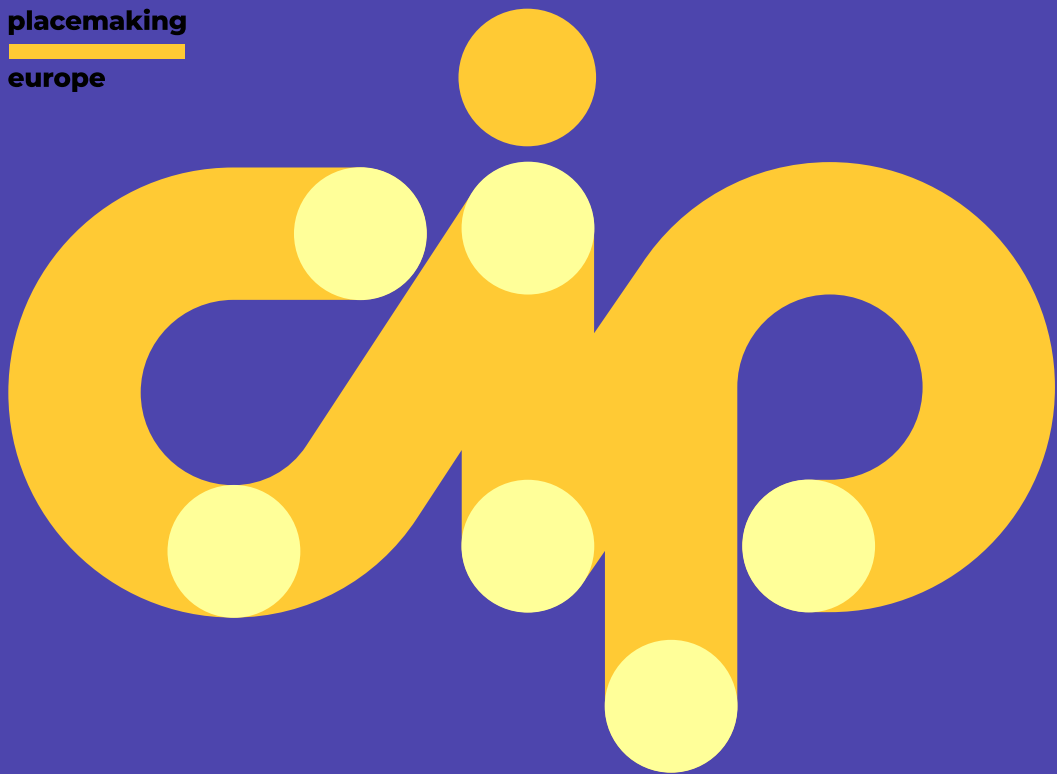


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**Cities in
Placemaking**

**12 Cities
Embracing
Placemaking to
Tackle Urban
Challenges**

The Hague
February 11-12, 2025

 Vinnitsia, Ukraine	 Vila Nova de Famalicão, Portugal	 Wrocław, Poland	 Trenčín, Slovakia
 Rotterdam, the Netherlands	 Reggio nell'Emilia, Italy	 Helsinki, Finland	 Helsingborg, Sweden
 The Hague, the Netherlands	 Cork, Ireland	 Budapest 8th District Józsefváros, Hungary	 Bradford, United Kingdom

SUPPORTING PARTNERS
Creative Bureaucracy Festival
Intercultural Cities Programme of the Council of Europe
International Society for Urban Health



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12 Cities Embracing
Placemaking to Tackle
Urban Challenges

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Foreword

I am thrilled to welcome 12 European city-frontrunners in our beautiful city. Enthusiastic people who work on placemaking, a relevant people centered urban development approach. Bottom up plans which we also use in several parts of The Hague. I am curious to hear about the lessons learned, the great examples which Placemaking Europe gathered from 2 years working with these cities. It is great to share some of our best practices and challenges during the Cities in Placemaking event.

— The Hague Deputy Mayor Robert Van Asten



Public space is universal, but in Europe, it holds a particular significance. It is the fabric that weaves our cities and cultures together, the physical and symbolic stage where democracy, exchange, and solidarity unfold. From grand city squares to neighborhood parks, Europe's strength has long been found in its public agora—where people meet, debate, celebrate, and simply exist together. In a time when trust within and between communities is under strain, when mutual care and civic life face unprecedented challenges, the role of public space has never been more relevant.

That is why the Cities in Placemaking programme is so essential. Over the past two years, 12 European cities—each a leader in urban policy—have engaged in deep, sustained collaboration. This was not a symbolic effort or a fleeting commitment; it was an intensive, hands-on process of co-creation, learning, and transformation. These cities have come together not just to exchange ideas but to forge a shared roadmap, recognizing that the way we shape and govern public spaces is key to tackling our greatest challenges—from economic exclusion to climate change.

And there is no better place to mark this moment than in The Hague, the International City of Peace and Justice. For decades, The Hague has been a global center for diplomacy, human rights, and conflict resolution. A place of collaboration and civic responsibility, reminding us that cities are not just administrative units but active forces in shaping fairer, more inclusive societies.

But this is not only about bold declarations or ambitious plans. It is also about the details: the everyday work of governing humbly, improving the systems and habits that define our cities, and recognizing that the best solutions are co-produced with communities, not just for them. This agenda is not the end of a journey—it is a foundation for continued action. These cities acknowledge that there is always more to learn, more to refine, and more to build together.

A special thanks must go to the 50 civil servants who formed the core of the working group, representing every area of municipal governance—from health to planning to economic development. Their dedication and willingness to push beyond traditional silos have made this programme truly transformative.

We are also deeply grateful to the cities that have opened their doors and hosted critical discussions and explorations—what we have called milestones—throughout the programme. Bergen, Wrocław, Cork, Trenčín, Rotterdam, and Helsingborg have played an essential role in shaping this shared vision, ensuring that learning happened in real places, with real people, and in real time.

Public space is where Europe's shared future is being shaped. And when our public spaces are connected, our communities are too.

Charlot Schans
and Ramon Marrades
(co-directors, Placemaking Europe)

Introduction

● Twelve European cities have collaborated over the past 24 months to advance their urban development policies, co-create with citizens, and better respond to their communities' needs.

● These frontrunners will gather in The Hague to present a joint roadmap, bridging their differences and celebrating a shared European vision for public space.

● Cities' representatives believe that city diplomacy and collaboration are more important than ever in times of uncertainty, declining trust, and growing divides.

● The gathering will take place in The Hague (February 11-12), international city of Peace & Justice, underscoring the significance of the right to the city.

Over the past 24 months, 12 European cities have collaborated to advance urban development policies, co-create with citizens, and better respond to their communities' needs. Now, these frontrunners gather in The Hague to present a joint roadmap that bridges their differences and celebrates the shared European vision of public space.

