

community engagement in planning - exploring the way forward



**Final Report of the INTERREG IIIB
Advocacy, Participation and NGOs in Planning Project**



Cover photographs supplied by (clockwise from top left): Bral vzw, Spectacle Productions, Amsterdam City District Geuzenveld-Slotermeer, PAL



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Community Engagement in Planning – Exploring the Way Forward

Final Report of the INTERREG IIIB Advocacy, Participation and NGOs in Planning (APaNGO) Project

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APaNGO – a transnational partnership project part-funded by the European Union’s INTERREG IIIB programme for North West Europe (NWE). The INTERREG programme encourages closer co-operation and integration through transnational spatial development initiatives that promote sustainable development.

priorities and scope

INTERREG IIIB project areas must fall within the scope of the following five priorities:

- A more attractive and coherent system of cities, towns and regions.
- Accessibility to transport, communication, infrastructure and knowledge.
- The sustainable management of water resources and the prevention of flood damage.
- Stronger ecological infrastructure and protection of cultural heritage.
- Enhancing maritime functions and promoting territorial integration across seas.

The APaNGO project was approved under the first priority, and its aim was to find ways of increasing community involvement in spatial planning processes, particularly at regional level.

objectives

The APaNGO project had six objectives:

- To develop an understanding of the techniques, systems and infrastructure that are available in different member states to help the general public and community groups to engage constructively in planning and development decision-making at regional level.
- To test and implement methods and processes for involving local people in regional planning.
- To set up a standing transnational forum between a variety of NGOs which provide community representation in forward planning and development processes at city, regional or (with the emergence of the European Spatial Development Perspective) European level.
- To enhance skills and resources for community involvement in planning.
- To produce a good practice guide aiming to disseminate best practice in community involvement in local and regional planning issues.
- To provide an enduring resource for community involvement in planning for Europe.

For further information on the APaNGO project, visit the APaNGO website, at www.apango.eu

foreword

By Professor Sir Peter Hall

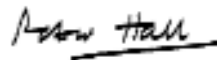
This is a hugely important and timely report – not only for planners and developers in the UK, where the Government is addressing an urgent need for more homes to meet the needs of a longer-living and growing population, but also in other EU Member States. Across the Union, from the UK to Bulgaria and from Sweden to Malta, it is no longer acceptable to make decisions from the centre and expect them to be implemented unquestioningly. The legitimacy of any planning decision will vitally depend on the quality of democratic input to the process; without that input, decision-making itself will be discredited.

But this raises very difficult questions of the right locus for decisions. Europe-wide and Member State policies for major developments will come face to face with the views of local communities, and at that local level one community may differ entirely in its view from another. We have to rely upon good planning to resolve issues and arguments of this kind. Cross-sectoral working, in which housing associations, developers, local authorities and communities all play their part, is vital to achieving successful outcomes.

This project therefore set out as a partnership between very different sectors, to address these challenges head on. It proceeds through a series of case studies in different Member States. In all such work, the devil is always in the detail, which makes these studies uniquely valuable in demonstrating how to attack the problems and reach viable solutions through better engagement and better dialogue.

The report's recommendations distil these lessons, providing a guide for central and local governments across the EU to reform and improve their planning processes in the interests of their people and of sustainable development generally.

On behalf of the TCPA, I commend the report and hope that its lessons will be widely read and enthusiastically adopted.



Professor Sir Peter Hall
President, Town and Country Planning
Association

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introduction

1.1 Introduction to the APaNGO project

The APaNGO¹ project was devised as one of the first European Union action research projects on community participation in planning and development. Its underlying philosophy was the importance of fostering constructive community engagement in order to help deliver sustainable development on the ground.

The project's central purpose was to provide a better understanding of the practice of community participation as it relates to planning and development. This then formed the basis for making recommendations on how practice can be improved. Although derived from the experience of North West Europe, it is expected that the findings of APaNGO will be of interest to all EU Member States and other countries.

Perhaps because development and its impact is by its nature local and place specific, there has been very little exchange between Member States about appropriate engagement techniques and services. These are being developed largely in isolation to deal with the same kinds of participation and advocacy challenges. Furthermore, because of pressure on funding for the NGO (non-governmental organisation) sector, the provision of information for local communities on how to engage with planning and development effectively is few and far between. APaNGO aimed to help fill these gaps. One further important feature of the APaNGO project was its focus on planning and development of regional or city-wide significance. The larger and more significant a project or plan, the greater will be its impact on the community concerned. However, there is a common perception that, ironically, this is the scale at which it is hardest to engage local

communities. In this respect the project built on research conducted by the Town and Country Planning Association (TCPA).²

The APaNGO project was launched in December 2005 by Brusselse Raad voor het Leefmilieu,³ (Belgium); Geuzenveld-Slotermeer, City District of Amsterdam (the Netherlands); Planning Aid for London (UK); Spectacle Productions Ltd (UK); and the Town and Country Planning Association (UK). The TCPA served as the lead partner accountable for the project to the main funding body, the European Commission's North West Europe INTERREG Secretariat.

The First Interim Report from the APaNGO project covered the findings from the first stage background research. This consisted of desk studies of the seven Member States in North West Europe (Belgium, France, Germany, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, the Republic of Ireland, and the UK) and analysis of the responses to an extensive questionnaire survey. **The First Interim Report can be downloaded from the APaNGO website at www.apango.eu**

This Final Report of the APaNGO project comprises essays on the individual demonstration projects from the UK, Belgium and the Netherlands written by the partner bodies concerned. They tell different stories but each relates to the central questions of APaNGO – how to successfully engage communities in planning and development. These four case studies each describe a major project, the participation processes employed, and the lessons learned. This Final Report concludes with a summary of the overall issues arising from the case studies, followed by conclusions drawn from them on the conditions necessary for effective participation in planning.

¹ Advocacy, Participation and NGOs in Planning

² Baker, M., Roberts, P. and Shaw, R. (2003) *Stakeholder Involvement in Regional Planning. National report of the TCPA study.* Town and Country Planning Association, London

³ BRAL, Brussels Environmental Association

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executive summary

2.1 Introduction

The APaNGO project has operated in two linked phases:

- Phase 1 was a desk research and questionnaire survey of existing planning systems across North West Europe, the techniques currently being used for community involvement, and the infrastructure of support (the organisations and services available) for community involvement in planning. This research is fully reported in the APaNGO First Interim Report.
- Phase 2 was the establishment and reporting of a series of demonstration projects by the APaNGO partners:
 - An evaluation of Brusselse Raad voor het Leefmilieu's (Bral's) Brussels-wide work as an NGO supporting community-led campaigns for involvement in planning since the 1980s in the international quarter of Brussels.
 - The Amsterdam City District Council of Geuzenveld-Slotermeer's project to use 'branding' as a way of creating community identity and a focus for community participation in planning the regeneration of the Eendrachtsparkbuurt neighbourhood.
 - Spectacle's work in the UK and Brussels, using community-controlled media (especially video) for creating, supporting and documenting community participation in regeneration.
 - Planning Aid for London's (PAL's) work as an NGO providing planning aid services to community and voluntary groups and individuals across London; particularly the development of a toolkit for the Greater London Authority to support community participation in the sub-regional development frameworks of the London Plan.

The APaNGO Final Report focuses on case studies of these demonstration projects, and identifies some common themes from their work before drawing out a set of conditions for successful participation in planning based on

the experience of the APaNGO projects. This Executive Summary focuses on these common themes and conditions.

2.2 Common themes across APaNGO projects

2.2.1 Who is involved?

The APaNGO projects demonstrate ways of identifying the key sectors of society that need to be involved in planning, based on both the ethical principles of democratic planning (for example planning processes that are fair, inclusive, open and transparent) and the need to be effective in terms of the quality of the technical planning processes and outcomes.

The key issues arising in the APaNGO projects in relation to who to involve include:

- The need to start participatory working with a focus on the existing interests and motivations of local people, because they will then see the relevance of being involved.
- The need to find innovative ways of reaching all sectors of the community – for example young residents, minority ethnic communities and small business, and including the 'silent majority' as well as 'hard to reach' groups.
- The need to balance securing the involvement of all sectors of the community with avoiding further alienation of disadvantaged sectors of the community from mainstream society and the decision-making processes of planning by creating separate processes that isolate these groups.
- The need to tackle the 'voluntary exclusion' of the rich and powerful, who may bypass formal consultative structures that are established for the public and communities, and instead use privileged access to exert influence.
- Those who get involved in current participatory processes may have past experiences of community activism based on

protest which will affect how they approach participation. However, the APaNGO projects have successfully created participatory processes that have brought a wide range of activists together to work productively.

2.2.2 Local focus for participation

All the APaNGO projects were identified to illustrate regional planning issues, but their experience is that, in order to involve local people and local communities, issues need to be translated to a local scale to show local relevance. The relationship between local, regional and national planning is complex.

All the APaNGO projects demonstrate how what are seen as local planning issues have regional, national and even sometimes international implications, including the role of international institutions and the 'participation by stupefaction' that often accompanies high-profile, big-budget developments. Similarly, the projects show how regional and national planning policies impact on local communities and what that means for participation. The APaNGO projects found that working at regional level is not just about working at a different spatial level, but requires working in a fundamentally different way. Issues that have emerged include:

- Regional planning issues cross traditional geographical boundaries that affect any community sense of identity, and are also likely to cross the boundaries of existing organisations.
- Identifying the decision-makers is more complex at regional levels, where it is not always clear who makes key decisions or where accountability lies, which in turn makes it hard for NGOs and communities to identify appropriate 'targets for influence'.
- The sheer scale of regional work means that NGOs may need to work across large geographical areas, often with hundreds or thousands of active voluntary groups and organisations that may be difficult to reach and encourage to participate, even working through existing networks.
- There is a need for different involvement techniques for working with communities on regional issues, including new analytical and practical toolkits for planning professionals to enable them to identify the appropriate technique for the circumstances.

2.2.3 Implications of 'community'

The APaNGO projects show that there can almost never be any easy assumption about

the nature of communities, even in clearly defined neighbourhoods. They found that:

- Diverse groups from many different backgrounds (with different cultures and languages) may be rooted in neighbourhoods in different ways, requiring particular participatory opportunities to enable them to be involved.
- The 'community' that will live in a regenerated area may be different from the current residents, some of whom may be participating in the design of a future neighbourhood they will never live in: there are different 'communities of time' with different roles in participation.
- 'Community memory' affects participation in two ways:
 - the collective sense of local identity that exists among local people (or is created through mechanisms such as the City District of Geuzenveld-Slotermeer project's 'branding'); and
 - the memory of previous failed participatory activities that have undermined trust in such processes – APaNGO projects such as those run by Bral and PAL explicitly built trust in some circumstances to overcome past failures by other institutions.

Planners have a particular role in bringing communities of time, space and social relationships together in participatory processes that can contribute to appropriate planning as well as to the desired social outcomes (for example strong and cohesive communities).

2.2.4 Levels of involvement

The APaNGO First Interim Report found that the great majority of community participation in planning takes place at the 'lowest' level of participation – information provision and minimal consultation. However, the depth and nature of involvement does largely depend on the different focus, legal structures, processes and systems for participation in planning in different countries. The experience of the APaNGO projects shows that:

- There is significant interest and commitment in all the partner countries in deepening community participation in planning, and the APaNGO projects have been able to develop within this positive context.
- Community capacity-building, often provided through the support of NGOs (and public authorities), helps local groups to develop

the confidence and skills that contribute to deeper and more effective participation. Such capacity-building includes helping these groups to understand how planning processes work and how they can be influenced.

- Communications and cultural activities have been particularly effective at building capacity – whether through ‘branding’ to create identity; artistic and cultural activities; or the use of communications media to capture and share the cultural and political resonances of participation.
- Information provision, although seen as a ‘low’ level of participation, is a vital element of all participatory activities. Where appropriate information has not been forthcoming from official sources, finding out and communicating relevant information has been a core strand of the work of several of the APaNGO projects.

2.2.5 Timing of involvement

Much participation in planning takes place at a stage at which communities can merely comment on highly developed plans or proposals. Participation at this stage tends to generate negative input, because the focus is on stopping what is not wanted rather than on making proposals to include good new ideas. The APaNGO projects show that:

- One-off, shallow consultation with tight deadlines does not gain effective or positive community participation. The APaNGO projects show the value and importance of early involvement followed by long-term relationships in creating effective participatory processes and planning outcomes. The projects found that longer-term relationships between support organisations (NGOs and public authorities) and local communities could be developed without requiring enormous investment of resources at all stages.
- Support by NGOs for participation in planning tends to be funded project by project, which limits the potential for longer-term relationships (although ways can be found of overcoming this problem). Longer-term investment in the voluntary sector infrastructure of support could help support these longer-term links more effectively.
- Continuous involvement brings problems for community organisations, as long-term vigilance on planning issues is time-consuming and demanding, causing ‘burn out’ among committed activists. However,

this continuous involvement is what is sought by communities and NGOs, and with effective support the demands can be made more manageable.

2.2.6 Linking participation and decision-making

The gap between the development of national policy promoting greater participation in planning and practice on the ground remains most apparent where participation processes meet decision-making structures. This gap can undermine the trust of communities in participatory processes by weakening the clarity of the influence of these processes on decisions and action. The APaNGO projects found the following:

- Formal consultative structures can provide useful mechanisms for continuing dialogue between communities, NGOs and authorities, but are only effective when linked directly into decision-making processes. Participatory processes are undermined if there is no clear link to decision-making. Openness, honesty and transparency in these processes is vital.
- It is not the role of NGOs or community groups to be representative: they usually represent particular interest groups in the wider political process in which decisions are made by democratically elected authorities.
- For communities, it is often the action that follows planning that is the most important motivation for their involvement: the plan is merely a mechanism leading towards the desirable outcome on the ground. Community groups will often experience ‘consultation fatigue’ if all their involvement does not lead to any change or action on the ground.
- Increased capacity-building is needed among public authorities to enable them to achieve the cultural change necessary to value the input from local communities as highly as the input they traditionally receive from professional and academic sources. New skills are also needed to enable authorities to assess and integrate data from these different sources to contribute to better-quality planning outcomes.

2.3 Recommendations

The issues raised from the experience of the APaNGO demonstration projects have led to the APaNGO partners identifying the

following six key conditions for successful participation in planning:

• **Recommendation 1**

The APaNGO partnership recommends that both voluntary sector bodies and government should recognise a responsibility to provide independent resources for community participation in planning in all major development areas.

• **Recommendation 4**

The APaNGO partnership recommends that statutory rights in planning for those most affected should be maintained and that agreements on development with communities should be legally recognised wherever possible.

• **Recommendation 2**

The APaNGO partnership recommends wider take-up of the use of community media, branding techniques and street-based and cultural activities where communities judge these appropriate or helpful.

• **Recommendation 5**

The APaNGO partnership recommends that responsible authorities in charge of community participation set out as a priority what can and cannot be changed as a result of the dialogue of participation or involvement.

• **Recommendation 3**

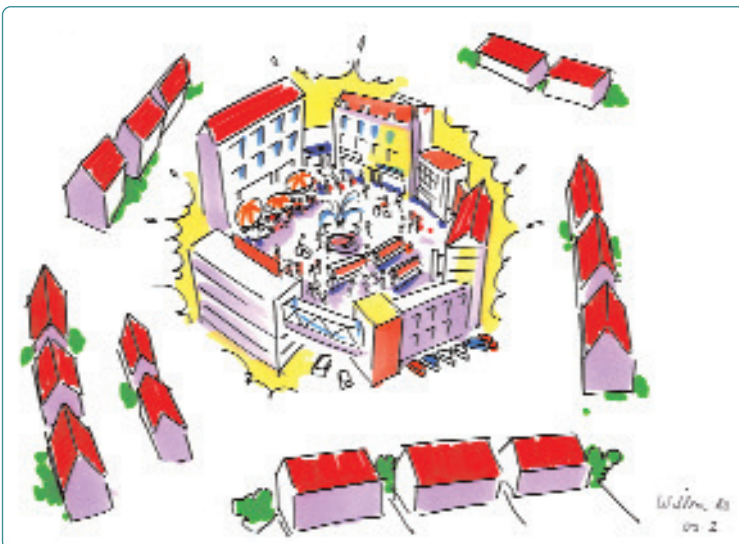
The APaNGO partnership recommends that public authorities appreciate the value of community views which are generated in various ways through the participation services it supports. As a result government bodies should better integrate community input in its different forms in the decision-making process.

• **Recommendation 6**

The APaNGO partnership recommends that all those engaged in participation in planning and development should recognise that decision-makers must consider evidence which represents best the variety of interests of current and future communities, including taking into account representations from specific interest groups with particular knowledge.

The APaNGO partners consider these conditions and recommendations to be essential for effective participation in planning, both in terms of creating better-quality planning decisions and outcomes, and in terms of principles of fairness and transparency – all of which are essential in supporting the contribution of planning to sustainable development.

Holland Branding Group



Rob Bakker

Above

APaNGO partners meeting in Brussels

Left

Output from an Amsterdam City District Geuzenveld-Slotermeer branding workshop

3

reaching out to the region – methods of strategic policy engagement

APaNGO Demonstration Projects – Planning Aid for London By Carol Ryall and Pat Castledine

This chapter describes two examples of community involvement at the regional level of planning: the first is the development of a toolkit to assist the Greater London Authority planners working at the London-wide regional level; the second relates the experience of two workshops where we applied the lessons learned during the development of the toolkit to the issue of waste management.

3.1 The GLA sub-regional development frameworks 'toolkit' project

3.1.1 Reason for the project

Community involvement is central to the reform of the UK's planning system. The Government's publication *Community Involvement in Planning*¹ stressed the need to ensure a continuing commitment to improving access for everyone to both planning information and the planning system (particularly those processes which manage new development and develop policy). Local planning authorities (LPAs) are encouraged to evaluate their arrangements for community involvement to ensure that everyone has access to information and can take part in shaping policy and influence planning decisions.

Securing the involvement of diverse communities in strategic planning policy development is a challenge for any government authority. In the first instance, there is the need to reach the wide range of communities affected, often with competing and conflicting requirements in terms of priorities and concerns. There is also the difficulty of involving communities meaningfully at a strategic level when, normally, most contact on planning matters occurs at the local level where

democracy, decision-making and its impacts are more directly linked and visible.

3.1.2 Regional context

The Greater London Authority (GLA), its Assembly and Mayor have a statutory responsibility to develop strategic planning guidance for the capital. The Mayor's vision is to develop London as an exemplary, sustainable World City. One of the key interwoven themes is the promotion of social inclusivity to give all Londoners the opportunity to share in London's future success. The London Plan – a strategic plan – was approved (by a process called 'adoption') in



Above

London sub-regions map

February 2004. The Plan, covering the whole of Greater London, has policy implications for all of the 33 London boroughs. Each borough must produce its own local planning policies, set out in local development documents

¹ Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (2004) *Community Involvement in Planning*. London: ODPM

(LDDs), and these policies must be *in accordance* with the London Plan; i.e. they must set out how they will achieve the Mayor's policies on issues such as affordable housing targets, employment growth and the provision of social infrastructure.

A key implementation tool of the London Plan was the concept of sub-regional development frameworks (SRDFs²) for the North, South, East, West and Central areas. Each document took the relevant London Plan policies and applied them across six to eight boroughs, setting out more detailed targets and policies. The final agreed frameworks provide non-statutory guidance on the implementation of the London Plan. Consultation on drafts of the SRDFs took place between June and October 2005, and the consultation process formed the basis of the APaNGO demonstration project.

3.1.3 Partners and stakeholders in the project

Three pan-London voluntary and community sector organisations – London Civic Forum (LCF), Planning Aid for London (PAL) and London Sustainability Exchange (LSx) (the partners) – were commissioned to assist the GLA to develop a process which would assist the GLA's planning staff to be more effective in engaging the community and voluntary sector in consultation on sub-regional planning matters.

