

JOURNAL

PROJECT

CULTURAL H.ID.RA.N.T.
-CULTURAL Hidden
IDentities ReAppear
through Networks of
WaTer

📍 Halandri, Greece

TOPIC

Culture and cultural
heritage

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Cultural H.ID.RA.N.T. project in Halandri foresees the reintroduction into city life of the roman Hadrian aqueduct. The ancient underground infrastructure will gain contemporary value returning to serve the city with its original function, but also becoming the pivotal element in a wider strategy for the conservation and cultivation of local cultural capital, the establishment of stronger bindings in the community at large, and the sustainable regeneration of city spaces. This first journal reports on how the different dimensions of the project have been framed, explored and elaborated along the first 16 months of activity.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Cultural H.ID.RA.N.T. project in Halandri foresees the **reintroduction into city life of the roman Hadrian aqueduct**. The ancient underground infrastructure will gain contemporary value returning to serve the city with its original function, but also becoming **the pivotal element in a wider strategy for the conservation and cultivation of local cultural capital, the establishment of stronger links in the community at large, and the sustainable regeneration of city spaces**. A strong potential in the project is represented by the possibility to raise local cultural and natural heritage awareness and to contribute to citizens' wellbeing: to get there the project puts in place a set of actions that would strengthen local memories and identities, concretely contributing to conservation and cultivation of local cultural capital, improving the quality of collective spaces by enhancing walkability and access to quality natural and green areas.

As many different dimensions integrate and intertwine (cultural, social, environmental, economic aspects have strong correlation), **the initiative puts an accent on commoning and citizens' empowerment, with water as the connecting point between heritage and community, physical and intangible actions, symbolic values and emerging vocations, sustainable uses of resources and resilient urban development**. This first journal

reports on how the different dimensions of the initiative have been framed, explored and elaborated along the first 16 months of activity. It describes project advancements, development trajectories, obstacles and main difficulties, discussing how the local approach relates to the larger debate on how we can “make our cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable” (UN Agenda 2030, SDG 11).

Section 2 reports on how the initiative connects to ERDF funds, and about the way it intercepts EU, national and regional frameworks for action. The chapter will also discuss how the initiative core concepts relate to the Greek National Growth Strategy for the future delivered by the national government in 2018. Section 3 explores how Cultural H.ID.RA.N.T. is connected to the current EU debate on Cultural Heritage, with a particular focus on the importance of a cross-cutting approach for culture, and on the perspective of heritage-led urban development and regeneration.

Section 4 and 5 explore the achievements of these first 16 months, with an emphasis on main tasks and objectives implementation, and a further elaboration on obstacles, barriers and unplanned consequences emerging from action. Finally an analysis of the seven UIA implementation challenges is provided, highlighting the most relevant aspects concerning the “state of the art” of the process, such as: the upscaling of the initiative at metropolitan scale, the structuring of the public procurement tenders for the the new water infrastructure and the new public spaces, the participatory and engagement activities progress (pre and post covid restrictions). Some crucial aspects will be outlined on actors and organizations networking, such as the difficulties in the engagement of public officers and technical bodies of the City and the potential offered by the local ecosystem of stakeholders.

EU, NATIONAL AND REGIONAL POLICY FRAMEWORK

Cohesion policy is one of the European Union’s main investments to enhance economic and social development, eliminate regional imbalances and contribute to meet the targets for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. Within the EU Cohesion policy framework, there is scope for country members to determine their own complementary priority areas. **As for Greece, EU cohesion policy main principles and values have a key role, as national development policies are a mix of both EU and national priorities:** guided by two main documents, the EU Partnership Agreement with Greece for 2014-2020 (ESPA 2014-2020) and the recently adopted National Growth Strategy (1), these strategies have important implications for territorial policy and investments across the country.