The **Agenda for Making Placemaking Systemic**, outlines key principles and commitments to integrate

placemaking into urban development. The roadmap emphasizes the importance of high-quality public spaces as the backbone of thriving urban areas, the value of co-creation with local communities, and the need to balance physical design (hardware) with social activities (software) and effective management (orgware). It commits cities to innovate through organizational reform and adaptive systems, involve communities with an emphasis on inclusion and equity, and invest in

long-term resources to sustain initiatives. By embedding these principles into their governance models, the participating cities pledge to create healthier, more inclusive, and resilient urban spaces while addressing pressing societal challenges.

In an era marked by uncertainty, declining trust, and growing social divides, city diplomacy and collaboration have become more crucial than ever. The Hague, recognized as the world capital of human rights, will host the Cities in Placemaking: 12 Cities Embracing Placemaking to Tackle Urban Challenges on 11-12 February 2025, reinforcing the vital connection between the right to the city and public space.

This gathering marks the culmination of the Cities in Placemaking programme, a transformative learning partnership for municipal administrations led by Placemaking Europe. The Hague, with its enduring commitment to dialogue, social justice, and diplomacy, serves as a symbolic location for this pivotal event. It will unite cities in their mission to reimagine urban spaces as catalysts for equity, democracy, and resilience.

At the core of this initiative is the recognition of public spaces as critical arenas for community connection, growth, and democratic expression. Over the past two years, the Cities in Placemaking programme has fostered collaboration among 12 municipalities and international partners, laying the foundation for a systemic roadmap to integrate placemaking into urban governance. The Intercultural Cities program of the Council of Europe has contributed its expertise in promoting interculturality and fostering inclusive communities. The Creative Bureaucracy Festival has provided valuable insights on public sector innovation, highlighting the role of creative governance in driving

change. Additionally, the International Society for Urban Health has emphasized the importance of public health and equity, integrating these critical dimensions into the placemaking agenda.

Placemaking is a hands-on, strategic process to reimagine and enhance public spaces, empowering communities, strengthening cultural identities, and improving urban life. The event in The Hague highlights the right to public space as a fundamental human right and calls for its integration into urban policies for inclusive and sustainable development.

The Cities in Placemaking gathering spotlights The Hague's innovative placemaking efforts through activities involving local placemakers, community leaders, and international partners. Open events, site visits, and collaborative workshops offer participants a chance to reflect on programme achievements and explore how its lessons can inspire systemic change globally. The Official Discussion convenes mayors, vice-mayors, and decision-makers to address urban challenges, revise governance models, and establish shared goals to advance placemaking as a city-wide strategy.

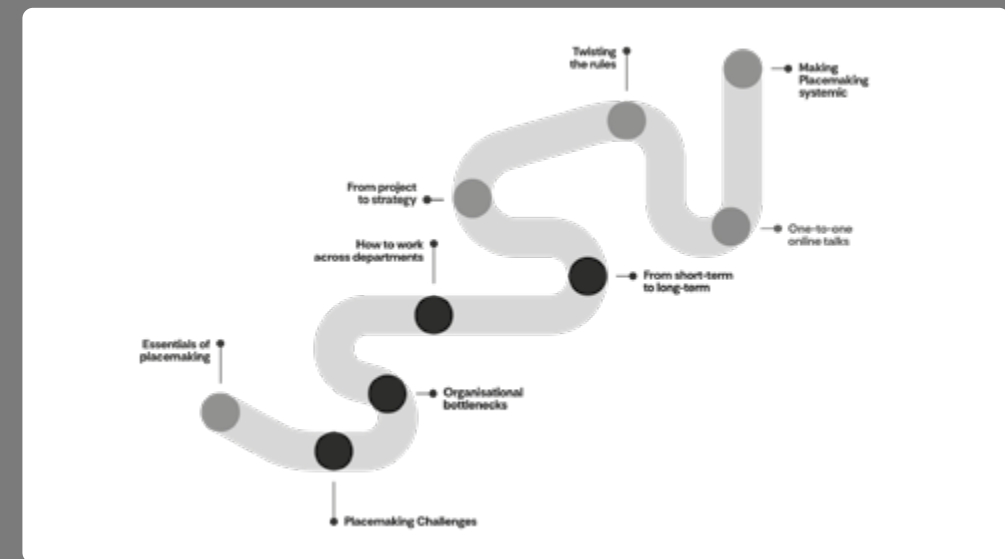
This landmark event is a call to action for cities worldwide. It underscores that the right to the city begins with rethinking how we design, manage, and protect public spaces as a foundation for equitable, inclusive, and resilient urban futures. By bringing together international leaders, the gathering on 11-12 February 2025 launches a collective effort to transform public spaces into powerful agents for long-term resilience and the development of thriving, diverse communities.



Cities in Placemaking programme

Learning sequence

The Cities in Placemaking programme is a city-to-city learning programme to build awareness and develop the skills and knowledge to drive systemic change by unleashing the full potential of placemaking for the long term improvement of their cities. We have gone through 8 milestones, structured to progressively achieve the ultimate objective of creating a roadmap to implement placemaking systemically. Led by Placemaking Europe and the knowledge partners Creative Bureaucracy Festival, International Society for Urban Health and the Intercultural Cities programme of the Council of Europe, we have conducted 8 capacity-building sessions held in a combination of in-person and remote formats with the themes of.



ESSENTIALS OF PLACEMAKING

MAR 2023

Setting a baseline for the programme and shared understanding of what makes a great place, and how we create better cities together with the communities through placemaking, and identifying the current state of placemaking in the participating cities.

PLACEMAKING CHALLENGES

JUN 2023

Understanding and diving deeper into the challenges that cities face and could be addressed by placemaking on three scales: macro-challenges, place-based challenges and organisational challenges.

ORGANISATIONAL BOTTLENECKS

SEP 2023

Identifying the main organisational hurdles of city governments in placemaking processes, and exploring potential solutions to enhance their effectiveness, using the Placemaking Embeddedness Scale.

HOW TO WORK ACROSS DEPARTMENTS

NOV 2023

Exploring cross-departmental collaboration and discussing how to enhance the strengths and overcome the weaknesses; identifying weak and strong links of particular aspects of working across departments, such as sharing the same goals and knowledge, having the resources, contributing to the long-term strategies.

FROM SHORT-TERM TO LONG-TERM

MAR 2024

Discussing the implications of shifting from short-term placemaking interventions to a more strategic, long-term and comprehensive approach and analysing the transformative potential of placemaking in regard to its value in each time cycle; exploring methods for effectively measuring and defining impact in a way that signifies meaningful and valuable change.

FROM PROJECT TO STRATEGY

JUN 2024

Deepening into the process of planning and implementation of a city-wide level placemaking strategy and developing the key priorities for the global agenda on making placemaking systemic through exploring the key principles for commitments, supported by stakeholder mapping, and a discussion on the organisational changes needed to implement the agenda's action points.

TWISTING RULES

SEP 2024

Developing the key commitments to be included in the Placemaking Agenda that would enhance rethinking traditional approaches, re-framing statements to encourage cross-disciplinary thinking and collaboration, finding loopholes or workarounds within existing frameworks accommodate interculturally inclusive, forward-looking urban development, and exploring how to push for policy changes or adaptations to accommodate forward-looking urban development.

