

Brussels, 13 November 2018

COST 107/18

DECISION

Subject: **Memorandum of Understanding for the implementation of the COST Action “Writing Urban Places. New Narratives of the European City” (Writingplace) CA18126**

The COST Member Countries and/or the COST Cooperating State will find attached the Memorandum of Understanding for the COST Action Writing Urban Places. New Narratives of the European City approved by the Committee of Senior Officials through written procedure on 13 November 2018.



MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

For the implementation of a COST Action designated as

COST Action CA18126

WRITING URBAN PLACES. NEW NARRATIVES OF THE EUROPEAN CITY (Writingplace)

The COST Member Countries and/or the COST Cooperating State, accepting the present Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) wish to undertake joint activities of mutual interest and declare their common intention to participate in the COST Action (the Action), referred to above and described in the Technical Annex of this MoU.

The Action will be carried out in accordance with the set of COST Implementation Rules approved by the Committee of Senior Officials (CSO), or any new document amending or replacing them:

- a. "Rules for Participation in and Implementation of COST Activities" (COST 132/14 REV2);
- b. "COST Action Proposal Submission, Evaluation, Selection and Approval" (COST 133/14 REV);
- c. "COST Action Management, Monitoring and Final Assessment" (COST 134/14 REV2);
- d. "COST International Cooperation and Specific Organisations Participation" (COST 135/14 REV).

The main aim and objective of the Action is to foster substantially more inclusive and collaborative urban processes. It aims for a fuller and better understanding of the narratives underlying local urban contexts. It will provide methodologies that can further articulate those narratives within architectural and urban design practices. This will be achieved through the specific objectives detailed in the Technical Annex.

The economic dimension of the activities carried out under the Action has been estimated, on the basis of information available during the planning of the Action, at EUR 40 million in 2018.

The MoU will enter into force once at least seven (7) COST Member Countries and/or COST Cooperating State have accepted it, and the corresponding Management Committee Members have been appointed, as described in the CSO Decision COST 134/14 REV2.

The COST Action will start from the date of the first Management Committee meeting and shall be implemented for a period of four (4) years, unless an extension is approved by the CSO following the procedure described in the CSO Decision COST 134/14 REV2.

OVERVIEW

Summary

Writing Urban Places proposes an innovative investigation and implementation of a process for developing human understanding of communities, their society, and their situatedness, by narrative methods. It particularly focuses on the potential of narrative methods for urban development in European medium-sized cities.

By recognising the value of local urban narratives -stories rich in information regarding citizens socio-spatial practices, perceptions and expectations-, the Action aims to articulate a set of concrete literary devices within a host of spatial disciplines; bringing together scientific research in the fields of literary studies, urban planning and architecture; and positioning this knowledge vis-à-vis progressive redevelopment policies carried out in medium-sized cities in Europe.

The Action defines three thematic targets it wants to explore theoretically as well as in case studies. 1) meaningfulness: offering local communities and professionals the ability to improve their understanding of their built environment; 2). appropriation: empowering communities by improving their ability to project their feelings on their built environment. 3). integration: offering concrete tools and methods for the construction of common grounds among communities, based on relations of meaningfulness and appropriation of their built environment.

Based on a robust investigative tradition in these fields, the COST Action brings together solid experience in linking the literary and the built and offers the necessary scientific background for the assessment of the contemporary city, while cherishing and enhancing the specificity of local urban cultures in the European context.

<p>Areas of Expertise Relevant for the Action</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Languages and literature: Literary theory and comparative literature, literary styles ● Other social sciences: Qualitative methods for the social sciences ● Other humanities: Cultural heritage, cultural memory ● Arts: History of art and history of architecture ● Social and economic geography: Spatial development, land use, regional planning 	<p>Keywords</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● narrative ● urban studies ● architecture ● literature ● place-making
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Specific Objectives

To achieve the main objective described in this MoU, the following specific objectives shall be accomplished:

Research Coordination

- The Action aims to offer both a conceptual framework and operative tools to analyse urban narratives in mid-size European cities of the participating countries, and to share knowledge with city makers.
- Assemble a set of instruments from different scientific approaches that are being used or developed in European countries, of potential interest to public authorities, policy institutions, and communities. Building a pool of knowledge that will enable creation and assessment of new strategies and policies of urban development in Europe.
- Meaningfulness: offering urban communities and spatial professionals instruments and methods to improve their understanding of their built environment; and, by doing so, of their understanding of their role and possibilities in relation to that built environment.
- Appropriation: empowering local communities by improving the ability to project their feelings and hopes on urban planning and built environment strategies.
- Integration: offering concrete tools and methods for the construction of common grounds among communities, based on relations of meaningfulness and appropriation of their built environment.

- Collect local stakeholders' perspectives on these instruments and practices and on their role as a design support tool for urban policy making through an interactive setting where the instruments are presented and used to address real life problems.
- Juxtapose environmental, social, cultural, gender and economic issues relevant to contemporary urban narratives as logical outcome of the cross-disciplinary working strategy of the Cost action.

Capacity Building

- The Action aims to bring studies carried out at the intersection of literature studies and the spatial disciplines from the margins of academia to a centre-stage position in the European scientific discourse. It does so by solidifying and extending a network of scholars, who operate on these transdisciplinary crossroads.
- At the practical level, the COST Action aims to extend the knowledge produced on scientific grounds, rendering it operative in the field of practice and policy making, by participating in ongoing urban planning processes in medium-sized cities in Europe, located in the participating countries.
- At the level of education, the main target is to form future professionals in the acknowledgment of the importance of meaningfulness, appropriation, and integration of individuals and communities in relation to their built environment; and providing them with the skills required to act based on that acknowledgment.
- At the level of local urban communities, local stakeholders, policy makers, urban planners and citizens the main target is to increase these local actors' awareness of the value of innovation and creativity within their communities, as means towards a more inclusive, democratic and collaborative approach to contemporary urban development.
- At the level of knowledge exchange, the Action will provide an advanced digital platform, and an open-access journal, accessible to researchers, students and local communities; allowing them to assess and improve the developed methodologies, and to conduct a comparative analysis of the variety of local urban cultures.

TECHNICAL ANNEX

1. S&T EXCELLENCE

1.1. CHALLENGE

1.1.1. DESCRIPTION OF THE CHALLENGE (MAIN AIM)

The current context of European cities offers unprecedented challenges for policy makers, urban planners and architects, as urban identities are shifting due to demographic changes caused by migration and side effects of urban transformation such as gentrification and social segregation. There is a need to reinvigorate depleted production sites, to negotiate differences in client and project structures, and to respond to shifting urban identities (due to migration, ageing of the population, gentrification and demographic shrinkage) with more democratic and inclusive spatial policies. This COST Action focuses on the typical European urban condition of medium-sized cities (Dehaene et al 2013), which are facing such profound challenges, and redefining their identity amid shifting economic and demographic forces. While the metropolis dominates contemporary urban culture in Asia and the Americas, Europe is a continent predominantly populated on a relatively even spread of medium-sized cities. Together, these cities epitomize a rich variety of distinct urban cultures, which are, in turn, embedded in urban narratives: stories containing valuable information regarding citizens' socio-spatial practices, perceptions and expectations. In terms of spatial planning, a crucial concern among those confronting these challenges is the need to redevelop former productive sites without the former thrust of economic and demographic growth. Europe's population is decreasing and ageing; and yet projects meant to recover vast post-industrial landscapes tend to focus on growth, and mimic urban trends from the global metropolis. Such unrealistic approaches tend to neglect local problems such as vacancy but, most importantly, they fail to cope with intricate site-specific cultural (social, spatial, and political) dynamics.

