COMMENTS ON THE JPI URBAN EUROPE AGORA
'From ambitions to local action: Co-designing a programme for urban research, innovation and experimentation,'

By Piotr Wołkowiński[1]

During the recent JPI Urban Europe AGORA dialogue 'From ambitions to local action: Co-designing a programme for urban research, innovation and experimentation,' I made a few of comments based on my experiences as an URBACT lead expert, an UIA expert, as a person responsible for the partnerial relations of the Gdansk/Gdynia/Sopot metropolitan area, or just someone very concerned with the quality of life…

1. **Impact measurement and management**. This seems central today, over and above monitoring and evaluation, but appears absent in the JPI Urban Europe preparatory papers. Work done by the United Nations on the Social Development Goals[2] leads us into the need for real reflexion on the impact of what we do.

- It could/should include establishing some kind of common values/principles at the beginning (something that EU funding does not automatically support or even identify as a strong need),
- identify what we already know and what we think we don't know (instead of (re)diagnosing everything once more),
- identify for whom the impact is going to be measured (this can no longer include 'everybody'),
- train the receivers of the impact measurement, so as to go on to impact management,
- use the results wisely to stimulate improvement, efficiency and replication.

Task forces need to be built around this type of action, some within the action, some just observing, in order to remain distanced. The work on impact should start any action, be present during, and be very active at the end. In no case should it be cancelled due to lack of funds. We cannot continue to act without common thinking and reflection processes. This is especially valid in order to bring in reflexivity (university partnerships) into action-based processes.

Below is a complex analysis of how to go about impact measurement and management, which was worked through with the assistance of Karl Richter for the Benefit of the Boosting Social Innovation URBACT action planning network, which produced a final report "Wellbeing in Cities – a social innovation revolution", linked to this question.

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[2] Examples:
https://www.southpole.com/sustainability-solutions/sdg-impacts-of-investments
https://360impact.ch/en/sdgs-and-impact/
https://karlhrichter.com/about/

Impact Management (for Dummies) Rubric

Functional requirements rubric - for accounting and valuation of stocks and flows relating to intangible assets and capital

Impact [intensity/ methodological/ maturity] Pathways **

Stages of Common Impact Management Journey *		G Agnostic	F Negative Screen	E Positive Screen	D Outputs	C Causal Theory	B Outcomes	A Net impact
Select Pathway		*Don't consider impact*	*Know what you don't want*	*Know what you want*	*Describe what happens*	*Explain why outputs happen based upon specific inputs and actions*	*Enumerate the intended effects of actions on stakeholders*	*Enumerate positive and negative outcomes, both intended and unintended*
1	**Establish Intent**	- .	- Select criteria/ sectors/ themes that must be excluded.	- Select criteria/ sectors/ themes that are desirable.	- Select criteria/ sectors/ themes that are desirable.	- Select criteria/ sectors/ themes that are desirable. stakeholders who will be affected/ targetted.	- Select criteria/ sectors/ themes that are desirable. stakeholders who will be affected/ targetted.	- Select criteria/ sectors/ themes that are desirable. stakeholders who will be affected/ targetted. stakeholders who might be also be affected.
2	**Identify Objectives, Metrics & Indicators**	- .	- .	- Select principles that need to be adhered to.	- Select principles that need to be adhered to. indicators that correspond with intent.	- Select principles that need to be adhered to. indicators that correspond with intent. Theory of Change/ Logic Model.	- Select principles that need to be adhered to. indicators that correspond with intent. Theory of Change/ Logic Model. stakeholders/ beneficiaries and align indicators.	- Select principles that need to be adhered to. indicators that correspond with intent. Theory of Change/ Logic Model. stakeholders/ beneficiaries and align indicators.
3	**Define Targets & Select Strategies**	- .	- .	- Identify benchmarks.	- Identify benchmarks. timing of measurement. targets in format that enables accurate assessment of results. required. measurement.	- Identify benchmarks. timing of measurement. targets in format that enables accurate assessment of results. required. measurement.	- Identify benchmarks. timing of measurement. targets in format that enables accurate assessment of results. required. measurement.	- Identify benchmarks. timing of measurement. targets in format that enables accurate assessment of results. required. measurement.
4	**Measure, Collect & Validate Data**	- .	- .	- .	- Identify measurement techniques and methodologies. self, independent expert, audited. standardised form and data structure. collection.	- Identify measurement techniques and methodologies. self, independent expert, audited. standardised form and data structure. collection. as appropriate.	- Identify measurement techniques and methodologies. self, independent expert, audited. standardised form and data structure. collection. as appropriate.	- Identify measurement techniques and methodologies. self, independent expert, audited. standardised form and data structure. collection. as appropriate.
5	**Analyse & Evaluate Data**	- .	- .	- .	- .	- .	- Capture atribution, displacement, deadweight, drop-off... confidence level. assign pecuniary valuation to outcomes.	- Capture atribution, displacement, deadweight, drop-off... confidence level. assign pecuniary valuation to outcomes. normalise, and optimise the data.
6	**Report & Disclose Results**	- .	- .	- .	- Prepare reports. with independent data aggregators.	- Prepare reports. with independent data aggregators.	- Prepare reports according to industry standard/ norms. with independent data aggregators.	- Prepare reports according to industry standard/ norms. with independent data aggregators.
7	**Use Results to Inform Decision-Making**	- .	- .	- .	- Results form part of primary information actively used by management/ executive team.	- Results form part of primary information actively used by management/ executive team.	- Results form part of primary information actively used by management/ executive team. behaviour change as a result of impact management.	- Results form part of primary information actively used by management/ executive team. behaviour change as a result of impact management.

