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Residents' participation under representative rule.
The redefinition of public comments on municipal action through the promotion of "participatory democracy" [1]

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French mayors are allowed to develop any system they wish for including inhabitants in urban planning, but since 2002, the law on 'grassroots democracy' [*démocratie de proximité*], also called 'Loi Vaillant', statutes the minimum level of participation that has to be organized by each city authority in cities over 80,000 inhabitants (Blatrix, 2009). As a result, the mayor, who is the executive official elected along with a city council every six years (Dion, 1986; Garraud, 1989; Mabileau, 1995), has the legal obligation to put together "neighbourhood councils" whose role is strictly advisory. Members of the mayor's majority in the city council may be part of these councils, and there is no strict obligation to give them a budget, to have them meet regularly or to take into account the results of their activity. Whether participation is pushed forward by mayors trying to promote new forms of resident involvement in the city affairs, or controlled within the tight framework of the law, participation in French cities is managed by the city administration. Thus, in France we should expect participatory governance to be tightly connected to the constraints and imperatives of the leaders of each city – the mayors.

Becoming a mayor in France requires competing in elections and learning how that competition works. Competitors have to take on different political labels, supposed ostensibly to express programmatic differences. After more than a century of electoral competition, political parties have created voter loyalty, however fluctuating it may be, that is triggered by specific themes and discourses (Huard, 1996; Garrigou, 2002). Whereas being in the opposition implies making critical statements about those in power, the intention being to erode their political credit[2] and to trigger your own voters' support, running a city involves getting supporters outside your own party, and thus being able to promote consensus and to claim to speak for all. The position of mayor requires showing no "radicalism". Performing the role of mayor correctly means being acknowledged as someone who, with expertise and confidence, addresses the needs of all (often conflicting) citizens and cares for them. Consequently, every statement made publicly in the local press cannot escape being read as "in favour of the current local authority", "neutral" or "criticizing the current local authority" – and things may

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[2] The political credit means the extent of the voters' confidence towards each individual political actor, and it authorizes to act legitimately in the public space (Gaïti, 1989).

sometimes get so tense as that no "neutral" position can be held (Blondiaux, 2008).[3] In politics, any event, project, idea or statement may give rise to a controversy and become a resource the opposition can use against those in office, depending on the state of competitive tension. Hence, we should expect that professional politicians and their collaborators, including those who work in the local administration, would be greatly accustomed to these power relations, and therefore try to anticipate them and to act according to their anticipations. Because it implies debating conflicting interests, citizen participation is, in that respect, expected to trigger controversies in local newspapers and to potentially fuel the opposition.

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In this chapter, we would like to address how the contradiction between the constraints of representative democracy, as we have pointed them out, and the implementation of what may be called "citizen participation" is dealt with by the municipal authority in one of France's largest cities. Our aim is not to assess enlargement of the social basis of participation throughout those forums,[4] or to assess the degree of success or failure (both of which have occurred) of residents' claims, or to describe the role of the professionals of participation involved,[5] or how traditional associative representatives may or may not have been marginalized by the new ways of including residents in urban planning concerning their neighbourhoods. Instead, our aim is to try to understand how participatory forums work within the electoral constraints and representative structures of the municipality that organizes them. The mayor's teams concern themselves with both the voices of citizens – whose total disappointment regarding municipal participation could bring about a loss of voters' support – and the quality of the commentaries made or written about the mayor's actions. How does this double preoccupation influence the actions of the staff in charge of "residents' participation", or the design and dynamics of participatory forums? How do controversies that potentially emerge from "residents' participation" find a place in local newspapers without being seen by the mayor's staff as something that lowers the mayor's credit?

We would like to take a first step towards answering these questions by trying to understand how the mayor's team in charge of "participation" manages to show that the municipality is open to debates, apparently allowing the "debatability" (Barthe, 2002) of its decisions. This neologism refers to "the degree to which decisions may be included in the public debate" [*le degré auquel ces décisions sont suceptibles d'être soumises à un régime de discussion publique*], and has been proposed in relation to technological decisions – like the choice of nuclear energy – usually firmly excluded from public debate in the name of technical expertise. In this realm, consulting procedures allow alternate solutions to become audible and, in the public eye, they enable politicians to replace the experts as "decision-makers". What is at stake here is: who receives the criticisms, that is, who takes the blame – or claims the responsibility – for public action. In French cities, where mayors can only on very few topics shift the responsibility of "problems" over to the national government or to their own technicians, opening municipal projects to debate is expected to weaken the production of mayors' political credibility and thus, to force them to do more political work to justify their actions. The question is: how can municipal projects be discussed and debated in public by residents,

[3] On the status of conflict in deliberative democracy theories, see Blondiaux, 2008.
[4] On this question, see Neveu, 2003, Röcke and Sintomer, 2005, or Talpin, 2013, and Carrel, 2013.
[5] See Nonjon, 2012.

so that the conflicting interests they reveal do not generate negative media coverage? Three operations seem to be the most important here. First, in order to show that residents can actually take part in the making of municipal projects, the mayor's teams are compelled to accept the organization of more debates, to show in the press and to the voters the existence of multiple and various forums. Second, they have to tightly monitor public statements during and after the forums so that they can present a satisfactory version of "the voice of the residents". Third, critical discourses have to be neutralized by suggesting that the position of compromise is the only acceptable position in public debates. The form of debating defined by those three operations is not only imposed on the residents, but also on technicians or municipal officials, who sometimes have to back away in order for "municipal participation" to be credible. Finally, through this organization of public debates, what is achieved is the monitoring of publicized conflicts that municipal executives have to deal with.

The city of Strasbourg[6] offers an interesting case study[7] for at least three reasons. First, neighbourhood councils had also been in existence, on and off, for a longer period of time, but the new socialist[8] mayor, elected in 2008, seemed to have accepted a change of rules and had decided that no elected officials would preside over these councils, something that hardly ever occurred in France at the time. Second, in September 2009, the municipality announced the creation of a new participatory forum, the "Urban Workshop", presented as a means to organize public discussions about the future growth and urban development of Strasbourg, beyond small-scaled projects, and to open it to the city's inhabitants. Third, an administrative directorate for "local democracy and proximity" had been set up, combining various services, "workshops" and forums dedicated to citizens' participation. Those institutional efforts seemed to demonstrate a strong and ambitious desire to promote local democracy.

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[6] Strasbourg, the main city of the region Alsace and now of the new region 'Alsace Champagne-Ardennes Lorraine', has about 270,000 inhabitants, but the Strasbourg district 'Strasbourg Eurométropole' has a population of half a million.

