MEETING OF THE CALRE WORKING GROUP ON INTERACTIVE DEMOCRACY

OPENING OF THE PROCEEDINGS BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE PARLIAMENT OF WALLONIA, MR ANDRÉ ANTOINE

- The meeting opens at 9.55 a.m.

Mr André Antoine, President of the Parliament of Wallonia - Madam President of CALRE, dear fellow presidents of assemblies or parliamentarians, our expert speakers - who, in some cases, have come from afar to talk about how to nurture a close dialogue with our fellow citizens - I bid you all a warm welcome here, to the Parliament of Wallonia.

The Parliament stands as an illustration, along with our colleague, Mr Alexandre Miesen, President of the Parliament of the German-speaking Community, of today's federal Belgium, where our legislative assemblies have powers and prerogatives that equal those of our Chamber of Representatives in matters granted to us by the Constitution.

I would like to draw your attention to the rich history of this building, which dates back to medieval times. In the past, this is where the needy and the sick were treated. And it is a common joke among the people of Namur that it is still full of sick people today: politicians.

But we have decided to find a cure for our ills by nurturing dialogue, by seeking consultation, by inviting participation; in short, interactive democracy, within the framework of this commission, which I have had the honour of chairing for three years and thanks to which we have another opportunity to meet here.

Some have had to pull out - the sun or the World Cup may well be to blame for that - but it is more probably due to the fact that our parliaments are now caught up in their own affairs: sessions are drawing to an end and the time has come for budgetary adjustments, and while everyone is already dreaming of a holiday, the work isn't over, which may explain this low turnout.

But what we may lack in quantity, we sure do make up for in quality, especially thanks to the presence of Madam the President of CALRE, who does us the honour of being here today.

Interactive Democracy, Participatory Democracy, Continuous Democracy, Shared Democracy; no end of qualifiers are being added to the word democracy to restore its vitality and allow us to make the best decisions in coordination with our fellow citizens. Today, democracy can no longer be merely representative, despite the fact that elections make our position perfectly legitimate.

This was the main lesson drawn from our 2016 working session, which brought together seasoned academic experts - I am thinking in particular of Mr Blondiaux and Mr Louvain, and of course Ms Schnapper - who came to draw our attention to a number of truths about this democracy that is in need of an overhaul today and whose foundations had to be restored.

I think we can all agree that our fellow citizens no longer intend to surrender their voice to us. At most they are willing to lend it to us for a while, only to revoke it when they want a greater say. This means that they do not relinquish their place for four or five years, the length of the mandate, to allow parliamentarians to take decisions on their behalf, but rather, when it comes to certain subjects, they intend to have their say, they intend to propose, or even suggest the decision, perhaps even decide themselves.

Therefore, as legislative assembly leaders, our duty is to explore and design effective and mobilising methods to meet this aspiration of our fellow citizens. The time is ripe, because information and communication technologies are today valuable tools that can be used to better nurture the dialogue with our fellow citizens.

This means that the exchange of good practices in the various assemblies, in the various countries, is essential, whether it is within the Council of Europe's participatory democracy incubator, the European institutions or even this CALRE working group.

At our previous meeting, we wanted to give the stage to experts working on interactive democracy at European and national level. They shared with us a number of concrete and innovative measures, for example, the Europe for Citizens programme, or the crowdsourcing tools, or the co-construction of legislation.

It couldn't have come at a better time, because the Parliament of Wallonia, having borrowed this idea from the French National Assembly, has just implemented it. With the Secretary-General, we have launched an operation known as "A decree for all, a decree by all". This is an opportunity for our fellow citizens, in response to topics previously determined by the elected representatives, to submit their suggestions, to react to the proposals and to build on them, or even perhaps to amend them; in short, to encourage a very active dialogue between citizens and elected representatives, culminating in an actual physical meeting with these citizens who have tabled a number of suggestions.

That is what we'll be doing on the 2nd of July of this year, since we will be receiving all the parliamentarians who have become involved in this process of listening to citizens, meeting with them to improve on the texts, knowing that, at the end of this co-construction effort between citizens and elected representatives, texts will be submitted, even before the summer holidays, that is to say in mid-July, on two topics which were not simple: the first concerned the fate of small traders in the face of hypermarkets, supermarkets and thus the emergence of e-commerce. How to maintain social ties? This is a big concern here in Wallonia. On the other hand, the "Zero unemployment territory" campaign, which we had observed in France and which we wanted to roll out here.

There were a number of positive, favourable reactions, although our fellow citizens may have preferred to address other themes. And that is what I believe will encourage us to continue with the operation along the same lines, since I think it has largely met our expectations.

