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Housing for immigrants and community integration in Europe and beyond: strategies, policies, dwellings, and governance

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Transversal analysis

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Reviewer: UVEG, UJML

LIST OF ACRONYMS

COTA	Collectif pour l'échange et la technologie appropriée
DAC	Development Aid Committee
EU	European Union
GA	General Assembly
LIP	Lyon Ingénierie Projets
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
MAU	Malmö University
MERGING	Housing for immigrants and community integration in Europe and beyond: strategies, policies, dwellings, and governance
NGO	Non-governmental organization
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
TOC	Theory of Change
UGOT	University of Gothenburg
UJML	Université Jean Moulin Lyon 3
UNIBO	Universita di Bologna
UVEG	Universitat de València
WP	Work package

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1 INTRODUCTION

This report is part of the final evaluation of the Merging project (deliverable 6.3), which is composed of 4 "sub-deliverables":

- o The evaluation report of Caliù Urba, the pilot project in Valencia,
- o The evaluation report of Anna, the pilot project in Gothenburg,
- o The evaluation report of Cocon, the pilot project in Lyon,
- o The transversal analysis, which is presented in this report.

After some exchanges with the consortium members, we decided to do so to facilitate the use of this deliverable. Indeed, it can be interesting to read the evaluation of each pilot separately, or to read two of them simultaneously to make a comparison, or to read the full "package" to get the big picture of Merging and what it has achieved, etc.

The transversal report deals with the three focuses of the final evaluation, developed in 3 different sections, which are the following:

- o **Focus 1 – Working as a consortium**: in this section we analyze our collective and the way we organized ourselves to work efficiently together, and to combine our multiple expertise. We also explain the difficulties and obstacles we met along the way, and the solutions we found to overcome them.

- o **Focus 2 – Transversal summary analysis of the evaluations of the three pilot projects**: in this part of the report, we present the transversal findings arising from the implementation and evaluation of the three projects. We don't present in detail the content of each of these evaluations, since there is a dedicated evaluation report for each pilot project. We simply focus on the essential, to strengthen the transversal analysis with some elements popping-up from the field.

- o **Focus 3 – A practical guide of good practices to support migrants' integration through housing:** in this section, we aim to reflect on transversal axes and questions that have structured the collective reflection all along the Merging project, to identify some concrete and positive practices to develop and strengthen to continuate, replicate and scale-up such initiatives.

As explained in the report, many interviews, workshops, collective meetings, have been organized to gather as much data as possible, to collect both individual and collective views, to cross opinions, identify convergences, divergences, and build an analysis as complete and objective as possible.

Even if it has been written by Cota, as the leader of the WP6, this report reflects a participative and collective dynamic, and aims to present the positions and reflections of the Merging consortium.

2 FOCUS 1 – WORKING AS A CONSORTIUM

2.1 INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

2.1.1 WHY EVALUATE THE CONSORTIUM'S DYNAMIC?

The Merging project is an interdisciplinary research-action program that gathers 10 entities from 6 European countries to work collectively on the link between migrants' integration and access to decent housing. The multi-actor approach, that involves relevant stakeholders with complementary backgrounds and expertise to co-create and share knowledge, practices, and innovative solutions, is accurate to tackle this complex and multidimensional issue.

By combining different types of knowledges (academic, technical, such as architecture, urbanism or building techniques, and methodological), the Merging project aims at integrating and studying all the dimensions of the thematic to design and implement three pilot projects at the local level in 3 different cities: Valencia, Lyon, and Gothenburg. But if working as a consortium has proven its efficiency in various contexts and initiatives, this approach implies numerous challenges.

The Axe 1 of the evaluation is fully dedicated to this multi-actor approach, to:

o Explore the work process of Merging and describe the internal organization of the consortium.
o Identify good practices and challenges of the collaborative methodology.
o Provide recommendations to improve the multi-actor approach as professionals and organizations, beyond the end of this specific project.

2.1.2 METHODOLOGY

The content of the evaluation has been first elaborated by Cota and enriched by the partners during a collaborative workshop held in Valencia, aside the 24 months General Assembly. Participants shared their will to appreciate how they did work together in the same direction but with their own specificities, and how the consortium constituted a space for learning. Evaluating its own functioning as a consortium is not so usual in this kind of projects, but since the partners are looking for scaling up the pilot projects and strengthening their sustainability, this evaluation axes progressively emerge as something relevant and even crucial.

In line with the participative methodology of the project's evaluation process, the Axe 1 relies on the involvement of the consortium's members and their capacity to evaluate themselves as a group, by using a reflexive approach. To do so, 22 bilateral and confidential interviews have been carried out between November and December 2023 to collect feedback from all the entities and people involved. These interviews allowed to collect qualitative data and are completed by other sources such as the proposal, deliverables from all WPs and minutes of meetings.

A cross-cutting analysis has been realized to identify findings shared by several consortium members, which then have been classified into three mains thematic:

o **DESIGN:** How has the project been conceived to ensure a multi-actor approach?
o **EFFECTIVENESS**: How did we effectively work together?
o **IMPACT and SUSTAINABILITY**: What were the effects of the multi-actor approach and can the collaboration last after the closure of Merging?

A focus group has been organized the 18th of January 2024 and was attended by 26 participants. The objective of the meeting was to present the main findings, open the discussions to bring nuances, and reflect jointly on recommendations to improve each partner's ability to work efficiently in such a consortium, as well as our collective capacity to optimize the last months of the project, and the continuation of the pilots. This report is integrating the consortium's contributions to ensure that all points of views are represented.

2.2 MAIN FINDINGS

2.2.1 A DESIGN THAT ENSURES A MULTI-ACTOR APPROACH TO TACKLE A MAJOR SOCIETAL CHALLENGE

Composition of the consortium

The Merging project is a multi-actor participatory research-action process that is composed by 6 universities, 1 private company subsidiary of a university and 3 non-profit organizations that bring complementary expertise and work collectively on the same objective.

10 members from six countries
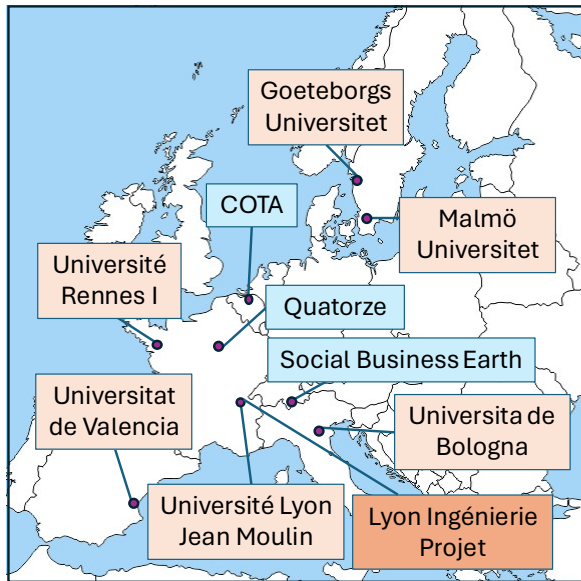
Figure 1: Geographical repartition of the ten members of the Merging's consortium.

The first idea came from the willing of Université Lyon Jean Moulin and Quatorze, who wanted to collaborate on the topic of migrant's housing. A concept note has been produced and send to several potential actors through Europe.

At the end of this prospective phase, ten entities have been convinced to be part of the project and participated to the proposal elaboration.

To ensure a wide geographical coverage, entities have been solicited in six European countries: Belgium, France, Italy, Spain, Sweden, Swiss. We can notice an overrepresentation of French entities, with four members on ten, since the project has been impulse from France, and, to a lesser extent, of Sweden (justified because Sweden is among the top/bottom five countries in the world with the highest share of nationals among its foreign-born population[1]).

Attention was paid to their expertise's complementarity, to limit duplication, optimize specialities and avoid potential conflicts. Hence, the project mobilized seven academic methodologies to lead research that cuts across several areas. Thanks to this diversity, the consortium was able to use the wide panel of disciplines that are composing social sciences, such as sociology, anthropology, demography, economy and legal sciences, management sciences. Merging also mobilized four more

7 academic disciplines and 4 technical expertise

Figure 2: Merging: a multidisciplinary project.

entities to support the pilots' implementation, with technical and methodological expertise, such as architecture, business development, project management or international cooperation, all with a strong social dimension.

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[1]https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/promoting-our-european-way-life/statistics-migration-europe_en

Typology of Merging's participants

☐ University
☐ Non-profit organization
☐ Private company subsidiary of a university
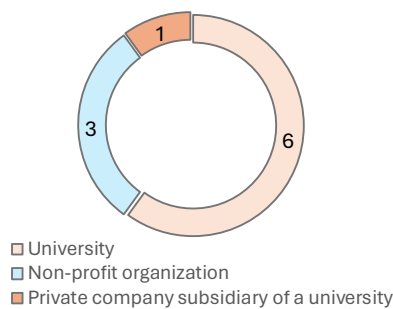
Figure 3: Repartition of the consortium members according to their legal status.

The consortium was also characterized by the diversity of its members' status, coming from the academic field (for six of them), as well as non-profit organizations (3) and private sector (1). This composition is reflecting the nexus between research and action that represents the DNA of Merging. To be even more representative, the consortium could have integrated national migrants' representatives' associations or international NGOs from the beginning to have an expertise on the targeted populations. The involvement of local associations has been done after the feasibilities studies which helped to identify the accurate NGOs. If this strategy cans be considered as a good practise, it created some delays in the pilot's implementation.

If the consortium constitutes the core of the project, it's closely linked to local ecosystems in the three countries where a pilot has been implemented. In each concerned country, the multi-actor approach has also been adopted, mobilizing decision-makers, local authorities, civil society, and associations, private sector, and local communities (see Axe 2 of the evaluation for more details).

Architecture and role repartition

Regarding the short period of implementation (36 months and 4 additional months thanks to a no-cost extension), the mobilization of ten entities and the implementation of three pilot projects constitutes an ambitious objective. The inception phase was indeed very limited, since the first deliverables were already planned for the fourth month.

According to the proposal, the project planned only three months of launching, during which management, coordination and communication tools were elaborated. The busy chronogram and the high number of deliverables to realize during the first twelve months (18) limited the introduction time of the project, which is necessary for partners that have mostly never collaborate to take the time to know each other and create efficient working links. This time was even more necessary regarding the context of global pandemic that limited physical contacts.

Hopefully, the proposal has been conceived to ensure a clear tasks repartition, optimizing the specialities of every entity. The Merging's architecture is divided into eight work packages (WP), that are following a logic and complement themselves, with no task duplication.

The proposal is clearly describing who is involved in each WP, and on each task, clarifying the role's repartition inside the project. To ensure a horizontal organization and avoid the work in silo, each WP has been granted with the lead of one specific member of the consortium and implies several participants[2].

The board below shows that the Merging project is not a compilation of tasks realized successively by several entities, but a project which is deeply fostering collaboration, complementarity, and interdependency in its structure, from the deliverables to the global organization.

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[2] *According to the proposal, Work Packages Leaders review together with the project coordinator deliverables, milestones, risks, and contingency plans related to their work package, coordinate the task and report regularly about the status of its work package.*

WP	TITLE	LEAD	OTHER INVOLVED ENTITIES (AT LEAST 2 WORKING DAYS DEDICATED ON THE WP)
1	Management and coordination	UJML	LIP
2	Review of existing knowledge and practising	UVEG	UJML, Quatorze, Rennes, UNIBO, UGOT, MAU
3	Case studies	UNIBO/SBE	UJML, Quatorze, Rennes, UNIBO, UVEG, UGOT, MAU
4	Feasibility studies	Quatorze	UJML, UNIBO, UVEG, UGOT
5	Pilot testing	Quatorze	UVEG, UJML
6	Evaluation	COTA	UJML, Quatorze, UNIBO, UVEG, MAU
7	Policy and governance - recommendations	UGOT	UJML, Quatorze, UNIBO, UVEG, UGOT, MAU
8	Dissemination and exploitation	UJML	LIP, Quatorze, UNIBO, UVEG, UGOT, MAU

Figure 4: Initial distribution of WP's lead and participation (from the proposal)

However, some weaknesses have been underlined by the interviewees, such as the unbalanced repartition of working days between those who have been working only on research and those in charge of a pilot. Indeed, the proposal indicates that entities involved in the pilot's implementation have more than double the number of working days compared to other partners, which is creating from the beginning an unequal participation between members. As well, it has been noticed that collaboration modalities could have been more detailed by WP's leaders at the beginning of each work package. This clarification could have help to define better how to work jointly on each task, and the role repartition according to the number of working days of each entity as it has been noticed in the proposal.

