



The URBINCLUSION Hints and Tips

by Anamaria Vrabie and Lorenzo Tripodi



EUROPEAN UNION
European Regional Development Fund

Table of Contents

1. Introduction 3

2. Keep the integrated approach realistic in terms of administrative and legal processes of public administration 3

3. Design around the knowledge that the community can offer..... 3

4. Design your process and impact evaluation from the beginning. 3

5. Invest time, patience and trust for collective decision-making between stakeholders from public administration, academia, business and civil society. 4

6. Take ownership that making different departments of the public administration collaborate is a full-time job. 4

7. Create contexts where neighbours can support each other. 4

8. Prepare for the mistrust other stakeholders have in authorities. 4

9. Invest in capacity building for experts in community organizing and facilitators. 4

1. Introduction

This document contains reflections of the URBinclusion partners about key aspects for developing integrated and sustainable co-creation practices to combating urban poverty. The following collections of hints and tips stems from the implementation experience of each partner during the URBinclusion network implementation and it is meant to support other cities practitioners going beyond lessons learned such as "next time we have to better coordinate ourselves". This section should be consulted in conjunction with the URBinclusion Manifesto and its example of practices.

2. Keep the integrated approach realistic in terms of administrative and legal processes of public administration

Try to anticipate as much as possible what synergies different interventions or projects might generate and organize a steering committee of different departments that can coordinate their procurement, administrative and legal processes. Otherwise, even though during implementation the synergies between projects become clear and they could benefit from an improved coordination, it is oftentimes too late to change contractual conditions or funds that have already been disbursed. In order to do so, a shared vision of the change that is envisioned is crucial. In this way, different agents can find a common frame for action and get clarity of their individual roles and shared responsibilities.

3. Design around the knowledge that the community can offer

It is important to recognize the actors already working at local level – being them residents or professionals offering socio-economical or cultural activities - and actively involve them in the design and implementation of actions and interventions. The intelligence that a community already has in place for making possible its daily existence is a unique resource and it should be viewed as a foundation stone for any community interventions.

4. Design your process and impact evaluation from the beginning

Ask yourself what you want to know; then, design the indicators and data collection systems. Do not be afraid to propose qualitative indicators that would probably better capture the change you want to achieve through the project. Avoid to leave this process at the end of the projects, as in most cases all stakeholders will be too tired to actively engage in the development of an effective evaluation tool and time won't be on your side. Moreover, if this process is not done at the beginning, it is difficult to monitor progress or to make the case of a different methodology for impact evaluation. Remember that a thorough process and impact evaluation can be the foundation of change happening long-term: it can provide evidence for what works and can positively influence changes into public policy and large funding programmes designs.

5. Invest time, patience and trust for collective decision-making between stakeholders from public administration, academia, business and civil society

Use the URBACT Local Groups (ULG) methodology or any other methodology promoting multi-stakeholder groups (living labs, innovation labs, advisory boards, etc.) to consolidate the practice of collective decision-making between stakeholders from public administration, academia, business and civil society. We find that any complex integrated urban development question and processes involving the development and implementation of a local action plan has generated stronger results and positive spill-overs when it benefitted from an ULG approach. Try not to be disappointed by stakeholders losing interest and motivation in the process, resiliency is key for building trust in what a community can achieve together.

6. Take ownership that making different departments of the public administration collaborate is a full-time job

Prepare to face difficulties for making different departments within a local authority effectively collaborate. Systemic changes are always welcomed, especially in governance structure to allow a diverse team to work across departments and in an agile manner. When these are not possible, it is important to allocate enough resources for this effort, as it really amounts to a full-time job, and to offer recognition and support to the ones that take up this difficult task.

7. Create contexts where neighbours can support each other

Take into consideration how to design contexts where residents can be generous and caring. Whenever we managed to create such opportunities (tours done by residents, community gardens, community action days, etc.), we were surprised of the amazing resources of time and creativity that people contributed, in spite of the challenges they were facing on a daily basis.

8. Prepare for the mistrust other stakeholders have in authorities

It is important to acknowledge there are significant differences in Europe between agents that people trust. In some communities, residents rely to a large extent to family members for solutions to various socio-economic challenges, rather than asking for support from public authorities. Be prepared for the mistrust stakeholders will have in a public authority leading a participatory process for integrated urban development. This situation has causes that go beyond your project and interventions, and they are rooted to a past background sometimes unknown to both public authorities and residents. Try to create a present experience that is aligned with your values and principles of action.

9. Invest in capacity building for experts in community organizing and facilitators

Support the learning and training of interdisciplinary local experts that can support processes of community organizing. In the absence of talented professionals locally, many processes will be negatively affected by lack of capacity for delivering the desired changes and principles of intervention.