



URBACT
Driving change for
better cities



URBACT KNOWLEDGE HUB PRESENTS



**HOW ARE CITIES
IMPLEMENTING
PLACED-BASED
APPROACHES?**

PORTO CITY LAB PAPER
September 2020

URBACT Knowledge Hub presents:

HOW ARE CITIES IMPLEMENTING PLACED-BASED APPROACHES?

CITY LAB PAPER, September 2020

Authors

IVÁN TOSICS,

URBACT Programme Expert

MIREIA SANABRIA,

URBACT Lead Expert

EDDY ADAMS,

URBACT Programme Expert

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THE URBACT CITY LABS

1.1 WHAT ARE URBACT CITY LABS?

Between September 2018 and January 2020 URBACT organised four City Labs. Their objective was to complement the work being undertaken by the German Presidency team to refresh the Leipzig Charter. The Labs were organised in partnership with EUROCITIES and Urban Innovative Actions (UIA).

The City Labs drew upon the extensive cities network of URBACT and the other partners. The Labs adopted an operational focus, exploring the implications for cities, and putting them at the heart of the process. Their starting point was the fundamental changes that have taken place since the Charter's initial publication in 2007.

Each of the City Labs focused on one of the original Leipzig Charter principles – Participation,

Sustainability, Integration and Balanced Territorial Development – and asked:

- How does each Leipzig Charter principle look in 2020?
- How are cities implementing the principles and where are cities struggling, in relation to the principles?
- How cities can be supported to build their capacities in relation to these principles?

Each City Lab generated a report and a video, showcasing the work of participating cities. These examples are designed to inspire and encourage other cities which are committed to achieving sustainable integrated urban development.

1.2 WHY RENEWING THE LEIPZIG CHARTER PRINCIPLES?

The Leipzig Charter remains a landmark urban policy document. The principles it set out remain central to how European urban development is conceived today. For example, the importance of cities playing an active role in decision-making, which is embedded within the Urban Agenda for the EU, was clearly articulated in the original Charter. Its principles have also helped shape global urban policy keystones like the New Urban Agenda and the UN's Sustainable Development Goals.

The importance of multi-level governance, integrated working and empowerment of all urban participants were other important features in the original documents that are now widely accepted and understood. This far-sighted policy statement established the principles widely regarded as essential to tackle the major urban challenges of our time:

“Every level of government - local, regional, national and European - has a responsibility

for the future of our cities. To make this multi-level government really effective, we must improve the coordination of the sectoral policy areas and develop a new sense of responsibility for integrated urban development policy. We must also ensure that those working to deliver these policies at all levels acquire the generic and cross-occupational skills and knowledge needed to develop cities as sustainable communities.¹”

Clearly, the Charter's main messages remain highly relevant in 2020. However, the working context for Europe's cities has been transformed since 2007. The global financial crisis, the digital revolution and the evident climate emergency are amongst the most pressing developments. Their seismic scale, and their implication for cities, has prompted the review of the Charter.

1 European Commission, Leipzig Charter, page 2, 2007

1.3 WHAT GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR EUROPEAN URBAN POLICY-MAKING?

The first three Labs focused on the original Charter's key principles, centering around Participation, Sustainability and Integration. In each case, a design challenge has been the optimum entry point enabling us to showcase cities' operational experiences.

Not surprisingly, there have been touch points across the City Labs. For example, the need to strengthen civic participation processes has run through all of the discussions. URBACT has also shed light on specific priorities during these sessions, for example the importance of gender equal approaches², which the programme has effectively championed.

The new Leipzig Charter establishes three important urban policy goals. In equal order of priority, they are the Green City, the Just City and the Productive City. The importance of the place-based approach, and the complementarity of different spatial levels remains. The neighbourhood, the administrative city and the metropolitan regional area are specifically identified.

This fourth and final URBACT City Lab focused on the spatial dimension, under the banner of Balanced Territorial Development. Although this may initially appear quite abstract, it relates to fundamental questions relating to the good functioning of our cities:

- What challenges are best resolved at which levels?
- How are decisions made and by whom?
- How can vertical and horizontal collaboration be encouraged?

This City Lab mirrored the revised Leipzig Charter's focus on three spatial levels. After a plenary session, participants worked in three parallel sessions, each exploring a different territorial dimension. One addressed the neighbourhood level and another the metropolitan dimension, each illustrated with city cases discussed later in this document. The third session considered the perspective of small and medium-sized cities, which face particular challenges relating to sustainable urban policy.

City Lab participants taking part in the plenary session



2 See urbact.eu/gender-equal-cities

2

'BALANCED TERRITORIAL DEVELOPMENT' IN CONTEXT

2.1 'PLACE-BASED' AND 'PEOPLE-BASED' APPROACHES

'Balanced territorial development' refers to the spatial aspects of development. The 'place-based' approach refers to "strategies that are integrated, to simultaneously tackle the various dimensions of complex urban problems [usually associated with poverty and deprivation]"³. This is often opposed to 'spatially blind' or 'sectoral' policies. The two types of interventions are equally important. The combination of the two is essential for what is now commonly understood as 'sustainable urban development'.

For more than 15 years URBACT has been promoting an integrated and participative approach to urban development among city

representatives and local stakeholders. This approach has evolved since the beginning of the millennium, with important steps such as the Leipzig Charter signed in 2007. It is based on the principle, on the one hand, that in order to respond to sustainable development issues, the social, economic and environmental aspect of a local policy must be considered as a whole, and, on the other hand, that policy integration can only be done locally.

URBACT has become a renowned platform for exchange of knowledge on urban development between cities and the other urban stakeholders in Europe (the European Union, Member States, Regions, research institutions, etc.).

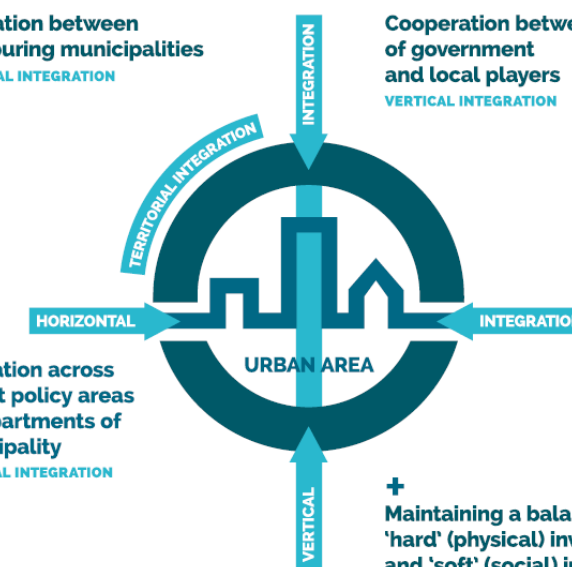
Integrated Urban Development

MEANS...

