



ANALYTICAL DOCUMENT – A PEER LEARNING VISIT REPORT

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Date 17/06/2021

ONLINE PEER-LEARNING VISIT HOSTED BY NANTES (FR) FOCUS ON CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN CULTURAL HERITAGE

ANALYTICAL DOCUMENT



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY & MAIN TAKE AWAYS (1-2 PAGES)

The birthplace of Jules Verne, Nantes is a centre of imagination and creativity, a city with a unique atmosphere with culture at its heart. Thanks to the significant investment and commitment to the City of Nantes and of Nantes Métropole, culture in all its forms is bubbling throughout the city. It is shared with as many people as possible with a strong emphasis on innovative ideas both locally and internationally.

The online peer-learning visit (15-17 June 2021) focused on citizen participation in local heritage projects, and on [Nantes Patrimonia](#), a digital platform for discovery and expression of heritage. The main points discussed were:

- Policies of the city of Nantes regarding culture and heritage
- Focus on Nantes Patrimonia: collecting and co-creating knowledges on local heritage with citizens, associations and public institutions, technical aspects and communication strategy
- Citizen participation on heritage projects with two others examples: the Nantes Heritage Council and the Great Mills of the Loire project

Main take-aways from the online peer-learning visit:

- Since the end of the 1980's, Nantes benefits from strong political support for culture and cultural heritage, backed up by matching strategic financial investments. These led to major cultural successes, including the reconversion of the Island of Nantes, the Lieu Unique national scene, the classical music festival La Folle Journée (developed in other countries outside the EU) etc.
- Nantes has an integrated vision for culture and cultural heritage. This vision is reflected in many policy areas, including urban development, as well as social cohesion, and environmental policies (e.g. plans for heritage and landscapes in most green areas of the city).
- Heritage in Nantes is considered in its very wide understanding: historical, industrial and dissonant heritage (Nantes was a hotspot in the slavery trade) are safeguarded and highlighted as key components of the city's identity. Nantes also values its "small" heritage (e.g. statues, carvings, coat-of-arms) through Nantes Patrimonia, which gives the opportunity for all citizens to contribute to cultural heritage by sharing stories around these smaller, lesser known heritage assets.
- Investing in people and developing strong teams pays off. Ensure you have the right mix of skills in your team, both from the technical side and the content side.
- Cultural heritage acts as a bedrock for participatory process, and it acts as a focal point for citizens to get more actively involved in the life of their districts. Involving citizens to discuss heritage leads to discussing the sense of place in different urban areas.
- When it comes to participatory processes with citizens, take your time and be patient to see concrete impacts on society: for example, it takes 5 to 6 years to develop communities of contributors for the Nantes Patrimonia platform.
- During citizen consultation processes, reaching out to unusual suspects remains challenging. How to include individuals beyond the highly educated and senior ones? What role can the social media play in reaching out to more diverse and to younger citizens that best represent the demographic of the city?

ANALYSIS

Nantes is the 6th largest city in France, located 50km away from the Atlantic coast. Nantes is at the heart of Nantes Metropole, its metropolitan agglomeration composed of 24 cities. With 660 000 inhabitants in its metropolitan area, Nantes is the main north-western French metropolis.

The city has the third largest population growth in France and it is one of the youngest French metropolitan areas with two-thirds of the population being under the age of 40.

Find more information on Nantes [here](#).

NANTES: POLITICAL SUPPORT TO A CITY OF ARTISTS

There is a clear political support to cultural policies: *'In Nantes, heritage is not an extra soul, it is not decorative. It is in everything, the mark of Nantes' singularity'* Johanna Rolland, Mayor of Nantes

Key features of Nantes cultural and heritage policies include:

- A cross disciplinary view of culture, including the following keywords: creativity, proximity, influence, human, social, economic and urban development
- Strong City identities: ancient harbor, medieval town, triangle of trade, industrial city, city damaged by WW2 bombings, contemporary architectural design...
- Reconversion of industrial brownfields (including shipyards) into cultural projects since the end of the '1980s, including the development of the [island of Nantes](#).

