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The Rijeka Report

Rijeka Study Visit
Highlights and Insights

Version 1
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GRAD
RIJEKA

Over 45 Re-Value project partners - mostly practitioners from Re-Value Cities - met in Rijeka, Croatia, on 29 & 30 October 2024, for a Re-Value Capacity Development and Exchange Programme Study Visit.

The agenda showcased Rijeka's ambition to strategically revalue its rich industrial heritage and working waterfront. Art and culture—including legacy investments from Rijeka's tenure as Capital of Culture 2024—served as a guiding theme, shaping urban planning practices and innovative solutions throughout.

The Rijeka Report summarises the Rijeka Study Visit experiences. The next Re-Value Study Visit will take place in April, in İzmir, Turkey, in conjunction with the 2025 Re-Value Consortium Meeting.

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Re-Value Community of Practice members from İzmir, Ålesund, Písek, Burgas, Bruges, Cascais, Constanța, Rimini, and Rijeka, as well as scientific partners from Ecoten, NTNU, VITO, UniBo, University of Nova Gorica, ICLEI and GIB, and Ida Križaj Leko from the [Delta Lab](#).



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1 Rijeka Study Visit Programme

The Rijeka Study Visit Programme was a two-day journey along the city's industrial waterfront and waterways to learn about Rijeka's rich industrial past and see how it is reimagining its future self. The Re-Value partners engaged and exchanged with local experts on topics related to hacking industrial heritage (adaptive reuse of cultural and industrial heritage), sustainable waterfront redevelopment, gentrification, and culture as a driver of change.

The Study Visit was designed to meet four objectives:

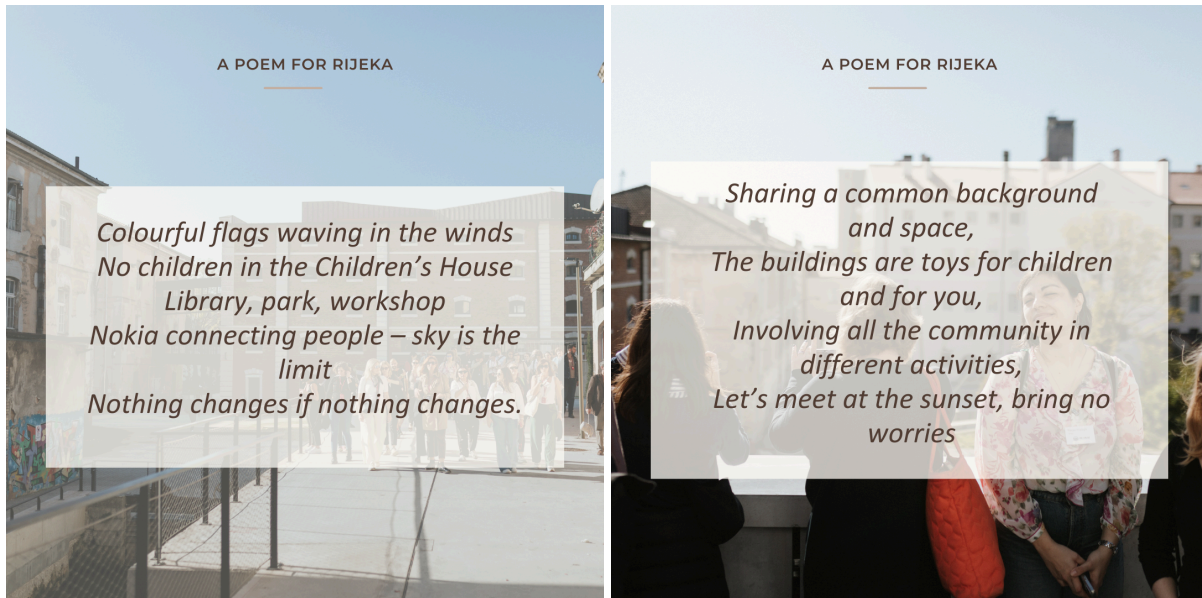
- **Strengthen the Community** (of Practice) by continuing to create opportunities to professionally socialise and deepen relationships between partners in a stimulating environment;
- **Observe & Learn** about Rijeka's rich history and cultural influences, key landmarks and stories from its strong industrial past, and its ambition to (re)develop it through coordinated planning efforts, substantial investments, cultural heritage, and built environment.
- **Advise & Encourage** the Municipality during an interactive workshop on Industrial Heritage reconversion, inspired by examples from all partner cities, that sparked a discussion on good transferable practices from "There" to "Here" in Rijeka.
- **Reflect & Plan** for continuing the Re-Value work by identifying upcoming European funding opportunities during an interactive workshop on call topics for 2025.