[7] The fieldwork consisted of participation at 16 workshops, meetings or debates, and at one press conference, as well as 15 interviews with executives, project managers, consultants or experts engaged in the workshops, and participants at the workshops. The organizers also provided information about 80 participants to 2 public debates on the theme 'the urban outline' [*la silhouette urbaine*] (sex, age, profession, residence and their opinion about these debates, obtained by evaluation surveys distributed at the end of the debates). A press review of 86 long articles from the main local newspaper *Les Dernières nouvelles d'Alsace* (*DNA*) was also gathered (30/05/2008 to 19/02/2012). Articles were selected using the following keywords: local democracy, participatory democracy, residents' consultation, and urban workshop. Finally, although the neighbourhood councils' activities were outside the initial fieldwork of the study, their reports, available online, were consulted, in order to talk about the reports with participants at the "urban workshop" who used to be in neighbourhood councils, to examine the topics discussed within them as well as their organizational rules. See the methodological chapter in this book for a more detailed presentation of the fieldworks and methods.

[8] In the 1960s and 1970s, participation and local democracy were among the main preoccupations of the left-wing Association for Democracy and Local and Social Education (ADELS) and several left-wing mayors and their teams elected in 1977 – known as the 'pink wave' because it was favourable to left-wing candidates (mainly socialist, communist) – tried to implement participation forums during their mandates. But during the past 30 years, participation has gradually become a more consensual theme, as "proximity" (Lefebvre, 2005) has become a widespread political theme, often raised by political actors who need to reinforce the legitimacy of their claims to office (Anquetin, Freyermuth, 2008).

Showing that the mayor's action is open to debate through the organization of municipal "participatory forums"

The 2008 municipal election campaign in Strasbourg was especially focused on the theme of "local democracy", because the incumbent mayor Fabienne Keller and her deputy Robert Grossmann, elected in 2001[9] on a right-wing coalition list, were facing heavy criticism from both the opposition and their own party regarding their "authoritarian attitude" and "lack of concern" for democracy.[10] Once elected as the leader of the socialist-green coalition list in 2008, Strasbourg mayor Roland Ries, who therefore campaigned on his ability to revive "local democracy", had to show his openness towards public discussion on his projects. He did so by turning the discussion of the mayor's action into a category of municipal policy. This implied three main sets of actions: first, setting up a new administration for "local democracy and proximity"; second, creating a participatory forum each time a municipal project is met with residents' protest; third, showing municipal elected officials' involvement and the mayor's personal readiness to hear residents' concerns. The result of these three actions has been the implementation of numerous and varied actions labelled "participatory".

"Participation" as a municipal public service

In September 2008, a new segment of the municipal administration for "local democracy and proximity" was officially created. It aggregated public services and committees inherited from former municipalities and forums that were the result of campaign promises or new legal obligations. The ten neighbourhood councils[11] were reorganized – though not to improve their social representativeness or to achieve a more even distribution of the citizens theoretically concerned. The change was devised on the basis of the criticisms expressed during the campaign against the former mayor. The councils' "newfound independence" from the mayor's office was emphasized. The members of the councils were encouraged to submit "(reasoned, favourable or unfavourable) advisory recommendations to be appended to the municipal deliberations" on improvements relating to everyday life in the neighbourhood [*usages de proximité*]. They were also given the right to take up matters on their own initiative, a small working budget,[12] and access to training sessions and, of course, no municipal majority representatives were to be nominated to each council board. The ten neighbourhood councils delivered 91 recommendations between 2009 and 2013 (almost 2/year/council) regarding streets, squares, bicycle lanes, extension of tramway lines, circulation of buses, direction and speed of traffic, parking, construction of public or private facilities, applications for protecting remarkable historic buildings in the zoning plan, and 11 recommendations

[9] The municipal mandate beginning in 2001 lasted an exceptional 7 years instead of 6.

[10] Following strong disagreement among members of the majority concerning the question of the "authoritarian attitude" of the mayor and its first deputy, six of its members joined the opposition and competing lists in the 2008 elections: the deputies Ludmilla Hug-Kalinkova and Chantal Cutajar, as well as Marthe Schwab, Jacques Ledig, Jean Cantin and Olivier Aron.

[11] Strasbourg's neighbourhood councils were created in 1996, during the socialist mayor Catherine Trautmann's second term. The right-wing mayor elected in 2001, with a different formal organization, maintained them.

[12] In 2009, the neighbourhood council for the city centre had a 7,922 € investment budget ["*fonds de participation des habitants*"].

regarding their own working conditions, and all were taken into account in the final deliberation.

Also, the mayor added to this local democracy administration the former municipal "service for territorial action and public peace",[13] renamed "councils for community work and prevention" [*conseils d'animation et de prévention*] under the former mayor, now once again renamed "territorial partner workshops" [*ateliers territoriaux de partenaires*]. Under the former mayors, these services examined community projects targeting residents of working-class neighbourhoods and subsidized them on a case-by-case basis. The "territorial partner workshops" generalized this system to all neighbourhoods of the city, working-class or not. What was provided through those "workshops" was the organization of neighbourhood parties, events for youth, promotion of social and professional integration and of gender equality, parenting support measures, a charter for "living together better", rules for circulation in front of buildings, uses of public spaces, as well as the creation of collective or shared gardens, gym clubs for seniors, etc.[14] Thus, the mayor was able to label "participatory" the ordinary administrative activity of subsidizing associations in order to gain voters' support.

Additionally, the emphasis on the youth council [*conseil des jeunes*] and the January 2009 reopening of the Council of Foreign Residents [*Conseil des résidents étrangers*] – aimed at "consulting" the non-French residents of Strasbourg and created in 1993 during Trautmann's term, and closed under the Keller municipality – were meant to showcase the mayor's constant concern for the "opinions" and "projects" of all residents. To those services would be added new kinds of forums in order to preserve the mayor's credibility and avoid criticism.

An extension of "participation" to avoid criticism and maintain credibility

The mayor's political positioning on local democracy led him to appear to be open to discussing not only minor urban improvements (such as the renovation of squares or streets), but also more important municipal projects (such as the extension or creation of residential neighbourhoods), especially when they were being contested.

In order to appear to be open to the discussion of projects that were larger in scope, "consultation" was organized based on the "orientations" of some urban renewal projects in new "Project workshops" [*ateliers de projets*]. Anticipating accusations of "artificial consultation" at a stage when the content of the projects had already been settled, the mayor and his deputies initiated "discussions" at an early stage – whether they were intrinsically well-founded, however, was not discussed.

[13] The creation of that service was a result of the prominence of the themes of "proximity" and "insecurity" at the turn of the 2000s (Freyermuth, 2009).

[14] Halfway through the term, the administration reported "100 to 150 actions per year, thousands of inhabitants concerned, over 600 partners mobilized including 60% of associations and 40% of institutional actors" and the coordination of "70 working groups of 12 people on average, i.e., one to six groups for each neighbourhood, meeting around every six weeks" (document CUS "Ateliers territoriaux de partenaires : des actions au plus près des habitants", November 2011).