Essential dynamics of cultural policies in Nantes include: diversity of the cultural scene, support to artistic creation, 'open' conception of culture and amateur practices, strong presence of art in the public space, cultural accessibility and participatory dynamics.

Cooperation with and between stakeholders is facilitated through co-construction, federation of local actors, cooperation between institutions and international cooperation.

Political Support is backed with strong investments in culture:

- Cultural budget of €85.6m in 2018:
 - o 49.3 M€ from the City of Nantes, i.e. 159 €/inhabitant
 - o 36.3 M€ from Nantes Métropole, i.e. €56/inhabitant
- 384 subsidised institutions, companies or associations
- Approximately 1,000 artists directly supported by the City (financial assistance, access to artist residencies, prizes, etc.)
- Endowment fund for culture

Heritage in Nantes is seen as a source of innovation for the construction of the city:

- Through contemporary artistic interventions in the public space
- Examples: the Memorial of the Abolition of Slavery, the Rings by Daniel Buren and Patrick Bouchain, etc.
- through industrial reconversion: The biscuit factory / le Lieu Unique national stage, the Parc des Chantiers, the new Ecole des Beaux Arts, etc.

Importantly, Nantes is a fast-growing city undergoing many changes and welcoming new citizens. This means remodelling the city to accommodate this growing population, while ensuring the urban sprawl does not harm cultural heritage. This requires important work in terms of mapping heritage and feasibility studies.

For more info on Nantes policies on culture and heritage, see [this video](#).

A SELECTION OF LOCAL INITIATIVES PRESENTED DURING THE VISIT

Focus on	Participatory governance – citizen participation
Title	Nantes Patrimonia
Description	<p>What is it and where does it come from?</p> <p>Nantes Patrimonia is a digital platform where citizen access information on the everyday heritage of their City and their neighbourhood. Citizens can also bring input to the platform and become actors in the life of their city and their district through subjects that bring them together and that represent them. Nantes Patrimonia’s motto is ‘Nantes tells its story with you’.</p> <p>The challenge of developing Nantes Patrimonia was twofold:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Conduct important work on heritage conservation - Create a sort of virtual cultural institution, and not just a ‘simple’ website. <p>Nantes Patrimonia provides digital tours, articles and interactive cartography, showcasing urban history, daily life, architecture, historical events, and the latest news on Nantes' heritage.</p> <p>How was Patrimonia developed?</p> <p>The portal was built over four years by professionals and over 100 citizens. The main steps include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - preliminary study to collect needs and expectations of users - citizen workshops on ‘what is heritage for you?’ and creative workshops on future uses - study day on ‘Heritage and citizen expression: the Faro Convention’ as a basis for the construction of the Nantes heritage approach - ergonomic design and testing of the platform with citizens - public meeting on what Nantes Patrimonia is, how to contribute and why - May 2019: Official launch of version one of Nantes Patrimonia: contributions are sent to the Patrimonia team - September 2020: launch of version 2 of Nantes Patrimonia: contributions can be uploaded onto the platform directly. - 2020: the Nantes municipal archives launched a call for souvenirs from the lockdown period for Patrimonia. <p>Budget and financing</p> <p>€770,000 including VAT (forecast) for versions 1 and 2 (without human resources development):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - data and content management programmes €215,000 - technical developments €170,000 - ergonomics, graphic design, communication €150,000 - preliminary studies and collection €110,000. - editorial accompaniment, animations and co-constructions €125,000

65% comes from the municipality, 5% from the state and 30% from European funds (ERDF).

Management

The heritage and archaeology department of the City of Nantes leads the project, working closely with the citizen dialogue department and the digital resources department.

12 people set up the platform, 9 are involved in its monitoring:

- Heritage Department: one project manager, one digital project manager, one webmaster, one iconographer, one director of the Nantes archives (+ content editors)
- Digital Resources Department + external service provider: one project manager, one cartographic referent + one external project manager
- Communication Department: one community manager

4 full time employees currently work on Nantes Patrimonia.

Who writes articles for Nantes Patrimonia?

- Internal contributors: professionals/officials working for the city of Nantes (department of heritage and archaeology, city museum, city archives...)
- External contributors from local associations or neighbourhood associations
- Individual, through a new online service for citizen contribution: citizens can submit an anecdote, add and correct information.

