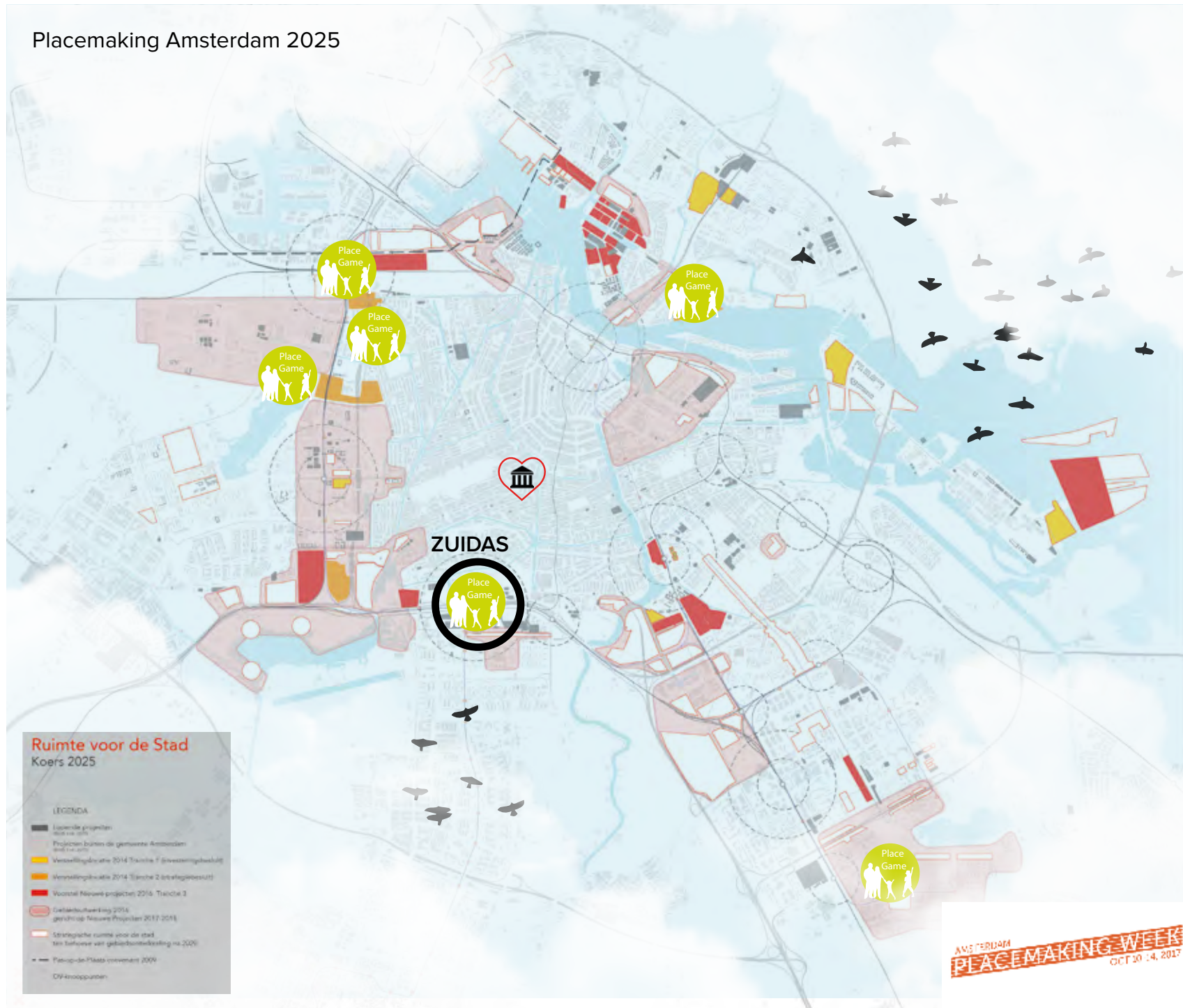


An aerial photograph of the Zuidas district in Amsterdam, showing a dense cluster of modern office buildings and a multi-lane highway. A stylized orange banner with white text is superimposed over the center of the image. The text on the banner reads 'AMSTERDAM PLACE MAKING WEEK' in a large, bold font, with 'OCT 10-14 2017' in a smaller font below it.

**AMSTERDAM ZUIDAS**  
**Re-examining Place through an Innovation Lens**

**Place Game Report**  
10th October 2017

# Placemaking Amsterdam 2025



## Placemaking Week 2017

Public space is located at the intersection of many global issues - from health to sustainability, innovation to equity. Placemaking Week is all about leveraging this convergence.

Building upon the momentum of the Placemaking Leadership Council and 2016's Placemaking Week in Vancouver, this year Project for Public Spaces collaborates with their Dutch partners—Stipo, City at Eye Level, Placemaking Plus, and Pakhuis de Zwijger—to create a dynamic forum for attendees to develop and share concrete strategies to advance placemaking locally and globally.

Placemaking Week was closely looking into the case of Amsterdam, trying to reach out to existing processes here and bring its expertise. Therefore, 6 place games were organised based on Koers 2025 plan.



