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Executive Summary

This deliverable tells the story of the Sandbox city of Amsterdam, our work there in the CrAft project and the lessons we learned for working on a climate-neutral transition in a NEB way. Through structured interventions, co-creation workshops, and active monitoring, sandboxing facilitated the dialogue between local stakeholders, municipal actors, and cultural institutions. In doing so, we have deepened our understanding of collaborative governance, revealing both its potential and its tensions within existing institutional frameworks. The pilots demonstrated the necessity of flexibility, strategic positioning, and compelling narratives to align grassroots initiatives with municipal agendas. Our pilots, the Green Mile and het Groene Veld showed how externally initiated projects can gain legitimacy while influencing shifting municipal policies. The Sluisbuurt pilot highlighted strategies for embedding arts and culture into urban planning while balancing financial, spatial, and knowledge-based challenges.

CrAFt's impact has been significant in advancing climate neutrality within the NEB framework by fostering municipal engagement. While direct influence on pilot projects was limited by resources and timeframe, interventions strengthened project identities, legitimacy, and cross-sectoral connections. Importantly, CrAFt facilitated crucial dialogue between area development and cultural sectors, creating a foundation for long-term collaboration despite ongoing governance and policy challenges.

1. Sandboxing in Amsterdam

From December 2022 to October 2024, we applied the principles of sandboxing in Amsterdam. The ambition behind sandboxing was closely aligned with the overall objectives of CrAFt to move beyond one-off pilots and experiments and contribute to the upscaling of outcomes of the project.

1) **Refining and developing actionable local collaborative governance models to enable the combination of the three NEB values and the NEB principles and thereby accelerate the transition to climate neutrality .**
2) **Understanding the potential of arts and culture in the collaborative governance of projects focused on climate neutrality.**
3) **Initiating learning processes to facilitate both vertical (institutionalisation and system change within one city) and horizontal (transfer of knowledge to other cities) upscaling [1].**

The historic city of Amsterdam celebrates its 750th anniversary in 2025. The development of the city in the past decades shows its success as an attractive environment for business and living, but it also creates growing challenges by threatening many of its traditional spatial, social and cultural qualities.

Amsterdam's economy is historically quite mixed with transport and distribution via its large seaport and international airport Schiphol, the financial sector, industry, research and knowledge, tourism and hospitality, the cultural sector and creative industries and professional services[2].

Amsterdam as an egalitarian, affordable, culturally diverse and attractive city has come under pressure. The city still has a strong economic and cultural appeal and a historic, vibrant and compact cityscape but it needs to create new housing opportunities for a wide group of residents and balance economic growth with other social and cultural values. This has to be done in a timeframe in which major challenges relating to sustainability, including climate adaptation, climate mitigation/neutrality (circularity, energy transition), are setting new standards for urban development.

Sandboxing was introduced in 2015 in fintech as "a safe space where businesses can test innovative products and services without immediately facing full regulatory requirements" [3]. Others highlight it as a virtual space for developers to experiment with innovations, adjust features, share feedback, and gather user reactions[4]. Since CrAFt aims to test and refine local collaborative governance

[1] Doren *et* al. (2018)
[2] https://www.amsterdamsorteermachine.nl/nieuwe-economie
[3] Leckenby et al. (2021)
[4] Arntzen et al. (2019)

models before broader roll-out, the sandbox approach was adopted and tailored to Amsterdam.

We have worked in pilot projects to tackle challenges that arise when implementing new forms of collaborative governance. We also aimed to put the findings on the agenda at the city level. In the following chapters, we will discuss our work in the pilot projects[5], the impact CrAFt has had in Amsterdam, and the collaborative governance lessons we learned that are relevant for other cities.

[5] Two pilots (Marineterrein & Sluisbuurt) were the main focus of our work. In the other two pilots (Vrije Ruimte/het Groene Veld & the Green Mile) we worked less intensively and were supported by Steam Teams from CrAFt

2. Pilot project: Marineterrein

Marineterrein (Photo: Bureau Marineterrein)

Type of development: inner city innovation hub. This is one of the last undeveloped areas in the centre of the city.

Objectives: a Living Lab where technical sustainability innovations can be developed and tested in a controlled environment and scaled up in Amsterdam and other cities.

Relationship with NEB: *Sustainability* features prominently in the ambition of Marineterrein. *Arts and culture* are used to facilitate experimentation and adaptations, and in discussing the future developments of the area. Programmes and activities are undertaken to *include* residents, but also offer entrepreneurs, institutions and start-ups a space to experiment with users and collaborate on projects related to urban challenges.

Governance: An independent intermediate, Bureau Marineterrein, has a temporary assignment from the municipal and national governments to develop the living lab and the community in a way that includes local citizens.

Phase (cookbook): (Re)-act: After ten years of organic transformation, plans for the area needed to be re-adjusted since the military had decided to partially stay, and 40% of the district was allocated to housing.

Governance challenge: To retain the experimental character of the area preserving the legacy of the approach used in the temporary phase, and transfer

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe Research and Innovation programme under Grant Agreement No. 101056946.

knowledge (including the governance model) to the next phase when the area will become partially residential.

Interest in sandboxing: Bureau Marineterrein wanted to create a well-thought-out legacy and collaboration model supporting the future of the area. In the framework of the temporary assignment, the timing of CrAft interventions was perfect and the urgency of addressing the governance challenges was high.

