

The Workshop « New room for citizen engagement » focused on the importance of a global vision for the territory.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) created by the United Nations can be applied to all layers of the hierarchy, from the UN to the smallest district. They ensure that citizen participation is possible within a certain frame so that a **sustainable and global development is encouraged where** small-scaled individual interventions could fit in.

**Transformation means a global process of change towards sustainability.** Transformation is understood as a holistic and societal development and learning process. The action level "city", between region and district, has a central strategic importance for the change. Sustainable development needs an integrated approach with economic and environmental, social and cultural aspects in order to make good use of our resources. Commitment and cooperation of all actors strengthens quality and efficiency, reduces complexity and wrong decisions. Citizen participation promotes local democracy and design options and strengthens diversity of ideas through communication and cooperation.

Another important part of the workshop is about the actors that are involved in transformation processes. They can be divided in 4 groups: civil society, university, economy and state institutions. The aim is to find a way to let these different groups communicate and work together to create a well-balanced ecosystem. It is difficult to get all 4 groups together, and the communication is also an issue in many cases, but we have to keep in mind that **we are all citizens no matter in which group we work.**

In general we can talk of a **tripartite process of success** (working hypothesis):

- **Politics** opens up for new ways of local democracy, are committed to encourage an opinion on sustainability.
- The **administration** extends its methods and its processes in the joint project realization.
- **Citizens** are committed to their immediate living environment, investing their talents and lifetime in collaborative projects.  
=> Urban development as a joint responsibility process for a good interaction of complementary forces.

More and more the **university is seen as an important actor for change** and their processes being part of citizen project. The format is called "living lab" or "Reallabor": Civil society and private sector actors, local and political representatives together with representatives of universities, work on concrete tasks in the real world to develop solutions to social change. The projects may also be developed together, but in any case they are scientifically supported in order to document and analyze the common path of learning and development.

We can distinguish between 4 different **perspectives of "citizen engagement"**:

1. Formal or informal settings in the planning context, such as invitation for the municipalities to collect point of views from the daily life of inhabitants.
2. A community organisation setting when small activities are organized in order to enhance social life in a neighborhood.
3. An urban art project or green space activity where people spend time and/or money to ameliorate their own environment.
4. Civil society as pioneer of transformation, such as cooperative city development with an emphasis on cooperation and dialogue.

If we look especially at **participation as a relation between the municipalities and the citizens, it has to respect some guidelines to ensure a wider and sustainable vision.** The purpose is to find a new approach (one that lays between the classic top-down and bottom-up policies) to achieve municipality goals but still keep enough space for citizens to design their living environment.

Main questions and discussion subjects:

- Often the same profiles attend organized meetings, but is it possible to get the minorities involved?

Maybe it isn't that important to get everybody engaged at the beginning, some people need more time and have to see results before participating. It is important to focus on the ones that are willing to change things (frontrunners, pioneers...).

We also notice that neighborhoods don't need the same approaches. The example of "the white table" ((c'est quoi??)) shows that an event for residents of the same street can be held without the help of the municipality in some cases and not in others. The process is easier in areas where the people already know each other, communicate and work more together to collect the tables and chairs they need for the event.

- **Citizen participation depends on the will of local authorities to change the way they think/work.**

What is the aim of participation? What are the expected outcomes? Who will organize the communication process and for what purpose?

Participation is a complex process like neighborhood processes are as well. Therefore a profound strategy is useful to shape a frame for a longer cooperation setting between the different players. The culture of participation can be fruitfully cultivated between the actors with their different and complementary forces.

Several projects of participation and citizen involvement are started in Eupen. In a general perspective, the main question seems to be **how to integrate the activities on regional level with new plans on local level**. In a more detailed access, new methods and formats are needed.

A strategy for a municipality needs to be supported by each department. The overall picture is to be translated into each specific field of city development or vice versa each political area has its own opportunities for involvement.