Drivers of the multi-actor approach

The Merging architecture is also promoting interdependency between its members to foster the joint approach, especially through the multilevel dimension of the program, the research-action methodology and the innovation aspects.

Merging is a multi-scales project, that combines different levels of implementation:

- o Local territories, through case studies (WP 3), and pilots' design and implementation (WP4, WP5).
- o National context, through WP2 (such as the deliverable D2.3. "Overview of refugee's access to housing").
- o European level, through the WP7 and WP8 that target communities, local political stakeholders, financial partners, NGOs, Media and business and academic communities through Europe.

To navigate between these various scales, complementarity and knowledge sharing are key and allow to consider the specificities of each territory pr country and replace them in the wider context of Europe. As well, this composition is proposing a geographical complementarity that is interesting to study the thematic in all its dimensions and to link it with the different level of territories.

The interdependency between research and theory is also a driver that fosters the collective work. Indeed, the pilot's design are based on mappings, case studies and feasibility assessments elaborated in the previous WP by entities that are not systematically involved in the pilots' implementation.

This articulation between research and theory could have been even stronger if members of the consortium that haven't been part of the pilot could use these experiences on the ground to feed their own research. This reciprocal link has been hindered by the short time of the Merging project and the fact that two of the three pilots suffered from important delays, limiting the data collection. The continuity of the pilots after the closure of Merging will be an opportunity for all the involved universities to have access to relevant data, that will for sure support their research and open new academic perspectives.

Furthermore, the innovative approach that is at the core of Merging needs the diversity of the consortium's members to dispose from several points of view, expertise, and experiences. These differences ensure rich discussions, intellectual emulation and collective brainstorming that facilitate the identification of innovative solutions to the challenges faced by migrants, ready to be applied in practice and cover real needs.

2.2.2 A DYNAMIC JOINT PROCESS THAT FOSTERED COLLECTIVE WORK AND COLLABORATIONS

Coordination and management of the consortium

Regarding the complexity of the program, the high number of members and their differences, the Merging's coordination was a real challenge that has been overcome by the rigorous application of governance modalities detailed in the proposal.

The coordination team was constituted by two representatives from UJML, specialized in management sciences, supported by the private firm *Lyon Ingénierie Projet*, that provides support to management and design in projects led by academics. The dedication of three persons to the coordination was accurate to ensure the consequent workload. The three coordinators showed a real complementarity in their experience and specialities.

The coordination was globally appreciated by the consortium members, who highlighted the availability, flexibility, and polyvalence of the coordinators.

The governance modalities have been respected regarding the frequency of General Assemblies (GA), that have been held regularly every six months. These times were used to share information, discuss specific aspects of the Merging's implementation, and constituted major opportunities to ensure the consortium vitality. Logistic discussions were held during GA, and decisions have been taken based on a consultative approach (such as the period of extension, budget reallocations, etc.).

Nevertheless, members shared that the GA could have been more interactive to go beyond the basic share of information and ensure collective times of reflection on strategic aspects of the project (such as advocacy, deliverables dissemination, exit strategies, etc.) to balance the lack of human resources in the WP7, which oversaw the advocacy strategy. More unformal times could also have been planned when GA were held physically, especially to balance the high numbers of online meetings due to the pandemic, limited travel budget and environmental reasons.

As example, the one-month stay of the Valencian team leader at Lyon in November 2023 allowed to have strategic and on-going discussions with UJML on the best modalities to continue the pilots. Even if this exchange time was not planned in the proposal, it was very useful to strengthen the relationship between UVEG and UJML and to identify relevant strategies for the sustainability of the Merging experience.

The two other instances of governance, the Ethical Issues Committee and the Advisory Board have proved to be not so useful, mostly because of the lack of availability or expertise of their participants, who were external to the project and involved as volunteer. Hence, the Ethical issues committee and the Advisory board committee have been held only once, but members of the first one have been individually solicited on an ad hoc basis, especially at the beginning of the project.

Concerning the communication inside the consortium, interviewees underlined that access to actualized information depends on their position in the project. Traditional communication mechanisms have been used, such as mails and a SharePoint, which has been frequently and regularly updated. If a collaborative platform has been created at the beginning of Merging (Slack), it has been underused, then abandoned.

Access to information was considered insufficient by some members concerning the pilots' progress. If members that are directly involved in their implementation held weekly meetings with the local partners, other members felt to be underinformed on their progress between two GA. This can be explained by delays accumulated in the pilots of Lyon and Gothenburg and the fact that slow a tiny achievement doesn't always justify an e-mail, especially to avoid the trap of a dilution of information because of too many solicitations. Other information mechanisms could have been elaborated to guarantee the same level of knowledge between members, at the condition to find the right balance between information sharing and over solicitation.

Involvement and collaborations

Members showed globally a satisfying level of involvement in the consortium and in the project. They alleged to feel strongly concerned because of their individual values, in line with the final objective of Merging for a most welcoming Europe for migrants and refugees. Their participation went beyond a simple "job", but relied on a more personal involvement, seen by some members as an "activism" for social cohesion and diversity promotion. The share of the same vision and ethical principles represented a strong foundation for the consortium and engaged its members to deliver concrete results.

Apart a few exceptions, members have been involved during the whole project, creating a continuity in the relationships. As an example, all the members of the executive committee named in the proposal were still part of the project at its end. But the consortium was also able to integrate newcomers at different stage of the project and give them the opportunity and the legitimacy to be fully part of the dynamic.

The attribution of various WP's lead also fostered the involvement of each member. Overseeing a specific part of Merging and its internal coordination was a clear motivation for a stronger involvement but was also a driver of unbalanced participation between members involved mostly during the research part of Merging, and those who were involved during the whole project through the pilot's implementation. The representants of the first category shared to be less involved once their WP was finished.

Inside the consortium, collaboration between members appeared also to be effective. The creation of bilateral relationships strengthened and complemented the consortium's dynamic (and did not concurrence it). Professionals that didn't know each other a few months before started to invite themselves for specific events or academic residency, to impulse joint initiatives out of the frame of Merging and develop more personal links. Some rare and individual disagreements happened, but mediation and solutions have been founded to overcome them, and no real impact on the consortium was attested.

The lump-sum strategy also offers a flexibility that allows budget reallocations from one member to another. This budgetary solidarity has been effective when the *Malmö Universitat* reversed a part of its budget to UGOT to ensure continuity when one of the team left for a maternity leave. This

budgetary agility also allowed to tackle the various financial challenges of the pilots' construction, such as the rise of the cost of raw materials or the closure of the Ukrainian firm that was selling the boat floats, when UJML transferred 50.000€ to Quatorze.

Finally, even if the global pandemic and the high pace of work during the first year hindered the launch of the group dynamic, the strength of individual involvements, the quality of its animation and the interdependency between WP ensured a concrete participation to the consortium and supported the constitution and the effectiveness of a working platform.

Effectiveness of the joint work

Through its design and the group dynamic, Merging offered many opportunities for its participants to work and think together at different levels. This collaborative implementation was even more remarkable that ensuring a joint work in a 10 members consortium constitutes a real challenge.

Indeed, the Merging project managed to create different spaces to work collectively from its elaboration to its closure. Hence, participative activities have been done through several opportunities, such as:

- o The proposal elaboration, during which each participant was invited to contribute.
- o The WP's organization: leaders were organizing a kick-off meeting to overview and organize contributions inside the same package.
- o The deliverables' elaboration, especially those who were combining several contributions, but also through the share of every document to collect inputs (or validation) from other members.
- o The various meetings held, as opportunities to lead a participatory reflection on terminology, on targeted populations, or on other strategic and logistic decisions related to the project's implementation.
- o The joint organization of the final conference.

The strategic times of COTA's workshops were also a booster for the constitution of a shared vision of common goals for the consortium. Through the definition of a specific theory of change for every pilot, online meetings and regular restitution during the GA, the methodological support brought on social change offered collective moments to think and analyse together, to define steps and milestones, and to identify which impacts the Merging project is reaching.

The participative methodology of the final evaluation was as well an opportunity to take a breath and have an overview of the project. The Axe 1 on the appreciation of the consortium's dynamic gave the possibility to reflect on what has been done together, and how. The Axe 3 on good practises compelled collective intelligence and findings to enrich the joint reflection on the link between integration and housing.

If the joint work has been effective, working with ten different partners on a three-years project means to face several challenges such as additional working time, articulations between stakeholders, longer deadlines, delays due to the collect of several contributions, additional time needed to validate and review each deliverable. Interdependency between WP also constituted a factor of delays, and articulation between specific WP could have been more optimized and their contents more used.

Furthermore, working as a European and interdisciplinary consortium also implies to take in consideration the articulation of different methodologies – that can lead to misunderstood of concepts because each discipline has its own definition, different working cultures, local barriers, and opportunities, hidden agendas, and individual careers strategies. The consortium was able to manage all these differences to ensure an effective and collaborative work dynamic.

2.2.3 IMPACTS OF THE MULTI-ACTOR APPROACH ON THE PROJECT AND ON THE CONSORTIUM MEMBERS

Added values of the interdisciplinary approach

Despite the challenges linked to the diversity of members, efforts made to ensure concrete collaboration worth it, since interviewees stressed the added value of the joint work on the quality of knowledge production. Indeed, the combination of various expertise has given the project the necessary theorical backgrounds regarding its ambitions.

Considering different academic and technical approaches allowed to cover the multidimensional aspect of the thematic, provide cross-cutting analysis, elaborate holistic response to the issue of migrants' housing and support innovation.

Based on the consortium's example, the replication of the principle of collaborative work at the local level appeared relevant and led to the constitution of a multi-stakeholder's methodology to support innovative pilots' implementation.

However, this group collaboration could have been even stronger if the members had led a joint reflection on the interdisciplinary methodology, that has been implemented effectively but not theorized. Furthermore, no collective publication has been done to propose a concrete answer on the link between housing and integration and to summarize the compilation of all the research elaborated in the frame of Merging.

More globally, the consortium missed an opportunity to use the group as a lever for social change because of the lack of valorisation and dissemination of the work done. If the three pilot experiences led at the local level brought changes on the ground, no joint advocacy towards decision-makers has been conducted yet. The organization of the final conference, which will be held in Brussels in April 2024, could represent an opportunity to mobilize and raise awareness of European and local decision-makers.

Effects of the multi-actor approach on members

According to its members, the consortium was constituting a learning space where they acquired several and valuable knowledges. This aspect of the consortium relied on:

- o The diversity of its participants and the complementarity of their expertise.
- o Opportunities that have been organized to reflect and work together.
- o The space accorded to concertation, knowledge and experience sharing.
- o The reciprocal support to involve new thematic or to integrate new dimensions.

Members indeed describe the project as a rich experience, where they develop reciprocal learning on different subjects and at different levels of the organisation. The learnings depend on one's speciality, but most participants indicated to have gain or strengthen their knowledge on:

- o Different academic fields.
- o The research-action methodology.
- o The thematic of the link between housing and integration.
- o Project's implementation, so "how to translate theory to practice".
- o Participative methodologies and changes-oriented approach.
- o Technical aspects related to architecture.
- o Local and national contexts linked to housing or migration.
- o Etc.

Beyond the share of learnings, the consortium was able to create its own knowledge. First, participants worked on a common understanding of the problematic, including a common glossary, concepts' shared definition and scope of research. But they also learnt to "work together", through the Merging experience. The project gave an opportunity to strengthen capacities to elaborate and implement jointly a complex initiative, to learn how to create and maintain a group dynamic, to adapt together to potentialities and challenges. This learning process is particularly valuable since multi-actor project are increasing.

Merging also provides its members with an enhanced legitimacy. Some of the interviewees underlined that working inside a multi-actors EU-funded project is valorising and opens perspectives and opportunities for the future. It can generate or facilitate access to new fundings, or major programmes. For the members involved in the pilots, the experience is also strongly strengthening their position at the local level by enhancing their credibility and replacing a grounded innovative project in a wider scope of intervention at the European level.

