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Public Engagement: The Inclusive Approach

Public engagement and empowering civic engagement

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1. Urban development in the 21st century will be increasing based upon principles of sustainability

- Urbanisation is an ongoing process all over the world. Even in continents with large rural zones like Africa, India or China, cities are growing rapidly. They are at the centre of development, bringing together infrastructure and economic, administrative, financial, labour and education activities. It is in cities where the hopes for a better tomorrow crystallize. They are societies' laboratories, and represent a country's social and economic structure in miniature.
- Sustainability is a key element for future urbanisation:
 - o Protecting the environment
 - o Resource and energy saving
 - o Water and waster water, as well as sanitation organization.
To protect water especially drinking water for future generations is one of the most important principles, because pollution of seas and rivers the resource of sweet water sometimes needs a generations up to get clean drinking water generated.
- These are well known principles of sustainability. But there are more elements for sustainable urban development and that means: the goal of inclusiveness for the city development. To define what I mean with inclusiveness (Towards the background having been responsible for the planning and construction department of 5th biggest city in Germany, which has grown in the last two centuries on the basic of coal mining and heavy industries) means as well public engagement.
 - o The city should not suffer from segregation through ethnic, religious, social or educational differences,
 - o The fragmentation of the cities by different culture, different economic and lifestyle situation and the lack of opportunities to work and to be educated in one part of the city and a surplus of opportunities in the other part of a city brings unbalanced situation.

So the main task is to balance between the public responsibility of creating the frame of legalised planning and private initiatives within negotiated rules, that should be followed.

2. These developments as for finding balance between:

- **Economic renewal, expressed in the word efficiency, balanced wealth and creative adjustment**

- **Social improvement in terms of solidarity, empowerment shared involvement in public matters**
- **Environmentally responsible behaviour of private commercial and commercial stakeholders, protecting all kinds of natural resources, promoting biodiversity as well as urban greens and reducing air pollution and noise** (see Hong Kong as the colleague just told us in Macao)
 - o Economic renewal: in many cities: in many cities we have the decline of heavy industry, steel and coal production, docks and traffic sites, which areas are to be changed by new developing plans. This readjustment gives many cities the possibility to develop modern working plans, as well as new residential areas, which meet the needs of the inhabitants. That means not only to follow the interests of possible developers or investors, but to remind them that their social responsibility is an element of their economic success. The responsibility of the city administration is to prepare and that of the city council is to decide or improve these concerns, and both together are responsible for good governance.
 - o If the city develops master plans or zoning plans or other legal binding plans
 - there should be fixed by negotiation with the developer a certain percentage of construction for residential possibilities, or partly paying social infrastructure, or giving a special percentage of the plots for low cost housing. The public sector should use its power to search an adequate private engagement.
 - there should be negotiated and involvement in public matters by co-financing kindergartens or green areas etc. This is as well for the benefit of the investor or company as for the future inhabitants of those residential areas (look e.g. at the former Citroen car-production area, now a new park with attractive residential areas in Paris/France, or a former brewery, where there is now the headquarter of RWE, one of the biggest European energy providing companies of Germany, situated in Essen with a public park and rented flats).
 - o At least feeling responsible for the environment is not only the responsibility of the public sector or the rich countries, but in the interest of the companies themselves, because to save resources is a matter of saving costs, and on the other hand a decision for the own future. Only innovative products conquer the market. But for developing innovative products one needs innovative people, who like to have a well protected personal environment to live without noise and within green areas. They expect good schools, attractive leisure, culture and health offers for their family.
 - o The city by public engagement with NGOs and other representatives of the civic society should bring stakeholders and actors together to exchange experience and should extend mechanisms of participation beyond their own committees and bodies to include local groups, decision-makers, opinion leaders, residents, property owners, little shops, and other interested citizens, in order to mobilize human resources on the local level.
 - o So civic engagement is a matter of all stakeholders. The task is to create a win-win situation. Within those win-win strategies the support of poor or less educated people or of elderly and handicapped or of foreigners is included, because open minded societies reflect and create atmosphere of changes. Gated societies exclude or fragmentize creative people (from whatever under-, middle- or upper class or ethnic groups they may come). It is an illusion to hope that conflicts may be solved

by segregation, because the change of creativity is excluded as well. All experience shows that throughout the history any “melting pot” has brought flourishing cities. But that leads to the 3rd thesis.

