

SEPTEMBER 2014

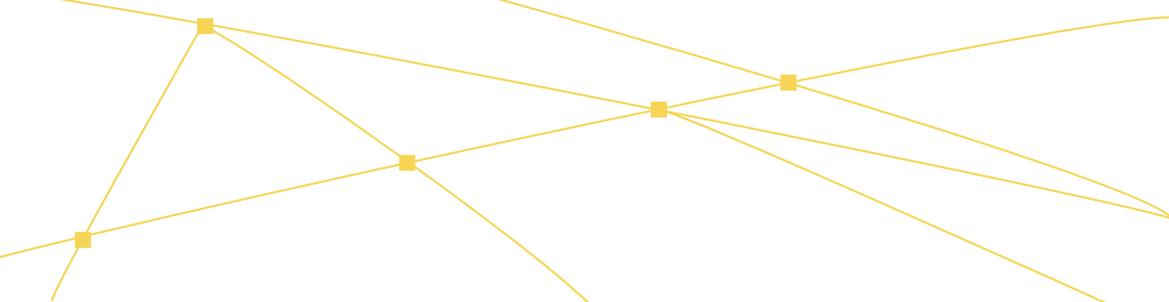
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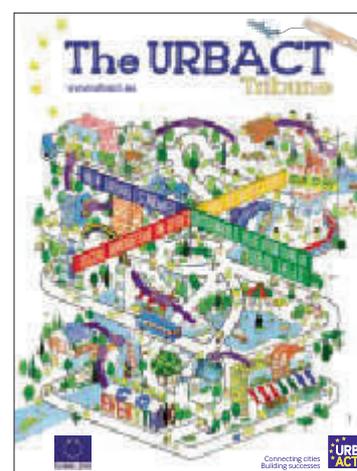
Connecting cities  
Building successes





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by François Jégou and Marcelline Bonneau
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Layout and printing: **bialec**, nancy (France)  
Dépôt légal n° 83861 - Septembre 2014

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# SOCIAL INNOVATION

## WHAT'S BEHIND THE CITY SCENE?

BY FRANÇOIS JEGOU  
AND MARCELLINE BONNEAU

Cities increasingly face multiple and wicked issues and have fewer resources to tackle them.

The traditional governance model struggles to address these issues and its limits reveal the need for a new governance culture. This article comes

from the URBACT workstream “Social innovation in cities” and investigates the way social innovation has been catalysed in some cities together with a governance structural change, based on integrated, participatory and co-production approaches.

### A challenging context

Cities face more and more complex and deep-rooted social, economic and environmental issues. Demographic decline, threats to economic development and competitiveness, growing social polarisation, climate change and the depletion of natural resources are amongst the most striking. At the same time, their finances have also been affected by the crisis, often cited as a *Perfect Storm* of rising needs and declining resources.

Some cities have found that, more and more, they cannot address these issues by doing what they have done in the past through traditional models of governance. The focus around single organisational or agency remits, relying on the deployment of resources over which leaders and managers have direct authority, and the rigidity of this top-down governance models have had their limits exposed. Consequently, there is a growing acknowledgment in many cities that new governance models are required.

As such, social innovation, intended here as new value creation models mainly based on human talents and resources is a means to problem-solving and solutions identification, aligned to the implementation of new governance processes in cities. Its characteristics are **collaboration** and **empowerment** of all involved stakeholders, and the use of **new tools** such as IT and online resources. The previous URBACT workstream on Social innovation and Youth identified that cities need to evolve new services alongside their citizens by becoming catalysts and innovation brokers. That workstream underlined the need for new leadership models and the implementation of appropriate ecosystems supporting social innovation.

Social innovation has indeed been used in some cities worldwide, and includes cases which are now internationally recognised as being effective in trying out new approaches to solving problems. The city of Medellin in Colombia is one of these examples: long known for high inequalities and crime rates, the city became an award-winner for its innovation and urban design. It has transformed its urban and social landscape, the first step of which was the construction of a Metrocable integrating isolated neighbourhoods into the remainder of the city. It has also regenerated some urban areas, recovered public spaces and built cultural and education infrastructures: these are believed to be key to the city's transformation and the enabler of citizens'

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increased participation in urban life. As a result, the city has become safer, less polluted, with less traffic, and greater social inclusion<sup>1</sup>.