1.1 Strengthen the community

The Rijeka Study Visit, like previous ones, offered valuable opportunities for partners to engage and interact. Over the preceding 18 months, most partners had already met and built professional relationships, but this visit also facilitated further connections, including with new consortium members.

What set the Rijeka Study Visit apart from previous visits was its connection to a unique event held the preceding weekend. Participants were invited to contribute to the workshop titled *"Heritage Cities, Water, Migrations – Examples from Re-Value, Venice, and Other Projects"*, organized by Marco Acri (UNG) at the Venice Biennale in Italy. This additional event enriched the experience, providing both structured and informal opportunities to connect. Partners explored Venice and the Biennale together, shared meals featuring excellent Italian cuisine, and traveled as a group from Venice to Rijeka, fostering stronger personal and professional bonds.

In Rijeka, the Study Visit included engaging workshops and activities designed to strengthen the sense of community among participants. The closing activity was a creative poem exercise inspired by the French *cadavre exquis* model, offering a playful and collaborative way for participants to express themselves and thank the City of Rijeka for hosting. Additionally, a pub quiz hosted by Lies Debbaut (City of Bruges) provided a lighthearted opportunity for reflection. Featuring questions about the partnership and previous Study Visits, the quiz brought everyone together to laugh, reminisce, and celebrate the shared journey since the project's inception.



Collaboratively written poems with the French “cadavre exquis” method

While participants enjoyed the programme, some provided feedback that a less-packed agenda would have ensured a more active participation in all activities, similar to the approach in Burgas and Constanța.

The joint WhatsApp group created for the Study Visit, as with previous visits, played a key role in fostering community. While it served practical purposes, such as sharing logistical details and locations, its true value lay in facilitating informal exchanges. Participants used the group to share photos, comments, and personal experiences, creating a lively space for jokes and casual interactions beyond technical or organisational discussions. This informal channel noticeably strengthened group cohesion, enhancing not only collaboration on project work but also the overall sense of camaraderie within the partnership.

1.2 Observe and Learn

In Venice, more than 30 Re-Value partners joined university students from Nova Gorica, Gorizia, and NTNU Trondheim in a workshop led by Marco Acri titled "Heritage Cities, Water, Migrations – Examples from Re-Value, Venice, and Beyond."

Following an introduction by **Annemie Wyckmans** (NTNU) and **Marco Acri** (UNG) on the Re-Value project and its context in Venice and Nova Gorica, the contemporary artist duo **Alice Mestriner** and **Ahad Moslemi** presented their thought-provoking art project, *Floating Borders*. Their presentation explored the perception of borders in two contrasting settings: a natural border—the sea—in Tarvisio, and three human-made borders in Livorno. Through their work, they highlighted the potential to transform a city's limitations into strengths, offering a compelling perspective on how borders, whether natural or constructed, can be reimagined as opportunities for growth and connection.

Participants were then invited to engage with transformative approaches to industrial heritage conservation and migration in “water cities”. The workshop centred on three key themes:

- **Adaptive Reuse of Industrial Heritage:** Re-Value Cities shared examples of waterfront industrial heritage regeneration from their own cities. Additional examples were presented from Gorizia's

European Capital of Culture projects, Livorno, and Venice, with the Arsenale and other Biennale sites offering particularly resonant backdrops for the discussions.

- **Port-Harbour Regeneration in Waterfront Cities:** This theme addressed the historical and ongoing importance of port areas in waterfront city development. Conversations focused on the challenges ports face today, such as proximity to historic centres, ownership complexities, pollution, and preservation issues. A key question raised was whether Venice, with its unique characteristics, risks becoming an "obsolete" city.
- **Migration, in Line with the Biennale di Venezia Theme – "Foreigners Everywhere / Stranieri Ovunque":** Participants also toured the 60th International Art Exhibition at the Giardini and the Arsenale, organised by La Biennale di Venezia.

Participants were encouraged to gather impressions from the exhibition and visit of the city and reflect on the three themes. The photos of these impressions were gathered and discussed at the end of the workshop, with interesting insights on:

- Water fountains in Venice: one student highlighted that many are abandoned and could be repurposed and well integrated into the city's landscape.
- Street lighting: one student shared the feeling of safety experienced in Venice even at night, thanks to the appropriate lighting and pedestrianised aspect of the city.
- Contamination: Marjan Khaleghi from NTNU discussed the meaning of this term, often negatively connotated, but which could be approached positively in the city (greening contamination, etc.)

The event connected the Re-Value Horizon Europe project with the [GO!2025, Nova Gorica - Gorizia, European Capital of Culture](#) project, led by the University of Nova Gorica on Green Spots and Mobility, featuring an action titled **Landscape of Migration**.