The national framework for growth

By promoting “holistic growth” the **National Growth Strategy for Greece** focuses on deindustrialization and reindustrialization processes, digital development and the support to the state’s main economic sectors, with the aim of restoring productivity growth and competitiveness. Cooperative and social sectors of the economy are considered as crucial factors to support the shift towards sustainable production and consumption patterns. The strategy intends to ensure the provision of key infrastructures while investing in Greece’s human capital, building on high-skilled but underutilized labour, and betting on knowledge as a driver of sustainable growth. In this sense a specific accent is put on society, in terms of justice and opportunities for individual and collective development, promoting a fair, inclusive and sustainable economic model, where all equally share the benefits of growth. The strategy seeks to design a modern welfare state and a social safety net that truly targets those in need and ensures that no one is left behind. For these reasons effective social protection, inclusive education, meaningful employment, active labour training policies, and an improved environment for innovation are foreseen, as supportive factors to tackle social exclusion and poverty, and mobilize human resources. Similarly the **Partnership Agreement for the Development Framework 2014-2020 (PA)** (2) envisages to revitalise the Greek economy through the recovery and upgrading of the productive and social fabric of Greece, with the creation of sustainable jobs spearheaded by outward looking, innovative and competitive entrepreneurship and on the basis of reinforcing social cohesion and the principles of sustainable development. Being the main strategic plan for growth in Greece, the PA seeks to tackle the structural weaknesses and socioeconomic problems caused by the economic crisis, and helps attain the national targets within the Europe 2020 Strategy, focusing on smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. Facing this framework and the overall objectives and investment priorities defined through the EU Cohesion Policy in Greece, many aspects of Cultural H.ID.RA.N.T. contribute to ERDF thematic objectives and investment priorities with: the the development of web tools and free-access e-culture repository and an e-learning guide to update, curate and disseminate project contents (TO2/ IP.2.c and TO5/ IP.5.a); the delivery of an integrated approach to conserve, protect, promote and develop both natural and cultural heritage, pointing to quality green spaces with less air pollution and noise (TO6/ IP.6.c/ IP.6.e.); a

contribution to more endogenous, resilient urban development strategies for local creative communities (TO8/IP.8.b); the promotion of social inclusion, accessible and open processes (TO9).

Regional references

PA also foresees **13 Regional Operational Programmes (ROPs)**, one for each Greek region. These are the regional components of the Cohesion Policy of Greece, setting the strategic objectives for development and defining how investments should be targeted. In some EU countries it is common to have both ROPs and a separate overarching regional development strategy not directly tied to the use of EU funds: in Greece instead **the ROP acts as the main regional strategy**. ROPs present a diagnosis of central challenges and opportunities in a region, coupling a strategic framework with a relatively short-term timeframe (seven-years). Even if they do not represent (or should not substitute) an integrated development strategy for the region (3), they focus on covering European regulation requirements. As far as the City of Halandri is concerned, the “Attica OP” is the territorial reference, highlighting (between others) the support of ICT smart use, the improvement of the region attractiveness as a place to live and invest, the protection and the sustainable management of the environment, climate change adaptation and the harmonisation with the European environmental policies. Key, in this case too, is to ensure social cohesion, creating a framework of protection and support for vulnerable groups, mitigating poverty and social exclusion of parts of the region’s population. Interventions focus on labour market integration of targeted groups, on the improvement of access to welfare and health services, on the creation of educational and health infrastructures. **Cultural H.ID.RA.N.T. is in line with the Attica OP priorities and objectives** the development layout of the programming period 2014-2020 is heavily based on RIS3, with priorities focusing on Creative Economy, Blue Economy, and Sustainable economy of needs. The Halandri UIA proposal contributes to 2 out of 3 RIS priorities, leveraging different facets of creative economy (local festivals, the creation of a local archive, cultural heritage, theatre, art, ICT software in the fields of culture, crafts) to ultimately contribute to a sustainable economy of needs, building quality of life in every aspect of individual and social life. A proposal dealing with Cultural Heritage and local wellbeing challenges, Cultural H.ID.RA.N.T. prioritise human needs and can drive innovative efforts to serve them via community-led initiatives.

In addition to the ROPs, each region analyses its spatial structure and provides guidelines for land use planning and the development of urban transport networks. This planning framework is implemented under the framework of the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change. In this system the government has the most important competencies as it approves all spatial frameworks and plans, with the “decentralised administrations” being responsible for the approval of lower-level plans, the implementation of urban plans and their modifications. The regions and the municipalities have an advisory role in the approval of spatial and land use plans, with the Region of Attica representing an exception as its Spatial Plan is approved by law by the Greek parliament. Cultural H.ID.RA.N.T. outcomes contribute to the objectives and indicators of the regional strategies, as well as to local strategic plans, such as the - under finalisation and approval - new Land Use Plan and the Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan for Halandri, with all tangible spatial interventions delivered in accordance with the Presidential Decree defining the Penteli Halandri stream protection plan.