Cooperation between neighbouring municipalities
TERRITORIAL INTEGRATION

Cooperation between all levels of government and local players
VERTICAL INTEGRATION

Cooperation across different policy areas and departments of a municipality
HORIZONTAL INTEGRATION



³ Fioretti, Carlotta, 2020: Handbook Of Sustainable Urban Development Strategies. European Commission, Joint Research Centre. <https://ec.europa.eu/jrc/en/publication/eur-scientific-and-technical-research-reports/handbook-sustainable-urban-development>

2.2 A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

1990s and the URBAN Community Initiatives

The beginning of place-based development in urban areas, as a concern of Cohesion Policy, was in the 1990s with the launch of the URBAN Community Initiative as pilot (1989-1993), followed by URBAN I (1994-1999) and URBAN II (2000-2006) Community Initiatives. The governance arrangement of URBAN was based on direct collaboration between the European Commission and local governments for the regeneration of deprived urban areas.

These EU initiatives, though financially very limited, triggered a shift in national urban policies towards an integrated approach, with a focus on the neighbourhood level. A 2010 evaluation⁴ found that the URBAN Community Initiatives had made a positive contribution

to tackling the challenges of neighbourhoods in crisis, and supported some genuinely innovative and high quality projects.

Things however changed with the introduction of the territorial dimension to Cohesion Policy in the Lisbon Treaty and with the 1999 reform of the Structural Funds. In the 2000-2006 period, URBAN was reduced in size, and from 2007 it became 'mainstreamed' – practically terminated. This can be understood as a reorientation of funds from urban development, moving these toward regional operational programmes. On the other hand, in February 2003 a specific programme was launched as the "European Network for Exchange of Experience", called URBACT.

The 2000s and the Barca report

The interest in integrated urban development started to increase again towards the end of the 2000s. The 2008 crisis focused attention on the multitude of challenges in Europe (climate, ageing, inequalities etc.). There was an emerging agreement that the many challenges and their complex interactions could only be handled by integrated approaches.

An important change factor in the EU policy towards the revival of the place-based approach was the publication of the Barca report⁵, prepared at the request of former Commissioner Danuta Hübner in 2009. Dr. Fabricio Barca, former Director General, Ministry of Economy and Finance in Italy, rejected the view that geographic inequalities

are inevitable products of growth that can only be tackled through spatially blind measures, for example encouraging labour mobility.

Barca developed an opposing perspective, pointing to the virtues of a place-based approach. He pointed out the importance of increasing the capacity of a territory to optimise its resources – which depends on the interaction of institutions and decisions, both private and public, economic and political. The report paved the way for the return of the EU framework for multi-level governance with the inclusion of area-based interventions as the way to horizontally integrate different sectoral policies.

The 2010s and the new ITI and CLLD tools

When the Cohesion Policy regulation for the 2014-2020 period was approved, the vision was that the most important success factors of URBAN were included in the mainstream programme as part of the compulsory urban dimension (Article 7 – "at least 5% of the ERDF resources shall be allocated to the integrated actions for sustainable urban development").

Important new tools, such as Integrated Territorial Investment (ITI) and Community Led

Local Development (CLLD)⁶ were developed to enable integrated urban development in the neighbourhoods and also in the broader urban areas. ITI allowed for all three spatial levels to become the basis for integrated planning and development. Besides the neighbourhoods and administrative cities, the novelty was the introduction of the functional urban area (FUA) as a new territorial option for EU programming.

2.3 PLACE-BASED APPROACHES TODAY

The 2007 Leipzig Charter had a very strong emphasis on deprived neighbourhoods – as a reaction to the urban riots of that time, predominantly in French cities. Today the situation is different and the three spatial levels are more equally handled.

A recent analysis of the EC Joint Research Centre on SUD strategies⁷ shows that the majority of Sustainable Urban Development Strategies focus on cities, towns or suburbs (45%), followed by districts/neighbourhoods (31%) and functional areas (20%).

The analysis shows that there are clear differences in the thematic content between

the three categories. The majority of strategies that target neighbourhoods focuses on social inclusion (thematic objective T09). In other words, neighbourhood strategies are largely used to provide support for the physical, economic and social regeneration of deprived communities. On the other hand, strategies covering functional urban areas address mainly low-carbon economy (T04), environment protection and resource efficiency (T06) and transport (T07). This shows that functional urban area strategies focus on environmental and transport issues and the related infrastructure development.

City Lab participants discussing in a fishbowl format



4 ECOTEC, 2010: Ex-Post of Cohesion Policy programmes 2000-06: The URBAN Community Initiatives, https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docgener/evaluation/pdf/expost2006/urbanii/final_report.pdf
5 Barca, F 2009: AN AGENDA FOR A REFORMED COHESION POLICY A place-based approach to meeting European Union challenges and expectations https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/archive/policy/future/pdf/report_barca_v0306.pdf
6 CLLD as a tool to promote urban participation was explored in the first City Lab
7 Fioretti, Carlotta, 2020: Handbook Of Sustainable Urban Development Strategies. European Commission, Joint Research Centre. <https://ec.europa.eu/jrc/en/publication/eur-scientific-and-technical-research-reports/handbook-sustainable-urban-development-strategies>

3

THE CITY EXPERIENCE

3.1 INTEGRATION AT NEIGHBOURHOOD LEVEL

The draft version of the new Leipzig Charter stresses the importance of the neighbourhood level with specific reference to the challenge of urban poverty. It argues that citizens should have access to social services, health care, culture and mobility, irrespective of their gender, age and socioeconomic position, and that housing should meet the needs of heterogeneous groups in society.

“Urban challenges culminate at neighbourhood level. Targeted actions can lead to cost-savings and offer opportunities for testing innovative urban projects. Some neighbourhoods are arrival areas for migrants, some face social tensions and high shares of poverty. Other neighbourhoods are characterised by high socio-economic dynamics, mobility and a shortage of affordable housing. Neighbourhoods with a multitude of complex challenges need specific policy attention and targeted funding.”

From the beginning of URBACT in 2002, poverty and inclusion-related topics have had an important focus. From the mid-2010s, one of the first URBACT capitalisation efforts aimed to draw out learning on *Integration and Regeneration of Deprived Areas*⁸ as a contribution to the European Urban Agenda. In this detailed analysis, sectoral and place based interventions were shown as two ideal types which cannot be ranked according to importance or efficiency. Both have their merits and problems, if applied alone.

A sectoral policy would only influence some of the aspects of poverty and could even worsen the situation in regard to the other factors - for example, social housing improvements leading

to increases in rental and utility costs causing difficulties for residents living on social benefits. A place-based initiative would only impact on the factors within the selected area, neglecting people outside the area. Another frequent problem of place-based policies is that due to the improvements in the area, prices increase leading to population changes, displacing the original residents to other deprived areas, and replacing them with better off families. The key to success is to integrate the two types of intervention logic.

