ACTIVE CITIZENS
CITIZENS' PARTICIPATION IN SMALL & MEDIUM EU CITIES

WHY DO WE NEED 'PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY' IF WE ALREADY HAVE DEMOCRACY?

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European Union
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Driving change for better cities

ACTIVE CITIZENS, A NETWORK OF CITIES FOR PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY

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WHY DO WE NEED 'PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY' IF WE ALREADY HAVE DEMOCRACY?

The concept of 'participatory democracy' is relatively recent. It appeared in the United States at the end of the 1960s within protest movements. Nowadays, the concept of participatory democracy is everywhere, in the politi-cal discourse, in civil society debates, in mass media. Concrete expressions of the concept (through experimentations, actions, projects) are multiplying at all levels of governance (International, European, National, Regional and local levels) as well as in many countries all over the world and in particular within the now-called 'mature democracies'. However, as Pourtois and Pitseys (2017) highlight, the concept of 'participatory democracy' could be considered as a pleonasm. Indeed, **a 'democracy' is supposed to be, by essence 'the governance/rule of people by the people' (demos meaning people/citizens and kratos power/rule).** Therefore the participation of people to the governance is by default – or should be – contained within the concept of democracy.

LET'S FACE IT, DEMOCRACIES ARE CRACKING!

'We have the show of a democracy, we have the rituals of a democracy, we have the belief that we have a democracy. But when you test what we actually have against the core commitment of a democracy : equals citizens in a equal political system. We have nothing close to a democracy today.' Lawrence Lessig (2018), Professor of Law at Harvard University.

Why do we, therefore, need to insist on the 'participatory' dimension of governance? Because **'many across the world are dissatisfied with how democracy is working'** (Pew Report, 2019). Democracies are 'suffering from a withdrawal of public confidence and participation' (DeBardeleben, Pammett, 2009). 'Governance by the people' is built on a principle of representative democracy in most modern democracies. People elect representatives that are given a mandate to rule, decide and make choices for them – in their name and interest – (whether

we are in parliamentary or presidential democracy). Yet, in the last decade, that model of representative democracy is also being questioned (Michels, 2010). Indeed, the low voter turnout has reduced the elected representatives' legitimacy who, at the same time, have proven to be in part inefficient to respond, solve and face the emerging challenges of the rapidly changing world we are now in. The bureaucratic and technocratic structure of our democracies are also denounced as one – of the many – reason which explains the failure of our governments to respond quickly and with agility to the ever-pressing challenges our world is facing : climate change, economic instability, social inequality, terrorism, etc. On top of that, 'citizens are [more and more] sceptical about the virtues, capabilities, and good sense of their public officials' (Nabatchi, Leighninger, 2015). 'Democracy as a way of organizing the state has come to be narrowly identified with the territorially based competitive elections of political leadership for legislative and executive offices' (Fung, 2001). The lack of integrity of [some] elected representatives (often revealed through public regular scandals) have also contributed to the growing distrust in government, whether we are looking at global, national or even local governance levels. OECD reported that, in 2012, 'only four out of ten people in OECD member countries expressed confidence in their government' (noticing a sig-

nificant drop in trust also because of the 2008 economic crisis). Yet, we know that **'trust is an essential, yet often overlooked, ingredient in successful policy making'** (OECD, 2013) and by extent, healthy and true democracy. The European Commission itself recognizes the need to reconnect to citizens and calls for 'a Europe closer to citizens' both on EU-level (meaning citizens taking part to EU policy-making debates) but also locally through 'locally-led development strategies and sustainable urban development across the EU' (EU Commission, 2018). **'Preventing backsliding in democracy requires deepening and expanding participation'** (IDEA, 2017).

While trust in government seems low, it is important to mention that trust level differs whether we are looking at national or local govern-

ments. Most of the time, surveys and studies are actually looking at national governments. But, as Fitzgerald & Wolak (2016) explain, 'citizens report greater trust in local governments. For citizens, it is in local politics that they feel most politically effective and that they have the greatest understanding of political issues.' Even though this might sound strange – we know that usually national politics are largely more impactful on daily life than policies which can be implemented by local authorities – it gives hope and may appear as a 'good thing to start with' (meaning working with citizens at local level as a first step). And since 70% of Europeans live in urban areas, cities are clearly a central part of this logic (Adams, Ramsden, 2019).

LOCAL GOVERNANCE: PATERNALISM, CONFLICT AND COPRODUCTION

If we put aside the national government for a moment, it is interesting to re-explore, at local level, the set of three patterns of citizen participation and action identified by Susskind, Elliot (and associates) in 1983 in Europe. Indeed, at municipal level, they identified the three following patterns of public participation: paternalism, conflict and coproduction.

- **'Paternalism** is a pattern in which 'municipal decision making is highly centralized and advice giving by citizens is either discouraged or – in the best case – closely managed and controlled by local government officials.

- **Conflict** is a pattern in which centralized decision making is dominant but groups of citizens struggle openly to wrest control over certain decisions

- **Coproduction** is a pattern [infrequently found at the time of the study] in which decisions are made through face-to-face negotiation between decision makers and those residents claiming a major stake in particular decisions.'

The paternalist pattern still remains very present today. We all know local governments in which the elected officials (and the mayor in particular) tend to 'agree that some direct involvement of residents or consumers is necessary to legitimize decisions that must be made, but these same officials are quick to point out that only they (on the basis of their election or appointment) are actually empowered to decide' (Susskind, Elliot & Associates, 1983) –regardless of their sometimes weak legitimacy gained by disputable voting results (low voter turnout, large/small number of candidates, 1-2 rounds). This pattern, as said before, is still very present today especially with politicians who – even for those who may be willing to implement more participatory processes – see citizen participation processes as a risk of loss of power and legitimacy. **'I have been elected, I have been given the power to decide, it is my mandate, given by the people, I don't see why they should have their word in public decisions since they already did, have their say by electing me to decide for them'.** This fictive yet true quote reflects quite genuinely what we can

'Citizen participation is useless because citizens are not experts!'

hear – in private – from many local elected officials when faced with the question of citizen participation. It is important to point out, however, that the paternalist pattern is not bad (or good) in itself, as the outcome is obviously entirely dependent on the elected official's choices, decisions (and vision). It is only here, interesting, that, in that pattern, there might be some level of citizen contribution but that it does not, in any case, alter the distribution of power which remains entirely within the elected officials' control.

The conflict pattern sounds more true and actual than ever before, with the intensification of long lasting citizen demonstrations all over the world both at national level (the Arab spring, the Occupy movement, Climate March, the Yellow Vest (Fr: gilets jaunes) in France) but also local level (the Zone to De-

fend or ZAD (Fr: zone à défendre) in France, the Catalan protests, the demonstrations in Hong-Kong). In the best case scenario, the elected officials are 'forced' to negotiate and finally give to protest leaders/spokespersons a seat at the bargaining table and either agree to soften, cancel, or moderate prior decisions or propose 'quick' solutions to ease the conflict. In the worst case scenario, the elected officials act as if deaf, hope and wait for demonstration fatigue and for the protest to fade away with time. Of course, 'really worst case' scenario may also lead to violence and armed conflict with injuries and death of protesters and/or law enforcement officers. Conflict often emerges as the last resort for most citizens who do not find any way for their voices to be heard by the elected representatives. Of course, the conflict pattern is not, in a democracy, the most desirable

form of participation as it is mostly a consequence of a lack of a democratic process. However, in many cases, confrontations may also lead to the development of alternative choices, counterplans and change of postures. **'Citizen engagement is about collaborative partnerships and dialogue of which confrontation is also a component'** observes Dr. R. Balasubramaniam when talking about his field experience working with citizens engagement.

The third pattern is the coproduction pattern and is, of course, in our case, the one which appears as the most desirable and promising one. In this pattern, public decisions on (some) local matters are the result of face-to-face negotiations in between public officials and citizens/residents. In that pattern of participation, of course, all participants that take part to the process accept and consider the others as legitimate actors, but also the possibility that citizens 'might share responsibility (along with government) for the production of services or the management of the development process.' Even though that pattern sounds as the most desirable one in terms of democratic governance, it is not without any challenge and issue which will be developed later in the baseline study.

DO CITIZENS ASK FOR MORE DEMOCRACY?

Citizen participation contributes to a better democracy (Michels, 2011). Lawrence de Graaf (Professor at the Tilburg School of Politics and Public Administration, Netherlands) explains that by 'involving stakeholders and (groups of) citizens at an early stage of the policy process rather than consulting them immediately before the implementation phase, we can create a broader support for policy decisions and, therefore, make government policy more effective and legitimate'. On top of that **'engaging citizens in policy making allows governments to tap into wider sources of information, perspectives and potential solutions, and improves the quality of the decisions reached' (Michels, 2010).**

Not only greater citizen participation can allow better governance and policies but 'people worldwide are crying out to have more say in the public decisions that most impact their lives locally and nationally' says Dr. Carolyn J. Lukensmeyer[1]. 'Around the world, citizens are demanding new forms of democracy, in which their engagement extends beyond the ballot box and tokenistic consultation' adds Professor John Gaventa[2]. **It appears clearly that participatory democracy and citizen engagement in policy-making goes beyond the 'simple' consultation in which 'government asks for and receives citizens' feedback on policy-making'.** We are moving towards active participation and co-production of policy-making. As the OECD frames it, active participation 'means that citizens themselves take a role in the exchange on policy-making, for instance by proposing policy-options. At the same time, the responsibility for policy formulation and final decision rests with the government. Engaging citizens in policy-making is an advanced two-way relation between government and citizens based on the principle of partnership'.

At the same time, civil society is also increasingly pushing for greater governance transparency. Indeed, we observe that 'an increasingly active citizenry is championing the call for responsive government, for policies that foster equity and development, for a budgetary planning process which is open and subject to scrutiny, for eradication of graft and corruption, and for enhanced and demonstrated results' (Khan, 2007). Even though, transparency has been largely improved during the last decades, the accountability of governments is still quite a challenge.

All this supports the idea that the participatory dimension (or coproduction pattern) of governance appears to be more and more accepted and recognized as 'something that we definitely need to go toward' – even though it has been strongly advocated by some for more than 35 years (see Barber's Strong Democracy : Participatory politics for a New Age, 1984). Indeed, we see that (some) elected officials realize and acknowledge the disconnection and gap between politics and citizens, and wish to favour more 'co-production' of public decisions. On their side, citizens and civil society actors also push for increasing the participation level of people within governance. On their other side, researchers and practitioners also point out that engaging citizens in public decisions is essential to (in part) counter the 'nearly-inevitable collapse of the democratic model'. More generally, we have entered in a time where the 'participatory imperative' (Blondiaux & Sintomer 2002) in all fields, sectors, levels of governance is quite well recognized, yet still to put in practice (and finally going beyond the proclamations).

This is not only true at national level but also local level. Indeed, 'to function effectively, local authorities need the voluntary cooperation of citizens. Local service provision normally requires some measure of input from citizens, for example the compliance with regulations regarding collection of waste, the behaviour of parents in kindergartens or that of relatives of clients in elderly care' (Lidström, Baldersheim, 2016). Therefore, involving citizens in public decisions appears key for efficient and relevant policies as well as well-functioning public services. This means that **involving citizens within public decisions is not only a 'democratically nice thing to do' but an actual way of improving public decisions, policies and services.**

The Estonian Government promotes participation[3] as follow: 'A big part of today's policy-making is done by citizens and non-governmental organisations. Good policy-making includes the voice of citizen, non-governmental partner and expert, and it engages the cooperation of various governmental authorities. The participation of various parties in the decision-making process gives the opportunity to find out who is being influenced by a particular decision and how. It enables making informed, better targeted and more efficient decisions, prevent problems in implementation and acknowledge alternatives.'

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1. Dr. Lukensmeyer is Executive Director of the National Institute for Civil Discourse from the University of Arizona. Citation from Nabatchi, T. & Leighninger, M. (2015). Public Participation for 21st Century Democracy.
2. Pr. Gaventa is Director of Research at the Institute of Development Studies, UK. Citation from Nabatchi, T. & Leighninger, M. (2015). Public Participation for 21st Century Democracy.
3. https://www.riigikantselei.ee/en/engagement-and-participation

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION NEEDS ACTIVE CITIZENS

Beside decision-making processes, at local level, it appears also very clearly that **'more and more people are taking the initiative to make their local neighbourhood more liveable, for instance by helping to maintain playgrounds or green spaces. As a result, the relationship between government and society is changing'** (Dutch Government, 2019). Those locally 'engaged citizens' are sometimes referred as 'active citizens'. As the Dutch government states it, those 'active citizens don't want the government to provide standard solutions for everything. They prefer a tailor-made approach and authorities that think along with them' (Dutch Government, 2019), they [the citizens] want to take some part into the

decision process – or in other words to have their say – and want the local authorities to be more 'collaborative'.

Of course, talking about 'active citizens' immediately raises the question of who we are talking about when we say 'active citizens' and what it takes to be qualified as an 'active' citizen' – or 'inactive citizen'? –. Staffan Nilsson (the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC)'s president) says **'active citizenship is the glue that keeps society together'** and the EESC further explains the concept of active citizens as follow : 'A catalogue of the activities that could qualify as active citizenship would be wide-ranging and extensive, and together they build a healthy, participative democracy. They cover voting and standing for election, teaching and learning, donating to good causes, [...] campaigning and volunteering. They may take place in a professional, political or personal context. They can be on an international scale, or simply target the neighbour next door. It is also a form of literacy, because it implies being aware of what is happening around us, acquiring knowledge and understanding so as to make informed judgements, and having the skill and courage to respond in the appropriate way, individually or collectively. Active citizenship embodies the conviction that every individual can make a difference to the community

he or she lives in'. **An 'active citizen' is therefore – to simplify – any individual who actively takes part to the public life, social life, and affairs of its community, and contributes positively to it.** We will come back later in this study to this question of active citizenship and whether this limits or not the scope of participatory democracy which rather aims – with the pious hope – to reach all 'lay' citizens regardless of knowing if they are, indeed, active or not. 'When 'citizen participation' refers to communities, participation poses questions of representation. Some citizens, particularly the better educated and wealthier, generally have greater ability to participate than others' (H.S. Baum, 2002). 'The participation in conventional or unconventional political ac-

tion is strongly related to education, income and gender' (Röcke, 2014).

And on the empirical side, we observe that retired residents are also the most common participants of neighbourhood meetings and citizen participation in general. This poor diversity and poor numbers of participants of citizen participation processes means that 'it is often the same people who show up'. This phenomenon is now often referred to as usual suspects of citizen participation. **Enlarging the diversity, and increasing the numbers of active citizens taking part to citizen participation processes clearly appear as an objective of public authorities, for the sake of democracy!**

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION ON THE RISE

Cases of participation of citizens in public decisions, either at national or local level can be easily found throughout the last decades. However, **in the most recent years, experimentations, cases, projects, actions, tools, methods, guides, stories of the expression of participatory democracy are multiplying at a pace we have never seen before.** They touch all topics/subjects, vary in formats, lengths, perimeters, etc. Amongst the many experiences we can cite for example : participatory budgeting (Brazil), citizens' assemblies, neighbourhood councils, citizens' juries, citizens' panels (France), Meeting with citizens (Belgium), Public discussion (Bulgaria), Citizenship pool (Italy), citizens' 'forums, Youth councils,

Citizen's interpellation right (Belgium), G1000 (Belgium), Residents' participation fund (France), citizen deliberative processes, Houses of Participation (Belgium), 'Ask the Mayor' tv serie (Bosnia and Herzegovina), Unconventional Public Hearing (Hungary), citizens' participation digital platforms (Spain), etc. Many of these cases or experiences can be considered as 'democratic innovations' as they go beyond the 'familiar institutionalised forms of citizen participation' (Smith, 2009) like competitive elections, referendums, neighbourhood meetings, urban public inquiries, etc. They are specifically designed 'to increase and deepen citizen participation in the political decision-making process' (Smith, 2009).

Yet, even though citizen participation (but also user-engagement) is no longer a radical and innovative idea, it often still remains as 'something nice to have', but not so fundamental and necessary unless public authorities decide to use a policy 'stick' (Bemmelmans, 1998) and come up with a legal framework that makes a certain form or level of 'citizen participation' compulsory (or that conflict situations force public authorities to adopt new participatory practices). Citizen participation is, in most cases, not so much regulated by legal frameworks and policies and is usually dependent of the good will of governments. However, some public policies have been, in some places,

created in order to systematize forms of 'citizen consultation' (if not participation). We will look at the laws which focus on the citizen consultation or participation but of course many more laws have been put in place regarding the transparency of governments for example: the open publication of public finance and budgets, open-to-public city council sessions, access to city council decisions, etc.). As examples, we can cite the policy on urban public inquiry which legally force public authorities to submit urban and/or environmental projects (new building, renovations, etc.) to the reaction of the public. This policy related to urban consultation may be found, for example, in France, Belgium, Swiss, Canada and most European projects.

Of course, the 'publicity' of urban projects is often passive information rather than active consultation of citizens – and almost never co-creation processes –.

At the international level, the Arhus Convention signed in 1998, also clearly grants the public rights regarding access to information, public participation and access to justice, in governmental decision-making processes on environmental matters, both at local or national level. In Europe, the Arhus Convention is applied through the Directive 2003/4/EC of the European parliament and of the council of 28 January 2003. The New Cohesion Policy of the European Commission (2018) calls for 'a Europe closer to

citizens by supporting locally-led development strategies and sustainable urban development across the EU' (in which citizens shall be involved in the process of policy-making, planning, etc.). The 5th call for proposals (2019) of Urban Innovative Actions also clearly states in its guidance material that the UIA Initiative shall support projects that are participative – and include 'external expertise such as universities, NGOs, businesses, citizens and other levels of government both in the design and in the implementation of the project' –.

At city level, the setting-up of neighbourhood councils are also now, in some countries, compulsory by law. In France, the Vaillant Law, on 'Démocratie de proximité' (proximity democracy), has in 2002, obliged by law, every city of more than 80 000 inhabitants to set up neighbourhood councils to develop citizen participation. These neighbour-

hood councils receive an 'operating budget' and an 'investment budget'. Also compulsory by law since 2014[4] in France, every city which has, what the State qualifies as, a 'priority neighbourhood'[5] has to establish a Citizen Council (per priority neighbourdhood). The Citizen Council aims to integrate citizens at all stages of the city contract to renew/develop the neighbourhood. Citizen Councils shall include local residents, either randomly picked from administrative lists or volunteers, and a group of local stakeholders (associations, NGOs, local businesses, etc.). However, the experience has shown, so far, that Citizen Councils were very unequal from one city to an other in terms of legitimacy but also power, representativity, autonomy or recognition...

Forcing participation can clearly not be a stand alone solution for a lively participatory democracy.

4. French Programming Law for Cities and Urban Cohesion of the 21st of February, 2014
5. Priority areas are designated areas within the City that need additional investment to combat specific problems such as high unemployment rate, lack of critical social community services, insecurity, and more (see https://urbact.eu/priority-neighbourhoods)

WE DON'T KNOW HOW TO CONDUCT CITIZEN PARTICIPATION!

The wish to know 'what works best' and 'how to do it', finding the 'good practice' and copying 'good examples' (Barnes, 2008) is very strong amongst public authorities. 'Show us how to do it!'. Even though this may be true, it is not today a problem hard to solve anymore. Since Barnes' works, a decade ago, **tools and methods to enable citizen participation can be found all over the Internet.** Practitioners of citizen participation have, for years – and even more intensively recently –, been sharing their tools and methods – evidence-based practice – through the publication of toolkits, guides, guidelines, manuals, handbooks and so on. Today, it cannot be said that the main blockage for citizen participation within public authorities is the lack of methodological resources. There are many, and they are not

that hard to find. Just to cite a few, here are a couple of useful/interesting links :

Toolkit on Citizen Participation by the Council of Europe
https://rm.coe.int/

Better regulation toolbox of the European Commission especially the tools #53 to #56 on Stakeholder consultation
https://ec.europa.eu/

Digital Tools for Citizens' Assemblies by mySociety : https://www.mysociety.org/

Participatory Governance Toolkit by Civicus
https://www.civicus.org/

Toolkit of good practices for citizens' participation by the European Association for Local Democracy
https://www.alda-europe.eu/

Public Participation Guide: Tools by EPA (United-States Environmental Protection Agency)
https://www.epa.gov/

From local to European : Putting citizens at the centre of the EU - by the European Committee of Regions agenda https://cor.europa.eu/

If the tools and methods aren't what cities lack to start doing more citizen participation, then what?

'Citizens are better at complaining than at finding solutions'

WHY IS CITIZEN PARTICIPATION STILL SOMETHING NOT NORMAL AND NOT NATURAL TO DO IN PUBLIC POLICY-MAKING?

First of all, **citizen participation is not – for most cities – a natural and normal practice for public authorities.** Public authorities do not have a culture of participation (even in the way they function internally). And even though 'commitment to user and citizen participation is growing, new methods of working with citizens represent a challenge to many of those whose professional training has taught them to separate themselves from those to whom they provide services. They can also be threatening to elected members who regard themselves as the legitimate representatives of the people' (Barnes, 2008). Moreover, 'citizens, policymakers and politicians often have diametrically opposed ideas regarding the nature and essence of new participatory formats. Citizens

are mainly interested in direct involvement in political decision-making processes, whereas politicians are mostly looking for new forms of communication that do not entail fundamental changes to the existing policymaking process' (Hierlemann, 2019).