3. The economic basis of social inclusion is work, the emotional basis is identity, the key element is improvement

- Common work or the opportunities to work as the economic basis of social inclusion must be developed by the cities as local economy. Integrated projects of working with unemployed, with elderly, with people without graduated education are possible to be organised on the local level:
 - o by building their own homes
 - o by caring the greenery
 - o by organising facilities for children or old people
 - o by gardening or protecting special re-cultivated areas.
 - o (Just to outline some examples)
- The incentives may be given by public or private funds, on the long way those projects create their value. The public engagement has a role model responsibility in these fields.

Let me therefore come to thesis 4.

4. The implementation of these principles differs following the cultural and political background of the various societies

We think in Great Britain, The Netherlands or Germany that the own house is the key element of a good family life, responsibility and freedom of emotional basis of identity. Therefore low cost housing programmes should follow different cultural backgrounds. But to enable programmes like this even with low income people they should be carried out by permitting and encouraging of

- o self-designing and self construction, by support of experts in managing, financing and construction
- o with mutual help of organised production processes (these two change the professional profile of planners, architects etc.
- o with renting, that leads to step by step to property

The public sector has the responsibility for infrastructure, organising mobility as well as security in the cities. The civic engagement can be empowered to solve their own problems within this given framework (see experiences with slums in Rio de Janeiro or Kuala Lumpur when people organise themselves).

5. For civic engagement empowerment training and capacity building is crucial. Therefore the cultural dimension is essentially for an inclusive city, for organization of processes in the governing levels and related to concerned institutions and the involved parts of population

To get inclusive cities one needs at first recognition of the problems in existing cities and develop strategies to meet and solve them. In France e.g., in the huge prefabricated settlements only non-French population was to recognize, because the French people left those settlements. Therefore the French government has begun with social work in those settlements, in getting the children and young adults involved in sports, in dance, music and

theatre groups, trying to find their interests. They renovated the buildings by initiatives with unemployed young people to qualify them. They organised participation processes to get the tenant involved. This is practice in UK and Germany or The Netherlands as well. The European Union has implemented throughout Europe a programme named “Urban”, where “round tables” were subsidised, to develop a culture of talking about conflicts, of discussing the relevant problems of living together, of organising processes of decision making for their own little community of housing, greens, schools and facilities. Thus the support was not given for financing, construction of low cost housing but to *train people how to live together peacefully*.

This is the philosophy of thesis 6.

6. Democratic processes of decision making and models of participation are attached to the principles of subsidiary and effectiveness

Subsidiarity is not only the principle between the states of the European Union to balance the conditions between poorer and richer countries. This principle leads to recognition, that people are not only capable but in the majority willing to solve their own problems. The little assistance they need to find their ways is much more effective than waiting until the problems are so big, that one can only solve the conflicts by separating the different religions, ethnics and income groups.

So I would like to close my consideration with the 7th thesis, because following my professional experience as well some European best practices local based initiative helps to combine the creative power of the concerned people with the governmental framework.

7. The city, in which public and civic engagement are in a balance, is a continuous challenge for planners, politicians and the population living in our cities, needing consciousness and awareness, advocating, patience, high professional knowledge and respect to the local competence of the people, living in our cities and their voluntary or forced ability of self-reliance and commitment to turn out their won life.

Both sides are playing in the same game – both may win by learning to use participation as well as intervention prudently – may I dare to say wisdom?