Relationship with European (CrAFt) cities: Many towns have inner-city industrial and military areas that are being redeveloped, and many of them wish to retain the character of temporary (cultural) initiatives.

2.1 Sandboxing at Marineterrein

Sandboxing at Marineterrein focused on helping Bureau Marineterrein define and maintain the legacy for the next phase. At the same time, we aimed to distil lessons relevant to other cities and projects and gained insight into the impact of CrAFt.

Identity & Trust workshop: This workshop was developed based on an initial scan of the pilot and the governance. We created a list of variables related to the NEB impact model[6], NEB compass[7], and a framework on collaborative governance[8]. It started with an imaginative exercise to bring all participants into the right mindset of their own legacy and how they would like to reuse it in the future. Then, we asked participants to select their own 'core values' using the already mentioned variables we had printed on coloured paper and scattered on the table. Working in pairs, they organised them in two identity shapes and related them to their vision of governance and legacy. The purpose was to connect to underlying needs that had never been documented. The exercise resulted in a clearer definition of the core identity and vision for the legacy, supporting future actions within the Bureau Marineterrein team.

[6] https://craft-cities.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/CrAFt-NEB-Impact-Model-Summary.docx.pdf
[7] https://new-european-bauhaus.europa.eu/tools-and-resources/use-compass_en
[8] Emerson et al. (2012)

Future vision and identity workshop (Photo: Ruben Logies)

'Conversation Starter' NEB statements: At a Consortium event organised by Circollab[9], we used 6 statements related to the NEB values to help attendees reflect on issues related to the development, growth, and sustainability aspect of the Marineterrein area. It was clear that arts & culture can play an important role in telling the stories about the change that has already happened or is needed, or about current issues, but people realised that there are many forces at play and it's difficult to integrate all interests of all stakeholders, including nature. The exercise proved that using statements related to NEB can trigger useful discussions and that insights and knowledge can be gathered and even used quantitatively when there are enough participants. The statements have to be well prepared: they need to be polarising, simple and clear, and divided into the NEB categories Sustainable, Beautiful, Together.

Nightwalk at Marineterrein during the CrAFt consortium meeting (Photo: Ruben Logjes)

Images: Circollab event - statement discussions during the event. *Images: Nightwalk at Marineterrein.*

[9] https://openresearch.amsterdam/nl/page/84670/circollab

The Circolab event (Photo: Laura-anne Grimbergen / AHK Culture Club

'Nightwalk' Marineterrein: This silent walk immersed our CrAFt consortium partners in Marineterrein, aiming to retell the story of Bureau MT and the area. The content was distributed via WhatsApp, where all participants could read, watch, listen to the stories at their own pace, absorbing the history of past events and artistic impressions related to the physical features of the walk. The experience proved that reusing information related to legacy in a creative way helps to tell the story in a concise way and creates a mindset where you can be in the moment and almost physically feel the information. After the walk we gathered insights via the WhatsApp chat. The nightwalk format was inspired by a local artist who had conducted it for the students of the minor Urban Interaction Design in which CrAFt was a project partner.

2.2 Impact of CrAFt at Marineterrein

We facilitated Bureau MT to define the significance of their actions in line with NEB values and principles, thus supporting their efforts to encourage collaboration among the collective, citizens and neighbours, and the involvement of the arts in reiterating their vision during the transition of the area. Despite the lack of institutional support, they had managed to finance these initiatives independently in the past and we helped in positioning these efforts within the bigger European NEB ambition.

During the preparation of the podcast series *De Ziel van Marineterrein* ("The Soul of Marineterrein") about the past decade of organic transformation in the area, we helped narrate the story from the NEB perspective, highlighting their position in relation to NEB values and principles throughout the governance process.

The initial quick scan and the NEB Impact Model[10] helped us identify their position regarding the Impact Model categories and recognise overlooked aspects such as local embeddedness, capacity for joint action, and sustainability. Through our work with stakeholders like Circolab we raised awareness of the value of repurposing underused buildings, e.g. for experimental temporary affordable housing, as an opportunity for Bureau MT.

The creative session Identity Workshop resulted in the recognition of Bureau MT's core identity, which reiterated their vision and plans for future actions. The unique use of variables plotted on the 2 Identity cores offered the team a way to reflect on a shared vision for the next phase and become aware of the governance model already in place and how it could be enhanced in the future. This set-up can easily be reused several times by themselves and by others.

2.3 Governance lessons

We gained insight in the value of **reusing and combining existing knowledge and resources.** Bureau MT brought their experience and legacy that enabled us to identify and frame their governance process. We, on the other hand, combined different tools and methods we were testing in CrAFt, the other Sandbox cities and pilot experiences with concepts of collaborative governance and the reflexive monitoring approach.

Additionally, we can distinguish a number of concrete lessons from Bureau Marineterrein:

Crafting the community: Curate and keep the community actively involved. Select a good mix of stakeholders who share the same values and ambitions, ensuring that the collective addresses the issues from different perspectives. In doing this, first be clear about what your set of values and ambition is. Then, be selective and keep re-aligning stakeholders to their shared values and ambition.

