

FIG President Holger Magel
at Habitat Professionals Forum 2005 in Istanbul

“Governance – People – Professionals

Civil Society and Good Governance: how does the growing role of citizens impact on the urban planning process and the role of architects and planners?”

“About the need of centres of capacity building in urban and rural development”

The increasing role of participatory planning and – combined with it – of moderation, mediation and conflict solution is inevitable, at least in democratic countries. This development has a strong impact on theory, education and practice of planning processes and decision procedures of municipalities or local authorities. The mostly uncoordinated and less reflected informal participation and decision procedures of local agenda 21 processes have raised many questions and reservations among a lot of local governments and planners in Germany:

- Are citizens really able and mature enough to contribute seriously and effectively to complex urban planning processes?
- Do they only follow their current moods and possibly negative feelings?
- Is it better to give them opportunity to decide only on simple and clear issues and projects and isn't it better, to plan without too much publicity and participation and to inform citizens later on respectively to practice only a concise **formal** citizen participation?

Against this scepticism I still do believe in the need and benefit of a wide range of informal planning (which must finally be confirmed by formal procedures!) and great variety of citizen participation, **if**

we are willing and able to empower and enable citizens to really be able to participate, i.e. to make valuable contributions as “trained amateurs” in complex and comprehensive planning systems and procedures like top-down and bottom-up planning but as experts of their own home and its potentials, weaknesses and options. “Trained” means to offer them systematic workshops and “learning by doing” at special “Schools or Training Centres of capacity building in urban and rural development”. Participants of these moderated 2-3 days long workshops are all affected actors: local government people with the mayor, planners and architects and representatives of citizens and NGO's! The common interest and topic is the future of the city or village or landscape based on a jointly discussed and elaborated overall concept and vision and followed by concrete projects! The workshops should happen far to the home city so that every participant can better concentrate on the workshop themes including staying overnight.

These centres fit perfectly in the new paradigm of dialogue planning (instead of experts planning) and in the European and global philosophies and trends of capacity building, subsidiarity, civil society and good governance. The European structural funds therefore support financially the workshops because they are very successfully bringing government, people and professionals together.

Principally founded in Bavaria you can find training centre in more and more European countries. It's a recommendable success story!

Why?

Because all decisive success factors will be enhanced:

- broadly discussed and therefore realistic plans for implementation,
- commitments to future by both governments and citizens,
- common ideals, ideas and visions,
- better working communication between the stakeholders

and nearly the most important issue and factor:

- an atmosphere of mutual trust and familiarity!

Against this background architects and planners are not only experts **consulting** people anymore but they have become professionals who are strongly interested in the inputs and locally based experience and professionalism of citizens! They should respect the TRIAS of dialogue planning: to **allow** participation, to **wish** participation and finally to **enable** to be able for participation.