UIA | URBAN INNOVATIVE ACTIONS

The Urban Lab of Europe !

The U-RLP Project Journal N° 4

*Project led by the **City of Utrecht***

INTEGRATION OF MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES

PLAN EINSTEIN #URLP

The U-RLP Project

The **U-RLP** project seeks to capitalise asylum seeker's entrepreneurial skills. Starting before asylum status is granted, the activities of the "launch pad" will enhance the entrepreneurial skills of the refugees who will remain in the Netherlands but also of those who will return to their country of origin. Within an existing emergency shelter, the project will combine community housing, learning activities as well as incubator and work spaces. Targeting the asylum seekers but also local young NEETs (not in Education, Employment or Training), who represent 20% of the neighbourhood population, the project's ambition is to establish solid bridges within the community. International entrepreneurship training, business language courses, peer to peer coaching and internships in local businesses will be offered to target groups. Special attention will be given to post traumatic stress with the experimentation of innovative tools to reframe refugees broken narratives, encouraging resilience, and building confidence for entrepreneurship.

Partnership:

- Gemeente Utrecht

- Socius Wonen – SME

- Universiteit Utrecht - School of Economics (U.S.E.) and Centre for Entrepreneurship (UtrechtCE).

- Stichting Volksuniversiteit Utrecht - Division of English courses

- Social Impact Factory – NGO

- Vluchtelingenwerk Midden-Nederland – NGO

- University of Oxford - Centre on Migration, Policy and Society

- Roehampton University

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1. Executive Summary

Throughout the past months, activities of the project have begun to be implemented in the Haydn centre, an achievement that should be considered a success indicator of the project but that is not free of complexities. Training courses have started as well, generating new activities and events that will enrich the existing offer. It is important to highlight the involvement of actors linked to the Overvecht centre, asylum seekers, youngsters and neighbours in this new phase. Some have helped to collaborate in the redecoration of the new centre, others have offered new training activities, and some have even directly begun to mobilize, such as the Radio Einstein team.

At the moment, activities take place in an attic that has been rented by the city on the second floor. Despite the enthusiasm and the number of actors that are showing interest in participating in the project's new context, there are still some key issues to be negotiated in order to know what the final implementation of the project will be like in this centre.

The negotiations with COA to adapt the project to the new context are complex. Although the experience of collaboration in the Overvecht centre has been positive, the (physical) conditions and role of the actors in this new case are different, influencing how decisions are taken. Currently, the young people of SOCIUS do not reside in the centre, and there is no open space in the entrance to create a meeting space that facilitates relations between residents and neighbours. This means that there are aspects of the project that must continue to be debated in order to find the best solution. This is undoubtedly the main challenge now, along with the need to adapt the approach and activities to quite a different context. A final but crucial point to keep in mind is the political and social climate marked by the increase in populist anti-immigration discourse, which, much like in other European countries, is most prominent at the national level. Consequently, managing perceptions and promoting alternative narratives should be incorporated as a dimension that is essential for the long-term success of the project.

2. Progress made over the last months

From October 2018 to the present, project activities have started being implemented in the Haydn centre, and work has been done to adapt them to the new context. Currently, activities take place in the attic that the City has rented on the second floor of the Centre for Asylum Seeker's building.

The attic space has been redecorated to make it more comfortable to carry out the activities, since previously it was a completely open space for office work.

It is important to highlight that in the task of adapting the space, residents of the Overvecht neighbourhood and other volunteers have collaborated, including youth that were part of SOCIUS.

The English and entrepreneurship training courses began in January 2019, and although at first participants were mostly refugees, little by little some neighbours also started to attend. However, it is expected to be a process that understandably takes time. Some of the former residents of the Overvecht centre are continuing the courses at the Haydn centre.

Some social interactions between refugees and neighbours are beginning to be generated, a key objective that is part of the DNA of the project. In addition, the city has begun to organize parallel activities in the attic so that while the mothers are attending the courses, the children are drawing or doing other playful activities. A corner space for coffee has also been created.

Regarding the different actors involved, both the Refugee Council and Welcome Utrecht have their own offices in the attic. This change is positive, as they did not have actual sight on the classes in action in the previous centre. In the new space, the walls are made of glass, creating much more contact between refugees, teachers and students. In addition, the Social Impact Factory is adding to this by using flexible workspaces very close to the kitchen, favouring the creation of a sense of community. Another aspect to note is that the Radio Einstein team has also been relocated to the new space.