Crafting the place: Create a vibrant meeting place with events, community and projects to facilitate gathering various stakeholders and interests. For instance, the yearly event 'Groenmarkt' integrates student projects with residents from the area and companies from Marineterrein, stimulating willingness to help each other out and become part of this new place.

Crafting the how: Facilitate how people come together and how they can work together. Use a framework for trial-and-error processes, such as living labs. Be

[10] https://craft-cities.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/CrAFt-NEB-Impact-Model-Summary.docx.pdf

open to fail, learn, share, scale, and replicate. Think long-term how experiments and learnings can be transferred based on shared values and issues.

Crafting with all: Engage artists, students, policy makers, researchers, and companies to address pressing sustainability challenges in creative and innovative ways. Invite representatives of other cities, districts, or neighbourhoods to the area to be inspired. The individual expertise of employees who can work on multidisciplinary levels is vital to successfully combine knowledge (e.g. sustainability, networking, architecture, regulations from the municipality, creation of events, campaigning, and many more), but stakeholders such as Bureau Marineterrein need to take on a role beyond the one of coordinator to make long-term impactful decisions and actions.

3. Pilot project: Vrije Ruimte – Het Groene Veld

An impression of 't Groene Veld (Photo: Maria Kapetijns)

Type of development: City edge temporary development with reduced regulation, focused on the cultural sector with the freedom to experiment.

Objectives: *Vrije Ruimte initiatieven* ("Free Space Initiatives") are semi-public, non-commercial spaces which allow communities to experiment, self-organise, and express themselves beyond institutional control, offering alternatives amid rapid gentrification and densification. They promote diversity, social cohesion, and alternative ways of living and creating. Free Space challenges conventional urban planning by emphasising bottom-up governance and the right to the city for all groups.

Relationship with NEB: Vrije Ruimte naturally aligns with NEB. Unlike traditional urban planning approaches, which often focus on large-scale infrastructure and economic growth, free spaces demonstrate how grassroots initiatives contribute to urban resilience by fostering cultural diversity, ecological awareness, and participatory governance.

Governance: Vrije Ruimte is initiated by the municipality of Amsterdam to bridge bottom-up self-organisation with institutional recognition and support. Unlike traditional urban planning, where governance is often centralised, Het Groene Veld fosters collaboration between independent cultural actors, knowledge institutions, local communities, and the municipality, aiming to establish a sustainable and inclusive model for free spaces in Amsterdam.

Phase (cookbook): Iterating between decide/commit, plan and do

Governance challenge: Ensuring long-term recognition and protection while maintaining grassroots autonomy. It aims to secure long-term land use

agreements that protect against displacement, strengthen partnerships between citizens, academia, and policymakers to develop innovative governance models, and advocate municipal policies that integrate free spaces into sustainable urban development.

Interest in sandboxing: For Het Groene Veld, sandboxing was an opportunity to develop arguments to remain in the space and increase their legitimacy.

Relationship with European (CrAFt) cities: Many cities in Europe are experiencing pressure on the real-estate markets and searching for possibilities to retain valuable 'free' spaces.

3.1 Sandboxing in Vrije Ruimte

We aimed to explore how temporary, self-organised initiatives can transition into stable, recognised urban assets with a long-term position in the city's governance structures. Our role in this process was both observatory and participatory, balancing research with interventions led by student projects. The interventions focused on:

- **Raising Awareness** – Demonstrating the cultural, social, and ecological contributions of free spaces to urban resilience.
- **Providing Legitimacy** – Engaging municipal actors and policy-makers to recognise free spaces as essential components of city-making.
- **Encouraging Experimentation of future visions of urban planning** – Free spaces are a place where counter-societies are shaped. Experimenting within our interventions allowed for defining new visions for urban planning.

Student Projects – Engaging Future Urban Thinkers and Storytellers

Vrije Ruimte serves as a learning environment for students from various disciplines such as urban planning, design, and cultural studies. Through collaborative research, fieldwork, and artistic interventions, students contribute to reframing the role of free spaces in urban development. By engaging students, the project not only fosters fresh perspectives but also builds a new generation of city-makers who value inclusivity and experimental urbanism. This approach has been implemented in two AUAS minors: Storyhacking and Virtual Reality.

Story-hacking – Rewriting the Narrative of Free Spaces

One of the main challenges in legitimising free spaces is the dominant urban development discourse, which often prioritises economic growth and

market-driven urbanisation. Through story-hacking, Vrije Ruimte challenges these narratives by curating new urban stories that highlight the cultural and societal benefits of alternative spaces. This includes:

- Producing multimedia content (videos, articles, and exhibitions) to showcase the lived experiences of free spaces.
- Developing counter-narratives that emphasise the social innovation and artistic experimentation taking place in these spaces.
- Engaging with policy-makers and media to reshape the public perception of free spaces from temporary or marginal to integral components of the urban fabric.

VR Minor[11] – Immersive Experiences for Policy-makers and Citizens

The VR Minor was an innovative approach to allow policy-makers, urban planners, and local citizens to experience free spaces in an interactive, immersive format. Through VR simulations, users can:

- **Explore different free space scenarios**, visualising how these areas evolve over time and how this counteracts to a densifying city.
- **Understand governance challenges** such as land-use negotiations, community participation, and municipal support and express the value of the spaces connected to the NEB values and principles.

