RECOV

REthinking Collaborative Values for public services

International Conference

“Collaborative public services: building and managing of public co-working spaces and co-housing”

16th - 18th of January 2018, Santorso, Italy

Conclusions and Recommendations

Europe for Citizens

ALDA European Association for Local Democracy

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About the Project

The project "RECOV: REthinking Collaborative Values for public services" was developed by 10 partners across Europe, recognising the importance to jointly address recently emerging challenges and to take advantage of opportunities arising out of this cooperation. The project aims at creating a network of towns eager to work together on common issues and finding solutions through joint brainstorming in order to introduce concrete measures for the improvement of local governance through dialogue and participation, contributing to a more inclusive and democratic society.

The project suggests collaborative approaches that bring together local stakeholders from various fields of expertise and putting in synergy their knowledge and competences for public good.

The project "RECOV: REthinking Collaborative Values for public services" is founded by the European Union through the programme Europe for Citizens.

About the Conference

The project tackled the topic of co-working and co-housing during the second international conference held in Santorso, Italy from the 16th to the 18th of January 2019. The conference entitled "Collaborative public services: building and managing of public co-working spaces and co-housing" was the second international conference organised in the framework of the project. The main objective was to share practices and tools that allow municipalities to be more open, while focusing on involving actively the local communities in collaborative activities.

The conference was opened by Franco Balzi, mayor of Santorso, who welcomed the participants and presented the activities of the municipality for the promotion of collaborative public services. In turn, Alessandro Perelli, vice president of ALDA, highlighted the importance of collaboration for local communities in Italy and Europe, while Antonella Valmorbida, ALDA's Secretary General, explained how the European Union is also actively engaged in fostering development at the local level.

During the conference, the panellists shared their experience about co-working and co-housing, thus opening a discussion on why and how local communities should engage in the practices of co-working spaces and co-housing. Furthermore, several regional co-working initiatives were presented, such as Megahub, Spazio Hub and Urban Center Thiene.

The present document summarises the challenges that the local authorities and the CSOs face while cooperating in building and managing of public co-working spaces and co-housing and the recommendations based on good practices shared during the event.

Method

The following recommendations resulted from the discussions following the 2 panels of the conference and the project partners' workshop using the methodology World Café. This method ensured the participation of every partner and efficiently gathered all the necessary information and opinions on the proposed topics.

Conclusions and recommendations from the conference

Collaborative public services are the future of community development and cooperation between the citizens and the local authority. Co-working and co-housing are trending practices that can be valuable tools in creating a stable community that thrives.

The numerous examples of collaborative public services provided during the panels and recommendations can be used as positive practices to be implemented in future projects.

During the opening speech the Mayor of Santorso, **Franco Balzi**, talked about the importance of collaborative public services in the municipality, as the conference itself was held in Oasi Rossi, an open communal space where the community can directly use the municipality's services.

Nuno Wemans from Clube Intercultural Europeu, Portugal presented their project Espaço C3 that includes a co-working space, a training room, a multimedia studio and a youth space, financed by the BIP/ZIP program of Lisbon's City Hall. When talking about promotion of the space in the community, he shared that it was a simple task as the community was already in need of this type of space and the information of its opening was easily shared and attracted locals. What is important in creating such a space is to identify the real need on the field and reply to those need. However, creating a collaborative space was not an easy task, Mr. Wemans asserted that it takes time, patience and diligence in order to accomplish the process in a satisfactory manner.

Giulia Sostero from ALDA presented the Project Income implemented by ALDA and 8 partners from various countries. The project targets coordinators of co-working spaces in order to improve their practices, skills and capacities in the good management of co-working spaces. Based on her expertise throughout the implementation of the project Mrs Sostero witnessed that co-working principles are beneficial tools for economy growth, tackling unemployment in the community and promoting diversity.

Giulio Pesenti Campagnoni from the municipality of Santorso presented the project "Municipalities in transitions" and highlighted that the future of the communities depends on collaboration. After observing positive examples of collaboration between civil society and public administrations throughout the project it was evident that cooperation helps the development of the community and that a big number of collaborations are already established but the community is not informed. Mr. Campagnoni recommends creating networks in order to connect citizens, civil society and local administrations to work together.

