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The Urban Lab of Europe !

The CURANT project
Journal N° 4

*Project led by the **City of Antwerp***

**INTEGRATION OF
MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES**

The CURANT project

The **CURANT** project seeks to provide integrated services for unaccompanied young refugees once they reach adulthood and are no longer entitled to benefit from social protection as an unaccompanied minor. It will combine co-housing and social integration schemes with volunteer buddies (young local residents aged 20-30 years old) for 1-1 integration and circular integrated individual trajectories. 75 affordable co-housing units for both unaccompanied young adults and buddies will be made available in the city. The trajectories of the young refugees involved will be treated in all their complexity instead of focusing separately on different components. A guaranteed, safe, affordable and quality place to live will pivot around a circular set of social services including language courses, training and health care. Different city departments, regional and local agencies for health services and education as well as NGOs will be actively involved in the implementation of the project.

Partnership:

- Stad Antwerpen

- Solentra (Solidarity and Trauma) - unit of the psychiatric division of UZ Brussel

- JES vzw - 'urban lab' for children and youngsters in Antwerp, Ghent and Brussels

- Vormingplus - NGO

- Atlas integratie & inburgering Antwerpen - NGO

- University of Antwerpen

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1. Executive summary

Integration is at the heart of European policies and at the heart of CURANT project. The European commission emphasises how migrants actively contribute to development in an economic, social and cultural matter. The common assets for integration in the EU highlight the significance of a holistic approach to integration and aim at supporting EU States in formulating integration policies. They also serve as a basis for EU States to explore how EU, national, regional, and local authorities can interact in the development and implementation of integration policies. Finally, they assist in evaluating EU-level mechanisms and policies with a view to supporting future integration policy developments. This last point regarding the Evaluation is the main focus of this Journal, in other words *How may we measure and evaluate the degree to which migrants are actually integrated*? *What indicators for impact measurement, including also non-quantifiable elements?* As the CURANT project is reaching its final stages it is indeed important to focus on the methodology and the results from the integration evaluation study. Since in CURANT, the key element is a housing solution the makes a match between a newcomer and a native, it is a suitable project for measuring and evaluating integration on both target groups. Since the beginning of the project, CURANT's challenge has been to define assets and a methodology easy enough to be shared and told, aiming at spreading good practices and their results, but well-structured enough at the same time to capture the complexity of the project. By combining qualitative and quantitative methods and therefore facing issues from different perspectives, they have carried measurements on termly basis, at the beginning, at the middle, and towards the end of the project. This Journal n.4 will give an overview on the project state of the art and will go in depth on the topic of impact measurement.

2. CURANT project in the last six months

2.1 Waste sorting and the creation of empathy

What may seem like a simple and technical issue like sorting the waste may sometimes give some key elements for understanding integration. In many of the CURANT housing situation conflicts rise around newcomers not knowing how to sort trash and natives' neighbours getting frustrated and angry with the presence of newcomers in their housing context. There are three main actors in this short episode: the newcomer, arriving to a place already full with new elements and having to deal with something they never thought of or were not used in their home country. **They have a hard time understanding the importance of such action to the group as a whole**. The neighbours, not knowing or understanding the refugees path, and looking then only at this episode as a sign of them unwilling to be integrated. They often lack of tools and methods to actually explain their needs and the general rules to the newcomers. The buddy finally, a sort of bridge between the other two, is very much aware of how the trash should be sorted, as he/she is native but has also been

a part of the newcomers' path and has seen the difficulties and the cultural gaps. This allows the buddy to have a more **empathic reaction** to the newcomer and being able to find new ways of communication. At this case, a course was suggested in one of the big housing structures to explain both the importance of sorting the trash and how to do it. Looking at this issue one can see that integration cannot be measured only by looking at the newcomer. **The society changes through the arrival of new people and it is crucial to evaluate the integration both on newcomers and on native**. A great emphasis is given to the value of communal living and how it assists in changing people's' perspectives towards a strong integration. The challenge for the project today lays exactly in the non-easy task in measuring empathy, measuring understanding, patience and also the creative way to solve problem using all the above. In the following paragraphs is a general update and a specific one on evaluation.