Mind the gap

In its **2020 territorial review for Greece**, OECD points out that despite the efforts to guide urban growth at a more functional and comprehensive scale of planning, there remains a gap between spatial planning and socio-economic planning. At the central government level, the General Spatial Plan is disconnected from the major national economic plans and the partnership agreement (ESPA 2014-2020). At the regional level, the Regulatory Master Plan of Athens-Attica was elaborated with little coordination between the economic development strategy at a corresponding scale. At the municipal level, the General Urban Land Use Plan must be sent to the Ministry of the Environment for approval and remains disconnected from the five-year local economic strategic plan that municipalities are expected to elaborate at the beginning of the municipal political mandate. The time needed for the completion of the sequence of plans which define binding land uses inside town plan boundaries is extremely lengthy and the large number of different types of plans can lead to overlapping responsibilities and contradictions (4). Unless these kind of diseconomies can only be partially tackled by a single Municipal Authority (as it can control just portions of the whole process), Cultural H.ID.RA.N.T approaches these issues in a proactive way, putting a strong accent on the design and accompaniment of procedures, providing specific attention to the different decision-making phases (approval steps, permissions, etc.), dedicating specific efforts to the dialogue with supra-local levels of government.

EU POLICY&PRACTICES FOR CULTURAL HERITAGE

During the last decade Cultural Heritage (CH) gained growing importance in Eu policies for cities and communities, achieving a broader conceptual scope, being described and approached differently: this is particularly evident when we think of scale factors - with an interest/accent moving from single buildings to urban fabric and urban landscape, purpose of action - with an evolution from preservation to smoother forms of valorization, up to adaptive reuse; working methods - with culture and cultural heritage more and more present in the debate on integrated approach, playing the role of a cross-cutting issue (6). A relevant angle in this matter is the closer relationship established in the debate between CH and urban development, with a specific and fruitful reflection on sustainable development goals and urban regeneration processes. These perspectives can be found in: the **EU Urban Agenda** - introducing heritage as a constituent part of Culture as a policy field; the **Work Plan for Culture 2015/2018** (7) - having Cultural Heritage as one of its priority areas; the **New European Agenda for Culture** (2019-2022) (8) - highlighting CH protection and valorization.

Cultural Heritage is something evolving

The many voices supporting the generative power of Cultural Heritage (CH) as a tool for urban innovation stress the idea that **CH is not a static matter**, but rather something evolving and capable of incorporating new ideas and values in time (9). Cultural and natural significance are then seen under a completely new perspective, going beyond the mere act of preserving, maintaining or protecting the physical heritage to embrace a more complex (even potentially conflictual) relationship between tangible and intangible dimensions, value and revenue, power, government and governance (10). Implications on how we frame time, history and contemporaneity, are bold and wide, as much as the consequences of applying mindsets in which collectively built and shared values, culture, sense of ownership and belonging, horizontal governance and management models acquire a growing centrality in the urban arenas (and in the action on territories). The case of Halandri stands in this framework. With the Cultural H.ID.RA.N.T. project the recovery of the ancient Hadrian Aqueduct represents a crosscutting area to test and explore the powerful capacity of CH to work as a temporary and/or permanent collector, activator, accelerator of new identities, values, resources, social and cultural capital, hidden potentialities of a changing context. One of the crucial features in the proposal is the very idea of interpreting the aqueduct return in use as a means to activate a complex urban regeneration and development process: rather than being considered as an end in itself, the adaptive reuse of the ancient infrastructure (and its urban and societal implications) intercepts a variety of different dimensions, bringing history back to contemporary life in a generative way. Besides this, the conversations taking place around the aqueduct bring together languages, interests, objectives and purposes which may seem very distant and incompatible (i.e. timing, rationalities, cycles of decision, responsibilities, accepted social practices, etc.): the discourse around the aqueduct can then become a concrete and conceptual space where different positions in the process are stimulated to find simplified and intermediate languages to cooperate and work together. Based on cooperation, translation and interpretation, but also built around common definitions and shared concerns, these languages will be partial and limited (probably rather incomplete), but they might give birth to a number of different arenas concerning how the actors in play see their future as a community at local, metropolitan and EU level.

Multiple conversations on space and society

According to this perspective the project brought about by the City of Halandri is in direct dialogue with emerging debates and practices supporting a more direct involvement of communities in the political process (power, government, management, governance effects, democratic participation, etc.) (11). The emerging trends in EU urban contexts, show that the **public discourse on the city and its artifacts** (buildings, infrastructures, public realm, cultural heritage) has a strong incidence at local level, with rather conflictual relationships with growing space-related mobilisation of local actors (i.e. right to the city, right to affordable housing, reaction against unwanted infrastructures, etc.). The call for new mechanisms for space production in cities, new cooperative development models, new rules and new ways to manage city assets, is often put in relationship with the visible implications of the processes of economic and financial crisis, the consequences of globalization, the spending reviews for public authorities, the weakening of the welfare state, the privatization of public services, the growing imbalances and inequalities emerging in our cities.

