

Quarterly Report 01

Stories and updates from U.R IMPACT Network



In this report we explore what Impact Evaluation means for cities, we explore some valuable tools and we share our experience during our Transnational meeting in Murcia

March 2024



NETWORK OVERVIEW

U.R. Impact, co-funded by the URBACT IV European program, is spearheaded by the Municipality of Cinisello Balsamo. Its primary aim is to craft an Integrated Action Plan assessing the societal impact of urban revitalisation initiatives.

Emphasising the significance of social impact and community engagement, this project seeks to reconceptualise urban renewal endeavours. This entails reorienting these actions to prioritise the welfare of citizens—addressing their social, economic, and environmental well-being at the core of these transformative processes. Additionally, by fostering a greater sense of belonging and encouraging civic involvement, the initiative aims to enhance community participation in these efforts.

Three key components for impact

The network core object is to learn and implement social impact management in their cities. the methodology around this aim is divided into three main elements:

Intentionality puts impact evaluation ex-ante, allowing planning designing for impact and includes constant monitoring and replanning

Additionality Taking into account various areas and stakeholders involved in the process.

Measurability Collecting valuable data and showcasing the impact.

City identity and key themes

Across the ten diverse cities engaged in this transformational journey, several key themes emerge, reflecting common challenges, innovative approaches, and distinctive characteristics intrinsic to each location.

Crafting a unique identity and safeguarding local heritage hold utmost significance for all U.R IMPACT cities. While some aim to establish a distinct identity and allure to draw in new permanent residents, others prioritise enhancing the sense of place for current inhabitants.

Social Inclusion	Sustainable Tourism
Brain drain and youth policy	Heritage and innovation
Governance models	Local commerce and proximity economy

How good is your Additionality?

When we speak about Additionality in relation to impact, we think about giving voice to all stakeholders. It is important, **before we even start to measure or plan for impact, that we listen to citizens, local organisations, future generations, investors and more.**

The public administration can promote participatory planning processes, which involve actively engaging stakeholders in decision-making related to urban regeneration. This can be achieved through mechanisms such as public consultations, community workshops, and participatory design exercises. By facilitating inclusive and bottom-up participatory practices, the public administration ensures that the voices and aspirations of local residents are incorporated into the planning and implementation of regeneration projects. This approach promotes community ownership, fosters social cohesion, and increases the likelihood of achieving positive social impacts.

In U.R Impact we used the adapted participatory ladder created by Christophe Gouache - (Strategic Design Scenario) starting from Arnstein's Ladder of Participation (1969). Each city of the network self evaluated its additionality using a simple self evaluation tool used during an online session.

Good practices within the network

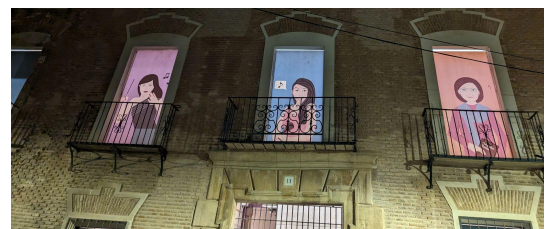
One night at the market - Mertola A participatory design initiative actively involving the community. People were invited to join communal dinners at the local market, creating convivial moments of social gathering. This occasion not only provided the opportunity to participate in enjoyable moments but also served as a platform for discussions and listening to the changes and needs of the city.



The Corner Shop - Broumov In order to revitalise the downtown area, the local ONG represented in the ULG has leased a shop, giving citizens the opportunity to use it for activities of their choice. In only 3 months, more than 50 different activities were organised and held in the space.



Urban DNA and the birth of Urban Acupuncture Therapy Citizen engagement programs, part of Urbact Interactive City project, involve target neighbours interactively online and offline, fostering dialogue and developing urban solutions based on local needs.



MEASURABILITY

Preparing to Measure

The public administration plays a crucial role in conducting social impact assessments as part of urban regeneration processes. **Social impact assessment involves systematically evaluating the potential social consequences of regeneration projects before they are implemented.** The public administration can lead this assessment process by defining relevant social indicators, collecting data, and involving experts in analysing the potential social impacts. By conducting comprehensive social impact assessments, the public administration gains insights into the potential positive and negative effects of regeneration initiatives, enabling evidence-based decision-making and the implementation of mitigation measures to enhance social sustainability.

To Start this process, we invited the ad-hoc Expert Lidia Gryszkiewicz to follow the work of the network and conduct a workshop. During our meeting in Murcia we started deep diving into impact evaluation. The first day workshop focused on refining the theory of change for each of the 10 cities. **A theory of change is a logic model that defines and sets the long term impact that one inspires to, as the answer for a specific challenge. It then puts In order resources, actions, outputs and outcomes that would lead to the impact.** The workshop aimed at verifying and confirming both the challenge and the impact. The partners used different tools to do that and can now use the tools with their local groups back home. The definition of the starting and end point and the conformation of the focus, also with local stakeholders is a crucial part for a successful impact measurement. The next phase involves exploring different indicators and conducting individual training sessions for our partners.



