# 3.4 Strengthening CIs' networking and cooperation attitude

# Guidelines for the next steps (Deliverables 3.4.2 and 3.4.3)

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# Table of Contents

# Index of Figures

# 1. Introduction

This document contains some guidelines for the next steps of deliverable 3.4 and the activities connected to it, such as Working Labs (3.4.2), Study Visits and Follow-Up Workshops (3.4.3). At the end of this sequence of events, each partner will have to identify the ideas that will continue to the next phase. The activities have been grouped together in a single paper in order to analyse them not as independent events, detached from one another, but as relatively small parts of an ongoing process that connects every step with the next.

For this purpose, the document gives an overview of the whole process (Chapter 2), followed by a short discussion of each of the phases that can be identified within it: the Working Lab (Chapter 3), the Study Visit and Follow-Up Workshop (Chapter 4), and all the moments in between (Chapter 5). The last section offers some parting remarks on the significance of the activities and their content (Chapter 6).

# 2. The Process

The events and activities of the deliverable 3.4 represent the shift from the generic, informative part of the project to the more specific phase, dedicated to the nurturing of a few selected ideas. They are indeed of great importance, but should be referred, as previously stated, to an ongoing process, of which they represent only a fraction. This process has already started with all the actions, formal or not, that have so far been required to organise the Info Day, scout and invite interested people, forge the first contacts and spread the word about the idea of the Nest and its role in the *smath* project. It also comprises the years of networking and sharing that constitute the story of each partner and that have generated their current network. Furthermore, it will continue to include all the big and small steps toward the construction of the Nest, and its management long after the conclusion of the project.

The process represents the constant flow of scouting activities, information and effort to keep in touch with the outside world that feeds the Nest and keeps alive the creative atmosphere. Every

small interaction, be it a formal meeting to define a collaboration, a small-talk conversation during a social gathering, or a quick e-mail to check in with a partner, is instrumental in the definition of the most promising ideas, and the survival of the Nest. If the various World Cafés and Working Labs represent an official occasion to gather all the actors together and work on their ideas, so much more goes on between an event and the following one. Usually, the ideas discussed during the event will need follow-up meetings, emails, phone calls, coffee breaks to actually take shape and convince all the involved partners.

The flow of ideas and information cannot be paused between the events. At the same time, the definition of the project cannot be forced to take place only during these official activities. Ideas require time to take shape, details take several interactions to be defined, and the aim of the Nest is exactly that of providing the environment to make this possible. Hence, the steps for the gradual selection of the projects will turn out to be many more than the official ones.
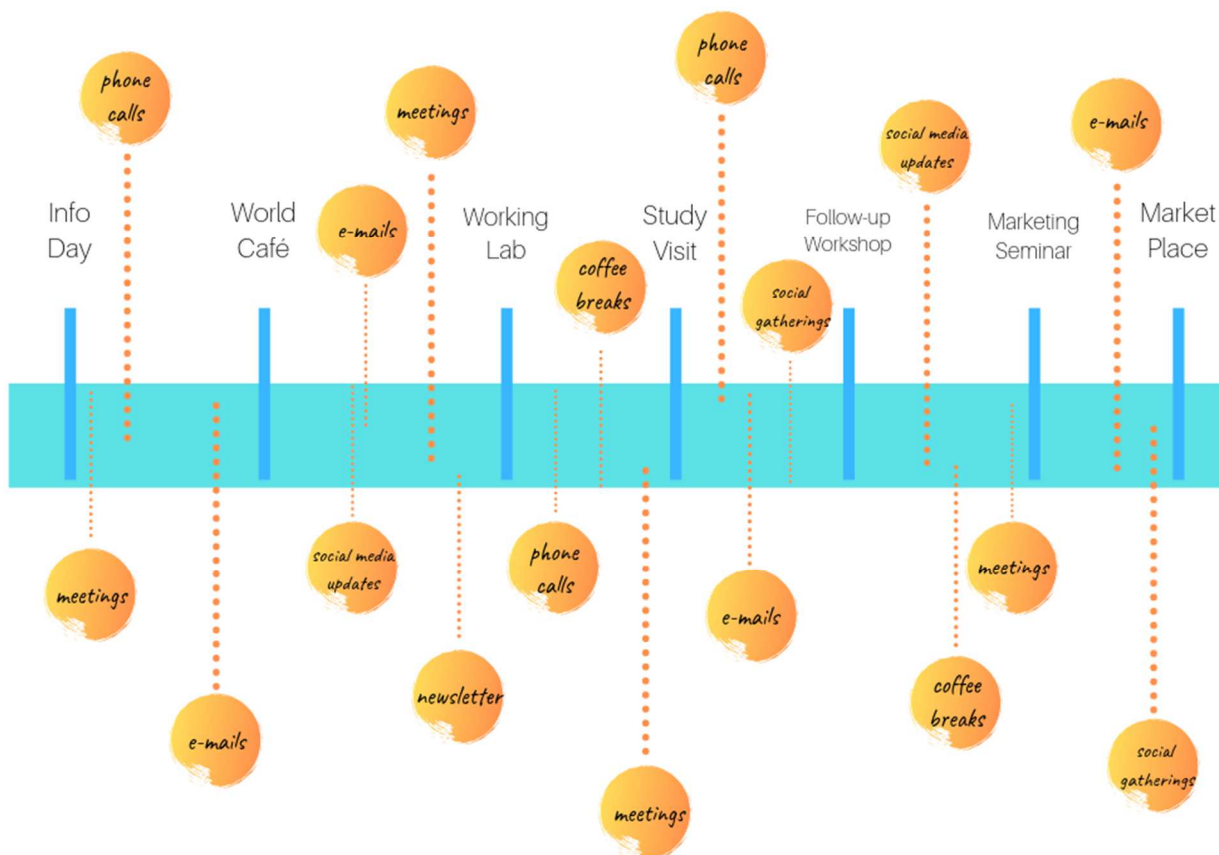