To contribute to the development and elaboration of responsible methods of analysis and design for socially inclusive and locally specific urban places, the COST Action Writing Urban Places departs from two main ideas: (a) that it is of crucial importance to investigate how people experience the urban places they use or inhabit, and (b) that it is through literary devices that urban stories and cultures can be shared and further be raised to the level of urban and architectural strategies, and of concrete democratic political action. Like public spaces and buildings, on which societies are able to converge, literary accounts are vehicles for empathy, able to make readers acquainted with the perspective of the "other". Poetic devices, on the other hand, evoke common-ground emotional responses to site-specific atmospheres and tell us about the affective relationships between citizens and their environment.

The urban challenges caused by processes of migration and gentrification imply a negotiation of different urban identities. This negotiation comprises the different ways in which different people perceive, remember and imagine their city; but also, the way they envision different possible futures for that city. In terms of narratives: there are notable differences between the stories of elderly people with their memories about the city, and those of the newcomers, who pair their perception of their new environment with their own cultural and geographical background – in the case of migration – or with a different social-economic status – in the case of gentrification.

Seeking to preserve the inclusive, democratic nature of the contemporary European city, different agencies concerned with the built environment are confronting the shortcomings of conventional urban development approaches by increasingly appealing to narratives, as both analytical and practical tools in their urban redevelopment projects. Narratives can provide specialists with a wide array of perspectives, attained directly from citizens, and provide citizens with valuable instruments for the individual and collective exercise of their citizenship; and yet the expertise required to legitimate and

appraise the value of these narrative in current planning practices is still lacking. The COST Action stems from the belief that, in order to foster substantially more inclusive and collaborative urban processes, and in order to confront divisive or dissociative political initiatives, it is vital to aim for a fuller and better understanding of the underlying personal and collective stories that support the urban context, and to provide methodologies that can further articulate those stories within architectural and urban design practices.

1.1.2. RELEVANCE AND TIMELINESS

Due to processes of migration and gentrification, the way in which people relate to their urban environment has changed. Conventional master planning methods for urban development fail to respond to these shifting urban identities. The current challenges require a different role from spatial professionals such as urban planners, architects and policy makers. As conventional codes and models of spatial development turn unstable, following economic uncertainty, alternative approaches to the urban question turn plausible. Policymakers and project developers in mid-sized European cities such as Barreiro, Irún, Montreuil, Charleroi, Gent, Manchester, Ingolstadt, Nacka, and Espoo (cities that participated in the *European competition 2015* for architects) have come to realize that univocal diagnoses and rigid planning methods, based on precise cost-benefit calculations, are no longer reliable nor feasible. Instead, alternative methodologies, able to foster interdisciplinary co-operation, while acknowledging distinct and diverse socio-spatial practices and experiences, turn vital. In this context, such initiatives as “Urban Innovation”, “Temporary Use”, “Incubator Policy”, “Performativity”, and “Creative City”, have turned prevalent in the field of urban regeneration. All of these initiatives coincide in questioning the value of traditional master planning and aim for a more experiential understanding of urban situations, in which the “lived” understanding of places plays a cardinal role.

Seeking to preserve the inclusive, democratic nature of the contemporary European city, different agencies are increasingly appealing to narratives in urban redevelopment projects; and yet, the scientific expertise required to make responsible use of the knowledge provided by narratives, in both analytical and projective ways, is still lacking. Based on a robust investigative tradition in these fields, the COST Action brings together solid experience in linking the literary and the built and offers the necessary scientific background for the assessment of the contemporary city, while cherishing and enhancing the specificity of local urban cultures in the European context.

The Action is timely in two concrete ways: On the one hand, it offers an alternative analytical apparatus to confront a context in which many sites are due to be redeveloped in the coming years, and where new insights offering practical tools are much needed. On the other hand, it is clearly directed against divisive and dissociative political trends that promote antagonism, futility, and segregation. The network thus combines the knowledge of recent urban regeneration approaches, methodologies and instruments concerning spatial design, and expertise from the field of comparative literature, linguistics and the broader social sciences; and it does so with the clear intention to foster and promote hard-earned democratic values and practices among European citizens.

1.2. OBJECTIVES

1.2.1. RESEARCH COORDINATION OBJECTIVES

Concretely, the Action collects current initiatives that address urban change in the European mid-size city, from the crossing point of literary studies, urban studies and architecture. The Action’s objectives are to offer both a conceptual framework and operative tools to analyse urban narratives in mid-size European cities of the participating countries, and to share knowledge with city makers. Together, conceptual framework and operative tools are meant to foster and promote the construction of empathic, meaningful, and integrated built environments for European citizens.

At a theoretical and methodological level, the COST Action connects ongoing investigations regarding new methodologies for architectural and urban research and design, developed by researchers, educators and practitioners who investigate oral and written language as a cardinal element in architecture culture. In doing so, the Action defines three thematic targets it wants to explore theoretically, through case studies, on-site analysis and discussion in the participating countries.

1) Meaningfulness: offering urban communities and spatial professionals instruments and methods to improve their understanding of their built environment; and, by doing so, of their understanding of their role and possibilities in relation to that built environment. This section focuses on experiential and historical aspects of urban places, by investigating the site-specific qualities that render meaning and identity to place. The section explores historical narratives, oral history and literary cultural heritage in the (re)construction of urban identities. It articulates the work of writers who have tried to convey a place meaning and to describe how individuals perceive and assign meaning in their built environment (such as Proust 1919, Pamuk 2005).

2). Appropriation: empowering local communities by improving the ability to project their feelings and hopes on urban planning and built environment strategies. This section focuses on the social component of urban research, proposing a transcultural understanding of architecture and challenging the boundaries between academia and practice, literature and architecture, writing and acting. The action will study accounts of aesthetics, appropriation and empathy (Mallgrave, 1994) in relation to the built environment. The role of local actors such as users, inhabitants and other stakeholders becomes crucial in urban processes – precisely because they are the ones who experience, appropriate and develop their environment. Existing narratives, which reveal the lived account of users and inhabitants can be found in myths, in stories and novels regarding a specific place (Tuan 1974, de Certeau 1984), and can be revealed, for instance, by means of interviews.

3). Integration: offering concrete tools and methods for the construction of common grounds among communities, based on relations of meaningfulness and appropriation of their built environment. Urban narratives have the capacity to offer “attuned” relationships between people and place (Pérez-Gómez 2016), as well as between different individuals. This section draws attention to architectural design processes, regarding architecture also as the transformation and communication of narratives.

