

# CULTUUR&CAMPUS PUTSELAAN

## Periodic Lessons Learned #4

### Deliverable D7.6



Gemeente  
Rotterdam



# General Information

## Project Description

<b>Acronym</b>	C&CP
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<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.putselaan.nl">www.putselaan.nl</a>
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## Deliverable Description

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## Acronyms and Definitions

<b>Acronym</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
AWC	Afrikaanderwijk Cooperatie
BUZ	Stichting Buzinezzclub Foundation
C&CP	Cultuur&Campus Putselaan
CA	Consortium Agreement
COD	Stichting Codarts voor de Kunsten
EC	European Commission
ELIA	European League of Institutes of the Arts
EUR	Erasmus University Rotterdam
HR	Stichting Hogeschool Rotterdam
ICLEI	ICLEI - Local Governments for Sustainability
RDAM	Gemeente Rotterdam
TU Delft	Technische Universiteit Delft
WDKA	Willem de Kooning Academy Rotterdam
WP(s)	Work Package(s)

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# 1. Abstract

As described in the Grant Agreement the periodic lessons learned deliverable (D7.4) provides an updated version of D7.3 on the challenges and lessons learned, narrating the journey of C&CP up until this stage. This deliverable will be followed up by two additional lessons learned reports, D7.5, and D7.6. The lessons learned reports will be targeted towards a broader, public audience. The purpose of these is to build a community around the C&CP and to inspire other partnerships across Europe to initiate their own C&CP.

There is much left to learn concerning the process of engaging in territorial transformation without resulting in displacement (excessive gentrification). The consortium will learn valuable lessons throughout this project and intends to record this knowledge in a way that the learnings may be transferred across the European Union. At various intervals during the project period, the consortium will take stock of its learnings and publish a series of analysis reports. These reports will map the stakeholder landscape engaged and outline the utilised collaborative (co-design) processes. It will also detail the challenges that the project and its different stakeholders encounter. Lessons learned recorded so far go beyond this goal and cover all aspects of the project; this is in addition to what is described in the GA.

## 2. About the Cultuur&Campus Putselaan Project

**Cultuur&Campus Putselaan** (C&CP) pilots a new approach to city making through education, research, policy and culture at the heart of Rotterdam South. The C&CP will be located on the Putselaan. In our approach, we facilitate the coming together of different types of knowledge - theoretical, practical, from the arts and sciences - with the lived experiences of citizens. We do so in three ways.

**First**, by co-creating a vibrant site of encounter, dialogue and shared learning. The C&CP will be housed in a historical building, the refurbishment of which unites a sustainable re-design vision of students of architecture and built environment, with the wishes and needs of local stakeholders, in a part of town where education and cultural institutions are scarce. This will be a hub for students, residents, social enterprise start-ups, lecturers and researchers – a place for learning, studying, community, art and culture. C&CP will connect to existing initiatives and spaces, while also providing a unique hub for higher education in the area.

**Second**, we will facilitate empowering the co-design of impact-oriented learning curricula that can make the area more sustainable, inclusive, and enriching. From sustainable crafts and repair workshops open to all, to lifelong learning formats and Master level courses, we will test innovative didactic approaches geared towards activating and inspiring citizens, students, and lecturers in shaping a better future for Rotterdam South.

**Third**, we will ground our approach to research in participatory research and citizen science, that empowers residents to take part in the processes that shape their city and delivers a sound understanding of the area, its challenges and opportunities, based on shared ownership.

**With C&CP, we aim to create a positive and lasting impact, working together towards a thriving future for Rotterdam Zuid.**

## 3. Introduction to the Periodic Lessons Learned Report #2

This deliverable captures valuable insights and lessons gleaned over the first 24 months of our project journey. Rather than being organised by work packages (WPs), this report adopts a thematic approach to reflect the cross-cutting nature of our project's challenges and achievements. Our aim is to distil comprehensive observations across various facets of project implementation, emphasising broader themes that transcend individual WPs.

Key themes addressed in this report include General Observations & Project Management, Research & Education, Placemaking & Programming, Stakeholder Management & Network Engagement, Building Renovation, and External Communication & Dissemination. Each section delves into specific lessons learned, drawing from the collective experiences of our WP leaders, consortium members and stakeholders. These insights are pivotal for refining strategies, enhancing collaboration, and optimising project outcomes moving forward. In the following Periodic Lessons Learned reports we will also include input from local stakeholders and the Core Group.

This report serves not only as a retrospective analysis but also as a forward-looking tool to inform strategic decisions, inspire best practices, and promote continuous learning within our consortium and beyond. By sharing our journey and lessons learned, we aim to contribute to broader discourse on sustainable urban development and community-driven initiatives across diverse European contexts.

## 4. General Observations and Project Management

### 4.1 Consortium Agreement

The drafting and signing of the Consortium Agreement required more time than initially anticipated due to the pioneering nature of the collaboration and the diverse stakeholders involved. The complexity of coordinating multiple parties, each with their own interests and requirements, contributed to the extended timeline.

To mitigate such delays in the future, it is imperative that the Consortium Agreement be initiated concurrently with the preparation of the grant agreement. This simultaneous approach ensures that both documents are aligned and that any potential conflicts or issues can be addressed early in the process.

Moreover, meticulous planning is crucial. Clear deadlines must be established and communicated to all project partners from the outset. These deadlines should be realistic yet firm, ensuring that all parties are aware of their responsibilities and the timeframes within which they must operate. Adherence to these deadlines by all partners is essential to maintaining the project's timeline and ensuring its success.

### 4.2 Team Formation

The formation of a team comprising members from numerous organisations requires more time than initially anticipated. When collaborating with large institutions on a broad project, there is a tendency to distribute the workload among a vast group of individuals, each with distinct responsibilities. However, this approach risks diluting the time and effort each person can dedicate to the project, potentially undermining their sense of ownership and commitment.

Moreover, truly forming an inter-organizational, interdisciplinary team has necessitated more time investment than initially planned, partly due to the complex interlinking of our work packages. This complexity, more pronounced than in other Horizon projects, requires substantial knowledge exchange among team members, further contributing to the delay.

The need to share tasks among many individuals due to limited time availability and resources can quickly lead to team fragmentation. To address this, it is advisable to maintain a smaller, more focused team. For instance, a team size of 4 full-time equivalents (FTE) should ideally consist of 4 dedicated individuals, rather than 40 part-time contributors. This ensures that each team member can invest sufficient time and effort into the project, thereby enhancing their sense of ownership and the overall effectiveness of the team.

Avoid forming “single-person teams”, as this approach is insufficient to address the complexity of the project. Conduct a thorough review of all tasks and deliverables, ensuring the composition of a dedicated team that effectively covers all critical aspects of the work. Secure support from the financial, communications, and other relevant departments across all participating partners, emphasizing the urgency and significance of the project to foster engagement. Ensure that the project receives and continues to receive attention across the organization in order to broaden and strengthen opportunities in the program. Implement robust communication and documentation tools, such as logs, to ensure continuity and institutional knowledge retention in the event of personnel changes. Additionally, establish contingency plans to account for potential absences due to illness or leave, maintaining project momentum and minimizing disruptions.

### **4.3 Team Cohesion**

To support teamwork and cohesion, the project secured a shared working space in Rotterdam South, initially on the Pretorialaan (M4-11) and subsequently at the Hillevliet (from M14). The latter space is accessible to the wider C&CP community interested in contributing to Rotterdam South and connecting with a community of local entrepreneurs, organisations, and makers. The dedicated space not only fosters collaboration within the project and with external stakeholders but also strengthens the project's connection to and visibility within the local neighbourhood, prior to the opening of the Putselaan building.

The establishment of this dedicated working space within the community has proven to offer significant advantages to the project. This presence not only provides a convenient location for team members to collaborate but also ensures that the project remains visibly represented in the local context. Frequent use of this space enhances the project's accessibility by offering a welcoming and approachable environment where residents, stakeholders, and partners can easily engage with the team. This accessibility reinforces the project's commitment to engaging with the surrounding community, cultivating stronger connections, and fostering trust among stakeholders.

The structured division of tasks into work packages has proven to be a valuable framework for managing the project's phases. However, achieving practical synergy between these work packages has presented challenges. Such integration is crucial to ensuring that creative and educational programming, research objectives, and communication efforts align effectively, contributing to cohesive and impactful outcomes.

A critical aspect of project management is ensuring that the various documents produced across work packages are well-aligned and coherent. Achieving this alignment depends heavily on close collaboration between work package teams, which facilitates consistency in goals, methodologies, and reporting. However, fostering this collaboration is often challenged by significant time pressures and heavy workloads faced by team members. These constraints can limit opportunities for frequent communication, joint reviews, and coordinated planning, resulting in fragmented documentation and potential misunderstandings. Addressing this challenge requires deliberate efforts to allocate sufficient time for inter-team coordination. Strengthening these collaborative mechanisms will enhance the quality and integration of

project outputs, ensuring that the work packages contribute cohesively to the overall project objectives. Continued attention to fostering integration and alignment between work packages, building on their strong interdependencies, will support the development of a unified vision and stronger project results.

