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WP10 – Extended Water Museum Study Visit

Deliverable D10.1

Guidelines & Best Practices Toolkit for Establishing an Extended Water Museum

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Purpose of the Deliverable

This Toolkit has been developed within the AQUATIK-EU project to provide methodological guidance for municipalities and other stakeholders involved in the planning, implementation and long-term management of Extended Water Museums through the methodology presented in this Toolkit.

Deliverable D10.1 supports the establishment of Extended Water Museums by presenting the experience gained through the Souli pilot as a transferable methodological reference. It combines conceptual foundations, implementation methodologies and practical recommendations that may assist municipalities and project partners in adapting the Extended Water Museum approach to different territorial contexts.

Rather than constituting a purely theoretical study, the Toolkit has been designed as a practical guidance document that supports informed decision-making, promotes collaborative governance and encourages the sustainable interpretation and management of water heritage.

Design Principles

The Toolkit has been developed according to the following principles:

- Practical orientation, supporting implementation rather than extensive theoretical analysis.
- Integration of conceptual foundations, methodological approaches and implementation tools within a coherent guidance framework.
- Presentation of the Souli Extended Water Museum as a transferable pilot experience.
- Promotion of interdisciplinary collaboration and stakeholder participation.
- Adaptability of the proposed methodology to different territorial contexts and municipal capacities.

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1. Foundations

The Extended Water Museum represents a contemporary approach to heritage interpretation, expanding the traditional boundaries of museums towards the wider landscape, local communities and the natural environment. Drawing upon the principles established by ICOM, UNESCO and the ecomuseum movement, this approach recognises water heritage as an integrated system where natural, cultural and social values coexist and interact.

This chapter introduces the conceptual foundations underpinning the Extended Water Museum approach adopted within the AQUATIK-EU project. It presents the key concepts that support the interpretation, valorisation and sustainable management of aquatic heritage, providing the theoretical context for the methodological framework developed in the following chapters.

1.1 Cultural Landscape

The concept of **Cultural Landscape** constitutes one of the fundamental pillars of the contemporary approach to cultural heritage. According to UNESCO and the European Landscape Convention, landscape is not perceived merely as a natural or geographical setting, but as the result of the continuous interaction between people and nature over time. Natural features, human activities, historical processes and cultural expressions together form an integrated system that reflects the identity and history of a place.

In the context of water heritage, the cultural landscape extends beyond water features themselves. It encompasses natural processes, historical infrastructures, traditional water uses, routes, settlements, places of memory, as well as the social and cultural practices that have evolved around water throughout history. The significance of the landscape does not derive solely from its individual components, but primarily from the relationships established among them and from the way these relationships shape the collective experience of a place.

This perspective differs substantially from the traditional approach to heritage conservation, which has often focused on the protection of individual monuments or isolated natural sites. Instead, it recognises the landscape as a living system where natural heritage, cultural identity and the everyday life of local communities coexist and continuously evolve.

For this reason, the cultural landscape provides both the spatial and conceptual framework within which the **Extended Water Museum** is developed. The interpretation of water

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heritage is therefore not limited to individual sites of interest but expands to encompass the wider landscape, revealing the ecological, historical, social and cultural interconnections that define the distinctive character of each territory.

1.2 Extended Museum (ICOM)

The concept of the **Extended Museum** represents one of the most significant developments in contemporary museology, reflecting the evolving role of museums in the twenty-first century. The approach was developed within the framework of the **International Council of Museums (ICOM)** and was formally articulated through the Resolution **"The Responsibility of Museums Towards Landscape"**, adopted during the 24th ICOM General Conference held in Milan in 2016.

The fundamental principle of the Extended Museum is that museums are no longer confined to the physical boundaries of a building or to the preservation of collections alone. Instead, they expand their role towards the wider natural, cultural and social environment, recognising that heritage extends across the landscape and remains closely connected to the communities that have created, preserved and continue to attribute meaning to it.

Within this perspective, museums become institutions of knowledge, interpretation and mediation, fostering collaboration among experts, local authorities, community organisations and citizens. Heritage protection is therefore understood not simply as the conservation of individual artefacts, but as the interpretation and safeguarding of the relationships between people, nature and culture. This broader role enables museums to contribute actively to sustainable development, community engagement and the preservation of local identity.

The Extended Museum approach provides the conceptual foundation upon which the **Extended Water Museum** is built. By adopting these principles, the AQUATIK-EU project interprets aquatic landscapes as living heritage systems, where natural and cultural assets, collective memory and community participation converge to create an integrated framework for heritage interpretation, education and sustainable management.

1.3 Ecomuseum Principles

Building upon the evolution of the museum concept, the **ecomuseum** approach considers the territory itself as a living museum, where natural environments, cultural heritage and community life together form an integrated heritage system. Rather than concentrating heritage within the physical boundaries of a museum building, the ecomuseum extends

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interpretation to the wider landscape, recognising the inseparable relationship between people, place and heritage.

Originating in France during the 1970s, the ecomuseum movement has evolved into an internationally recognised model for the integrated management and interpretation of local heritage. Contemporary ecomuseums go beyond the preservation and presentation of cultural assets, functioning as platforms for cooperation, participation and local development. Within this framework, local communities are not regarded merely as visitors or beneficiaries of heritage interpretation, but as active contributors to the identification, documentation, safeguarding and promotion of their own heritage.

A fundamental principle of the ecomuseum is the active involvement of communities throughout all stages of planning, decision-making and implementation. Local knowledge, collective memory and everyday cultural practices are recognised as valuable sources of heritage, while collaboration among citizens, local authorities, cultural organisations and experts contributes to a more inclusive and sustainable approach to heritage governance.

These principles are closely aligned with the philosophy of the **Extended Water Museum**. Water heritage is understood not as a collection of isolated natural or cultural assets, but as a living network of relationships linking landscapes, communities and water resources. Consequently, community participation is not simply considered a desirable component of the process, but a fundamental condition for the successful establishment, long-term sustainability and continuous evolution of an Extended Water Museum.

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2. Methodological Framework

The conceptual foundations presented in the previous chapter establish the theoretical basis of the **Extended Water Museum** approach. Building upon these principles, the present chapter introduces the methodological framework that may support municipalities and implementing partners in the planning, development and implementation of an Extended Water Museum.

Rather than proposing a single standardised model, the framework presents a sequence of complementary methodologies that can be adapted according to the environmental, cultural and governance characteristics of each territory. The approach reflects the experience developed within the **AQUATIK-EU** project, combining heritage interpretation, participatory governance and sustainable territorial development into an integrated implementation process.

The methodologies presented in the following sections are intended to support the identification, interpretation and valorisation of water heritage while encouraging collaboration between local authorities, experts, stakeholders and local communities. Together, they provide a practical methodological pathway that may assist municipalities in developing locally adapted Extended Water Museum initiatives capable of responding to both heritage conservation and sustainable development objectives.

2.1 Water Heritage Identification

The identification of water heritage constitutes the first step in the establishment of an Extended Water Museum. Its objective is to recognise, document and understand the natural, cultural and intangible assets that collectively shape the identity of a water landscape and provide the foundation for its interpretation and sustainable management.

The establishment of an Extended Water Museum begins with a comprehensive understanding of the water heritage that characterises a territory. Rather than focusing exclusively on individual monuments or natural features, the identification process seeks to recognise the full diversity of heritage elements associated with water and the relationships that connect them.

Water heritage encompasses both **tangible** and **intangible** components. Tangible heritage includes rivers, springs, wetlands, hydraulic infrastructure, bridges, watermills, traditional settlements and other physical elements that reflect the interaction between people and water over time. Intangible heritage comprises oral traditions, historical narratives, local

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knowledge, rituals, traditional water management practices and the symbolic meanings attributed to aquatic environments by local communities.

Equally important is the recognition that water heritage should be interpreted as an interconnected system rather than a collection of isolated assets. Natural processes, cultural landscapes, historical events and contemporary community life together contribute to the significance of a territory. Identifying these interconnections enables a more holistic understanding of heritage and provides the basis for coherent interpretation strategies.

The identification process should therefore combine documentary research with field observation and community knowledge. Existing literature, historical archives, environmental studies and spatial data provide essential background information, while local residents, cultural associations, experts and public authorities contribute valuable knowledge that often remains undocumented. Integrating these different sources strengthens both the accuracy of heritage identification and the sense of local ownership throughout the process.

Within the **AQUATIK-EU** approach, Water Heritage Identification represents the foundation upon which all subsequent stages of the Extended Water Museum are developed. The inventory of heritage assets informs landscape mapping, narrative development, participatory activities and digital interpretation, ensuring that future actions are grounded in a comprehensive understanding of the territory and its heritage values.

Implementation Considerations

- ➔ Consider water heritage as an integrated natural and cultural system rather than isolated heritage sites.
- ➔ Include both tangible and intangible heritage assets throughout the identification process.
- ➔ Combine documentary research, field observation and community knowledge to develop a comprehensive understanding of the territory.
- ➔ Establish a structured heritage inventory before proceeding to mapping, interpretation and digital documentation.

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Practical Note

At this stage, the objective is not to prioritise heritage assets but to identify the broadest possible range of natural, cultural and intangible elements associated with water. The assessment, interpretation and prioritisation of these assets will be undertaken during the subsequent stages of the methodology.

2.2 Landscape & Heritage Mapping

Landscape and Heritage Mapping constitutes the second stage in the development of an Extended Water Museum. Following the identification of water heritage assets, this phase seeks to understand their spatial distribution, interconnections and relationships within the wider landscape. Rather than simply locating individual sites, mapping reveals how natural, cultural and historical elements collectively shape the identity of a territory.