Prior to the start of consultation on the SRDFs, it was clear that there had already been some cross-boundary working between London boroughs. Sub-regional partnerships or alliances made up of representatives from local councils, businesses, and health and learning and skills organisations had already been established. There was, however, limited community and voluntary sector involvement in these arrangements. The voluntary sector is significant in London:³ it includes organisations which vary from small to large and formal to informal, is supported by paid and/or unpaid workers, and works to address a wide range of community needs. Their communities are also diverse (gay and lesbian, young people and black and minority ethnic groups) or are issue-based on topics such as disability or health.

It was therefore essential that the sector was involved in the development of strategic planning policy. The APaNGO project enabled PAL to undertake more in-depth work than it

would otherwise have been able to resource, and provided a practical opportunity for PAL to examine the opportunities for and difficulties of consultation at a strategic level. The project aimed to develop a toolkit for the Greater London Authority for use in consulting the voluntary sector on sub-regional development frameworks.

3.1.4 Level of involvement

The partners commenced by pooling their extensive range of expertise in the community and voluntary sectors, and identifying contacts, gaps requiring outreach work, and measures to ensure good sampling across London. This involved identifying different sub-sectors, creating a matrix from which the sample could be selected.

Well over 500 organisations were approached to take part, but this number underestimates the final total involved as a number of networks and umbrella organisations were also used to approach their own membership of smaller organisations.

At the time of the project, the SRDF documents had been drafted by GLA staff with some involvement from the various sub-regional partnerships. The three demonstration project partners used this opportunity to undertake consultation on the SRDFs themselves.

3.1.5 Preparation of the toolkit

The details of the toolkit itself are not discussed here because it was produced for GLA staff and is relevant only for producing the SRDFs themselves. However, the findings of the surveys and consultation events with the voluntary sector provide valuable guidance and advice in respect of consultation at the regional and sub-regional level. The research document, including the toolkit itself, was designed to be used by GLA staff as a stand-alone point of reference: one which could be easily updated, extended and applied to future consultations. It was electronic using standard Microsoft Office software (Excel and Word).

The main document contains:

- a simple checklist which takes staff through the process of consultation with the sector;
- a contacts database in a format that can be networked, allowing staff to update it as

² The concept of sub-regional development frameworks (SRDFs) is identified in the Mayor's London Plan, to provide direction and focus for implementation for each of the five identified sub-regions. They were to be produced by the Mayor in partnership with boroughs and other stakeholders

³ Contributing over £3 billion to London's GDP, in 2005, there are 761 start-up charities, 60,00 community groups and 5,00 social enterprises. £18.7 billion was generated by 26,634

former contacts change or new contacts become involved;

- clear direction on the importance of communicating the programme, scope and content of consultation to the voluntary and community sector; and
- the background research to the toolkit, produced as an appendix.

The document was submitted to the GLA in December 2005.

3.1.6 Conclusions: lessons learned from the process

The research revealed some key features related to consultation on strategic planning issues at a sub-regional level.

- It takes a good deal of time for consultation information to percolate down to the local level.
- Response time must also be factored in.
- A three-month period should be the minimum for any strategic consultation.
- Relating policies to more local issues/areas wherever possible aids understanding and encourages involvement for those not necessarily aware of the wider strategic issues. Indeed, the findings of the project partners were that generally the sub-regional development frameworks were, in fact, a more effective way of communicating regional policy than the London Plan itself.
- Using existing voluntary networks to reach different parts of the voluntary sector was more effective in reaching particular communities than setting up new outreach programmes for every project, and such methods were more likely to be met with a more positive response.
- Networks and other voluntary organisations need resources and support in order to be able to take part in any consultations, but in return they can assist local authorities to undertake more effective consultations. Funding them is therefore good value for money.
- Information should not be too technical, and plans and diagrams should be easy to read. Authorities often lapse into jargon, and do not check before publication that information is provided in a range of levels and formats and include a glossary.

- Consultation methods and information should be tailored to the needs of the different groups.
- Regular community focus groups may be a useful way of ensuring communication methods are appropriate.
- Signposting to additional sources of information and help is appreciated by the voluntary sector, as is a glossary and contents/index page. Any measure that assists the reader to understand a document, and the relevance of their involvement in it, is more likely to encourage an informed response.
- We should not rely on e-technology. Many people still have no access or only limited access to computers and have limited capacity to receive documents or print them off. Ideally a hard copy of information should be related to the event. Good indexing and splitting e-documents into downloadable sections can also help, but they have to be well referenced to enable the reader to understand the whole picture.
- Finally, we should approach consultation like a marketing exercise, providing targeted information rather than a 'one size fits all' approach. The public sector could learn a lot from commercial sales and marketing on reaching and targeting communities in particular. Our communities are certainly all very different, and our approach to them should be sensitive to this in the ways in which we reach them.

We have been warned!

3.2 Environmental/waste workshops – involving communities in local and strategic planning policies on the locations for waste management facilities

3.2.1 Background

By applying some of the key lessons learned in the course of the toolkit project, we aimed to disseminate information about a regional issue to a targeted audience, specifically designing the access to the information in a way that was best suited for those targeted. We set out here our experience in relation to the examination of waste management with groups of young people.

3.2.2 Southwark

Southwark is an inner London borough on the south bank of the Thames. It has a wide diversity of communities and is experiencing high levels of growth and regeneration led by both private and public sectors. A lively workshop was held



PAL

Above

Junior planners

in March 2007 at the Kennington offices of the Kickstart Youth Inclusion Project in Southwark. Seven young people who live on the Heygate Estate, a large housing estate that is undergoing renovation as part of the regeneration of the Elephant and Castle, located in Walworth in the London Borough of Southwark, participated. The workshop was designed to assist young people in the area to become more involved in the regeneration of the borough and planning in their neighbourhood, leading into the establishment of young people's planning panels in specific wards of the borough.

Planning Aid for London prepared a variety of different materials for the workshop including hand-outs and displays explaining the impact of climate change and the ways in which strategic planning policies could be altered to lower the carbon footprint of regeneration. We learned from the workshop about the concerns of local young people regarding their own regeneration priorities and their concerns about the environment, and also about some of the ways in which young people might be involved creatively and effectively in making decisions about planning issues.



PAL

Above

Model-based exercise

Activities in the workshop involved, among other things, a model-based design exercise whereby young people had to create a neighbourhood on a site which already had a number of constraints on it, such as a waste management facility and other uses. Participants also had to find suitable locations for different types of waste management facility, from recycling collection points, to transfer facility, to processing facility, in different areas within the site.

3.2.3 Newham

Newham is another inner London borough with some areas of extreme deprivation. It is one of the host boroughs for the Olympics and forms

part of the Thames Gateway regeneration area. Some areas are experiencing high levels of growth.

A workshop facilitated by PAL was held in April 2007 at the Grassroots Community Centre in West Ham. Young people and one youth worker participated from a group called the 'Architecture Crew', which is run by Fundamental Architectural Inclusion, an architecturally based regeneration project based in Newham. The workshop was intended to raise awareness about waste, recycling, and young people's personal and household consumption, making the connection between their everyday activities and sub-regional planning issues relating to the treatment and disposal of waste. This workshop helped the group to examine and comment on plans for a new bio-fuels facility in nearby Silvertown.

We learned from the workshop that many young people were aware of the need to recycle, but were unclear as to whether many of the materials in the products that they bought could be recycled, and how they might go about this.

We also learned that the young people who took part understood what made different land uses compatible or incompatible with other land uses in a given area, and that there were ways also of minimising negative impacts from development, such as waste facilities, through using different forms of design, creating buffer

areas and not locating facilities close to other sensitive uses.

The workshop built on some of the knowledge about regional planning that the Architecture Crew had amassed through working with PAL during their preparations to edit the young people's section of the Mayor of London's website earlier in the year.

3.2.4 Conclusions

The conclusions drawn underline the lessons learned in the previous project:

- Prepare materials that are appropriate to the group and subject.
- Use existing networks and groups.
- Maintain and build on knowledge to reinforce understanding.
- Use everyday situations familiar to the group to assist in the understanding of strategic issues.
- The process of engagement requires resources to provide ongoing support, and workshops, although effective, are labour intensive with significant resource implications.

We must ensure that, once engaged, groups and individuals continue to contribute to the debate about our environment.

4

how to brand a neighbourhood? innovative citizen participation in urban planning

APaNGO Demonstration Projects – Geuzenveld-Slotermeer, City District of Amsterdam

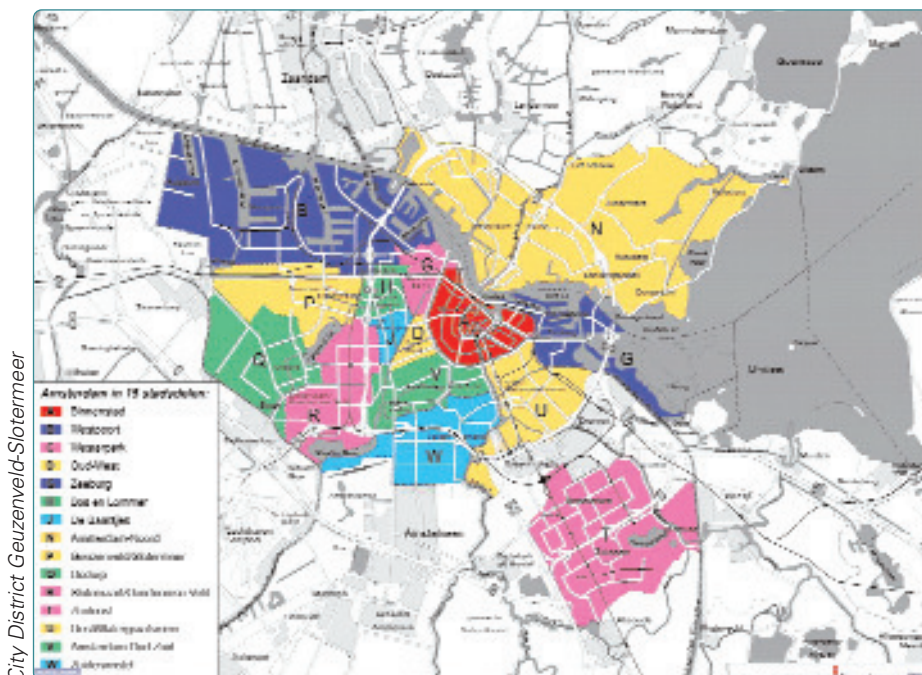
By Pieter van Dijk and Age Niels Holstein

In 2006 the Amsterdam City District of Geuzenveld-Slotermeer experimented with the technique of ‘branding’ in the regeneration of the Eendrachtsparkbuurt (Eendrachtspark Neighbourhood), a post-war neighbourhood. This approach differs from conventional techniques of citizen participation in urban planning, which are usually aimed at acquiring feedback on a planning proposal that has already been made. Branding turns the traditional planning world upside down, by taking the perspectives and experiences of residents as a starting point. What did this new approach look like? What were the results? And what are the lessons that have been learned? This chapter reports how an innovative process led one neighbourhood towards its new

identity, led by an ambition that *‘The atmosphere in the new neighbourhood should be relatively relaxed. Urban, without the hectic feel of the big city.’*

4.1 Introduction – planning objectives for the Eendrachtsparkbuurt

The Eendrachtsparkbuurt is a neighbourhood in the Geuzenveld-Slotermeer City District. It is located in Amsterdam’s ‘Western Garden Cities’ (Westelijke Tuinsteden), which were built as part of the ‘New West’ expansion of the city of Amsterdam. Now home to over 40,000 residents, Geuzenveld-Slotermeer is characterised by numerous green spaces,



City District Geuzenveld-Slotermeer

Left

Map of Amsterdam

typical post-war medium-rise buildings, and an extremely diverse multicultural population (64% are from minority ethnic groups). Among its many green areas Geuzenveld-Slotermeer has no less than five public parks and designated conservation areas, offering many recreational facilities, such as the Sloterpark with its national swimming facility, the Sloterparkbad.

In Geuzenveld-Slotermeer the need to plan for change arises because the area faces severe social problems. The renewal area is encountering social and economic decline (the average yearly family income is 19,000 euros and the unemployment rate is 20%). To deal with this decline the City District Council has adopted a wide-ranging improvement programme, covering the fields of social, economic and urban development. In the Geuzenveld-Slotermeer City District substantial demolition and construction work is scheduled up to 2015 – work that will have a major impact on the residents' familiar surroundings. The City District Council and the housing corporations are endeavouring to minimise this impact through a social plan, as well as by management of the living environment during the construction work.

Among the most urgent reasons to improve the quality of living conditions and urban daily life in general in the Eendrachtsparkbuurt are:

- the poor quality of the relatively small houses;
- the high concentrations of social housing (up to 100% in some parts);
- multiple social problems; and
- the difficulties in maintaining public spaces at a level of basic quality.

4.2 Planning – the case of urban regeneration and the involvement of residents

In the early phase of urban regeneration in the City of Amsterdam, established planning processes were adopted in a fairly straightforward and routine way. Planning objectives mainly focused on translating regional housing programmes – with ambitious targets in terms of numbers of new housing units – into spatial strategies for under-developed city areas. Planning aimed to

improve the spatial quality of run-down neighbourhoods. At the same time housing programmes resulted in an increase in urban density. Urban planners and designers drafted urban structure and zoning plans for regeneration areas which were comparable to city extension plans. These were publicly announced so that residents could react to them. As a consequence of this planning activity many residents had to move to other neighbourhoods so that their old homes could be demolished and replaced by high-quality, modern housing. They could return after the completion of the regeneration process. Still, most of them did not, since by this time they had adjusted to their new environment and had 'rooted' in another part of the city, through for example their children attending a new school.

Although the basic rights of residents were protected in so called 'social plans' accompanying the regeneration schemes, many residents still felt their influence in the planning process to be marginal. The role of the community in the planning process did not correspond to the impact this had on community life and the interests of individual residents. As criticism gained force, the central municipal council and the city district councils became aware of the necessity that urban regeneration should focus more on neighbourhood communities and should also involve current and future residents in the process of planning itself. The voices of residents should be heard more clearly and their interests should be represented in the core of new urban plans.

As a consequence of these criticisms, the City District Council of Geuzenveld-Slotermeer changed the process of planning by attributing a more central role to participation. A minimum level of involvement of the communities and individual residents should be guaranteed, and the City District Council approved a participation bylaw for this purpose. At the outset of each planning initiative the City District Council decides which of three models of participation prescribed in the bylaw is appropriate and should therefore be adopted. These models are:

- **Information model:** The community is given all the information on the planning process, to enable them to exercise their legal right to be heard within the political process¹ of decision-making on the final plan. Active

¹ The 'right to be heard' is provided for in a City District bylaw: the participation regulation of the City District ('Participatieverordening'). This regulation gives the right to every individual resident to appear at the public meeting of the Advisory Committee of the City District and to express views and insights about the decision of the City District Council being considered in this public meeting

participation in the production of the plan is not possible because of fixed limitations that make real influence impossible.

- **Consultation model:** Residents are consulted over various choices that have to be made in the plan. Policy is sufficiently flexible to guarantee real influence. Consultation does not affect citizens' legal right to be heard in the decision-making on the final plan.
- **Co-production model:** Local government and residents together 'produce' the urban plan. Both are responsible for the plan, and thus both must agree on it. After agreement, residents can still exercise their legal right to be heard as part of the political process of decision-making on the final plan.

In addition to these rules of participation, residents still have their rights of legal participation, embedded in a statutory process. Each plan has to be released publicly. After publication, citizens have the right to inspect the plan for a period of six weeks. In this period they have the opportunity to give comments, both in writing and orally at a public 'hearing' in front of councillors that the local authority organises for this purpose. When the plan is on the agenda of the District Council, the public has the right to give comments before the political deliberations 'take off' at the public meeting. The whole planning process is completed when the District Council arrives at a final decision on the plan. (The statutory planning system in the Netherlands is further explained in the APaNGO First Interim Report.²)

The bylaw tries to establish a delicate balance between informal participation and legal participation rights. The commitment is to serious investments in co-operative or even co-productive participation at the outset of planning, which should minimise criticism or resistance within communities and thus pay off at the decision stage of the plans. The belief is that these plans will become better plans because they are informed by real-life experience, and thus they will gain the necessary support. This is, of course, only true under the assumption that communities will be engaged in the 'real' planning practice. In the Eendrachtsparkbuurt, therefore, a serious effort is made to engage the local community, and especially a number of 'hard-to-reach groups', through employing the identity-based participation technique of 'branding' a regeneration area. It is an example of testing

out new perspectives for urban regeneration in the western parts of Amsterdam. This effort became Geuzenveld-Slotermeer's first APaNGO demonstration project.

4.3 Looking ahead – dilemmas on participation

At the outset of the planning process in the Eendrachtsparkbuurt a series of 'dilemmas of participation' were identified. They were discussed at an APaNGO workshop in June 2005. Three dilemmas are concerned with basic conditions for successful citizen participation; two others focus on the relation between bottom-up participation and professional standards and/or commercial interests:

- **The participation-representation dilemma:**³ This dilemma is created by the tension between formal support by the District Council for citizen participation on the one hand, and a lack of real 'policy space' for this to take effect on the other. When citizens are asked to contribute to an urban planning project, they expect to be taken seriously. If they experience that local councillors, who formally represent the public as democratically chosen representatives, have already reached a decision on all major elements of the plan, the process is likely to result in frustration and loss of trust in local government.
- **The lack of interest dilemma:** In the Eendrachtsparkbuurt this dilemma amounts to the rhetorically phrased question: 'Why participate when you are asked to leave?' This question results from a strategic and pre-judged decision to demolish a large zone of housing blocks as the starting point of a plan. The level of community engagement by residents who live in these blocks is expected to be very low. This planning situation existed within the Eendrachtsparkbuurt. Current residents were more interested in finding a new home in a new neighbourhood – for the time being or permanent – whereas future residents were not yet known. So who would be left to help design the 'look and feel' of the neighbourhood?
- **The silent majority dilemma:** The third dilemma deals with the challenge of diversity: how do you make sure that citizens with different backgrounds, gender, ages etc. join the participation process, instead of a

² Town and Country Planning Association (2007) *Advocacy, Participation and NGOs in Planning. Interim Report 1*. APaNGO Project Report. London: TCPA

³ For a general discussion of this dilemma, see also the APaNGO First Interim Report, paragraph 2.2.7

small number of 'usual suspects'? In the Geuzenveld-Slotermeer City District, youngsters and Moroccan and Turkish women are known to be 'hard-to-reach groups', even though together they constitute a substantial part of the resident community. This dilemma has to be taken into account when asking them to contribute to a participation process, but also when crucial information has to be communicated to those groups. For instance, cheerful and colourful brochures containing information on new urban plans do not always succeed in getting the message across.

City District Geuzenveld-Slotermeer



Above

Being a neighbourhood reporter

message' – introduce new perspectives on planning by adopting innovative means.

- **Which ways?** Use branding as an innovative planning tool to integrate *participation and urban design* by determining the future identity of the neighbourhood.