Bojana Otasevic from the City of Uzice presented the "Integrated urban development strategy for the inner City of Uzice" whose creation included the cooperation of all public services, business sector, citizens and the civil society sector. She shared that creating a collaborative public service is a lengthy process that needs involvement of all sectors. She recommends using all means of communication and promotion in order to involve as much stakeholders as possible.

Emir Coric form the Municipality of Centar presented the projects and services of the municipality created with the collaboration of the citizens and for the community. He shared how the municipality can contribute in the creation of co-working and co-housing, by providing free use of spaces and urban communities owned by the Municipality, by purchasing premises that citizens or civil society organisations can use or by renting the space and providing logistic support and human resources.

Agron Haxhimali from Association of Albanian Municipalities recommended fostering collaboration between the local authorities, civil society and citizens through the presentation of the work that the municipalities in Albania have achieved in this field.

Cristian Farinea talked about his project Spazio hub, a place in which people can cooperate, share and help each other to develop common ideas and projects. The project brings together citizens in creating businesses and provide services together. Mr. Farinea recommends this practice in order to foster cooperation and creating services most suitable for the community. By providing best practices, opinions and even negative experiences the participants in the program can help their fellow citizens to develop their ideas.

Anna Binotto from the Urban Center Thiene talk about the process of creating an urban centre with a joint effort of the public and civil society sector. As part of their programme for jobs and employability they have been part of several projects working on the topic of co-working like business accelerators, co-working spaces and support for young entrepreneurs. She emphasised the importance of creating co-working hubs that will provide young entrepreneurs to develop business ideas which will contribute to the growth of the community as well.

World Café topics and discussions

What are the challenges of collaborative public services?

The municipalities as providers of public services can make a significant difference and contribution regarding the topic of co-working spaces and co-housing. However, in most cases there are challenges that need to be overcome and positive practices that arise from the results.

Communication

The general public is not informed that the local public authority has the possibility to offer existing or create co-working spaces and co-housing.

The communication channels between the local authority and the citizens are often not clear and the procedures of requesting guidance are vague especially in rural municipalities. In some communities there is a person nominated for a specific topic, but in most that's not the case.

It is of the outmost importance to establishing good dialogue between the municipalities and the civil society organisations. The civil society sector can formulate the needs of the citizens but they should establish cooperation with municipalities in order to communicate it efficiently

Location

Often municipalities have at their disposal work space that is not being used, offices or public buildings that can be adapted to the current needs of the community. There are various examples of community theatres, meeting rooms and offices. The difficulty is in finding the suitable location for the specific project or idea. In most communities those public spaces are not in suitable shape or ruined, are not in frequently visited neighbourhoods or have some legal issues. This is especially challenging for the co-housing spaces as they need large space and suitable location.

Transparent processes

The CSOs and the citizens are rarely informed about the services and possibilities that their municipality can offer. The municipalities need to be more transparent about their resources and the procedure for using those services.

Procedures

The bureaucratic procedures in the municipalities are very complex and it takes a long time to process demands and project proposals from the citizens and the CSOs.

Interest

The municipalities have their own interest, which in most cases differs from the interest of the civil society organisations. This is one of the more serious challenges that requires cooperation and compromise among the partners and an effort for establishing mutual language and comprehension. All stakeholders need to remember that their cooperation is important for meeting the needs of people, and that is what actually unites their interests-the public interest of the citizens.

Identifying the needs of the community

In some cases it is very challenging to identify which needs are the most relevant for the public interest, and to prioritize the most important ones.

Initiatives

The municipality can also help with supporting some initiatives of civil society organisations financially, by giving them resources. However, citizens and smaller CSOs do not have the adequate skills to draft a proposal that can be supported.

This is also challenging because a lot of civil society organisations send requests to the municipality, but the municipality needs to choose one or to two projects that are most closely to the public interest, because it can't afford to support all of the initiatives. This may result in conflict and impact the cooperation between the municipalities and the civil society organisations.

Which strategies and methods shall be applied for engaging citizens in collaborative public services?