New activities have also begun to arise as a result of the demands and suggestions from participants. For example, a group of designers working in the neighbourhood have a meeting space with refugees interested in design and want to involve them in the redecoration of the centre's open meeting space, as was done in Overvecht through the SIF project co-creating 'Coffee of the World'.

This is undoubtedly a very positive indicator of how the project is beginning to settle in this space, an example being the case of two Overvecht people (an asylum seeker and a neighbour who are from Syria and Yemen) who have proposed to offer IT courses in order to give back some of what they have obtained from the project.

A crucial factor during this phase is to work on the coordination between the different actors involved in the project. In this sense, the Social Impact Factory has taken up a leadership role by organizing regular meetings between all the stakeholders involved. These meetings are allowing the creation of a shared vision, a sense of team and a very favourable atmosphere that is valued in a very positive way.

The Social Impact Factory is also promoting new activities and researching what type of events or workshops would best match the new group of people at the Haydnlaan. SIF will continue teaching the inclusive groups how to use "LinkedIn" or update their CV, as well as hosting

a business program by a company through which students from the entrepreneurship courses will obtain their certificate and participate in a final event.

Welcome Utrecht are also promoting new activities, such as the design of new specific courses that have a more technical-professional nature.

3. Key current challenges

The key challenges of this stage are closely related to the complexity of adapting the project to a new context.

3.1. Negotiations with COA to adapt the project to the new context

As we pointed out in the previous journal, the decision to adapt the focus of the project to another centre of the city after the closure of the one in Overvecht should be considered as a positive change. It shows that the project has had impact by influencing the reception policies of asylum seekers, both at the municipal and state levels.

However, certain circumstances make it necessary to adapt the project to quite a different context. A first point is that the new location is situated in a different neighbourhood, with different characteristics compared to the Overvecht area. Other examples include the physical structure of the building and the fact that the profile of asylum seekers is different from those in Overvecht, resulting in other residents.

Another important point is that the centre in Haydn is owned by COA. This brought a change in the relationship with COA resulting in negotiations with them on how the project should be adapted and what role and responsibility each actor has. In this sense, the main challenge is the need to reach an agreement that satisfies everyone in a multi-level governance construct.

Regarding the previous journal, progress has been made on some issues, but there are still several key aspects that are important, and should therefore be addressed in the coming weeks and months.

Meeting spaces

A pending issue is the creation of an open meeting space at the entrance of the building, apart from the space currently existing in the attic. The COA considers that there are some circumstances that differentiate this centre from that of the one in Overvecht, including the profile of asylum seekers, making it difficult to create this open space. For its part, the project team considers it crucial that this space be open and designed through a participatory process as was done in Overvecht, so as to foster relationships and a sense of community among asylum seekers, youngsters and neighbours. Some details, such as being able to offer free coffee in this space, are considered vital to generate this sense of community. At this moment COA has not yet renovated that part of the premises and it is not sure if an arrangement can be reached that may combine the control and security criteria of the COA, as well as the will of the City to promote an open space that favours relationships and participation. These factors might seem small, but the experience in the previous center has shown the Project team that they can have a great impact in the atmosphere and success of the approach.

Another important space is the square in front of the centre, which is currently being used as a parking lot. The intention is to reform it to make it a space for citizen use, especially designed for children. If this is done, activities can be developed that would facilitate relationships and attract more neighbours, as was the case in Overvecht. There is a consensus with COA in regards to this matter, although it is not clear when the reforms would begin to be carried out.

The activities

The good news is that the availability of the budget has been confirmed in order to be able to continue with the training activities, at least until October 2019. However, there are still some details to agree upon related to the responsibilities and competences of the different actors. COA considers that it should have a much more decisive role in comparison with the Overvecht centre, since it is the owner and holds responsibility for the management of the centre.

Initially, COA considered that the work of referring refugees and neighbours to training courses was sole part of their responsibility. However, after the first few experiences, it was agreed that this was not that simple and that they would need to share this responsibility with the Refugee Council. It is a good example of how agreements should be reached, although on other matters negotiations are still far from being realized.