2.2 About local governments changes and celebrations

At the moment of writing this journal 59 refugees are in the project and follow the CURANT trajectories whereby a few don't have a buddy. This situation is caused by the early exit of some refugees or buddies and the difficulty to find replacement. CURANT therefore tries to invest in a 'buddy' that doesn't live with the refugee that already lives with another refugee. April is the

last month in which new Flemish buddies are actively searched for as CURANT only want to start new trajectories for at least 6 months. 21 refugees moved already out of CURANT and their exit path was evaluated. 21 refugees got prolonged after their one year trajectory. **All together, 80 refugees lived together in the CURANT project period.**

The political situation blocked some of the communication work due to election silence. Also the inauguration of Brem 16 did not get the attention it could have had. Another matter is the need to communicate again and to involve the new political party. CURANT got a new political representative after elections, who visited the project on 26/03/19. There is a positive approach to the project and the desire to find ways for its continuity in time.

The cohabitation in the larger buildings, Klapdorp and BREM 16 is still more difficult than in the two/four bedroom apartments. Most of the problems occurs relate to cleaning issues, and are similar to other student housing situations. Probably big housing settings are allowing people to be seen less and **responsibilities are more difficult to distribute**. On the other hand, social activities are being organised such as a party in Klapdorp where everybody from CURANT was invited. Together with some bachelor Erasmus students, CURANT will organize a huge neighbourhood party end of April in Merksem (where the collective housing brem 16 is built) where neighbours of Brem 16 and all CURANT inhabitants will together have an amazing time with food and workshops.

A neighbourhood party

Some courses and activities were organised in the last Month:

- a mind spring course (psycho education) in Tigrinya whereby all youngsters really enjoyed the teacher who spoke Tigrinyan.

- a course around 'waste' was organised in BREM 16.

- there was an official integration ceremony when some of the youngsters finished their integration trajectory when they move to Belgium (see picture 190315-140_ copyright Swa de Heel)

- The project leader presented CURANT to a lot of students and gave a presentation at the 'social innovation for refugee inclusion' (https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/agenda/our-events/events/social-innovation-refugee-inclusion-sense-home-co-organised-conference).

CURANT helped **refugees get a vacation-job for summer time** (July and August) which is important because as a student there is 1 month during the holidays where one do not receive social welfare benefits.

The focus on housing search and individual living will start in May together with the general courses and are made by CURANT and Atlas. The youngsters will be obligated to follow this course at least 3 months before moving out. After the theory, they can become part of group sessions where 2 social workers help them looking for an apartment on the internet, calling landlords, visiting houses, etc.

Some newcomers and buddies expressed their wish to continue to co-live in a standard student apartment situation. This is a good sign for the project, but this wish encounters a regulation barrier: co-living influences social benefits that one may get from the state and so is blocking the possibility for the spontaneous continuity of the project. This is one of the main point to tackle through the policy guidelines that will be produced through the evaluation of the project, explained in the following paragraphs.

