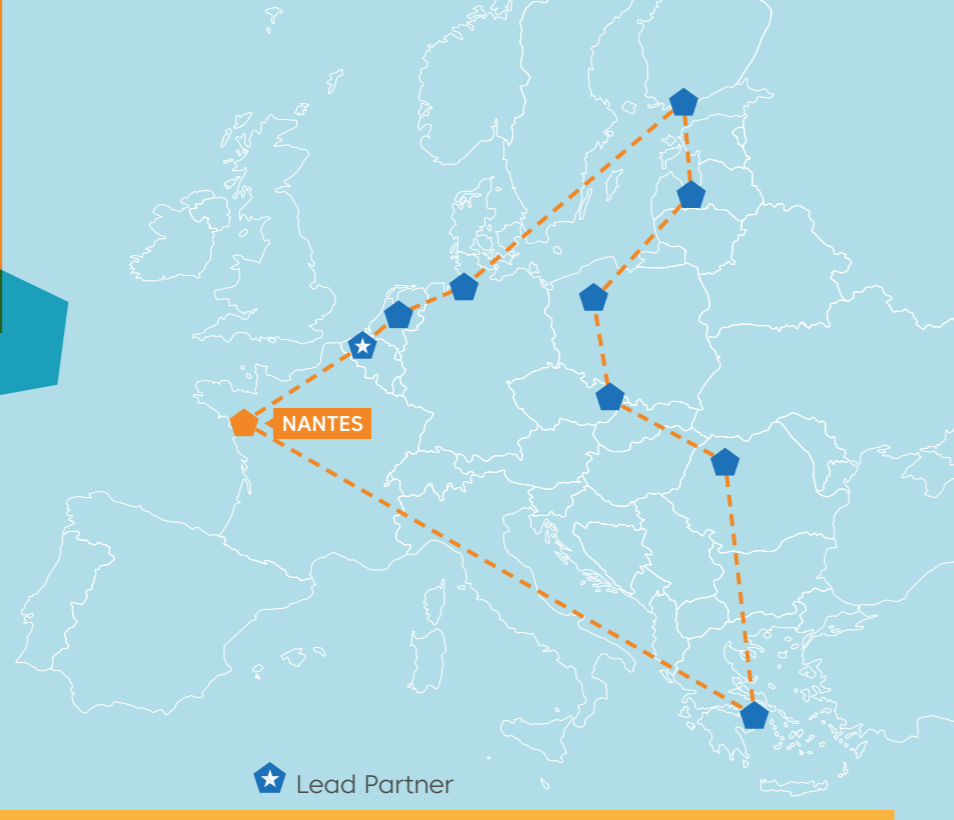


SLEEPING BEAUTY WAKES UP

Key information

- Location: **Nantes (France)**
- Population: **303 382**
- Involved in URBACT network: **REFILL**
- More information: <http://www.urbact.eu/Refill>



Nantes has harnessed temporary use to revitalise urban space and test out future development. With the help of URBACT, citizens are now creatively involved in shaping that future.

Located on the Loire river in north-west France, Nantes was a thriving industrial port city before 20th-century deindustrialisation led to widespread unemployment and economic stagnation. In the 1980s, Nantes was known as 'une belle endormie', or Sleeping Beauty.

Since then the city has undergone large-scale cultural regeneration and economic revival. Nantes has gained international attention for its innovative approach to post-industrial urban development, with temporary use as a key driver. As part of the URBACT REFILL network, Nantes shared its successful strategies with nine partner cities, and in turn enhanced public involvement in shaping its own future.

An island of opportunity

A 4.9 km long island in the centre of the city, Île de Nantes was a shipping industry hub before the shipyards closed in 1987, rendering most of it derelict brownfield land. In 1989 – despite developers' ambitions to build profitable projects – the newly elected mayor at that time, Jean-Marc Ayrault, put a stop to all planning and demanded a rethink of the island.

Mayor Ayrault committed to testing out solutions through temporary use. In 2003, the city created a development company, SAMOA, which could buy land, rezone and resell it with pre-determined conditions, to transform the island along public interests. In 2008, while the island undergoes

gradual redevelopment, SAMOA has retained three large former industrial halls to use as temporary, affordable office spaces for Nantes' entrepreneurs and small companies working in the creative, cultural or charitable industries. In total, the buildings house 180 companies – it's known as a hotel for start-ups – and the ten-year project has proved so successful there is a waiting list.

Île de Nantes is now one of Europe's largest urban regeneration sites. Its temporary uses have made it a hub for creative industries and diversified Nantes' economy. The island serves as a laboratory for urban redevelopment, home to street art companies, design laboratories, co-



The Ilotopia hub



Ilotopia's citizens engagement walk

working spaces, bars, galleries, and a theatre. Some of the space is programmed without any defined use, building in a flexibility that allows the city to be nimble and responsive. Following the cultural and economic success of these short-term initiatives on the island, SAMOA is now planning to incorporate temporary use strategies as part of the island's longer-term development plans – proving that 'meanwhile' use doesn't need to end when redevelopment starts.

Ilotopia

"The REFILL project helped Nantes organise a local working group of stakeholders that had not successfully been brought together before," explains Lucie Renou, SAMOA International Project Manager. The formation of this URBACT Local Group – consisting of city officials, urban planners and community members – helped create a new citizen participation project on Île de Nantes: Ilotopia.

Based in an old garage, Ilotopia is a three-year project working with citizens to shape public space collaboratively

on the island. With the help of creative participation and conversation tools – such as buses transformed into mobile workshop rooms – citizens discuss urban transformation and co-produce projects, which are temporarily tried out in public spaces before they are integrated in the final development plan. As described in its URBACT Integrated Action Plan, Nantes is looking to expand the Ilotopia experiment and develop a long-term mechanism for citizen participation in urban change.

For Ms Renou, international collaboration through REFILL had a hugely positive impact on Nantes. "I'm happy to say that trustful relationships emerged between partners and facilitated the exchange of best practice," she says. "The comparison and communication allowed SAMOA to rethink its local project with the points of view expressed by the REFILL partners. It allowed SAMOA to reflect on temporary use and better evaluate its impact, as well as work in a more integrated way with the city stakeholders. URBACT allowed the local project to have more ambition."

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Lucie Renou



Participation at Ilotopia



Partner cities visiting Nantes