Our Parliament has been fully committed to this process of openness to citizens since the beginning of this legislature, drawing inspiration in particular from best practices that we have been able to observe among the CALRE members. These include:

Electronic petitions. Today, it only takes one Walloon to submit a petition. If it comes within the remit of our Parliament, this petition will be dealt with in a parliamentary committee. It will therefore be necessary for parliamentarians to give an answer, whether positive or negative, but there must be an answer, that is the first element.

The second is the citizen contributions. All our legislation is available to citizens who can say "I agree. I do not agree. I would have liked to change this passage of the law that we call a decree. " All these contributions are then enclosed in the brief of the parliamentarians who are free to pay heed to them or ignore them, that is up to the elected representatives.

We also broadcast all our debates on television so that citizen viewers can follow the positions taken by each of the representatives.

Finally, we have just completed a second citizen panel operation where, after a survey among more than 1,000 members of the population, we asked these 1,000 Walloons if they wanted to participate in a citizen panel, that obviously required us to select, to classify thirty or so citizens that would be representative of the variety of our Walloon population, whether in terms of age, qualifications or socio-professional origin.

In short, they were given the opportunity to be parliamentarians for a month. I admit that a lot of people were sceptical, claiming that it was much too important a role to give to citizens who had no clue about what they were doing.

It's true that there was a lack of knowledge of the mechanisms and subjects but, very quickly, these citizens threw themselves into it, they mastered the subjects by even asking for additional experts and by filing a certain number of recommendations.

Whether it is with a decree by all, for all, or with the electronic petitions, the contributions, the citizen panel or the public consultation, since we are putting the final touches to a very important text that will allow us, at the level of the Walloon Region, to organise public consultations (as is already the case at the local level), democracy is being used as one of the instruments of the orchestra. It takes several instruments to bring this democratic symphony to life. It isn't always easy, but instead of complaining that the gap is widening, we must work to create a bridge between citizens and elected representatives.

Today, we are not going to deal with national or regional aspects, but we will focus more on local democracy and municipal democracy. On the one hand, in Wallonia, we will be voting in October, this is an important event. We realise that many political parties are competing for ideas to restore dialogue with our fellow citizens and to give them more opportunities to express themselves. If you think about it - and this is the mayor talking to you - the municipal level is an ideal place to allow citizen expression and participation on issues that affect them very directly, whether it be their living environment, the waste policy, urban planning or road safety. These are all topics that interest and engage our citizens today. That is why we wanted today to deal with the question of what action needs to be taken to boost the participatory credentials of our municipalities in this matter?

Many experiences already exist: advisory councils. In my municipality, I've launched what we refer to as cooperative budgets. It's very simple: the cooperative budget differs sightly from the participatory budget. It isn't a sum that is

entrusted to the citizens who decide how it will be used. It's more of a call for projects. Then we enter into a dialogue with the municipal college, because we need permits and administrative procedures, we select or reject the projects, explaining the decision each time. It was a first and, in a town of 10,000 inhabitants, it attracted 16 projects supported by several citizens, groups and associations. Of the 16 projects, 14 were admissible and will therefore be funded.

We witnessed the satisfaction of those who set up these projects when they heard that they have the green light. We explained to the other two that their project was outside the scope of the municipality or that the resources that it required exceeded our budgetary possibilities, in any case at the moment. The fact that it was a new tool was understood.

As Mr Miesen knows, we have had experiences of citizens who come directly to the municipal council to raise an issue with the executive but admit that this formula is not very successful at the moment. Citizens are still afraid to put a question to an elected representative, they fear a backlash because of the fact that they are challenging and proposing something else. We see that our fellow citizens are very cautious when they raise an issue, which is often critical.

On the other hand, in the formula I mentioned, the cooperative budget or even the participatory budget, we see more willingness to get involved. This is particularly true in our country when it comes to matters of spatial planning and urban planning. We see immediately when there are inquiries, since the law requires us to hold inquiries, it is not uncommon to see several hundreds of citizens say: "We do not want this project, or we want to see it evolve, or we want to see it better integrated". So we see that, at the local level, there is a reservoir, a breeding ground extremely favourable to participation.

To cultivate this garden of democracy at the local level, we've called in the experts, the gardeners of participation.

I refer, of course, to our first speaker, Dominique Ollivier, who is well versed in this subject and who has a very long experience in the field of public administration, since she is the author of numerous texts and dissertations dealing in particular with civil participation. In just a few moments, she will explain to us the ins and outs of the Montreal Public Consultation Office, which is an independent organisation and which is entirely, if I am well informed - but she will confirm it to us - dedicated to the consultation of the citizens of the City of Montreal, mainly in the fields of urban planning - which means that it isn't that different to our Region - but also on any project that could be submitted by the municipal authorities.

