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The Urban Lab of Europe !

The ICCARUS (GENT KNAPT OP) project Journal N° 1

Project led by the City of Ghent



HOUSING

The ICCARus (Gent Knapt Op) project

The **ICCARus** project has the aim to renovate 100 houses of captive residents (people who live in poor quality houses and who do not have the means and social skills to renovate them). To do so, the project will create, shape and test a revolving fund based on the principle of subsidy retention to make the renovations possible for this low income target group. The financial contribution to target households will return to the fund when the building is alienated. At that point, the fund will gain not only the net amount that was let but also part of the real estate value increase after the intervention. This way, the public finance is not only spent for a limited number of people, but can be used over and over again, triggering future “waves” of renovation.

Before, during and after the renovation process, captive residents will be supported technically, financially, administratively and socially while the works will be taken care of in an integrated way. After the project period, there will be an operating recurring fund to tackle the bad housing conditions of captive residents in Ghent.

Partnership:

- City of Ghent
- OCMW Gent
- KU Leuven
- UGent
- AP Hogeschool Antwerpen
- Samenlevingsopbouw Gent
- Domus Mundi
- REGent

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The City of Ghent aims to address the lack of affordable and qualitative housing for its low income and vulnerable citizens through the *ICCARUS aka Gent Knapt Op* project funded by the Urban Initiative Actions.

This initiative is embedded within the holistic long-term strategic plan 'Ghent 2030' aiming to provide affordable housing options to all its citizens.

Affordable and dignified housing has undoubtedly become one of the most pressing issues for many European cities, caused by a sharp increase in demand and decreasing supply of affordable housing options in the growing urban centres. This has contributed to poor urban housing conditions, undignified living environments, accelerated health issues and urban poverty.

In Ghent, 10% of the housing stock is dedicated to social housing – a total of 14,347 social rental dwellings. This is significantly above the regional average of 6%¹. Rental subsidies and tax benefits are insufficient to address the demand or offset the effects of a lack of new housing construction, thus continuously increasing the waiting time for social housing waiting lists vary from 3-10 years depending from beneficiary criteria². In addition to the housing gap, Gent has approximately 35,000 housing units in substandard conditions in need of urgent upgrade.

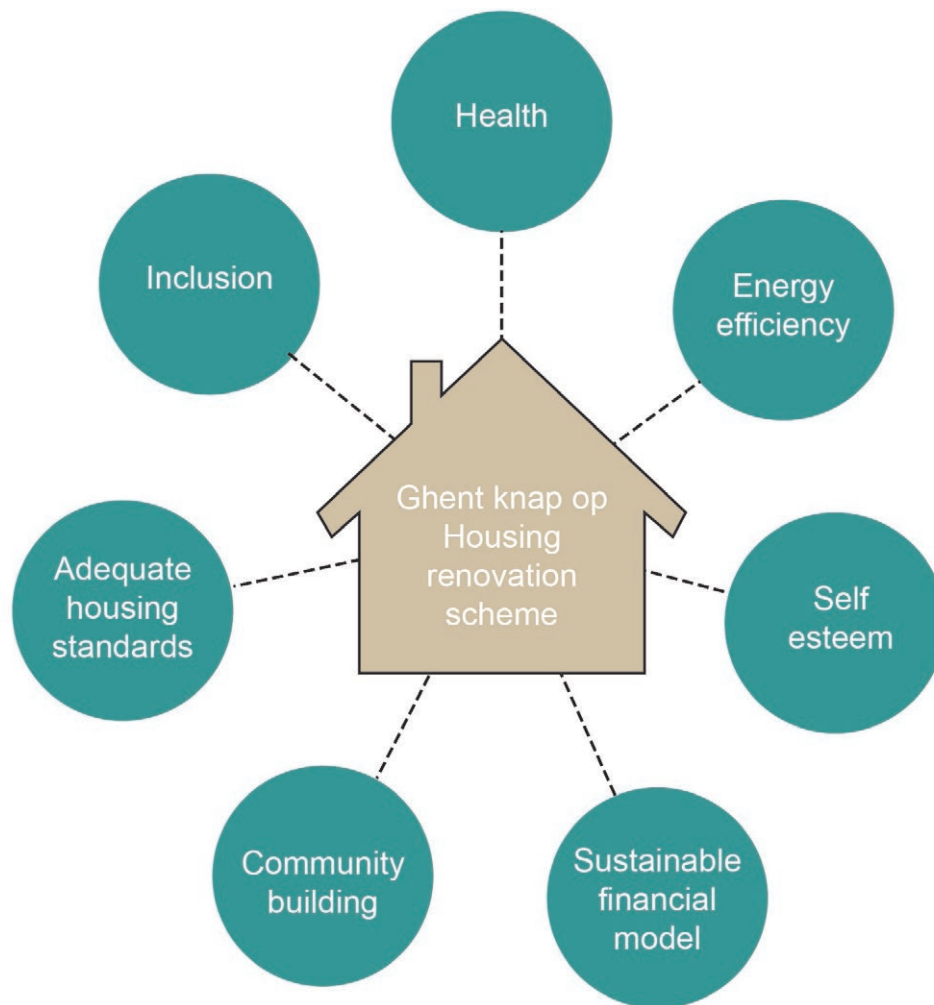
The *Gent Knapt Op* pilot project addresses this complex web of issues from an innovative angle by focusing on the renovation of existing homes of vulnerable homeowners in substandard conditions. The project's target group – called 'the captive residents' – comprises 100 vulnerable families without the means to renovate their homes to an adequate living standard. In many instances, the homes were inherited or purchased in poor conditions and families were not able to afford rental housing or qualify for private financing.