3.2 Impact of CrAFt

The student interventions within Vrije Ruimte, particularly Story-hacking and VR Minor, have contributed to both Het Groene Veld and the broader city of Amsterdam.

Legitimacy and Engagement: Through the engagement of students in research, storytelling, and immersive digital experiences, the interventions have demonstrated the societal importance of Het Groene Veld, making it harder for policy-makers to ignore them. Repeating these projects will catalyse the impact. The Story-hacking campaigns provided Het Groene Veld with new insights and tools to reach broader audiences and communicate their impact more effectively. By experimenting with different story-telling formats and campaign strategies, the student projects have enabled the space to better articulate its value—not only to the surrounding community, but they also 'hacked' the

[11] A semester-long interdisciplinary programme where students focus on a specific them and project

narrative in a broader sense in how society including policy-makers and cultural institutions value "urban development".

The student projects also showed that legitimacy for free spaces does not emerge automatically—it must be cultivated. Initially, students were often unaware of or indifferent to the concept of free space. However, through their work at Het Groene Veld, they developed a deeper understanding of its importance and recognised the social, cultural, and ecological significance of these spaces, demonstrating that direct involvement is a key factor in fostering legitimacy and engagement. This suggests that sustained engagement is essential in creating broader public and institutional support for free spaces.

Beyond local impact, these student-led interventions have also influenced the broader policy landscape. The examples and findings from the projects have been shared with Spaces of Urgency, a municipal initiative exploring the role of free spaces in Amsterdam's future. By contributing to these larger discussions, the interventions have played a role in shaping how free spaces are perceived at the city level.

New Governance Practices: The interventions have also provided insights into how new governance models can be developed to better support free spaces. Traditionally, governance approaches in urban planning tend to be top-down, regulatory, and rigid, making it difficult for informal grassroots spaces like Het Groene Veld to thrive. The student projects have highlighted the need for a more adaptive and facilitative governance style—one that acknowledges experimentation, temporary uses, and community-led development as integral parts of the city's growth.

3.3 Collaborative governance Lessons

Connecting to networks and building alliances: For Het Groene Veld, governance is not a fixed structure but a constant process of adaptation. The space exists within an environment where multiple external forces—municipal policies, infrastructure projects, zoning regulations, and financial constraints—shape its possibilities. This means that, in order to survive, Het Groene Veld must continuously navigate shifting urban priorities and position itself as an indispensable asset to the city. One of the key strategies Het Groene Veld employs is building strong alliances with various stakeholders such as residents, social organisations, cultural institutions, and environmental groups—all of whom contribute to making the space more resilient. By embedding itself within these networks, Het Groene Veld ensures that its value is not only recognised by its direct users, but also by broader communities who speak on its behalf.

Aligning narratives: Het Groene Veld actively in negotiations with the city, adapting to urban demands while maintaining its core principles. For example, in response to municipal planning constraints, the community has worked to quantify and formalise its contributions—whether through demonstrating its social impact, ecological benefits, or its role in public engagement. This ability to align its narrative with municipal priorities has helped to ensure that Het Groene Veld remains a relevant and active part of the city.

Dedicated capacity & resources: For the municipality, the challenge lies in recognising and supporting free spaces without over-regulating them. While there is growing acknowledgment of their value, traditional urban governance models often struggle with the fluid and informal nature of these spaces. We see a clear need for a different approach—one that goes beyond rigid planning frameworks and instead focuses on facilitation, flexibility, and long-term support. One of the key lessons for the municipality is the importance of dedicated capacity and resources. Our interactions with the free spaces policy domain have shown time and time again, that without structured municipal support, free spaces remain vulnerable to displacement and policy neglect. Moving forward, securing long-term funding and programmatic recognition will be crucial in ensuring that free spaces are not treated as temporary anomalies but as permanent fixtures within the city's planning strategies. At the same time, this requires internal coordination within the municipality. Departments such as urban planning, real estate, sustainability, and cultural policy often have competing priorities, making it difficult to develop a cohesive strategy for free spaces.

A new approach to regulations: Another challenge for the municipality is redefining its relationship with regulations. Current policy frameworks often prioritise control and predictability, making it difficult to accommodate the experimental nature of free spaces. However, the interventions have shown that urban policies can embrace flexibility without compromising governance. This means finding ways to work within existing rules while also carving out space for exceptions, trials, and adaptive policy-making.

4. Pilot project: Green Mile

Render of a possible transformation of the Stadhouderskade (Design UNStudio. Copyright Plomp)[12]

Type of development: Inner-city transformation of a major urban traffic artery into a linear park/green area. The aim is to metamorphose the Stadhouderskade, currently one of the busiest streets in the city and part of the city centre ring, into a green, sustainable, safe, and vibrant thoroughfare for all life forms.

Objectives: To create a livable street/urban area around the Stadhouderskade for humans, plants, and animals through co-creation with residents, organisations, businesses and the Amsterdam municipality.

Relationship with NEB: *Sustainability* is interpreted as the quality of life for people, animals and plants. *Aesthetics/arts and culture* are present in the form of one of the partners of the bottom-up initiative called Green Mile (Rijksmuseum) and there is interest in exploring the potential of creative methods and interventions in the approach of the Green Mile. *Inclusivity* is central in the Green Mile approach as they aim to work for and with residents, businesses and organisations in the area.

