

EURBANITIES

EURBANITIES POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS I

8 Recommendations to improve urban
participatory processes

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Background	<p>EURBANITIES is a European project for adult education, aiming <i>to facilitate the participation of civil stakeholders in neighborhood level development programs</i>, through the establishment of a <i>pedagogical curriculum</i> based on a <i>game tool</i> dedicated to local stakeholders, activists, trainers, and urban development professionals.</p> <p>EURBANITIES game will be practicable as an online game for individual use, and as a pedagogical tool as part of a training program. Its aim is to <i>stimulate the strategy-making process of civil activists and inhabitants</i> actively participating in neighborhood level urban development projects. EURBANITIES will help them to prepare their actions in a strategic way, based on a know-how accumulated through the analysis of already existing experiences.</p> <p>The game tool will be built on the base of several <i>scenarios of participation</i> established following the <i>evaluation of experiences of participation</i> in neighborhood level development. Around 20 on-going or already finalized projects from 10 countries will be presented in the form of narratives <i>following a common grid of story-telling</i>. The experience evaluations will focus on the strategies and actions engaged by the main stakeholders' and their re-adaptation according to the turning points</p>

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intervening during the process. Scenarios of participation will be built following the main logical chains of actions traced upon the summarizing of the experiences and their turning points.

The scenarios will serve as a skeleton of the online game, to be constructed in the second year of the project. Parallel to game development, *a pedagogical curriculum* will be formulated for the use of the game tool in a pedagogical context. The game and the curriculum will be tested in a series of trainings and workshops during the third year of the project. to know how to act and live with digital reality. Younger users need to achieve digital responsibility. Older learners and workers need to be introduced to and made proficient in the navigation of the digital world in order to qualify them for jobs needed today.

The partnership identified and summarized 20 experiences on urban participatory processes. The experiences had been grouped in three categories:

1. Bottom-up proactive
2. Bottom-up reactive
3. Top-Down proactive

Participative processes are never ending stories. Unlikely development projects that have a clear frame based on a planning procedure, a governance and a financial structure, participative processes are long lasting stories, that themselves may contain several projects, or aim at the realization of projects. In any case, participation only exists if it is continuous and sustainable. Even in the case of a negative turning of a story (for instance the rejection of an initiative by the local municipality), there still remains a possibility of the reinforcing of the community or of the launching of new participative methods. Thus, although for the sake of simplicity and scenario building, the experiences are presented here with a clear beginning and a more or less clear ending, in the reality these stories should have (or should have had) further turning points and phases.

There are only some specific cases when the stories end suddenly, with no possible way of follow-up. These cases might be considered as real negative ones, where participation probably was not based on the effective need of the local community. In these cases, any external or



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internal problem (lack of financial resources, political tensions etc.) may
blow up the whole process of participation.

Recommendations

Based on the above made findings, the Strategic Partnership “EUrbanities” has the following recommendations concerning participatory urban processes:

1. **The process is never straight** – urban participatory process does not follow lineal logics. Like in storytelling, the process is connected to turning points, which determine the success of the process. If the turning points and their implications on the participatory process are well understood, a positive outcome for all the community can be expected.
2. **Have more than one viewpoint** – Embrace and consider all actors in the participatory process. Sustainable but as well positively surprising interventions help to build a community and enable active citizenship.
3. **Understand the process and embrace surprises** – As mentioned earlier, participatory process is not straight forward. Turning points can help actors to reconsider their strategies or let new actors intervene. Understanding the process means to steer and moderate it, not plan it in advance. Surprises will help to negotiate between the actors and result in creative and innovative solutions.
4. **Differentiate between an ending and outcomes** – If the participatory process is implemented well designed, it will hardly end at a certain point. The ending is always a temporary snapshot which might be used to tell the story of a participatory process. The outcomes are indicators of the gain for the community. Outcomes initiated new processes, enable the community to become proactive and secures the sustainability of the initial process.
5. **Be aware of the correlation between outcomes and endings**
The analysis of the experiences showed three kind of outcomes:
 1. Success
 2. Failure
 3. CompromiseSuccess leads to an ending consisting out of achievement, capacity building, visible change and establishment of participatory procedures. Failure will lead to the breakdown of negotiations, polarisation and exclusion. Compromise will lead to the recalibration of the process, in order to achieve another outcome. The processes are flexible and each outcome can lead to another ending.
6. **Choose the participatory tools according to the situation** – Since outcomes and processes are fuzzy and flexible, be aware of the methods you will use. Analyse together with the actors what is needed in order to support the participatory process and choose your tools accordingly.



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7. **Involve the community** – The core of participatory process is the involvement of active citizens. In order to understand the need of a community, involve them in the assessment of the situation. The involvement will ensure participation and ownership, which is crucial in order to succeed.
8. **Direct your message** – When you communicate on the process think about to whom you want to target your message and focus your message on your subject. In this way people can easily understand the concern but as well the implications.