



# **The URBINCLUSION manifesto presentation: the content, the preparation process and possible uses**

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## 1. Introduction

Yes, we know. Manifestos and similar proclamations for progressive visions abound, often spreading consolatory wishful thinking and cosmetic communications, rather than providing needed instruments for better policy and management of public affairs. Yet, in wrapping-up the experience of URBinclusion, we tried to distil some recommendations out of two years of dialogue and joint work among the nine cities participating in this network. We thought that we could dare to formulate our own humble manifesto picking up few concrete solutions that our cities have devised to respond to the challenges they were facing. We delivered a pragmatic manifesto.

## 2. A manifesto for making participation a permanent social condition

Our goal is not to call for new extraordinary solutions, groundbreaking innovations or paradigm-shifting ideas. The goal is to reflect on the consolidated body of URBACT methodologies, to formulate them in a friendly and portable compendium, and to provide some practical, sensible examples of how the URBinclusion partners responded to the on-field challenges during the implementation of actions. This manifesto is a set of recommendations emerging from the direct experience of the teams involved in the implementation of strategies in the nine cities of URBinclusion, distilling some practical ideas out of our learning journey, and it is mostly directed at consolidating their use in future projects.



The subtext crossing this manifesto is: effective solutions and competences to solve many dilemmas of our urban world do already exist. They are within reach, but an additional effort is needed to make them available throughout departments, organisational entities and to overcome other barriers that urban policies everyday activities can face. An effort of transforming participation in a permanent social condition rather than an episodic intervention technique.

The **integrated approach** calls for breaking barriers among sectors and tiers in public administration and civil society at large. The role of the public administration needs to be constantly redefined and new agile structures need to be developed that can best fit a real process of co-creation alongside the targeted citizens. For this, a governance framework that allows individual and collective leadership is needed. The horizontal dimension of collaborations taking place at local level is crucial. To challenge the many faces of poverty we need to develop a communication with many faces, one that values direct communication with peers, over one through representatives. The overarching scope of public interventions should be to foster independence, sense of initiative and self-organising capabilities of the citizens targeted by the actions. Their role needs to go beyond a "beneficiary" approach towards a **peer approach**, with shared commitments and responsibilities.

Participation in policy practice is not about creating instruments, but **establishing principles** for the creation, reproduction, management and sharing over common goods and services.

To involve local stakeholders is not only to take decisions with people and to co-design solutions: it means establishing a **long-term condition** of engagement. Participants do not work if it is just expressed through a vote and implemented by others. Without **commitment** and **responsibility** of stakeholders there is no participation. Building mutual trust is essential to create a shared **responsibility and ownership** of projects. Commitment and responsibility create community.



People need to see things happen. Real results foster continuity, engagement and empowerment.

We need to remind ourselves that strategies are a **roadmap** for guiding our actions, rather than static plans. Instruments, given a local route, they should be **adaptable** to change and incorporate the **feedback** from the implementation process in an **agile** manner. They are relevant and useful for implementation if they incorporate **realistic** opportunities, benchmarks and **flexibility**. They are a checkpoint of where we are in the process and how we can communicate interim results. Above all, they must be flexible and have a **collaborative governance** system.

There is an urgent need to **innovate in project financing**. We need to reconsider how available financial tools and mechanisms can be adapted by cities to tackle the many faces of poverty. Innovation is not only necessary in financial instruments themselves, but also in the way we understand and produce value in the social context. It is important to spread the risk that cities can assume in fostering the development of **social economies**, assuring access to finance investments tackling social issues and sharing the related risks.

inclusive policy work, we have agreed on the importance of the *savoir faire*, of particular sensitivities for the inclusion of local stakeholders and the creation of rich and tasty (integrated and participated) policy recipes. This sensibility has been often related to the particular capacity, leadership or charisma of individuals able to assume a connecting role in the territories, to make the magic happen in complicated processes, to accompany the composition of different ingredients of projects and programs towards a successful cooking. We often evoked the need for “coffee diplomacy” to make the alchemy work...

### 3. Developing the manifesto - the process

2018 was a year where the idea of the manifesto was popping up frequently in the talks of our transnational meetings. It was only in Naples during December 2018 where we decided to take a leap of faith that the insights on co-creation practices for tackling urban poverty that we reached as a network could be useful to the outside world.

One of the key questions we discussed during the transnational meeting in Trikala in February 2019, where we began the process of collectively drafting this document, was indeed: *a manifesto for whom?* Who do we imagine to be the beneficiary of such a document? The generic answer was multiple: practitioners and civil servants; national organisations and program managers; European networks of cities; academics; Mayors and local politicians. But apart from legitimate ambitions to reach a wider audience, the important beneficiaries are: ourselves, and especially people like us, who work every day with or in cities’ administrations and local communities as civil servants, experts or facilitators.

During the meeting in Trikala we started the discussion from the original challenges defined by URBACT and selected by the network. To the three challenges originally identified by the partners as the most pressing and essential ones – adopt an integrated approach in the implementation, maintaining the involvement of local stakeholders in decision making and perform appropriate monitoring - we added two additional challenges that emerged in the implementation process as unavoidable issues. They are: the financial innovation required to sustain the implementation of actions during financial/economic crisis and the consequent lacking of funds, and moving from strategy to implementation, which is an implicit condition in taking part to an Implementation Network. We divided ourselves in five groups, each one dedicated to one of these challenges, each one producing a set of considerations or lessons coming from the case studies visited and discussed during the URBinclusion journey. After reporting in the following plenary these forethoughts, we drafted a first version of the manifesto in form of bullet lists.



Successively the lead experts have reworked the form of the text, slightly refining the wordings while maintaining its enunciations quite faithfully. In this phase, we hired a designer to help visualise its general concept. The discussion among partners highlighted how the implementation of strategies is not a linear progression clearly made of successive steps, but it is rather a recursive process made of

short loops. This idea has inspired the visual concept of the manifesto that represents the different challenges in a circular scheme, with the challenge of monitoring and evaluating actions at the centre, identified at once as a crucial necessity and the often-missing element of the process.

The next step was to use the transnational meeting in Barcelona in March 2019 to further refine the wording and make sure that both the text and visual choices reflect the subtext of the ideas expressed by network members during the debates. We also asked for feedback on the text and main ideas from the participants attending our Final Conference in Barcelona, who had a background in social services, academia and politics. The general feedback was that the



Manifesto must be supported by a set of examples, some actions that can contextualize the identified ideas. This is why, the consolidated version of the URBinclusion Manifesto that we are now publishing, features a set of examples and further references to solutions implemented during the network activities, and demonstrating their effectiveness to respond to the initial challenges.

## 4. Using the manifesto

As our manifesto is spread around, our hope is that it is going to be a living document, not only for the nine cities, which contributed to create it, but for many others. It can act as a quick verification tool to check if small or more complex actions stay true to principles or as a way to engage with cities about their experiences in combating urban poverty.

So - you can find [here](#) a version of the Manifesto and example in printable format.

See [here](#) short videos on some of the examples referenced by our Manifesto.

And drop us a line to Lluís Torrens [ltorrens@bcn.cat](mailto:ltorrens@bcn.cat) and Sebastià Riutort [sriutort@ext.bcn.cat](mailto:sriutort@ext.bcn.cat) with suggestions or just to share with us if the Manifesto was useful for you and your work.