

**JOURNAL**

**PROJECT**

CoGhent - Collections of  
Ghent

Ghent, Belgium

**TOPIC**

Culture and cultural  
heritage

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# COGHENT JOURNAL #1

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## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Visual part of the communication material of the CoGhent project (photo credit CoGhent project)

The CoGhent project intends to repurpose digitized and digital born cultural data to facilitate the dissemination, reuse, and recombination of institutional cultural heritage data as well as the contribution of the different local communities with stories and artefacts to enrich, complete this city wide repository of cultural heritage data. In creating a multi-voiced platform the project sets out to promote social cohesion and social inclusion of the population of the city through a more open, accessible, rich, diverse and representative digital cultural heritage.

The project is in line with EU ERDF policy objectives focusing on open digital innovation, open access to culture, e-inclusion, community-based cultural services and education as well as similar technological, social, and participatory objectives at national, regional and local levels.

CoGhent designs a data infrastructure focusing on publication and synchronisation of data at its source. This allows for both easier third party and internal reuse of the published data. Internally, the project will co-design a mobile structure enabling innovative ways to access, and experience cultural data, experiment it in 3 neighbourhoods in Ghent and integrate it as a new dimension of Design Museum Gent.

The sanitary measures and restrictions put forth during the COVID-pandemic considerably limited the initially intended neighbourhood engagement activities and co-design of the outcomes in the preparatory phase of the project. This Journal #1 presents a detailed analysis of the CoGhent project through the lens of the 7 challenges defined by UIA highlighting in particular: a complex and highly faceted project with multiple levels of stakeholders; a distributed management fostering autonomy, responsibility, self-determination, intense dialogue and empathy between participants; a community-driven design process based on experimentations and iterative improvement. The project implementation has not started yet, and no significant feedback is already available in terms of monitoring, evaluation and upscaling.

## 2. STATE OF THE ART

### 2.1. Introduction to the challenge addressed

More than one core challenge, CoGhent is addressing a series of issues and opportunities concerning cultural heritage, its wholeness, representativeness, accessibility, dissemination through repurposing, etc. in the current trend towards open digital culture.

In particular, the project intends to address 2 streams of issues parallel and interwoven.

On the one hand, citizens have rather few means to contribute to cities' cultural heritage presented in cultural institutions. In particular, popular history, grassroots' knowledge, successive flows of migration tend to be missing in territories' cultural heritage. However, culture has an enormous potential to improve social cohesion. All local communities should find themselves, their actions and life represented and worth to be preserved as common cultural heritage.

On the other hand, digitization of cultural data in progress among museums, libraries, and cities' cultural institutions struggles to be appropriated and reused by citizens. In particular, lack of common approaches between cultural institutions, of open and accessible platforms slow down the potential to reach out to new and larger parts of the population.

### **Social cohesion and social inclusion through digital culture?**

The CoGhent project intends to merge these two streams of issues into an opportunity that draws on the huge potential of digitization to stimulate wide open access to cultural heritage. On the one hand, digitization of cultural data is likely to be an opportunity to unlock cultural capital from the institutional silos where it is currently kept, to make it widely remotely available while stimulating multiple possibilities for its re-use and creative recombination.

On the other hand, the same digitization processes show a great potential to open up, connect and organize the richness and diversity of vernacular culture, testimonies and artefacts coming from the city populations and therefore improve social cohesion and social inclusion.

Bridging between these streams of challenges and opportunities, CoGhent aims at increasing social inclusion and cohesion in the city, supporting the cultural heritage of the city to integrate and evolve towards the opening of cultural digital data.

## **2.2. How does the project fit into the policy context at the EU, national and regional level?**

The 2 interwoven streams of digitalisation of cultural data and its repurposing, with the aim of enhancing social inclusion and social cohesion through culture, represent the contribution of CoGhent project to 4 of the ERDF thematic objectives:

**TO1 Strengthen research, technological development & innovation:** CoGhent sets up a city-wide digital architecture to deploy, study, crowdsource, collect, connect and interact with cultural heritage. This open-ended infrastructure will enable sharing, facilitate development, and unlock more innovation.

**TO2 Enhance access to, use, and quality of information & communication technologies:** CoGhent supports cultural institutions to improve the quality and openness of their databases. Quality guidelines for digitized heritage will be deployed. This will lead to strengthened applications for e-culture and e-inclusion.

**TO9 Promote social inclusion, combat poverty & any discrimination:** CoGhent aims to substantially lower barriers to access the urban cultural offer and services, by developing and testing innovative community-based services and community centric methods.