Within the Extended Water Museum approach, mapping is not limited to cartographic representation. It is an interpretative process that connects ecological systems, cultural landscapes, historical infrastructures, traditional land uses and community experiences into a coherent territorial framework. Rivers, springs, wetlands, bridges, watermills, archaeological sites, settlements and cultural landmarks are therefore understood as interconnected components of a living heritage system rather than isolated points of interest.

Landscape and Heritage Mapping also enables the recognition of relationships that may not be immediately visible through conventional heritage inventories. Ecological corridors, historical routes, traditional water management systems and cultural narratives frequently extend beyond administrative boundaries, highlighting the importance of adopting a landscape-scale perspective. This integrated understanding strengthens both heritage interpretation and future planning decisions.

The mapping process should combine geographic information, historical documentation, field surveys and local knowledge. Geographic Information Systems (GIS), historical maps, aerial imagery and environmental datasets may be complemented by community observations and local narratives, creating a multidimensional representation of the territory. This integrated mapping approach supports evidence-based decision-making while reinforcing community engagement throughout the planning process.

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Within the **AQUATIK-EU** framework, Landscape and Heritage Mapping provides the spatial foundation upon which subsequent methodological stages are developed. The resulting territorial representation supports value assessment, participatory activities, narrative development and digital interpretation, ensuring that the Extended Water Museum reflects the complexity and diversity of the landscape it seeks to interpret.

Implementation Considerations
➔ Map relationships between heritage assets rather than individual sites only. ➔ Integrate natural, cultural, historical and social dimensions within a single territorial framework. ➔ Combine spatial data with local knowledge and field observations. ➔ Consider ecological and cultural connections that extend beyond administrative boundaries.

Practical Note

Landscape mapping should remain flexible throughout the development of the Extended Water Museum. New heritage assets, community knowledge and ecological information may emerge during later stages of the process, requiring periodic updates and refinement of the territorial representation.

2.3 Value-Based Mapping

Following the identification and spatial mapping of water heritage assets, the next methodological step involves understanding the different values associated with each element of the landscape. **Value-Based Mapping** enables municipalities to move beyond the simple documentation of heritage assets by recognising the multiple ecological, cultural, historical, social and symbolic dimensions that contribute to their overall significance.

Within the Extended Water Museum approach, heritage value is not determined solely by scientific or historical criteria. Instead, it emerges through the interaction between the landscape, local communities and the meanings that people attribute to places over time.

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Consequently, different stakeholders may recognise different values within the same heritage asset, reflecting the diversity of perspectives that characterises living heritage.

A comprehensive value assessment should therefore consider multiple dimensions simultaneously. Ecological value relates to biodiversity, ecosystem functions and environmental quality. Cultural and historical values reflect the historical development of the territory, traditional knowledge and cultural identity. Social value derives from the role that water places play in everyday community life, while symbolic value encompasses myths, memories, beliefs and narratives that contribute to the collective identity of a place.

Rather than ranking heritage assets according to a single criterion, Value-Based Mapping promotes an integrated understanding of their significance. This multidimensional perspective supports balanced decision-making, helping municipalities identify priorities for interpretation, conservation and sustainable management while recognising the diversity of values embedded within aquatic landscapes.

Within the **AQUATIK-EU** framework, Value-Based Mapping provides the analytical foundation for the subsequent development of participatory activities and interpretative narratives. Understanding why places matter is essential before deciding how they should be interpreted, communicated and experienced by both local communities and visitors.

Implementation Considerations

- ➔ Assess heritage assets through multiple value dimensions rather than a single evaluation criterion.
- ➔ Recognise that different stakeholder groups may attribute different values to the same place.
- ➔ Consider ecological, cultural, historical, social and symbolic values as complementary rather than competing.
- ➔ Use value assessment to support interpretation, conservation priorities and sustainable management decisions.

Practical Note

Value assessment should remain transparent and participatory. Rather than relying exclusively on expert judgement, municipalities are encouraged to combine scientific

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evaluation with community perspectives in order to capture the full diversity of meanings associated with water heritage.

2.4 Participatory Mapping

Participatory Mapping represents a fundamental component of the Extended Water Museum methodology, transforming heritage mapping from a purely technical exercise into a collaborative process of knowledge creation. While previous methodological stages focus on identifying, documenting and assessing heritage assets, participatory mapping introduces the perspectives of the people who live, work and interact with the landscape on a daily basis.

The methodology recognises that local communities possess valuable knowledge that is often absent from official records, historical archives or scientific studies. Memories, oral histories, traditional practices, place names, cultural meanings and everyday experiences associated with water contribute significantly to understanding the identity of a territory. Incorporating these perspectives enriches the interpretation of water heritage and ensures that local knowledge becomes an integral part of the Extended Water Museum.

Participatory Mapping also serves as an effective governance mechanism by fostering dialogue among local authorities, experts, stakeholders, community organisations and citizens. Through workshops, interviews, focus groups, community walks and participatory mapping sessions, different perspectives can be discussed, compared and integrated into a shared understanding of the territory. This collaborative process strengthens transparency, builds trust among stakeholders and promotes a shared sense of responsibility for the protection and valorisation of water heritage.

Within the **AQUATIK-EU** framework, participation extends beyond consultation. Communities actively contribute to identifying heritage assets, documenting local narratives, validating interpretation, and shaping future cultural and educational activities. This collaborative approach reflects the principles of both the Extended Museum and the Ecomuseum, recognising communities not merely as audiences but as active partners in heritage interpretation and management.

Participatory Mapping therefore represents a bridge between technical knowledge and lived experience. By combining scientific expertise with community perspectives, municipalities can develop Extended Water Museums that are both scientifically robust and

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socially meaningful, strengthening local ownership while supporting sustainable heritage management.

Implementation Considerations
➔ Engage local communities from the earliest stages of the planning process. ➔ Combine expert knowledge with local experience and traditional knowledge. ➔ Use a variety of participatory methods, including workshops, interviews and field activities. ➔ Encourage dialogue among public authorities, stakeholders, cultural organisations and citizens. ➔ Ensure that community contributions are documented and integrated into subsequent interpretation and planning activities.

Practical Note

Participation should be understood as a continuous process rather than a single consultation activity. Community engagement is most effective when maintained throughout the planning, implementation and future development of the Extended Water Museum, allowing local knowledge and new perspectives to continuously enrich the interpretation of water heritage.

2.5 Narrative Development

Narrative Development represents the stage at which documented heritage assets, landscape relationships and community knowledge are transformed into meaningful interpretative experiences. Within the Extended Water Museum approach, narratives do not simply communicate information; they reveal the relationships between water, landscape, history and society, allowing visitors and local communities to understand the broader significance of aquatic heritage.

Effective heritage narratives are developed through the integration of multiple knowledge sources. Scientific evidence, historical documentation, ecological characteristics and archaeological information provide the factual basis, while oral histories, local memories, traditions and cultural practices contribute to the human dimension. Together, these

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complementary perspectives create coherent stories that connect tangible and intangible heritage within a single interpretative framework.

Narratives should be organised around the distinctive identity of each place rather than following a standardised storytelling model. Every heritage site possesses unique ecological characteristics, historical developments and cultural meanings that shape its interpretation. Consequently, the objective is not to produce isolated descriptions of individual sites but to develop narratives that explain how different locations contribute collectively to the identity of the wider water landscape.

Within the **AQUATIK-EU** methodology, narrative development also supports the interpretation of water heritage through thematic routes and interconnected heritage points. Rather than presenting each location independently, narratives establish relationships between sites, enabling visitors to understand ecological processes, historical continuity and community interactions across the territory. This integrated storytelling approach strengthens both educational value and visitor experience.

The development of interpretative narratives should remain an open and evolving process. As new historical evidence, scientific knowledge or community perspectives emerge, narratives may be refined and expanded, ensuring that the Extended Water Museum continues to reflect the living relationship between people, water and landscape.

Implementation Considerations
➔ Develop narratives that combine scientific evidence with community knowledge. ➔ Interpret relationships between places rather than presenting isolated heritage sites. ➔ Integrate tangible and intangible heritage within a common interpretative framework. ➔ Adapt narrative complexity according to different audiences while maintaining scientific accuracy. ➔ Periodically review and enrich narratives as new information becomes available.

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Practical Note

*Narratives should encourage visitors to understand **why** a place is significant rather than simply describing **what** they are seeing. Interpretation becomes more meaningful when ecological processes, cultural identity and community memory are presented as interconnected elements of the same heritage story.*

2.6 Digital Interpretation

Digital interpretation represents the final stage of the methodological framework, transforming heritage knowledge into accessible and engaging visitor experiences. Within the Extended Water Museum approach, digital technologies do not replace the direct experience of the landscape; rather, they enhance interpretation by providing additional layers of information, storytelling and interaction that support a deeper understanding of water heritage.

The use of digital tools enables municipalities to present complex ecological, historical and cultural information in ways that are accessible to diverse audiences. Mobile applications, QR codes, digital maps, audio guides, multimedia content and virtual exhibitions can complement on-site interpretation, allowing visitors to explore heritage at their own pace while accessing scientifically validated information enriched by local narratives and community knowledge.

Digital interpretation also contributes to improving accessibility and inclusiveness. By offering multilingual content, alternative formats and different levels of interpretative depth, digital platforms can accommodate visitors with diverse cultural backgrounds, ages and learning preferences. Furthermore, digital tools allow heritage interpretation to extend beyond the physical visit, supporting educational activities, community engagement and long-term dissemination of knowledge.

Within the **AQUATIK-EU** framework, digital interpretation is closely linked to thematic routes and interconnected heritage narratives. Digital technologies facilitate the integration of individual heritage sites into a coherent visitor experience, enabling users to understand the relationships between natural environments, cultural landscapes and community histories across the wider territory. Rather than functioning as isolated technological solutions, digital tools become an integral component of the Extended Water Museum methodology.