The development of the Masterplan and the articulation of the project's future vision, alongside managing all associated practicalities, have required significantly more time and effort from all team members than originally anticipated in the project plan. These activities are foundational for guiding the project's strategic direction and ensuring that operational realities align with long-term goals. However, the extensive involvement demanded has added pressure on team capacity, impacting time available for other tasks and deliverables. This underscores the need for realistic scheduling and resource allocation that accommodates the complexity of strategic planning and day-to-day project management. Furthermore, transparent communication about these demands can help manage expectations among stakeholders and foster a more sustainable work rhythm, preventing burnout and ensuring ongoing commitment.

To strengthen collaboration and ensure progress, regular team meetings should be held to review tasks and deliverables comprehensively. These sessions should also include brainstorming workshops that encourage innovative solutions and facilitate cross-disciplinary dialogue. An essential approach is to adapt the composition of work package teams as needed, bringing together members from different work packages to address specific challenges and opportunities. This dynamic arrangement fosters a deeper integration of creative and educational programming, research objectives, and communication efforts, ensuring they align effectively. Additionally, facilitate a start-up mentality within the team to develop more synergy and involvement.

While the project team has made progress in developing procedures to collaborate effectively across work packages and institutions, challenges remain in organizing the broader institutional structures necessary for facilitating decision-making at the appropriate levels. Key areas, such as rental contracts, operational plans, and long-term investments, require streamlined and flexible coordination. However, a heavier reliance on central institutional management in these activities could risk marginalizing smaller organizations and reducing the involvement of neighborhood stakeholders.

Additionally, the engagement of local residents has not been consistently embedded across all areas of the project, which poses the risk of insufficient local ownership. Addressing this issue necessitates a dual approach: strengthening bottom-up mechanisms to enhance grassroots participation and community representation while ensuring institutional management provides efficient and unobtrusive support. This balance is critical to fostering inclusivity and ensuring the project remains responsive to both local and institutional needs.

Maintaining a strong connection with the Core Team is equally vital to the project's success. This can be achieved by prioritizing transparent communication channels that encourage continuous dialogue and mutual updates between the Core Team and other contributors. Scheduling regular strategic check-ins and reflective discussions helps to align the broader team's efforts with the project's vision, while collaborative planning sessions further solidify

shared goals. Additionally, cultivating a sense of shared responsibility and encouraging informal moments of connection fosters trust and strengthens interpersonal relationships within the Core Team, reinforcing their role as a cohesive guiding force.

#### **4.4 Understanding HORIZON Rules and Regulations**

It requires more time than anticipated for all partners to familiarise themselves with HORIZON rules and regulations. This challenge is particularly pronounced when working with a large consortium that has limited prior experience with European Commission or HORIZON projects. The complexity and specificity of these regulations can be daunting for partners who are new to this framework.

Despite the coordinator's efforts to provide necessary documents, links, and ad-hoc presentations or explanations, these measures alone are insufficient to fully resolve the issue. The coordinator can facilitate understanding by offering resources and guidance, but the ownership ultimately lies on each partner to invest the time and effort needed to thoroughly familiarise themselves with the relevant rules and regulations. This individual responsibility is crucial for ensuring compliance and smooth project execution.

Moreover, fostering a proactive approach among partners is essential. Encouraging regular review and discussion of HORIZON guidelines can help mitigate misunderstandings and enhance overall project efficiency. While the coordinator plays a pivotal role in guiding this process, the active engagement and commitment of each partner are indispensable for successful collaboration.

#### **4.5 Co-Design Taskforce**

Initial plans for a separate Co-Design Taskforce failed to take into account practical aspects of the collaboration, such as: the team meets frequently and in various constellations; tasks at hand require flexibility among the team. One Co-Design Taskforce cannot attend to the diversity of tasks and activities - a more flexible approach is warranted.

#### **4.6 Roles and Responsibilities**

The governance structure and reporting responsibilities, as well as the project's integration into a broader urban development initiative, have presented several challenges.

From the outset, the tasks and role of the project manager were somewhat underdefined—whether their responsibilities were limited to coordination or also included fostering a collaborative atmosphere and facilitating connections. Additionally, the role and purpose of the Core Group (consisting of the managerial layer above the WP leads of each institution) has been somewhat ambiguous. On the one hand, they have supported the project team with

important decisions such as the extended renting contract of the C&CP building for seven years which the project team could have not decided itself. On the other hand, there has been some uncertainty regarding the necessity of reporting to this group about ongoing activities on a WP level and the relevance of their discussions to our project.

These challenges are particularly pronounced when a smaller project operates independently but maintains strong ties to a larger urban development initiative that is not directly included in the pilot project. This dual relationship complicates the project's governance and reporting mechanisms, necessitating a clearer delineation of roles and responsibilities to ensure effective management and integration with the overarching development goals.

This clarity eliminates ambiguities that may hinder decision-making or lead to inefficiencies. The responsibilities of the project manager, work package leads and Core Group, should be explicitly articulated to ensure alignment and mutual understanding. A well-documented governance framework not only streamlines coordination but also builds trust among team members by setting transparent expectations regarding their contributions and decision-making authority.

Equally important is fostering a stronger connection between the Core Team and the broader project team. This involves promoting open communication and ensuring that collaboration between these groups is both structured and adaptable. The ongoing revision of the organizational structure is a proactive step towards achieving this goal, introducing adjustments that better align with the project's vision. The inclusion of additional members in the Core Team and granting them greater decision-making authority ensures a more agile and responsive governance process. Furthermore, the establishment of an extra workgroup focused on research critical to the project's continuation exemplifies the flexibility needed to meet emerging challenges. By continuously evaluating and adapting team compositions and functions, the project can better secure its long-term objectives and integration into the wider urban development initiative.

Working from established institutions on innovative collaborations and programs with a lived environment, new perspectives arise and, in the experiment, things can go differently. It's important that management give 'backing' to the team.

#### **4.7      *Communication***

Apart from the scheduled and structured formal communication, informal communication has proven to be equally important for fostering a collaborative and cohesive team environment. Encouraging regular informal interactions can help build stronger relationships between team members. These interactions can lead to more spontaneous sharing of ideas and solutions, fostering synergies between WPs, ultimately benefiting the project as a whole.

By enhancing both formal and informal communication channels (for example through regular co-working days, or a group app), the working team can achieve greater synergy, ensuring that all WPs are working harmoniously towards the project's goals.

To further strengthen communication and collaboration, it is crucial to move beyond routine status updates and incorporate diverse types of meetings, such as brainstorming sessions and collaborative workshops. These forums encourage creative problem-solving and cross-pollination of ideas between work packages. Actively participating in each other's programming and project activities not only fosters a deeper understanding of the interconnected elements of the project but also enhances team cohesion. This also goes for the more strategic roles involved in this project, creating the long term vision. Additionally, creating opportunities to share both successes and challenges helps build a supportive environment where lessons can be collectively learned, and achievements celebrated, reinforcing the team's commitment to the project's shared goals.

#### **4.8 Partner Collaboration**

Even when partnerships are local or regional, as in our case, one should not underestimate the political complexities and resource differentials that can arise. These factors can create challenges in decision-making processes and project alignment and significantly impact the efficiency and cohesion of collaborative efforts. Aligning expectations and resources towards a common goal requires considerable time. By dedicating time to nurture these relationships, the partnership can develop a strong foundation, ensuring more cohesive and productive collaboration in the long term.

#### **4.9 Balancing Engagement with Local Stakeholders and Preferred Suppliers**

The project aims to collaborate with local initiatives as extensively as possible. However, regulations regarding preferred suppliers can pose significant challenges to engaging with these local entities. Organisations with stringent preferred supplier policies often find it difficult to work with local initiatives, which may not be on their approved list.

In contrast, smaller organisations with more flexible procurement rules are better positioned to collaborate with non-preferred suppliers. This flexibility is advantageous for fostering partnerships with local stakeholders, promoting community involvement, and supporting local economies.

If the project team or the project itself operated as an official legal entity, it would potentially bypass these restrictions. However, given that we are utilising public funds, it is imperative to adhere to principles of fairness and transparency. This requires providing equal opportunities for all potential suppliers to apply for funding, ensuring an equitable distribution of resources and compliance with public procurement regulations.

#### **4.10 Involving and Engaging Institutions Effectively**

Temporary projects can be vulnerable to disruptions caused by staffing changes. Enhancing a

wider sense of shared ownership across the institutions is essential to achieving this goal. When individuals depart, the project should not experience immediate delays or find itself in a precarious position. Building a strong sense of collective responsibility ensures continuity and resilience.