In this sense the idea proposed by Cultural H.ID.RA.N.T. to activate a **water solidarity community** around the aqueduct revitalization - imagining the citizens holding in a cooperative way the future management of the

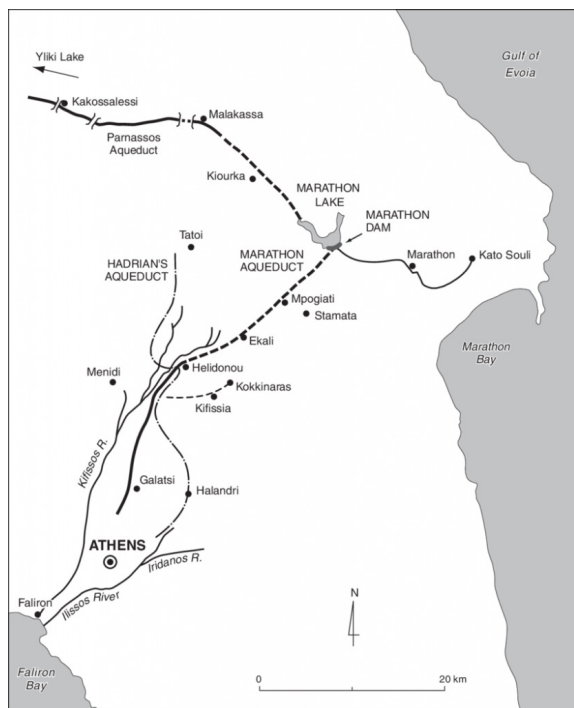
infrastructure - is a way to commit to a different management and government of “urban production” processes, implying a radical rethinking of the participatory issues (tools, models, aims), looking for new actors and resources to mobilise, and developing new competences to effectively challenge urban issues. In this sense then, Cultural H.ID.R.A.N.T is part of a wider record of experiences showing us that integrated urban regeneration initiatives can directly affect the “state of health” of our democracies (operationally working on integration, equality, civiness, sense of belonging, generation of new resources, and social capital). These practices try to establish a relationship between spatial issues (i.e. vacancy, spatial inequalities, urban commons, role of cultural heritage and urban culture, etc.), and new economic and development models, exploring solutions to reframe them. As they test new balances and linkages between the local systems of stakeholders, question more traditional development paradigms, invent new forms of local governance, these experiences show that **alternatives to the regular dynamism of urban processes** are already ongoing. Introducing new provocative assumptions and concerns, they push on the debate about the reframing of the public sphere, the redefinition of the role of the public authorities in the provision of services and facilities, the role of citizens, communities and organizations in the local development process, the new assets local systems can count on for their future development.

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

The road to Cultural H.ID.RA.N.T.

Halandri is the biggest municipality (12) of the North Athens Regional Unit, and today is well known for its flourishing commerce (three existing shopping malls, complementing a variety of neighborhood shops and a diverse food consumption offer) and its vibrant nightlife (with recorded peaks of more than 5000 visitors in the city center during Saturday evenings). Recent development policies in the Attica Region focused on the economic recovery from the national crisis started in 2009 contributing to strengthening the branding of Halandri as a leisure center.

Halandri is least known for being crossed by the important subterranean Roman Hadrian Aqueduct: 20 km long, it departs from the fringes of Mount Parnitha and ends up in two water tanks in Dexameni square (Kolonaki/Athens). Connecting 7 municipalities (Acharnes, Metamorfosi, Heraklion, Marousi, Halandri, Pilothei-Psychiko and Athens) it supplied the area with water for nearly 1800 years (140 A.D. year of its construction to the early 30s when a new pipes system was initiated). Unless several parts of it decayed or were destroyed by further city developments (i.e. engineering works due to Metro construction, Olympic games developments, etc.), **Hadrian still carries water**: nowadays the Municipality of Metamorfosi is the only one out of seven using it, watering 80% percent of the public green areas. In the proximity of Halandri city center, the aqueduct intercepts the Rematia stream, a waterway surrounded by a ravine, flowing to the most urbanized areas from the Penteli hills. A protected natural resource (according to DPR 659/D, 1995), the dense forest growing on the banks of the **Rematia stream** represents a primary ecological corridor in the region, offering with its pedestrian pathways system a direct access to local flora and fauna.