Risks and opportunities for the collaboration 's continuity

Members shared their will to maintain the group dynamic or at least bilateral partnerships after the project's closure. This continuity appears even more important to keep supporting the pilots' implementation and transfer them to relevant entities, to valorise the work done and to promote a new social model of integration that relies on access to housing. A project of joint article between UJML, UVEG and Quatorze is on-going showing the members' willing to maintain their collaboration.

This wish is facing several risks that can affect the sustainability of the consortium's dynamic. Numerous challenges exist and have been mentioned by interviewees, such as:

- o The lack of availability, since all members are facing a consequent workload,
- o The lack of opportunities, since the consortium's dynamic is supported by meetings, GA, pilots' implementation, and joint deliverables.
- o The lack of additional fundings, which are necessary to ensure the continuity of the collaborative methodology.
- o For some members, the interdisciplinary approach is sometimes not understood, supported, or appropriated by universities.

These challenges are strengthened by the fact that no exit strategies have been conceived yet. However, the focus group organized the 18th of January 2024 to share the main findings of the Axe 1 of the evaluation has initiated several discussions that will maybe result in joint publications, exit strategy elaboration or modalities definition of the consortium's continuity.

2.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

To ensure the participative methodology of the evaluation, the previous findings have been presented to the consortium's members and discussed with them. An interactive exercise has been organized, to support a joint reflection on recommendations with the objective to foster the collective work.

Even if all of them won't be implemented during the short time remaining before the closure, these recommendations will at last be useful for future projects.

Using a collaborative platform, members were invited to contribute and share ideas and good practices by working on six main categories. These recommendations have been completed by reflections shared during interviews and additional elements added by the COTA's team.

1. **Ensure collaboration and group identity**

2. **Create opportunities to work and think together**

3. **Go beyond the combination of various expertise (1+1 = 3)**

4. **Optimize meetings and workshops**

5. **Use the consortium's potential for dissemination and advocacy**

6. **Maintain exchanges and collaboration after the Merging's closure**

Figure 5: Participative exercise of recommendations' identification.

Ensure collaboration and group identity

The success of a consortium relies mostly on the willingness of its participants to be fully involved and to dedicate time. A strong engagement facilitates collaboration and strengthen resilience to overcome challenges. To facilitate this engagement, some actions can be done.

Members' identification: Ensure complementarity and assess motivation.

Project beginning : Take the time to learn how to work together.

Governance: Define modalities and clarify roles and responsibilities.

Collective dynamic: Organize a team building to favour the sense of belonging.

Collaboration and group identity

Relationships: Ensure informal times and events.

Socialization: Limit online meetings for longer face-to-face meetings.

Group visual identity: Define a design chart and harmonize deliverables.

Conflict prevention: Ensure reactive mediation in case of disagreements.

Figure 6: Recommendations to ensure collaboration and group identity.

Create opportunities to work and think together

Being a consortium is not enough to ensure an effective collaborative work. If the Merging project succeed by giving opportunities to foster a joint work, following recommendations are going further to strengthen partnerships, effective involvement and guarantee a smooth communication.

Internal communication: Ensure proactive exchanges of each team's progress.

Field visits: Invite members on each field to meet local stakeholders.

Create opportunities to work and think together

Diversity: Anticipate differences in working cultures and methodologies.

Articulation: Reflect the link between territory, consortium and transdisciplinary.

Figure 7: Recommendations to create opportunities to work and think together.

Go beyond the combination of various expertise

Combining expertise doesn't have to be an addition of specialities but must create a new holistic expertise feed by each competency. To do so, a reflection on the multi-actor approach can be initiated.

Representativeness:
Ensure a diversity of expertise (with the participation of NGOs).

Go beyond the combination of various expertise

Transdisciplinary:
Theorize and valorise how various expertise create a new knowledge.

Common base:
Ensure a common understanding of main concepts.

Joint work:
Organize joint initiatives and elaborate collective documents.

Figure 8: Recommendations to go beyond the combination of various expertise.

Optimize time, meetings and workshops

Getting involved in a consortium implies to dedicate more time than working individually. Because available time is a rare and precious resource, some practices allow to manage efficiently the meetings spent together.

Anticipation:
Share information in advance and record the minutes.

Optimize meetings and workshops

Diversity:
Vary the meetings format and innovate the content.

Prioritization:
Hierarchize information to avoid overload.

Working groups:
Organize small groups and hold specific thematic meetings.

Participatory animation :
Foster participation through interactive methodologies.

Carbon footprint:
Limit the environmental impacts of a European project.

Figure 9: Recommendations to optimize time, meetings, and workshops.

Exploiting the consortium's potential for dissemination and advocacy

The consortium combines participants' networks and expertise, which must be fully optimized to ensure a wide dissemination at local and European levels. Several actions can give the needed visibility to generate change.

Strategy:
Create a specific group in charge of a dissemination plan.

Use the consortium's potential for dissemination and advocacy

Dissemination:
Identify key persons and how to reach them.

Capitalization:
Transform the Merging experience into sharable knowledge.

Advocacy:
Disseminate the experience through a joint political advocacy.

Visibility:
Elaborate visibility supports to promote the main findings.

Sustainability:
Ensure civil society and political appropriation/transfer.

Figure 10: Recommendations to exploit the consortium's potential for dissemination and advocacy.

Maintain exchanges and collaboration after the Merging's closure

The dedicated period of the Merging project is too short to reach all its ambitions. To provide support to pilots, ensure the dissemination, and fully benefit from the consortium's effects, some actions can be taken to ensure the persistence of partnerships.

Exit strategies:
Identify early exit strategies and adapt them progressively.

Partnerships continuity:
Create strong and sustainable links with local strategic actors.

Maintain collaboration after the Merging's closure

Communication:
Maintain continuous and updated information sharing.

Collaboration:
Keep collaborating on scientific productions, workshops or events.

Figure 11: Recommendations to maintain exchanges and collaboration after the Merging's closure.

3 FOCUS 2: TRANSVERSAL SUMMARY ANALYSIS OF THE EVALUATION OF THE 3 PILOTS PROJECT

In this section, we present the transversal analysis elaborated based on the full evaluation of the three pilot projects. Each pilot benefits of a detailed and full evaluation, but it makes sense to analyse them with a common lens, to identify transversal lessons learned and recommendations, to replicate and scale-up this kind of innovative initiatives.

3.1 SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

This section gives an overview of the evaluative dynamic for the three pilots, which can be shortly described as the following:

•A constellation of flats in the historical center of Valencia, with a common place to meet •8 renovated and furnished flats •A common space	•A floatting living unit in a vibrant old industrial neighborhoud •1 houseboat •A floatting neighborhood	•A mixed village of tiny houses and others •7 tiny houses •A common yurt
« CALIU URBÀ » **VALENCIA**	**« ANNA »** **GOTHENBURG**	**« COCON »** **LYON**
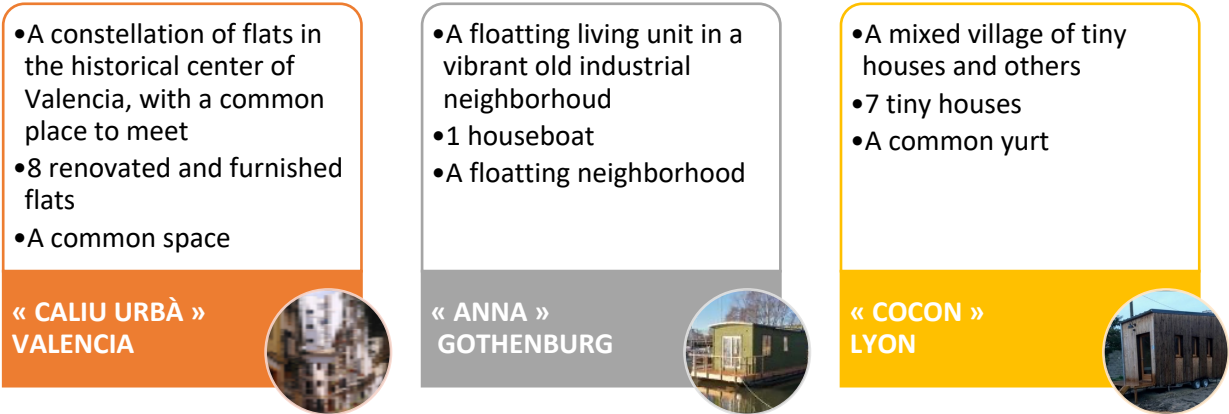
Figure 12: Brief description of the 3 pilot projects.

Regarding the methodology, this section, as the dedicated evaluation of each pilot project, relies on the 6 evaluative criteria of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) - Aid Development Committee (DAC), to which we added the criteria of "innovation".

Relevancy	**Coherence**	**Efficiency**
Effectiveness	**Impact**	**Sustainability**
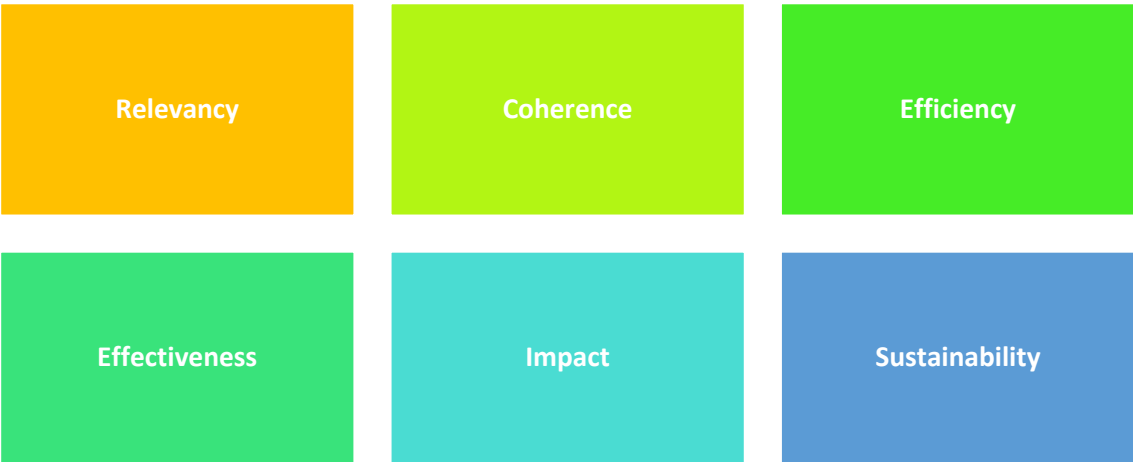
Figure 13: The 6 OECD-DAC criteria.

The data collection and analysis process are detailed in each pilot's evaluation report, but here are the main data collection canals used for these evaluations:

	GOTHENBURG	LYON	VALENCIA	TOTAL
FIELD VISITS	1	2	2	**5**
INTERVIEWS	8	12	19	**38**
FOCUS GROUPS	-	1	1	**2**
WORKSHOPS	1	1	2	**4**

Figure 14: Data collection modalities for the 3 pilot projects.

Since this evaluation is not an external one, but an internal and collaborative process, it has been highly participative, and a wide panel of stakeholders and people were mobilized to cross views and perspectives. The available documentation was also consulted for each pilot, to triangulate as much as possible the data gathered through interviews, focus groups and workshops.

3.2 FINDINGS

3.2.1 RELEVANCY

The three locations of the three pilots share some context similarities, such as being implemented in attractive cities/countries for migrants, in a context of pressure on the housing market, with an impact of restricted European migration policies and a lack of confidence in politics to address the issue of migrants' housing.

Taking these similarities into account, they develop a similar global strategy, which combines innovative housing solutions, a device to foster social integration, an important participative dimension, and a high level of adaptation to each location specificities.

Despite their specificities, the three projects present common added values, such as the design of multidimensional solutions (global support, multi-actor strategy, multi-level project), an important field work based on academic research, with a continuous support from universities (UVEG, UGOT, UJML), a combination of several expertise (technical, social, architectural, etc.) and an inclusive approach rooted in empowerment processes, in which migrants are fully considered as actors of change, both at their personal level and at the community level.