MAKING PLACEMAKING SYSTEMIC

DEC 2024

Finalising the proposed methods for integrating placemaking into governance, policies, and planning systems, establishing it as an ongoing process embedded in the city's DNA and developing a comprehensive action plan for integrating placemaking in each participating city



The result of Cities in Placemaking is this Agenda for Making Placemaking Systemic. It draws on the programme's findings and proposes an action plan for integrating placemaking into the wider urban governance framework.

Challenges

The first part of the programme, revealed the main challenges that European cities are now facing. The diagnosis of all 13 cities showed the current most urgent issues:

COMPETITION FOR SPACE

The growth of the city and the densification are leading to spatial conflicts and clash of interests on how to use the land and the public space. The immediate consequences are an increase of inequalities with the exclusion of the ones with less power to 'compete'.

MOBILITY AND CAR-DOMINANCE

The urban development patterns of recent decades have created urban environments that are car-centric and geared towards private modes of transport. Now we are struggling to get rid of cars in favour of more sustainable modes of transportation and more space for pedestrians. Car dominance and car dependency are so ingrained in people's minds and habits that it must take both a change of attitude and planning to drive change.

SPATIAL AND SOCIAL DIVIDE

The dynamics of sociospatial differentiation is attributed to various social, economic, cultural and political factors and it is the result of spatial division between different social groups. The increasing polarisation of interests leads to fragmentation, segregation and conflict instead of opening to compromises and cohesion. This manifests in urban space and directly impacts communities.

HOUSING FOR ALL

Urban growth also imposes challenges on the availability of housing. Housing development driven by private interest alone is oftentimes not aligned to the needs of all the city's inhabitants and possibly leading to a shortage of housing. The access to affordable and quality housing for all is crucial, as it is a basic human right.

FAIR ACCESS TO PUBLIC SERVICES AND AMENITIES

Accessibility to places and services means that people can participate in urban society. Urban growth also imposes challenges for fair access to the institutions, services and benefits of the city such as transport, information, education, care, etc. Guaranteeing fair access to all is a precondition to guarantee the development of fully integrated and sustainable cities - accessibility not only in terms of quantity and low barriers, but also in terms of proximity to residents.

CLIMATE ACTION

Climate change has a huge impact on cities and communities so there is the need to mitigate its effects and guide communities to adapt to them, all while trying to make cities climate neutral, green and biodiverse. The effects of climate change are not equally felt by all communities, and those facing most disadvantage need to have their voices heard and taken into account when adaptation measures are planned and implemented.

NATURE PRESERVATION AND BIODIVERSITY

The growth of cities has imposed pressure on natural areas diminishing their actual biodiversity. People-nature conflict is omnipresent in urban development and must be addressed to achieve a better balance between human culture and the natural environment, which positively affects (mental) health and wellbeing, climate change mitigation and adaptation.

URBAN HEALTH

The social and physical environment has a huge impact on the wellbeing and the quality of life of residents and communities. The physical and built environment (urban structures, infrastructure, and spaces) may affect (mental) health especially if there are issues with noise, water quality, sewage, air pollution, lack of space and others. The urban environment also presents benefits to health through open, green, and recreational spaces that play a crucial role for mental health diseases (such as loneliness, high level of stress, etc.) too.

RESPONSE TO MIGRATION

When migration, whether driven by environmental or human-made catastrophes, conflicts, or other global disruptions, is rapid and sudden, cities that lack the necessary resources, infrastructure, and vision may struggle to adapt. This can lead to missed opportunities for inclusion and innovation. Without effective inclusion strategies, rapidly growing diversity—across cultures, religions, ethnicities, age groups, and genders—may result in segregation and social fragmentation instead of fostering social cohesion and shared prosperity. The real challenge lies in how cities anticipate, manage, and embrace change and diversity to harness their full potential.

SAFETY

The challenge of ensuring safety in cities is a result of the intersection of both individual and urban settlements' vulnerabilities. Everyone deserves to feel safe in public space but oftentimes the design decreases the quality of places for all, or, on the other hand, it is suitable only for certain groups of people (without considering gender and cultural needs), which results in exclusion and lack of feeling of safety for the others.

Our current systems are not responding sufficiently to these challenges, and with increasing urgency and pressure to address current trends and the negative impacts of ineffective urban systems, we need to act on new, innovative, holistic and especially inclusive approaches that put communities at the centre of change and lead to the creation of loveable, resilient and sustainable cities.



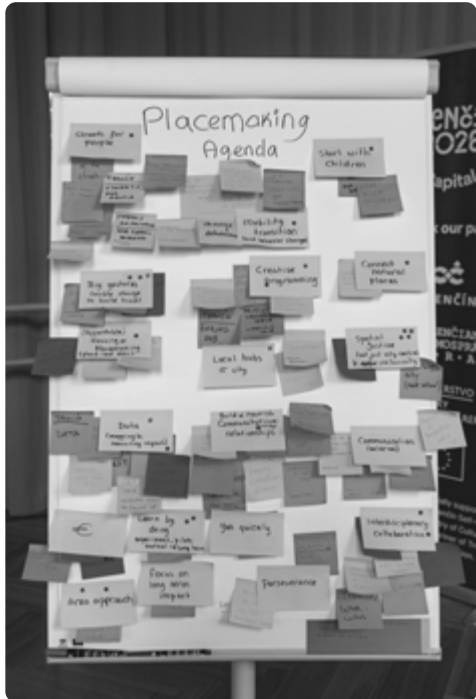
Agenda for making placemaking systemic

12 Cities Embracing Placemaking to Tackle Urban Challenges

The principles

We propose placemaking as a way to address current challenges and adapt urban governance to new realities.

We see that in order to face the challenges and create more healthy, inclusive, resilient and lovable communities in cities we must follow the following principles:



● TO UNDERSTAND THE LONG-TERM VALUE OF HIGH-QUALITY PUBLIC SPACES THAT ALLOW URBAN AREAS TO THRIVE.

Public spaces are the backbone for urban development, they last much longer than buildings. If well designed and properly conceived from the outset, they add enduring quality to the area and facilitate strong and resilient communities.

● TO CO-CREATE INSTEAD OF PARTICIPATE: BOTH INTERNALLY AND EXTERNALLY

By harnessing the wisdom of local heroes and communities and shaping goals based on collective knowledge and insights from diverse stakeholders.

● TO THINK LONG-TERM AND ACT SHORT-TERM

By using the long-term vision and our values as a compass for short-term actions. This allows us to test, learn from our failures and build trust with communities. Placemaking is not a linear process, it requires an iterative approach.

● TO PRIORITISE INTERCULTURAL INCLUSION AND EQUITY IN OUR ACTIONS

By actively seeking diverse perspectives of the community, valuing diversity and including the seldom-heard voices, to facilitate their participation and leadership and to equitably address barriers and foster positive interaction between diverse individuals and communities.

● TO BALANCE THE HARDWARE, THE SOFTWARE AND THE ORGWARE

Good public space requires well-designed physical space (hardware), the right type of uses and social activities (software) and ownership and management (orgware).