In response, the *Gent Knapt Op* pilot project proposed a 'recurring fund' - the key innovation of the project - to introduce a new financial model that is mutually beneficial to the City of Gent and the target homeowners testing a new sustainable housing model.

This fund does not function with the traditional system of subsidies but with a system of subsidy retention. In the case upon selling (disposal) of the property, the owner pays back the original financial contribution of 30,000 euros that was earmarked for essential renovation works to their homes, plus an additional premium calculated on the basis of the added value of the house at the moment of selling. Thus, allowing for a longer-term sustainability and financial support to more dwellings to be renovated in the future providing safer, more energy efficient and healthy home to Ghent's citizens. In support to the project, technical and social support are provided to the participating families.

¹ *The state of housing in the EU 2019*

² *In 2018 the average waiting time was 3,5 years. But that is average. Singles have a shorter waiting time than families with kids. For some target groups Ghent has priority rules, which also affects the average waiting time. If you are a family with 4 kids, you are more likely to wait 10 years than 3,5 years.*



Gent Knapt Op addresses the issue of affordable housing in a holistic way, not only supporting residents to bring up to standard their housing but to enable active citizenship, inclusion and longer term sustainability. Thus, the City of Gent and specialized partners address a wider spectrum of socio-economic objectives such as dignified and healthy housing, increased living comfort, a sustainable financial housing model, strengthening ownership, enhancing community

cohesion and neighbourhood inclusion, reducing neighbourhood gentrification and contributing to the Flemish climate objectives and increases housing that comply with Flemish building code³.

This journal aims to share the knowledge and lessons learned from this innovative project, the key stepping-stones and implementation challenges. This journal will reflect on the first steps of the implementation phase and the team's challenges to lead this innovative pilot project.

³ The Flemish Housing Code regulates housing policy and gives technical specification having as main principle the right to decent housing for every citizen.

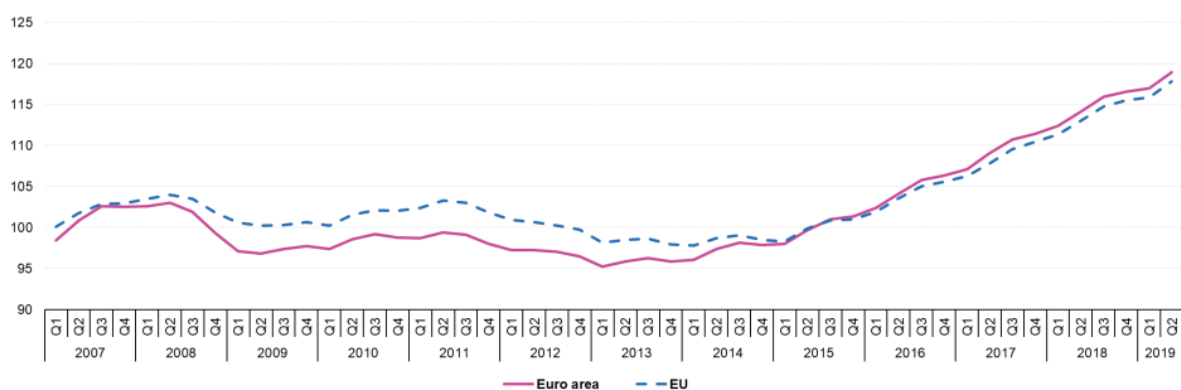
2. HOW THE PROJECT FITS IN THE POLICY CONTEXT AT THE EU, NATIONAL AND REGIONAL LEVEL

Europe has identified the state of housing to be in a crisis as highlighted in the 'State of housing in the EU' publications of 2015 and 2017. In 2017, 10.2% of households in the EU spent over 40% of their disposable income on housing costs, potentially resulting in 85 million people being at risk of poverty. In addition to the very high-income percentage dedicated to housing costs, a large percentage of people are living in substandard, unhealthy and marginalised housing conditions, further increasing their families' vulnerabilities and weakness to withstand shock and strains on their income and overall psychosocial well-being.

In most European countries housing prices have risen by 4% per year while state funded social housing has decreasing steadily contributing to a widening social divide.⁴

According to High level task force, the estimated investment gap of 57 billion per year in affordable housing exists highlighting a general lack of consistent governmental policies and commitment to the issue. In the recent past, government policies have focused on private investment incentives and social welfare type payments which have increased considerably from 54.5 to 80.8 bn Euros in the recent years.

House Price Indices - euro area and EU aggregates; Index levels (2015 = 100) - 2007-2019Q2



Source: Eurostat (online data code: prc_hpi)

eurostat

⁴ The State of Housing in the EU 2019



Accessing adequate affordable housing has undoubtedly become a pressing matter and challenge for all European countries. Especially in larger European cities the problem is most apparent with increasing housing rents and large urban populations living in substandard conditions or forced to moving to less expensive areas, which are in many instances far from their place of work and available services.

