborative platforms and dynamics [Jonadi, Marina Alta, Nyborg]. To some of them, this process can certainly be addressed as an opportunity to refine their own participatory approaches, and, in any case, to set the basis for a robust city alliance for attractiveness, beyond the RE:START project.

⁵ Being the natural environment the fifth helix, as a vital dimension in today's place-based development, regardless of the theme.

Grid for stakeholder mapping crossing the quintuple helix model with RE:START thematic strands

	Public sector	Private sector	Academia and research	Civil society	Environment and place
Economic development and Invest-in units			N/A	N/A	N/A
Destination/tourism management organisations			N/A	N/A	N/A
Major cultural entities and events			N/A	N/A	
DirComs from key facilities [logistics hubs, tech parks...]			N/A	N/A	
Main and niche firms. Business associations	N/A		N/A	N/A	
Civic platforms	N/A	N/A	N/A		
Creative agencies and freelancers	N/A		N/A	N/A	
Media and local marketers			N/A	N/A	N/A
Province or regional authorities		N/A	N/A	N/A	
Higher education institutions	N/A	N/A		N/A	

N/A: Not Applicable

“ We have successfully met the challenge of establishing our ULG because, in addition to having an existing living lab involving our *Council of Associations and Voluntary Organisations*, we also benefit from the leadership role played by our *Cooperativa di Comunità*.

Emilio Francesco Aprile, President of the Jonadi Community Co-operative

Lessons from the URBACT summer university

The 2026 edition of the URBACT Summer University, which took place in Cork [Ireland], was fully dedicated to stakeholder involvement. A RE:START delegation attended the event, and they extracted the following main takeaways:

- The big step is moving shortlisted stakeholders [those intended to be involved] to the **active engagement zone**, in particular those relevant —some call them “robust actors” — but, for some reason, reluctant or hesitant to take a stake in the process.⁶
- To that aim, being able to build up a truly **compelling shared purpose**, tailored to every stakeholder or group of them, is key to engage actively. Moreover, stakeholders should clearly perceive the RE:START policy challenge is strategic and strongly backed by the mayor and his/her team. In other words, motivating with a **mission-oriented approach**.
- Engagement will be stronger through **concrete actions and clear roles**. As a preliminary idea to work on, the RE:START group envisioned a call for proposals for a consultation on “who we are” —how different target groups perceive the city, including the own population— and possible future-oriented pathways. This would yield a survey, a short video with testimonials, and an event. These pieces could serve the communication that there is an attractiveness agenda in progress.

“ The URBACT Summer University was one of the most inspiring events I have ever attended, impressive both in its impact and scale. Participating in the Summer University helped us refine our approach to establishing the ULG and identify potential stakeholders who had not previously been considered.

Oleksandra Ryhalovska, ULG Coordinator, Economic Development and International Cooperation Department of Khotyn City Council

Envisioning local alliances for attractiveness

Regarding the ULGs, there have been far-reaching talks and discussions on the formats best adapted to the strategic nature of place attractiveness and the local capabilities actually in place, with some partners drafting bold preliminary designs.

⁶ In Cork, RE:START cities identified a few examples: a well-established, publicly-owned heritage organization representing a flagship city asset; a main real estate-biased business association with a poor, or even wrong, idea of what sustainable growth means; a small firm with low expectations regarding the local council’s real capacity as a changemaker.

For instance, **Marina Alta** is envisaging a **multi-layered ULG structure** adapted to the supramunicipal scale of the comarca [with 35 municipalities] and the three distinct spatial settings of the area —coastal, intermediate, and inland rural. So, rather than a single group, the ULG is expected to operate as an articulated system, comprising operational coordination [driven by MACMA technical staff alongside external expert support], political-strategic validation [a kind of extended steering group combining political representation from MACMA's governance structure with key stakeholders], and area-based discussion [three multi-stakeholder working groups —coastal, intermediate, and inland rural— channelling their proposals to the steering group].