"We started doing the "Project workshops" because we had major development projects that were about to be launched – Heyritz-Étoile, Malraux, Robertsau, Port du Rhin,[15] and if we didn't do it at that point (…), if we didn't seize the opportunity, for every major development project we'd skip the big orientation phase, which is an important and symbolic one after all, since it's at that time that people can tell themselves: here we are, we're defining the city's major orientations with the municipality" (interview with the organizer of the "Urban workshop" and co-organiser of "Project workshops", 20 February 2012).

Yet the number of project workshops increased because the mayor was forced to include the mobilizations elicited by some developments in his plan in order not to appear to contradict his ostensibly displayed openness to the "voices" of the residents. Examples of such controversies included the extension or repeal of the moratorium on electromagnetic waves passed under the former mayor, or the renovation of the municipal baths and extension of the mall on the place des Halles. The successive titles of articles in the local daily paper (the *Dernières Nouvelles d'Alsace*, *DNA*) indicate the chronology of the creation of these workshops. For instance, the workshop on the Halles neighbourhood resulted from residents' protests against the absence of public consultation regarding the extension of the mall on the "place des Halles":

"Un épineux dossier" [A thorny issue], 12/03/2010; "Des riverains se mobilisent contre l'extension" [Residents rally against extension plans], 15/04/2011; "CoQ [conseil de quartier] à la sauce piquante" [A heated neighbourhood council meeting], 29/04/2011; "La ville propose un atelier de projet" [The city proposes a project workshop], 24/06/2011; "Non à la densification du secteur " [No to the densification of the area], 17/12/2011.

The extension of this local democracy policy was a condition of the sustained credibility of the municipality regarding its openness to "debates".

"Foresight" was the last label used in staging the notion that municipal projects were open to public debate. The mayor's team took advantage of the creation of an inter-municipal zoning plan [*Plan local d'urbanisme intercommunal*] to set up a "citizen group" of 45 individuals called *Communauté des curieux du PLU* [literally, the community of those curious about the zoning plan], whose activity was subject to further publicity. Recommendations were drafted following six meetings or "strolls" [*balades*] organized in 2012 and meant to complement the planning and sustainable development plan or PADD [*Plan d'Aménagement et Développement Durable*], a component of the zoning plan.

However, the difficulty of mobilizing a publicly presentable number of residents around the "foresight" issue caused the mayoral team to create another new service, the "Urban Workshop" [*atelier urbain*],[16] whose initial mission was to flesh out the consultation

[15] The *ateliers de projet* selected in 2008 were: Quels développements et aménagements pour le quartier du Port du Rhin ? [Extensions for the Port du Rhin district]; Quels espaces publics pour le Heyritz-Étoile ? [Public spaces in the Heyritz-Etoile district]; Au regard du devenir de la Robertsau, quelles solutions en matière de transports et de déplacements ? [Solutions for transportation and mobility in light of the Robertsau district's development]; Eco-quartier Danube [Danube eco-district]; Schéma directeur Vauban-Kehl [Vauban-Kehl Master Plan].

[16] "The City of Strasbourg has therefore launched a broader debate on the city of tomorrow, particularly in order to define guidelines for the development of Strasbourg on the basis of the collection of citizens' input. For this purpose, the City has created the *Atelier urbain* [Urban workshop], a body devoted to "foresight and qualitative assessments, calling upon the subjectivity of the residents in order to bring out

apparatus. The Urban Workshop, whose activities started halfway into the municipal term, referred not so much to a group of residents as to an attractive label for journalists, giving coherence and unity – under the "foresight" label – to a wide array of events that more residents attended or participated in: interactive presentations, urban walks, bicycle tours, sketching workshops, photography and sound exhibitions, itinerant exhibitions in trailers, literary meetings, film screenings, and working groups that were organized between September 2011 and June 2013. The low cost of access to these participatory events encouraged more residents to get involved.

"We came up with the Urban Workshop when we were wondering: How do you bring a wider audience in on these questions? You do something new and you don't bother them with public meetings" (Interview with the assistant to the organizer of the Urban Workshop, 16 January 2012).

"We [at the Urban Workshop, on the] question of the publics, we don't have a quantitative approach, we're more qualitative, [but] we have four themes to address in depth with the general public (…). It's important that, in practice, we don't fake making people think about the city (…). And Alain Jund [one of the municipal councillors officially appointed by the mayor to supervise the "local democracy" policy] also says that it's important to have an open debate, that it shouldn't be consensual, with just one point of view represented" (organizer of the Urban Workshop and co-organiser of several project workshops, previously cited interview).

The "debatability" of municipal projects was, thus, displayed through the organization of routinized participation forums, ad hoc meetings on ongoing projects, and the mobilization of the residents around the theme of urban foresight; representatives of the municipal majority regularly participated in such meetings.

Showing the mayor and the city councillors' personal involvement

Lastly, in order to demonstrate the democratic voluntarism of the majority, the mayor's eagerness to share power and openness to discussing his projects, members of the municipality were entrusted with a number of delegations: the first deputy Robert Herrmann was put in charge of "municipal coordination and local democracy" and of the "youth council", and ecologist candidate Eric Schultz was appointed as municipal councillor in charge of "local democracy". Additionally, several deputies regularly attended participatory events, such as the socialist deputies François Buffet (sustainable development) and Daniel Payot (culture) and the ecologist leader Alain Jund (urban planning). The presence of the mayor was also organized; he was made available for individual demands. In addition to contributing to the "democratic" and "non-authoritarian" positioning of the mayor, this distribution of roles facilitated the presentation of municipal representatives as people who were available to respond to citizens' demands while allowing for the management of those demands.

The mayor emphasized his concern for "citizen participation" by tallying up pre-existing routinized forums, including around ten to thirty participants in each of the monthly neighbourhood councils, the thirteen board members of the Council of Foreign Residents that met twice a month, and the "working groups" of representatives of

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the representations, feelings and perceptions of the city present in the minds of Strasbourg residents", *Synthèse générale Atelier de projet « Silhouette urbaine »*, 2013.

associations (professionalized or not) who applied for support of their "actions" to the relevant municipal departments within the framework of the territorial partner workshops. Overall, around 2,000 people – from the most committed members of the neighbourhood councils to those who only attended conferences[17] – participated on a sporadic or regular basis in one of Strasbourg's local democracy forums.
The important point for the mayor's team was that the proliferation of "local democracy" projects constructed the compactness of a municipal policy that can always be readily presented to journalists and voters in regularly issued and cumulative "action reports", even if fewer voters were directly affected by municipal "participation".

For the mayor's team, the diversity of forums set up by the "local democracy" policy required tighter control of the level of criticism that could emerge during these forums and of how the outcome of forums was commented on in the local newspaper. Thus, public expression had to be turned into a publicly acceptable and more neutral "voice of the residents".

