Output 2: Strategy

Tesserae Berlin

How to identify skills in a local area ?

“Strategy maps out a critical path that leads participants to the use of the Method”

1. General description of the chosen area [demography, history, context,…

The area of Mehringplatz is an exemplar case of Berlin current urban transformation. It is a very central location, but assumes many characteristics of a typical peripheral disadvantaged neighbourhood. Located after the postwar division at the edge of Berlin west, few hundred meters from the notorious checkpoint Charlie, the area has been developed in the 1960 as a huge social housing block. Today, the company owning the majority of the build stock is private, but still a relevant part of the population has subsidized contracts or is under unemployment benefits. After the fall of the wall, the area find itself in a new central position, at the end of the main axis of Friedrichstrasse. It has been put under urban regeneration regime (Sanierungsgebiet) in 2011 and is interested by a huge number of new project mainly connected with cultural economy, including the academy of the Jewish Museum, the new seat of the TAZ newspaper, the construction of new buildings for creative industries and a number of galleries and co-working spaces.

1. How have you chosen your local area? What makes this area potentially interesting?

It is a territory subject to huge transformative actions and gentrification processes, which are at once paradigmatic of Berlin current transformations and conflicts and very peculiar of the specific context. There is great pressure on the settled population by new forces taking over the territory, but at the same time an important potential for local economies and community empowerment that represents an optimal testing ground for EULER purposes.

1. How will you contact and involve people to work with?

This is a delicate aspect, as the neighbourhod is the object of a high number of local initiatives , projects and laboratories that risk to result redundant and somehow countereffective for citizens’ attention. Our strategy starts from an accurate stakeholders analysis and assessment of local resources and initiatives currently going on. Selecting the appropriate partners already doing effective fieldwork is the first step, avoiding to double existing activities. So far we have established a partnership with the organisation Supermarkt, based in Mehringplatz, which deals with collaborative economies. We contacted and interviewed a number of local actors including the Quartiermanagement funded by the Social City national program, the Gewobag company, owning most oft he properties in the area, and a range cultural association active on the territory . Next step is to identify simple and concrete objectives for initiatives that could engage different social components in a collective action and reach them with a clear and effective communication campaign.

1. What is the project you want to involve them in [this is probably different form the teaching and learning-project that is supposed to happen for Erasmusplus]

Through the tools of community mapping and urban reconnaissance we want involve people in a laboratory aimed to identify existing resources and potentials for innovative commons based economies. Also we are discussing with local partners the possibility to devise participative video as a means to involve in particular young population in a reflexive understanding of the neighbourhood context. At the current stage the actual project is still open to inputs that can come from the local community. The main question is how to reconnect existing virtuous practices and social forces in networks able to scale up their capacity. A successive step in the activity could be the design of „open business plans“ for innovative enterprise or social initiative.

1. “Experience has taught the partners in this consortium that many organisations find it hard to start working in a deprived urban area. VET-organisations, government as well as private actors find it hard to reach into communities that are further removed from the mainstream economy. The Strategy provides them with a first step towards involving citizens on the basis of what they are interested in, not because of charity or a decree from above.” How does your work support the claim made here? How will your work reach citizens different from those in traditional training programmes?

The main focus will be put on practices that can foster the mutual knowledge exchange able to transmit competences and knowhow matured in specific experiences to wider networks of active subjects, and to involve less skilled subjects in the process. The project will start from drawing on subjects that are already engaged in proposing alternative collaborative visions and models, to support with expertise and multipliers their capacity to network and scale up.