"Foreigners everywhere" sign in the Biennale / Ayşe Ünal presents an industrial heritage case study from Izmir

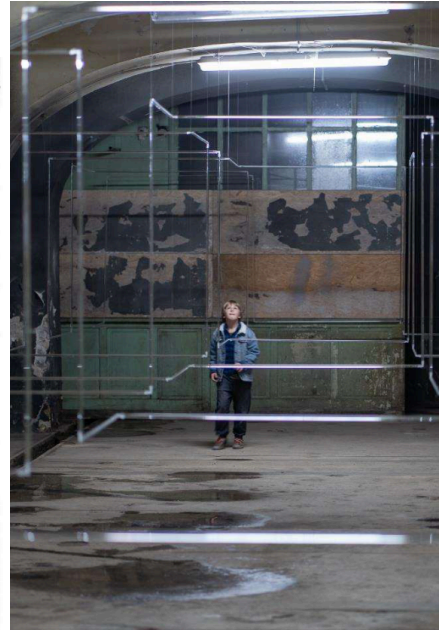
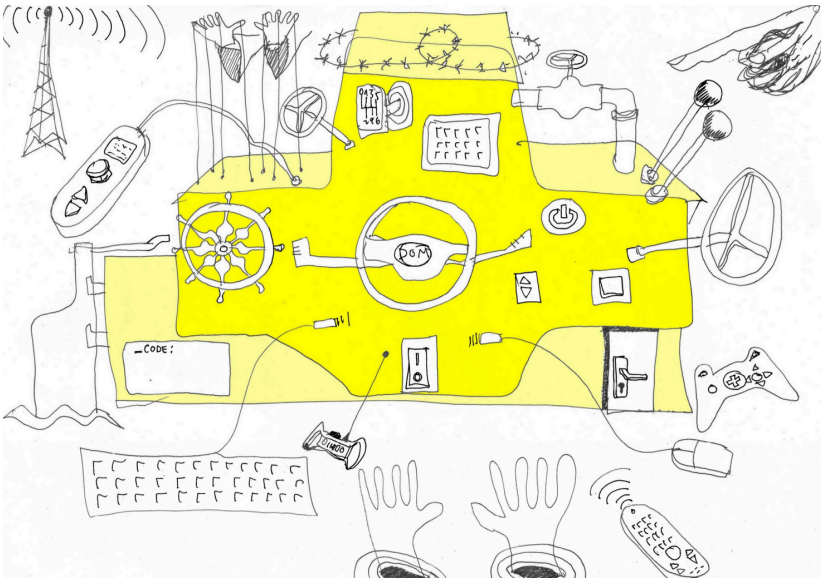
One **Day One** in Rijeka, Re-Value partners gathered at the [Children's House](#) where an impressive [video retracing the urban history of Rijeka \("RI:VALUE"\)](#) was shown.

Dinko Peračić (Split) and **Marin Nižić** (Rijeka) then kicked the Study Visit off by presenting their work in Rijeka. Split-based architect Dinko Peračić presented three industrial heritage reuse projects, showcasing his innovative approach to merging architecture, urban renovation, and design with cultural participation, activism, and transformation. The first project presented was the Harbour Market in Vodice, a tourist town on Croatia's coast. Initially developed through private investments, the area offered limited public space, so the project aimed to renovate the existing marketplace while addressing the shortage of communal spaces. One key feature of the project is a movable roof allowing for adaptation to various weather forecasts. This served as a model for cities looking to creatively enhance public areas with spatial limitations.

Peračić also discussed his work on the Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art in Rijeka, set within the former industrial Benčić complex. The museum was refurbished pragmatically and cost-effectively, designed to keep budgets low and expedite completion. Emphasising flexibility, Peračić conceptualised abandoned buildings as a "toy" for artists, providing minimal structural alterations to allow maximum creative freedom. This approach led to a bold artistic intervention, with one artist fully painting the building red. To address the building's periodic flooding issues, Peračić removed flood-vulnerable elements from the ground floor, which even led an executive during floods to say he never felt "more connected to the sea" when walking through the flooded building.

Peračić's work exemplifies agility in the face of financial and time constraints, delivering functional and user-centred spaces rapidly. **"We don't wait for good weather or investment, we do it,"** he remarked. This philosophy was further illustrated in his Biennale project—a wall-mounted model uniting cultural scenes from three Croatian cities (Rijeka, Zagreb, and Split) within the Venetian Arsenal, symbolising a single interconnected cultural space.





Dinko Peračić presents three architectural projects (previous page). On the right, picture from the Imminence exhibition, by Ivana Franke, Tommi Grönlund, Petteri Nisunen (11.10.2019)

Marin Nižić, a strategic designer with the NGO, Urbani Separe, shared insights from his multi-year participatory projects focused on regenerating and activating urban and natural spaces in Rijeka and beyond. His work includes initiatives like leading community walks along a fictional green corridor to observe local species and organising a festival taking place in many locations of the city. Marin Nižić emphasised a core principle of participatory planning: **creating moments of linking**. At Urbani Separe, he explained, “**We try not to have a strong opinion, but we create a space for opinion.**” His presentation sparked meaningful reflections on the role of trust in participatory processes and highlighted the importance of local governments acknowledging and learning from their mistakes.