And of course, on behalf of our assembly, of CALRE, I would like to thank you in particular for having crossed the Atlantic to be here. Going to such efforts to bring this measure to our attention which, to my knowledge, is relatively new in our old continent, is proof indeed of your firm belief in democracy.

Moreover, as I mentioned a moment ago, solutions sometimes reside closer to home, in this case, on the other side of the Sambre. Which is why our second speaker, Mr Marcel Guillaume, will take us through the work of the Namur Citizen Forum. This initiative was spawned by an issue that has come under intense media scrutiny. There has been a lot of debate about the development of a park into a shopping centre and which today, deploys all of its activities, if I am well informed, within the entire scope of municipal powers, on the basis of a project and has drawn from it a management method, a method of participation.

We will see how the subjects of citizen participation are approached on both sides of the Atlantic, from the St Lawrence to the Sambre.

After several citizen consultation sessions, the forum produced a white paper containing many suggestions for all local political formations and they concern both mobility and spatial planning, social ties, and even early childhood.

Beyond the specific recommendations it contains, I am also delighted to learn more about the process that finally made it possible to switch from protest, forgive me the use of the word, to a form of participation and coordination of public expression. I think this process deserves to be highlighted.

As you see, there is a great appetite for this subject, we have found the gardeners of democracy and we will be enjoying the fruits of their labours in a short time, but before giving the floor to the CALRE President, I would like to leave you with this very beautiful thought by the former governor of New York, Alfred Smith, who declared that the cure for the evils of democracy is more democracy.

We've observed a number of incidents in this representative democracy. We believe, and this is the purpose of our work today, that more democracy can lead to cures for a society that would not only be in better shape but, above all, would give a fair place to our citizens.

Thank you to our two speakers and thank you to the president.

To whom I gladly give the floor.

Good work to everyone. Thank you.

INTRODUCTORY WORD BY MS ANA LUIS, PRESIDENT OF CALRE AND PRESIDENT OF THE ASSEMBLY OF THE AZORES

Ms Ana Luis, President of CALRE and President of the Assembly of the Azores. - *Hello everyone. Thank you for your welcome.*

I'm just going to say a few words to justify my presence here, in my capacity as president of CALRE.

My intention was to attend a meeting at least once in each of the ten CALRE groups. Not only with all the coordinators who truly make huge efforts and who throw themselves into these themes that are so important for all citizens, not only for CALRE, but also for the whole of Europe.

They are people who are deeply involved and who really maintain a very important dynamic to carry out the objectives of our association.

Good governance practices are debated, which take the form of ideas and working tools. We hope that this will be of great value for our parliaments.

These are the objectives of CALRE. Even if there has been a change in the name, the fundamentals remain the same. The fundamentals are in fact the promotion of dialogue and the promotion of electronic tools in order to come closer to the citizen.

In general, and after listening carefully to the speech given by the President of this Assembly, I think it can be said that there is a common denominator for all the parliaments of the Western world. There is a kind of disinterest and even some ignorance of policies. Citizens, for the most part, pay no attention to policies. They are not really aware of the policies that are debated and developed by parliaments. When we talk about young democracies, like Portugal, which can look back at only 44 years of democracy, it seems to us very important to bring the dialogue, and thus the debate with the citizens, inside the parliamentary assembly.

I think we need to talk less or otherwise really focus on issues that concern our citizens. We are trying to narrow this distance between elected representatives and citizens via these electronic tools in order to find a consensus and to allow everyone to find their place and participate in the debate.

This question is, in my opinion, essentially political. We have the technology, tools and social networks, we can use them, they are at our disposal. I believe that this is a clearly political question. There is a kind of political dysfunction that needs to be addressed.

Things are not how they used to be, when political communication was only a matter of drawing up a short memo to say what had happened. Today, much more communication is needed. We must look to the future. We must make sure that citizens know exactly what they want, how they can get it and how they can participate in this process.

For these reasons, we as citizens, we are present on the social networks as consumers when we should also have a role of actors. We must use these means of communication, these networks, to embrace the inspirations, interests and concerns of every citizen.

The question I would like to ask you, which I would like you to think about, is a question that has already been put to our Parliament and this issue is still being debated. When everything has been done, when electronic means are already used and citizens can already participate via these tools, for example, we have in our Constitution the opportunity to participate, to ask questions, to propose projects, to make suggestions that will be debated and voted on in Parliament. For example, any citizen already can take the initiative of asking for a referendum. We feel that our website is really very clear and one wonders, in these conditions, when one has such a complete work tool, what is still left to be done. Is it sufficient? How do we develop new tools, new methods to allow an even more active participation of the citizen? We must also increase interest in politics, because we note that, today, there is a distance, a gap, between the citizen and the policy being developed.

Citizens lose interest in politics because they often do not know how to access it. It seems very far removed from their reality.