To support this threefold investigation, the Action establishes a workgroup dedicated to the development of a methodological/theoretical framework, which connects and builds upon ongoing research of the network’s participants, including:

a) methodologies for the appraisal of a range of concepts from literature, linguistics and creative writing, such as dialogical approach of Bakhtin (Bakhtin 1975, Kenniff 2014) when it comes to understanding place-making as a collective and site-specific process;

b) strategies for the development of narrative imagination as employed by storytellers (Herman 2009, Keunen 2011) as a relevant mechanism for spatial design. These strategies intend to assess the way in which visual and perceptual imagination inform local narratives, as well as the disciplining process that enables the individual and collective imaginary to function as an instrument of emotional and rational appraisal of the built environment;

c) comparative studies of successful precedents that have approached spatial questions from a literary perspective, like those carried out by reputed institutions, such as the Cooper Union in New York, the AA-school in London and the School of Architecture in Valparaiso, Chile.

d) theoretical reflections on the act of writing as a mode of social-spatial investigation, meant to reconstruct processes and connections, unravelling latent complexities of urban situations.

With this thematic approach and theoretical grounding, the Action will conduct a comprehensive analysis of actual redevelopment processes taken as case studies in mid-size cities in the participating countries. By these means, the Action aims to bring additional expertise in the use of narratives as building blocks for urban planning to a centre stage position in professional discussions, and to make that expertise operative in different instances related to the production of the built environment. In this sense, the initiative should mark a crucial step towards new forms of productivity, based on more inclusive, democratic, site-specific and collaborative spatial planning policies.

1.2.2. CAPACITY-BUILDING OBJECTIVES

At the scientific level, the COST Action aims to bring studies carried out at the intersection of literature studies and the spatial disciplines from the margins of academia to a centre-stage position vis-à-vis the European scientific discourse. It does so by solidifying and extending a latent network of scholars, which has consistently operated on this transdisciplinary crossroads for a considerable amount of time. At the practical level, the COST Action aims to extend the knowledge produced on scientific grounds, by rendering it operative in mid-size European cities. The COST Action thus aspires to transfer the

knowledge produced by this network onto the field of practice and policy making, by participating in ongoing urban planning processes in a carefully defined set of medium-sized cities in Europe, located in the participating countries. By involving participants for different domains, such as researchers, scholars, students and local stakeholders within municipalities, politicians, public administrators as well as local art institutes; the Action will contribute valuable elements for decision making to current urban redevelopment processes in Europe, at the specified scale. Among these valuable elements, the Action will provide decision makers with clear and concise expressions of citizens' understanding of their built environment. Operation is foreseen at the following levels:

- At the level of scientific research, the action implies increasing and improving the existing knowledge, regarding the questions of meaningfulness, appropriation, and integration of individuals and communities in relation to their built environment; by advancing concrete studies in the fields of aesthetics, semiotics and literary studies in relation to the built environment.
- At the level of education, the main target is to form future professionals in the acknowledgment of the importance of meaningfulness, appropriation, and integration of individuals and communities in relation to their built environment; and providing them with the skills required to act based on that acknowledgment. Students and early career researchers are therefore offered theoretical knowledge developed by the network; they are taken into the field to participate in workshops and summer schools, applying and testing appropriate instruments to understand and use urban narratives.
- At the level of local urban communities, local stakeholders, policy makers, urban planners and citizens the main target is to increase these local actors' awareness of the value of innovation and creativity within their communities, as means towards a more inclusive, democratic and collaborative approach to contemporary urban development. Local stakeholders (city administration, decision makers, opinion makers and some governmental bodies) will be actively involved and invited to participate and to take a leading role in the Think Tanks that are part of the initiative. The Action aims to establish agreements and collaborations with particular communities and authorities, in order to simultaneously obtain and apply the knowledge mentioned above.
- At the level of knowledge exchange, the Action will provide an advanced digital platform, and an open-access journal, accessible to researchers, students and local communities; allowing them not only to assess and improve the developed methodologies, but also to conduct a comparative analysis of the variety of local urban cultures by means of the study of site-specific narratives. Further, digital and analogue training material regarding urban writing in urban development will be developed and made available within the network and beyond.

1.3. PROGRESS BEYOND THE STATE-OF-THE-ART AND INNOVATION POTENTIAL

1.3.1. DESCRIPTION OF THE STATE-OF-THE-ART

Authors like Alberto Magnagni (2006), Karl Schlöger (2008) and Dehaene (2013) have brought the role of medium-size cities in European culture to the attention of urban studies. As stated by Dehaene et al., "The mid-size city is more than ever part of an urban network in which the opportunities and problems of contemporary urban society are concentrated. The major challenges facing society – demographics, migration, mobility, ecology – are also challenges for the mid-size city. In this context, the mid-size city today is once again where the urban representation of the European city is being recalibrated." Traditional master planning procedures fail to address the shifting urban identities resulting from these processes. New techniques and approaches thus have to be developed that consider citizens' perceptions and offer accurate frameworks that are resilient to future changes (Verwijnen and Lehtovuori 1996, Landry 2000, Awan, Schneider et al, 2011). In recent years, alternative urban regeneration approaches have appeared, taking aspects like the experience of place, and site-specific atmospheres into consideration (Landry 2000, Kong and O'Connor 2009).

Influential studies regarding the way people perceive urban spaces have been for instance those of Kevin Lynch (1960) and Gordon Cullen (1971). While these studies foregrounded the visual aspects of such perceptions, theorists such as Yi-Fu Tuan (1974) and Michel de Certeau (1984) argued that to fully understand the daily practices, rituals and cultural layers of the relationship between people and their environment, one should turn to the stories in which this information is embedded. In recent decades, a number of architects, writers and scholars have built up expertise about the way stories and urban places relate, and have investigated methods to analyse them. This has resulted in a number of

transdisciplinary editions (Nerdinger 2007, Edwards and Charley 2011, Gadanho et al 2013); and in recent scholarly events and publications addressing the intersection between architecture, urban planning and literature, such as "Once upon a Place " (2013), "Writingplace" (2016) and "Reading Architecture" (2018). The use of literary instruments to analyse sites has been explored by a number of researchers (Grillner 2005). This growing discussion on the relationship between architecture and literature provides an appropriate perspective to introduce these "writing" methods for the analysis of local urban cultures and for strategic planning of urban development in this context.

1.3.2. PROGRESS BEYOND THE STATE-OF-THE-ART

The Action recognizes that literary techniques add valuable analytical capacities to the standard repertoire of the planning disciplines. For instance, the identification of "protagonists" in the development of scenarios for urban transformation (Schmidt, in Notteboom et al 2017), helps to involve local community and stakeholders in processes of change, while the evocative description of local urban atmospheres allows designers to unveil otherwise neglected site-specific qualities in design (Perez-Gomez 2016).