Although each element in the participation process related to these three task areas, some additional specific activities also complemented and characterised the chosen strategy:

- **Networks:** To be sure that members of usually under-represented groups would join in, two initiatives were undertaken initially. A group of *young residents* was trained in the use of video cameras and sound recording so that they could function as 'neighbourhood reporters' during participation meetings and document the events. *Turkish and Moroccan women* were given training in participation. These social investments had real positive results as the branding sessions turned out to be more diverse than usual. But also regular contacts with tenants committees who would be affected by the regeneration process were maintained.
- **Community art:** In the art project 'The Imaginary Refurbishment of your Neighbourhood', residents were invited to come up with imaginative ideas about their own neighbourhood and to communicate them to three artists. These artists worked for three months in the Eendrachtsparkbuurt. The artists elaborated these ideas in their

- **The 'blindness by insight' dilemma:** The fourth dilemma concerns the gap between the professional's perspective and the average citizen's perception of the built environment. Good participation ensures that the interests of the community and of individual citizens are translated in the various urban plans and designs, while at the same time meeting all relevant professional standards. The big question is: how do you achieve this? How do you integrate two apparently separate worlds?
- **The conflict of interests dilemma:** The fifth and last dilemma deals with institutional interests versus community interests. In the Netherlands, housing associations⁴ increasingly act as real estate developers in the commercial housing market. There might be a conflict of interest between citizens and their view of a happy, liveable neighbourhood, and the real estate developer, who might want to market the new place in a way that serves their commercial interests best (in terms of letting and selling the houses and apartments).

4.4 The participation strategy

To address these dilemmas a threefold participation strategy was chosen, consisting of a framework of tasks that answered three basic questions:

- **Whom?** Identify the *network of all possible participants* and pay specific attention to hard-to-reach-groups.
- **Which means or instruments?** The '*medium*' is almost as important as the

⁴ In the Netherlands housing associations in the 1980s were semi-governmental organisations that received government funds to provide social housing. After reforms they became privatised organisations that are allowed to make profits, but remain restricted by detailed regulations. Through these regulations the Dutch Government aims to guarantee its main objective to continue to deliver social housing within the context of a 'free' housing market. As a result housing associations in the Netherlands can be seen as private enterprises that are allowed to invest 'societal capital' and therefore are also bound by strict rules and regulations



City District Geuzenveld-Slotermeer

Left

Mobile studio and projection screen: Platform Neighbourhood Nine



City District Geuzenveld-Slotermeer

City District Geuzenveld-Slotermeer



Above

Left: The prize-winning idea 'Imaginary refurbishments of your neighbourhood': Fountain

Right: Prize-winning idea 'Imaginary refurbishment of your neighbourhood': Four seasons van (Translation: Spring: Peanuts for 1 euro; Summer: Lovely ice creams; Autumn: Fruit for 1 euro; Winter: Hot chocolate)

mobile studio, which also served as neighbourhood projection screen.

Several screenings were staged after sunset, and in this way the neighbourhood was kept informed about the progress of the project. The art project came to a close with the selection of two prize-winning ideas: a 250 euro reward was given for the most imaginative idea and a 250 euro reward for a feasible solution that could be incorporated in the urban plan. A celebration of the prize-winning ideas was organised at a neighbourhood party. All the ideas were documented and used as another resource for the future identity of the Eendrachtsparkbuurt.

4.5 Participation and urban design through 'branding'

The most significant component of the participation in the urban plan was the adoption of a branding technique in a series of

participation exercises. In the case of the Eendrachtsparkbuurt, the City District and the housing corporation Het Oosten/Kristal commissioned the Holland Branding Group to design and realise the branding trajectory. The challenge in the Eendrachtsparkbuurt consisted of designing an attractive, diverse and vital neighbourhood that would fit the needs of current and future residents. The central goal of participation in the Eendrachtsparkbuurt was to re-assert the core aim of the planning process: to create new attractive urban spaces for current and future resident communities. A collaborative quest for the current and desired identity of a neighbourhood has several important advantages. A search for a well formulated and 'rooted' identity:

- addresses participants less as 'consumers' of a plan and more as a 'producers' of their own neighbourhood;
- supports and informs the marketing strategy for a specific area;

- attracts potential future residents and entrepreneurs who ‘fit’ into this identity;
- directs professionals towards the objective that they will have to realise collectively; and
- connects ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ aspects of renewal, such as housing blocks and roads (‘hard’), and activities and public services (‘soft’).

The future identity has to be ‘rooted’ in the history of the existing neighbourhood. Branding would be an empty gesture if it did not establish a delicate interplay between continuity and discontinuity; thus lodging new elements of the identity into the ongoing history of the neighbourhood. The ‘brand book’ (one of the concrete products delivered) opens with a description of the history of the neighbourhood. Interviews and conversations held with residents can be considered as forms of oral history. Interviews were also documented in a separate booklet that was offered as a present to every resident that now lives in the neighbourhood or has been relocated as a result of the demolition programme. The identity, thus informed by local history, also links features of the new urban plan to the existing situation. A number of qualities and characteristics of the Western Garden Cities (the famous Van Eesteren Extension Plan) return in the new urban plan – thus also physically expressing continuity in the urban layout of this part of Amsterdam.

In particular, working with identity and branding, in the case of long-term, grand-scale urban regeneration projects, provides a ‘far-away beacon’ that helps co-ordinate different plans and projects, and keeps all actors involved on track towards a common objective. Even when the demolition of current housing blocks has been completed and the new dwellings have been delivered, the desired identity remains relevant. It can be a resource for neighbourhood management, or it may well inspire the organisation of diverse activities in the neighbourhood.

The branding project was intended to overcome ‘blindness by insight’, mentioned above. A concerted effort was made to bridge the gap that often exists between professional standards and community interests. Its ambition was to make the perspectives and the genuinely held interests of the community the starting point for the planners and their use of highly sophisticated tools and standards for urban planning. Branding was deployed to ‘open up’ the planning process so that the plan drew on the perceptions and desires of residents and diverse ‘clients’, gained through detailed discussions about the future identity of the renewal area.

4.6 The branding process in detail

The participation process was divided into three clear-cut phases:

- an orientation phase;
- an identity phase; and
- a design phase.

Participants in the exercises could be categorised as follows:

- current and potential future residents;
- City District professionals;
- the housing association (Het Oosten);
- the real estate developer branch of the housing association (Het Oosten Kristal);
- representatives of local non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and residents networks;
- local entrepreneurs;
- researchers and other experts in urban planning and housing – for example from housing associations;
- visual artists employed by the City District; and
- the branding consultants (Holland Branding Group).

The orientation and identity phases were characterised by participation-by-invitation, whereas for the participation in the design phase open enlistment was chosen. The invitation of participants for the identity sessions was based on the following criteria:

- participants with knowledge about, experience of or responsibilities for the area;
- participants who wanted to make a contribution to its future;
- participants who would speak freely and on their own behalf only;
- participants who would demonstrate interest in the opinions of others; and
- participants selected and invited who would together constitute a diverse group of people, in terms of gender, cultural background and age.

Another important aspect was that the group consisted of both professionals – project

managers, researchers – and citizens and volunteers from local NGOs. In more traditional forms of citizen participation these two worlds are kept separate. In the branding sessions they were actively mixed, so that different types of knowledge could inspire and reinforce each other in a live project.

The branding process started with an orientation phase. An ‘orientation day’ was designed to identify relevant themes for the future brand. These themes would direct the regeneration of the neighbourhood. By walking through the neighbourhood and joining a so called ‘theme group’, questions about the new neighbourhood were discussed:

- What kind of people are there now?
- What types of new residents would fit in?
- What should the new ‘atmosphere’ be?

Instead of jumping to conclusions, the main objective was to discern the themes and topics of concern to the neighbourhood that were considered important by its residents. In order to complement and express the discussion, visual artists transformed the views of the participants (not only those of residents but also those of researchers and professionals from the City District, the housing corporation, NGOs and real estate companies) into colourful drawings that served as visual conceptions of the future. Both the central questions and the list of invitees for the identity sessions of the next phase were determined by the results of the orientation day.

The next phase was about identifying core values for the Eendrachtsparkbuurt. Two sessions were organised with about 15 participants (plus eight ‘observer’ officials who only witnessed the process), who were requested to search for common values concerning the neighbourhood. This was triggered by questions like:

- What does the word ‘home’ mean to you?

- What atmosphere do you appreciate in the surroundings of your house?
- What type of residents should the new neighbourhood attract?

In the expression of personal views and the ensuing discussion, visual communication again played an important role. Participants were asked a question, and also asked to present their views by means of a drawing. They could ‘order’ this drawing from the same ‘visualisers’ of the orientation day. With the drawing in their hands, they shared their experiences with the rest of the group.



City District Guezenveld-Slotermeer

Above

Talking by images

The two sessions resulted in the formulation of five core values or qualities for the Eendrachtsparkbuurt:

- developing;
- lively;
- inclusive;
- hospitality; and
- park.

These core values were related to emotional, functional and aspirational aspects, as shown in the value table (Table 4.1). This value table was



Holland Branding Group

Above

Drawings of visual concepts: Icons of identity

Table 4.1
Value table

Core values	Development	Lively	Inclusive	Hospitality	Park
Emotion	Building a future	Inspiring	Compassionate	Organic	Relaxed
Function	Equip	Enterprising	Tolerant	Community	Green and spacious
Aspiration	Catharsis	Web/network	Fusion	New Amsterdam	Allure

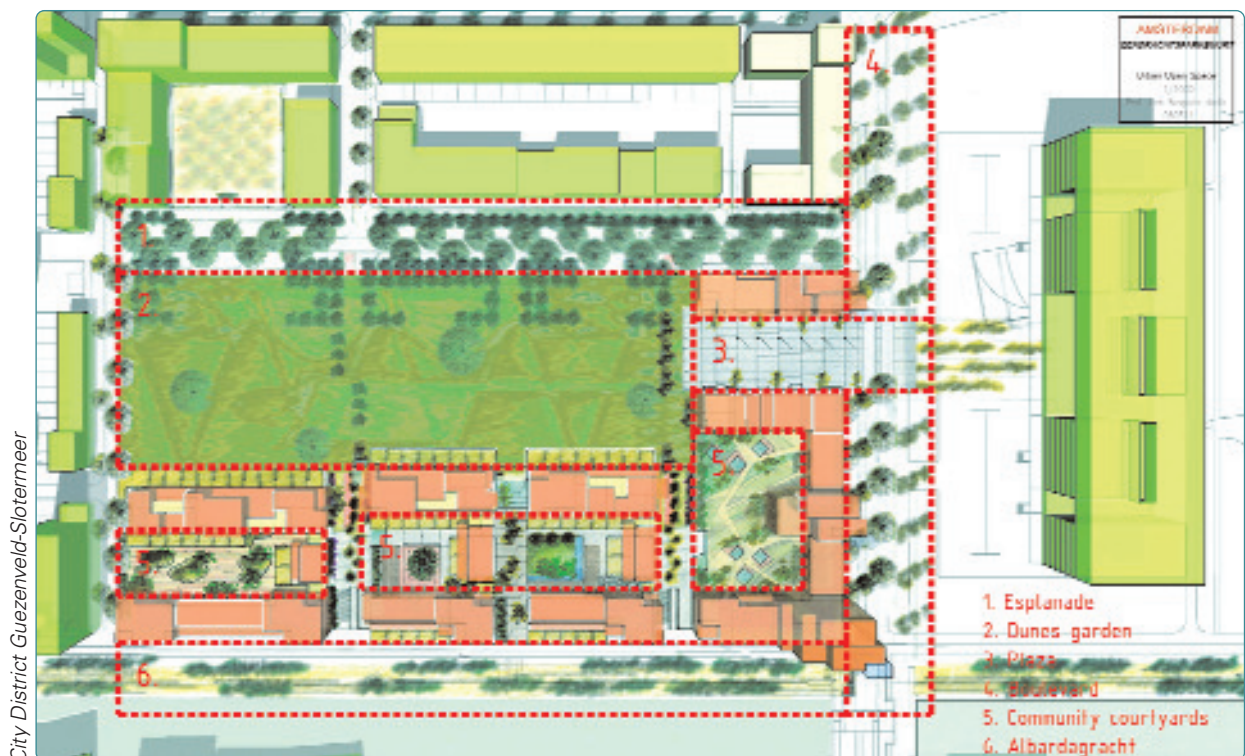
used as input for the third phase: the design process. The design was led by the Spanish urban designer and architect Joan Busquets. Busquets’ urban design office places identity at the heart of its use- and user-oriented design process. Visual concepts of the future neighbourhood identity and core values as listed in the matrix of Table 4.1 create together a specific interface. This interface can be used to specify the qualities and functions of individual spaces, which thereby become key components of the general layout of the urban plan. As part of this design process core values guide the interpretation of urban fabric.

To maximise citizen influence on the urban plan, two interactive workshops were organised during the design phase to discuss draft versions of the design. These meetings resembled traditional and familiar participation exercises. In the first workshop, the general public could give suggestions on the basis of the first sketches of the plan. The urban designer then went back

to the sketch-table to incorporate the suggestions into the plan wherever possible. In the second workshop, a more definitive design was presented and discussed. After the designers had included the last remarks within the design, the urban plan was completed.

As a result of the design process several distinctive urban spaces can be discerned in the urban plan of the Eendrachtsparkbuurt. The new neighbourhood is designed as a composition of:

- a public garden;
- a square (plaza);
- an esplanade;
- collective spaces;
- a boulevard; and
- the canalside.



Above

Individual spaces in the Eendrachtsparkbuurt plan
(Joan Busquets)

All the elements of this composition should enhance 'Relaxed living in an active neighbourhood'. Under that heading, a City District leaflet dated April 2006 presented definite plans for the Eendrachtsparkbuurt to residents and other people involved. Visuals and accompanying text showed and explained what the new neighbourhood would look like, pointing out its mixed qualities: green spaces *and* an urban feel, commercial flats for sale and rent *and* social housing. It would be a whole new place with some historical echoes, compared with the existing 288 post-war, medium-rise flats that would soon be demolished.

After the publication of the final draft the statutory participation process began, including a six-week public consultation period on the official plan. No formal complaints about the plan were put forward during this period. This simple fact could be interpreted as a successful result of the time, energy and commitment that all participants, residents and professionals alike put into the process. When the District Council approved the plan in July 2006 it was then able to start building the new Eendrachtsparkbuurt, which is now well under way.

4.7 Conclusions – lessons learned

Looking back at the process, the overall conclusion about the participation process is positive. However, branding and 'participation' do not stop when the plans are approved. Whether the desired identity of the new Eendrachtsparkbuurt will actually be realised is a matter of staying focused on the core values and their translation into the public space, activities and facilities in the neighbourhood. A number of important lessons learned are worth recounting.

4.7.1 *New dynamics – political antagonisms are attenuated*

The essence of searching for the desired identity for a neighbourhood is that it approaches citizens in a new way: 'Planning starts with *your* experiences and opinions. We regard you as an important source of knowledge for the regeneration process.' This approach clearly creates a different group atmosphere, compared with most regular participation meetings, in which sometimes the only rational option seems to criticise a plan that is already prepared. Branding 'seduces' people to look at their environment in a different, new way. The general stance is less political, more open minded. Moreover, new dynamics in the participation process arise as

existing and future residents share their ideas about the future. Apart from bringing together residents, branding also improved the co-operation between the City District and the housing corporation.

4.7.2 *Diversity – possible, but only with substantial effort*

Above we raised the 'lack of interest dilemma' of citizen participation: without extra effort to reach other target groups only the 'usual suspects' are involved. In what way can we achieve a real diversity of input into the participation process? In the branding process explicit attention was given to this issue. The goal of diversity among the participants was achieved by asking youngsters to be neighbourhood reporters, after receiving training. Moroccan and Turkish women were personally invited to take part in participation training, in order to be able to join the identity sessions without feelings of discomfort and anxiety. This also resulted in a more mixed group of people who commented on the plans during the workshops, which were open to all interested residents. However, these results were achieved only after a distinct effort. If you want diversity, you have to invest time and money in it!

4.7.3 *Future residents*

How can we know the thoughts and feelings of future residents? This is a challenge, especially in neighbourhoods in transition, where the housing stock is transformed from 100% social housing to a mixture of social housing and private sector housing (both to let and for sale). There might be distinct differences in lifestyles and preferences between groups. In the case of the Eendrachtsparkbuurt, a lucky circumstance existed in the area under scrutiny: a number of new blocks had already been delivered. The residents in those homes – from different lifestyles, ethnic backgrounds and income groups – had a real interest in the new plan because they were actually facing the planning area. The composition of residents of those blocks could be expected to resemble the future composition of the new Eendrachtsparkbuurt. Without available 'new arrivals' to draw into the process, one would have to find other ways to incorporate these voices. In that case a second-best option might be focus groups with new residents from other parts of the city.

4.7.4 *Linking brand and design*

When the branding process started, the urban designers also made a start on preparatory work. The planning circumstances were such that the urban design process and the branding process were interwoven in a parallel, interactive (back and forth) manner. This is not

an ideal situation. Serial linkage might be preferable, in which case the identity session and its results precedes the urban designing process altogether. The outcome was good in Eendrachtsparkbuurt because the urban designers integrated identity themes in an organic way in their design process. To guarantee a proper connection, a number of meetings between the process moderators of the Holland Branding Group and the design team of Busquets were organised. As a final check, residents were invited to participate in two design workshops. This enabled them to comment on the plan. Nonetheless, a lesson learned is to start early with the common search for a desired identity, to maximise the input to the planning and designing process.⁵

4.7.5 Conditions for success

Branding is not cheap and easy. This way of organising the participation process is resource intensive, in terms of money, effort and co-ordination. Commissioning a specialised office that has both the knowledge and the skills to successfully organise a branding process involves a financial investment that one has to be willing to make. In the case of the Geuzenveld-Slotermeer City District, the question arises whether the same kind of process would be affordable in cases where the renewal area is far greater than the Eendrachtsparkbuurt.

A well conceived process plan – which metaphorically could be denominated as logical ‘process architecture’ – turned out to be an important factor for success. Branding was an important component of a larger process. This being the case, what was expected from participants had to be clear for all those involved, including residents with little education or schooling. It is a general truth that the goals they are moving towards and the rationale behind the set-up of different meetings or other activities have to be obvious to everyone.

4.7.6 Follow-up – citizen involvement

When residents get enthusiastic in meetings such as the identity sessions, it is very challenging to ‘keep things going’ – in other words, to translate the involvement of citizens as experienced into a more permanent neighbourhood network of active and responsible citizens. After the adoption of the urban plan of the Eendrachtsparkbuurt by the City District Council the decision was taken to make an effort to prolong the involvement of residents by setting up new meetings to inform and consult the public about the progress of

detailed designs of individual dwellings and detailed solutions to filling in the public spaces. The intention must be to sustain community involvement after completion of the plan.

4.7.7 Branding – commercial trick or genuine historically rooted participation?

Before starting the branding process, some professionals in the City District had doubts about whether a ‘tool’ like branding would be suitable. They sensed a danger that branding would serve predominantly the commercial interests of the real estate developer of the housing corporation – branding it in order to maximise sales. They envisaged a potential tension with the interests of current residents – their desire to have real influence on the design of the new neighbourhood. Fortunately, branding proved to be a valuable instrument in the process, and participants did not experience a conflict of interest. Perhaps contrary to expectations, after the process the housing corporation was not fully convinced of the usefulness of the brand as a specific marketing tool.

4.7.8 Follow-up – brand management

The production of a ‘brand book’ in which the collectively determined core values are described should not be seen as the end result. In the further development of the neighbourhood, core values have to be kept alive by ensuring that they inform new operational decisions and discussions with all relevant participants.

This might well entail different forms of ‘brand management’, in which elements of the brand are re-asserted or adapted to new circumstances and corresponding new points of view. It is notable that the new brand and identity picked up clues from the historical ambitions of the neighbourhood formed by van Eesteren’s original post-war plan, and this iteration is likely to continue through brand management for the neighbourhood. The process therefore re-contextualised historical ambitions by adapting to new societal challenges, and to this extent can be seen to have some roots in the history of Eendrachtsparkbuurt.