Engaging citizens in collaborative process is a big challenge for the local authorities and CSOs. We propose three strategies that any local authority can use to engage their community to collaborate in creating, supporting and offering different public services in the name of the local authorities on the topic of co-working and co-housing.

Participatory engagement from the beginning

The Local authorities should put into practice the citizens' participation from the start of the processes of establishing co-working and/or co-housing practices. The participation of citizens can be insured by using the following methods:

- Calls for project proposals by the local authorities open for citizens – When the Local authorities have a process or a project where the citizens and the local stakeholders can contribute, the local authorities should launch a call for proposals that is transparent and target locals;
- Open Source questionnaires or inquiries about needs related to collaborative public services (participative diagnosis) – In order to discover the opinions and needs of the citizens and the local stakeholders;
- Meetings and tools for civic society participation in urban planning (everything or specific areas or neighbourhoods) – Involving citizens in urban planning will ensure the creation of a growing community;
- Forums for open discussion in public spaces (as central as possible) where civic society organises itself to discuss and promote collaborative public services and debate the needs of the city/town/neighbourhood.

Communication / Dissemination tools

Good communication and dissemination tools are essential for a good cooperation and engaging citizens in collaborative projects. We propose using the following methods:

- Promotion of collaborative public services through different communication channels (social media and apps – online platforms OR personal contacts and door-to-door depending on the target audience or the residents profile);
- Be transparent and trustworthy – have an open door policy and be reachable when asking for engagement;
- Have prominent figures or celebrities from your community to promote active engagement of citizens in different initiatives, including collaborative public services;
- Meetings, conferences, seminars to discuss proposals and present the proper context for people to make informed decisions and proposals;
- Always promote constructive criticism and be open for comments and feedback;

- Monitoring and accountability strategies: make visible or provide updates on the status quo of a certain citizen-led project or initiative.

Engagement in the decision making processes

Involving citizens in the decision making process of the local authorities will give opportunity to the citizens to shape their communities according to their needs. Here are some recommendations for including the community in public processes.

- Have a period of discussion of proposals in the city hall and public debates about the proposals to have feedback and suggestions from civil society;
- Use ICT apps for public decision making (system of voting or multiple option questions) or online participation tools;
- Promote regular meetings with different stakeholders in which people can participate in proposals or projects for the city.

How local stakeholders may be involved in creation and management of public spaces?

Identifying the local stakeholders

It is important to identify the local stakeholders in the community that can be involved in co-working and co-housing projects and define their role in the management of public spaces. All stakeholders should be included, state and local authorities, CSOs and NGOs, private and business sector, citizens and institutions.

Targeting the right stakeholders

In the process of creating co-working and co-housing projects by the local authority, the project should target specific stakeholders following the nature and topic of the proposed action.

A strategy on how to reach different stakeholders and action plans including organising local events, workshops, brainstorming ideas and etc. will help the process of targeting the stakeholders.

Motivation

Defining the motivation behind the actions of the stakeholders can be useful for the creation of co-working and co-housing projects. When preparing a project, project managers should talk and brainstorm about the possible motivation of stakeholders to get involved and to use that information to attract them.

Experience

Local business, CSOs and NGOs can have more experience on certain topics than the local authorities. Identifying the experience of the local stakeholders and involving them in the process of creation of a project will bring valuable experience to the action. For example, when opening a community theatre, the local theatre directors or actors can advise the local authority for the necessary arrangements, or when building a co-housing space, local architects and engineers will be the main advisors.

Citizen participation

Citizens have the experience of the day-to day processes in the community. Involving them on discussions, debates, public presentations, info packs, door to door methods in a smaller community, different media and with online tools will bring added value and will help create tailor-made project responding to their needs. The citizens will feel useful and directly responsible for the success of the project.

Co-financing

When the municipality has difficulty to raise funds for a specific project, then crowdfunding events can be organised where the local stakeholders can participate directly in the creation of a co-working or co-housing project.

The local authorities can offer subventions, grants and financial help for specific groups that would like to create co-working and co-housing spaces.

By offering local tax benefits the local authority can attract the stakeholders to get involved.

