



PROJECT LEGACY AND SUSTAINABILITY

Third MiFriendly Cities Sounding Board

29TH JUNE 2020

Mark Russell & Tamsin Koumis
MigrationWork CIC



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**THIRD MIFRIENDLY CITIES SOUNDING BOARD
PROJECT LEGACY AND SUSTAINABILITY
HOSTED BY MIGRATIONWORK CIC,
29TH JUNE 2020**

On the 29th June, 2020, MigrationWork CIC, acting on behalf of the MiFriendly Cities Project, held its third project Sounding Board on the topic of project legacy and sustainability. Like other Sounding Boards, it drew together attendees from across European projects and cities, including four key speakers with direct experience of the topics under discussion:

Laura Colini, Phd in Urban and territorial studies, Programme expert for Urbact, expert at UIA and independent researcher at Tesseræ Urban Social Research.

Jolien de Crom, Coordinator for Antwerp's youth and refugee projects, and previously project manager of Antwerp's Curant project.

Conrad Parke, of the Centre for Local Economic Strategies in Birmingham, and previously Legacy Officer of the USE IT project in Birmingham.

Marta Siciarek, founder and chair of the Board of Immigrants Support Centre, Gdansk (2012-2018), and coordinator of Gdansk Metropolitan Policy on Integration.

The Sounding Board was facilitated by Mark Russell and Tamsin Koumis from MigrationWork, both of whom work directly on the MiFriendly Cities project, Tamsin supporting Social Innovation grant funded projects, and Mark as communications lead for the project. The session was summarised by Sue Lukes, Director of MigrationWork.

MiFriendly Cities is a UIA funded project aiming to improve migrant integration in the West Midlands of the UK. Sounding Boards are a way to discuss different topics which this project is tackling, to hear about similar experiences and share knowledge across European and UK colleagues. The topic of this Sounding Board was 'legacy and sustainability', by which we mean 'how can the spirit, aims and programmes of a project be continued beyond the project end/UIA funding'? We approached this by posing three starting topics.

SUSTAINING PROJECT NETWORKS, RELATIONSHIPS, AND SUPPORT GROUPS

Networks and relationships can be the glue that makes things happen and creates real change in a project – sometimes more so than the programmes themselves. They exist locally, regionally and internationally and can be equally effective in their own right. But they can also be transient and project-dependent, retaining structure and cohesion only when funding is there to bind them together, aiming at the same defined goals. When project based and local, there are no easy ways to identify these networks, or to sustain them when funding ends.

Partnership projects bring together state and non-state actors: the UIA calls for public and private partnerships, so by its very nature it is looking for the creation of solutions which meet both sets of interests. The MiFC project partnership is made up of 11 project partners including three City Councils, and both profit and not-for-profit organisations. By coming together to achieve shared aims, partnerships offer an opportunity for new relationships to be formed, and for the culture between private, NGO, and state actors to be brought closer together. However, funding plays a huge role in cementing partnerships, and once that funding is removed, partnerships are difficult to sustain, with travel, time and logistics, as well as new projects and requirements, all getting in the way.

International networks (like Eurocities) provide a more consistent network for focused activity and the influence of policy, drawing upon the legitimacy of city authorities and absorbing programme learning across regions. But participation can also be project-based for many participants, which means attendance for some remains dependent on project funding: ‘international managers’ within these networks might therefore occupy important roles which defy project-based limitations. However, it might be that the new ‘Zoom’ culture of Coronavirus has already changed this – creating a meeting culture less dependent on travel and physical presence.

The suggestion to review European-based international networks to look for ways to consolidate effort and focus, rather than create new organisations next to existing ones, is an interesting one, but what frameworks exist to do this?

Good relationships between politicians and the project are often some of the most pivotal for sustaining projects and programmes; securing political (read financial) support means that successful actions can be mainstreamed into annual funding workstreams. In Gdynia, Poland, ‘family assistance’ has been successfully imported from project-based financing to institutional financing, thanks to political buy-in whilst the programme was prototyped at the project level. Relationships take time to develop: the USE IT project in Birmingham learnt that whilst ‘getting stuff done’ ‘under the radar’ enabled quick project progress, early buy in from politicians was key to involving political stakeholders in the testing and prototyping process that projects offer. This may slow the project progress down but can lead to more sustainable buy-in on a political level.

In Barcelona, consensus between different state and non-state actors was built around the 'guaranteed minimum income' initiative, and shows NGO activism working effectively with politicians to gain cross sector support. But in countries and cities, when the political agenda tilts away from a project objective, new difficulties are created. Thus, as the pendulum swings between right and left across Europe, there can be a need to 'retune' messages around migration to ensure political support. Despite this, projects led by NGOs, like community led trusts, welcome public authorities' help, for example to negotiate with private partners, and provide legitimacy and credibility.

'Curing the Limbo' project in Athens, also UIA funded, aimed to influence policy by strengthening the wider project ecosystem with the help of "network training", ensuring knowledge is transferred locally and in other organisations. The idea here was to 'contaminate' other themes and activities with their learning and approach, to ensure that goals are embedded across policy making, and not limited to the particular policy remit of this project alone. This might be more effective than trying to create new structures and focus where none exist.

It is crucial projects look to first identify, and then to present effective innovation and good practice to public authorities in a credible and engaging way, so that programmes stand the best chance of being adopted into mainstream structures and funding – accepting that the network that created the innovation may not last to see it continue. This means working with municipalities early on and always looking for win:win scenarios in the public and private sphere. Another approach is that the project secures further alternative funding to ensure continuity of programmes and key personnel, and the structures that support them – but this often requires additional resources.

Participant networks such as the MiFC Social Innovation 'Network' (a migrant-led network of grant-funded community projects) offer exciting potential, but it must be remembered that individual participants' lives are fluid and sometimes transitory and thus long term engagement may not be possible for all. For the Antwerp Curant project, only 15% of individuals involved in the refugee 'buddy' system remained active in the project network after the project had ended. However, even with low continued engagement, the personal and collective power of grassroots and migrant-led networks such as these can influence change in systems and structures, especially in projects which have a longer time frame. Identifying and supporting key leaders who are able to offer continued engagement – with the right support – is key. This can mean that small numbers of key participant leaders continuing their engagement post-project, can have the potential to have a big influence locally.

So, projects are inherently time-limited, but their influence need not be. Despite the risks inherent in 'projectification', projects do bring about opportunities for conversations, relationships, and even networks between stakeholders who might not otherwise interact. This can lead to learning and thus to change. With more time and resources, we would like to explore further how networks can be identified, leaders best supported, and the 'value' of networks measured.

TOPIC 2

FUNDING STRATEGIES AND SOURCES

Funding is critical to sustainability. Projects should be focused on trying to get successful programmes and activities assimilated and ‘institutionalised’ – embedded into policy and practice via the relevant public authorities and service deliverers. This can be done by sharing the project platform with public bodies (like MiFriendly Cities), including them in programme creation and development, and sharing success and showcasing effective practices at key times. It is also useful and advisable to ensure participants and beneficiaries share the impact of the activity and programme directly with policy makers themselves – allowing human stories to speak powerfully and from experience.

The Antwerp Curant project has managed to sustain its core ‘hosting’ approach to provide housing to migrants using a ‘buddy’ system, post project, albeit on a smaller scale. It has proved to be important to explain the benefits and impact of the project to local authorities, and it was effective for authorities to hear directly from beneficiaries and participants.


Capital funding for things like buildings also have a physical legacy, and therefore longevity of impact. Antwerp have also benefitted greatly from having a dedicated, specialist European funding team, that can continually scan for funding opportunities and have more time than project managers to write up reports and bids. This approach costs money to resource and isn’t an option for most cities, but where possible, it can be effective in keeping a regular flow of funded projects coming through the city.

In Gdansk, project sustainability relies on NGOs sharing and / or moving responsibility for initiatives into the public institutions, so that public sector capacity can be developed and long-term sustainability thus ensured. Equally important is mainstreaming migrants’ rights within general NGO activities, as is a case for gender based violence. Migrant women experiencing violence may seek help at a ‘general’ women’s rights organisation, which recognises - with the City Hall, funding their programme - a cross-discrimination migrant women experience. Immigrants Support Centre ran a project on gender-based violence in 2016 and currently the topic is a part of a general anti-violence agenda of expert NGOs, which is obviously beneficial to migrants, and is strengthening the legacy of 2016 project.

Another approach is the private route - designing sustainable business models that involve the beneficiaries themselves. There are some interesting experiments going on across Europe on innovative funding models (SIBs, community-based VCs, lending schemes, etc). Where does new funding come from, and how can we help participants source and bid for it? We know funding is critical – which is why MiFC has provided seed funding to 30 social enterprises and innovation projects, that have already received training on how to source and bid for future funding. But sourcing additional funding can be a complex process, with many forms and procedures, and in the context of coronavirus the funding environment is even more difficult.

Helping participants transition from project funding to new sources of funding is therefore a good idea, either through training and advice, or by using intermediaries who can support applications and advocate for the projects. Funders want to fund these sorts of activities, but getting them together, using the same ‘language’ as funders and thus fulfilling their criteria for funding, is not easy.

In order to upskill participants to access further funding opportunities outside the MiFC project, the team has worked alongside local funders to teach participants about the culture of giving in UK civil society, helping them to navigate the needs and drivers of funders, and to decode the language and terminology. Since the Black Lives Matter movement, many organisations are reviewing their processes to examine institutional barriers and, in the case of public and private funders, to make funding streams more accessible. Projects can offer the opportunity for organisations to learn with their participants about how to design inclusive processes, as well as helping participants to learn about existing processes and procedures.



POST PROJECT GOVERNANCE AND STRUCTURES, AND THE ROLE OF LEGACY OFFICERS

Our final topic was about more formal governance and structures that can be built to sustain projects, to ensure the issues, organisations and individuals involved are sustained in a more formal way, and linked into policy and practical change. MiFC already has the highly active participation and leadership of 3 city councils, and it is therefore hoped that the learnings of the project can find its way into positive policy change. To help this happen, it was noted that MiFC were scoping a Legacy Officer role to oversee project sustainability and liaise with policy makers.

‘Legacy’ governance must be built in from the start, involving good partners and politicians who feel ownership. In Gdansk, the project did this by focusing on capacity building within current structures and departments, thereby creating mainstream change and thus longer-term solutions.

While insisting on policy change as an outcome for UIA funded project is not feasible for many reasons, it is an important and welcome adjunct to the learning and resources each project creates. But could legacy feature more prominently in bid objectives from the start? While the UIA can’t oblige projects to implement change and guarantee legacy, it is still an important consideration when bids are reviewed and awarded, whether in the form of ‘capacity building’ or something more tangible. Sounding Board participants generally felt that a stronger emphasis on legacy from the UIA would ensure that more projects design structural thinking into the project process, thereby better enabling them to ‘start legacy early’.

The role of 'Legacy Officer' was explored by the group, acknowledging that this role, if used inappropriately, could perpetuate the 'projectification' of the programmes further. Perhaps so, unless they are able to engender systemic legacy focus across a project, or influence policy change to create mainstream activity. As Legacy Officer for the Use It programme in Birmingham, Conrad highlighted three key learnings:

- legacy and sustainability can mean different things to different people and stakeholders, so you must make sure everyone has a similar understanding
- you need 'successful' projects and proof of success to ensure legacy, so you must make sure you gather the evidence and case studies that do that
- successful legacy requires a culture change, focused on delivering solutions to problems faced by the public sector. For example, the USE It project was able to secure long term funding to support a scheme that placed new arrivals with health sector experience into local hospitals, as it helped the NHS meet skills and resource shortages.

Despite projects being designed to end, achieving sustained positive change can still be possible. Stimulating, positive change can happen where there is city authority will, a spirit of 'local collectivity', and where 'changemakers' are sufficiently empowered – perhaps placing advocates alongside participants as they transition from project to post-project funding and support. Other thoughts included creating a space for 'legacy' in the bid document; ensuring legacy is the responsibility of all partners and participants early on, and not a consideration at the end of a project; encouraging local funders and organisations to share in the project and consider their role in bridging the post project gap; and placing even more emphasis on how projects measure and present their evidence of success, to help with public authority and private partnership discussion.

In summary, we asked ourselves again what is 'legacy' and how do we define it? We noted how wide ranging the discussion was, from detailed experience to general observations, from principles to politics. While all projects have a beginning, middle and an end, at their best they can explore innovation and open our horizons, without threatening the established order of things, the status quo.

We identified many areas of legacy:

1. The legacy of a building or structure that can have long lasting physical impact and role, if its use and resources are planned effectively. For MiFC we have the Hope House extension and its use needs to be considered carefully.
2. The legacy of resources, whether learning, briefing papers, or discussion reports like this one, can be disseminated widely and have a long-term impact on subsequent projects and policy.
3. We must ask ourselves if any enduring change has already been created by the project, through partners, objects, and programmes? An example might be the changing interest and support from regional funders in MiFC projects, as they see the worth and credibility of some of our grant seeded projects, run by participants themselves.
4. Is there a project 'Brand' or 'Marque' that has been created, and can participants, partners and authorities draw on that equity now and in the future? Has the project created a positive reputation that has longer lasting impact?
5. The legacy of partnerships, relationships, and networks. How do we map these effectively and keep them going? Is our experience of lockdown in a pandemic evidence that project relationships can be sustained without a travel budget?
6. Disassembling the project to find what is effective. An effective legacy will entail the deconstruction of a project into the most successful and least successful parts, so that prioritisation of resources and the scope of roles like a legacy officer can be done. It is not possible to sustain everything a project is doing, but it is possible to focus on the things that really make a difference.

PARTICIPANT LIST

Speakers

Conrad Parke, Centre for Local Economic Strategies, Birmingham

Jolien de Crom, Antwerp Curant project

Laura Colini, Programme expert for Urbact

Marta Siciarek, MetropolitanPolicy on Integration

Facilitators

Mark Russell, MigrationWork CIC, (MiFriendly Cities partner)

Sue Lukes, MigrationWork CIC, (MiFriendly Cities partner)

Tamsin Koumis, MigrationWork CIC, (MiFriendly Cities partner)

PARTICIPANT LIST

Contributors:

Abbie Draper, Coventry City Council (MiFriendly Cities partner)

Amanda Handisides, Project Manager- Interserve Group (MiFriendly Cities partner)

Anne Stoltenberg, Migrant Voice (MiFriendly Cities partner)

Bethany Finch, Birmingham City Council (MiFriendly Cities partner)

Dajana Vasilj, Coventry City Council, (MiFriendly Cities partner)

Dario Mazzella, Brussels

Dipali Chandra, West Midlands Funders Network

Eleftheria Pita,

Fabio Sgaragli, Fondazione Giacomo Brodolini

Feyrouz Lajili, Eurocities

Helen Lewis – Coventry University, (MiFriendly Cities partner)

Inti Bertocchi, Bologna

Isabella Schneble, Finance Officer, Urban Innovative Actions

Levente Polyak, Eutroplan Research and Action

Mariama Njie-Ceesay, Coventry University Social Enterprise, (MiFriendly Cities partner)

Meryem Abdelhafid, Coventry University

Olivia Everett, Coventry University, (MiFriendly Cities partner)

Paola Seremetis, Thessaloniki

Piotr Wolkowinski, Expert, Urban Innovative Actions

Richard Williams, MigrationWork CIC

Rossella Nicoletti, Eurocities

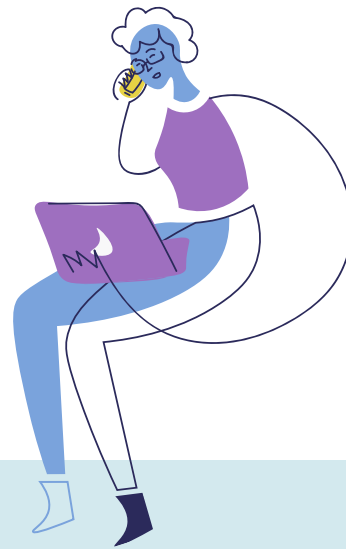
Sara Hasan, University of Birmingham

Shahda Khan, Middlesbrough

Sunairah Miraj, Coventry City Council, (MiFriendly Cities partner)

Zsófia Hacsek, Coventry University

RESOURCES



European Migrant Advisory Board (EMAB)

<https://ec.europa.eu/futurium/en/inclusion-migrants-and-refugees/european-migrant-advisory-board-emab>

Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art – New Mappings of Europe

<https://visitmima.com/whats-on/single/new-mappings-of-europe/>

MiFriendly Cities About Us

<https://mifriendlycities.co.uk/our-journey/>

Curing the Limbo, Athens

<https://curingthelimbo.gr/en/home>

Antwerp Curant project

<https://www.uia-initiative.eu/en/uia-cities/antwerp>

IMPART Project, 2007-9

Increasing the Participation of Migrants & Ethnic Minorities in Employment

<https://www.migrationwork.org/work/impart-increasing-the-participation-of-migrants-and-ethnic-minorities-in-employment>