4.7.9 In conclusion

Formulating a threefold participation strategy, in which the adoption of a branding technique became a core element in the planning process, was a truly new experience for the City District. Through this experiment, new ways of engaging citizens emerged, and as a

⁵ This, of course, relates to general points made in the APaNGO First Interim Report, in paragraph 2.2.4, about the timing of involvement

result new qualities could be incorporated in urban design. Of course, some elements could be improved as set out in the lessons above, thus providing the input for this report.

4.8 Epilogue – bottom-up regeneration of Sloterveer

Geuzenveld-Sloterveer's second APaNGO demonstration project is related to the regeneration of Sloterveer, a neighbourhood of approximately 10,000 households covering almost half of the City District area. The Sloterveer regeneration programme began in December 2006. We decided to select participation in the Sloterveer area as our second APaNGO demonstration project. We cannot simply repeat the Eendrachtsparkbuurt participation process in a Sloterveer setting, although we can try to learn from the lessons it offers. The Sloterveer regeneration scheme affects a considerably larger area than the Eendrachtspark neighbourhood. Whereas participation in the Eendrachtsparkbuurt related to the design phase of a well progressed urban plan, in the Sloterveer example we are witnessing the onset of a new planning process.

Nonetheless, benefiting from the experiences and the insights achieved in the Eendrachtsparkbuurt means making informed decisions about:

- the 'architecture' of the whole participation process in relation to the planning targets – this will lead to greater complexity, because the targets are more comprehensive as they relate to a much larger regeneration area;
- the role of the urban identity of the Sloterveer area in the planning and participation process; and
- the appropriate network and outreach strategy to engage all resident communities and other interested parties.

As a result we identified a minimum of three phases in the regeneration process:

- The *first phase* concerns *process design and preparation*. In this phase strategic decisions are taken about the 'architecture' of the participation trajectory.
- The *second phase* consists of a *bottom-up community process*. This leads to the actual regeneration plan for the Sloterveer neighbourhood.

- The whole process is concluded by the *third phase*, in which the different elements of the plan are implemented and realised. We suspect that some regeneration schemes can be implemented quite soon; others, such as more comprehensive refurbishments and/or renovation, or even demolition and building of new houses (when required), will take many years.

4.8.1 Learning from good practice – the 'Wijk aan het Woord'⁶ conference

On 24 January 2007, the City District organised the APaNGO conference 'Wijk aan het Woord'. Apart from considering our own findings in the Eendrachtsparkbuurt, conference debate focused on the exemplary regeneration process that took place in the city of Enschede in the east of the Netherlands. In 2000 a fireworks factory in Enschede – located in the middle of a residential neighbourhood – exploded and destroyed an area of 42 hectares. Soon after this disaster – which took the lives of 23 residents, destroyed or damaged 650 houses and left 1,500 people homeless – politicians from local and national governments stressed the importance of involving the residents when rebuilding the neighbourhood.

Discussions on the Enschede case were triggered by a number of elements – the scope of citizen influence (residents selecting urban designers themselves); the involvement and input of children (thereby also giving opportunities to engage their parents); giving priority to a fully fledged residents' discussion on the regeneration agenda before professionals or councillors intervene; and the diversity of groups involved, such as artists, migrants, the elderly, entrepreneurs and young people. In Enschede this led to high approval rates for both the urban plan itself (327 votes in favour, 3 against) and the process that gave rise to it (87% were happy or very happy with the opportunity to discuss their ideas).

4.8.2 Creating support within the organisation

Inspired by the APaNGO conference debates, the preparation and design phase of the planning process began with two City District meetings: the Ateliers Sloterveer. The purpose of the ateliers was to design a feasible bottom-up approach for participation in the Sloterveer regeneration process.

The first atelier focused on opportunities for and obstacles to a bottom-up approach. Lists of possible partners in the process were drawn up; the integration of the regeneration process

⁶ Which can be translated as 'The neighbourhood speaks'

within ongoing activities in the area was analysed; and conditions and limitations to be explicitly communicated to all participants of the planning process were established.

The second atelier took place on the streets. To help gain support from external partners for the bottom-up approach, professionals from housing associations, community centres and youth work organisations, representatives from the police etc. joined City District planning and regeneration professionals in a number of walking tours through different parts of Slotermeer, in order to experience at first hand the positive and negative aspects of the neighbourhood.

Furthermore, the Amsterdam Trainee Pool, a group of young civil servants from the City of Amsterdam, carried out a 'sociale strooptocht' ('social raid'). Its objective was to identify key persons in the neighbourhood that should not be overlooked in the bottom-up regeneration process.

4.8.3 Concluding the preparations phase – what will actually happen in Slotermeer?

The consultants responsible for designing and realising the community involvement in Enschede, Joop Hofman Allianties, were commissioned by the City District to provide similar assistance in engaging local communities in the Slotermeer neighbourhood.

Compared with the Eendrachtsparkbuurt a striking difference in the planning and development aims in Slotermeer is that they do not exclusively concern the built environment (renovation, demolition and rebuilding), but instead give high priority to improving the social and economic fabric of the neighbourhood. What facilities and activities are needed? What can be established by the community itself? Where is help needed from the local government, schools and other local organisations?

As a result of atelier discussions the participation process is divided into the following steps:

- **Step 1: Analysis** of existing sources of knowledge; meetings with key professionals working in the neighbourhood.
- **Step 2:** Final **process plan**, including making explicit the division of labour, mutual expectations etc.
- **Step 3:** Activation of the '**mobilising forces**' in the neighbourhood – both residents and

professionals with a large network of contacts who can help secure a high level of community involvement.

- **Step 4:** Determination of the **agenda of the neighbourhood** by organising (about 15) meetings in the neighbourhood at which residents discuss what is good about their environment, and what could or should be improved – with tailor-made activities for specific groups supplementing the geographical approach.
- **Step 5:** First response and discussion by **professionals** in order to confront residents' ideas and preferences with professionals' knowledge and experience – in this phase (which might occur alongside the agenda-setting phase), the first steps are taken towards a realisable strategy.
- **Step 6: First check** by the City District executive, housing association and other key stakeholders on whether the general direction still meets the condition set at the outset.
- **Step 7: Synthesis** of the residents' agenda(s), professionals' views and other input such as research results – with the aim of finding common ground.
- **Step 8: Expert meetings** with a selected group of experts, professionals, residents and others to bring forward creative solutions to obstinate problems.
- **Step 9: Three-day festival (the Slotermeer Carrousel)**, at which plans are presented and discussed and so 'brought to life'.
- **Step 10:** Production of a **draft masterplan**, ready for decision-making by the City District, also containing the first outline of an implementation strategy.

4.8.4 The identity of Slotermeer – applying the lessons learned from branding the Eendrachtsparkbuurt

As described earlier in this chapter, a number of lessons were learned in the Eendrachtsparkbuurt. We have tried to make maximum use of the knowledge we have acquired from the Eendrachtsparkbuurt project within the regeneration process in Slotermeer:

- Start off with the experiences and ideas of residents, *not* with a preconceived and elaborated plan that cannot really be questioned. The Slotermeer process will explicitly start with resident's opinions and

desires, and will also aim to stimulate discussion among residents themselves. Only later in the process will residents' views be confronted with possible professional objectives.

- Diversity in the participants will be ensured by, on the one hand, actively inviting people from different target groups to join both the general sessions and the group-specific sessions attractive to the particular groups in the community; and, on the other hand, by using a lot of active working techniques, preferring visual means over textual ones.
- The neighbourhood agenda-setting (step 4 in the process list above) will be driven by the identity of the area, but will probably not result in a 'branded' specific urban design as in the Eendrachtsparkbuurt demonstration project. Several kinds of meetings and techniques will be used to conceptualise and visualise the future of the Sloterveer area. It is unlikely that all future elements can be summed up within a single 'brand' – something that the Eendrachtsparkbuurt experience shows was not achieved there either, as demonstrated by the housing association declining to use the 'brand book' as a marketing tool. In Sloterveer a section of the neighbourhood has been given the status of a 'Van Eesteren Museum' (named after Van Eesteren, the famous urban designer of the 'Western Garden Cities' of Amsterdam), and so this section is subject to strict rules prohibiting change to the layout of large sections of the area and preserving the architectural integrity of many individual building blocks. Thus both history and the neighbourhood agenda will contribute to any new emerging identity. At this stage it has not yet been decided how this new complex identity will be connected to the urban design phase of the planning process. It might well be the case that elements of the above described branding technique will be used at that stage, to ensure that a proper connection is established.

4.8.5 Advice from the APaNGO partners

The above ten-step approach to the participation process, consisting of a network and outreach strategy and elements of an identity-led planning approach, was presented to the APaNGO Steering Group meeting of 2-4 July 2007. In the ongoing planning process the

following helpful comments made by the APaNGO partners will receive careful attention:

- **Develop an exit strategy:** An ambitious participation process creates high expectations among residents and other participants. This forces the organising party to make clear what will happen with participation outcomes, *and* what will happen after the process has ended.
- **Be explicit about responsibilities:** The City District and housing associations do not always share the same interests. It should be clear to residents and other participants who is finally responsible for decisions.
- **Keep a proper balance between the process budget and spending of direct benefit to residents:** Hiring a consultancy company to organise the process is necessary, but this should be matched with substantial budget for residents to decide upon. If not, people will find it hard to understand why a lot of money is spend on 'overheads', and so little to the benefit of neighbourhood residents themselves.
- **Look for quick wins:** When people see that ideas are realised quickly, they will see that participating actually makes a difference, and so will want to become more involved in the process.
- **Include residents in the steering committee:** See if the institutional partners will agree to invite residents onto the steering committee, thereby giving them real influence on strategic decisions.
- **Put real power in residents' hands:** For example, offer a group of residents the 'ownership' of a partial project.
- **Invest in residents' skills:** Ensure that residents have recourse to training and advice, so that they are and feel qualified to give informed opinions and make decisions.
- **Acknowledge the housing associations' enduring involvement:** Most housing associations have a long history of involvement in the areas in which they have real estate property. The City District should acknowledge this, thereby trusting the housing associations' real commitment to neighbourhood improvement.

5

stichting sens unique and stevin huizenblok – two of the many stories about the eu presence in brussels

APaNGO Demonstration Projects – Brusselse Raad voor het Leefmilieu

By Hilde Geens

5.1 Introduction

Participation in the planning processes for the area in Brussels in which the main institutions of the European Union (the Council of Europe, the European Commission and the European Parliament) are located has been complex and challenging for all involved. This APaNGO demonstration project is designed to evaluate some of the major initiatives undertaken by community groups since the 1980s (supported by Bral, an APaNGO partner) to gain effective involvement in planning for this unique neighbourhood.

This chapter describes the very particular conditions in this locality, in which local community participation, and the interests of local residents, come into close proximity with developments of international importance and national, regional and local investment. The deeper evaluation of these activities will not be completed until September 2007, so this interim summary describes only two of the many local community initiatives that took place in the area, and identifies some interim conclusions.

5.2 The European quarters in Brussels

The area in which the institutions of the European Union are located is less than one square mile in size and is largely situated in the Leopold district, just outside (to the east) of the historic heart of Brussels. This district was developed during the 19th century as a residential area for the affluent 'Brusselaar' (typical Brussels inhabitant). The original

buildings are stately mansions, some of which have been kept, but are still not protected. Two broad avenues connect the European district with the heart of Brussels: the Rue de la Loi and the Rue Belliard. The Leopold district itself is situated within the city limits of Brussels, but some of the European institutions (the European Parliament and some of the



Bral / vzw

Above

The EU institutions are situated in a 19th century neighbourhood in Brussels

Commission's buildings) have settled in the two neighbouring municipalities of Ixelles and Etterbeek.

From the very beginning, the development of the buildings for the EU institutions has lacked

a strategy and any planning by the Brussels and Belgian authorities, or by the institutions themselves. The result has been significant *ad hoc* development, often led by private developers.

Since the State reforms at the end of the 1980s, the responsibility for spatial planning in Brussels has been divided between three policy-making bodies: the Federal State, the Region of Brussels, and the 19 municipalities. The three main European institutions act autonomously and without mutual co-ordination. This fragmentation is an important element in the history of planning for the institutions and the districts in which they are located.

The greatest single cause of the lack of planning is embedded in the structure of the EU itself. While decisions regarding the location of the EU headquarters were still pending, a long-term strategy was impossible, and none of the institutions could act as principal in a construction contract. The Belgian Government was apparently very reluctant to act for the same reason. The result was that private developers took control and, through good contacts and lobbying, succeeded in tailoring their projects to the needs of the institutions. However, some masterplanning was attempted, including community participation. The process is described below, and has some important lessons for community participation in high-status circumstances such as these.

5.3 The first masterplan: 1986-87

The first masterplanning attempt was made by the Brussels Government during 1986-87: 'Ruimte Brussel Europa' or 'Espace Bruxelles Europe'. For over a year and a half all stakeholders worked on a masterplan to integrate the new European Council building and the existing Commission buildings in a quality environment. Around 30-35 people met regularly to develop the plan, including representatives of the European institutions, all levels of government, NGOs (including Bral) and local residents. The result was a whole series of measures at different levels, including programmes to make operational plans to renovate housing and to support the development of small businesses. The idea was to invest in the areas around the institutions and then establish buffer zones to stop their expansion. The residents' concerns were that the three European institutions (and associated developments) were all expanding and were likely to merge into each other and squeeze out the local community entirely.

One month before the end of the masterplanning process, leaks of a secret deal between the Brussels Government and a private developer were published in newspapers. This deal was said originally to be about building an International Congress Centre – the Belgian authorities could not be involved in building a Parliament in Brussels because there was as yet no EU political agreement to do so, although everyone knew the building was intended to be used for the European Parliament. This building was outside the masterplanning zone, on the far side of the buffer. One of the main purposes of the masterplan had been lost. There were even suspicions that the whole consultation exercise had been a smokescreen; certainly it became clear that the deal to focus on a site and building outside the masterplan area, beyond the buffer zone, had been on the table from about half way through the masterplanning process.

Local NGOs and communities fully supported the principle that Brussels should house the European Parliament and become a 'European Capital'. The voluntary and community bodies had put in an enormous amount of (almost entirely unpaid) time, had learned to manage and understand huge quantities of information, and had been committed to playing their part in what was seen as a very positive way forward. However, the perceived dishonesty of the participation process in which they had been involved left them feeling completely betrayed.

The masterplan was completed, in spite of the problems. However, there was still a lot of work for the public authorities to do to translate it into the necessary operational plans, and all the planning energy was diverted into the development of the EU Parliament building – outside the masterplan. As the development of the Parliament building continued, there were opportunities for public consultation on the formal planning applications. The requirements in order to obtain a building permit in Brussels are to publicise the application and allow anyone to examine the complete file and make recommendations and remarks, without having to prove or explain their personal interest, in an open meeting. Only then is a decision made.

Although this process guarantees a certain degree of publicity and the opportunity to respond, it remains a very passive and limited procedure. Residents and NGOs opposed some applications, and some were amended (although the extent to which local people's objections influenced those changes are not clear); but all the building permits were granted.

5.4 The concerns of the community

Over the years that the European institutions were expanding in the neighbourhood, the residents had the impression that their living conditions became less and less important considerations. Brussels had decided to integrate Europe within the city, instead of creating a new district outside the city as Luxembourg chose to do. But the community felt that in any conflict the European institutions were always given the highest priority. For example, in the 1970s several residential blocks next to the Berlaymont (Commission) building were expropriated to allow for possible expansion. Such expansion never occurred, but the indecision remained for years, blighting any chances of regeneration. The developments that did go ahead created increasing traffic and the building sites caused noise and dust – all of which were experienced mainly by the residents. The neighbourhood changed. More and more restaurants and bars came, rents went up, and with the EU came the whole international ‘court’ – lobby groups, press agencies, law firms. The EU was not integrating: it took over. The south of the area was still residential, but in the north the big houses were all taken over by lobbyists and the like. There has been some regeneration in the south and east, but the pressure remains to change family housing into offices and smaller, more expensive flats and apartments.

The various community groups wanted to be involved in the process. They wanted their basic rights and concerns to be taken into account – secure housing rights, the quality of their environment, local community facilities and shops. Their primary concern was not to influence the decision on a particular plan or project; they were demanding that the rapid change of their neighbourhood be guided and controlled under some sort of managed and strategic planning process, and that they would be recognised as one of the stakeholders in that process.

5.5 Community group access to and use of information

The formal creation of the Brussels Region, as part of wider Belgian State reform, was finalised in 1990. By that time, a lot of decisions had already been taken by the Federal Government and its administrations and the European institutions. Various community groups had started to collect detailed technical information about planning issues in the neighbourhood. Some information was collected at the time of a court case in the

early 1980s by local groups (including Bral) against Federal Government plans for a new European Council building in a residential area. Other material was collected as part of the masterplanning exercise in 1986-87. Very little of the information was provided officially; it all had to be researched or was provided by supporters. The community groups were made up of volunteers, and neither they nor the two NGOs supporting them (Bral and its French counterpart Ieb) ever received funding specifically for this work. Nevertheless, the groups were able to publish a whole range of well researched brochures and pamphlets on the issue.

5.6 What happened next?

In 1989, the new Brussels Government stated in its general policy declaration that it would confirm and execute the conclusions of Ruimte Brussel Europa. In practice, the larger follow-up committee (which included residents) held only one meeting, in 1991. At around this time, in the early 1990s, a new umbrella organisation was formed: Co-ordination Europe. This was essentially a federation of local community groups from the area affected by the masterplan and the two NGOs supporting them (Bral and Ieb).

In September 1994 Co-ordination Europe presented its *Assessment of a Forgotten Plan 1987-1994 (Bilan van een Vergeten Studie Ruimte Brussel Europa)*. This assessment described in detail what the conclusions of the masterplan had been, the actions that had been agreed, the results at that moment, and how the different public authorities had acted on it during the past years. The report was painfully negative: not only had not much happened to bring about the promised buffer zones, but there was negligence on other levels, and violations of the law had been tolerated. When the report was published, there was hardly any reaction from the authorities.

Co-ordination Europe decided that it was time to look forward again, and to work out a common programme for the future development of the European neighbourhood from the perspective of the residents.

In contrast to the defensive *ad hoc* responses that had been made during the formal consultation procedures (that were always ongoing), Co-ordination Europe decided to put forward a comprehensive plan in which the European institutions had their place, but which also respected the needs of the neighbourhood. It took a lot of discussions and negotiations

between the different groups to reach a consensus. The unions of the European civil servants were also involved and were co-authors of the resulting manifesto, which was published in three languages (French, Dutch and English) in 1996 as *Europe en Quartiers*, *Wijken voor Europa*, and *Europe: a Living Campus*. It was written and designed very carefully to reach a broad public and today still provides a good overview of a part of the history of the EU in Brussels as experienced by the residents.

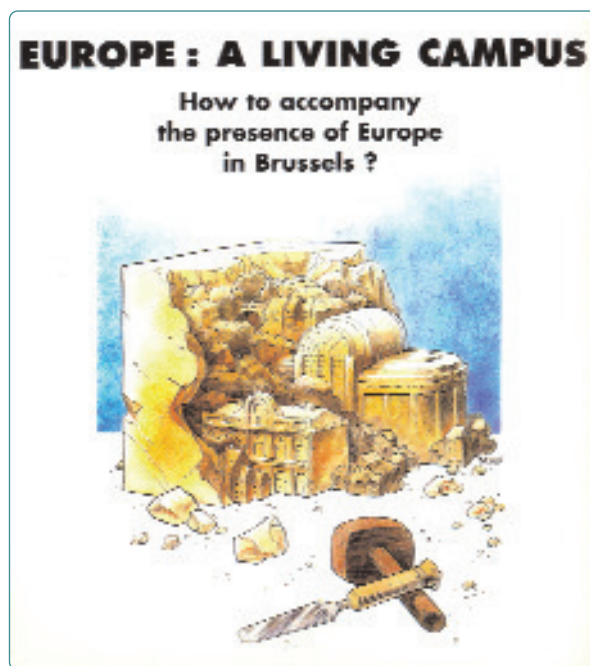
The main purpose of the manifesto was an invitation to the different public authorities involved to re-establish dialogue (which existed during work on *Ruimte Brussel Europa*) to develop a masterplan with all the elements included (and with no hidden agendas such as a European Parliament building agreed behind the scenes) and with all partners involved – the residents as well as the European institutions.