Marin Nižić presents the Urbani Separe approach

After the presentations, the Re-Value partners divided into two groups, alternating visits to the City Museum and the recently renovated public library. These site visits offered valuable insights into Rijeka’s transition from a city with a rich industrial heritage to one that embraces a future of revitalised spaces designed for public use.



Tour of the library, hosted by Tanja Badanjak



Tour of the City Museum

Following a lunch on the rooftop of the Children's house, **Adam Langer** and **Anete Soldátová** from Sladovna Písek, introduced the artistic mission approach to the city tour. Re-Value partners were encouraged to experience the city with all five senses, by obstructing their sight and touch during the tour. This activity aligns with the venerable Bauhaus design approach, which valued a design process that incorporated observing all sensory aspects, including sounds, smells, lighting and surfaces.



Artistic Mission explanation by Sladovna Písek

Partners then embarked on a walking tour from the Children's House to the IVEX Building, passing through the city centre, led by **Nasrin El Gharni** and **Sandra Barbiš**. The tour was an occasion to experience the city, with historical and cultural insights provided on its everyday life and the history of key buildings, and reflect on balancing different uses in Rijeka. Participants then reached the ExportDrvo and IVEX buildings, and were given insights into their history and current uses with tours of the buildings. The full day illustrated well the different steps of industrial heritage reuse, from concept ideas to full repurposing.



Tour of the city and presentation of the ExportDrvo building

On the second day, **João Dinis** and **Viola Marx** opened with a presentation about the EU-funded project, UrbanReLeaf, which features the cities of Dundee, Scotland, and Cascais, Portugal. The project centres on citizen-driven data collection to inform the design of public spaces, particularly urban parks, based on user perceptions in both cities. The presentation offered valuable insights into methodologies that strengthen informed and inclusive practices, key principles of Re-Value. It also highlighted an accessible approach to new technologies, using tools and data collection methods tailored to diverse user groups. For example, younger participants can easily share their experiences by scanning a QR code and completing an online questionnaire, while older participants have access to paper forms and a support person if needed.



Presentation of the EU-funded Urban Releaf project by João Dinis and Viola Marx

Following this, two presentations focused on citizen's engagement and participation through different initiatives.

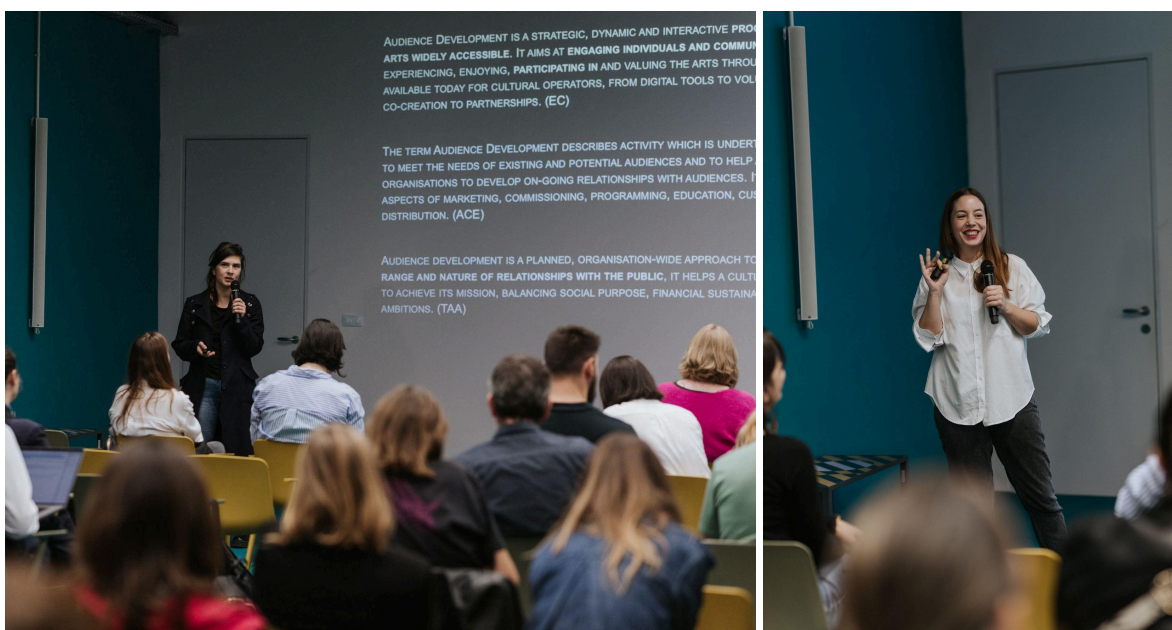
Tanja Kalčić shared her insights on citizen engagement and audience development from her role in the Rijeka European Capital of Culture 2020 project, where she led efforts to promote public participation. She discussed two key approaches to increasing citizen engagement: *cultural democratisation*, a top-down strategy, and *cultural democracy*, a grassroots, citizen-focused model. Rijeka 2020 significantly transformed the city's cultural landscape, which had historically overlooked public participation. The initiative sparked a lasting shift, fostering a structured and sustainable framework for audience engagement that continues to thrive today.