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The successful implementation of digital interpretation depends on maintaining a balance between technology and authenticity. Digital media should enhance, rather than dominate, the visitor experience, encouraging meaningful engagement with the landscape while preserving the authenticity, atmosphere and cultural significance of each heritage site.

Implementation Considerations

- ➔ Select digital tools according to the objectives and characteristics of each heritage site.
- ➔ Integrate scientific information, community narratives and multimedia resources within a coherent interpretative framework.
- ➔ Ensure accessibility through multilingual content and user-friendly digital platforms.
- ➔ Design digital interpretation to complement, rather than replace, direct engagement with the landscape.
- ➔ Establish procedures for the regular updating and maintenance of digital content.

Practical Note

Digital interpretation should always remain secondary to the heritage experience itself. Technology is most effective when it helps visitors better understand the landscape, encourages exploration and stimulates curiosity without distracting from the authenticity of the place.

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3. Governance and Community Engagement

The successful development of an Extended Water Museum depends not only on the identification and interpretation of water heritage resources but also on the establishment of an effective governance framework that promotes collaboration among public authorities, local communities, scientific institutions and other relevant stakeholders.

Within the Extended Water Museum approach, governance is understood as a participatory and adaptive process through which different actors contribute their knowledge, expertise and experience to the planning, implementation and long-term management of water heritage initiatives. Community engagement therefore becomes a fundamental component of sustainable heritage management, strengthening local ownership, fostering collaborative decision-making and supporting the long-term resilience of the initiative.

The following sections present the principal components of participatory governance, including stakeholder identification, community participation, co-creation processes, citizen science, governance approaches and capacity building. Together, these elements provide municipalities with a methodological framework for establishing collaborative partnerships that support the sustainable development of Extended Water Museums.

3.1 Stakeholder Identification

The first step in establishing an effective governance framework is the identification of stakeholders who influence, manage, use or are affected by water heritage. Stakeholder Identification enables municipalities to understand the diversity of actors involved in the territory and to recognise the different forms of knowledge, expertise and responsibilities that contribute to the development of an Extended Water Museum.

Stakeholders should be identified broadly, extending beyond public institutions to include local communities, environmental organisations, cultural associations, educational institutions, tourism operators, research organisations, businesses and individual citizens. Each stakeholder group contributes different perspectives, resources and capacities that enrich both the planning process and the long-term management of water heritage.

Stakeholder identification should also recognise that interests and expectations may differ among groups. Some stakeholders may focus primarily on environmental conservation, while others emphasise cultural identity, tourism development, education or local economic opportunities. Understanding these different perspectives enables municipalities to anticipate potential synergies, identify possible conflicts and establish more effective mechanisms for collaboration.

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Within the **AQUATIK-EU** approach, stakeholder identification represents the foundation for participatory governance. A comprehensive understanding of the stakeholder ecosystem supports the organisation of collaborative activities, facilitates dialogue and strengthens the collective capacity required to develop and sustain an Extended Water Museum.

Implementation Considerations
➔ Identify stakeholders from the public, private, academic and civil society sectors. ➔ Recognise both institutional expertise and community knowledge. ➔ Consider different interests, expectations and responsibilities throughout the planning process. ➔ Update the stakeholder inventory as new organisations or community initiatives emerge.

Practical Note

Stakeholder identification should be viewed as a dynamic process rather than a one-time exercise. As partnerships develop and new initiatives emerge, municipalities should periodically review and expand their stakeholder network to ensure broad representation and long-term collaboration.

3.2 Community Participation

Community participation represents a core governance principle of the Extended Water Museum approach. Rather than being limited to individual consultation activities, participation should be organised as a continuous and structured process that accompanies the planning, implementation, management and long-term development of the Extended Water Museum.

Meaningful participation requires clear mechanisms that enable local communities to contribute throughout the entire project lifecycle. Municipalities should create opportunities for dialogue, consultation and co-decision, ensuring that community perspectives are considered during strategic planning, interpretation, educational activities and future development initiatives. Such an approach strengthens transparency,

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builds trust among stakeholders and promotes shared responsibility for the protection and sustainable management of water heritage.

Community participation should also remain flexible and inclusive. Different stakeholder groups—including residents, cultural associations, educational institutions, environmental organisations, local businesses and public authorities—may contribute in different ways depending on their knowledge, interests and capacities. Providing multiple forms of engagement allows wider participation while recognising the diversity of local perspectives.

An effective participation strategy also requires continuous communication. Regular information sharing, feedback mechanisms and opportunities for ongoing dialogue help maintain stakeholder engagement beyond the initial planning phase. Demonstrating how community contributions influence decisions further reinforces local ownership and encourages long-term commitment.

Within the AQUATIK-EU methodology, community participation is therefore understood not simply as a participatory activity but as an essential component of collaborative governance. By maintaining active relationships between municipalities, stakeholders and local communities throughout the life cycle of the Extended Water Museum, participation contributes to institutional resilience, stronger partnerships and the long-term sustainability of heritage management.

Implementation Considerations

- ➔ Establish participation mechanisms from the earliest planning stages and maintain them throughout implementation and future management.
- ➔ Provide multiple opportunities for engagement, recognising the diversity of stakeholder groups and participation capacities.
- ➔ Ensure transparency by communicating how community contributions influence planning and decision-making.
- ➔ Maintain regular communication and feedback mechanisms to strengthen long-term stakeholder engagement.
- ➔ Encourage shared responsibility among municipalities, stakeholders and local communities for the stewardship of water heritage.

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Practical Note

Successful community participation depends on continuity rather than one-off consultation events. Participation should be embedded within the governance structure of the Extended Water Museum, allowing communities to remain active partners throughout its planning, operation and future development.

3.3 Co-creation Workshops

Co-creation workshops provide structured opportunities for stakeholders and local communities to collaboratively develop ideas, exchange knowledge and contribute to the design of the Extended Water Museum. Rather than presenting predefined solutions, these workshops facilitate dialogue through which participants collectively shape the interpretation and future development of water heritage.

Workshops may address a wide range of topics, including the identification of heritage assets, the development of interpretative narratives, the mapping of cultural values, the design of thematic routes and the prioritisation of future actions. Bringing together participants from different backgrounds encourages the integration of scientific expertise, institutional knowledge and lived experience into a common planning process.

An effective co-creation process should promote equal participation, transparency and mutual respect. Facilitators play an important role in ensuring that different perspectives are heard and that discussions remain focused on shared objectives. Interactive methods such as collaborative mapping, storytelling exercises, scenario development and group discussions encourage active participation while generating valuable qualitative information.

Within the **AQUATIK-EU** approach, co-creation workshops contribute not only to the development of the Extended Water Museum but also to strengthening long-term partnerships among local authorities, stakeholders and communities. They create spaces for continuous dialogue and collaborative learning that extend beyond the implementation of individual project activities.

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Implementation Considerations
➔ Define clear objectives before organising each workshop. ➔ Ensure balanced representation of stakeholder groups. ➔ Use interactive and participatory facilitation methods. ➔ Document outcomes systematically for future planning and evaluation. ➔ Encourage continuous collaboration beyond individual workshop sessions.

Practical Note

Successful workshops are measured not only by the number of participants but by the quality of dialogue and the extent to which participants influence future decisions and heritage interpretation.

3.4 Citizen Science

Citizen Science has become an increasingly important approach to the documentation, monitoring and interpretation of cultural and natural heritage. Within the Extended Water Museum framework, it enables citizens to actively contribute to the generation of knowledge while strengthening their understanding of water heritage and their sense of responsibility towards its preservation.

Rather than acting solely as observers or visitors, citizens become active contributors to the documentation and continuous interpretation of aquatic landscapes. Through structured activities, such as biodiversity observations, photographic documentation, oral history collection, environmental monitoring and heritage recording, local communities can generate valuable information that complements scientific research and institutional datasets.

Citizen Science also contributes to improving environmental awareness and public engagement. By participating directly in heritage documentation and monitoring activities, citizens develop a stronger understanding of ecological processes, historical continuity and the multiple values associated with water landscapes. This active involvement reinforces long-term stewardship and encourages more informed decision-making at both community and municipal levels.

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Successful Citizen Science initiatives require clear methodologies, appropriate training and effective coordination between municipalities, researchers, educational institutions and local organisations. Establishing common protocols for data collection, validation and sharing enhances the reliability of the information while promoting collaboration between scientific expertise and community participation.

Within the **AQUATIK-EU** framework, Citizen Science extends the participatory philosophy of the Extended Water Museum by transforming citizens into active partners in heritage documentation, environmental observation and lifelong learning. In doing so, it contributes not only to the preservation of water heritage but also to building stronger relationships between communities and their aquatic landscapes.

Implementation Considerations

- ➔ Design citizen science activities that are accessible to participants of different ages and backgrounds.
- ➔ Establish clear protocols for data collection and validation.
- ➔ Encourage collaboration between municipalities, researchers, schools and local organisations.
- ➔ Use citizen-generated information to complement professional research rather than replace it.
- ➔ Share results openly with participants to strengthen trust and long-term engagement.

Practical Note

Citizen Science initiatives should focus on generating meaningful experiences as well as reliable information. Participants are more likely to remain engaged when they understand how their contributions support heritage interpretation, environmental management and local decision-making.

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3.5 Governance Approaches

The long-term success of an Extended Water Museum depends on effective governance arrangements capable of coordinating diverse actors, balancing different interests and supporting collaborative decision-making. Governance should therefore be understood as a continuous process that integrates public institutions, local communities, experts and stakeholders within a shared framework of responsibility.