The reactions to *Wijken voor Europa* were friendly and polite. Several of the ideas were repeated later in official plans, but the invitation to work together was not taken up immediately. In the meantime, other activities were pursued, through *Stichting Sens Unique* and *Stevin Huizenblok*, both of which are described in detail below. In summary, in two different locations and with different goals, two groups of outsiders squatted on sites at a sensitive location in the neighbourhood. One (*Stichting Sens Unique*) put a circus tent on vacant lot next to the European Council, and the second (at *Stevin Huizenblok*) involved occupation of one block of the five blocks of expropriated buildings behind the Berlaymont (the European Commission building).

5.7 Stichting Sens Unique

The name *Sens Unique* (One Way) refers to the two main roads that link the European Quarter with the city centre, which are both busy one-way boulevards. The name also refers to the one-way, top-down decisions that always seem to be made about the European neighbourhood.

Various groups in Brussels from outside the EU neighbourhood – mainly young people (students, artists) – who were offended by the way things were going and wanted to express their disagreement in a public way. This was not the first time that such public protest had taken place. Two years before, a group had squatted in an empty hotel in the centre of the city and had repeated the action the next year. Following by then what was almost a tradition,



Above

The vision of Co-ordination Europe is still very relevant

another group set up *Stichting* ('Foundation') *Sens Unique*. A couple of months earlier a major local event had been held in the neighbourhood: 'Suite Jourdan Suite', involving local residents, civil servants from the European institutions and others working together to rehearse and put on concerts, join choirs, run events in private houses etc. All this built local networks and relationships so that the *Sens Unique* group was able to mobilise local interest more easily.

The trigger for the action was the announcement of the sale of several public buildings in the neighbourhood. The properties were all promised for housing but were to be sold at market value without restrictions.

In a very limited time, and after consultation with local groups, a campaign was launched. For one week (in January 1997) a circus tent was set up on one of the vacant sites that was to be sold. During that week, cultural happenings and debates around the subject took place inside and outside the tent. A small group of young people lived there for the whole week to draw attention to the properties that were squatted.

Two weeks earlier, the group had distributed empty boxes in the neighbourhood and asked people to 'do something' with the boxes that represented their feelings about the EU presence and return them later. They could paint them, draw on them, use them as scale models etc. It was not a huge success, but it gave a link to what was happening in the tent. The presence and activity in the tent were the

responsibility of the young people; the link with the overall issue and the extensive research that was available was made by Co-ordination Europe.

The action started with a press conference highlighting strong research documents that demonstrated that the public sale meant another set of broken promises. In the tent was a scale model of the neighbourhood made by Coordination Europe and illustrating the main themes of *Wijken for Europa*. The model itself was proved to be a useful instrument to start a discussion with visitors to the tent.

The overall goals of Sens Unique were:

- to bring about some form of overall co-ordinated comprehensive planning in the EU area – including through the appointment of a ‘Miss/Mister Europe’ (a person – or organisation – to co-ordinate the overall planning of the European quarter);
- to keep the public properties in the public domain;
- to achieve a long-term solution for block 3 (Stevin Huizenblok); and



Bral/vzw

Above

European Commissioner Liikanen is one of many to have visited Sens Unique

- to win political support for meeting the needs of the neighbourhood.

The physical and unusual presence on such a prominent site during that one week gained more public attention and political reaction than initiatives in all the years before. Several politicians from the Federal and Brussels Governments and the European Parliament visited the tent, questions were asked in the Brussels Parliament, and public promises were made. After a week of freezing in the tent the young people went back home. For Coordination Europe, the week led to months of work in following up all that had happened.

One of the results of the campaign was the formalisation of consultation between local residents groups, the local authorities and the European Commission, through the Comité de Suivi. This worked well for over two years, based mainly on personal goodwill. But after a while the public authorities started to drop out, and decisions were regularly made outside the consultation group. It became clear that there was no guarantee that anything the group decided would be implemented, and there was no feedback on what was done (or not done). The residents groups themselves started to experience consultation fatigue, and eventually the Comité de Suivi was no longer convened.

5.8 Stevin Huizenblok

The project on Stevin Huizenblok was a more practical immediate result of the Sens Unique action. It became possible because of the media and political attention won by Sens Unique and the follow-up by Co-ordination Europe, which brought in extra financial support.

The history of this residential block was already quite remarkable when the project started. As mentioned above, in the early 1970s five residential blocks were expropriated in case the expansion of the EU institutions took place in that area. The Brussels city authorities took over the management of the buildings, and residents were allowed stay in their homes if they wished. Those who did leave were replaced by others who were looking for cheap housing. They were never given a decent lease and were warned that they would have to leave at one month's notice if necessary. This situation lasted for several years. One block was demolished to create a car park and a park. In the early 1980s the tenants were given notice to leave on two occasions, and twice it was withdrawn after protest. In 1981 it was finally decided that expansion of EU institutions

would take place elsewhere, and the expropriation was cancelled. The city administration decided to sell two of the blocks, without restrictions on later use. Predictably, this led to speculation and the blocks remained empty for a long period (for several years). The buildings are now studios and flats.

Block 3 was never sold and became part of a real estate deal between the City of Brussels and the Federal Government involving the sale of the block along with several other properties in the city centre, which would then be renovated by a private contractor. However, problems arose, followed by a court case; the contractor lost interest and the city authorities did not receive the money it needed to close the deal with the Federal Government. Although the deal was made official by publication in the *Law Gazette*, it was never completely finalised. As a result, neither the city authorities nor the Federal Government would accept responsibility for the block. No serious maintenance had been done since the 1970s, and the homes were in poor condition. The tenants had no leases and no-one to help them. Putting an end to this situation that was one of the four goals of Sens Unique.

In the middle of 1997, the Woonbureau Stevin (the tenants group for the Stevin block) was accepted as a project by the Flemish local government body concerned with support for community groups, which meant that Bral could be funded to provide direct help to the group. The block had 37 homes. Some were empty, but 45 families (173 people) lived in 24 of them. A full-time member of staff worked on the project for over two years. The goals of the group were:

- to gain a clear decision about the ownership of the buildings and obtain normal leases;
- to bring about a formal decision on the need to renovate the buildings, including higher public financial support than normal; and
- to get the renovation started and provide a decent home within the block for every family that wanted to stay.

The first priority was to bring everybody together to try to find a collective solution for the problems. All residents became members of a new organisation in which all the decisions were discussed and taken collectively. It is always important to have an organised group of this sort to engage in a dialogue with the City or the Federal Government, or to win outside support or solidarity or media attention.



Bral vzw

Above

Many town houses in the last of the Stevin blocs are still awaiting renovation

The organisation worked on a scenario to relocate all the families in a decent home, preferably within the same block. All the possibilities of renovation with public support were investigated and discussed with every family on an individual basis. The families' need for space and their ability to rent or buy were taken into account. This scenario was discussed and refined at (at least) monthly meetings. Since costs were such an important issue, Bral helped the group to undertake its own very detailed financial analysis of the whole operation. Bral also started discussions with housing corporations to find out if they would be willing to invest in the block, and received positive responses on the condition that the owner agreed.

After feedback from the families, and with the support of housing corporations, the group was able to work out a plan to finance the renovation of the whole block, including the empty buildings, and to relocate all the families. All the families signed up to a charter which outlined the conditions and principles that would apply to the management of the buildings once the renovations were complete. The group asked the Federal Government for permission to use an empty building as a community centre (for group meetings, after school activities, computer training, a gym for mothers etc.), and that was agreed.

In the meantime, lobbying continued to try to force a decision about ownership, and finally, after a year, the city authorities took responsibility for ownership of the block. At the same time, agreement was reached to provide increased public financial support for renovations to the building. The residents group then formally presented their renovation scenario to the city authorities to allow them to get the renovation work started.

The day after the official presentation of the scenario, all the residents received notice to

leave the buildings within six months. The City, as the new owner, still planned to sell the block, as part of the same deal with the Federal Government that had been negotiated earlier. The timing could not have been worse; it was just before the summer holidays, when most of the families were leaving to visit their relatives in Morocco. Extensive political lobbying, discussions in the Brussels Regional Parliament and even the support of the unions had not been able to influence the city authorities. Even the use of the community centre was forbidden.

The City refused to recognise the residents organisation and wanted to negotiate only with individual families. Furthermore, the City was using a very old list of residents, and the people that had moved in over recent years were denied any financial support. The negotiations were slow and complex and required a lot of individual feedback to the families (many of whom were not able to fully understand the situation). Under pressure, the City agreed to discuss a possible sale to the residents, but the financial conditions were impossible. Over the following months, almost all the residents became discouraged and left. The buildings were sold at market value and renovated using the increased public support that the group had negotiated. Several of the homes are now studios and flats instead of the family homes that had originally been stipulated in the sales contract.

The whole process had lasted over three years. During the first two years the intensity of involvement was very high, with monthly and sometimes even weekly meetings. As long as a positive result was still a serious possibility, involvement stayed high; but once it became clear that all the effort would have no or even a negative result, the motivation disappeared.

5.9 Main findings

- **Local focus:** Both Sens Unique and Stevin had a local focus – on specific buildings in a relatively small neighbourhood. The initial focus for the campaigns was to stop the eviction of tenants and the sale of the buildings, but the wider issue was the lack of structured involvement of local people in the future of their neighbourhood. The local focus of the groups and the community campaigns was only part of the story though, because the buildings and the neighbourhood had wider importance: it was essentially a conflict between, on the one hand, the regional and even national importance of Brussels as the EU

headquarters and, on the other, the survival of a community in its local neighbourhood.

- **Depth of involvement:** Both campaigns were bottom-up: both were developed by local residents and their own local organisations. In Sens Unique, the local community initiative was supported by young people and artists from elsewhere in the city. In the Stevin campaign, all the residents were active members of the organisation and all decisions were made by consensus. Such an approach is very time-consuming for the support bodies, and can really only work on a relatively small, local scale.
- **Timing of involvement:** The timing was determined by the residents and their support organisations and their action to get decisions made or changed. The difficulty was that the City and Federal Governments were working to parallel programmes and timetables that were not shared.
- **Continuity of involvement:** Although Sens Unique was a time-limited campaign of just one week, it was based on activities carried out over previous years. The consultation



Bral/vzw

Above

During five editions of Suite Jourdan Suite, residents and Eurocrats came together over music

with the public authorities and even with the EU that followed continued for over two years. In Stevin, it lasted for around three years. The continuity of involvement remained with the residents, and with Bral as the support organisation. Many individuals were involved throughout – unlike their counterparts in the public authorities, who tended to change jobs and were thus not often involved for very long.

- **Clarity:** The problem for all these community activities was that they fought for involvement, and although some consultation mechanisms were indeed put in place, the roles and limits of these mechanisms were never fully agreed between all parties – and certainly not kept to by the public authorities which entered into consultation with community groups but had then kept information hidden and held separate negotiations with others that completely undermined the consultation processes. Even when some public authorities appeared willing to negotiate with the residents, others did not, and it was never clear who would make the final decisions. There was essentially no transparency or openness throughout.
- **Who was or should have been involved:** In general, the neighbourhood around the EU institutions is a middle class area in which the residents mainly defended their interests without external support, always aiming to work in alliance with the EU civil servants. The Stevin block had become run down, with a community that was disadvantaged in terms of the legal security and condition of their housing, language difficulties and broader exclusion – not least as a result of years of uncertainty and bad management by the public authorities. Here, the strength of the action was based on the collective efforts of all residents working together and by consensus. Although actions were also community based in Sens Unique, there was an external trigger, bringing in new energy and providing a new impetus for further community action through the involvement of outsiders (the artists and young people).
- **Information available:** Sens Unique, the follow-up consultation and Stevin were provided with almost no official information to support their work. Bral and the residents nevertheless worked very hard to research information (often quite technical information) to support their campaign. For example, they gathered evidence that showed that the sale of two of the buildings was highly questionable, and the sale was

subsequently stopped. Information was also used to produce booklets and pamphlets to gain wider support, all of which took considerable time and money.

- **Supportive attitudes:** The public authorities were supportive in short bursts; they engaged in consultation, but it seems that they never had any intention of changing their original decision to sell the buildings for private development.
- **Resources:** All the residents groups were voluntary and had no paid staff. The two federations supporting them (Bral and Ieb) have professional staff, but initially no resources were available for this work under their existing funding arrangements. Later, Bral was funded to provide staff support to the group at Stevin, which was enormously useful.
- **Motivation of those involved:** For Sens Unique, the motivation was about improving the quality of life in the neighbourhood, and being involved in decisions about the management and future development of the area. In Stevin it was the basic survival of the community – a decent home with a normal lease after years of uncertainty. It was these powerful drivers that kept local residents involved for as long as there was a chance that they might achieve their goals.

5.10 Overall findings and preliminary conclusions

Some positive results were achieved by Sens Unique. The campaign was short, intense and unusual and won media attention. It was different from the usual press release or brochure: it demanded a reaction. With clearly defined goals (stopping the sale of the four buildings), an immediate result was possible. The sale did not proceed, but this was not a final result. When important things are at stake – real estate, property values etc. – the stakes change. Decisions are made behind closed doors and the general public does not have the same influence. The group was always aware that the different parties here were not at all equal, and sensed that some things may not be open to influence.

On the other hand, Sens Unique made an opening for a dialogue between the different partners involved. A 'Miss Europe' was appointed, although in practice she had only a supporting role in the Comité de Suivi rather being a strong co-ordinator with real responsibilities and power. The Comité de Suivi,

with its regular meetings between the Brussels and Belgian authorities, EU institutions (mainly the European Commission) and representatives of the residents, was formalised and received professional support from Miss Europe. After some months it was clear that this was not enough. Nobody had the authority to make sure that the partners would still attend the Comité, that the decisions were implemented, that everything at stake would be discussed in the Comité, or that some members would not undermine the collective agreements by making other decisions. In a complex situation, decision-making and implementation is difficult. When it is not clear when and how a decision will be taken and implemented, it is hard to organise participation.

In Stevin it was, at the start, a lack of respect for the people involved, combined with a lack of co-ordination between two public authorities, that made that the situation last all those years. In the end there was a clear political choice made to attract different people to that neighbourhood. Perhaps the scale was too small and the situation too particular to be able to gain enough support to change this specific political choice.

The lessons from all this activity will be fully identified when the evaluation by Bral is complete. At this stage it is already possible to draw some interim conclusions.

It is possible to get a community campaign like Sens Unique up and running and to achieve some short-term gains, including increased local enthusiasm and publicity. But there needs to be investment in following up these sorts of short-term actions. This follow-up is less exciting, is very demanding, and takes a lot of commitment to keep pushing and watching the situation. In a complex and long-term situation such as this, it is almost impossible to build on the initial flurry of activity and keep community action going – or to identify and achieve the

short-term goals and successes that are so important to community morale. It is very easy for groups to become disappointed and lose heart.

More specifically, it is extremely hard to consolidate the achievements of community action and build on them. When unions campaign for change, their activities are embedded in formal structures and legal agreements. Community groups have to start from scratch every time. There is legislation underlying planning laws about the provision of information to communities, but that is often interpreted at the most basic level. The groups have to constantly push for consultation, and have to be constantly vigilant to resist what has been agreed subsequently being withdrawn. For most people, this all has to be done in their spare time – when they have finished working, studying, caring for children or whatever. The slightest domestic problem can remove this time for community action entirely – in contrast to those professionals who are consulting communities as part of their paid daily work. Such inequalities are commonplace in community participation and are often overlooked, but they serve to increase the burden on the few people who do keep active, and they increase the risk of fatigue and burn-out.

In this case, the main attention and resources of the public authorities were invested in the needs of the EU and the way they could be met in Brussels. With the complexity of the Belgian situation and of the EU itself, and given the powerful position of the private sector, that was already a big task. The needs of the local community are different and need a different approach, based on a commitment to real, honest and transparent participation. Even the greater resources of the public authorities were not adequate in this case to achieve effective participation in this neighbourhood.

6

community media as public space and social infrastructure

APaNGO Demonstration Projects – Spectacle Productions

By Mark Saunders

Spectacle has a long history of establishing and supporting participatory community media workshops in areas of urban change.

Through Spectacle's workshop process, residents make their own videos, acquire skills and develop their own uses for media as a public space. The positive effects of Spectacle workshops during production occur behind and in front of the camera and, after production, through screenings and discussions.

By recording their neighbourhood participants not only contribute to the history of their neighbourhood and community but also, through screenings, participants positively intervene in the regeneration discourse. Both the production and viewing processes help to promote communal activities that cut across the usual divisions of age, ethnicity and religion and stimulate unmediated communication within communities. The use of media technology facilitates better engagement conditions through visually communication of the message across local and global boundaries.

Compared with the usual methodologies for stimulating participation that are generally based on meetings, video workshops provide an activity-based environment. It is our experience that people who may never attend a meeting will engage in video workshops. People who at the level of community politics may be oppositional to each other have participated and worked together in our workshops.

Spectacle's APaNGO demonstration projects explore the uses of media technology,

particularly by residents, in the context of participation in urban planning.

For the purpose of this chapter, there is a focus on four projects, but Spectacle worked in various locations and sites as part of the APaNGO project, including Ixelles and Rue Laeken in Brussels and Stockwell and the proposed Olympic site in London. Each is at a different point of development on the regeneration timeline. They represent a range of scales and levels of community empowerment. All form part of a regional plan.

6.1 Projects

6.1.1 England

Silwood Estate, London



Silwood Estate is a Single Regeneration Budget¹ (SRB) scheme in Rotherhithe, South East London. Spectacle has been working with residents using video as a tool to document and influence the regeneration since 2001 when the Silwood Video Group was formed.

SRB project start date: 1999

Spectacle's documentation start date: Early 2001

Finish date: Ongoing

¹ This is a form of national funding for regeneration to assist low-income areas. The criteria for funding are less stringent than other forms of funding for regeneration and it attempts to develop local assets through local partnerships. The SRB is administered by Regional Development Agencies at the regional level (the London Development Agency in London)

Marsh Farm, Luton



Spectacle began working with this community in 1994, documenting Exodus's community initiatives for social regeneration on Marsh Farm Estate. Spectacle has made three broadcast documentaries about Exodus, the ground-breaking social direct action group, and has continued to work with residents of Marsh Farm up to the present day. Since 2002, the Marsh Farm Estate has been the focus of a £50 million project through the New Deal for Communities (NDC) regeneration scheme that includes ongoing masterplanning.²

In 2004, Spectacle established the Marsh Farm Video Group. It has already documented the masterplanning consultation and produced a video for neighbourhood renewal supported by the Luton Assembly. The project has been subject to various delays and will continue beyond the time scope of APaNGO.

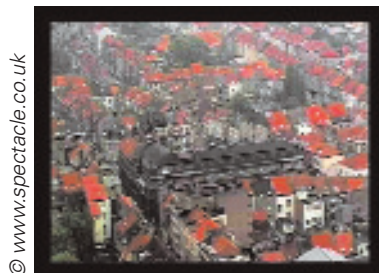
Project start date: 2002

Spectacle's documentation start date: 1994

Finish date: Ongoing

6.1.2 Belgium

St Joost, Brussels



Spectacle, together with PTTL (Plus Tôt Te Laat), started a video workshop group – the PTTL Video Group – in 2000 based in an unemployment office in St Joost, Brussels. The video group documented the resident consultation process of the 'Contrat du

Quartier,' or District Contract, for 2000-03.³ Two films were produced – *Call me Josse* and *La Participation* – which have been screened extensively locally and internationally.

