



From storytelling to scenario building – local experience of citizen participation in European cities

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INTRODUCTION

The present booklet is the outcome of the first phase of the **EURBANITIES** project aiming at the realization of a game-based pedagogical tool for empowering civil participation in local urban development on neighbourhood level. The project is built upon 4 main phases: 1) construction of a set of local experience representing different situations of public participation in European cities, 2) constitution of scenarios of participation based on the local cases; 3) development of an online game tool based on the scenarios and 4) development and testing of a pedagogical curriculum permitting the use of the game tool in trainings for local activists, trainers, experts in local development and in general, for all citizens willing to act in a proactive way for their urban environment.

The present booklet contains the description of 20 cases from 9 European countries representing Northern, Western, Southern, and Central and Eastern Europe¹. The evaluations were elaborated between December 2015 and September

2016 and were presented at two transnational project meetings in poster format in March and July 2016.

The experiences represent a large variety of urban situations, from the very small city (Rónakeresztes in Hungary for instance) through middle sized regional centres (Brighton, Sassari, Krakow), to large-scale European capitals and urban regions (Budapest, Berlin, Bucharest or Ile de France (Colombes)). They all reveal some specific social conflict between local stakeholders, civil society and local inhabitants, whose resolution unfolds during the development project.

THE TYPOLOGY OF THE EXPERIENCES OF CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

Based on the initial state of affairs and on the evolution of the analysed processes, a typology of the cases of local experience have been identified and tested by the project partners. The 20 cases were classified by forms of participation, referring to the general direction of stakeholders' interactions and the kind value of this interaction. The general direction of stakeholders' interaction describes the role played by the different stakeholders in the project.

A **bottom-up state of affairs** concerns actions initiated by actors *without political power*, such as NGOs or citizens. Projects initiated by an intermediate NGO can also be considered as bottom up, even if they are not rooted in the given community.

¹ Belgium (1), Finland (2), France (1), Germany (1), Hungary (6), Italy (2), Poland (3), Romania (1), Ukraine (3) and the United Kingdom (1)



Exceptions are the cases when the NGO is acting through an assignment on behalf of the local government or any other local authorities.

A **top-down state of affairs** describes all projects initiated by the local governments or other stakeholders *with political power*. The top down character does not directly qualify the local embeddedness of the project: in several cases the local

government is an important element of the local community. However, political power enables the initiators to implement the project even if the other stakeholders or/and citizens are against it.

Furthermore, stakeholders' interaction can also range from reactive to proactive according to their position in the given situation. A **reactive state of affairs** describes the initial nature of the

<p style="text-align: center;">top-down</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Teleki Square, Budapest, Hungary 2. Chylonia Estate, Gdynia, Poland 3. Malachowski Square, Warsaw, Poland 4. Pidzamche, Lviv, Ukraine 5. New England House, Brighton, UK 6. Community House, Ronakeresztes, Hungary 7. Nadas, Budapest, Hungary 8. Santa Caterina, Sassari, Italy
<p style="text-align: center;">reactive</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Hunyadi Square, Budapest, Hungary 2. Molinay, Seraing, Belgium 3. Tempelhofer Feld, Berlin, Germany 4. Civil Protest for the Poor, Budapest, Hungary 5. Hala Matache, Bucharest, Romania Merk-Rastila, Helsinki, Finland <p style="text-align: center;">bottom-up</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">proactive</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Social Housing Reconstruction Camp, Nagykanisza, Hungary 2. lets give a hand, Sassari, Italy 3. DIY Tikkutehdas, Tampere, Finland 4. Can B Done, Kraków, Poland 5. R-Urban, Colombes, France

Figure 1 Classification of Eurbanities experiences according to the forms of participation

participative action that responds to an exclusionary policy decision or step of another actor (e.g. local government). In these cases, the developmental goal also includes putting pressure on the actor with exclusionary decisions to perform inclusive decision-making and engage in a dialogue with other actors. In the case of a proactive interaction, the stakeholders mobilize themselves upon an existing social problem through cooperative initiatives. A **proactive state of affairs** concerns a situation, when the participatory or developmental process was triggered as a response to an existing urban or social problem of the above types. Proactive initiatives can be regarded as forms of innovation.