Young people of SOCIUS

Undoubtedly, one of the main principles of the project's approach is co-housing, so that young people from the city live in the same building as asylum seekers and get involved in the organization of activities. This generates spontaneous support relationships and collaboration among residents. It is one of the most relevant issues that still undergoing the process of reaching an agreement with COA. At the moment, it does not seem like something will be specified in the short term.

The future of negotiations

The success of the implementation of the project in this new phase will largely depend on the outcome of these negotiations, in which various issues are mixed and are not exempt from an emotional component. The actors must find a new balance that fits the features of the new premises. It is important to work on building trust based on common elements in order to reach a satisfactory agreement for both parties. Basically, the main complexity lies in the fact that the actors have different views on how to handle the reception of asylum seekers. On the one hand, it is of a considerable value that COA has made an effort to change some aspects of its reception policy, incorporating elements of the most social and inclusive approach defended by the City. On the other hand, there is a concern that potential concessions could jeopardize the very essence of the project. This is a complex equilibrium that must be taken into account.

Given this situation, some ideas were proposed at the past partnership meeting of the project to facilitate the negotiation process. For example, the possibility of having the help of an external expert who identifies the common aspects and helps to reinforce trust between parties was raised. It is also planned to request a policy paper from the research and evaluation team so that they can contribute with their vision on what aspects of the project it is important to maintain based on the results they obtained.

Another line of work is to generate agreements and trust through bottom-up processes, such as coordination meetings attended by social workers of COA, where there are many areas of agreement and a good working atmosphere. Finally, it is also important to highlight the responsibility of politicians in this process, and taking into account that COA is also implementing similar projects in three other Dutch cities, it is no longer an issue that affects just the city of Utrecht.

3.2. The political and social context

In the Senate elections held on March 21st, the winner was the Forum for Democracy party (FVD) led by the far-right Thierry Baudet. It obtained 13 senators, exceeding the liberal party of the country's Prime Minister Mark Rutte by one. The current government coalition has lost the majority in the Senate making governance complicated, as it is essential that the majority of the Senate approve the bills.

This result, occurring two months before European elections, confirms the trend (in many European countries) of the rise of support for populist parties pushing forward an anti-immigration discourse. This reality, obviously, does not favour refugee reception policies based on a more social and inclusive approach, and it is not unlikely that this social climate could affect the project.

In this regard, various rumours have recently been identified among the population, which for example, consider that it is no longer necessary to receive more refugees since the situation in Syria and Eritrea has improved.

Precisely, one of the decisions that the project team has taken is to promote some training activities based on the anti-rumours approach. This strategy, which was promoted in Barcelona and has been implemented in more than 25 cities, has the objective of questioning the prejudices and false rumours related to immigration and socio-cultural diversity in general. Working on the dimension of perceptions and negative narratives about immigration and refugees is without doubt one of the great challenges of the present.

4. Analysis of the seven challenges

4.1. Leadership for implementation

The leadership and political support of the project is a key aspect regarding its success. Changes in the government during the implementation of a project can obviously influence its development. In the case of Utrecht, as a result of the local elections in March 2018 there was a change of the political representative responsible of the project. Some time is always necessary in order to adapt, and attain knowledge of the project as well as of all the actors involved. Precisely a few months after this change, there was a complex situation regarding negotiations with the COA on how to manage the closure of the centre. The new political leader had not been there when the agreements with the COA were negotiated at the beginning of the project, and this obviously influenced somewhat in the decision-making and positioning of the different actors involved. But beyond these logical circumstances as a result of the mentioned changes in government, the change of political leader has not had a relevant impact on the project. Actually, the current deputy mayor is a strong supporter of the project and has consolidated the political leadership and support for the project.

Regarding the technical leadership for the implementation of the project, the balance between a more vertical leadership and a more horizontal one is always complex, but the project's commitment to a very collaborative relationship between the actors is valued quite positively. These more collaborative and participative leaderships require that trust is generated between all partners, and that adjustments be made to the decision-making and management, a process that understandably takes time.