◀ Placemaking Amsterdam 2025

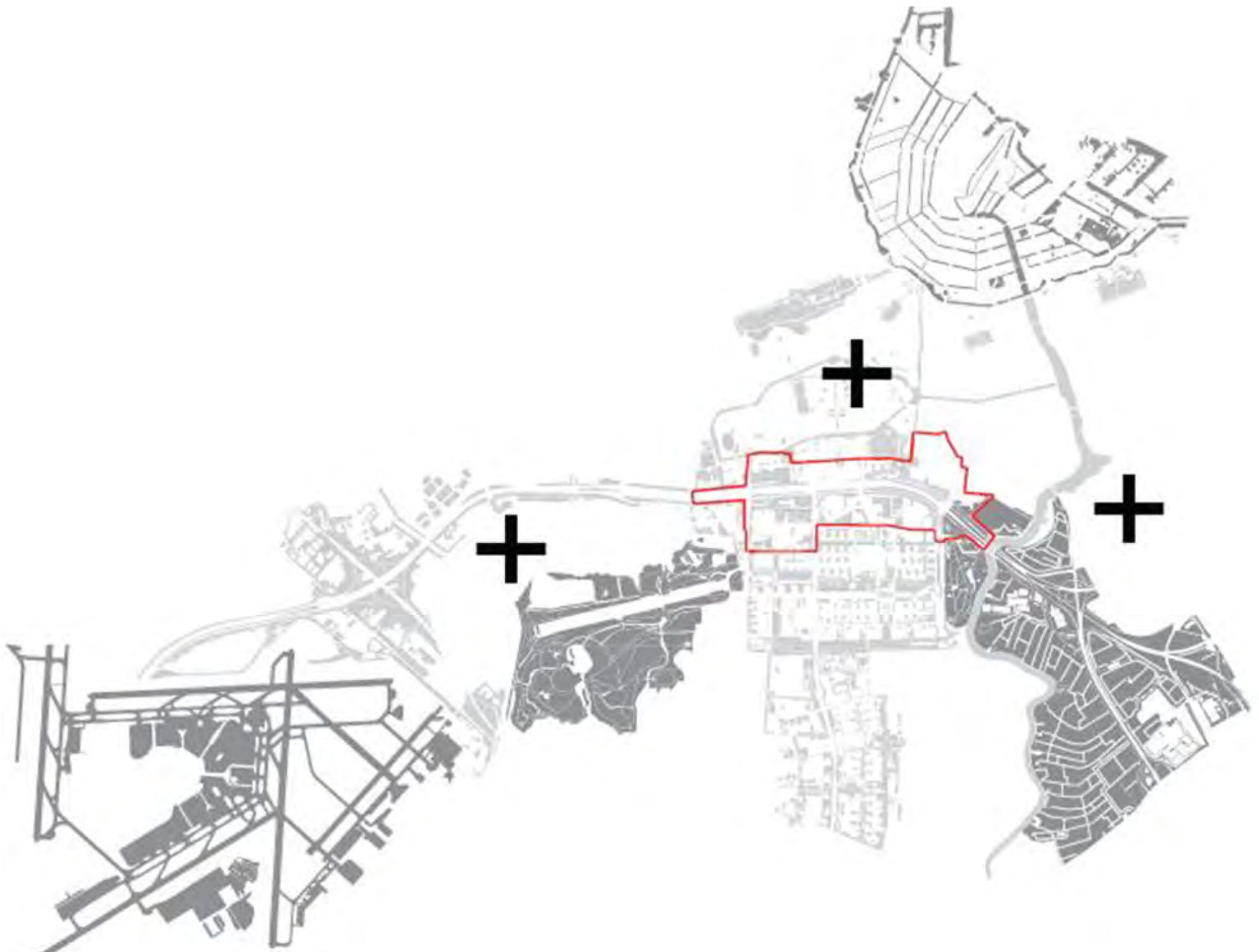
## Reasoning for the Place Game

For Placemaking Week, we chose Zuidas Kenniskwartier (Knowledge Quarter) as one of the six locations for a placegame, in this case examining place through an innovation lens. In this deep learning workshop, attendees learned about the Zuidas district from local stakeholders, and observed firsthand the connections between place and innovation. How can public spaces, including the lobbies of key buildings, become places to stimulate new ideas and inspirations—an important precursor to innovation?

The Placemaking Week was an initiative of Project for Public Spaces, STIPO / The City at Eye Level, Pakhuis de Zwijger, Placemaking Plus and the City of Amsterdam.



Zuidas Place Game 3



## Summary

For Placemaking Week, around 40 people came together from all over the world to examine Zuidas Kenniskwartier (Knowledge Quarter), one of the six locations for a placegame under the theme of innovation.

Participants quietly observed spaces to see how spaces are used and how people are interacting, talked to local stakeholders, and made observations about how place can become a powerful platform for innovative and inspirational thinking.

Julie Wagner introduced research on innovation districts and the centrality of place- and people-led strategies. VU University and the City of Amsterdam introduced their ongoing programs and challenges.

Participants then observed spaces and their users to see how spaces are used and how people are interacting. They interviewed local stakeholders, and made observations about how place can become a powerful platform for innovative and inspirational thinking. We discussed and examined these with each other.

This workshop was organized by:

- Julie Wagner, Brookings Institute and the Bass Initiative on Innovation and Placemaking
- Josja van der Veer, Marcel van Heemert and Franc van Nunen, VU University, Campus Development
- Eline Hoogendijk, Zuidas, City of Amsterdam
- Hans Karssenbergh, STIPO and The City at Eye Level.

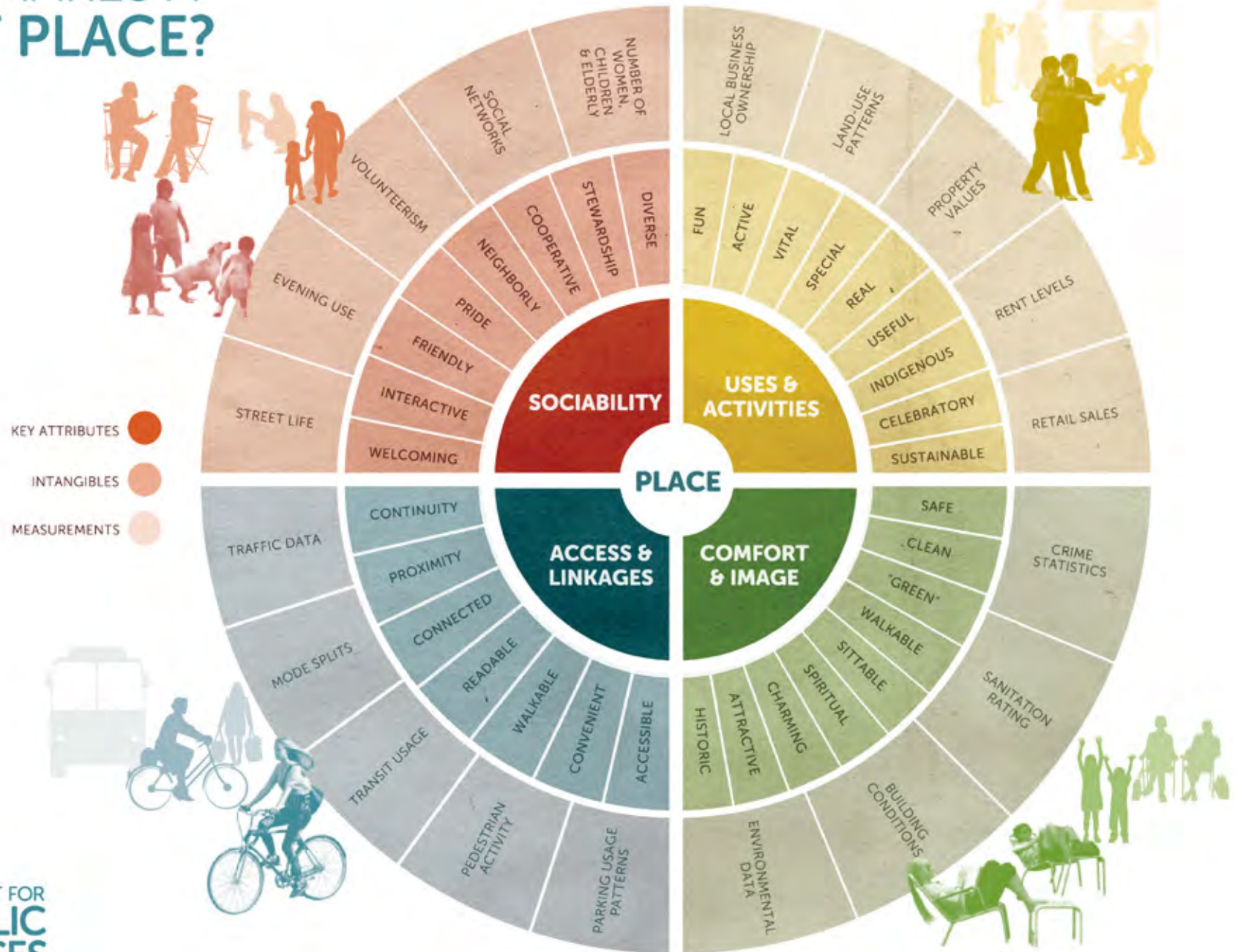
Organized by:



Prepared by:



# WHAT MAKES A GREAT PLACE?



## What is Placemaking?

Placemaking process begins with community and users. New opportunities arise from self-organised group of users of the space. Looking together into possibilities in public space, beginning with so-called low-hanging fruit: small interventions that are easy and fast to make (lighter, quicker, cheaper approach). Good public space attracts people as a magnet. They go there not only because they have to, but because being there is an enjoyable experience. What should be done to transform boring average space to attractive place?

### PPS, Project for Public Spaces

In evaluating thousands of public spaces around the world, PPS has found that to be successful, they generally share the following four qualities.

#### COMFORT & IMAGE

Whether a space is comfortable and presents itself well – has a good image – is key to its success. Comfort includes perceptions about safety, cleanliness, and the availability of places to sit – the importance of giving people the choice to sit where they want is generally underestimated.