Managing a co-working and co-housing space

The local stakeholders can contribute to the managing process of co-working and co-housing spaces as they can have more experience. Local NGOs or small business can manage shelters, hubs and community centres.

Best practices and experience exchange

The local authorities should connect with stakeholders in order to share and gain knowledge on best practices of co-working and co-housing. Taking part in European projects is a way for the local authorities to gather experience and network.

How to promote co-working and co-housing in the local community?

Promotion is very important for a successful project or initiative. The following promotional tools can be used to attract attention to co-working and co-housing projects in the community.

General promotion

- Classic advertising tools such as adds and commercials can be used by the local authorities and CSOs to promote co-working and co-housing projects;
- Formal promotion (TV, radio, websites);
- Informal promotion – "Face to Face" or by innovative approach – a public car, which drives through local community and on megaphone local administration present and promote ideas, values, advantages of co-working and co-housing, to encourage citizens to make such decisions.

Promoting co-working:

Co-working can by promoted through the following methods:

- Promotion via Websites and Social media as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram - posting open calls where citizens can apply for co-working with the municipality, municipality can encourage it by allocating funds for good ideas, projects;
- Creation of informal groups and organisation of workshops where participants in groups talk about common ideas, projects;
- Organisation of workshops inside the municipality with different departments, offices and decision makers;
- Creation of campaigns – promoting additional values of co-working for the community and for the local economy;
- Raising awareness among citizens – good leaders can promote co-working with their good skills, experience, knowledge, practices;
- Organisation of open debates, round tables, "Face to Face" discussions;
- Networking – finding people with common interests (target groups) and present them an idea of working together in shared space;
- Presentations – that can be done on local markets, local events where local administration or different stakeholders can introduce values of co-working and co-housing.

Promoting Co-housing:

Co-housing can be promoted through the following methods:

- Promotion through local events, organised by municipality – containing information on the possibilities of shared facilities, building an infrastructure with joint spaces, the benefits of economising financial resources by living together;

- Sharing good examples between neighbours about advantages of co-housing;
- Raising awareness among citizens by sharing guidelines, tutorials about co-housing – how to build such a community, shared space;
- Formal advertising focused on economising financial resources by living together, reduced expenses;
- Creating agencies which offer public private services and consultations;
- Subvention to students and youngsters who decide to live together in order to economise financial resources and become independent;
- Questionnaires – Adapted to the local context which will bring insights on the opinions of the community and educate the community at the same time;
- Presentation of co-housing in local community – cultural house, urban centre, youth centre;
- Presentation of co-housing in schools to children teach them about values and advantages of co-housing and co-working who in turn will share information with their families.

How co-working and co-housing can contribute to the local economy?

One of the most difficult tasks was to discuss about this particular and very important aspect of co-working and co-housing, how the local economy will develop with the support of co-working and co-housing principles. Two main conclusions were drawn, i.e. co-working can increase the additional value and co-housing can certainly reduce the cost of living.

Co-Working and the local economy

Co-working spaces have the potential to play a significant role in local economic development, but there must also be community and local government communication and commitment to provide neighbourhood services and amenities in order to tap into the potential of co-working. On one hand, there needs to be an understanding of the necessity of collaboration among citizens in the community, as well as civil society and authorities and on the other, the local government needs to encourage the independent initiatives of the citizens by offering quality public services.

How co-working can impact the local economy growth:

- **Co-working spaces build sharing economies:** by providing shared space and shared amenities in flexible packages, co-working reduces expenses and distributes funds amongst community members in a way that is customised to their needs.

- **Co-working spaces nourish and retain creative talent locally:** the co-working model generates a creative economy made up of individuals who not only need an inexpensive way to operate, but need a consistent flow of new people, new ideas and new opportunities. In this way, creatives will not be forced to seek employment elsewhere, but they will engage their ability with other local businesses.

- **Co-working spaces boost the local economy:** a local co-working community can effect a significant cash influx, for example, in direct economic development through regular support of local businesses like gift shops, convenience stores, restaurants, bars and local services.