4.2. Public procurement

At the beginning of the project there were some complications regarding the recruitment criteria set by the UIA Initiative, as well as the specific needs of the project. Combining its innovative nature, which requires a lot of flexibility and the need to hire independent experts, with the criteria of the Initiative was not easy. But finally it was possible to find solutions and agreements that allowed these criteria to be adapted without impeding the good development of the project.

4.3. Cross-department working

At the beginning of the project it was pointed out that when a municipality promotes an innovative project, it is not always easy to count on the support and collaboration of the different municipal departments from the beginning. However, for the success and sustainability of the project it is very important to add allies, both internally and externally. These projects require transversal action, and over the last two years there has been a very positive evolution in this regard. Beyond the more formal internal channels to collaborate and share the experience with other departments, we can identify two aspects that have facilitated this process. On the one hand, the impact that the project has had on the media has made it easier for many people

to know the project better and be interested in it. This shows that sometimes a positive impact on the media also has a positive internal impact on the organization. On the other hand, the activity promoted as a "theatre safari" to get to know the project and its surroundings, had a great success in terms of participation, not only among the neighbours but also among many municipal technicians from different areas. This experience, being much more direct and creative than formal meetings, allowed many municipal technicians to approach the project in a positive way and encourage an attitude of respect and collaboration.

4.4. Participative approach

As already mentioned in the leadership section, the participation of partners in the decision-making process and the need to reach agreements has been a constant throughout the project. Betting on a more horizontal management is an ambitious goal that is not free of complexities. The actors need time to get to know each other, build trust and share a common vision. Over time the processes are being adjusted, and the weaknesses and strengths of each actor and of the group itself are being identified. A very clear management has been carried out regarding the times and distribution of tasks within the coordination team of the project, but there has also been a lot of space for each partner to evolve and take responsibility, not only for their specific area, but also for the global project. These approaches take time, and there are new actors involved and a need to rebalance relationships and responsibilities in the new phase. This is one of the great challenges of the present.

4.5. Monitoring & Evaluation

The evaluation of innovative and complex projects like this, that involve different objectives and perspectives, is not easy. In addition, issues such as privacy laws pose certain barriers when collecting some data. On the other hand, there are objectives that can only be assessed well in the long term. Therefore, it would be interesting that apart from the evaluation that can be carried out during the project and at the end, the evolution of these families is evaluated over time (5 years) in order to compare it with other families that have been to other centres in the new phase.

The research team in charge of the project's evaluation has identified some specific challenges during the process:

- Unexpected changes throughout the project in timing of placements and developments in the Project (e.g. delays in full start to project, sudden termination and working with a developing programme)

- Working from an overseas independent research team and managing workloads to thoroughly research the highly complex project.

- Multiple experiences and pathways to evaluate, from different perspectives, and outcomes that in the short-term are fuzzy and not easily captured.

- Reliance on data from multiple partners. Moreover, due to GDPR, they had limited access themselves, causing both additional work for partners as they are reliant on one or two individuals per partner to provide them with data they need. It also causes difficulties in getting the right data, and without knowing

its conditions of production, assessing its strengths and weaknesses.

They have adapted to through the following:

- Flexible approach, mixed-methods and learning orientation: Using a flexible non-experimental evaluation approach and using the evaluation as an opportunity for learning. The value of a 'learning lab' approach where research can feed into ongoing initiatives is vital.

- Relationships: They have had to be quite determined on this aspect, and for the most part developed good working relationships with partners. However, being the evaluators is always a slightly tricky position to manage, as it is their job to be more critical and independent than a supporter role.

- Academic insight: It has been a real benefit to the project evaluation to draw in opportunities for academic feedback on our emerging results through the advisory board's input, bringing together those working on similar topics in other countries (UIA projects and others). This has also happened through academic conferences, joint publication ventures and the invited seminar organised in Utrecht.

4.6. Communication

Achieving a vision and a shared approach among all of the actors involved is a key objective for the success of the project. At the beginning, as in all projects, and especially in those that are innovative and where partners are quite different from each other, this goal is complex. But a shared discourse has been created over time, making it possible to strengthen trust between the different actors and influencing the way in which the project is communicated both internally and externally. The significant positive impact of the project on the media has also reinforced this shared message and a sense of belonging and pride as a collaborative group committed to a collective goal. This learning has been very positive and now we need to see how this will be adjusted to the new context, in a different space and with new actors. Like everything, the change will require time and insurance that will influence communication processes, both between the actors involved and from the outside. Undoubtedly, this is another important challenge of the present and future of the project.

