



ET SI ON ADOPTAIT UN ARBRE ?

Les Pas pour le dire - Promenade citoyenne du 12 Novembre 2011 - Cette pancarte sera enlevée ce jour à 18h



Jégou F., Seyrig A., Guisse S. and Knopfer J. 2012. **“Engaging care of public and social space: 2 cases in the framework of agenda iris 21”**, Civil Society Reclaims Public Space. Cross Perspectives Based On Research, Human Cities Symposium 15–16 March 2012, Brussels (BE).

This paper presents 2 cases from the Agenda Iris 21 program in the Brussels Capital Region. It was presented during the Human Cities Festival "Reclaiming public space" at the HC Symposium on March 15th-16th, 2012, Brussels (BE).

Abstract

The paper will expose 2 case studies developed in the framework of the Agenda Iris 21 programme supported by the Brussels Capital Region between 2009 and 2011. “Adopt a tree handbook” involving the children and families of Saint-Gilles neighbourhood in Brussels in greening the square metre of earth at the bottom of the trees in the streets in front of their own houses. Another initiative is” Citizenship walks action kit” which involves inviting the inhabitant of the Molenbeek-Saint-Jean neighbourhood in Brussels to take part to collective walks across the area where they live and rediscover it. Both cases will be analysed for their similar strategy to engage people participation in exploring and taking care of public space in the perspective of sustainable ways of living on the one hand, and on the other hand, in enhancing socialisation and refurbishing the social fabric between communities in

both these popular areas of Brussels. In particular, the design-based approaches and tools used in both processes will be presented, firstly a collective investigation of local initiatives of social innovations focusing the interaction between citizens and the public spaces they cross in their everyday. Secondly, a co-design process involving citizens, local authorities and civil servants into a participative ideation, specification and experimentation of new social activities. Third, the delivery of an enabling solution based on a set of tools and a shared community of practice to empower the participants to the initial experimentations to reproduce and disseminate them. The conclusive part of the paper will enlarge the focus and consider these two case studies in the light of Agenda 21. Firstly, how co-design of new social activities may enable the re-appropriation of public space as a common good and



stimulate the renovation of public action and public authorities practices. Secondly, how participative design approach based on investigation of local social innovation, inclusive co-design, progressive micro-experimentations and design of enabling solutions opens opportunities of renewal for Agenda 21 as a modern eco-systemic instrument in the perspective of Rio+20 conference.



Les enfants construisent et installent les pancartes au pied des arbres parrainés avec des membres du comité de quartier « chrysalide » à Anderlecht.

1 / Introduction

The Brussels-Capitale Region encouraged between 2007 and 2011 the development of Agenda 21 action plans through a yearly call for tender called Agenda Iris 21 and oriented toward the 19 Communes (Brussels city districts public authorities) and equal number of CPAS (districts' local social centres). The Framework proposed by the Region in the call would belong to the category of "Institutional Agenda 21" in Boutauds' (2009) and comparison of Agenda 21 processes in Europe. This is an initiative promoted by the public authorities. It aims to support local projects as well as the transformation of local public action and governance. To balance this top-down setting, the Region requires that 10% of the funding provided per year should be allocated to external support to engage participation of citizens, civil society and stakeholders outside the public administration in the realisation of the assessment preceding the constitution of the action plan. Within these sub-calls for tender, Strategic Design Scenarios has been involved in 2010 and 2011 in supporting the Commune of Saint-Gilles and the Commune of Molenbeek in the design and implementation of participation processes.

Adopt a tree handbook focused the involvement of the children and families of Saint-Gilles neighbourhood in Brussels to green the squares of earth at the bottom of the trees in their streets in front of their own houses. Saint-Gilles is an old popular area situated rather in the centre of Brussels characterised by an up-hill part with middle-class families enjoying the popular authentic character of the neighbourhood and a down-hill part mostly populated with low incomes families with high level of immigration and turn-over.

The Action Plan of the Agenda 21 of Saint-Gilles was nearly completed when the call for tender was launched. Its main aim was then to engage and facilitate parts of the Action Plan where citizen participation was required. It also intends to comply with the expectation of the funding Region to compensate a too top-down approach in the Agenda 21 process lacking of citizen participation in particular in terms of representativeness of the multicultural mix and of the underprivileged categories of the population.

◀ Figure 1: Meeting the different local authorities departments to coordinate their possible interaction with 'Adopt a tree action' (Photo: Strategic Design Scenarios).