#### USES & ACTIVITIES

Activities are the basic building blocks of a place. Having something to do gives people a reason to come to a place – and return. When there is nothing to do, a space will be empty and that generally means that something is wrong.

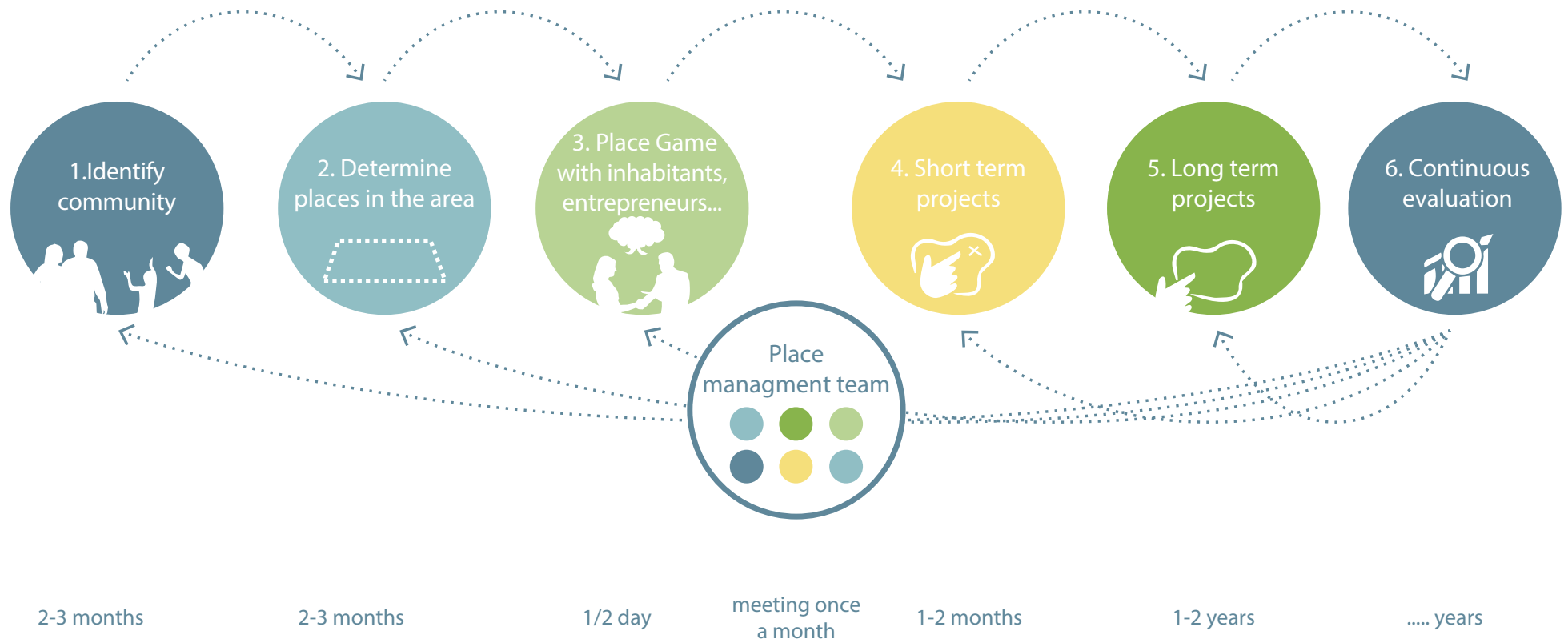
#### SOCIABILITY

This is a difficult quality for a place to achieve, but once attained it becomes an unmistakable feature. When people see friends, meet and greet their neighbors, and feel comfortable interacting with strangers, they tend to feel a stronger sense of place or attachment to their community – and to the place that fosters these types of social activities.

#### ACCESS & LINKAGES

You can judge the accessibility of a place by its connections to its surroundings, both visual and physical. A successful public space is easy to get to and get through; it is visible both from a distance and up close. The edges of a space are important as well: For instance, a row of shops along a street is more interesting and generally safer to walk by than a blank wall or empty lot. Accessible spaces have a high parking turnover and, ideally, are convenient to public transit.

Read more about placemaking and Project for Public Spaces > [website: pps.org](http://pps.org)





## Placemaking “in action”

Placemaking is about listening, looking and questioning people that live in the neighborhood, work and play there, to discover their needs, inspirations and vision of the place.

It is community-driven, place-based approach to create livable public spaces, that create strong societies around them.

Our Placemaking approach is based on our belief that it is not enough to simply design and develop public space in order to improve them. Improvements should reflect social values and needs. We believe that process that includes local people and allows them to be a part of development process is a key factor to create a successful public place, that is sensitive to its environment and context.

Placemaking must begin with a fundamental view to the dynamics, desires and conditions within a community. It is about watching, listening and asking people in a community about their problems and aspirations.

We work with communities to create a vision of the places they find important for common life and their daily experience; and we help them to implement their ideas. We begin with short-term experimental improvements, which can immediately bring benefits to public space and users.



- 1 ACTA  
2010
- 2 OI2  
gereed 2015  
onderzoek, kantoor VU/Umc
- 3 SCHOOLWERKTUINEN  
onderzoek, kantoor VU/allianties
- 4 ALLIANTIE GEBOUW  
gereed 2017  
onderwijs
- 5 NU.VU  
gereed 2017  
onderwijs, kantoor, cultuur
- 6 WOONTOREN  
wonen, voorzieningen
- 8 HERONTWIKKELING HOOFDGEBOUW  
BOUWDEEL E (OPTIONEEL)  
wonen
- 10 OZW  
2005
- 11 HERONTWIKKELING TRANSITORIUM  
onderzoek, wonen
- 12 HERONTWIKKELING ENERGIE-  
CENTRUM  
onderzoek, kantoor
- 13 HERONTWIKKELING MEDISCHE  
FACULTEIT  
onderwijs, kantoor, wonen
- 14 PLOT C  
onderwijs, wonen
- 15 HERINRICHTING OPENBARE RUIMTE  
2013-2018
- 16 HERONTWIKKELING INITIUM  
wonen
- 23 HERONTWIKKELING W&N GEBOUW,  
BOUWDEEL A/B  
wonen
- 24 HERONTWIKKELING HOOFDGEBOUW  
+ onderwijs, onderzoek, wonen, (congres)  
25 voorzieningen

> 2040

# Innovation Districts & Placemaking

*Julie Wagner and Bruce Katz*

To the surprise and amazement of many people, broad economic, demographic and cultural forces are changing, if not entirely re-conceiving, how people, firms and large institutions innovate. Innovation is increasingly a collaborative process, where ideas are shared more openly across various stages of innovation. While simply stated here, this shift among other trends, have led to a re-valuing of places with density and proximity—such as cities—that enable firms and talent to cluster in close proximity. It has, over time, lead to a new geography of innovation increasingly described as innovation districts.

These districts are geographic areas where leading-edge anchor institutions and companies cluster and connect with start-ups, business incubators, and accelerators. Innovation districts are also physically compact, transit-accessible, and technically-wired and offer mixed use housing, office, and retail. They constitute the ultimate mash up of entrepreneurs and educational institutions, start-ups and schools, mixed-use development and medical innovations, bike-sharing and bankable investments—all connected by transit, powered by clean energy, wired for digital technology, and fueled by caffeine.

The potential for innovation districts to drive innovative, inclusive, and sustainable growth requires us to understand what drives them and makes them productive and prosperous. Unlike segregated business or residential districts that have for decades populated most cities and suburbs, or even the activity centers that more recently have sprung up around public transit stations, innovation districts uniquely contain three categories of assets: economic assets, physical assets, and networking assets.