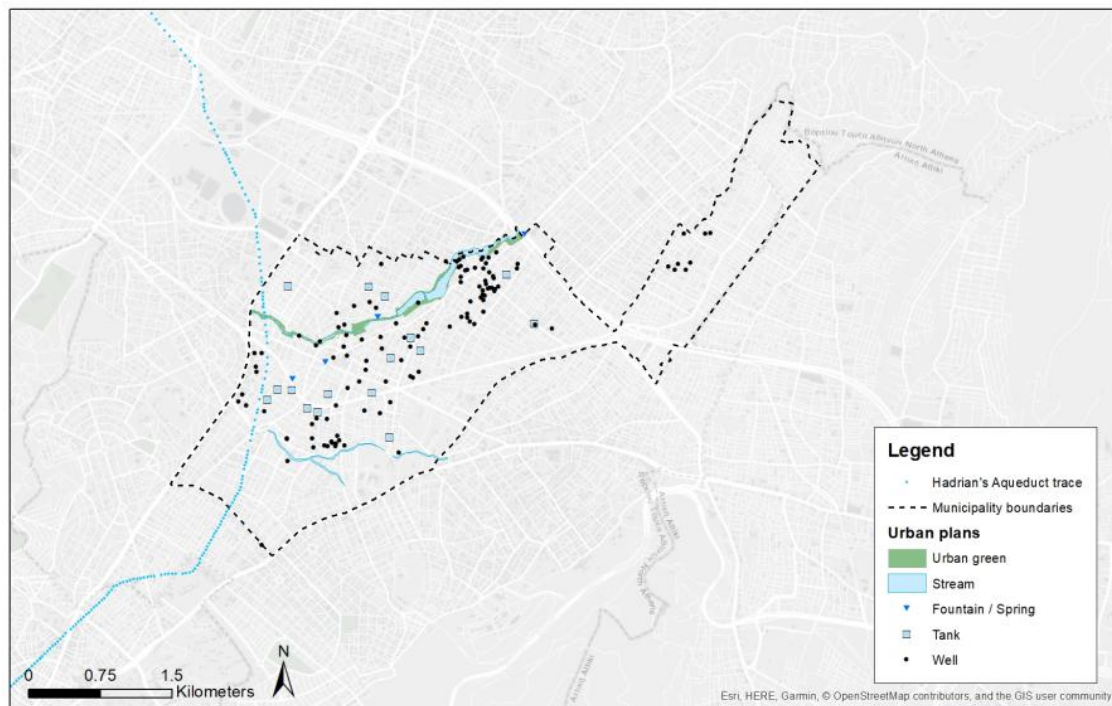


Hadrian aqueduct as it crosses Athens metropolitan area

A unique artifact, Hadrian aqueduct has remained obscure both as a monument and as a water resource for a very long time (13), with just a few “physical” clues of its presence on the city’s surface. Until today 390 water-wells of the aqueduct have been located: 228 of them are visible and 174 of them happen to be in public spaces, while **44 are located into Halandri’s territory** (with 25 of them that are visible and 29 that are not). The invisibility of the infrastructure is not only due to its underground position, but combines with Hadrian being almost forgotten and detached from mainstream local culture, storytelling and touristic promotion strategies.

The implementation of Cultural H.ID.RA.N.T., has offered the Municipality the possibility to outline a different strategy for its territory, **putting Hadrian’s Aqueduct at the cross field of cultural, societal, economic and environmental change**. Recognizing that the solutions for pure economic revitalization have not succeeded in addressing emerging challenges regarding people’s wellbeing and the city’s resilience, the UIA funded action aims to tackle the citizen’s low local cultural and natural heritage awareness, letting new narratives emerge, nurtured by heritage recognition and valorization, memories collection, qualities of the built environment enhancement, starting of urban regeneration processes, community empowerment. Unveiling the relevance of the aqueduct, shedding light on its area of influence, is also a way to promote a different approach to this portion of metropolitan Athens, creating alternatives to the leisure and catering ‘theme centre’ of Halandri and contributing to more endogenous, resilient urban development. An area with great touristic potential, integrating the main (and well known) archeological resources of the city, this portion of territory could contribute introducing a cultural heritage asset beyond the usual sight-seeing approach, fostering a different methodology of work to operate in a peripheral municipality, creating a paradigm shift in the present weak peripheral heritage branding (specially if compared to Athens historical centre),