The first step required by the co-ordination of the Agenda 21 of Saint-Gilles was then to browse the prepared Action Plan with the co-ordinator and the elected Échevin in charge. Actions listed in the Action Plan were short-listed. The chosen actions support engagement and participation. The first potential cluster of actions considered was regarding sustainable food. The delivery of local food purchase groups in a very dense urban area is an issue. As well as lacking public and private spaces available is a major issue. A second potential cluster of actions was triggered by the initiative of Saint-Gilles public authorities to establish a sustainable development help-desk and the difficulty to give visibility to one dedicated space installed into a former shop refurbished for the purpose and to attract a turnover of visitors. Finally a third cluster of actions of the Plan was focusing the greening of the public space by the inhabitants themselves including encouraging flowering of balconies, planting vines climbing on facades, involvement of gardeners in the public space and planting the squares of earth available at the bottom of trees in the streets. This last Action was chosen under the claim of Adopt a tree both for its potential of political visibility in a neighbourhood lacking of green spaces and for its balanced mix of social involvement and environmental benefits likely to represent a challenging experimentation for local authorities slightly uncomfortable with bottom-up participation.

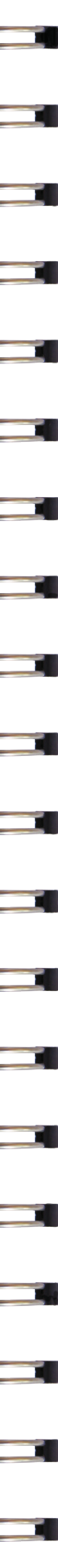
The “Urban Citizen walks” have been set up with the objective of involving citizens and local associations in the preliminary step of the local Agenda 21 diagnosis phase. Engaged for a long time to promoting sustainability, the neighbourhood of Molenbeek-Saint-Jean is dealing with strong social and economical issues challenging the setting up of the Agenda 21. Located in the western part of the Brussels Capital Region, the municipality of Molenbeek can be characterised with strong contrast between a “upper-part” of the neighbourhood which is mostly residential. There is quite loose and green urbanism, and a “lower-part” which is very dense and facing strong issues of urban renovation in a context of a socially

◀ Figure 2: Moment of the citizen walks and street signs raising questions on the public for participants (Photo: Strategic Design Scenarios).

and economically weaken population mostly coming from recent immigration.

When Strategic Design Scenarios answered the call for tender to organise the citizen walks, the local Agenda 21 was in it's first year of existence and was in a scoping phase. After all the work done in-house with the contribution of the neighbourhood townhall services, the coordination of the Agenda 21 was then expecting to open the scope to citizens and local associations. Conscious of the difficulty that it represents in such areas to mobilize the participation of the most "sensitive" inhabitants, those responsible of Agenda 21 thought of organizing urban citizen walks. These walks are a way to involve all types of inhabitants in a light and proactive format. Walking together with the citizens through their area, exchanging on an everyday life basis was chosen rather than a more conventional meeting format, rarely attracting the mix of populations expected.

The neighbourhood has then been divided into three main areas, corresponding to a common segmentation - and three walks has been planned, one by area. In each area, the idea was to connect with local associations doing social and/or sustainable work and on the field to involve them in the construction of the program and the diffusion of the information.





2 / Metodology

Context and intention differs in the two cases: Molenbeek define a precise briefing to organise citizens walks in order to feed the assessment phase and orient the construction of the action plan; Saint-Gilles action plan was nearly finalised and required implementation of certain actions of the plan involving citizen participation. But from a broader point of view in both cases expectations were similar: activation of bottom-up participation in a top-down framework driven by the public authorities and generation of larger visibility to the Agenda 21 process. The methodology proposed by Strategic Design Scenarios was therefore similar in both cases and based on the following points:

2.1 / Participative design

The first step of the approach is based on a co-design process involving citizens, local authorities and civil servants into a participative ideation, specification and experimentation of new social activities.

In Molenbeek, this process was developed in five phases. First a preliminary exchange at the city council; second, an open workshop organised in one of the neighbourhood community centre; third, three days of preparatory visits on the field to meet the local initiatives and visit the potential stops; forth, organisation of the three participative walks and fifth, debriefing following each walks. The principle of citizen walks itself was an idea proposed by the local public authority and already precisely described in the call for tender. In the offer, Strategic Design Scenarios suggested to adapt the methodology with its own approach.

The first exchange in Neighbourhood Council was organised to define more precisely with the working group the methodology proposed by Strategic Design Scenarios in its answer to the call. Building confidence, sharing on the spirit of the mission, specify details of organisation were the main objectives of the meeting.

The second step, the open workshop, broadened the participative assembly to other civil servants or politics and to local associations in charge of sustainable initiatives already identified by the Agenda 21 coordinator. Designed as a creative workshop aiming to build the walks in a collaborative way, the session was dispatched by working tables. The local expertise of participants was requested in two ways. They were invited on one hand to feed a city map with promising social initiatives, which could potentially become stops for the walk, and on the other hand, they were asked to contribute with a set of playing cards to the definition of the walks on the conceptual and more technical point of view. Their practical knowledge and their experience of the field were both mobilized. The collaborative tools like the map with flags to pin or the playing cards were designed to facilitate the collection of information, but also to create a user-friendly atmosphere that leads to numerous of informal discussions.

