PASSAGE project

Cross-border meeting in Wimille, 11 October 2018

Synthesis of work in groups on citizen engagement

Two main questions:
- **How to increase the visibility of low-carbon transition to the general public/the citizens?**
- **How to increase the visibility of low-carbon transition within our public policies/our professional activities?**

1. Main issues identified

⇨ **What is the role of the citizen?**

✓ Citizens can act to change their behaviour, but what is their impact compared to heavy industries or freight transportation? Trying to make people feel guilty is probably not the best solution.

✓ Citizens have a crucial role in persuading and lobbying big companies.

> ### Example
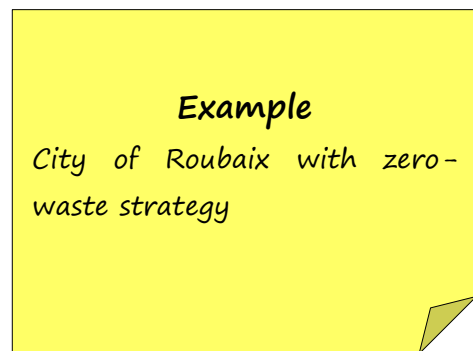> In Germany residents can leave packaging at the shops, it forces change and encourages companies to reduce packaging.

✓ Citizens must be involved from the beginning to feel part of the solution and should be involved throughout the decision-making process. Example: we can involve citizens in the process of defining the priorities for investment in low-carbon transition, using similar methods to those used in social economy, such as citizens' budget. Thus, people can vote and decide which priorities should be put at the top of the political agenda - the topics they want to push forward.

⇨ **How can we move from "start-up" to "mainstream"?**

There are many initiatives taking place: brilliant projects, but they remain small-scale projects with a limited impact.

How can we make sure these projects can reach everyone? How can they become a standard way of doing things? How do we deal with limited resources?

✓ Chose 1 or 2 initiatives for a large-scale development: don't try to solve all the issues at the same time, pick one or two priorities. Avoid dilution, make a strong choice.

✓ Focus funding and communication on the chosen priorities: it will eventually create a synergy with other topics and the impact will cascade through to other areas.

✓ Activities need to be targeted according to the specificities of each territory and the needs of the people or business. The same initiative may not work everywhere – "one size doesn't fit all".

Example
City of Roubaix with zero-waste strategy

⇨ **What is the right scale for action?**

What is the relevant scale to develop a strategy with a clear direction? District councils are interesting scales. There are similarities between territories (for example: post-industrial territories), but how do we acknowledge local differences?

Is it possible to develop a clear strategy, focused on 1 or 2 priorities, at the scale of a County, a Region, or a strait? Any examples in Europe?

2. Main ideas and levers

⇨ **We could get inspiration from methods of marketing and further link behaviour to money…**

The financial incentive is strong! It is very concrete, everyone can say: "ok, I can win from it". It is true for individuals and for companies. Demonstrate the economic potential of energy transition, link climate change and energy transition to the main priorities of people (poverty, jobs, income…).

Theory of engagement:
- Fast system: acting on emotions and interests is a much more efficient method of changing behaviour.
- Slow system: talk to the rational side of people, future of their children…

Both can be used, to find the right balance.

Stop separating environment and economy: competitiveness is in both resilience and sustainability.

⇨ **We could further link energy issues with health**

If citizens understand the benefits for their health and quality of life, they will more easily change their behaviour.

⇨ **We need a toolbox – highlight good practices**

Many initiatives exist in territories and many tools are created by stakeholders (eco-energy box, ADEME eco-gestures…). In order to highlight existing initiatives to citizens, we could register them. This is the first step to ask the relevant questions to all the relevant people working on the topic.

However, providing the information to citizens is not enough: we should probably have a long term support strategy…

⇨ **We need objective data** (also linked with the issue of indicators – see below)

For citizens to understand the problem and to change their behaviours, we could involve them in measuring the problem, or make the data easily available to them (eg. online Open Data). In this way, people will be able to see and understand the reality of the situation themselves.

> ### *Example*
> Cooperation between Flemish government, universities and citizens for a big campaign to measure air quality. Results of the study shared to people who were involved in measures so that they can be ambassadors in their neighbourhood. Important communication, true awareness raising.

However, if citizens can be involved and motivated for measure operations, it seems unlikely to be enough; mobilisation of science and research seems required considering the stakes and the urgency.

⇨ **We need consistent messages**

Too often policies are inconsistent. For example, we ask citizens to drive less but build new roads. We could find a middle-ground and use consistent messages that can be understood by anyone. This requires us to stop thinking in silos and to link all issues.

We can try to ensure that all topics use the same overarching messages; linking them under one idea so that people can see the connection. We could use a "golden thread" running through our messages.

We could show citizens how much money has been saved through energy savings, and how it is going to be used. If citizens can see the collective benefit, it may encourage behaviour change.

⇨ **We could bring together public and private sectors**

NGOs, private companies, local authorities… could all work for the same goal, because the transition benefits everyone. We need more partnerships, mutualisation and consistent messages. Example: encourage working from home, reduce parking lots around companies, increase sustainability of office buildings…

⇨ **We need ambassadors**

People do not listen if the message comes from institutions, they need to hear it from people they trust:
- ✓ **Their employer:** we could develop partnerships with private companies, demonstrate they have everything to gain from encouraging people to have more sustainable behaviours. For example, we could organise challenges within companies.
- ✓ **Their neighbours, their friends:** train people who can train other people, involve one person in a project and ask this person to talk about it…
- ✓ **NGOs, associations**
- ✓ **Celebrity/famous people with influence:** we need a populous approach.

> ### Examples
> Neighbourhood: network of ''consumers' schools'' in Pas-de-Calais, who address precarious populations so that some people can be ambassadors to their neighbours.
>
> Association: PIMMS in France; mediation between people and public services
>
> Celebrity: Sir David Attenborough on plastic pollution in UK.

Creating specific online platforms or specific dialogue areas does not work: we need to use existing neighbourhood platforms or social networks. It needs to come from the community itself, to feel relevant to people.

⇨ **We could act on two important levers: education and simplification**

There is a lack of general training about low-carbon transition. Training should be organised for young people, but also at corporate level (throughout life training).

Labelling, for example, is an interesting tool to educate people and enlighten their choice: you do not need to spend hours to decide what to buy, you have a clear reference from the label. Although, it needs to be used sparingly to avoid multiplication, confusion and loss of visibility.

Example in the field of energy consumption:
- Train people to understand their energy bills
- Simplify the energy bill (work with energy providers)

If people know what they use and what they pay, they can be more careful.

⇨ **We could work with children and families**

- Change the habits and trends of new generations. Children are the future, they should be one of the main targets. It may be too late for some parts of the population, which are reluctant to change.

- Train young people and children so that they are aware of the environmental impact of consumption.

- Educational aspect of environmental projects. Example: involve secondary school pupils in projects of active mobility around their school

Watch out! Working with families should not mean leaving aside non-families and other groups.

⇨ **We could question the notion of "freedom"**

When it comes to mobility, car is associated with freedom in the mind of citizens. But where is the freedom if it prevents pedestrians or cyclists feeling safe? Is it really freedom when you stop other people's freedom?

On other topics, it is the same: "I can pay for it, if I don't want to save energy it is my problem".

This is a key issue, and it can be very difficult to change people's mind-set. It will take time and different messages and techniques to change their perception of freedom and what is socially acceptable or 'normal'.

⇨ **We need more exchanges at the scale of the strait**

- ✓ Organise citizen exchanges between both sides of the strait
- ✓ Compare our daily lifestyles
- ✓ Learn from each other

Idea
Organise a cross-border "Positive energy family" challenge, with twin-families across the strait

⇨ **We need to have clear objectives and we should measure progression**

We need to have a clear objective, a purpose of action. It is a long-term effort and thus we could identify key steps in-between to measure progress and avoid discouragement. Significant resources should be allocated.

There is a need for clear rules to be set up in line with this objective. In addition, we could implement control to make sure these rules, laws and policies are correctly implemented.

We need both "the carrot and the stick!"

⇨ **It would be useful to have indicators and take mitigating/compensating actions**

Having environmental criteria in all projects is important. It is not only a box ticking exercise; it is about considering all the impacts and take the decision on a good knowledge basis. Not only for infrastructure projects, but for all kind of public and private policies.

When there is a negative carbon impact, we could consider taking mitigating actions. We could go further in compensation measures.

- ✓ How far can we go based on these indicators?
- ✓ Should it be a decision-making indicator to grant subsidies?
- ✓ Europe is doing it when asking all project applicants to assess the environmental impacts of projects.

In France, environmental assessment is already important for all infrastructure projects: be careful not to add to the administrative burden.

Example
Loire-Atlantique County Council has decided to stop developing four lanes roads, considering they encourage car-travel and have a negative environmental impact.