4.7. Upscaling

We have already commented that one of the main challenges of the moment is how the project approach will be adapted to the new centre, and we have seen the complexity of the negotiations between the City and the COA in this regard. It is obvious that the project has already generated a significant impact when its approach is already being adapted to other centres, but it is still early to assess how this expansion occurs. From the outset, it must be assessed as a success that the project's resources have been allocated, independently of those contributed by the UIA program in the first phase, to the adaptation of the project in other centres. Over time it will be possible to better assess how this expansion has worked, if the key principles of the approach have been maintained and the impact it has had in other contexts compared with the initial experience.

5. Learned lessons

The lessons learned during the implementation of the project have been many and it is not the objective of this section to identify them all. But it is important to highlight some that seem more relevant in regards to the strategic perspective, instead of those having to do with the day-to-day management of the project. In this sense, five lessons that cover different areas are highlighted.

5.1. About the approach and methodology of work

Promoting an innovative and complex project based on collaboration between different partners with different experiences, profiles and competences is not easy. But it is precisely from that diversity that wealth is derived, having access to different knowledge and skills to address different issues.

In order to get the opportunity to overcome complexity a variety of necessities are required, and surely the most important of all is time. It takes a while to get to know each other and find the most effective work dynamics, which must evolve and adapt based on trial and error. The flexibility, the dialogue, the creation of different spaces and tools to facilitate collaborative work, the creation of a shared vision, and finally, the empowerment of actors in taking initiative and have a shared communication strategy are some of the elements that facilitate this process.

The bet of the city has been to try to promote a shared management and decision-making space without imposing a hierarchical leadership, and at the same time generate a more organic eco-system in which the different actors must dialogue and find the best strategies for project management. This is not easy and there have been some problems encountered along the way. But over time, a network of actors has been generated and they have been making their own decisions and generating different spaces for communication and exchange. The balance between a more directed and executive management with a more participative and horizontal one is not easy, but from the project coordinating team the experience is valued in a positive way. Nevertheless, it is considered that there has still been a short time to finish adjusting all the pieces.

Undoubtedly this experience will be very useful for the development phase of the project in the new centre, which without the rigidities of the project, will allow greater flexibility and establish relationships with new actors, and at the same time continue to count with the initial partners.

The relationships and the context will be different, but they will continue to rely on a very participative management model which favours shared responsibility as well as creativity, and above all the need to have more time for the pieces to fit together.

5.2. On the inclusive perspective and equality of status

One of the principles of the project's approach has been to encourage the inclusion of asylum seekers from the first day. It is about not wasting time and promoting inclusion processes, regardless of the future resolution of the files of each asylum seeker. This is very important

because normally it is based on the idea that it is not necessary to put efforts on inclusion programs if you do not know whether asylum seekers will finally stay in the country. But experience shows that promoting inclusion during the first months is essential to facilitate the adaptation of people in the medium term. Even for the people who are not granted asylum after the process, it is crucial to take advantage of this time in order to develop capacities and relationships, to know better the environment and to be treated and considered from an equal status. It is an action that brings much more benefits than it does costs. This has to do with another key aspect of the project: the "future free" approach. It starts precisely from the idea that taking advantage of the time by reinforcing or adapting their professional profiles, skills or talents is something that ultimately will not only benefit them but the place where they finally settle.

In the absence of a more in-depth analysis of the final evaluation and impact of the project, it can be affirmed that there are clear indications that show the positive impact of this approach. Asylum seekers who have participated in training courses or in various activities or who have simply shared some moments and meeting spaces with SOCIUS youngsters and neighbours positively value this atmosphere as much more inclusive than other reception centres. Through the experience and challenge of reforming the meeting space of the centre into a world cafe, some asylum seekers recognized that they had felt for the first time more as "neighbours" rather than as refugees. Moreover, they stressed the importance of the feeling of being able to contribute and feel in equal status with the rest.

But a fundamental element of the project's "inclusive" approach is that, to be truly inclusive, it must involve and benefit the group of actors involved and not only the asylum seekers. Therefore, both youngsters and neighbours must perceive that this model also offers opportunities for them. This is what makes the project truly inclusive and this is surely one of the great lessons learned.