The question I ask you, and which I would like you to think about, is what more can be done to develop this cooperation and meet the aspirations of our fellow citizens.

The President then gives the floor to Ms Ollivier.

PRESENTATION BY MS DOMINIQUE OLLIVIER, PRESIDENT OF THE MONTREAL PUBLIC CONSULTANCY OFFICE (MPCO)

Ms Dominique Ollivier, President of the Montreal Public Consultancy Office (MPCO). - The city of Montreal is the largest city in the Province of Quebec. Public consultation is an important part of life there, going back to the end of the 1970s when citizens launched a protest against plans by the authorities to change a thoroughfare in the City. What characterises Montreal is, on one side, our mountain and, on the other, the river. In the minds of the people of Montreal, a sacred thoroughfare leads down from the mountain to the river. They want to be able to see the river from the mountain, to see the mountain from the river, which means that the entire urban organisation of the city is designed in such a way as to preserve these two-way views. At the time, a group of citizens had been protesting against buildings and plans that were in the pipeline to develop the city. They organised the first citizen consultation in Montreal around this ambitious project on a thoroughfare known as McGill College.

There was a change of municipal administration in 1986. This led to the creation of what is called a public consultation office - which was a municipal service - and which, when there were major urban planning projects, was in charge of consulting the public to gauge its opinion on these issues.

The Montreal Public Consultation Office operated for approximately eight years until 1992. This office was abolished when the administration once again changed hands.

Ten years later, the Province of Quebec redrafted the Charter of the City of Montreal, to allow the City of Montreal to bring together all municipalities and districts of the island within a single large city of Montreal. The Quebec government imposed as a condition, the return of a formal process of citizen participation. To protect it from the vagaries of political will, it decided to institutionalise it in the form of what is now called the *Office de consultation publique de Montréal*, the Montreal Public Consultation Office. The Office was therefore created 15 years ago, in 2002, and is now in its sixteenth year of existence.

The Office has a threefold mission:
- – To consult the citizens on all the projects affecting the urban development plan for Montreal, which is an obligation enshrined by law;
- – To advise all the bodies of the City of Montreal that may need to hold a consultation, be it the districts or services that would like to put in place policies or various schemes, to ensure that they respect public consultation rules when drawing up their public consultation plan;
- – to be able to conduct a kind of international watch on best practices in the field of public consultation.

That's why we often say that in Montreal, we are a little ahead of the game: the Office is becoming a public consultation factory and we are at the forefront of everything that is being done around the world.

To do this, we are part of the major networks.

The first is the International Observatory of Participatory Democracies, based in Barcelona, which brings together a number of cities in several European countries, including Spain, Portugal and Italy, among others. It is a grouping of all forms of local or regional governments that are interested in issues of public participation and the inclusion of citizens in these networks.

The second is the Aarhus Network, which is more specialised in bodies that depend either on cities and municipalities or states, but which are official citizen consultation bodies - administrations or parliaments.

Participation in these two networks has enabled us to exchange best practices and to experiment with all kinds of consultation techniques over the years.

We have five major fields of action in Montreal.

First, all real estate projects that exceed a surface area of 15,000 square meters. Why is this field of action so special? Because these are both public projects and private projects. Even if the land is privately owned, if we are talking about a construction of more than 15,000 square meters, it still needs to be the subject of a public consultation, if it requires a derogation from the city's urban planning scheme to realise it.

We also cover everything that is collective facilities. We're talking here about hospitals, schools, universities, airport terminals, road trains, etc.

We have what is also called in Montreal - as you can see in the third image - the historic and natural districts, the historic district being Vieux Montréal, the old part of the island, and the natural district being the mountain.

We also draw up plans and public policies. In Montreal, we've done, for example, cultural policy, housing policy, etc.

Finally, the last element is the right of initiative of citizens. To do this, citizens must collect a certain number of signatures and, on that basis, they can ask the municipal administration to grant them a public consultation on a particular subject, but which must not already be the subject of a policy or bylaw. This allows citizens to be active.

I am very impressed to see that, in the Walloon Parliament, it only takes one signature because, at home, it is much more restrictive than that. It takes 15,000 signatures for a metropolitan project that affects the 3 million inhabitants of the greater Montreal area, or, if it is done at the level of a district, it is a local project, in which case it is a percentage of the number of inhabitants of the district, generally between 5,000 and 7,000 signatures.

It is interesting to note that the signatures must still be physical signatures. This is done on purpose, in the sense that in the age of social media, it becomes very easy to resort to what is called "press button" democracy. A petition is launched on Facebook and within an hour you can collect incredible amounts of signatures. Whereas those who came up with the idea of the right of initiative wanted to force the project leaders to really rally some popular support behind their idea, but an informed popular support. That's why, so far, it is still necessary to obtain physical signatures, collected at meetings or door-to-door. Increasingly, people are asking us for the right to be able to put it in electronic format, but for the moment they are still physical signatures.