Belgium provides 7% of the total housing stock to social housing either for rent or purchase. Since 1980 social housing has been decentralized and divided into 3 regions; the Flemish Region, the Walloon Region and the Brussels Region. The regions provide a combination of social housing solutions including public housing financed through public funding managed by public or private bodies. Access to these housing units is

managed through public housing waiting lists and applicants are selected on income basis, time waited and availability. Housing benefits-rent subsidies are another way the Flemish region supports lower income population to rent on the open market.

Considering that housing market in the Flemish regions have risen almost 5% each year and the production of social housing has remained stable since 2001, it is understandable that the shortage of affordable housing is continuously increasing. In addition, 68% of the Flemish population are homeowners, a high percentage in comparison to other European countries, but many of these properties are in substandard and very poor condition and were therefore affordable to such a large percentage of population.

This is the space The *Gent Knapt Op* project situates itself to service homeowners that have managed to purchase a house, either through a loan or by inheritance, but are unable to renovate them to inadequate and healthy standard. The project focuses on a vulnerable population group that does not qualify for Housing benefits-rent subsidies or social housing provision defining housing in a holistic manner- a housing pathway process rather than a simple product of 'a roof over your head'. It aims to reinforce and strengthen beneficiary's self-esteem, enhance community building and reinforce neighbourhoods' inclusion in addition to a sustainable financial model for the future.

3. CHALLENGES

3.1 Leadership

Gent Knapt Op is led by the City of Ghent in collaboration with eight implementation partners. The project core team is the City of Ghent and

Public Centre of Social Welfare Ghent (PCSW) in partnership with three academic/ research institutions and four non-profit organisations.

3.1.A Core project team

Institutional partners

A core team of the City of Ghent and the Public Centre of Social Welfare Ghent (PCSW) leads the project. The City of Ghent, being the main facilitator, established a team to coordinate, manage and communicate the project. Mayor decisions are discussed and agreed upon in the steering committee – comprised of representatives from all partner organisations. The partners from the City of Ghent and the Public Centre of Social

Welfare Ghent also have to check decisions at the political level. The institutional partner, the Public Centre of Social Welfare Ghent (PCSW) with its expertise and technical knowledge from a previous refurbishment project called “Dampoort Knapt Op”, gave input for the social and technical screening and selection process of the project target group. Screening is done by Community Development Ghent and SIVI, selection is done by the selection committee

3.1.B Research, Evaluation and Monitoring

Educational institutions

The KU Leuven University, Ghent University and AP University are the three academic partners contributing different expertise and providing essential input on implementation and evaluation. The University of KU Leuven is a consortium of four research groups comprised of the Sustainable Buildings Research Group, the Research Institute for Work and Society, the Research Centre for Economics and Corporate Sustainability and final the Institute for Property Law and Private Law. Each research group contributed specialist expertise in the set-up of the project, such as the development of recurring fund, the evaluation of property value as well as the area selection based

on demographic data. Detailed mapping was conducted in relation to demographics, neighbourhood statistics, property statistics and evaluation as well as beneficiary criteria according to vulnerability and housing location. In addition, KU Leuven is also contributing to the monitoring and evaluation of the project.

The University of Ghent, department of Medicine and Primary Health Care, involvement is primary focused on assessing the impact that improved housing conditions have on the health of the participating family members. Whereas the AP University’s department of Health & Wellbeing is monitoring and evaluating the social impact on the participants.

3.1.C Technical and Social support

Non-profit organizations

The four non-profit organizations are focused on the daily communication and community facilitation with the participating house owners, often referred as '*Boots on the ground*' facilitating effective beneficiary communication, participation and trust building – the cross cutting essential aspect of the project.

Domus Mundi has the project task to support qualitative & affordable housing for all. The organisation's team consists of technical experts, architects and engineers that assess the potential dwellings according to the Flemish code, interview the potential beneficiaries and draw up the renovation plan with the target homeowners. The team guarantees the standard of the renovation works as well as assists the beneficiary family to make a suitable household financial plan.

REGent is an organization that develops local initiatives to reduce energy & water usage, assisting with technical specifications of the renovation according to the Flemish energy code and on behavioural change education of the household occupiers to reduce consumption.

Community development in Ghent and SIVI teams oversee communication and dissemination of information, recruitment including activities such as visiting households, talks and project information dissemination to the potential beneficiaries of the programme as well as screening of participants and assist participating households technically with the application and socially and emotionally throughout the life cycle of the project.