Despite the complexities found in the process, as well as those that have been detailed in the previous journals, the need to adjust many things, and having to wait for the final evaluation of the project, it is clear that working on inclusion from the first day is a challenge worth working on. This is a point that should be integrated into the refugee reception policies as a whole.

5.3. On the importance of generating spaces for meeting and interaction

Another key aspect of the project, closely related to the previous one, has been the importance of generating spaces and opportunities for meaningful encounters among asylum seekers, the youngsters who resided in the centre, and neighbours. The most traditional model, which keeps asylum seekers "separated" from society, having hardly any links with the host society, has shown its important weaknesses.

However, this is neither simple nor any is it implied that any kind of relationship is per se positive. In the "contact theories" of social psychology, some criteria are identified to ensure that the contact is really productive. These include the need for equality of status or that the relationship has a cooperative and non-competitive component, and also that there are "connecting" agents that facilitate this interaction.

But it is also part of the idea that it is not always necessary to promote "high intensity" contact, often finding sporadic and less intense encounters to have a significant impact. In fact, many social psychological experiments show a positive impact on people who, without personally having any direct contact, have friends or relatives who have had this type of contact. This has been an important lesson.

In the development of the project, different types and levels of contact have been produced. In some cases asylum seekers and neighbours have shared, not only training spaces, but the promotion of a joint project, gatherings derived from participating in various activities, and the most sporadic interactions in the shared spaces of the centre.

When these "productive interactions" take place, the prejudices and other mental barriers that hinder inclusion are reduced. They allow us to verify a key aspect in breaking stereotypes, which is to visualize the great diversity of profiles within the stereotyped groups, labelled generically as "refugees". They allow the identifying of shared interests, needs or abilities, and generate a sense of shared belonging and a higher level of empathy.

Reducing the tendency of physical and mental segregation of asylum seekers in the host society should be a key objective of host policies. Investing on generating spaces and opportunities for meeting, creating mutual knowledge and collaborative processes is one of the main ways to achieve this. In order to do this, the physical conditions of the space and the generation of an atmosphere that facilitates these encounters are two fundamental elements that must be taken into account. It is not only through close contact that this atmosphere will naturally occur. The final assessment of the project will identify the strengths and weaknesses, and which methods and tools must be adapted to allow the development of spontaneous, creative and collaborative relationships.

We do not believe that it is a coincidence that the centre of Overvecht has had fewer conflictive situations than other centres in which this approach is not implemented. It should not be seen as a coincidence that asylum seekers in this centre begin to use the bicycle to move around the city earlier than in the other centres. This indicator, which at first glance may seem anecdotal, has a much more important and profound meaning than it seems.

5.4. On the need to reformulate the discourse

Unfortunately, in recent years political discourse that considers the arrival of refugees in Europe as a major problem, a burden or a threat has increased and attained the support of more citizens. One of the key objectives of reception policies is not only to work to provide the most effective strategies to favour that reception, but also to reformulate the political and social discourse surrounding them. To put it another way, the management of this specific social perception acquires a fundamental importance for the success of reception policies themselves.

From the beginning, the focus of the project took into account the importance of political discourse surrounding this topic. Adopting a reactive and counter-speech approach is a mistake that has been shown to further polarization against reception policies. The complicated thing is to have the ability, and I would also say that courage, to build a positive and constructive discourse that is capable of putting value on the opportunities of diversity without ignoring the complexities of the process.

Surely, one of the main merits of the project has been to bet on a discourse that does not only focus on the refugees, but on the set of residents in the neighbourhood, emphasizing the opportunities that the centre could provide to them as well. The fact that different trainings and activities are offered, as well as a new space for community dynamization in an environment with a scarcity of services and spaces of relationship has been a strong commitment.

But above all, I would highlight a fundamental fact that does not happen very often, and that is the decision to listen to the neighbours. Many of the people who are opposed to the reception of refugees feel that they are not taken into account, and that governments do not work to cover their needs in areas such as housing, employment or training. Listening and knowing their perceptions and anxieties from the beginning was a necessary exercise to design much more successful project that reduces the rejection attitudes and allows to join allies of civil society. But this must also go hand in hand with the political discourse, the messages that are transferred to the population as a whole and to manage in a coherent and responsible manner the relationship with the media and with social leaders.