The governance of an Extended Water Museum requires cooperation across multiple sectors, including environmental management, cultural heritage, tourism, education and local development. Such an integrated approach enables municipalities to address water heritage through complementary perspectives while ensuring that decisions reflect both scientific evidence and community priorities.

Collaborative governance also enhances institutional resilience by promoting transparency, shared decision-making and continuous communication among participating organisations. Clearly defined roles, regular dialogue and coordinated planning contribute to more effective implementation while strengthening long-term partnerships that extend beyond individual projects.

Within the AQUATIK-EU approach, governance is viewed not as an administrative structure alone but as an enabling mechanism for sustainable heritage management. It creates the institutional conditions necessary for community participation, knowledge exchange and adaptive management, ensuring that the Extended Water Museum remains responsive to environmental, cultural and social changes over time.

Implementation Considerations

- ➔ Establish governance structures that encourage collaboration across sectors.
- ➔ Clearly define responsibilities while maintaining flexibility for adaptive management.
- ➔ Promote transparency and regular communication among partners.
- ➔ Integrate heritage, environmental and development objectives within common planning processes.
- ➔ Periodically review governance arrangements to respond to emerging challenges and opportunities.

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Practical Note

Effective governance depends as much on communication and trust as on formal organisational structures. Regular interaction among partners often determines the long-term sustainability of collaborative initiatives.

3.6 Capacity Building

Capacity Building strengthens the institutional, organisational and professional capacities required to establish, manage and sustain an Extended Water Museum. Rather than focusing exclusively on individual training activities, it supports the long-term development of knowledge, governance competencies and organisational capabilities that enable municipalities and partner organisations to implement the methodology effectively.

Within the Extended Water Museum approach, capacity building involves strengthening the ability of municipalities to coordinate stakeholders, manage heritage resources, integrate environmental and cultural policies, develop interpretative programmes and respond to emerging challenges. It also supports institutional learning by promoting knowledge transfer between organisations, encouraging interdisciplinary collaboration and facilitating the exchange of practical experience.

The AQUATIK-EU project contributes to capacity building through study visits, professional training, peer learning and the exchange of good practices among project partners. These activities enable municipalities and organisations to acquire practical experience while adapting the Extended Water Museum methodology to their own territorial context.

Capacity building should be regarded as a continuous organisational process rather than a series of isolated training events. Staff turnover, changing policy priorities and evolving environmental challenges require municipalities to continuously update their knowledge and strengthen institutional memory. Embedding learning within organisational practices enhances resilience and supports the long-term sustainability of the Extended Water Museum.

Within the AQUATIK-EU framework, capacity building ultimately contributes to the transferability of the methodology. By strengthening institutional capacities instead of relying solely on individual expertise, municipalities become better equipped to sustain heritage initiatives beyond the duration of individual projects and funding programmes.

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Implementation Considerations

- ➔ Strengthen institutional capacities alongside individual skills.
- ➔ Promote interdisciplinary learning across municipal departments and partner organisations.
- ➔ Encourage peer learning and knowledge exchange between municipalities.
- ➔ Integrate capacity building into long-term organisational planning.
- ➔ Preserve institutional knowledge through documentation, training materials and internal knowledge-sharing mechanisms.

Practical Note

Capacity building is most effective when learning becomes embedded within organisational practice. Continuous knowledge sharing, practical application and institutional learning ensure that expertise remains within organisations and continues to support the long-term development of the Extended Water Museum.

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4. Pilot Application – Souli Extended Water Museum

The previous chapters introduced the conceptual foundations, methodological framework and governance principles that underpin the development of an Extended Water Museum. Building upon these foundations, the present chapter demonstrates how these principles were translated into practice through the pilot application developed by the Municipality of Souli within the framework of the AQUATIK-EU project.

Rather than presenting the Souli initiative as a completed museum, the pilot illustrates an integrated process for identifying, interpreting and valorising aquatic cultural and natural heritage at the territorial scale. The pilot therefore serves as a practical demonstration of the methodologies presented in the previous chapters, showing how conceptual principles can be transformed into concrete actions that combine landscape interpretation, community participation, governance and digital innovation.

The experience developed in Souli constitutes the practical foundation upon which the present Guidelines and Best Practices Toolkit has been prepared. As such, the pilot is intended not only to document local implementation, but also to provide a **transferable reference model** capable of inspiring municipalities and local authorities wishing to develop similar initiatives within their own territories.

The following sections describe the principal stages of the pilot application, from the definition of the pilot area and the identification of heritage assets to the development of interpretative narratives, digital interpretation and the lessons learned throughout the implementation process.

4.1 Pilot Area

The pilot application of the Extended Water Museum was developed within the **Municipality of Souli**, located in the Region of Epirus in north-western Greece. The selected pilot area encompasses a significant section of the **Acheron River Basin**, one of the most distinctive water landscapes in the Mediterranean, where exceptional ecological value coexists with a remarkable concentration of historical, archaeological and mythological heritage.

The Acheron River has shaped the natural and cultural identity of the region for centuries. Its springs, tributaries, mountain landscapes, traditional bridges, historical pathways, settlements and archaeological sites collectively form an interconnected cultural

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landscape in which water has continuously influenced human activity, local traditions and territorial development. At the same time, the river occupies a unique position within European cultural memory through its association with ancient Greek mythology and the internationally recognised narratives of the Underworld.

The selection of Souli as the pilot area was based on its capacity to demonstrate the interdisciplinary philosophy of the Extended Water Museum. Within a relatively compact geographical area, the pilot incorporates a wide spectrum of water heritage, including natural ecosystems, hydraulic infrastructure, cultural landscapes, historical monuments and intangible cultural heritage. This diversity provides an ideal environment for applying an integrated methodology that combines environmental interpretation, cultural heritage, community participation and sustainable territorial development.

Rather than concentrating interpretation within a single museum building, the pilot adopts a **landscape-based approach** in which heritage is experienced across the territory itself. Individual heritage sites are connected through ecological relationships, historical continuity and thematic narratives, allowing visitors to perceive the Acheron Basin as a unified heritage system rather than as a collection of independent attractions.

Within the AQUATIK-EU project, the Souli pilot therefore represents more than a local initiative. It functions as a living demonstration of how an Extended Water Museum can be progressively developed through interdisciplinary collaboration, participatory governance and landscape interpretation. The experience gained through the Souli pilot provides practical evidence that the Extended Water Museum methodology can be successfully adapted and implemented in different territorial contexts.

4.2 Heritage Assets

The development of the Souli Extended Water Museum was based on the identification and selection of heritage assets that collectively represent the ecological, historical and cultural identity of the Acheron River landscape. Rather than functioning as isolated points of interest, these assets were considered as interconnected elements of a wider cultural landscape, each contributing to the overall interpretation of the territory.

The documentation process adopted a holistic perspective, considering the Acheron River basin as an interconnected cultural landscape rather than a collection of individual heritage assets. Natural environments, cultural resources and intangible heritage were examined as complementary components of the same territorial system, allowing the relationships between water, landscape and local communities to be understood within a broader cultural and environmental context.

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The selected heritage assets reflect the diversity of the area's water heritage and include natural, cultural and intangible elements that collectively illustrate the multiple dimensions of the Acheron landscape. For each selected asset, information was compiled regarding its physical characteristics, historical and cultural significance, current condition, interpretation potential and its relationship with the wider landscape. This comprehensive approach ensured that individual assets were understood not as isolated sites but as interconnected components of a living cultural landscape.

The documentation process combined information derived from scientific literature, historical sources, field observations and knowledge shared by local stakeholders. Bringing together these complementary sources provided a comprehensive understanding of the area's water heritage and supported the interpretation of the landscape from multiple perspectives.

The information collected during this stage informed all subsequent phases of the pilot application, including landscape mapping, narrative development, the design of the interpretative route and digital interpretation. In this way, the documentation process provided the knowledge base that supported the development of the Souli Extended Water Museum and ensured that subsequent decisions were grounded in a comprehensive understanding of the area's water heritage.

4.3 Interpretative Route

The development of an interpretative route represents one of the most effective ways of translating the Extended Water Museum methodology into a coherent visitor experience. Rather than presenting heritage assets as isolated destinations, the Souli pilot demonstrates how individual locations can be connected through a common territorial narrative that reflects the ecological, historical and cultural identity of the landscape.

The interpretative route developed within the pilot was designed to follow the natural evolution of the Acheron River while illustrating the multiple dimensions of water heritage identified during the previous methodological stages. The route therefore combines natural environments, historical infrastructure and intangible cultural heritage into a continuous interpretative experience that enables visitors to understand the river not simply as a geographical feature but as a living cultural landscape.

The selected heritage assets were organised so that each location contributes a distinct interpretative dimension while simultaneously strengthening the coherence of the overall narrative. This sequential approach encourages visitors to gradually discover the different

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relationships between water, landscape, communities and history, allowing the interpretation to evolve progressively throughout the route.

The pilot illustrates that an interpretative route should not be designed according to geographical proximity alone. Instead, the selection and sequence of heritage sites should reflect the story that the municipality wishes to communicate, ensuring that each location contributes meaningfully to the broader interpretation of the territory. This approach allows municipalities to transform individual heritage assets into an integrated visitor experience capable of communicating the complexity of water heritage.

Within the Souli pilot, the interpretative route was structured around three representative heritage locations that collectively illustrate the ecological origin, historical evolution and symbolic significance of the Acheron landscape. Together, these interpretative points demonstrate how the Extended Water Museum approach can connect diverse forms of natural, cultural and intangible heritage through a coherent territorial narrative while remaining adaptable to different local contexts.

