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REFLECTIONS ON
CITIZEN PARTICIPATION
IN EUROPE'S CITIES

LISBON CITY LAB PAPER
January 2019

ALL TO PLAY FOR – REFLECTIONS ON CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN EUROPE'S CITIES

PREAMBLE

URBACT is hosting a series of City Labs linked to the proposed renewal of the Leipzig Charter under the 2020 EU German Presidency.

This paper is linked to the first URBACT City Lab, which took place in Lisbon on 12 September 2018. Its focus was on citizen participation in Europe's cities. Amongst the City Lab participants, there was a consensus that the active contribution of citizens leads to better results. The session also highlighted several examples of leading practice amongst Europe's cities. However, it also identified challenges cities face and concluded that this remains work in progress.

This paper sets out the policy context relating to citizen participation in Europe's cities and shares some of the relevant learning experiences. It concludes with reflections on how we can support city authorities to achieve higher levels of citizen participation in the future.

1

THE URBACT CITY LABS: BUILDING ON THE LEIPZIG CHARTER

This section looks at why URBACT is examining the concepts of integrated and participatory urban development through a series of city labs.

1.1 THE NEW URBAN AGENDA

"The New Urban Agenda reaffirms our global commitment to sustainable urban development as a critical step for realizing sustainable development in an integrated and coordinated manner at the global, regional, national, subnational and local levels, with the participation of all relevant actors." [1]

Across the world, cities increasingly face the same challenges. As the global population reaches 8 million, fuelled by accelerating rates of urbanisation, it will be cities that generate solutions for humankind. They lead the drive to ensure citizens have clean air, a sufficient supply of food, affordable housing and decent jobs.

The priorities are mapped out in the UN Habitat's *Sustainable Development Goals*, which frame the *New Urban Agenda*. This clear, ambitious framework provides a global blueprint for cities of all sizes. But whilst this sets out the 'what', it's important not to overlook the 'how'.

In the context of this paper, the reference to "all relevant actors" is particularly significant. For over 15 years the principles of integrated sustainable urban development have underpinned URBACT's work with cities. They have done so alongside a commitment to stakeholder participation, which asserts that no single group of actors can solve cities' complex challenges in isolation. Underpinning URBACT's work is the belief that through cross-sectoral collaboration, cities will generate and implement the most effective solutions.

1.2 RENEWING THE LEIPZIG CHARTER PRINCIPLES

It is over a decade since the Leipzig Charter underlined the principles of sustainability; integration and participation, during the 2007 German EU Presidency. They were proposed as part of an approach which focused on place-based solutions involving partners at different levels of government – as well as those outside it. Yet, although these terms are widely used, they are by no means universally applied. Routinely, city authorities coming into URBACT enquire about the meaning of these principles. In the summer of 2018, in a DG REGIO survey of 14 Baltic state cities, 8 of them responded

that the "concept of integrated sustainable urban development is unclear".

Evidently, this remains work in progress. In response, URBACT has launched a series of City Labs taking place between autumn 2018 and spring 2020. Alongside this, there is a process to renew the Leipzig Charter led by the German Federal Ministry of Urban Affairs, to coincide with the German EU Presidency in 2020. URBACT's City Lab process will contribute to this by providing a city-level perspective across Europe.

1   UN Habitat (2016). The New Urban Agenda. p.4. Available at: habitat3.org/the-new-urban-agenda/

1.3 THE URBACT CITY LABS

The URBACT City Labs will complement the German Federal Government's activities. Cities will be at the heart of the URBACT process, which is being delivered in partnership with EUROCITIES. Their #cities4Europe campaign is closely aligned to URBACT's commitment to encourage cities to assume a more active role in shaping their own futures. Both structures also champion the involvement of all urban stakeholders, in particular citizens, in this work. This commitment reflects the European Commission's Policy Objective 5 in their proposal for the 2021-2027 period which involves bringing "Europe closer to citizens".

URBACT will host a series of City Labs during this period. Each will explore a specific aspect of the principles set out in the Leipzig Charter. The City Labs will also provide a space to reflect on the most significant developments, which have emerged to influence EU urban policy since the initial Charter was launched. Examples are likely to include the impact of ongoing digital transformations as well as the financial repercussions of the 2008 Global

Financial Crisis. They will also consider policy areas which have undergone specific shifts – for example the scope of social cohesion since the increase in third-country migration in 2015.

Each Lab will be hosted by a city with significant experience to contribute to the theme in focus. EUROCITIES Members will also have an input to each City Lab session, which will involve a wide variety of urban stakeholders from across Europe reflecting multi-level governance perspectives. The lab format will be highly interactive and each will generate a combination of practical outputs for practitioners and pointers for city, national and European policymakers.

The final City Lab session is scheduled to take place in Germany in the spring of 2020. It will draw together the key points from the series, setting out recommendations to feed into the renewed Leipzig Charter. There are also plans to hold a special session linked to this work at the EUROCITIES Annual Conference taking place in Leipzig in autumn 2020.

An URBACT lab, held during the City Festival

1.4 THE LISBON CITY LAB

The first URBACT City Lab took place in Lisbon in September 2018, alongside the URBACT City Festival. The focus of this session was on participation, and in particular the important issue of empowering citizens. At a time when levels of democratic participation are widely in decline, and when levels of trust in authority are diminishing, this is an increasingly important theme. If trust is to be rebuilt with our citizens, it is at the local level where this is most likely to happen.