3.2.2 COHERENCE

The pilots are aligned with the Charter of fundamental rights of the European Union and its Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion. They are also in line with different level-governance frameworks (national, regional, municipal) and some local legislation. We can notice here that in Gothenburg, the project is exploring what the local stakeholders call "a grey zone", which is living on houseboats. Even if regulation do exist, this way of living is not yet totally framed by rules and legislations.

The three projects are in resonance with some local dynamics supported by civil society, and they had developed synergies with some of them. Due to their innovative character (and the short timeframe), no duplication of this pilots has been noticed yet, neither among their direct ecosystem or at a broader scale. However, synergies have been ensured through a multi-actor strategy and the involvement of

various local stakeholders, in a search of complementarity. New connections have even been established between stakeholders from different countries involved in different pilots.

3.2.3   EFFICIENCY

The **budget management has been globally efficient within the three pilots**, with many challenges to face and difficulties to overcome. We have observed that the stakeholders and partners involved in these initiatives have reduced project management costs by doing extra hours, multitasking, etc., even if the lump-sum rule allowed budgetary flexibility.

This flexibility doesn't mean that extra funds can be available on the way if needed, but that transfers between Merging's members were facilitated, as it was the case in Lyon and Gothenburg to face the raising price of building materials, notably due to the unexpected war in Ukraine. The partners also managed to optimize existing resources by using recycled material, donations, or by soliciting some extra fundings, etc. It's important to notice here that these projects are experimental ("pilots"), so they are generating more costs than a "mass production".

The three projects were **quite ambitious compared to the timeframe** of Merging; it would have been complicated, not to say difficult, to achieve more within three years. Indeed, the operational phase was linked to the academic research, and didn't start from the very beginning of the project, as it was planned in the proposal. It could have been possible to do differently, but the efforts provided, and the solution found to face and overcome the many difficulties met within the three pilots appears like a maximum, regarding the political and technical issues that have generated important delays.

Local partnerships were at the core of the three local dynamics and were an important factor of efficiency. The local involvement had helped to get some additional funds, to obtain free dwellings appartements, to get some free or low-cost material, to access some key persons and organizations, etc. Despite the political changes observed during the project, the turnover which occurred in some local organizations, and the variable commitment of some local actors, the three pilots have succeeded in identifying, mobilizing, and optimizing a relevant and effective network.

3.2.4   EFFECTIVENESS

The expected results of the pilots haven't been achieved as they have been designed in the logical frameworks, mainly due to political and technical issues. Nevertheless, some notable achievements can be observed, which are highly singulative compared to the resources available (time, budget, people), and to the difficulties faced.

Thus, we can identify:

| **16 livable housings** ready to be (8) or already (8) occupied | **3 multi-actor local networks** (with different levels of structuration) | **Several dozens** of inhabitants' effective mobilization | Social follow-up provided to **18 people** (Valencia) |

Figure 15: Main results achieved in the Merging's pilots.

3.2.5 IMPACT

Impact is a long-term process and should be evaluated ex-post, a couple of years after the end of the Merging project. However, we can already identify some positive effects arising from the three pilots project and concerning different audiences, which can be summarized as follows:

DECISON MAKERS
- Involvemnt in mlulti stakeholders dynamics
- Awareness raised towards new housing solutions

LOCAL COMMUNITIES
- Experience of participative democracy
- Evolution of their perceptions about migrants and housing
- Improved resilience and social cohesion
- New individual skills

MERGING PARTNERS
- Legitimacy improvemnt (producing knowledge AND concrete actions)
- New perspectives of collaboration
- New individual and collective skills
- Consolidation of the networks

MIGRANTS
- Living conditions improvement for 18 (and potentially, +/- 30) migrant people
- Mental health and well-being
- Autonomy and empowerment
- Capacity to project themselves in the future
- Sense of belonging

Figure 16: Main effects generated by the pilots.

3.2.6 SUSTAINABILITY

Like impact, sustainability should be evaluated ex-post, to observe concrete lasting effects, or results, coming from the project. Nevertheless, we can already highlight some factors of sustainability, such as the existence of various scenarios for each pilot after the Merging's closure, with different exit strategies (identification of new fundings opportunities, progressive transfer to local entities, possible extension/duplication for other publics such as students), an existing capitalization and promotion process of the three experiences (through publications, colloques, events, etc.), the optimization of the data collected to feed future research, and a strong mobilization of some local actors.

Some risks are also to consider regarding sustainability. Thus, the partners have identified a possible insufficient political appropriation, the threat of political changes, with a raise of far right politics, a certain lack of visibility, since these three pilots are small projects, the threat of a fading commitments

of local actors (especially in the case where pilots meet difficulties to live autonomously, and/or to be replicated or scaled-up), a lack of funds to keep the dynamic alive, and some technical limits of the chosen solutions.

3.2.7   INNOVATION

Innovation was a key notion within Merging. The aim was not to be innovative by creating totally "new" things, but to be innovative to address the issue of housing for migrants, by designing, testing, and implementing solutions that have not been developed in this way before.

In this state of mind, innovation has been putted in some specific dimensions of the pilots. They are innovative through:

- o   The design of the housing solutions,
- o   The promotion of innovative ways of living,
- o   The presence of a common space and/or a neighbourhood dynamic on the sites,
- o   The local and multi stakeholders' mobilization,
- o   The concrete involvement of inhabitants of the neighbourhood,
- o   The holistic and tailormade social support proposed,
- o   The locally rooted dynamization of residential, historical, or industrial areas.

This innovative way of doing responds to local problematics but support also global issues' responses such as migrations' contribution to development, climate change adaptation integrated in social policies, promotion of diversity as a driver for social cohesion, etc.). Finally, these innovations are made to be appropriated, replicated, and scaled up.

3.3   RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations have been elaborated collectively by the Merging partners and some of the local stakeholders involved in the pilot projects, during an online stakeholders' forum held on 22 March 2024. After a presentation of the main findings arising from the crossed analysis of the pilots' evaluations, the main question to answer was:

> *How to disseminate, scale-up and replicate the pilot projects?*

6 categories of actors have been suggested to the participants to organize their contributions:

European Union	National authorities	Local decision makers
Host communities	Social workers and civil society	Academics and Merging partners

Figure 17: Actors targeted by the recommendations' participative exercise.

5 blocks of recommendations came out from this collective work, which are the following:

1. Optimize the Merging or existing networks

•Disseminate widly and promote new social models, and identify synergies if possible.

2. Keep on producing knowwledge

•Produce scientific knowledge to better understand the effects on the new social model.

3. Change the narrative

•Promote new ways to consider welcoming policies and highlight the benefits of migration on development.

4. Engage the decision-makers

•Use convincing arguments to get strategical and financial support from duty-bearers.

5. Ensure a favourable environment to replication

•Mobilize supportive conditions to facilitate the pilot's replication.

Below, we present the recommendations for each block, and a table to link these recommendations with the different actors identified.

3.3.1 OPTIMIZE THE MERGING OR EXISTING NETWORKS

OBJECTIVE: Disseminate widely, promote new social models and identify synergies if possible.
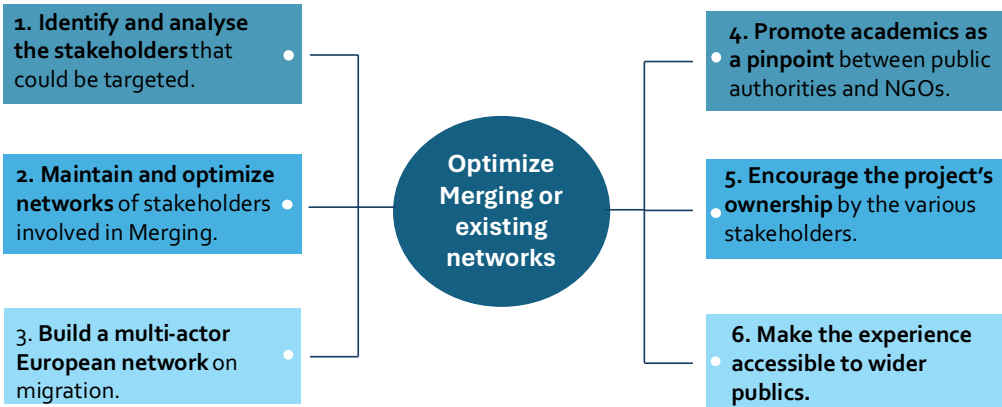
Figure 18: Recommendations to optimize existing networks.

Recommendations	European Union	National authorities	Local decision makers	Host communities	Social workers and civil society	Academics and Merging partners
1. Actors' map and analysis			●		●	●
2. Networks' optimization			●	●	●	●
3. Multi-actor European network			●		●	●
4. Academics as pinpoint						●
5. Project's ownership			●	●	●	●
6. Vulgarization						●

3.3.2   KEEP ON PRODUCING KNOWWLEDGE

OBJECTIVE: Produce scientific knowledge to better understand the effects on the new social model.
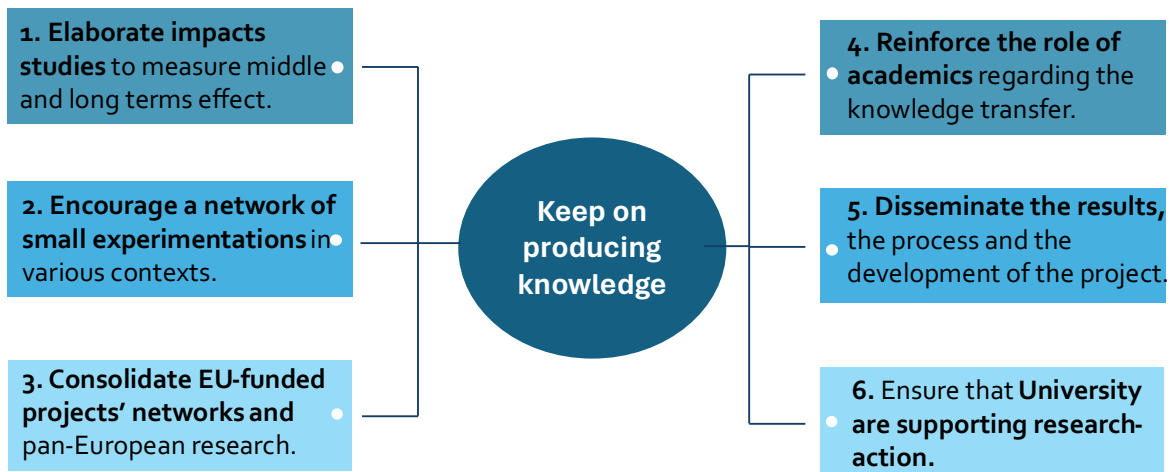
Figure 19: Recommendations to keep on producing knowledge.

Recommendations	European Union	National authorities	Local decision makers	Host communities	Social workers and civil society	Academics and Merging partners
1. Impacts studies/evaluation	●	●	●	●	●	●
2. Small experimentations		●	●		●	●
3. UE-funded projects' network	●					●
4. Knowledge transfer						●
5. Disseminate results and process						●
6. Promotion of research-action						●

3.3.3 CHANGE THE NARRATIVE

OBJECTIVE: Promote new ways to consider welcoming policies and highlight the benefits of migration on development.