**TO10 Invest in education, training & lifelong learning:** CoGhent will develop new forms of participatory cultural activities, focused on the accessibility of urban cultural heritage unlocking its values to and within communities (and the tools to collect & connect such heritage). This improves and activates education and lifelong learning.

At **national level**, the CoGhent project is in line with the National Digital Agenda priorities for Belgium on Digital Government regarding open Data.

At **regional level**, the project is aligned with Flanders Strategic vision paper on cultural heritage: *"[...] update of the immaterial cultural heritage policy with an integrated approach to material and immaterial heritage. More effectiveness and less fragmentation within the (Flemish) cultural heritage sector by working towards more cooperation and coordination. Overall commitment to broad participation and diversity."*

It enriches the smart specialization strategy of Flanders in the field of technological strengths within the spearhead cluster "Creative industries & services" and the 3-helix method with the citizen future-proofing transition in cities.

Finally at **local level**, the city of Ghent's governance agreement (Oct 2018) sets out priorities for the coming years to particular challenges addressed in CoGhent's project:

- On Participation: *“We improve participation of vulnerable groups, helping them to participate and contribute to leisure and cultural activities. That’s why we focus on an accessible, available, usable and understandable offer”.*
- On cultural Heritage: *“Material and immaterial heritage from the past gives meaning to the present. That’s why we don’t just store and protect it, but also open it and make it publicly available. [...] We want to give more attention and visibility to the heritage of the diverse communities in our cities and will challenge the heritage museums to do so a swell”.*

### 3. OPENING CULTURAL DATA FOR CULTURAL INCLUSION

#### 3.1. Introduction to the solution implemented

CoGhent project intends to build the necessary IT infrastructure to enable easier and wider access to institutional culture heritage, facilitate its reuse and recombination on the one hand and on the other hand, enable self-contribution from the population to enrich and complete cultural heritage preserved and disseminated by cultural institutions.

In concrete terms, CoGhent will build a mobile infrastructure called the *CoGent Box* that will work as the “touch point” and physical demonstrator of this new digital cultural data city service for all actors of the city and the large public.

The *CoGent Box* will be the result of a co-design process between the project’s stakeholders and the population of the city. It will allow citizens to both access and enjoy the digital content currently kept in closed repositories in cultural institutions, capture citizens’ stories and memories to complete and diversify Ghent’s cultural heritage collections.

The mobile CoGent Box will be experimented and fine-tuned in 3 pilot neighbourhoods throughout the project and at the end of the 3-year project period, it will be included permanently in the Design Museum Gent.

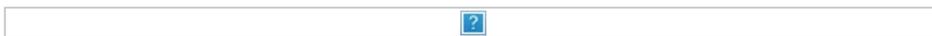
The CoGhent project should therefore explore and experiment the evolution of cultural institutions of the city and beyond as open and inclusive “cultural third places”, likely to improve the access and participation to cultural and recreational services, foster intercultural dialogue, enable populations from all cultures and backgrounds to find space and to contribute to.



Different projects submitted for the mobile CoGent box through a 5-days design competition involving students and professionals in February 2021 (photo credit CoGhent project)

#### 3.2. Examples of first actions

The sanitary crisis strongly limited the deployment of the CoGhent project on the field in the first half of the project period. Beyond all the project preparation process that took place mostly online and reduced direct interactions with the population, *The Summer of the Neptune*, is the first engagement’s action organised in one of the 3 pilot neighbourhoods. It is set as an experimentation of several key-dimensions of the CoGhent project including social inclusion through culture, enhancing of neighbourhood heritage stories, connection with institutional culture, etc.



Instagram post announcing the Retro Event

*The Summer of Neptune* (photo credit CoGhent project)

#### A neighbourhood revival experimental event

What is the event about? The *Neptune* was the last open-air swimming pool in Ghent built in 1947 and demolished in 2020. The event on 29<sup>th</sup> of August 2021 was an afternoon of revival and farewell to this 70 year old landmark of Ghent. Former water polo players, an ex-water ballerina, former lifeguards, staff of the cafeteria and sweet shop, former regular customers, in total 25 figures of the swimming pool testified about their involvement with this piece of cultural heritage in Ghent. A series of installations such as live photo booth, photographer of portraits, local *Radio Neptune*, radio interviews, publication with stories of *The Neptune*, a film booth with a video presentation of heritage in Wondelgem, elderly people from 2 nursing homes of the neighbourhood were picked up by refugees riding bike taxis to enable them to take part in the event and add their stories, etc. prefigure or at least explored possibilities to reuse and recompose local popular memories and turn them into a form of “collective fabric of city cultural heritage”. The event started Sunday morning, bringing together local civil society organizations to showcase their projects and engage them to work with cultural heritage, explore possible links between their activities and the CoGhent project.