- **Economic assets** are the firms, institutions and organizations that drive, cultivate or support an innovation-rich environment.
- **Physical assets** are the public and privately-owned spaces—buildings, open spaces, streets and other infrastructure—designed and organized

to stimulate new and higher levels of connectivity, collaboration, and innovation.

- **Networking assets** are the relationships between actors—such as between individuals, firms, and institutions—that have the potential to generate, sharpen, and/or accelerate the advancement of ideas.

When these three assets combine with a supportive, risk-taking culture they create an innovation ecosystem—a synergistic relationship between people, firms, and place (the physical geography of the district) that facilitates idea generation and accelerates commercialization. Importantly, this ecosystem is a “place-based” ecosystem, where place is central to achieving such synergy.

## Amsterdam’s Zuidas as an Innovation District

Zuidas, six minutes from Schiphol and well connected with the city center, is the legal and finance hub, and home to a large academic hospital, medical research center, and Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. Zuidas is also transforming into an innovation district, where anchor institutions and companies cluster and connect with start-ups and others to magnify innovation output that can be commercialized for the market.

Zuidas started out in the 90s as a legal and finance district but has in the last ten years been developing much more into a mixed use, compact and dense new urban area. Mixing with new functions such as housing, activating the ground floors and connecting the Zuidas area to the networks of the existing city are key strategies to achieve this.

The Knowledge Quarter is one of the areas that is now under development. This part connects the VU University and the VUMC Academic hospital with the businesses and the other functions of Zuidas. The area has a strong potential to function as an innovation district, with the mix of research and development, professors and students, new startups, and the attention given by both the VU University and the Zuidas team to placemaking, quality of public space, active ground floors (plinths).



Place of the  
Place Game

Places that we visit:

- 1 - Main Hall VU Building
- 2 - O2 Area
- 3 - VU Campus Square



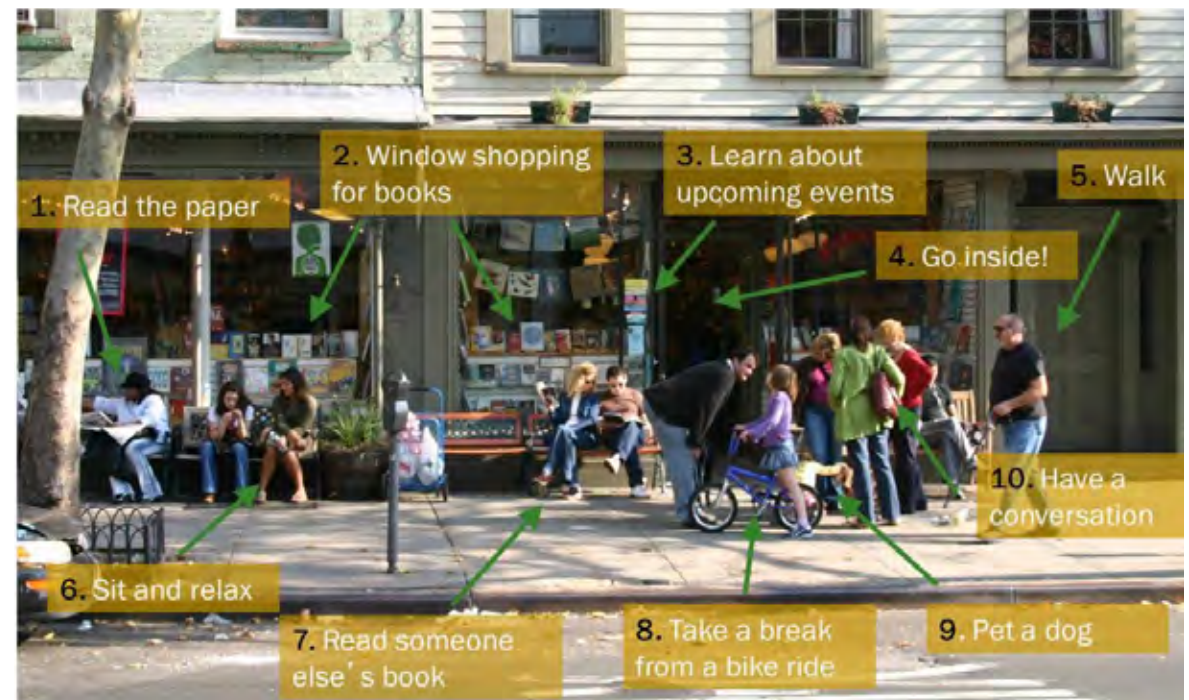
## The Power of 10

10 places were chosen as an approach of Project for Public Spaces, 'The Power of 10'. The idea behind this concept is that places thrive when users have a range of reasons (10+) to be there. These might include a place to sit, playgrounds to enjoy, art to touch, music to hear, food to eat, history to experience, and people to meet. Ideally, some of these activities will be unique to that particular place, reflecting the culture and history of the surrounding community. Local residents who use this space most regularly will be the best source of ideas for which uses will work best.

## Determine places

To analyze the Zuidas area in Amsterdam through an innovation lens, the workshop and placegames took place. In this deep learning workshop, attendees learned about the Zuidas district from local stakeholders, and observed firsthand the connections between place and innovation. How can public spaces, including the lobbies of key buildings, become places to stimulate new ideas and inspirations—an important precursor to innovation?

In the end information from this analysis is used to determine the most essential changes as well as to discuss and present short and long term ideas.