These principles have been discussed, analysed, challenged and applied during this 2-year journey by the participating cities. This has led to more detailed guidelines to innovate, involve and invest. Each city will implement these commitments in their own unique way.



Commitments

Gathering in The Hague, on the occasion of the event: Cities in Placemaking: 12 Cities Embracing Placemaking to Tackle Urban Challenges, we hereby state:

By signing the agenda for making placemaking systemic, we, representatives of local governments, commit to the following:

Innovate: Through organisational reform and adaptive systems

- To embrace an experimental approach and learn by doing;
- To build an organisational support system for placemaking, to minimise regulatory constraints and maximise lasting project impact;
- To adopt a place-based approach, prioritising local wisdom, characteristics and needs;
- To demonstrate impact and sound decision-making by embracing impact analysis and storytelling;
- To promote cross-disciplinary collaboration to integrate input of all stakeholders for balanced outcomes.

Involve: Through co-creation and project leadership

- To place the needs and perspectives of the community at heart, with particular attention for the most vulnerable.
- To capitalize on the local community's assets, inspiration, and potential by acknowledging and working with local heroes.
- To initiate and nurture relationships with internal and external stakeholders and allocate adequate resources to support these relationships effectively.
- To quickly respond to issues to aim for significant change and build community trust.
- To facilitate the transition to healthier and more sustainable environments.

Invest: Through securing resources and opportunities for initiatives to flourish

- To include social sustainability and human scale as basic criteria of area development.
- To explore financial support systems to facilitate local initiatives, local ownership and co-creation with local communities.
- To foster collaborative programs across sectors & disciplines (i.e. the private sector, social enterprises and community organisations).
- To tap into existing and innovative resources (finance, talents and expertise) and help develop co-investment networks.
- Engage in short term actions that lead to long term goals.

The result of Cities in Placemaking project 2023 - 2024 is this Agenda for Making Placemaking Systemic. It draws on the programme's findings and proposes an action plan for integrating placemaking into the wider urban governance framework.

Working as individual cities and as part of a European network of cities we can respond to challenges of ineffective urban systems and act on new, innovative, holistic approaches that put communities at the centre of change and lead to the creation of loveable, resilient and sustainable cities.

The programme and this agenda has helped us to formulate local action agendas. These action agendas are specific to our local contexts and circumstances.



City by city

The following city-to-city reflections offer a glimpse into how each city has embraced and transformed placemaking through their participation in the Cities in Placemaking programme over the last two years. These reflections highlight how cities have integrated the three core commitments of the global agenda, **(Innovate, Involve, and Invest)** into their urban strategies. By innovating through organisational reform and adaptive systems, involving communities through co-creation and project leadership, and investing in resources and opportunities for initiatives to flourish, these cities demonstrate how placemaking can evolve from a theoretical concept to a driving force for transformation. Through this journey, each city has built a shared understanding of placemaking, aligning their local efforts with the global agenda to foster vibrant, inclusive, and sustainable public spaces.

THE HAGUE: PLACEMAKING AS A RIGHT TO THE CITY

The Hague has embraced placemaking as a core strategy for tackling urban challenges, moving beyond technical fixes to foster spaces that reflect and serve the needs of its growing population. Rather than treating housing shortages, economic disparities, and the loss of green spaces as isolated problems, the city sees them as symptoms of a deeper disconnection between people and place, and uses placemaking as a holistic tool to address systemic challenges (**Innovate**). Here, placemaking is used as a practical, almost rebellious way of re-anchoring its urban spaces to the everyday lives of its residents. Its approach is rooted in collaboration, experimentation, and the belief that access to inclusive, vibrant public spaces is not just a matter of good urban design, but a fundamental human right – the right to the city. This is a prime example of The Hague’s commitment to the placemaking agenda (**Involve**).

A prime example is Spuiplein, a once-sterile square now undergoing transformation through co-creation with residents, and cultural organisations. Reimagined with greenery, rainwater absorption, and user-friendly surfaces, the square is becoming a dynamic community hub. Similarly, Spuistraat is being transformed into a pedestrian-friendly space, prioritising interaction among locals with widened sidewalks, seating, and green spaces, while also encouraging local businesses to engage with public life. These changes reflect The Hague’s commitment to creating inclusive, sustainable, and accessible spaces for everyone. To support these efforts, The Hague has invested in building internal capacity, with a dedicated alderman overseeing placemaking and encouraging collaboration across departments (**Invest**). Participation in the Cities in Placemaking program has also been key, helping convince local leaders to allocate more resources to placemaking and align city-wide efforts to support innovation.

ROTTERDAM: PLACEMAKING AS POLICY – THE POWER OF THE MANIFESTO

In a world increasingly shaped by sterile urban grids and impersonal architecture, Rotterdam emerges as a provocative counter-narrative, a city actively rewriting its relationship with public space as it moves beyond traditional urban planning to embrace placemaking as a practical people-centred strategy (**Innovate**). This shift focuses on people-centered solutions that address urban challenges and improve daily life.

A great case study for Rotterdam is Bellamyplein. Once a neglected square that has now been transformed into a multifunctional space where flood management and play coexist, turning a practical challenge into a valuable community asset. Similarly, Berkelplein, or “Regenplein,” integrates rain gardens and permeable surfaces to tackle climate resilience while fostering connection (**Involve**).

A central piece to Rotterdam’s success is the ‘Placemaking Manifesto’, a guiding document that outlines nine actionable promises to support placemaking. These include allocating dedicated budgets, celebrating temporary projects, and streamlining decision-making processes. The manifesto encourages experimentation and gives local stakeholders the tools and freedom to co-create public spaces (**Invest**). Through collaboration and innovation, the city is demonstrating that placemaking can solve real problems while creating vibrant, functional spaces for residents. Rotterdam’s participation in the Cities in Placemaking programme has been pivotal in refining its approach. By learning from other cities’ successes and challenges, Rotterdam gained valuable insights that directly influenced the development of its Placemaking Manifesto.

REGGIO EMILIA: PLACEMAKING AS COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY

Reggio Emilia is a dynamic blend of history, innovation, and inclusivity, where the city’s legacy of resistance continues to shape its culture of social cooperatives, community engagement, and civic activism. These values guide its approach to urban development, particularly in balancing the needs of diverse communities. Reggio Emilia embraces placemaking to play a key role in involving residents in shaping their city, transforming urban spaces into thriving, shared environments (**Innovate**).

Through the “Neighbourhood as a Common Good” approach, the city encourages collective responsibility and active participation, ensuring that decisions are made collaboratively rather than top-down (**Involve**). One of the city’s unique initiatives is the role of the ‘Neighbourhood Architect’, a facilitator who supports community-driven projects like reclaiming abandoned spaces, creating green areas, and organising local events. A wonderful example within Reggio Emilia is the “City of Trails” project, which remarkably stands out as residents helped map and create walking paths that connect neighbourhoods, fostering deeper connections with their surroundings.