of Neptune event (photo credit Local Photo Club of Wondelgem)

## A community-based design of the project

Beyond its main objective to involve the local community of Wondelgem and inform them about the CoGhent project, *The Summer of the Neptune* was able to experiment around the project aim of social inclusion through culture: testing the attractiveness of a well-chosen piece of local heritage to raise interest of different local communities, to bridge bottom-up neighbourhood narratives with institutional city heritage raising daily life as part of the collective history of the city. *The Summer of the Neptune* can be seen as a classical neighbourhood event compared to the objective of the CoGhent project, but it is also emblematic of the intended collective co-design of the project that the covid crisis prohibited until now!

## 4. UIA IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES

### 4.1. General overview

UIA CHALLENGES	SUMMARY FOR THE COGHENT PROJECT
<b>LEADERSHIP</b>	CoGhent is a pretty complex and challenging project. Stakeholders and city administration in particular are expected to collaborate on issues out of their comfort zone (experimental IT infrastructure, high level of citizens' participation, etc.). This issue is answered through a distributed management of the project leaving space and autonomy to stakeholders. Possible side effects of this management posture are avoided by defining a clear vision, directions and a sufficient level of coherence between the multiple stakeholders involved.
<b>PUBLIC PROCUREMENT</b>	Innovation and development skills necessary for the project are already included in the CoGhent partnership. Procurement process regards essentially IT hardware infrastructures that have been purchased through current city IT framework providers to avoid and mitigate delays. Beyond this classical situation the design of the co-creation fund shows innovative procurement postures to engage dialogue on potential applications based on open cultural data and stimulate stakeholders to propose ideas.
<b>ORGANISATIONAL ARRANGEMENTS WITHIN THE URBAN AUTHORITY</b>	10 city services or equivalent are involved in CoGhentproject representing a major challenge in collaboration and coordination. A culture of participation and cooperation is activated, fostering a series of unusual attitudes in public administration, such as self-determination and autonomy, empathy and conviviality, permission to experiment and fail, iteration and redundancy.

<b>PARTICIPATIVE APPROACH FOR COIMPLEMENTATION</b>	<p>Raising citizens' awareness about cultural heritage and engaging city level participation is the core of CoGhent project and therefore its major challenge. Despite the strong culture of participation in Ghent, the project's co creation process suffered from the sanitary crisis with difficult activation of neighbourhoods; digital divide reducing the potential of online alternatives, and finally slowdown of the project with the necessity to reinvent the city's culture of participation in the post-covid new normal.</p>
<b>COMMUNICATION WITH TARGET BENEFICIARIES AND USERS</b>	<p>The CoGhent project uses a range of communication channels to reach different target audiences, from project stakeholders in the city, to cultural institutions, to other cities and related research fields in Belgium and beyond.</p> <p>The emphasis on mixing participation and communication both engages the local population who are disengaged from culture and engages key audiences in the project's communication activities.</p>
<b>MONITORING AND EVALUATION</b>	<p>The monitoring and evaluation infrastructure is designed to appreciate the effects of the implementation of the mobile White Space in the 3 pilot neighbourhoods. Nothing can be reported on the different result indicators as this implementation has not started yet.</p>
<b>COMMUNICATION WITH TARGET BENEFICIARIES AND USERS</b>	<p>Beyond exploiting all possible channels of communication ranging from intense multiple use of social media to more traditional paper-based communication and conferences, a strong asset of the CoGhent project is to combine bottom-up public engagement with top-down communication and networking to establish a rich dialogue with unusual suspects and a population disengaged from the culture arena.</p>
<b>UP-SCALING</b>	<p>The CoGhent project is still in the phase where it is mainly focused on the roll-out of the project itself. The exercise on how CoGhent project is going to ensure that other cities can learn from their experience still needs to be done extensively.</p>

## 4.2. Detailed analysis

### LEADERSHIP

*"Is there risk aversion? Yes, lots of the project stakeholders, especially within city administration are used to a low risk and low-experimental environment, explains Pieter Jan Pauwels, from District09 one of the 2 ideators of CoGhent project. For instance, city IT developers are used to build projects that are technologically sound, with high redundancy, where the specification sheet is handed to them in detail. In the case of CoGhent, we invite them to invent the spec sheet and focus on building something on a pace that is a lot faster than most of their projects"*