The distribution of the cases of experiences shows a relative balance among three states of affairs (Bottom Up Proactive, Bottom Up Reactive and Top Down Proactive), with a slight over-representation of the top-down proactive type. Here, 7 from the 9 experiences are from Central and Eastern Europe. This might reflect the different socio-political background of these post-socialist environments, where NGOs have less financial resources to launch independent participative processes and therefore the civil sector is more dependent on the local authorities' initiatives and assignments, then in other European countries.

The fourth quarter of the matrix (**top-down reactive**) could not be filled as such cases only exist when a public authority intervenes as a reaction to an external event, e.g.: a natural disaster, a strong political conflict or a social conflict caused by political circumstances - for instance the

refugee crisis. These cases mainly happen at a higher territorial (administrative) level, such as the national, regional or even international levels. However, these situations can be the base of local projects (on neighbourhood level) initiated by NGOs (for instance, education or integration programs for refugees living in a neighbourhood).

INTERPRETATIONS: EXPERIENCE AS A PROCESS

Experience

Experience has been defined as a long term, non-linear process that can last over an extended period (years) and is affected by several external and internal factors, changes and events. In this vein, the experience narratives describe processes in diverse contexts and present the way the positions, objectives and strategies of different stakeholders transform as they attempt to achieve their goals.

The narratives apply the methodology of storytelling. They focus on the logical construction of the experiences, the successive follow-up of actions and their consequences and are destined to lead to the elaboration of different *types and scenarios of participation*.

In order to ensure a general pattern for comparability of different routes and outcomes designed by the experiences, a single structure (grid) was developed for the story-telling. This was based on a methodology retrieved from theories of (local) development that define **development as a process of social change** which ultimately concerns the



transformation of institutions (Bruszt, 2007; Evans, 2004; Farrell-Knight, 2003; Ostrom, 1996; Sabel, 1994; Sen, 1999).

This is not a linear process, since participants of the development project can make mistakes, false starts as they meet and overcome obstacles (Hirschman, 1958; Sabel, 1994). According to this approach a minimum of four factors should be satisfied in order to achieve development:

- i. **deliberation:** the will to solve initial problems, to solve gridlocks;
- ii. **reflexive spontaneity:** in other words, knowing oneself, the partners in conflict, what needs to be done;
- iii. realization of mutual vulnerability and dependence;
- iv. **dialogue** among cooperating actors whose relations are determined by equally distributed rights in making decisions.

Ultimately, it is in a dialogue that parties must define and redefine their positions, understand the issues at stake. This **constant re-elaboration of intent can produce a common understanding and alignment of interests** (Sabel, 1995).

Based on this approach, neighbourhood level development of EURBANITIES is considered as a **long-term, non-linear process**, during which actors – stakeholders in the story – interact with each other in different ways and to various degrees. As the story of development and of the interaction unfolds, the process can

be organized into **phases** separated by **turning points**. A turning point can be **an event** such as a sudden change in the general political or economic context, or the breakdown of negotiations between stakeholders **that transforms the positions of stakeholders in a way that affects the entire development process and its outcome**. The position and points of view of stakeholders (civil, public, private) are redefined at each turning point.

Turning Points

Turning Points are crucial elements of the stories and the scenarios as they introduce a change in the flow of events. They lead to a cut of the logical sequence of stakeholders' actions and reactions and often a radical change of their position and mutual relationship. Turning points might be crucial with regards to the final outcome of the processes, they can turn a positive process into a negative one and vice versa.

The local experiences include a large variety of turning points, such as different events, decisions, changing attitudes, arrival of new stakeholders etc. Overall, turning points can be classified according to two main types of transformations:

Internal transformations: These changes are related to the reactions of the stakeholders included in the story: reactions of local stakeholders to a social issue or to the behaviour of other stakeholders during the story. Each story begins as a reaction to a pending social issue or challenge of either one of the two major types of stakeholders (the NGOs or the local authority/local government). In

this sense, the coming about of the initiative can be regarded as the first turning point in the flow of events, in the sequence of the narrative.

Following this initial turning point, four types of internal turning points have been identified.

a.) The stakeholders' subsequent reaction to each other's positions in the unfolding story triggers further turning points that can transform the general situation and lead the story into a different scenario. In the case of positive turning points, the stakeholders' reactions to initiatives, proposals or actions are embraced by the other side (1st scenario), which can lead to the institutionalization of partnership between the stakeholders and eventually to concrete local changes.

b.) Negative turning points are those moments in the sequence of the narratives when the reaction to an initiative by the other side is direct rejection or resistance. These turning points can trigger protest actions that can lead the story either into a positive scenario, to further negotiations or to the breakdown of negotiations and the initiative (narrative) itself.

c.) The lack of reaction (neglect) can also be regarded as a negative turning point in the flow of events, as it can lead to the breakdown of negotiations and eventually of the narrative itself without any local changes.

d.) During negotiations and actions, stakeholders can reconsider their original points of view, redefine their goals to bring about some common understanding and shared vision in the goals of the

development initiative. This type of internal turning point can lead the story into a positive scenario, or to further negotiations.