City leaders participating in the City Lab were clear about this. Lisbon's Deputy Mayor, Paula Marques, observed while opening the City Lab that, "Cities must face global threats with local strategies". Mayor Andreas Hollstein, from the German city of Altena, concluded the event reflecting that, "A new political style is needed. Citizens have to be part of that change process. Going forward, we have to accept citizens as co-producers".

Lisbon was an appropriate place to have this discussion. In the current EU programming period, it is one of a handful of cities which has successfully implemented the Community Led Local Development (CLLD) model in an urban context. This was proposed for the first time during the period 2014-2020 for cities benefiting from the cohesion policy, encouraging them to develop a participatory approach to local planning, decision making and investment. During this first City Lab session, participants heard about this experience, drawing out the key learning points for the future. The Lab also showcased other cities which have explored the CLLD model, as well as examining alternative pioneering platforms to empower citizens, such as participative budgets, crowdsourcing tools and citizens assemblies.

1.5 THE FOCUS OF THIS PAPER

This paper summarises the debate at the centre of this first URBACT City Lab. The following chapter examines, what is meant by participation, with reference to key theoretical frameworks including the CLLD concept. The focus then turns to implementation, and more specifically, the current state of play across Europe, identifying trends, highlighting what works and what cities can build upon. This paper also shines a light on the barriers to participation, exploring the factors that continue to obstruct and prevent participative approaches. The final chapter sets out the reflections on how to promote higher levels of active citizen participation in Europe's cities.

Lisbon's Deputy Mayor, Paula Marques, at the 2018 URBACT City Festival

2

PARTICIPATION IN EUROPE'S CITIES: THE CURRENT STATE OF PLAY

This section examines the policy and conceptual context for urban participation. It starts with the Leipzig Charter, before exploring EU policy approaches and examining key tools such as the Community Led Local Development (CLLD) model.

2.1 WHAT DOES THE LEIPZIG CHARTER SAY ABOUT PARTICIPATION?

The Leipzig Charter advocates an integrated and sustainable approach to urban development. Although it underlines the importance of participation, it does so at a rather abstract level. Specifically, it states[2]:

⬟ Article 7: To make greater use of the integrated urban development policy approaches.

⬟ Article 8: For us, integrated urban development policy means simultaneous and fair consideration of the concerns and interests which are of relevance in urban development. The preparation of integrated urban development policy represents a process in which the coordination of key areas of urban policy, the involvement of sectors, stakeholders and public and the decision about future development in terms of space, subject matter and time are taking place.

⬟ Article 10: We recommend that European cities consider developing integrated urban development programmes for the city as a whole. These implementation-oriented planning tools should: be coordinated at local and city-regional level and involve the citizens and the agents that can contribute to shape the future economic, social and environmental quality of territories.

2.2 WHAT DO WE MEAN BY PARTICIPATION?

Much of the discussion on participation over half a century has been influenced by Sherry Arnstein's 1969 paper[3] in which she envisaged a linear model from manipulation to citizen control with eight rungs on the ladder organised in three categories going from citizen power through tokenism to non-participation.

Arnstein was writing soon after the introduction of Lyndon Johnson's Great Society Programme, which included a funding programme called Model Cities that supported 150 cities. Although sometimes criticised for being too normative, the ladder is a useful way of differentiating between various degrees of participation.

The Model Cities programme called for 'maximum feasible participation'. Arnstein was an experienced policy maker who had served in the federal department for Housing and Urban Development and had seen tokenism in action on numerous advisory committees.

Citizen control	
Delegated Power	Citizen Power
Partnership	
⬆	
Placation	
Consultation	Tokenism
Informing	
⬆	
Therapy	Nonparticipation
Manipulation	

Figure 1: Sherry Arnstein's ladder of participation

Her central argument in the paper is that real participation is ultimately about citizen control. This has significant implications for partnership models involving citizens – the so-called quadruple helix.

There is frequent confusion about the link between partnership and participation. To put it simply, there can be partnership without participation but not participation without partnership. Many partnerships contain all relevant agencies in horizontal and vertical chains, but relatively few directly involve citizens. Moreover, when they do the dialogue is frequently one-sided.

There can be partnership without participation but not participation without partnership

This point is reiterated by Archon Fung in his 2006 paper[4]. He suggests that three dimensions is useful to portray the space in which discussions with communities take place. One axis describes how participants are selected (for example, self-selection versus random). A second axis describes the structure of the meeting (for example, between deliberation/negotiation and listening as a spectator), the third looks at authority and power, ranging from direct authority and co-governing to educating the individual.

He points out that most public 'consultation' meetings fall into particular types in which information is passed from experts or politicians to citizens, and in which little dialogue takes place.

Forms of more direct participation have often arisen out of local citizen activism in the shape of urban social movements. These have included direct action groups such as squatter organisations, protesters against road projects, land speculators and landlords, as well as opposition to redevelopment and dispersal. They are characterised as a wide range of informal groupings often forming in response to single issue campaigns at local level.