More recently, URBACT has been working with the Urban Poverty Partnership of the Urban Agenda for the EU. National, regional and local-level stakeholders from four participating countries (France, Germany, Poland, and Spain) were brought together to analyse their urban policies targeting deprived areas. The resulting *Local Pact paper*⁹ offers a policy framework for countries and cities, promoting place-based approaches, combined with people-focused processes for designing and implementing poverty-reducing measures.

The Urban Innovative Actions (UIA) initiative has also generated good practices based on place-based approaches (Use-It! In Birmingham¹⁰, TAST'in FIVES in Lille¹¹, Mac in Pozzuoli¹²), as well as more people-based approaches (B-MINCOME in Barcelona¹³, 5Bridges in Nantes¹⁴, Co-City in Turin¹⁵).

The City Lab confirmed that it's the combination of the two approaches that is essential. Participants discussed examples that highlighted on the one hand the importance of a multi-level governance framework, and on the other hand new participation methods, focusing on co-creation and co-design in cooperation with residents, civil society networks, community organisations and private enterprises.

8 Tosics, I, 2015: Integrated Regeneration Of Deprived Areas And The New Cohesion Policy Approach. An URBACT contribution to the European Urban Agenda. URBACT, August 2015 http://urbact.eu/sites/default/files/20150909_urbact_deprived-areas_gb_md_1.pdf
9 <https://urbact.eu/local-pact>
10 <https://www.uia-initiative.eu/fr/uia-cities/birmingham>
11 <https://www.uia-initiative.eu/fr/uia-cities/lille>

12 <https://www.uia-initiative.eu/fr/uia-cities/pozzuoli>
13 <https://www.uia-initiative.eu/fr/uia-cities/barcelona>, also described in City Lab#2 Paper <https://urbact.eu/files/how-are-cities-putting-sustainable-urban-development-practice>
14 <https://www.uia-initiative.eu/fr/uia-cities/nantes>
15 <https://www.uia-initiative.eu/fr/uia-cities/turin>

Lille and the French "Politique de la Ville"

Lille European Metropolis (MEL), located in northern France, is the fourth largest urban area in the country with a population of 1.2 million people. With 90 municipalities covering more than 600 km², it includes major urban centres such as Lille (230 000 inhabitants), Roubaix and Tourcoing, as well as rural areas. Established by law in 1966, MEL has an annual budget of EUR 1.8 billion to devote to metropolitan policies such as transport policy, spatial planning, waste, water, environment, economy and employment.

The French "Politique de la Ville" programme was created in 1977 to link the State, regions and cities in the regeneration of deprived areas. The priority areas are identified by the central government on the basis of concentration of low-income people. On the MEL territory there are 26 priority districts in 21 cities, covering 20% of the population. These areas receive social cohesion funds of EUR 40 million each year, involving 200 associations which annually run around 1 000 projects. Within the priority areas, nine have an urban renewal program, equivalent of EUR 2 billion across 7 years. Bénédicte Tillard, leading on urban and social cohesion projects in the City of Wattrelos, said:

"The 'City contract' is the essential element of French urban poverty policies: co-chaired by the intermunicipal structure and the State, with a wide range of stakeholders (50 partners), including NGOs, companies, consultative chambers, citizen council, it enshrines the strategic priorities shared by all the partners, and sets the direction for the annual calls for proposals."

In each priority area, a citizens council is formed on the basis of an open call organised by municipalities. Interventions in priority areas are co-financed by the State and the city.

The 'Les Villas' area of the City of Wattrelos was presented as an example where residents get involved in a project. In the area, three buildings have been demolished and participatory planning enabled residents to be involved in the planning and decisions regarding the park replacing the buildings.

One of the challenges in this process is that residents want to see changes happening fast, and their expectations don't always align with the temporality of the project. The 'City Contract' plays an essential role here. It sets a strong basis for the project which can also survive if the political leadership changes.

UIA TAST'in FIVE project, City of Lille



Besides working on urban regeneration projects, another priority for MEL, tackled with the other seven city partners of URBACT network Com.Unity.Lab¹⁶, is to address the challenge of employment in the most disadvantaged areas. Efforts aim at creating local shops, working with companies to foster employment opportunities, leveraging public procurement to benefit local residents to transition into employment.

Finally, Lille is involved in UIA project TAST'n FIVES¹⁷ focusing on the Fives neighbourhood where the 2001 closure of the metallurgic "Fives Cail Babcock" company led to dramatic decline and over 20% unemployment rate. The project introduces an innovative device: a collective kitchen with various actions benefitting local residents: providing a shared space to socialize, organizing workshops, creating a virtuous ecosystem of training and job opportunities.

City-led regeneration in Łódź

With almost 700 000 inhabitants, Łódź is the third largest city of Poland, and the main centre for regeneration projects in the country. Despite privatisation efforts during which some 10 000 units were sold, Łódź remains the biggest landlord in Poland with more than 40 000 communal flats where the regeneration policies concentrate.

The national government adopted in 2015 a new Act of Revitalisation that allowed cities to develop revitalisation programmes for 'hard' and 'soft' interventions preventing urban decay. The city conducted a thorough analysis (spatial, technical, economic, environmental and social) to identify the priority areas. These cover large parts of the inner city that has the largest concentration of public housing and where most buildings are listed (also making renovation costly) and in a very bad state of repair.

In the first phase of the programme, 8 of the 20 priority areas have been selected for the renovation. Work started in 2017 and will be finished by 2023 with the help of EU funds, city budget and national funding. Joanna Brzezińska, Deputy Head of the Revitalisation & Housing Bureau, said:

"The interventions are not only about physical renovation, but mainly about the people. For them, special social elements have to be included into the revitalisation programme."

In the course of renewal, people are given replacement flats for two to three years, after which they can come back, if they want. Support is made available to enable the most disadvantaged to move back in case of rents increase. The municipality found that most people do not want to come back to the renovated buildings as they are happy with their replacement flats and do not want to move twice (many of the residents are elderly people, disabled people or large families).

The municipality has been recognised by URBACT for its good practice on improving the social dimension of urban regeneration. Łódź is leading Urban Regeneration Mix Transfer Network¹⁸ focusing on increasing participation of local residents and strengthening relations between stakeholders in regeneration processes in seven cities. Innovative approaches in Łódź include:

- Direct social assistance to families with two new functions created in the community: the 'Area Hosts' support the administrative side of the process (they distribute information on the planned revitalisation activities, coordinate the relocation process etc.), and the 'Lighthouse Keepers' support the residents in steering life changes, tackling the problems relocation may cause and settling rent arrears.