Governance: The Green Mile was founded in 2022 by Heineken, Rijksmuseum, the Nederlandsche Bank, AUAS, Blending Bricks, and UNStudio. It was born in the realisation that, in deciding priorities and developing solutions, different perspectives and broader partnership are needed in which citizens and companies have an important added value.

Phase (cookbook): decide & commit/plan

Governance challenge: Finding a way of engaging a diverse group of residents (young people, houseboat residents, homeless people) in activities and decision

[12] https://www.greenmileamsterdam.com

making, organising the governance of the foundation in relation to the municipality.

Interest in sandboxing: High interest due to limited capacity within the foundation to develop appropriate governance structures and the strong desire to involve AUAS researchers and students in the work of the foundation.

Relationship with European (CrAFt) cities: Many CrAFt cities are developing various types of linear parks, sometimes transforming on old infrastructure. Also, the governance of the project with a limited role for the government is relevant for many cities in Europe where similar business/civil society initiatives are taking shape.

4.1 Sandboxing at the Green Mile

Because of the strong position of the AUAS in the Green Mile foundation, our team first positioned itself closely to the AUAS community manager working on student engagement and the broader development of the Green Mile community. The sandboxing consisted of trying to understand the Green Mile with its history, practices, and challenges and in developing and applying interventions to help it address these challenges. For the exploratory part of our work, we used a combination of methods from formal semi-structured interviews, the analysis of existing sources, and observations made during our work on the interventions. In our capacity as researchers from AUAS, we recorded these observations and ensuing reflections in a project logbook. Most interventions on the Green Mile were carried out by STEAM teams. We had the ambition to organise a roundtable with representatives from the foundation and the municipality to reflect on the findings of our work in the pilot and to develop strategies for dealing with the outstanding challenges. Due to unforeseen staff shortages, this did not take place. Between September 2022 and April 2024, three STEAM teams worked on various governance challenges on the Green Mile.

STEAM team Master Urban Management

Goal: To improve citizen engagement

Implementation: The students first addressed the challenges surrounding collaborative governance on the Green Mile. Then, they designed a plan to enhance resident involvement and to implement it together with the foundation. The planned intervention broadly consisted of the following:
First, gain insight into challenges such as involving residents and translating thinking into action through reflection. Then, key figures such as the area broker and the community centre coordinator are connected to stimulate collaboration.

After that, the group is expanded, and a core team is formed to establish a Community of Practice (CoP). This core team organises a resident meeting to strengthen planning.

Outcome: Due to differences of option on the focus of the interventions and timing with the foundation, the interventions could not be carried out as planned. However, the involvement of the STEAM team ensured that the urgency of resident involvement was placed on the agenda, and a roundtable session was held at the initiative of the students, where a strategy for engaging residents was worked on.

STEAM team Bachelor Social Work

Goal: Help the Dutch National Bank (one of the members of the Green Mile Foundation) determine how the pavilion around its building could meet the needs of various groups using the area, including homeless people. The original idea was to provide this group with lockers to temporarily store their belongings.

Implementation: The team conducted exploratory research among the users and residents of the area to gain insight into what they, particularly the homeless, needed. The idea was to create a design for the use of the pavilion.

Outcome: Due to alignment issues with the Green Mile and the Dutch National Bank, the students were unable to complete their task of creating a new design.

STEAM team Minor Klimaatbestendige Stad

Model of new design for the Van Gendtbrug (Tristan Hamminga | Robin Decock | Terry van Schijndel | Erik Rademakers)

Goal: To inspire the foundation on how design and imagination can be used to communicate spatial interventions. The team worked on the redesign of one of

the bridges on the Green Mile to meet technical requirements and the needs of residents, plants, and animals alike.

Implementation: The work was carried out by an interdisciplinary team that conducted research into the bridge's surroundings, technical aspects of materials, and the needs of users, leading to a final redesign of the bridge.

Outcome: The Green Mile Foundation found the design inspiring, but it remains to be seen if the students' approach will be used, and if their work will have a long-term impact.

4.2 The impact of CrAFt

Some of the interventions by the STEAM teams did not achieve their objectives. Looking at the underlying causes, we uncover another governance challenge. The members of the Green Mile primarily work within their core tasks. For example, the Dutch National Bank mainly contributes to its direct surroundings. The AUAS contributes through student and research projects. Additionally, the director of the foundation has a mandate to develop the foundation with ideas on how this should happen, along with limitations in terms of time and resources. In the case of the STEAM team projects, tensions become visible when the ways of working and thinking of the partners meet. For instance, at an educational institution like the AUAS, the learning experience is paramount, and projects are allowed to fail as long as students learn from them. Logically, the other organisations and businesses are more result-oriented and have different expectations and ways of working. It was only by working in CrAFt that these tensions became visible. In a sense, it is unfortunate that not all interventions achieved their goals. At the same time, we gained valuable insight for the partners in the Green Mile and for other NEB projects, because NEB is about bringing together people from different backgrounds, all embedded in organisations with their own procedures and practices.

The pilot had a significant impact on the growth and development of the students who participated. The direct impact of CrAFt on the pilot was, in this case, limited to inspiring the foundation members or bringing challenges to the agenda. However, the involvement of the students ensured that we now have a better understanding of an important challenge.