Planning for impact and the challenges of integration

Delivering more integrated approaches to sustainable urban development is a key objective of the URBACT programme and a central focus of the Action Planning networks. Therefore, it is essential to have a good understanding of what we mean by 'integrated' urban development and how this understanding can be applied in action planning. URBACT suggests 12 ways of integration, ranging from stakeholder involvement in planning and implementation to territorial integration, sustainable integration, vertical, and horizontal integration.

Evaluating integration involves assessing how effectively different elements are combined and aligned within the planning process. In the second methodological workshop held in Murcia, we had discussions on these topics to equip U.R. Impact partners with the necessary skills to comprehend integration. After an introductory presentation, cities conducted self-evaluations to identify their integration needs and capacities. Subsequently, in small groups, cities engaged in peer reviews of the initial sections of each other's plans.

A peer review tool was employed to evaluate the completeness, clarity, and focus of each city's plan section. This collaborative approach not only ensures the quality of individual plans but also fosters mutual understanding among cities and encourages self-reflection. Continuing these peer reviews will further enhance understanding among cities and promote continuous improvement in their planning processes. Establishing a strong baseline for each plan involves thorough self-assessment and constructive feedback from peers, laying the groundwork for effective integrated action.



\\ OVERVIEW //
CITY CHALLENGES


how might we...

Enhance economic growth to attract people to the city and support local retail?

Hannut

Use the unused area next to the city centre to transform it into a green area and create more space to live and work?

Kamza

Keep the attractiveness of the school to maintain neighbourhood vitality and promote a sense of community?

Cinisello Balsamo

Increase the attractiveness of the city centre to bring people back and restore a sense of community without losing the original character?

Mertola

Communicate better with garage owners to free more space and create more green areas?

Targu Frumos

Develop a governance model to deliver a sustainable project and serve the needs of the community into the future?

Longoford

Reverberate the north and south of the city to rebalance economical and social conditions and break the ecological barriers created by the river and the train rail?

Murcia

Improve communication and knowledge to empower active community members to create a stronger and more connected community working on common goals?

Bovec

Involve youth in creating a city future vision to increase the attractiveness of the city and increase the number of young people coming back to live here after university?

Broumov

Make the city centre more attractive for citizens to encourage people to spend their time there and boost the entrepreneurship in that area?

Bielsko Biała

MURCIA

A city in constant regeneration



Our transnational meeting in Murcia, allowed us to witness first hand the transformative changes within the city over the past years reaffirms the power of integrated planning for inclusive and sustainable urban development.

The revitalisation of the Segura river area has not only provided citizens with more green pedestrian spaces but has also fostered better connectivity between the city centre and the riverfront. Additionally, the ongoing "South Connection" project, sparked by citizen activism, is breaking down physical and social barriers by relocating railways underground, fostering unity and inclusion.

Prioritising social impact in urban development lies at the heart of our network's mission, and Murcia's initiatives serve as a compelling pilot case. Beyond the creation of green spaces, the ultimate measure of success lies in whether citizens experience enhanced quality of life, well-being, and inclusivity.



MURCIA RÍO PROJECT

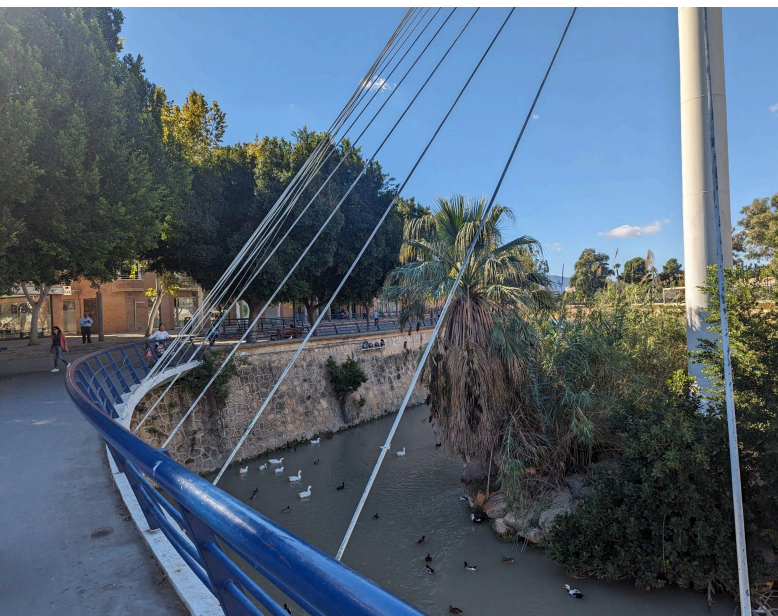
Murcia River is one of the strategic initiatives driving the revitalization of the Segura River environment as it passes through the urban centre, by creating a large green “lung” for the use of all Murcian citizens.