One of the standout initiatives she highlighted was a mobile van that brought the discussion space directly to neighbourhoods. This informal approachable space allowed residents to discuss local issues and

collaborate on solutions within the project framework. Invitations were later sent to residents, encouraging them to join a citizen assembly. There, they received practical guidance and mentorship from a local NGO, empowering them to take action in their communities.

Next, **Tanja Badanjak** presented the vision and activities of the City Library Rijeka, emphasising its pivotal role in fostering social development in the local community. By promoting a culture of reading, lifelong learning, innovation, and meaningful leisure activities, the library caters to residents of all ages. Its diverse programming includes year-round festivals and unique events like *Books in Awkward Places*, where authors are interviewed in unconventional settings such as supermarkets or dodgy playgrounds.

The library also hosts science-focused discussions, blending presentations with hands-on activities to engage audiences in innovative ways. With initiatives targeting everyone from children to senior citizens, the City Library serves as a hub for creativity, learning, and community connection.



Tanja Kalčić presents her work on public participation as part of Rijeka European Capital of Culture 2020 / Tanja Badanjak presents the vision and activities of the City library

Following the presentations, participants were invited to explore an exhibition highlighting the outcomes of the Rijeka Innovation Camp, organised as a Business Challenge. In this initiative, high school students teamed up to devise innovative business solutions aimed at enhancing public spaces, improving quality of life, or promoting sustainability. Their proposals focused on the connection to the sea and were presented to a panel of judges. Among the creative ideas were an educational summer camp focused on marine life, "Aquasecure"—a system designed to alert Rijeka residents about water levels and road accessibility—and "Eco Gift from the Coast," which repurposes recyclable materials into city-themed souvenirs.

RE-VALUE



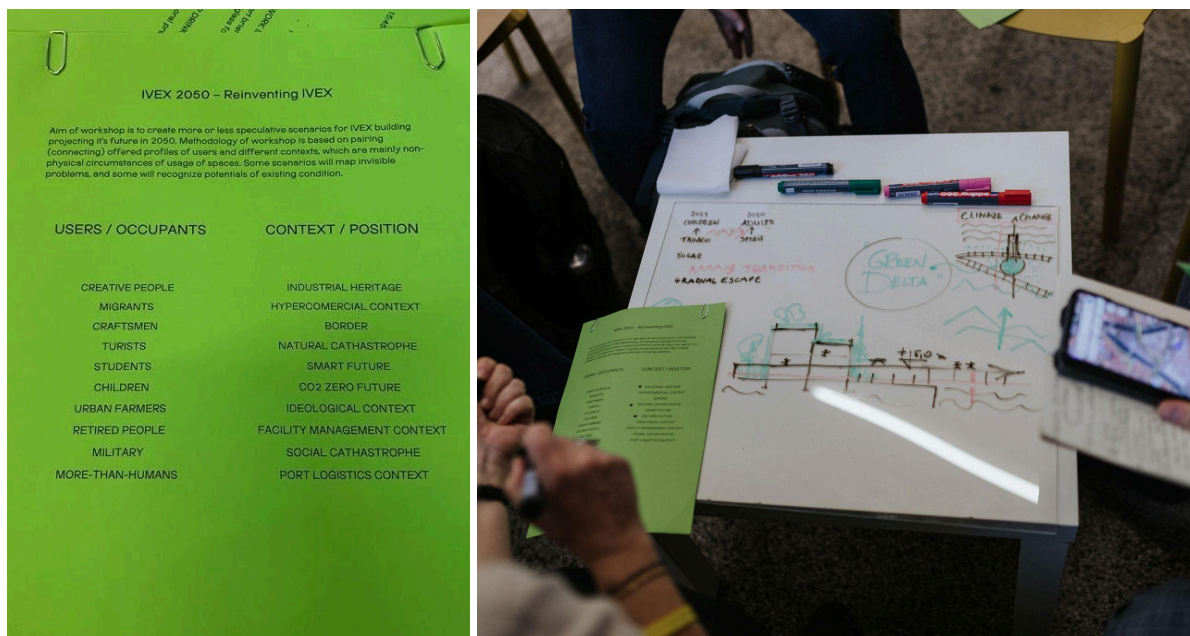
Results of the Junior Achievement Europe Innovation Camp hosted by the municipality, presented as posters during the Rijeka Study Visit

1.3 Advise & Encourage

Several workshops provided participants with opportunities to reflect on what they had seen in Rijeka and offer insights to the local team.