¹⁶ <https://urbact.eu/communitylab>

¹⁷ <http://www.uia-initiative.eu/en/uia-cities/lille>

¹⁸ <https://urbact.eu/urban-regeneration-mix>

- A social participation model – a programme of micro-grants (EUR 250 to 1 000) supporting residents, NGOs and local groups to develop neighbourhood initiatives.
- Training for revitalisation stakeholders: to explain what revitalisation is about and improve the soft skills of the stakeholders (e.g. communication with residents). Participants include civil servants, social service providers, police officers, and NGO representatives
- Participatory planning for designing public space: residents, officials and designers work together to create a space that suits residents' needs.
- Multi-Generational House: 16 flats and 2 community spaces were made available to tenants who were selected based on their expectations and aspirations for mixed community living and who had no rent arrears. The basic principles for co-living are mutual assistance, openness to the needs of others, tolerance, and strengthening multi-generational cooperation.

Participation of ULG members on Senior Days in Łódź



In the last 10 years, there has been growing interest in the conceptualisation of shared urban spaces as commons. It was sparked by concerns over austerity policies and growing privatisation of public spaces. Urban commons refers to common goods which are neither exclusively public nor private. The City of Bologna has pioneered the work on the urban commons and was the first city to adopt a regulatory framework in 2015. Today some 150 Italian cities are experimenting with such regulations. Some cities are also experimenting without any legal framework, and there is still no legislation at national level.

In Turin, the Co-City approach was modelled on the experience of Bologna and benefitted from UIA's support to kick-start the process. In 2017, Turin introduced a new tool: a 'pact of collaboration', to regulate the urban commons - typically unused or underused buildings, green spaces, squares or even community gardens. The 'Pact' is a signed document between two parties – residents or associations and the local authority - by which both sides agree to take on certain responsibilities, mostly with regards to the reuse of abandoned urban spaces and structures.

The commons were selected on the basis of a call for proposals. 200 ideas were proposed for places where co-design and co-management of actions could be organised. All proposals were published and made accessible to all citizens. More than 50 pacts were signed. From there, the Municipality didn't give money or a concession such as building, but launched a co-design and co-management process with the associations to create an enabling environment to support the commoning process (coaching, providing equipment etc.). Giovanni stressed that this is a collective learning process and there were also examples of failures where the contract had to be terminated and lessons learnt on both sides.

UIA Co-City project, via Agliè, Turin



The use of innovative ICT platforms and the active collaboration of the network of the Houses of the Neighbourhoods (community centres managed by NGOs), as well as other actors such as the University, also integrate different parts of the city through virtual and physical collaboration into a wider action of urban regeneration against poverty and social exclusion.

Still early in the implementation, Co-City hopes to foster collaboration and mutual trust between the public authority and the local community. The creation of new forms of commons-based urban welfare aims to ultimately promote social mixing and the cohesion of local community, making residents actors of the urban change while the local authority acts as a facilitator of the innovation process already ongoing in the urban context.

CASE STUDY Turin and the urban common experiment

With 908 000 inhabitants, rising to 1.7 million in its metropolitan area, Turin is one of the most important cities in Italy and the capital of the Piedmont Region. The city was successful in recent decades in creating a vibrant urban context for innovative social entrepreneurship.

In the meantime, however, entire parts of the city were excluded from these forms of urban innovation. A very visible sign of urban decline is the large number of abandoned buildings, most of them a heritage of the city's industrial past. 6.5% of about 1600 buildings owned by the city are unused or underused, even if most of them have a strong potential as possible drivers of urban regeneration.

It's in this context that the Urban Innovative Actions Co-City project starts delivering its first results. The project is one of the most advanced experiments in Europe for the creation of new forms of management of urban commons and commons-based urban welfare. Giovanni Ferrero, project lead of UIA Co-City¹⁹ project, said:

“The novelty of Co-City is the transformation of abandoned structures and vacant land into hubs of residents' participation in order to foster the community spirit and to enhance the creation of social enterprises to reduce urban poverty in different areas of the city.”

¹⁹ <https://www.uia-initiative.eu/fr/uia-cities/turin>

Concluding remarks on neighbourhoods

In addition to the discussions emerging from the three city cases, City Lab participants were invited to reflect on barriers and enablers for place-based approaches at neighbourhood level:

- Although this City Lab focused on 'place-based approaches', participants recognised that such approaches need to be integrated with people-based interventions to design and implement successful poverty-reducing measures.
 - Area-based policies always have to be embedded in multi-level governance policies. These can take different legal forms, such as the French contract system, or a looser renewal policy such as in Poland, or even without a national policy such as in Italy with the Commons based programme.
 - The content of area-based interventions, the share of physical regeneration versus social programmes can be determined in a top-down way (Lille), or through having some local influence (Łódź). Alternatively, such decisions can be taken in a bottom-up way (Turin).
- As Joanna Brzezińska from the City of Łódź stressed during the City Lab: "from the local perspective, it's easier to spot where the problems are, and to find solutions to them". However, the current policy, institutional framework and funding conditions of area-based interventions are mostly determined by the national level, giving cities relatively little room to make their own decisions.
 - In most cases, the formal governments on the state or local level still hold most decision-making powers regarding the most deprived areas. The French citizen councils or the Łódź model do not give decision-making powers to citizens on the essential decisions about urban renewal. On the other hand, the commons-based model in Turin is based on strong residents' involvement, without, however, having access to a major financial stream for renewal. A stronger EU framework promoting new ways of participation²⁰, focusing on co-creation and co-design with residents, is needed.

Joanna Brzezińska, Deputy Head of Łódź Revitalisation & Housing Bureau, presenting during the workshop on neighbourhoods



3.2 INTEGRATION AT METROPOLITAN LEVEL

Life in urban areas is not limited by administrative borders. Citizens move across boundaries; they live and work in functional urban areas because housing and job areas are not contiguous with the administrative area of the core city. According to calculations based on data of 40 EU cities, the population of functional urban areas is on average 2.7 times larger than the population of the core city²¹.

Today the crucial importance of functional urban areas in safeguarding the liveability of European towns and cities is generally acknowledged. This is the spatial level where:

- planning interventions can assure sustainable use of land, contributing to reducing urban sprawl and land take
- compact, dense and polycentric settlement structures can be promoted, reducing transport and mobility needs
- urban transport and mobility systems can best be regulated to be efficient, low-carbon and multi-modal

- land-use instruments can support new affordable housing to ensure vibrant and socially mixed neighbourhoods and to avoid speculative land policy.

In order to achieve these positive impacts municipalities within the functional urban areas need to cooperate and coordinate their policies. This can be achieved through new forms of governance structures and institutions and also through new types of planning and regulatory policies.

In an optimal case national urban policies empower cities and urban areas and enable the exchange of experiences and knowledge between municipalities and other stakeholders. Efficient functional urban area cooperation also needs national and regional funding programmes, not only for providing resources, but also to offer incentives to strengthen integrated urban development.