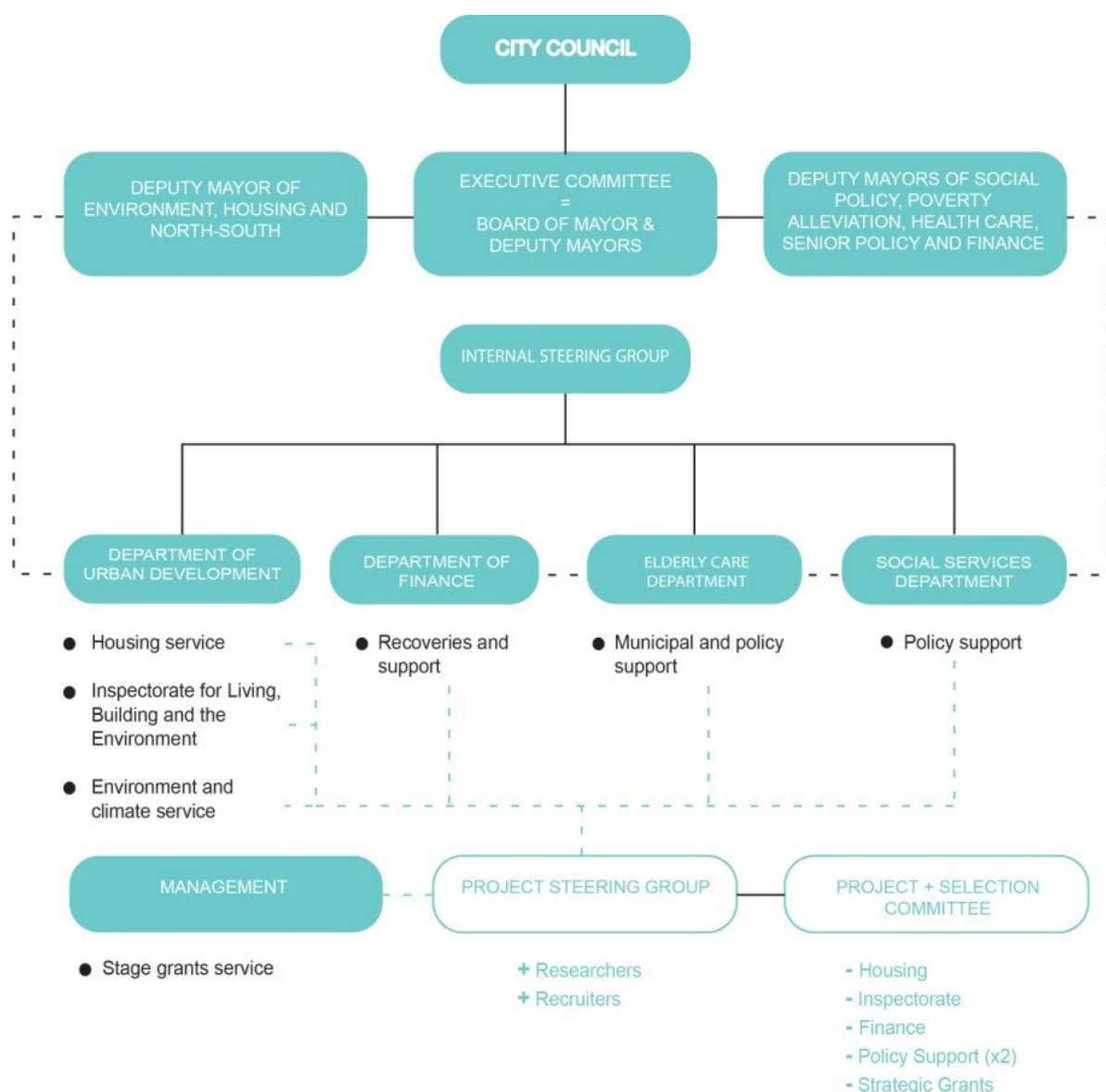
3.1.D Leadership Challenge

The *Gent Knapt Op* project receives broad support from the highest political level and as part of the 'Ghent 2030' agenda it is evident that the City of Ghent is meaningfully promoting inclusion and affordable housing for all. The project is an important and innovative showcase for the city's vision and supported by enthusiasm and steadfast commitment by its partners and project team.

Collective leadership: *Gent Knapt Op* promotes a collective leadership approach by engaging all partners in the decision-making process. A steering committee of partner organisations as well as a selection committee was created to facilitate effective and timely decision-making processes, encouraging good partner communication,

coordination and working relationships to be able to address challenges in a consistent and effective manner.

Technical support: The day-to-day interaction with beneficiaries proved to be challenging, as presented by the social workers responsible for the immediate interaction with the beneficiaries. The combination between "advertising" the program to potential homeowners and resolving technical queries and doubts of participating homeowners were often complex and challenging for the social staff team to resolve on 'the spot'. In response "case committee consultations" between social workers and the technical team were set-up to find quick solutions.



3.2 Procurement

From experience, one has learned that effective and timely procurement is a key challenge for a public body implementing projects within tight time and budget limits. The *Gent Knapt Op* project developed an innovative alternative to overcome this hurdle by awarding the ‘captive residents’ the renovation cost in the form of a ‘grant’. Consequently, no public procurement was required for the renovations and the homeowners lead the renovation process themselves. This strategy has many advantages: it saves time and allows for the beneficiaries to