On the other hand, the impact on the reformulation of discourse is also determined by the creation of relations between asylum seekers and neighbours, as we have mentioned in the previous point. An example is that of the neighbour who went on television confessing that at first he was very critical of the opening of the centre, but that over time he was getting to know the reality of the centre and took part in some activities. The root of his experience was that he had noticed that his criticisms were not well founded, being a good symbol of what can be achieved when discourse is also based on reality.

However, it is equally important to note the work that is done in the centre as the fact that helps visualizing and disseminating these types of experiences. It is about incorporating the impact on perceptions as one more objective of the policy. Although many neighbours have not gotten to know the centre, the fact that rejection has not increased since its opening, that there have been no conflicting episodes of any relevance, and that there have been numerous news of a rather positive nature in the media should be considered an important success.

Although it has not been easy, and it is necessary to continue deepening the construction of the discourse and how to reach more people, the project has managed to at least open a gap in the negative narratives and promote an alternative more complex and more positive and constructive discourse. The need to continue betting on this path, despite the difficulties, is a great lesson learned.

5.5. On the influence on state policies from the local

Finally, we cannot forget the lesson learned as a consequence of the ability of local policies to influence state policies. One of the factors that allowed many actors to focus on the project was precisely its ability to generate a new discourse and create an image of innovative commitment that could bring good results to the processes of reception of refugees and inclusion in general.

At a time when we still didn't know about the results of the project, COA (the Central Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers in the Netherlands) began to work on adopting the

approach (or rather, part of it) in other centres. From what we know the process is not being easy.

Cities, unlike other levels of government, have a better knowledge of reality on a day-to-day basis, and therefore a greater capacity to act in proximity and generate collaboration networks with different actors that are present in the territory. When an innovative project is able to influence state policies, it can produce logical tensions derived from the different approaches and competences.

Precisely the lessons learned highlighted in the previous points are considered key aspects of the success of the project. If an adaptation of the approach in other contexts does not take these lessons into account, the very focus of the project may be questioned. On the other hand, the fact that state policies are open to incorporate elements of the project's approach, especially the dimension that bets for inclusion, is undoubtedly good news.

One of the main lessons learned is that adapting this process in other contexts and involving the city, maintaining the key elements of the approach, is difficult and dependent on many factors. However, it is certainly worth working on, putting an emphasis on dialogue and trying to reach agreements based on a shared diagnosis and on the common elements that are shared. In this sense, the involvement and commitment of politicians must play an important role to defend the incorporation of those elements of the project that are considered basic to its success.

6. Conclusion

The U-RLP project has been implemented in a very specific context and has had to address various complexities, as always in this type of innovative projects. The closure of the centre earlier than planned and the opportunity to adapt the project approach in another centre, in a different context and also with a different relationship between key actors, are marking the final phase of the project under the framework of the UIA program. The next journal will be the last and we will be able to better review the overall evolution of the project as well as the management that has been done of the key main challenges and the main lessons learned, which we have already pointed out initially in this journal.

Although the activities planned in the UIA project will be finished, it will be necessary and useful to assess how the project's implementation is going in the new centre. The replicability of these projects is an important issue and although the context and role of the actors are different, the analysis of this first experience of adaptation of the model will be very interesting to better assess the mid and long-term impact of the project.

Urban Innovative Actions (UIA) is an Initiative of the European Union that provides urban areas throughout Europe with resources to test new and unproven solutions to address urban challenges. Based on article 8 of ERDF, the Initiative has a total ERDF budget of EUR 372 million for 2014-2020.

UIA projects will produce a wealth of knowledge stemming from the implementation of the innovative solutions for sustainable urban development that are of interest for city practitioners and stakeholders across the EU. This journal is a paper written by a UIA Expert that captures and disseminates the lessons learnt from the project implementation and the good practices identified. The journals will be structured around the main challenges of implementation identified and faced at local level by UIA projects. They will be published on a regular basis on the UIA website.

Urban Innovative Actions

Les Arcuriales
45D rue de Tournai
F- 59000 Lille

+33 (0)3 61 76 59 34
info@uia-initiative.eu
www.uia-initiative.eu

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