Correspondingly, maintaining enthusiasm and engagement among personnel at institutions is crucial for the project's success. Establishing the project with its own legal identity would mitigate some of the challenges associated with this issue. It would foster greater commitment and contribute to a more sustained momentum.

By reinforcing commitment and creating a structure that encourages active participation and ownership among institutional stakeholders, the project can navigate personnel changes more effectively. This approach not only strengthens the project's foundation but also enhances its capacity to achieve long-term objectives.

Effective planning is critical when collaborating with educational partners, as their involvement is often influenced by academic schedules and school holidays. To mitigate potential disruptions, project timelines and deadlines should be aligned with the academic calendar whenever possible. Additionally, implementing contingency measures, such as designating backup personnel to cover for absences during holiday periods, ensures that progress remains steady even during times of reduced availability. This proactive approach not only minimizes delays but also reinforces the project's resilience and ability to adapt to the specific constraints of its institutional partners.

#### ***4.11 Ensuring Project Integrity and Protecting Bottom-Up Principles***

During a meeting involving a diverse group of researchers reflecting on research engagement in the area, a colleague from a different faculty at EUR noted how certain external initiatives appear to align themselves with other projects, such as Cultuur&Campus, as a means to legitimize their own efforts. The discussion also raised concerns about the potential instrumentalization of EUR and its research position to advance the objectives of these external programs. Given that the Rotterdam municipality, a key consortium partner, oversees some of these initiatives, it is imperative to safeguard the project from being co-opted by external agendas. Maintaining the project's bottom-up character and autonomy is essential to preserving its intended goals and principles.

This situation also underscores the importance of establishing sustainable structures that genuinely facilitate neighborhood involvement and ensure the community's voice remains central. Additionally, it highlights the need to broaden communication efforts to clarify the distinction between the larger Cultuur&Campus plans and the localized Cultuur&Campus Putselaan initiative. Determining where critical discussions about establishing an independent entity to uphold these values should take place will be pivotal to securing the project's integrity and long-term vision, creating an intermediate space at the Putselaan, where bottom up needs and initiatives are validated and formalized with knowledge and network from government and educational institutions.

# 5. Research and Education

## 5.1 Stakeholder Mapping

There is a recognized need for enough time to effectively establish contact with local residents, foster connections, and gain a comprehensive understanding of their motivations and preferences for community engagement.

Building meaningful relationships and comprehending the specific dynamics of community cohesion demands an extended period of time. This entails not only identifying stakeholders but also engaging with them to ascertain their perspectives and needs. A thorough approach is essential to ensure that the stakeholder mapping process is inclusive and reflective of the diverse interests within the neighbourhood.

In this context, it is also important to develop systematic and recurring methods for gathering neighbourhood input. While a stakeholder group has been established as a valuable mechanism for community involvement, coordinating meetings and maintaining consistent participation have proven challenging. These logistical hurdles highlight the need for adaptable and sustained engagement formats that can function even when availability is limited. Establishing structured, yet flexible, input channels—such as rotating meeting times, asynchronous digital feedback tools, or community drop-in sessions—could improve continuity and broaden participation over time.

By allowing sufficient time for these activities, the project can cultivate stronger community ties and gather valuable insights that will inform subsequent stages of development. This strategic approach promotes a more accurate stakeholder mapping process, enhancing the project's overall effectiveness and community impact.

## 5.2 Addressing Research Fatigue and Participant Compensation

To address the issue of research fatigue effectively, additional resources and funding are necessary to support new approaches and alleviate the strain of past practices. There is an increased awareness that continuing with top-down, extractive research methods is unsustainable for sound, comprehensive academic research. It is ethically imperative to compensate participants in stakeholder engagements, acknowledging their contributions appropriately.

The urgency to compensate co-creation contributions and participation adds financial pressure to the project requiring us to secure additional funding. This funding is crucial to ensure fairness and respect for stakeholders' time, effort and expertise. Moreover, it underscores the importance of upholding ethical standards in research practices.

In addition to financial compensation, C&CP aims to diminish commonly perceived hierarchies between researchers and community-members. This requires mid- to long term trust-building and sustained engagement with local communities valuing different kinds of knowledge, skills and experiences.

By allocating adequate resources for participant remuneration, and building sustained relations, the project can mitigate research fatigue and uphold ethical principles. This approach not only enhances stakeholder engagement but also fosters trust and cooperation, laying a solid foundation for meaningful research outcomes.

### **5.3 *Planning Collaboration for Development Education with Multiple Institutions***

Collaborating with various educational institutions presents challenges, particularly concerning differences in credit awarding practices and academic planning. Educational institutions typically plan curricula well in advance, often a year ahead, making a three-year timeframe tight for implementing new initiatives. Testing and iterating ideas within such constraints pose significant difficulties, especially compared to integrating innovations into existing courses rather than developing entirely new ones.

Ideally, an initial exploration phase would be added to the process, to assess feasibility and alignment with educators' and potential participants' realities. This phase should identify realistic options and formats, considering complexities such as microcredentials and minors, which may pose accessibility barriers due to associated costs. It's essential to ensure that educational offerings are accessible to the intended target group, but also that they meet their needs and requirements.

Considering these challenges, collaborating on alternative educational programs with institutions could prove beneficial. Alternative formats, like summer schools or winter schools, might offer potential avenues for joint development that accommodate the timeframe and logistical considerations of both educators and participants. Such collaborative efforts could lead to more effective and inclusive educational opportunities aligned with the needs and capabilities of all stakeholders involved.

### **5.4 *Balancing Top-Down and Bottom-Up Approaches in Collaboration***

In fostering collaboration across different institutes, it is essential to prioritise connecting specific lecturers and stakeholders from the start. This approach ensures alignment of needs, interests and expertise before formulating ideas for a minor, rather than starting with the idea and then seeking suitable contributors and participants. Emphasising a bottom-up approach is crucial for cultivating a collaborative environment where ideas and initiatives originate from those directly involved and knowledgeable in the field.

## **5.5 *Placemaking and Research Collaboration***

The event “Issue Wrestling: The Dark Side of Placemaking,” held in September 2024, was a unique and interactive arts-based initiative that explored themes of gentrification and urban development through a creative lens. Organized by C&CP in collaboration with artist Natasha Taylor, the event featured a blend of scripted wrestling performances and a panel discussion. By incorporating local voices into the narrative of the wrestling matches, the event created a fictional yet impactful space for residents to share their experiences with gentrification in an engaging and participatory manner.

This innovative approach underscored the significant potential of artistic practices not only as tools for research data collection but also as mediums to address complex social issues in an accessible and thought-provoking way. The event demonstrated how playful and artistic formats can facilitate dialogue, enhance awareness, and promote engagement with challenging topics. Furthermore, it fostered new connections with diverse neighborhood communities and highlighted the relevance of such practices for educational institutions, as affirmed through discussions with ELIA members at the biennale in Milan. The success of this event emphasizes the value of integrating artistic methodologies into placemaking and research collaborations to encourage meaningful conversations and broaden community participation.

## **5.6 *Time and Financial Pressures in the Educational Sector***

The educational sector faces significant time constraints exacerbated by general funding reductions at the national level. These challenges intensify the urgency to develop new educational initiatives or rely on volunteers to contribute additional time towards educational development. Securing increased funding is essential to engage more personnel and adequately compensate them for their contributions.

## **5.7 *Collaboration amongst Research Initiatives***

Collaborating with other research initiatives focused on the same target area during the foundational stage is crucial for fostering comprehensive knowledge and leveraging collective expertise. It allows for the own research design to be adjusted to become complementary rather than duplicating. However, embarking on an exploratory phase concurrently with these initiatives necessitates substantial time allocation and introduces heightened demands on the research timeline. This dual commitment underscores the complexity of managing interdisciplinary collaborations while maintaining the integrity and pace of the research plan.

## **5.8 *Insights from the Development of the Public Dashboard***

The development of the digital dashboard has yielded several important insights that inform both platform design and broader strategies for stakeholder engagement, accessibility, and public communication of complex data.

### ***5.8.1 Defining and Prioritising the Target Audience***

A key learning has been the importance of clearly defining and prioritising the intended user groups. Local residents, researchers, and professionals interact with the platform in distinct ways, with differing expectations and levels of technical proficiency. Rather than aiming to equally serve all user groups, the decision was made to primarily focus on the needs of local residents, positioning researchers and professionals as secondary audiences. This prioritisation enables the platform to function as an accessible entry point, effectively directing users to more specialised external tools and resources as needed.