3. Challenges

This journal focuses on the challenge of monitoring and evaluating and will explore it deeply in the next chapter. Other challenges are however part of the ongoing implementation of the project. With the political change, **Leadership** for implantation has seen a new team and a new perspective on the project. The challenge is passing on the experience and also excepting a change in the approach to it. This challenge was approached by opening up and assisting the new leaders in knowing the project and keep on being involved in it. A big challenge in **organisational arrangement** is the need for a change in some of the rules concerning co-habitation. Different department are involved around the issue and it seems crucial for giving a future to this project or even similar project that may develop from it. Guidelines for a law review on the issue is being produced to help the authorities in taking a new direction. The **participative approach** is showing good result, if looking at the more social initiative happening; young people involved are taking responsibility and self-management. It is more challenging to see the results of the participative approach in the everyday life in the big housing complexes, as described above. The aim is to insert more governance capacity building in the process. **Communicating** with the target beneficiaries is strictly related to the participative approach. To meet the linguistic challenges, it is pretty simple to translate on spot communication or documents, but the real challenge lays in truly understanding the culture behind certain rules or habits. The project is pretty strong on this challenge due to its basic idea of buddy-new comer system which is per se creating improved understanding by empathy. It is hard to think about this project in terms of **Upscaling** thinking about creating bigger or more housing complexes, especially since the big interventions are the more difficult ones to manage. Rather, it has come clear that the upscaling may be in spreading the idea of co-living with a buddy-new comer system in regular housing situation, but here again, the first challenge is the regulation barrier described in the beginning of this paragraph. **Monitoring and evaluation** are explored in the next chapter, in deep. They also include further reflection on the other challenges.

Newcomers and buddies playing cricket

4. Social Impact Measurement

4.1 The challenge of social impact assessment in European practices

Measuring social behaviours and social phenomena is always a very challenging task, though it has been undertaken by many influential research institutes, policy makers and impact investment companies. Besides integration, which might be one of the trickiest asset to evaluate, the range of social impact actions is wide and broad per typology, intensity, stakeholder involved, population groups targeted, cultural background, and so on.

As mentioned in the previous pages, in EU programs and funds some common principles to follow a holistic approached have been set, aiming at supporting EU States in formulating integration policies and serving as an exploration of how national, regional, and local authorities can interact in the development and implementation of integration policies formulating. It results that indicators for measuring integration often are clustered in the following macro-areas: a) access to the labour market, b) housing and social services, c) education, d) participation in political processes and decision making, e) mortality, fertility and demographic changes and f) juridical indicators. The data collection under each of the indicator may derive from the use of different tools. It is also suggested, as it is being demonstrated in this pages, that integration should be evaluated both on the incomers and on the natives. Moving to a private impact measurement point of view,

Nesta, one of the main global innovation foundation, **has developed and shared an impressive amount of literature** on the topic of impact measurement offering an interesting perspective on the funders aside from the project's operators. Their primary aim is to "increase the impact of the ventures we back, both in the difference they are making, the number of people they are reaching and whether they can do this in a financially sustainable way. Therefore, key to our impact is understanding whether investees are having a positive effect, whether there is good quality evidence to back up this effect, whether investees have scaled their product or service (in order to help a significant proportion of people) and whether the venture is financially sustainable"[1]. To understand impact at various stages of the investment cycle, they have developed 4 key indicators: "

1. Effect: the effect of the venture's activities on the people it is targeting.

2. Impact risk: how certain are we that the effect is real, as indicated through high–quality research and evaluation, and our Standards of Evidence for Impact Investing.

3. Scale: how many units of the venture's product or sessions of a service are being supplied to the targeted users?

4. Financial sustainability: Can the venture sustain its scale?"[2]

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[1] Nesta Impact Investments, Impact measurement in impact investing, learning from practice, Eibhlín Ní Ógáin, June 2015
[2] Nesta Impact Investments, Setting our sights. A strategy for maximising social impact, September 2017

In other words, their approach is always guided by verifying that action impact directly on the beneficiary groups, creating value for who invests, measuring in a rigorous and transparent way, making their report accessible and comprehensible, making the positive impact sustainable and prosecutable after the investment.

4.2   Theory of Change: context and pursued change

CURANT project's impact measurement is based on the "**Theory of Change (TOC)**[3]", which is in theory very simple, but practically very difficult. The Theory of Change is essentially a comprehensive description of how and why a desired change is expected to happen in a particular context. It focuses on mapping out or "filling in" what has been described as the "missing part" between what a program or change initiative does and how this lead to desired goals being achieved.