## Place Game



16 Zuidas Place Game

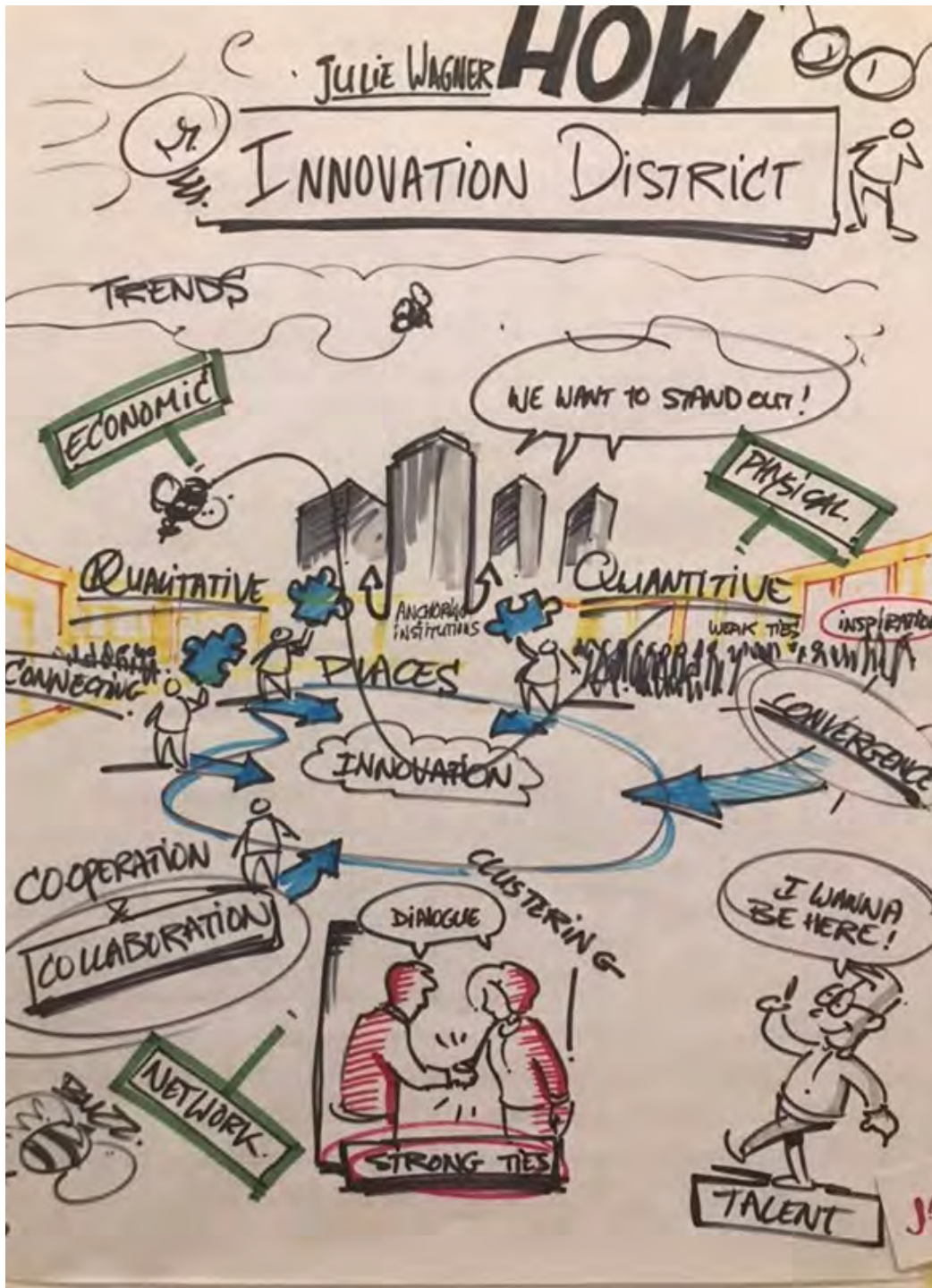


## Participants

The day of the Place Game there were more than 40 participants from around the world as well as local businessman, creative people and inhabitants. This colorful mix of expertise and different points of view brought a lot of unexpected and valuable insights about Zuidas, Amsterdam.

	First Name	Last Name	Country/Cit
1	Agnieszka	Winkler	USA
2	Alessandra	Weiss	Canada
3	Ally	Goh	Singapore
4	Amelia	Lukmanto	The Netherlands
5	Andrea	Graziano	Italy
6	Anna	Siprikova	USA
7	Bob	Hannan	Ireland
8	Carolina	Huffmann	Argentina, Buenos Aires
9	Cathleen	Edgerly	USA
10	Chris	Luth	The Netherlands
11	Erik	Bijsterbosch	The Netherlands
12	Hamdan	Abdul-Majeed	Malaysia
13	Harold	Kuan	Australia
14	Haya	Mani	Palestine
15	Jen	Heal	UK
16	Jia-Ping	Lee	Malaysia
17	Joan Stegenga	Stegenga	Amsterdam
18	Joe	Clark	USA
19	Julie	Heyde	USA
20	Ka Man Judy	Chan	Hong Kong
21	Karina	Koziej	Australia
22	Kate	Litwin	USA

	First Name	Last Name	Country/Cit
23	Leo	Le Duc	The Netherlands, Amsterdam
24	Leonardo	Brawl Marquez	Brazil
25	Lorenzo	Petrillo	Singapore
26	Magdeline	Sng	Singapore
27	Marcela Guerrero	Casas	South Africa
28	Mark Ojal	Ojal	Kenya
29	Marta	Machus-Burek	Poland, Warsaw
30		van Dijck	The Netherlands
31	Mary	Stargel	USA
32	Nathalie	Camus	UK, Wales
33	Razi	Riahi	UK
34	Rosa	Danenberg	Sweden, Stockholm
35	Stephanie	Hays	USA
36	Steve	Davies	USA



## Evaluation of places

During the deep learning session we examined the strong and weak ties.

Background:

Districts attempting to cultivate networks are driven by experimentation, creativity, and even a sociological understanding of how networks function. A leading scholar on networks, Granovetter, differentiates networks as either having “strong ties” or “weak ties,” which are determined by factors such as the frequency of contact, the emotional intensity of the relationship, and the reciprocity of commitments between the actors.

**Strong ties** occur between people or firms with a working or professional history, higher levels of trust, willing to share more detailed information, and more apt to participate in joint problem solving.

**Weak ties** occur between people or firms working within a different economic cluster or context where there is infrequent contact. Weak ties provide access to new information, even novel industry information, new contacts, and new information on business leads that are outside of existing networks.

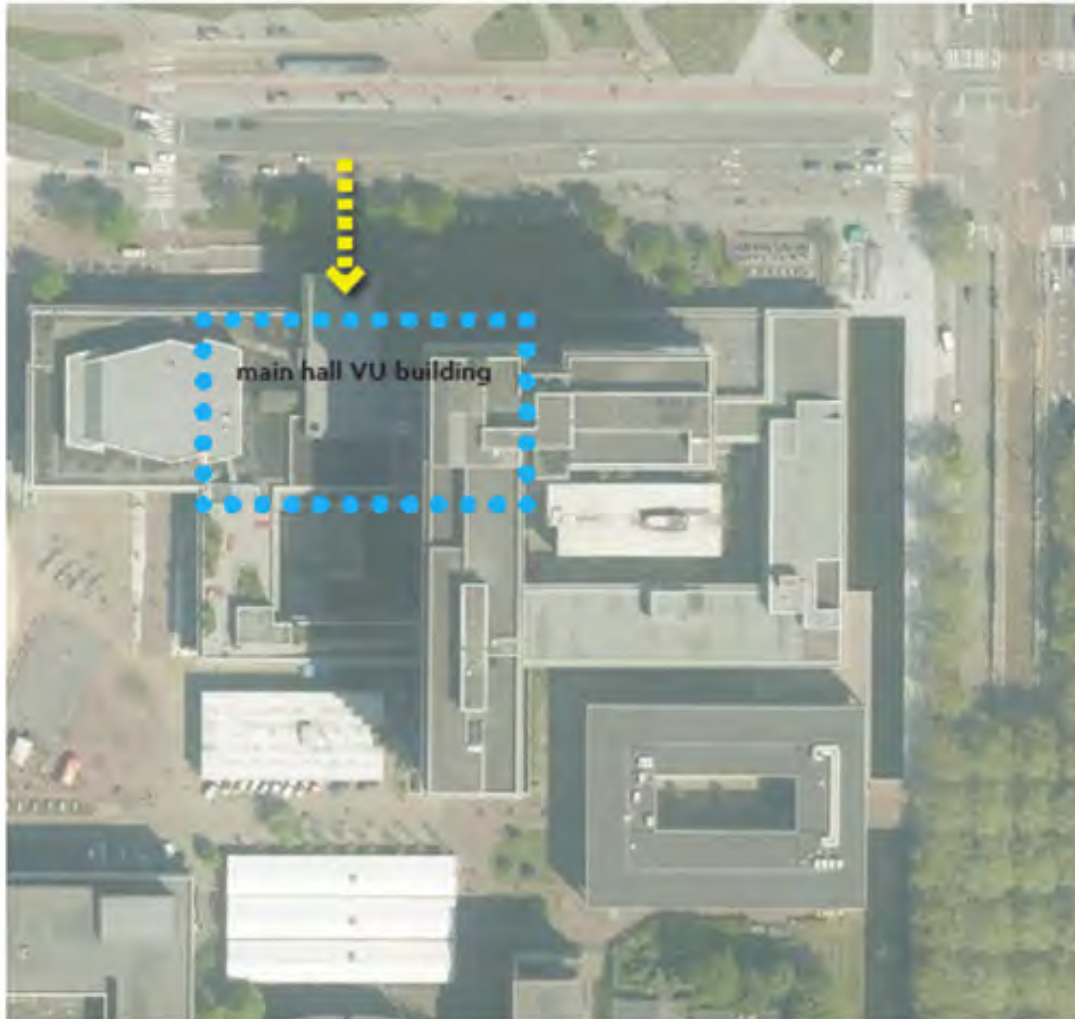
While it may seem obvious that a dense network of strong ties is the optimal condition for a highly innovation-driven environment, research indicates that both strong ties and weak ties are fundamental to firm success. Two primary categories of networking assets emerge from this research:

**Networking assets that build strong ties** focus on strengthening relationships within similar fields. These types of assets include: “tech regulars” (such as Eindhoven’s Tech Regulars, where “techies” discuss problems or advances in their work as a collective), workshops and training sessions for specific fields or technicians (daily activities along Boston’s waterfront), cluster-specific meetings (22@Barcelona), industry-specific conferences and monthly meetings (found in several districts), and industry-specific blogs for local firms and entrepreneurs.