Disciplining public expression to produce an acceptable "voice of the residents"

Because they promoted a "more active democracy", "based on the participation and expression of each individual",[18] the mayor's auxiliaries in charge of implementing this policy were led to conjure up a "voice of the residents" that had to meet several requirements if this policy was not to cause more controversies. The "resident voice" should not appear to be the result of an arrangement between the socialist municipal government and identified allies, or to be a channel for demands whose fulfilment might be construed as buying votes. It should not be condemned as a mere opinion poll or a communication stunt. It must not appear to be the result of the municipality withdrawing for fear of critics and protests – because all of these "appearances" would give the opposition more political leverage to use against the mayor.
The control of the emergence of this "voice of the residents" in each participatory forum therefore required using a range of techniques to manage public interaction, and resulted in selection of participants who could show their willingness to listen to contradictory opinions and understand the municipality's technical and administrative constraints.

Socializing "participants" to the constraints of politico-administrative "decision-making"

Because the members of each neighbourhood council, who were often educated, retired and available, met several times a week to produce "opinions" each month, because they

[17] This is according to an e-mail database assembled by the members of the *mission démocratie locale* on the basis of questionnaires handed out during *atelier urbain* events, which also feature the addresses of the neighbourhood councillors and of the regular members of the other forums.
[18] Communication material Strasbourg Ville et Communauté urbaine, *Avec vous ça change tout. Démocratie locale : Strasbourg pionnière et audacieuse*, 2012.

acquired – through their interactions with municipal technicians – better knowledge of the technical constraints and political ins and outs of the "projects", and because they had the journalists' ear thanks to being granted the status of "councillor" by the municipality, their criticisms regarding the organization of the councils and the projects submitted to them were likely to be publicized and to hurt the image of the mayoral team. Early in the term, several press articles reported criticisms of the functioning and the activity of the neighbourhood councils.

"What are the spokesperson's actual attributions? What powers and prerogatives do the councils have? 'We discuss the same questions over and over. It's going around in circles. Everything's been worked out already. We can't express ourselves. We don't have enough weight. We're given delegations on minor issues, but we can't touch the important things. There are too many meetings.' Such are the criticisms voiced by the councillors of the Neudorf district" (Roger Wiltz, "Coup de fatigue à Neudorf", *DNA*, 15/09/2009).

Arguing that technicians and elected representatives needed to be informed about the councillors' opinions concerning on-going projects, and that they asked to have fewer and shorter meetings, the municipality restricted the powers of initiative [*auto-saisine*] of the neighbourhood councils, announced the creation of an "Urban Workshop" [*atelier urbain*] in charge of handling "cross-cutting issues, which affect more than one neighbourhood"[19] and appointed new members at the midterm. By restricting debates to a smaller range of issues over which the municipality had control, this reform facilitated the production of opinions included in routinized form in the administrative municipal decision-making process. The presence of experts invited by the organizers of public meetings also allowed for the emergence of arguments that served as counterweights to stances deemed to be too radical. Because the "participation" of neighbourhood councillors was presented as a significant investment for the municipality, with a high level of retribution in the participatory hierarchy – the drafting of opinions annexed to the deliberations of the municipal council – it was mandatory for neighbourhood councillors to attend meetings regularly and participate in the "training sessions" offered by the organizers, which consisted of socializing residents to administrative constraints on considering contradictory interests and setting budgetary priorities; those who did not comply faced exclusion, far from the aims of former "urban protest" activists involved in participatory policies (Nonjon, 2012).

"Whether in the neighbourhood councils, in the urban workshop or in the project workshops, ultimately we want to end up with reasoned, insightful recommendations. So we prefer to ask the questions after a period of interaction and information, in order to make the answer a little bit more insightful, a little bit more precise than if we had just asked the question on the spot (…). Neighbourhood councillors have already been trained a little (…), they're aware of what's at stake (…). They've attended training sessions on how the city of Strasbourg works, how a deliberation works, on the decision-making chains, they've had some insight into what a complex urban project is, they've seen for themselves how the municipal council works, by voicing their opinions and seeing that their opinions were annexed to the deliberation (…). The councillors who've been here from the beginning, they've received a culture of administration, of urban planning, so that now you no longer have to explain to them that in a complex urban project, you first have a phase for defining guidelines, and then you get to the program, and then you get to the outlines, and eventually you reach the construction stage (…). So we thought it was a waste to let those people vanish even though we know they're eager to participate beyond

[19] See Manuel Plantin, "Création de l'Atelier urbain", *DNA*, 15 September 2009.

the level of their neighbourhood, and on top of that we've already made this effort to educate them as citizens. These neighbourhood councillors almost have the same vocabulary as our technicians; they're fully capable of understanding it (…). All of our apparatuses have those two sides: they collect input but they also train people, they encourage them to express opinions and make recommendations that are not ungrounded, that have a connection with reality, so that the whole thing isn't completely pointless." (Organizer of the Urban Workshop and co-organiser of project workshops; previously cited interview).

Training a few neighbourhood councillors tended to spread a "proper" code of public debating in participatory forums.

Discouraging controversial stances by framing public meetings

The participatory forums also tended to produce instructions on how to address the municipality: all viewpoints deserved to be heard as long as they were not controversial, "polemical" – where "polemical" meant trying to put the municipality on the spot or to publicly disparage its efforts regarding consultation. In order to decrease the risk of controversy in public meetings and make their contents more technical, "project teams" [*équipes projet*] were assigned the task of deciding in advance the range of authorized questions concerning the projects under debate – including antagonistic and therefore potentially conflicting visions – by coming up with a strategy to present their genesis and the "technical" solutions to various "problems" (Futrell, 1999). When certain projects met with strong opposition and the project team anticipated controversy in the public debate – which was likely to result in negative media coverage for the municipality – it called on municipal representatives to contribute by also controlling their language and attitudes.

"On the controversial issues, we make sure that the elected representatives are given talking points in advance, so that they can react; we reassure them, too. We show them what will be presented a few days before the meeting, not on the day of the meeting (…). We see them earlier to prepare with them answers to questions that could make them uncomfortable, and we give them talking points to respond to. We are careful not to put either the municipal departments or the elected representatives in a difficult situation. When we go to public meetings, we're all in it together (…). For instance, on the Robertsau project workshops, which were very complicated, we had a three-hour-long preparatory meeting with the departments beforehand, almost an hour of political validation, for a meeting that lasted two short hours. And during that hour with the politicians, we went over the whole PowerPoint presentation, every word. We made changes if we felt that a word would cause people to jump onto this or that topic, or cause tension (…). For each project workshop, I put together a project team, made up of the project manager(s), the official in charge of proximity, the representatives of the service providers (…). And there's always someone from the mayor's cabinet in there" (organizer of the Urban Workshop and co-organizer of project workshops; previously cited interview).