*Figure 1. Exemplification of official and unofficial activities of the Nesting process.*

# 3. The Working Lab (3.4.2)

The Working Lab represents a moment, after the World Café, to continue with the construction of the relationship or to start consolidating it. The content of the event must be defined according to the results of the World Café. If all the ideas chosen by the end of it already have a partnership to back them, the Lab could be structured with a hands-on approach, with the aim of starting to delve into the idea, discussing the available resources, the needs of the project, the costs and/or other specifications.

In other cases, though, the World Café might have brought to life an interesting idea without defining a partnership, and the subsequent interactions might have failed to find a suitable match. Others might have found a partner, but may be struggling to define the idea, or at least some parts of it. In this case, the Lab represents the last opportunity to make ideas emerge and pair people with useful and interested partners.

Concerning the practical organization of the Lab, activities and interactions could be programmed according to the degree of evolution of the discussion during the World Café. For instance, if during the World Café the discussion has been maintained at a very general level, the Working Lab should maintain the subdivision in the three thematic areas (Sustainable Tourism, Urban Regeneration, Social Cohesion) to continue the general discussion with aim of focusing it. On the contrary, if during the World Café ideas have been proposed and a dialogue has already started between firms and creatives, the Working Lab should be organized to allow for this to be brought forward within smaller groups or even one-to-one conversations, supported by the facilitators.

Another crucial element is the presence of a facilitator for each table/group. If in the World Café its role consisted in keeping track of the flow of ideas and make sure everyone at the table had a chance to express themselves, the Working Lab requires a more active, and almost pushing, presence, as this is the last occasion to pair them up. Thus, the facilitator should be able to guide the participants towards the best possible match, bringing them to explore all the possibilities until they found the one that generates interest from the other parties.

It seems therefore worth mentioning that the people chosen for the role should have a good understanding of the local context, and the ability to identify viable ideas, or stir interesting

projects toward a more sustainable and/or promising direction. Thanks to their experience, they should provide advice on any basic aspect of project development, while also imagining its future development and structure, without necessarily "forcing" the involved actors to conform to it.

The more structured ideas might benefit from the use of Design Thinking to start defining and developing the project further, while others might be in need of another brainstorming session. Hence, it might be wise to plan for both situations, and later adapt accordingly to the results of both the World Café and the interactions leading up to the Lab.

