



★ NETWORKING EUROPEAN CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

European Conference
Cities and Urban Spaces: Chances for Cultural and Citizenship Education

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Report

Workshop IV: Good Governance and Politics in the City: Cultural and Citizenship Education Accompanying New Models of Participation

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Scientific Input:

Krzysztof Herbst, Social Strategy for the year 2010, City of Warsaw (Poland)

Project Presentations:

“Supporting Participatory Budgeting Models”

presented by Sophia Rieck, Freelance Consultant (Germany)

“BudgetMaker”

presented by Jan Dirk Gerritsen, Institute for Political Participation (The Netherlands)

“Expertising Governance for Transfrontier Conurbations – EGTC”

presented by Christian Lamour, CEPS/INSTEAD (Luxembourg)

Moderation:

Susanne Ulrich, Center for Applied Policy Research (Germany)

Citizen participation becomes the measure of good urban governance, making transparency of decision-making essential. In fact, urban policies and their effect on the development of cities mirror the level of responsibility - be it high or low - which the citizens are prepared to take for the spaces they inhabit. Following decades of Public Administration reform variations across the board, new kinds of interaction between citizens, their cities administrations and other stakeholders are sought. The question is how cultural and citizenship education can foster mass participation in urban political processes and generate innovative forms of broad civic participation?

In light of these ideas, the goal of the workshops was to foster knowledge and information exchange about good participatory practices in Europe, and to look for new approaches to interdisciplinary co-operation and projects. Specific questions were posed regarding identification of chances for cultural, as well as citizenship education, in the context of city development / urban spaces, and whether any additional benefit - new perspectives and conclusions - can be derived.



The moderator of the workshop was Susanne Ulrich, director of the Academy Leadership & Competence at the Centre for Applied Policy, at the Geschwister-Scholl-Institute for Political Science, Ludwig-Maximilian-University in Munich. She started the proceedings by facilitating an energetic introduction of all participants, delivered in their many mother tongues.

Owing to health reasons, only one scientific input was available at the outset of the workshop - that of Krzysztof Herbst, from Poland, author of Social Strategy for the year 2010 for the City of Warsaw.

Herbst provided an overview of ideas, trends and issues, as they pertained to the theme. He asserted that the way public participation and civil dialogue concepts are promoted seems too simplistic to deliver good results, and he provided a range of reasons for this. Citing the five key principles of governance as defined by the EU - openness, involvement, accountability, effectiveness and coherence - and the objective of connecting the EU to its citizens more closely, Herbst juxtaposed the practical findings – that genuine participation is costly, time-consuming and perceived as risk by the administrative workers.

When consulted, inhabitants do not en masse demonstrate high competence - they cannot read plans, nor analyze regulatory documents. Management and organisational issues are difficult for them to judge. Finally, they understand their “place” (location, unit, settlement) as basic services’ structure and - by expecting it to be calm, cosy and safe - altogether deny its urban character.

While “governing” and “governance” should go hand in hand and ideally merge over time, this requires massive changes in public administration. Whereas participation is widely discussed, Public Administration reform is often delayed, if not forgotten. Administrations remain systems of distinct baronies, which do not talk to one other, let alone collaborate.

Herbst stressed that paradoxically the only public institution, which certifies “maturity” is the school, which in contrast has failed to provide us with any change facilitation knowledge, skills or experiences over the last half century when these skills were widely studied and applied in business. Furthermore, civil society is rather difficult to achieve through planned activities, training or projects; this emerges rather from the “long waves” in the history of societies.

Modern societies weaken structures of social and physical spaces and pass some roles to the supra-territorial or global networks. This idea corresponded very well with the third presentation in the workshop.

Parts of cities are connected not as much with its core, as with the economic and cultural global spaces. Similarly people, from living in neighbourhoods – change for acting in the networks and spaces of flows. In the same vein, socio-spatial structures are replaceable with developer’s force fields (playgrounds); cities resemble assemblages, where any element may be detached and plugged into other assemblage. Ownership (and corresponding stewardship) of spaces limits the public space, required for interaction and development of citizenry. For broadening the educational horizon, we have to integrate capacities of art, culture, science, tourism, stressed Herbst.

The discussion which followed focused around various instances of frustration – PA reform leaders sharing disappointment instead of inspiration with their eager followers in other countries, mutual frustration of citizens and their city officials over the planning protocols, citizens losing access to public spaces through dubious privatisations etc.

The project presentations, which followed offered possible new modalities for educating citizens about the cities and urban spaces they inhabit.