2. External changes: These transformations denote events external to the jurisdiction of stakeholders within the community that local actors cannot influence but that can have an impact on the evolution of the development story.

a.) External changes can be, for instance, the appearance of a new (external) stakeholder or a facilitator who can help local actors redefine their goals and points of view or can introduce new ideas that both sides of stakeholders can identify with. In this positive scenario, the external actor can change the storyline for the better by helping local stakeholders reframe their narratives about cooperation and dialogue.

b.) Turning points can also be triggered by external events, such as the transformation of the political context because of municipal or regional/national elections; a sudden change in the financial capacities of either of the participants; a general economic and/or political crisis, a transformation of the physical environment or the social composition of the area, the appearance of new funding tenders.

Scenario Building

The above presented typology has been elaborated according to the initial state of affairs and the turning points as they appeared in the experiences. From the relative common starting points, the stories may follow very different paths,



determined by the different turning points that cut the story into phases. Identifying these paths has been a first step in the building of the **scenarios of participation**.

Scenario building can be regarded as a practice of **simplification**: the main objective is to draw **general development paths** based on the stories. As typologies in general, instead of highlighting the small differences between the experiences, scenario building also intends to **create large categories** and thus to hide the small details. This exercise has been an important step towards the creation of the game tool, in which the processes are presented in a simplified way.

Scenarios for storytelling were developed through the assessment of the initial state of affairs, the turning points of the stories, tools of participation used by stakeholders and the outcome of the participation experience. The initial state of affairs among stakeholders changes as the story of the experience unfolds through turning points and the transformation – or stagnation – of the interaction among participating actors.

The **scenarios are not isolated** from each other: at certain points, there are possibilities for passing from one scenario to the other. Depending on the evolution of the initial state the position of the stakeholders and the tools used by them, one scenario may turn into the other at certain points of the story. For instance, a bottom-up reactive scenario may turn into a bottom-up pro-active one in case of a positive collaboration between the stakeholders and the strengthening of the

local community. Or, a bottom-up state of affairs might change into a top-down situation in case the local authority takes over the initiation as a result of financial, political or other reasons.

Type 1: Experiences with a bottom-up proactive initial state of affairs

The departing situation of bottom-up proactive experiences is an initiative launched by an NGO or a group of citizens, local stakeholders to resolve a local problem persisting since a certain time.

At the first turning point the municipality responds to the initiative either by embracing, ignoring or rejecting the NGOs proposal.

1st scenario: If the initiative is embraced, the NGO becomes a partner of the municipality in the implementation of the development project. NGOs tools will change according to its role: as its initiative is embraced and it works as a collaborator, it will rely on cooperative work and the media. During the evolving partnership of the local government and the NGO, a local community is shaped (or reshaped) as developmental decisions become embedded within the fabric of the local society. *Experiences: Social Housing Reconstruction Camp (HU); Skateboard planning, Tampere (FI)*

2nd scenario: If the initiative is ignored, NGO stakeholders remain in a pending position and might continue to push for the realization of the proposal. In order to attract the authorities' attention, the NGOs may rely on demonstrations and petitions. When facing the ignorance of the local



government, the NGOs must reconsider and recalibrate their initiatives to draw more attention to the subject in question.

Experiences: Let's Give a Hand, Sassari (IT), CanBDone, Krakow (Poland)

3rd scenario: If the initiative is rejected in a straightforward manner, the NGO can turn into an open opponent of municipal policies. If the initiative is rejected by the local government, the NGO can rely on mobilizing international networks and organizations. When faced with the rejection of the local government, NGOs must also reconsider and recalibrate their initiatives to trigger more positive responses about the subject in question.

Experience: R-Urban, Colombes (FR)

The outcomes of this first type of participative process will vary according to the scenarios: in case of a positive development, a partnership may develop between the municipality and the NGO, the latter can even institutionalize and change the scale of its activities. Thus, important solutions are found for the initial problem.