Participants who had already been "trained" promoted this discipline of expression. Seeing as they were already aware of the constraints involved in the production of municipal policy, the neighbourhood councillors who were on their way out or wished to debate broader projects were available to step in as "competent participants"; their inclusion in the participatory forums tended to tone down their otherwise potentially controversial contribution to the public debate. The organization of foresight-oriented forums was a way to enrol these participants in the local democracy agenda.

Disciplining participation through conviviality

The organizers of the Urban Workshop had to juggle two constraints: being able to show a sufficient number of residents capable of playing their part without disrupting this forum; producing a suitable "voice" of the residents that can't be interpreted as the result of a mere opinion poll. The organizers' lack of interest in questionnaires or a focus group indicated that the quality of the input collected was not the forum's main *raison d'être*.

"When I came in, they told me 'you have to collect input' and they gave me the initial outline of the partnerships and the actions that were going to be carried out within the framework of the Urban Workshop (…) with the objective of collecting citizen input. It was supposed to be done in an innovative way, too: with an exhibition, workshops, conferences… When I looked at the program (…), I got a bit scared (…): how do we collect input in an exhibition? (…) Do we have to stand near the signs and ask people questions? (…) There are only two of us (…) and in that case, it generally means you use a traditional method (…) like a questionnaire (…). But the specifications for the Urban Workshop were all about being innovative about opening a debate, about engaging people in the debate. I mean, sure, but after all, the point is to collect input from average citizens on foresight issues at the city level (…). Innovative formats are all well and good, it does help with reaching a wider audience in the consultation, because not everyone goes to public meetings, you really have to use varied formats as an incentive to get people to come (…). Originality was a strong asset in terms of visibility for the Urban Workshop. But in the first phase, we had very little input" (Assistant to the organizer of the Urban Workshop; previously cited interview).

The organizers of the Urban Workshop, who did not have a strong position in the municipal administration and had no previous experience of professional consulting on resident participation, relied on their own resources to produce and monitor the "voice of the residents". Indeed, this workshop was not entrusted to professionals of 'participation', but to two female contract employees, aged around 30, previously employed in the City administration, one as an assistant for organizational consulting, the other as a coordinator of summer activities for children from working-class neighbourhoods. They were presented as specialists in local democracy and occasionally assisted by moderators or "facilitators" from communication agencies. Their new activity was supervised by a senior civil servant from the mayor's entourage, and a graduate of the renowned "École polytechnique". Both employees had been selected by this civil servant, and their shared characteristics were indications of the skills required for the job. Trained in communication and marketing, they had no experience of the "activist" part of the professional networks of participation (Nonjon, 2012): the organizer held a Bachelor's degree in information and communication and a Master's degree in project management obtained at a business school; her assistant had obtained language and international business degrees in France and abroad.

As they used their own resources to promote the Urban Workshop, the two organizers based workshop monitoring on enrolment through conviviality. As an incentive to encourage more people to participate in this forum, which had no concrete pre-

established goal,[20] the moderators lowered the cost of access by organizing events with reduced expectations of the participants in terms of mastering the codes of public debating ("urban strolls" followed by a meeting in a café with a complimentary drink, "interactive conferences", film screenings followed by a non-mandatory debate, photography exhibits, sketching workshops, etc.), which focused on promoting discourses or themes likely to be presented as "residents' concerns". As they were involved in the academic or community spaces of urban planning, arts and social work in Strasbourg, they were able to entrust other professionals with some of the work with "mobilizing" the public for participatory events, including teachers and students of Strasbourg's school of decorative arts (for the organization of a local democracy week and of on-site visits), the alumni of the National School of Architecture (for the creation of an "atlas of urban forms"), local musicians (to play at events and during the final week of the urban workshop), student radio hosts (to conduct interviews and cover the events), an association of activists in a working-class neighbourhood[21] (for the organization of documentary screenings followed up by public meetings with municipal executives or representatives), etc.

Far from being accused of promoting private interests, the involvement of community partners who brought in their own audiences regardless of the neighbourhood in which the event took place tended to confirm the authenticity of the "voice of the residents", because those participatory events did not result in immediate municipal action towards the "residents" involved. The youth of both the organizer and her assistant, the help they received from professionals usually not associated with the city administration (such as students or local musicians), and their enthusiasm in the creation of participatory events, led the audiences attending those events to perceive the Urban Workshop as altogether disconnected from the communicative concerns of the municipality.

The moderators of these forums promoted forms of conviviality that encouraged participants to adopt a posture of "good citizen" (Talpin, 2006). In public, they often claimed to wish to "make constructive remarks"; aggressive or contentious attitudes and the expression of personal qualms were discouraged. The social homogeneity of these often-small groups favoured the creation of a close-knit circle where the opinions voiced were those that were publicly acceptable to members of the educated middle classes, with varying degrees of income stability. The final synthesis of the Urban Workshop emphasized four themes that attested to their concern for the quality of urban life at average income levels: nature and water in the city; public and shared areas; the balance between identity, diversity and social mixing; tomorrow's heritage.

Field notes: "Moderated discussion", 22 October 2011, café-restaurant l'Alsacien. In addition to myself, nine participants have done the neighbourhood tour and stayed for the discussion, including the two Urban Workshop moderators and the two architects and teachers recruited for the Urban Workshop. The five others are two female architecture students aged under 25, who were asked by a teacher to attend this tour/meeting, two female students in retraining at

[20] The general theme introduced to give a framework to the interactions with the residents was: "The urban silhouette – what kind of city do we want?" The process that resulted in the strategic choice of this theme will not be discussed here.

[21] The meetings organized by this association in the Hautepierre neighbourhood were politicized insofar as they were opportunities to voice opinions on the treatment of the neighbourhood by municipal departments or the government and on urban planning preferences. These opinions, however, were not included in the final synthesis of the urban workshop.

the private institute Éco-conseil, aged around 30, who hope to see how "participation" – a component of their training – works in practice, and a regular male participant in the urban workshop, a resident aged around 50 whose mobility is restricted as he uses an electric wheelchair. The moderators ask each participant to take two post-it notes and write on each one a word or a sentence on the theme "how do you see the city of tomorrow?" They add that a report on their discussion will be passed on to the city technicians, the experts and the elected representatives. The two ecological consultants in training say that they would like more shared areas and more conviviality in the city. The man in the wheelchair emphasizes the need for vegetation, car sharing and the availability of bikes fitted with baskets to make getting around in the city centre and transporting groceries easier. One of the architects chimes in to mention districts built collaboratively in Switzerland and Germany, where neighbours have close ties, and the development of shared facilities in buildings (such as utility rooms); he says this is how the new Danube eco-district in construction in Strasbourg was conceived. He moves on to ideas to prevent urban sprawl, such as offering sufficiently large housing units and green spaces in the city as an incentive for families with children not to move to the country. The architecture students speak of improving the quality of collective housing in working-class neighbourhoods (for instance, in order not to hear the neighbours through the walls) and of the lack of cultural facilities outside the city centre. In her synthesis, the moderator highlights the following themes: the desire to live in a pleasant city; the question of the distance between businesses or facilities and the residential areas; the prevention of unwanted forms of mobility; the need to build ties with peripheral areas; the need for shared spaces.