Our consultation process has been done predictably for 15 years. The foundation of our methodology, which interlocks like a set of puzzle blocks.

All our consultations take place in two stages.

The first stage, called the information stage, during which we will present to all interested citizens the ins and outs of a project.

After that comes the consultation or feedback stage. We will hear the opinions of citizens on this subject, when I say "we" I should clarify that the Office is of course composed of the President, but also of around thirty commissioners who are first and foremost chosen for their skills, architects, engineers, political scientists, community workers, sociologists, urban planners, whose mandate is endorsed by two-thirds of the votes cast by the municipal council. They are subject to a strict code of ethics and are neither city officials nor elected representatives.

Each time a consultation project come up, we appoint a commission. A commission is made up of two to four commissioners who will hear the opinions of the people and who are responsible for writing the report. Our second stage is the consultation stage. The third is the reporting stage.

Everything that comes to the office is made public. All the documents to which the commissioners have access, are also accessible to the public. If we are talking about studies, noise studies, sunshine studies, risk studies, citizens have access to them because we work according to the principle that any citizen should be able to consult all the documentation and embark on the same thought process as the commissioners to reach their conclusions. This is also part of what allows fundamentally this great transparency, which allows citizens to have confidence in the process. This is the foundation of all our consultations, and then we will add new tools, online questionnaires, online consultation platforms, self-directed consultations - I'll show you some photographs later -, the crowdsourcing of data, crowdsourcing of solutions and anything else that we can think of.

I would say that what is missing in our entire process, and this is the battle we are currently waging with our elected representatives, is the feedback process. We may have a device that is institutionalised and that has a firm foothold, where the roles of each are well defined, but if we do not tell the citizens what we have done with all these ideas, all this collective intelligence that we have put at the service of a project or improvement of project acceptability, then at the end of the day we've wasted our time.

For us, it is becoming essential to tell elected representatives that feedback is a crucial and important part of the consultation process and that it is this that will make it possible to earn people's confidence.

We do all sorts of activities, as you can see, I'm showing you some photographs. We will use role plays, thematic workshops, map and model workshops. You have an example of self-directed consultation at the bottom. We develop kits that are downloadable, which explain what is the rationale behind the consultation.

Then, simply by working from a wall, a group can meet as they wish and follow these steps to give us the feedback we are waiting for. You have an example here. We have even used Boal theatre, or theatre of the oppressed, role playing,

participatory theatre, to allow the most excluded groups to participate. As you can see, there are different ways to approach people.

The benefits of a consultation are fairly clear in Montreal. There are usually five elements that trigger a really useful consultation. The first is when we are sent a case that has a turbulent and publicised history. If, moreover, the matter in hand has been the subject of much media attention and there are very polarised opinions and a centralised decision-making mechanism, where the decisions are in the hands of a handful of people, if there is the presence of an attentive public in groups of people, pressure groups, lobbies, interest groups that are very involved in the project, the presence of divergent interests. We have experienced cases where we had environmentalists who were pitted against urban developers for example. It is therefore potentially very explosive.

There is a misunderstanding of the opposing interests among stakeholders and that is when we intervene. If in addition, there is the citizen perception of a risk of losing something, of disrupting a certain established order, at that time, we have what is called the perfect cocktail to roll out a public consultation. These are the cases we like. Sometimes it's a little complex, but these are very stimulating cases because we can use mediation, consultation and co-creation to ensure the calm expression of divergent points of view, a consolidation of information that can sometimes be contradictory, and allow all stakeholders to have a better knowledge of the case and thus contribute constructive and solution-oriented ideas.

In our consultation mechanisms, for us, it is clear that the state of the decision is the first thing that matters. We often ask our elected representatives, before giving us a mandate: "Let's see what is the scope of the consultation? ". That is to say, what can be brought into play and will attract citizen participation. If the decision has already been taken at that time, we don't see the point of holding a consultation. Why hold a consultation if the decision has already been taken? At that point, the work needs to focus on information mechanisms

There are two types of projects, so-called downstream projects and upstream projects. The downstream project is a project where we have already determined what are the main lines. What we want to know is what the population thinks and how it reacts to this project. When we talk about upstream projects - my favourite - different elements are on the table. We can start from the blank page by telling people: "How would you design a measure to reduce, for example, our fossil energy consumption in Montreal?" We did it three years ago, it was one of our best consultations. There, everything is on the table and it is the collective intelligence that will express itself. You have the example of the platform that we used to do it.

Or, we can have topics like the city centre strategy. We had to work on the revitalisation of our city centre. We voice a few ideas and we tell people: "Come and improve these ideas, come add your opinion to these ideas." This is the point when, depending on the type of consultation, we will use different types of tools to do so.