Idanha-a-Nova will follow a similar structure. On the ground, five **thematic city-stakeholder working groups** will organize discussion and co-creation. The themes will be: i) community, governance, and territorial cohesion; ii) economy, employment, education, and innovation; iii) agriculture, food, and locally-based resources; iv) tourism, heritage, nature, and thermalism; v) rural landscapes and villages. Above this level, a **local council committee** will work on integrating and cross-referencing the working groups' contributions, ensuring the overall strategy is sound and consistent. On top, a **strategic forum** —conceived as a broad-based participatory event— will bring together public authorities [local, regional, and national] and the wider community. This forum will provide further discussion, build consensus, and pave the way for multi-level governance. The RE:START local team will provide overall facilitation and operational coordination.

“ The main challenge for RE:START in Marina Alta is adapting a European experience to a territory made up of diverse municipalities, each with different needs and resources. Our ULG should become a space for cooperation that allows us to build a shared vision for the future of our territory.

Sergi Ferrús, Mayor of Pedreguer and President of MACMA

“ The real value of our ULG lies in bringing different voices around the same table. Our challenge is to turn dialogue into meaningful collaboration, ensuring that local stakeholders are not just participants, but active contributors in shaping the future of our municipality.

Katerina Ziazia, RE:START Team, Municipality of Loutraki – Perachora – Agioi Theodoroi

Beyond one-way learning

Untapping one-to-one conversations

Crossing contribution capacities and learning needs has been one of the outcomes that one can take from the RE:START transferability study. It was addressed with the aim of promoting peer-to-peer conversations and exchanges, within the network and beyond. Regarding the inventory of expertise, an overview is as follows:

Governance

Place attractiveness must work as an integrated and overarching approach. Somehow, **Idanha's** good practice came to fill a gap in local strategic planning, providing a forward-looking vision and better direction to the municipality. In the realm of working with a strategic approach, the network demonstrates a strong collective foundation. **Nyborg** represents an exceptional model through its newly established Department of Strategic Development and Business, which operates directly under the executive level to align urban planning, flagship projects, tourism, business development and citizen involvement.

Next step for all is turning integrated strategic planning into a real capacity to break competence silos and work across different city departments, in particular economic development, tourism and urban planning. To help on this, political momentum is key, in order to embed the attractiveness approach into local government, and keep the implementation effort in the long-term. In this regard, the great commitment and participation from mayors and elected representatives in the RE:START transfer journey is a good start.

Attractiveness is about strategic communication, and in this field the Mayor's Communication Office of **Loutraki** is in good position to share vision and expertise. Attractiveness is also a multi-stakeholder task, and in this point **Jonadi** provides a highly innovative, community-led governance framework, with a focus on the youngers. The Council of Associations and Volunteering is at core of this framework, which is now evolving towards a living lab approach.

Inter-municipal cooperation can be relevant to get critical mass and more powerful arguments to buzz and attract, in particular when you are small. A standout performer in horizontal multi-level governance is **MACMA-Marina Alta**, whose experience in coordinating tourism strategies, youth policies and cultural initiatives across 35 local councils provides a benchmark in this field. Finally, when it comes to fundraising, **Khotyn** has developed an unparalleled expertise, evidenced by 22 international cooperation agreements across 12 countries

Mapping contribution capacities and learning needs across the RE:START Network

	Background and experience					
	Idanha	Jonadi	Loutraki	Marina Alta	Nyborg	Khotyn
Cross-cutting / Governance						
Strategic urban development						
Strategic communication [city branding]						
Breaking competence silos						
Stakeholder involvement						
Multi-level governance & funding						
Inter-municipal cooperation						
Talent / Startup, Create, Work						
Talent attraction & retention						
Engaging diasporas and return migration						
New workplaces						
Skills & workforce development						
Making migration work for decline regions						
Investment / Invest						
Investment & knowledge attraction						
Cluster development & cluster branding						
Residents / Live						
Old town revitalisation						
Urban-rural linkage. Landscape valorisation						
Housing [out of the box housing formulas]						
Transforming culture						
Youth engagement						
Securing quality population services						
Visitors / Experience						
Destination management						
Regenerative/sustainable tourism						
Events						

Legend

Background and experience based on city' self-assessment.	
No experience	Our city has no practice in this field.
Beginner	Our city has taken some steps into this field, but cannot exhibit significant results so far. We are on the way.
Experienced performer	After different initiatives and projects, we've reached a position at the mainstream practice in this field. We can exhibit bold results.
Innovator	It's a priority theme, in which we're following our own innovative pathway. Besides bold results, we outstand or are at the forefront in this field.