The constitution of networks of professionals or "independent" experts, which had tended to monopolize the organization of participation for public institutions since the 1970s, and the academic output on the subject also provided a vocabulary, methods, arguments and criteria that facilitated the production of a participatory authentication of the events – regardless of the use of citizens' input by the organizing team. While these professionals, experts and academics could give no guarantees to municipal representatives regarding the electoral gains of the local democracy forums – in which only a small fraction of voters were involved – they could provide them with arguments to defend themselves against potential criticisms and the availability of techniques to produce a "voice of the residents" that were adjusted to their constraints.

The urban workshop can thus respond to criticism of the lack of representativeness of the forums by highlighting the "diversification" of the participants through efforts to attract the "general public": "In the neighbourhood councils, you have an over-representation of men (…) who are white, above 50, retired, used to be engineers or civil servants, and have university degrees (…). But in the first phase (…) of the Urban Workshop, we realized we had more than 60% of people aged under 50. That's not bad! We had students, young professionals (…) you can feel it brought in some new blood" (Assistant to the organizer of the Urban Workshop; previously cited interview).

Through expert or convivial supervision of the residents' discourses and control of the municipal discourses, the participatory forums established a discipline of public speaking that imposed a single rule for access to public expression about municipal projects. It resulted in a selection of participants, who tended to end up forming a group of specialized and authorized citizens. The production of a "voice of the residents" regarding mayoral projects thus constituted a justification for municipal policy that

prevailed in the public space, particularly for journalists,[22] and tended to restrict the ability of the opposition to voice criticism publicly and, therefore, to restrict the diffusion of critical stances on the municipality.

Integrating conflicts as a normal democratic process to disperse the critical pressure on the municipality

Much more than a mere communication tool, the organization of those local democracy forums helped diminish the critical pressure on the mayor's team, because it helped produce and generalize new kinds of public commentaries on the mayor's "choices". When the opposition publicly criticized the mayor, saying the local democracy policy was a fake, the mayor's deputies or team could retort that the municipality had actually stepped back on some projects and accepted the residents' choices. When the municipality stepped back and changed its original projects when faced with protest, local journalists tended to portray this less as an absence of convictions and belief, and more as a genuine effort to accept the residents' will. When dissent emerged in the mayor's own team, among its deputies – threatening to boost classical oppositional comments about the lack of unity and, therefore, of ability and seriousness on the part of the municipality, or when a controversy was so intense among potential supporters that it risked disrupting the appearance of unity and consensus around the mayor – the organization of forums could help disperse the political content of the controversy and turn it into an "apolitical" and technical discussion, whose heat would not burn the mayor in return.

The weakening of the "participation-as-an-artificial-policy" argument

Because even the municipality had to play along and adopt this posture of acceptance of compromise, by publicizing the suspension of projects when they were turned down after the consultation phase, the criticisms voiced regarding the lack of importance of the projects discussed by neighbourhood councils were deflated when the latter appeared to be the cause of shifts in municipal policy.

"Robert Grossmann (…) berates [the] municipality (…): 'we're invited (…) to talk, to hash things out, but the projects are already done', the former president of the urban community fumes. 'Who's been consulted about the new phase of your cycling policy? Did you ask for the opinion of the CADR [a local association that promotes cycling]? Why not ask the neighbourhood councils for their opinion on the plans regarding the Meinau stadium, your casino project or your intention to drown the Wacken exhibition park in concrete?" In conclusion, Fabienne Keller (Strasbourg au centre) points out that 'the neighbourhood councils are consulted on rather secondary issues' (…). On the way the municipal council works, Roland Ries, the mayor of Strasbourg (PS), emphasizes that 'for the system to work properly, everyone needs to do their part (…).' Having reassured the opposition on the consultation of the CADR on the cycling policy, he goes on: 'The neighbourhood councils work and are independent from the municipality. Whether you like it or not, this is new: during your time in power, the spokesperson was appointed by the mayor and the deputy mayor was the president.' The first deputy Robert

[22] On the structural dependence of journalists towards electoral logics, see Schlesinger, 1990, Juhem, 2001.

Herrmann (PS) concurs: 'Above all, this is genuine consultation. Regarding the rue du Faubourg-de-Pierre, our initial project made it a one-way street. We gave up on that idea after debating it in the neighbourhood council.'" (Manuel Plantin, "Conseil municipal : Débat de rentrée sur la démocratie locale", DNA, 15 September 2009).

This line of argument was also rather efficient after the referendum organized on 28 May 2011 by the municipality concerning the plans to reduce the speed limit to 30 km/h (20 mph) in the entire city centre. Even before the vote, the outcome of the referendum elicited journalistic verdicts (Lehingue, 2005). The majority of "no" votes, which led to the plan being dropped, was first described by several journalists at the local daily paper *Les DNA* as a "resounding failure", a "major setback" and a "disavowal"[23] for the mayor. Yet the outcome was blamed on the "motorist's rampant liberalism" and on the "not-in-my-backyard syndrome", or on the lack of "pedagogy" on the part of elected representatives[24] rather than on the shortcomings of the project itself. Moreover, the organization of the referendum was the subject of several positive articles in which the DNA journalists appeared to support the mayor's initiative. The dismissal of the project ultimately did not cause the mayor to be stigmatized in the press in the long term: between 1 February and 18 May 2011, sixteen articles and published readers' letters addressed the organization of the referendum and the "30 km/h zones" project; after the vote, only ten articles and readers' letters discussed the negative outcome, including four that praised the mayor's initiative or equally criticized other local politicians for "forcing decisions through" because they did not organize referendums on similarly contentious issues.
Overall, judgements expressed through the residents' participation theme in the local newspaper tended to be less controversial, and more neutral towards the municipality. Public criticisms were therefore dampened by numerous "neutral" comments.

A neutralization of judgements about the municipality in the local newspaper

In order to assess whether participatory forums would help produce favourable, neutral or negative judgements about Strasbourg's mayor and municipality, and whether participatory forums improved the public judgements expressed in the local newspaper about the local authority, the tone and number of the 86 long articles published in the daily local newspaper, *Les Dernières nouvelles d'Alsace*, between 30/05/2008 and 19/02/2012 (first article after the beginning of the mandate – end of the available newspaper archive at the time of the study) obtained using the keywords *local democracy*, *participatory democracy*, *residents' consultation*, *urban workshop*, have been coded: positive ; rather positive ; neutral ; rather negative ; negative.

To assess the articles' tone, the identities of the main speakers cited in the article, their distance to the mayor's team, were taken into consideration. The credibility of the mayor was considered lower when someone who appeared to be a supporter made a positive appraisal. It was considered higher when someone not identified as a supporter made the positive appraisal. Likewise, the intensity of the criticism was considered stronger when it was made by a supporter or by someone not connected to politics, and lower when members of the known opposition made it.