Contributors can provide testimonies, photos, videos, anecdotes etc. Proposals are moderated based on a contribution charter. Workshop results showed that residents wanted reliable and moderated data.

Profile of contributors and users of Nantes Patrimonia

At the beginning of Nantes Patrimonia, contributors were mainly senior persons active in heritage associations.

School pupils are easy to reach, mainly through artistic education programmes developed with schools. For instance, teenagers worked on with history teachers on slavery history in Nantes.

In summer 2020 a programme called 'ballades estivales' (summer walks) was developed for individuals who didn't go on holiday and willing to discover neighbourhoods outside the city centre attracted more participants than planned. A current trend is the increased number of contributions from individuals aged 35/40 years old.

For testimonies from contributors, please see [this video](#).

Behind the scenes: the technical solutions behind Patrimonia

Nantes Patrimonia is designed as a collaborative platform, and the technical solutions behind it reflects this core aspect.

The building block of the technical tool relies on a specific Geographical Information System developed for the department of heritage and

	<p>archaeology. The purpose is to share knowledge and quickly access information for research analysis (queries can be run across all databases) and even visualisation of content.</p> <p>The system is based on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use of old and recent maps from the city - Architectural and archaeological heritage databases - Importance of data models and ensuring the right information is included. <p>The tool allows detailed geotagging of heritage items across the city, as well as using multiple map layers to visualise the evolution of the city in an attractive way. Most importantly, the tool is accessible for non-specialised audiences and can be used by different staff members.</p> <p>The tool uses standards for data modelling based on a protocol developed by the French ministry of culture, which also allows comparability and heritage research across the whole national territory.</p> <p>For more info please see this video.</p> <p>Communication around Nantes Patrimonia</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There are no dedicated social media for Patrimonia. Communication is done through already existing social media from the city of Nantes. Content is posted every Sunday. - A current poster campaign throughout the city communicates about the new online contribution tool. The aim is to reach a younger audience. - One monthly newsletter presents new articles on Patrimonia and various heritage news - The average visit lasts over 10 m : this means that people do read articles ! <p>Evaluation and future developments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sept 2021: participatory workshops will take place to evaluate the content of the website and its ergonomics with citizens who know the website and who do not know it. The aim is to adapt the website after 2 years of existence - From 2022 on, for 3 years, a PHD student will work on Patrimonia - Objective now: enlarge le scope of people who visit and contribute to Patrimonia. <p>For more info, see Nantes Patrimonia</p>
Results / impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Staff members consider that it takes 5 to 6 year to create real communities of contributors’. -
Lessons learnt & Key success factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hire a strong, dedicated and passionate team is the key success factor <p>A ‘dream team’ mixes 2 key skills: technical staff and editorial staff. Importance of the reliability of the information provided on Nantes Patrimonia: all contributions are checked and moderated.</p>

	<p>Accompany individuals who want to contribute to Nantes Patrimonia, through group meetings or individual sessions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Build on existing solutions when developing technological tools and make use of existing IT resources. Make sure you invest in staff and projects beyond the IT infrastructure to make it a 'living' tool. - Involve heritage associations, university and local citizens for knowledge sharing
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Focus on	Participatory governance - Citizen consultation
Title	Nantes Heritage Council
Description	<p>In 2008, archaeologists and university professors publicly raised the issue of disappearing pieces of archaeological pieces, due to the growing number of construction works. Nantes was then (and still is) a fast-growing city whose population almost doubled since 1960. This marked the establishment by the mayor of Nantes of a local scientific heritage council, meeting approximately 6 thematic meetings/year (with 1 plenary meeting in the presence of elected representatives), which role was:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To involve citizens in heritage policies - To create a space for dialogue and debate - To reconcile urban policies and heritage preservation <p>A shared assessment of council was conducted in 2019-2020 and the Nantes Heritage Council was revamped and open to citizens beyond the scientific community, with the following features:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 2 main missions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Formalising a contribution whenever a project linking heritage and city building is the subject of a dialogue o Playing a resource or reflection role on upstream subjects, making it possible to provide historical depth or a general methodology - composition <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o technical and scientific expertise covering a wide range of heritage fields (architecture, urban planning, history, geography, sociology, landscapes, archaeology, art and creativity....) o gender equality o age mix o number of members 17 members instead of 10 - Recruitment by application <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o responding to a call for applications o selection of candidates based on transparent criteria o commitment by a mandate of participation of limited duration but renewable o validation in assembly - Independence and autonomy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o « chairman » of the council and/or sessions

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ independent organisation (except the intervention of representatives from municipal services) ○ institution and respect of a regulation (confidentiality, ethics and deontology, conflicts of interest ...) - functioning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ subjects are included in the follow-up of the projects of the city's development ○ clear planning of meetings ○ readability of the work accessible to the members to ensure traceability (reports, opinions, etc.) ○ public communication of the council's work ○ more direct meetings with the elected representatives concerned ○ rules and a charter to be respected ○ a voluntary commitment and means of coordination and management <p>For more information: The Nantes Heritage Council</p>
Results / impacts	<p>A key impact of the Heritage Council (in both forms) has been to put heritage as a core element of city developments (urban design and architectural projects).</p> <p>It is too early to assess the impacts of the Nantes Heritage Council in its renewed form.</p>
Lessons learnt & Key success factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - need to pay specific attention of the diversity of the citizens part of the Council (age, gender, positions etc) - need to structure well the functioning and operating processes of the Council

Focus on	Participatory governance - Citizen consultation
Title	The great mills of the Loire (les grands moulins de la Loire)
Description	<p>The great mills of the Loire (les grands moulins de la Loire) is a former industrial building dating from the 19th century. It is located in the Western part of Nantes, in an industrial area with a concentration of factories. Several of these have been acknowledged as heritage assets (e.g. industrial halls, or the Titan cranes).</p> <p>The city of Nantes wished to rejuvenate the area around a wider plan, at the crossroads between heritage and nature: creation of the “extraordinary garden”, including outdoor activities and landmark artistic interventions with a giant mechanical tree (“l’arbre aux herons”).</p> <p>Compared to other heritage sites, the heritage value of the great mills was not obvious, especially as a blue metallic cladding was installed on the building in the 1970’s and its main features were hidden (e.g. use of Hennebique techniques for the structure which is made out of reinforced concrete).</p>

	<p>The renovation or demolition of the great mills was placed on the table for a public debate around two main questions: Which uses for the building? Which transformations are required?</p> <p>The consultation had several phases:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) explain the interest and the specificities of the building (Hennebique concrete). 2) Three scenarios were developed: 1) preservation and restoration; 2) Restoration with adjustments to the building’s volumes, or 3) destruction. 3) Documentation was made available to explain the scenarios 4) Open workshops/roundtables where people/associations could make presentations (with guidelines on contributions). <p>Throughout the process, a citizens’ commission was actively involved over 3 months to develop a “citizens opinion”. During that time, the commission:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Got to know the file and understand the great mills • Read citizens contribution (70+ and 4 collective contribution) • Drafted an opinion on the future of the great mills • <p>The citizens opinion opted for the restoration of the great mills, with some adjustments. The main points of consensus were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remove the metallic cladding • The mills are an imposing building, and as such is blocking the view on the Loire river. • The future use of the building should be open for all and not privatised. <p>Discussion points remained over having an open rooftop or not, the future of the stone carrier and the intrusion of the building on landscapes. The city eventually opted for a plan that opened up the site to its environment (by removing volumes and opening the whole ground floor to unmask the river).</p> <p>On this basis, the restoration of the building was enacted, and the following activities will be part of the future of the site, which will host an interpretation center for natural heritage and the stone carrier; and a museum around Jules Verne, due to open in 2025 («cité de l’imaginaire »).</p> <p>For more info see Nantes website The Great Mills of the Loire project and this video.</p>
Results / impacts	<p>The collective discussions were popular, and more than 70 contributions were received throughout the process.</p> <p>Importantly, the whole participatory approach raised awareness on the value of this heritage site. It also placed the future of the site in discussions and develop new ideas and solutions.</p>
Lessons learnt & Key success factors	<p>The feedback from the process is very positive:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Citizens become ‘experts’ in heritage and become more conscious of its value. 2) New arguments developed by citizens (e.g. reuse of a building has an ecological added value: no need to build something new.