The Action explicitly combines these perspectives of literary, urban and social disciplines and aims to make professional insights from literature applicable to contemporary tasks in the regeneration of medium-sized European cities. By bringing literary notions into the realm of urban and landscape design, the Action provides the means for various disciplines and scales to work together. To bring such transdisciplinary knowledge to city makers, and exchange knowledge between local stakeholders and scientific experts, one of the aims of the Action is, through the training schools and workshops, to co-organize design research in and with the medium-sized European cities.

The Action connects these perspectives to the work of a solid international network of scholars, architects and writers. By offering both a theoretical and historical knowledge base and contributions that address the operability of literary approaches for European cities, the Network marks a step forward in an emerging debate and practice regarding urban narratives within the disciplines of architecture and urban planning.

1.3.3. INNOVATION IN TACKLING THE CHALLENGE

Faced with urban challenges caused by migration, gentrification and other contemporary urban processes such as the digitalization of commerce and the tension between local characteristics and global trends, it is crucial to understand the urban as a complex expression of social, historical, material, spatial and temporal relations between people and their built environment. Approaching the questions of meaning, appropriation and integration from the viewpoint of narratives offers the possibility to understand not only how different user groups experience urban sites, but also how meaningful urban sites can be produced; both in writing and in new urban designs and buildings.

The Action thus links urban studies, architecture and humanities research with investigations of literary language. By these linkages, the Action explores how narratives can offer tools and methods for urban planners and architects. On a theoretical and methodological level, the Action aims to provide a comprehensive framework that links literary theory to urban studies. This framework will articulate relevant and original developments in the fields of architectural theory, literary studies, and the broader social sciences, drawing on firm intellectual traditions, such as semiotics and aesthetics. The introduction of three directions of inquiry (Meaningfulness, Appropriation and Integration, as formulated in 1.2.1) within this framework should provide the opportunity for the development of innovative concepts.

On a practical level, the Action participates in site-specific studies in European mid-size cities with local stakeholders as well as students of architecture and urban planning. This approach not only generates new insights regarding urban narratives and their role in creating meaning, appropriation and integration in urban projects, but also makes it possible to conduct comparative analyses between different European cities. The Action foresees the emergence of a new form of urban planning praxis: merging scientific research, education and practical, site-based actions and making use of expertise from different disciplines. This praxis not only acknowledges the value of local urban cultures but also provides appropriate tools and methods to link urban narratives to develop new, truly inclusive and collaborative forms of urban planning.

1.4. ADDED VALUE OF NETWORKING

1.4.1. IN RELATION TO THE CHALLENGE

The COST Action forms an innovative research network of researchers and practitioners in urban planning, architecture, comparative literature and other fields investigating the use of narrative in the study of urban culture. There is wide-spread European knowledge related to the urban narratives among a variety of relevant disciplines. If harvested, this knowledge holds vast potential to generate innovative cooperation and creative concepts that could raise the usability of scientific research in urban planning in Europe. The Network therefore aims to bring discussions of urban narrative and explorations of literary devices in urban and architectural design to the central stage of European urban discourse and practice.

The COST Action will put to use the capacity of the disciplines of literary and urban theories in rendering applicable solutions and findings to understand urban culture in European medium-sized cities. Through the exchange of expertise, the Action will provide clarification of a theoretical, scientific ground as well as appropriate methodological instruments. The complex set of scientific and capacity-building objectives offers comprehensive knowledge for the development of more sustainable, open, innovative, culturally diverse and inclusive urban cultures in cities. It also offers a better understanding of the dynamics of urban societies and social changes and gives better insight into the nexus of cultures, identities, and dynamics of migration that operate within the contemporary city. Subsequently the improved understanding of the potential of urban narrative and the importance acknowledging the value of such narratives within cities enables constructing new models for urban development.

1.4.2. IN RELATION TO EXISTING EFFORTS AT EUROPEAN AND/OR INTERNATIONAL LEVEL

The COST Action benefits from a number of past and ongoing EC funded projects relevant to the issues of urban development, such as the Reflective Societies program within H2020 and FP7 projects within Social Sciences and Humanities such as DIVERCITIES Governing Urban Diversity: Creating Social Cohesion, Social Mobility and Economic Performance in Today's Hyper-diversified Cities and LOCALISE local worlds of social cohesion. Further, the European Union is exploring the future through the lens of Grand Societal Challenges (GSCs), through an EU funded project 'Forward Looking Analysis of Grand Societal Challenges and Innovative Policies' (FLAGSHIP).

The innovative interdisciplinary approach of this COST Action may foresee also an analysis and partial critique of the way Europe's GSCs have been framed, by inquiring into how the qualitative content of literary forms can enrich the interpretation and the underlying problem definition of GSCs, and hence the search for solutions for a 'better future'. (EC (2012), The Grand Challenge. The design and societal impact of Horizon 2020, Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, European Research Area, EUR 25271, June 2012, Publications Office of the European Union.)

Another European initiative on the level of urban and architectural design is the biannual competition *Europan*. The 13th edition of *Europan* was entitled: "The Adaptable City 2: Self-Organization – Sharing – Project (Process)" and participating cities were the medium-size cities that acknowledged the need for alternative approaches to urban development. The COST Action supports this initiative while offering a broader approach than the *Europan* competition: while *Europan*, as a competition among young architects, is focused on architectural design results, the Action aims to provide a larger analytical framework, offering in-depth analysis and tools for design on both urban and architectural scales.

Related to the ambition to establish a database, there are links with the Literary Atlas of Europe and related resources, useful for the development investigations into Geocriticism (Westphal 2011).

2. IMPACT

2.1. EXPECTED IMPACT

2.1.1. SHORT-TERM AND LONG-TERM SCIENTIFIC, TECHNOLOGICAL, AND/OR SOCIOECONOMIC IMPACTS

On a long-term perspective, the Action will contribute to the following benefits:

- Produce and offer in-depth historical and theoretical insights in the value of urban narratives to express multiple layers of local urban cultures
- Collect, exchange and disseminate knowledge on contemporary narratives that shape urban conditions, identities and perception of European medium-size cities
- Connect scientific expertise in literary studies with urban planning professionals
- Introduce appropriate methods to analyse the narratives and spatial practices of urban life
- Improve knowledge regarding narrative tools and methods
- Facilitate people's use of those tools and methods, towards improvements in their built environments.
- Conduct studies of the historical and cultural variability through narrative

On a short-term perspective the Action aims to realize the following benefits:

- Create an innovative network of researchers, practitioners, policy makers, and urban communities, in a proactive and creative interaction, in order to formulate the collective ambition of meaningfulness, appropriation and integration in urban development processes.
- Provide a set of tools and methods to analyse urban narratives and to use narrative in inclusive design processes
- Develop excellent interdisciplinary training for scholars, students and practitioners on the application of future urban developments.

2.2. MEASURES TO MAXIMISE IMPACT

2.2.1. PLAN FOR INVOLVING THE MOST RELEVANT STAKEHOLDERS

The three main domains of activity in the COST Action also define the most relevant stakeholders and the main target groups and end users: the research community, the educational community and the local urban communities. The three domains are intrinsically linked: they exchange knowledge and participate together in the Actions activities.