In the case of a negative development, the NGO remains in an isolated position, it becomes an enemy of the local authority. Instead of the research of common solutions, the tools used by the civil society might be stronger: protest and demonstrations against the municipal policies.

Type 2: Experiences with a bottom-up reactive state of affairs

In this second type of participative experience, local NGOs, citizens or other stakeholders with no political power launch

an action to resolve a political or social conflict, often caused by an imminent political decision on behalf of the municipality or other stakeholders with political power.

1st scenario: In the most positive scenario, the NGO can eliminate the resources of the immediate social conflict and positively influence local policies. Constructive tools of action can be used in this case: participatory planning, networking, social media, flash mobs, trainings and workshops. *Experience: Molinay, Seraing (BE)*

2nd scenario: In a most negative scenario, the reaction of the municipality to the civil society's initiative is rather negative, but, although the associations cannot reduce the imminent danger of the conflict, the local community finds itself reinforced as a result of its action. The local community is thus able, in a second phase, to turn to more radical tools and actions to achieve the dissolution of the conflict. *Experience: Hunyadi, Bp (HU); Meri-Rastila suburb development, Helsinki (Finland); Tempelhof, Berlin (Germany); Civil-Protest for the Poor, Budapest (Hungary)*

3rd scenario. In the most negative scenario, the conflict cannot be eliminated and/or it may even aggravate and the new and stronger conflict may generate new tools to trigger partnership. These can be demonstrations, meetings, petitions, media, and expertise. In this case the outcome can either be a change in the scale of intervention or the transformation of tools by the local authorities. If a solution to the conflict cannot be generated, new problems may appear, which does not negate the evolution of a good community through constant negotiations. *Experience: Hala Matache, Bucharest (Romania)*

In the case of a **positive scenario**, in a second phase of the process, the NGO can begin to work on the strengthening of the local community capable to initiate solutions to local problems. In this case, the process **may turn into a bottom-up proactive one.**

Type 3. Experiences with a top-down proactive state of affairs

Top-down proactive experiences are based on a community building initiative launched by the local government. The realization of these projects is often assigned to local NGOs that is why sometimes it is difficult to differentiate this type of action from the bottom-up proactive ones.

1st scenario: The local authority's initiative is adopted by the community, in which case the citizens' involvement in the implementation of the project is rather strong. The tools used in the course of such collaboration can range from meetings, FB posters and network building. The outcome of this scenario is the empowerment of the local community through dialogue between the authorities and the society, which demonstrates an additional achievement of the initiative compared to the original goals. *Experience: Rediscovery of Teleki Square, Budapest (Hungary); Małachowski Square, Warsaw (Poland); Chylonia estate revitalization (Poland).*