Cultural H.ID.RA.N.T. interprets **Hadrian Aqueduct as a vehicle to reveal local cultural capital, tangible and intangible heritage, natural and man-made resources**. Water is put at the center of the revitalization of local communities, as the re-introduction of the roman monument into city life becomes a collective sense-making process. With water becoming a cultural heritage ambassador, introducing a new narrative concerning the monument aims to create positive momentum for the improvement of local wellbeing, in two main ways: by proposing to engage people in the co-governance of their natural resource and heritage branding, cultivating a sense of community; by developing quality green spaces, accessible to all. Within this framework, three aspects of Hadrian Aqueduct operationalise the project’s objectives and have guided these first 16 month implementation process: Heritage Commons, Water Commons and Community Network.



Elements of water use

Mid-century 1929-1959

Hadrian aqueduct pathway, wells and other water resources in Halandri



Cultural Halandri
Revitalizing the urban fabric
through the activation of water



Activating Heritage Commons

Cultural H.ID.RA.N.T. builds upon tangible and intangible dimensions of heritage, working on data collection and creation. The objective here is to cultivate a sense of ownership and belonging, through the activation of bottom-up processes and the definition of a new branding strategy for the city. With the task to establish a digital archive, the partnership combines institutional (technical and research based) and everyday knowledge (oral and written history, grassroots memories, individual experience, etc.) collecting, organizing and systematizing raw material into an open access platform. Built to visualize, storytell and present the gathered contents, the digital archive will be offered to the local community for further development in the long run, and promoted at local level through the organization of a yearly event (Hidrants Festival). The activation of a Heritage Commons area of works has a lot to do also with the attempt to make aqueduct-related information more spread at city level, making the residents of the Halandri area familiarize with project contents and values. After these first 16 months the implemented activities in these fields have been:

- **Local archive:** the collection of raw materials has been guided by Medina, which supervised the assemblage of oral history testimonies (on the relationship between residents, water and the aqueduct), historic and archaeological documents (contents coming from official archives). Besides further expanding the collection and starting the georeferencing and digitization process, the next working phases will be the definition of narratives, storytelling and learning pathways, as much as discussing and defining the structure of the platform (usability, management, implementation, etc.) with all engaged organizations (Medina itself, Ephorate of Antiquities, Oral History association, SOS Rematia - stream protection association, etc.);
- **Hidrants Festival (14):** a first edition of the event took place from 10th to 12th of september 2021. The Festival was the first occasion to literally incorporate parts of the aqueduct into dedicated cultural performances (i.e. performances curated by Ohi Pezume/Urban Dig project taking place in the El Alamein reservoir and using the information and gathered knowledge as core contents of a theatre piece named "The under self") (15), but it also represented a relevant framework for continuing the participatory activities with pupils and residents already started in the previous months (curated by Commonsplace) and systematize the engagement of local associations and NGOs (i.e. Oral History Association organizing urban walks for residents during the Festival days).



Excerpt from "The Under Self" theatre performance during the 1st Hidirant festival

Building Water Commons

The reintroduction of the natural water resource, as major evidence of the hidden aqueduct and a vital component of local heritage is also a relevant development trajectory, with the reduction of potable water use for irrigation combined with the enhancement of walkability and accessibility of quality green space. To do so Hadrian aqueduct is mapped, analyzed and brought forward with an innovative process that will introduce the "cultural hidrants". These are concrete spots in the territory, places gathering activities, people, networks and relations that spread cultural capital throughout the city along with the water supply. The creation of a new water infrastructure intertwines with site specific urban regeneration processes that will bring to the realization of 8500 sqm of new public spaces (with intervention areas in the urban fabric including, between others, the Hadrian aqueduct reservoir and roman wells, the Rematia stream banks, 4 natural/cultural nodes defined through participatory processes). Being Hadrian's water non potable (according to the contemporary standards) the new water distribution infrastructure is intended for serving the neighborhoods with a resource for irrigating gardens. The construction of a 5 km new water network system (pipes) combines with the procurement of 2 mobile water tank trucks, that will be used to reach those areas that will not be in direct connection with the new water network. These first 16th months have been used to prepare the stage for the forthcoming buildings sites, with a work made on more fronts:

- **Water and water infrastructure:** under the guidance of EYDAP monitoring activities took place both on the water resource (to better understand the qualities and characteristics of the Hadrian's water) and on the ancient infrastructure (to measure the reservoirs capacity and define with precision the quantity of water that will actually be available for setting the service). As the infrastructure design process is proceeding, the procurement phase for the new water pipes is being prepared.
- **Urban regeneration process:** City of Halandri and TPA have been working in these months in order to get the necessary approvals and permits for the urban transformation process to start. Crucial to the success of this implementation phase is the procurement process, for which specific indications and dedicated documents are foreseen in order to grant timing, quality and effectiveness.