The Segura River, which is historically another “barrier” within the city, will regain its central role with the development of the plan for the recovery, protection, and conservation of the orchard and the Murcia River project, ceasing to be a physical barrier that has historically divided the city. **Murcia Río Project is based on the maintenance and care of the Segura River as it passes through the city and aims to enhance the relationship between citizens and their river, the origin of the city and its orchard, and as a central axis of the municipality.**

To achieve this, the overall programme has been divided into several major actions:

- landscape and natural recovery of the riverbed as it passes through the municipality;
- recovery of meanders, parks, and gardens;
- naturalised adaptation of the riverbed;
- lighting and access to the riverbed;
- implementation of the bike lane
- cultural spaces;

The social and environmental recovery project Murcia River includes the Alameda de las Cuatro Piedras, the Alameda del Malecón, integrated into it along with the already opened riverbank bike lane, intelligent lighting of the riverbed installed along its urban stretch, the right and left riverbanks, the Riverside Walk, and the Visitor Centre of La Contraportada; as well as the projects of the River Terraces and the Urban Park Murcia Rive’.



MURCIA SOUTH CONNECTION

The South Connection project in Murcia is poised to bring about a significant transformation by reorienting the city's focus towards the southern regions. This project is designed to not only reshape the urban landscape but also enhance mobility and civic engagement. In practical terms, the South Connection project will serve as a mobility hub, linking Murcia on multiple levels:

- Connectivity with the rest of Spain will be enhanced through a new train station featuring high-speed rail, suburban, regional, and long-distance lines, alongside a new bus terminal.
- Southern neighbourhoods will be integrated with the city centre through various mobility systems and public transportation options.
- The introduction of a "Green Route" will connect the new urban centre with districts south of the Segura River, fostering accessibility and environmental sustainability.
- Pedestrian and cycle routes will be established to interconnect all neighbourhoods within the Southern Connection Project, promoting active transportation and community cohesion.

Citizen participation is paramount throughout the project's development, with over 70,000 residents from outlying areas and southern neighbourhoods being involved.

Consultative bodies and meetings will provide avenues for input, while professional associations and experts will offer technical insights.

To ensure transparency and accountability, oversight bodies such as the Social Council of the City and the Monitoring Committee of the Murcia Southern Connection will play crucial roles. Agora meetings, neighbourhood surveys, and engagement with schools and children will further enrich the social participation process, ensuring that the project reflects the diverse needs and aspirations of the community.



TOOL FOCUS



Theory of change

“Theory of Change is a series of logical steps that define how and why certain interventions will lead to a desirable change.”

The Theory of Change (TOC) is akin to a detailed roadmap, elucidating the intricate process and rationale behind the anticipated transformation within a specific context. It acts as a vital link between program activities and envisioned outcomes, effectively bridging the gap to showcase the causal relationships between interventions and goals. This methodology seamlessly resonates with U.R Impact's ethos of holistic planning and execution, ensuring a more comprehensive approach towards creating meaningful change.

How to use it?

- Start by articulating the **problem statement**, which requires thorough definition and refinement in collaboration with the ULG. Various tools can aid in this process. (see article?) Additionally, define and refine **the individuals affected** by the problem and other pertinent stakeholders.
- Then, fast forward to the final segment and **outline the long-term, systemic impact** you aim to achieve.
- Returning to the beginning, assess available resources and identify the necessary resources to facilitate the activities. **Enumerate the activities and consider the outputs they are expected to generate**. Subsequently, contemplate the outcomes that would emerge from these outputs.

Theory of Change _____

Co-funded by the European Union Interreg

1 The Problem

What is the problem? What does it exist?

2 People

Who are the people affected? Other stakeholders?

4 Input	5 Activities	6 Outputs	7 Outcomes	3 Impact
What are the resources needed?	What actions will be taken?	What are the immediate results of the actions?	What is the intermediate outcome of the results?	What would happen if the problem did not exist?
	Key Assumptions - If we do this...	If this happens...	Then we could expect..	

WHAT NEXT?



U.R Impact partners continue to work on understanding better the impact they intend to generate and the type of activities they need to plan. The evaluation of the impact will be refined in the next months also through one on one meetings with the Ad-Hoc and Lead Expert. The partners will share and peer review their plans and will participate in online meetings where we will deep dive into the concept of Testing Actions. Looking forward to our next transnational meeting in September in Bovec, we will also get more familiar with the concept of sustainable tourism.