The PTTL Video Group has had its work broadcast, featured in festivals and screened at the Palais des Beaux-Arts, Brussels and the Institute of Contemporary Art in London.

Project start date: 2000

Spectacle's documentation start date: 2000

Finish date: Ongoing

Cité Administrative, Brussels



This is a huge former government office complex in the centre of Brussels, and neighbouring St Joost, that is now empty and about to be developed. Spectacle started 'Open Workshops' on the site and continued them by integrating the group into the PTTL Video Group.

Project start date: 2004

Spectacle's documentation start date: 2004

Finish date: Ongoing

6.1.3 Community relationships

Spectacle had formed relationships with Marsh Farm residents before the regeneration project there commenced and with the Silwood community and Cité Administrative almost at project onset.

6.2 Local focus

Owing to the sheer size of London, its people are less acquainted with neighbourhoods where they do not reside. It is therefore socially and politically fragmented, and residents in one neighbourhood are unlikely to have much knowledge of the others. There

² The New Deal for Communities is a programme to reduce the income gap between Britain's poorest communities and the rest of the country. There are five social ailments that the programme attempts to remedy: poor job prospects, high levels of crime, educational under-achievement, poor health, and problems with housing and the physical environment. The NDC is part of the National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal

³ The 'Contrat du Quartier' (District Contract) is a revitalisation programme initiated by the Region of Bruxelles-Capitale that works in partnerships with local communities. The programme consists of nine months of preparation, a four-year implementation, and then a subsequent two-year follow up phase

tends to be obscure and inaccessible layers between residents and decision-makers.

A feature of Brussels, compared with England, is how near the local power structures and people are to the residents. This has been accomplished even though Brussels is a complex place politically. Within Brussels, there are French and Flemish-speaking communities, and it is subject to local, regional, national and European levels of decision-making.

6.2.1 Silwood Estate

The Silwood SRB⁴ scheme is a small part of the massive regional Thames Gateway plan and a more substantial focus of the Lewisham and Deptford regenerations.

It is also squeezed between two commercially-driven developments in Surrey Quays (docklands) and the proposed Millwall Football Club schemes.

One drawback of the project is that the residents were not consulted and were often ignorant about the larger over-arching schemes. The community was only made aware of Millwall's plans through the local press, even though they are going to be significantly affected. It is a private development, and there does not seem to be any consultative mechanisms in place.

6.2.2 Marsh Farm

As the major working class district in a still industrial town (home to Vauxhall Cars and Luton Airport), Marsh Farm and its future has a major influence on the housing situation in the region. A top-down masterplan that reflected this agenda was roundly rejected by the community. The struggle between the community, who have a highly developed

bottom-up regeneration scheme of their own, and the council, which has become the main implementation agency for a top-down masterplan, has been a source of delays affecting our project to set up and support a Marsh Farm Video Group.

It has been remarkable to witness how the £27 million already spent by the NDC has scarcely been able to benefit the community.

6.2.3 St Joost

A feature of St Joost, which was the object of a very local Contrat du Quartier regeneration scheme, was the presence and accessibility of the mayor and his councillors in the neighbourhood. However, like the Silwood scheme, St Joost is a small square in a much bigger grid.



Left

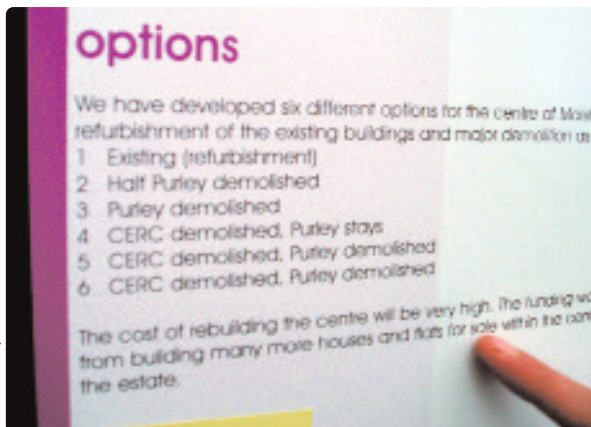
St Joost – false impression of the plan's flexibility

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The community's aspirations were hopelessly let down. In the end, 'back room deals' and horse-trading side-stepped the temporary 'participation' of residents in the scheme.

In Brussels St Joost is famous for its well documented history of mayoral 'clientalism'. The wishes expressed by residents through the participation process were either ignored or unilaterally 'interpreted' by the mayor. As final decision-maker, the mayor, a jazz lover, installed a jazz organisation in one District contract building and interestingly a video project from outside St Joost in the 'community centre'.

Some residents complain that the Contrat du Quartier actually served as an exhausting diversion from plans being hatched in the neighbouring European Quarter that would negatively impact their neighbourhood. In our film *La Participation* (see the Spectacle catalogue at http://www.spectacle.co.uk/catalogue_index.php), the community representatives expressed total 'participation fatigue'. However, the video project revitalised the group. Spectacle and PTTL have the intention to follow this up with a new film during 2007/08.



Above

Masterplanner's choice reflected in 'options' 5 and 6

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⁴ Single Regeneration Budget, a UK government scheme to tackle the physical and social decline of impoverished urban areas through direct funding of physical infrastructure

6.2.4 Cité Administrative

This is a functional government office complex built in the 1960s that is no longer in use. At the start of the project the main issues were: who will make decisions on its future, on which masterplan, and who should be consulted.

The initiative is in the hands of the regional government. The private owners (Dexia bank and Breevast) are of course also involved. Because of its size and its central location a change of use of this empty complex could create all kinds of potential, including a finger park extending from the Botanique Park to the Cathedral.



© www.spectacle.co.uk

Above

Cité Administrative gardens

The complex consists primarily of offices and a few shops. Lower down the hill and nearer the centre are a few social housing blocks, but the area was designed for and used by commuting bureaucrats.

St Joost, the biggest nearby residential area, is one of Brussels' poorest and densest and lacks open or green spaces. The majority of the young people who used the Cité Administrative gardens and fountain areas in the summer evenings and at weekends resided in St Joost. The site also had one of the biggest public open spaces in Brussels, with a magnificent view across the city that attracted some tourists; however, skateboarders were the most persistent users.

The Cité Administrative therefore is a project of great concern and interest, but with no clearly defined constituency. In August 2004 Spectacle, together with our Brussels partner PTTL, ran a series of workshops on the site including the week-long 'Open Workshop' as part of the PleinOpenAir04 film festival event. There was a great diversity in the workshop – 19 attendees spoke 17 languages between them. The film *Cité Admin* (see the Spectacle

catalogue at http://www.spectacle.co.uk/catalogue_index.php) grew out of this workshop.

6.3 The model used for workshops: Silwood

The Silwood Housing Estate Video Project proposal detailed below is the basic model used in all of the Spectacle workshops. One key factor, essential to the success of participation, is the extent to which the project is supported by the residents.

The proposal is based on the experience and knowledge gained through Spectacle's successful pilot project and proposes a partnership between Spectacle Productions, Groundwork Thames Gateway London South, the Silwood Single Regeneration Budget Team, London Borough of Lewisham, and the community.

The main project goals are listed below.

The Video Project

Project aim

To train residents to film and edit video footage and through this, capture the changing physical and human face of the estate.

Through the pilot, it has been recognised that the scheme has considerable potential to help tackle some of the issues prevalent on the estate and thus incorporates these within its aims:

- **Eliminate barriers between residents across ethnic, generational and socio-economic lines:**

Significant tensions currently exist between different groups on the site. Racism is unfortunately experienced by some residents. A sense of community will not be created without first breaking down



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Above

Silwood Video Goup editing



Above

Stockwell Video Goup

some of this resistance and encouraging greater interaction between different generations and ethnic groups.

Through training workshops, residents of all ages and backgrounds will learn to film and edit video footage. As well as directly working and interacting together at the workshops, part of their duties will be to interview residents and 'officials' working on the estate. A young person may interview an elderly person to understand life on the estate when it was built; a black person may interview a Vietnamese to gain their perspective. Another resident may interview the Head of Regeneration at the council or their local councillor.

As this continues throughout the life of the project, Spectacle hopes to encourage people to interview people removed from their normal social interaction. This will create some understanding and recognition between the different groups.

- **Provide a voice for people's thoughts, opinions and concerns:**

While the majority of residents support the development of the estate, there are currently few outlets for residents from marginalised groups to express either their excitement about the development of a new estate or to grieve for the loss of their old way of life in a suitable way. Many people are being uprooted from their homes, and understandably are concerned at the prospect of great change. The video gives people the opportunity to express their thoughts and concerns.

The video also acts as a conduit to convey ideas and opinions in a relaxed way. Many people do not participate in more traditional consultation methods, such as public meetings and questionnaires. Even those that do attend may not feel comfortable articulating their thoughts in front of an audience.



Above

Marsh Farm residents interview Marsh farm residents

The video provides a mechanism to interview people informally on their own terms, perhaps in the local café or on the street. This can be a much more effective way for people to feel able to voice their opinions. As the interviews will often be undertaken by another resident, this may also create greater empathy and understanding than if interviewed by a stranger.

The video footage taken by participants will then be screened at regular public events on the estate. This will enable all residents to view the work and spark debate in a way that more traditional consultation techniques often cannot achieve. As individuals have a natural interest in seeing themselves and friends on film, attendance levels at such events are much higher.

- **Confidence and self-esteem development:**

Through the ongoing training and interview process, the video project will give people more genuine participation in the regeneration scheme and will support them in building their confidence, co-operation and interpersonal skills. As most people have no experience using video, it is also a great 'leveller', allowing everyone to take part, without fear of lack of ability.

It is envisaged that as the project progresses, participants will acquire greater control over the project and its management. At the beginning, the scheme requires a lot of input from external agencies for capacity-building and training; as participants gain in confidence and ability, it is hoped they will be able to run the project with minimal external assistance, apart from technical training.

For those individuals wishing to progress beyond the scope of the project, they will be supported to pursue further skills and qualifications in associated areas of work.



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Above

Silwood Video Group – passing on skills

- **Create a social history document:**

The video will provide a permanent archival document highlighting the regeneration process over seven years. The video will be available for regeneration practitioners and residents alike.

Project delivery

The project will incorporate the following elements:

- **Scheme promotion:**

Ongoing outreach and promotion of the video project will attract residents to take part. It is envisaged that a core group of participants will develop, maintaining a constant involvement throughout the scheme's life. Other people will join and leave as appropriate to their level of interest and life stage, and this natural turnover is inevitable in any long running scheme.

- **Training workshops:**

Throughout the duration of the project there will be regular workshops to train participants in both technical and interview skills. Technical components will include use of the video camera, ensuring quality sound and lighting and editing footage. Training in interview techniques will help participants build confidence to deal with a wide range of interviewees and gain skills in drawing out individual concerns and issues.

- **Community interviews:**

Armed with their skills developed in the training workshops, participants will interview a wide variety of community members and officials. There will be opportunities for young people to interview older people; community members to interview partner agencies and each other. Some residents will be interviewed regularly throughout the project to chart changes in personal feelings as the regeneration programme progresses.

- **Video documentation:**

As well as interviews, residents will film the estate and the surrounding area to



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Above

Stockwell Video Goup interview

illustrate the changing physical state. In its entirety, the film will carry the viewer through demolition phases to the building phase and through to the completed and new estate. Footage will also be taken of the public meetings and other estate events such as local football matches, fun-days or youth club sessions to illustrate the interaction of the community with the development.

- **Public screening events:**

Throughout the filming process, regular public screening events will be held so that all residents can view the footage, make comments and suggest where edits can be made. As well as promoting the video scheme to new participants, these events will help raise awareness of the progress of the estate, consult residents and encourage participation in all aspects of the regeneration programme. Through the video interviews, residents' concerns will also be highlighted to partner agencies, such as the housing associations.

- **Production of archival video:**

After the final edit and at the completion of the project, a high quality, professional video will be made freely available to community members, key regeneration partners, local libraries, universities and schools.

The value of video is in its flexibility as a medium. This project is part of a response to many different factors, not least the regeneration programme itself and the views of residents. As development progresses, the project can easily adapt and respond to changing conditions, perhaps by increasing the number or type of sessions and events offered. This plan therefore can be seen as a 'working' tool and will respond as circumstances evolve.'

Submitted by Groundwork TGLS

6.4 Lessons learned

6.4.1 Implications for project continuation when funding has ceased

One of our strategies has been to continue a project even when funding may have finished. This is in the belief that funding will follow a flourishing project and that activity sustains a group. Although this is not sustainable over long periods of time, it is a strategy that accounts for the long duration of our workshop projects.

Most of the groups have succeeded in attracting funding beyond the original funding period, normally in the form of project funding. However, in Brussels the PTTL Video Group has effectively created a cultural enterprise whereby its activities have led to work being commissioned and broadcast. Operating in a smaller city means there is a great deal of cross-over. PTTL's resource base has now moved from St Joost to Midi, from one side of central Brussels to another. While in London this would seriously affect the demographic of attendees, in Brussels it appears not to have affected attendance or participation.

The success of Spectacle projects is greatly increased when there is support on the ground in the form of either a physical base or a key video person, as there is with PTTL in Brussels. A group can survive for a long time simply through the demand and activity of residents. Without this kind of support, such as on the Silwood project after the Cyber Centre closed and local funding stopped, the project becomes dependent on Spectacle's active input at every level to function, and this is only sustainable in sporadic bursts.

Silwood Video Group has been sustainable through Spectacle's direction and contribution of resources to the development of the group. For instance, when commissioned to make a

fund-raising video about LOOP (Lifestyles Opportunities for Older People), Spectacle instead ran workshops and made a video *with* LOOP members. For Spectacle it was an extension of our outreach work on the Silwood project, where many of our group members were also LOOP members.

Spectacle has given work placements and part-time employment to residents of the estate – a priority aim of the regeneration process. Silwood Video Group members filmed two conferences organised by the Marsh Farm group, and Spectacle took both these groups to Brussels to work with the PTTL group. It is important for us to find ways to provide some continuity, a strategy that has sustained the Silwood and PTTL groups for the past six years.

In fact, Spectacle has seen a constant changing of regeneration personnel on the Silwood project. Spectacle has been the most constant and enduring community activity on the estate. The work is highly visible; the Silwood Video Group and/or Spectacle have tried to document most of the monthly community regeneration meetings.

Spectacle's activities continue today, and recently the Silwood Youth Project commissioned Spectacle to run a series of music video workshops with Silwood rappers – one participant remembers Spectacle from when he was 14. The Silwood Youth Project is seeking additional funding.

6.4.2 Relationship-building

The building of relationships between Spectacle as 'outsiders' and residents is important for the success of the projects. While it clearly requires that Spectacle is funded to support the group, our relationship to the participants needs to operate beyond and outside of client/provider economics. In reality, funding for video projects is rarely at a level where survival can occur without unpaid or voluntary work. As a means to help bridge the gap between those roles, Spectacle operates open accounting, which is to say that we actively encourage workshop participants to understand and help make decisions about the economics. Open accounting helps to acknowledge and value the unpaid contributions of participants through its definition of the 'other' – what must be paid for, how much and to whom.

We are trying to fight the perception that professionals are involved solely because they are paid. It is important that our scope can last beyond the two- to six-month time frame of funded activities. Unpaid project development,



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Above

LOOP video project

which also thrives better with open accounting, is a necessary part of the 'real world' situation of small independent production companies. We have often involved our users in preparing funding applications.

We are striving to create self-sufficient community media groups: we therefore want all the people involved to take ownership of the project and the work that comes from it. It is in editorial group discussions that issues of boundaries, transparency and openness arise. For residents, the video project is often a tool for exploring those boundaries.



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Above

Silwood, Marsh farm and P TTL Video Groups on live radio in Brussels

For instance, on numerous occasions participants have interviewed regeneration project managers, or have interviewed planners at public exhibitions and events. The presence of a camera and being 'on the record' often serves to clearly define what can and what cannot be said. There is a need to be more precise and avoid casual verbal promises. The response of decision-makers involved in regeneration schemes to residents with cameras often reflects the level of their real ability to participate in meaningful debate and a possible lack of openness and transparency.

It is often the case that councils tend to view video as public relations; something to be managed and kept 'on message'. For Spectacle and our participants it is about having a voice; about those not attending meetings having the chance to express themselves.

These points are made to illustrate that a video project can be a success on almost any social criteria, producing numerous excellent 'outputs'. However, that is dependent on those in control understanding that not having a voice is social exclusion. Community media should be seen as social infrastructure, not about

making films, or the content of any particular film. It is about media as a public space. The more people who participate, the better it works. As Spectacle originally proposed, it should be a partnership.

6.4.3 Addressing social exclusion

Addressing social exclusion is a major aspect of Spectacle's agenda in facilitating workshops. We actively go out to work where the socially excluded or less mobile are found. All activities are free to participants, another reason such work needs to be funded.

Spectacle ensures that regular meeting times are in the evenings and at a time most people can attend. Once a group is established, we will negotiate meeting and workshop times with residents. Activities occur at different times throughout the week, which means most people can find a time that suits them to become actively involved in filming or editing.

Spectacle ensures that participants rotate the role of chair and minute-taker at every meeting. This breaks down the difference between new and old members since rotation occurs frequently. No-one is left to endure a tiresome role for an extended period. During a production period there may be ten hours of planning and editorial meetings or screening discussions in a week. This strategy is extremely effective in helping to bond a group of otherwise disparate people.

Spectacle ensures that groups are not *exclusively* made up of the socially excluded, as this would simply continue the problem. To ensure the mix, it is assumed that the most socially mobile will find us through our publicity and the internet, and conversely we target under-represented groups; we seek out older people or other groups who may have a technophobia or inverted bias, thinking it only for 'other people'.



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Above

Mixed group at a workshop



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Above

Marsh Farm Video Goup record masterplanning event



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Above

PTTL Video Group explore Rue Laeken

Spectacle works a lot on the streets to boost visibility among the community. People see us in operation and see that other local people are operating the cameras or conducting interviews.

At the Marsh Farm Master Planning Day, three of our five young camera operators were on the point of having Anti Social Behaviour Orders and were considered by many local people as 'impossible to work with'. Contrary to what was perceived about the youths, they took care of expensive video equipment and did excellent filming all day, showing great commitment and concentration, filming long discussions between planners and residents. At Marsh Farm, Spectacle held a series of workshops with young people where two of the principal participants were ankle-tagged and at 7 pm would have to leave the workshop to get home in time for their curfew.

Spectacle does not see this work as rehabilitation, youth crime diversions or social work but as community-building. By prioritising social inclusion, Spectacle can bring all residents together through the workshops. There is remarkable diversity in project groups. Silwood Video Group has an age range of 16-66; and the Cité Administrative Open Workshop attracted many immigrants and ethnic minorities: there were 19 people who spoke 17 languages between them. Most regeneration projects aim to address social exclusion. It is disappointing that so little interest or support is given to projects that give people a voice, as this is the essence of social exclusion.

In Brussels there seems to be a more engrained notion that a condition of democracy is in accepting a range of diverse opinions and that people have a right to express them.

Participants in our video workshops are engaged in discussion about planning issues. However, it is often the case they are not particularly interested in planning at the outset. Going out on the streets with a camera (the technique of 'dérive with camera'⁵) is an essential part of our workshops process. It means that people not only have an engagement with their surroundings and the other residents, but they also become very knowledgeable.

This community expertise and knowledge base is an important aspect of Spectacle's work. Not only is there much pooling of information, but new information is produced. Ideas that are often inspiring get disseminated and developed. The Active Archive part of the demonstration project is addressing how to best use digital media technology and computer convergence to usefully service and support this community level of networked information across national borders and linguistic divides.