CASE STUDY

Recent metropolitan cooperation in Brno

Brno Metropolitan Area (BMA) is a typical example of a monocentric metropolitan area. It consists of 167 municipalities with a population of over 600 000 inhabitants. This territory is one of the seven metropolitan areas in the Czech Republic defined for the purpose of the ITI tool.

Brno was a partner of Sub>Urban²², an URBACT III network with a strong spatial dimension and a focus on the urban fringe but also building on collaboration with neighbouring municipalities. Brno was also part of the Joining Forces²³ project under URBACT II. This project focused on the possibilities to steer cooperation in metropolitan areas and ensure its effective governance and administration.

There is no legislative framework in place to cover the administration of metropolitan areas in the Czech Republic. The coordination of activities in the territory takes place via a partnership principle and through communication with relevant partners in the area. A Steering Committee composed of key political stakeholders from BMA, representatives from universities, NGOs, chamber of commerce etc. takes decisions, on the basis of recommendations by thematic working groups.

²⁰ <https://urbact.eu/sites/default/files/urbact-citizenparticipation-edition-190524-final.pdf>

²¹ Tosics, I – Geróházi, É, 2013: Metropolitan Areas In Action. Analysis of European cities. Background study for the Eurocities publication Metropolitan Areas In Action Summary Report. November 2013. <https://mri.hu/en/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2017/12/MAIA-summary-MRI-1311-1.pdf> <http://nws.eurocities.eu/MediaShell/media/MAIA%20concluding%20report%20FINAL.pdf>

²² <https://urbact.eu/sub.urban>

²³ <https://urbact.eu/joining-forces>

In the BMA area an Integrated Development Strategy for the application of the ITI tool was produced to address the development of the city of Brno and its natural hinterland. A memorandum on Metropolitan Cooperation was also signed among the partners with the goal to establish the political support for metropolitan agenda. Soňa Raszková, from the department of ITI Management and Metropolitan Cooperation, said:

“The ITI tool, applied since 2014 in Cohesion Policy in the Czech Republic, was of crucial importance to evoke – for the first time – the cooperation between people from different sectors within Brno and its surrounding municipalities.”

Over a few years cooperation has led to important results, in the form of integrated projects/solutions of agglomeration significance – compared to individual projects. Integrated projects must fulfil more demanding evaluation criteria and approval process but their effects are synergetic with bigger metropolitan impact. Examples range from a transfer terminal and new tram lines to the integrated regeneration of a hospice building.

New tram line in Stavba-Dornych, Brno



During the present programming period (2014-2020), both the EU Cohesion Policy environment and the willingness of the municipalities to collaborate were positive elements enhancing metropolitan cooperation. But there were also serious barriers, especially at national level. There was a delay in the implementation of the ITI setting, with the first calls only starting in 2016. The Managing Authorities of the different operational programmes had different views towards ITI reflecting the strategies of their own ministries.

This raised difficulties in accessing funds. Without a proper national policy and legislative framework, metropolitan area thinking was limited to EU issues and therefore hindering integration efforts, for example the possibility of combining EU Funds with non-EU funds.

In the new programming period (2021-2027), strategic investments into metropolitan areas will become more important than the project-oriented European Structural Investment Funds (ESIF) interventions, which have dominated so far. To adapt to this new context, BMA is conducting further analysis on the metropolitan area. A questionnaire was sent to all relevant mayors to assess their willingness to cooperate in planning and funding. New projects of strategic importance are being prepared to ensure early implementation. The communication activities have been strengthened in order to raise awareness about metropolitan issues.

František Kubeš, head of Department of Strategic Development and Cooperation, concluded his presentation wishing that “through metropolitan cooperation a metropolitan spatial vision should emerge”. To achieve this, an important step would be to set up a metropolitan expert office/agency and also a metropolitan fund (a model for shared expenses and finances). He stressed that all this would only function smoothly if a metropolitan law is adopted on the national level.

CASE STUDY

Barcelona, an established model of metropolitan cooperation

The need for metropolitan cooperation around Barcelona (1.6 million inhabitants) has been acknowledged for many decades, and different forms of metropolitan institutions had already existed until the end of the 1980s. At that time, however, existing structures were abolished and replaced by three voluntary cooperation organisations of 18-20 municipalities on the topics of waste and water management, coordinated transportation and spatial planning. These three organisations were unified into one in 2010 when the political will of the participating municipalities and the Catalan government finally pointed in the same direction.

The Law 31/2010 by the Catalan parliament laid the foundations for the new institution, the Barcelona Metropolitan Area (AMB). The AMB covers 36 municipalities and brings together 3.2 million inhabitants into a single metropolitan zone. The specificity of AMB, having been established by law, is that it's difficult to change it because it is a local government providing specific powers for the 36 municipalities: urban planning, mobility and transport, waste and water management, public space, social and economic development and housing. Differently from Brno, the metropolitan area is not funded by the EU, nor by any EU longer term programmes.

The geography around Barcelona can be described with concentric circles. Around the first zone of municipalities, comprising AMB, there is a second zone, considered as an urban and metropolitan adjacent area. This belt of cities and their respective areas of influence represent another 1.5 million people. Therefore, the actual FUA/metropolitan area of Barcelona has a population well above 4 million (over half of Catalonia).

Mobility challenges in the Barcelona metropolitan area



3.3 VITALITY OF SMALLER CITIES

The highest governing body of the AMB is the Metropolitan Council which consists of 90 members. The mayors of the 36 municipalities are ex officio members of the Council – besides them 54 more councillors are delegated so that the municipalities are represented proportionally to their demographic weight. The Metropolitan Council meets at least once a month.

The executive body of AMB is the Governing Board, consisting of 17 persons: the AMB president (mayor of Barcelona), the Executive Vice-president and other Vice-presidents and metropolitan councillors appointed by the president at the proposal of the Metropolitan Council. The Board meets at least twice a month.

The AMB brings together a team of 500 professionals into a single body. AMB seeks to optimise resources and investment management, capacity building, good territorial governance and its international reputation.

With its rather advanced institutional approach, the AMB also plays an important role at EU level. In 2015, the AMB initiated the creation of the European Metropolitan Authorities (EMA), a platform for political dialogue among metropolitan areas and cities, European institutions and national governments. AMB has an important role in implementing ERDF projects like the agreement with the regional government of Catalonia for the management of EUR 30 million of ERDF for metropolitan projects. AMB is also the Lead Partner of URBACT network RiConnect²⁴, a network of eight metropolises aiming to improve mobility infrastructures and create more sustainable, equitable and attractive metropolis for all.

One of the challenges of AMB that will be addressed through the RiConnect network is around infrastructures and mobility. Until very recently car-based mobility was a political priority at the expense of public transportation. Infrastructure was built without taking into consideration existing spatial relationships, which resulted in physical barriers, discontinuities, segregation of urban neighbourhoods and open spaces. Mobility infrastructure ownership is fragmented and includes central, regional and local governments, complicating matters further.