An important reflection by the city is that, as with many cities, Reggio Emilia faces challenges in sustaining these initiatives. The city works across sectors to find long-term, sustainable solutions, addressing key questions like how to involve a broader range of residents and secure continuous funding without losing community control (**Invest**). Reggio Emilia’s participation in the Cities in Placemaking programme has been instrumental in refining its approach, drawing inspiration from international best practices and building cross-cultural exchanges. As the city prepares to host Placemaking Week Europe 2025, it sees this as an opportunity to discuss challenges, share experiences, and foster a collaborative learning environment with other cities.

HELSINKI: PLACEMAKING AS A FLEXIBLE, USER-LED MODEL

Helsinki has moved away from traditional, top-down urban planning, driven by necessity and creativity. Faced with challenges like climate change, the pandemic, and shifting lifestyles, the city has adopted more flexible, user-led, and co-creative processes, giving residents the power to design their spaces. A key achievement is Helsinki’s ‘Placemaking Operational Model,’ which serves as a replicable example for other cities (**Innovate**). Key principles of this model include:

- **Test and Iterate:** Pilot projects form the foundation, allowing Helsinki to experiment with quick, low-cost interventions to determine what works.

- **Engage Local Knowledge:** Co-creation is integral. Projects like the Bloomberg Asphalt Art at Vuotalo involved 500 children in designing public art, while neighborhood-specific solutions, such as Kannelmäki Youth Centre’s outdoor living room, prioritize local voices.

- **Flexible Funding:** Helsinki transitioned its placemaking budget from capital investment to operational expenditure, enabling faster, more adaptable project execution (**Invest**).

A strong example of this approach is the revitalisation of suburban areas like Malmi, Meri-Rastila, and Mellunkylä, where bold placemaking experiments have brought new life to overlooked neighbourhoods. Additionally, community-driven projects, such as the Bloomberg Asphalt Art initiative involving 500 children in public art and the Kannelmäki Youth Centre’s outdoor living room, highlight Helsinki’s dedication to co-creation and local leadership (**Involve**). Helsinki’s involvement in the Cities in Placemaking programme has supported this evolution by refining strategies and facilitating international knowledge exchange.

Looking ahead, Helsinki plans to expand its placemaking efforts, integrating placemaking practices across all sectors, enhancing child-friendly designs, and

potentially launching large-scale projects in industrial zones like the Hanasaari power plant site. This demonstrates Helsinki's commitment to creative, sustainable urban spaces for the future.

WROCLAW: PLACEMAKING AS A TOOL TO PROMOTE SOCIAL INCLUSION, ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY AND ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP

Wrocław's placemaking has undergone a profound transformation over the past two years, with its participation in the Cities in Placemaking programme. Initially following a traditional, top-down approach centered on long-term master planning, the city has shifted to a more dynamic, community-driven, and experimental model. This change has been fueled by reflection, learning, and embracing the programme's principles. Wrocław has applied the idea that we don't need to have all the answers from the start—we can test solutions, make mistakes, learn along the way, and continuously improve (**Innovate**).

One example is the revitalisation of Nowy Targ Square. Once a lifeless concrete space, it has been transformed into a green urban oasis with over 170 trees, ferns, and grasses planted in 2024, and an automatic irrigation system for sustainability. The addition of a fountain will further increase the square's vibrancy, creating a space for social interaction. Other impactful projects include Popowice Depot, where residents used microgrants to create a vibrant garden (**Invest**), and City Farm, combining urban agriculture with social impact.

Wrocław has also embraced a mindset of experimentation, recognising the importance of short-term actions in achieving long-term change. Through workshops, temporary interventions, and community-driven initiatives, the city is learning to design spaces that evolve with its residents' needs (**Involve**).

These efforts reflect Wrocław's commitment to fostering social inclusion,

environmental sustainability, and active citizen participation. By embracing community input, the city is reshaping itself into a more responsive, vibrant, and sustainable place for its residents. However, Wrocław's journey is far from over. Challenges remain, such as inequalities and underused spaces. The next step will be maintaining momentum, ensuring placemaking remains a transformative force, not just a temporary experiment.

HELSINGBORG: PLACEMAKING AS A LONG-TERM COMMITMENT

Helsingborg has actively participated in the Cities in Placemaking programme, embedding placemaking as a core urban strategy in its 2024-2030 Action Plan. Through hands-on projects, the city has gained insights into trust-building, co-creation, and the importance of local heroes in community engagement. Although the different projects have been successful to varying degrees, Helsingborg has learned that placemaking requires sustained effort, consistent presence, and long-term commitment.

Helsingborg's placemaking success is driven by four key factors: a dedicated team, a clear mandate prioritising placemaking, a dedicated budget, and a structured framework ensuring consistency. These elements have enabled the city to implement initiatives and establish placemaking as a long-term practice in urban development (**Invest**).

An innovative example by the city of Helsingborg is the 'Bumling lamp', a five-metre-tall symbol of community connection. The lamp's classic Swedish design has been transformed with seating, dynamic lighting, and Bluetooth speakers, becoming a vibrant meeting point that sparks conversation and co-creation. The Tunnel Strategy is another key initiative, transforming neglected and unsafe tunnels and underpasses into spaces for social interaction, art, and improved lighting. By involving the community in the design

process, Helsingborg is turning these areas from places of avoidance into vibrant spaces of activity (**Innovate**).

Looking ahead, Helsingborg is refining its placemaking with a focus on storytelling, place management, and evaluating and evolving the existing projects – making sure that they are on the right track. The city is committed to supporting local heroes, ensuring equitable resource distribution, and continuing international knowledge exchange, reinforcing its dedication to vibrant, sustainable public spaces (**Involve**).

TRENČÍN: PLACEMAKING AS A COMPASS FOR CITY-WIDE CULTURAL ACTIVATION

Trenčín's placemaking journey began with a focus on people, driven by the city's bid for European Capital of Culture 2026. This led Trenčín to the Cities in Placemaking programme, where it formalised its approach to creating spaces that truly belong to residents (**Innovate**). While the city had unknowingly practised placemaking for years, joining the programme gave it clarity and confidence to formally embed its placemaking principles into policy.

The city's approach spans large-scale projects like Trenčín SiTy and smaller interventions such as the street festival Korzo Palackého, which transformed a busy street into a communal space for a day. Pilot projects like parklets and street festivals allowed Trenčín to test placemaking ideas with real-life impact and community engagement. A standout example of the city's commitment is its development of practical tools like the Manual for Advertisement and Signage and the Manual for Public Spaces, which lay the groundwork for a cohesive urban environment (**Invest**). Trenčín fosters collaboration and experimentation, creating a space for learning and growth. Through initiatives like Lively Neighborhoods, the city invited residents to actively shape their surroundings, embodying the core principle of

co-creation (**Involve**).

Trenčín's experience offers valuable lessons for other cities: start small, listen to residents, and embrace collaboration. The city's transformation shows that placemaking is not about perfection but about meaningful steps toward building a city that belongs to its people. As the city moves toward 2026, placemaking will continue to shape its identity, ensuring that public spaces are designed not just for people, but by people.