We can say that citizen participation is not so much present in the DNA of the administrative and political culture in general. Historically, if you look at political science schools, administrative schools, civil servants training courses, etc., citizen participation is clearly not so present, or at least, not until very recently (and often not present enough in primary and secondary schools as well). **This means that the current civil servants that administrate the cities are not so used to, or even trained to citizen participation (and it goes the same with elected officials).** Citizen participation is still therefore something quite new – and disruptive – for most city administrations.

On the citizen side, it is, in some cases, quite true as well. We observe many collectives of citizens who push their own interest, their own projects but actually don't take into consideration the rest of their fellow neighbours. The culture of participation requires new ways of working together, new ways of being (collaborative posture rather than competitive culture, inclusiveness instead of exclusiveness, sense of community

rather than individuality, etc.). So how to develop a culture of participation with the current citizens but also the ones to come is definitely one of the (sub)challenge that cities have to respond to in order to develop a citizen participation culture.

Jo Spiegel, Mayor of the City of Kingersheim (France) – who developed democratic innovations – advises three transformations of postures:

- 'going from 'I', my opinion to the collective 'Us/We'

- going from a legitimate single/personal case to think about the general interest, the common good which is not the addition of egoisms

- going from the immediate, the now (and we are in a culture of the immediate) to the long term, the future'

Starting from zero – or anywhere near – is not a problem in itself. Anyone can learn. The culture of participation and collaboration can be developed and new reflexes can be adopted but it does take time. That's good news then! **Well… if being a 'newbie' of citizen participation is not a problem in itself… you still need to want to do it, to be convinced that it's a right thing to do, that it makes sense, because you believe it can really contribute to better policies, better services, better governance.** No surprise. This is the second hard point.

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION? HELL NO!

The experience that I gathered along the many years of working at Strategic Design Scenarios with cities from all over Europe around the topic of citizen participation (through participatory foresight activities, social innovation, sustainability local agenda setting, public authorities and citizens' collaboration, etc.) allowed me to identify many blockages that exist within public authorities. For the Active Citizens network I decided to try to list a series of **40 different – non-exhaustive – reasons/ arguments – of 'not doing citizen participation'** (the full list can be found at the end of this paper). Most of these reasons – or pretexts – are nourished with strong – and some-

times deeply anchored – perceptions, misconceptions, doubts, suspicion, fear (of loss of power and legitimacy), exaggeration, etc. Yet, these reasons are still very present in most public institutions and civil servants (but also some elected officials) can be deeply resistant to opening up to citizens (Adams, Ramsden, 2019). Even amongst the network of cities of the Active Citizens action-planning network (URBACT) – so cities who engaged in a 3 years programme of exchange of practices on the citizen participation topic –, all recognize that, within their own city administrations, things were not that easy. The most common arguments which they hear from within their own city administration – against citizen participation – are (sentences were selected by cities from the game Citizen participation? Hell no!) : "citizen participation slows down every process or project', 'citizen participation is useless because citizens are not experts!', 'it's too complicated to work with citizens', 'citizens are better at complaining, than at finding solutions', 'citizens have no interest in public actions & matters', 'no need for citizen participation, we already work with NGOs, unions and associations of consumers', 'with citizens, conversations always remain superficial and without depth'. Yes. We still have a long way to go to deconstruct these 'reasons' of not doing citizen participation. That is to say that **even though a couple of convinced elected offi-**

cials and motivated civil servants engage in citizen participation programmes, projects, actions and experiments, the number of 'non-convinced at all' and reticent people is big. Citizen participation promoters and actors therefore need to be aware of these blockages and identify them in order to be able to counter, remove or deconstruct each one of them. And we know, also from experience, that in any progressive or disruptive evolution/change, not everyone joins in, and that's ok. Being aware of this should not, of course, prevent from engaging in citizen participation actions. Having a small team of motivated elected officials and civil servants is all you need to start with. But when it comes to diffusing and implementing citizen participation principles to other departments or services… then the problem arises. We will therefore collectively explore later in the network how these challenges can be faced.

'No need for citizen participation, we already work with NGOs, unions and associations of consumers'

E-DEMOCRACY WILL SAVE US THEN!

e-Participation, Online Deliberation, e-Democracy platforms – whatever their different names – are, lately, getting a lot more attention from public authorities. **Civic techs have boomed and off-the-shelf solutions are now offered to cities to implement participatory democracy through digital platforms.** 'Thank god! We're saved!'. 'No need any more to face frustrated citizens face to face! Let's have them engage (or

complain) on the city app.' Startups but – thankfully – also open-source's solutions are now easy to find and implement. Cities can even customize these ready-to-use platforms. Technology is here again and this time it is to save democracy!

This cynical critic of e-democracy platforms is of course easy to do, yet quite true. Experience has shown that in order to develop citizen participation, it takes time, energy, trust, conviviality, transparency, care and so much more. The rise of citizen participation has inevitably attracted many IT entrepreneurs to deliver digital solutions, and that is not an issue in itself. The problem is that cities, who have nearly no experience in

citizen participation (or no culture of participation), see in these solutions the promise of achieving finally and easily citizen participation. Yet we know that it does not work like that. **Cities who have 'jumped' on these solutions are already stepping back a little bit. 'It does not deliver the promise we have put into it!'** And the platforms providers are not to be blamed – at least most of them –. Naturally, cities think that by using digital tools, they will finally go beyond the usual suspects and at last, reach the numbers! Yes, it clearly touches a different population, usually younger and more connected. The ones who are not spending their evenings in neighbourhood councils. But – unfortunately for city authorities – masses don't rush onto their city apps. And frankly, it is not that surprising. Why? Often the apps are not following user-centered design principles and therefore end up being not ergonomic enough, not intuitive enough and/or just too complex (too many steps to be able to report a problem or suggest something). Communication channels to promote the app are not reaching out enough… or when the app is running fine, it's the city back office which do not respond to the citizens requests/reports/comments and users decide to give up after one or two trials. **'The best of platforms will fail if it is not supported internally, and if feedback from citizens is not shared and acted on within the administration'** explains Wietse

Van Ransbeeck (Co-founder of CitizenLab, Belgium). These different cases have all been observed within the cities participating to the Active Citizens network who have set up an app (Agen, Cento, etc.).

'Governments still struggle to engage truly in policy-making with citizens, and when they do so they often fail to generate the expected degree of engagement. eDemocracy and eParticipation projects have largely remained confined to the experimentation level and have been deployed in only very few cases'(Osimo, 2012).

Yes, digital platforms can really support citizen participation! But they cannot be stand-alone solutions and they are definitely not a panacea. Citizen participation is a living thing that needs animation, management, facilitation just like a community. Digital tools are therefore complementary with non-digital tools. Combining them with low-tech, real-life encounters and debates, workshop sessions, street-corner meetings, etc. can be, however, really powerful. In the experience of the city of Gdansk (which has been doing quite progressive work on citizen participation), 'city authority staff have learned that at least for now, physical platforms are more effective than digital versions. But they recognise that both approaches play complementary roles' (Adams, Ramsden, 2019).

Of course, **good cases of using digital platforms to enhance and facilitate citizen participation exist.** Some of them replicate offline practices online (to benefit from the speed/reactivity offered by ICT tools as well as its capacity to enlarge audience), like e-petitions or e-voting. As examples we can cite the electronic petitions of the Scottish Parliament[6] or the Estonian Portal TOM[7] ('Täna Otsustan Mina', 'Today I Decide' in Estonian) set up in 2001 and which allowed, in both cases, citizens to suggest amendments to existing laws, or propose subjects to be discussed by the governments… Deliberative processes have also been, in some occasions taken online (they are then referred to as ODP, Online deliberative polling) and offer a space for deliberation in between citizens over different given topics and which happen through multiple sessions over a defined period of time (example: participants meet and deliberate online for between one and two hours per week over a period of around a month before submitting the result of their deliberations. From one session to another participants discuss and question different competing experts so as to gain knowledge on the topic and be able, in the end, to make a better informed choice). Of course, webforums are also a quite obvious — and old – example of use of ICT tool to support conversation and exchange of opinions over a diverse set of topics...

More complete forms of participation platforms have also recently emerged. The Decide Madrid platform (Spain) or the synAthina platform of the city of Athens (Greece) have proven to be remarkable cases of use of digital means to support participation. On these platforms, citizens may come up with proposals, ideas, hold conversations, vote, comment, etc. It is important to mention that, for example, on the synAthina platform you also find links to a whole serie of on-the-ground actions, 'in-real-life' citizen trainings, etc. The digital platform therefore acts as a tool which supports a global collaboration and citizen participation strategy/plan. In parallel, the booming of participatory budgeting programmes have also led to the development of specifically designed – and easy to set-up – ICT platforms which enable cities to run and manage participatory budgeting processes.

6. https://www.parliament.scot/gettinginvolved/petitions/index.aspx
7. The TOM portal has been replaced several times since 2001 and is now the https://www.osale.ee/ plat-form. You can read more about the Estonian participa-tion tools here: https://www.riigikantselei.ee/en/engagement-and-partic-ipation An analysis of TOM's use was published in 2007 and can be found here: https://issuu.com/e-governancea-cademy/docs/tid_analysis_report_june_2007

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION REQUIRES PARTICULAR SKILLS

The attraction phenomenon around tools, whether digital or not can be dangerous. The more the tool looks attractive, well-made, fancy, the more it is dangerous. Why? Because too many cities end up seeing the tool as an end, not a mean anymore. Then, we have elected officials proud to announce that they have set up a city app which allows citizens to exchange and co-elaborate with the city administration… but when you do look into details, the number of active users is quite low, the exchanges very punctual or one-shot, or the city's capacity to respond to citizens' interpellations nearly null. Often, because nearly all the resources have been put into getting the tool and having it running rather than in the human resources needed to manage and facilitate it (in the back office). **People who have experience with social work, social innovation projects, etc. know that when working with citizens, you need social skills of mediation, communication, empathy.** The person who stands in the back office of the app should therefore not be an IT technician, it should be someone with mediation skills, someone who can respond to citizens' messages with attention, diplomacy, sympathy, respect. But those soft skills, yet key skills, are often overlooked, even though they are crucial in order to build a healthy, positive, respect-

ful and friendly relation with citizens. **'Experience has taught me, that listening to grassroot voices [for example] involves listening deeply and needs humility as well as an ability to learn and appreciate the other's views; patience to reflect, and perseverance to interpret things carefully'** says Dr. Balasubramaniam (2015). Those aren't skills that are usually asked for in the job descriptions of most city departments…

YOU WANT CITIZEN PARTICIPATION? YOU'LL HAVE SOME!

Citizen participation is very 'trendy' – politically speaking – at the moment. **Inspiring democratic innovations are taken place here and there and seem to really offer new perspectives of governance practice** (esp. participatory budgeting, participatory urban planning), in which citizens really do have a greater role to play. Yet, as citizen participation becomes more and more a 'must-have' (and that no one can – politically and publicly – claim that there should not be any citizen par-

ticipation), we also observe the rise of 'fake participation'. **Redesigning a whole neighbourhood, ordering studies, making plans, taking decisions, ordering construction works, all that without any exchange with citizens… and coming at the end of the planning to ask them what colour they would like the benches to be painted in is a joke. A terrible joke.**

This type of fake participation process in which citizens are asked to express their opinions on non-decisive or unimportant matters can be very harmful for democracy. It is even worse than doing nothing. Why? First, because 'citizen participation has proved itself equally useful and successful in complex technical matters as well as in controversial social and ethical questions' (Hierlemann,

2019). Second, because the current trust level of governments is already quite low and that the people who accept to take part to citizen participatory processes are, potentially, the few most active and dedicated citizens you may begin with. Yet you despise them by having them decide upon futile matters and none of the crucial/strategic aspects that will actually really impact their daily ways of living. This type of fake participation process can be extremely harmful as you immediately 'loose' the citizens who showed up and came out angry, frustrated, disappointed, – once more, by politics and administrations –. This simply reinforces the growing conviction that governments don't really care, don't really listen to citizens but only fake to do so. This is even more damaging for democracy than doing nothing.

FROM NOWHERE-TO-BE-FOUND CITIZENS TO CITIZENS-EVERYWHERE

Often, those (esp. local authorities) who wish to really set up more citizen participation in governance fall in the trap of wanting to put citizens everywhere, at every single stage of policy-making decisions. But this is not necessarily needed or right. – Wait, really? –.

In order to co-develop, co-create policies and services together with citizens, governments shall always question themselves whenever starting a project/policy/service:

- What do we need the citizens for? For what do we believe it could be meaningful to engage them in the process? At what stage of the process, do we think they could real-ly be an added-value?

- At what stage, on the contrary do we think that we don't 'need' them (meaning that we could avoid requesting/asking for their participation – and therefore preserving them)? For example, because it is a quite administrative/technical phase that the administration manages/deals quite well with…

It may seem strange to consider that citizens shall not necessarily be put at every stage and phase of public policy-making decisions but it is actually a very pragmatic and realistic approach. Experience has shown that citizen participation can be done at all levels of governance: local, regional, national or even European levels and at every stage of policy-making processes: from building a diagnosis through citizen walks, participatory mapping, collective review and prioritizing of issues, to ideation phases in which citizens contribute to the creative generation of ideas and solutions (see participatory scenario building), or to the development of prototypes and experimentations and to testing, refining, implementing (see collective backcasting) and evaluating phases (see for example participatory evaluation practices). Citizens can really be meaningful contributors to every stage of public policymaking. Yet. It does mean that they should, in all situation, be part of every single stage of policymaking process. Why not? Because – at the moment – govern-ments don't have the resources, the time, the capacity to ensure proper citizen participation all the time on every single subject. But also because we need to be conscious of the possible participation fatigue of active citizens (asking them too much, too often). And because we should not necessarily pass from a 'nowhere-to-be-found citizens' situation to a 'citizens-everywhere' situation, public authorities together with citizens shall define the right balance, according to their mutual capacities, interests, opportunities, etc. While doing so, public agencies should 'fine-tune the art of listening to communities and building their own capacities to respond to their [citizens & communities] aspirations' (Balasubramaniam, 2015). Challenges to implement greater participatory democracy are, as we have seen, multiple and diverse. Yet, proofs of successful forms of participatory democracy are also multiplying. **A growing number of governments, especially at local level, wish to develop more active citizen participation to local governance and the 8 cities of the Active Citizens URBACT action planning network are actors of that movement.**

The path is long, full of pitfalls but democracy is worth it.

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ACTIVE · CITIZENS

CITIZENS' PARTICIPATION IN SMALL & MEDIUM EU CITIES

8 CITIES ALREADY TAKING STEPS TOWARDS MORE PARTICIPATORY PROCESSES

City profiles of the Active Citizens Network

TARTU (EE)

DINSLAKEN (DE)

HRADEC KRALOVE (CZ)

SAINT-QUENTIN (FR)
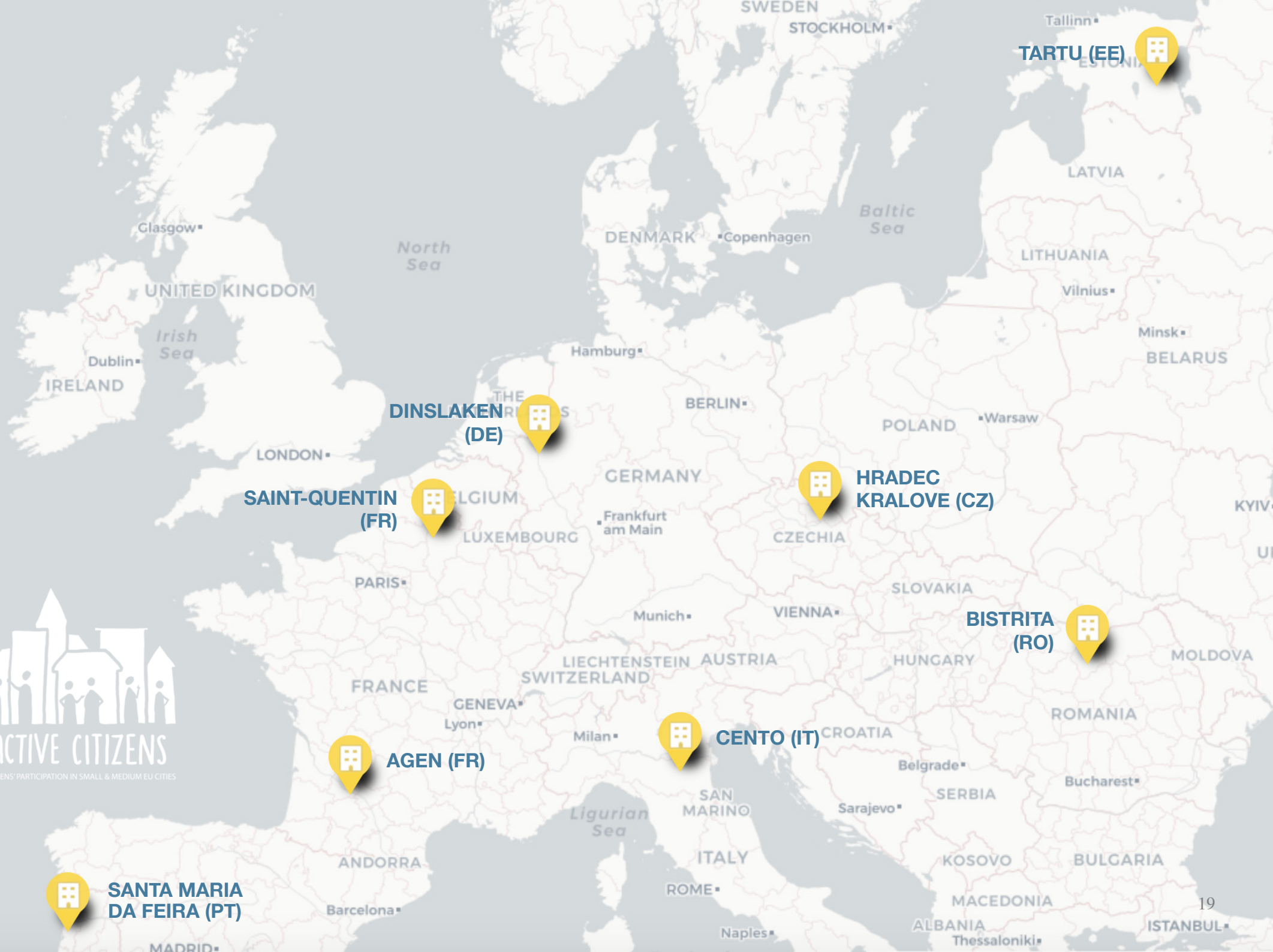
BISTRITA (RO)

ACTIVE CITIZENS
CITIZENS' PARTICIPATION IN SMALL & MEDIUM EU CITIES

AGEN (FR)

CENTO (IT)

SANTA MARIA DA FEIRA (PT)

19

8 SMALL & MEDIUM SIZED CITIES THAT ARE 'LEARNING BY DOING'

The 8 cities of the Active Citizens' network are small and medium sized cities ranging from 10 000 inhabitants to 100 000. This choice was made by the Lead Partner city of Agen in order to have a coherent network of cities with some common challenges and realities as well as relatively similar resources.

All of them have some experience with citizen participation but of course, many differences exist in between these cities in terms of achievements. Some are more advanced than others but all of them have implemented or experimented forms of citizen participation through 'learning by doing' processes. The 8 cities have experienced successes as well as failures when trying to integrate more participatory processes in their city governance whether in city-making (urbanism), policy-making, public services or social/cultural activities. None of the Active Citizens' cities is 100% examplary but some of them have some very interesting and inspiring experiences worth sharing within the network and beyond. Each city

profile is therefore built around the description of a selection of key interesting cases rather than an exhaustive list of all their local participatory practices. This means that there is more in each city than what is described here.

The 8 city profiles are presented in alphabetical order:

- Agen, France
- Bistrita, Romania
- Cento, Italy
- Dinslaken, Germany
- Hradec Kralove, Czech Republic
- Saint-Quentin, France
- Santa Maria da Feira, Portugal
- Tartu, Estonia

Each city profile is built on a similar format including some data about demographics, economy, etc., then a comment about the general citizens' relation to governance (this is key to understand in each country what is the situation between citizens and politics in terms of trust, etc.) to then a subjective selection of existing local practices in terms of: city-making, policy-making, public services, social/cultural life and finally other forms of citizen or multistakeholder processes. Finally, for each city, potentital sub-challenges are identified. Some similar cases were found in several cities and therefore not systematically re-presented in each city (which do not mean they don't also exist there).

AGEN, FRANCE

## CITIZENS' RELATION TO GOVERNANCE

The city of Agen has a relative stable political situation since 2008 because the current Mayor has been re-elected for a 6 years long second mandate in 2014. The last election were won directly in the first round with 52% of votes. Locally, the Mayor appears to have a relatively good support from citizens however, citizens' relation to democracy and governance has to be analyzed, especially in France, through a wider perspective meaning at national level also. Like in most EU countries, trust in municipal governments is higher than in national government but in France, this gap is big. **French people trust local governments way more than their national government** (France is amongst the EU countries with the lowest trust level in their national government) which might be the reason why France is well-known for its regular strikes and demonstrations movements. **Lately, France has been profoundly shooked by the Yellow vests movement since October 2018 (which initally started with the rise of fuel prices). The Yellow vests movement targeted the national government but took place at local level, in every city, every village. Not only this popular movement showed the growing discontentment of citizens against the french government but also the way politics were made in general.** Therefore, the implemen-

tation of Citizens' initiative referendums for example were amongst the demands of the Yellow Vest movement asking for more democracy. This episode of french democracy has literaly influenced the politics at all levels who were 'forced' to realize that they needed to urgently and better connect with their citizens. This has to be taken into account to understand the citizens' relation to governance and democracy in France. Locally, however, it is important to mention that the Mayor of Agen has already, in 2009, implemented citizens neighbourdhood councils as a way to give more power to citizens in the city maintenance.