Recently the Active Archive provided several hours of visual history of the now largely demolished Midi area of Brussels from 2002-03 for use in the film *Dans 10 Jours ou dans 10 Ans...* by Gwenaël Breës, a resident. At its first major screening, it attracted more than 150 local people and stimulated a very animated discussion about an issue considered 'dead and a lost cause'. Other users include Bral, the University of Caen and a variety of international PhD students. Spectacle has also provided Grenoble University Architectural School with a range of material for its distant learning planners' course.

6.4.4 The acquisition of skills

For many, the attraction to the workshops is the acquisition of skills, particularly where opportunities are thin on the ground. Spectacle

⁵ In philosophy, a *dérive* is a French concept meaning an aimless walk, probably through city streets, that follows the whim of the moment. 'Derive with camera' allows people to explore their environment through the camera lens without preconceptions, to understand their location in the city better, and therefore their existence



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Above

Brussels resident using the Active Archive

takes care to create a social space and tries to make it a happy and creative environment. Residents are stimulated and motivated to keep attending exactly because they get to meet a range of people – perhaps people who they might otherwise never meet.

One elderly white woman got to meet her long-time neighbour, a young black woman with a family who lived immediately above her on the next floor, through the video workshops.

People have a whole range of uses of video and information technology, ranging from wedding or birthday videos, to the production of music videos or show-reels, to video for the internet or transferring their family home movies to DVD format. The video workshop, especially if it can establish some kind of resource on the estate, will be a very popular and widely used facility.

6.4.5 Potential of cultural production

There is also potential for cultural production and even occasional cultural enterprise. For example, the films produced by our workshops in Rue Laeken and Ixelles have been broadcast in Brussels. One film, *Quand les Papiers Arrivent...*, an Ixelles spin-off project, has been broadcast nationally. Like Silwood Video Group, PTTL Video Group have had work shown in festivals all over North West Europe. All the films address citizen participation in planning.

6.4.6 Progressive social thinking

On the Marsh Farm Estate, PRP, the masterplanners, had a budget of over a million pounds. The Marsh Farm Video Group filmed the masterplanning event as part of our series of workshops (total budget a few thousand pounds). Spectacle filmed many interviews on the day and produced a DVD. The sentiments and ideas that came across from residents



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Above

£1.1 million spent on the masterplan

interviewing other residents reflected their objection to the main principle of the proposed and imposed masterplan. Two years later, the PRP plan was rejected and the community's own, long fought-for alternative plan was eventually taken on.

This is a classic case of almost limitless resources being put into trying to persuade a community to accept a council-devised scheme by presenting a narrow range of options 'for consultation'.

The conference 'Swimming against the Tide: Regen: From the conventional to the inspirational', that was organised by Marsh Farm Outreach and filmed by Spectacle and Silwood Video Group (see the Spectacle archive at http://www.spectacle.co.uk/catalogue_index.php) was about how poverty on estates can be addressed by self-help and plugging the economic 'leaks', where money flows out of the estate when, for instance, there are no local shops or entertainment or social venues. The idea is that a flurry of investment followed by an investment drought does not seem to be a sensible approach to urban renewal, even if it was all being spent on developing and investing in the long-term future of the area.

This and other forms of progressive social thinking are also ideas that Spectacle wishes to help make available via the Active Archive.

6.5 Conclusion

Definite advantages have emerged from the use of the technique employed by Spectacle to facilitate community participation in the planning process.

The use of media was able to bypass obstacles usually faced by officials that attempt to involve residents in decision-making. Spectacle's work on participatory media is about more than simply making films; it is the basis for social networking, community capacity-building and cohesion. Its starting point is that media is a public space and should be part of social infrastructure.

Oftentimes community groups are not represented proportionally at conventional public hearings. Diversity in participants was a goal, and the atmosphere of openness created a less intimidating environment.

Spectacle video projects address social exclusion and under-representation behind and in front of the camera. Behind the camera they create inclusive, non-hierarchical, socially relaxed work environments. In front, they seek out under-represented voices and the socially excluded. Spectacle actively tries to recruit into the group everyone we meet through our media work.

Spectacle attempts to accommodate the schedules of residents, but one potential barrier to broad involvement is that participants will have to commit more time than if they were to simply attend a community engagement meeting. Video production is time consuming, and those who work long hours to support a family or work night shifts might find it difficult to allocate time to participate in such activity. However, they have the opportunity to contribute to the project in front of the camera or to input into editorial decision-making by home viewing of indexed rushes or simply by attending a screening and discussion.

When the film is complete, it can reach a wide audience. If everyone involved in its making invites just a few friends and family to a local screening, it is quite possible to get audiences of 50-100 people together to discuss the planning issues of the neighbourhood – in a discussion un-mediated by outsiders and professionals, and outside of any existing local political or social frameworks (that may be perceived as exclusionary or cliques).

Video has the capacity to allow people to speak in their mother tongue, and it can be translated and subtitled or over-dubbed. As a visual language, video can often express meaning to those who may not understand all the verbal content of a film.

The creation of films and other media projects also fosters a sense of communal ownership. Participants finish with a concrete product that is the result of their time, energy and passion. This sense of accomplishment is also supplemented by the fact that they have contributed a body of information to community history. If participation is fostered and continued, then a new channel for community participation has been created and will hopefully be sustainable. Additionally, materials created can be consulted by other communities that wish to embark on a similar project or learn about how communities are affected by regeneration projects.

It is hoped that local officials are open to this new kind of community engagement. There is no way to predict how the films produced will be received or if the information delivered through them will be utilised. Residents should ensure that they are being properly made use of by decision-makers.

Residents should be informed about regeneration as a whole. They should be told what is 'good practice' and be provided with good, clear and current information. They should have a clear idea of the parameters and limitations on their ability to make or influence decisions. They should have the opportunity to meet with other residents and discuss a range of other successful regeneration projects. It might be useful to have an independent one-stop information source to advise residents on their rights and obligations, the processes and technicalities, such as section 106 agreements,⁶ and perhaps provide a 'good ideas library'.

Community media is both a public space and social infrastructure. To exist, it needs a little funding support, space for dissent, and greater respect and power given to a community's ability to help themselves and those around them.

How to do this for the 'greater good' should be the subject of urban planning and social development. That is what Spectacle believes is the purpose of participation and the regeneration process.

⁶ Section 106 of the England and Wales Town and Country Planning Act 1990 allows a local planning authority to enter into a legally-binding agreement or planning obligation, with a land developer over a related issue. Section 106 agreements can act as a main instrument for placing restrictions on the developers, often requiring them to minimise the impact on the local community and to carry out tasks, which will provide community benefits

7

analysis of common themes across apango projects

Edited by Gideon Amos and Diane Warburton

7.1 Introduction

The four APaNGO demonstration projects in community participation in planning described in the preceding chapters were all significant (city-wide or regional scale) plans and developments in which the engagement of communities by local and regional authorities was practised to a greater or lesser extent. Beyond this the projects were very different, operating on different timescales and using different techniques. In summary:

- Bral is a Brussels-wide NGO that provides community development support and resources for community groups working on planning issues across the city (in association with their French counterpart Ieb). Their APaNGO demonstration project is an evaluation of community-led campaigns in the neighbourhood in Brussels in which the European Union is located.
- The City District Geuzenveld-Slotermeer Amsterdam local authority (Statsdeel Geuzenveld-Slotermeer) used 'branding' to create community identity and participation in the Eendrachtsparkbuurt neighbourhood. The neighbourhood had poor-quality housing and multiple social problems among a very culturally diverse population with little experience of participation.
- Spectacle is a London-based NGO that works internationally on projects using community-controlled media (especially video) for creating, supporting and documenting community participation in regeneration. Their demonstration project included work with communities in regeneration areas in South London and Luton in England and St Joost and the Cité Administrative in Brussels.
- Planning Aid for London (PAL) is an independent NGO that provides support and advice on planning issues free or at low cost to community and voluntary groups and

individuals. Their APaNGO demonstration project was the development and use of a toolkit for the Greater London Authority to support community participation in the Sub-Regional Development Frameworks of the London Plan.

Each of these demonstration projects has provided a very rich set of data that raise as many questions as they answer. Their diversity means that any attempt to make comparisons or identify good practice has to take context into account. The APaNGO partners therefore worked to identify common issues that emerged across the four demonstration projects, and explored these emerging issues at two symposia with academics and others with experience and knowledge of community participation in planning.

This chapter summarises these common themes, drawing on the written case studies and the symposia discussions that were informed by the APaNGO First Interim Report. The Interim Report presented the findings from desk research and a questionnaire survey of the legislative and regulatory frameworks for community participation in planning in seven countries in North West Europe (Belgium, France, Germany, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, the Republic of Ireland, and the UK). It also identified the techniques being used for community involvement in planning in those countries and the infrastructure of support provided by public, private and voluntary bodies to those communities that want to participate.

The following themes form the basis for this chapter:

- Who is involved?
- Local focus.
- Complexity of 'community' and communities of time'.

- Levels of involvement.
- Timing of involvement.
- Linking participation and decision-making.

The final chapter of this report then identifies some overall conclusions of the APaNGO project, drawing on the research for the APaNGO project as a whole.

7.2 Who is involved?

The APaNGO demonstration projects identified some common concerns about who should participate in planning, in particular related to the interests of democracy and ensuring the poorest and most disadvantaged have a voice.

In practice, the APaNGO projects found that both ethics and the need for effective practice required planning processes that were fair, open and transparent. Only in this way can all sectors of society be included and the resources of all brought together to contribute to better planning outcomes.

The promoters of all the APaNGO projects shared a belief in approaching development questions from the point of view of the existing interests and motivations of local people in order to encourage them to see the relevance of becoming involved.

7.2.1 Approaches to involvement

A variety of approaches to participation were adopted in the APaNGO demonstration projects:

- Bral used community campaigns that were initiated at least in part by, and always run in partnership with, local people. Local residents decided what the campaigns should try to do and were the main activists, with Bral (and Ieb) providing support and advice. Bral worked primarily with local residents, but outsiders also had a role, including young people and artists from elsewhere in the city. The residents also established good working relationships with the civil servants in the offices of the European institutions in the area. All these rather unusual alliances proved very powerful.
- City District Geuzenveld-Slotermeer also ensured that participation started where people were, by investigating (with local people) their experiences and opinions rather than starting with a draft plan or set of ideas for them to comment on.

7.2.2 Reaching the hard-to-reach

All the APaNGO projects found innovative ways of reaching out to the different sectors within their local communities:

- City District Geuzenveld-Slotermeer struggled with who should participate in their planning for regeneration as some of the existing residents were being moved out and may or may not have been returning to the regenerated area. They targeted specific groups of residents identified as frequently excluded from planning processes. For example, they provided video cameras for a group of young residents so they could 'report' on the neighbourhood and the plans for regeneration. They also provided training in participation for Turkish and Moroccan women in the area. This was in addition to working with the main committees for local residents. The City District Geuzenveld-Slotermeer project found that getting a diversity of community groups to participate took a lot of effort and investment but was very worth while in reaching a better cross-section of local people than traditional approaches of simply providing publicity and general invitations.
- Spectacle found it a particular problem (common to many community programmes) to get small businesses to participate alongside residents in their St Joost project in Brussels. They have generally tackled the issue of achieving diversity of participation by choosing to work in areas where socially excluded and less mobile people are found – taking the participation to them, in ways and at times that suit. They have found that working on the street keeps the project visible and continues to generate community interest. Spectacle also found that the potential to learn media skills and techniques attracted different people to become involved in projects, including young people and people with problems of literacy or language. Their approach included making video films but also holding screenings and discussions as an integral part of their work. They found that visual communications can cross traditional and sometimes entrenched cultural barriers and divisions. Video can capture the experience and create a history both of place and process. It also consolidates skills, confidence and self-esteem through the product (a video film), which becomes a permanent record. Spectacle found that people gain in confidence and take part in wider participatory activities once they start to be involved, even in a small way.

- PAL found that the most effective way of reaching the 'silent majority' as well as 'hard-to-reach' groups in their work on the London Plan was to use existing voluntary, community and public authority networks to reach individuals and groups, and then work with different participation techniques with the different target groups.

7.2.3 Innovative media, culture and the arts

Other APaNGO projects have also used cultural activities to draw people in initially. Bral worked with the Sens Unique campaign of artists and young people, and built on the Jordan Suite music festival in the neighbourhood, both of which helped establish local networks and relationships that made building community campaigns much easier. City District Geuzenveld-Slotermeer used community art by linking residents' ideas on the future of the neighbourhood with a range of work in different media by three artists that aimed to articulate those ideas in various ways and demonstrate those ideas through screenings locally. Some groups in Bral's client communities used elements of street theatre to make their point.

The City District Geuzenveld-Slotermeer's idea of 'branding' is also a cultural activity, creating a positive, collective identity for the neighbourhood to be regenerated through creating a shared vision and shared purpose. All the APaNGO projects found cultural and creative activities very useful in attracting people to participatory community projects, for developing skills and confidence, and for creating and maintaining a positive mood and style for the work they do.

7.2.4 Findings from tackling exclusion

In tackling the challenging problem of exclusion the APaNGO projects have found that:

- Regeneration programmes can target involvement activities at the most disadvantaged communities **in ways that further exclude them** by establishing separate participatory processes from mainstream decision-making.
- Participation in planning is often conducted in very **formal settings** that can disadvantage less experienced individuals and groups (often the most disadvantaged already) who are unable to respond in the required manner and within the relatively short timescales.
- For many hard-working people in disadvantaged communities, the slightest domestic problem can remove **time for community action** entirely, and groups in

disadvantaged communities can rarely survive if key individuals drop out.

- Participation exercises run the risk of being tokenistic if privileged access to decision-making by influential actors bypasses consultative structures. It is therefore important that rules are maintained to ensure all representation made in planning processes are on the record.

Although an important element of protest remains, Bral at least detected a move towards participation and away from protest in the Brussels communities.

The APaNGO projects demonstrated that although people may have different backgrounds and experience of community politics, they can still be brought together to create positive relationships and work productively for better local outcomes.

7.3 Local focus

7.3.1 Local focus versus regional planning

The initial APaNGO research showed that community participation in regional and national spatial planning was becoming more important in policy and legislation, but that the main focus for participation in planning in practice remained at the local level.

The APaNGO demonstration projects reflected this complexity. All were identified because they were regional scale planning issues, but all focused on the day-to-day work on local participatory activities. They showed that, in order to involve local people and local communities, issues often need to be translated to a local scale to show local relevance. However, all the APaNGO projects linked to wider spatial issues and structures and showed the extent to which local, regional, national and international issues and decision-making are deeply intertwined.

The work by Bral in the international quarter of Brussels provided a clear example of these complexities. Bral found that the living conditions in this neighbourhood and the way decisions were made about them were fundamentally affected by the impact and influence of international institutions.

7.3.2 Findings from local work on regional planning

The projects found that:

- In London, PAL and Spectacle found that high-prestige projects (landmark buildings on key sites by famous architects with access

to huge budgets) had apparently led to **'participation by stupefaction'** – with minimal involvement by local people and businesses in developments that dazzle public authorities and private investors. The scale of interventions by European institutions in Brussels could be said to have had a similar effect.

- APaNGO projects also found that, for local communities, identifying the decision-makers was complex at the regional level, where it was not always clear who made key decisions and where accountability lay. This complex picture made it very hard for communities and NGOs to identify the appropriate 'targets for influence' when they did participate.
- Working at regional level was found to be about working in a fundamentally different way rather than simply at a bigger scale. The PAL project showed some of the particular difficulties of working at regional and sub-regional levels. For example, the issues crossed the traditional geographical boundaries by which some communities defined themselves and were often **beyond the remit of individual local organisations but were too specific for national bodies**.
- On the topic of working at a regional scale of involvement, PAL contacted over 500 voluntary and community groups for their project, all with very different interests. Even with such extensive outreach, they found it very hard to generate a high degree of community and public interest in key elements of the strategic plan for London. They also found that regional participation required very different techniques from local involvement (hence the development of their toolkit). The need for **different techniques at different spatial levels of involvement** may need to become part of the analytical and practical toolkits used by planners developing participatory working in future.

7.4 Complexities of 'community' and 'communities of time'

7.4.1 Community complexities

The City District Geuzenveld-Slotermeer project experience challenged the easy assumption that a defined neighbourhood also has an easily identifiable 'community'. Local communities in neighbourhoods targeted for regeneration are frequently very mixed, with diverse groups within these communities rooted in a different way in their neighbourhood (with many residents new to the country as well as to the

neighbourhood). Associated language and cultural differences need to be addressed as part of the participation processes. The complexity of local community structures can be compounded by regeneration plans when one community is moved out and may or may not return. Here, there are different 'communities of time' as well as different cultural communities within the local neighbourhood.

7.4.2 'Communities of time'

The concept of 'communities of time' goes beyond simple changes in individual residents or businesses over time. The importance of considering the interests of future generations is another element of the concept if plans and proposals are intended to meet the principles of sustainable development. Communities embody complex elements of time, space and social relationships.

7.4.3 Findings from working with communities over time

The projects found that:

- The shared and individual histories of local people (wherever they come from) in the neighbourhood, as well as the history of previous experiences of participation, form part of 'community memory'. The City District Geuzenveld-Slotermeer project recognised the importance of local history and found that using **'branding'** as a technique could express a better shared understanding of community memory and identity and so help to create a new identity for an area as well as a shared view of the area's future.
- 'Community memory' was also influential in the ways in which communities approached participation. PAL found that in one project where there had been previous poor participatory practice by another agency, any new participatory initiatives had to demonstrate their independence and difference to gain the trust of local people. Both PAL and Bral experienced these problems, and worked explicitly to **build trust** as part of their participatory activities.
- **Planners had a unique role in this area because they could bring considerations of the interests of different communities over different timescales to a project.** They could also ensure that processes took into account the interests of different communities of time, and even the interests of future generations. Part of the purpose of participation should be to openly articulate issues that would not otherwise come to the surface because of differences in timescales but which can fundamentally affect the

success of any proposed plan, development or regeneration programme.

- Projects also emphasised that effective participation design should ensure that all the assumptions about how communities could or should change over time (for example the aim of creating mixed communities) should be examined openly and honestly, from as many varied perspectives as possible.

7.5 Levels of involvement

7.5.1 Levels of involvement across North West Europe

In the seven North West European countries studied, the APaNGO First Interim Report found that, whether through design or from a lack of resources, the great majority of community participation in planning takes place at the 'lowest' level of the participation spectrum (see: www.apango.eu for the First Interim Report) – with information provision and minimal consultation frequently the norm. In contrast there was a wide recognition among respondents to the APaNGO research that these very limited techniques do not engage communities effectively. The research found that there is also very often a lack of clarity about the specific purpose of particular participation processes in planning, including about what can or cannot change as a result of participation. This creates uncertainty and a lack of motivation among those invited to participate.

There are significant variations between the countries reviewed in the initial APaNGO research, with the Netherlands, Luxembourg and Belgium more likely to work 'collaboratively' with local communities. However, the major differences in the focus, legal structures, processes and systems for participation in planning in different countries need to be taken into account in assessing the depth and effectiveness of participation.

In the Netherlands, for example (and in France and Belgium to some extent), the planning system relates to legally protected interests on land use, which therefore affects the aims and objectives of individual and institutional participants in the planning process. In the UK, the planning system aims to facilitate and place conditions on various development processes, which has different implications for participation. There are also differences in the extent to which plans can be varied once they are agreed (for example in Belgium, France and the Netherlands, land use plans can only be varied by applying to the courts). These

differences affect the depth of participation that can be achieved at different stages in the planning process.