**Networking assets that build weak ties** focus on building new, often cross-sector, relationships. Examples include: networking breakfasts (such as 22@Barcelona’s breakfast where experts and star innovators offer new insights in their fields followed by open time to network), innovation centers (such as Boston’s newly constructed 12,000 square foot District Hall), hack-a-thons across industry clusters such as life sciences and tech (Stockholm), tech-jam start-up classes (found in Boston), and even the choreographed open spaces between highly programmed buildings (St. Louis). In this last example, St. Louis will be clustering five innovation centers, with the purpose of generating “collision points” between smart people.

# Main hall VU building



Build in 1965

2.800 international students

Recently refurbished

congress

Library

Film screening

25.000 students

Espresso

Promotions

Meeting places

Workplaces



# Place no. 1 - Main Hall VU Building

## **FEATURES OF THE PLACE**

The inside space is great and has potential for more interaction. The problem is that no-one knows it on the outside until they're in the building. The building is an 'inside world' and with the new development of the Kenniskwartier across the road it has the potential to open up more and show better which innovations are taking place inside. Also, the building seems very much occupied by students interacting, and not too much yet by students mixing with researchers, businesses, incubators etc.

## **IDEAS FOR PERMEABILITY**

- Create a softer transition from building to street
- Open the building for everybody
- Create a door to connect the dead space to the outdoor un-used square
- Bookshop should open up towards the street and food combined and turn the bookstore to an area of dismission
- Open the restaurant
- Create sitting on small architecture elements along the facade
- Add green on the north entrance
- Add areas with exhibitions of academic works, show the innovations that are happening inside on the outside of the building
- Chatting smokers (young people smoke chat and stay- happy place)
- Musical keyboard on the ground (to patterns in the carpet)
- Floor directions way finding

## **IDEAS FOR PROGRAMMING**

- Designing a program using the space as a gallery for the exhibitions
- Active design, outdoor yoga, public art temporary
- Market
- Community calendar of events (what's happening in Zuidas?)
- Card games
- Event for researchers or students
- Signal more artistic, less official
- Moveable seats and tables, some play elements
- Interactive, spinning student profiles
- Quiet sittings with a view on the garden
- Organize regular events
- Give a challenge statement to spark conversation
- Building intimate places for conversations
- Bench type- the people sit in the corner so bench with cosy corners

## **LONG TERM IDEAS**

Higher ceilings currently too low.

## **REFERENCES**

Bristol town hall passes given to city innovators (anyone involved in a relevant field) can use their pass to access to the buildings. Could help to encourage other people (not student) into the building.





▲ Placegame Ideas Map Main Hall VU Building

# O2 area



state-of-the-art research

Human Life Sciences

Interfaculty collaboration and meetings

O<sub>2</sub> stands for oxygen and is therefore a symbol of life

Build in 2015

allows partners to rent office and laboratory space

laboratory space

VU, UvA & VUmc partners





# Place no. 2 - O2 Area

## FEATURES OF THE PLACE

The OI2 building stands for 'onderzoek' (research) by the VU MC and research by the university. But it also wants to stand for oxygen, life. The spaces inside have potential, and some do lead to interaction, but the building is very rigid and sterile on the outside. There is a principal choice to be made: whether to have one or two entrances and see the rest of the building mostly as an 'inside world', or to have the building communicate inside out much more, for instance by creating 10 separate units with their own doors on the side street. The building now seems oriented to the Boelelaan only. But even there, the way it is built, the wind is a problem for comfortable interaction and the creation of 'weak ties' between people in public space.

## IDEAS FOR PERMEABILITY

- Divide the O2 ground floor into separate units.
- "Open" Plinths
- Make a terrace in front of O2
- Create something like a "way of sculptures"
- Heat in winter.
- Move the entrance door from the café to connect with the hospital policlinic
- More seating, colour covering
- Restaurant. Get out.
- Move the temporary park/placemaking
- Make rooted walk through and place picture related to Uni/hospital along the route
- Open exit up to become entrance as well
- Bunker. Open up façade more contact.
- Wall garden against the plinths making with the community and a tea party afterwards
- No black windows. More transparent
- Open door would be more inviting
- Improve the way finding signage around the area.

- Build board on one of the empty walls
- Signage facing street clearly/showing the café is open to the public
- Create new bike racks as art to add colour.
- Look at all the plinths
- Food truck, Loose chairs on the footpath
- Re-think this entrance street
- Break the wind to make people feel more comfortable on the sidewalk.

## IDEAS FOR PROGRAMMING

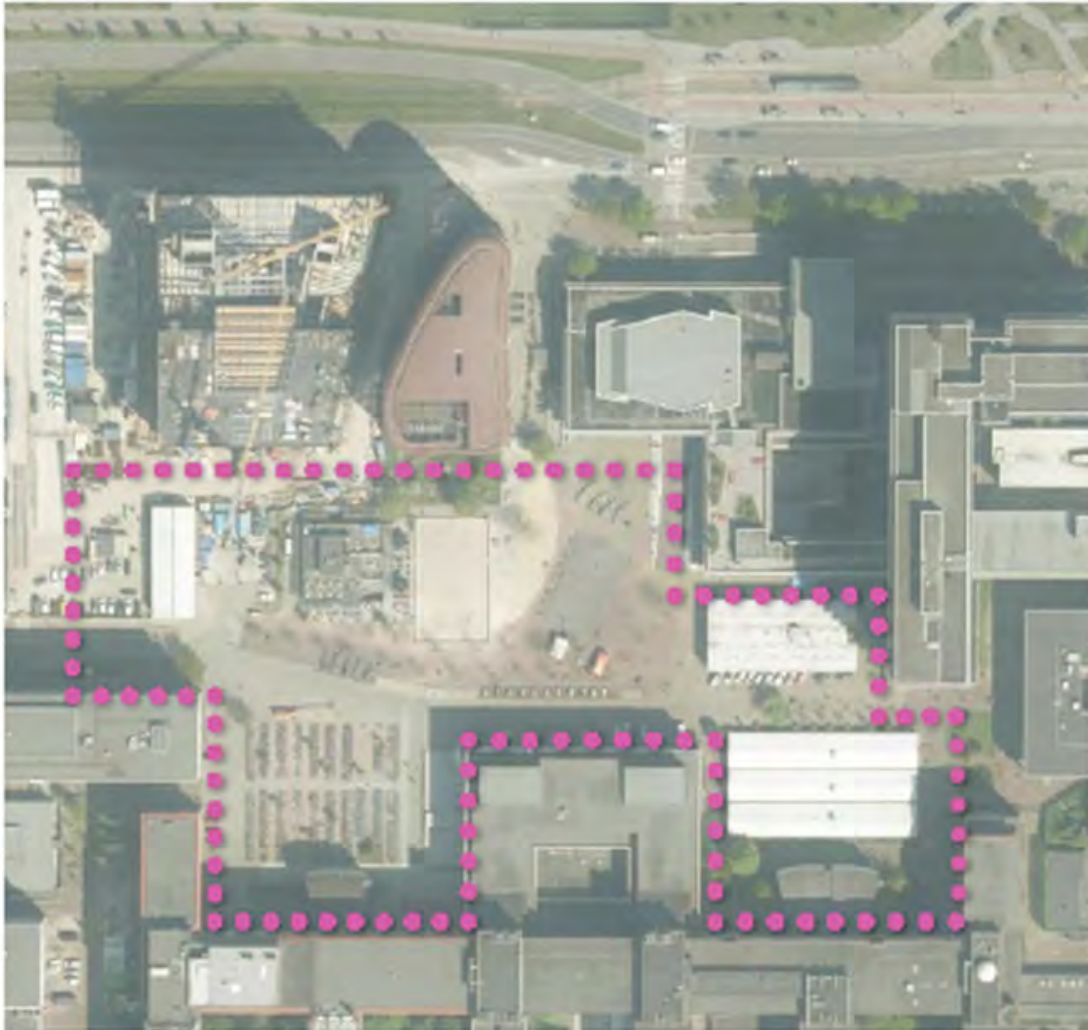
- Inspiration. List of:
  - companies digital
  - projects in Medical field
  - Low Hanging Fruit
- Not a hospital: sign. O2 receptionist gets 150 questions a day about where the hospital is.
- Expedition. space to create an identity
- Inspiration. Public exhibitions: Structures for people to present photos. Artworks, projects, science festivals or markets.