1. Promote housing as a fundamental right for all, including migrants.

2. Emphasize the positive effect of migration on global and local development.

3. Valorise the experience as a **solution for national housing issues**.

Change the narrative

4. Highlight the benefits of welcoming policies on the **districts' dynamization**

5. Demigrantize" housing schemes and "migrantize" participatory process.

6. Involve local actors in the definition of key messages.
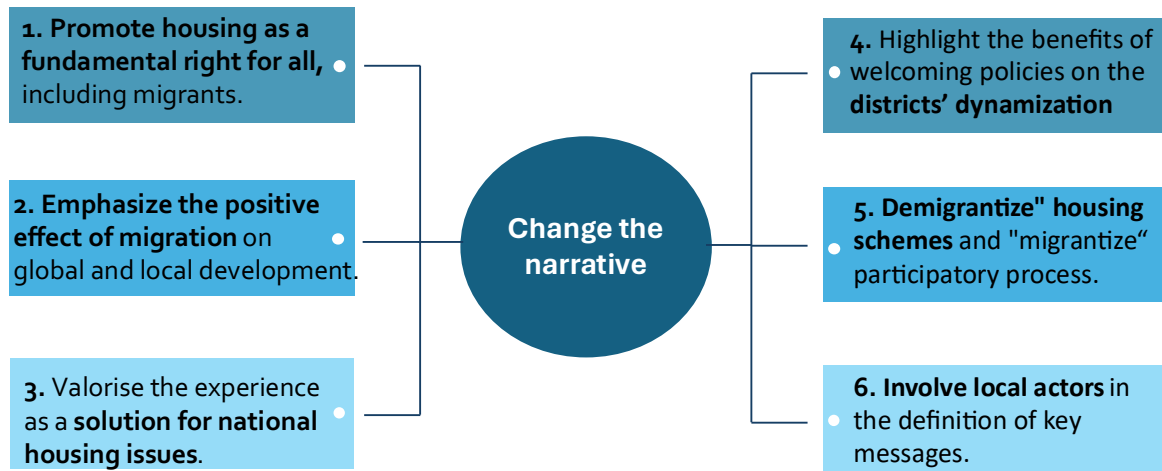
Figure 20: Recommendations to change the narrative.

Recommendations	European Union	National authorities	Local decision makers	Host communities	Social workers and civil society	Academics and Merging partners
1. Fundamental right for all	●	●	●	●	●	●
2. Positive effect of migration	●	●	●	●	●	●
3. Solution for housing issues	●	●	●		●	
4. Districts 's dynamization	●	●	●	●	●	
5. "Demigrantize" schemes	●	●	●	●	●	●
6. Participative key messages definition			●	●	●	●

3.3.4 ENGAGE THE DECISION-MAKERS

OBJECTIVE: Use convincing arguments to get strategical and financial support from duty-bearers.

1. Target **European political mechanisms** to impact multi-levels decision-makers.

2. Find a facilitation to reach and **mobilize national decision-makers**

3. Communicate to all concerned institutional departments.

Engage the decision-makers

4. Use the **legitimacy of academical research** to promote social innovation.

5. Underline the **budgetary efficiency** of multi-actor social projects.

6. Valorise the **rebuilt of links and trust between politics and citizens.**

Figure 21: Recommendations to engage the decision-makers.

Recommendations	European Union	National authorities	Local decision makers	Host commu-nities	Social workers and civil society	Academics and Merging partners
1. European mechanisms	●		●		●	●
2. Reach national decision-makers	●					●
3. Communicate transversally		●	●			●
4. Legitimacy of academics		●	●			●
5. Budget efficiency promotion	●	●	●			●
6. Rebuilding trust in politics	●	●	●	●	●	●

3.3.5 ENSURE A FAVOURABLE ENVIRONMENT TO REPLICATION

OBJECTIVE: Mobilize supportive conditions to facilitate the pilot's replication.
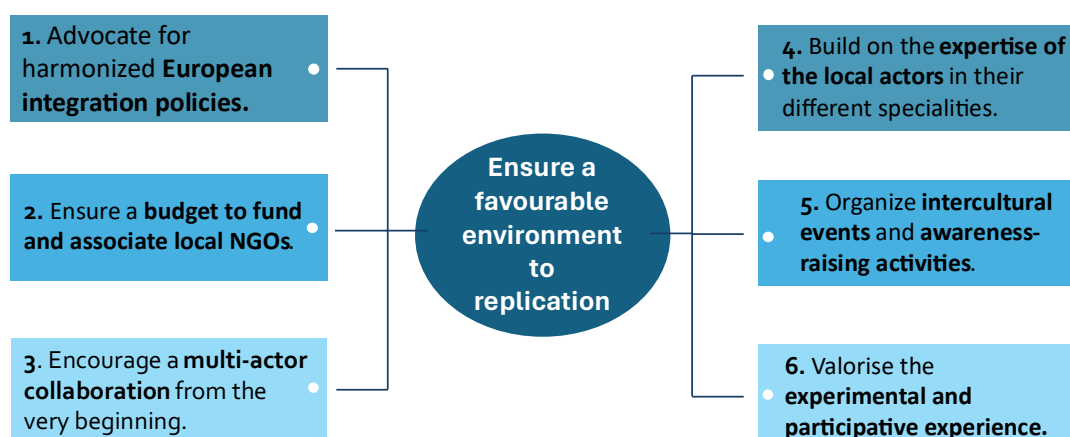
Figure 22: Recommendations to ensure a favourable environment to replication.

Recommendations	European Union	National authorities	Local decision makers	Host commu-nities	Social workers and civil society	Academics and Merging partners
1. Integration policies harmonization	●	●	●	●	●	●
2. Budget for local NGOs		●	●		●	●
3. Collaboration and co-creation			●	●	●	●
4. Build on local expertise			●	●	●	●
5. Intercultural and awareness-raising activities			●	●	●	●
6. Experimental dimension			●	●	●	●

4 FOCUS 3: A PRACTICAL GUIDE OF GOOD PRACTICES TO SUPPORT MIGRANTS' INTEGRATION THROUGH HOUSING

4.1 INTRODUCTION

4.1.1 SCOPE

The Merging project is an interdisciplinary research-action program that gathers 10 entities from 6 European countries to work collectively on the link between migrants' integration and access to decent housing. By combining different types of knowledges (academic, methodological, and technical, such as architecture, urbanism or building techniques), the Merging project aims at integrating and studying all the dimensions of the thematic and to design and implement three pilot projects in three different cities: Valencia, Lyon, and Gothenburg.

After 40 months of implementation, Merging constitutes a rich learning experience concerning the multiple links between integration and housing. This section of the evaluation report is compelling the main findings, lessons learned and good practises of the project to transform the Merging experience into shareable knowledge.

Hence, the main objective of this section of the report is to provide orientations on how to implement such a project in which housing is the starting point of an individual holistic integration process that ensures social bonds with host communities, with a focus on the promotion of a participatory local democracy model. More generally, this section aims at disseminating a model of social cohesion, social justice, and sustainable development, where diversity and human mobility are constituting a wealth and an added value for European societies.

The section is targeting a wide audience of persons and entities that can be interested by the concepts of integration, social cohesion, community approach, local animation, participatory democracy, etc. This third part of the evaluation process is designed to support the work and the reflection of social workers, local and national decision-makers, duty-bearers, civil society, NGOs, local communities, etc.

This section is providing practical guidance directly learned from the Merging experience but is not a step-by-step strategy to follow closely. The lesson learned and good practises shared in this part of the report must be adapted to contexts, opportunities and challenges faced at each local level.

4.1.2 CONTENT

Housing is considered as the first, maybe the most important, step of the integration process. The location of the house determines closely the direct environment in which migrants are evolving, by giving an anchoring point from which they can create social relationships with the neighbourhood, get familiar with the services and organization of the district, and participate to collective activities. This "communitarian dimension" is necessary to fully complete the socio-economic integration. Thanks to the research-action dimension of Merging, the three pilots constituted an opportunity to test the theoretical framework that has been developed in research and appreciate the viability of new approaches and innovative social models. The analysis also provides some advice to ensure that the project cans support concrete social and political changes.

Based on the collective intelligence of the Merging members, the document is exploring the impacts of a decent housing on the integration process, then provide guidance at different levels of

intervention: the individual level, focused on migrants, the communitarian level, focused on host communities and the strategical level, relating to the different drivers of social change.

4.1.3 METHODOLOGY

The guide reflects the main findings of the Merging project that have been identified through academic research and pilot implementation in three various territories and contexts, but also on the previous experience of each stakeholder. To collect data and experience, a questionnaire with 9 questions (see Annex 2) has been shared to all the Merging members, and their contributions have been discussed during a focus group held online the 16th of February 2024. Members were then invited to read the draft, share comments, and complete the document.

4.2 EXPLORE THE LINKS BETWEEN INTEGRATION AND HOUSING

4.2.1 IMPACTS

Build an integration strategy from the housing as a starting point showed convincing results, since having access to a decent place to live in leads to several complementary impacts. First, access to housing means to have a **formal address**, which supports registration, access to documentation and obtention of a **legal identity**.

A decent house is also constituting a **shelter** for people in situation of vulnerability, preventing them from being homeless and exposed to **violence and abuses**, or from dilapidated dwellings that can affect badly physical **health and security**.

Figure 23: Impacts of a decent housing on the integration process.

Living in a formal place helps to be grounded in a specific area and to **access to basic and local services**, such as education, health, culture, and social activities. A formal address is also necessary to search for a job and to get rest after a harassing working day.

Plus, a decent housing is an important driver for **well-being and mental health**. It contributes to the feeling of **stability and anchoring,** avoiding mental tiredness linked to a migratory journey with all its uncertainties. **Privacy** also constitutes to the feeling of integration: inviting selected friends or relatives, cooking when and what they want, or choose the TV program are little actions but contribute to mental serenity and to the sensation of being "at home" and at the good place.

Having an address is also the first step to be part of the local society: appropriating the district (its streets, shops, services, or transportation) and creating **social bonds** with the neighbourhood provide a **sense of belonging** and help to integrate the local hosting community, which is a first step before becoming an **active member**.

Having access to all these dimensions leads to an **empowerment**, starting from a point where migrants are considered like "beneficiaries", depending on social follow-up and solidarity, to a full actor of change and part of the community. Combining social and professional autonomy with **self-esteem** and self-confidence supports them to pursue their personal life and family itinerary as they wish, with the necessary **personal resources** to do so.
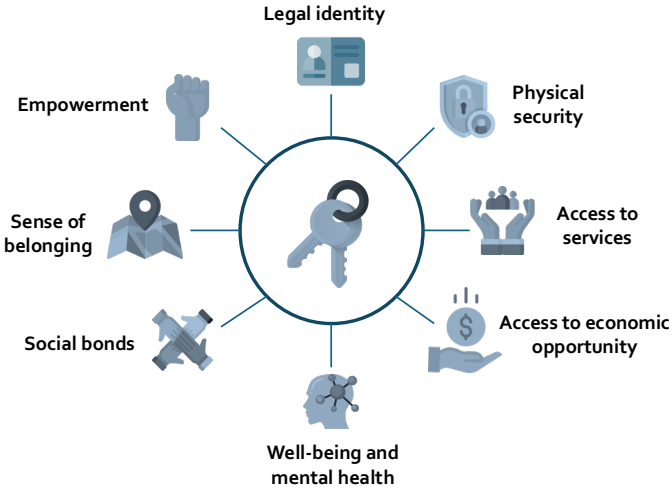
4.2.2 TRANSVERSAL PRINCIPLES

Adaptation and agility

Legislation, political situation, populations, culture and rights and duties are specific from a country to another, and sometimes from a location to another. The period is also a driver that can modify the context, and we must keep in mind that all situations will evolve, sometimes very quickly. To optimize the chance of success, all interventions should ensure a previous and deep analysis of the context before designing any strategy or activity. During the implementation, projects must elaborate frequent context analysis and adapt the strategy if needed. Hence, **flexibility is key** to seize opportunities and improve the initiative.

Multi levels process

To foster the impact of an intervention, a multi levels strategy should be designed. Acting at the same time at the individual level, the community level, and the strategic level (that includes decision-makers, reglementary frameworks but also public opinion) allows to **leverage different drivers and ensure social change**. Combining bottom-up and top-down approaches also facilitates the obtention of simultaneous interlinked effects such as individual empowerment, political appropriation, and support of local communities.

Multi-actor approach

The multidimensional process of integration implies to involve a **wide panel of stakeholders** where each of them will play a specific role. Echoing the multi levels strategy, the multi actors approach should target migrants at the core of the project, but also civil society and NGOs to benefit from their experience of local integration and social support, private sector or social housing actors to access affordable dwellings, local host communities to ensure a social integration, administrations to access public services, decision-makers to obtain official authorizations and support, media to cover the initiative and give visibility and academic to product scientific knowledge.

Co-participatory process

The mobilization of various stakeholders that are different and sometimes have contradictory goals can be done through a **participatory process and a respectful dialogue**. Actors, and especially migrants, must be consulted before the design and the strategy definition, and, if possible, closely associated to the decision-making process, the implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of the project.