Few weeks later, the collaborative process of the building of the walks has been continued by the organisation of three “spotting” days, one corresponding to each of the future walks. Those preparatory visits were open to the people from the neighbourhood council and to citizens linked to authority like neighbourhood councillors. The idea here was first to have a preliminary contact with the hosts to share on the concept and organisation of this citizens walks and to prepare the discussion before the event time and also to check the interest and capacity of the visited places to host the group during the walks.

Fourth step, during the walk themselves: to facilitate the interaction between the organisers (including the consultant and the representatives of the city) and the participants, several supports were designed to involve the citizens in the walk itself, and in the construction of the shared diagnosis of sustainability. A map displayed on a sandwich-board, a “stick for talk” to record conversations on the go and a shared camera where initially designed in the interest of facilitating participation in an informal way.

Finally, the convivial debriefings organised at the end of each walks were opportunities for walkers to get back on the route but also on

other untreated subjects. Those debriefing finally also turn out to discussions on the methodology of the walks itself, considered as an open process. In Saint-Gilles, stakeholders involved in the actions of the Agenda 21s' Plan characterized by citizens' participations gathered in a Pecha-Kucha-like evening to share, discuss and select interesting initiatives.

A similar open workshop as in Molenbeek was organised, inviting players already involved in citizens' participation in a presentation evening hosted by the local cultural and art centre Pianofabriek in Saint-Gilles. The purpose of the evening had multiple reasons: to give visibility to existing citizens' and public authorities' initiatives oriented toward participation; to let their promoters meet each others and confront their points of views; to get a reasonable panorama of what's happening in that field and finally to debate of how public participation could be supported and enhanced. The presentation format was inspired by the settings of a Pecha-Kucha a presentation methodology in which 20 slides are shown for 20 seconds each, usually seen in a multiple-speaker event. In the case of Saint-Gilles evening, each speaker – including the Échevin – had only 3 images and 3 minutes to present an overview his/her project or initiative. The aim of this rather strict and somewhat frustrating format was to keep presentations very short in order to be able to present a large panorama of examples stimulating debate and keeping time for discussion. Cases from local NGOs supporting families to reduce their energy bill to public authorities initiatives to diffuse sustainable daily practices were complemented by a range of social innovations from other parts of the world brought by Strategic Design Scenarios to open the debate (Meroni, 2007; Jégou and Manzini 2008). Highlights of the discussion point the paradoxical injunction of local authorities struggling to engage participation in a top-down process and the lack of practice of public action to acknowledge and support spontaneous bottom-up public participation. Beyond the conceptual debate that will be developed in the last part of the article, the exchanges allow pointing to a series of promising local initiatives and experienced actors to further investigate active local participations processes in the public space.



2.2. Investigating local initiatives

The second step of the approach is based on the collective investigation of local initiatives of social innovations focusing the interaction between citizens and the public spaces they cross in their everyday life.

In Saint-Gilles a systematic series of visits and interviews to all citizens' initiatives of greening public space allows exploring existing practices, detects resisting barriers and integrate working solutions.

The very idea of 'adopting a tree' and its inscription in the Agenda 21 Action Plan of Saint-Gilles was suggested by two remarked initiatives conducted in 2008 and 2009. The first took place in Anderlecht, another neighbourhood of Brussels and is based on the Comité de Quartier (neighbourhood committee) called Chrysalide and supported by the Brussels Capitale Regions' Quartiers Verts (Green Neighbourhood) programme. The second took place among inhabitants of Crickx and Gustave Defnet streets in Saint-Gilles in the context of a summer initiative called La rue aux enfants (The street to the kids) transforming both streets for a few days into a temporary playground for kids and a party place for their families. In both initiatives, the highlight was to focus on square of earth at the bottom of the trees in the streets and consider it as micro-gardens of the inhabitants living in front rather than as public space. In consequence, these micro-gardens not owned by anybody are proposed for 'adoption' by one or more family. Both processes include the involvement of kids as gardeners and as intermediary to involve their families, the progressive engagement of more participants until the organisation of a hot moment around a planting party and last but not least, a strong project management by a group of motivated citizens and in particular a leader whose creativity, entrepreneurship and persistency ensure the progress, overcome barriers and is key to the success of the operation. Both

cases were investigated in details through visits and in-depth interviews trying to detect enablers, tips, difficulties and ways to overcome them. More initiatives of greening public spaces – Faites une fleur à la rue Jean Robie (flower the Jean Robie street); Solidarité Étudiants Tiers-Monde (hosting of developing countries students including a collective garden) – were investigated in the same way to complete with complementary experiences and points of views and to systematically map the existing initiatives of the place. In particular the public services in charge of maintenance of green spaces and of urban planning were associated in order to explore potential synergies, points emerging conflicts and include their participation in the perspective of an intermediary project both private and public, bottom-up and top-down.