-Research community: The Work Plan of the COST Action is structured around the scientific disciplines that are involved in the investigation and development of future urban policies and inclusive development of medium-size cities. Based on a shared ambition to define the role of narrative in relation to meaningfulness, appropriation and integration in urban processes, researchers interact in an inter-disciplinary debate that enables the transfer of knowledge and evolves new forms of expertise, enhanced by real-life experience. Early Career Investigators (ECI) will be involved in all activities of the Action, stimulating their creativity and increasing their knowledge and experience through a first-hand involvement in case studies and training schools.

-Educational community: the involvement of students and young researchers is of crucial importance, because these are future practitioners, researchers and policy makers. They will address future challenges and research on urban narratives throughout Europe, in the acknowledgment of the importance of meaningfulness, appropriation, and integration of individuals and communities in relation to their built environment.

-Local urban communities: decision makers, city administration representatives, civic activists and local stakeholders will be involved in the Action as the main end users. Their participation through the case studies enables the collection of good practices, policies and evaluation of the scientific and academic work of the Action. Cities and communities that are relevant for the case studies will be able to utilize the Action as a platform for debate, exchange of knowledge and practice of cooperation between citizens, decision makers, planning experts and students. The aim is, finally, to influence city making toward more responsible, socially inclusive and locally specific built environments. Within the three thematic perspectives, the local communities will be involved in the following ways:

-Meaningfulness: the local communities will be involved in the collection of oral history by means of interviews and in-situ events;

-Appropriation: workshops will be held with local communities to consider the role of users in the way a site is socially embedded in a city. Here, narrative is the crucial technique to (re)construct the social and temporal aspects of the site;

-Integration: new scenarios for place-making will be shared with local communities through presentations and public discussions.

2.2.2. DISSEMINATION AND/OR EXPLOITATION PLAN

The COST Action will collect data from the community through different contributions, including projects and papers; and will share the knowledge and information gathered through a digital database, which will operate as an open access library. By creating an accessible profile of all the contributors, people and institutes from different regions in Europe and beyond will be able to connect to this database. This digital platform will act as a dynamic repository of information, data, layouts and matrices of knowledge about the Action. Specific case studies from different COST Countries will be published at the Actions' digital platform. The collection of urban narratives, maps and projects relevant to the Action will enable a sustainable sharing of the work and findings of the Action by all stakeholders and prospective users beyond the timeframe of the Action.

The Action will share the comprehensive insight of existing theoretical knowledge and spatial practices and policies with all stakeholders, including researchers, scholars, decision makers and citizens, and collect existing research projects and data. This double repository of theoretical research data and case studies aims to bring together of theory and practice. It enables exchange of knowledge and experience and stimulates further interaction among members of the Action and involved stakeholders. For local stakeholders, municipalities, designers and citizens of the participating cities, the project has clear deliverables. For each of the studied cities, a threefold report of design research will be made, based on the three thematic strands: meaningfulness, appropriation and integration. The report on "Meaningfulness" will provide the analysis of site-specific experiential qualities and historical narratives that render identity and meaning to the experience of places; "Appropriation" will contain the stories attained from citizens through interviews; and "Integration" will contain new design strategies based on the two first phases. The reports will be offered to municipalities as well as to local citizens. In each city, a public presentation will be held at a local community centre or art centre, and local media such as newspapers and social media will be used to disseminate the results.

The Action will organize two scientific conferences (mid-term and final conference) targeting a scientific community but also involving civic experts and practitioners from the governmental bodies, formal or informal groups and collectives. The conferences will be the ground for exchange of knowledge and experience from all stakeholders. Two conference proceedings will be published. The Action will host an open access journal specific to the theme in which journal papers will be produced in order to disseminate the findings of the Action. For the management of the dissemination plan, the Action will establish a Publication Board made out of five members from the Steering Committee and the Working Groups. A website will enable project management, networking, and the exchange of information about the Action's work; and enhance the visibility, accessibility, and accountability of the Action for participants and the general public alike. The dissemination of the Action's work and results within academia is one of its main pillars. The use of novel tools and methods obtained from the Action's work and results will be shared among the institutions that are part of the Action, and will be integrated into their educational activities and research programs.

The thorough exploration of urban narratives will be exercised in a series of site-specific studies, that will focus on developing scenarios for urban transformation in selected medium-size cities. These projects will be developed within academia, and will be published in a series of three Project Reports presented at the Action Training Schools targeting the ECI, PhD and other students, junior researchers and scholars. Three Training Schools will be organized once a year.

The close coordination and interaction of the case studies of the COST Action and the Training Schools enables a fruitful integration of the scientific work and methodology into education and research carried out within academia. The Action will create awareness of meaning, appropriation and integration in the built environment. It will stimulate the decision makers, planners and inhabitants to comprehend the potential of urban narratives in cities. Consequently, the COST Action contributes to the enhancement of inclusive policies of urban management and living conditions of the urban populations within the case study cities. The dissemination and exploitation of the results of the Action work will be used to establish an innovative network of civic institutions and individual actors. In this way, innovative approaches and methods regarding the investigation of and interventions will be shared among partners.

For the purposes of better visibility and exchange of experience the Action will organize two Think Tanks and one Expert meeting with representatives of the city administration, experts and local stakeholders. These Think Tanks provide a broad platform for a debate within communities in urban border zones. These meetings will be enriched with the exhibition of the Action results from the case studies and student works. The Action will produce a Report of Practices showcasing the findings about the precedents in the use of urban narratives in policies of urban development in medium-size cities.

2.3. POTENTIAL FOR INNOVATION VERSUS RISK LEVEL

2.3.1. POTENTIAL FOR SCIENTIFIC, TECHNOLOGICAL AND/OR SOCIOECONOMIC INNOVATION BREAKTHROUGHS

The Action aims at the development of several innovative breakthrough beneficiaries as long-term effects:

- Explore the use of narrative techniques as both analytical and projective tools to enhance the inclusivity and cultural sensitivity of urban development
- Assemble a set of instruments from different scientific approaches that are being used or developed in European countries, of potential interest to public authorities, policy institutions, and communities. Building a pool of knowledge that will enable creation and assessment of new strategies and policies of urban development in Europe.
- Introduce new and innovative methodological tools for in-depth investigation of meaning, appropriation and integration of local urban cultures and.
- Collect local stakeholders' perspectives on these instruments and practices and on their role as a design support tool for urban policy making through an interactive setting where the instruments are presented and used to address real life problems.
- Juxtapose environmental, social, cultural, gender and economic issues relevant to contemporary urban narratives as logical outcome of the cross-disciplinary working strategy of the Cost action.

Potential Risk Level and Risk prevention for action.

(Operations)

- The interlink between different deliverables and milestones are closely tight. A possible resulting risk would be that any delays in productions or outcomes have a lasting effect on the following action. It comes to the Working Groups to control any delays and potential risk between the different objectives of the Action. This will also be a fixed agenda point for the MC meetings.