Mutual benefits

The initiative should not only focus on the positive impacts on migrant and refugee populations, but also underlines the benefit for the whole society, at different levels. Based on the theory of the contributive democracy[3], it implies that each member of a community should "take part", "bring a part" and "receive a part". The participants' adhesion, their active involvement and their contributions help to build a common vision and foster the appropriation of the project.

---

[3] Joëlle Zask, *Participer. Essai sur les formes démocratiques de la participation,*

4.3   SUPPORT THE INTEGRATION PROCESS

4.3.1   PROVIDE A DECENT HOUSING

The experimentation

Based on the previous research led at the beginning of the Merging project, three innovative housing solutions have been developed within the three pilots to provide answers to migrants' housing issues, but also to adapt to the urbanistic and legal challenges specific to each city.

LYON

- 7 tiny houses to face the urban density issue and the housing market pressure.
- A yurt and a garden open to the neighbourhood to ground the pilot in the district.
- Mixed populations (local and migrants) to ensure diversity.

Figure 24. A tiny house in Lyon

VALENCIA

- 8 social housing renovated flats in the same area.
- A central and touristic place, at the core of the old city.
- A common space to facilitate social bonds with the neighbourhood.

Figure 25. The old centre of Valencia.

GOTHENBURG

- A sustainable houseboat made with recycled material.
- A participatory co-construction process with several workshops
- A creative solution to adapt to the market pressure: build on water.

Figure 26: The boat house at Gothenburg.

Lessons learned.

How to guarantee accurate dwellings for populations in situation of vulnerability?

Decent	A secure, healthy and isolated home
Accessible	A central area well deserved by transportations
Adapted	A dwelling that responds to specific needs (families, disabilities, ...)
Innovative	Sustainable buildings and creative solutions

How to ensure the feeling of being "at home"?

Personalize the place: Choose the decoration, arrange furniture, bring personal items.

Choose the program: Cook and watch what you want, invite your relatives and friends.

Appropriate the district: Map and use the local shops, services and social activities.

Create social bonds with locals: Meet your neighbours, engage discussions and have new friends.
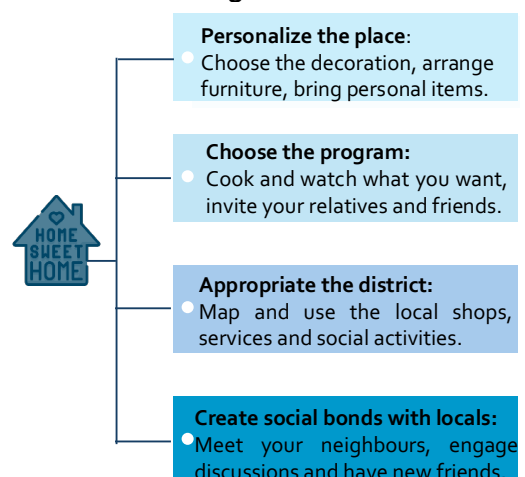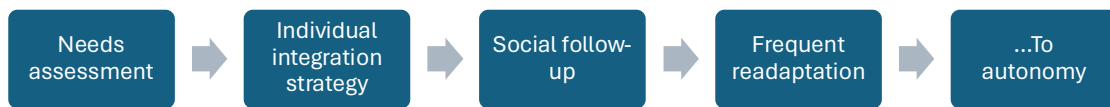
Figure 27: Good practises to provide housing to newcomers.

4.3.2 PROVIDE A GLOBAL AND ADAPTED SUPPORT

Housing is a step of the integration process but is constituting only a part of the answer. A holistic social follow-up aims at improving migrants' living conditions, but especially at supporting their capacity to fulfil their needs by themselves.

The experimentation

In Valencia, the Caliu Urbà pilot provided a social follow-up to 18 migrants that have benefited from the housing program. Once they have been identified, the following process starts:

Needs assessment → Individual integration strategy → Social follow-up → Frequent readaptation → ...To autonomy

The social follow-up provided a multidimensional support to address interlinked and targeted needs, with the decent housing at its core.
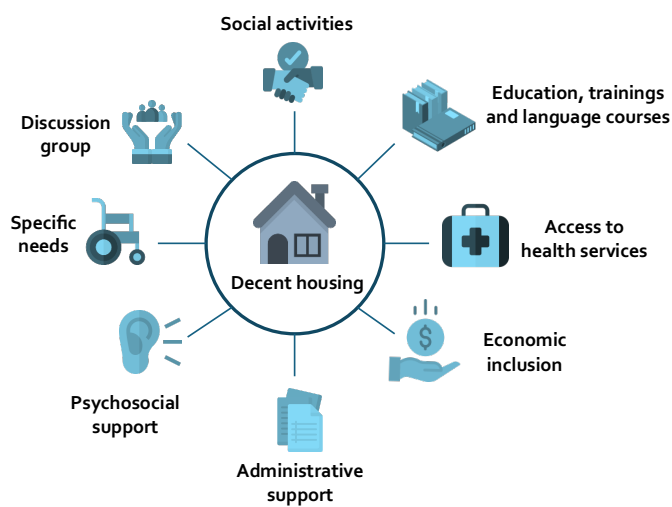
Figure 29: Description of the holistic follow-up provided in Caliu Urbà

A focus group led with Caliu Urbà beneficiaries in November 2023 showed that, on 7 migrants interviewed, all of them improved their feeling of safety and integration.
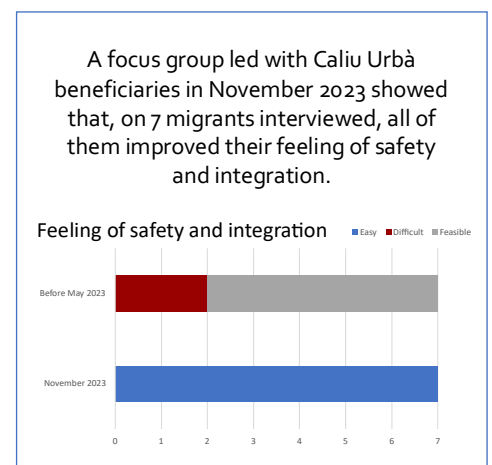
Figure 28: Results of the focus group led with Caliu Urbà beneficiaries in November 2023

Lessons learned.

Principles of an efficient social follow-

Holistic	Tailor-made	Evolving	Socialization
A multidimensional follow-up	Individual strategies to provide a specific support	Frequent adjustements and adaptation	A support that goes beyond the basic needs

How to ensure migrants' empowerment?

Co-decision: Participate to the implementation and definition of its own integration strategy.

Sufficient material resources: Ensure a stable economic situation and good living conditions.

Self-confidence: Strengthen the self-esteem and the capacity of making its own choices.

Empowerment: Decide for its own personal life and family itinerary, with the necessary personal resources to do so.

Participation: Involve in rewarding activities and have a voice in the decision-making.

Information and knowledge: Have access to information on duties and rights and necessary soft skills.

Representation: Be considered as an active actor of change and not a passive beneficiary.

Figure 30: How to ensure migrant's empowerment?

4.4   INVOLVE LOCAL COMMUNITIES

4.4.1   ANALYZE THE LOCAL ECOSYSTEM AND MOBILIZE KEY LOCAL ACTORS

Before proceeding to the pilots' implementation, an in-depth understanding of national and local contexts has been built to develop adapted implementation strategies, mobilizing key actors and local resources.

The experimentation

Through joint and complementary academic research, the Merging project developed a good understanding of each area, replacing them in a national context. A specific attention was also paid to the local context analysis through feasibility studies.

Existing integration policies (WP2)	Identify the most salient practices and barriers to inclusion.
Case studies (WP3)	Develop an understanding of practices in European countries.
Feasibility studies (WP4)	Local context analysis, urban morphology and actors mapping.

Lessons learned

How to understand the local ecosystem?

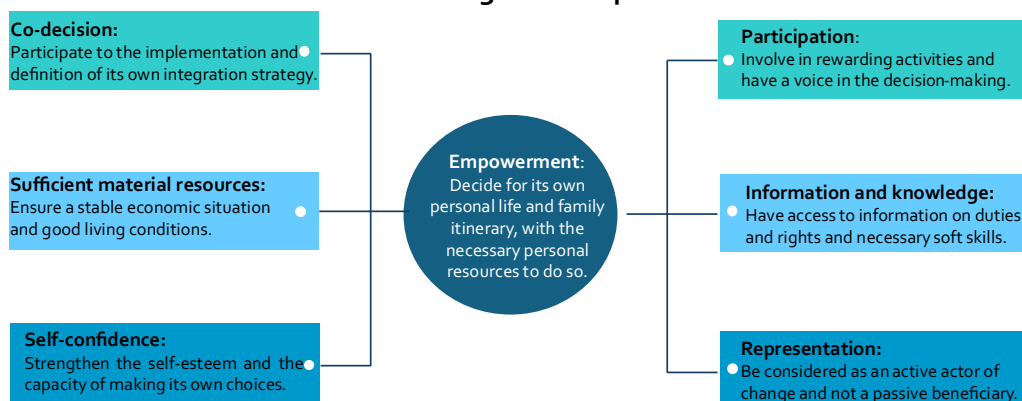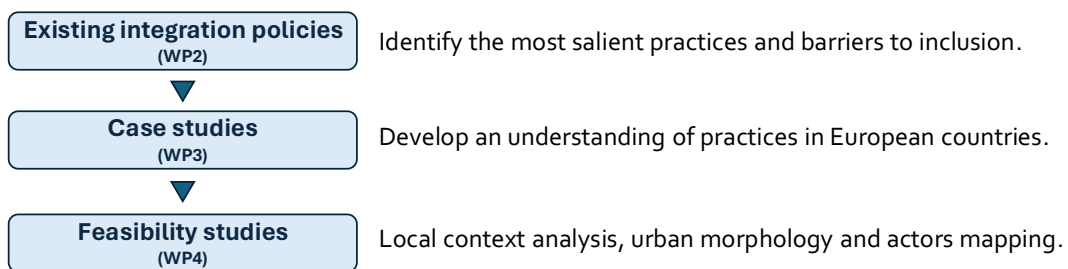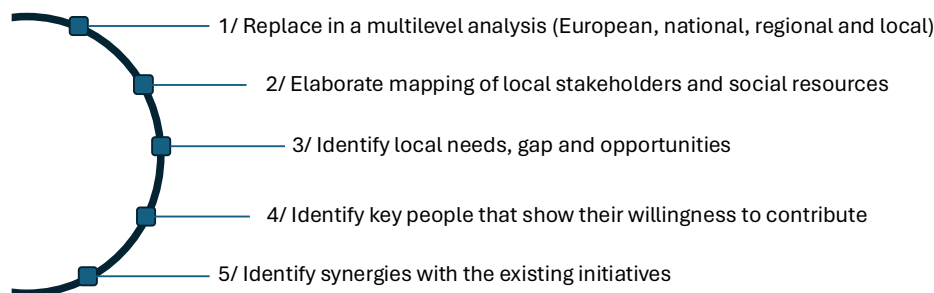Perform an analysis of the local context develops an understanding of the legal administrative system, socio-economic, political, and cultural structures, and dynamic that are prevailing in the specific area. This step is fundamental to prepare the future relationship with the host community and cans be divided into the following steps:

1/ Replace in a multilevel analysis (European, national, regional and local)

2/ Elaborate mapping of local stakeholders and social resources

3/ Identify local needs, gap and opportunities

4/ Identify key people that show their willingness to contribute

5/ Identify synergies with the existing initiatives

Good practises to involve local stakeholders and the neighbourhood:

o **Raise awareness activities and informational public meetings** are necessary to create a contact with local communities, present the initiative, its objectives, and benefits, communicate about the progress, explain the possible roles of the neighbourhood, and avoid conflicts or misunderstandings among local inhabitants.

o **Build strategic alliances** with key persons, intermediaries (such as social workers) and stakeholders interested in long-term exchanges to facilitate the contact with inhabitants.

o **Establish local partnerships** to optimize the use of local resources, strengthen efficiency and ground the project in the area.

o **Design a specific program to build community networks** and use the local network of a local partner to reach more stakeholders.

4.4.2 INITIATE A JOINT DYNAMIC INVOLVING LOCALS AND MIGRANTS

Creating social bonds with the neighbourhood can be done through individual relationship but initiating a group dynamic around a common project is more effective to ensure a local participation.