VINNYTSIA: PLACEMAKING AS RESILIENCE AND TRANSFORMATION

Vinnytsia's placemaking journey is rooted in resilience, emerging from the shadows of conflict to embrace transformation through community-driven initiatives. Faced with challenges, Vinnytsia reimaged its approach by focusing on the "why" of space rather than merely adding parks.

A forward-thinking project emerged when the city met ITACUS at the Placemaking Week Europe 2023 and rethought underground shelters as more than temporary safety zones. Instead of being just protective spaces, these shelters were transformed into community hubs where people could connect, share, and find comfort in difficult times. This vision became a reality, as the city worked with ITACUS to create a manual for applying placemaking principles to these shelters, turning necessity into innovation (**Innovate**).

Vinnytsia also tackled neglected rivers, transforming polluted waterways into vibrant community spaces through local engagement. The city's response to the influx of internally displaced persons (IDPs) as well as representatives of national minorities from the eastern part of Ukraine was equally innovative, creating a Coordination Center that prioritised both practical needs and cultural exchange. By redefining hospitality, Vinnytsia made inclusivity a core part of its placemaking strategy (**Involve**).

Vinnitsia's Integrated Development Strategy 2030 links placemaking with broader goals like digitalisation, sustainability, and civic engagement. The city emphasises shifting perceptions before transforming spaces, demonstrating a commitment to 'invest' by securing resources and fostering creativity even in the face of adversity (**Invest**). This approach shows how placemaking fosters a sense of community, belonging, and resilience, making Vinnitsia a model for other cities.

CORK: PLACEMAKING AS A TOOL FOR TRANSFORMING FRAGMENTED EFFORTS INTO A COHESIVE URBAN POLICY

Over the past two years, Cork has undergone a significant transformation in placemaking, evolving from fragmented efforts into a structured, value-driven approach deeply embedded in urban policy. Initially, Cork had been unknowingly practicing placemaking with initiatives like outdoor dining, parklets, and artistic projects such as Street Art projects. However, what was missing was a shared understanding of placemaking—how to define it, measure its impact, and integrate it more cohesively across different sectors. Through the Cities in Placemaking programme, Cork embraced a more intentional approach to placemaking, recognising the need to integrate it into both urban development and policy.

A major turning point came when the city shifted from sporadic interventions to a more structured and embedded placemaking practice. This included placing a stronger emphasis on meaningful community engagement and participatory processes, with community leaders early in the process, creating a more inclusive approach to growth (**Involve**). The city also improved internal communication, making placemaking a shared responsibility across all sectors (**Innovate**).

Cork has also explored 'meanwhile uses' – temporary, adaptable

projects that activate underutilised spaces, giving life to forgotten areas while reflecting the city's unique character. Most importantly, placemaking in Cork has become a way to express its 'Corkness,' with its rich history, vibrant culture, and strong connection to the river being central to the city's placemaking efforts. This focus has turned placemaking into a core principle of Cork's future, creating spaces that resonate with the people who live there, shaping the city as a vibrant, inclusive place for all (**Invest**).

BUDAPEST 8TH DISTRICT: PLACEMAKING AS CITY-WIDE TRANSFORMATION ROOTED IN LOCAL ACTION

The placemaking strategy of the 8th district of Budapest is transforming the city through local, community-driven action. With a "learning by doing" approach, the city tests and refines temporary interventions like parklets and small green spaces, adapting urban systems based on real-world feedback (**Innovate**). These initiatives create a more accessible, people-first city that evolves to meet the needs of its residents, showing how adaptive urban systems can lead to sustainable transformation.

The district is shifting from top-down planning to prioritising community-led initiatives (**Involve**). This approach ensures that public spaces reflect the diverse needs of its residents, fostering stronger social cohesion through co-creation. By involving local stakeholders in the planning process, Budapest ensures that its urban spaces are shaped by the people who use them, strengthening its placemaking efforts.

The 8th district of Budapest also began to secure political and financial backing for placemaking projects. Through the Cities in Placemaking programme, the district has integrated placemaking into urban policies, ensuring long-term investment in both physical infrastructure and community involvement (**Invest**). This

commitment ensures that placemaking is not a side project but a core principle embedded in the city's long-term vision. Looking ahead, the 8th district of Budapest aims to scale its placemaking efforts into more complex urban areas, such as major boulevards. Future priorities include expanding monitoring to understand the long-term effects of placemaking, increasing inclusivity, and strengthening maintenance efforts.

BRADFORD: PLACEMAKING AS A BRIDGE BETWEEN CULTURE, COMMUNITY, AND CHANGE

Bradford has embarked on an ambitious placemaking journey over the past two years, refining its approach to urban transformation. Once reliant on outsourcing large-scale projects, the city now takes an active role in shaping its own future. With a growing team of landscape architects, planners, and designers, Bradford uses placemaking as a cornerstone for revitalisation, policy integration, and community engagement. As it prepares for its 2025 UK City of Culture designation, the momentum for this transformation is strong.

Placemaking in Bradford is about more than grand-scale development; it is about creating cohesive urban spaces that meet the needs of all residents. The city has embraced a culture of innovation by using data-driven decision-making and test-and-learn methodologies (**Innovate**). This allows for urban interventions, like green spaces and active lifestyle designs, to continuously evolve based on feedback. Bradford's shift to designing in-house, instead of relying on external contractors, also fosters an adaptive approach to development.

Bradford's placemaking efforts are centred on involving the community. By embracing co-creation, the city engages residents, businesses, and public services in shaping public spaces (**Involve**). Projects addressing health inequities, especially among teenage girls, highlight the city's commitment to inclusivity.

Bradford has begun embedding placemaking into its policies and securing financial backing, the city ensures that placemaking remains a central element of its development strategy, guaranteeing sustainable transformation (**Invest**).

VILA NOVA DE FAMALICÃO: PLACEMAKING AS A MODEL FOR CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND URBAN TRANSFORMATION

As Bradford approaches 2025, it is cementing its position as a leader in urban transformation, proving the value of integrated placemaking for lasting change. Vila Nova de Famalicão began a few years ago a local policy of attracting and involving citizens for greater civic participation, especially in supporting the creation and development of local and neighborhood activities (sports, cultural, socializing and festivities), seeking to foster a stronger and more prosperous spirit of socialization and neighborhood.

As a result, proposals and challenges for the creation and regeneration of spaces adapted and suited to the aspirations of enjoying public space emerged from citizens, resulting in projects of active participation between citizens and local authorities. On the other hand, the environment of civic participation cultivated also offered the opportunity for local authorities to work on their intentions to intervene in public spaces with citizens and stakeholders. (**Involve**)

Offering the city more and better public space, with a strong focus on green spaces, with quality, appealing to smooth mobility, safe and intergenerational, has been making it possible to revitalise worn-out, old and inadequate areas, making them more inclusive and friendly to people and the environment (**Innovate**).