(Network)

- The quality of the Network depends on the diversity of its members, varying in background, age, gender, educational level and geographical spread. It is the Actions goal to enlarge the Network and keep the quality and diversity balanced. A potential risk for the action that can occur, especially in the beginning of the four-year period, will be the limited connections between the Network and different institutes. Although some institutes, be it government, academic or local, will be naturally connected to the Network through multiple members, others are a linked only through one or two connections. Losing those connections could result in the loss of an institute, which could have a serious effect on the Action's objectives. Investing in different channels connecting an institute will be of high importance. Each of the members of the Network will be asked to provide a contact for replacement. This person should be informed of the action and be kept up to date with its activities, so that he/she can stand in if necessary.
- Further, comparing results from many different COST Countries and scholars who may be conducting fieldwork somewhat differently poses a risk for the project's outcome. Therefore, the work plan provides regular meetings of the Action MC as well as of the Working Groups, to ensure sufficient communication and steering. The Action will set a framework for the progress reports and the case study reports with a cross-group review system.

(Research)

- Among the potential risks of the initiative is the possible dispersion that stems from the perceived unavailability of some artistic notions (e.g., the case of "poetics"). Defining clear and limited lines of inquiry within proven traditions, by keeping a clear focus on the main targets of meaningfulness, appropriation and integration at all times, and by limiting the range of literary techniques used to identify and translate these ambiguous notions, the potential risk of dispersions can be limited and controlled.
- Further, even though the studied Mid-size cities will be comparable in size and in the kind of societal challenges they are facing, there will be many differences in terms of geographical, topographical and climatological conditions, demography, urban cultures, building traditions and so forth. While offering, therefore, a splendid setting for testing the developed narrative methods in various circumstances, these differences should be seriously considered in the analysis. The mid-term reports, journal, conferences and other cross-network activities will ensure a continuous reflection about the role of different parameters in the participating cities.

3. IMPLEMENTATION

3.1. DESCRIPTION OF THE WORK PLAN

3.1.1. DESCRIPTION OF WORKING GROUPS

The Action aims to collect current initiatives of scholars addressing urban change in the European Mid-size city from the crossing point of literary studies, urban studies and architecture, with the objective to offer both a conceptual framework and operative tools to analyse urban narratives in mid-size European cities of the participating countries and to share knowledge with city makers. Four basic Working Groups are initially required to implement the Plan. Participants have a particular emphasis in relation to these Working Groups, yet should be able to participate in more than one Working Group simultaneously. Furthermore, operating the initiative might imply the need to reorganize, add or reorient one or more of these Working Groups. The analysis of the information gathered by these groups, and its further articulation, will result from a series of Inter-Group activities and scenarios, such as Workshops and Meetings, as defined in the following chapter. The four Working Groups are coordinated and organised by the Action MC meetings. These meeting set the targets, goals and deliver scientific directions for the working group to further develop. From here the overall themes for the workshops, think tanks and conferences are decided and in light of changing insight, situations and failing objectives they will to minimize the threats.

- **WG1 Science communication:** The Working Group will be responsible for the overall communication and output of the initiative. This implies dealing with the output of the project, in terms of reports, academic journal, website and conference proceedings, guaranteeing internal and external communications.
- **WG2 Theoretical framework:** this group will define and update an operative theoretical framework, throughout the duration of the initiative. This framework will articulate relevant and original developments in the fields of architectural theory, literary studies, and the broader social sciences, drawing on firm traditions in the field (semiotics, aesthetics) while the formulated directions of inquiry (meaningfulness, appropriation, integration) allow for the development of innovative concepts.
- **WG3 Methodological framework:** this Working Group will delineate and test a repertoire of pertinent methodologies for context analysis and the formulation of propositions. These methodologies will be obtained from a consensual choice of precedents. These methodologies will operate as heuristic techniques, meant to confront the problems defined by the initiative within a limited structure, and with an equally limited set of procedures and tools.
- **WG4 Field work:** A fourth Working Group (WG4) will be in charge of carrying out the necessary fieldwork in mid-sized European cities, utilizing the methodologies defined by WG3, and structuring each specific investigation on the grounds defined by WG2 at a theoretical level.

WG1 Science communication:

The operations carried out by Working Group 1 are organized in three distinctive tasks:

Task 1: *Coordination of the communication between the WG's, local stakeholders and the wider audience. This implies dealing with the output of the project, in terms of reports, academic journal, website and conference proceedings, guaranteeing internal and external communications*

Task 2: *Evaluation of the status and results of the projects and the deliverables of the different WG's, on a regular basis.*

Task 3: *Dissemination of the status and results of the projects and the deliverables of the different WG's through the website and beyond the Network. Part of this task is maintaining and updating the network's database and online journal, so it can function as the 'heart' of the Network and the initiative.*

This WG is endowed with coordinating and evaluating roles, which means that its deliverables lie in the strength and flawless inter-connection between the other WG's.

The Deliverables that this WG will produce are:

Together with:

- | | | |
|--|------|----------------|
| D1. Website and database development and maintenance; | | |
| D2. Promotion and dissemination of the results at Experts' meetings and Think tanks. | | |
| D3. Conference | (2x) | (with WG2) |
| D4. Proceedings book | (2x) | (with WG2) |
| D5. Progress report | (1x) | (with WG2) |
| D6. Academic Journal | (8x) | (with WG2/3/4) |

For deliverable **D6** (academic journal), the members of the editorial board will be chosen amongst the different actors from the 4 Working Groups depending on the chosen theme of the issue at hand, while

external experts will be invited to act as an academic referee board to ensure the scientific quality of the journal. Three issues of the academic journal will have a theme closely related to the action and the activities and research at that stage of the actions. The topics of these issues will be decided at the action MC meetings (MC 2 / 5 / 7).

WG2 Theoretical framework:

The operations carried out by Working Group 2 are organized in three distinctive tasks:

Task 1: *Developing multi- and transdisciplinary ground for the investigation of urban narratives*

Task 2: *Conceptual reflections derived from the specifics of potential case studies. It will include an in-depth historical investigation of local urban narratives within medium-sized cities in Europe.*

Task 3: *Preview of key literature about theories and concepts relevant to narrative analysis of the European medium-sized cities.*

The deliverables of the WG2 are:

D1. Conference	(2x)	Together with: (WG1)
D2. Proceedings book	(2x)	(WG1)
D3. Progress report	(1x)	
D4. Literature compendium;	(1x)	
D5. Theoretical report;	(1x)	
D6. Academic journal;	(8x)	(WG1/3/4)
D7. Training school;	(3x)	(WG3)
D8. Expert meeting;	(3x)	(WG3)
D9. Think tank.	(2x)	(WG3)

D1. until D6. are deliverables with a concrete value that will be distributed through the network website and the connected institutes. The Training School (**D7**) will connect related PhD researchers of the connected institutes through a series of peer reviews or workshops in order to evaluate their research by expert from the network. **D8.** and **D9.** are more closed in nature compared to the other deliverables and focus on bringing experts together.

WG3 Methodological framework:

The objectives of WG3 include the investigation and development of appropriate analytical and projective methods to understand narratives of European medium-size cities, and to develop new strategies, scenarios and guidelines for future urban and architectural visions.