When discussed at European level, participation is often sentimentalised. Users of the term rarely delve into the conflict of interests, the different experiences of the Member State cities depending on local and national circumstances, and the density of civil society organisations and informal associations. However, it seems to be widely assumed that participation improves urban policy making. Occasionally, the upsurge of anger against schemes does force the question of consultation versus participation into the spotlight. For example, the Stuttgart 21 railway station in which all official top-down consultation had already been approved[5].

2.3 PARTICIPATION IN EU COHESION POLICY

Prior to the 2014-2020 programme period, there had been several experiments with participative approaches in cities. Yet, they had not been able to use a common regulatory framework and were, to some degree, shoehorned into the funding programmes. These had included adding Community Economic Development priorities in some countries such as the UK in the two programme periods from 1994-2006, and the launch of 140 URBAN 1 and 2 programmes under the URBAN Community Initiatives during the same period.

Member States that wanted to develop participative approaches used the 'local development' clauses in the regulations to finance them. These included most notably the German federal government's use of both ERDF and ESF to support its Soziale Stadt initiatives for disadvantaged city neighbourhoods.

Among these, two Länder: Berlin and North Rhine Westphalia stand out as widely regarded good practices.

Both have featured in previous URBACT networks; Berlin was the former lead partner of the URBACT II network CoNET and Duisburg was the lead partner of the URBACT network RegGov, both of which had a focus on disadvantaged

2   Articles from the Leipzig Charter on Sustainable European Cities

3   Arnstein, S. (1969). 'A Ladder of Citizen Participation' in 'Journal of the American Institute of Planners', 35(4), pp.216-224.

4   Fung, A. (2006). 'Collaborative Public Management' in 'Public Administration Review: special issue', 66, pp. 66-75.

5   Novy, J.; Peters, D. (2012). 'Railway Station Mega-Projects as Public Controversies: The Case of Stuttgart 21' in 'Built Environment', 38 (1), pp. 128-145.

neighbourhoods. The Berlin case managed to combine a form of neighbourhood budgeting and high levels of citizen participation with a focus on deprived neighbourhoods[6]. They are continuing to share their experience in a parallel URBACT Knowledge Hub action on designing city-state pacts to tackle deprived areas. North Rhine Westphalia used Soziale stadt to intervene in over 80 city neighbourhoods, with major cities like Duisburg benefiting in several neighbourhoods and using a deep approach to involve citizens.

Despite these front-runners, the Cohesion

The EU Structural Funds have encouraged 'partnership' as one of four founding principles of the 1989 reform. However, often this has been interpreted as a requirement to involve government at all levels (Member State, regional, city) and the social partners – who are understood as business organisations, trade unions as well as government agencies operating from afar. In some countries, things have gone further with participation of non-governmental organisations. Participative approaches and specifically the involvement of citizen organisations has been a key feature

The Körnerkiez playground,
a product from a bottom-up initiative in Berlin

Source: European Commission[8]

Policy has not been used across the EU for participative approaches in cities. To some degree, the funds are designed for medium and large projects delivered through public sector stakeholders. In those Member States where the levels of ERDF funding is low, the Cohesion Funds are not enough to encourage major changes. The Community Led Local Development (CLLD) approach that has been successful in rural and fishing areas typically involves a multitude of smaller projects and a more diverse set of delivery agencies including social enterprises, other non-governmental organisations such as charities, associations and foundations as well as SMEs. For many Member States and their Managing Authorities, this level of devolved funds accompanied by associated risk has been problematic.

of successive declarations about urban policy, including the Bristol Accord and, as mentioned, the Leipzig Charter itself. But exactly what is meant by participation has always remained unclear.

Despite the lack of clear guidance, several Member States[7] have taken steps to engage directly with citizens through different models of neighbourhood management and participative budgeting.

Most prominent among these have been Berlin's Quartiers management for deprived neighbourhoods since 1999, and participative budgeting models in cities as diverse as Cascais, Tartu and Paris. Some of these approaches will be discussed in the following section.

Since the beginning of the current programming period (2014-2020) Community Led Local Development (CLLD) has been introduced in the Cohesion Policy regulations and can now be supported through any of the European Structural and Investment Funds. This opened up the field to using ERDF and ESF for urban and social forms of CLLD.

The proposed ERDF/CF regulation for 2021-2027 allows for CLLD in the context of sustainable urban development, as well as: "fostering the integrated social, economic and environmental local development, cultural heritage and security, including for rural and coastal areas also through community-led local development"[9].

For CLLD, the level of delegation varies across Europe, but rather like the urban-focused Article 7 there is a working assumption that delegation of the selection of operations will be made to the Local Action Group while the Managing Authority or Intermediate Body will focus on checking eligibility. This avoids the need for a Local Action Group to become an Intermediate Body itself which has proved to be a complex and often slow process in the delegation of funds under Article 7 of the current ERDF.

The current regulation (2014-2020) has been developed out of the positive experiences of rural areas where there are approximately 2 500 LEADER groups each of which has developed a strategy/action plan for its territory, and has put together a Local Action Group to implement it. Since 2007, approximately 500 fishery Local Action Groups have been set up under the fisheries fund. These have drawn on the model used for LEADER but have developed in a specific way to assist coastal and a few inland fishing communities.