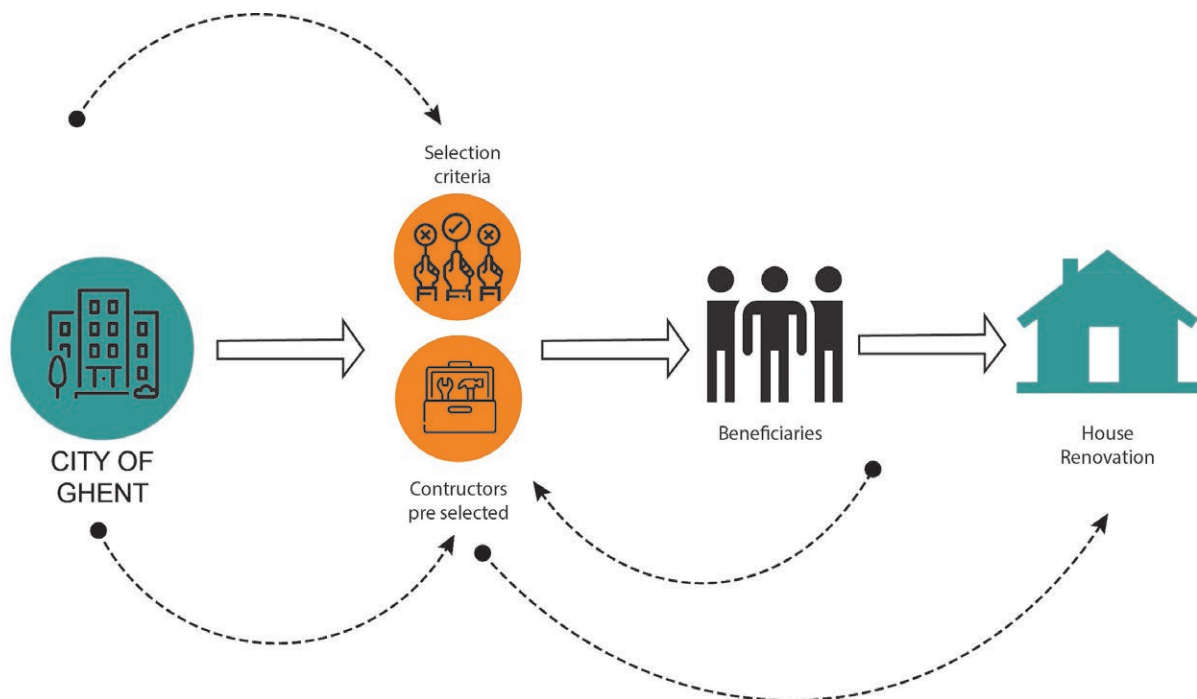
take charge of their housing renovation plans encouraging ownership, self-esteem and a state-funding collaborative process. In order to guarantee the quality of the renovation to be according to the Flemish planning and energy code, a team of technical consultants assists the beneficiaries throughout the process. Tailored technical and social support to the often vulnerable beneficiaries was needed to manage the process successfully. Currently, *Gent Knapt Op* project is in the process of supporting 25 homeowners to renovate their homes.

3.2.A Procurement challenge

Alternative selection process: Although this innovative way of procuring affordable housing has enabled a faster and inclusive process, the challenges have moved from the procurement of services and goods towards the selection process of the 'captive residents' (the participating homeowners). It is worth to reflect on the fact that procurement is a selection process of acquiring goods and services, like the setting out of the appropriate criteria for beneficiaries' selection. Currently, the most prominent challenge in the project is to reach out to the target group, which needs renovation assistance the most. Selection criteria have been set by the large steering group with all partners and have

become complex. This has resulted to date in less homeowner participation than expected. The original criteria were approved by the city council and changes require time and procedures to be made. However, the steering committee is addressing the challenge by widening the eligibility criteria in order to reach more vulnerable homeowners in need.

Simultaneously, a list with selected constructors is set up after an open call for all constructors, but remains an open list where constructors can be added at any moment upon their request. Also, beneficiaries can propose a contractor themselves to make a quotation for the works.



3.3 Organisational arrangements within the urban authority

Ghent Knap Op is organized within the City of Ghent as a separate team, drawing together people from separate divisions of the City. The project team consists of a collaboration of three departments - The Department of Urban

Development (Housing Service), the Social Services Department (Policy Support Service) and the Management Department (Strategic Grants Service). The project team has a good working relationship within the city with long experience

with European programs and another UIA project being implemented concurrently. Developing innovative projects is a significant part of urban authority of Ghent with a long list of pilot projects exemplifying an impressive level of expertise and commitment. Complementary projects are informed, and lessons learnt shared through collaborative meetings and peer to peer learning,

such as the Housing board comprised of local social and housing organizations involved in the process.

The project enjoys a great commitment and enthusiasm by all public and private partners and there is a horizontal information flow and flexibility in the decision-making processes.

3.3.A Organisational arrangements within the urban authority challenge

Political Support: The project team is responsible for the successful realization of the project thus, it is important to have political support throughout the project life cycle. Currently, there is a high level of commitment and political support, helping and strengthening the project to meet the project milestones and the UIA timeline.

Shared database: The project team has established a thorough software alternative to MS project, SharePoint & CRM where all deliverables, outputs, milestones linked to all partners are stored online. This technological

support is essential to facilitate quick overview of the project and link different deliverables and outputs to each other, highlighting delay and support quick responses. This has been the first time that such shared network environment has been created for private and public partners and has proven to be the most successful. However, it has been mentioned by partners that such an open sharing system poses a challenge in relation to personal beneficiary information such as privacy legislation.

3.4 Participatory approach for co-implementation

Gent Knapt Op is presenting an innovative approach that can have a life-changing impact on the participating homeowners. It is a pilot that not only sets up a new financial system for renovating vulnerable citizens' homes but also tests co-implementation and participatory approaches. Firstly, and foremost, it manages to introduce the concept of co-design of house renovation to a publicly funded project. During the whole process beneficiaries are supported technically, financially and emotionally. This process requires time and skills, but in the end facilitates beneficiaries' empowerment and ownership contributing to the sense of 'a new home'.