A UNIQUE CASE OF 'PUBLIC SERVICE DELEGATION CONTRACT TO CITIZENS'
[CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN CITY-MAKING]

In 2009, in Agen, the Mayor decided to create Citizens Neighbourhood Councils (no legal framework forced him to do so). In order to divide the city into roughly comparable 'neighbourdhoods'. To do so, he decided to create the neighbourdhoods based on the 23 existing polling places (voting bureau). This method was used because the polling places divide the city into equal population portions (between 1000-1500 people). This is how, in 2009, the city was divided into 23 Citizens Neighbourhood Councils. Elections were ran in every single neighbourhood and citizens had to vote for a list of 9 volunteer citizens. 207 citizens (9 in the 23 neighbourhoods) were elected all over the city to 'represent' their fellow citizens. The average voter turnout was around 25% during the first mandate and 17% for the second mandate (each mandate is 6 years long for both the Mayor and the citizens of the neighbourhood councils). **The Mayor decided to give to the Citizens Neighbourhood Councils one key specific mandate: to decide upon the**
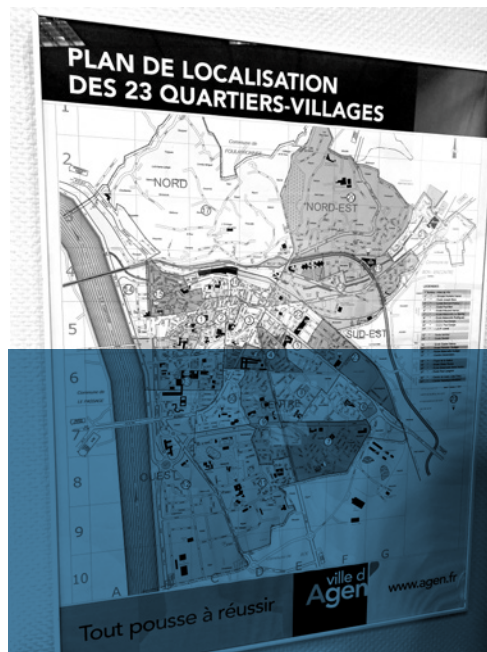
city street maintenance agenda. This task, usually performed by the Road Department (or Road Maintenance) of the city administration, was given to the citizens together with the maintenance budget. Each Citizens Neighbourhood Council has to decide upon a given budget of 375 000€ for the 6 years long mandate (so over 8 Millions Euros in total) and what to do with it, meaning which street to renovate, which sidewalk to transform, etc. Each council has an official convention with the city and every year there is an annual face to face meeting in which there is an assessment done with elected representatives. The councils decide which street they wish to renovate (and how they want it) then give their decisions to the city administration who then check the validity of the demand and launch the construction works. **This form of 'public delegation contract' to citizens has been an internal revolution (within the city administration) as part of the 'powers' of the road maintenance department were suddenly taken away and given to the citizens meaning both the power to decide upon the maintenance agenda as well as the construction budget.**

10 years later, the experience has proven to have at least 3 key positive effects :

1. No neighbourhood is forgotten
Before the creation of the Citizens Neighbourhood Councils, the Road Maintenance Department was decided upon what works to do, which street to renovate, etc. 'This year, we will renovate the north district of the city'. This 'arbitrary' way of deciding upon what and where to renovate the streets often meant that some neighbourhoods would not be renovated for years and years because the technical services did not judge it necessary to renovate them. With this new way of doing, **every single neighbourhood benefits from some renovations since each neighbourhood as a council to decide what to do and the budget that goes with it** to run the construction works. There is no more 'forgotten' neighbourhoods.

2. Citizens' reactivity versus city's technical services' reactivity
A city is made of hundreds of streets, from large avenues to small alleys. Of course, the technical services can hardly keep an eye on every street and before they realize that something need to be repaired in that small alley behind the shopping street it may take some time. On the other side, **when it is up to citizens to decide (or at least to the Neighbourhood Councils), identifying and monitoring problems is way faster because the citizens actually live there, in those streets.** They are, therefore, way more reactive as they can report every single problem very quickly (and fix it since they have the power to decide to do so). Unmounted paved stones, a bended street sign, a broken bench... can therefore be quickly fixed (at least faster now than it used to).

3. Building upon citizens' ideas and expertise

Agen has several stories to share in which the citizens' inputs have been able to unblock some situations that the city's administration was not able to fix. As an example, they told the story, of a school entrance which was quite dangerous at the beginning of the school in the morning and its ending at the end of the day with all the kids, parents and cars all concentrating on the sidewalk and the street. **The technical services of the city as well as elected officials worked for weeks on the subject without coming up with a solution until the concerned Citizen Neighbourhood Council was consulted and got an idea that no one even considered in the city administration** and which ended up being a proposal which solved the problem (the solution consisted in moving the school entrance location towards a surrounding street and defining a pedestrian-prior area). Building upon citizen's ideas and expertise prooved several times to be quite meaningful for the city administration.

However, drawbacks, or at least, things to fix and improve are plethoric. Indeed, we have observed that the members of the Citizens Neighbourhood Councils never received any proper training not only about road maintenance but also about participatory processes. Therefore, some councils are very pro-active in collecting the needs, requests and ideas of their fellow neighbours (by having a permanent office opened once a week to welcome whoever has a concern to share

with the neighbourhood council) while others do not gather citizens' opinions beyond informally encountering them in the street. Some councils even admit taking decisions all by themselves, since they have the 'power' to do so. Indeed, the city administration does not request them to conduct any formal process of consultation or concertation of the other citizens. This means that, in a way, the members of the councils are like 23 'mini-mayors' who can take decisions by themselves or consult their fellow neighbours if they wish to, but in any case, it's up to them to decide what and how they want to do it (one president of council has openly told us that he was happy when he could take decisions alone by himself... which of course is a quite questionable remark when we aim at greater democracy...). Finally, the process of election is also definitely not satisfactory in terms of democracy as most neighbourhoods had around 20% of voters only, which means that the legitimacy of the citizens councils is quite fragile and replicating the same limitations that regular elections already have (which is at the source of the weakness of representative democracy – meaning low voter turnout therefore weak legitimacy of elected representatives). It is also important to mention that, since this is entirely volunteer work for the citizens, there is a very weak representativity of the population as nearly all of the members of the councils are around 70 years old.

To conclude, **this case of 'public service delegation to citizens' is inspiring on many aspects but need further improvements and refining.** Amongst the possible challenges to be solved, we have:
- the current process of election
- the low diversity of the councils' members (esp. age)
- the absence of any form of training on the topic of road/urban maintenance
- the absence of any formal participatory process requested by the city administration

A DIGITAL CONTRIBUTIVE PLATFORM FOR REPORTING INCIDENTS IN PUBLIC SPACES: TELL MY CITY
[CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN CITY-MAKING]

In 2018, the city of Agen has released an app called 'Tell my city'. This app is a public system allowing any citizen to report to the city services all forms of incidents, problems observed within the city such as potholes, broken streetlamps,
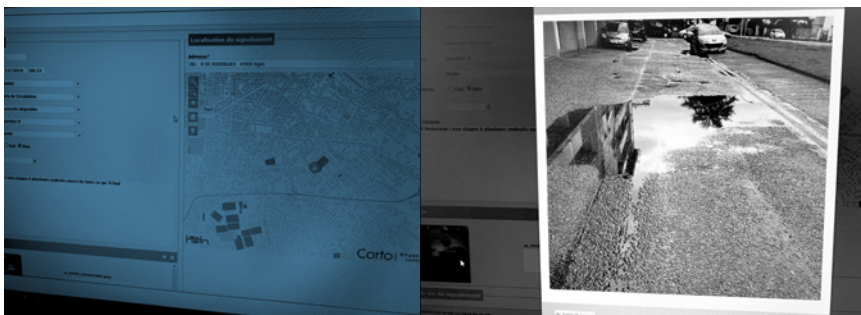
illegal dumping of trash, etc. This platform allows citizens to post pictures of the problem, write a few lines to describe the problem and geo-localize the report. All reports are then automatically sent to the city administration where one person is in charge of going through all the reports and forwarding them to the right city departments (road maintenance department, waste department, etc.) for them to give a response: either the problem can be dealt with right away then a technical team is sent to remove the trash, to repair the sidewalk, etc., or the problem is identified but it will take some time before it can be solved (reasons are then given to the citizens who have done the report).

Within 10 months, the city has received 1430 reports, showing the growing success of this tool. In order to inform citizens about this contributive platform, the city administration has developed a dissemination strategy composed of 3 aspects: first, all over the city, billboards show a campaign against 'incivilities' and below each ad there is an invitation to join and report problems through the Tell my city app, second, the local press and the website of the city promotes the app, third, every citizen who contacts the city administration or shows up at the city hall to report a problem is invited to join the Tell my city app. Civil servants even show citizens how the app works and help installing it on people's smartphones, in order to enable and train them to use it (increasing this way the number of citizens using it). **After one year and a half of the existence of the app, 70% of reports from citizens are now done through the Tell my City app. This good result is also to be put in relation to the fact that the city actually answers to the reports and really solve the problems** (they have put in place a real back-office system of report management as well as internal processes allowing good communication in between the different city departments).

In itself, the Tell my City app is an interesting case of use of a digital tool to support citizens' contributions however it is not a 'participatory democracy' tool per say but rather what we could qualify as a 'contributive tool'. Indeed, citizens contribute to reporting and maintaining the city infrastructures but they are not in-

volved in decisions or policies which could change the state of the situation (like the waste management, etc.). Even if the city identifies recurrent issues (which could reveal management or monitoring dysfunctions), there are dealt with internally only but citizens are not involved in the long-term process of solving the cause of the problems.

CURRENT SITUATION AND FUTURE PERSPECTIVES

The situation of Agen demonstrates a clear political ambition of involving citizens in the governance of the city. Until now, it has mostly been around questions of city making (urban infrastructure) but has proven to be done at a very impressive level which is no-where-else to be found. The very unique format of the Agen Neighbourhood Councils demonstrates a strong will to give citizens more power and space in city decisions making, even though it is one very specific topic: street maintenance. The mandate that has been given to the citizens is bold and show a real ambition of going towards more participatory processes. The Citizens Neighbourhood councils of Agen have proven to be quite effective – even though largely improvable – and appear as an inspiring case for the other cities of the network and beyond. Outside this inspiring case, **the city of Agen has still a lot of room to experiment further with participatory processes which would go beyond the only scope of participatory city-maintenance. This could mean, for example, to involve other citizens in larger or more strategic urban planning projects, as well as experimenting more participatory processes in policy-making and the design of public-services.** In that regard, Agen can probably build upon an other interesting process done at the Maison Montesquieu (Agen's city-centre Social Centre) in which activities are entirely proposed, carried out and facilitated by the inhabitants themselves. 'We are already at a certain level of co-creation, or even co-decision, where the inhabitants go from the status of consumers of activities to that of actors and producers of activities' comments the former director of the Social Centre. In 2019, the Social Centre was visited 5000 times, counts 340 members and 73 volunteer citizens who run both recurring workshops and one-shot activities. 'The next step is to rethink the governance body of the social centre in order to include citizens in this decision-taking body' comments Nicolas Castet, Active Citizens' network coordinator and former social centre's director.

BISTRIȚA, ROMANIA

CITIZENS' RELATION TO GOVERNANCE

The situation in Bistrița necessarily has to be looked at through the lense of the Romanian history and socio-economical situation. Of course, the soviet past of Romania has influenced the relation citizens have towards democracy and governance. Indeed, Romania went through a fascist dictature (1940s) then a soviet regime (1945-1989), **citizens have experienced a form of governance which did not leave much space to participatory democracy and active citizen participation to governance and democratic debate and deliberation**. Of course, since 1989 the situation has changed a lot including the integration of Romania in the European Union in 2007. However, **the tumultuous political modern history of Romania has led to a general feeling of 'mistrust' – and even suspicion in some cases – in politics for a good majority of citizens.** Several recent cases of political corruption (both at national and local level) have reinforced this general feeling (which is confirmed by facts if you look at the poor score of Romania in terms of corruption index[1]). Romanian are, therefore, not so convinced of the global honesty and trustworthiness of most of their elected officials. European

1 See Transparency International Corruption index

studies[2] even show that Romania scores rather low in terms of level of trust in its national government but also local goverments (even though trust level really improved in the last years). In terms of public administrative capacity, Romania ranks as the lowest country in all 28 EU countries [3] meaning that it is the country with the highest need for administrative capacity improvement. In parallel, the socio-economic situation of Romania has led (according the citizens we met during our study visit in Bistrița) to a low level of citizen engagement in public matters in general (as people rather focus (giving their time, money, etc.) on supporting their own family). As a fact, the number of local associations is, for example, the lowest one in comparison to the other 7 EU cities of the network (20-30 associations in comparison to an average of 200-400 in the other cities). **Cases of good citizen participation or participatory democracy are therefore not so numerous and widespread in Romania. However, things are evolving and we can observe a growing desire for more participatory practices, both from the citizens' side as well as the politics who acknowledge the need for more participatory processes and greater citizen engagement.**

GIVING VOICE TO YOUTH: BISTRIȚA YOUTH COUNCIL
[CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN CITY SOCIAL/CULTURAL LIFE]

The city administration has set up, in 2006, a Youth Council. The Youth Council is based on the original City Council, which means that it is composed – similarly to the 'adult' one – of 21 counsellors including one Mayor and 2 Vice-Mayors. The Youth Counsellors come from the different high schools of the city and are aged 15 to 17. They are elected for a 2 years mandate. The Youth Council is given by the city a yearly budget of 7500€ to run projects. **Counsellors meet every 2 weeks and discuss about youth's interests and run youth-related projects (most often there are cultural, sport or environmental projects/events…). The city supports the Youth Council in the implementation of their ideas/ projects.** During the events/activities ran by the council, the members are able to mobilize a quite large portion of young people in the city (in helping, volunteering to set up and run the events, etc.), however, there is no formalized process of consultation or integration of the youth in the decision-making process or co-creation process. This means that the Youth Council's members ask, informally, their friends, colleagues at schools (or outsidde) what they think of this need, this problem, this idea, etc. but there is no proper formalized process of consultation or co-creation with the youth population. Sometimes the Youth Council make a

2 European Commission, Joint Research Centre, (2015) Trust, local governance and quality of public service in EU regions and cities
3 European Commission, 2017. A comparative overview of public administration characteristics and performance in EU28

questionnaire to be given to the other students but, in the end, the treatment of the 3000 responses was done by the city administration. The Youth Council has a special venue to host their meetings which is the Youth Community Center. Two civil servants from the city administration are in charge of supporting the Youth Council and of organizing and leading their meetings in order to reduce the workload for the Youth Council's members.

The experience, so far, has proven to be quite a success.
First, **students really show a good interest in joining the Youth Council.** Every school has a number of available seats based on the number of students and two minorities (German and Hungarian students) have reserved seats to ensure their presence in the council. In average, there are about 3-4 candidates per seat in the council. And the voter turnout is around 70% per election.
Second, the Youth Council has a privileged relation with the city administration. On some subjects, the Youth Mayor even seats at the City Council. **In parallel, 'from time to time, we [civil servants] ask the Youth Council what they think of some of our projects… we ask their opinions for example on what they would like the city to develop in the future…'.** As an example, we wanted to develop a part of a local forest and we worked with the Youth Council to come up with ideas. In the end, this portion of forest got transformed into a 'Youth Forest' with youth-centered infrastructure including climbing, skating, walking, cycling, tennis, football, concert stage, etc. 'The Youth Council came up with ideas we did not think about, like the skatepark which they even designed.'
Third, it appears that the Youth Council really contributes to train active citizens. Indeed, the experience has shown that several students (at least 5 or 6) who were involved in the Youth Council as members or mayors are now involved in politics.

USER-CENTERED AND MULTISTAKEHOLDER COLLABORATION IN PUBLIC SOCIAL SERVICES

[CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC SERVICES]

The public service for social care in Bistrița has developed interesting practices of citizen participation, or rather of 'beneficiaries' participation'. Indeed, 'all our social services are created based on debates with our beneficiaries' explains the director of the Social Service Department. For example, when we built the programme for after-school activities, we discussed with the parents of the kids through monthly meetings in which we discussed what to do, what to develop, what are the needs, etc. 'It is the fourth year since we starting feeding children with natural/local/seasonal food, and this was also the result of a work with families and experts'. The social service provides help and support for homeless people, elderly, young adults, a social canteen and home services/suppport. It includes providing them with a minimum living wage, child support, family allocation, allocation and assistance for disabled people, a mobile medical unit for roma people, etc.

'Five times a year, we do a large food distribution operation to our 1 800 beneficiaries in the city and when we do so, we prepare, the year before, together with the beneficiaries what they would like to receive'. People make their requests for some food products (flour, oil, sugar, etc.) and the city tries to arrange and respond to the beneficiaries' needs instead of distributing some products that they might not need and consume. But, as the director explains, this collaborative approach is not only with the beneficiaries but a multi-stakeholder way of working. Indeed, the social service department is always working with a whole series of actors ranging from other city departments (education, health, etc.) but also NGOs and other public institutions (schools, etc.). From his professional experience 'the secret of a good collaboration depends on the will, capacity and mutual knowledge of the leaders of the different institutions to work together…

It is because we know each other quite well that we can easily have informal/ direct contacts/exchanges to solve quickly some issues'. In a way, the close (and friendly) relationship of the multiple stakeholders (directors knowing personaly one an other and having each others' phone numbers) is key for the agility and reactivity of the system. This culture of multistakeholder collaboration is quite developed in the romanian social service area. As an example, 'the 103 municipal social services in Romania are grouped in a Whatsapp group

to exchange together their experience regarding some cases, to ask for peer to peer advices, share ressources/useful websites, etc.'. This inspiring practice of beneficiaries's involvement (or 'co-design with users' practice) as well as the multistakeholder collaboration, developed in the social field in Romania could be useful and maybe, in part, transferable to other public city services…

Finally, it is also important to note that the social services have developed through their social practice, interesting social skills (attitudes, behaviours, language) regarding their relation with citizens: 'When I receive people in my office, I sometimes spend 45 min to discuss with only one person. I offer them something to drink, to make them feel in a safe and friendly environment, I compliment and re-assure them so that they feel valorized and gain confidence, etc. then we can collaborate more easily (without agressivity, fear, etc.)'. As explained previously in the first part of the baseline study (regarding the needed skills for citizen participation), **the social skills (empathy, non-condescending posture, etc.) developed in the social field can be inspiring for other public city services, and more generally for the Active Citizens' network.**

CURRENT SITUATION AND FUTURE PERSPECTIVES

As mentionned previously, the situation in Bistrița has to be looked at through the lens of the trust and relation between citizens and governments (whether local or national). Even though there is not a rich and long history of citizen participation things are evolving. Indeed both active citizens, we had the chance to meet during the study visits, and elected officials have demonstrated their will for greater collaboration between citizens and city administration. **Amongst the many perspectives, it appears there could be some interesting opportunities to explore around the training of students (and maybe volunteer citizens?) and civil servants on the citizen participation topic** together with the Babes Bolyai University of Cluj Naboca, Bistrita Branch who have shown a big interest in working on the topic. Future experiments could be done on the topic of culture in Bistrița, but also further youth involvement or participatory urbanism.

CENTO, ITALY

CITIZENS' RELATION TO GOVERNANCE

In order to understand the citizens' relation to democracy and governance in Cen-
to, and by extension, to Italy, it is important to have a close look at the political
history of the country. Italian politics is quite known for being tumultuous. In the
1990s political scandals, extensive corruption and organized crime's considerable
influence have for many years led to the growing disenchantment of citizen's
regarding political matters. **Political turmoil has led to a general form of suspi-
cion regarding politics, however, it appears that the situation has improved
in the last decade also because of the continuous fight against corruption**
(even though Italy still scores quite badly in Europe in terms of corruption in-
dex) and the increase of transparency measures. In the recent years, however,
parties and movements which lay their foundations on direct participation and
involvement of citizens, such as the "Cinque stelle"(five stars) movement and
the "Sardine" initiative during the latest elections in Emilia-Romagna, have risen
to be part of the italian government. **Italy has a very low level of trust in their
national government** (one of the lowest in Europe together with France, Greece,

Spain - see EU study[1]) and in municipal authorities as well (even though higher at local level than national level). It is also important to mention that the italian administration is perceived quite negatively by citizens especially for its high level of bureaucracy. And this appears to be not only a perception but a measurable fact since european studies[2] place Italy as the 21st country in Europe for public administration performance (therefore appearing as a country with the highest need for administrative capacity improvement). **In Cento the situation is quite interesting as the municipal team, which got elected in 2016, is quite new, young and elected from a Lista Civica meaning a Civic list (a local civic list with no-affiliation to national political parties).** Cento has a long history of Mayors elected through civic lists instead of big national parties which appear to be a way of putting some distance with the national parties' turmoil. Finally, we can add that even though political participation of citizens is not that huge locally (56% of voter turnout), citizens' volunteering is very high especially through active local association and consulte civiches (neighbourhood councils) gather a rich and diverse set of active citizens.

