

## **The Tribune tree: Elements of cross analysis**

The five cases show how the practise of citizen participation in the regeneration of European cities is part of a more general outlook for a new ethic of roles, giving expression to a democratic requirement, a stronger concept of solidarity and sense of community but also to market laws (as we see particularly in Birmingham and in Rome). Each of the dynamics presented also combines a "bottom-up" process of reinforcement with community actors at the roots of society with a "top-down" process of dilution, decentralisation and implementation of cross co-operation between state provided public services and local collective organisations.

Each of the five experiences analysed here,-even if they principally concern participative democracy-also contained procedures for direct democracy at one or another level of the decision-making process. Decisions are usually taken by majority vote, save in the case of Bremen which is an illustration of the original approach of seeking a consensus. We should, however, take note that none of the observable procedures on these axes is really public and that the social space which they concern never goes beyond the level of the group (Molenbeek, Rome, Bloomsbury), the neighbourhood (Trinitat Nova) or above a certain level of budget (Bremen).

### **What makes people and institutions sit beneath the Tribune Tree?**

The dynamics that we have analysed provide four categories of answer to this essential question:

#### *Realistic pragmatism*

What is there in common between a militant tenant in Birmingham, anxious for more efficient local city management services and an illegal landowner in Rome, anxious that his property rights be legalised? Probably, not much, other than that they both have a right to the city and share a realistic view of participation: it is not citizen idealism that guides them, nor community spirit, nor the quest for personal development, but rather the awareness they have of practical necessity and the effectiveness of their involvement. In the case of Birmingham, as in that of Rome, citizen participation is set in this essentially instrumental perspective where it appears to be the scenario that produces the best results for the least cost. It is interesting to note that in both cases the approach succeeds in achieving a formal contract for shared management with the public institution.

#### *The participative ideal*

The experiences of the Maritime Quarter Committee and the association of neighbours and friends of Trinitat Nova are evidence of another attitude towards participation. The dominant concept here - that comes through clearly from the accounts of certain participants - is that by cooperating with public initiatives, individuals gain in personal accomplishment, in skills and in confidence; and that they are better able also to comprehend the interests and aspirations of their co-citizens. This is a view that puts the accent on the value of participation as an educational experience, onto which is grafted a sense of community that encourages people to become involved in the life of the city independently of any

utilitarian consideration but simply driven by concern for the well being of the community to which they belong.

The enthusiasm, the pleasure of doing things together, of learning together, is a generator of energy that is highly prized, both in Trinitat Nova and in the Maritime Quarter.

Is that to say that participation is appreciated for itself alone, as a form of initiation into the art of citizenship? That would probably amount to an over romantic interpretation. In both cases, moreover, the account clearly shows the delicate balance between the taste for pragmatism and the pleasure of living together. In other words, there is pleasure so long as there is movement and one can achieve the objectives that have been collectively set.

#### *The concern of deliberative democracy*

The cases of Barcelona, Bloomsbury and Bremen are evidence of a third motivation associated with the desire to participate in the elaboration of choices and public decisions. It encourages groups to imagine methods for "free organised discussion" (Ricoeur, P., 1985). That is the purpose of the rule of consensus established in Tenever and it is in this way that one can interpret the chain of action leading to the adoption of the community action plan in Trinitat Nova.

On a more general level, it is probably here that participative democracy that is expressed through all these different arrangements, introduces something that is really new in terms of local democracy. In effect, the effectiveness of the collective debating procedures that have been set up is not simply that they provide an aid to public decision-making; but that they are about the ability to institute standards of behaviour in local public life. There is a normative function that is different from the executive function and which could be the beginning of a separation between the legislature and executive that does not currently exist in all the countries of the Union (Renault, Yann, 2001).

#### *The need for representation*

As was clearly expressed in the discussions with Bremen and the Maritime Quarter, fringe groups place symbolic importance on the fact of being involved through their representatives in the decision-making process. For them, to sit at the table where decisions are made, amounts to a recognition of their existence, and allows them to express their views and identity.

### **Who has the right to participate?**

Each of the five experiences under consideration, illustrates in its own way, that legitimacy cannot be decreed but is a cultural and social creation that gives rise to an awareness of the common good and an individual and collective ability to take account of a higher interest. In short, the person who is endowed with the greatest legitimacy at the moment of participation is the person who is the most civic. The rule of consensus accepted by the residents of Tenever in Bremen provides a good example: it matters not that one is a resident, a trader or an employee, since everyone accepts from the outset that the positions and interests of all are up for "renegotiation" in a collective debate until such time as a solution is adopted that meets the common interest. In Molenbeek, something similar operates thanks to this shared culture - that can be likened to unwritten internal rules - that makes the

committee an open forum for deliberation, it is as important *"that one is here as well as being a citizen of the world"* as it is to be effective as regards the objectives that have been collectively chosen.

### **Residents, citizens, users**

The question of legitimacy refers back to that of representation but also to the social complexity of the category of actors referred to as "residents" that cannot be thought of in one dimension. The attitudes and practises of the residents vary according to whether they are men or women, young or old, from a working class or elite social category, from the left or from the right; attitudes vary also according to the concept of citizenship, whether they are settled or visiting.

The acting roles of the resident and the citizen in the game of participation are thus different even if they are often closely interrelated. Residents give priority to the appropriation of their daily environment and the optimisation of the corresponding services, whereas the citizen assumes the role of responsibility for the whole and for the management of the urban dynamic. In the experiences of Birmingham or of Rome, even if both cases demonstrate that one resident is not the same as another, it is nevertheless the residents that lead the play. In the Maritime Quarter, and in Trinitat Nova, however, it is more the profile of citizen that defines the rules of the collective game.

There is one category that is absent from these experiences which is that of the user. These are defined by reference to the various city services available (shops, leisure, public services, public spaces, transport etc). Their involvement is not manifested in the same way as that of groups that are defined in relation to the places they live. It is no less real however (example: the association of those without tickets that fights for wider access to public transport in Belgium). One sees little contact between these two forms of citizen participation.

### **Evolution of the roles played by the public authorities and re-definition of the relationships between the public and private sectors**

The process we have reviewed gives rise, as we have seen, to methods of co-development of public authority in which the functions of the state and of the administration are changed. Many believe that in this perspective, it is no longer for the public authority simply to do but rather to facilitate things getting done and to check that they are done and done according to the criteria of the common good. In four out of the five cases, the continuity of the effort is nevertheless clearly subject to political will and the human and financial resources provided by the public authority, even if the social and symbolic "centre of gravity" is generally to be found at the grass roots level where access is difficult for the public authorities.

This public authority is a consortium of public actors bringing together the local level of authority and the regional level in the case of Barcelona, Bremen and Rome. It is the municipality in the case of Bloomsbury.

This public consortium gives financial support to the experiment over time and generally has a leading role in the technical structure of organisation and

communication that appears to be another pre-requisite for the continued existence of the experience. It also provides assistance in drawing on the necessary public and private skills as well as implementing the appropriate strategic instruments.

The case of Molenbeek, however, reveals another profile of organisation, in which independence from the management system is jealously guarded as a core value of citizen action. The reasons for which the members of the Maritime quarter committee refused to adopt a legal structure or an institutional system are several:

- The fear of operational orchestration by the authority that "gives" the funds
- The fear of political "hijacking" and a personalising of the power system in the committee

The success of this scenario is, therefore, linked to an internal ability to maintain a forum for exchange and debate available to a series of partners and to use these as technical or financial relays where necessary.