### ***5.8.2 Providing Context for Interpretation***

To prevent misinterpretation of complex or sensitive data—such as information on land subsidence, heat stress, flooding, or social vulnerability—contextualisation is essential. Without adequate explanation, such data may lead to confusion or even unintended consequences, including negative impacts on perceived property values. Incorporating clear legends, descriptive text, and onboarding features such as tutorials strengthens user understanding and increases the platform’s transparency and reliability.

### ***5.8.3 In-House Development and Infrastructure Vulnerabilities***

A notable strength of the dashboard project has been the ability to draw on in-house technical expertise for its development. This internal capacity has allowed the team to build a promising and tailored product that aligns closely with the goals of community engagement and data accessibility. However, the process has also highlighted structural vulnerabilities—particularly related to infrastructure, such as the limited availability of appropriate software tools and platforms within the partner institutions. Efforts are ongoing to overcome these limitations, but they underscore the importance of long-term support mechanisms and technical resourcing to ensure the sustainability of such digital tools.

### ***5.8.3 Prioritising Usability and Simplicity***

User feedback has emphasised the critical importance of simplicity and intuitive design in ensuring the dashboard's accessibility. Features such as clear navigation structures, thematic filters, and visible legends enhance usability across diverse audiences. By prioritising ease of use, the platform reduces barriers to engagement and supports more inclusive participation.

### ***5.8.4 Connecting Data to Human Narratives***

Blending quantitative data with qualitative stories from local residents has proven to be a powerful method for enhancing both the accessibility and emotional relevance of climate-related information. These personal narratives contextualise abstract data, making risks more tangible and relatable. However, the integration of such stories also introduces the need for well-defined protocols regarding authorship, moderation, and long-term content stewardship. Establishing sustainable strategies for content curation is therefore essential to maintain the platform's integrity and relevance over time.

# 6 Placemaking and Programming

## 6.1 *Programmatic Goals Over Physical Infrastructure*

In placemaking and programming processes, it is essential to prioritize the project's objectives and desired outcomes before focusing on the physical location. Initial emphasis on the building or infrastructure can divert attention from the core goals of programming, potentially leading to delays and inefficiencies. By ensuring that the programmatic vision remains at the forefront, the project can better align its resources and activities with its intended impact, ensuring a more cohesive and effective execution moving forward.

## 6.2 *Alignment*

It is of critical importance to initiate programming and creative placemaking activities as soon as communication begins. These activities are integral to shaping the project's content and overall direction from its inception. Starting organisation of activities early in the project plan ensures that they effectively contribute to the project's development, network and relationships with stakeholders, and enhances its relevance and impact over time. This proactive approach underscores the strategic alignment of creative efforts with the project's objectives right from the outset, fostering a cohesive and well-integrated implementation process.

## 6.3 *Ensuring Coherence*

Achieving coherence in placemaking and programming requires a steadfast alignment with the project's vision and mission statements. These guiding principles provide a foundation for ensuring that all activities and initiatives contribute meaningfully to the overarching goals. To maintain this alignment, it is advisable to develop a structured checklist to evaluate and determine the inclusion of suggestions and proposals within the programming. This checklist should reflect the project's core values, objectives, and practical considerations, serving as a transparent decision-making tool.

By consistently applying this evaluative framework, the programming process can remain both dynamic and purposeful, enabling the integration of diverse ideas while safeguarding the project's coherence. Such a systematic approach fosters trust among stakeholders and ensures that every addition to the program reinforces the project's vision, enhances its impact, and contributes to the shared sense of purpose within the community, and possibly other lighthouse projects as well.

## 6.4 *Resource Allocation*

The funding allocated for programming is narrowly focused on specific events, which imposes constraints on the breadth and depth of activities that can be pursued. However, there exists a broader vision encompassing ambitions in education, research, and related fields, which currently surpass the financial resources available for implementation. This disparity underscores the need for strategic resource allocation and potentially seeking additional funding avenues to fully realise these multifaceted goals.

The absence of a dedicated budget for the studio program within the initial plan has presented challenges in its implementation, requiring considerable adjustments to accommodate its needs. A more streamlined approach, such as consolidating all deliverables under Work Package 4 with a unified program budget, might have offered greater transparency and facilitated a more equitable allocation of resources. This consolidation could also reduce administrative complexities, providing a clearer framework for managing expenditures.

## **6.5 Sustainability of the Initiative**

The sustainability of the initiative hinges upon transitioning from a three-year pilot project to a longer-term endeavour, with commitment from all partners. It is imperative to evolve beyond a temporary project status and establish ourselves as a durable, ongoing initiative. Committing to this approach not only ensures continuity if the project proves successful but also demonstrates a steadfast dedication to long-term processes and sustained collaboration with local stakeholders.

## **6.6 Integration**

The integration of the concept of creative placemaking within the context of the project involves aligning with similar initiatives within organisations, emphasising the addition of economic and social value over both short-term and long-term horizons within a specific area. While short-term economic gains are typically associated with gentrification, our approach aims for a reflective placemaking strategy that collaborates with existing communities and initiatives. For this approach to succeed and be sustainable within the project, it is crucial that institutions recognize its value and provide support.

## **6.7 Additional: Lessons learned from Dialogue on Urban Development Practices**

On March 24th 2024, an event convened by Peer Protocol in partnership with C&CP provided valuable insights into urban development strategies, emphasising community empowerment, collaboration, and sustainable growth.

### **6.7.1 Best Practices Identified**

Implementing several activities and services in the neighbourhood, such as provision of free food and beverages during BBQs and installing accessible washing machines (free to use) in communal spaces, have proven highly effective in fostering connections with local communities and residents, encouraging regular interaction and providing valuable insights from external participants. They promote community interaction and open avenues for feedback and critical perspectives from a broader audience. Furthermore, supporting existing citizen initiatives by offering space and resources ensures that the project remains relevant and adaptable,

benefiting from the continuous input and evaluation from external contributors. This emphasises the importance of maintaining a regular and critical exchange with people external to the project for inputs, critical perspectives, and space for reflection and evaluation.

### **6.7.2 Participatory Planning and its Importance**

Participatory planning plays a crucial role in project success, as rigid end-results often neglect crucial invisible processes, leading to potential project failures. It emphasises learning through exchange and coaching, fostering inclusive collaboration among artists, as demonstrated in the Timewindow case. (<https://timewindow.nl/index.html>), Timewindow is a talent development platform rooted in the performing arts and branching out to connecting disciplines, creating collective solutions for individual artist's needs.) Moreover, achieving significant social change necessitates systemic transformation. Thus, embracing participatory approaches is essential for addressing complex societal challenges effectively.

### **6.7.3 Addressing Gentrification and Community Stability**

While neighbourhood improvement through gentrification can be beneficial, it should not displace existing communities. Instances of de-gentrification, such as Communa's initiative (<https://communa.be/en/home/>) to repurpose empty residential buildings for homeless housing, demonstrate efforts to reintegrate marginalised populations into revitalised areas.

Effective mitigation of gentrification requires governmental intervention to maintain affordable housing and stabilise rental prices, thereby preserving social housing initiatives. These measures are pivotal in fostering inclusive urban development while safeguarding community cohesion and equity. These were insights from the Dialogue that can inspire our further navigation of this topic.

### **6.7.4 Learnings for Policy**

The Right-to-Challenge policy (<https://www.rotterdam.nl/right-to-challenge>) in Rotterdam illustrates significant potential for organising public services in a socially equitable manner. Rather than focusing solely on cost reduction, this policy prioritises enhancing social impact. Facilitated by the R2C team within the municipality, it supports the development of plans and mediates disputes to ensure effective implementation.

Additionally, municipalities can bolster communal housing initiatives by offering long-term leases and loan guarantees. These measures provide both physical and psychological space for initiative leaders, fostering sustainable community development.

To address the challenge of transient locations, acquiring property emerges as the most viable solution. This approach breaks the cycle of temporary arrangements, ensuring stability and continuity for community initiatives.

These insights underscore the critical role of supportive policies and strategic interventions in promoting sustainable urban development and strengthening community resilience.

### **6.7.5 *Enhancing Partnerships***

To become a more effective partner, it's required that the organisations demonstrate greater flexibility in budget administration. Currently, some organisation's budgets are typically organised in silos, restricting the ability to allocate funds across different projects. This rigid structure hinders the successful implementation of many multifaceted initiatives.

Additionally, overcoming the challenge of temporary locations necessitates property acquisition. Owning property is the only viable solution to ensure the stability and continuity of NGO operations, breaking the cycle of reliance on short-term arrangements.

By addressing these needs, organisations and institutes can significantly improve their collaboration with smaller organisations or NGO's, fostering more sustainable and impactful community projects.

# 7 Stakeholder Engagement, Network Engagement & Relationship Management

## 7.1 *Establishing the Stakeholder Group*

It is crucial that stakeholders are well-informed about the project's goals and expectations for their involvement in the group. Building a successful collaboration requires sufficient time to carefully select suitable representatives, understand their perspectives and interests, and lay the groundwork for their active participation.

