URBAN INNOVATION IN THE FIELD OF CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

/// WHY BECOME PART OF A PARTICIPATORY PROCESS?

Participation, or « the involvement of urban stakeholders (citizens, users, business community members) in shaping the issues that affect them, as well as in implementing the resulting solutions » is an approach that is developing in cities all over the world. Developing a local-level project is no longer the work of just two categories of players interacting: those making decisions (the project contractors) and those executing them (project management), but has extended to include all players affected (project "users").

The experiments conducted to date in France have brought to light the benefits of this type of approach, which concurrently brings richness to products, fosters innovation - in particular innovation in types of use -, anchors projects within their local environment and facilitates integration into the existing urban fabric and population as a whole. When the issues are understood by the citizens, and when a project has the support of the population and future residents, community and users, success is practically guaranteed.

/// PARTICIPATION... FOR WHICH TYPES OF PROJECTS? AND USING WHAT KINDS OF PROCEDURES?

The participatory approach can apply to many different types of projects, from designing a land planning project for the near or not-so-near future, to drafting a strategic planning document, involving future residents in designing a local development project or involving them more directly in urban management.

Participation can come at any stage of the project:

- at the design stage, with a co-design process that makes it possible for residents or future users of an infrastructure or service to make put their user expertise - a complement to technical expertise - to valuable use. Residents can be brought on-board through participatory workshops or through interactive mapping tools, for instance, to help draft a strategic planning document;

- at the decision-making stage, by organising a vote on a jointly-developed budget, or submitting multiple options to the residents for a new development project;

- at the launch phase, so that all populations affected can truly take ownership of the project;

- and during the working and operation stages, by involving residents in operation maintenance or management, and secondly, by opting for flexible, open approaches, which make it possible to reshape the project in accordance with the feedback received.

Participatory approaches can come in different forms – above all, the methodologies and tools chosen need to be tailored to the end-purpose sought, as shown in the case studies shown below.
While the advent of new information and communications technologies has made it infinitely easier to get urban stakeholders involved, they have also shaken up the traditional methods for consulting and securing resident participation, making landscape much less recognisable. Key innovations include:

- **The ability to preview projects as 3D models**

  3D modelling can not only depict a territory or project, but also accommodate exploration and simulation within that virtual realm. The digital environment created is, in fact, a model of the project inserted into its context, and placed on a 3D navigation tool (3D navigation, a multi-user web solution, augmented reality, natural interface, etc.), all of which "breathes life" into the project. As far as participation is concerned, digital modelling creates a shared understanding of the urban space and firmer grasp on the project proposed. In that sense, digital tools give a stage to urban projects, in an educational and innovative way, and open up discussion.

- **Crowd-sourcing**

  Tapping the citizens to produce new information about the city, becoming more familiar with usages and putting forth solutions and projects as a group: such is the three-fold promise of urban crowdsourcing. From tools dedicated to reporting problems in the urban environment (roads, traffic), participatory budgets, census initiatives (biodiversity inventory) or assessing spaces and infrastructures (mobility for wheelchair users), the expertise of citizens is extremely valuable to those working to better manage and design cities.

- **Participatory mapping**

  Participatory mapping makes it possible for city or neighbourhood users to share their opinions via an online map. Logging in from a notepad or cell phone, they can add ideas by sliding pictograms across the image, then commenting, voting or sharing ideas on the social networks, for instance, to contribute to the Local Urban Development Plan (PLU).

- **Digital platforms**

  Digital platforms bring together, in a single "warehouse", all the data produced across a given sector, then crosses and aggregates them to improve the quality and performance of urban services. As soon as data are made open, there is often also a rush to visualise them in graphs, charts or mapping schemes, so that they can be easily understood by all citizens. Innovation is not only about digital tools, however; it also lies in the very approaches adopted, from opening up public data (of which urban residents and users eagerly take ownership to make proposals of their own), or implementing participatory workshops that pave the way for new forms of action and local democracy.

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The Citizen Participation Agency, created in June 2015, with an open Board of Directors, aims to develop participatory measures from the local authority and support citizen initiatives. It also provides specific support to the Participatory Councils. Our desire is to create a context that encourages co-building of public policies and citizen initiatives so they become more widely known and therefore to address new approaches to governing a territory.

Significant participatory tradition:
- 1989. Children’s City Council
- 1990. Senior Council
- 1993. District Councils
- 2007. «Territory of Co-responsibility» (Europe)
- 2014. Collaboration with the Démocratie Ouverte organisation and the «Highly Citizen-Engaged Territory» approach based on three principles:
  - More transparency in public action,
  - More participation from inhabitants,
  - More collaboration from local stakeholders in decision-making and the implementation of city-level public policies.

INNOVATIONS
- October 2014: organisation of the “Mulhouse c’est vous” (Mulhouse is you) citizen forum, which was a founding element of this approach, and enabled discussions with Mulhouse inhabitants on the ways in which they would like to invest in the future of their city and be involved in public decision-making.

> Diagnosis given for 60 democratic and participatory measures to develop the city’s governance scheme and result in a participation guide (to be published in December 2016).
> Creation of the MulhouseC’Vous platform, which provides transparency for public action and aids discussions with citizens on public projects and private initiatives.
> Experiment with legislative theatre, an innovative practice around co-building to meet specific needs (health, insecurity, large-scale city projects, etc.).

KEY FIGURES
- 60 measures diagnosed
- 600 responses to the future Bike Plan survey
- 1 200 votes to select the banner on Temple St Etienne
- 200 participatory councillors
- 9 co-responsibility measures under way
- 150 people, each with 6 citizen meetings
IMPLEMENTATION

► Strong political desire
  • Placing transparency and new forms of governance at the service of an exemplary, responsible city.
  • Placing participatory democracy at the heart of the city’s Smart City strategy.
  • Implementing a progressive methodology, with tools adapted to suit the public groups.
  • Putting forward a comprehensive service offering, which includes services from the local authority and private initiatives.

► Major challenges
  • Enabling as many people as possible to take part and avoid always calling upon the same citizens.
  • Highlighting actual achievements to create healthy competition amongst citizens around the co-building approach.
  • Changing relationships with the population and restoring a political role for citizens.
  • Co-building with all the smart elements of the city.

STAKEHOLDERS

► The Participation Agency, a public agency with financial autonomy and open turnover
► The Participatory Councils
► The Citizen Councils
► Voluntary partners, private partners, etc.
► All citizens who wish to become involved in the life of the city, by moving from “entitlement” to “the right to do”, who agree to change stance and make proposals.

RESULTS

/// Close living conditions improved thanks to a participatory “works” budget jointly managed with the Participatory Councils.
/// An annual citizen day: creation of 37 projects, participation of over 500 inhabitants in 2016.
/// An open Financial Commission to grasp the challenges and have visibility on the monitoring indicators.
/// Well-being and social cohesion projects in the districts, supported by groups of inhabitants (district parties, district newspapers, neighbourhood parties, etc.).

FINANCIAL COMPONENT OF THE OPERATION

/// An approach that uses co-building workshops on the new services to be developed in line with the needs and constraints of the citizens. Definition of services to match the user expectations.

KEY DATA

► 2016 Agency budget of €130,000
► A team of 10 people provided to the Agency by the local authority