Seoul, in South Korea, is another example. Since his election in 2011 (and 2014 re-election), Seoul's mayor Won Soon Park has encouraged citizen participation and an atmosphere of open dialogue: for his initial election campaign he used social media to communicate and listen to the needs of the citizens. As a mayor he developed a multi-channel platform to communicate openly about policy-making processes, enabling citizens to provide feedback on a real-time basis. This involved institutions created for the social activities of the city directly under his office (the Social Innovation Bureau and the Public Communication Bureau). He has also encouraged social enterprises that use innovative methods to tackle social problems, and has expanded collaboration between government, the private sector and civil society.

Through cross-sector innovation, Seoul is involving all stakeholders, for example through:

## Social innovation can be used to effectively address urban issues, with little economic resources and enhanced democratic participation.

- ▶ The Simincheong, located in Seoul City Hall: a “speaker’s corner” for anyone who wants to send a video message to the city administration.
- ▶ The Hope Institute’s civil creative programmes: where citizens’ ideas are turned into policies.
- ▶ The Seoul Innovation Planning Division: to showcase initiatives of social innovation in cities around the world and research how to apply them in the local context.

This approach has enabled the city to create large social achievements in a relatively short time in a large and complex city, while also maximising the city’s resources and budget.

What these two examples show is that social innovation can be used to effectively address urban issues, with little economic resources and enhanced democratic participation.

However, these examples should not hide the fact that many city authorities are still “feeling their way” and trying to adapt their approach to problem solving. Not all cities are confident and comfortable about a governance change and the URBACT programme is playing a key role in relation to this: it fosters exchange of practices for improved sustainable management of cities and provides the baseline for collaboration and the sharing of fresh thinking on common problems. At a time when there are increasing EU resources to support social innovation activity, URBACT’s role is particularly valuable. This workstream is part of this approach.

What lies behind the practices of cities using social innovation? What does that imply in terms of local governance? How do municipal governments adjust their functioning, organisation and culture? What new roles should municipalities assume and which spaces should they create? These are some of the questions we seek to address in this article.

## Engaging administration staff and stakeholders

One way of using social innovation in city governance has been in increasing “participation”. Participation in city governance, indeed, has been promoted for many years to different extents: through consultations or the development of ad hoc activities where administration staff, citizens or stakeholders could feel that they were not only informed but also heard. Some cities have innovated in going beyond simple *participatory* processes towards more elaborated approaches to engage stakeholders.

**Some cities have innovated in going beyond simple *participatory* processes towards more elaborated approaches to engage stakeholders.**



Seoul's Mayor Won Soon Park approach to city governance. © Eddy Adams.

This should first start with the city administration itself. Moving away from a hierarchical decision-making and problem-solving system, some municipalities have opened up the policy process to their staff, outside the strictly political level. They have developed **holistic approaches** and **methodology** in order to ensure that for a given problem, staff can learn from experiences of other sectors, enhance their knowledge, and move from problems to solutions.

This has been the experience of Malmö, in Sweden, in the healthcare and elderly care sectors. Discussions and exchanges brought together civil servants and politicians: the variety of perspectives coming from the different fields of work of participants enriched the dialogue, design and implementation of local policies for elderly. As a result, the working approach has been adopted by other levels of government and the administration of Malmo South is currently running more innovative projects for elderly compared to other city areas.

**Integrated** and **systemic** approaches have also led to learning across sectors. The municipality of Gdansk, in Poland, has been successful in creating a working group defining the agenda for education. When dealing with education and social issues, the municipality acknowledged the need for transversal policy-making: “deprived areas, preparation of pupils and students for adulthood and the job market, the adaptation of schools not only to the highly changing needs of the school-children, but to the whole local community, where inhabitants can find their place and become more active”, as mentioned by Piotr Kowalczyk from the city of Gdansk. As such, an informal think-tank was created 5 years ago: 15 civil servants worked over 2 years on the definition of common values, on converting the social aid into a social development policy and working on a cultural change process to integrate citizens and stakeholders’ perspectives into governance.