To achieve these objectives, it is essential to invest time in fostering relationships with stakeholders and ensuring they feel engaged and valued within the group. This extended preparation period not only enhances the quality of collaboration but also increases the likelihood of sustained commitment and meaningful contributions from all involved parties. Therefore, C&CP emphasises the necessity of dedicating at least six months to this foundational phase of stakeholder engagement and group establishment.

## 7.2 *Connecting with NEB*

Establishing a connection with the New European Bauhaus (NEB) involves addressing numerous fragmented initiatives, which present challenges in maintaining a cohesive approach across all organisations involved. As a partner situated distant from the project's focal area, it becomes more challenging to engage with the practical and spatial dimensions of the initiative effectively.

## 7.3 *Phased Connection with Stakeholders*

The phased approach to connecting with stakeholders involves: Phase 1, focusing on establishing connections within the local area and networks. Phase 2 centres on leveraging these connections to implement and integrate C&CP within broader communities, thereby enhancing its impact. We recognize the importance of adopting such a phased approach, in order to build trust and develop a strong mutual understanding over time. This strategy also allows time to strengthen connections among work packages, aligning with the aforementioned points.

# 8 Building Renovation

## 8.1 *Budget Management*

During the preparation of the application and the development of the building plan, there has been a notable increase in prices, which has impacted the project's budget and feasibility. To mitigate such risks in future applications, it is imperative to conduct a comprehensive risk analysis for the building transformation. This analysis should account for potential cost fluctuations, identify financial uncertainties, and develop strategies to address these challenges effectively, ensuring the project's viability and success.

## 8.2 *Statement of Building Requirements*

The statement of building requirements from the partners was initially unclear and lacked the necessary flexibility. To effectively develop these requirements, it is crucial to have a clear vision and a comprehensive plan. This process necessitates adequate time and careful consideration to ensure that all aspects are thoroughly addressed.

Integrating the preparation phase of the building renovation into the work package (WP) plan from the outset is essential. This integration should allow for flexibility and the consideration of multiple scenarios to accommodate potential changes and unforeseen challenges. Such an approach will ensure that the requirements are not only well-defined but also adaptable, facilitating a smoother and more efficient renovation process that aligns with the partners' needs and expectations.

## 8.3 *Renovation Time*

The initial planning for the renovation was overly optimistic. Given that the project involves the renovation of a historical monument, a more realistic timeline is essential. The complexity and sensitivity associated with preserving and updating a monument necessitate extended time for careful planning, thorough research, and meticulous execution. This includes obtaining necessary permits, ensuring compliance with heritage preservation standards, and addressing unforeseen structural issues that may arise. Therefore, future plans should incorporate a more generous timeline to accommodate these factors and ensure the renovation is conducted to quality standards.

#### **8.4 Renovation Process**

The process plan for the building has undergone a significant revision, with the design and construction stages now divided into two distinct phases: the Casco (shell) design and construction phase, and the interior design and construction phase. This separation allows for more focused and specialised attention to each aspect of the project.

To further enhance the redevelopment process, it is recommended to develop multiple scenarios for the building's transformation and integrate these scenarios into the work packages. By proactively identifying and analysing potential risks associated with each scenario, more informed and strategic decisions can be made. This approach not only helps mitigate unforeseen challenges but also enables a more flexible and adaptive project management strategy, ensuring a smoother and more efficient progression of the redevelopment.

#### **8.5 Design Competition**

The concept of the design competition has evolved, due to the emerging needs of the renovation but also timing of educational programmes. Through this experience, we learn that it is essential to maintain flexibility in developing the design competition to accommodate changes as they arise. This adaptability is also pertinent to the development of educational curricula, highlighting the need for responsiveness and flexibility in both areas.

#### **8.6 Rental Agreement**

The rental agreement process took longer than anticipated. It is crucial to ensure that the rental agreement or commitment is secured promptly, as it is essential for proceeding with the next steps of the project.

#### **8.7 Facility Management and Interior**

Facility management and interior design are crucial components necessary for the optimal functioning and aesthetics of a building. They play pivotal roles in creating an inclusive and sustainable built environment that meets the needs and expectations of its occupants and of wider stakeholder communities.

## **8.8 Budget vs. Timeline Expectations**

The alignment between budget and time expectations proved unrealistic given the project's specific requirements and available funding. This discrepancy was particularly pronounced due to the nature of the building being a monument, which typically involves complex restoration or adaptation processes.

It is crucial that the starting point and budget are grounded in reality and aligned with the project's planning and ambitions. Rushing the project to meet tight timelines can be achievable but often requires a higher budget to accommodate expedited processes and potential unforeseen challenges inherent in historic or monumental buildings. Therefore, a realistic assessment of both time and financial resources is essential for achieving successful outcomes without compromising quality or project goals.

## **8.9 Monumental Building**

Transforming a monumental building to enhance sustainability and accessibility involves primarily technical considerations rather than purely design-oriented tasks. It is imperative to involve individuals with substantial expertise in renovations and design during the proposal writing phase to establish realistic timelines.

Implementing co-creative processes more rigorously, as opposed to the current pragmatic approach, requires a longer timeframe than the three-year duration of the project. This extended period is necessary to ensure thorough engagement and collaboration with stakeholders, fostering a comprehensive and inclusive approach to achieving project objectives.

## **8.10 Social Return Expectations**

The social return expectations emphasise that while the building is integral to the program, it is not the central or primary focus. This implies that while the building's development or renovation contributes significantly to the program's goals, the broader objectives and impacts beyond the physical structure itself are of equal or greater importance. This perspective underscores the holistic approach to achieving social benefits and outcomes through the program, where the building serves as a catalyst or component rather than the sole determinant of success.

## **8.11 Project Status and Transition Phase**

As of the end of April 2025, the final eight weeks of the Casco renovation phase have commenced. The handover of the building key by the municipality, scheduled for July, will mark the transition to the next phase—interior development and spatial layout implementation as outlined in the project plan.

Throughout this process, collaboration has taken place with the Project Group, Stakeholder

Group, and the four partner organisations. This phase represents a key milestone in translating conceptual plans into tangible use.

### ***8.12 Strategic Reflections and Lessons Learned***

A central aim of the initiative has been to draw lessons from the development of this Community & College (C&C) model, with the intention of informing future implementations. When the Putselaan building was initially selected, there was limited clarity on its eventual use and the specific demands that would emerge during programming.

The building's monumental status has posed significant limitations on internal modifications, thus restricting the range of functions that can be integrated. This constraint, however, has also encouraged creative spatial solutions within existing boundaries.

During much of the early development, conceptual leadership was provided by individuals not directly responsible for the building's operational future. As a result, defining the precise needs of future users proved challenging. In response, the project team opted for a multifunctional layout, allowing broad usability and potential adaptation over time.

Further challenges emerged from the requirement for the four partner organisations to comply with European Union procurement regulations. These regulations have limited the extent to which local residents and neighbourhood-based initiatives could be involved—particularly in the areas of procurement and contractor selection. This has hindered the project's ability to fully engage local craftspeople and workforce talent.

Another critical lesson learned relates to the tension between institutional management measures—particularly safety requirements—and the building's intended accessibility to the neighbourhood. Insight into formal safety protocols should be obtained early in the process, allowing space to discuss how these requirements can coexist with goals of openness and social experimentation.

To realise a more community-driven approach in future iterations, an operational model that operates independently of EU and internal procurement frameworks may be necessary. Such autonomy would allow for more responsive, place-based decision-making and deeper local engagement—aligning more closely with the original vision of community-rooted development.

# 9. Communication and Dissemination

## 9.1 *Collaborative Communication Team for Effective Dissemination*

To ensure effective communication and dissemination, it is essential to build a dedicated communication team that encompasses the diverse expertise required to reach all relevant target groups. In fact, the team should possess a diverse range of skills and competencies to enhance its ability to create relevant and impactful content. This includes expertise in visual design and strategic messaging, which are crucial for developing compelling narratives. Additionally, the team should be capable of managing multiple communication channels and digital media, maintaining strong public relations, engaging effectively with stakeholders, analyzing data, and assessing the impact of dissemination activities. These capabilities are essential to crafting a comprehensive and targeted approach to outreach and to monitor its impact. Furthermore, it is relevant to establish a workplan which can allow the collection of data from project-related events, approaches or activities and the development of communication material that can be adapted and framed for the different communication channels

In addition, there should be a supportive team, including communication experts from each project partner, facilitating a collaborative approach that leverages the strengths and insights of each institution. Regular monthly meetings should be held to ensure alignment, exchange of ideas, and continuous monitoring of progress across all communication activities. By fostering a culture of collaboration and maintaining open lines of communication among all partners, the project can create a unified and strategic approach to its outreach efforts, ensuring that messages are tailored, consistent, and effectively engage each target group. This collaborative model also strengthens the project's overall impact, ensuring that dissemination activities are cohesive and reach a broad audience.