### Forms of distributed management

In front of both a complex project architecture with many stakeholders involved outside their comfort zone, the CoGhent project organized a form of autonomy and of distributed management: *"We give sufficient agency and interpretation of the project application to the actors who are set to handle it. Space to determine what needs to be*

*done, extra deadlines and milestones are needed to move everyone forward. If you do not give that agency and consider the actors as suppliers, they will return the favour and ask for a spec sheet or to do a sheet. A micromanagement style of working is simply not workable in such a big complex project, that at the same time is still quite vague and open."*

On top or aside from this innovative distributed management characteristics, the project implements more classical management good practices based on project management structures such as the *Business Steering Group*, *Technical Steering Group*, a Project Coordinator less involved with the content and more focused on monitoring how the project is progressing, regular talks with project partners for continuous improvement and problem detection, etc.

## **PUBLIC PROCUREMENT**

*"As the consortium is already set up in a quadruple helix, most of the necessary knowledge and skills were already present within the consortium, explains Pieter-Jan Pauwels. Procurement is specifically used for hardware purchasing, and smaller services that are required such as locations for events, communication products, etc."* The purchasing power of CoGhent project is not directly meant as a strategic level to achieve socio-economic and environmental policy objectives. *"As procurement is a long and intense period for both requesting parties and providers, adds Line Ostyn, CoGhent's Project Coordinator, we choose to focus on hardware that was available within the current framework agreements of the city rather than setting up new procurements procedures. This meant we could order hardware within weeks instead of months."*

The expectations of the project consortium in terms of societal change in particular betting on a strategy of inclusion through culture ([see paragraph 2 Inclusion through culture ? in Web Article #1](#)) are pretty high but they don't directly depend on the way the project's procurement is organized.

### **Participative procurement process**

The project also shows high expectations in terms of innovation and stimulation of the local ecosystem of cultural creatives at large to recombine open cultural data and to create new digital culture applications. The design of the procurement process in this subarea of the project is very interesting to focus on. The CoGhent core team sets the *Co-creation Fund Process*, a form of open call for project ideas reusing opencultural data CoGhent is aiming to generate.

*"We will organise a Co-creation Fund Brainstorm to finetune ideas, explains Pieter Jan Pauwels. We also define a network event where local actors with ideas can ask information and talk about their project ideas in an informal setting. There were info sessions for internal stakeholders as well as a livestream for potential submitters to explain the ins and outs of the co-creation fund"*. Compared to strict public procurement processes, the *Co-creation Fund Process* intends to install the conversation with potential participants, to raise their interest, and to foster exchanges between potential competitors for subsidies. *"Behind the scenes we've been actively contacting companies, nonprofits and stakeholders in the field to engage in the Co-creation Fund. We're really using the different networks that are connected to the project."* The procurement of innovation tends to turn upside-down the classical moto of formal tenders with controlled interaction, neutrality of procurer, separation of competitors, etc. On the contrary, it promotes collaborations, exchanges, interactions to stimulate creative parties and get the most of them!

## **ORGANISATIONAL ARRANGEMENTS WITHIN THE URBAN AUTHORITY**

10 city services are involved in the CoCghent project. 7 internal business units within the city: *City Management, Strategy, Organisation & Participation Service; Strategic Funding Unit; Policy Participation Unit; Data & Information Unit; Ghent Archives; Department Social Cohesion, Welfare & Health Social Cohesion & Urban Well-Being unit; Department of Culture, Sports & Recreation*. 3 as part of the AGB or Autonomous Municipal Company: *District09, AGB Kunst & Design* (1 involved Museum) and *AGB Erfgoed* (3 involved museums). Although the city of Ghent is well known in Europe for its culture of participation and integrated policy, engaging the collaboration of so many heterogeneous stakeholders in a complex project with multiple subcontractors, open call to external creative contributors and large citizen participation represents a real challenge.

### **Distributed and stakeholder-based project process**

The project is based on a series of effective coordination mechanisms which are unusual for classical public administration:

- Involve the different city services from the proposal writing phase in their core role giving them agency to determine their own involvement.
- Ensures that administrative services all have a certain buy-in and are not forced to take up tasks that do not fit their competencies.
- Clearly indicate where people can go with questions. Make them feel comfortable raising issues or

speaking up about them.