This process led to a shift in the integration of citizens in problem solving. Also, in policy terms, education became a top priority for the city from 2012 onwards and some of the members of the think-tank were integrated into the city administration staff.

There are many cities like Gdansk that have involved citizens and stakeholders in the design and implementation of new services. This requires creating new synergies between administration and stakeholders, sharing and benefiting from each others’ experiences,

## URBACT TOGETHER<sup>2</sup> network and co-responsibility of actors

From 2010 to 2013, 8 European cities within the framework of the URBACT TOGETHER network have promoted the idea of co-responsibility of actors (public authorities, companies, associations, citizens, etc.) in order to ensure well-being for all and to avoid situations of exclusion. The network was successful in using a methodology – SPIRAL, developed by the Council of Europe based on material criteria (such as monetary ones) and immaterial (such as attitudes and images and prejudices) criteria to define paths towards the well-being of all<sup>3</sup> – where the service users took responsibility for and helped to shape and organise the service that they themselves use.

During focus groups, participants, coming from all spheres of society, assessed what they considered “well-being” and “ill-being”. Municipalities kept an open-minded approach, allowing ideas to arise instead of pre-defining existing problems and solutions, shedding light on the concerns of citizens, from a multidimensional perspective. The replies served as the basis for pilot actions in each partner city.

Each municipality had a different experience of citizens’ involvement; however, at the end of the project they all presented their approaches to integrating co-responsibility in their future actions, one step further.

In Mulhouse, France, this approach led to a multi-party social contract, whereby families receiving social benefits commit to a programme of activity which they co-designed themselves. In Kavala, Greece, a Social Pharmacy centre was created drawing on the wider engagement of professionals in offering a new type of health service accessible to the broader public. There was a high focus on the poorest sections of the population. A last example is that of Dębica, Poland, where the project consolidated a pre-existing large scale scheme involving citizens through workshops and seminars, which had an impact on the wider development of the town strategy and saw the emergence of public-private partnerships.

as well as cooperating on concrete projects, sharing tasks and responsibilities.

Through **cooperation and co-creation**, and **up to co-responsibility**, a whole new system has come to life in some cities, making a “micro-society” in itself, a working and more sustainable system within the wider society. Furthermore, beyond connecting stakeholders from different and separate arenas, some public authorities have tried to settle relationships between them, at the same time embedding social and environmental values. This has been the aim of the URBACT TOGETHER network which has addressed cities’ challenges from the identification of needs from citizens themselves at the same time empowering them in the implementation of solutions (see box above).

### **Brokering between stakeholders in the city**

In order to ensure an efficient and working integration of all relevant stakeholders in city governance, some cities had **to adapt their role**, and sometimes extend their competencies. In particular, it has been proven crucial not only to bring stakeholders together but

**A broker, ensures the function of mediator between two parties. In a city, it requires organising a complex set of activities, which go beyond the usual practices of the administration.**

also to stimulate relationships and initiate new partnerships. As such, some civil servants have played an active role as “brokers”. As stated in the *How can cities support young people through social innovation?* (URBACT Tribune 2012), the function of the “trusted broker” is pivotal in establishing relationships based on trust, between all stakeholders.

A broker, ensures the function of mediator between two parties. In a city, it requires organising a complex set of activities, which go beyond the usual practices of the administration. One key feature is match-making between stakeholders: civil servants need to identify stakeholders, connect them and ensure that a form of cooperation can arise.





**Working as “Real Food Broker” at the market for regional products, Amersfoort.**  
© Mr. Cor Holtackers

Other features are the need to animate and use specific tools, which requires a proactive role in the field with stakeholders. Ensuring that the brokering role is efficient in turn demands developing specific soft and hard skills (i.e. from empathy to forms of public entrepreneurship), as well as adapting to a new working method (i.e. fostering partnerships without breaking into the expected neutrality of the public sector). Our research indicates that dedicated training in these new competences is crucial.

