

Digital Democracy & Participatory Processes

...Wanna try?

ALDA – European Association for Local Democracy

The Project



ENergies for Local Administrations
to Renovate Governance in Europe

ENLARGE is a 2-year project funded by the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme.



It started in 2016, and its objective is **sharing knowledge on collaborative governance** through an intense process of dialogue and communication among policy makers, civil society actors and practitioners.



ENLARGE is led by **Institute for Social Research (IRS, Italy)**, and partners are the European Association for Local Democracy (ALDA, France), University of Turin (UNITO, Italy), and the Stockholm Environment Institute Tallinn Centre (SEI, Estonia).



The **innovative approach** of ENLARGE was to put together literature on collaborative governance with the in-depth study of real-life cases from all over Europe to understand what factors favour or hinder these type of processes.



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The ENLARGE journey

- Based on real-life stories -





01

We explored

existing cases of collaborative governance in
the field of sustainable energy

« Manifesto »

for boosting collaborative processes »»

01

Social Legitimacy

Legitimate policymaking tools
by citizens and CSOs

02

Institutional sustainability

To be accepted by public
officials

03

Policy Effectiveness

Influence public policies



02

We produced

an interactive gamebook on
collaborative governance in sustainable energy



03

We tested

the gamebook with civil servants, political
leaders, civil society, academia, and many more




Testing and dissemination events took place all over Europe, and participants' comments were used to improve the gamebook with their experiences and ideas.

**2 years to comment
& improve it!**



Participatory processes are like bumpy trails - there is no optimal design at such

- ✓ each process is **incremental**, namely the result of original design choices, corrective tools and adaptive strategies
 - ✓ a design choice can be **useful for a purpose but counterproductive for another** (e.g. institutional sustainability vs social legitimacy)
- 

ENLARGE gamebook

- ✓ A number of possible stories, on two main scenarios – the creation of a windfarm (co-design), and a plan of energy efficiency (co-production)
- ✓ Accent on: reasons for stakeholders' behaviour; gain/losses of choices; corrective tools; adaptive strategies

Our Story

'E.' is a small-sized city situated in a hilly region.

'upland' area, characterised by a historic centre and a combination of residential buildings and commercial activities

area of 'lowland', located on more level ground, composed of a variety of residential, commercial and manufacturing buildings



Citizens Involvement?



Broad

including choosing the location and technical characteristics of the farm, and deciding on how the profits generated by the Council from the production of electrical energy will be used



Narrow

this stage is left to the politicians – & a team of experts – and only involve the citizens in the complementary aspects of the project, e.g. secondary works aimed at valorising the project as an instrument for local development.



The latter option is selected - **to postpone the citizens' participation stage until after these decisions have been made**

- Establishment of a technical panel for the preliminary planning stage
- Citizens are informed they will be involved at a later stage

**+ institutional sustainability of the participatory approach
- social legitimisation**



Which model of engagement

Limited time and resources → **participatory process**
(not a deliberative or hybrid one)

Stages:

- **Distribution of the dossier**, in person and online
- The environmental officer and the executives will meet the citizens at 'open door', **public assemblies**, answering questions and doubts
- The municipal technicians will work on the **revisions to the preliminary project** with suggestions from the meetings
- The revised project options will be presented in a **second round of public meetings**.

Social legitimacy

Only slight + impact on the social legitimacy of the co-design process

It is **difficult to establish if the participatory model favours the institutional sustainability of the process**. The government in office will most probably benefit from this direct engagement with the citizens, but:

- Possible tendency among some of the **councillors to oppose the process**, because the face-to-face interaction between the environmental officer and the residents will deprive other politicians of a primary role in the project.
- **Proposals from unqualified citizens** will put some of the least flexible technicians on the defensive

Corrective tools for bringing minority voices to the fore in highly unbalanced, open door arenas

less direct participant interaction tools

which facilitate the expression of voices that 'fly in the face' of the majority', such as the use of sticky notes or questionnaires



Enabling citizens who do not attend

the public meetings to take part in the debate to contribute their ideas and proposals in writing.



a final vote is made

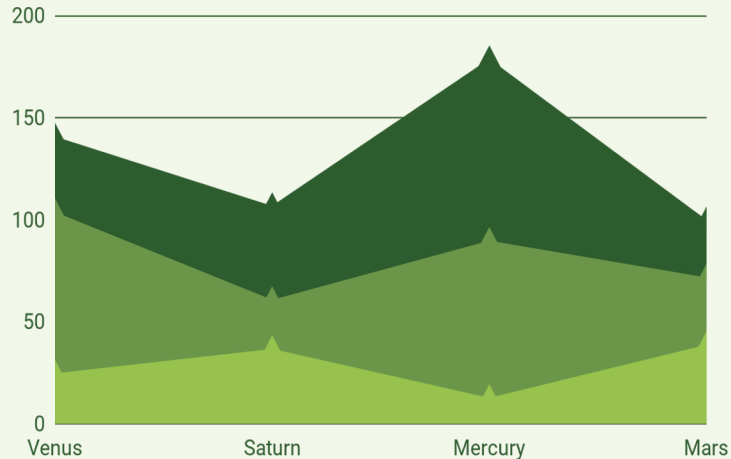
on all the project integrations proposed by the technicians, and those receiving the most votes during all of the meetings are accepted.



The Outcome of Our Adventure

Having made minor changes to the initial project, the co-design process will most likely end with a project that encompasses **most of the feasible suggestions proposed by the citizens**.

Nevertheless, the project will probably still be seen as an initiative promoted by the administration that is **not truly shared**, because the margin of citizens' intervention was very limited in nature.



As such, this **debate will likely continue** among both the members of the Council and the general public for some time.





Now,
it's your turn!

What can you do with the book



- ✓ Play with it, and send us suggestions for improvement
- ✓ Share it with representatives of communities, agencies, associations, and academia working on the topics

Thanks!

Do you have any questions?

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