4.3 Collaborative governance lessons

We can distil a number of lessons from our experiences at the Green Mile:

A positive and flexible narrative about the future: At the start of the project, partners and local stakeholders created a positive vision for what the Stadhouderskade could become for people, animals, and nature—deliberately not framed as being against issues like traffic or litter. The goal was to spark imagination and invite participation. UNStudio led a design process that produced visualisations of the area's potential, helping to build a shared vision, reach new people, and make valuable connections. These renders made the dream of the Green Mile tangible and helped engage a broader audience. The foundation also organised events like the launch to spread this positive narrative. A key strength of the Green Mile is its broad, flexible vision, allowing new partners to easily become part of it. This is evident in its focus on citizen engagement and education. The foundation model suits this flexibility, making it easier to involve diverse stakeholders, including residents.

Characteristics of members and their organisations: The members' backgrounds, networks, and skills are key to the foundation's success. They have strong, positive relationships and can easily connect, which supports coordination in this early phase. Many hold similar roles in their organisations, often working at the intersection of different domains in the areas of sustainability, inclusion, and public relations. These roles demand openness, flexibility, and bridge-building—crucial for the Green Mile's cross-domain approach. Members, including the director, share a strong passion and bring high energy to the foundation. Just as important was the connection of the foundation to the developments in the partner organisations. The Green Mile aligned well with developments within partner organisations, though each had a different "window of opportunity." The Rijksmuseum focused more on sustainability and visitor experience, the Dutch National Bank aimed to reach a broader public, and AUAS worked on building long-term city partnerships. The Green Mile's focus on sustainability and local engagement allowed each partner to pursue internal goals while contributing to the liveability of the Stadhouderskade.

Leadership: The Green Mile clearly demonstrates that different types of leadership are needed at different stages of a project's development. In the first phase, it was about driven pioneers who knew what they wanted and could effectively convey the story. Now, the Green Mile has reached a phase where more facilitative leadership is needed, allowing space to adapt the story of the Green Mile and its focus based on new needs.

Relationships with stakeholders: The Green Mile, with its new form of governance, has advantages in its dealings with the Municipality of Amsterdam, but it also presents challenges. In the start-up phase, most of the contact went through the area broker. This is the usual route for citizen initiatives. In the current

phase, we see that the foundation struggles to make contact at the right level because the issues the foundation is dealing with may be addressed at a higher level. At times, it is possible to exert influence at the strategic level through existing networks. For example, Heineken's contacts with the mayor help to demonstrate the value of the Green Mile. The residents in the area see the foundation as something that represents their interests towards, for example, the municipality. At the same time, due to the prominent names associated with the foundation, some people have developed the expectation that the foundation has a lot of money to invest, but that is not the case.

5. Pilot project: Sluisbuurt

The current situation and an impression of the future development at Sluisbuurt (https://www.amsterdam.nl/projecten/sluisbuurt/#PagCls_16982147)

Type of development: Sustainable district development and development of a new neighbourhood that are a result of the expanding city.

Objectives: To use culture and creativity as catalysts for a sustainable and inclusive new neighbourhood with its own identity.

Relationship with NEB: In the urban development plans, *sustainability* is a key principle. At the Sluisbuurt, art and culture is seen as a catalyst for stimulating circularity in the neighbourhood. *Aesthetics and art and culture* are present in the temporary cultural space Baggerbeest and projects developed by different stakeholders in the framework of placemaking. *Inclusivity* is central in the approach of Baggerbeest.

Governance: Baggerbeest is managed by the foundation Urban Resort and financed by the municipality. The programming is developed with local stakeholders like InHolland University of Applied Sciences (hosting Sluislab, a local living lab), the arts academy Sandberg and creative organisations, educational partners and residents.

Phase (cookbook): The project is in the do-phase: the area is being actively developed. For some parts of the project, there is still room for further planning .

Governance challenge: Finding ways for arts and culture to play a more structural role in city development, beyond placemaking. How to bridge the gap between different stakeholders and interests and integrate bottom-up initiatives and long-term urban planning.

Interest in sandboxing: The partners in Baggerbeest were eager to learn how their initiative could become a more structural part of the local urban development. The sandboxing was a way to find strategies and make connections with the municipality.

Relationship with European (CrAFt) cities: Urban development strategies in Amsterdam and Europe can learn from the pilot how arts and culture can play a role in creating sustainable, inclusive and beautiful neighbourhoods.

5.1 Sandboxing in Sluisbuurt & impacts

Our approach to sandboxing in the Sluisbuurt pilot focused on exploring how arts and culture can evolve from temporary initiatives to permanent roles in the city's development, highlighting their potential to shape vibrant, sustainable urban spaces. We carried out the following interventions:

Interviews and Impact Stories

These interviews aimed to gather insights into their perspectives on the integration of arts and culture in urban development and the challenges faced in the Sluisbuurt project. We focused on their roles, experiences, and visions for the neighbourhood's future. We interviewed Mirjana Mirjanovic (Urban Designer, Municipality of Amsterdam), Karel Koch (Lab Lead, Sluislab), and Marijn van der Eyden (Local Artist). The interviews provided a deeper understanding of the governance structures and relationships within the project, highlighting key challenges and opportunities for integrating NEB principles and values.