The APaNGO First Interim Report also outlined the importance of a strong NGO infrastructure of support that provides expert advice, support, information and sometimes access to funding for participatory projects. Three of the four APaNGO partners (Bral, Planning Aid for London and Spectacle) are part of this infrastructure of support, and their work (as shown in the examples in this report) provides evidence of the importance and value of this support to extending the depth and effectiveness of participation.

The relationships between NGOs and communities can have a particular quality – perhaps because NGOs tend to be acting either in direct support of communities or as intermediaries (as Planning Aid for London does in some projects) – to help improve relationships and participatory working between authorities and communities. These relationships thus tend to be much closer to the empowerment end of the participation spectrum and tend to be longer term.

The APaNGO demonstration projects show some of the ways in which this type of support work has contributed to community capacity-building – helping groups and individuals develop skills and confidence that they can use immediately and later. Part of this learning is about increasing understanding of how planning processes work and who to try to influence to achieve the changes that communities want to see.

Information provision, although seen as a 'low' level of participation, is a vital element of all participation in planning. When Bral found that the official information provided on planning and development issues in the neighbourhood in which they were working was minimal, they supported groups to research, collect and use a wide range of information (including technical and legal materials) to make their case on specific developments.

Research and information provision on planning and development issues has never been simple for NGOs or communities. The City District Geuzenveld-Slotermeer project found that professionals and communities had different 'worlds of understanding' which affected the information provided by officials and how it could be understood by communities. The problem PAL found was that it took a long time to get information to percolate out, even when making the effort to do so and even through

existing networks of contact – they concluded that at least three months was needed for any such process. Like City District Geuzenveld-Slotermeer, they also identified the importance of information being produced for non-planning specialists, and that there needed to be access to further and more detailed information if groups wanted to follow issues up.

7.5.2 Findings from the levels of involvement

The projects found that:

- The research, writing, publicity and dissemination skills that groups develop can also be used in future participation activities and as **useful skills in other areas of people's lives**.
- As well as a tool for social and political education, use of **community media provided education** in terms of developing technical and generic skills which were transferable to a range of other areas of life.
- **Community media provides a powerful tool** that communities can control themselves and use to develop their own picture and record of planning and regeneration processes.
- Community media, like other community support work, is more likely to be successful if there is a **physical base, or person employed** for the task – that sort of structure has been essential in Spectacle's projects. This sort of capacity-building contributes significantly to deeper and more effective participation in planning.
- Systems with built-in **legal guarantees** and better access to a more **varied representative political landscape** (as in Belgium and the Netherlands) may have the advantage of delivering better chances of serious commitment to the outcomes of participation processes.
- The APaNGO First Interim Report's overall conclusions showed that there was growing and strong commitment to deepening community participation in planning in most member states, with particular interest in closer joint-working, collaboration and partnership. There was also evidence of significant **innovation and creativity in the development of new techniques** that create more effective and positive community participation in planning, such as 'co-production' of planning solutions in the Netherlands and citizens' juries in the UK. The APaNGO First Interim Report identified these and various other innovative techniques being

developed across North West Europe which have the potential for much wider application.

7.6 Timing of involvement

7.6.1 'Communities of time' and demonstration projects

The local focus of much current community participation in planning is therefore much more complex than it appears at first glance. The focus may be the neighbourhood but, in a globalised world, and especially in the highly developed cities of North West Europe, there are much wider sets of interests within relatively small geographical areas. Communities span different cultures and time – and **change over time** much more rapidly and extensively than in the past, as people move in and out. This is in addition to the basic range of varied and often conflicting interests and priorities that always exist even in the most apparently settled homogeneous community. The APaNGO projects identified some innovative ways of reaching out to many of the different interests within the communities in which they have worked (as outlined above) which aim to respect these complex differences.

The APaNGO First Interim Report found that much community participation in planning takes place when the preliminary work has been completed, and communities can then merely comment on highly developed plans or proposals. Involving communities at this point tends to generate negative responses rather than positive proposals. The same was found in relation to continuity of community participation, with communities often receiving little or no feedback on their involvement in planning processes, and with that involvement tending to be in the form of *ad hoc*, one-off events rather than the development of sufficiently long-term relationships with communities.

The APaNGO demonstration projects provide evidence of the move to the longer-term participation identified in the APaNGO First Interim Report. Elements of the City District Geuzenveld-Slotermeer project were perhaps the most time-limited of the demonstration projects as their focus was on developing community participation in the initial planning and design stage of their regeneration programme. However, one positive outcome of the participation process is that contact is maintained with those involved as the City District Geuzenveld-Slotermeer programme moves into the implementation phase and as the City District Geuzenveld-Slotermeer, as a local body, is bound into an overarching long-term relationship with its community.

The other three APaNGO demonstration projects were all led by NGOs, and all aspired to build long-term relationships with communities across projects and programmes. Bral are still working with some communities 20 years after their initial contact. Spectacle continue, wherever possible, to work with groups after funding for projects has finished so they can maintain structures of involvement longer-term with media production, creating a continuing public space. They find that this has enabled more positive community input to regeneration programmes than is often the case with conventional participation techniques.

Unfortunately, all the participation in planning work done by the APaNGO partners has tended to be funded project by project, so longer-term development work often has to be managed with very limited resources and on the fringes of other work.

The approach across all the APaNGO demonstration projects has been to try to find ways of overcoming the problems of one-off, shallow and reactive consultation in planning at a point in the process where it is too late for communities to make any positive input. However, as Bral found in particular, it is relatively easy to get community action and campaigns started, and to encourage local groups to participate in consultation meetings, but very difficult to keep activity going in the longer term.

NGOs involved in planning and local authorities often find their involvement inevitably continuous, whatever the structures or lack of them, as they often feel that the need to monitor the threats to their local communities, or to campaign for positive change, does not end. When community input is entirely voluntary, such constant vigilance can be extremely time-consuming and demanding, which puts pressure on those few individuals who continue to do this work. These people often either 'burn out' through exhaustion, or they may become professional and highly skilled activists – and they may then be characterised by public authorities as the 'usual suspects'. All these problems make it very difficult to maintain voluntary community input to ongoing participation over the long term, and requires constant support for the groups that are involved.

However, in spite of the difficulties, all the APaNGO research showed that communities and NGOs do want long-term participation and feel that this is the most effective way to keep communications open and relationships maintained.

7.6.2 Findings from community involvement over time

The projects found that:

- When an appropriate and continuous infrastructure existed to enable communities to participate effectively and at the right times, participation in planning became more manageable and meaningful for all concerned and contributed to better-quality planning.
- The production of community **media projects can create an enduring public space** for communities, in addition to more traditional forums and meeting places.
- **Longer-term investment in voluntary sector infrastructure** by government or by major voluntary bodies can allow more capacity-building with communities on a longer-term basis and can support greater continuity and effectiveness of participation in planning.
- **Communities change over time** frequently and sometimes dramatically, and so participation efforts need to retain checks and balances with planners and elected authorities to reflect enduring groups or interests as well as those that 'come and go'.

7.7 Linking participation and decision-making

7.7.1 Dilemmas of participation and representation

The APaNGO First Interim Report identified the major shifts that have occurred in the legislative structures for planning across North West Europe in recent years to encourage greater participation. That report also identified a significant gap between policy and practice, which it attributed to these changes still being relatively new.

While the APaNGO demonstration projects provide examples of good practice in participation in planning that can be seen as narrowing that gap between policy and practice, the gap remains most clearly apparent where participatory working meets decision-making structures. This is because the ways that decisions are made too often fail to take account of the results of community participation, which in turn puts at risk the efforts to achieve effective participation.

While there is broad recognition in both the APaNGO First Interim Report and among the demonstration projects that participatory

working needs to feed into a strong representative democratic structure, much depends on the elected authorities responding to this participatory working and their willingness to sustain a 'culture' of participation and involvement.

One approach identified in the APaNGO demonstration projects to the problems of linking community participation to decision-making is to establish and work within formal consultative structures that provide a mechanism for continuing dialogue between communities, NGOs and authorities. These have worked very effectively in some circumstances. The APaNGO experience shows, however, that there is little value in such consultative structures if they are bypassed when important decisions are made.

Both Bral and Spectacle found this to be the case in their separate projects in Brussels, with formal consultations taking place and then decisions on the issues being taken in secret with no links to the formal consultation with communities. Bral in particular found that there was no way of legally embedding the conclusions of community participation as the process progressed (unlike negotiations between unions and employers). This risked either party – developer or elected authority as representative of the community – going back on previous commitments or agreements at any time. Several APaNGO projects have recognised the different pressures on individuals within formal structures and outside where, on reflection, agreements reached cannot be kept to. Openness and transparency in these processes (as referred to above) have been found to be useful in these circumstances, but generally the only effective tool is continuous honest communication between the different parties.

The problem in the Brussels cases was not that the decision was taken outside the consultative forum or process (although it would be a problem if working at a co-production level), but that there were no clear links or communications between the consultation exercise and the decision-making. The structure of decision-making therefore did not respect the consultation process.

There were implications for community participation in the future in these cases: Bral found that where consultation structures had no influence (no potential to change things), they gained little involvement of local people. Spectacle addressed these issues by using video to try to equalise the positions of the various parties as noted above.

The interface between participation and representative democratic structures drew attention to the very different roles of authorities, NGOs and communities in ensuring that participation was representative. Increasing understanding between different sectors of the community was one of the positive results of participatory processes that brought together a wide range of people from different backgrounds and with different interests. However, NGOs and community groups usually have no specific responsibility for representing the broad views of the community: they tend to represent the interests of their members, who may be interested in a geographical area or in aspects of the subject such as wildlife or pollution. This is very different from the role of democratically elected representatives in mediating between conflicting interests and making decisions in the interests of the whole community, now and for future generations.

City District Geuzenveld-Slotermeer identified this difference and described it as a participation-representation dilemma. They proposed that it is possible to measure the success of participation through assessing the influence of the process on the plans, measured through the lack of any formal complaints. This approach may provide only a bare minimum of evidence of a satisfactory participatory process, but does attempt to assess success in a field where quantifiable measurements are hard to come by. More broadly, it was clear from the APaNGO demonstration projects that unless participation led to influence that contributed to action or change, it had little value to participants.

It is sometimes forgotten that, for communities, the action that follows planning is the most important motivation for their involvement: a plan is merely the vehicle for achieving the desired community, neighbourhood or development. Bral found that years of consultation with no implementation led to extensive consultation fatigue, while the City District Geuzenveld-Slotermeer planning project was followed by action and development on the ground that put the plan into practice. Here, the authorities included the values, principles and conclusions of the community in the design of the scheme.

The APaNGO demonstration projects clearly showed some significant innovation and achievement in reaching a wide range of people through their activities. The problems arose when the results of these participation exercises came up against decision-making structures that were not designed to respond to community input. Frequently local authorities and other

decision-making bodies are uncertain how to respond, or how to integrate community input with conventional research and with the parallel decision-making of elected representatives.

The APaNGO demonstration projects showed the need for much greater capacity-building on all sides of the development process, and the City District Geuzenveld-Slotermeer project demonstrated how a willingness to build the authority's capacity to engage with their communities resulted in much more effective planning processes.

7.7.2 Findings from decision-making experience

The APaNGO demonstration projects found:

- Much depends on the elected authority responding to community participation work and their **willingness to sustain a 'culture'** that is receptive to such input.

- Unless participation led to influence that contributed to action or change, it had little value to participants.

As communities and NGOs continue to grow in skills, confidence and capacity for effective participation, the APaNGO projects' experience suggested that there is likely to be a parallel growth in demand for similar skills to be developed within public bodies and private companies. The development of skills is then only likely to be effective if there is also a major cultural shift in decision-making within institutions to enable them to respond positively to this new level of community participation. The experience of the City District Geuzenveld-Slotermeer project showed how effectively this can be done when delivered with the appropriate skills and a real willingness to listen to and consider community input.

8

conclusions and recommendations

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The detailed findings from the APaNGO demonstration projects set out above, alongside the conclusions from the APaNGO First Interim Report, suggest that there are six key conditions for successful participation in planning. These form the basis of the project's conclusions and recommendations and can be summarised as follows.

8.1 The need for appropriate support and techniques

The APaNGO research suggests a continuing and growing need for investment in the infrastructure of support and in appropriate techniques for community participation in planning.

The APaNGO projects showed the value of such support being independent from decision-making processes, so that the focus can be on empowering communities. Such support processes can be provided effectively by public authorities, but it is also essential that there should be more long-term investment in this infrastructure with the voluntary sector providing support, advice and expertise to communities to support their participation in planning.

Recommendation 1

The APaNGO partnership therefore recommends that both voluntary sector bodies and government should recognise a responsibility to provide independent resources for community participation in planning in all major development areas.

Appropriate support requires investment in capacity-building by NGOs, working with communities, to enable local people to better understand planning and political systems and to participate more effectively. Capacity-building is also needed within public authorities so that they can better understand the principles, processes and value of community participation in planning – both in terms of improved quality of plans, developments and programmes and

in terms of strengthening democratic systems through greater public involvement.

The APaNGO research showed the value of particular techniques and approaches, including community development, cultural and creative activities, the use of community media to support and develop participation, 'branding' to create an identity for a neighbourhood, and long-term consultative structures. These techniques bring some new opportunities for creative and positive community participation in planning. New techniques will always be needed and are being developed to meet the changing needs and structures of society.

Recommendation 2

The APaNGO partnership therefore recommends wider take-up of the use of community media, branding techniques and street-based and cultural activities where communities judge these appropriate or helpful.

As with all participatory techniques, the main success factor is to use a technique that is appropriate both to the purpose and to the context of the participatory process. This obviously requires clarity about the objectives of the participatory process, what it is trying to achieve and the context and history within which it will operate. The demographic make-up of community and its previous experience of participating in the planning process will be important factors in making this judgement. Techniques are merely tools to achieve a particular outcome and should never be the first decision in designing any participatory process.

8.2 Cultural change in decision-making bodies

As the APaNGO projects have demonstrated, a key problem currently lies in the interface between participatory processes and decision-making structures.

In practice, the problem is largely about lack of understanding and recognition of the value of participatory 'products', whether they are ideas from communities, video films, alternative proposals, contributions to visioning events or comments on draft plans and strategies. Current representative democratic structures are not designed to recognise or integrate community input in the variety of forms in which it may be presented. They are more commonly-used to dealing with input from elected representatives or in the form of analysis and recommendations from professionals and academics.

A key condition for successful participation in planning is a cultural change so that a community's input is supported through enabling participation in planning and its views are welcomed and valued as highly, and taken as much account of, as professional guidance from officers and academic research. Each of these may have particular value in providing data on different elements of the final political decision. Communities may be able to provide valuable input on community history, lay knowledge, public values and opinions; officers may be able to provide information on technical issues, precedents and wider policy considerations; and academic research may provide insights from experience elsewhere or new experiments with new techniques. Neither community, nor professional, nor academic input can escape inevitable flaws, and none should be regarded as inherently more valuable.

New methods of assessing and integrating these different sorts of data from different sources can be found if there is a willingness in public institutions to do so – it is there that the cultural change is needed if future participation is to be effective.

Recommendation 3

The APaNGO partnership therefore recommends that public authorities appreciate the value of community views which are generated in various ways through the participation services it supports. As a result government bodies should better integrate community input in its different forms in the decision-making process.

8.3 Rights and legal recognition of agreements

Agreements reached between communities and authorities as a result of participatory processes need to be formally recognised so

that they cannot be ignored if they become inconvenient later (possibly through legal formalities such as those developed in the Netherlands). There should always be the potential for re-negotiation but that should be done on the basis that there is an agreement that needs to be renegotiated. Statutory rights in any planning process are a fundamental part of building trust in development decisions. This approach allows communities to trust agreements when they are made, and move on to more positive activities rather than simply watching to check if previous agreements are being ignored. These rights significantly contribute to increasing trust and respect between authorities, communities and NGOs.

Recommendation 4

The APaNGO partnership therefore recommends that statutory rights in planning for those most affected should be maintained and that agreements on development with communities should be legally recognised wherever possible.

8.4 Open, transparent, challenging and fair processes

Participatory processes need to be clear, open, transparent, and fair to those involved and the rest of the (possibly uninvolved) population. Ideally, processes need to be able to challenge both the explicit proposition being considered and the underlying assumptions about the benefits of the final outcomes, although not all processes should or could always cover every related issue. The key condition for success here is the need for clarity about the boundaries of the participation, and what it is (and it is not) possible to change as a result of the participation. Much of the frustration among participants in planning processes from communities and NGOs is about lack of clarity, and a sense that they have been mis-led about what the participation is supposed to achieve and what the limits of their role are.

8.5 Linking participation to action

There is no point having a participatory process if nothing is going to change and nothing is going to happen. Action may require communities themselves to do something, or it may be that public authorities or private developers are going to carry out development. The main motivation among participants in any participatory process is that they will be able to influence or change these outcomes for the better. The alternative, just talk, is unlikely to inspire communities or NGOs to take part.

Recommendation 5

The APaNGO partnership therefore recommends that responsible authorities in charge of community participation set out as a priority what can and cannot be changed as a result of the dialogue of participation or involvement.

8.6 Representation

Community groups, NGOs, business groups and other specific lobby groups rarely represent whole communities; nor is that usually their role. They can take part in a process that aims to be representative of all local interests, but that process is the responsibility of those running it. A political decision then has to be made in the interests of the whole community (whether at local, regional or national level). Representative processes that value the interests of minority groups are key for effective participation in planning as whole communities are affected by planning decisions. It is a key role for planners and for local government decision-makers and it can be achieved with appropriate techniques and clear responsibility for the balance of interests represented at different points in the process.

Recommendation 6

The APaNGO partnership therefore recommends that all those engaged in participation in planning and development should recognise that decision-makers must consider evidence which represents best the variety of interests of current and future communities, including taking into account representations from specific interest groups with particular knowledge.

8.7 Conclusion

The APaNGO partners consider these conditions and recommendations to be essential for effective participation in planning, both in terms of creating better-quality planning decisions and outcomes, and in terms of principles of fairness and transparency – all of which are essential in supporting the contribution of planning to sustainable development.

APaNGO project partners

The project involved five partners, with the TCPA in the lead role:



The **Town and Country Planning Association** (TCPA) is an independent charity campaigning for decent homes in well-designed neighbourhoods, community empowerment and a sustainable future. It works to inspire government, industry and campaigners to put social justice and the environment at the heart of the debate about planning policy, housing and energy supply and use. www.tcpa.org.uk



The **Brusselse Raad voor het Leefmilieu** (Brussels Environmental Association – Bral) is a non-profit, independent network of residents' committees and active citizens interested in helping to shape their city. Its members have a broad interest in the environment, mobility and urban renewal. www.bralvzw.be



Planning Aid for London (PAL) is a registered charity that provides free and independent town planning related advice for individuals and groups unable to afford professional consultants. It assists people in drawing up their own planning applications or helps them to comment on other people's applications. It also offers advice on fund-raising strategies, community development and consultation methods. www.pafl.org.uk



Spectacle Productions Ltd is an independent, London-based television production company specialising in documentary and community-led investigative journalism. The company distributes independent videotapes, provides facilities for independent producers, and runs training workshops on media studies, production and community-based media. www.spectacle.co.uk



Stadsdeel Geuzenveld-Slotermeer (City District Geuzenveld-Slotermeer) is one of the 14 city district authorities in Amsterdam. Established in 1990, it has around 40,000 inhabitants and has recently initiated a large regeneration project. To address various problems and to meet new challenges for city life, it aims to improve the environment in which people live and work, create incentives to stimulate social and economic activities, and work together with housing corporations to provide a large variety of new homes. www.geuzenveld.amsterdam.nl



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For further information or if you need a larger-text version of this report, visit www.apango.eu



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