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## **Stakeholder Involvement in (Small-Scale) Urban Regeneration Projects – Results from a Public Consultation Meeting in Karlsruhe**

### **1 Consultation Workshop within the EU Project ReNew Town: New Post-Socialist Cities – Competitive and Attractive**

In the course of the EU Interreg Project 'ReNew Town: New post-socialist cities – competitive and attractive'<sup>1</sup>, a workshop was held on the 20<sup>th</sup> of June 2012 under the auspices of project partner number 4, the Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (KIT), in Karlsruhe, Germany.

The main purpose of the meeting was to discuss research results and findings that the KIT team has collected during its first year of supporting the project as a research institution. During this initial project lifespan, an extensive good practice study was carried out in order to identify relevant examples of urban regeneration in Germany<sup>2</sup>. While the selected good practice examples give interesting insights into small-scale participation projects, KIT has also undertaken deepening research on stakeholder involvement and governance within two in-depth studies<sup>3</sup> of larger urban regeneration projects. These studies were carried out in the residential area 'Cottbus Neu-Schmellwitz' and within a housing area in Karlsruhe called 'MiKa'.

To provide insights into the relevance of small-scale participation projects and to discuss the research results on stakeholder involvement and participation with people in practice, KIT invited more than

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<sup>1</sup> see [www.renewtown.eu](http://www.renewtown.eu)

<sup>2</sup> the good practices are available on <http://www.renewtown.eu/good-practices.html>

<sup>3</sup> the two in-depth studies on 'Urban regeneration in Cottbus Neu-Schmellwitz' and 'The MiKa project Karlsruhe' are available on <http://www.renewtown.eu/documents.html>

30 local and regional stakeholders and interested citizens and communities to attend its consultation workshop.

The workshop was divided into two parts: In the first part, the selected good practice examples were presented to the participants followed by a structured plenary discussion on selected questions while the second part of the day was focused on the results on the in-depth studies. This led to a discussion about stakeholder involvement, its success factors and failures.

As a general remark it can be said that the issues transferability and regional differences with regard to small-scale projects were also raised by the KIT team. Interestingly these issues led to disagreement as some participants assumed that there are differences between East and West or North and South while others fully denied regional differences. Unlike this disagreement, it could not have been observed that the participant's regional backgrounds have influenced the discussion. In contrast and although country based preconditions cannot be denied, the workshop participants were in surprising agreement and elaborated a general set of criteria as starting point for making (small-scale) urban regeneration projects successful.

KIT therefore hopes that these set of criteria will support our Central European partners in facilitating their work on the ReNew Town pilot actions and other future urban regeneration projects.

The results of the meeting are described below.

## **2 Results on Good Practice in Small-Scale Urban Regeneration Projects**

While some of the ReNew Town partners are implementing small-scale regeneration projects during the project's lifespan, KIT supports the partnership through providing knowledge and advice to facilitate the implementation of the pilot actions in four countries - Czech Republic, Slovenia, Slovakia and Poland.

Drawing on the German ReNew Town good practice database<sup>4</sup>, the participants of the Karlsruhe workshop were asked to elaborate sets of criteria that make small-scale projects become successful good practice examples. These sets of criteria should facilitate the work of the pilot action city partners and provide help in solving their problems within their particular locality. According to the workshop participants, the following key criteria are relevant in making a small-scale project a good practice:

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<sup>4</sup> see <http://www.renewtown.eu/databases.html?&intcond=0&country=aa>

A small-scale project is a good practice if it

- involves stakeholders<sup>5</sup>
- is demand-oriented and generates benefit for people inside and outside of a particular quarter,
- stimulates inspiration,
- has a firm prospective and is sustainable, and
- meets a local interest.

In the plenary discussion, participants emphasized the significance of sustainability in small-scale projects and underlined the importance of them having the power to inspire – the power to inspire people inside of a locality but also the power to inspire people outside of a particular locality and the power to serve as initial spark for further projects. Interestingly nearly three-quarter of the participants used words like ‘new/room for something new’, ‘impulse/push’, ‘start’, ‘spirit’ to describe the benefit of small-scale projects. The participants expressed that small-scale projects have the ability to change present community structures but they also emphasized the need not to overload project participants and to be vigilant in regard to group formation processes and social exclusion.

In conclusion as advice to the ReNew Town pilot action city partners, planners of small-scale urban regeneration projects should think about of what might be inspiring for local as well as other people within their planned urban regeneration project while at the same time if a small-scale project is to become a successful good practice it is essential to integrate project participants well without overloading them for the sake of gaining more attention.