Local Advisory Team event with working group on Sluisbuurt

The CrAFt Local Advisory Team (LAT) came together in September 2022 to discuss the governance challenges in the selected pilots in Amsterdam, amongst which also the Sluisbuurt case with the aim of scaling of successful approaches and peer learning in the city amongst different stakeholders. The participants shared relevant insights on strategies and approaches in other parts of the city. This peer-learning group led to new connections, deeper understanding of the mechanisms that make the arts and cultural engagement successful, and to a new strategic focus on New European Bauhaus within the general strategy department for urban development.

Sharing experience and approach in the Dutch NEB network

The Dutch New European Bauhaus network consists of about 30 partners of the NEB initiative and is coordinated by the national Rijksbouwmeesteratelier[13] since 2021. The national contact point for NEB organises regular partner meetings to exchange best practices, ideas for collaboration and space for reflection on NEB in the Netherlands. AUAS co-organised the partner meeting together with the Sound and Vision Institute in January 2024. The focus of the meeting was the role of arts and culture in urban development. The artwork of Marijn van der Eyden was presented as part of the Sluisbuurt pilot. The network event served as a platform to exchange practices of artistic research, focusing on the power of imagination for social engagement in transitions. The session was a way to get feedback and learn from the national NEB community to build on experiences and projects beyond Amsterdam. It was a good way to deep- and up-scale the NEB values and principles in the Dutch ecosystem.

Artistic Intervention by Marijn van der Eyden

Marijn van der Eyden is an artist-in-residence in the creative space 'Baggerbeest' situated in the Sluisbuurt. She uses her creative skills to reflect on and participate in urban development. She contributed to CrAFt with her artwork[14] representing an archive of stories of former residents and the rich cultural heritage of the area. The artistic intervention was used as a conversation tool to examine the role of arts in urban development. Marijn captures the dynamic narratives of the Sluisbuurt area using her interdisciplinary background in mathematics, architecture, and arts. She collaborates with residents to document their stories and cultural heritage, particularly in the context of rapid urbanisation and

[13] https://www.collegevanrijksadviseurs.nl/projecten/new-european-bauhaus
[14] https://www.marijnvandereyden.nl/projects/Het%20Zeeburgereiland

redevelopment. She built an archive of stories of artists in the urban area before the new Sluisbuurt development. By actively engaging with residents and gathering their stories, Marijn creates a collective archive that not only reflects the history of the area but also strengthens community ties and showcases the underlying perspectives within the larger area development process. Her work in Baggerbeest fosters a sense of ownership among residents, encouraging them to participate in shaping the future of their neighbourhood. This intervention exemplifies how art can influence urban development policies and promote inclusive approaches to community engagement. The presentation of the artwork took place during the CrAFt event 'CrAFting Tomorrow's Cities' in February 2024.

Workshops during CrAFt event

During the CrAFt event 'CrAFting Tomorrow's Cities' in February 2024 in Amsterdam[15], we organised a plenary session at the Sluisbuurt about the role of arts and culture in urban development governance. Afterwards about 80 participants from all over Europe were invited to engage in a series of excursions. To showcase and experience how arts and culture contribute to collaboration and forge a collective identity in the new neighbourhood.Participants chose one of the following workshops:

- "Art for Commoning" Tour: a guided tour showing art developed and tested in Sluisbuurt to trigger collaboration in the neighbourhood.
- A guided tour at Broedplaats Baggerbeest to learn more about the vision and role of the temporary pop-up incubator for artists and how they contribute to the development of the neighbourhood in collaboration with the municipality and the community.
- "Art and Greening" Excursion: a visit to the Garden Department run by alumni of the Gerrit Rietveld Academy showing the development of the permaculture garden in co-creation with the neighbourhood. Exploring how artists use the garden project for textile art and the long-term impact of the garden project on neighbourhood design.
- Two workshops on Civic Participation in Urban Development Through Creative Methods. Participants learned about participatory methodologies involving future thinking and imagination. One workshop was on intergenerational thinking for urban development, based on the Transition Scapes project of the research group Civic Interaction Design at AUAS, the other was a serious gaming project by Plou.

[15] This was our annual consortium meeting, in Amsterdam, with CrAFt partners, cities, NEB Alliance, and local stakeholders

The workshops were fully booked, and the feedback from workshop leaders and participants was very positive. The sessions created new insights, brought together a great variety of stakeholders, and the interactive set-up reflected the CrAFt approach of action instead of only listening.

Roundtable Discussion

The roundtable discussion (Photo: Mareile Zuber

The roundtable discussion aimed to explore how arts and culture in the Sluisbuurt can transition from temporary roles to permanent contributions in urban development. This dialogue is critical for aligning stakeholders on the importance of integrating cultural initiatives into the ongoing urban transformation. The discussion was moderated by Professor Stan Majoor (Coordination of Urban Issues), focusing on key themes relevant to the New European Bauhaus (NEB) principles such as the value of arts and culture in enhancing social cohesion, the balance between temporality and permanence, and the need for innovative space usage. Participants included representatives from the Municipality of Amsterdam, Sluislab, Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences (AUAS), Baaibuurt Collective, and other community stakeholders. The format allowed for an open dialogue on the integration of arts and culture into urban development. The roundtable yielded a deeper understanding among stakeholders of the challenges and opportunities for embedding arts and culture into urban

development. The insights will inform future strategies and policies aimed at ensuring that the cultural dimension of Sluisbuurt is recognised and sustained.