- Creating an atmosphere in which experimentation but also failure is allowed. Be open about the project as a collective learning process.
- Ensure a culture of consultation with clear objectives for each consultation, well prepared and more effective meetings.
- More real-life meetings instead of online meetings so that people get to know each other better, get more in touch with each other's work context and can work together better.
- State a clear vision and direction of the project, repeat it time and again and when in doubt, refer to the content coordinators.

### **An open-management state of mind**

These postures for effective collaboration in complex environments also find their roots in the IT culture based on open source, interoperability, iterative processes, etc. The human collaboration in CoGhent seems to reflect in a way its digital infrastructure. What Olivier Van D'huynslager from *AGB Art and Design co-ideator of the CoGhent project*, describes in technical terms: *"open-source and open-ended approach by adopting LDES specification and OSLO as an application profile, ensuring both semantic and technical interoperability, allowing easy and low-cost, both client-, and server-side, replication and synchronisation by third parties"* is pretty well matching the organisational and relational setting of the project. We could directly translate the technical specs in the form of management specs: *transparency between administrative silos ensuring the capacity to understand each other, to cooperate between heterogeneous competences and to replicate effective solutions...* This parallel is not a coincidence. The city context in which the CoGhent project operates is strongly influenced by the culture of open source. "Ghent has been strongly pushing open data in the last decade. Ghent is a higher education city: 70

to 80 thousand students with lots of technical profiles who are looking to work with real and interesting data. It is likely that the culture of open source and open participation had diffused in Ghent and influenced the city policy and management culture.

This open management posture also generates side effects: *"people don't always show up to the update meeting", remarks Olivier Van D'huynslager. "The agency we give to partners also often provides us with miscommunication and misinterpretation of certain elements of the project"*. Nevertheless, it represents a strong asset to navigate in a complex project and heterogeneous environment across a city!

### **PARTICIPATIVE APPROACH FOR CO-IMPLEMENTATION**

*"I see this project as a beginning, for more outreaching work. Museum should more often go in the neighbourhood, people carry history"* states Neslihan Dogan, one of the "district scout" in charge of exploring the 3 pilot neighbourhoods for CoGhent project looking for local stories and building bridges between culture of the museums and culture in the neighbourhoods. CoGhent's aim is to reach, engage, participate and involve in particular disadvantaged populations who feel alienated from the cultural arena and the public institutions like museums that embody it.

### **A field process slowed down by the sanitary crisis**

This core challenge clashed strongly into the Covid sanitary crisis. *"We could have spent a full year experimenting in the different neighbourhoods with different methods," explains Pieter Jan Pauwels. A lot of the exploratory research and development was done online which is hard in order to reach citizens and target groups. We had trouble finding respondents for the Cultural Toolkit Development, and even if we did, those people didn't always have the digital skills to work in an online environment"*. The strong culture of participatory governance built in Ghent during the last decades was unable to express itself properly.

*"Project's partners went to the locations in specific neighbourhoods but had limited response due to citizens not using the public infrastructure in the city compared to the pre-corona situation."* On the field, Neslihan Dogan modulates with positive side effects: *"People were more eager to talk after all these lockdowns. We still could talk together outside, Discussions develop while walking in the neighbourhood in a more loose and less controlled environment"*.

### **Engagement of unusual suspects**

Beyond the limiting impact of the sanitary crisis, the CoGhent project faces classical challenges to engage a shared and balanced participation.

A common understanding of what is meant by engagement of the citizens has to be discussed and shared between project partners. It is even more of a challenge in a project where this question is key and in a city with a strong culture and expectation in terms of participation. *"It is a challenge to develop and propagate a widely supported vision on the participation of citizens for this project, together with the different project partners," reports Pieter*

Jan Pauwels. *We just finalized the Neighbourhood Activation Plans, half a year later than expected*

The engagement process should lead to a balanced and equal participation. The core CoGhent's goal of inclusion through culture ([see Web Article #1](#)) requires

bridging between cultural institutions and neighbourhoods' population. For instance, the starting point of the engagement process either leveraging on museums' collections or on neighbourhoods' culture doesn't mean the same heritage and is therefore likely to engage different populations. The Neighbourhood Activation Plans' objectives are 3-folds: Creating awareness about heritage; Setting up dialogue through encounters and cooperation; Contribute to the collection.