This project also reassesses the idea that affordable housing is a public top-down process

that is expensive and time consuming. As an alternative, the project established a procedure where the beneficiary agrees to a contractual relationship with the city of Ghent and designated prioritized housing plan. In many instances, the works needed dealt with leaking roofs, lack of insulation and heating systems. The renovation plan is tailored to the needs of each dwelling according to safety and energy planning codes so that the project links the improvement of living quality to energy efficiency.

Gent Knapt Op project scope is not limited to the renovation of private houses but also focuses on the wider community and local neighbourhoods. A series of neighbourhood group meetings are conducted during and after completion of the

renovation works for beneficiaries to meet each other, discuss and exchange ideas.

At an institutional level, *Gent Knapt Op* thrives on a diverse partnership with institutional partners as well as bottom up community groups that have the local knowledge and relationships with the neighbourhood to join these local exchange platforms for peer to peer support and learning.

Participatory approach for co-implementation challenge: Trust building - The project consists of three main components, each being a complex system:

- a. Financial and legal – the contract between the city and the beneficiary and the reoccurring fund
- b. Technical – housing renovation plan, including the specific renovation works and selection of contractor
- c. Physio-social support to the beneficiaries to manage the process.

Even though for many participants the project is a great opportunity, it still is perceived as a 'major change' in their life, which many vulnerable families struggle to manage.

The process has complexities and requires time and energy commitments from the participants. During the implementation phase, the NGOs had to face difficulties assisting and building trust relationships with potential applicants, since the process is complex and has several sequential stages of selection process and paperwork, contractual and evaluation process towards construction phase. In order to navigate the time span of planning and organisation, trust is the most essential factor. The social workers have to be very skilled in order to be able to build the participants' skills and capacities to renovate their homes to a successful standard. Most captive residents feel a sense of shame for the poor quality of their living standards. The time pressure of achieving project benchmarks undermines the time it takes to build trust relationships and led to participants dropping out. Especially as each participating homeowner's context is different including a large spectrum of different gender, age and ethnicity. The social support component is a critical and essential component without which the renovation works cannot be done. Sufficient time, knowledge and skill is required to navigate these challenges on a case by case basis.

3.5 Monitoring and evaluation

Although *Gent Knapt Op* has clear targets and indicators set up from the start, measuring the qualitative impact might become a challenge due to the project's complexities. The monitoring and evaluation will be conducted by the educational partners including the KU Leuven, Ghent University and AP University. The project has set up a holistic monitoring and evaluation process that will measure the social impact on the beneficiary and the neighbourhood, emotional and physical health on the beneficiary and energy efficiency. Currently, the activities

in this work package are just commencing with the social impact evaluation being conducted including household questionnaires and photo documentations.

Indicators:

1. Housing quality and affordability
2. Environmental impact on Health
3. Well-being and Quality of Life
4. Social cohesion and participation

3.5.A Monitoring and evaluation challenge

Monitoring and evaluation as a tool: The European Union stressed that monitoring and evaluation needs to be deployed as tools to adjust strategies and actions plans during the implementation process. Thus it is advisable to commence the monitoring and evaluation process with the beneficiaries that have already been selected or failed the selection process. It would clarify reasons of success or failure and highlight the beneficiaries thinking in order to be able to answer the question: *Are we reaching the right beneficiaries- target group?* This would support changes to the beneficiary selection

criteria, such as conducting additional open calls, etc.

Qualitative evaluation: Attention should be given to the qualitative factors that are very important for scaling up the project in future stages. The challenge would be to set out clear indicators from the start that can answer to the larger questions such as “Do we reach the right target group?” and most importantly “Is the 30,000 Euros enough for the renovation to bring up to standard?” These questions are very important for the current process but also for scaling up on a larger scale.

3.6 Communication with target beneficiaries and users

Communication with target beneficiaries appears as one of the most visible challenges at this stage of the project. The project depends on willing beneficiaries to participate and trust the city of Ghent in many aspects such as financially and contractually as well as technically and socially. The assistance was mainly done by the three NGOs that have the “boots on the ground” that had to inform local residents in 4 different neighbourhoods and assist them one by one to apply for the grant and programme. It requested a variety of communication methods in order to firstly attract potential beneficiaries, secondly to build a trust relationship between the two and thirdly to guide them technically through the



procedure if they were selected. This guidance includes a lot of knowledge on contractual, financial, technical and social matters thus many social workers were trained to be able to give answers but still communication and trust building has been hard.

3.6.A Communication tools and actions

1. *Digital communication presence;* Gent Knap Op set up quickly a website and blog to inform the public of the project and listed the open call for potential candidates to apply.
2. *Local press;* Press release was distributed to local press outlets such as newspapers, magazines etc.
3. *Flyers and posters;* Gent knap op created a brand identity for the project and produced a series of different hand outs to be able to communicate easily the project that were distributed in the four neighbourhoods. Posters and flyers were hung up in local shops, pharmacies, restaurants, hairdressers, bakeries etc.