This is achieved by first **identifying the long-term goals** that are set and then going back to identify all the conditions that must occur. This information is then collected in an Outcomes Framework. This tool provides the basis for identifying what are the actions to be brought to reach the outcomes identified as **preconditions** for achieving the long-term goal. Through this approach the precise link between activities and the achievement of the long-term goals are more fully understood.

Thanks to this approach, a **better planning** is possible, where activities are linked to a detailed understanding of **how change actually happens**, a better evaluation is achievable, as it becomes possible to measure progress towards the achievement of longer-term goals that goes beyond the identification of program outputs.

The Theory of Change has set 6 stages for mapping:

1. Identifying long-term goals

2. Backwards mapping and connecting the preconditions or requirements necessary to achieve that goal and explaining why these preconditions are necessary and sufficient.

3. Identifying your basic assumptions about the context.

4. Identifying the interventions that your initiative will perform to create your desired change.

5. Developing indicators to measure your outcomes to assess the performance of your initiative.

6. Writing a narrative to explain the logic of your initiative.

The TOC process hinges upon defining all of the **necessary and sufficient conditions** required to bring about a given long term outcome. It basically requires to think in backwards steps from the long-term goal to the intermediate and then early-term changes that would be required to cause the desired change: this is called "**pathway of change**", a representation of the change. In this process, there are some important considerations to be kept in mind: a) connections between long term, intermediate and early, b) substantiation that all of the important preconditions for success have been identified, c) justifications supporting the links between program activities and the outcomes, d) contextualisation of factors that will support or obstruct progress toward the realization of outcomes.

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[3]   The Center for Theory of Change

4.3　Social Impact Measurement inside CURANT

Since the beginning of the project, CURANT's challenge following the Theory of Change has been to define **assets and a methodology easy enough to be shared and told**, aiming at spreading good practices and their results, but well-structured enough at the same time to **capture the complexity of the project**. By combining qualitative and quantitative methods and therefore facing issues from different perspectives, they have carried measurements on termly basis, at the beginning, at the middle, and towards the end of the project. Final data are to be soon collected and the final results of the evaluation to be delivered by middle of June.

As Rilke Mathieu from the CeMis - University of Antwerp - explains, in the broad overview some focus has been set:

- **Supportive networks**: this focus is to measure how the relationship among the newcomers can influence them and can how the networks can change along the time, grow, diversify, be replaced, and so on. As when during a project is requested to create a Stakeholder Map, in order to analyse and recognize who are the actors who can influence, in a negative and positive way, the fulfilment of your project, the same way here newcomers are asked to draw on a paper their network and to compare it over the time. Who are the people around you who can support? Who can make you feel home? Who is negatively influencing you?

- **Newcomers aspirations**: according to CURANT team and their partner's experience on integration processes, one big challenge for the newcomers, especially for young

adults who just entered adulthood, is described by a mix of anxiety and uncertainty about their future, which path to undertake and how to set the objectives to be reached, not very differently from all young adults. It is then interesting to measure to what extent the project has helped them to have a better and clearer idea of the future and had guided them into the right direction. This is a very important metric to measure how, in the next years, the expectations will be fulfilled or disappointed by the host country.

- **Change of perspectives in the "buddies"**. As said already, integration has to be seen in a holistic way by giving attention both to the migrants both to the context. The buddies co-living with the newcomers have been subject to measurement on shifts in attitude and on development of intercultural skills, according to the existing scale "multi-cultural personality". The literature examining the topic of well-being of biculturals and multiculturals suggests that integrating one's cultural identities, or being involved in both one's mainstream and one's heritage cultural groups, seems to yield greater well-being.[4] As underlined in the previous chapter, their role is as a bridge among the newcomers, seen by an intimate point of view, and the citizens, who might have a falsified view. But what is really interesting here to discover it is if the buddy's point of view has changed in first place, and if in a negative or positive way. This kind of impact is particularly subtle and difficult to measure, as we talk about attitude and perspective.