In Molenbeek, we focus places able to illustrate and to stimulate debate on local sustainability within the framework of the citizen walks. On the basis of official lists of actors provided by the coordination of the Agenda 21, but also with active contribution of locals association involved (see below), we identified location of several initiatives. Within few weeks, we identified numerous more or less institutionalized (recent or established associations but also under development, single citizens innovations, private initiatives and partly governmental ones) structures which were contributing to sustainable development of the public space (understood as physical and social) in the neighbourhood.

This research has resulted in a neighbourhood map to be turned into an interactive and updatable open web map for Molenbeek. Among all detected initiatives some were finally selected as stops for the walks. Here the idea was to go one step further than citizens diagnosis walk, listing negative points and complains addressed to the public authorities. Visiting initiatives existing in their own district and discovering them under the light of sustainability, was the occasion for participants to push doors they pass by everyday without often really knowing what's happening behind; but also to

get deeper into the problem of sustainability in their everyday life.

Four stops had finally been chosen to rhythm each of the two hours of urban walks. They ranged from the visit of youth or women social centres to passive housing, public parks and collective gardens, shared composting spots, activities in the field of economical insertion in the world of work, cultural centre, etc. The selection of those cases was based on one hand on practical criteria (relative short distance to moderate walk length, availability of hosts, etc) and on the other hand on their ability to complement each others and cover different main aspects of sustainable development (understood here as: environment, social, economic and mobility) as expected by the Molenbeek coordination of the Agenda 21. Even if the initiatives visited were all in all transversal to several dimensions, each stop was the opportunity to focus on one of them.

2.3 / Continuous reporting online

During both processes, the classical administrative reporting has been substituted by the regular productions of posts to feed a dedicated blog sharing, in an informal way, each steps and progress of participation processes engaged. Each project for the public sector is associated with the invariable redaction of the minutes of each meeting in addition with a (possibly thick) final report. And we all know that those formal documents often end in the archives without being utilized at the level of investment they required to be produced. In the two present cases, Strategic Design Scenarios proposed to the local authorities to substitute classical forms of reporting with a vivid instant reporting, written in a journalistic style, easy to read and illustrated with pictures. Posted on a simple blog, those articles, documenting the on-going process with a voluntary transparency, are becoming part of the engagement process and at the same time easily contributing to the dissemination of the project.

SUSTAINABLE EVERYDAY PROJECT / SEP

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AGENDA 21 MOLENBEEK / CITIZEN WALKS

Posted by [admin](#) on Wednesday, October 12, 2011 · [Leave a Comment](#)



ABOUT

The Agenda 21 of the City of Molenbeek (Brussels-Capital Region) organised in Novembre 2011 3 citizens walks. The aim of those walks ? Re-discovering their area with the citizens with a new point of view on sustainable initiatives.

The blog "[Les pas pour le dire – Agenda 21 Molenbeek](#)" is tracing the participative construction of the walks and coming back on the walks themselves, the visited places, etc.

PARTNERS

This projects has been conducted by [Strategic Design Scenarios](#) for the Agenda 21 of the city of Molenbeek

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Publication on the web for public institution being always a complicated task, due to the need of the institution to submit information through a complicated process of validation. Strategic Design Scenarios proposed in both cases to open a dedicated blog on the Sustainable Everyday platform. Sustainable Everyday Project (SEP) is an open web platform initially created by various partners to stimulate social conversation on possible sustainable futures. Since the site launching in 2006, it has been hosting several dozens of projects' blogs related somehow to design, sustainability and social innovation. The SEP Platform could be considered as a virtual third space dedicated to sustainable living thematic but not directly related to any institution or company. In the case of those two Agenda 21 projects, a blog has been created from the beginning of the project and this strategy has had several benefits. First, it allowed the project partners to get round the heavy publishing procedures on the official local community website and to publish information in progress all along the project process. Then, it also contributes to balance the institutional and top-down dimension with an open and social network-like communication process. Finally, it potentially increased the visibility of the Agenda 21 process locally but also to the larger community of interest of SEP worldwide.

Sustainable Everyday Project

"J'adopte mon arbre"

Comments Off

Archived Entry

Post Date :

Tuesday, Feb 8th, 2011 at 4:08

Category :

Adopter un arbre and News

Do More :

Both comments and pings are
currently closed.