Joint working between different funds on CLLD was also foreseen in the regulation, although in practice this has proved difficult to implement. As a result, few countries have attempted it, with Sweden as one of the few to try it explicitly. At local level, many Local Action Groups draw funding from a range of sources but using ad hoc mechanisms. However, there are few examples of cities across Europe that have used the CLLD tool to finance local participative development, and the explanations for low take-up are not well understood.

The Lisbon Community-Led Development network

Source: Rede DLBC Lisboa

6 Tosics, I. (2018). Dilemma Fighting Urban Poverty. Available at: urbact.eu/dilemma-fighting-urban-poverty

7 It is worth noting that in 2014, separate to the Cohesion Policy, France introduced legislation relating to Citizen Councils. This is described as 'co-lead' mechanisms through which 1 057 Citizen Councils were in place by January 2017.

8 European Commission (2014). 'Participative neighbourhood management in Berlin'. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/index.cfm/en/projects/best-practices/germany/2654

9 ERDF Draft Regulations 2018/0197 Article 2. The regulatory proposals are under negotiation between the Member States, the European Parliament and the European Commission, and a final version is expected in the second half of 2019.

2.5 BARRIERS TO THE USE OF CLLD IN URBAN AREAS

Although nearly EUR 1.8 billion has been allocated to CLLD in the operational programmes for the Cohesion Policy[10], it seems likely that much of this is allocated to forms of rural or urban-rural CLLD to complement LEADER CLLDs[11]. In addition to the previously mentioned points about Member States with relatively low levels of ERDF, we add these three tentative explanations for this relatively low take-up:

- Cities did not lobby for the tool, as they do not always want to delegate below their own level. This can be characterised as the subsidiarity barrier. The value of empowering citizens to address local problems is still not well understood in most countries at both national and city level. The Lisbon City Lab identified capacity limitations as well as a wariness of 'citizen power' amongst factors affecting this.

- The CLLD instrument was perhaps not sufficiently well-marketed and explained. In addition, Member States and their cities were not clear that they could use CLLD within an integrated ERDF Article 7 strategy for the city.

- Regardless of delivery mechanisms, participative approaches still suffer from some of the same problems that Arnstein and Fung identified – in particular that they are used for decisions on token issues while the real business of local government and especially the commercial agreements with developers are still decided by power brokers behind closed doors.

Despite, or perhaps because of these challenges, URBACT finds that there is a growing appetite at city and neighbourhood level to pursue deeper approaches to citizen and resident participation in urban areas[12]. The question is whether the CLLD regulation is the best vehicle for taking this forward, perhaps drawing on the experience of Lisbon, or whether some looser regulation might better succeed in bringing more cities and their Managing Authorities forward to support these participative approaches.

The next chapter looks at participative mechanisms, both using the CLLD regulation, those adapting the ERDF regulation in other ways and those using other funds to promote social innovation, placemaking and other forms of citizen control.

3

PARTICIPATORY MODELS: WHAT'S WORKING?

10 European Commission (2017). 'CLLD under ERDF/ESF in the EU: A stock-taking of its implementation'. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docgener/studies/pdf/clld_implem/clld_implem_en.pdf

11 DG Regio expert analysis shows that two-thirds of CLLDs are focused on rural development with a small proportion reported as having a rural-urban focus.

12 Adams, E.; Moulin, E. (2017). 'URBACT: another paradigm for European cities'. Available at: https://urbact.eu/urbact-another-paradigm-european-cities

Cities of all sizes are testing new participative models across Europe. In some cases, bottom-up initiatives are shaping change, in others the city leadership is making things happen. In territorial terms, these new models are evolving on different levels – significantly on both the neighbourhood and administrative city scales. This section identifies some of the key developments, the majority of which were discussed in the City Lab session.

3.1 CLLD IN AN URBAN CONTEXT

Following from the previous chapter, the CLLD model has been widely regarded as a great success in Europe's rural and fishing areas. So much so, that in the 2014-2020 programming period, it was promoted as a potentially valuable instrument in the urban context. However, the implementation rate in Europe's urban areas has been rather low. Two notable exceptions have been in Lisbon and The Hague. Here, the CLLD experience in the Portuguese capital will be briefly examined [13].

CLLD in the city: Lisbon's BIP/ZIP programme, an URBACT Good Practice label

Lisbon has used the CLLD instrument to establish a participative model for the city's deprived neighbourhoods. Through pioneering use of available data, 67 neighbourhoods were identified which were a mix of peripheral housing estates and deprived zones in the historic centre. Combined, these account for around one quarter of the city's population.

Known as BIP/ZIP, the city's strategy aimed to strengthen social cohesion through promoting active citizenship and community participation. The emphasis on active local participation assumed that communities understand their own challenges and that, with resources and support, they can design and implement innovative solutions to address them.

The Lisbon model involves an open call for proposals each year. This is open to nonprofit organisations and informal associations, such as tenant groups. There is a EUR 50 000 ceiling per bid, and an important criterion is that a proposal must involve at least two organisations working together. In this way, collaboration and trust are encouraged.

13 Virgilio, F.. 'CLLD Lisbon - Integrated Action Plan'. Available at: https://urbact.eu/clld-lisbon-integrated-action-plan

By 2017, Lisbon had supported 230 projects from approximately 500 applications, using a budget of EUR 9 million. Around 400 local organisations have taken part in the delivery process. Themes supported to date have included [14] :

- Improvements to recreation and children's play facilities
- Interventions against gender-based violence
- Small-scale environmental improvements

Building the capacity of local communities is an important part of this work. Local offices, known as GABIPs, have been created to support the CLLD process. Each has a coordinator, and brings together municipal officers, elected officials and local stakeholders. Seven GABIPs have been established across the city.