THE RICH DIVERSITY OF ACTIVE CITIZENS IN THE CONSULTE CIVICHE (CIVIC COUNCILS)
[CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN CITY-MAKING & PUBLIC SERVICES]

The Consulte Civiches (civic councils or neighbourhood councils) are bodies of citizens who play a consultative role in the administrative management of the local community (esp. urbanism, public services, etc.). Historically, in Italy, the city of Bologna (in the 1960s) was the first one to create Neighbourhood Councils. Even though, nowadays, many more cities have them, the city of Cento (same region as Bologna) introduced them 20 years ago already. In Cento, the territory has been divided into 9 integrated areas, in each of which a Civic Council has been constituted. The number of members of the individual Civic Councils is established taking into account the population living in the various integrated areas and ranges between 7 to 11 citizens. Each council is composed of a president (elected by members) and its members (consultori). The members are elected by the residents of each neighbourhood and apply as candidates on a voluntary basis. In order to be eligible, candidates have to either live or work in the neighbourhood. During the lifetime of the council (similar to the mayor's mandate), if one member leaves permanently the council (whatever the

1 European Quality of Life Survey 2016
2 European Commission, 2017. A comparative overview of public administration characteristics and performance in EU28

reason) or is excluded (because of non-attendance to a certain number of councils meetings in a row), he or she is replaced by the next candidates that were on the original election. If there is no candidate to replace him or she with, he or she is not replaced. In the event that the number of members remaining in office becomes less than half of the needed number per council, then the council is ceased and new elections will be held. Each council is given a place to meet by the city administration. Meetings can either be decided to take place based on the president's call, or by one of its member. To happen, at least one third of the members of the council shall be present or 30 citizens from the neighbourhood. In practice, most Civic Councils have told us to meet every 2 months on average (unless there are specific issues to deal with which would require meeting more frequently). The municipal budget, the multi-annual plan of interventions, the urban planning projects as well as public works projects exceeding 150 000€ shall be approved by the city only after it went through a consultation process with the concerned Civic Council (the one impacted by the planned project). For some public matters, the consultation process is therefore compulsory but obviously, the city does not have to take into account what comes out of the Civic Council since it is a non-binding position anyway – which is why it is called a consultation body –. **'You can consult, for some subjects you even have to do so, but you don't have to listen to and follow what you hear, exactly like with an advisor, or a friend.'** After every meeting, the council has to produce a meeting report which has to be sent to the city administration by the president for the city to read. Unfortunately, the many members we met claim that most of the time they do submit their report to the city but they actually don't get any feedback from the administration – and/or realize later that what they advised or proposed as

changes was not taken into account... Inevitably, this has to be improved and/or clarified in order to preserve, recognize and value the engagement of these active citizens. But, what stroke us when we met these active citizens in Cento was the rich diversity of its members. In the 8 cities of the Active Citizens network, the Consulte Civiches have proven to have one of the richest diversity of active citizens in terms of demographics (whereas usually it is mostly retired people). Concretely this means that the members cover a wide range of the population in terms of age (young people, families, mid-age active citizens, senior ones) and a good gender balance. It appeared to us, therefore, that the Consulte Civiches of Cento are an incredible source of voluntary and diverse active citizens which is not 'exploited' (positively) enough by the city. One of the risk of not improving quite urgently the communication/collaboration between the councils and the city is, of course, the progressive resignation of these active citizens and the growing conviction that local governments (and not only national ones) pretend to care about citizens' opinions but, in the end, don't really. If participation is considered as a facade by citizens, then it would be a great loss for the city administration.

LOCAL ASSOCIATIONS: A FERTILE SOIL FOR PARTICIPATION AND COLLABORATION
[OTHER FORMS OF CITIZEN PARTICIPATION AND/OR ENGAGEMENT]

The city of Cento hosts around 200 associations which, for a city of that size demonstrate a good citizen engagement in the social, cultural, political life of the city. These associations are very diverse and act at different levels on many subjects (social inclusion, cultural activities, library, cinema, organic food purchasing groups, events, fairs, shows, intercultural exchanges, sports, etc.). Most associations confirm that involving citizens on the long run and/or in management roles is not so easy. Indeed, for management roles, active citizens are often a reduced number ranging from 5 to 20 people. On the opposite, involving citizens in 'fun' activities, very hands-on work and punctual support/help is quite easy and efficient. Without much surprise, more demanding activities require time, energy and effort) that many citizens don't necessarily have or can not give. In terms of citizen participation this means that we shall also consider different possibilities of engagement in participatory processes. From demanding and long run ones to light, fun and quicker ones. As an example of this approach, the Carnival di cento is a good case. 5 associations dedicate a huge amount of time and energy creating

the carnival's floats all year around with a small number of active volunteers but when it comes to the actual setting up and running of the carnival event, then 1000 volunteer citizens help (for the couple of days of the event).

Associations in general acknowledge that, for them also, it is difficult to mobilize citizens. It often requires a lot of effort of communication (putting flyers one by one in people's mailbox or even directly 'knocking at people's door). This difficulty faced by citizen-based associations confirm the even greater difficulty that city administration may encounter when they wish to carry on participatory processes (even though they have more powerful communication, resources).

Collaboration between the local associations and the city are happening regularly but there are "not very natural, fluid or even a normal/common practice'. 'Sometimes we find a wall between the city and us' says an association's member. Amongst the difficulties we can mention the difficulty of identifying the right person to contact within the city administration… so knowing personally some key civil servants helps a lot (and especially knowing personally an elected official!).

Citizens also often experience the difficulty of dealing with the two parts of what makes a city's authority, the politics on one side and the administration (civil servants) on the other side. For them, 'it's easier to talk with the politics rather than the civil servants because with the city departments/services we always end up having bureaucratic problems' (having to provide an absurd amount of administrative papers, forms, authorization, proofs of all kind, etc.). **There is a gap between the politics and the civil servants: 'politics make us some promises then the technical services tell us 'no, it's not feasible'. 'We often have the impression that the technical services are hiding behind regulations and rules but**

don't help much in finding solutions'. Finally and on top of that, citizens and administrations don't have the same relation to time. 'We, associations are moving faster than the bureaucratic rhythm of the city administration'.

If you had a magic stick to improve the collaboration with the city administration: 'I would ensure that the city exploits better the potentiality and expertise of the engaged, active citizens (associations)'. 'We would take away the barriers that block us from doing more'. 'We would like the city to recognize the importance of the [social] role we play and be supportive of our projects'. **'To collaborate closer with the city requires a personal change of mind… both in the head of the active citizens, civil servants and politicians…'** concludes an active member of an association. The number of associations in Cento demonstrate that citizens are locally socially, culturally and/or politically active and this means that there is a fertile soil to plant the seeds for greater and closer participation and collaboration between citizens and city governance.

CURRENT SITUATION AND FUTURE PERSPECTIVES

Cento has just initiated, in 2019, a promising programme called 'Cento Beni Comuni' with the aim of building the basis of a participatory approach and collaboration between citizens and administration through a collective reflection on the theme of the 'common goods' of the territory (see the theory of the Commons). The idea is to co-define a regulation of common goods that would facilitate forms of collaboration between citizens and the city to implement initiatives and inter-

ventions for the shared care and management of material assets of the city (green areas, historical heritage, public spaces, etc.) as well as immaterial goods (artistic heritage, cultural and social projects, etc.). The programme is still ongoing and appears as an interesting case, and maybe, space for some potential Active Citizens' experiments. Obviously, there is also a clear opportunity to work on the redesign and improvement of the Consulte Civiche as they really are a promising platform for active citizen participation.

DINSLAK-EN,GER-MANY

CITIZENS' RELATION TO GOVERNANCE

Germany has a quite stable political situation. Indeed, the two main historical parties (CDU/CSU (centre-right) and the SPD (centre-left)) have basically shared power since 1945. Locally, it is the same situation, as **Dinslaken has been governed from 1948 to 1999 by an absolute majority of SPD, then by CDU in 1999 and back to SPD in 2005.** Similarly to many other EU countries, the two main historical parties are now more and more challenged with the growing role of medium or small parties including (like in other countries) extreme parties (esp. far-right nationalists parties). Even though elections have grown more and more unpredictable, the political situation remains globally stable for the moment. As a result, **analysis confirm that trust in the governement[1] in Germany is higher than the EU average and it goes the same with the local municipal authorities** (trust level in Germany is amongst the highest ones in Europe). Germany also has one of the lowest corruption index[2] in Europe which may also explain the good

1 European Quality of Life Survey 2016
2 See Transparency International Corruption index

trust level in governance in that country.

Locally, Dinslaken has a stable political situation with two mayors who have both done two mandates in a row (having therefore 2 mayors in 20 years). Although there has been no fixed majority in Local Council during the three last periods. However, this does not mean that citizens are 'politically sleepy', on the contrary, **Dinslaken benefits from a good number of active citizens and has experimented many diverse participatory and collaborative approaches.**

OPENING UP THE CONVERSATION WITH CITIZENS ABOUT URBAN PLANNING CHOICES
[CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN CITY-MAKING, URBAN PLANNING]

The city of Dinslaken has multiple experience of what could be considered as forms of 'participatory urban planning'. Amongst the different experiences, we can cite in particular: the Horse racing track project (Zukunft Trabrennbahn) and the participatory design of playgrounds.

The first project is the complete transformation of a 35 hectares horse racing track right in the heart of the city. The track (about to be definitely closed down) represents a big urban development opportunity but the question is: what to with it? what to make of that available space? Usually, cities tend to decide on their own (meaning the elected officials) what to do with it, then hire an urban & architecture agency to make some plans then validate and launch the works. For this project, the city has decided to launch a large and ambitious participatory process of co-definition of the future plans for this space. The city basically invited whoever wished to contribute to the collective reflection about: what should this place turned into? what should it become? **As the city administration explains 'doing a participatory process for this project appeared inevitable for us as this horse racing track is, for inhabitants, a big landmark and a traditional symbol of the city's identity. But the racing activity has been 'dying' for years, so 'we had to admit that it could not go on forever like this and that we needed to imagine future plans for this space'.** What is ambitious and interesting is that the city, then decided to set up a 'fully open participatory process' meaning with no fixed plan to start with. This is worth noting because too often city administrations who wish to conduct some forms of participatory processes often end up doing a consultation of citizens with an already quite advanced (if not already final) plan of what they wish to do... Here, the process starts with a blank page.

To run the process, the city missioned an external consultancy specialised in participatory processes. They comment this choice explaining 'it was very important for us to have a third party facilitator/moderator because he/she is neutral in the process. The moderator is not attached or affiliated to the city administration and/or the politicians'. This appeared to be even more important since the city experienced past urban projects conflicts (renewal of train station plaza) in the past. – By the way, the latest experiments in the field of participatory processes clearly confirm the idea that third party actors have a clear added-value in collaborative processes as they play a broker role, a facilitator role and are appreciated for their trustworthiness and selflessness –.

The participatory process of the horse racing track has proven to be quite successful so far (it is still going on) since it brought, as average, around 100 citizens (and local stakeholders) at every meeting/workshop (the process started in sept. 2019). The events were organized around collective future reflections like 'Innovative Living': **How do the citizens of Dinslaken want to live? What possibilities are there, what alternatives are there to conventional housing and how can housing remain affordable?** The next one was dedicated to 'Community life', etc. This process is interesting in terms of participatory process as it does not directly ask citizens what are their wishes and desires for this place but extend the conversation further, at a higher level. The risk of doing it directly at the 'planning wishes' level is to end up with a wide collection of ideas (with some quite contradictory or even uncompatible), then fight about which one is better than the other and how to make choices. Here, the process opens up the conversation at a higher level than the space itself, it questions the way people want to live, what is meaningful for them, how they would like to live... in order to rethink the whole area in an integrated way. The process is still ongoing and includes phases of online (voting) and offline contributions and is meant to open up the conversation in a creative and reflective way (thinking of future living) then to narrow it down progressively in order to come up with more precise specifications (infrastructure,

services, etc.) to be implemented in the future in that space. In parallel, the city has included some requirements to be fulfilled like the construction of a minimum number of houses in order to respond to the growing need in the city. This aspect is key as the city is a key actor in the process who also must define some 'non-negotiable' aspects which respond to the general interest of the city. **The whole process is a long one but interestingly, the city has decided to start it as early as possible (too often participatory urban planning is done when everything is already almost set and defined by the city and there is nearly no margin for improvement or change).** Indeed, the actual horse racing track will only be ready for construction in early 2023 in any case (as the current users of the track will be definitively ceasing their activities at the end of 2022). This project was worth mentioning for us as it represents the largest and most ambitious participatory experiment conducted so far for the city (after experiencing a difficult city-citizens conflict around the renewal project of the train station plaza).

The second project we wanted to share is the participatory design of playgrounds in the city. Dinslaken has, like several other cities, a youth group called the Youth Parliament (Kinder- und Jugendparlament). This parliament, amongst the many missions it has, also takes care of this creative process which is the participatory approach of the redesign process of the city playgrounds. The idea is quite simple: let's co-design with users of the playgrounds! The Youth Parliament together with the city organize a process in which kids and parents are invited to share what they would like their new playground to be like, what are their needs (bench for seating, etc.). In the process, **kids are invited to draw, to bring inspiring ideas they've found elsewhere, cut-outs from magazines… The whole process happens on the spot, meaning right in-situ where the new playground will be installed.** Then the 'playgrounds' users' vote amongst a series of options (defined by the budgetary limits of the city) and decide upon what would be the best equipment to implement. The Youth Parliament facilitates (together with one civil servant from the city) the participatory process. 'Because we are teenagers ourselves, I think people trust us more than the adults. **Because we are 'kids' ourselves (even though, teens) we know better their needs and wishes, we un-**

derstand them better' – than the city staff – comments a Youth Parliament's member.** After the co-definition and collective decision process (done through voting), the city launches the works (public procurement calls for the equipment, installation, etc.). Once installed, a little party is organized with the community to celebrate and inaugurate the playground.

Imagine if school yards could be imagined and designed by kids themselves... how fantastic and fun would they be!

GIVING VOICE TO THE YOUNG AND THE 'NOT-SO-YOUNG ANYMORE' CITIZENS
[CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC SERVICES AND POLICY-MAKING]

The city of Dinslaken cares for its young generation and its elder generation. In order to give voice to these two categories of citizens, Dinslaken is 'equipped' with two bodies of young representatives and elder representatives: the Youth Parliament (mentioned previously) and the Senior Citizens' council.

The Youth Parliament or Jugendparlament (created 22 years ago by the Mayor of Dinslaken in 1998) is a council of around 18 teenagers aged between 10 to 21 years old. Members have a 2 years mandate. The members join the Parliament on voluntary basis through the schools of the city who promote the Youth Parliament. **'I joined when I was 14 because I thought that young people were always criticizing and complaining but not doing much so I wanted to try to change things that I was unhappy with', explains the Youth Parliament's president.** The Youth Parliament receives a budget of 4000€ per year to carry on projects and activities dedicated to the youth. Whenever the city has projects concerning the Youth, then the Youth Parliament is 'consulted' (although not so systematically in practice). The Youth Parliament's members also have the right to sit officially in the City Council for Commissions (youth support Commission, schools Commission, etc.) and also have the possibility to know about the topics of all the other commissions that may concern the youth public. In practice, the members join regularly the most obvious commissions like the youth support one but don't often attend the other ones as it is on them to look for the commissions' agendas. The city does not automatically notify them with the agendas that may concern them. The members have to search by themselves the info... **despite their right to sit at the commissions, members only have a consultation role: 'we**

don't have any voting or decision rights' comments one Youth Parliament's member. But 'we can make proposals, suggest ideas, etc.' to the mayor and the city counsellors'. The Youth Parliament has been created a long time ago already as a form of consultative body but members don't receive any particular training to participatory processes… therefore in order to carry and collect the voices of their fellow youngsters they 'improvise' a bit: 'we give our contacts', 'we use boards wherever we are to collect feedback, ideas and suggestions', etc. but beyond this, none of them have been trained to other forms of participatory tools, methods and approach. Exploring this aspect appears to be an interesting perspective within Active Citizens…

The Senior Citizens' council is a quite common consultative body in German cities. **The Senior Citizens' council is meant to represent and inform the interests and concerns of older people to the city authority, to participate in the planning of facilities, measures and programs for older people and to provide information and help to all older people.** In Dinslaken, the Senior Citizens' council is composed of 13 elder citizens (+ 5 'reserve' members). Each member has a mandate of 4 years. The Senior Citizens' council has a budget of around 2000€ per year. Similarly to the Youth Parliament, the members have an official right to seat at the city council 's commissions. The Senior Citizens' council is there to discuss policies, services and infrastructures which may impact and/or concern elder citizens. The members even hold voluntarily a 'senior office' in the city hall for elder citizens who seek help, advices or information (the office is only opened 2 hours a week though). The Senior Citizens' council also tries to develop solutions to elder-specific 'problems'. For example, the council has worked on the 'need to access toilets easily' and came up with a collaborative solution called the Open Toilet Initiative. This initiative was done in partnership with shopowners of the city and consists in the open access for elder people exclusively to the shopowners taking part to this initiative. Indeed, outside of cafés and restaurants, shops don't have to provide access to toilets to their customers. Here, the idea is to make an exception for elder people who could exceptionnally access the private toilets of the labelled shops by entering the storeroom. Besides developing solutions, the Senior Citizens' council promotes elder-interest information by self-publishing a quarterly local magazine. **The council is, similarly to the Youth Parliament, what could be referred to as a form of advisory board since they don't have any direct decision powers.** Still, the risk of such bodies, in terms of participatory democracy, is that the city only consults the councils and not the rest of the young and elder population. **We could therefore argue 'We don't need to do participatory processes with elder people because we already collaborate with 13 elder citizens from the Senior Citizens' council!'.** Of course, we realize quickly how tricky this can become if these voices are the

only to be heard and listened to.

10 or 20 young people or elder ones do not necessarily speak for the thousands of them who live in the city. In line with this idea, a team of researchers from the Düsseldorf University of Applied Sciences has been asked to 'study and analyse' youth's habits, wishes, needs, practices in order to better understand them. The team of the research center for social space-oriented practical research and development (FSPE) surveyed 512 young people of Dinslaken about: What do young people from Dinslaken do in their free time? Where do they like to go, where not? What do they wish? What is the daily routine of a student in Dinslaken? The survey was done through on-the-spot survey in 3-4 different places throughout the city. The city, together with the university, gathered the feedback of young people in order to both analyse practices but also come up with a city action plan based on the results of the 'hearing' of the young generation. 'For us, it was really important to seize this opportunity because everybody (esp. in the city admin.) acts as if they know what the youth want, need, etc. but no one is actually talking to the youngsters!' says the person in charge of the City Youth Department.
This Youth Barometer case is interesting for at least two reasons for Active Citizens: first because it is a very straight-forward and easy way (easy for other cities to replicate) to hear voices from a specific group, second, because it is done on the spot where people are (instead of inviting people to come over to the city hall). It is the city that goes towards the citizens and not city who asks citizens to come to the city. Experience has shown that this is a way more successful approach if you wish to meet with 'lay/random citizens' (instead of militants, motivated active citizens, etc.).

CURRENT SITUATION AND FUTURE PERSPECTIVES

Dinslaken has developed some inspiring and transferable practices of 'forms of citizen participation' especially in the urban planning sector. The two consultative bodies (Youth Parliament and Senior citizens council) are not particularly innovative yet they are good functioning citizen-based bodies which contribute to give a certain minimum voice to citizens. It helps the city administration to remain 'connected' to the realities of at least part of its citizens. Dinslaken has many possibilities in the perspective of the Active Citizens network especially around the questions of training of citizens but also training of civil servants on the participatory tools/methods/practices in order to develop more creative approaches and the question of developing a more systematic 'reflex' of collaborating with citizens so that it becomes a new habit, a natural thing to do.