## **MONITORING AND EVALUATION**

### **The implementation phase has yet to be started**

The Result Indicators defined for the CoGhent project (Neighbourhood social cohesion index; Degree of heritage stories linked on-site and offsite; Museum and Cultural Institution Commitment; Social inclusion; Social integration and Mental distance from museum institutions & collections) are mostly structured in 3 steps: during the first year to set a baseline and help to choose the pilot neighbourhoods, before the interventions in the neighbourhoods and after. The installation of the mobile White Space in the 3 pilot neighbourhoods has not started yet and no specific comment can be reported yet.

When the CoGent-box will be placed in the neighborhoods, an individual research method will be conducted per neighborhood. This will be done to gain insights on the impact of the box both in qualitative and quantitative manner. In the first neighborhood, usability-tests will be applied in order to further sharpen out the experience within the CoGent-box. In the second neighborhood, a qualitative approach (local stakeholder interviews with civilians and local organisations) will be conducted. In the last neighborhood a quantitative analysis will be executed in order to study the impact of the box on social cohesion in this neighborhood.

From the risks encountered by the project (citizens' reluctance to take part; budget stress; difficulty to assess social goals; lack of solution adaptability for dissemination and delay) only some delay related to technical IT development can be reported and some choices had to be made to stay in the budget, a minor problem considering the potential impacts the sanitary crisis could have had on such a field- and community-based project.

## **COMMUNICATION WITH TARGET BENEFICIARIES AND USERS**

Late August 2021, the retro event *The Summer of the Neptune* focused on a former swimming pool complex in Wondelgem, one of the 3 Ghent's pilot neighbourhoods for the CoGhent project (see before 3.2. Examples of first actions). Strong records on *The Neptune* remain in the population and activate the collective memory in the neighbourhood and in the city. The event schedule during the afternoon of the 29 of August 2021 consists in storytelling from locals, former staff of *The Neptune*, an ad'hoc *Radio Neptune*, a video presentation of heritage in Wondelgem, a life photobooth, a publication with stories of *The Neptune*, extra effort to give access to the event to elderly of 2 nursing homes in Wondelgem, etc.

*The Summer of the Neptune* was intended as emblematic of the CoGhent vision of capturing and listening untold stories, raising popular records as cultural heritage and for social inclusion in the city. *"The Neptune was a kick-off event to involve the local community of Wondelgem and inform them about the CoGhent project settling soon in their neighbourhood. It was a good start and first means of contact with local organisations and citizens to get them more involved and informed"* explains Pieter Jan Pauwels.

### **Interwoven engagement and communication strategy**

*The Summer of the Neptune* event is both meant as a participation engagement process and a strategy to raise interest in communication. The event results in creating awareness about CoGhent in Wondelgem and the collection of contact

details of local people and organisations potentially interested to be involved in the further course of the project.

Raising interest and concernment among unusual suspects is likely to enhance the effectiveness of the use of the different communication channels described in CoGhent's Communication Strategy and Communication Action Plan: CoGhent communication channels, channels of the project partners, local (city) media, press releases, posters, flyers, advertising, information meetings, social media channels, advertising on social media channels and online publicity on specific websites, etc.

### **Reaching out to museum and tech community in Europe**

CoGhent project intends to reach out to the broader museum and tech community. Project managers communicate about the project in several conferences (i.e. Open Belgium 2021, IIF conference 2021) and articles on international websites of the museum community (i.e. Europeana, ICOM).

## UPSCALING

The CoGhent project is still in a phase where the focus is on the deployment of the project itself. The exercise on how the CoGhent project will ensure that other cities can learn from its experience has yet to be done in depth.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

The organisational settings of the CoGhent project are inspired and guided by open management, distributed responsibilities, intense network exchanges, etc. inspired by the open-source IT culture in background of the project on the one hand and, on the other hand, by a practice of collaboration with the population, of bottom-up activation of neighbourhood, of giving access to the citizens, etc. which stems from the culture of participative governance of the city of Ghent.

### Catching-up with community-based co-design process

Both assets of open management and strong participation culture ensure the project a major resilience. However, the sanitary crisis seems to have affected the project more deeply than is apparent from the project monitoring board. The co-design of the project process in the 3 pilot neighbourhoods based on intense interaction to engage with the population, iterative experimentations on the spot, progressive co-elaboration of solutions with a strong buy-in from all stakeholders, etc. was slowed down or had to migrate online. The strong participative and distributed design assets of the CoGhent project had to evolve to a more classical ideation-development-implementation project structure. The project is experiencing some delays in the development of the IT infrastructure, but the main challenge is, covid permitting, to make up for the collaborative design and iterative experimentation time that has not yet begun.

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