EYDAP employees testing water from Hadrian aqueduct

Stabilizing Community Networks

Community network activities will familiarize inhabitants with co-governance and decision-making processes, promote solidarity economy and boost endogenous growth in the local economy. These activities will combine cultural production and fruition (Hidrant Festival, cultural and engagement activities with different targets, etc.), participatory activities and the constitution of an informal community of Water Solidarity Economy. Unless the Covid-19 emergency slowed down the initial plan for engagement activities (with a reduced capacity of the partnership to organize in presence public workshops and co-design activities), the last 16 months were used for:

- **Schools engagement** (online and in presence): Commonsense was responsible for igniting the interaction with secondary schools students, starting a conversation both on the general meanings of the aqueduct for the city (collective sense-making and cultural elaboration on local memories and identities) and on the local specific implications of the UIA proposal implementation (i.e. with a discussion of the transformation of the schools surrounding areas, the schoolyard, entrance, etc.);
- **Residents engagement** (online and in presence): City of Halandri organized a number of public meetings and open calls to cooperation, to socialize and share project contents and values - first informational phase. Starting from last June, the engagement process of residents entered a new phase with open discussions, workshops and gaming activities as the main tools supporting the collective conversations;
- **Water solidarity network establishment:** a first survey was circulated among residents whose houses lie along the new water infrastructure pathway. Launched by the City of Halandri the survey aimed at gauging the level of interest on the (potential) new water source and having a first understanding of the size of the future water community.



Multiple conversations taking place in the city

CHALLENGES AND NEXT STEPS

All described elements and outputs follow different trajectories and rely on different timing, rationalities, cycles of decision, responsibilities, accepted social practices (i.e. procurement timing, building timing, etc.). Achieving successful and compelling results requires combining languages, interests, objectives and purposes which may seem very distant and incompatible, and this is a critical issue to be taken into account. As far as UIA 7 challenges are concerned, Cultural H.ID.RA.N.T. current state of implementation highlights strong and weak points below analyzed.

Challenge

Observation

Leadership

Challenge level



The MUA is operating as pivotal between different levels of government (local, regional, national), different kinds of authorities (EYDAP, Ephorate of Antiquities, etc.); different arenas for discussion (interests, positions, objectives in the process). Having the steps to the implementation clear, MUA is working to facilitate the different phases, blending and tuning the different activities and domains (i.e. approval and decision-making cycles, control of the public procurement process, igniting connections between the partnership and the local ecosystem of stakeholders, etc.). Since the early stages of the process the MUA has established a direct conversation with the national institutions (in particular the Ministries of Culture and Environment that are responsible for the policy area intercepted by the project) to bring Cultural H.I.D.R.A.N.T. about not only as a local project but as a metropolitan strategy (see the Scale up challenge below). This strong commitment and the capacity of the MUA to spot the critical aspects of the implementation process, prioritizing innovation in procedures and filling the gaps, is contributing to spread different values and approaches (i.e. cultural heritage relating to urban regeneration relating to commoning and urban development) that permeate the local ecosystem of stakeholders.

Public procurement

Challenge level



The local procurement framework is characterized by long timing for tenders and tendency to high discounts, which are often related to potential low quality of interventions and troubled construction processes. The MUA is now working with TPA on the definition of the main guiding documents and principles of the procurement process, with a particular focus on the urban regeneration projects that will bring to the city new pocket public spaces. The middle ground between economic offer and quality of the final built outputs is critical and multifaceted as it requires from the MUA a high capacity to control the realization process in all phases: this is particularly true when the ambition in terms of landscape, urban and architectural solution is high and the intention is to build public spaces that go beyond the standard (in terms of design, materials, technologies and solutions to be applied). In this framework innovation is needed in procurement mechanisms (such as introducing in the public tender specific documents assessing the requirements in terms of urban, architectural and technological compliance of the realization process), ruling (i.e. specific guarantees provided by the contractors on their organizational, administrative, legal and technical skills) and governance (involvement of external expertise supporting the MUA in all phases).