## 9.2 *Lexicon*

The Lexicon, a comprehensive list of central terms compiled with input from all stakeholders, emerged as a crucial tool during our project. However, due to personnel changes significant challenges were encountered due to which we weren't capable to maintain it consistently from the project's outset. A pivotal takeaway from this experience is the imperative of maintaining an updated Lexicon. Moving forward, it is essential to promptly incorporate new terms arising from discussions or project activities. Regular data collection should be established by consistently gathering input from all project partners. Moreover, stakeholders must be educated about the Lexicon's significance and how it supports project objectives and communication.

## 9.3 *Cyber Attack*

The website for Putselaan experienced a cyber hack, highlighting vulnerabilities exacerbated by the transition to a new project leader, which caused delays in the Communication & Dissemination plan's timeline, impacting project execution. This incident underscores the critical lesson that leadership changes can introduce risks that must be managed carefully. Moving forward, it is essential to establish robust transition protocols and enhance security measures to

safeguard against potential threats such as cyberattacks.

Clear restrictions and formal agreements regarding the management of the website should be established, outlining responsibilities for maintenance, updates, and safeguarding against cyber threats. These agreements must include defined protocols for regular security assessments, secure hosting environments, and contingency plans for any potential technical failures. By creating a structured and well-documented approach to website management, the project can minimize risks, ensure smooth operations, and uphold the integrity of its online presence throughout its duration.

In addition to ensuring robust website maintenance and security, it is equally important to clearly define each partner's responsibilities and establish regulations regarding the involvement of third parties in website development, hosting, and maintenance. Formal agreements should specify which partners are responsible for these activities and outline the conditions under which third-party vendors or contractors may be engaged. These agreements must address security standards, confidentiality requirements, and compliance with relevant regulations, ensuring that any external parties involved adhere to the same high standards as the project itself. By setting clear expectations and establishing well-defined guidelines for third-party involvement, the project can maintain control over critical aspects of website management, mitigate potential risks, and ensure consistent, high-quality service throughout the project's lifecycle.

In our specific case, upon identifying potential security risks, the website was temporarily taken offline as a precautionary measure to protect data and infrastructure.

The first step in our recovery process involved conducting a comprehensive security audit of all systems and access points. This required a significant financial investment and close collaboration with our IT partners at WdKA and Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences. Through the implementation of additional security layers, new procedures for content updates, and partnership with the experienced web developer Norday (affiliated with WdKA), we have now established a secure and reliable system.

A key element of the solution was the restructuring of access rights and user management. Together, we developed protocols defining who may edit and publish specific content, substantially enhancing the overall security of the platform.

This experience has provided valuable insights into the importance of proactive security measures and the necessity for regular security audits. We have also learned the critical value of having a well-prepared crisis management plan to respond effectively when unexpected situations arise.

The experience with website development through institutional channels also revealed the importance of detailed budget planning for digital infrastructure. Moving forward, we recommend establishing clear protocols for digital resource allocation and maintaining contingency funds for unexpected technical challenges or necessary upgrades, as these can be costly. This approach has proven essential for managing the complexities of institutional digital development.

#### **9.4 Communication & Dissemination Plan**

A significant lesson learned pertains to the Communication & Dissemination Plan, where content can diminish in relevance over time for readers. Team inputs may become outdated, and substantial updates are typically provided closer to new submission deadlines. Additionally, the plan may include a process for more frequent review and evaluation of the effectiveness of plans (and communication strategies).

Improvements are required in the implementation mechanism of the communication plan to facilitate structured input from other WPs. Enhancing this process ensures consistent and timely contributions from all WPs, thereby enhancing the overall effectiveness and alignment of the communication efforts within the organisation.

#### **9.5 Visual Input**

Another important lesson learned pertains to the significant value of visual input contributed by the team. It was recognized that engaging partners in the creative process yields valuable insights and ideas. Moving forward, there's an aim to enhance collaboration and foster open communication to ensure that all partners feel actively involved and valued throughout the creative process. This approach will promote a more inclusive and productive environment for generating innovative solutions and achieving project goals.

#### **9.6 NEB Communication and Community**

The New European Bauhaus (NEB) initiative, despite its fragmented communication, successfully disseminates its messages across various channels. As a partner of C&CP, NEB contributes additional perspectives, resources, and networks which enhance the reach and effectiveness of C&CPs communication efforts.

Among the NEB projects, a sense of community has emerged that fosters mutual learning and inspiration. Consortium partners ICLEI and ELIA have been vital in connecting C&CP to other European projects and sharing best practices and tools.

#### **9.7 Learning from other initiatives**

Valuable insights were gained by observing various art schools and their project implementations at the ELIA conference in Milan. The ELIA conferences served as an excellent platform, where global leaders in the field contributed to the development of the Culture and Campus project. A key highlight was the opportunity to lead a workshop discussing the project, which provided invaluable feedback and perspectives. One significant takeaway from these interactions is the recognition that successful concepts from other institutions can be adapted and implemented in the campus setting, rather than reinventing existing models.

These institutions have proven to be valuable sources of guidance when personally invited to engage with the project. Their workshops have offered practical knowledge that has already informed the project's approach. Moving forward, it is clear that seeking assistance from established schools beyond the immediate partners should be prioritized. These institutions possess substantial expertise that could significantly enrich the project's development, and fostering such external collaborations will be essential for its continued success and growth.

### **9.8     *Communication vs. placemaking***

Placemaking, which involves creating spaces that resonate with community needs, and communication strategies should be coordinated in parallel. Both processes rely on a deep understanding of these needs and the ability to express insights effectively. Effective communication not only disseminates information but also fosters collaboration and shared values, which are essential in placemaking. This parallel coordination is crucial for creating engaging, socially significant spaces that foster a sense of community. Furthermore, the synergy between placemaking and communication strategies promotes cross-fertilization of ideas and practices, enhancing the overall impact and coherence of these efforts.

# 10. Self-Evaluation

This chapter presents a self-evaluation by the project team of the initial phase leading up to the opening of Culture & Campus at Putselaan 178. Its purpose is to extract lessons from this period to guide a successful continuation and to provide inspiration for similar initiatives worldwide.

In this document, we speak frankly. We are honest about what, in hindsight, we could have done better. Only through this openness can we truly learn. This is not a closed chapter; we are still in the midst of it and can already draw lessons for today and tomorrow.

The analysis was conducted in October 2025 by the entire team and documented by the team member who was newest to the team and therefore least influenced by the project's history.

The evaluation focuses on five key areas:

1. **Top-led** – How can the project be effectively steered when multiple parties are involved?
2. **Bottom-fed** – How are residents and creators made co-owners of the project?
3. **EU** – How supportive is collaboration with the EU?
4. **Learning capacity** – How do we learn throughout this pilot?
5. **Other** – What additional lessons can we draw?

In sharing this chapter of lessons learned, we deliberately avoid recommendations that are obvious in theory but rarely effective in practice. Examples include having a fully defined mission and objectives from the outset, or maintaining a completely stable project team throughout the period. More valuable are lessons on how to achieve the best possible outcomes when these ideal conditions are not present. We also avoid generalities, instead highlighting details that make the lessons specific and actionable.

## **The Culture & Campus Putselaan Team**

## 10.1 *Top-led*

**Top-led** refers to initiatives where the initiating parties have a clear goal and set the overall direction—for Culture & Campus Putselaan (C&CP), this meant defining the framework and organizing the project. This chapter evaluates what went well and what could be improved in establishing and executing these lines.

C&CP was founded on the recognition that higher education has poor connection with the younger generations in Zuid, including in the arts, which are often thriving in these neighborhoods. By situating itself in Zuid and developing education that better meets local needs, higher education can become more relevant to the area while also learning from Zuid about how people experience art and issues like sustainability. C&CP was also established with the understanding that many city residents—especially in these neighborhoods—have little to no trust in institutions. Part of C&CP’s mission is therefore to build trust.

### **Seizing Unique Opportunities**

C&CP got off the ground thanks to decisive action by a few key individuals. A department lead of Major Research Initiatives at EUR initiated an EU grant application, serving as lead and recognized as the project leader. A municipal real estate manager connected this initiative to a building whose new owner the city was seeking. This alignment made everything that followed possible.

#### **Lesson:**

Starting an initiative requires courage, swift action to seize opportunities, decisiveness, and leadership that is recognized and supported by all parties. Waiting too long risks losing the chance entirely.