Project Presentations

"Supporting Participatory Budgeting Models"

Ms. Sophia Rieck, a Freelance Consultant from Germany, presented a technology-based intervention, enabling local governments and citizens to establish participatory budgeting. The project also promotes the discourse about different models and approaches of communal civic participation in a variety of German cities. Close to 80 municipalities are active in this project, at various stages - from preliminary discussions, to its full implementation – among 140, which have had some exposure to participatory budgeting. Its online address is www.buergerhaushalt.org and it is the central information platform citing models, opportunities, constraints, possibilities, chances and applications of participatory budgeting in Germany.

Its objectives are to develop a citizen-oriented local authority, to present the municipal budget in a transparent and comprehensible way, to receive useful spending & saving suggestions (from 'citizens as experts') and to increase transparency and acceptance of political decisions.

The participation centres around the online channel, although there are other avenues as well. The website is organised as a web blog and every interested person may write and comment or start a discussion.

Although interested citizens who use the tool get educated about the limits of their city budget, the inherent dangers of this tool are in its access limited to digitally equipped individuals and in the apparent ease of making decisions which may appear fiscally sane, but could produce adverse results long term.

"BudgetMaker"

Over the last two years, the Dutch Institute for Political Participation developed a so-called BudgetMaker (www.begrotingswijzer.nl). The development of the application was originally funded by the local government of Zuidplas, the IPP and the Association of Netherlands Municipalities.

Similar to the first example, local governments now have the opportunity to involve their citizens in the budgeting process. The project was presented by **Jan Dirk Gerritsen**, from IPP. His presentation described the development of the application, including some early challenges, such as simplifying a local government budget.

While engaging with the budget maker, people realise the difficult choices, which have to be made in order to allocate resources fairly. Furthermore, the budget maker shows the most important elements of a municipal budget. The citizens also comprehend that a fairly large proportion of the budget has to be spent on certain policies, decided by the national government.

The challenges in practical application of the tool revolve around password-protection vs. broad adoption, simplifying the complexity of allotments, and the legality of visitors. At present, the development team focuses on more standardisation, to lower the cost.

The discussion, which ensued revolved around the options for potentially adding other functionalities to the tool, such as gaming (for intuitive learning), but potential costs and development time frame were cited as prohibitive.

"Expertising Governance for Transfrontier Conurbations – EGTC"

The project, presented by Luxembourg's **Christian Lamour**, of CEPS/INSTEAD, encourages public exchange between local and EU stakeholders by mobilising the citizens to connect beyond borders. The EGTC (European Grouping for Territorial Cooperation) Network project associated six European cross-border conurbations (The Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai Eurometropole F/B, the Strasbourg-Ortenau Eurodistrict F/D, the Trinational Eurodistrict of Basel F/D/CH, the Frankfurt-Slubice conurbation D/PL, the Ister-Granum region H/SK and the eurocidade of Chaves-Verin P/E) as well as the French-based association named "Mission Opérationnelle Transfrontalière" located in Paris. The project was sponsored by the European URBACT programme.

The EGTC project aimed to structure the strategy of the six cross-border conurbations on governance, relevant both locally and trans-nationally. The management of trans-frontier urban areas requires the definition of a new operative system, with stakeholders on both sides of the border. Consequently, the six cross-border areas exchanged ideas and produced individually a Local Action Plan on meta-governance, disseminating the sound urban management and democratic dialogue beyond the state. The project had a distinctly European range, with the aim to increase efficiency of public leadership and to relate networks of public leaders to communities of citizens.

The ensuing discussion opened up issues of existing trans-national co-operations, such as universities, mass media and transportation. In terms of identities, the ideas mentioned included soft normative procedures for cross/border citizenry, cyber publics and supra-national European identity, distinct from EU identity. Convergence along the lines of mutual interest, not geography, was invoked as critical.

Conclusion

Several topics echoed throughout the workshop. Long-term frustration on both sides (among the citizens, as well as among public servants) caused by a number of factors, seems strangely unproductive when it comes to generating more citizen participation. Loss of public space to privatisation – where someone at least claims a stake - is contrasted by the growing disinterest in managing the dwindling public funds at the time of a general crisis. New technological tools, which enable hands-on mass participation in directing municipal spending (or rather a beta version of it) have a very slow uptake, both by municipalities and by the citizens (it remains unclear whether it is the case of too much too soon or too little too late). And last but not least, the education system has been repeatedly cited for failing to impart any change-fostering, problem-solving skills to the population worldwide, which signals that cultural and citizen education perhaps should not be contemplated as related, but rather treated for their long-term dysfunctional relationship.