The operations carried out by WG3 are organized in three distinctive tasks:

Task 1: *Investigating the possibility of cross-disciplinary tools and techniques to be used in the process of research.*

Task 2: *Preview of key literature about methodologies and concepts relevant to narrative analysis of the European medium-sized cities.*

Task 3: *Exploring and testing the possibilities of identified methodologies and tools through site-specific workshops in cooperation with WG4.*

The deliverables of the WG3 are:

D1. Progress report	(1x)	Together with:
D2. Academic journal;	(8x)	(WG1/2/4)
D3. Training school;	(3x)	(WG2)
D4. Expert meeting;	(3x)	(WG2)
D5. Think tank.	(3x)	(WG2)
D6. Methodology report;	(1x)	

WG4 Field work:

The site-specific studies will form the core of the WG4 fieldwork activities. Each study consists of two phases, an analytical and a projective phase. The analytical phase gives an account of the social spatial practices in urban territories characterized by the heritage of differences by means of mapping and narrative techniques. For this phase, close corporation with WG 2 and 3 are necessary. In the projective phase, based on the results of the analytical phase, this package develops scenarios for (re) interpretation of social and cultural differences and production of meaningful architecture and urban space where different spatial and societal practices can coexist. Identifying and connecting the different stakeholders will be an important part of this WG.

The WG identifies the following tasks;

Task 1: *precedents studies/ historical and theoretical framework;*

Task 2: *Identifying and collecting site specific narratives, history and challenges (atmospheres);*

Task 3: Organization of site-specific workshops in combination with the WG3. Combining both the findings of the WG 2 and 3, together with connecting expertise with the different stakeholders.

The deliverables of the WG4 are:

Together with:

D1. Progress report

D2. Five case studies;

D3. Reports of Case studies with evaluation of the innovative methodologies and tools;

D4. Study of precedents and best practices;

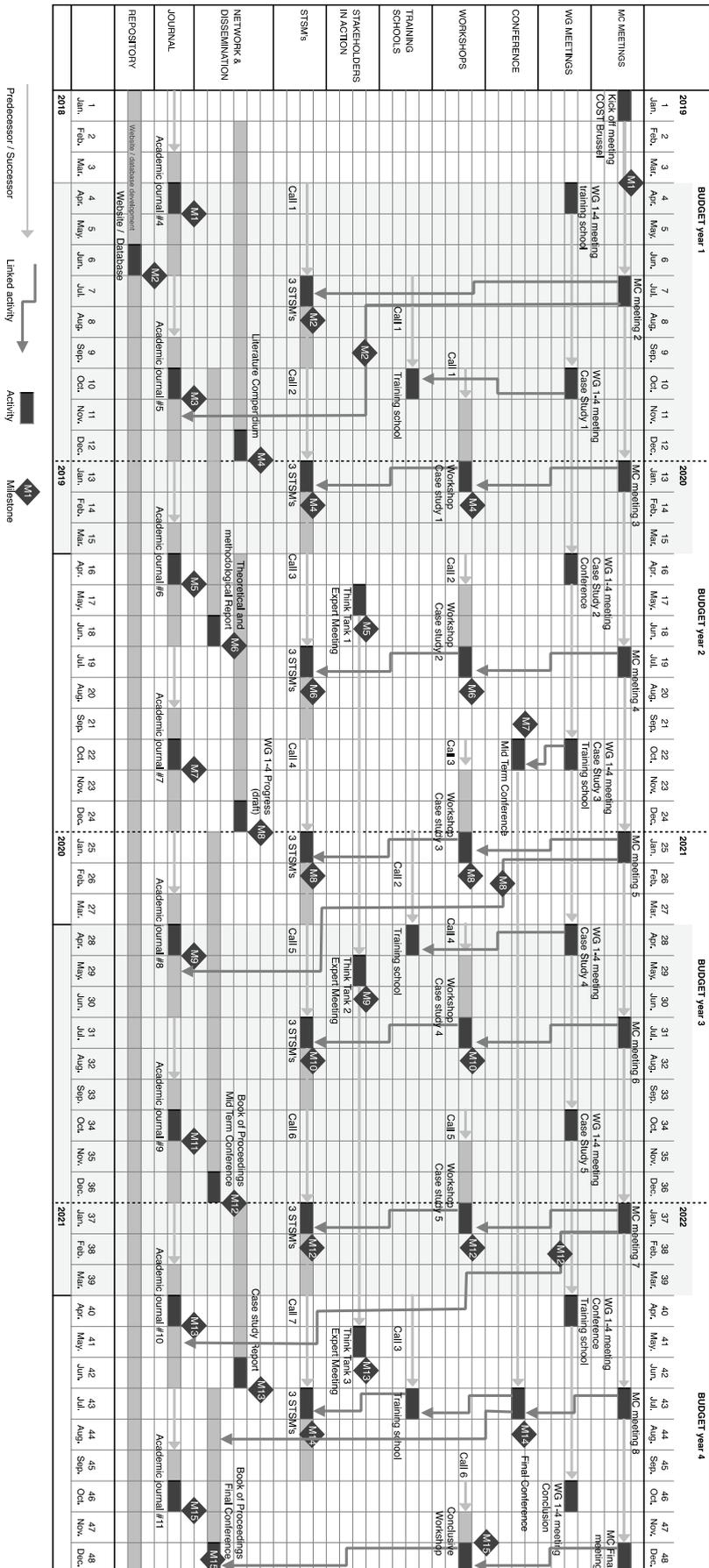
D5. Academic journal. (8x) (WG1/2/3)

For the case studies the COST Action includes a series of workshops (**D2.**) where the educational programs of the connected institutes invite students to develop content based on the theoretical and methodological findings of the other WG's. By inviting different experts from the network into the educational programs, we contribute a series of analyses and projects on the case studies by the students.

Lead	Milestone Number	Milestone	Month	Deliverables and Progress indicator
	--	Preliminary work	1	- Website and database development; - Call for papers academic journal
SC/MC	M1	Launch of the Action	3	- Kick-off meeting; - Election of SC and WG leaders; - Academic journal presentation.
MC/ WG1-4	M2	Launch website and database & educational activities	6/7	- Establishment of website and database; - Min. 3 STSM's initiated; - Selection of action related theme, for Academic journal
WG1-4	M3	Academic journal issue 4	10	- Academic journal presentation
WG1-4	M4	Compendium & Case study workshop	12/13	- Literature compendium; - Workshop case study 1; - Min. 6 STSM's initiated.
WG1-4	M5	Focus group	17	- Expert meeting 1; - Think-Tank 1; - Academic journal presentation.
WG1-4	M6	Theoretical and methodological report & Case study workshop	18/19	- Theoretical and methodological report; - Workshop case study 2; - Min. 9 STSM's initiated.
WG1-4	M7	Mid-term conference	22	- Mid Term conference; - Academic journal presentation.
MC/ WG1-4	M8	Progress report & Case study workshop	24/25	- Progress report; - Workshop case study 3; - Min. 12 STSM's initiated; - Selection of action related theme, for Academic journal.
WG1-4	M9	Focus group	29	- Expert meeting 2; - Think-Tank 2; - Academic journal presentation.
WG1-4	M10	Journal & Case study Workshop	31	- Workshop case study 4; - Min. 15 STSM's initiate.