4.3.1 Springs of Acheron – Ecological Origins

The **Springs of Acheron** were selected as the starting point of the interpretative route because they illustrate the ecological foundation upon which the entire territorial narrative of the Extended Water Museum is developed. Within the Souli pilot, the springs demonstrate how the natural origin of a river may become the beginning of an integrated interpretation that combines environmental processes, cultural heritage and community identity.

The springs emerge from the mountainous formations of Tomaros, Souli and Paramythia, where multiple interconnected water sources gradually form the Acheron River. This hydrological complexity highlights the importance of understanding the river basin as an integrated ecological system rather than as a single linear watercourse. Consequently, the interpretation focuses not only on the physical source of the river but also on the ecological relationships that sustain the wider landscape.

Within the Extended Water Museum approach, the Springs of Acheron function as a living exhibit where the landscape itself becomes the primary medium of interpretation. Seasonal variations, water quality, geological formations and ecological processes collectively communicate the dynamic character of the environment without requiring extensive physical infrastructure. Visitors are encouraged to experience the landscape directly while understanding the natural processes that have shaped the territory over time.

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The springs also embody significant cultural and symbolic dimensions. Throughout local tradition, the transformation of bitter waters into sweet waters has been associated with renewal, continuity and purification, illustrating how natural phenomena gradually become embedded within community memory and cultural identity. This combination of ecological and intangible heritage reflects one of the fundamental principles of the Extended Water Museum: the inseparable relationship between nature, culture and people.

Within the Souli pilot, the Springs of Acheron therefore represent more than the geographical beginning of the river. They establish the conceptual starting point of the interpretative journey, introducing visitors to water as the origin of ecological systems, cultural landscapes and living heritage. As demonstrated through the pilot, beginning an interpretative route from the natural source of a river provides a coherent narrative structure that may be adapted by other municipalities seeking to develop place-based water heritage experiences.

4.3.2 Dala Bridge – Water and Human Interaction

The **Dala Bridge** was selected as the second interpretative point of the Souli pilot because it demonstrates how water landscapes have historically shaped human movement, settlement and collective organisation. While the Springs of Acheron introduce visitors to the ecological origins of the river, Dala Bridge illustrates the long-standing relationship between communities and water as a resource that influenced communication, production and everyday life.

Historically, the bridge served as a strategic crossing used by the Souliotes during their resistance against Ottoman forces, reflecting the close relationship between the natural landscape and the historical development of the region. Its location demonstrates how rivers functioned not only as natural features but also as elements that influenced defence, mobility and territorial organisation.

The surrounding landscape further enriches this interpretation through the presence of traditional hydraulic infrastructure, including the nearby watermill. Together, these elements illustrate how communities utilised water to support local production, agricultural activities and economic development. Rather than considering the bridge and the watermill as separate heritage assets, the pilot interprets them as complementary components of a wider cultural landscape shaped by water.

Within the Extended Water Museum approach, the Dala Bridge demonstrates the importance of interpreting water heritage through the interaction between natural environments and human activity. The site encourages visitors to understand how

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infrastructure, local knowledge and community organisation evolved in response to the opportunities and challenges created by the river. In doing so, the interpretation extends beyond the monument itself to reveal broader relationships between landscape, history and society.

The Souli pilot illustrates that historical infrastructure can play a central role in the development of interpretative routes when presented as part of a wider territorial narrative. By connecting ecological processes with historical events and everyday community life, municipalities can transform individual monuments into meaningful components of an integrated Extended Water Museum experience.

4.3.3 Gates of Hades – Mythology and Intangible Heritage

The **Gates of Hades** constitute the third interpretative point of the Souli pilot, illustrating how mythology and intangible cultural heritage can become integral components of an Extended Water Museum. While the Springs of Acheron introduce the ecological origins of the river and the Dala Bridge reflects the historical interaction between water and local communities, the Gates of Hades demonstrate the symbolic and cultural dimensions through which water landscapes acquire meanings that transcend their physical characteristics.

According to Ancient Greek mythology, the Acheron River formed one of the principal rivers of the Underworld and represented the symbolic passage between the world of the living and the realm of the dead. For centuries, these narratives have shaped the cultural identity of the region, transforming the surrounding landscape into a place where mythology, history and nature coexist. Although rooted in ancient beliefs, these stories continue to influence the collective memory of local communities and the experience of visitors, illustrating the enduring relationship between landscape and cultural imagination.

Within the Souli pilot, mythology is interpreted not as an isolated legend but as an essential layer of the cultural landscape. The interpretative approach seeks to connect archaeological evidence, historical knowledge, environmental characteristics and local traditions into a coherent narrative that respects both scientific interpretation and cultural memory. In doing so, visitors are encouraged to appreciate mythology as part of Europe's shared cultural heritage while simultaneously understanding the ecological and historical significance of the Acheron landscape.

The Gates of Hades also demonstrate the importance of integrating intangible cultural heritage into the planning of an Extended Water Museum. Oral traditions, symbolic meanings, historical narratives and local storytelling enrich the interpretation of the

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territory by revealing dimensions of heritage that cannot be understood through physical remains alone. This holistic perspective reflects the broader philosophy of the Extended Water Museum, where tangible and intangible heritage are interpreted as complementary expressions of the same territorial identity.

Through the Souli pilot, the Gates of Hades illustrate how mythology can support contemporary heritage interpretation without compromising scientific credibility. By presenting mythological narratives alongside environmental, archaeological and historical evidence, the pilot offers visitors a multidimensional understanding of the landscape while providing municipalities with a transferable example of how intangible cultural heritage may enhance the interpretation of water heritage in different territorial contexts.

Together, the three interpretative points illustrate how an Extended Water Museum can integrate ecological processes, historical development and intangible cultural heritage into a coherent territorial experience. Rather than functioning as isolated attractions, they collectively demonstrate the interpretative philosophy developed through the Souli pilot, where landscape, history and cultural memory are understood as complementary dimensions of water heritage. This integrated approach provides a transferable model that may support municipalities in designing interpretative routes adapted to their own territorial contexts.

4.4 Development of Interpretative Narratives

The development of interpretative narratives represented a fundamental stage in transforming the identified heritage assets into a coherent Extended Water Museum experience. Building upon the heritage identification, landscape interpretation and participatory approaches presented in the previous chapters, the Souli pilot sought to create narratives capable of communicating the multiple relationships between water, landscape, history and local communities.

Rather than producing independent descriptions for individual heritage sites, the narrative development process focused on constructing a unified interpretative framework that would allow visitors to understand the Acheron River Basin as a living cultural landscape. Each narrative was therefore designed to contribute a different perspective to the overall visitor experience while maintaining thematic continuity throughout the interpretative route.

The preparation of the narratives combined information derived from environmental observation, historical documentation, archaeological evidence, local traditions and mythological references. These different sources of knowledge were carefully integrated in

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order to ensure that interpretation remained scientifically credible while reflecting the cultural identity and collective memory associated with the landscape. Particular attention was given to presenting ecological, historical and symbolic dimensions as complementary rather than separate aspects of water heritage.

Within the Souli pilot, narrative development also sought to balance information with visitor engagement. Scientific accuracy remained a fundamental principle throughout the process; however, interpretation was organised in a way that encourages curiosity, reflection and emotional connection with the landscape. Rather than presenting isolated facts, the narratives invite visitors to explore how natural processes, historical events and cultural traditions have continuously interacted in shaping the identity of the Acheron Basin.

The pilot further demonstrated that effective interpretative narratives should remain adaptable and capable of evolving over time. As additional research, community contributions or new interpretative perspectives emerge, narratives may be refined and enriched without altering the overall coherence of the Extended Water Museum. This adaptive approach reflects the dynamic nature of both cultural landscapes and community knowledge, ensuring that interpretation remains relevant while preserving its scientific integrity.

Through the experience of the Souli pilot, the development of interpretative narratives proved to be more than a communication exercise. It became a methodological tool capable of connecting diverse forms of heritage into a coherent territorial experience, supporting both visitors' understanding and the long-term valorisation of aquatic cultural and natural heritage. The process developed within the pilot therefore provides a transferable reference for municipalities seeking to design place-based narratives that strengthen the interpretation of water heritage while reflecting the unique identity of their own landscapes.

4.5 Proposed Framework for Digital Interpretation

The experience gained through the Souli pilot provided the basis for the development of a **Proposed Framework for Digital Interpretation** within the Extended Water Museum approach. Drawing upon the methodologies applied during the pilot and the principles presented throughout this Toolkit, the proposed framework aims to support municipalities in integrating digital tools into heritage interpretation in ways that enhance visitor engagement while preserving the authenticity of the landscape.

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Building upon the interpretative route and the interpretative narratives developed during the pilot, the proposed framework identifies key principles for integrating digital interpretation as a complementary layer of the visitor experience. Rather than replacing direct interaction with the landscape, it seeks to facilitate observation, interpretation and learning through carefully selected digital resources adapted to local needs, institutional capacities and the characteristics of each territory.

The proposed framework is based on three complementary principles. First, digital interpretation should reinforce the relationship between visitors and place rather than divert attention from the landscape itself. Second, digital content should support the interpretative themes developed for the Extended Water Museum, ensuring coherence between physical and digital experiences. Third, technological solutions should remain flexible and scalable, allowing municipalities to progressively adapt the framework according to available resources, organisational capacity and local priorities.

The framework may be implemented through a variety of digital solutions, including QR codes linked to interpretative content, interactive digital maps, multimedia storytelling, audio interpretation, mobile applications and web-based educational resources. The selection of technologies should always be guided by interpretative objectives rather than technological complexity, ensuring that digital tools remain accessible, sustainable and appropriate to the local context.

A defining characteristic of the proposed framework is its adaptability. Recognising that municipalities participating in the AQUATIK project operate within diverse environmental, cultural and organisational contexts, the framework does not prescribe a single digital model. Instead, it provides a flexible structure that may be progressively adapted while maintaining the common principles of the Extended Water Museum methodology and responding to local heritage priorities.