Participative approach and active involvement of key local stakeholders

Challenge level



Unless the value and interest for the project has already been manifested by a part of the local community (i.e. Hidrant Festival audience, participants to local workshops, etc.), the engagement activities are required to be made accessible to all targets, expanding languages, tools and opportunities for the wider community. This implies the introduction of variable geometries of engagement, recognising different levels, intensities and perspectives of participation.

Cross department and integrated management and implementation

Challenge level ●

MUA capacity of leadership should be further supported by crossfield effectiveness in all fields of policy. The level of enthusiasm and protagonism of city departments is currently very uneven. Dedicated efforts to overcome the “paperwork bureaucrat” attitude towards a larger sense of ownership of the project by city officers at large is in the making. The partnership is currently discussing about the possibility to open weekly working meetings to a larger group of city officers, while a higher commitment and sense of ownership could be ignited framing the technical bodies of the city as a stakeholders category itself, stimulating their direct knowledge and experience of the project contents and challenges with site visits (i.e. very few of them ever visited the Hadrian reservoir), guided tours (oral history can be of interest to anyone) and more direct contact with the local strengths and opportunities offered by the Cultural H.ID.RA.N.T.

Monitoring, evaluation and management

Challenge level ●

Unless it is still a bit early to provide an evaluation on how the monitoring and evaluation activity is developing, it is to underline that qualitative aspects of participation and engagement (i.e. sense of belonging, levels of empowerment, etc.) already intertwine project activities (i.e. with the monitoring staff cooperating in the design of cultural production and engagement activities).

Communication with local partners and beneficiaries

Challenge level ●

A one step forward in communication with local partners and beneficiaries is necessary in this phase. Until now everything moved on smoothly, but the emergence of first outcomes (the festival) and the start of the building activity (water pipes, public spaces, etc.) requires an enlargement in scope and outreach (i.e. poorest and least engaged communities, wider set of stakeholders, etc.)

Scaling up

Challenge level ●

The upscaling and the involvement of other municipalities in the area is already in the making, with some concrete measures taking off (agreement between 9 municipalities + Regional Authority, possibility to address specific regional resources to the initiative, strong local partnership, etc.). This is strongly intertwined with the capacity of leadership that the MUA is acquiring by following the implementation of all project actions and phases

The next months will be crucial for the delivery of the **procurement processes of the two main building activities**: the new pipes infrastructures and the urban regeneration projects, with new public spaces and new connection layouts between the green spaces in the city. Bureaucratic issues apart, these activities will also have to be fine tuned during all phases, as they are two separate procurement processes, guided by two different authorities (the City of Halandri and EYDAP). Thus building permits and agreements at the different levels (national, regional and local), the dialogue with the different institutional actors (Ministry of Culture, Ephorate of Antiquities, etc.) and city departments are just a part of the picture. In this situation, **sound partnership and the direct engagement in the project of some of the main players in the game** (EYDAP and the Ephorate of Antiquities) can definitely be a good start (16).

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(7) [Work Plan for Culture](#) (2018)

(8) [A new European Agenda for Culture](#) (2018)

(9) this perspective is clearly emerging from the experiences brought about in the last years by H2020 funded projects like [ROCK](#) and [OPEN HERITAGE](#) with a comprehensive production of documents, papers and policy briefs on the matter (last visited: october 2021)

(10) [Participatory governance of Cultural heritage. Report of the OMC](#) (Open Method of Coordination) working group of member states and experts (2018)

(11) see between others the experiences of URBACT funded projects Boostinno, Refill, Second Chance, Tuttur, Co-City; the reflection brought about by H2020 funded projects GE.CO., Open Heritage and ROCK; the elaboration on these topics proposed by Patti, D., Polyak L. (2017), *Funding the cooperative city: community finance and the economy of civic spaces*, Vienna: Cooperative City Books.

(12) The city covers an area of 10.805 sq.km, and has a population of 74,192 inhabitants (source City of Halandri, 2019).

(13) Christaki M., Stournaras G., Nastos P., Mamas N (2016), *The majestic Hadrianic Aqueduct of the City of Athens*, Global NEST Journal, Vol 18, n.3, pp 559-568.

(14) the programme of the three days event is available [here](#)

(15) an excerpt of the performance is available [here](#)

(16) Mérai D., Miah J., Nasya B., Szemző H. (2021), [Collaborative heritage reuse. Enabling strong partnerships](#), ICLEI Europe

Culture and cultural heritage

See on UIA website