- Networking. Sprit out spaces with same F + B along the open thoroughfare
- Networking. Lines this area in mobile food vendors (reason for researcher to learn + others to visit O2)
- Social Network. More gathering around sitting places.
- Use Art as a healing programme.
- Social! Networks
- Using this large spaces for all times.
- Interaction and integrations between O2 and hospital.
- Networking. Café happy Hour all university employees get 50% off
- Inspiration. Internship for student to work with researchers.
- Mix PhD and University researchers
- The spaces need to be softer – it could be a quiet, contemplative space.
- Benches or workplaces on the sidewalk near OI2
- Meeting boxes/spaces for work, meetup etc.





▲ Placegame Ideas Map O2 Area



# VU Campus



## The basket café and restaurant

Sports

Chill

Supermarket

Study

Workplaces

Urban atmosphere

Performances

relax

Outdoor film screening



# Place no. 3 - VU Campus Square

## FEATURES OF THE PLACE

This place has drastically improved, since it was a parking lot still 5 years ago, and VU have come a long way since then, introducing pop-up use. Still, the place is at around 20% of its potential and could grow more. In stead of now 'jumping' to a 'final stage' with a grand design, it may be important to realize that the unfinished character is the actual strength of the space, inviting the users to participate, feel at home and help shape the place. It could definitely need some design solutions and green, but based on use and mental ownership.

## IDEAS FOR PHYSICAL CHANGES

- Create the central square the heart of place (temporary structure, offer amenities, start-up)
- Stage for live music and open event
- Small places, better spaces ( think about small things and activities in the small places)
- Get rid of benches - Get more loose chairs
- More seating for: reading books, events, sessions of poetry
- Choose a different colour of the space, not only grey and green- mix of colour
- Add more colours and furniture
- Round shapes to soften the very straight lines of all buildings
- Vines from rooftop to create green walls
- Light, installation to encourage more evening usage
- More activities and facilities in the plinths
- Add more trees and greenery to create soft and playful place.

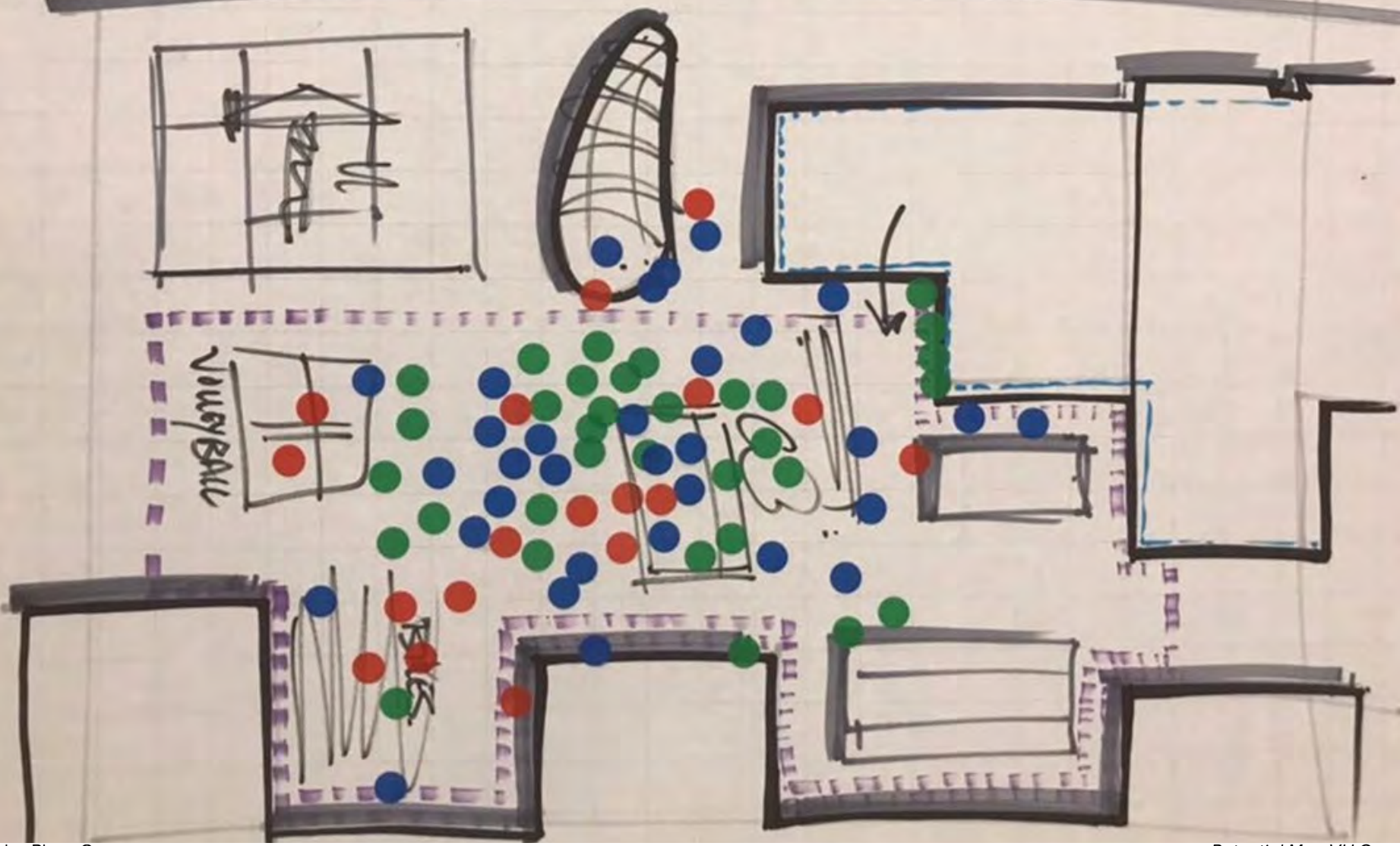
- Beautification of the chimney (graffiti, interactive installation)
- Seat with backrest
- Undercover parking of recycled material
- Add water(Erasmus University of Rotterdam)
- Open plaza with a big central artwork (like the bean in Chicago)
- Go to murals.nl and commission a mural design

## IDEAS FOR PROGRAMMING

- Using as a big screen (Vancouver metro-Natlab)
- Lust garden – reference of Italian gardens of important villa's
- More outdoor lessons
- Add flexible and moveable furniture
- Create winter pavilion with glass to keep people sitting outside
- Inspirations-urban farming
- What about thematic walk without expositions.