The **Proposed Framework for Digital Interpretation** represents one of the principal outcomes derived from the experience of the Souli pilot and contributes directly to the objectives of the present **Guidelines & Best Practices Toolkit**. By combining transferable methodological principles with sufficient flexibility for local adaptation, the framework provides municipalities with a practical reference for strengthening heritage interpretation, improving visitor engagement and promoting a deeper understanding of aquatic cultural and natural heritage through appropriate digital solutions.

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4.6 Lessons Learned and Transferability

The development of the Souli Extended Water Museum provided valuable experience regarding the practical application of the methodologies presented throughout this Toolkit. Beyond the specific characteristics of the pilot area, the implementation process demonstrated a series of principles and approaches that may support municipalities seeking to develop their own Extended Water Museum initiatives within different territorial contexts.

One of the principal lessons emerging from the pilot is the importance of adopting an integrated perspective on water heritage. Rather than interpreting natural, cultural and historical assets separately, the Souli experience demonstrated the value of understanding them as interconnected components of a shared territorial identity. This holistic approach strengthens both heritage interpretation and the long-term sustainability of local initiatives.

The pilot also highlighted the importance of interdisciplinary collaboration throughout the development process. The identification of heritage assets, the preparation of interpretative narratives and the design of visitor experiences benefited from the contribution of diverse sources of knowledge, including environmental expertise, historical research, local communities and cultural interpretation. This collaborative approach reinforces the role of municipalities as facilitators of dialogue between different stakeholders rather than sole managers of heritage resources.

Another important lesson concerns the flexibility of the Extended Water Museum methodology. The experience of the Souli pilot confirms that the methodology should not be applied as a fixed model but as an adaptable framework capable of responding to the environmental, cultural and organisational characteristics of each municipality. This flexibility enables local authorities to build upon their own heritage assets while maintaining the common principles that underpin the Extended Water Museum concept.

The pilot further demonstrated that interpretation gains greater value when ecological processes, historical evidence and intangible cultural heritage are presented through coherent narratives rather than isolated information. By connecting diverse heritage dimensions within a unified interpretative framework, municipalities can create meaningful visitor experiences that strengthen environmental awareness, cultural appreciation and community engagement.

The experience gained through the Souli pilot therefore extends beyond the boundaries of the pilot area itself. It provides a transferable methodological reference that may assist municipalities participating in the AQUATIK-EU project in planning, adapting and

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implementing their own Extended Water Museum initiatives according to local priorities and available resources. In this respect, the Souli pilot functions not only as a demonstration project but also as a practical source of inspiration for future applications.

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5. FROM CONCEPT TO EXPERIENCE

The Souli Extended Water Museum

Figure 1: Visual overview of the Souli Extended Water Museum pilot. The infographic summarises the interpretative route, the main heritage assets and the visitor journey, providing a visual synthesis of the pilot application developed in Souli.

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6. Guidelines and Best Practices

The experience gained through the Souli pilot provides a valuable foundation for translating methodological principles into practical guidance that can support municipalities in developing their own Extended Water Museum initiatives. While each territory presents unique environmental, cultural and institutional characteristics, the implementation process revealed a number of common principles that may be adapted across different local contexts.

The following guidelines synthesise the experience of the pilot together with the methodological framework presented in the previous chapters. Rather than prescribing a standardised model, they offer a series of transferable recommendations intended to assist municipalities in planning, implementing and managing Extended Water Museums according to the principles of sustainable water heritage interpretation, collaborative governance and place-based development.

Together, these recommendations form a practical guidance framework that supports informed decision-making while allowing sufficient flexibility for municipalities to respond to their own territorial priorities, available resources and governance capacities.

6.1 Planning an Extended Water Museum

The establishment of an Extended Water Museum begins with a comprehensive understanding of the territory in which it will be developed. Effective planning extends beyond the identification of heritage assets and requires municipalities to consider the environmental, cultural, social and organisational characteristics that shape the identity of the area. A well-defined planning process provides the foundation upon which all subsequent stages of implementation are built.

Planning should begin with the definition of clear objectives that reflect both local priorities and the broader vision of the Extended Water Museum. Municipalities should identify the principal themes they wish to communicate, the audiences they intend to engage and the long-term outcomes they seek to achieve through the initiative. Establishing these objectives at an early stage facilitates coherent decision-making throughout the development process.

A comprehensive understanding of the territorial context is equally important. Existing natural resources, cultural landscapes, historical sites, intangible heritage, local communities and institutional capacities should be considered collectively rather than independently. This integrated assessment enables municipalities to recognise

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opportunities, identify potential challenges and develop realistic implementation strategies that respond to local conditions.

Planning should also recognise that an Extended Water Museum is not a stand-alone project but a long-term territorial initiative requiring collaboration between multiple sectors and stakeholders. Consequently, planning activities should encourage interdisciplinary cooperation from the outset while allowing sufficient flexibility to accommodate future developments, new partnerships and emerging opportunities.

Rather than seeking immediate large-scale implementation, municipalities are encouraged to adopt a phased approach that allows gradual development and continuous learning. Pilot actions, community participation and periodic evaluation contribute to building institutional capacity while reducing implementation risks and supporting long-term sustainability.

Successful Extended Water Museums are founded upon strategic planning that integrates environmental, cultural and social dimensions within a shared territorial vision. Municipalities should therefore approach planning as a collaborative and adaptive process that establishes the conditions for sustainable heritage interpretation and long-term community engagement.

6.2 Identifying Water Heritage Assets

The identification of water heritage assets constitutes one of the most important stages in the development of an Extended Water Museum. A comprehensive understanding of the territory enables municipalities to recognise the diversity of resources that collectively shape local identity and provides the foundation for meaningful interpretation, sustainable management and long-term heritage valorisation.

Water heritage should be approached as a multidimensional concept that extends beyond individual monuments or protected sites. Rivers, springs, wetlands, lakes and coastal environments represent only one aspect of water heritage. Equally important are the cultural landscapes that have evolved around water, traditional hydraulic infrastructure, archaeological remains, historical settlements, local knowledge, oral traditions and the intangible cultural expressions associated with aquatic environments.

The identification process should therefore adopt a landscape-based perspective, recognising the relationships that connect natural, cultural and social elements across the territory. Rather than compiling an inventory of isolated heritage assets, municipalities are encouraged to understand how different components interact to form coherent water

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heritage systems that reflect the historical evolution and environmental characteristics of the area.

Particular attention should also be given to the values associated with each heritage asset. Ecological significance, historical relevance, cultural identity, educational potential and community importance all contribute to determining the role that individual assets may play within the broader interpretative framework of the Extended Water Museum. Considering these multiple values allows municipalities to establish priorities while ensuring that diverse forms of heritage are represented in a balanced manner.

The experience of the Souli pilot demonstrated that heritage identification is most effective when supported by interdisciplinary collaboration and local knowledge. Scientific research, historical documentation and environmental assessment should be complemented by the experience of local communities, whose familiarity with the landscape often reveals cultural associations and heritage values that may not be immediately evident through documentary sources alone.

A comprehensive identification of water heritage assets creates the foundation for all subsequent stages of development, including interpretative planning, community engagement and visitor experience design. Municipalities should therefore regard heritage identification not as a preliminary inventory exercise, but as a continuous process of understanding and interpreting the evolving relationships between water, landscape and society.

6.3 Building Partnerships and Governance

The successful establishment of an Extended Water Museum depends not only on the identification of heritage assets but also on the development of effective partnerships capable of supporting its long-term implementation and management. As demonstrated throughout this Toolkit, the interpretation of water heritage requires the integration of diverse forms of knowledge, expertise and local experience. Municipalities therefore play a central role in facilitating collaboration among the different actors who contribute to the interpretation, management and promotion of aquatic cultural and natural heritage.

Partnership development should begin at the earliest stages of planning. Engaging stakeholders from the outset encourages the exchange of knowledge, strengthens local ownership and facilitates the identification of opportunities and challenges that may influence the implementation process. Early collaboration also contributes to building trust among participating organisations and establishes the foundations for long-term cooperation.

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An effective governance framework should recognise the complementary roles of different stakeholders. Public authorities provide strategic coordination and institutional support; cultural and environmental organisations contribute specialised knowledge; academic institutions strengthen scientific documentation and research; while local communities offer valuable experience, traditions and place-based knowledge that enrich the interpretation of water heritage. The integration of these complementary perspectives contributes to more balanced and inclusive decision-making.

Governance arrangements should remain sufficiently flexible to accommodate the evolving nature of Extended Water Museum initiatives. As new heritage assets are identified, additional partnerships emerge or local priorities change, governance structures should be capable of adapting without compromising the overall vision and objectives of the initiative. This adaptive approach reinforces institutional resilience and supports the long-term sustainability of collaborative heritage management.

The experience of the Souli pilot confirmed that successful collaboration depends as much on continuous communication as on formal organisational structures. Regular dialogue, transparency and shared responsibility encourage active participation while strengthening the commitment of stakeholders throughout the implementation process. Municipalities should therefore view governance not simply as an administrative requirement but as an ongoing collaborative process that supports innovation, knowledge exchange and community engagement.

Strong partnerships provide the institutional foundation upon which all subsequent activities of an Extended Water Museum are built. By encouraging collaboration across disciplines, organisations and local communities, municipalities create favourable conditions for developing initiatives that are scientifically robust, socially inclusive and capable of generating long-term environmental and cultural benefits.