The first workshop, led by **Ida Križaj Leko**, took place on Day One in the IVEX building, which currently serves cultural and educational purposes. After a guided tour of the facility, Re-Value partners were divided into four groups to envision future possibilities for the building. They were tasked with identifying potential user groups and determining suitable uses. Ideas ranged from a retirement home with a slide into the water to a rewilded "Green Blue Delta" and an innovative "Ivy/IVEX" concept.

While many creative suggestions emerged, Ida Križaj Leko observed that most focused primarily on the building itself, rather than its integration with the surrounding infrastructure—such as roads, public spaces, and nearby buildings—an essential aspect of the project.



IVEX 2050 - Reinventing IVEX workshop

On **Day Two**, an industrial heritage poster speed-dating workshop took place. Participating cities and their local partners had prepared posters showcasing industrial heritage regeneration projects from their respective regions, accompanied by detailed case study sheets offering deeper insights into each initiative. The session aimed to inspire ideas for Rijeka's development.

Re-Value partners were invited to explore the posters, reflect on their experiences in Rijeka, and identify transferable concepts that could enhance Rijeka's project. This interactive approach encouraged participants to draw practical inspiration from diverse examples of heritage revitalisation.



Industrial heritage posters speed-dating workshop

1.4 Reflect & Plan

To conclude the study visit, NTNU organized a Knowledge Café and NEB Facility project-preparation workshop. Participants were divided into five groups to reflect on their ongoing projects and identify funding gaps that could not be addressed through Re-Value. Following this reflection, they were introduced to summaries of 14 upcoming 2025 funding calls supported by HORIZON-NEB and HORIZON-MISS. Each group reviewed the calls to pinpoint those best suited to their identified needs.