- Create a Greek theatre
- Get students to "own" the square with planning, design and beta actions
- Make cocreate areas inspiring + inviting
- Hold open classes in the basketball court and invite the public in to audit the class.
- Have some live video connection to space.
- Rachets, ping pong, more for play
- Filling the space with public art and green (the university in Avana should be visited for inspiration)
- Installations of emerging innovators
- Create new edge with uses, within the existing square to make it more scaled
- Install a year-round pavilion for exhibitions, meeting and event space programme
- Multiuse packets rather than seasonal activities (moving courts)
- Community art with everyday contribution.
- Around the world, students take over pop up and sell crafts or food
- Communal dinners with bring your food and drinks and live music

# VU CAMPUS





Placemaking Ideas Map VU Campus Square ▲





## Results



## Result 1: short term

The basic improvements include opening up the inner functions to the outside. The bookshop to have a small exterior terrace, the hall having transparent facades to make them more permeable.

Few more changes, that could be done very fast is addition of the color and greenery. **Colors** could be added with professional graffiti or simply by coloring empty walls bright colors such as yellow or blue. Addition of **greenery** would easily change the mood of public space and make it more attractive.

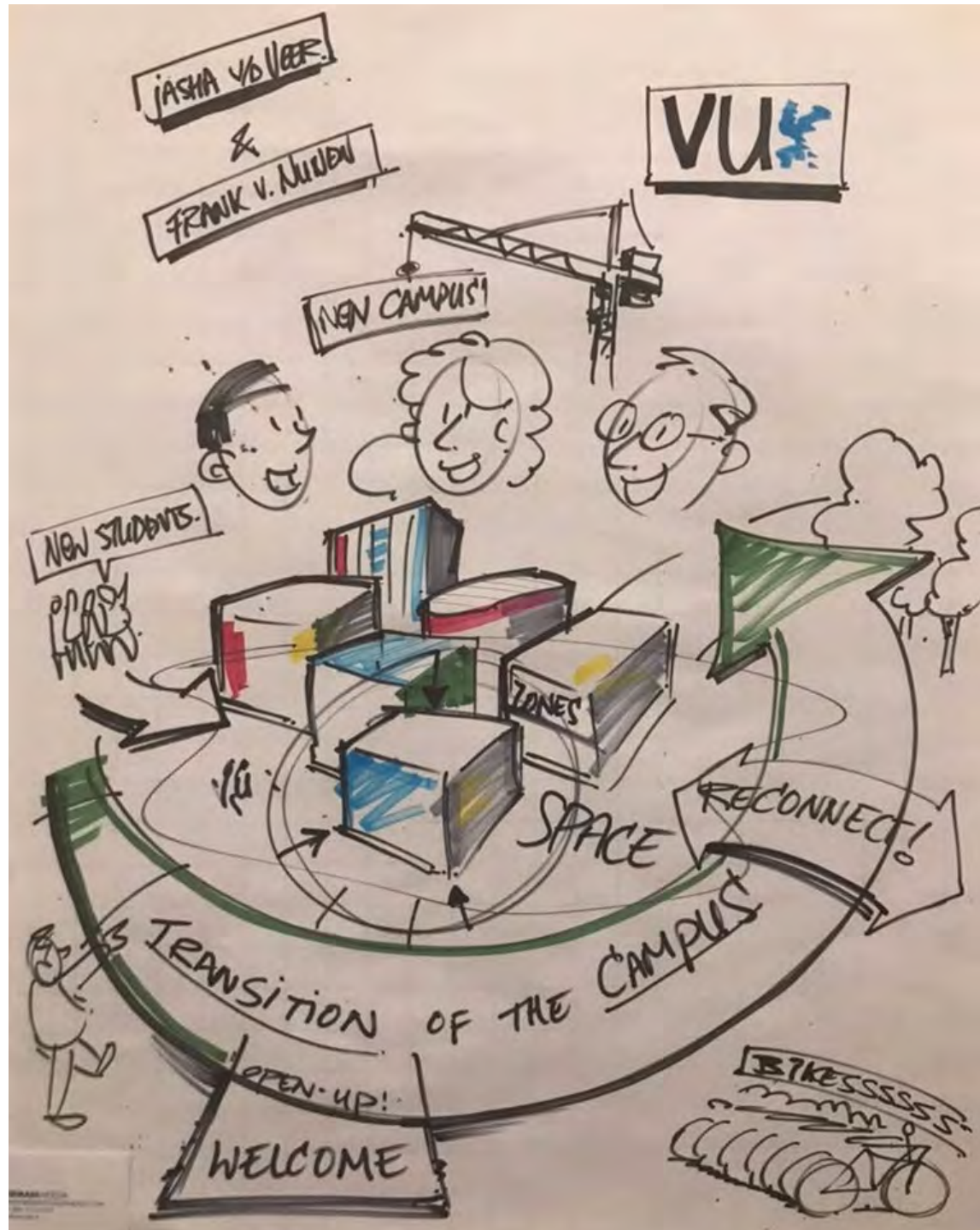
Participants also noted, that the area can be activated by introducing small activities like outdoor yoga, public art, active design, sports activities like ping pong. The VU main square has to be made the central heart and attraction maybe with small mobile food and drink spots. Improvements of **signage and way finding** would increase the efficiency of the visitors and users of space.



## Result 2: Long term

In long term, the ceilings need to be made high for more interaction. Also the facades of the building should be permeable and the ground floors need to be more interactive with the outer spaces. The interaction between students and researchers can be increased with interactive functions.





## Closing Notes by Julie Wagner

Across every global region, innovation districts are in the process of evaluating their spaces and places as a means to increase both social networks (strong ties and weak ties) and a way to strengthen innovation overall. On this latter point, through experimentation, a growing number of innovation districts are public spaces are increasingly transformed into areas for brainstorming, the testing of concepts, testing prototypes, and more.

In the case of Zuidas, this innovation district has a number of places where strong ties occur (main hall for students; O2 for researchers) but, like most districts, the area lacks places for the formation of weak ties.

This generally requires two kinds of interventions: programming support to help draw like and unlike people together and spaces where people have a reason or desire to visit.

This is when placemakers can be exceptionally helpful: in offering strong observations and suggestions as outlined in this report and in guiding innovation districts through a community engagement process that empowers people that work, live and play in the area to help shape the spaces themselves.

## New Ideas to Work Out

We closed off with Josja van der Veer of the VU Campus Development extending her gratitude with the enormous amount of new ideas and information generated during the workshop. She indicated she would now like to take the next step and work out a plan with the scope of 1 – 5 years.

The Zuidas team represented by Erik Bijsterbos and Eline Hoogendijk were also very grateful for all the participants joining and the attention they gave to the area they are working on every day. The workshop gave them a lot of new ideas, way more than expected, which will help working further on the area together with the other partners and stakeholders.



Placemaking Plus



AMSTERDAM  
PLACEMAKING WEEK  
OCT 10-14, 2017