Although successful, the Lisbon CLLD model has its limitations. The project scale is too small to significantly address the chronic underlying causes or effects of urban deprivation. Nor has it been able to combat the growing unaffordability of traditional neighbourhoods, exacerbated by short-stay rental companies like Airbnb targeting the tourism industry[15]. However, the city's experience shows that CLLD can be an effective instrument to involve local communities in shaping investment in their neighbourhoods. Perhaps more importantly, it also creates a platform to bring different territorial levels to the decision-making table, where neighbourhood stakeholders have a strong active voice.

Lisbon is currently sharing its CLLD experience with other EU cities through the URBACT Good Practice Transfer network, Com.Unity.Lab[16].

Visit to the construction site of the BIP/ZIP project in the Boavista neighbourhood, in the framework of the URBACT City Festival

14 Ramsden, P. (2018). 'Why is Lisbon's community economic development approach so important in Europe today ?'. Available at: urbact.eu/lisbon-community-economic-development-approach

15 Airbnb has removed a high proportion of the housing rental stock from local use. This was facilitated by the liberalisation of the housing market as part of the EU's 2011 bailout deal with the Portuguese government.

16 See more at: https://urbact.eu/comunitylab

The city of Lisbon developed its CLLD approach partly to encourage and promote local democracy, particularly at the grass-roots level. 20 years ago, another Portuguese-speaking city, Porto Alegre in Brazil, implemented the first participatory budget model driven by the same intentions. Fast forward to 2019, and there are hundreds of participatory budgeting examples across Europe.

One of the most ambitious of these has been in Paris, which was launched in 2014. The city's programme comprises 5% of the available investment budget each year, representing EUR 500 million. In 2016, 158 964 people voted on how to spend nearly EUR 100 million, including EUR 10 million ring-fenced for schools. This allows young children to experience decision-making as active citizens from an early age.

Each of the city's 20 districts has a participatory budget assigned to local projects, whilst EUR 30 million has been earmarked specifically for deprived neighbourhoods. There is also a city-wide participatory budget for the whole of Paris. Since 2014, 11 253 projects have been submitted and 416 projects have been approved and voted on, with numbers increasing each year. The number of people voting is also rising every year at a significant rate. In 2014, 40 000 people voted, 67 000 in 2015, and close to 93 000 in 2016, representing an increase of 39% over the 2015 response and involving about 7% of the Parisian population.

As well as encouraging active citizenship, Paris sees participatory budgeting as a mechanism for rewiring the relationship between the city authority and Parisians. Six civil servants lead the city process, but more than 500 civil servants have taken part in exchanges, workshops and meetings. A variety of tools – both online and face-to-face – have been developed to support the process, all of which are identified as being relevant to the modernising government agenda.

Small and medium-sized cities have also put participatory budgeting to effective use to stimulate levels of local engagement. In 2011, the city of Cascais with 206 000 residents located west of Lisbon, had an electoral participation rate below 40% – common in many localities. In response, they introduced the most effective participatory budgeting programme in Portugal, which over six years has involved 115 000 citizens electing to support 88 local projects. The city has invested EUR 15.8 million based on the proposals and choices of its citizens. Cascais now has 18% of its entire investment budget in the hands of the participatory process, the highest proportion in Portugal. Like Paris, it is using the model as a platform to build citizen capacity and transform the working relationship with the municipality. In October 2018, the city hosted its first Smart Citizenship Academy. This recognised the need to build the capacity of all stakeholders – most notably city authority staff as well as citizens.

Both the Paris and Cascais Participatory Budgets models are labelled as URBACT Good Practices.

Active citizen participation during a Participatory Budget meeting in Paris, an URBACT Good Practice

These participatory budget examples emerged partly in response to the dilution of trust between citizens and their elected representatives. In Eastern European cities the legacy of authoritarianism further complicates this. Gdańsk is a city that has been pioneering new ways to mobilise citizens to address their challenges. The city administration has developed a strong collaborative relationship with the local NGO sector, supported by an active mayoral policy of bringing third sector experience into city hall[17]. This has led to exciting break through projects like the So Stay hotel, an innovative employment project for young care leavers – and another URBACT Good Practice.

more systemic deliberative processes such as the design and implementation of Citizens Assemblies[18]. Through this, they have learnt to focus these processes on specific problems. It was described as, "the narrower the topic, the better the recommendations," during the City Lab.

In addition, Gdańsk has several platforms in place through which citizens can submit ideas for change. Proposals receiving 2 000 signatures are considered in the legislative process, and voted upon by the city council. Additionally, the city's participatory budget has around EUR 5 million set aside for implementation of the selected proposals. Throughout this process the city has learnt a great deal

Gdańsk, a city that supports Citizens Assemblies

Source: Citizens Assemblies: Guide to democracy that works[19]

Within the administration, the culture change agenda has also included the development of collaborative work across departments, to break down the traditional silos that inhibit innovation. This municipal behavioural change has prioritised new ways to involve and work with citizens, generating important lessons. The city's experience has included placemaking projects like the Coal Market, where citizens took charge of the reuse of a high profile public space. But it was the city's response to the 2016 floods which moved Gdańsk towards about such platforms. One lesson is that civil servants can be deeply resistant to opening up to citizens. Consequently, there is a need for encouragement and support if they are to play an effective role. City authority staff have also learned that, in Gdansk at least for now, physical platforms are more effective than digital versions. But they recognise that both approaches play complementary roles.