WG1-4	M11	Academic Journal	34	- Academic journal presentation.
WG1-4	M12	Proceedings & Case study Workshop	36/37	- Book of proceedings Mid-term conference; - Workshop case study 5; - Min. 18 STSM's initiated; - Selection of action related theme, for Academic journal.
WG1-4	M13	Focus Group	41/42	- Expert meeting 3; - Think-Tank 3; - Case study report; - Academic journal presentation.
MC/ WG1-4	M14	Educational activity & Conclusion	43	- Final Conference; - Min. 21 STSM's initiated.
MC/ WG1-4	M15	Dissemination	46-48	- Book of proceedings Final conference; - Conclusive Workshop; - Academic journal presentation.

3.1.2. GANTT DIAGRAM



3.1.4. RISK AND CONTINGENCY PLANS

The main risks related to the Work Plan could be identified in the complexity of the projected organization and interaction among three main fields of activity: scientific, educational and networking.

- The main risk for the scientific activities is the different level of development of the scientific capacities in different scientific communities and their involvement and expertise. The multi-disciplinary nature of the objectives of the Action could result in an involvement of researchers from different scientific background, which in the case of unbalanced distribution among the Working Groups could prevent the expected level of cross-discipline cooperation.
- The potential risk for the successful organization and management of the educational activities is due to the external and diverse conditions related to the education in different countries and institutions, which might prevent expected level of coordination and interaction among the institutions and Action members involved in educational activities.
- The main risk for networking activities will emerge from potential inability to establish a productive and trustworthy relationship among the members of the Action and with the local urban communities, decision makers and inhabitants involved in the development and implementation of policies and practices of urban management.

The Contingency plan of the Action provides a set of measures for mitigation of the risks.

- The Action will elect a Scientific Coordinator for each of the Workshops and case studies that will be developed. The role of the scientific coordinator will be to provide a good coordination and interaction among the members of the Working Groups and among the researchers with different scientific backgrounds. It will also provide a management support to a host institution.
- The Action will elect an Academic Coordinator for the Training Schools and STSM's that will work closely with all academic institutions on coordination of educational activities within the Action. It will provide an expected level of communication and coherence in the definition of design and educational tasks and their timely conclusion followed with relevant academic and organizational reports.
- The Action Vice Chair will actively participate in the design and monitoring of the quality and timeliness of the tasks and deliverables performed by WG3 dedicated to networking and dissemination. The task of building a profound and productive interaction with urban communities where the case studies will be performed will be the priority of all Action members. The representatives from the respective city administration will be invited to take part in the work of the Action at the early stage of the development of the Work Plan. An Editorial Board will be elected to further strengthen the Action capacity for publishing and dissemination of the results.

3.2. MANAGEMENT STRUCTURES AND PROCEDURES

The Action will be organized and managed in accordance with the Rules for Participation and Implementation of COST Actions. The main management body of the Action is the Management Committee (MC) of the Action, constituted of COST member countries and Cooperating countries representatives. Management Committee of the Action will be responsible for the coordination, management, supervision and quality assurance of the overall work of the Action. The Management Committee will meet twice a year.

The Action will be managed by the Action Chair and the Action vice-Chair, elected at the Kick-off meeting of the Action. The core work of the Action will be organized in the Working Groups (WG) managed by a Work Group Leader and Work Group vice-Leaders for each of the WG's. The Working Groups Vice-Chairs will be elected from the ECI members of the Action. There will be elected a Coordinator of STSM's and a Science Communication Manager. The Action Chair and Vice Chair with the WG's Leaders and the STSM's Coordinator will constitute the Steering Committee (SC) of the Action. The steering role of the Steering Committee (SC) will be maintain through close cooperation with the Action Chair and Vice Chair on management of the overall activities of the Action, support the work of the MC, planning the Action activities, set milestones, assess and evaluate the quality of work of each of the WG's and to facilitate and assure the cross-network communication and coordination of the all Action activities and proper dissemination of Action deliverables and results.

The three main domains of interest and dissemination of the Action: research, education and networking with urban communities will be accordingly represented in the structure of events and meetings of the Action. In addition, there will be an elected Academic coordinator for each of the Training Schools and Summer Schools and elected Scientific Coordinator for each of the meetings of the WG's: Workshops with Case Study, Conferences, Expert's meetings and Think Tanks. Their role is to coordinate the activities envisioned and planned for the dedicated meeting and activity.

The Steering Committee will elect Editorial Board of the Action that will be in charge of editing, planning and promoting the content of the publications of the Action, Action web site, Action web platform, and Actions' Reports.

For the each of the Scientific Conferences a Scientific Committee will be elected from the members of the Action and members of broader scientific and academic community in the fields relevant to the scientific objectives and topics of the Action.

3.3. NETWORK AS A WHOLE

The Action is carried out by an innovative and creative network of researchers, scholars and practitioners from 10 countries, 50% of which are Inclusiveness Target Countries. The overall objective of the Action -to strengthen the scientific excellence through the creation of a transdisciplinary networking of researchers, practitioners and local urban communities - is reflected in its organization structure and the participants of the Action activities. The geographical distribution within the Network of Proposers is balanced, combining North-West Europe (UK, Netherlands, Belgium, Switzerland), Nordic countries (Denmark, Estonia), South (Portugal, Romania), as well as East Europe (former Yugoslavian republics such as Macedonia and Slovenia), and is relevant for the scientific objectives of the Action. The COST Inclusiveness Target Countries play a key role in each of the four Work Groups and take editorial positions in the journal that the Action will use as one of its main vehicles for knowledge dissemination. Further, at least one city per ITC will be taken as Case study. A number of expert meetings and conferences will take place in the ICT countries.

The case studies will be carried out in Mid-size cities of the participating countries, thereby allowing for comparative analysis of European cities of similar size, facing similar urban processes, but with different geographical, climatological and cultural backgrounds and conditions. Proper geographical distribution is also highly relevant for the organization of the planned Workshops of the Action with Case studies in European medium-size cities. Different perspectives coming from different directions of Europe provide a diverse and inclusive approach, combining local and migrant narratives on these medium-size cities.

The Action respects an appropriate gender balance in all its activities the balance male-female in the network of proposers being around 50% (slightly more women than men); the Action will also be committed to considerably involve in Early Career Investigators through initiatives for their proactive participation in all research activities of the network and making a considerable participation of ECI in the educational activities. Considerable effort of the Action will be entrusted to promotion of scientific excellence and capacity building and personal qualifications in the field of urban planning, architecture of cities and place making, literary studies and spatial research in the COST Inclusiveness Target countries. A range of activities for promotion and dissemination of the Action results, like Training Schools, STSM's, Experts meetings and Think Tanks will be initiated and organized in European medium-sized cities with challenging questions regarding urban development and within the local communities that could benefit the most from inclusive, site-specific and collaborative planning policies.

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