One of the platforms enabling this brokerage function has been the Local Support

Groups set up within the URBACT programme, where partner cities commit themselves to listening to and liaising with stakeholders, and co-produce solutions towards the generation of more efficient and strategic Local Action Plans (LAP)<sup>4</sup>. As part of the URBACT Sustainable Food in Urban Communities network, the City of Amersfoort went beyond the group’s stakeholders to expand with regular and frequent interactions with citizens and stakeholders, integrating them more actively in city governance and ensuring matchmaking for the development of projects (see box below).

## ***Creating shared spaces and ways to engage and innovate***

In adapting their role to new urban realities, some cities have gone beyond the usual structures for problem-solving, such as meetings, to provide a space for experimentation with innovative solutions. In these cities the administration is not solely responsible for identifying and implementing solutions. While retaining this final responsibility it has created space for other actors to bring new ideas and facilitate their implementation.

One example has been the use of procurements such as competitions, calls and others to orient and stimulate innovation. Not only does this create new opportunities, but it also widens the administration’s service providers. In light of this, some cities have experimented with complementary forms of participative contributions such as competitions. In the case of the city of Barcelona, in Spain, the BCN Open Challenge has sought to improve the efficiency of procurement decisions, and to allow small entrepreneurs to be part of this process and to implement their innovative solutions to various urban issues (see box next page).

Another approach has been to step away from traditional governance building on expertise, planning and forecasting and to seek new and innovative, “out of the box” solutions with the help of user-driven or community-driven innovation specialists such as designers, supporting civil servants directly involved in the process. In this regard, some cities have set up Public Innovation Labs or Public Innovation Places which serve as

### **Amersfoort’s broker role – partner in the URBACT Sustainable Food in Urban Communities<sup>5</sup> network**

The administration of the City of Amersfoort (The Netherlands) has adopted a new governance approach “letting go” more often and favouring the collaboration with citizens and stakeholders over the traditional top-down command and control method. The administration has also given groups of citizens the responsibility to find and implement solutions for some key societal issues such as health care.

One of the goals of the administration is to support city initiatives to get started or scaled up. This is only possible through a systematic matchmaking process between

stakeholders and a strong networking activity: through meetings, attendance at public events and presence within the community such as during local food markets. As such, the administration focuses heavily on connecting initiatives with the government of the city and communicating on the projects.

The city has launched this work on specific topics, such as food, health care and welfare or city maintenance, as well as working transversally on general city governance issues. In the food sector, it has for example a large experience of working

on the accessibility of food in the city, community gardens, natural playing fields and educational gardens, especially enhanced by the Local Support Group on sustainable food.

Through networking and matchmaking, the city ensures that projects arising for the created connections can be implemented in a fully independent way. This results in a better knowledge and integration of all parties in city governance which is also made possible thanks to the reactivity of the municipality when support is needed.

## BCN Open challenge (Barcelona)<sup>6</sup>

A survey amongst 54 global cities<sup>7</sup> show that less than 10% of cities accept unsolicited proposals for new solutions coming from small enterprises.

BCN Open challenge attempts to invert this trend and to guarantee space for small companies to innovate in the city. As an international call, it seeks to procure innovative and sustainable solutions to transform both public services and places in Barcelona. It is organised by the Barcelona city council and a supporting company, Citymart.

Six social issues should be tackled in the proposed solutions: reducing bicycle thefts in the city, empowering support systems to reduce social isolation, monitoring pedestrian flows in the city, tools for digitisation of museum and archive collections, automatic detection and alerts of damaged road surfaces, and empowering local retail through technology.

The prize of the BNC Open Challenge is a direct commitment to contract the six winning solutions.

Through this competition, the city of Barcelona seeks to make the process of procurement decisions more cost-efficient, transparent, and allowing small entrepreneurs to be part of this process and to implement their innovative solutions. It seeks to allow small entrepreneurs to be part of this process and implement their innovative solutions. The winners will be announced by the end of 2014.