The creation of the City Park and the return of the river to the city (2012) and the rehabilitation of the city's

central square (2022) are the two best examples of strong investment in urban design with citizens, environment, soft mobility, quality space, integration and inclusion in mind. In addition to these examples of large financial investment, many other small local and neighborhood investments have been co-created with the community and associations, promoting the creation of various public and community spaces that meet the community's wishes, offering conditions for leisure, environmental preservation and green spaces, sports, cultural practices and shows (**Invest**).

In the future, the intention is to involve all these practices in an even more structured and coordinated way, assuming an urban vision with a strong mark of Placemaking policies.





12 Cities Embracing Placemaking to Tackle Urban Challenges

Programme

The 12 Cities Embracing Placemaking to Tackle Urban Challenges event spotlights The Hague's innovative placemaking efforts through activities involving local placemakers, community leaders, and international partners. Open events, site visits, and collaborative workshops offer participants a chance to reflect on programme achievements and explore how its lessons can inspire systemic change globally. The Official Discussion convenes mayors, vice-mayors, and decision-makers to address urban challenges, revise governance models, and establish shared goals to advance placemaking as a city-wide strategy:

TUESDAY, FEB 11

● Amare

13:00 - 14:00
Welcome and light lunch
→ In-person

14:00 - 17:00
Site visits: The Hague's placemaking projects
→ In-person

18:00 - 20:00
Placemaking event - let's hear from the local placemaking heroes
→ In-person

WEDNESDAY, FEB 12

● Amare

16:00 - 18:00
Official Discussion: Systemic placemaking to tackle urban challenges
→ Hybrid

WELCOME AND LIGHT LUNCH
13:00 - 14:00

Kickstarting our event! This welcome session will set the stage for two days of immersive learning and exchange. Your host, The city of The Hague and representatives from Placemaking Europe will introduce you to the programme, connect you with fellow participants, and organise groups for the afternoon activities. A light lunch will be served to fuel the conversations ahead.

SITE VISITS: THE HAGUE’S PLACEMAKING PROJECTS
14:00 - 17:00

As a participant city of the first Cities in Placemaking programme 2023-2024, The Hague is ready to showcase its pioneering projects, offering first-hand insights into how the city is leveraging placemaking to address its urban challenges. You will have the opportunity to choose out from five diverse locations, where you’ll hear directly from the people driving these transformations and see how the Cities in Placemaking agenda is being integrated into local policies and practices. Participants will be divided into small groups for a more focused and in-depth experience.

PLACEMAKING EVENT - LET’S HEAR FROM THE LOCAL PLACEMAKING HEROES
18:00 - 20:00

In the evening, we will gather to hear compelling stories from The Hague’s placemaking champions - both from the municipality and grassroots initiatives, as well as stories from the international participants. This evening event will highlight innovative projects, community-led transformations, and the partnerships that make it all possible. Expect engaging discussions, local as well as international perspectives, and plenty of inspiration.

OFFICIAL DISCUSSION: SYSTEMIC PLACEMAKING TO TACKLE URBAN CHALLENGES
16:00 - 18:00

This session will kick off with a presentation of the agenda, setting the stage for a dynamic discussion on the future of placemaking in cities across Europe. Reflections from the Cities in Placemaking programme will be shared, followed by a Mayor’s Discussion - divided in two parts, featuring city representatives from The Hague, Rotterdam, Wroclaw, Reggio Emilia, Budapest, and Trencin, who will share insights on their progress, challenges, and ambitions in embedding placemaking in urban development. The session will include an open Q&A, inviting participants to engage with speakers and contribute to the conversation on how to make placemaking a systemic and transformative force in cities.

Part 1: Placemaking as a Political and Strategic Priority

This segment will focus on the broader political and policy-driven dimensions of placemaking.

- Speakers:
- Patrik Žák, Deputy Mayor, Trenčín
 - Jakub Mazur, Deputy Mayor, Wroclaw
 - Chantal Zeegers, Deputy Mayor, Rotterdam
 - Robert Van Asten, Alderman, The Hague
 - Dan Boyle - Lord Mayor, Cork

Moderated by Fredrik Lindstal

Part 2: From Vision to Action: Placemaking in Practice

Moving from strategy to implementation, this segment will highlight how cities are embedding placemaking through concrete actions, projects, and continuous urban evolution.

- Speakers:
- Nur Icar, Alderman, The Hague
 - Daniel Radai, Deputy Mayor, District 8 Budapest
 - Ben Freeman, Council of Europe
 - Davide Prandi, Councillor, Reggio Emilia

Moderated by Charlot Schans

Site visits

SITE VISIT ① BINCKHORST: PLACEMAKING AS A TRANSFORMATIVE JOURNEY OF INNOVATION, CO-CREATION, AND INVESTMENT

Transport: Bike Tour

The municipality envisions transforming Binckhorst into a mixed-use area for both residential and business purposes. The environmental plan facilitates this transformation by offering flexibility and space for companies, developers, and future residents to propose initiatives and seize opportunities. However, it also protects the existing rights of current activities in the area, which creates challenges.

This bike tour will take you to various locations and initiatives, including a temporary park, a temporary school, and a site between multiple railway lines where a cultural initiative is planned. At the school, students will present the projects they are working on and explain how they have shaped the future urban development of Binckhorst in Minecraft. Along the way, we will also see Binckhorst Castle (first mentioned in 1308), the 'Haagse Trekvliet' canal (dating back to 1344), the 'Laakmolen' windmill (built in 1699), and numerous references to the area's industrial heritage.



*Binckhorst's transformation into a mixed-use urban area aligns with the core principles of the placemaking agenda. The area is being reshaped through a **flexible environmental plan** that encourages **innovation, allowing space for residents, developers, and businesses to contribute ideas while safeguarding the existing rights of current users**. This balance between development and preservation embodies the principle of **thinking long-term while acting short-term**.*

*During this site visit, we'll cycle past landmarks highlighting the area's industrial heritage such as Binckhorst Castle, the 'Haagse Trekvliet' canal, and the Laakmolen windmill. These historic landmarks not only tell the story of Binckhorst's past but also showcase **how local character and history are integrated into the urban design, reflecting a place-based approach to placemaking**.*



SITE VISIT ② SCHEVENINGEN: A SEASIDE TRANSFORMATION THROUGH INNOVATION AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Transport: Tram

The Hague's 11 km coastline is just 5 km from the city center. This tram tour will take you to Scheveningen, the largest of the city's two seaside resorts. With its kilometer-long beach, Scheveningen is considered The Hague's backyard. During this visit, you will learn about managing tourist flows in the summer, the decade-long placemaking and redevelopment of the iconic Scheveningen Pier, and the **Living Lab Scheveningen (LLS)**—a testing ground for digital innovations. This includes smart light poles that not only provide lighting but can also be equipped with sensors or cameras. This tour is specially designed for those who prefer not to cycle around the city.