### **Building First**

Ideally, a concept is developed first, and then a building is selected. In this case, the construction team was ready before the partners had finalized a concept. This worked because it was a shell renovation, making the building sustainable and accessible regardless of its final use. A shell renovation involves preparing the core structure—walls, floors, roof, insulation, and basic utilities—while leaving interior design, furniture, and specialized facilities to be completed later. These later stages, known as the fit-out, determine how the space can actually be used, including layout, classrooms, studios, kitchens, or other functional areas.

Delays in the renovation made early construction essential, as core structural work and accessibility improvements could be completed beforehand. Starting these elements early allows the project to progress while decisions about the fit-out and programming are still being finalized.

**Lesson:**

Start construction as early as possible for elements that do not define the final use, such as structural upgrades, accessibility, or sustainability improvements. The fit-out, which includes interior layout, furnishings, and technical installations, determines the building's functional use and should follow the finalized concept. Distinguishing between renovation and fit-out supports phased thinking, though there are trade-offs. Additionally, prioritizing the reuse and adaptation of existing buildings—rather than constructing new ones—provides environmental benefits, preserves cultural heritage, and often accelerates project timelines.

**Long-Term Commitment**

Signing a seven-year lease with the four partners was crucial: it demonstrated serious collaboration and showed the neighbourhood that C&CP would not disappear after a few years. Many initiatives in Zuid fail not due to lack of interest, but because funding runs out or reasons remain unclear to residents, fostering scepticism toward institutions. The seven-year commitment helps build trust.

**Lesson:**

Pop-up projects are trendy in institutional circles but often perceived as transient by local communities. Residents invest less when initiatives appear temporary. Seek long-term engagement in neighborhoods, including through lease agreements for physical spaces.

**Decision-Making**

- Decision-making was unclear throughout the start phase. While much went well, it also led to undesirable outcomes. The building is configured for traditional education, limiting its appeal to residents, entrepreneurs, and creators. Facility management reflects an educational institution rather than a community co-owned space.
- Renovation and management largely took place outside the project team, handled by EUR. The project leader had minimal authority, resulting in misalignment between the project team's vision and the building's actual design.
- The project team lacked a cohesive decision-making structure. Meetings focused on updates rather than decisions, missing opportunities to escalate issues to the core team or Executive Board.
- The team was too large for efficient decision-making, including many work package leads, external partners, and ad-hoc participants. Cultural tendencies—consensus in some organizations, hierarchical or individualistic approaches in others—further slowed decisions.
- The absence of central governance limited influence from partners such as the Afrikaanderwijk Coöperatie and hampered communication work packages.
- Work package segmentation clarified responsibilities but, combined with a solistic culture, contributed to fragmented decision-making.

- Decision-making at higher levels was also slow; the Executive Board was hard to convene, and the core team initially lacked sufficient information to make decisions. When the core team became a steering committee with final responsibility, decision-making improved.

#### **Lessons:**

1. Ensure the project leader explicitly receives mandate from all partners.
2. Assign the project group an integrated mission, not just a sum of partner contributions.
3. Structure the project group professionally, with clear rules on what decisions the team can make and short lines to the approving body.
4. For large partnerships, create a consultation group alongside a small decision-making project group.
5. Include a secretary to streamline coordination, especially where individualistic cultures dominate.
6. Prevent critical processes from developing outside the project group.
7. Maintain short lines to the approving body to escalate disagreements efficiently.

#### **Ownership and Sense of Urgency**

C&CP's start phase relied on strong enthusiasm from a large group. This facilitated rapid work on needs assessment, curriculum development, and placemaking programs. However, when enthusiasm didn't translate into action, interest waned, as with the associate degree initiative.

Codarts temporarily withdrew support due to internal challenges, missing key developments. Similarly, municipal staffing delays affected urgency and co-ownership perception. Explicit commitments from the steering committee and Executive Board have been essential, but maintaining ongoing engagement remains a risk.

#### **Lessons:**

1. Do not assume ownership is fixed; regularly assess urgency and action translation among partners.
2. Maintain an agenda of both ambitious and achievable innovations to guide the partners.
3. Make the shared building a high-value space for partners and the community—a safe zone to experiment and create initiatives not possible within individual institutions.

#### **Think-Do-Think vs. Do-Think-Do**

The four partners generally follow a “think first, act later” approach, limiting agility. External partners like the Afrikaander Wijncoöperatie start sooner and adapt along the way. For C&CP, a culture of experimentation is necessary to respond more rapidly to emerging opportunities.

A “provocateur” role was largely missing. For the next phase, a program director with a vision for change and a “do-think-do” approach was appointed to fill this role.

**Lessons:**

1. Carefully plan contracts and finances, but otherwise learn by doing.
2. Explicitly embed this approach in your vision and designate individuals to challenge assumptions.
3. Allow small financial risk-taking through venture capital to support experimentation.

**Shared Mission and Vision**

A clear vision and mission drive innovation. Initially abstract, C&CP's vision focused on creating a vibrant hub within the building while contributing to neighbourhood transformation. However, differences among partners caused fragmented communication and expectations.

Partner perspectives:

- EUR: research relevant to residents, makerspaces, and collaborative minors.
- Willem de Kooning Academy: making art accessible and relevant to youth, validated through alternative routes.
- Codarts: temporarily absent, future role unclear.
- Municipality: supporting policy goals via art and education for local youth.

**Lessons:**

1. Recognize that partners have different motivations; work from these interests.
2. Analyze existing problems and missed opportunities to define a common mission.
3. Ideally, establish vision and mission at the project's outset, though timing may conflict with other startup tasks.

**Roles and Capacity**

Capacity was fragmented, with too many participants contributing limited hours. A core team of two full-time staff per organization—one focused on structure and operations, one on connection and innovation—would have been more effective. The combination of administrative tasks, team development, program coordination, and site development proved too much for a single project manager, leading to high workload and limited impact.

**Lesson:**

Allocate sufficient capacity and clear roles per organization to ensure operational efficiency and focus.

## 10.2 ... *Bottom-Fed*

**Bottom-fed** means that while the overall direction is top-led, programming emerges in part from the needs and initiatives of the neighbourhood, local partners, and makers. The goal is for them to feel co-ownership of C&CP—or at the very least, to feel very welcome and have a say in programming. This requires working from a position of equality, a core value of C&CP. This chapter evaluates what went well and what could be improved in including these stakeholders.

### **Equality**

In the preparation phase, equality was likely the greatest challenge. Everyone values it in principle, but the four institutions forming C&CP do not naturally operate this way. Higher education's role is vertical: transmitting knowledge and assessing students. The municipality likewise acts vertically, aiming to protect or guide residents. The institutions' involvement in Zuid is also based on the belief that the area needs development and has something to learn from them—a “helper syndrome” that hinders genuine equality.

A hopeful sign is that people already working in the neighbourhoods or with makers recognize the skills and qualities of their partners, leading to more balanced and respectful collaborations. Institutions can and should better integrate principles of equality, also by recognizing and building on the talents and contributions that already exist in the neighbourhood, learning from local expertise rather than assuming that knowledge flows only from institutions to the community.

Equality does not mean listening only to residents and makers—the partners have their own agendas. The challenge is to combine these agendas and create a dialogue that translates into practical actions.

A further challenge is residents' and makers' attitudes: distrust toward institutions, expectations of competence, fairness, and support, combined with frustration at bureaucratic slowness. This perspective, while understandable, can also obstruct equal collaboration. Successful partnerships require actors who understand the lived realities of the neighbourhood while also recognizing the constraints and responsibilities of institutional contexts.

### **Organization**

The C&CP project team in the preparation phase consisted of leads of eight work packages and several partners. Residents and makers were not included. Their participation could have provided valuable perspectives, but including them might also have slowed progress. The two representatives from the Afrikaanderwijk Coöperatie made a difference on some issues but felt largely unheard, especially regarding their offer to support C&CP's operations.

In retrospect, stronger collaboration with the neighbourhood and makers would have been beneficial. The team was too large and insufficiently decisive. Alternatives could have included appointing an advisor rooted in the neighbourhood or makers' world, or creating a dual leadership for the project.

## **Steering, Participation, and Follow-Up**

Many residents and makers have little trust in institutions, feeling unwelcome and marginalized. Some feared C&CP might serve gentrification. Initially, C&CP was received enthusiastically as a positive cultural initiative, committing long-term and engaging local residents and entrepreneurs.

Bottom-fed initiatives were embraced early: the logo was designed with student input, the building layout was developed with residents and students, and a needs assessment was conducted in surrounding neighborhoods. However, most contributions were later overridden: the logo was adjusted by the project team, the needs assessment was not acted upon, and the building layout was redesigned to suit an educational institution rather than the neighbourhood. Expectations—such as access to musical instruments—were raised but never fulfilled.