When we come to the question of online consultation, there is no doubt that, as you said, Madam President, all the social media mean that people are participating more and more. I often say that we are in the era of participation where, in Montreal, we share our life on Facebook, we share our bikes using the Bixi, the collective bikes, we share our car via car-sharing apps, we share our homes via Airbnb and other platforms of the same style. So we are really in an era where sharing and the circular economy is increasingly part of the way people think about their society. So we can't do without electronic tools if we want to harness the full potential of digital.

However, we've realised that in order to work on consultations using digital technology, we also had to ask ourselves about all the obstacles to citizen participation.

Formerly, at the Office, in our first ten years of existence, we were very happy when we had a project with two hundred people participating, when we had about fifty people who, in the feedback phase, presented us with a written opinion that was motivated, enlightened, when we had perhaps twenty or so who came to express their concerns, and if we ended up with between seventy and a hundred participations, we were very happy. If we say that with a hundred participants, for each participant there are one hundred people who do not speak, we have more or less reached 10,000 people if we apply a rule of three.

At present, our latest participation figures are on average four times higher than what we had in our best cases and, if we take into account the different forms of participation between online participation, physical participation, and alternative methods, we are not far from reaching between five and ten thousand people directly. It becomes very interesting in that sense.

When it came to the consultation to reduce the consumption of fossil fuels, just via the platform, more than a thousand people created profiles and this generated more than 5,000 contributions that needed to be analysed, which was a huge leap forward for citizen participation.

We've noticed that the barriers to participation are threefold. There are so-called physical obstacles, so all the questions of time, of availabilities, of the accessibility of the places where the consultation takes place, of the level of effort required of the participants, and so on.

There is the problem of information barriers. As we know, even if we use very modern information dissemination methods, it is still difficult to reach everyone and reach large numbers of people, through a campaign in the newspapers. Given the budgets, that are still limited, we can't roll out television campaigns for one consultation and so on. We realised that more and more alternative means had to be used to disseminate information about a consultation that is in progress.

The last is of course the systemic barriers that cannot always be addressed.

In Montreal, for example, four years ago, we took the trouble to take a good look at our figures and found that on a number of projects women's participation was between 18 % and 25 %. They did not make the journey to the consultation. We started working on what we call multichannel consultations, that is, using several simultaneous methods to allow women's participation, and last year, women's participation was 49 %, so in the parity zone.

We realise that, when we want to encourage participation, it becomes very important to ask ourselves which tools are available to people to participate.

Nevertheless, we realised that when we carry out a more in-depth analysis, that women's participation, although it is 50% at different stages, or 49 % at different stages, is still much more stimulated by all methods that do not require women to travel to the consultation. Even if, for example, we have put childcare services in our premises where our consultations are held, even if we have diversified our consultation hours. They are organised in the evening, during the day, at the weekends, to allow people to come at a time that best suits them. Nevertheless, the main factor in increasing women's participation is the online consultation platforms, the online questionnaires, the possibilities of sending their opinion without necessarily being physically present to defend it. In fact, if you look at this graph on the average participation, you can see in the background, in blue, what we have always generated in physical meetings and how, whenever we put participation online, we sees that it drastically increases the amount of people who are able to participate. If we had the figures for 2017 and 2018, you would see to what point it is absolutely exponential.

What is interesting for us is to realise that the use of electronic methods also serves to promote participation and consultation. We have an increased presence of people who come to our consultations.

Some lessons have been learned from using various techniques. In our traditional method, people would come into a room, speak before the commissioners and submit their participation. We've added data visualisation methods. We've set up a day care centre, which will allow people to come with their children, with their babies and to participate. We use *oculus rift* that allow people to move within projects without physically being forced to come along, and to have different kiosks where people will have all the ins and outs of the projects, from the obvious to more ambitious evolutions.

Here you have an example of a set of maps and models where people have to work together to produce scenarios for land use planning. These concepts are increasingly being used. This is the example I gave you. Voting is also done using electronic controllers. If people come along, they can interact in real time.

Perhaps this is becoming one of our most popular things, namely the use of all the techniques used in popular education, such as participatory theatre, role playing, data visualisation, where we have to project ourselves into the future by stepping into the shoes of a character that is not necessarily us. This is how we succeed in reducing tensions and also in getting citizens to express their so-called lines of desire.

When we look at the overall picture, we have drawn some conclusions from all of these methods that have been put in place. That's what I would like to share with you. As far as the lessons learned are concerned, the first thing we realised was that digital technology enormously stimulates participation, the amount of people who come to participate. However, it does not replace physical meetings. To be predictable and credible, people need to know in advance all the stages of the consultation, all the opportunities they will have to participate, all the ways in which we will use their opinions to see the product in a real and tangible way. That is what has given the office its credibility over the years and that allows people, then, to formally ask us, time and again, to come and intervene in the cases at hand.