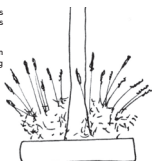
Le 6 janvier 2011, nous rencontrons Gaia Carabillo, une habitante de Saint-Gilles qui nous raconte l'histoire de son projet « j'adopte mon arbre ». Elle nous explique sa démarche de l'organisation de la fête de la rue à l'adoption d'un arbre, et nous essayons d'en tirer les "ingrédients de la réussite" d'un tel projet.

En 2008, un groupe d'habitants des rues Crickx et Gustave Defnet, dont Gaia fait partie avait lancé l'idée d'une "rue aux enfants" dans leur quartier. Pendant cette fête, la rue est fermée aux voitures, et de nombreuses activités y ont été proposées : « atelier de recyclage avec les enfants, éducation à la propreté et au tri, ateliers avec les enfants des différentes association du quartier, concours de fanfares, poneys, jeux de société, château gonflable... et surtout jeux libres dans un espace sans voitures. » décrit-elle.

[Plantes "couvre-sol"] Bodembedekkers

La question de l'aménagement du pied des arbres est aussi une question de protection des plantations.

De kwestie van hoe de voet van de boom aan te leggen, is ook een kwestie van bescherming van de beplanting.



Comment protéger le pied des arbres des chiens qui viennent faire leurs besoins

Les types de plantes qui prennent

tr.

ggen hondenvoer? De zogenaomde

nte. Innemen en op die manier de

es, peuvent attirer des insectes

la biodiversité en ville.

runnen insecten aantrekken die

van de biodiversiteit in de stad.

GRAMINES "COUVRE-SOL"
TRES RESISTANTES
GRASGEWASSEN DIE DE
BODEM BEDEKKEN ZIJN
HEEL RESISTENT



[2]

Petit manuel du projet
Klein handboek voor de buren

[Adopter un arbre Adopteer een boom]



respiration et la verdorisation du pied des arbres, ne pose pas de problème si la

sance des plantes n'est pas un obstacle à la visibilité.

eschikt maken en de aanplanting van groen onder bomen leveren geen probleem

s de plantengroei geen beletsel vormt voor het zicht.



Le champ visuel doit rester libre pour voir un enfant qui veut traverser. Il faut donc

penser à des espèces de plantes légères qui ne n'obstruent pas la visibilité par sa densité ou par sa hauteur qui ne doit pas dépasser celle du capot d'une voiture.

Het gezichtsveld moet vrij blijven om een kind dat wilt oversteken, te kunnen zien. Men

moet dus voor lichte plantensoorten kiezen die niet het zicht belemmeren door hun dichtheid of hoogte. De hoogte moet onder de hoogte van de motorkap van een auto liggen

LAVANDES CREANT UN
PETIT BUTISSON AU PIED
DE L'ARBRE

LAVENDEL G ROEIT TOT
EEN KLEIN STRUUKJE
ONDER DE BOOM



[1]

3 / Results

In both processes developed in Saint-Gilles and Molenbeek, Strategic Design Scenarios approach includes a step beyond the requirements of the call for tender, proposing to wrap together the experience and the tools used into a toolkit facilitating the stakeholders involved to reproduce the process by themselves and disseminate it.


In Saint-Gilles, the experiences gained from the investigation phase observing citizens' initiatives, outlining an enabling framework with the different departments of local administrations at stake and ends up into the production of Adopt a tree handbook (Fig 1 and 3).

The main motivations for sedimenting the experiences collected and lessons learned from the various initiatives of greening the neighbourhood in Saint-Gilles reported above was to facilitate the reproduction of the process and the likelihood of engaging more citizens in organizing an Adopt a tree process in their streets. What mostly striking when studying social innovation processes as Chrysalide or La rue aux enfants is the enormous amount of time, dedication and patience that is requested from their promoters to stimulate the social fabric in both highly individualist-oriented mature societies and multi-cultural context with social tensions. Obviously a handbook will not do for the irreplaceable skills of creative empowerment and charismatic entrepreneurship. But it may achieve two articulated goals:

- The handbook may gather a significant amount of experiences (failures and success) in an easily accessible way to avoid the burden of collecting case studies, analysing barriers and enablers or simply finding the contacts of the experienced people who can testify from their own practices;
- Consequently, the handbook is the evidence of real practices that both illustrate that it exists (it is not an idea or an utopia) and it is feasible (it has already been made by others even if with clear difficulties). And the very fact of presenting it as more feasible and accessible as shown in the first point is likely to inspire new vocations among a larger range of less charismatic and skilled citizens.