The tone of the articles was counted as:

[23] These phrases were used respectively by Dominique Duwig, "Zones 30 : coup de frein à l'extension" [30 km/h zones: brakes on the extension] , DNA, 31 May 2011; Philippe Dossmann, "Zone 30 : c'est niet !" [30 km/h: the answer is *niet*!], DNA, 31 May 2011; Denis Tricard, "Les écueils de la démocratie locale" [The pitfalls of local democracy], DNA, 31 May 2011.
[24] Idem, Denis Tricard, "Les écueils de la démocratie locale", DNA, 31 May 2011, and Philippe Dossmann, "Zone 30 : c'est niet !", DNA, 31 May 2011.

- "Positive" when a positive assessment was made by someone who did not belong the mayor's majority or could not be identified as a mayoral supporter.
- "Rather positive": positive assessment was made by someone close to the mayor.
- "Neutral": when both positive and negative assessments were presented (when made by someone from the opposition, or from someone who did not appear to be close to the majority).
- "Rather negative": negative comment was made by someone who appeared to be close to the opposition.
- "Negative" when the negative comment was made by someone who had not previously been identified as part of the opposition.

These articles concerned the following themes:
Neighbourhood councils, Convention for Culture, natural urban park, renewal of working-class neighbourhoods, renewal of buildings for collective use, creation of a business centre, moving of the fair, moving of the convention centre, deputy mayor portraits, Foreigners council, eco-neighbourhoods, plan for an Eurostadium, retransmission of city council debates, electromagnetic waves, construction of the Heyritz-Etoile and Malraux squares, urban projects in unused industrial land, extension of the 30 km/h zone, urban density, Urban Workshop, projects workshops, change of organization for the neighbourhood councils – and opinion column by opposition leaders and civil society personalities, and readers' letters on those themes.

Three main results emerged from this count:

The first result is that judgements expressed about the municipality, through the local newspaper's articles about "municipal participation", tended neither to improve its credibility, nor decrease it. The category of judgements that increased most was the "neutral" one. Whereas 15 out of the first 48 articles published between 30/05/2008 and 02/12/2010 (about 30 months) were coded as "neutral", 16 out of the remaining 38 published between 02/12/2010 and 19/02/2012 (15 months) were "neutral". "Participatory democracy" tended to help journalists publish less controversial articles.

The second result is that "rather negative" judgements by members of the opposition became even weaker when those who expressed them had to take a position on "participation". Between 30/05/2008 and 23/01/2009, "rather negative" judgements were expressed about the municipality's action in articles concerning "participation". But from 30/01/2009, criticism against the municipality made by the opposition stopped halfway: the consultation of residents was said to be insufficient, but the principle was said to be right – so the municipality's action was increasingly described as going in the right direction.

The third result, when reading "negative" articles negative opinions were expressed by former neighbourhood councillors or representatives of residents' associations, is that even if their "negative" arguments appeared to be convincing, their position seemed tainted by the fact that they appeared to want a monopoly on the residents' voices – and perhaps not to respect other residents' preferences. Even "negative" comments tended to lose strength in that regard.

The absorption of controversy by the municipal policy of "local democracy"

The effect of the organization of project workshops or neighbourhood councils, intended to help residents and technicians co-elaborate the projects, was therefore not to suppress the expression of opposition to municipal projects, but to include them in the presentation of a democratic municipal policy and to lower critical pressure on the municipality. Between 2009 and 2012, each time a neighbourhood council was consulted on the renovation of a public facility or space, the municipality communicated about it, celebrating "democracy in action". The publicity on the opinions of the councils – often "favourable with additional proposals" – appended to the deliberations of the municipal council swept the potentially conflict-laden negotiations between social

groups, residents' associations or local business owners, etc., under the rug, thanks to the publicly pacified coordination of the neighbourhood councils.

The municipality supported demonstration of its concern for "local democracy" by offering each neighbourhood a consultation about the rehabilitation of one of its central spaces. The councils of the working-class neighbourhoods of the Neuhof and Meinau were involved, respectively, in the consultation process for "renovation of the childhood centre [*maison de l'enfance*] on the "place de Hautefort"" and for creation of the "medico-social centre of the Canardière"; the councils of the residential neighbourhoods of the Robertsau and the quartier des Quinze were involved, respectively, in "refilling of the canal des Français" and "renovation of the place Arnold and surroundings"; the council of the former suburb of Kœnigshoffen was presented as an actor in "renovation of the entrance to the neighbourhood", etc. All these "participatory" projects did not bring the same benefits to the mayor, but their elaboration met the same requirements. The crowning achievement of the municipality in terms of "democratic innovation" was the renovation of a large square and former coach station, place d'Austerlitz, with the recommendations of the Esplanade-Bourse-Krutenau neighbourhood council, earning them a "victoire du paysage" award on 13 December 2012. The square was redefined as a residential and touristic place, where there were no longer buses passing by or passengers being dropped off. In the municipal literature, the square was described as "co-produced with the residents and stakeholders. The renovation of the square [is] the outcome of an innovative consultation process that began in 2008, bringing together residents and stakeholders in the drafting of specifications for the call for tenders". The municipality's press statement announcing the award pointed out that "the renovation work was assessed on the basis of multiple criteria, including the consideration of sustainable development preoccupations, the participation of residents, the improvement of their living environment and the aesthetic value". Yet the renovation of place d'Austerlitz, a major gateway to the touristic centre of Strasbourg, had been the object of a struggle between residents and business owners under the preceding mayor: the former wanted the coaches out of this residential area, while the others were eager to keep the tourists around. Additionally, the question of the coaches was a matter of disagreement between two prominent members of the socialist mayoral team elected in 2008: Jean-Jacques Gsell, the deputy in charge of tourism and business, and Alain Jund, the ecologist leader and deputy in charge of urban planning. Co-founded in 2007 by Jund, the association of residents of the Bourse-Austerlitz-Krutenau (AHBAK) neighbourhoods, whose membership included retired urban planners and architects capable of formulating their demands as residents in the manner required by the city engineers and urban planners, began early on organizing meetings with the association of business owners from the rue d'Austerlitz on the renovation of the area, with the support of the left-wing parents' association FCPE and the CARDEK socio-cultural centre (an association founded in the 1960s by communist activists to protest the "urban renewal" methods used by the then right-wing municipal government). By including the protagonists of these struggles and negotiations in the neighbourhood council, the municipality made their divisions invisible and this forum appeared to be an apolitical and efficient tool for devising "technical" and "rational" urban planning solutions.

The mayor could therefore readily point to his openness to "democracy" when challenged by opponents who publicly criticized his projects, and lower the critical impact of the petitions often used by opposition representatives to undermine the

municipality. The line of argument based on "compromise" between the contradicting interests of categories of "clients" allowed the mayor to adopt the posture of an arbiter outside the restricted circles of the municipal committees and institutional bodies in which it was generally used.

"In the midst of this 'self-congratulation party', a petition passed on by a local opponent [Jean-Emmanuel Robert, UMP (right-wing, opposition) municipal councillor] 'sharply contrasts with the official communication', which did not take into account the opinions of some sixty petitioners who campaigned for the 'preservation of an underpass between the Catherine and Brigitte sub-districts, bridging the green space, the childhood centre, various places of education and worship, the commercial areas and the rest of the neighbourhood and Cronenbourg'. 'Having a consultation doesn't mean that everyone agrees', retorts Philippe Bies, the vice-president in charge of urban renovation, who also mentions that '900 residents' have 'co-produced' the renovation guidelines, before – in the following phase – each project was reworked in 'workshops' and under the form of 'ambulatory questionnaires'." (Philippe Dossmann, "Rénovation de Hautepierre : à l'unanimité avec un bémol", DNA, 25 October 2009).

The discipline of public expression of compromise was even imposed on the associations traditionally representing area residents or local business owners, who were not in a dominant position on the neighbourhood councils – unlike, for instance, in Marseille, where they have long-standing institutionalized ties with the municipality, including the neighbourhood councils (Mattina, 2008). Because "local democracy" tended to entail a specific form of expression of public stances, it encouraged a weakening of the impact of interventions by associations that publicly called out the mayor to defend their interests.[25] It also increased the cost of such interventions in the public space: in order to criticize the results of the "participatory" debate on the zoning plan in 2010, seven different neighbourhood associations had to team up to produce a collective letter to the mayor in the local daily paper.[26] These associations, which were mobilized to get the municipality to curb the densification of construction in Strasbourg's neighbourhoods, were partly vindicated, but their negotiation with the mayoral team was not the object of a public controversy involving the opposition in the daily paper.

The domestication of political allies through "compromise"

Lastly, compromise also prevailed in the regulation of dissent in the PS-EELV majority, for both the ecologist allies and the socialist deputies,[27] as the public expression of their disagreements was constrained by the necessity to adopt a posture of respect for conflicting interests. This discipline in public expression did not prevent conflicts from arising, but the negotiation occurring in cases of conflict could more easily escape the attention of the press and the opposition. It was also liable to strengthen the ordinary techniques of the municipality's hierarchical control (Anquetin, 2015), as it limited the intervention capacity of deputies in the public space, not only practically – the following

[25] On the marginalization of public recriminations from associations for the loss of the parking spaces of the place du Château, and on circulation on the place de la Gare, respectively, see Boris Marois, "Une borne qui modifie les habitudes", DNA, 23 February 2010, and Chantal Grandgeorge, "On a écouté nos doléances", DNA, 23 February 2010.

[26] "Le PLU sur quelles bases?", DNA, 27 May 2010, co-signed by neighbourhood associations ADIQ, ADIR, ASSER, CARSAN, ARAN, ARP, ARTI.

[27] As in the case examined above concerning the renovation of the place d'Austerlitz, negotiated in the Bourse-Esplanade-Krutenau neighbourhood council.

interview excerpt addresses the ecologist deputy in charge of urban planning's lack of authority over a department – but also discursively. This meant the ecologist members of the municipal majority were not in a position to influence the mayor's decisions by making their support conditional on the implementation of specific measures, and that the mayor had more freedom to determine the price of support from his allies.

"The socialists and the UMP, the concrete addicts, they're, how shall we put it… conservative, they're quick to agree with the technical consultants, the promoters and so on. So the Greens complain, they say to the socialists: 'no, we shouldn't put concrete everywhere'. And then the socialists have them face the economic actors, who tell them: 'wait, you have to make the most out of the land, you have to densify, you have to build, you can't bring in money to depollute or to promote biodiversity'. Since Roland Ries [the socialist mayor] and Jacques Bigot [the socialist president of district] have appointed [the ecologist city councillor] Alain Jund to handle urban planning, the Greens have to deal with it. You put the ecologists there, and this way, they're going to have to take this on, they're responsible for the urbanization. (…) Bies [the deputy in charge of social housing] is your average socialist, he wants to do social housing (…), that was part of Ries's program, so you have to bring in the numbers, and you have to explain to people that it's necessary to densify, that they shouldn't be egoistic, that there should be more flats where they live (…). It's a socialist discourse that makes sense. So Jund comes after that, and the trick he uses to get out of this contradiction is to say: we're densifying and that allows us to combat urban sprawl. So he can say that he's doing sustainable development and at the same time, he can build all over the place (…). Another way to prevent the ecologist deputies from doing anything against the mayor's best interest consists in not giving them any authority over the departments. Jund has (…) the delegation, but he hasn't got a single department working for him. If for instance he wanted to commission a counter-study to say 'wait a minute, this rehabilitation proposal is not worthwhile', he's got nobody to do it." (Interview with an architect, former administrative director a municipality of 25,000 inhabitants in the Bas-Rhin, a supporter of the ecologist party EELV, 24 January 2012).

As participatory compromise became the rule in public controversies surrounding municipal projects, a number of criticisms initially liable to hurt the mayor were turned into neutral or even positive discourses about the municipality. To those who claimed that the local democracy policy was merely a smokescreen, the mayor could readily present a list of projects that had actually been amended or withdrawn after consulting residents. Local journalists were less likely to comment on mobilizations against municipal projects as a sign of poor municipal management, instead describing them as the unavoidable consequence of democratic conflict. Disagreements also partially escaped media attention insofar as the mobilized groups were less free to make public statements outside the framework of the debates organized by the municipality. Whenever opponents were particularly vocal and together risked posing a serious challenge to the municipality, the mayor could always invoke his role as an arbiter of dissension. When his ecologist allies in the majority or his deputies called for more politically ambitious moves, the mayor could hide behind the democratic argument that he needed to consult residents to justify his managerial positions.

Ultimately, whether they concerned construction of new residential areas, densification of housing, extension of pedestrian areas, or renovation or creation of facilities, most

municipal projects ended up being associated with a "consultation forum", even if in some cases the actual consultation was symbolic. The massive spread of discourses of justification based on participation was an emerging effect of the systematic organization of consultation on municipal matters; it brought about the imposition of a new range of criteria for assessing municipal policy, in which the opinions expressed on the quality of the projects as such, be they deemed "good" or "bad", lost value compared to arguments focused on the existence of or lack of consultation on the projects. At present, adopting these discourses and the arguments that come with them tends to be required for anyone wishing to be heard in the public space. This helps the mayor's team control the conditions under which criticisms against his actions are made and tends to lower the impact of oppositional discourses. Ultimately, the emphasis on the consultation of citizens in municipal policy has become a means to monitor dissent, a concern related to the ordinary logic of electoral competition.

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