- **Co-working provides a platform for small businesses:** in this way they can succeed and grow, even if they don't require workspace. Local businesses can benefit from co-working spaces through direct partnerships and programming. For example, lunch delivery partnership provides the benefit of convenience for members and consistent influx for participating local restaurants.

- **Co-working spaces create opportunities for globalisation:** another way that co-working spaces boost the local economy is through their flexibility in relation to the remote work office. By ensuring that remote employees invest their income locally, co-working can impact small business ecosystems in as powerful of a way as a corporation's choice of home office location.

Co-housing and the local economy

Regarding co-housing, currently, most people tend to be independent and it is difficult to grasp the concept of co-housing. This is the main reason why there is a need for raising awareness among citizens on the benefits of co-housing. An emphasis should be put on communities and their residents having their own private spaces, but banding together to share meals and facilities, organise common activities and take care of each other as well as the understanding that co-housing can improve the community sense in a neighbourhood.

It is expected that local governments along with other institutions could invest funds or relieve the money loan in order to build new structure or reconstruct old buildings into flexible family complexes, designed to enable interaction and adapted to accommodate people in some shared spaces, but it is possible also for citizens to jointly create co-housing opportunities.

How co-housing can impact the local economy growth:

- **Co-housing reduces the costs of living because it is affordable and cooperative:** pooling financial resources cuts costs and reduces needs for individual investments. By conserving resources and assets, co-housing communities can help alleviate the shortage of affordable housing. Especially for young people, co-housing has potential to make buying or renting a home cheaper, but also enables sharing of bills, cars and household goods, as well as sharing resources and trading of services like babysitting, care for the elderly, medical care etc. This will give the opportunity to the citizens to reinvest the saved resources locally and to give back to the community.

- **Co-housing increases efficiency and protects the environment:** Considering the fact that communal space is used for gardens and yards that supports local sustainable agriculture, bedrooms and other facilities such as gym, pool or laundry fewer resources will be used per person for construction, use and maintenance and will be also reduced the overall physical and environmental footprint per household. Also, vehicle sharing and shared heating/cooling units will reduce the community's carbon footprint and emissions. This effect will promote the green local economy and with that the development of a healthy community.

- **Co-housing boosts local economy by creating new communal workplaces:** By cutting the individual costs and pooling financial resources, the citizens will have opportunities to seek services that they can't have individually, like private child care services, exercise centres or other type of services for hobbies and courses. The co-housing community will combine finances and thusly create need for new workplaces for those services.

The final conclusion is that successful neighbourhoods need time and dedication and the municipalities that strive for sustainable long term economic development need to be involved and working with communities throughout the process. There needs to be a comprehensive effort with all parties involved for successful community and economic development.

Overall recommendation

Creation of collaborative public services is essential for a sustainable development of a community. Working on the topics of co-working and co-housing and using their principles to jointly implement projects that will create better communities.

The challenges when creating a public co-working or co-housing space are numerous and sometimes can be intimidating. But, they don't have to be obstacle when creating projects. They can be overcome by good preparation, communication and eagerness to succeed by the partners. Patience and persistence are important virtues for this process.

Identifying the stakeholders is a crucial step in creating collaborative public services. The local authorities, the civil society and the business sector have their specific expertise which will largely contribute to the success of a project.

The right motivation will boost the confidence of the community and will inspire citizens to get more involved and the local authorities to invest more in collaborative activities.

It's important to involve all stakeholders in the activities from the beginning of the process. There is a great number of methods to engage citizens to participate such as open calls, open meetings in the city hall, online surveys and discussions.

Best practices and positive experiences from other communities and organisations will provide the necessary support when starting a co-working or co-housing project. Conferences and workshops can facilitate the process.

Promotion of public spaces and collaborative projects is essential for the success of this process. As the topics have a broad spectrum of activities, all the means of promotion and dissemination can be used, as long as the communication strategies are tailor-made for the specific community.

Starting a co-working or a co-housing project can contribute to the local economy in many ways. When researching about the benefits of the principles of co-working and co-housing projects and creating a strategy, it's important to emphasize the economic benefits of the activities.

The joint effort of all sectors of one community is a sign of a healthy and developing community.

"Collaborative public services"
MEGAHUB: