The European Union has placed the environment, climate and biodiversity among its main priorities, with the ambition to become the first carbon neutral continent. This challenges large urban agglomerations, which concentrate almost a fifth of the European population and a third of its economic activity.

Urban agglomerations are also challenged by the current pandemic, forcing us to question the urban density of cities and the need to be in the city to be productive.

If the reduction of greenhouse gases emissions mainly concerns the field of energy production, it can also be achieved through transport and mobility, thermal quality of buildings, limitation of urban sprawl, expansion of natural areas, etc.

All these topics, together with art, culture and social environment, shall be taken into account when dealing with urban planning and cities’ development and management strategies. But how?

Some solutions are starting to emerge and to be tested. We are gradually establishing a new relationship between human activity and nature, in which the latter is no longer enslaved but finds its place in our lives.

The latest IPCC and IPBES reports show that increasing urbanisation through expansion of cities is one of the main determinants of climate change and the decline in biodiversity.

Plant and aquatic breakthroughs in our mineral universes and the implementation of a more intelligent management of the water cycle - notably by waterproofing - like sunshine in our cities, become essential policies of modern town planning.

Waterproofing contributes to adaptation to climate change:
- By reducing the risk of flooding;
- Through the preservation of natural resources;
- With the reintroduction of nature in the city: the living environment and the well-being of the inhabitants are improved; islands of freshness are created; biodiversity develops and the attractiveness of the territory increases.

Our European cities, already exemplary in their masterful urban planning, respectful of heritage and anxious to offer amenities and green spaces to the inhabitants, must aim to become Safe Cities, Healthy Cities and resource-efficient cities.

Life in the city is popular and creating livable urban space is undoubtedly a priority for planners. Yet how can we make our cities worth living in and healthy? How do we define sustainable neighborhoods that will function properly and continue to attract people in the future?

Fouad AWADA
Director General of L’Institut Paris Region
What is the participative urban planning? Why is it important to include citizens in the planning process and how shall they be included?

We like to use this quotation from Yves Chalas (2009) to describe what is participatory urban planning: “Participatory urban planning is urban planning that has no true project or solution before the public debate, but does after the public debate.”

Participatory planning is a proven approach to designing neighbourhoods on a human scale. It provides undeniable advantages when compared to conventional processes managed solely by professionals. Since citizens are in the neighbourhood every day, they can provide observations and knowledge that are different from experts, thereby enriching the analysis. Professionals can then supplement the information provided by the citizens. Listening and being open to everyone’s input are key ingredients for the mutual understanding of issues.

By integrating citizens’ observations, concerns and aspirations from the start, and throughout the project, all participants can find solutions collectively that meet the community’s true needs. More than just a simple consultation, participatory urban planning promotes open dialogue and interaction between users, experts and decision makers throughout the entire process.

ANC developed two toolkits for use by citizens wanting to engage in the transformation of their neighbourhood: the co-design toolkit and the policy toolkit.

The recently launched policy toolkit is a bilingual, online gallery of resources that will help communities advocate for policies which enable healthy built environments. To create this toolkit, we drew on research, knowledge, community feedback and the strategic work of partner organisations to consolidate resources from Canadian communities. Included in the new toolkit is a policy map, policy resources, design resources, supporting research and a timeline of healthy places policy in Canada. It could be of interest for people outside of the country, but has a Canada focus through part of the tools.

The Co-design toolkit is a collection of 27 exercises developed or adapted by the ANC team throughout the last 10 years of existence. It is available in both French and English, free to use, and available to citizens from all over the world; our tools have been downloaded from people from over 2000 cities across 166 countries over the last 30 months. The different exercises have four different objectives: understanding the challenges of a sector, developing a collective vision, identifying development solutions as well as demonstrating and evaluating. They are to be used by residents, organisations or institutions willing to engage citizens in decision-making relative to urban planning.

The European Commission set the zero land take objective by 2050 to counteract urbanisation and related pollution in Europe. EU Cities are now trying to achieve this objective by reintroducing natural spaces into urban areas. What solutions would you recommend?

The conservation of naturalized areas, whether they are productive (agricultural) or not, is a major issue for urban development professionals. Considering more and more people are going to be living in cities (60% to 70% of the global population, depending on the reference), cities should start planning for the next 100 years, if not more. Where will food and water be coming from? Where will people be living? And working? How are they going to use transport?

We need to find a way to engage residents in (...)
(...) decision-making to find better solutions for the transformation of neighbourhoods. We need to reflect on transportation and develop sustainable and active mobility, keeping in mind the duration of journeys and access to services (see 15 minutes’ city as imagined by the city of Paris). We need to have equity in mind, as every decision has an impact on population (already, we now that many cities have air pollution issues, notably in the east side of many European cities). With the current pandemic, we cannot take for granted any public space and parks, and access to those is more important than ever.

There are lessons to be learned from circular economy theories for municipal professionals, as proposed by Sylvain Grisot. Before any naturalized area be converted and urbanized, a throughout look at urbanized land should be made and solutions to intensify and density, to transform and to recycle every parcel of land should be identified.