HRADEC KRÁLOVÉ, CZECH REPUBLIC

SOME DATA ABOUT HRADEC KRÁLOVÉ

Country = Czech Republic
Region = Hradec Králové Region
Area = 105,69 km2
Population = 92.742 hab
Population density = 877,5 hab/km2
Demographic profile (age, gender, ethnicity): stagnating population, average age - 44,3 years, 52 % female – 48 % male, 2,2 % of foreigners
Economy profile (per capita GDP, key local industry/employment sectors): GDP 9.740 mil. EUR (Hradec Králové Region), 9,6% poverty rate, mostly services - manufacture of medical devices – manufacture of pianos - engineering
Employment levels : 2,8 % unemployement
Functional Urban Area : Medium sized area

Political situation : Mayor : Alexandr Hrabalek (political party/affiliation : non-affiliated) since 2018 (first mandate)

CITIZENS' RELATION TO GOVERNANCE

Comparing to the other EU countries, Czech citizens´ trust in government (local as well as national) is above the average, while the trust in local authorities is much higher than in national ones (European Quality of Life Survey, 2016). The national surveys show that the society's attitude towards local government is way more positive than towards regional and national levels. In September 2019 almost 65% of citizens trusted their local governments and mayors (45% regions, 44% national government). However, voter turnout is not massive at local level. Only 43,5% of constituents used their right to vote to the local government in 2018. In terms of citizen engagement, there is a wide range of NGOs active in the Czech Republic. Indeed, during the communist era, citizens were involved in a large set of activities – from gardening to sports, etc. And many of these groups, clubs, associations, unions, NGOs, became later also active in community life. The velvet revolution in 1989 brought some change in the Czech society and in citizens' participation. It appears that 'people started to be more focused on their personal/individual activities than

on social community life'. Still, many citizens-based organizations and NGOs are active at local level and are – or could be – considered as partners by the city authority (for example in city planning and city development processes). The city of Hradec Králové already works and collaborates with some of them but wishes to go beyond its 'classic' partners to reach a wider citizen participation/ involvement in the city governance.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSIONS: A RELAYING PLATFORM BETWEEN CITY ADMINISTRATION AND CITIZENS
[CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC SERVICES AND POLICY-MAKING]

The city of Hradec Králové is composed of 25 Local Government Commissions (Komise místní samosprávy - KMS) which were created in the 1990s. These commissions are meant to act as an 'initiative & advisory body' for the city council. The 25 commissions cover the whole territory of the city. The Local Government Commissions (KMS) are composed of citizens who are all validated by the city council (who also has the power to remove any member of the commissions). Members shall be citizens who either live in the district, are representative of an association/club from the district or own a property within the district. Each commission shall be composed of 5 to 11 citizens (in practice they are usually around 6). 'KMS used to be composed of retired people mostly but now we have people of all age and in particular more and young people joining (people in their twenties who wish to contribute to bring change to their city) as people feel concerned about their city' explains one KMS' member. There are also, within each KMS a Chairman and a Vice-Chairman. Both of them are again appointed by the City Council based on the proposal of the members of the Commission. Meetings of each commission shall be determined/

organised by the commissions themselves but the City Council may request special meetings if needed (important subject to be discussedd, urgent matters, etc.). Usually, KMS meet once a month or so and their meetings are opened to the public. The city authority, on its side, provides each KMS with its agenda, upcoming plans, projects which may concern the district. For each project, plan, etc. the KMS are given the right to request any document they wish related to the city project or plan (for example land-planning documents, city properties, etc.) in order to have all the necessary information to discuss the subjects inside the commission. The KMS are informed and are given details by the city on a wide variety of subjects who may impact the district. On each of these topic, the KMS are expected to comment, give their opinions, recommandations, etc. : land use plans (affectations), urban infrastructure changes (roads, urban greenery, public lighting), city properties management (in case the city wish to sell/rent a public building), safety (in relation with the municipal police) and environmental matters (application of the legislation, pollution), and the monitoring of buildings and their use (in case of vacant or decrepit buildings), etc. KMS are also expected to relay the city information to the other citizens, and take part or organize events to promote the social life of each district. Every time a KMS holds a meeting, they shall send copy of the minutes to the mayor's office... The to-do and to-manage lists of KMS are quite long. Especially for such a small group of citizens. Conscious of the big tasks that are expected from the KMS, the city compensates the involvement of each citizen with a symbolic indemnity of about 200€ per year. Not enough to bring people in for money, but enough to symbolically recognize the citizens' public involvement and dedication. **Citizens who join the KMS want to contribute to make their districts nice places to live in. 'But I wish we could have greater weight and power', says one KMS member, then adds 'because we want to have a say and fix things in our districts, the city has a tendancy to sometimes consider us as 'pathological complainers' jokes one citizen.** Inhabitants who have something to say about their district

(whatever idea or problem) gets in contact with their KMS (most often by email) – and when they know it – then the KMS transmits the message, if relevant, to the city authority. **The KMS really act as a relaying platform between city authority and citizens but also what we could call a form of 'first citizen-level controller'.** Of course, KMS are not perfect and may largely be improved in their functionning, and this is something which could be explored within the Phase II of the Active Citizens network. As an example (and similarly to all other Active Citizens' cities), citizens (members of the KMS) never received any training on participatory tools and methods... so when they consult their fellow citizens and/or neighbours, it is rather informally by meeting them in the streets or through some district events or email contacts.

TRAINING KIDS TO BECOME ACTIVE CITIZENS: THE ECO-PARLIAMENT
[OTHER FORMS OF CITIZEN PROCESS]

The city of Hradec Králové also develops a sense of active citizenship through its Eco-parliament in schools. Eco-parliaments were established in 2008 in Hradec Králové. Eco-parliaments are part of an international programme called Eco-Schools operated by the Foundation for Environmental Education and counts more than 59 000 schools around the world and more than 400 schools just in Czech Republic). **Eco-parliaments are composed of kids carrying on sustainability activities.** Each eco-parliament is composed of 2 kids per class, for a total of 30 kids. Their slogan is **'if you can influence the school, you can influence the world around you'**. Eco-parliaments follow a 7 step process composed of: A team of pupils, Analysis, Planning, Implementation & evaluation, Connections with the curriculum, Connections with the surrounding environment and an Eco-code to be followed. Eco-parliament identify problems or subjects to work on

and develop projects based on their analysis all the way to their implementation. It may end up being about cleaning up activities (trash collecting), saving energy and water initiatives, etc. **Eco-parliaments also try to carry on projects, beyond the school, at city level around green architecture, waste management, biogas station as well as transport and safety. Eco-parliaments present their recommendations to the city council with the deal that some proposals shall get through and be implemented.** They may meet the city authority when they wish to present proposals. 'We presented our projects to the city council but we came back a bit frustrated because the elected officials were on their mobile phones… it was not respectful from adults' explains one participating kid. – Yes, not everyone is showing interest even at elected officials level –. 'The city management changed since the creation of the eco-parliaments... the former city management was very keen on school projects but now a bit less…' explains the facilitating teacher. – That's an other challenge that every city often experience –. However, eco-parliaments contribute to give kids a sense of responsibility and a feeling of agency which contribute to making them more active citizens in the present and most likely also for the future. As a proof, some kids who have left primary school have replicated and set up eco-parliaments in their high-schools. Indeed, in the life of an eco-parliament, kids learn to collaborate (team building and team work), they also do study visits, field trips, report to their other classmates what they did, saw, etc. and organize workshops for their parents, and finally make presentations and conferences! Eco-parliament members also have a mission of gathering their peers in the process, involving them in activities as well as disseminating eco-behaviours. 'We are representatives so we inform our classes about what we do, but some kids are easy to engage some not so easy, it depends' recognizes one kid. – Sounds not so different again from adult citizen participation –. **Eco-parliaments appear as good platforms for training future generations of active citizens as long as their involvement is 'awared' with concrete projects that make them proud and bring real change, even if a small one.**

CURRENT SITUATION AND FUTURE PERSPECTIVES

Hradec Králové has developed several forms of citizen participation but have also, like the other Active Citizens' cities, experienced failures. In Hradec Králové, it is in urban planning projects that they faced the biggest difficulties in working – or rather dealing – with citizens. Therefore, **Hradec Králové is a city with plenty of room for further experimentations of greater citizen participation, either in city-making projects but also policy-making ones or public services.**

SAINT-QUENTIN, FRANCE

SOME DATA ABOUT SAINT-QUENTIN

Country = France
Region = hauts-de-france
Province = AISNE
Area= 22,56 km²
Population = 55 650 inhabitants
Population density = 2 503 / km²
Demographic profile (age, gender, ethnicity)
: 38,5% is less than 30 years old, 19,7% is
more than 65 years old.
2 300 Students, 12 500 pupils
Economy profile : 5 500 companies, 1 300
shop owners, National Program "Action
Coeur de ville", Robonumerics develop-
ment
Employment : 13,2% unemployment rate,
23 540 employed people between 15 and
64 years old
Functional Urban Area : Small Urban Area

Political situation : Mayor : Frédérique
Macarez (political party/affiliation : Les
Republicains – right) since 2016 (first
mandate)

CITIZENS' RELATION TO GOVERNANCE

Saint-Quentin being the second french city of the Active Citizens network, the situation has to be looked at similar lenses, at least partially in regard to citizen's relation to governance. Like in most EU countries, trust in local authorities is higher than in national government but this is even more true in France. France is amongst the EU countries with the lowest trust level in their national government, which might be the reason why France is well-known for its regular strikes and demonstrations movements. We can not understand the current situation in France without taking into account the recent popular movements and in particular the long and unprecedented social crisis of the Yellow vests movement. Its started in October 2018 (starting initally against the rise of fuel prices) and is still not over yet, nearly a year and a half later. Besides inspiring other social movements around the world, the Yellow vests movement targeted the national government but the mobilization happened at local level, in every city, every village. Not only **this popular movement showed the growing discontentment of citizens against the french government but also the way politics were made in gener-**

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al. Beyond the claims on purchasing power, social rights, etc. the movement asked for more democracy. As part of the response, the french president decided to call on a Grand Debate all over the country as a way to allow citizens to express their views. Based on the old french style 'cahier de doléances' (book of grievances) used during the french revolution, the state dedided to collect citizens' ideas and complaints in order to respond to them. **This episode of french democracy has literaly influenced the politics at all levels who were 'forced' to realize that they needed to urgently and better connect with their citizens.** Locally, city mayors have also started reflecting on giving more space to citizen participation and cities are exploring that direction. However, some cities did not wait for the Yellow vests movement to take some initiatives and start implementing more participatory approaches. **Saint-Quentin is one of the cities who already initiated forms of participation several years ago already. Officially, we could say that this desire became very concrete in 2014 with the creation of a dedicated 'City Department of Proximity Democracy'.** Amongst the different forms of citizen participation, Saint-Quentin has 'institutionalized' multiple consultative bodies: Neighbourhood councils, a Youth Council, a Senior Council and Associations (NGOs) Council.

MULTIPLYING THE COUNCILS TO MULTIPLY THE OPPORTUNITIES OF COLLABORATION WITH DIVERSE GROUPS OF CITIZENS
[CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN CITY-MAKING, POLICY-MAKING AND SOCIAL/CULTURAL ACTIVITIES]

As listed above, the city of Saint-Quentin has multiple bodies of citizens: Neighbourhood councils, a Youth Council, a Senior Council and Associations (NGOs) Council.

The first one is Neighbourhood councils (created in 2014). The objective of the city, through these **Neighbourhood councils is 'to encourage the expression and the participation of the inhabitants as well as to allow them to take part in the reflections on the local decisions and in the definition of the projects which concern the inhabitants on a daily basis'.** The city territory was divided into 8 districts with one council per district. Each council is composed of 25 members (but in practice around 15-18 are really active members on the long run). **To**

become a member of a neighbourhood council, citizens notify the city of their will to take part, then are added in a candidates' list, then the city organizes a random picking process. In the first year, for 280 seats, 600 citizens candidated (with a clear majority of retired inhabitants...). Neighbourhood councils meet officially at least once per trimester with the city authority (meaning with the presence of one elected official and civil servants). During these official meetings, the topics that are discussed are brought in by the city authority (urban planning projects, construction works, cultural events, etc.). Each meeting agenda is set by the city administration and elected officials and all the subjects that the citizens want to discuss are dealt with towards the end of the meeting. But neighbourhood council's members may also meet outside of the official meetings with the city whenever they wish to. Some of them only meet during the official trimestrial sessions, some meet every month or even every two weeks when they organize some events or specific local activities. Each neighbourhood council organizes the participation as they wish, but like in many other cities, there is no formal process to enlarge the conversation with the other inhabitants. No one has ever received particular training on how to conduct participatory processes so most of the complaints and ideas that inhabitants may have are given through informal processes (meeting people by chance in the street, during local events or through emails and/or phone). 'But people don't know us enough so they don't know that we can act as a relay structure between them and the city authority, they don't necessarily know that the neighbourhood council exists' explains a member. However what works well is that during the official meetings 'we always have an elected official who validate decisions that are taken during the meeting and we have civil servant technicians who can bring us and explain the more technical information and details about the construction works for example', adds an

other member. The members can then 'translate' and 'transmit' to their fellow inhabitants what is going in the neighourhood and what are the city's future plans to come. 'In the case we propose some projects, the city never leaves us without response and this is very appreaciable because they take the time to explain the reasons why it can go further or why it can not be implemented'. **'For me, one big problem we have is that the Proximity Democracy Department of the city moved from a desire to develop participatory democracy towards 'neighbourhood animations like social and cultural events... I think we don't do yet real participatory democracy.** When the city makes urban plans they come to discuss it with the neighbourhood councils but everything is already planned and set, we don't actually co-create with the citizens...' deplores the Head of the City Proximity Department. Amongst the many things to improve, there could also be more inter-neighbourhood projects and meetings for example... because the daily life of a citizen does not stop at the border of a district.

The second body of citizens that the city has set up is the Youth Council. This one is not localized per district but is at city level. **The Youth Council's objective is 'to allow the youth 'to participate in the realization of citizen projects; to make young people aware of social issues and how they materialize in the city. And finally to offer the possibility to young people to give an advisory opinion on the many areas that concern them'.** Similarly to the Neighbourhood councils, the Youth are chosen through random picking in order to offer an equal chance of participation. 45 kids are picked from the youth candidates

(during the last picking the city received 80 candidates). The Youth Council is followed and managed by one dedicated elected official in order to ensure political presence and support. Youth members shall be between 11 and 20 years old and live in or study in the city. Officially, the Youth Council meets every month or two months but in practice 'we usually meet more often, especially when we have some projects to carry on. In some case, we even meet by ourselves without the city authority'. Again, **the Youth Council face some similar problems than those observed in other cities meaning that no one is really trained for participatory approaches and tools (in order to engage the other youth people) and tend to end up doing more social/cultural/sport/art projects and events than working on youth-related policies, services and infrastructures. 'When the city develops projects that are related to the youth, the city does not come to us to discuss them with us, we are not consulted' explains one Youth Council member.** In any case, and similarly to other forms of citizen-composed bodies, the Youth members explain that they gain a lot of skills by being part of the Youth Council. 'We learn how to conduct and manage a project, we get to know the city constraints, we learn how to manage a budget, etc.' explains an other member. This confirms the idea that these bodies act as 'active citizens' training space' in which citizens, youth or not, gain competencies and get a greater understanding of how a city authority functions as well as project management skills. Amongst the different aspects to be improved one of them is questionning the good use of citizens' desire to be engaged in active citizenship. Indeed, 45 kids are members of the Youth Council but what about the 40 others who did not get picked. What happens to them? Isn't it a shame not to value their motivation and desire to be involved in their city just because they were not picked? This question also applies for the neighbourhood councils... and should be discussed within the Active Citizens network. The picking is a solution to give a fair and equal chance to everyone to take part but since we are looking for active citizens, why 'wasting' the ones who wish to take part? Can't we find ways to give them some space, to find some opportunities for them to be active? During the study visit of Saint-Quentin, we had the chance to attend the 'random picking ceremony' and saw that the kids who were not picked from the hat felt quite sad and disappointed for not being able to join the Youth Council. And it's quite understandable. This is, for Active Citizens, an interesting challenge to tackle. How to develop solutions which enable a wide inclusiveness of all voluntary forces while still being able to manage this citizen participation ?

The third body is the Senior Council. Similar to the one from the city of Dinslaken, the aim of that council is to consult and build together with some elder citizens services, infrastructures and policies which contribute to an elder-friendly city. Again, the members are randomly picked from a list of volunteers. Not to enter

into much details, what appears is that there has been a similarly shift from the original intention (of doing a form of participatory democracy) towards co-creating elderly-focused social and cultural activities. The origin of this shift will be interesting to analyze further within Active Citizens in order to understand what led to this shift from participatory democracy and to building projects that enable social connections between public. One risky hypothesis could be that since the participatory approaches are not so mastered in city authorities they tend to easily shift towards what they know the best when working with citizens, meaning doing social work. Of course, this risky hypothesis will require further investigation... It is also important to note that the city of Saint Quentin is part of a label called 'Ville Amie des Ainées' (Elder-friendly city). For this label, the city has set up an impressive multistakeholder group composed of around 50 invidual professionals of the elder sector who share experiences, carry on collective projects, build bridges in between professionals beyond personal sector-interests (private services, public ones, NGOs).

The fourth and last body is the Associations Council (created also in 2014) which gathers 25 representatives of different associations. It is important to note that the city of Saint Quention has a very impressive number of local associations with 563 associations/NGOs. Representatives are again randomly picked and become members with a 3 years long mandate. The aim of the Associations Council is to create and develop links between the actors of the associative world. As well as playing a linking role between the associations and the municipality. This council is worth citing here as it also reflects the important work that the city of Saint Quentin has done in building multistakeholder collaboration platforms. On top of this council which enables assocations to exchange, meet and at the same time as coordinating with the city, Saint Quention has developed a public service called the 'Guichet des Associations' (Associations Counter). The Associations Counter is a city service which enables any association to get in contact with the city for all association-related subjects. This was set up to facilitate administrative procedures for the associations only (giving dedicated information and advices, tailormade solutions, easy procedures for event authorizations, etc.).

CREATING A DEDICATED CITY DEPARTMENT FOR PROXIMITY DEMOCRACY
[CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN CITY-MAKING, POLICY-MAKING AND SOCIAL/CULTURAL ACTIVITIES]

As mentionned earlier the city of **Saint Quentin has created a specific city department in order to support what they call 'proximity democracy'.** The service has dedicated staff whose role is to accompany the different councils that were presented previously. In order to go even further, the city of Saint Quentin created, in 2017, a space within the administration's facilities called the 'Citizen Space'. This 'citizen space' is there to host citizens for various activities. 'It is a place of training and information' explains the director. 'We host plenty of activities here, trainings, webinars, workshops, etc. that citizens are interest in.' However, in the line of the previously made comments, it

appears that the Citizen Space has moved from its first ambition of hosting democracy-related processes to offering community-centre-like type of activities. **In the perspective of Active Citizens, however, this Citizen Space offers a unique and promising infrastructure to host more participatory democracy experiments.**

CURRENT SITUATION AND FUTURE PERSPECTIVES

Saint-Quentin is one of the city which has taken the most advanced steps toward greater citizen participation. As they moved forward through a 'learning by doing process', the city realized all the limitations, the drawbacks but also the progressive (and unwanted) drift from the original objective of developing local democracy to developing social and cultural activities. Conscious of this 'new state of things', the city is willing to go further and it has all the assets to develop promising experiments within the Active Citizens network: rethinking the existing councils, developing co-design policy-making, and developing greater citizen participation for 'urban proximity management' to cite only a few perspectives.

SANTA MARIA DA FEIRA, PORTU- GAL

CITIZENS' RELATION TO GOVERNANCE

Portugal's politics are rather stable at national level (46 years after implementation of democracy, there have been alternance of 2 moderated parties). Portugal appears, in terms of trust level of citizens in their national and local governments, right in the average level in comparison to the rest of the EU[1]. This means that trust in governance is not high (like in nordic countries) but not so bad either. In terms of corruption level, again it is not performing too bad when compared to other EU countries but it's not that excellent either, in last years citizens perception of corruption was increased. In french, we would say that the situation is 'comme çi comme ça' (not good nor bad), could be worse but could still be largely improved. Average voter turnout is quite low in comparison to France, Germarny, Italy (to compare only with Active Citizens' countries - 65-75%) with a 45-55% voter turnout. **Portugal has one of the lowest voter turnout in Europe. The abstention rate has been increasing constantly since 1975 showing a growing disinterest for politics by citizens.** This situation reinforces the representative democracy crisis leading to elected officials who represent less and less

1 European Quality of Life survey 2016

the citizens. This situation has to be looked at within Active Citizens network. At the same time, locally, in Santa Maria da Feira, the situation seems to offer quite hopefull perspectives. Indeed, **citizens' engagement in local life is rather high with hundreds of citizens involved in diverse volunteering activities. This engagement demonstrates a will, from many citizens, to socially act for the municipality's dynamism and quality of life.** By building upon this logic, there might be promising perspectives to bring them closer and closer to local governance matters.