Supporting these developments requires political commitment and public investment.

17 Since the time of writing, the Mayor of Gdansk was murdered in January 2019.
   A testimony of his legacy is available at: https://urbact.eu/mayor-pawel-adamowicz-remembered

18 Gerwin, M. (2018). 'Citizens Assemblies: Guide to democracy that works'. Krakow: Otwarty Plan. Maycon Prasniewski in Gerwin, M. (2018).'Citizens Assemblies: Guide to democracy that works'. Krakow: Otwarty Plan.

However, the evident limitations of public authorities have been one of the abiding legacies of the Global Financial Crisis. Diminishing public budgets in many parts of Europe, combined with rising consumer expectations amongst citizens, are forcing a renegotiation of relationships. A growing number of enlightened city authorities see this as an opportunity – a chance to harness the enthusiasm and talents within their communities. Europe is full of such examples. The URBACT case study of Amersfoort in the Netherlands is one where, under the mantra of 'letting go', the city authority has devolved budget and decision-making on a series of projects to local communities. Another is in Madrid, where the Urban Innovative Actions-financed MARES project is bolstering the social solidarity economy by mobilising the local talents within four disadvantaged neighbourhoods. Its innovative model is renewing the collaboration model between citizens and the public authority. [19]

MARES is a good example of the way in which an economic crisis can create opportunities and encourage city authorities to innovate. Madrid has also introduced new platforms to involve citizens in proposing initiatives through their Decide Madrid portal. This evolved from the new administration's commitment to widening the civic participation process. From a single initiative focused on the redesign of a city square, it has grown into a major crowdsourcing platform. More than 20 000 proposals have been submitted by citizens via the portal, which commits the city to implementing those receiving enough backing from citizens. Voting is a mix of postal and digital platform, with over 200 projects funded to date through a budget of EUR 100 million.

On the other side of Europe, Athens had already been pioneering the concept of the digital civic platform , with the Bloomberg award-winning synAthina platform, providing a digital and physical space for civil society and public sector collaboration. Since its 2013 launch, synAthena has enabled 381 groups to design and provide over 3 000 services targeted to the city's most vulnerable people. In doing so, it has been one of key instruments in the inevitable renegotiation that has taken place between urban stakeholders during these difficult years. As such, it is emblematic of the city's social resilience. It is also one that Athens intends to build on, through its confirmation as Europe's 2018 European Innovation Capital.

It is perhaps fitting that Greece features so prominently in the debate about rebuilding civic trust and renewing democracy. synAthina offers a space where public policy makers and civic activists can cooperate with a clear shared focus. In other parts of Europe, the legacy of ancient Greece continues to influence efforts to revitalise the democratic process, addressing the apathy threatening our civic foundations. The previous section already mentioned the sortition models[20] utilised by the Gdańsk Citizens Assemblies, whilst the aforementioned developments in Amersfoort were influenced by the work of David van Reybrouk, who was behind the Brussels G1000 pilot.

The Brussels G1000 was one of the earliest examples of a growing body of urban experiments in deliberative democracy. Most of these adopt the classical Athenian principle of citizens randomly being selected to take decisions on behalf of the wider community, akin to the principles behind jury service. They use a variety of tools – citizen panels, open meetings, citizen juries – to empower ordinary people to deliberate on tackling urban priorities. As well as our European examples, Adelaide, Sydney and Toronto are on a growing list of cities testing these methods. The Melbourne People's Panel proposed 11 recommendations to the city authority after an extensive process, including radical steps to address climate change, improved cycling infrastructure and a 10% cut in the city's capital works budget.

Civil servants can be deeply resistant to opening up to citizens. Consequently, there is a need for encouragement and support

Source: Decide Madrid

MADRID DECIDE ARREGLAR CALLES Y ESPACIOS

3.4 TARGETED APPROACHES TO PARTICIPATION

In each of these city cases, a key challenge has been getting beyond the usual suspects normally involved in the policymaking process. They have made inroads, but this remains work in progress everywhere. Increasingly, URBACT is seeing cities working hard to support specific groups who are under-represented in decision-making. Umeå, another URBACT Good Practice, has pioneered gender-based approaches to city planning.

Their 'Gendered City Tour' takes citizens on a trip around their own city, to examine use of public space, transport, infrastructure and investments. Looking through the lens of who is using or benefitting from spaces and services, and how they are using them, allows residents to become more aware of the choices the municipality makes. It encourages those who are traditionally not at the forefront of the decision-making process to have their say. The key value that Umeå municipality lives by is to, "create conditions for women and men to have equal power to shape society as well as their own lives".