2 Industrial Heritage workshop insights

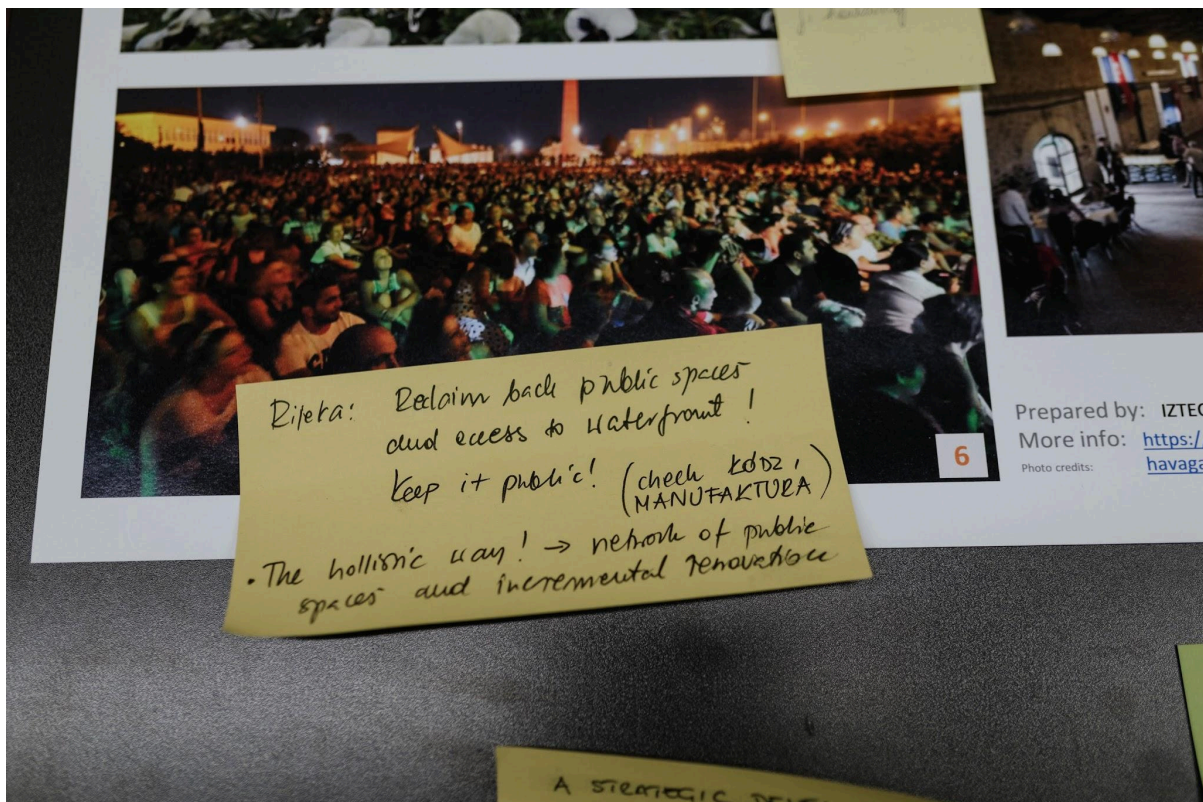
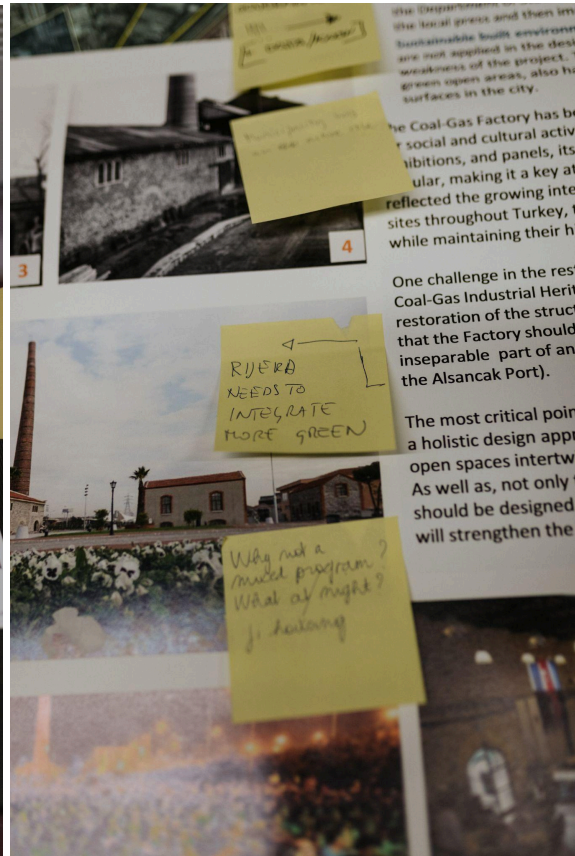
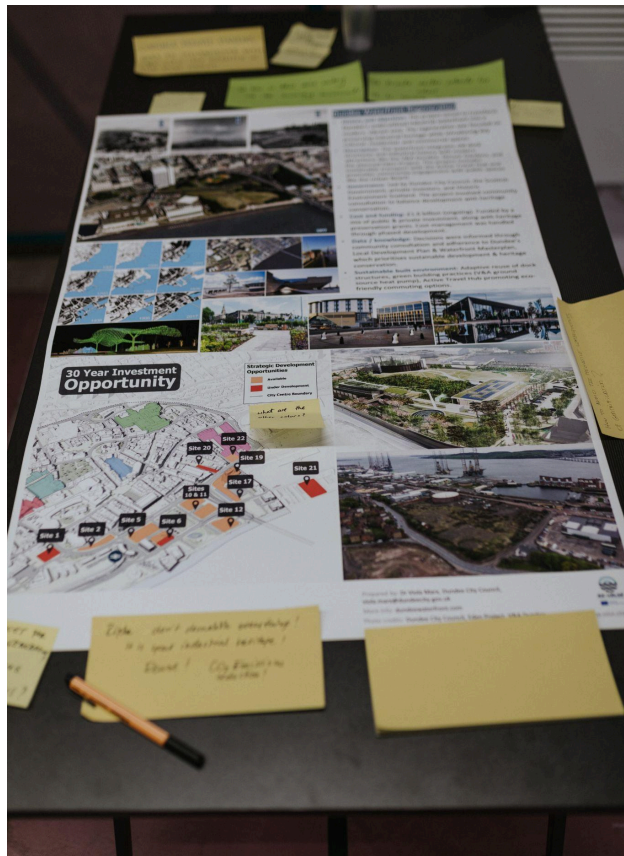
The industrial heritage workshop brought forward several valuable insights and reflections:

- **Exchange of good practices:** Participants expressed significant curiosity about the projects featured in the posters, highlighting an opportunity to exchange ideas after the study visit and to explore the compiled case study report in greater depth.
- **Sites and Connectivity:** Emphasis was placed on considering how sites are integrated into their broader environment during the discussions, particularly their connections to pedestrian infrastructure and surrounding areas.
- **Challenges with Port Ownership:** The issue of port ownership was identified as a challenge, with the consensus that it must be addressed to move forward effectively.
- **Heritage Preservation:** Participants underscored the importance of preserving industrial heritage, advocating against destruction in favor of adaptive reuse.
- **Small-Scale Interventions:** There was agreement on the value of implementing smaller, tactical interventions rather than waiting for a comprehensive final redevelopment plan - and the financial resources needed to make it happen.