*Scheveningen embodies placemaking through the **balancing of tourism management, community engagement, and long-term innovation**. This tram tour will highlight the area's transformation, including the redevelopment of the iconic Scheveningen Pier, where **placemaking efforts have revitalised the space into a thriving destination for both locals and tourists**. The city's commitment to sustainability and resilience is evident in the integration of the **Living Lab Scheveningen (LLS)**, which uses **innovative smart technologies**.*

*The city manages seasonal tourist flows and embraces **short-term actions for long-term outcomes**. This approach aligns with placemaking principles by testing ideas and learning from real-world impacts, **adapting quickly to community needs and feedback**. Digital innovations, along with the focus on accessibility, ensure that Scheveningen's public spaces cater to diverse users, fostering inclusivity and equitable access for all.*

*Scheveningen is a great example of how cities can creatively adapt and thrive by **blending tradition, technology, and community-driven solutions in urban development**.*

SITE VISIT ③ LAAKHAVENS: PLACEMAKING IN ACTION – TRANSFORMING THE HAGUE’S CENTRAL INNOVATION DISTRICT

TRANSPORT: BIKE TOUR

This tour explores a part of The Hague set for a major transformation over the next decade: the **Central Innovation District (CID)**. One of the largest inner-city developments in the Netherlands, this district will redefine The Hague’s skyline.

We will start our tour at City Hall and cycle to **The Hague College**, located on the other side of the railway tracks in Laakhavens, a former industrial area that is now part of the CID. Here, we will learn about efforts to create safer and more inclusive public spaces.

From there, we will walk to **NEST**, a temporary art space, and **Club Laak**, where the director of NEST and a local placemaker will discuss how these spaces contribute to the neighborhood. On the return journey, we will stop by **De Helena**, a community hub where various social enterprises operate. The tour will conclude back at City Hall.

Once an industrial area, the Central Innovation District (CID) is transforming into a dynamic urban hub. NEST and Club Laak exemplify how creative spaces foster collaboration and community-driven initiatives, while De Helena demonstrates the role of social enterprises in strengthening local economies. This visit showcases how placemaking in Laakhavens balances long-term urban development with immediate community impact, using temporary projects to test ideas and shape a more inclusive and innovative city.



SITE VISIT ④ ZUIDWEST: PLACEMAKING IN TRANSITION

TRANSPORT: TRAM

Zuidwest (South-West) The Hague is undergoing a major transition. Many social housing units will be demolished to create more housing options and promote greater diversity in the area. During this transition, vacant buildings and spaces are being temporarily used for placemaking initiatives that benefit the neighborhood.

This visit will take us to a project focused on transforming a community garden through collaboration between the city, placemakers, and housing corporations. The goal is to enhance quality of life, create a healthier and more sustainable green space, and provide more places for social interaction.

Additionally, the **Museum of the Inner City** has opened a location in The Hague’s South-West. At **Marterrade**, a currently paved area, greenery will be added alongside the development of a new community center featuring an **art school** and placemaking initiatives.

This tram tour will take us to key sites, where we will meet and engage with local placemakers.

Placemaking in Zuidwest ensures that temporary activations contribute to the area’s long-term transformation, fostering inclusivity and community resilience. The community garden project highlights how collaboration between the city, placemakers, and housing corporations integrates greenery and social spaces to enhance well-being. At Marterrade, the addition of a community centre and art school demonstrates how placemaking aligns urban development with local needs. This tram tour offers an opportunity to engage with local placemakers and explore how their efforts shape a more connected and vibrant neighbourhood.



SITE VISIT 5 TRANSVAAL/SCHILDERSWIJK : PLACEMAKING TO SHIFT PERCEPTIONS

TRANSPORT: BIKE TOUR

Schilderswijk ('Painters District') and Transvaal are two neighborhoods in The Hague that are often negatively portrayed in the media—an unfair representation. This visit will highlight the many initiatives led by residents, artists, and entrepreneurs who are transforming these neighborhoods in creative and sustainable ways.

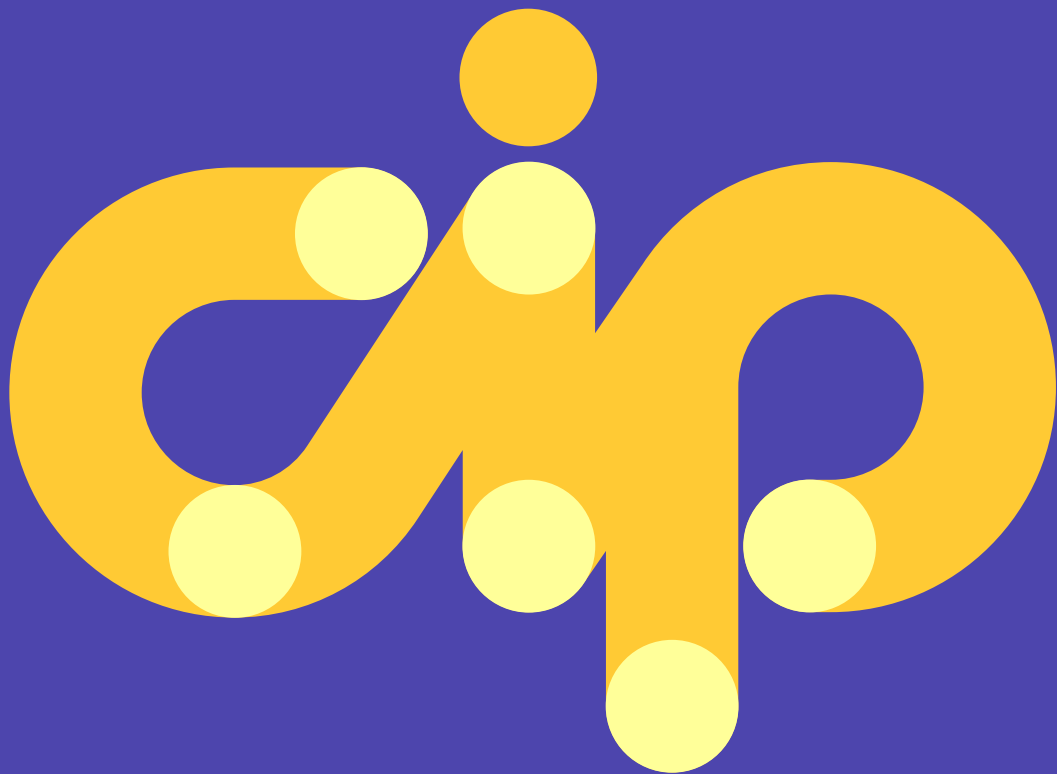
During the tour, we will explore projects that make use of vacant buildings, foster artistic collaboration, and contribute to circular and social economies while promoting community cohesion. The district managers will guide the tour, and at each location, project initiators will share their experiences and showcase their work.

*These neighbourhoods embody placemaking principles by **prioritising co-creation and local leadership**, using **temporary interventions to test and refine long-term strategies**, and **strengthening social connections through inclusive public spaces**. Their initiatives demonstrate how investing in people, social ties, and shared ownership reshapes perceptions and ensures urban development reflects local aspirations.*



Learn more about the project at:

cip.placemaking-europe.eu



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