Consultations were extensive through work packages and stakeholder groups, revealing blind spots, but engagement was late and sporadic, limiting effectiveness. Relations with stakeholders were strained: members were highly critical, making consultation unattractive, and advice was often treated as optional, discouraging further participation.

### **Lessons:**

1. Allocate space in project plans and EU funding applications for input from local partners, and budget for their participation. If they cannot join the team initially, establish a regular advisory group (e.g., four times per year).
2. Open the project team and steering group to residents and makers, who can contribute non-institutional perspectives, for example as advisors or co-leads.
3. Seek individuals who can think freely, are rooted in the community, and understand institutional dynamics. Without the latter, frustration arises.
4. Treat equality as an ongoing effort, not a given. Continuously assess and discuss equality within the team as a recurring theme.

## **The In-Between Space**

Transforming an area and education while prioritizing equality requires operating in an “in-between space”: between the systemic world (the institutions) and the lived world (residents and makers). In the lived world, initiatives emerge spontaneously, networks are dynamic, and residents expect flexibility and responsiveness. The systemic world is powerful and resource-rich but less agile. True transformation occurs where these worlds meet, understand, trust, and act together.

Building management exemplifies this tension. Early on, the team aimed to involve as many local residents as possible in operations to provide employment, local knowledge, and accessibility. However, as the EUR—main tenant—was bound by contracts for cleaning and security, this was not possible, frustrating the project team and partners.

**Lessons:**

1. Recognize that transformative work occurs in the in-between space, where few are comfortable—give it a name.
2. Assign individuals who feel comfortable in this space and connect them to someone in the institution who can navigate standard procedures to enable deviations.
3. As soon as possible, agree on neighbourhood involvement for building operations, even if exceptions to institutional contracts are required, to avoid failing on promises.

### **10.3 Learning Capacity**

C&CP was established as a pilot for developing a large campus, to experiment with collaboration between educational institutions, the municipality, and local initiatives and makers. While a small pilot cannot be directly scaled to a site ten times larger, it was designed as a learning platform. This chapter evaluates how learning was organized during the C&CP preparation phase.

#### **Staff Turnover**

The project team was relatively stable during the preparation phase, with most work packages retaining their leads. These leads knew the lessons from the start phase and whether they had acted on them. The project leadership, however, was less stable: there were three project leaders, each with a different style and level of commitment. The current project leader had to rectify many issues left by predecessors, while much knowledge was lost during transitions. At the very end, two new colleagues joined to lead Work Package 7 (long-term strategy), delivering under time pressure with limited knowledge of prior lessons.

Although the documentation system was adequate, the sheer volume limited its learning effect. The key takeaway is that minimizing staff turnover is ideal—but unrealistic—and therefore not a practical lesson.

#### **Reflection**

The project team devoted little time to reflecting on successes or areas for improvement, nor to collaboratively setting priorities for the next phase. The focus was on completing tasks, events, and deliverables, which is understandable given limited time per person. While work packages provided logical units of focus, this lack of reflection is seen as a major shortcoming of the preparation phase.

A natural opportunity for reflection was the biweekly team meeting, which had an agenda but was often not used for this purpose. Without structured reflection, discussions drifted to less critical issues. Reflection need not be time-consuming, provided the time, contributions, and shared conclusions are well managed—this requires active facilitation.

#### **Lessons:**

1. Embed fixed reflection moments into the process; reflective monitoring is an efficient method.
2. Assign a team member to oversee the reflection process to prevent day-to-day tasks from taking over. Rotate this role so everyone shares responsibility for collective learning.
3. Apply the same approach to the steering committee, who observe developments from a distance and derive different lessons.

## 10.4 EU

The **New European Bauhaus (NEB)** provided a golden opportunity to develop C&CP. Positively, we were taken seriously by the EU throughout the process: plan changes were always received favourably, and the project involved a significant investment. Another advantage was that, although the project ran over a long period, it had a precise schedule with clear deliverables. This greatly helped maintain momentum and keep track of the many parallel activities. This chapter evaluates the lessons learned relevant to working with the EU.

### **Navigating EU Procurement Laws for Local Impact**

Current EU procurement regulations can restrict local spending, making it difficult to ensure investments benefit the local economy. New approaches are needed to navigate these rules effectively, enabling local expenditure and maximizing positive community impacts.

#### **Lesson:**

Develop mechanisms to balance compliance with EU procurement rules while allowing flexibility to achieve meaningful local impact.

### **EU Research Project Structures and Funding**

Our ambitions for activities, encounters, innovation, and co-creation did not align neatly with the work packages, deliverables, and budgets of a Horizon 2020 project. This misalignment strained resources, planning, and time, while also adding pressure to deliver according to EU requirements.

#### **Lesson:**

Understand that EU research project structures may not match the needs of a collaborative, innovative initiative, and plan accordingly.

### **Rigidity of Deliverables**

While deliverables create clarity in planning and expectations, they can also foster rigidity because deviations require EU approval. For example, the MOOC initially seemed valuable but contributed little to the curriculum, yet still had to be delivered. Similarly, the website had to be launched before activities in WP4, resulting in it remaining largely empty. EU procurement rules delayed converting elements like the garden into a project exempt from procurement regulations. Restrictions on transferring budgets between partners further limited flexibility.

#### **Lessons:**

1. Allow projects the freedom to adjust activities within the project's objectives without prior EU approval. If the MOOC represents "accessible education," alternative actions achieving the same goal should automatically be allowed.
2. Permit pre-approved flexibility in budgets and inter-partner payments, with reporting requirements to maintain transparency.

## **Innovation and Transformation**

The lessons extend beyond flexibility. The EU could more actively challenge projects to define the core of desired innovation. NEB from Brussels largely allowed C&CP to focus on describing the dynamics of the renovated building and mixing groups of people, rather than pushing for deeper environmental transformation, new education forms, or validation methods.

### **Lessons:**

1. Before submitting and at least before approving a grant, engage in dialogue about the project's higher purpose. Discuss how partners will adjust policies, teaching, and operations to achieve transformative goals. Though this extends the application process, it pays off later.
2. Clarify assumptions about terms like "transparency," "equality," and "participation," ensuring these concepts are concretely defined in the application.
3. Avoid unimportant deliverables, such as creating a lexicon, which consume resources without adding value.
4. Require projects to outline how they will organize bottom-fed participation, including compensation for contributors. This was missing in C&CP's approach.
5. Include practical, small-scale requirements (e.g., printing, lunches, petty cash) in budgets, as neglecting these hinders implementation.

## 10.5 Other Lessons

### Territorial

Territorial transformation is central to our application. However, we struggled with the word “territorial,” which can imply conquering a space or displacing others. While it may fit C&C Doklaan, it does not suit C&C Putselaan, which focuses on improving quality of life and learning for residents—transforming Zuid in a positive, inclusive way.

#### Advice:

Clarify the language and framing around “territorial” to reflect collaboration and improvement rather than domination.

### White

This also applies to interior design. While white people may appreciate a thrift-store aesthetic, families experiencing poverty often feel disrespected by it. They value a space that is well-maintained and presentable.

#### Lesson:

Seek extensive feedback from the building’s users. This works best once the space is open and people can better understand its potential.

### Devil is in the Details

These challenges are surmountable, but addressing them earlier would prevent complications:

- C&CP is not yet an independent legal entity. The four partner organizations are legally “in charge,” so cooperation must be clearly documented to avoid future disputes. In summer 2025, all agreements were formalized with responsible parties and legal teams.
- Building delivery involved two parts: the shell renovation and the fit-out. Clear demarcation between these phases is crucial. It was inefficient not to assign the same contractor to both phases immediately; this was only resolved at the very last moment, after ceilings had already been installed.
- Financial arrangements were broadly agreed but not detailed. Payment processes were unclear, and none of the four partners could provide the C&CP executive director with a bank card, limiting the initiative’s flexibility with suppliers, especially small ones.
- Clearly document responsibilities of the building owner, main tenant, and subtenants, not just for assets and services but also for organizing them.

#### Lessons:

1. Document all aspects of collaboration carefully. Assume disputes may arise, and use the documentation as a reference.
2. For phased renovations or responsibilities, clearly define each phase and its financial consequences in writing.

3. Decide in advance which party can provide the initiative's director with a bank card. If not possible, consider a third party or establish a legal entity authorized to manage payments.

## **10.6 External Advice**

The international advisory board was never established. Opinions differ on whether this was a missed learning opportunity. Some team members felt they lacked insights, while others thought it was too early for such advice. Key working groups to shape core aspects, such as education, were also never created. As a result, knowledge sharing and the development of a shared vision on C&CP's position and added value were limited.

## **10 Closing Words**

This document has outlined the Lessons Learned for Month 1-36 working on the C&CP project, at the time of delivery on 31 of December 2025. It will be updated 1 more times, every 6 months, as required, throughout the project period.