AMB is emerging as an effective and coherent territorial leader established through a solid governance system. To tackle the challenges of the future, AMB is aiming to secure more functions and a stronger financing scheme, strengthening the image of the metropolitan area and creating a stronger vision for development. At the same time the metropolitan stakeholders should debate about a future enlargement of the AMB with more municipalities.

Concluding remarks on metropolitan integration

In addition to the discussions emerging from the city cases, City Lab participants were invited to reflect on the barriers and enablers for metropolitan integration:

- Without a proper national policy and legislative framework, metropolitan area integration, combining EU with non EU policies and funds, will always be limited.
- In the programming period 2014-2020, the EU played a crucial role to incentivise metropolitan cooperation through Cohesion Policy tools (ITI). While in many western countries metropolitan models developed

organically, in some of the new Member States, notably in Poland and Czech Republic, the ITI has led to the sudden success of metropolitan cooperation. The continuation and even increase of EU financial incentives would be necessary to further develop metropolitan areas - for example, with the establishment of a metropolitan agency and a metropolitan fund. Besides incentives, the EU could also issue guidelines to adopt proper metropolitan law at the national level.

A common assumption is that with the potential for agglomeration and significant infrastructure investment, larger cities give better returns. However, when smaller cities manage to successfully build on their endogenous potential, they can offer a high quality of life and thriving economic development.

Quality health and education services, connectivity, accessibility, suitable public infrastructures, leisure facilities and places for residents to meet and enjoy, are all factors that boost a city's vitality, strengthen the social and cultural networks and make cities attractive for people to live, work and socialise. A smaller city is able to face potential economic and social decline, whilst maintaining and strengthening its role in areas that range from service delivery to attractiveness and quality of living for its residents and, usually, for those of neighbouring urban and rural areas.

A formally accepted concept of small and medium-sized cities does not exist at the EU level. The OECD differentiates city sizes based

on resident population²⁵, but in practice, each Member State conceives size with respect to the national average. ESPON²⁶ has proposed typologies based on qualitative dimensions. Thus, spatial position (agglomerated, networked, isolated), socio-economic performance (dynamic, declining), or functional roles (relations with other administrative units) help understand the features and challenges of smaller cities and their territories. Certainly, the great diversity requires a close analysis and a place-based approach when it comes to designing policy instruments and development pathways that adjust to each city profile and circumstance.

The three cases showcased at the City Lab #4 workshop on Vitality of Small Cities, Igualada (ES), Amarante (PT) and Ventspils (LV) evidence how local integrated development strategies, which have been open to the collaboration of local agents, are making the most of the cities' competitive advantages to develop revitalisation strategies.

Workshop focusing on smaller cities



24 <https://urbact.eu/riconnect>

25 Towns: under 50 000 inhab. Small: 50 000 to 100 000; Medium: up to 250.000. Cities in Europe The New OECD-EC Definition, 2012, Dijkstra, L. & Poelman, H.
26 ESPON 1.4.1 "The Role of Small and Medium-Sized Towns (SMESTO)" Final Report

How Igualada was made visible again on the Catalan map



Igualada (ES), 60 km inland from Barcelona, has a population of 40 000 inhabitants. It is surrounded by a rural hinterland and has a catchment population of 70 000 inhabitants.

Historically, Igualada was one of the first cities in Southern Europe to industrialise through leather production (remains of the tanneries trace back to the Middle Ages). The textile and knitting industry developed in the nineteenth century. These traditional sectors experienced severe decline in the past decades due to industrial crisis, liberalisation processes and the relocation of firms. Beginning 2010s, like most of the Catalan regions, Igualada experienced a dramatic increase in unemployment and population loss.

To surmount this situation, the political authorities looked both within the city, tapping into local assets - existing young talent, an entrepreneurial spirit and key municipal capacities - and outside the city - seeking investment and support from higher government levels and through EU learning and cooperation programs. Igualada has been Lead Partner in URBACT 4D Cities²⁷ and RetailLink²⁸ Action Planning Network Projects, and in Interreg Sudoe INTER-TEX Project.

Internally, local authorities adopted an overarching innovative strategy, which entailed revamping the leather and textile sectors through research programmes on new and sustainable fabrics and methods, and digitalised processes. This has strengthened competitiveness and attracted foreign investment. In parallel, a retail revitalisation strategy has taken advantage of the local factory outlets' capacity to attract visitors from neighbouring towns and further remote cities, including Barcelona. Public promotional campaigns contribute to highlight homegrown talent as well as city's assets and charms.

Outside the city, Igualada sought the support from the Catalan Government to develop and implement a Smart Territorial Strategy and to obtain the consent to use the label Barcelona-Igualada Leather Cluster, building on Barcelona's brand recognition worldwide and positioning the city as the European capital of quality leather.

Participation in European exchange and learning programmes such as URBACT has allowed local public and private stakeholders to gain knowledge and improve capacities. This activity has also made the city more visible at the national and international level, furthering a positive image of Igualada. According to Daniel Castejón Llorach, responsible for international affairs at the City of Igualada:

“Smaller cities should participate in national and international forums in order to transfer their priorities to these higher levels of government. They are still struggling to participate in projects where bigger cities get an easier access. Smaller cities have the ideal size to test solutions and innovative ideas for the problems that Europe is facing.”

27 <https://urbact.eu/4d-cities>

28 <https://urbact.eu/retailink>

The integrated and participatory approach developed through URBACT networks has helped Igualada to set up local groups around strategic priorities. The method has been successfully transferred to other local initiatives as well. The recently created Igualada's Innovation Board (November 2019) composed of the local branch of the University, the vocational training and technology centres, local designers, SMEs and public institutions, with a mission to boost collaboration and develop local economic sectors in a joint and participatory manner, is an outstanding outcome.

A solid positive result of Igualada's efforts is the increase of population and job opportunities, leading to improved citizens' wellbeing.

The Smart Specialisation Strategy based on Igualada's own strengths and potential, raised special interest and comments from workshop participants. Because the city cannot be a direct competitor for Barcelona, the strategic alliance regarding leather production is advantageous for both cities today. Alternatively, because tough competition exists to attract and relocate faculties from the Universities in Barcelona, Igualada chose to turn to the University of Lleida, capital of the rural and less populated Catalan province. Today two branches of Lleida University offer higher studies on city strategic development subjects.

Igualada's efforts have clearly resulted in a reinforced functional role within the Catalan region, in particular in an area that appeared to have a lack of activity for too long.