Talent and investment

Talent attraction & retention emerges as a critical priority across the network, with some valuable operational frameworks. First one is the own **Idanha-a-Nova's** good practice, having talent and investment as the absolutely main target. Likewise, **Jonadi**, in Calabria, stands out as an innovator in this field, through its structured STAY–RETURN–ARRIVE vision, seeking to counter brain drain. Within this framework, the initiative *Torno Giù* – The Agora of Those Who Return is noteworthy, as a pioneering practice in diaspora engagement, creating physical and social spaces to reconnect with young talent living abroad.

On another vein, clusters, as future-oriented productive & knowledge priority domains, can be extremely useful to provide focus for the city's efforts on investment attraction. To some extent, "Idanha Green Valley" and its Bio-Region work programme can be conceptualized as **cluster development & cluster branding**. This could be helpful for Loutraki to develop cluster-based roadmaps around bold concepts like Wellness [expanding in this ways its assets linked to thermalism, sports and nature] or Green Hydrogen.

Residents

Liveability is a precondition to attract and retain, and it is key to consciously target the local population within an attractiveness agenda. The capacities to enhance liveability [adapted here to the context of small and medium-sized cities] are richly distributed across the partner cities.

Historic centres can work as hubs for social and economic activity, attracting residents, visitors and entrepreneurs alike. **Nyborg** is now quite involved in the heritage-driven revitalisation of the city centre and trying to give a city perspective to its heritage landmarks;

Jonadi's visionary plan to regenerate the derelict and almost abandoned small village of Nao is impressive. They are bravely testing a mix of youth-centred approach, out-of-the-box housing formulas, street art, social initiatives and even the international mobility that is fuelled by the Erasmus initiative, all to ultimately shape the so-called "Borgo Erasmus" project.

Together with the built environment, landscape has proved to be a precious source of uniqueness in most RE:START municipalities. Thus, it makes full sense addressing landscape valorisation as one of the conditions to care of in an attractiveness agenda. **Marina Alta** is a primary reference on this, together with Jonadi, which introduces itself as the "urban-rural village".

Along with housing, securing quality population services, education and healthcare in particular, is a prerequisite for place attractiveness, where most RE:START cities excel. A special mention to **Idanha-a-Nova** —providing high-quality education to youngsters, even a University campus, and innovative solutions specifically adapted to low-density areas— and **Khotyn**. The Ukrainian city has responded brilliantly to the enormous challenge of integrating over 10,000 displaced persons escaping war, providing them not only with basic housing, healthcare, and social services, but also with targeted support for education and entrepreneurship.

Visitors

RE:START cities bring extensive experience in tourism and events, while actively seeking to transition from short-term seasonal visitation to more sustainable and resident-oriented models. **Loutraki** brings robust destination management structure [Visit Loutraki] and could show a path to **Khotyn**, which is starting with its own DMO, called Ponizzia, based on inter-municipal cooperation. Loutraki, which brings a distinctive position as a thermal city, is now boosting an agenda of major national and international events, related to culture and sports, well suited to the concept of wellness the city is working on.

Leveraging its significant background in the MICE sector and a number of key heritage-driven events, **Nyborg** is now building up a wider and more consistent experience-oriented destination management strategy, also as a way to boost urban vibe.

Finally, along with Idanha, which stands out in nature tourism, **MACMA-Marina Alta** is a leading practitioner in regenerative and sustainable tourism, with concrete strategies and initiatives aimed at diversifying tourism away from the overstretched coastal strip toward inland natural and cultural assets.

APPRECIATE MOST.

LOUTRAKI

THE VISION OF THE MAYOR.

AND HIS DECISIONS....

(Selection of the company, finding
the funding,)

TRANSFER TO CITY:

THE WAYS TO ATTRACT MORE
PEOPLE ^{TO} WORK IN THE FIELD
OF WELLNESS / INNOVATION /
AGRICULTURE / SPORTS TOURISM.

IMPROVE:

Subsidy / economic help to
new comers?

URBACT



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