◀ **Figure 6: Experiences and meeting with stakeholders of the Adopt a tree action have been systematically published online and then transferred into the Handbook (Photo: Strategic Design Scenarios).**





In consequence, the Adopt a tree handbook is designed as an attractive set balancing the narration of a panorama of experiences showing citizens creativity in making use of the tiny squares of earth at the bottom of street trees with the tips and notes to concretely enable and facilitate potential candidate to take action. A careful trade-off is kept between the enabling dimension (and the risk to produce a boring technical manual diluting the process into too many advices and precautions) and the appealing dimension (and the risk to present a fairytale underestimating the requested effort to catalyse participation). The handbook is composed of 3 tools:

- The front end is a set of post-cards showing a selection of cases of greening of tree bottoms. They play the role of Enabling Cards (Jégou, Liberman, Girardi & Bernagozzi, 2008) with 3 levels of usage: the dissemination of core idea as independent post-cards showing and explaining key benefits of undertaking a tree greening process (distributing the post-card to attract inhabitants of the street interest); the presentation of current field of possibilities and main steps of the tree greening process (using the post-cards as an articulated story-board); the discussion and selection of the most appropriated components of the solution to fit the specific new street context where the greening process is envisioned (using the post-cards as building blocs of the desired solution).
- The core content of the handbook based on a customized and self-printed manual presenting the synthesis of many tree greening experiences in the form of story-telling. This manual can be read from the beginning to the end as a reportage: it drives the reader through pictures of many aesthetics obtained using the squares of earth at the bottom of the trees; it points the danger that high plants represents like for example hiding kids from vehicle circulation; it proposes a list of appropriated plants advised by the public services in charge of neighbourhood green; it shows models of tree adoption certificates to involve all the families; it shows how kids may build signs with their names

◀ Figure 7: 2 tools used during the citizen walks: a “speech-stick” to record informal conversations; a map of the walk with stops carried by one of the organizers to enable participants to locate their remarks and ideas (Photo: Strategic Design Scenarios).


to indicated that a tree has been adopted by them. It explains how giving visibility to people caring for the public space in front of their house increase interest from other citizens and reduced vandalism; etc.

- The third component of the handbook consists of having simple annual planning starting in Autumn when its time to start the involvement of the core promoters group, involve the neighbourhood authorities for authorizations. It continues with main steps to be taken in Winter and Spring formulated by questions: when do the public green services order their plants for the coming year and therefore when to ask for support? What about a workshop with kids? Etc. Finally it signal main steps to anticipate when organising the planting party. All the questions are loosely suggested on a large format to be completed, changed and pinned on the wall to keep participants focused on a minimum structured process.

Page setting of all 3 elements is made on a common presentation software to enable editing, customization, appropriation and printing on a simple desktop printer.

In Molenbeek, the three walks organised were considered as a mean and not an end, a way to pilot the tools and procedures used during the preparation and the animation of the walk in order to fine-tune the design of a “Citizenship walks action kit” (Fig 2 and 4).

Even if the initial conditions of organisation were not ideal due to a lack of time which did not allow to involve local association working with groups of people in fragile social situations as much as hoped, the experimentation of the organisation of those three pilots walks, gave the opportunity to the project team (consultants in collaboration with the coordinator of the Agenda 21 and local associations) to test and improve several participation and animation tools. Presented to the city and local associations in the form of a simple slide show to browse or to print, this kit describes step by step how to organize citizenship walks on sustainability. It gives advice and at



the same time feedback from the pilots walks, suggesting different implementation options. Among the tools of organisation and animation suggested, here are few examples:

- Temporary signage boards mimicking official street signs were placed along the walk itinerary to engage a dialog about specific public space situations. What about a community garden in this empty space? What if parking would be prohibited on this place? The aim was to invite the participants to the walk but also all people passing by to look at their everyday environment in a different way.
- A “speech-stick” to collect the informal exchanges between participants during the walk: including a digital recorder and covered with bright colours, the stick passed from hand to hand, everybody taking responsibility in turn to keep track of interesting remarks and specific conversations.


All those tools and advices are trying to contribute to the simple organisation of citizens walks to involve inhabitants into participative activities turning sustainability in their area into an everyday concern.

4 / Discussion

This discussion should also be reported to the Agenda 21 framework in which the two experiences reported here have taken place. Participation is a core aspect of Agenda 21 but when promoted through a top-down public initiative, participation appears ex-post as an alibi or a justification or in the perspective of the historical antagonism between direct democracy and participative democracy (Fung, 2011) it may even be a threat for policy makers. Participative design approach based on investigation of local social innovation, inclusive co-design, progressive micro-experimentations and design of enabling solutions opens opportunities of renewal for Agenda 21 as a modern eco-systemic instrument.

Co-designing new social activities have multiple enabling effects by supporting citizens in their appropriation of public space. It supports but also fulfils to a certain extent the so-called reclaim of public space. At first, the design is inspired by local existing citizen initiatives. It means that spontaneous citizen actions are not only recognized but also promoted. Recognition and visibility given by networking initiatives can act as an alternative to institutionalization. It's a chance to maintain social effectiveness of spontaneous structures. The design activity involved which provides new interactions, new collaborations and new enrolments may also develop original actions and support emergence of new initiatives.