4. *Door to Door*; A Communication toolkit and technical information was distributed to every house in the neighbourhood in order to disseminate the project.
5. *On site events and presentations*; Social workers in charge of the communication on the grounds, visited the four neighbourhoods talked to many local stakeholders and intermediaries to inform about Gent knap op. The social workers distributed project leaflets and organized four large information events.

A lot of potential beneficiaries came along to acquire information.

6. *Mobile Info point*; A bicycle transformed into a mobile info point visited many areas around the four neighbourhoods and informed local residents.
7. *One to one exchanges*; After the first part of the project dissemination, private meetings and house visits were organized with the potential beneficiary and the social workers to guide them through the process.

3.6.B Communication with target beneficiaries and users challenge

Neighbourhood participation: Neighbourhood participation and communication is at the forefront of the project. The project developed set of different types of communication tools in order to encourage meaningful exchanges and two-way communication with and between urban neighbourhoods. Not all urban areas reacted in the same way to the presentation of the project. It is interesting to note that some neighbourhoods were more interested and engaged than others, with significant differences in the level of participation. Several reasons may be mentioned: Firstly, urban neighbourhoods with little to no experiences with innovative housing and citizen initiatives and projects or engagement with the municipality through community projects were far less open to participate and, in many cases, doubtful of the project. Whereas urban communities where similar projects with focus on poverty issues and housing had been implemented before and a general knowledge within the community existed about the outcome of these projects. Neighbourhoods with strong citizen-led initiatives showed great interest and participation. Secondly,

each neighbourhood has a distinct socio-ethnic and cultural combination of inhabitants. These issues are an important part of the evaluation to analyse if possibly different approaches maybe acquired or multiple language communication material⁵ needs to be produced.

Guiding through the process: The project aims to guide the participants through each milestone of the project with a personal social worker allocated to each potential candidate. The recruiter builds a trust relationship between the candidate and the project and the municipality in order to assist and explain the project. This relationship is a key objective of the *Gent Knapt Op* project since it's not only the representation of the City of Ghent to the beneficiary but most crucially, most of the success of the project relies on the established trust relationship.

This creates a series of challenges: A significant burden is placed on the social worker to meet the 100-household target and 'engage' enough candidates to participate in the project, while simultaneously have enough technical and communication skills to assist the beneficiary

⁵ The project translated flyers into Turkish, Bulgarian and Slovak.

homeowners throughout the different steps of the project. Particularly the hurdle of the first 2 phases of the potential homeowner applicant to meet the qualification criteria to join as well as the agreement on the details of the renovation works are complicated and require time and perseverance.

3.7 Upscaling

The *Gent Knapt Op* project is the succession of the '*Dampoort Knapt Op*' refurbish project, a pilot project realized in 2015 testing the renovation of 10 homes in one neighbourhood. The learning's and experience gained from the small pilot were most useful for the development of the *Gent Knapt Op* project and illustrates that the project leadership is continually integrating new experience and learning's into their projects. Although the pilot is in the initial stages, the City of Ghent is already looking towards possible ways to broaden the project within Ghent. The City of Ghent and the Public Centre of Social Welfare Ghent are in the process of creating the recurring fund contributing to the sustainability of the project.

3.7.A Upscaling challenge

The *Gent Knapt Op* project has already showed that scaling up is possible and can be done successfully by scaling up from 10 renovated houses to 100 houses. The questions one should explore are: What will the challenges, bottlenecks and obstacles be when scaling -up to 500 or above theoretically? What is the right amount to cover construction costs for more houses? The monitoring and evaluation report will be an important phase to address these questions.

Beneficiary communication and trust: The project team has already highlighted the need to support

Consideration could be given to simplify the selection process and criteria in order to widen the eligible homeowners and reduce the time it takes to understand and commit to the project. In addition, finding alternative ways of informing and mentoring the potential beneficiaries through the processes may reduce the doubts of homeowners and increase participation.

Regarding up scaling these are some of the objectives pointed out by the city and partners for the next phase:

- Broaden the areas of the project to include larger parts of the city
- Encourage different types of beneficiaries that can take part in the project
- Link to the wider housing market and housing support from the municipality for beneficiaries in poor housing to access complementary programmes
- Housing plan funding flexibility

beneficiaries intensively during the beginning phases of the project. As mentioned above the contractual complexity of renovation works creates many insecurities for the homeowners and has caused some to drop-out of the project. In order to mitigate this to continue, a simplification of the process may encourage more participants to feel secure enough to participate and ultimately benefit from a better and healthier home for their families.

Custom Renovation plan and construction support: During the second phase of support, a custom-made housing plan is drafted for each