The Italian city of Parma also takes this concept of equal power seriously. In a city where 54% of the population are women, political representation fell well short of this mark. Deputy Mayor, Ms Nicoletta Paci, has also put in place specific actions to facilitate female participation in decision-making. Voters in local citizen councils are given two preferences: one

An example of the gender landscape in Umeå

Source: Umeå Kommun

19 Maycon Prasniewski in Gerwin, M. (2018).'Citizens Assemblies: Guide to democracy that works'. Krakow: Otwarty Plan.

20 Sortition in governance is the selection of participants or officials as a random sample of the wider population.

for a man and one for a woman. As a result, 40% of citizen council representatives are now women.

Braga in Portugal is one of several cities that has created effective mechanisms to promote youth participation, as Mayor Riccardo Rio explained at the Lisbon City Lab. In a city where 40% of the population is aged under 30, the Mayor sees it as his responsibility to have everyone included in the decision-making process from an early age. Influenced by the URBACT My Generation at Work project, dedicated youth councils have been set up, and a participatory budget for young people is in place. 3 000 youngsters now vote on a youth budget in all policy sectors.

In Braga, targeting actions to specific populations is not only to hear their voices on 'women's issues' or 'youth issues'. It is also to ensure that those populations contribute to all policies, whether it is education, finance, transport or health. One way of measuring the success of these actions is at the ballot box – do more people take part in local elections? For Braga, this is one indicator in time, and cannot be the only measurement used. Citizens need opportunities to influence decision-making between elections, if the participatory process is to be considered effective.

3.5 WHAT CAN WE TAKE FROM THIS

Across Europe, it is encouraging to see examples relating to urban civic participation. In some cases, triggered by an imminent sense of crisis, there is a growing appetite for innovation and experimentation in our cities. A noticeable aspect of this is an evident willingness to learn by doing, adapting and improving along the way.

These developments include a growing belief that everyday life can generate new and radical solutions to chronic urban problems. This approach, often associated with Henri Lefebvre's concept of "Right to the City", informs much of the new civic activism.

This is reflected in the development of the Commons concept, pioneered in Bologna and continuing to grow. It's also evident in cities like Aarhus, with its Rethink Activism Festival and across the hundreds of cities implementing the 100 in 1 Day movement, initiated in Bogota.

Is this the future for cities? And, if it is already here, why are developments so unevenly distributed? This begs several questions: why are they not more widespread and, in going forward, how can cities encourage and support higher levels of civic participation? This is the focus of the next and final chapter.

Ricardo Rio, Mayor of the City of Braga, during the City Lab in September 2018

4

BUILDING ON THE CITY LAB

This final section looks at the next steps possible for cities and other urban policymakers to support engagement and participation.

4.1 REDEFINING PARTICIPATION

City Hall is shifting from 'we know best' to 'together we know best'

It is evident from this short paper that both in concept and practice, civic participation has been transformed since the publication of the Leipzig Charter in 2007. Various drivers are shaping this. An important one at the macro-level has been the after-shock of the Global Financial Crisis which, particularly in southern European cities like Athens, Madrid and Barcelona, has reshaped the relationship between City Hall and citizens. This has come from both directions, with municipalities having to rethink and restructure, in the light of budget cuts and organisational fall out. From the ground, it has come from angry citizens, struggling to cope and impatient with the old ways.

A more positive factor has been the rise of design thinking which continues to shape the way policymakers approach the issue of good governance and city innovation. Building on principles derived from the Open Innovation movement, this reframes stakeholder relationships. The most important element of this is a shift from 'we know best' to 'between us, we know best.' The consequence of this is a more collaborative culture where citizens' insights and inputs are sought and valued. The deliberative democracy experiments previously discussed have also drawn upon these participative principles, aligned with the need to rebuild political structures.

A third key driver is the immense scale and impact of digital transitions evident in the past decade – which has accelerated in recent years. The disruptive extent of these developments continues to unfold, with policymakers at times struggling to keep up[21]. However, it is evident that these tools offer great potential, particularly in relation to strengthening the interface between city government and citizens. This shift includes the opportunity to improve the dialogue between elected officials and citizens (for good and for bad) and scope to improve services and make them more accountable. As evidenced, it also provides a platform to engage citizens in decision-making and budget allocation – at the same time raising their awareness of the business of government.

A renewed Leipzig Charter would be smart to take account of these shifts. It would also consider why the kind of approaches set out in this paper are not being undertaken by more cities across Europe. Why isn't every city exploring ways to stimulate and support higher levels of civic participation?

4.2 HOW CAN CITIES BE SUPPORTED TO ENCOURAGE HIGHER LEVELS OF CIVIC PARTICIPATION?

For the first time, the EU has made explicit commitments to build stronger links with its citizens. Disillusionment with political leaders and the perception that citizens are ruled from afar has created a fertile environment for populists across Europe. This is a real and present danger to democracy and to the European city model which has evolved over decades, based on principles of tolerance and fairness. In response to this, in its ERDF Regulations for 2021-2027 the Commission has introduced a Policy Objective advocating, "A Europe closer to citizens"[22].

The discussions within this paper relate to

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21 The Urban Agenda for the EU Digital Transitions Action Plan provides a good insight into this.
22 European Commission (2018). 'ERDF Draft Regulations 2018/0197'. Available at: ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/ en/2021_2027/

the key question of *how* Europe will do this. It would seem that the local level is the best place to start – and as more than 70% of Europeans live in urban areas, cities are clearly a central part of this.

So, what can be done to support cities to encourage higher levels of civic participation?