## Public labs

The labs seek to create an alternative environment in order to boost the reflection outside of usual boundaries in: setting up an atmosphere of trust and true cooperation, re-interrogating and investigating the classical way of addressing societal challenges, working directly in immersion with users, simulating, testing on the ground and creating prototypes of new solutions, through a trial and error process.

These are far enough from the market and from public institutions to become an “experimentation-based forward-looking zone” and a “do-tank” for traditional public and private institutions. These labs can be focusing on a method or a technology (interdisciplinary teams; design-driven approach, action-research, etc.), on a specific topic (e.g. education, health, youths), in or outside the system, working directly or indirectly, together or in opposition with public authorities, they can be very small or very large (small cell to some dozens of people)<sup>8</sup>.

In those labs, civil servants, supported by interdisciplinary and creative teams, review and test policies, on the basis of bottom-up, usage-based and community centred approaches, with a particular focus on design approaches<sup>9</sup>.

action-research oriented and experimentation-based areas for the exploration of problems and the identification of solutions (see box on public labs).

Some cities have also set up online collaborative platforms linking residents, companies and academics for exchanging ideas. These can also be a space for developing systematic solutions for solving city challenges. The city of York, in the UK, for example, has animated an open innovation platform to generate ideas and solutions in network on social

problems of the city. It is currently piloting the transfer of this approach to other cities of the URBACT Genius: Open network, Tallinn (Estonia), Siracusa (Italy) and San Sebastian (Spain).

The space for experimentation also includes those usually dedicated to economic innovation such as incubators: outside the administration and with limited interference with the way they usually function, resources, skills and expertise are brought together to identify solutions to societal needs.



Public lab. © Strategic Design Scenarios.



Finally, experimentation can also take place in public spaces and open air where a maximum number of citizens can be attained: these can be outside the usual boundaries of organized public or virtual spaces, for example at street markets, during public events or through project visits. In a complex realm of actions, URBACT networks such as “Placemaking” are also designing what they call a “living lab” where end-users can co-create any public place, and partners intend to be flagships of developing urban renewal projects with efficient participatory techniques.

## Conclusion: Towards a new governance culture

Through a few examples we can see that the integration of social innovation implies a **shift from command and control to brokering and engagement** between all players, stimulating social initiatives and creativity within the public sector. In the cases observed here, city governance has become less directive and more participative and co-produces with stakeholders and communities.

This clearly means that some cities’ governance model has been disrupted. Where does this **disruption** come from? It seems that in some cases, the drivers for these changes come from the top: an **explicit leadership** shift seems to be crucial to ignite the process and drive culture change. In other cities the drive is more bottom up, from civil servants themselves or civil society. In any case, this culture change has been enabled with the upcoming of a **new city ecosystem**, creating the space for and re-envisioning the relationships between all actors.

For sure, addressing existing city challenges with the use of social innovation requires a **culture change**: this includes building the capacity of all involved actors, including the development of adequate skills, attitudes, and mentality.

**Leaders need to adjust their strategies**, adopt new positions and act as a “chef d’orchestre”: listening to stakeholders, animating the local governing system, playing the role of interpreters between local players, translating

between different players and cultural languages, raising mutual interests and synergies, and, building a culture of trust.

Leaders should also be ready to **go beyond their comfort zones**, take risks, experiment and be prepared to learn from (unavoidable) mistakes.

This URBACT workstream will investigate further those questions through case studies, chat sessions, meetings and a final report to be published early 2015.