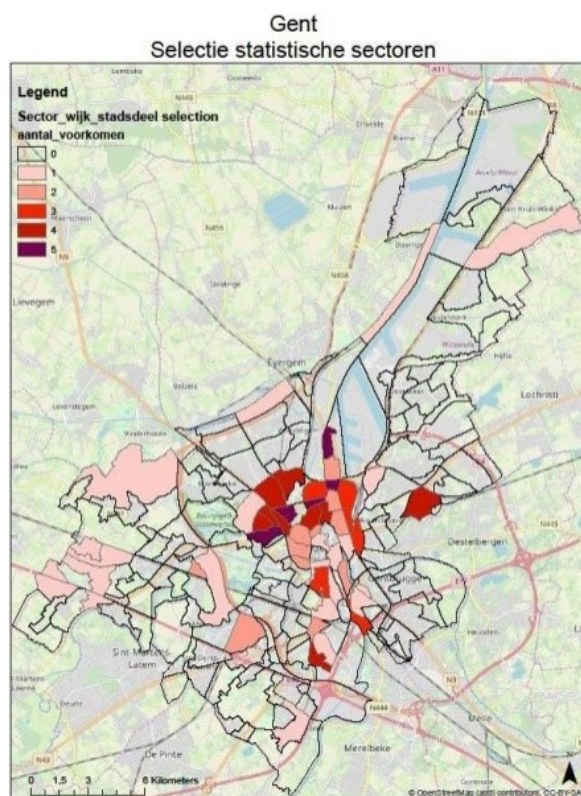
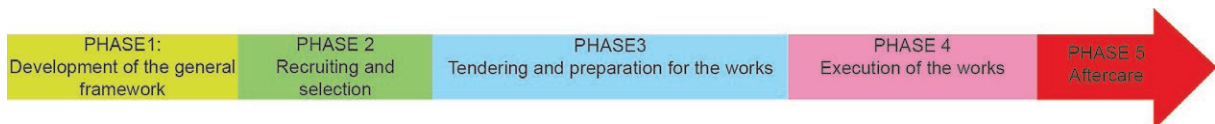
homeowner with the assistance of an architect. It includes the detailed specification of the works to be done, selection of subcontractors and supervision of the works. For small scopes of works, such as heating installations, electrical wiring or replacement of windows this process is well placed. However, homes that are in need of more complex renovation works

such as roof construction or concrete/ structural reinforcement the whole process might become a challenge since residents are not relocated. Additionally, the management arrangements for implementing the renovation for 100 homes will need to adjust when doing so for 500 or more houses adding additional complexity to the programme.

4. PROGRESS

Progress during the first year of the implementation has been swift with many stepping stones and preparatory work already successfully completed. Taking knowledge and experience from the ‘*Dampoort Knapt Op*’ refurbish project as well as experience in managing partner relationships gave the project a great head start at the initiation of the UIA project.

The project has many complexities to address, ranging from the contractual work, the financial support and recurring fund, the building works towards the collaborate design process and communication with the beneficiaries. The project team has already successfully achieved the first piloting of the project illustrating the high level of commitment of all project partners.



Neighbourhood selection and profile criteria: The neighbourhood selection and mapping phase has been completed. It included extensive demographic analysis and housing typology surveys in order to select the final intervention areas. Another criterion was the ‘boots on the ground’. The presence of SIVI and Community

Development Ghent in some areas, and not in others, explains also why some areas were chosen and others not. Four areas were selected meeting the project’s standards. All of them densely populated urban neighbourhoods with many social housing units.

Beneficiary selection criteria: The first open call for the project has been launched and closed in November. A second call with adjusted beneficiary criteria including Captive Elderly Owners and Captive Renters is currently running.

Renovation criteria: A check list and scoring points have been produced to accurately list the renovation plan criteria. Most works include heating installation, electrical installation and roof construction.

Contractual preparation: The contract has been prepared that the beneficiary will sign with the Social welfare department.

Financial preparation for recurring fund; The research has been concluded and the Social Welfare and the city of Ghent are in the process for setting up the fund.

First open call for Beneficiary recruitment and communication: This was realized already in the summer 2019 and now already 25 captive residents have been selected.

Open call for subcontractors: A pool of technicians and subcontractors have been selected to assist in the construction. The beneficiaries will be the ones responsible of selecting their subcontractor.

First signing of Captive residents: *Gent Knap Op* organized an official event in the municipality for all captive residents to meet each other and all partners and sign the contract.

House plan renovations for 25 homes; All 25 residents have agreed on their house plan renovations with the help of the architect.

Initiation of construction: The 25 homes are ready to be renovated.

5. CONCLUSION



The *Gent Knapt Op* project is an innovative pilot project that addresses one of the most crucial challenges of urban living – the lack of adequate, affordable and healthy housing for all.

Through its holistic and co-implementation approach, it addresses not only the provision of adequate healthy housing for vulnerable citizens but also the strengthening of ownership and participation of marginalised citizens, as well as setting up a sustainable funding mechanism.

Within the first year, the project has progressed swiftly and implemented crucial setting up phase, such as the first open call for participants highlighting the outstanding commitment and enthusiasm of the project team. The project's decision-making processes are collaborative and inviting and project tools to manage the

complexity of this project have been successful set-up to work towards the overall aim to make a sustainable impact on the participants' lives. In addition, positive relationships which each of the wider neighbourhood have been established and first beneficiary homeowners are commencing the process of renovation.

Beneficiary communication and selection criteria have proven to be the most prominent challenges experienced so far, especially regarding trust building relationships between the project team and the homeowners. The overall project time limitations and targets play an important role in this. Building trust with the participating families requires time, clear communication and positive feedback. The project team is investing an enormous effort to meet the targets of the project -100 homes- within the UIA timeline.

In the next phase, we are looking forward to *Gent Knapt Op* project realising 45 renovations and launching the new open calls with a wider range

of criteria for beneficiary's selection thus this will contribute to support more families to live in a healthy and safe home.



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.



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