### **3 Results on the Discussion about Stakeholder Involvement**

From the two in-depth-studies that were carried out by KIT, it became clear that stakeholder involvement is multi-faceted. While the MiKa project is an entirely bottom-up project only carried out by the citizens themselves, stakeholder involvement has long been disregarded by decision-makers within the Cottbus case.

On the basis of these two different occurrences of stakeholder involvement within the two in-depth studies, we wanted to figure out whether our workshop participants possess a coherent definition on stakeholder involvement and if they have a shared view on its success factors and failures.

For the discussion on this, the participants were randomly divided into two groups. The agreed group responses are shown in table 1.

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<sup>5</sup> however, it is important to note that the first dimension ‘stakeholder involvement’ has to be interpreted carefully. It is not clear if this is a prior dimension or only an artifact resulting from the information that was given to the participants prior to the meeting, where it was said that the meeting would be about stakeholder involvement in urban regeneration projects.

Question	Group 1	Group 2
<i>What do you see as the three most crucial features of stakeholder involvement in urban regeneration?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Participation in decision-making/Taking over of responsibilities,</li> <li>▪ Participation = Process – Transparency,</li> <li>▪ Human and financial resources, long-term focused.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Involve all groups of actors,</li> <li>▪ Room for manoeuvre (openness concerning results, transparency respectively allowance to act with regard to the administration),</li> <li>▪ Active participation in conversion activities (planning and implementation).</li> </ul>
<i>What three factors make stakeholder involvement succeed in urban regeneration projects?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Participation supported by a neighbourhood management institution. This means participation of various population groups,</li> <li>▪ Taking decisions made by citizens into account,</li> <li>▪ Financial resources.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Provide enough time, a locality and financial resources for the participation process (in an early stage and as a contact point),</li> <li>▪ Impartial moderation of the participation process (get in personal contact with the target group): expertise and methodical competence,</li> <li>▪ Meet on an equal basis (administration, citizens etc.).</li> </ul>
<i>What three factors make it fail?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Participation only as an ‚alibi‘,</li> <li>▪ If participation is not embedded locally</li> <li>▪ Lack of transparency.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Too late, too rigid to include results: Advanced planning process, pressure of time, already existing conflicts,</li> <li>▪ Poor preparation (unsuitable type of participation)</li> <li>▪ Participation only to gain acceptance.</li> </ul>

**Table 1: Agreed group responses**

In analyzing the results of the group discussions on stakeholder involvement it became apparent that our participants were not able to present a comprehensive shared definition of the three most crucial features that define stakeholder involvement. Considering their answers, it was also noticeable that within their statements the term ‘involvement’ was interpreted in different ways. Some workshops participants defined stakeholder involvement as ‘stakeholders being heard’ while others used expressions like e.g. ‘stakeholders have decision-power’.

This finding is to some degree surprising because stakeholder involvement was a predominant topic of the workshop. But on the other hand, it revealed that although stakeholder involvement is widely promoted, it is poorly understood and poorly practiced.

Instead of offering a definition, most participants listed success factors for stakeholder involvement. By combining for example the most stated answers from Group 2 to the first and the second question about stakeholder involvement, a list of success criteria has been developed.

This list can now be used in addition to the already identified success factors, which became apparent during the in-depth studies on the MiKa project. The list reads as follows:

- Involve all groups of actors and meet on an equal basis (administration and citizens etc.),
- Leave room for manoeuvre, which means be open concerning results, be transparent and provide allowance to act,
- Provide enough time and a locality for participation,
- Involve an impartial moderation entity for the moderation of the participation process.
- Elaborate a good management structure where everyone is allowed to participate,
- Put effort on the achievement of compromises between the involved stakeholders, if you want to carry out a project on a low-cost level.

Apart from the above set of success factors as guidance when planning an urban regeneration activity, another dimension of stakeholder involvement was proposed as an important issue during the discussion: this focused on the idea that involvement does not only mean taking part in discussions or decision-making but also bearing responsibilities. As this is an interesting but extremely difficult issue, we suggest that people should not be asked to make decisions that are beyond their competence - and certainly should not be held to blame (responsible) if they do so and the decision goes wrong. The real responsibility here might be that those with power (especially access to knowledge and resources) should put adequate capacity building in place before asking stakeholders to make such decisions.

Apart from that and as a general rule, our participants were at one with each other when thinking about factors that make stakeholder involvement fail. In the course of their discussion, the term 'inflationary stakeholder involvement' was raised and interpreted in the following manner: Though stakeholder involvement gains a lot of attention these days, participation processes are sometimes implemented for having an 'alibi' tool when wanting to justify decisions.

Again, this statement leads back to the success factors mentioned earlier by the workshop participants – the idea that stakeholder involvement does only work if there is an real existing room for manoeuvre which will allow stakeholders to act effectively.