The experimentation

Participatory workshops involving locals and/or migrants have been undertaken within the three pilots. Involving people in concrete activities allows to foster their understanding of the initiative, to be part of it, to create social bonds and to ground the pilot in its area. It also a lever for local participative democracy, social cohesion, and individual capacity building.

LYON

A participatory process took place to build the yurt, involving 12 people, and collective work has been done on the site to garden and clean it, and to green it after the installation of the tiny houses.

Figure 31. Participative workshop to build the yurt in Lyon.

VALENCIA

A workshop held to refurbish a common space through an innovative method of creation has been attended by 26 participants, including 11 migrants, for a total of 512 hours of participation (December 2023).

Figure 32. Artistic workshop to decorate the common space in Valencia.

GOTHENBURG

Participatory workshops have been organized with volunteers in the Ringön district to build the houseboat. 20 people were involved and gained new skills in sustainable construction methods.

Figure 33. Participative workshop ©Egnahemsfabriken Ringön, Gothenburg 2022

Lessons learned

How to involve and create links between locals and migrants?

A favorable environment for migrants
✓ Ensure a warm welcome for migrants.
✓ Support migrants' engagement in joint activities (raise awareness, incentive, etc.).

A place to meet
✓ Create an accurate place for different people to meet.
✓ Refurbish collectively the place during participatory workshops.
✓ Identify participatory modalities to manage the place.

①   **③**

②   **④**
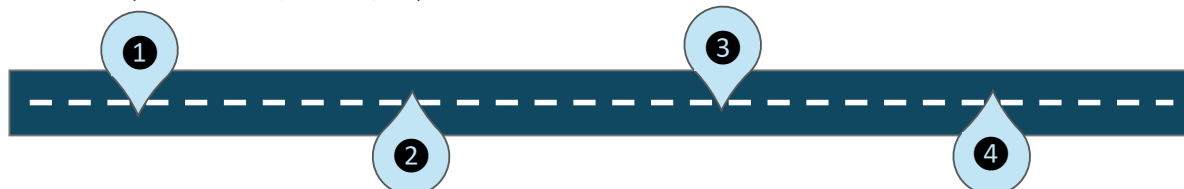
A participatory governance
✓ Offer the opportunity to take part to the governance of the initiative.
✓ Involve locals and migrants in co-decision processes and activities' design.
✓ Create a specific channel to communicate.

Joint activities organization
✓ Combine capacity building activities (cooking lessons, language courses, …) with raising-awareness events (conference, civic education, etc.).
✓ Invite migrants and locals to share their knowledge, skills and cultures.
✓ Elaborate a realistic program considering time challenges (childcare, work time, etc.).

4.5   ENSURE LONG TERM IMPACTS

4.5.1   ENSURE THE SUSTAINABILITY AND THE SCALING UP OF THE EXPERIENCE

Social change is a long-term process, which is often hindered by the limited time of projects that limits concrete and time-lasting impacts. To ensure time-lasting effects, sustainability and visibility are key to support the dissemination and the scaling up of the experience.

The experimentation
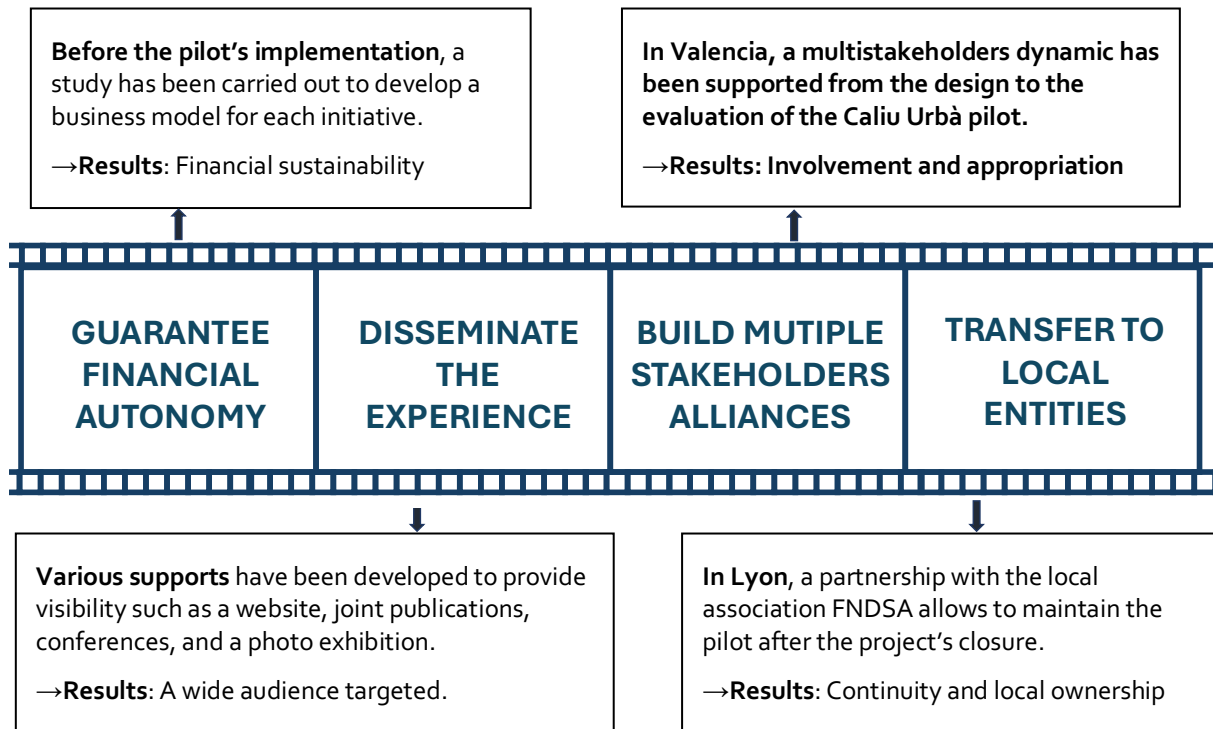
Before the pilot's implementation, a study has been carried out to develop a business model for each initiative.

→**Results**: Financial sustainability

In Valencia, a multistakeholders dynamic has been supported from the design to the evaluation of the Caliu Urbà pilot.

→**Results: Involvement and appropriation**

GUARANTEE FINANCIAL AUTONOMY	DISSEMINATE THE EXPERIENCE	BUILD MUTIPLE STAKEHOLDERS ALLIANCES	TRANSFER TO LOCAL ENTITIES

Various supports have been developed to provide visibility such as a website, joint publications, conferences, and a photo exhibition.

→**Results**: A wide audience targeted.

In Lyon, a partnership with the local association FNDSA allows to maintain the pilot after the project's closure.

→**Results**: Continuity and local ownership

Lessons learned

How to ensure the continuity of the experience after the projects' end?

- Identify the right communication channel for the right audience.
- Vary communication supports (social media, events and conference, periodical publications, etc.).
- Identify voluntary "ambassadors" to disseminate the experience.

Multiactors approach
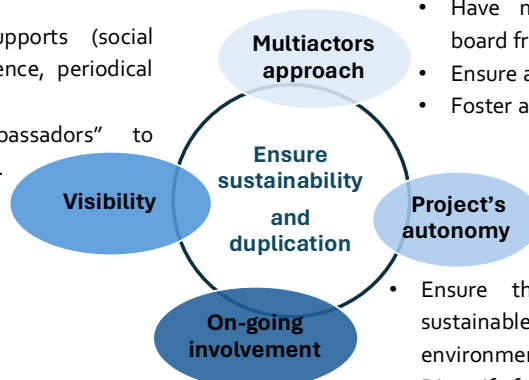
- Have motivated stakeholders on board from the beginning.
- Ensure a diversity in involved actors.
- Foster appropriation and ownership.

Visibility

Ensure sustainability and duplication

Project's autonomy

On-going involvement

- Ensure the continued involvement of stakeholders and investors.
- Keep citizens informed and organize activities on a regular basis.

- Ensure the integration of three sustainable aspects : social, environmental and financial.
- Diversify funding sources.
- Promote financial autonomy to not depend on periodic open public calls.

4.5.2   SUPPORT SOCIAL CHANGE

The Merging project is not only targeting migrants' integration, but also promoting a local and participatory democracy model, where citizens and local authorities are aware of the necessity to ensure integration for newcomers and take concrete actions to do so.

The experimentation

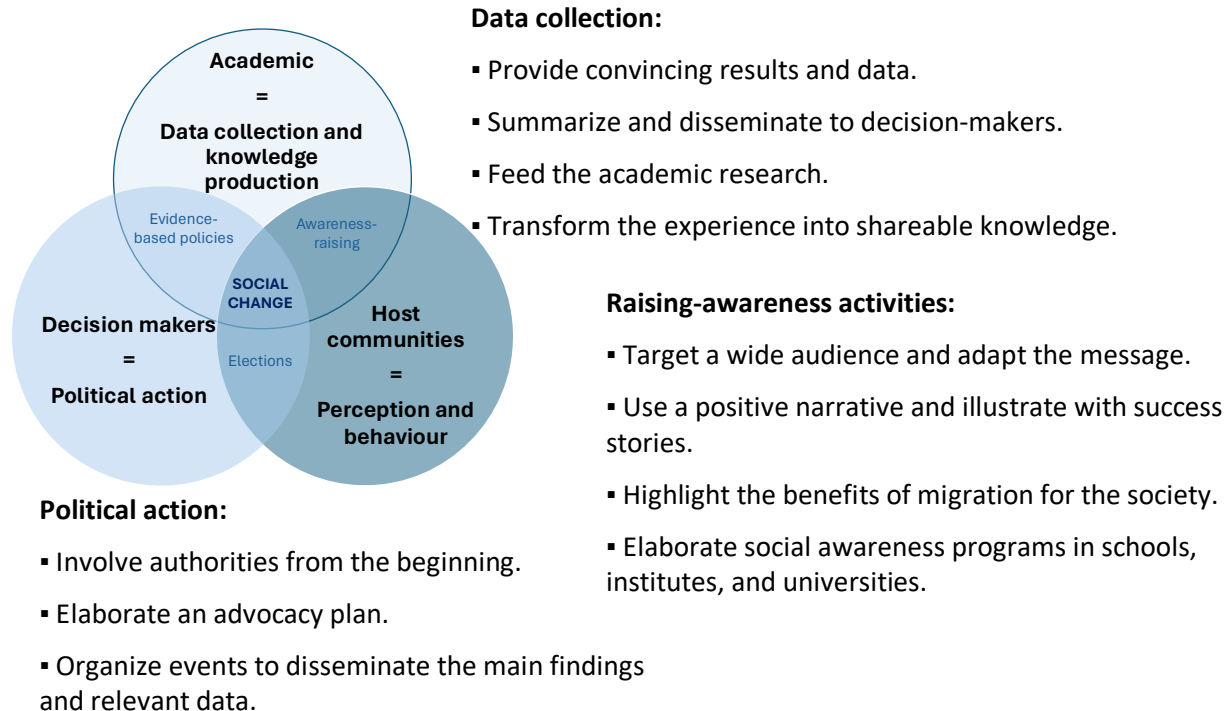| DATA COLLECTION	Research has been carried out to analyse the research-action dynamic in Lyon and study evolutions and effects through 11 interviews, 3 field visits and the participation to weekly follow-up meetings.
AWARENESS RAISING	In Lyon, a cycle of 3 meetings with the inhabitants of the neighbourhood has allowed to create a space for discussion, sharing views and concerns, and step by step, the trust has started to grow, together with a better understanding of the project.
POLITICAL APPROPRIATION	To benefit from strategic support, a multi-level political participation has been undertaken in Valencia. Regional administration, municipality, and national administration have been involved in the pilot from the beginning.

Lessons learned

Changing perceptions, practices, legal frameworks, and political action takes time and cans be done through a multi-level strategy, and especially through data collection, political advocacy, and raising-awareness activities.

Data collection:

▪ Provide convincing results and data.

▪ Summarize and disseminate to decision-makers.

▪ Feed the academic research.

▪ Transform the experience into shareable knowledge.

Raising-awareness activities:

▪ Target a wide audience and adapt the message.

▪ Use a positive narrative and illustrate with success stories.