After listening to these discussions and taking part in them, Rijeka's project coordinator, **Suzana Romac Belošević**, contributed additional insights, including:

- **Learning from Comparisons:** Comparisons with other projects can highlight not only what to emulate but also what to avoid. For example, while some discussions focused on creating spaces for children and young adults, Suzana noted that Rijeka has an ageing population, necessitating spaces that cater to these demographics as well.
- **Tactical Urbanism:** She emphasised the potential of tactical urbanism—testing ideas through smaller, temporary interventions—as a practical approach for Rijeka. Instead of waiting for an ideal, large-scale redevelopment, the city could benefit from incremental, immediate actions.
- **Challenges in Funding Allocation:** Suzana also pointed out the complexities municipalities face when allocating large funds. Supporting multiple smaller projects often presents logistical challenges compared to investing in a single, significant infrastructure change.

These insights provided valuable guidance for Rijeka's future development strategies, emphasising adaptability, inclusivity, and preservation.



Snapshots of results from the Industrial Heritage Speed-Dating Workshop

3 Knowledge Café / NEB Facility – Project Preparation workshop insights

During the Knowledge Café and NEB Facility workshop, **Deborah Navarra** and **Annemie Wyckmans** (NTNU) introduced participants to the 2025 HORIZON-NEB and HORIZON-MISS funding calls in the form of a “What if...” exercise. Partners and cities were encouraged to imagine new futures for a potential **Re-Value 2.0**. This approach used open-ended questions to spark ideas, challenge the usual ways of thinking, and explore fresh possibilities—perfect for uncovering unexpected synergies.

Participants split into four mixed groups to brainstorm innovative follow-up projects, focusing on new opportunities to tackle their challenges. The session was divided into two main parts, with first a focus on NEB Facility calls, grouped under three destinations:

- **Destination 1:** Connecting Green Transformation, Social Inclusion, and Local Democracy
- **Destination 2:** Circular and Regenerative Approaches for the Built Environment
- **Destination 3:** Innovative Funding and Business Models for Neighborhood Transformation

The second part of the session focused on how we can contribute to the EU Mission Program 2025. The main areas of discussion were:

- Helping local governments prepare for climate risks and build resilience.
- Restoring ecosystems along urban waterfronts.
- Creating climate-neutral cities with smarter, more circular urban planning.

More details about the calls are provided in this [PDF](#).

The workshop sparked dynamic discussions, offering participants an opportunity to deepen their understanding of Horizon Europe calls, their budgets, and the broader funding landscape. This not only equipped them with greater confidence in navigating funding opportunities but also helped the consortium better understand the cities’ priorities and capacity needs.

Key takeaways from the discussions included:

- **Topics:** Calls receiving the highest interest related to urban spaces and climate mitigation.
- **Scale of Action:** Participants examined the trade-offs between large-scale, comprehensive calls and smaller, action-oriented ones. They debated the advantages of larger projects, which offer more time and flexibility, versus smaller initiatives allowing more focused action.
- **Consolidating Project Funding:** Deliberations also focused on how new projects could build upon and complement the outcomes of Re-Value across participating cities. Partners explored which initiatives aligned well with Re-Value’s goals and which might diverge or address separate priorities.
- **Diverse Objectives:** The discussions highlighted the varied priorities and needs of municipalities, extending beyond Re-Value. Participants were encouraged to tailor their city trajectories, shaping projects to address their unique contexts and ambitions. Where they shared interests, participants were able to identify potential partnerships.

This collaborative session reinforced the importance of aligning funding strategies with both shared goals and local needs while fostering a broader understanding of funding mechanisms.



Snapshots from the Knowledge Café

About Re-Value

The Re-Value partnership consists of nine European waterfront cities and selected European organisations that work to make the urban transition irresistible for everyone. This is done by demonstrating how climate neutrality and urban quality can be aligned, by re-valuing the cities' connection to their waterfronts, strengthening co-benefits and mitigating potential adverse impacts.

Ålesund (Norway), Bruges (Belgium), Burgas (Bulgaria), and Rimini (Italy) demonstrate how integrated urban planning and design can be optimally deployed to achieve climate neutrality and significantly reduce GHG emissions by 2030.

In addition, Cascais (Portugal), Constanța (Romania), İzmir (Türkiye), Písek (Czechia), and Rijeka (Croatia) learn, replicate and develop their own participatory story-building, data-driven scenarios and financial and partnership models on integrated urban planning and design to accelerate their journeys to climate neutrality.

The partnership is coordinated by Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU) and is funded by the European Union's Research and innovation funding programme 'Horizon Europe'.

Learn more about the partnership and the outcomes on re-value-cities.eu.

Partners



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