The second observation is that we realise that, with very few tools or very little information, we manage to equip citizens to participate. Citizens understand much more than they are given credit for. Sometimes, as Mr Antoine said earlier, we say that we are going to hand over the decision-making responsibility to clueless citizens. We've realised that, with just a little information and a little bit of coaching, we can get them to discuss very complex projects. We carried out an experiment, we participated in the global citizen debate, before the COP21, in Paris, a few years ago, where the Mayor had entrusted us with the task of gauging the opinion of Montrealers before he headed for the Mayors Conference on Climate, to find out what he could commit to. With a day of study and very simple tools, videos, real and virtual discussion tables, we managed to get the opinion of more than 2,000 Montrealers - it was very concrete - who were able to dictate

to the Mayor how far they were ready to commit themselves. These are interesting cases of cooperation between elected representatives and the population on topics that are very complex, subjects discussed by the States. The second thing is that with a few tools, citizens will be catalysts for change.

The third thing we have discovered over our 15 years of experience is the power of influence. For our 15th anniversary last year, we took the opportunity to look at the consultations conducted, the percentage of recommendations followed by the various administrations. In fact, the worst reports have a 60 % success rate, which means that 60 % of the recommendations are applied. In the best cases, we hit 98%. It's interesting to see the power of influence that this gives citizens. I think that also helps to establish the credibility of the Office on these issues.

Our citizens in Montreal understand that the elected representative is not forced to do what they recommend. What interests them is to know why their suggestions were not retained and which ones were retained. Whenever the administration produces what we call the tracking tables or the feedback tables saying, "We followed that one, because... we did not follow that one, because...", the citizens, even if it is not what they had hoped for, understand or at least they feel listened to, represented and understand the process leading to the decision. This lies at the core of the lessons we have learned and which, for us, is taking on considerable importance.

The final lesson, which is fundamental to building an inclusive society, is that there must be inclusive consultation mechanisms. Every time we decide to use a consultation tool, we must ask ourselves who does not have access to this tool and who benefits from it. Does it benefit already organised groups or does it make it possible to reach large groups of people? How do we ensure, through stakeholder mapping, that we will seek the opinion of those who do not tend to express themselves? I've given the example of women, we could have taken the example of young people. Young people also participate a lot more with digital methods, but some people are still victims of the digital divide. We must also keep in mind all those who might want to express themselves but cannot afford to do so. What can be done for them? Keeping these things in mind allows us to achieve more inclusive measures and inclusive consultation processes that ultimately foster social cohesion.

Do you have any particular questions about my presentation?

Mr André Antoine, President of the Parliament of Wallonia. - Let us now turn to the participants.

I give the floor to Mr Alexandre Miesen.

Mr Alexandre Miesen, President of the Parliament of the German-speaking Community. - Thank you for your presentation.

If I understand correctly, for each project, for each consultation, you consult the entire population. Everyone has the opportunity to participate. You don't have one or more representative fixed groups per project. You consult everyone. How do you guarantee representativeness? Are there criteria to be able to participate, criteria of age or citizenship of Montreal? Do you have to prove anything?

Ms Dominique Ollivier, President of the Montreal Public Consultation Office (MPCO). - There is no criterion of citizenship or residence as such. What we have been doing for the last four years, since I was President of the Office, what we have added is a mapping of stakeholders. We ask ourselves: which groups are affected by the decision to come? Which are the groups that really do need to give us their opinion? What we do is what I described to you as multichannel consultations.

We will ensure that each of the groups identified in the mapping has at least one opportunity to express themselves in the chain we are going to build. Will it be digital? If they are people who do not use digital, will it be self-directed workshops or online questionnaires? If we want to speak directly to the public, if we want to talk to associations, we can have breakfast meetings, we can organise forum-like working days. It is the addition of all these methods of consultation that will allow us to have an overall picture and deliver the report.

Does this answer your question?

Mr André Antoine, President of the Parliament of Wallonia. - If I may, I wanted to go back to the mayor's appetite for getting the lowdown on the resilience of his citizens to climate and environmental change.

What were the conclusions on the substance? Was he reassured? At the end of the day, is the environment important for future generations? What was the conclusion?

Ms Dominique Ollivier, President of the Montreal Public Consultation Office (MPCO). - Four different methods of consultation were used to deliver our report to the post-COP21 mayors. What we realised was that, in general, the population of Montreal had a great appetite for climate change issues. According to these reports, 60 % of those who

contributed touched on the issue of transport, that is to say, how to move from individual cars to more collective transport, but also on goods transportation issues and the organisation of the territory in terms of planning.