6.4 Developing the Interpretative Experience

The development of an interpretative experience represents one of the defining stages in the establishment of an Extended Water Museum. Beyond identifying heritage assets, municipalities are encouraged to consider how visitors will engage with the territory, understand its significance and connect with the multiple dimensions of water heritage. Interpretation should therefore be conceived as a structured process that transforms information into meaningful experiences capable of fostering learning, reflection and appreciation.

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An effective interpretative experience should be organised around a coherent territorial narrative rather than a collection of individual attractions. Heritage assets gain greater significance when they are connected through shared themes that reveal the relationships between natural processes, historical development, cultural landscapes and community identity. This integrated perspective enables visitors to understand the territory as a dynamic system in which environmental and cultural values continuously interact.

Interpretative routes should be designed to encourage progressive discovery. Rather than overwhelming visitors with large amounts of information, municipalities should organise interpretation in a sequence that gradually introduces different dimensions of water heritage. Ecological features, historical sites, cultural traditions and intangible heritage may therefore be presented as complementary chapters of a broader territorial story, allowing visitors to build a deeper understanding as they move through the landscape.

The quality of interpretation depends not only on the information presented but also on the way it is communicated. Clear language, coherent storytelling and appropriate interpretative media contribute to creating engaging visitor experiences while maintaining scientific accuracy. Interpretation should invite observation, encourage curiosity and stimulate dialogue between visitors and the places they encounter, recognising that meaningful engagement often emerges through personal exploration rather than passive information transfer.

Municipalities should also ensure that interpretative experiences remain inclusive and accessible to diverse audiences. Different age groups, educational backgrounds and visitor expectations require flexible approaches that combine environmental interpretation, cultural storytelling and educational opportunities within a coherent and welcoming framework. This inclusiveness strengthens both the educational value of the Extended Water Museum and its contribution to community participation.

A carefully designed interpretative experience enables municipalities to communicate the complexity of water heritage in an accessible and engaging manner. By connecting heritage assets through coherent narratives and meaningful visitor experiences, the Extended Water Museum becomes not only a place of interpretation but also a platform for environmental awareness, cultural understanding and sustainable territorial development.

6.5 Integrating Digital Interpretation

Digital interpretation should be considered an integral component of the Extended Water Museum rather than an independent technological addition. Its primary purpose is to enrich heritage interpretation, facilitate access to knowledge and enhance visitor

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engagement while preserving the authenticity of the landscape and encouraging direct interaction with the natural environment.

Municipalities are encouraged to integrate digital interpretation from the earliest planning stages, ensuring that technological solutions are developed alongside interpretative objectives rather than being introduced as stand-alone additions at a later stage. Digital tools should always support the overall narrative of the Extended Water Museum, strengthening the connections between heritage assets, interpretative themes and the visitor experience.

The selection of digital solutions should be guided by local needs, available resources and the characteristics of target audiences. Rather than focusing on specific technologies, municipalities should prioritise digital tools that effectively support their interpretative objectives while remaining sustainable, user-friendly and capable of evolving as new interpretative opportunities emerge.

Digital interpretation also offers significant opportunities to improve accessibility and broaden participation. Well-designed digital content can facilitate access to information for diverse visitor groups, support educational activities and encourage independent exploration and lifelong learning. When carefully integrated into the overall visitor experience, digital interpretation contributes to a deeper understanding of water heritage without diminishing the value of direct engagement with the landscape.

Equal attention should be given to the long-term management of digital content. Municipalities should establish procedures for the regular review, updating and expansion of interpretative material, recognising that both heritage knowledge and digital technologies continue to evolve. A flexible digital strategy allows the Extended Water Museum to remain relevant, scientifically reliable and responsive to changing visitor expectations.

Ultimately, the successful integration of digital interpretation depends not on the quantity or sophistication of the technology employed, but on the value it adds to heritage interpretation and the overall visitor experience. Municipalities should therefore regard digital interpretation as a strategic tool that strengthens visitor engagement, promotes environmental awareness and facilitates access to knowledge while ensuring that technology remains closely connected to the landscape, local identity and the broader objectives of the Extended Water Museum.

6.6 Ensuring Long-term Sustainability

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The long-term success of an Extended Water Museum depends on its ability to evolve beyond the initial implementation phase and become an integral component of local territorial development. Sustainability should therefore be understood as a continuous process that combines institutional commitment, community participation, knowledge development and adaptive management rather than as the simple continuation of project activities.

Municipalities are encouraged to embed the Extended Water Museum within existing local policies and development strategies whenever possible. Establishing connections with environmental management, cultural heritage, education, sustainable tourism and community development initiatives strengthens institutional ownership while creating opportunities for long-term collaboration across different sectors.

Equally important is the continuous involvement of local communities. The value of an Extended Water Museum increases when residents, schools, cultural associations, environmental organisations and local stakeholders continue to contribute knowledge, experiences and new perspectives over time. Encouraging ongoing participation reinforces local ownership and allows the museum to remain a living expression of the territory rather than a static heritage initiative.

Sustainability also requires the periodic review and enrichment of interpretative content. New research findings, emerging heritage assets, community contributions and evolving environmental conditions provide opportunities to expand and refine the interpretative framework while maintaining scientific accuracy and relevance. This continuous process of knowledge development reflects the dynamic character of both cultural landscapes and the communities that inhabit them.

Municipalities should also consider sustainability in organisational and operational terms. Clear governance arrangements, long-term partnerships, staff development and realistic maintenance planning contribute to the resilience of the initiative while reducing dependence on short-term funding opportunities. A gradual and adaptable implementation strategy often provides greater long-term benefits than ambitious initiatives that cannot be maintained over time.

Ultimately, the sustainability of an Extended Water Museum is measured not only by its longevity but by its continuing capacity to support heritage interpretation, strengthen community identity and promote the sustainable management of aquatic cultural and natural heritage. By adopting a long-term perspective from the earliest planning stages, municipalities create favorable conditions for initiatives capable of generating lasting environmental, cultural and social value.

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6.7 Transferability Considerations

The methodologies and recommendations presented throughout this Toolkit are intended to provide municipalities with a flexible framework for establishing an Extended Water Museum rather than a prescriptive implementation model. Every territory possesses distinct environmental characteristics, cultural traditions, governance structures and community priorities that should shape the development of local initiatives. Consequently, successful implementation depends on the ability to adapt the proposed approach while preserving its fundamental principles.

Transferability should therefore be understood as the adaptation of a shared methodology rather than the replication of a specific pilot experience. While the Souli pilot provided the practical reference upon which this Toolkit was developed, its greatest value lies in demonstrating an approach that can be interpreted and applied according to different territorial realities. Municipalities are encouraged to identify their own heritage assets, engage local communities, develop place-based narratives and design interpretative experiences that reflect the identity of their landscapes.

Flexibility is equally important throughout the implementation process. Differences in institutional capacity, financial resources, governance arrangements and environmental conditions inevitably influence local priorities and implementation pathways. The Extended Water Museum methodology should therefore function as a guiding framework that supports informed decision-making while allowing sufficient adaptability to respond to local opportunities and challenges.

Successful transferability also depends upon continuous learning and collaboration. The exchange of experiences between municipalities, researchers, cultural organizations and local communities contributes to the continuous refinement of methodologies while encouraging innovation and the dissemination of good practices across different territorial contexts. In this respect, each new implementation enriches the collective knowledge surrounding the Extended Water Museum approach and strengthens its long-term development at the European level.

Ultimately, the value of this Toolkit lies not in providing definitive solutions, but in supporting municipalities as they develop their own locally grounded initiatives. By combining shared methodological principles with place-based adaptation, municipalities can establish Extended Water Museums that celebrate the diversity of Europe's aquatic cultural and natural heritage while responding to the specific needs, identities and aspirations of their communities.

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7. Implementation Toolkit

The guidelines presented in the previous chapter establish the methodological principles for developing an Extended Water Museum. Their successful implementation, however, requires practical tools that support municipalities in organising information, planning activities and making informed decisions throughout the implementation process.

The Implementation Toolkit translates these methodological principles into a series of practical planning resources that may assist municipalities during the early stages of development. Rather than prescribing standardised procedures, the proposed tools are intended to facilitate structured planning while allowing sufficient flexibility to accommodate different territorial contexts, governance arrangements and implementation priorities.

The following sections present a collection of adaptable planning tools covering heritage identification, stakeholder engagement, interpretative route planning, digital interpretation and key implementation considerations. Together, these resources provide municipalities with practical support for applying the Extended Water Museum methodology in a coherent, collaborative and locally responsive manner.

7.1 Heritage Identification Matrix

The identification of water heritage resources constitutes the first operational step in the development of an Extended Water Museum. A systematic understanding of the environmental, cultural and intangible heritage associated with water enables municipalities to establish a coherent basis for interpretation, stakeholder engagement and subsequent planning activities.

Table 7.1 below presents an indicative Heritage Identification Matrix developed on the basis of the Souli Extended Water Museum pilot. Rather than providing a definitive inventory of heritage resources, the matrix illustrates one possible methodological approach to identifying, organising and documenting the principal dimensions of water heritage. The example is intended to serve as a practical reference that municipalities may adapt according to their own territorial characteristics, available evidence and development priorities.

Heritage Category	Illustrative Example from the Souli Pilot	Contribution to the Extended Water Museum

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Water Sources	Springs of Acheron	Ecological origin of the water landscape
River System	Acheron River	Principal natural feature structuring the territorial narrative
Cultural Landscape	Acheron Valley	Integration of environmental and cultural values
Traditional Hydraulic Infrastructure	Dala Bridge	Historical interaction between communities and water
Traditional Water Infrastructure	Historic Watermill	Traditional use and management of water resources
Archaeological and Historical Heritage	Heritage sites associated with the Souli region	Historical evolution of the territory
Intangible Cultural Heritage	Gates of Hades mythology	Cultural identity and symbolic interpretation
Local Knowledge and Traditions	Community narratives related to the Acheron River	Place-based knowledge and collective memory
Indicative Heritage Identification Matrix Based on the Souli Extended Water Museum Pilot. Biodiversity and Natural Environment	Riparian habitats and ecosystems	Ecological significance and environmental interpretation
Interpretative Themes	Ecological, historical and mythological narratives	Development of integrated visitor experiences

Table 7.1. Indicative Heritage Identification Matrix Based on the Souli Extended Water Museum Pilot.