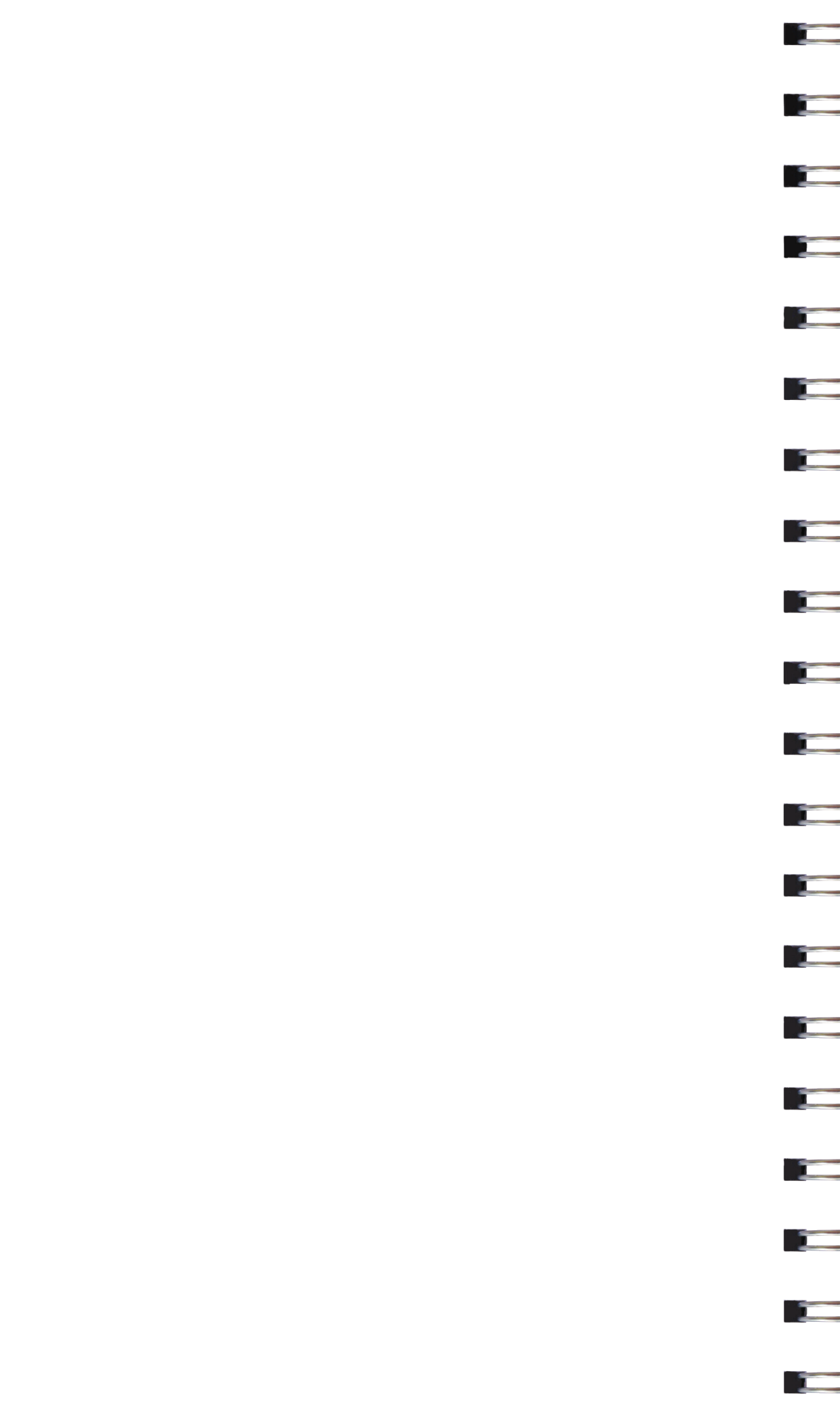
On the one hand, by engaging continually local expertise (about social initiative strictly speaking, but also about local population practices and habits, etc), the design process increases the potential success of new initiatives. It results in an optimally documented project based on local experiences of social innovation and a social network of involved creative citizens. On the other hand, by supporting local processes with new interactions tools and experiences of social innovations collected in different contexts, the design operation can stimulate, question and refresh citizen but also local authorities



initiatives and practices. More precisely, this design mediated process can be considered as a governance tool, horizontally shaped, articulating top down and bottom-up for cooperation towards a public space more considered as a common good. These participatory, real-life and collaborative ways of working and innovating are preventing public space standardisation. This approach is also preventing potential privatization.