Amarante, making the case for quality assets

Amarante (PT) is a historical city in Northern Portugal, 65 km from Porto with 56 000 inhabitants. It has an important natural and historic building heritage together with a cultural and artistic tradition that earned Amarante recognition as a UNESCO Creative City. The city has a long tradition in the wood and metal industry, an agribusiness sector and fast growing tourism. Amarante has professional schools, university education programs in partnership with different institutions, and a training offer to executives at the Industry Business School (IBS).

Amarante old city centre



At present, Amarante is URBACT III Lead Partner of the IPlace²⁹ Action Planning Network and had previously been partner in the CityCenterDoctor³⁰ network.

Main city economic development challenges identified in Amarante are in line with those of many smaller cities. Assumptions are:

- Smaller cities have smaller markets - companies make their business decisions based on data. But quantitative criteria exclude smaller cities as priority investment destinations, disengaging them from international trends and practices. Consequently, local jobs lose attractiveness and the brain drain increases.
- Smaller cities lack capacities and skills - these cities play in an unfair game because national and regional governments and institutions wrongly assume they are not qualified or competitive enough. They are bypassed in national investment strategies, which contribute to further decline for these cities and their surrounding rural areas. Tiago Ferreira, Executive Director of AmaranteInvest, the local development agency, said:

“Quality matters, sometimes more than size. Amarante has a cohort of high skilled tech people, a key asset for many companies that are interested in investing in Portugal. The city is also close to universities that issue 500 IT graduates per year. Still, decisions on investment are made on the basis of quantitative criteria, often concealing relevant assets of smaller cities.”

- Larger cities offer better quality of life - this is a too often a psychological trap, with a common impression that agglomerations are better places to live and work against more lethargic smaller and distant cities. Such negative public perceptions badly impact on smaller cities, inhibiting inward investment and pulling people to larger cities.

Amarante is addressing these three challenges through a place-based approach, and with a comprehensive view on the region, building on the assets nearby, i.e. from Amarante the biggest cities in northern Portugal can be accessed: Porto, Braga, Guimarães and Vila Real, as well as their Universities and research and development centres.

At the core of the local revitalisation strategy is foreign investment and talent retention. Boosting local talent and entrepreneurship skills among the local young will attract potential investors. In parallel, branding and communication play an important role towards showcasing the city's talent and assets. InvestAmarante, has produced high quality communication materials, comparable to those of bigger cities, to make the city case.

Finally, significant efforts and resources are addressed to gain reputation and distinctiveness. Attractive citywide events, such as art festivals or actions involving the local community, have rallied city creative solutions of a kind not usually expected from a smaller city. URBACT and other EU programmes (Erasmus+) help to connect the city internationally, testing and piloting projects in safe mode and opening to new opportunities at the EU level. Amarante is well acknowledged in Portugal and has initiated the virtuous circle of city collective pride and greater vitality.

Discussion of this city case highlighted the importance of intermediate governments to perform as umbrellas for smaller cities. The gap between the national and the local level as is the case in Portugal, may lead to a detachment between national policies and municipal demands. In the words of Tiago Ferreira: “smaller cities in Portugal have a two-fold role, performing as both national and local governments, since they do not find the dedicated attention and resources from the national institutions”.

29 <https://urbact.eu/iplace>
30 <https://urbact.eu/citycentredoctor>

CASE STUDY

Ventspils, a microcity to become regional digital hub

Ventspils (LV) is a city in northwest of Latvia with 34 377 inhabitants. It is the sixth-largest city in the country and one of the oldest. Located 2.5 hours from Riga, Ventspils is an international Port and Airport city. The city's High Technology Park provides infrastructure and services to IT and electronics companies.

Ventspils has all the advantages of a smaller city while performing as a regional economic hub that orbits around the technological industry. Ventspils works to offer opportunities, services, and a dynamic environment, for young people and families, both resident and from other cities and countries.

Ventspils breakwater



Talent retention is the greatest objective of the city today. Recent figures show that the population in Latvia is in decline, and Ventspils' population in particular decreased by 1.4% in 2018. Local companies are increasingly lacking a skilled workforce, especially in the ICT strategic sector, so the city fears that the brain drain might jeopardize future developments.

The local development strategy aims at attracting foreign direct investment and talent around the ICT sector. Information events, fairs and conferences help make the case for the city assets, while EU projects position the city internationally. UIA Next Generation Micro cities³¹, jointly developed with the city of Valmiera (LV, 23 000 inhabitants), fosters innovations in several urban development areas to support career development for young people and facilitate workforce retraining. The URBACT DigiPlace³² Action Planning Network – where they are also partners - is enabling the city to catch up with the digitalization opportunities in hard and soft infrastructure and facilitate the uptake of digital innovation by local citizens and potential entrepreneurs.

Project partnerships involve the Ventspils and Valmiera's municipalities, local universities, vocational schools, the technological park, Valmiera development agency and tech companies. All partners work towards building the local Makerspace, and the entrepreneurship lab to advance new jobs and skills and foster STEM education.

A project underpinning the city revitalisation strategy is the newly created City Contact Centre to guide potential new residents and emigrants through local opportunities and facilities in work, education, housing, and services.

Ventspils is clearly the case of a small city embracing the global technological and digital challenge to turn it into development opportunities. The regional perspective and the city's

31 <https://www.uia-initiative.eu/fr/uia-cities/ventspils-valmiera>
32 <https://urbact.eu/digiplace>

leading role are much relevant in terms of pulling smaller surrounding cities and towns. Yet, institutional support and adequate access to resources should help make this formidable task a more feasible one. Laura Codere, UIA project manager, said:

“Smaller cities in Latvia, would value a national policy specifically looking after smaller cities and support coalitions. That would prevent them from developing standalone plans.”

Regarding EU funds, City Lab participants stressed the fact that available sources are not always adapted to the specific needs of smaller cities. More and open dialogue with cities should guide the development of financial schemes. Besides, smaller cities require know-how and guidance in facilitating direct access to EU funding. Also, local authorities and practitioners would benefit from a better understanding of how to turn high-level urban development documents into concrete local policies. In this regard, URBACT is said to be an appropriate forum providing the tools.

Concluding remarks on smaller cities

In addition to the discussions emerging from the three city cases, workshop participants were invited to suggest policy instruments and measures in support of smaller cities vitality. The proposals covered the three dimensions with a transformative power for Green, Just and Productive cities, as proposed by the Leipzig Charter:

- Training and capacity building - Measures proposed were in favour of skills upgrade of local practitioners and authorities to cope with technological and digital tools; help specify the EU Green Agenda and other high level programmes into concrete actions; and support in developing strategic planning for cities and their territories.
- Governance and regulation - Participants pointed at enabling higher fiscal autonomy of smaller cities and an increased capacity to influence political decisions at the national and regional levels to make them more compatible with their needs and aspirations.
- Funding - Participants highlighted the need to facilitate smaller cities direct access to EU funds for their specific needs and better accommodate the requirements to the smaller cities' profile and capacities.