YOUNG MAYOR: PRACTICING DEMOCRACY AND CITIZENSHIP
[CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN POLICY-MAKING]

The Municipality of Santa Mariada Feira implemented the "Jovem Autarca" project (henceforth 'Young Mayor' – YM) aimed at young people, aged between 11 and 17 years, in order to develop youth participation at local level. 'In line with the guidelines of the Council of Europe (2015), considering the European political priority of promoting a mode of participation that goes beyond the mere voting or standing for election, **the local authority of Santa Maria da Feira intended to "ensure that young people not only hear and learn about democracy and citizenship, but rather have the opportunityto practice it"** (Council of Europe, 2015, p. 11) explains M. Rodrigues[2] who ran an evaluation of the Young Mayor initiative (2019). The Young Mayor programme started in 2014 with first mandate in 2015. The Young Mayor and its team shall be youth who either live or study in the Municipality of Santa Maria da Feira. Every year (term of office is one year), the Youth Department of the city (who is in charge of managing the Young Mayor programme) goes in every school to explain and promote the programme. Young people who wish to candidate have to notify and get the approval of their school director as well as their parents to apply (since all the Young Mayor activities are 'on top' of school duties and outside school hours) plus the signature of 50 supporters as well as a motivation letter. The 21rst teenagers who have their application ready end up being the 21 election candidates. Youth from 11 to 17 can vote but only youth from 13 to 17 are elegible. Then, the 21 candidates receive a training by the city on how to conduct an election campaign as well as support for campaign profile pictures, videos and flyers. 'We can go to all the schools to do our campaign (some of us went to all the schools)' explains the current Young Mayor. 'It is interesting to do the campaign in different schools because you get a chance to see other realities. In my case, my <u>grandpa took me t</u>o the other schools for my campaign'. 'For me, it was my mum

2 Rodrigues, Mariana & Silva, João & Caetano, Andreia & Ribeiro, Norberto & Ferreira, Teresa. (2019). The Young Mayor project in Portugal: The effect of the Quality of Participation Experiences on perceptions of the project's impact. 18. 25-37. 10.4119/jsse-1442.

who drove me around' adds a former Young Mayor. Then it is election time. Out of 8000 teenagers, on average 6000 of them vote. The candidate with the highest number of votes is elected as Young Mayor. The 1st councillor is the candidate who presents the second best result and the 2nd councillor is the candidate who presents the third best result. The following candidates are invited, if they wish, to the work team of the young mayor and the elected councillors, being appointed by advisers. The Young Mayor is a one year mandate only. The winner can not reapply the following year. 'The mandate is a little bit too short… but I see it as a challenge to stick with the timing' comments the current Young Mayor. Once the team is set, the Young Mayor team managed a budget of 10 000€ of municipal budget to carry on projects.The Young Mayor team meets in the facilities of the Municipality Council of Santa Maria da Feira on a bi-monthly basis (even though in practice, the team rather meets 2-3 times a month). **For those who live in far villages, the city offers them a taxi ride to bring them to every meeting during the whole term of office so as to facilitate their participation (and relieve the weight on parents). 'Their participation should mean zero cost for them' explains the Youth Department's director.** During the term of office, the Young Mayor team works on applying some of the projects that members have proposed during their campaign. Projects to be enabled are, therefore, not necessarily only the ones from the Young Mayor himself/herself. **'We have a complete freedom in the projects we want to carry on. The Youth Department supports us but does not interfere in our decisions' explains a former Young Mayor.** 'During the mandate we receive some training on how to present ourselves, how to talk to people, etc. but we don't receive any formal training on participatory processes or decision-making techniques'. Yet, the members are taken through a discovery journey within the governance system. 'We are taken around the city administration to meet the different city departments, we meet with all the city deputy

mayors and we even go to the Portuguese National Assembly in Lisbon where we are hosted by a deputy'. 'It's when we met the deputy mayors of Santa Maria da Feira that I felt our voices were important' says the current Young Mayor. Outside of our own projects, the Youth Department often comes to us when they have projects and ideas, etc. that concern the youth. They ask for our views on them. The team does not receive any financial compensation for its involvement but 'we receive forms of counterpart (some privileges). For example, we don't pay to enter the Medieval festival or Perlim event, etc. And we gain social recognition' explains a former Young Mayor. The Young Mayor team is also invited to participate in international exchanges. When it comes to the participation of the rest of the youth population, there is room for improvements. An external evaluation done by M. Rodrigues and co (2019), has shown that the most prominent complaint raised by the youth of the city (outside the Young Mayor's team) is 'the sporadic contact with the Young Mayor project' (Ferreira et al., 2018). In terms of perspectives for Active Citizens, it appears that the Young Mayor programme could explore new ways to promote a wider interaction between the projects and the youth community (to become 'participatory' and collaborative) as well as to work closer with the city elected officials (beyond the Youth Department only). Conducting training on participatory tools and methods for citizens' involvement appears to be a key action to be considered within the Active Citizens' phase II.

Even though, the Young Mayor can still be improved, it has proven to be very finely designed and well-conducted. The Young Mayor initiatives has also proven to really 'form' long-term active citizens since former Young Mayors and councillors get engaged, for example, in student associations when they get in University.

CHILDREN ASSEMBLY: CITIZENSHIP AT EARLY AGE
[CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN POLICY-MAKING]

Originally inspired by the 'Conseil des enfants' from Joué-les-Tours (twin city from France), Santa Maria da Feira has decided to implement a similar process locally in 2006. The Children Assembly can be implemented in schools of the municipality on a voluntary basis. Out of 80 schools in the municipality, 32 are involved in the Children Assembly programme. The objective? To develop a sense and active practice of citizenship. How does it work? Volunteer kids are between 8 and 10 years old and are elected within their classes or at school level by their fellow classmates. To be candidate, you need to recognize yourself in the Children Assembly's members' profile: to be an organized person, responsi-

ble person, respectful, being tolerant, to be conscious that they will be the voice of the others. Inevitably, 'there is some ambiguity/bias because it is the most well-behaving kids who tend to recognize themselves into that profile' deplores a Children Assembly's facilitator. We had the chance, during our study visit, to interview 3 members of the Children Assembly who told us what were the reasons that pushed them to candidate: **'I want to improve my school's condition** (the outdoor condition of the football court, the garden of the school)', **'I want to improve the toilets of the school** (hygiene - leading to investment in new equipments) and the snack food problem (campaign awareness')', **'I care for the environment and want to gather the trash that people leave behind and separate the trash in different bins and develop composting'**. But once kids are elected, it's a participatory process: kids identify a problem, try to find a solution to solve it and materialize the solution with the classmates. Which means they don't have absolute power to decide upon what to do only by themselves. They decide within the class. **'Here you decide' is the name of their online platform and the slogan of the Children Assembly.'** These were the original ideas they wanted to develop but the entire class has a word to say and prioritize' explains the facilitator. To be able to asnwer to the problems they want to tackle, the kids are asked to know more about the subject, so they do site visits, stakeholders visits, etc. depending on the subjects. The idea? Investigate the problem to understand it better before answering to it – this approach should be more often applied also for 'adult' policy-making... –. **How is it to be elected? 'I was very happy but I was also very scared when I saw all the votes for me. I felt happy and confident/grateful because my classmates trusted me'** – 'I knew that I would need my classmates to support me'. 'I felt very happy and knew I would be the voice of the school. One of my oponent cried of not being elected...' remember the Children Assembly's members. The Children Assembly tries to be as inclusive as possible and as participatory as possible even though it is not so easy. If there are shy/timid
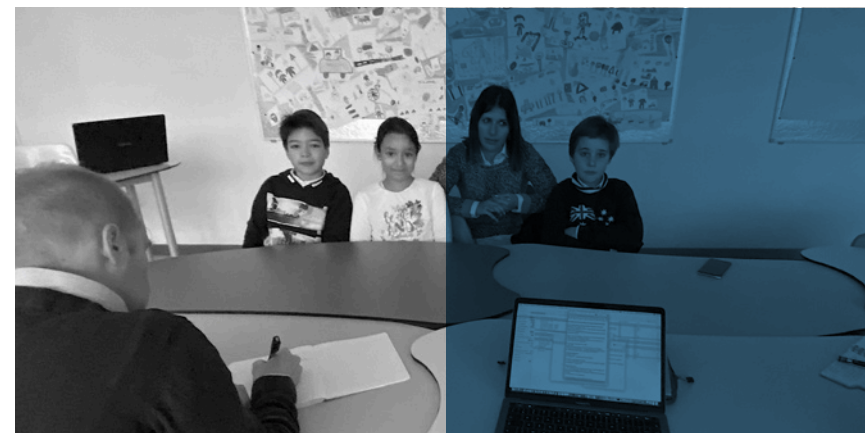
kids in the class how do you involve them? 'I motivate the most shy kids to come over and I tell them 'come and join us' explains Xavier, 9 years old.

The interesting fact is that the Children Assembly really develops active citizenship. After 14 years of existence, we had observed that some Children Assembly's kids became Young Mayor (or part of the team) once they went into secondary school. 'For the 10th year anniversary, we did a gathering and they have proven to be globally quite active in students associations for example. Some former members are part of our city' projects/initiatives (but also international exchange)' explains the Deputy Mayor in charge of the Youth and Education department.

SOCIAL FORUMS: A MULTI-STAKEHOLDERS' PLATFORM
[CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN POLICY-MAKING & PUBLIC SERVICES]

Social Forums were created in Santa Maria da Feira in 2014. The objective of the Social Forums is to have greater proximity with the different village's parishes (the municipality is composed of 21 administrative parishes (not religious divisions). **'The Social Forums are not compulsory by law, it is a voluntary approach as we wanted to have more proximity with the villages of the municipality' says a city representative.** To implement the Social Forums, 'we went around every parish to set up together with the president of each parish their Social Forum' explains a city representative. All the local organizations are invited to be part of the Social Forum (schools, companies, firefighters, police, associations, etc.). In addition to local organizations, the Forums have the participation of citizens. Each Social Forum is composed of about 15 to 20 people. At municipality level, through the Social Forums 330 organizations are represented. The whole idea is to have a 'proximity' level in order to identify and solve problems at community level. Of course, not all Social Forums function in the same way. When evaluating the level of participation on the 21 Social Forums, 3 are weak, 12 are rather well and 6 are exemplary, very efficient and with very good dynamics. **The Social Forums rely on 4 principles: shared responsibility to solve issues and 'do more & better', community development, participatory democracy (giving voice to the voiceless), sustainable development goals (SDGs).**
Social Forums act as a form of 'first-level' controller, ensuring that whatever needs to be solved locally is identified and talked about. It may be collective issues but also individual cases (an isolated elder person that we need to take care of, etc.). The Social Forums and the municipality allow to co-create diag-

no- sis of local situations. The Social Forums meet on average once a month in the evenings and co-create solutions to respond (together with the municipality) to the identified needs. For example, in one parish, the Social Forum identified an issue around accessing medicine, so we created a solidarity/social pharmacy. The biggest challenge, on the long run, for the Social Forums is that it takes time and it's entirely on a voluntary basis. 'We don't have any legal form so we can't apply for subsidies, we loose members on the long run because it is demanding, and we have nearly no capacity to implement projects since we don't have any budget of our own' comments a Social Forum's member. **The Social Forums are an inspir- ing form of multistakeholder level cooperation which could be transferable to other municipalities which have many villages spread across a wide territory (like the municipality of Tartu for example).**

THE SENIOR FORUM: A BOTTOM-UP CITIZEN-BASED INITIATIVE:
[OTHER FORMS OF CITIZEN PARTICIPATION]

The Senior Forum which got created in 2012 to give voice to the elders (listen to their needs, listen to their desires, listen to their concerns…). **In comparison to Saint Quentin and Dinslaken, the Senior Forum is a bottom-up initiative which was started by 12 elder citizens (60 years old on average) from the muncipality. This spontaneous citizen-based initiative grew today to 70 members today (covering 17 parishes out of 21). The collective formed into an association and work at improving the public policies and services related to elderly people. It acts as an advisory – or rather a proposing – body for the municipality.** The forum identifies and generates proposals that are then submitted to the municipality because the forum does not have the objective to carry on projects by itself. The Senior Forum teams up with universities to investigate particular elderly issues. 'So far, none of our proposals have been rejected by the municipality… also because they are good and solid (and reasonable) but some of them take time to be put in place' explains one Senior Forum's member. 'We also work with kids (4 500) of primary schools to bet on the future generation. The kids go back to their families and promote the care for the elders'. **Does the Municipality consult or work with the Forum Senior whenever it carries projects, policies or services related to senior? 'Yes. But it's mostly because we keep knocking at their door all the time. So yes they do,'** responds one elder member. 'Now we have open channels with the social actions department for example. We even have an office there.' adds a member. When questionning the question of participatory processes and how to they give voice to the elders (outside the members of the Senior Forum), members explain: 'We meet them by

going around all the retirement homes of the municipality, but also hold meetings in cafés. Before meeting with our fellow elders, we create a interview guide in order to have homogeneity in the questions we ask and have comparable responses'.

CURRENT SITUATION AND FUTURE PERSPECTIVES

Santa Maria da Feira hosts multiple inspiring practices of citizen participation but also multistakeholder collaboration. Many other initiatives were not presented here (like Uíma River intervention, community involvement in schools refurbishing, citizens' participation in culture, a citizen-ran Time Bank or a platform for Volunteers Matchmaking database: Bolsa Local Voluntariado) **but testify of the multiple dynamic local initiatives and programmes.** The municipality of Santa Maria da Feira has an extensive experience (of many years) which will be beneficial for the Active Citizens' network. **Even though, there are many local inspiring cases of forms of citizen participation, the participatory democracy dimension can be largely explored further.** Santa Maria da Feira has developed several programmes for the youth for example, but participatory urb an planning and city-making is, on the opposite, nearly inexistant. Therefore, Active Citizens could be the opportunity not only to improve and go further in existing practices but also to explore new directions like city-making.

TARTU MUNICI-PALITY, ESTONIA

SOME DATA ABOUT SANTA MARIA DA FEIRA

Country = ESTONIA
Region = SOUTH-ESTONIA
Province = TARTU COUNTY
Area= 742 km²
Population = 10 941 hab
Population density = 14,74 hab/km²
Demographic profile (age, gender, ethnicity) : growing population, 49% female – 51% male, largest part of population is between 25-28 years old
Economy profile (per capita GDP, key local industry/employment sectors) metal and agricultural business
Employment levels : unemployment rate in the Tartu County has been 2–3% in the recent years
Functional Urban Area : Rural area

Political situation : Mayor : Jarno Laur (political party/affiliation : Social Democratic Party – center left) since 2017

CITIZENS' RELATION TO GOVERNANCE

In Estonia, both national and local governemnts are rather well trusted by citizens. Like in other EU countries, the local municipalities are more trusted than the national government but, globally, **Estonia is amongst the 10 most trusted (by citizens) countries (national & local government) in the EU**. In terms of voter turnout, however, Estonia is not performing very well with only 50-60% of average voter turnout even though Estonia has a practice of e-voting both on national and local elections (36% of all votes at last municipal elections were casted digitally). **Locally, the Municipality of Tartu is facing a complex challenge because of the little population spread over a huge municipal territory. The united municipality has a population of over 11,000 inhabitants in an area of over 700 km². The municipality even includes an island with 35 inhabitants situated at 80 kilometers from the municipality's hall.** The very low density of inhabitants means that there is, inevitably, a big distance between citizens and their local government. Especially since 2017 when the merging of villages took place. Indeed, Tartu municipality is composed of former rural municipalities

which merged into a larger municipality three years ago. This regrouping has led to an increasing gap between inhabitants and the local government.

CONTRIBUTIVE REVIEWING OF LOCAL MASTER PLAN
[CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN URBAN PLANNING]

Master plans are often quite dense, complex and technical (even for the administration) but in order to facilitate people's contribution to the review of the master plan, the municipality of Tartu decided to use a digital tool. 'What we did was to break down the multiple aspects of the plan in order to give information that make sense for people, information that they can identify with' explains the Mayor. 'There are more than 280 issues within our Master Plan, so we have used a digital platform for people to be able to navigate within the multiple layers'. To allow people's contributions, the municipality generated an interactive map in which people could pin issues or concerns directly on specific locations. This contributive process (supported by the digital platform) allowed more people to participate to the review of the master plan as well as made the plan more understandable and meaningful. Of course, this process is quite tricky because not everyone is comfortable navigating through interactive maps but it still remained quite easier for people than reviewing the master plan on paper then sending their comments to the municipality.
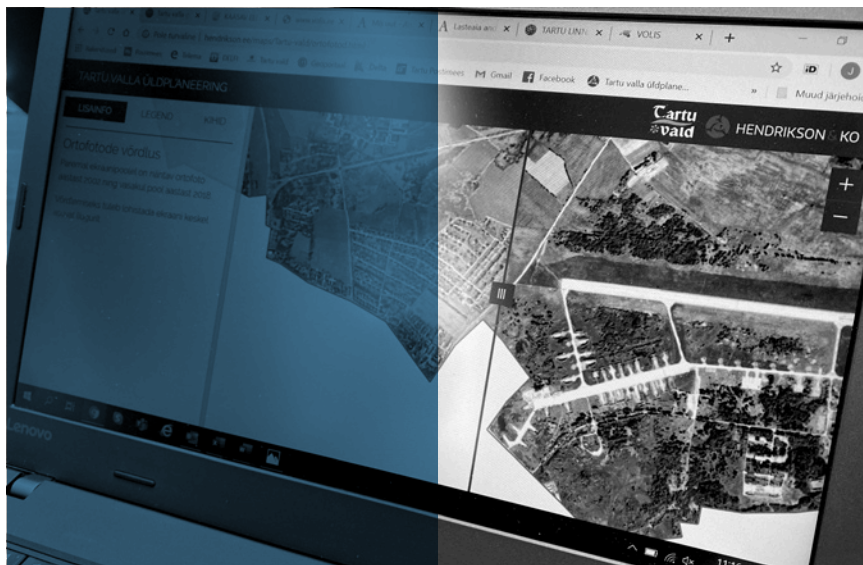
The same approach is also used to integrate citizens' proposal in other spatial planning matters. All spatial planning projects are made public both on paper and on a digital platform. Everybody can make proposals and suggestions using the planning portal with minimum effort (no formalities needed). All proposals are then delt with by the Municipality's planning department.

Tartu has a municipality's geoportal: https://gis.tartuvald.ee which contains all kind of spatial information: planning register, master plans, cemetery register, waste management, major road construction projects, road register, municipal land register, etc. 'The geoportal is an online tool that we update on a daily basis', explains one civil servant. Everything is accessible and architects and planners can download all the files they need for their projects. Following the same logic, citizens can easily be involved in forms of participatory (or contributive) spatial planning projects.

E-GOVERNANCE: VOLIS.EE AND THE TARTU MUNICIPALITY APP
[CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN POLICY-MAKING]

Estonia is quite famous for its digitalization and the municipality of Tartu is not at rest. Indeed, the municipality uses several digital tools to deliver services and give opporunity to citizens to participate in decision-making processes. Among others, VOLIS.EE is a software solution that enables the involvement of the local population in municipal decision-making processes and the provision of public e-services to the population. VOLIS can be configured to suit the needs of the city: the introduction of a paperless council, government & commissions, etc., to work on drafts or even holding virtual council's session. Meeting agenda and minutes are also automatically disclosed to the public through the VOLIS platform.

VOLIS allows you to also initiate drafts and proposals to local legislation. According to the Estonian legislation, if at least one per cent of the residents wish to, they have the right to initiate a change of legislation (the passage, amendment or repeal of legislation of the rural municipality or city council or government concerning local issues). Such citizens' initiatives shall be debated within three months in the respective council. The VOLIS platform also allows the municipality to hold local referendums (in which citizens vote direclty online using their smartphones, tablets or computers). Local government can set up additional polling stations to enable people who are not used to electronic voting, to participate to referendums. **The Municipality of Tartu has used VOLIS twice**

for local referendums. The first one was to decide upon the symbols/identity of the 'newly created' Tartu municipality (2017). Citizens had to decide upon the coat-of-arms and flag for the municipality. The second referendum was held to approve or disapprove a citizen-based proposal of erecting a massive statue of an Estonian mythical hero on the shore of Lake Saadjärv. This second referendum was open to all citizens residing in the four districts concerned by the project (the idea was rejected according to the popular vote). **Unfortunately, the voter turnover is very low. The municipality of Tartu is therefore more keen for the moment on using more active approaches (like participatory budgeting, idea gathering etc.) to involve citizens (still keeping in mind the possibility of local referendums if necessary/relevant).**

Besides VOLIS, Tartu also has a Municipality App. Tartu Municipality App is a smart solution created in March 2019, for residents of Tartu Municipality in order to create better and more direct contact between citizens and the municipality. When downloading the app, it is recommended that you create an account and allow notifications then identify your areas of interest (for example - cultural events in my neighbourhood; spatial planning issues and news etc). 'This way citizens can always stay informed about the latest information' comments a civil servant. 'With the App, you can ask questions, give your feedback, send pictures or messages, and contact municipal officials to get answers and know what's going on'. With the help of the app, Tartu Municipality can conduct various surveys or calls quickly and conveniently. Officials of Tartu municipality also respond to the notices and questions of the users through the app. The app is still recent but 'we would like the app to work better and have more users. We are going to run a campaign for people to know more about it and download it. Besides that, the main challenge with the app is mainly its dashboard and its numerous functionalities. Updating the content takes time and the functions bring some solutions but also new problems. But we really want this to work so we are on it' comments a civil sevant. Through these two tools
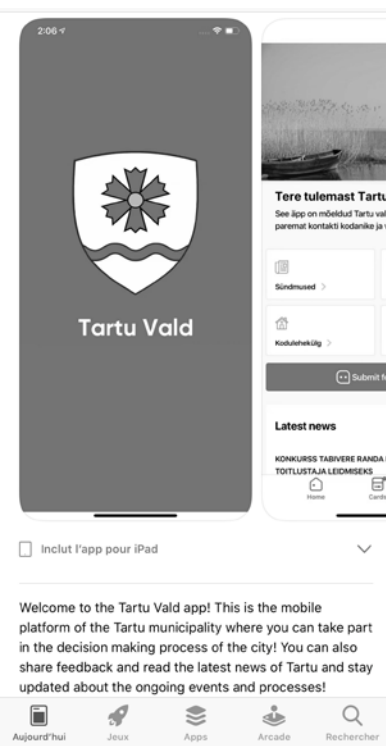
(VOLIS and the app), we can see how digital tools can support more participatory processes, even though they do not work by themselves and need to be sustained constantly to be relevant/useful.

PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING
[CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN POLICY-MAKING]

Participatory budgeting in Tartu Municipality was launched for the first time in 2017 (but running since 2013 in Estonia). 'The participatory budget is an opportunity to realize the ideas of citizens with the support of the municipal budget. At the moment we are still in a learning by doing process both for the municipality and the citizens' comments the Mayor. 'Each year, we collect feedback and we adapt the process along the way'. Basically, the participatory budget starts with a phase of Ideas Generation. Ideas shall concern – for the moment – only public space equipments/infrastructure for public use. Proposals shall be concrete investments and doable within a year. The total budget per year is 40 000€. Selected projects can not exceed 20 000€ per project. The citizens' proposals are submitted on the VOLIS.ee platform. Citizens' proposals shall include a project name, a description of the idea; a description of the target

group that will directly benefit from the idea as well as the need or problem the proposal contributes to solve (or the new opportunity it opens up). Citizens are also invited to add any other relevant information like the materials to be used, but also sketches, drawings or photographs or any other information considered important by the citizen. Proposals are then evaluated by a Commission who examines whether the proposed ideas appear relevant and feasible. The Commission may, with the agreement of the citizens who proposed the projects, merge similar ideas and may request that their proposals be supplemented and clarified. 'For the 2019 edition, a public hearing was held in Tartu Municipality's council to introduce the participatory budget ideas. The principle was to give, to the citizens who proposed ideas, the opportunity to present them live at the council meeting. Two citizens, both representing the same idea (#8), came to present their idea (a playground in Tammistu). We hope that in the coming years there will be more participants in the public presentation' explains a municipality member. Then the Commission puts the selected proposals on the participatory budgeting platform for open voting. Every resident of at least 16 years of age who resides in Tartu rural municipality (according to the Estonian Population Register) has the right to take part in the voting. Citizens have up to 3 votes but can't vote 3 times for the same proposal. In the last participatory budget, 17 ideas were accepted by the Commission (out of 56 ideas – so 1/3rd) and opened to vote on the platform. As an example, the most 4 chosen ideas during the last vote were: the building of a gravel walkway to allow promenade around the Kõrveküla village's lake, a pedestrian-friendly crossing at a specific crossroad, a community park with fruit and berry trees and picnic tables and a playground. **'The process works quite well but we are not very happy with the number of voters, for the last election we received the votes of 650 people so 6,5% of people' explains the Mayor.** As the participatory budget is quite new, it requires good publicity for people to know about it: 'we uses social media, especially Facebook, to publicize the ideas', then to know they can contribute to it. Giving examples is also a good way to attract citizens so that they can imagine better what are the types of ideas that can go through. Also, it is important to publicize the projects which have received financing and are now complete. Indeed, people need to see by themselves that the new playground, for example, was not only financed by the participatory budgeting of Tartu municipality but that the original idea was even given by one inhabitant who received the support of hundreds of others. Similarly to the EU obligation to put the EU logo on whatever has received european funds, here the idea is to make sure that people realize what contributed to make this equipment or this infrastructure possible. This appears even more important that Tartu municipality is very new (the merging being very recent).

Participatory budgeting is multiplying everywhere in the world like never before. It gives a chance for citizens to have a say in part of the allocation of the public investment budget and contributes to a more participatory democracy (citizens can initiate and propose ideas as well as vote and decide upon what are the ideas they prefer to see implemented). **Tartu municipality will be able to share its valuable experience within the phase II of Active Citizens as it is the only city within the 8 cities of the network to have implemented participatory budgeting.**

CURRENT SITUATION AND FUTURE PERSPECTIVES

Tartu is willing to go further to implement greater participatory democracy. In comparison to all the other cities of the Active Citizens' network, Tartu has a specific challenge which is linked to its huge territory. The situation is not like in Agen or Saint Quentin where you can stumble upon the mayor in the street, Tartu is 700km2. Therefore there is a physical distance between citizens and their local government and representatives. In that perspective, the use of digital tools may appear as a promising practice to develop participatory democracy.

At the same time, physical encounters will continue to matter. As an example, Tarmo Raudsepp, deputy mayor, goes once or twice a month over the island of Piirissaare (the small island by the russian border) to meet with the inhabitants of the island directly. Going directly where people are contributes to a greater understanding of the citizens' situation as well as their realities. On the other side, citizens, by meeting with their elected officials don't feel forgotten. **In the case of Tartu, exploring the right combination between e-democracy and 'physical' encounters and meetings with citizens is part of the numerous perspectives to be explored.**

ACTIVE CITIZENS' REFLECTIONS, CHALLENGES AND METHODS FOR PHASE II

Synthesis and methodology

REFLECTIONS AFTER 3 MONTHS OF STUDY VISITS ACCROSS EUROPE

'NO ONE CAN BE OPENLY AGAINST MORE PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY'

All the cities of the Active Citizens network acknowledge (both in terms of elected officials and civil servants) that 'we' should go towards greater citizen participation. Why? Because it goes back to the fundad-mental principle of democracy. As explained in the state of the art, democracies are challenged and there is an urgent need to reconnect citizens and governance, not only at national level but also at local level. But **bridging the gap between citizens and public authorities is not that easy. Beyond the pious hope of installing more participatory democracy, it's the concrete implementation which is hard. Especially when cities have very little experience and have never really been trained for that.** At the same time, civil society is asking – quite legitimately – to have a greater say in public policy-making. This growing claim is harder to ignore than ever before, especially politically. Even though some people may not be convinced by 'participatory democracy' approaches, it is difficult to be openly against it (especially when the systems in place have shown their limits in responding efficiently to environmental, economical and social challenges). Yet, **participatory democracy does not mean the removal of representative democracy.** Both can co-habit. It means giving more space and power to citizens than a right to vote once every 4-6 years. Even though, the Active Citizens' cities all share a desire to install greater participatory democracy, not everyone is convinced of its benefits, especially within elected officials' ranks (but also some city departments).

GOING FOR WHAT WE BEST KNOW

None of the Active Citizens' cities are experts of citizen participation. But that does not restrain them for trying out things, learning by doing, etc. Of course, there are successes and there are failures. Unfortunately, there is a lack of knowledge about participatory tools and methods which have been developed by practitioners for several years now. This means that **cities mostly improvise with citizen participation. And, quite inevitably, they tend to go towards what they know. Amongst the classic and traditional forms of participation we therefore often go for consultation processes for example.** In the consultation processes, the city authority has, generally, planned everything in advance and goes around to present their plan to citizens. Of course, nothing can be really changed because everything is settled already. The park is designed and the work is about to start... so as a way out, let's ask the citizens to choose the colors of the benches! Otherwise, elected officials go for referendums. Let's give the power of choice to citizens! But again, experience has shown that it does not always work (esp. because people are often not given the complete picture to understand the underlying issues and therefore answer with emotions and preconceptions). So, let's create consultative bodies. The democratic panacea at last! Cities are already used to collaborate with associations, organizations, federations, cooperatives, trade unions, etc. so let's make a similar thing but composed of citizens. **In nearly all cities of the Active Citizens' network, city authorities have build such citizen-based consultative bodies like neighbourhood council, citizens councils, etc. But they all recognize the many limits of it.** Often, there are not as diverse in terms of demographics as we could

wish (over-representation of white elderly middle-class citizens). Then, in many situations these bodies are not given real powers (besides in the case of Agen). And finally, on the long run citizens tend to experience 'participation fatigue' as participation is time and energy consuming for citizens (esp. when there is no counterpart whatsoever). Finally, we have observed that nearly all the consultative bodies which were present in the Active Citizens' cities: Youth Parliament in Dinslaken, the Neighbourhood Councils in Saint-Quentin and Agen, the Local City Governments in Hradec Kralové or the Consulte Civiche in Cento, tend to be self-centered. Or rather, have difficulties reaching out to the rest of the population. In a way, we could provocatively say that citizen participation is confiscated – or given – to small circles of citizens. And in a way, city authorities tend to 'be quite ok with it.' Why? Because the existence of these various bodies already give them a guarantee of a minimum citizen participation, which does not necessarily push/force them do to more, to engage wider, or to 'oblige' these bodies to reach out in more formal ways to the rest of the citizens. In a way, we could say that 'we don't need to reach out to extra citizens since we already work with 15 citizens in that neighbourhood council'. Therefore, the members of these bodies become the only voices that are heard. Which, of course, in terms of democracy is questionable.

But the point is not to blame these bodies but rather **to explore how, within the scope of Active Citizens we can work on equipping city authorities as well as citizens with tools and methods to allow them to go further in reaching out to a wider set of citizens and therefore enlarge the diversity and number of citizen voices.**

TAKING GOOD CARE OF AC- TIVE CITIZENS

Most cities tend to build participation frameworks that are long and demanding for citizens (up to 6 years mandate in the neighbourhood councils of Agen for example). Not only these processes require a long investment but they are rather limitative. Indeed, most people can't dedicate such a long term engagement especially when there is absolutely no counterpart or explicit benefits than being 'a good citizen'. As if, 'being a good active citizen' meant giving expertise, time, energy, effort – basically work – entirely for free. The idea is not necessarily to go towards 'paid citizen-work' but to explore other forms of less demanding as well as more inclusive processes. **What about designing processes so that they can allow both quick and spontaneaous contributions as well as longer ones? What about**

designing processes that offer a pleasurable and fun experience? Why not making citizen participation something enjoyable and convivial rather than necessarily formal and serious?** When you host friends over your place, don't you try to make them feel comfortable, at ease, and ensure that they enjoy the moment? Hosting workshops and meetings in informal and unusual settings (meeting in cafés), using games (serious games), using visual materials (working with pictures, drawings), setting a friendly ambiance (putting background music, sharing food and having a drink while working at the same time), building models (with legos, playmobils, etc.) are only a few things that contribute to change completely the atmosphere of workshops, meetings, etc. All this contributes to taking a good care of active citizens. **You need to 'pamper' active citizens if you don't want to waste or loose them. They are precious.**

TRYING OUT NON SEGMENT- ED APPROACH- ES

Many cities have very segmented approaches: children assembly, youth council, senior council, neighbourhood councils, etc. Even though, needs and desires differ from one

population segment to an other, **there is room for experimenting more integrated approaches.** Some cities have already build bridges in between different councils, for example having joint projects between senior councils and youth council. But more rigorous methodologies (see the CIMULACT method, Horizon 2020) can also enable to have in one room, citizens which cover all age range and socio-demographics. In the CIMULACT project, workshops were held with 36 including 6 citizens from each age group: 18-25, 25-35, 35-45, 45-55, 55-65 and 65+. On the same principle, groups can be made with citizens of diverse economic groups or educational level. This could be also something worth exploring within the Active Citizens' phase II.

GOING FOR STRATEGIC AND PARTICIPATORY FORESIGHT THINKING

There is a tendancy to believe that citizens only care for short term, concrete projects and are not interested by strategic or future thinking projects. Again, **experience has shown that strategic planning as well as participatory foresight can be successfully done with cit-**

izens. To mention one experience, I would cite the Visions+21 toolbox which was designed in 2012 for the French Ministry of Environment to enable cities and villages to conduct participatory (mixing citizens, civil servants and elected officials all together) vision building to collective-ly elaborate their city's Agenda 21 strategy. **The risk of excluding citizens from strategic planning reflections is to only leave to citizen participation processes 'anectodical' or non-important decisions (what flowers to plant? what logo do you like better?).**

ACTIVE CITIZENS' CHALLENGES: WHAT CITIES WANT

The 8 cities of the Active Citizens network have been asked to express explicitly what they concretely want to do when they say 'we want to develop participatory democracy'. **A set of motivation cards were given to every city and each one of them had to read them, order them and prioritize which ones were corresponding to their own objectives** (they could also create new ones from scratch). Out of the 14 motivations, here are the most selected ones:

1. We want to develop a culture of participation and a sense of active citizenship (7 votes)
2. We want to enlarge the diversity and number of active/ engaged citizens (6 votes)
3. We want citizens to co-create solutions (ideas, plans, agendas, actions) with us, city administration (5 votes)
4. We want to rebuild trust between citizens and the city administration (4 votes)
5. We want citizens to take an active part in urban planning projects and decisions (4 votes)
6. We want to facilitate the dialogue between elected officials and citizens (3 votes)
7. We want to collect citizens' opinions and views on public matters or actions (3 votes)
8. We want citizens to be active in the life of their neighbourhoods (3 votes)
9. We want citizens to be able to decide upon the financial investments and priorities for the city (3 votes)

Building upon theses objectives, we tried checking if what is already in place (what we found throught the study visits) answers and/or contributes to respond to each objective:

1. **We want to develop a culture of participation and a sense of active citizenship**
    Youth councils/forums contribute to convince young people of the societal impact that active citizenship may contribute to and proofs show that they remain active later on, but besides these councils we did not find any city which has developed a real culture of participation. For example, trainings in the field of citizen participation (either internal training of civil servants but also training for citizens) could not be found anywhere. Therefore, it appears that this objective is still not really answered to and remains interesting to tackle within the phase II of Active Citizens.

2. **We want to enlarge the diversity and number of active/engaged citizens (6 votes)**
   Cities have difficulties reaching out to a diverse and large crowd of citizens. Therefore they tend to 'institutionalize' participation through the creation of multiple forms of councils or consultative bodies. They don't have to enlarge the citizens panel now that they have 'secured' the presence of at least a certain number of them. And when they try to implement wider-reaching tools like referendums, they don't achieve the expected results. Plus, besides a few cases, 'institutionalized' councils tend to be over-represented with elder middle-class white people. This challenge is therefore very relevant to work on in Active Citizens' phase II.

3. **We want citizens to co-create solutions (ideas, plans, agendas, actions) with us, city administration (5 votes)**
   Som cities have developed practices allowing for co-creation but it remains rather exceptional. In most situations, the cities continue to create and develop solutions on their own, then, once elaborated come and present them to citizens for adjustments. Yet, the case of the Horse Racing Track in Dinslaken is a good example of a process of co-creation with citizens. This objective has been clearly announced as one to be achieved by the 8 cities, it will therefore be part of Active Citizens phase II experimentations.

4. **We want to rebuild trust between citizens and the city administration (4 votes)**
   All cities have done quite a lot in terms of transparency measures. Indeed, nearly all of them have live broadcasting of city councils, or at least, publicly available recordings, access to decisions which were taken, city budgets, etc. but transparency is not enough to build trust. Trust also comes with the actual common knowledge of citizens and city authority (incl. sometimes interpersonal relations). This is a field which we can definitely be more investigated within Active Citizens.

5. **We want citizens to take an active part in urban planning projects and decisions (4 votes)**
   Cities have more failed stories than success cases to share when it comes to participatory urban planning however, cases and methods, both within the network and outside of it can be found to enable this objective. It will therefore be part of Active Citizens' sub challenge.

6. **We want to facilitate the dialogue between elected officials and citizens (3 votes)**
   All the elected officials we met in the 8 cities have told us to have, on a daily basis, constant direct contact with citizens, either in the street, in events, through phone, emails, etc. However, it appears that this does not really solve the problem of the gap-feeling there is in between citizens and elected officials. This does not appear to be a priority but could be touched upon within the Active Citizens phase II as there are existing techniques, tools but especially particular participatory postures to adopt in order to facilitate the dialogue between citizens and elected officials

7. **We want to collect citizens' opinions and views on public matters or actions (3 votes)**
   This objective does not appear to be in the most important ones, probably because this is amongst the things that city authorities have slighlty less difficulties to do. It's not easy but all the cities have done some citizens' consultations either through meetings, questionnaires, referendums, etc. Active Citizens will not investigate consultation techniques but cities will be able to exchange tips and tricks during phase II.

8. **We want citizens to be active in the life of their neighbourhoods (3 votes)**
   This objective is not amongst the top priority one probably because most cities have shown quite good cases of local citizen engagement either through local associations, but also community led projects, etc. Neighbourhood councils are good examples of neighbourhood-level citizen engagement. Exchange of practices in between cities will be shared during phase II to respond to this sub-challenge.

9. **We want citizens to be able to decide upon the financial investments and priorities for the city (3 votes)**
   This sub-challenge is clearly touched upon in some cities, especially in Tartu municipality with its participatory budgeting but also in the city of Bistrita for example in which there is a public meeting to validate the city budget. Still, many cities may be interested in exploring, in practice, how to do, therefore this sub-challenge remains relevant to explore in Phase II.

SUMMARY OF SUB-CHALLENGES

1. **Developing a culture of participation**
2. **Enlarging and diversifying active citizens**
3. **Co-creating solutions city & citizens together**
4. **Building trust**
5. **Developing participatory urban planning**
6. **Bridging the gap between elected representatives and citizens**
7. **Listening to citizens and asking their opinions**
8. **Supporting lively neighbourhood**
9. **Co-deciding upon public budget allocation**

ACTIVE CITIZENS IS AIMING AT CO-CREATION AND CO-DECISION WITH CITIZENS

For all the previous reasons explained earlier, **the Active Citizens' network of cities have decided to work on the level of co-creation and co-decision with citizens.** Even though the previous levels may be relevant in some cases, the cities of Active Citizens have acknowledged that they were quite familiar with the first three levels (even though they need improvements) and wished to further explore the levels of Co-creation and Co-decision with citizens. As said earlier, **this does not mean that the level of Information, Consultation and Concertation is already mastered by the cities of the network but rather that, conscious**

of their limits, they wish to make the best use of the opportunity given by the present URBACT network to go beyond things they are more familiar with. The co-creation level does not necessarily mean co-creating ideas only but contributing to any phase of a project or policy making process. This can mean co-creating a diagnosis with the city, co-creating ideas and solutions, co-testing them, co-defining the rules or characteristics of a process/policy/procedure, etc. The co-decision level means that decisions about policies/projects are done together by the public authority and the citizens, in a partnership mode (instead of the elected officials only).

INFORMATION

Being informed, knowing what is going on, decisions that are made, discussed or planned to be made

CONSULTATION

Presenting ideas or plans to citizens to collect their opinions, reactions, concerns.
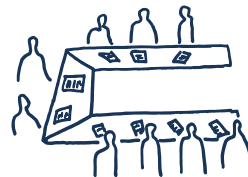
CONCERTATION

Inviting representatives of citizens' interests or citizens to collect their views, negotiate and potentially adapt the original plans.
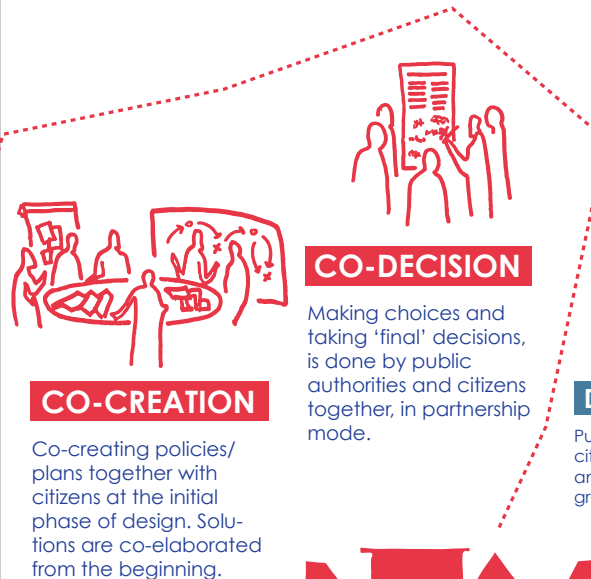
CO-CREATION

Co-creating policies/plans together with citizens at the initial phase of design. Solutions are co-elaborated from the beginning.

CO-DECISION

Making choices and taking 'final' decisions, is done by public authorities and citizens together, in partnership mode.

DELEGATED POWER

Public authorities delegate to citizens the power of creation and/or decision. Citizens are granted authority.

CITIZEN CONTROL

Citizens are in full control of power and decision. They are responsible and organized to manage that power.