Although it is crucial for each municipality to generate ideas, it is also key to create synergies and mutualise on existing ones. As such, we are keen on sharing with and drawing from experiences from all relevant actors: city administrators, urban planners as well as experts. Our website presents the information the workstream has gathered so far and is (aligned with the principles of social innovation outlined here) a platform open to your contributions<sup>10</sup>. ●

(1) For more information, see URBACT blog on Medellin: <http://www.blog.urbact.eu/2014/04/making-sense-of-medellin/>

(2) <http://urbact.eu/fr/projects/quality-sustainable-living/together/homepage/>

(3) SPIRAL methodology: <https://wikispiral.org>

(4) A specific edition of the URBACT Tribune in August 2011 made an overview and analysis of LSGs and the integrated and co-production journeys, highlighting the benefits for city governance and policy making: [http://urbact.eu/fileadmin/general\\_library/URBACT\\_16\\_08\\_11\\_pre\\_BAT-3.pdf](http://urbact.eu/fileadmin/general_library/URBACT_16_08_11_pre_BAT-3.pdf)

(5) <http://urbact.eu/fr/projects/low-carbon-urban-environments/sustainable-food-in-urban-communities/homepage/>

(6) <http://bcnopenchallenge.org/>

(7) <http://bcnopenchallenge.org/a-model-partnership-new-version/>

(8) *Labs for System Change: deslabos qui veulent changer le système*: <http://blog.la27eregion.fr/Labs-for-System-Change-des-labos>

(9) A network of these Public Innovation Labs has been developed among: MindLab and the city of Copenhagen, MaRS and the city of Toronto, 27e Région in France, The Studio and the city of Dublin, Izone & Public Policy Lab and the city of New York, Innovative SF and the city of San Francisco, Kennisland and the city of Amsterdam, Laboratorio para la ciudad and the city of Mexico, TACSI and the city of Adelaide.

(10) <http://www.sustainable-everyday-project.net/urbact-socialinnovationincities/>