## 4. The Study Visit & Follow-Up Workshops (3.4.3)

The Study Visit offers the opportunity to participants to learn something which they might capitalise on for their own project. Each group should therefore visit a company or institution working in their sector. The selection of the destination and the content of the visit will of course be left to each partner, but the company should represent an example and a source of inspiration. Participants should be given the opportunity to understand the inner workings of the organisation and, possibly, find answers to any doubt or curiosity. By the end of the visit, each one should have retained something to adopt and adapt to their own needs.

The Follow-Up workshops are the last official occasion to work on the definition of the ideas, but in some cases, they might turn out to be so much more. According to the state of development of each project, the focus might in fact be more or less specific. A few, rare partnerships might be ready to discuss the details of a business plan; others, even though in possess of a concrete and structured idea, might still have to define their needs and the direction they want to explore with the project; finally, those that took a little more time finding a match might require some additional time to define the idea, the resources involved and concretise the proposal. Once again, the content of the workshops will have to be broadly defined, only to be adapted to the need of each specific Nest. Forcing all participants to produce concrete models and plans in this phase might in fact prove to be premature and counterproductive, as time is required to build trust between the partners and to develop the ideas to their fullest potential.

# 5. The Interludes

Even if not explicitly mentioned in the official Application Form, the moments between one event and the next one are possibly even more important than the event itself. To ensure a smooth flow of ideas and discussions, the Nest-to-be needs to concentrate on three important tasks during these phases: keeping in touch with all involved actors, keep up the interest for the project and its initiatives and, of course, start selecting the most promising ideas. This all revolves around the formal or informal interactions with the future members of the Nest.

Each event will almost naturally be followed by emails and phone calls to clarify doubts, answer questions, better develop a conversation had during the event, or simply check in with those involved and receive some feedback. These daily activities, often taken for granted, are at the basis of the Nest.

To better encourage the participation of all the actors involved, other events, unofficial and informal, might be organised. Moreover, all involved parties should automatically be invited to all the other events of the Nest, even if totally unrelated. Two of the activities regularly taking place inside Pole ICP *Archeomed®* may provide an idea of the kind of atmosphere that might be conductive to the flow of interactions:

- **Apéro resident** is an open event. These regular appointments allow each resident to present his/her know-how and skills to all the members of the cluster and actors of the territory. They aim to introduce *Archeomed®* and its residents to cultural and heritage professionals, to share practices and to bring out collaborations and exchanges. This is accomplished not by formal, b2b meetings, but with friendly talk paired with a *verre de l'amitié*.

- **Croissant resident** is an internal event, reserved to residents of *Archeomed®*. These convivial meeting times are organized as "breakfast meetings" (hence the name 'croissant') and are built around a professional project of one of the residents. They constitute an opportunity to promote the sharing of knowledge, the exchange of good practices and collaborations between members, without the pressure of an official meeting or the formality of a project presentation.

Moment like these are what keeps the projects alive, giving the actors the possibility to keep discussing their idea and defining it, outside of the couple hours or the single day dedicated to the event. Keeping in touch with them and observing their development might even facilitate the selection of the final projects, as this will generate a deeper understanding of both the sustainability of the project and the chemistry between the partners.

# 6. Conclusions

If we regard the activities involved in the set-up of a Nest as part of a single, ongoing process, the events programmed in this phase can be seen as "simple" milestones for the whole journey. The labs and workshops are not the occasion in which everything is, almost magically, determined. Instead, they represent a moment of pause from the normal, continuous effort of keeping up the communication between the parties. In this moment, everyone comes together to assess the situation, understand what has been done so far, what still needs to be done, and how the Nest is shaping up. Depending on the results, each partner will have to decide whether to keep going or to make some alterations to change their trajectory.

As always, a one-size-fits-all approach is in this case not conductive to success, as every context and every project requires a tailor-made strategy. Most importantly, the activities of the Nest must not be forced to fit the model of an acceleration program, or any other quick-fix solution. As established, the Nest ensures a natural development of the ideas, each in the due time, through a natural growth process.