Participation in Community Meetings

AUAS researchers engage in community gatherings such as the public event "Zinkende Rafelrand" at Pakhuis de Zwijger and neighbourhood meet-ups at Baggerbeest, along with dialogues with Baaibuurt and Symbiocene. The aim was to connect with the community, understand local concerns, and promote collaborative dialogue between residents and stakeholders as well as share insights from the Sluisbuurt pilot, and gather feedback from community members to inform ongoing development efforts. This intervention built trust within the community, enhanced the visibility of the Sluisbuurt project, and ensured that local voices were heard in the decision-making process.

5.2 Collaborative governance lessons

Arts and culture as catalysts for inclusive urban development: Arts and culture can drive inclusive urban development and improve liveability. They foster social cohesion by connecting diverse communities and giving space to personal stories, as seen in Marijn van den Eyden's artwork highlighting unheard voices. Cultural activities bring residents together, strengthen community ties, and enhance well-being. The key challenge is making this impact permanent. Cities could address this by embedding cultural initiatives in urban strategies and protecting spaces for cultural expression through policy.

A nomadic cultural programme: Temporary spaces can support long-term cultural impact. Flexible regulations allow for creative, community-driven experiments that do not fit permanent structures. To sustain successful initiatives, cities can help them transition into stable formats. Agreements with developers—e.g. using vacant plinths in new areas like Sluisbuurt—can embed culture into early neighbourhood growth. A nomadic cultural programme using rotating temporary spaces keeps art visible and impactful over time. This strategy strengthens community identity and supports the financial sustainability of cultural organisations, enabling longer-term planning and investment in arts and culture.

Multifunctional space as a solution: The lack of space and funding for inclusive creative initiatives can be addressed through multifunctional use of urban spaces. Combining functions in public and private venues fosters collaboration across sectors and supports local initiatives. Partnerships between artists, cultural organisations, and other stakeholders create social and economic

value. City planning guidelines and incentives for adaptable design can help make this approach scalable and sustainable.

Collaborative platforms for long-term arts integration: To integrate arts and culture into urban development, structured collaboration between cultural initiatives and city planners is essential. A key barrier is the lack of mutual awareness—urban strategies often overlook artistic potential, and creatives may not know how to connect. A dedicated platform showcasing successful projects and ideas can foster inclusion. Independent "matchmakers" like Sluislab help bridge sectors, build trust, and align goals. Locally rooted hubs or communities—online or offline—can provide frameworks for collaboration. If well-designed, these platforms can be replicated across cities in Europe.

Open Innovation capacity: To stay future-proof, urban planning must create space for open innovation and imagination. Strict planning alone cannot meet unpredictable future needs. Incorporating creative and artistic thinking allows for the exploration of new development paths. Introducing 'undefined space' alongside traditional planning areas (e.g. housing and mobility) enables public co-creation and discussion. Structurally embedding such spaces into urban development processes would foster innovation and support the creation of more sustainable, inclusive, and attractive European cities.

6. Conclusions

The Amsterdam pilots are emblematic in the collaborative governance models they are using. These novel ways of working and thinking are putting pressure on existing approaches. Through sandboxing, we have gained an understanding of how the cities work, what works in the governance, and the challenges Amsterdam is facing in trying to bring about a transition to climate neutrality in a NEB way in a situation where both physical and institutional space are under pressure.

The Green Mile and the Vrije Ruimte het Groene Veld show us valuable strategies to position projects that arise from outside the municipality to be seen as legitimate to local actors and partners, and to be able to connect to changing municipal agendas. Both pilots show us the importance of flexibility and of constructing an attractive narrative about how the project connects a wide array of interests. Sluisbuurt provides us with promising strategies to integrate arts and culture into urban development. It is a combination of creative ways of thinking about how space can be used, partnerships to address financing, and curation to address issues of knowledge and different ways of working between sectors.

For local governments, the new governance models used in the pilot projects present challenges. The diversity means that flexibility and facilitation are needed as well as dedicated support. Tensions can arise with traditional paradigms in public governance. This is especially demanding in times of increasing demands on government, financial scarcity, and differing priorities and views between municipal departments.

CrAFt has contributed to furthering climate neutrality in a NEB way first and foremost by being a vehicle for our partners in local government to come in contact with NEB during our local meetings and the events of the CrAFt consortium. The engagement with CrAFt has helped the municipality to put NEB on the agenda. The impact on the pilots is modest, which was to be expected given the time frames and the limited financial resources that CrAFt had to offer projects.

In cases like Marineterrein we have helped in addressing concrete challenges such as articulating the value of the project or strengthening its identity. This does not only help the local project, but it also provides insight into how the concepts and values of NEB can be used in practice. In other pilots such as Vrije Ruimte the interventions applied have helped strengthen the legitimacy of alternative spaces, especially among students, i.e. the future professionals.

Through the LAT and the meetings we organised, we have also contributed by connecting the area development with the cultural sector. This has aided in

building understanding, trust and communication between these sometimes very separate worlds. This is of course just the first step. As the case of Sluisbuurt shows, there are many more challenges ahead.

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