▪ Highlight the benefits of migration for the society.

▪ Elaborate social awareness programs in schools, institutes, and universities.

Political action:

▪ Involve authorities from the beginning.

▪ Elaborate an advocacy plan.

▪ Organize events to disseminate the main findings and relevant data.

5 CONCLUSION AND PERSPECTIVES

This evaluation report reflects the innovative aspects of the Merging project. In line with the **participative methodology** that has been initiated from the very beginning, the conception into three different axes and the contents were identified collectively around three main axes:

- o **How did we work together?**
- o **What did we achieve together?**
- o **What did we learn together?**

Then, the partners have been involved in the definition of the theories of change of the projects, the elaborations of the monitoring and evaluation matrix, the elaboration of each pilot's evaluation, the assessment of the consortium's joint approach and the identification of transversal lessons learned.

A **wide panel of tools and approaches** have been mobilized to ensure this participatory approach, such as concertation, participatory workshops, bilateral interviews, plenary discussions, interactive exercises (especially to identify recommendations) and common analysis matrix.

By doing so, the findings show the **reflection of the consortium on its own practises and achievements,** with the bias of an internal and participative evaluation, but with an ongoing objectivity on what could have been improved.

The time dedicated to this evaluation process by all the Merging's members supports the quality and the richness of this report, while at the same time facilitating the appropriation of its main findings.

The participative evaluation of Merging was indeed **a collective learning**. Merging has been an innovative experience for all its members, according to its research-action dimension, the multi-actor approach, the mobilization of interdisciplinary expertise, the participative methodology and the multilevel intervention.

After 40 months of joint work, **major achievements have been attested**: dozens of academic, technical, methodological, or analytic deliverables have been elaborated, three pilot projects have been implemented thanks to the mobilization of local stakeholders, and a network including six European universities, three non-profit organizations and one private company subsidiary of university has been built and animated. These realizations are particularly meaningful regarding the short timeframe and the challenges that have been faced throughout the project.

How did we work together?

Concerning the work as a consortium, the conception **of a multi-actor and multilayer project supported by an interdisciplinary approach appeared relevant to tackle the ambitious objectives** of the project. The collaborative work relied on a reactive coordination, strong individual involvements strengthened by the share of the same social values and principles, the many opportunities that have been created to ensure joint action and research, and the complementarity of the partners' expertise.

The **multi-actor approach has been considered as a real added value** to ensure the quality of the work achieved, by articulating several dimensions and points of view and defining innovative solutions adapted to local and European contexts. The consortium also constituted a **learning space** where participants acquired soft skills, theorical, methodological, and technical knowledges. Bilateral and multilateral relationships that have been rising inside the consortium are still dynamic at the end of the Merging project, and should last after its closure, according to its members.

What did we achieve together?

Regarding the action part of Merging, **each pilot has been a rich learning experience** for the stakeholders involved. It constituted the opportunity **to concretely test the new social models based on academic research** elaborated in the first phases of Merging.

The fact that the three projects were so different (eight renovated flats, seven tiny houses and one houseboat) allowed to test adapted solutions in line with three specific local dynamics. Yet, the pilots provided **a lot of grounded and context-specific knowledge but are also responding to global issues at the European level.** Even if the timeframe was too short to obtain the expected objectives, which were too ambitious for the available resources (in terms of funds and time), the initiative provided concrete results, such as:

- **16 liveable housings ready to be (8) or already (8) occupied,**
- **3 multi-actor networks (with different levels of structuration),**
- **Inhabitants' effective mobilization,**
- **Social follow-up provided to 18 people (Valencia).**

It also generated a **favourable context to initiate deep changes**, such as:

- Joint work and coordination among civil society, politics, and academics,
- Involvement of inhabitants in participative democratic initiatives,
- Consideration of integration project as an entry to address other issues (such as social housing efficiency, district's dynamization integration of climate change into social policies, strengthened links between local populations and decision-makers, etc.).

Now that the project is coming to an end, discussions are oriented on how **to ensure the pilots' sustainability**. The three pilots are trying to bring together the conditions to ensure the continuity of their initiative, notably by mobilizing additional funds or strengthening the appropriation by local actors.
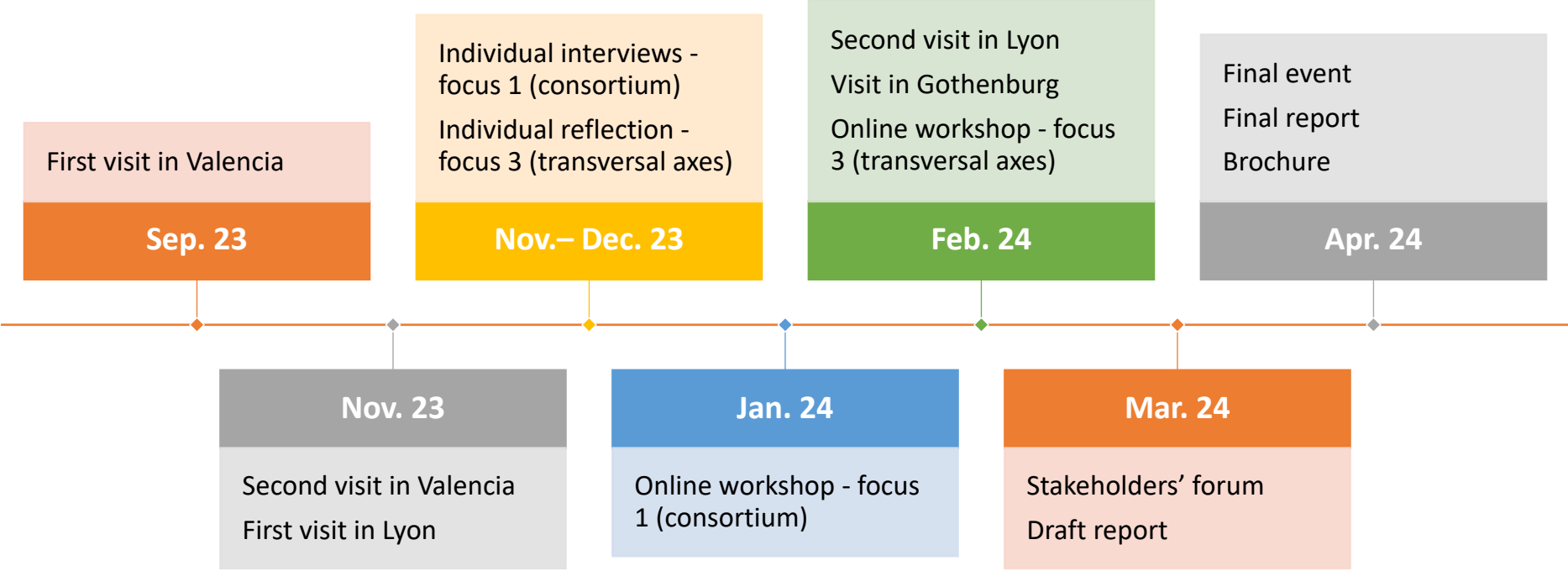
What did we learn together?

Now that the pilot projects are on track and start to confirm their relevancy as effective social models, **the challenge of dissemination and replication is still pending to ensure a change in the narrative and the perception of welcoming policies in Europe**.

To support the scaling-up of the pilots, the learning from the experimentation process has been compiled to provide guidance at different levels of intervention to action complementary drivers of social change: the individual level, focused on migrants, the communitarian level, focused on host communities and the strategical level, focused on a broader network and on large challenges.

In a complex world where all the social challenges are interlinked, **the Merging project provides orientations to build a European society where social cohesion, diversity and citizens' involvement are key to ensure inclusive and sustainable democracies** where no one is left behind and where everyone has a role to play.

6   APPENDIXES

6.1   EVALUATION TIMELINE

First visit in Valencia

Sep. 23

Individual interviews - focus 1 (consortium)

Individual reflection - focus 3 (transversal axes)

Nov.– Dec. 23

Second visit in Lyon

Visit in Gothenburg

Online workshop - focus 3 (transversal axes)

Feb. 24

Final event

Final report

Brochure

Apr. 24

Nov. 23

Second visit in Valencia

First visit in Lyon

Jan. 24

Online workshop - focus 1 (consortium)

Mar. 24

Stakeholders' forum

Draft report

6.2 INTERVIEVIEWS GUIDELINE (FOCUS 1)

1. INTRODUCTION

Reminder of the evaluation process and its objectives, the confidentiality of the interview and the right not to answer.

- o Can you briefly introduce yourself?
- o How has your structure (and yourself) been involved in the Merging project?
- o What is your global opinion on the Merging project?

2. THE CONSORTIUM: WORKING TOGETHER

Challenges and opportunities of the joint approach

- o How does the project provide a space for collaboration between its stakeholders?
- o What are the added values of multi-actor partnerships?
- o What are the main challenges of working in a multi-actor approach?

Governance

- o Was the governance adapted to the multi-actor approach of the MERGING project?
- o What forms have these partnerships taken?
- o Has the communication been smooth between stakeholders during the project implementation? Trough which practises?

Participatory approaches

- o How stakeholders have been involved in the evaluative reflexion?
- o Did it allow to the stakeholders to improve their knowledge? To take ownership of the project? To develop new methods of practises analysis?

Partnerships effects

- o Have joint actions been developed externally to the project or in complement?
- o How can partnerships last after the project closure?
- o Has the multi-actor approach influence the positioning of each partner? How? (Ex: reputation, enlargement, and diversification of networks).

3. THE CONSORTIUM: LEARNING FROM EACH OTHER

- o How has the MERGING project been a learning space for the project stakeholders?
- o On which thematic/issues/methodologies?
- o How have the various stakeholders used the contents of each WP?
- o On which issues and thematic did the consortium provide a space of joint reflection?
- o What lessons have been learned from pilot projects?
- o How have the lessons learned and identified recommendations been appropriated and used by the project stakeholders, external partners and decision makers?
- o Has the project influenced research priorities or trends in publications?

4. THE PILOT PROJECT

General

- o Do you think the pilot is responding to migrants and refugees' needs? Why?
- o To what extend the pilot project seems innovative to you?
- o What are the added values of the pilot project? Its weakness? Its challenges?
- o How did the project mainstream gender in its strategies and activities?
- o How did the project mitigate the challenges, resolve e or anticipate potential conflicts?
- o Are the local actors supporting the pilot? Why?
- o Are the different outputs been delivered on time? If not, why?
- o What is the added value of the pilot on an environmental perspective?

Impacts / effects

- o In what extend the project has a global impact on beneficiaries' living conditions? Especially their access to basic services or their involvement in collective activities?
- o Did the project contribute to the development of a "new local ecosystem"?
- o Does the pilot have an impact on your personal practises? On your structure?

Outlook

- o What are you expecting for the project in the next months? Years?
- o How could we ensure the sustainability of the pilot project?
- o How can we ensure a concrete appropriation of the project' s results by the decision-makers (at the UE level, national level, and local level)?
- o Have you identified lesson learned from this experience? What would you recommend improving in case of duplication/scaling up?
- o Do you want to add anything?

6.3   QUESTIONNAIRE SUBMITTED TO THE PARTNERS (FOCUS 3)

A/ INDIVIDUAL LEVEL	
INTEGRATION	How having a safe and decent housing can contribute to the integration process of migrants/newcomers/refugees?
PERSONAL SPACE APPROPRIATION	Once the housing becomes a reality, how to improve the feeling of «being at home"?
EMPOWERMENT	How to strengthen the role of migrants/newcomers/refugees in their own integration path?
B/ COMMUNITY LEVEL	
ECOSYSTEM	How to mobilize and dynamize the local ecosystem (involving local stakeholders, strengthening relationships and building/developing networks)?
SPACES	How to support beneficiaries in taking ownership of the neighbourhood?
PARTICIPATION	How to ensure beneficiaries' participation in collective and local activities?
C/ STATEGIC LEVEL	
SUSTAINIBILITY	How to ensure the sustainability of this kind of local initiatives (such as our pilot projects)?
POILITICAL APPROPRIATION	How to make advocacy and disseminate the experience of this kind of initiatives to strengthen a political appropriation?
PUBLIC AWARENESS	How to communicate on this kind of initiatives to develop a positive understanding of the challenges it carries out?