**KVARNER: SMART PLANNING WITH SIMPLA IN WESTERN CROATIA**

The Horizon 2020 project SIMPLA (“Sustainable Integrated Multi-sector PLAnning”) was implemented from 2016 to 2019 by an international consortium made up of 16 partner organisations from Italy, Austria, Spain, Bulgaria, Romania, and Croatia. The purpose of the project was to empower public authorities to develop and implement sustainable energy policies and actions by creating the conditions for a smart integration between SEAPs (Sustainable Energy Action Plans) and SUMPs (Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans) – or similar plans – in cities with a population between 50.000 and 350.000 inhabitants.

SIMPLA’s work-plan was focused on the establishment of a network of National Focal Points in the six previously-mentioned countries (expanding to further 12 through replication actions) which carried out a series of project activities, workshops and tailored coaching programmes in line with a specific methodology devised by the consortium as well. As a result, more than 1000 public officers were reached and 28 integrated plans were developed, composed of an energy plan, a mobility plan and a harmonisation report.

Furthermore, an important tool was created within the project: the SIMPLA guidelines for the harmonisation of energy and mobility planning. This is a step-by-step methodology for developing, reviewing and modifying energy and mobility plans on a local level. SIMPLA guidelines are free to use, and available online at [http://www.simpla-project.eu/media/82399/simpla-guidelines-v4.pdf](http://www.simpla-project.eu/media/82399/simpla-guidelines-v4.pdf).

The Institution Regional Energy Agency Kvarner (REA Kvarner) was a member of the project consortium with the main role to organise and carry out the majority of project activities in Croatia. During the first phase of the implementation, 12 Croatian cities were selected and involved in a multistage training programme, in order to introduce the representatives of the local authorities with the harmonisation methodology designed within the project. The five most prominent cities involved – Cakovec, Varaždin, Pula, Rijeka, and Porec – were then selected to participate in the second phase.

These local authorities decided to initiate the process of harmonisation. They were supported by a project provided expert, which carried out a specifically tailored coaching programme in order to meet the needs of each city involved. All Croatian local authorities which were involved in SIMPLA education programmes recognised the advantages of applying the concept of harmonisation to their internal processes of energy and mobility plan adaptation and update. Harmonising SEAPs & SUMPs: It’s SIMPLA!

**ENERGY IMPROVEMENT DISTRICTS IN THE BALTIC MACROREGION**

The energy planning instruments and cooperation models applied by local authorities in strategic energy planning are quite limited. The AREA 21 project of the Baltic Sea Region Interreg promotes the concept and practice of Energy Improvement Districts (EID). AREA 21 focuses on energy efficiency planning at the urban district level by transforming the existing building stock and energy infrastructure. The district-scale energy transformation faces several obstacles such as lack of cooperation between a myriad of stakeholders, loose concepts, fragmented projects rather than holistic plans and consolidated approaches. Financial challenges relate to funding and financial risks associated with cooperative energy projects. Technological challenges emerge from the functionality and hard fixes of the system design. Administrative challenges relate to processes and regulations that are not adjusted for the district-level implementation of energy planning.

The position paper of AREA 21 states an absence of funding schemes at the district level and underlines the importance of the smart combination of funding programmes with different targets. The funding buffet could facilitate context-specific approaches that combine the best measures from different areas.

Access to data on energy use is fundamental to understanding energy needs and saving potentials. Therefore, key (...
ENERGEE WATCH: PEER LEARNING ON DATA MONITORING

ENERGEE WATCH is a highly participatory project aiming to engage peer learning between local and regional authorities for the entire process of collecting, monitoring and verifying the data related to the implementation of sustainable energy and climate plans. The learning will focus on regional/provincial authorities and their agencies that are responsible for collecting and overseeing the monitoring of mitigation and adaptation measure indicators in order to empower them to make use of best practices.

The project builds on, among others, Covenant of Mayors SECAP guidelines, best practices collected through projects on evaluation and verification practices such as EC Horizon 2020 MultEE and EPATEE and the IEE Data4Action and MESHARTILITY and will also promote other successfully implemented monitoring, reporting and verification (MRV) practices from cities and regions in the EU.

The specific objectives of ENERGEE WATCH are:

- to develop and execute a complete and easily replicable peer-to-peer learning programme addressing at least 79 regional authorities or their associations and agencies. In this way, by building capacity of regional authorities, we would reach a few hundred of their cities and local members.
- to create effective and productive peer-to-peer groups among regional and local authorities and agencies within and outside consortium partners, in order to ensure the exchange of experience and expertise on MRV.
- to build partnerships that will stimulate mutual understanding of each other’s issues, situations and challenges with the aim of exploring new ideas, options and solutions.
- to further improve the replicability and comparability of measurement and verification practices through empowering mentors and strengthening their knowledge.
- to identify and set up proper replication mechanisms for the learning programmes available to regions and cities beyond the consortium network and the project’s duration.

Stay tuned to discover the first activities and outputs of the project!