2. **Methods of distribution of financial resources**. Many years ago, before the large development of EU finance, a project was something which we invented, tried out, it was confirmed as worthy, or not. If it was worthwhile it would become mainstream, permanently financed and secure in its actions. At present, due to EU rules on competitivity we remain within **calls** as a method of fair sharing of financial resources. Experimental actions could continue to be financed in this way, however proven actions, which are appropriately impact measured and managed, should fall into a different category of financial support, allowing them to develop qualitatively, to train their personnel over the medium and long term, and to support similar initiatives elsewhere (transfer and dissemination).

Innovation labs, for example, should be able to receive long term funding, if proved successful, which would have a permanent character, just like regular institutions, getting out of the competition implied in calls. Other well-functioning types of structures/actions/innovations should also come out of the "call" competition, especially on the basis of the public usefulness…

To conclude, it is worth reminding us all, that the rule of open competition collides directly, especially in the Third Sector and Social and Solidarity Economy with the rule promoting partnerships. Both rules have their origin in the EU legislation, however the competition provoked by many Local Authorities (LA), for very small budgets, has had, over the years, a very negative effect on associations and co-operation, co-construction and co-management on the ground. Some LA's have found that proposing alliances to NGO's and social economy structures is an interesting possibility and can be organized through innovative public spending and procurement, such as that proposed by the [Urban Agenda on public procurement](#) (final [Action Plan](#)). Here is a link to my resume of the opportunities that EU legislation gives in the direction of alternative ways to manage impact and its results ([Putting sense into public spending and building partnerships with the private sector](#)).

3. **Training**: I would opt for peer learning, with a strong encouragement to improve everyone's capacity to transpose their professional or even voluntaristic realities to others. It is a well-known fact, that in explaining to others what we do, we largely improve our own understanding of what we do and how we do it. This must be based on and accompanied by practical actions to test and do, with the support of "learning experts", persons shown to have understood the way we learn (with intimate knowledge of contemporary learning discoveries - neurodidactics) and having a proven record. Their role should be only "methodological" and not that of "experts". These methodologies have been tested in many Gdańsk schools, where around 800 teachers have been participating in [peer group learning](#), concentrated not only on their own "workshop", but on the learning process of schoolchildren. This action emerged as part of the cities teacher training scheme, as a result of the My Generation@Work URBACT action planning network. This was just part of the innovative management of Gdańsk shown partly in "[Gdańsk, initial steps towards responsibility sharing](#)" published by URBACT.

4. **Replication, sharing, dissemination:** the quantity of information, good practice and university research available at the present moment, is so enormous, that most smaller local authorities (LA) and many other people miss most of what is important. What is proposed on a daily basis in the internet is only really available to those already in movement and acticely recognizing the added value of collaboration. However, many smaller LA's never get to all this information and knowledge.

Small and medium sized towns are, in many cases lost and "cannot find their way in the forest" of EU produced knowledge. URBACT has been trying to concentrate on smaller cities and towns. The Polish PIM initiative, which was born out of an URBACT stimulated methodology concentrates only on small and medium sized towns, in order to help them, at first at a Polish level, to help themselves. They are also organized in thematic networks. The EU and its partners have to take into consideration how to SIMPLIFY and aerodynamise the EU information and knowledge, allowing more LA's to profit from it. This requires a specific translation/interpretation department, which would "translate" more complex issues into something "attractive" and readable for others. Surely, we must find a way to touch the non-voluntary (initially) towns, which may later show, that they have many things to offer and share.

5**. Aerodynamics of information**: as seen above we are at present inundated with information. What role could wise networks, such as JPI Urban Europe, URBACT or UIA play in making the adequate information simpler and more accessible to small units?