The design potential for this form of innovation taking attention to existing uses, including informal, weak or non-obvious practices represents a barrier against the standardization. Privatization risks could appear if participation of some users generates monopolization of public territories. It happens when only classical participatory tools, like prospective workshops or public opinion meetings, are used. There are often concerns when only a small part of real users of public space are involved. People with not much spare time may include a large portion of users such as those with children, young working or poor people, local workers, walkers, housewives, etc. Design helps then to multiply participatory tools (questioning boards and other interventions in public space, web blog, citizen walks, citizen workshops, targeted animations, etc), enabling, together, to reach more and diverse citizens by dealing with diverse commitment rates and forms.

The necessity to pay attention to user's commitment to the plurality of public space was a major highlight of last Human Cities Symposium in 2010. It's also an overall stake, when contemporary society and public policies tends to privilege high and constant citizenship, initiative and competition (Ehrenberg, 2000). It seems that if it's contextualized, constantly adjusted, collaborative, inventive and attentive, the design process supporting social initiative illustrated in this paper helps multiple appropriation of public space. It supports each citizen enabling as much as possible common good status of the place.



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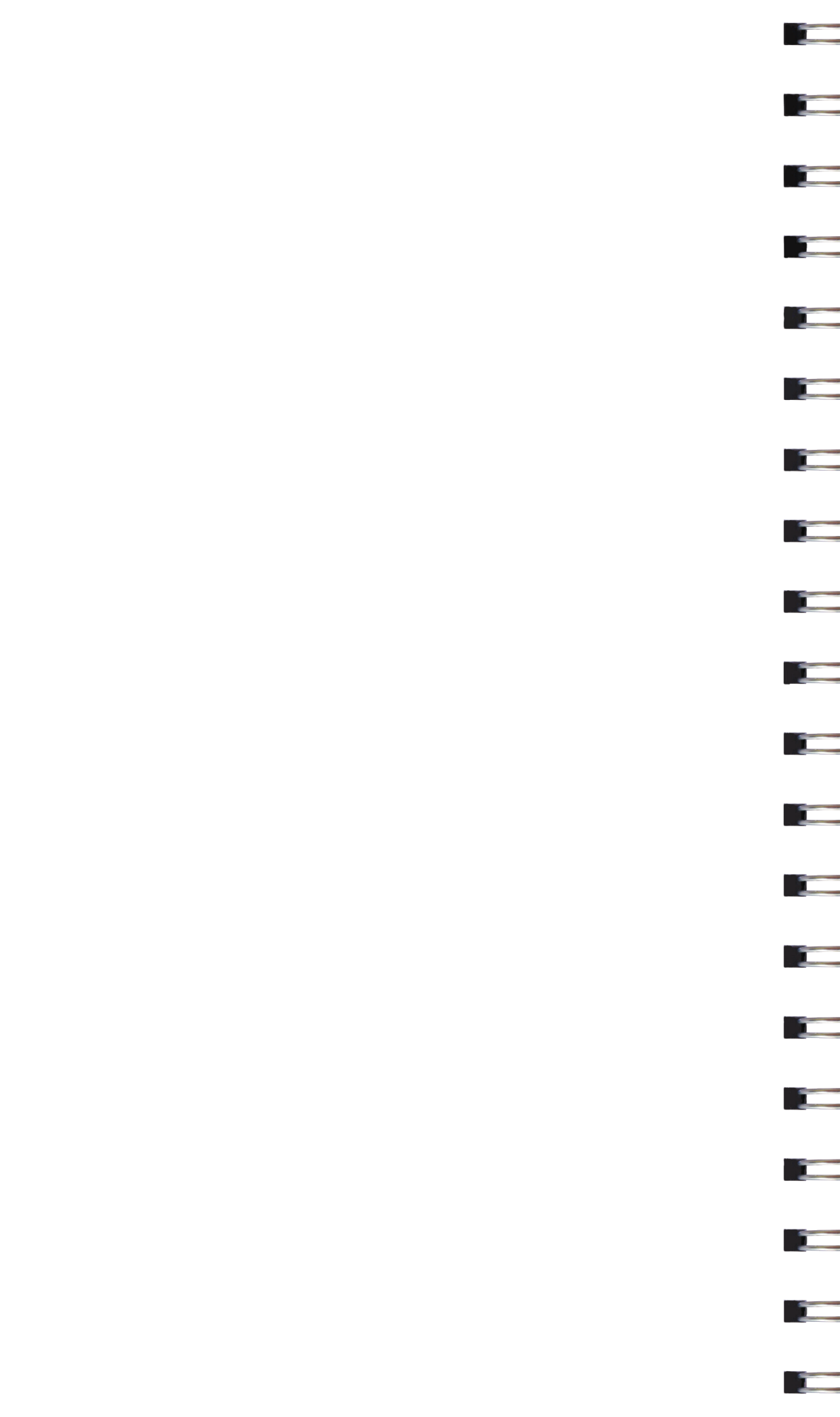
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