THE DIFFERENT LEVELS OF CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

PUBLIC POLICY-MAKING PROCESS USING THE
PARTICIPATORY DESIGN APPROACH

Need

Don't act

Investigating

Evaluating

Co-defining where to act

Implementing

Refining

Co-generating ideas

Testing with users

Building models & sketches

Building proto-types

Identifying prom-ising solutions

ACTIVE CITIZENS
CITIZENS' PARTICIPATION IN SMALL & MEDIUM EU CITIES
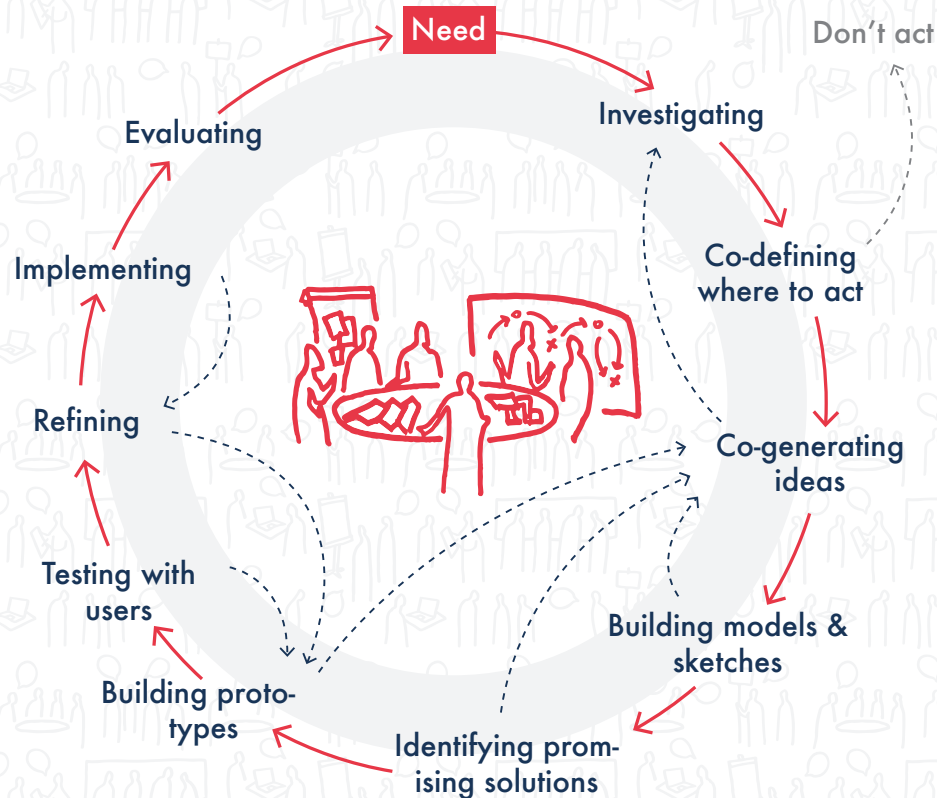
Poster by Christophe Gouache - Strategic Design Scenarios

EXPERIMENT-ING WITH CITIZEN PAR-TICIPATION AT DIFFERENT STAGES OF POLICY MAKING

The left-page model is a revised version of the policy-making process if we mix it with the participatory design approach. **At every stage, forms of citizen participation can be conducted:**

- First, in the identification of the need. Protocols and methods can allow citizens to report on needs and submit topics to be discussed by the city authority. For example, the city of Etterbeek (Belgium) has developed the Citizens' Interpellation Right in order to 'oblige' the city authority to put an issue, a subject, a need on the city coucil agenda if a certain number of citizens demand so.
- Second, in the diagnosis phase. Too often, cities tend to either skip that part because they believe they know the problem or delegate that part to an external audit agency who will deliver them with a clearer understanding of the problem. However, this stage can also be done with citi-

zens. **Participatory diagnosis allow citizens to share their insights and understanding on a problem (see participatory diagnosis in urban planning for example). The more views there are on an issue, the more angles of the problem can be considered.**
- Third, in the strategic phase of defining where to act. In policy-making, this stage consists of deciding how to deal with the problem and where to act precisely. Again, this can also be done in a participatory way as long as the complexity of the issue is made readable for everyone. This stage is key because that's where we define also if we answer in a direct, derived, or indirect way on a specific issue.
- Fourth, in the co-generation of ideas. This is probably the most obvious stage in which citizens can be involved. **At this stage, the point is to collect as many and diverse ideas as possible. It is also a stage in which ideas coming from elsewhere are key (benchmarking, cases transfer in between cities, etc.).** Citizens may hold expertise which can be critical at this stage.
- Fifth and sixth, in the building of models, sketches as well as the identification of the most promising solutions. Once ideas are given they need to be refined and further developed in order to reveal their potential. At this stage, the principle is to picture each idea through visuals and models. Building visuals/models allow for people to better capture

each idea and see 'what it could be like'. In that phase, each idea can be presented through storytelling, photo collages, sketchings, mockups, etc. Once the ideas are more explicit and tangible, it is time to select the ones which appear as the promising. Ideas shall be looked at according to the opportunities, available resources, both financial and human, feasibility, time, etc.

- Seventh, eighth, ninth, in prototyping and testing phase. In order to check the validity and relevance of the different 'chosen' solutions (from previous stage), we build prototypes. These prototypes may take different forms (simulations, minimal version of the solution) but are meant to test concepts. It may be the simulation of a service, an advanced model of an infrastructure, a process, etc. **The point is to try out this prototype by putting it under different testing conditions (submitting and presenting the prototype to users, doing-as-if-it-was real simulations, installing a light equipment/infrastructure to test the functionning of an idea, etc.). Stakeholders' feedback (citizens, us**ers, beneficiaries) will help identify what solution works best, which one needs to be refined/reviewed, etc. **The process can be repetead several times in order to reach a more advanced and robust solution.** This stage may include either very easy and quick testing but also longer experimentations (a couple

of weeks or months in some cases). The result of the testing will determine the future implementation.
- Tenth, the implementation phase. Most often, this phase is done by the public authorities as the citizens don't have the power, time and energy to manage it. However, situations of co-production are possible (for example in public-community gardens, collaborative spaces, etc.). Even with services when those require a co-management with citizens.

- Finally, the evaluation phase. **Once a solution has been implemented it is crucial to assess and evaluate its impact. Did it transform behaviours? Did it improve the situation? Did it meet the expected results? Again, this stage can be done through participatory evaluation methods (see participatory evaluation).**

This means that, **in all stages of the policy-making process, there can be room for citizen participation. It does not have to be only in the generation of ideas (which is the most often chosen stage for citizen participation).** Including citizens can be relevant at every stage. **However, it is not because it is relevant at every stage that it necessarily has to be done at every stage.** Indeed, a policy-making process is long and requires energy, time, and resources which may be too demanding for citizens. It is, therefore,

totally ok, to define at what stage it would be the most meaningful, relevant and beneficial to involve them and where the city has to take full control and responsibilities and advance on its own (which does not mean not keeping citizens informed of the state of things after or before they contributed).

NETWORK JOURNEY FOR PHASE 2

The Phase II journey of Active Citizens (see schema on next page) is built on an alternance between transnational exchanges and local activities. The general journey is built around 4 types of activities: transnational exchanges, local level activities, online network meetings, online network trainings. Each transnational level is followed by a local level activity to ensure the transfer of the knwoledge, the tools and the methods as well as the key information discussed and learned during transnational meetings to the local levels and especially the UR-BACT local groups (ULG). The phase II journey is organized in 4 stages: the activation stage, the planning action stage, the planning implementation stage and the final Integrated Action plan stage.

The first stage, the activation stage, will run from May 2020 to September 2020 and will aim at activating all the necessary elements for the proper start of the networking activities and the process of action planning. A big focus will be brought on the communication plan as well as the consolidation of the multiple ULG. The first stage will end with two things: the

URBACT Summer University in July 2020 in Croatia and the delivery of the Integrated Action Plan (IAP) Roadmap in September. In stage one, we plan to hold an online network meeting right after we receive the approval of URBACT for phase II in order to both celebrate and plan the stage one. We will also hold an online training (webconference) for the network to dive in the learning process as soon as possible. Finally, a first transnational meeting is planned before the URBACT summer university in order to gather all the city partners of the network to discuss and work on all the neeeded tasks (IAP roadmap, ULG, SSA, etc.). Then, the city partners will join again in July in Croatia for the URBACT Summer University where they will also learn and practice URBACT tools and methods. Finally, in September, the network will meet again to finalize and deliver the IAP roadmap. The rythm of the stage one is quite intense but it is designed in a way that shall ensure a strong commitment and reactivity from the partners directly at the (re)-start of the URBACT adventure (after the few months of 'waiting' for the approval). This quick and intense start will be counter-balanced by a more normal (calmer) rythm in the second stage.

The second stage, Planning Actions, is the longest and most significant part of the action planning journey (as it runs from Sept. 2020 to Sept. 2021) during which each network follows its own customised action planning process. This stage concludes with the network Mid-term reflection (MTR)

(state of actions report) and the draft Integrated Action Plans produced by partners. Stage two will be dedicated to learning, exchanging and experimenting. Meetings (both online and physical) will be on a regular basis to avoid having periods of potential 'sleepiness'.

The third stage, Planning Implementation will run from Sept. 2021 to March 2022 and will aim at focusing on the operationalisation aspects of the IAP. It will be a quite key stage – even though they all are important – because the IAP will start having a more and more advanced and finalized shape.

The last stage, the fourth, Implementation, will run from March 2022 to June 2022 and will aim on the launch of IAPs and dissemination of results. It includes the delivery of the Integrated Action Planning report, the final Integrated Action Plan and the network results. It will be a very short and intense stage since the network will have to 'wrap up' all its results, lessons learned, etc. as well as the final IAPs. It will also be the end of the URBACT journey which is why a last transnational meeting will be organized in the coordinating city of Agen – where all started – prior to going to the URBACT City festival in May 2022.

During the whole journey, loops between transnational level and local level will be insured. **Transnational meetings will aim in particular at collective competencies and skills learning and exchanging as well as network management (together with the online transnational meeting). The local levels will be focussing on leading on the ground reflections as well as Small Scale Actions (SSA).** The idea of the SSA is to 'push' every city to undertake local experimentations. SSA will allow ideas, concepts and approaches – perhaps already tried in another city – to be tested locally in order to check their relevance, feasibility and added value for greater participatory democracy. Local level activities will be led by each URBACT local groups.

Online gatherings will be done using Zoom.us and will be used for Online transnational meetings (network management) and online network trainings (webinars with one or two speakers/experts).

Finally, the communication and dissemination of results, during the whole journey of the network will be crucial especially since the topic of Active Citizens (citizen participation) is extremely 'hot' at the moment everywhere in Europe and beyond. This means that the network has a huge potential for conveying its story and the relevance of participatory democracy tools, methods, approaches, not only to the other URBACT networks but cities all over Europe as well as international institutions/organizations and networks like the World Forum for Democracy but also the International Observatory on Participatory Democracy (which counts over 800 cities around the world).

PHASE II JOURNEY

URBACT Summer University (Dubrovnik Croatia)
7-10 July 2020

Communic-ation plan

Study visit & trans. meeting in Brussels (Training & designing experiments, IAP Roadmap)
End of september 2020

IAP Roadmap

Transnational meeting in Tartu (Phase II, ULG, SSA)
Mid-June 2020

PLANNING ACTIONS STAGE 2

Webconference
Beginning of June 2020

ULG working on IAP & Small Scale Actions – First series of experiments
Sept. - Oct.-Nov. 2020

Online transnational meeting (Phase II launch, ULG Consolidation, & communication)
May 2020

ACTIVATION STAGE 1

Transnational meeting in Santa Maria da Feira (sharing & assessing first experiments)
First week of december 2020

Online transnational meeting (communication, ULG, politics)
January 2021

Webconference
January 2021

Transnational meeting in Hradec Kralove (action plans)
February 2021

Mid term network meeting
June 2021

Webconference
June 2021

Transnational meeting in Saint Quentin
May 2021

Online transnational meeting
April 2021

[Local actions] ULG working on IAP & Small Scale Actions – Second series of experiments
Feb. - April. 2021

ULG drafting IAP & SSA – Third series of experiments
June – Sept.. 2021

Transnational meeting in Dinslaken (Draft IAP)
End of september 2021

State of Actions report

Draft IAP

PLANNING IMPLEMENTATION STAGE 3

Online transnational meeting
Oct. 2021

ULG consolidating IAP & Small Scale Actions Fourth series of experiments
Nov. 2021 – Jan. 2022

Transnational meeting in Bistrita
End of January 2022

URBACT City Festival
May 2022

Final IAP & network results

Final transnational meeting in Agen (Sharing, disseminating)
End of April 2022

Communication, training
April 2022

Integrated Action Planning report

Transnational meeting in Cento (Final IAPs & Report)
End of February 2022

IAP FINALE STAGE 4

ULG finalizing IAP
March – May 2022

LEGEND

- TRANSNATIONAL MEETING
- LOCAL LEVEL ACTIVITIES (URBACT LOCAL GROUP, SMALL SCALE ACTIONS)
- ONLINE NETWORK MEETING
- ONLINE NETWORK TRAINING (WEBCONF.)
- DELIVERABLES

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PHASE 2 METHODS & TOOLS FOR TRANSNATIONAL EXCHANGES

Each transnational exchange will be done in an interactive and participatory way. The lead partner, together with the lead expert, will design each transnational exchange according to the objectives to be achieved. Specific methods and tools will then be developed in order for the network to reach these objectives. In order to give a greater understanding of the actual tools and methods which may be used, I, the lead expert, have gathered a series of concrete examples of practices that I am using in my own work. Active Citizens will enable some of them.

Action-training for civil servants on design for policies and public innovation

National Institute for Territorial Studies, Strasbourg, FRANCE

ACTION-TRAINING

Transnational meetings will be the occasion for every partner to gain some skills and competencies related to the challenge of participatory democracy. Therefore, parts of the transnational exchanges will be dedicated to action-training activities (learning about theory at the same time as practising what has been learned on concrete cases). This approach will be especially used during the first two stages of the phase II journey.

SHARING INSPIRING CASES AND PRACTICES

STRATÉGIE ALIMENTAIRE RÉGIONALE DURABLE, BRUSSELS, 2015

SHARING INSPIRING CASES & PRACTICES

Transnational meetings are the occasion for peer to peer learning. Therefore, some transnational meetings will be dedicated to the transfer and sharing of inspiring cases and practices. First transnational meetings will be ideal to share more pragmatically the experiences that have been identified in the study visits of phase I. This sharing could be done through an exhibition of cases.

BUILDING AND SHARING SCENARIOS

WASAN ISLAND, CANADA

BUILDING AND SHARING SCENARIOS

Transnational meetings which will be followed by local Small Scale Actions could be used by the city partners to build and confront their scenarios of how they are planning to conduct their Small Scale Actions.

SERIOUS GAME SESSION AND ROLE PLAY

Disruptive Imaginings, Joe Tankersley, Vancouver, Canada

SERIOUS GAME SESSION & ROLE PLAY

In order to challenge postures, difficulties, preconceptions, we will use serious games and role play to allow city partners to share their challenges and realities (playing the role of an elected official, a citizen, a civil servant, etc.).

PARTICIPATORY TRAINING

MEL LILLE METROPOLE HABITAT

INTERACTIVE AND PARTICIPATORY TRAINING

Trainings at transnational level could be the occasion to question city partners on their positions. Interactive techniques could be used in order for partners to potentially reuse them at local level and transfer them to the URBACT local groups.

MARKET PLACE OF CASES

URBACT _ BRISTOL FINAL EVENT
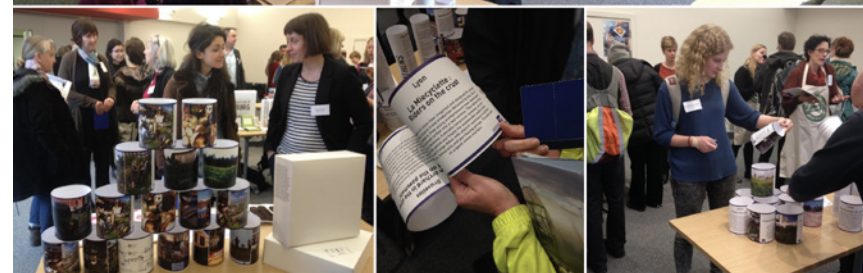
MARKET PLACE OF CASES

During stage 2 and 3, there will be several rounds of Small Scale Actions at local level, transnational meetings will therefore be the occasion to transfer experiences from one city to another. Setting up marketplace-like formats could be a relevant and playful way of organizing this peer-to-peer exchange of experiences.

PHASE 2 METHODS & TOOLS FOR URBACT LOCAL GROUPS (ULG)

ULG will need active methods and tools in order to offer a constructive and interactive experience. ULG coordinators and city coordinator will work together and be responsible for implementing these various tools and methods with their ULG. These methods are only indicative examples of what could be done as each ULG will have to define what is the most relevant for themselves.

EVIL CREATIVITY TOOL

LAB DGO6, SERVICE PUBLIQUE WALLONIE

EVIL CREATIVTY

It is important within the ULG to have a clear and honnest picture of the many risks and challenges which will arise when working on the topic of participatory democracy and citizen engagement. Similarly, to the game developed for Active Citizens 'Citizen participation? Hell no!', the idea is that the ULG imagines 'all the reasons why Active Citizens will fail at meeting its objectives. 'We are in 2022 and we have to admit it, the Active Citizens project is complete failure, all that because of...'. The principle is to put on paper all the risks, the fears, the worries of everything that could go wrong and lead to a failure of the project. Then, the group analyzes the responses and imagine the levers to overcome them.

Apéro challenge – Ensuring mutual knowledge in ULG

27e Région – Conseil Régional de Rhône-Alpes, France
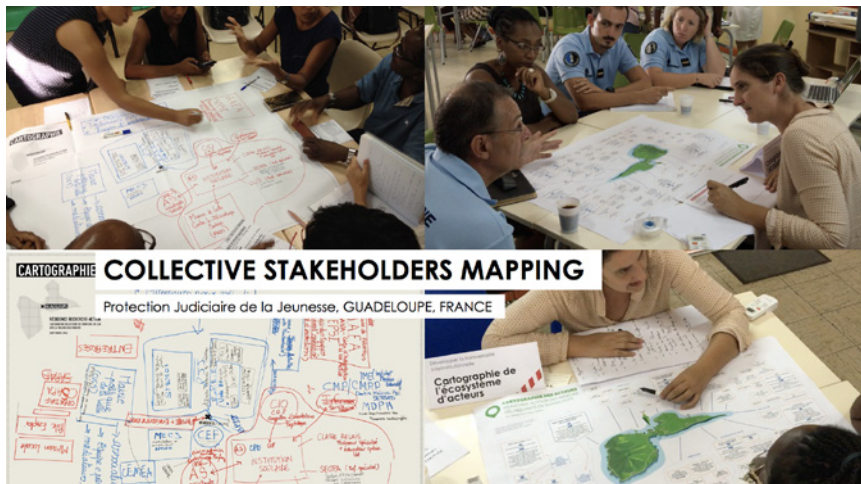
APÉRO-CHALLENGE

ULG members need to feel safe and confident within the group. They shall be able to speak with 'open heart' and speak out whenever they are problems or things they disagree with. But in order to be able to do so, ULG members need to know one another well. In the apero-challenge, each member makes a micro conference on whatever he wishes (based on their views and/or experience) to share in relation to the topic of participatory democracy then members discuss informally in a convivial drink moment.

COMMUNIKATHON – Inventing creative ways of communicating

VILCO - BRUSSELS

COMMUNIKATHON

In the activation stage, ULG will have to reflect on the communication aspects

of the network. Indeed, they will have to ensure the communication and dissemination of what is going on in the project around them and with key relevant stakeholders. In order to so, running a small Communikathon could allow them to explore creative and original ways to communicate about the project beyond the classic ways (newsletter, social media posts, etc.).

COLLECTIVE STAKEHOLDERS MAPPING
Protection Judiciaire de la Jeunesse, GUADELOUPE, FRANCE
Cartographie de l'écosystème d'acteurs

COLLECTIVE STAKEHOLDERS MAPPING

In a topic like the one of Active Citizens, it is crucial that the ULG identifies all the key stakeholders who have something to do, directly or indirectly with participatory democracy. The mapping of stakeholders could allow the ULG to identify and possibly mobilize some actors within the journey of phase II (and the Small Scale Actions for example).

Using images of daily life to identify topics for SSA
CIMULACT, Belgium

IMAGINING WHAT COULD THE SSA BE ABOUT

Citizen participation can touch upon pretty much any topic at city level (from daily life concerns, quality of life, urban infrastructure, local policies, public services, etc.). In order for the ULG to discuss the multiple aspects that could be potentially touched upon through the SSAs, the ULG could collectively browse through a collection of subjects and topics using visual cards of daily life.


SYSTEM MAPPING WORKSHOP
JRC _ EU DESIGN POLICY LAB

SYSTEM MAPPING

Once the topic(s) of the SSA are defined, the ULG needs to explore the problem/challenge under all angles and dive into the complexity of it. In order to understand complexity, the ULG could build system mapping to dissect the problem and identify precisely where to focus and act.

ORGANIZING A LOCAL SAFARI – FIELD VISITS AT PEOPLE'S PLACE
NORD-PAS DE CALAIS, LILLE, 2014

ORGANIZING LOCAL SAFARI

In order for the ULG to be grounded in reality and the local level, they could, during the SSAs organize local safaris, in which each member of the ULG goes out in pair to visit people at their own place rather than inviting them over to the city hall. Going there and meeting people at their place helps having empathy and a better understanding of people's views or positions regarding a subject.

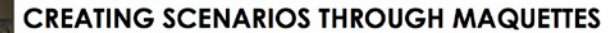BUILDING COLLECTIVE DIAGNOSIS
SMEDAR, Rouen

COLLECTIVE DIAGNOSIS

ULG shall, depending on the SSAs they chose to develop, carry on collective diagnosis sessions including the users, beneficiaries and citizens who have a link with the subject. This participatory diagnosis approach builds upon people's practical expertise.
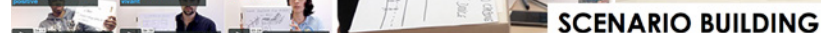
SCENARIO BUILDING
ZERO CARBON CAMPUS, ComUE Lille Nord de France

SCENARIO BUILDING

ULG will be able to develop several SSAs but in order to validate each one of them, a session of scenario building could help them explore multiple paths and modalities. Then they present and confront their scenarios and approaches.

CREATING SCENARIOS THROUGH MAQUETTES
LAB DGO6, SERVICE PUBLIQUE WALLONIE

BUILDING MODELS/MAQUETTES

In some cases, the ULG could create and compare scenarios through the creation models, maquettes and short projective stories.

BACKCASTING – FROM VISION TO ACTION PLAN
INET _ DESIGN OF PUBLIC POLICIES

BACKCASTING

Backcasting could be useful for the ULG especially when working on their Integrated Action Plan as backcasting consists in building an operational journey starting from a future vision.

'ACTIVE CITIZENS' ACTION PLANNING NETWORK
URBACT BASELINE STUDY
By Lead Expert, Christophe Gouache with the help and support of
Nicolas Castet and the partner cities

Final version - February 2020

Layout: Christophe Gouache, Strategic Design Scenarios
Photo credits: Christophe Gouache - Strategic Design Scenarios

ACTIVE CITIZENS
CITIZENS' PARTICIPATION IN SMALL & MEDIUM EU CITIES