Daniel Castejón Llorach, Internationalization Officer Igualada City Council, presenting during the workshop on smaller cities



4

CONCLUSIONS

CONCLUSIONS

The fourth and final URBACT City Lab, with its focus on territorial development, confirmed the central role spatial issues continue to play in urban policy. In doing so it acknowledged the importance of the initial Leipzig Charter's principle relating to place, and the ongoing relevance of the spatial dimension, which is reflected in the new charter document.

In terms of implementation, the City Lab provided fresh insights into the way in which cities are managing issues of territoriality. This includes the key question of governance and decision-making, as well as the approaches to tackling various policy issues which include mobility, poverty and employment.

At the neighbourhood level, the examples from Lille, Łódź and Turin underline the variety of models in play across Europe. The French example, embedded within a long-established national framework, illustrates a rather top-down approach. At the other end of the spectrum is Turin, one of many cities experimenting with the Commons concept. What links both of these cases, and that of Łódź, is the continued absence of real resources and decision making devolved to citizens. This remains one of the challenges to neighbourhood regeneration across Europe, as the first URBACT City Lab explored in detail.

At the other end of the spatial scale, our two examples of metropolitan governance also offer contrasting models. On the one hand we have Barcelona, with its sophisticated and well-established structures, and on the other

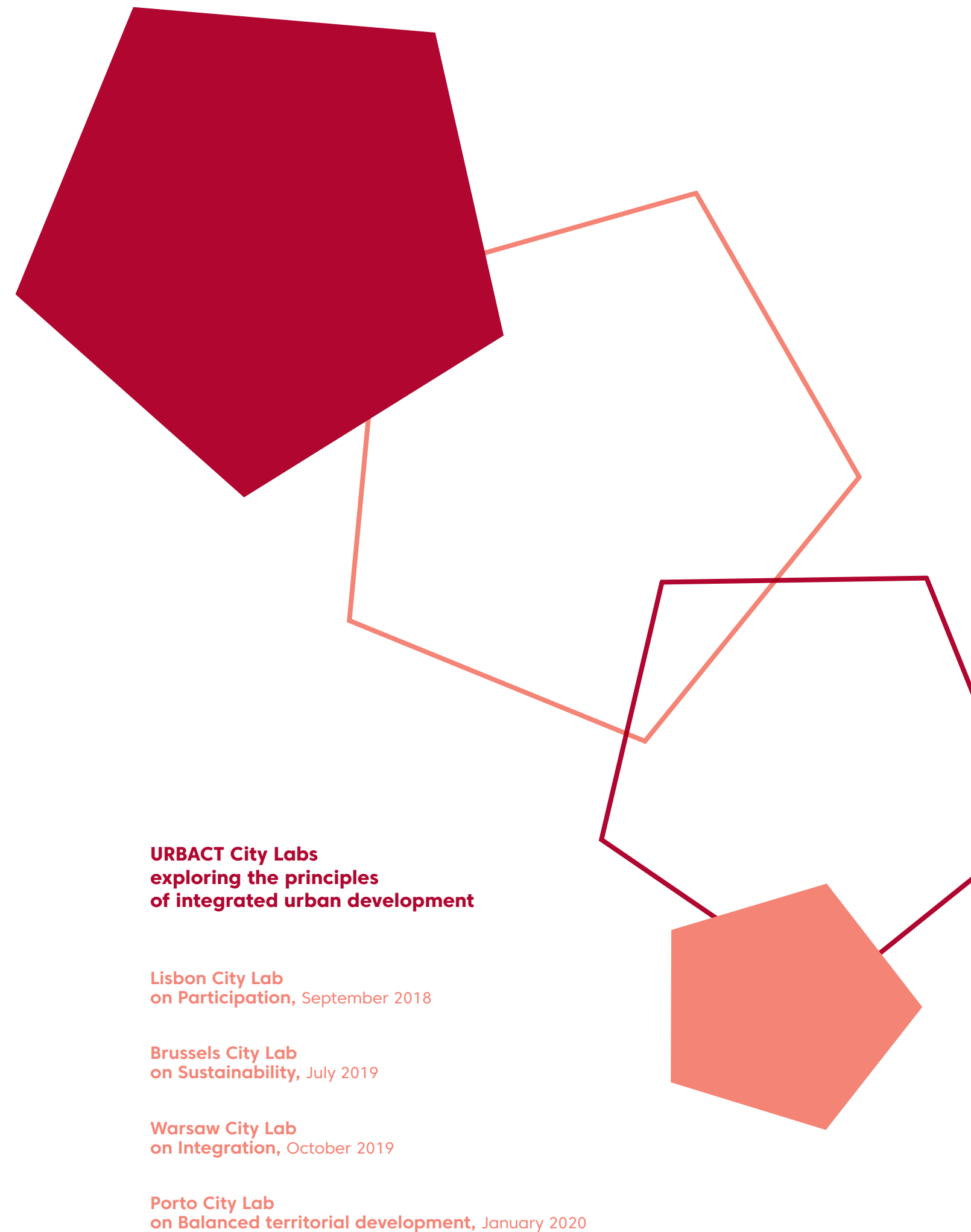
Brno, with a looser framework for collaboration across municipalities. Again, it is interesting to explore the drivers behind these approaches. Whilst the Barcelona governance framework has been internally driven, at the Catalan level, EU funding structures have been instrumental in shaping the Brno developments.

Set against the neighbourhood and metro regional models, smaller cities are often overlooked. Recent tensions such as UK leaving the EU and the French 'gilets jaunes' movement, have underlined fears that such locations are being left behind³². Such developments have encouraged policy-makers to pay particular attention to these smaller urban areas. Against this background, URBACT has a long-standing interest in supporting smaller cities, and the reference to this spatial level in the new Leipzig Charter is also widely welcomed. The three City Lab cases provided useful insights into the positive steps many smaller cities are taking to exert greater control of their futures.

All eight of these City Lab cities are active participants in the URBACT and UIA programmes. They are using these resources as an opportunity to learn, innovate and build their capacity. The City Labs series has illustrated how cities are interpreting the Leipzig Charter principles, providing inspiration for others. At the same time, the series has shone a light on the importance of open dialogue between all urban policy players, with cities at the centre, to continually improve our understanding of their needs and evolving priorities.



³² The revenge of the places that don't matter (and what to do about it): Rodríguez-Pose, LSE 2018



In the decade since the Leipzig Charter underlined the principles of integrated and sustainable urban development, cities have struggled to fully understand and apply these approaches.

This paper is the fourth in a series looking at how cities understand and apply the principle of balanced territorial development.

URBACT Secretariat:
communication@urbact.eu
Contact one of the team members:
http://urbact.eu/secretariat
Contact your National URBACT Point at:
www.urbact.eu/urbact-nameofyourcountry

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