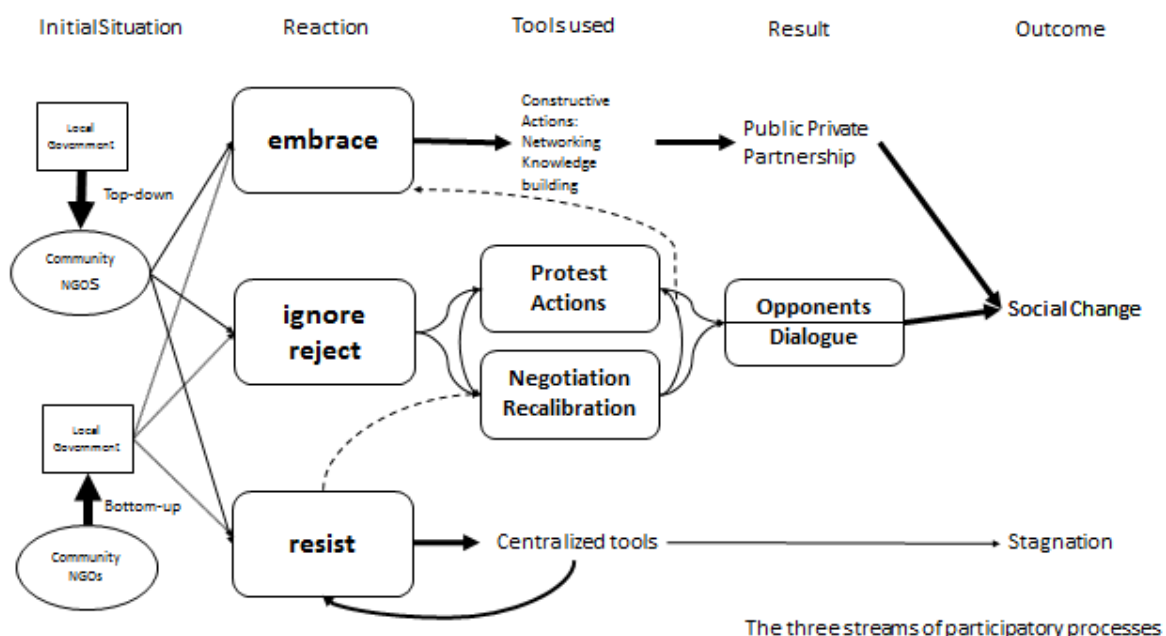


Figure 2 The three streams of participatory processes



New England House, Brighton (United Kingdom)

2nd scenario: If local authorities' initiatives meet the resistance of the local community, the latter can turn to tools of protest, such as demonstrations, flash mobs or petitions. As a result of such reactions, the local government can decide to adapt its initial plans to the needs of the community. In this case a positive scenario will take place. *Experience: Community House, Rónakeresztes (Hungary); Roma empowerment, Nádas (Hungary); Tale of Two Centres, Sassary (Italy); The Revitalization of Pidzamche Backyards, Lviv (Ukraine)*

3rd scenario. If the initiative of the municipality is rejected by the local community and the authority does not show any willingness to adapt the plan to the requirements of the local community, the scenario can **turn into a traditional top-down process** as the local government abandons the dialogue with the society. The outcome in this case is the failure of community building. *Experience: An Unrealised Project, Lviv (Ukraine)*

Based on the narratives of the experiences three main types of scenarios, or participatory processes could be identified:

Tools

Tools are types of actions and mechanisms deployed by local actors in their reaction to each other's initiatives, proposals, actions and/or to the new situation triggered by internal and external events. Tools can vary according to the actor who uses them and the scenarios in which they are used. Some tools can be used by both types of

actors and in several scenarios, others are specific to the actor and the situation.

- I. In the first scenario: EMBRACE, where the result is COOPERATION, PARTNERSHIP, constructive tools can be deployed by both the NGO and the LG.

Constructive tools

Local Government (LG): online platform for input from the community, public hearing, participatory planning, survey, workshops, leaflets, billboards, instawalks, popups, social media, participatory research, trainings,

NGO: participatory research and planning, workshops, networking, knowledge building, social media, surveys, trainings

- II. NEGOTIATION, where the result can be either OPPOSITION or DIALOGUE, recalibration tools can be deployed.

Recalibration tools

LG: large-scale surveys, social media, facilitated meetings, case studies from other LGs, public hearings, leverage: cooperation incentives to get more support (?), local media, community events

NGO: crowdfunding, putting pressure on politicians by flashmobs, demonstrations, social and local media, leaflets, involving external expertise, demonstrations, petitions

- III. RESIST or REJECT, where the result can be STAGNATION or

DIALOGUE, protest tools can be deployed.

Protest tools

LG: media exposure, centralized decision-making without participation

NGO: crowdfunding, politicizing the issue through media exposure, flashmobs, demonstrations, petitions, legal challenging of centralized decision, involving external experts, international organisations and platforms

CONCLUSIONS FOR EURBANITIES

The above analysis contains several important conclusions for EURBANITIES project. The scenarios, turning points and tools identified will be used for the definition of the main elements of the game. The general conclusions of the experiences, regarding the main challenges for realizing successful participative processes will be integrated into the pedagogical curriculum and the trainings to be provided by the end of the project.

Participative processes are never ending stories. Unlikely development projects that have a clear frame based on the project cycle, participative processes are long lasting stories, that may contain several projects themselves. 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 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 clear ending 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 internal problem (lack of financial resources, political tensions etc.) may blow up the whole process of participation.

As mentioned before, the above described types of participative processes and the scenarios of participation are the results of an exercise of simplification. They allow us to draw some overall conclusions about elements that are present in every process, including the identification of the main dangers, challenges participative processes have to tackle, and the main tools the stakeholders can use in their practices. In spite of common features, **each story is different, unique and unreproducible**. Each story is the fruit of many efforts, reflection and work on behalf of people who are active on the ground and who are the real experts of their own cases. Any time we want to draw generalities of participative processes, we should keep in mind that it is not possible to speak about participation without a permanent feedback from the ground. The following 20 experiences should also be read through this optic: as individual stories, reflecting very different local



situations, stakeholders with different backgrounds and results that give them various perspectives.

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