	3) Positive outcome this time (heritage is preserved and enhanced), but questions over the process if it had resulted in a negative opinion.
Feedback from hosts and participants, including on the transferability of practices presented by the hosts in other local contexts	Participants raised key points to set up similar solutions in managing heritage collectively: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop the right tools and technological solutions to enable collaboration - Political leadership is needed to ensure heritage becomes part of urban design processes and develop a vision for heritage (rather than “reacting” to destruction of heritage. - Need to first demonstrate the value of cultural heritage – some heritage is destroyed because it is not part of risk assessment procedures and developers are simply not aware of heritage

MAIN TAKEAWAYS FROM PARTICIPANTS (NON-EXHAUSTIVE)

City/region/ stakeholder	Main learning points	Future use of ideas and knowledge gained – Projects that were shared and that could be transferable to other contexts
City of Pesaro (Italy)	A great concrete example on how to set up a friendly, the participatory process and citizens engagement.	It was a very inspiring session and I will try to convince policy-makers to start some actions.
Heritage Council (Ireland)	Collaboration, empowerment and enthusiasm...	They have empowered me to face more blockages and blockers.... #positivedisruptors
Panevėžys County (Lithuania)	I learned about copyrights, communication and budget.	We have similar platform that needs improvement and will apply the Nantes exchange of knowledge directly
City of Munster (Germany)	Participation is possible, also on a smaller scale. At the same time the limits of participation are further as i thought - we heard so many great and different examples for participation. The Networking between different European cities is extremely profitable and enlightening	Since i am relatively new in my position i need to talk to my team and to learn more about the structures in our own organisation so I can see how the examples and great work of Nantes could possibly be adapted in our city

City of Kortrijk (Belgium)	The organisation of information about heritage in a geographic structure, emphasis on neighborhoods The possible use of GIS data The involvement of citizen participation and non-heritage organisations	Some ideas are probably useful to improve our database www.kortrijk.be/beeldbank Also to keep an open mind for contributions by citizens
City of Gent (Belgium)	1. Take your time. The Nantes parcours is impressive but it took a while to reach this point: building up a department; re-organising the advisory structures; experimenting with citizens participation. 2. Set up a dedicated team with several competences and well networked in the city. 3. Embed your project - i.c. Patrimonia - sustainably in the above. Don't make it stand-alone.	
Plovdiv (Bulgaria)	Collaborative inclusive process Holistic platform development - institutions, society, digitalization Committed team and long-term budgeting	By trying to present the case of Nantes and the different projects and results shared as a proof of the need to keep a dedicated team mediating the transfer of the ownership of the implemented projects within the local society and businesses and artists.

LIST OF REFERENCES AND PROJECTS SHARED

Local projects mentioned by participants:

- [A Trans-disciplinary Collaborative Town Centre Health Check Programme in conjunction with participating towns across the country](#)
- [Engaging children in Cultural Heritage](#)
- [Educational games for children](#)
- [The Unreal gaming engine.](#)
- An example of [3-years project for urban games in an industrial heritage area in Plovdiv](#)
- [Father and son](#), a game around heritage for kids
- [Local culture, past and present](#) in the form of a local guide in your phone
- [Nantes et le commerce triangulaire](#)
- [Collections of Gent](#). Museums, institutions, and citizens share cultural heritage.
- [Finnish National digital archive](#) used by libraries and museums.

Best practices from the Cultural Heritage in Action catalogue that were mentioned during the visit:

- Tampere's good practice: '[Adopt a monument](#)'
- [Budapest 100 festival](#)
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Other projects/Information shared

- [The herons tree project](#)
- [Geographic Information System](#)
- [the Faro convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society](#)
- [Nantes slavery memorial](#)
- [Le chronographe archeology center](#)
- [Museum Royal De Luxe](#), based in Nantes
- [Estuaire/voyage à Nantes](#)
- [La folle journée](#)

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