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The matrix demonstrates that water heritage should be understood as an integrated territorial system in which natural resources, cultural landscapes, historical infrastructure and intangible heritage collectively contribute to the identity of a place. Rather than focusing on individual heritage assets in isolation, municipalities are encouraged to identify the relationships that connect these different dimensions and to use this understanding as the basis for subsequent interpretation, planning and management activities.

Although the specific heritage resources identified will differ from one municipality to another, the methodological approach illustrated in **Table 7.1** may be adapted to different territorial contexts. By organising heritage information in a structured and integrated manner, municipalities can establish a robust evidence base that supports decision-making, stakeholder collaboration and the long-term development of an Extended Water Museum.

7.2 Stakeholder Ecosystem

The successful development of an Extended Water Museum depends upon the establishment of a collaborative governance ecosystem that brings together institutions, scientific organisations, local communities and other actors who contribute to the sustainable management and interpretation of water heritage. As discussed in the previous chapters, no single organisation possesses all the knowledge, expertise or resources required to develop and maintain such an initiative. Instead, successful implementation emerges through cooperation, shared responsibility and continuous dialogue among stakeholders with complementary roles.

Figure 7.1 below presents an **indicative Stakeholder Ecosystem** developed on the basis of the Souli Extended Water Museum pilot. Rather than prescribing a fixed governance structure, the ecosystem illustrates one possible collaborative framework that supports the planning, implementation and long-term management of an Extended Water Museum. The example is intended to provide municipalities with a practical reference that may be adapted according to local institutional arrangements, stakeholder networks and development priorities.

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Figure 7.1. Indicative Stakeholder Ecosystem Developed on the Basis of the Souli Extended Water Museum Pilot. *The diagram illustrates the principal stakeholder groups involved in the planning and implementation of the Souli Extended Water Museum and highlights the collaborative relationships established among public authorities, scientific institutions, cultural and environmental organisations, local communities and other actors. The ecosystem provides an indicative governance framework that municipalities may adapt according to their own territorial context while maintaining the collaborative principles of the Extended Water Museum approach.*

The ecosystem demonstrates that the Extended Water Museum functions as a collaborative platform in which different stakeholder groups contribute complementary knowledge, expertise and resources. Public authorities provide strategic coordination and institutional support, scientific organisations contribute research and technical expertise, cultural and environmental organisations strengthen heritage interpretation and conservation, while local communities preserve place-based knowledge, traditions and cultural identity. Tourism stakeholders and educational institutions further contribute to

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visitor engagement, environmental awareness and the long-term sustainability of the initiative.

Although the composition of stakeholder groups will inevitably vary among municipalities, the collaborative approach illustrated in **Figure 7.1** may serve as a transferable governance model for the development of locally adapted Extended Water Museum initiatives. By promoting interdisciplinary cooperation, community participation and continuous knowledge exchange, municipalities can establish governance structures that support both the conservation of water heritage and the sustainable development of their territories.

7.3 Interpretative Route Planning

The development of an interpretative route represents one of the core stages in the implementation of an Extended Water Museum. Rather than establishing a sequence of points of interest, interpretative route planning seeks to organise natural, cultural and intangible heritage into a coherent visitor experience that communicates the identity of the territory through meaningful narratives and carefully selected interpretative themes.

An effective interpretative route should emerge from a structured planning process that integrates heritage resources, thematic interpretation, accessibility, visitor engagement and educational objectives. This approach encourages municipalities to move beyond the presentation of individual heritage sites and instead create interconnected experiences that reveal the relationships between landscape, history, culture and water.

The planning of an interpretative route may be understood as a progressive process through which heritage resources are identified, evaluated and organised into coherent interpretative themes. These themes subsequently inform narrative development, visitor experience design and the integration of digital interpretation, ensuring that the final route provides a balanced combination of educational value, accessibility and visitor engagement.

Rather than following a rigid methodology, municipalities are encouraged to adopt a flexible planning approach that reflects their own territorial characteristics, available heritage resources and local development priorities. Interpretative route planning should therefore be regarded as an iterative process in which thematic development, narrative construction and visitor experience continuously inform one another throughout the design process.

Although each municipality will develop different interpretative routes according to its own heritage assets and local priorities, the methodological approach presented in this Toolkit provides a transferable framework for organising heritage resources into meaningful visitor

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experiences. By following a structured yet adaptable planning process, municipalities can develop interpretative routes that strengthen heritage communication, encourage environmental awareness and contribute to the sustainable development objectives of the Extended Water Museum.

7.4 Digital Interpretation Planning

Digital technologies have become an important component of contemporary heritage interpretation, offering municipalities new opportunities to enhance visitor engagement, improve accessibility and communicate the multiple dimensions of water heritage. However, the successful integration of digital interpretation does not depend on the quantity of technologies employed but, on their capacity, to support the interpretative objectives of the Extended Water Museum.

For this reason, municipalities should approach digital interpretation as a strategic planning process rather than a technological investment. The selection of digital tools should be guided by the characteristics of the heritage resources, the intended visitor experience, the needs of different user groups and the long-term capacity to maintain and update digital content. Digital solutions should therefore complement the physical experience of the landscape rather than replace it.

When planning digital interpretation, municipalities are encouraged to consider a limited number of key questions:

- ➔ What interpretative objective should the digital tool support?
- ➔ Who are the primary target audiences?
- ➔ Which heritage resources would benefit from digital interpretation?
- ➔ Which digital solution is most appropriate for the local context?
- ➔ Can the selected solution be maintained and regularly updated?
- ➔ Does the digital content remain accessible to different visitor groups?

Answering these questions during the planning phase helps municipalities select digital solutions that are proportionate to their needs and aligned with the overall objectives of the Extended Water Museum.

Rather than adopting technology for its own sake, municipalities should seek digital solutions that strengthen heritage interpretation, facilitate learning and encourage

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meaningful interaction between visitors and the natural and cultural landscape. A carefully planned digital interpretation strategy contributes not only to visitor engagement but also to the long-term sustainability and adaptability of the Extended Water Museum.

7.5 Key Planning Considerations

Before initiating the development of an Extended Water Museum, municipalities are encouraged to consider several organisational, strategic and operational aspects that may facilitate the transition from conceptual planning to practical implementation. Successful implementation requires careful preparation, interdisciplinary collaboration and a long-term perspective adapted to the specific characteristics of each territory.

The recommendations presented below synthesise the methodological principles discussed throughout this Toolkit and provide municipalities with a practical reference for organising the early stages of implementation. Rather than representing a prescriptive sequence of actions, they highlight key aspects that should be considered during the planning process while allowing sufficient flexibility for local adaptation.

Municipalities are encouraged to:

- **Establish a multidisciplinary working group** involving representatives from municipal departments, cultural organisations, environmental bodies and research institutions to ensure an integrated planning approach.
- **Develop a shared strategic vision** by defining the objectives, priorities and expected outcomes of the Extended Water Museum in collaboration with key stakeholders.
- **Identify and document water heritage resources** before initiating the design of interpretative routes, visitor experiences and digital interpretation initiatives.
- **Promote active stakeholder participation** throughout the planning process, recognising the contribution of local communities, cultural associations and scientific organisations in shaping the identity of the initiative.
- **Plan digital interpretation strategically**, selecting technologies that support interpretative objectives, improve accessibility and remain sustainable in terms of maintenance and future development.
- **Adopt a long-term implementation perspective**, considering governance arrangements, institutional responsibilities, financial sustainability and opportunities for future adaptation and growth.

These planning considerations are intended to support municipalities during the initial stages of implementation while allowing sufficient flexibility to respond to different territorial characteristics, governance structures and development priorities. The

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successful development of an Extended Water Museum should therefore be understood as an adaptive and collaborative process, evolving in response to local needs, available resources and the unique identity of each territory.

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8. Conclusion

This Toolkit has presented a methodological framework for the establishment of Extended Water Museums, combining conceptual foundations, implementation methodologies, governance approaches and practical planning tools within a single guidance document. Drawing on the experience of the Souli pilot, it has sought to demonstrate how water heritage may be interpreted as an integrated territorial system in which natural resources, cultural landscapes, historical infrastructure and intangible heritage are understood together rather than in isolation.

The methodologies presented throughout the preceding chapters are intended to function as an adaptable framework rather than a prescriptive model. Their value lies in supporting municipalities as they identify their own heritage assets, engage local communities, develop place-based narratives and design interpretative experiences that reflect the identity of their landscapes. Successful implementation therefore depends less on the replication of a specific example than on the ability to combine shared methodological principles with locally grounded adaptation.

The Souli pilot has confirmed that the establishment of an Extended Water Museum is a collaborative and progressive process, requiring interdisciplinary cooperation, active community participation and a long-term institutional perspective. Municipalities are encouraged to approach implementation as an evolving initiative that develops in response to local priorities, available resources and emerging opportunities.

Within the wider objectives of the AQUATIK-EU project, this Toolkit is intended to support the transfer of the Extended Water Museum approach to further territorial contexts and to contribute to the exchange of experience among participating municipalities. Each new application enriches the collective understanding of the approach and strengthens the long-term interpretation, protection and sustainable management of Europe's aquatic cultural and natural heritage.

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