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[4]　Maya A. Yampolsky, Catherine E. Amiot and Roxane de la Sablonnière, Multicultural identity integration and well-being: a qualitative exploration of variations in narrative coherence and multicultural identification

- **Personal skills**: this measurement is addressed to both the buddies and to the newcomers, being young, probably unexperienced on co-living and anyways challenged in new everyday-life efforts. The value of communal living is here under focus along with softer skills such as respect of new rules, adaption to the civic sense, and so on. This kind of measurement is particularly relevant as, for host countries citizens, the respect of civic rules very often represents the only metric they have to measure integration of newcomers from their point of view. What might seem as a part of the presence of a new individual with a different culture thus become very influencing on a politics and mediatic side.

- **Skills of integration in the context**: these are what might consider as the most spread data to collect and measure, and refer for example to language improvement – which in CURANT project has been one of the main aspect on which to engage newcomers and buddies. By living with a native, the youngsters had the chance to absorb the language and use it in the daily life, reaching higher levels. Besides, skills oriented towards the social, historical and cultural specific knowledge of the host country has been measured, together with skills addressed to working adaptability.

As said before, applying the Theory of Change allows to identify how change actually happens and consequently how to measure progress towards the achievement of longer-term goals that goes beyond the identification of program outputs. As seen above, CURANT approach has been to assess measurement during the project and not after, combining different methods, obtaining both qualitative and quantitative results

Newcomers progress in language skills

and analysing the change of the newcomers and of the buddies too. Nevertheless, it appears problematic to **see the connection among programs and results**: there is a gap between what can be measured and the kind of results requested by politicians. How to justify high costs when hard quantitative results cannot be given back? As also experienced in the European practices on social impact measurement, it is not easy to measure social phenomena and especially when referring to integration. It's not only about results, but also about the causality of the results themselves. If a youngster who is part of CURANT program finds a job, how can be measured and stated that is has been consequent to the project and not to fortuitous happening in his life, thanks to a friend's help or just because of his natural skills? Or if a newcomer improves his Dutch level, would have happened the same without CURANT program?

5. Lessons learned in CURANT evaluation

In the framework of impact assessment and evaluation, many different studies, research, and tests are being carried, which not address towards a specific trajectory, but that might show many possible directions to be undertaken. In this context, we can cluster interests in big social impact investors and the foundation working with them, and on the other side European and non-governmental funds. The collaboration of these two contexts, on a research and on an operative side, is without doubt a great richness for social businesses. As explained in the previous pages, CURANT's challenge has been to define assets and a methodology easy enough to be shared and told, aiming at spreading good practices and their results, but well-structured enough at the same time to capture the complexity of the project. This approach, even though it does not help justifying the kind of results that can be shared to governments and funds, is though intentioned to raise general sensitivity on the topic, to give tips for a strong storytelling, to help a future wider dissemination after the project has ended, and so, to guarantee as much as possible a future sustainability and continuation.

6. Conclusions

Going back to the words of Jolien De Crom, project manager, that featured the Journal n.1 on the project: "*On a personal level, I do hope CURANT can mean for some youngsters a fresh start, a new beginning, the chance to have a good start in this community. We understand that CURANT can't solve all the problems for the target group and will not help every youngster, but if we can change one youngster's life by giving him or her the start for a new future, we should be happy.*" Aware that through CURANT project same lives have been changing, both newcomers' and buddies', after having not only measured but seen daily small and bigger progresses, it is impossible not to question *What's next? How may we convey the results, the energy, the good relationships created into a new version of CURANT? How may we enable and* empower the people involved in the project and make them beyond politics and hold them responsible for a future of this project and for others yet to come?

In the next Journal, follow up on the final international conference in Antwerp which will take place on the 12th-13th of June. The main goal of the conference is to disseminate evaluation results properly to a wide range of cities and stakeholders. Beyond that, the journal will offer a commentary on the capitalization exercise in place.

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.

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