● Work with the willing – and make the case for participation

This paper has referred to cities where leaders have been instrumental in pushing for change. Madrid, Gdańsk and Cascais are three such examples, but there are many others. These cities are open and willing to share their practices, providing a great resource as well as an inspiration for those who are a little more behind the curve. As discussed below, there is a need to make better use of available resources and platforms to share knowledge and build capacity amongst cities.

At the same time, it is evident that many city authorities – politicians and civil servants - are uncomfortable around this agenda. Exchange with cities for our initial City Lab activity suggests that this is less about an absence of tools and methodologies, and more about attitude. In some cases, there is active hostility – for example amongst politicians who think their endorsement by the electorate every few years gives them a mandate to make decisions without any further reference to their constituents. In other cases, it is from civil servants who are afraid that citizens might tell them things they do not want to hear – or make decisions they disagree with. Ultimately, we are speaking about city authorities uncomfortable with the prospect of 'letting go', which is earlier referred to as the 'subsidiarity barrier'.

Clearly, there are already many good models available to encourage and support other cities, that are committed to promoting participation. But what about those cities where there is reluctance and even resistance? One approach might be to more actively make the case for civic participation – demonstrating the ways in which it promotes better governance and improved relations with citizens. Peer-to-peer mechanisms – where cities can exchange with other cities – offer important opportunities here. Platforms like URBACT and EUROCITIES have an important role to play.

Other parts of the governance machinery can also help. Cities cannot easily effect these shifts alone. In fact, where there is an absence of cooperation at the regional and national level, the challenge is even harder. We need to identify champions for the participation agenda at all levels of government. Member States and regions therefore have an important role to play. So does the European Commission, if it hopes to get beyond abstract principles, by ensuring that its officials understand the importance of this and are fully committed to supporting urban stakeholders trying to make it happen. In the words of one of the EU's founders, Jean Monnet: "Nothing is possible without the citizen. Nothing is sustainable without the institutions".

An important and specific message coming from this work relates to the CLLD tool in the urban context. For a variety of reasons, many cities have opted not to utilise this mechanism during the current programming period. There is little to suggest that more will do so in the new one, unless some of the obstacles are addressed. This is a good example of the way in which the key institutions – like the European Commission – can listen to cities, understand their issues and use this knowledge to reshape the available tools.

● Provide practical support to build cities' capacity to encourage citizen participation

It is encouraging to see so many URBACT cities experimenting with ways to drive and support citizen participation. This paper has only touched on a small sample of them. But we know that many other cities – particularly small and medium-sized ones with limited capacity – would like to do more but lack the know-how. These cities – where most Europeans live and where the threat to our European model is most at stake – should be the particular focus of combined EU-level capacity building activities going forward.

There are already many great stories of urban

transformation where citizens have been instrumental. Through a growing repertoire of tools, cities should improve capturing and sharing these stories. This requires a diverse menu of products, including technical guides for the practitioners, but also accounts which make the case for participation – aimed at key audiences including politicians and citizens themselves. Plurality should also be a watchword: it is vital to engage with audiences plainly and in their own language, taking advantage of the growing range of media to get messages across. Although written documents remain important, they need to be complemented with tools like videos and animations which have more reach in our digital age.

Alongside this knowledge-sharing mission is the need to build cities' capacity to support higher levels of citizen participation. From the cities themselves, this requires a commitment to experiment, to listen and be prepared to follow through on the results. It also demands a willingness to invest combined with an understanding that this is a learning journey where public officials and citizens will grow together.

Platforms for cities to learn from one another are an important component of this. URBACT, with its Summer Universities, URBACT Campus events and its transnational networks remains a key vehicle. Other transnational alliances – including EUROCITIES – play an important role too, as do agencies like the OECD with its Observatory of Public Sector Innovation (OPSI).

What can URBACT and its partners take from this initial City Lab experience?

Firstly, the important principles at the heart of the original Leipzig Charter are not yet fully understood and embraced by cities across Europe. Secondly, the mission to enable cities to embed these principles in their urban policy and practice remains unfinished businesses. And yet, this initial investigation of the principles, focused on Participation, reveals exciting progress and extensive innovation. However, it also makes clear the scale of the knowledge-sharing and capacity building requirements.

Future City Labs will continue to investigate the state of play relating to the Charter's principles across Europe's cities as we approach the end of the decade. Looking ahead, both to the German Presidency in 2020 and to the next EU programming period, the combined output of these URBACT events can contribute to the Leipzig Charter and the Urban Agenda for the EU by highlighting cities' changing investment and support needs.

✉

In addition to its existing activities, URBACT will design and deliver a series of capacity building events for cities linked to some of the key examples identified in this paper. We will look to co-design these with other stakeholders active in this sphere and would encourage those interested in contributing to this to contact us. communication@urbact.eu

Next URBACT City Labs exploring the principles of integrated urban development

JULY 2019
Sustainable urban development

OCTOBER 2019
Integrated approaches

FEBRUARY 2020
Working beyond boundaries

SPRING 2020
Sharing recommendations and key outputs for Leipzig Charter

In the decade since the Leipzig Charter underlined the principles of integrated and participatory urban development, cities have struggled to fully understand and apply these approaches.
This paper is the first in a series looking at what cities understand by 'participation' and how citizens are involved in urban policymaking.

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