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## → URBACT II PROJECTS

PROJECTS	ISSUES ADDRESSED	LEAD PARTNERS
<b>1<sup>ST</sup> CALL PROJECTS (2008-2011)</b>		
Active A.G.E.	Strategies for cities with an ageing population	Rome - IT
Building Healthy Communities*	Developing indicators and criteria for a healthy sustainable urban development	Torino - IT
CityRegion.Net	Urban sprawl and development of hinterlands	Graz - AT
CoNet	Approaches to strengthening social cohesion in neighbourhoods	Berlin - DE
Creative Clusters	Creative clusters in low density urban areas	Obidos - PT
CTUR	Cruise Traffic and Urban Regeneration of port areas	Naples - IT
EGTC	Sustainable development of cross-border agglomerations	Mission Opérationnelle Transfrontalière - FR
FIN-URB-ACT	Small and medium enterprises and local economic development	Aachen- DE
HerO*	Cultural heritage and urban development	Regensburg - DE
HOPUS	Design coding for sustainable housing	University La Sapienza, Roma - IT
JESSICA 4 Cities	JESSICA and Urban Development Funds	Regional government of Tuscany - IT
Joining Forces	Strategy and governance at city-region scale	Lille Metropole - FR
LC-FACIL	Implementing integrated sustainable urban development according to the Leipzig Charter	Leipzig - DE
LUMASEC	Sustainable land use management	University of Karlsruhe - DE
MILE*	Managing migration and integration at local level	Venice - IT
My Generation	Promoting the positive potential of young people in cities	Rotterdam - NL
NeT-TOPIC	City model for intermediate/peripheral metropolitan cities	L'Hospitalet de Llobregat - ES
Nodus	Spatial planning and urban regeneration	The generalitat of Catalonia - ES
OPENCities*	Opening cities to build-up, attract and retain international human capital	Belfast - UK
REDIS	Science districts and urban development	Magdeburg - DE
RegGov*	Integrated policies and financial planning for sustainable regeneration of deprived areas	Duisburg - DE
REPAIR	Regeneration of abandoned military sites	Medway - UK
RUnUP	Strengthening potential of urban poles with triple helix partnerships	Gateshead - UK
SUITE	Sustainable housing provision	Santiago de Compostela - ES
UNIC*	Promoting innovation in the ceramics sector	Limoges - FR
URBAMECO*	Integrated sustainable regeneration of deprived urban areas	Grand Lyon - FR
Urban N.O.S.E.	Urban incubators for social enterprises	Gela - IT
WEED	Promoting entrepreneurship for women	Celje - SI
<b>2<sup>ND</sup> CALL PROJECTS (2009-2012)</b>		
Active Travel Network	Promoting walking and cycling in small and medium-sized cities	Weiz - AT
CASH*	Sustainable and affordable energy efficient housing	Echirolles- FR
ESIMeC	Economic strategies and innovation in medium-sized cities	Basingstoke and Deane - UK
EVUE	Electric Vehicles in Urban Europe	Westminster - UK
LINKS	Improving the attractiveness and quality of life in old historical centres	Bayonne - FR
OP-ACT	Strategic positioning of small and medium-sized cities facing demographic changes	Leoben - AT
Roma-Net*	Integration of the Roma population in European cities	Budapest - HU
SURE	Socio-economic methods for urban rehabilitation in deprived urban areas	Eger - HU
TOGETHER	Developing co-responsibility for social inclusion and well-being of residents in European cities	Mulhouse - FR
<b>3<sup>RD</sup> CALL PROJECTS (2012-2015)</b>		
4D Cities	Promoting innovation in the health sector	Igualada - ES
CityLogo	Innovative city brand management	Utrecht - NL
Creative SpIN	Cultural and Creative Industries	Birmingham - UK
CSI Europe	Role of financial instruments (Jessica Urban Development Fund) in efficient planning	Manchester - UK
ENTER.HUB	Railway hubs/multimodal interfaces of regional relevance in medium sized cities	Reggio Emilia - IT
EUniverCities	Partnerships between cities and universities for urban development	Delft - NL
Jobtown	Local partnerships for youth employment opportunities	Cesena - IT
My Generation at Work	Youth employment with focus on enterprising skills and attitudes	Rotterdam - NL
PREVENT	Involving parents in the prevention of early school leaving	Nantes - FR
RE-Block	Renewing high-rise blocks for cohesive and green neighbourhoods	Budapest XVIII District - HU
Sustainable Food in Urban Communities	Developing low-carbon and resource-efficient urban food systems	Brussels Capital - BE
URBACT Markets	Local markets as drivers for local economic development	Barcelona - ES
USEACT	Re-utilizing existing locations to avoid land consumption	Naples - IT
USER	Involving users and inhabitants in urban sustainable planning	Agglomeration Grenoble Alpes Metropole - FR
WOOD FOOTPRINT	Local economic development through the (re)use of brownfield and buildings of the wood furniture sector	Paços de Ferreira - PT
<b>PILOT PROJECTS (2013-2015)</b>		
Diet for a Green Planet	Cooperation to align eating habits for an ecologically sustainable development	Södertälje - SE
ESIMeC II	Economic strategies and innovation in medium sized cities	Basingstoke and Deane - UK
EVUE II	Electric Vehicles in Urban Europe	Westminster - UK
Gastronomic Cities	Promoting gastronomy as a key urban development	Burgos - ES
Genius: Open	Creating innovative solutions to city challenges via an on-line collaborative platform	York - UK
Healthy Ageing	Cities' action for an active and healthy ageing	Udine - IT
PlaceMaking 4 Cities	Useful public spaces instead of nice public spaces	Dún Laoghaire Rathdown County Council - IE
Roma-Net II	Integration of Roma populations	Budapest - HU
TUTUR	Temporary use as a tool for urban regeneration	Rome - IT

\*Fast Track Label

**URBACT is a European exchange and learning programme promoting integrated sustainable urban development.**

**It enables cities to work together to develop solutions to major urban challenges, reaffirming the key role they play in facing increasingly complex societal changes. URBACT helps cities to develop pragmatic solutions that are new and sustainable, and that integrate economic, social and environmental dimensions. It enables cities to share good practices and lessons learned with all professionals involved in urban policy throughout Europe. URBACT II is 500 different sized cities and their Local Support Groups, 56 projects, 29 countries, and 7,000 active stakeholders coming equally from Convergence and Competitiveness areas. URBACT is jointly financed by ERDF and the Member States.**

**[www.urbact.eu](http://www.urbact.eu)**



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