One of the themes was personal lifestyle and that's where we had the most disparate answers. What I mean by that is that you have the more hardcore ecologists talking about buying local and even giving up meat, voluntary simplicity, etc., but there are also many citizens who said: "With more articulated, more interventionist or more proactive public education programmes we could do a lot".

That is how, since 2016, the year of the consultation, we now have a widespread programme for composting food waste, for example. People said: "Yes, we are ready to go that far". The number of landfill waste collections has been reduced and the number of collections of recyclable waste or biodegradable material has increased. Much more work has been done on parking and accessibility in the city centre.

In short, people were willing to change the way they live to meet international aspirations for reducing greenhouse gases and climate change.

These are interesting examples because they are very tangible. We really start from a blank page and we tell people! "What are you willing to do? " At first, people suggest solutions. Then we go to the consultation to see if there is a broad backing or not for this kind of solution and it becomes quite interesting.

Mr André Antoine, President of the Parliament of Wallonia. - We often find here in Belgium that our fellow citizens are mobilised much faster and much stronger against a project than when it comes to starting from a blank page.

In our Walloon legislation, we have what we call rural development programmes and they are eligible for subsidies only if the local authorities carry out a wide consultation in all neighbourhoods, villages, etc., so a blank page.

I am very surprised to see that, in some neighbourhoods, the page remains blank. It fills up only when a project is announced, which either pleases or does not please, and only then will you have a reaction.

I was wondering if this is also the case in Montreal because you have - going by the little I know of your city, having been to Montreal a few times - a very contrasting urbanisation. You still have charming old houses that date from past centuries and you have skyscrapers. At a certain point, does the question of the urbanisation of the green space stir up a debate and does it give rise to protest and therefore your intervention?

Ms Dominique Ollivier, President of the Montreal Public Consultation Office (MPCO). - Yes, absolutely. It is true that people are much more mobilised against a project than during the upstream stages, which means that, when we take steps upstream, we must use vast storehouses of energy to show people that it is their interest to do so.

We have an example that is quite interesting these days, which is still relevant in Montreal today, where I explained to you that we have the mountain that serves, among other things, as a transit route from the west to the east of the city. The new administration decided to stop transit traffic on the mountain to preserve it, for all sorts of reasons, including ecological reasons. It was in their electoral programme. Ten years ago we had a consultation called the "Mont Royal Enhancement Plan". One of the recommendations that emerged from it was to set up a pilot project to suspend or reduce transit traffic in order to preserve the mountain. This administration was elected with its mentioned electoral programme and all of a sudden it enraged public opinion: 30,000 citizens signed an online a petition against, 8,000 in favour, and there everyone says "Where did the Office get this from? Who did you consult? " because the development plan for Mount Royal was a blank page. We are now carrying out a consultation exercise. What's interesting for us to observe, and it's similar to what I'm telling you about the dangers of using electronic petitions, is that 30,000 people have signed the petition against. Our information evening was held in a physical presence and online format. It was rebroadcast online and we had 150 people on site, and 350 people who listened to the information, so 500 people out of a potential 38,000.

When I use the electronic platform, I tell them that I do not just want a vote for or against, I want arguments, I want to know why you are for, why you are against and especially what other solution can be considered. These are the five issues that have been identified by the administration, what other solution, other than that of stopping transit traffic, can you find?

I find it very interesting because I obtained the figures. People are asked to identify themselves. This can be a barrier to online participation. For us, it's credibility, we do not accept anonymous comments. We have to be able to say that someone said this or that. We realise that, for people, it is also a way to be more responsible and more realistic in what they will ask when the remarks are directly attributed to them.

We had about a thousand profiles that were created in under three weeks to intervene on this, but we are very much aware that we are very far from the 38,000 people who are supposedly for or against. This is where it becomes interesting to see that the more the democratic exercise requires effort and requires reflection, the more this kind of "push button"

democracy, the quick "like" or "unlike", becomes interesting. We, at the OPCM, tell them, that a bad idea, even supported by 1,000 people, is still a bad idea, whereas a good idea put forward by one person may be the idea on which we will work. It is the quality of the arguments that tips the balance in one direction or the other.

It's quite an exercise to be able to mobilise people around that, but the further away it is in time, the harder it is to rally people around, whereas when they feel the effects directly, automatically, it becomes easier and it is the quality of the consultation methods that are put in place that will allow people to get down to work, to have ideas.

Mr André Antoine, President of the Parliament of Wallonia. - Are there any other questions, other contributions?

PRESENTATION BY MR MARCEL GUILLAUME OF THE NAMUR CITIZEN FORUM

Mr André Antoine, President of the Parliament of Wallonia. - Given that this makes for a fairly smooth transition, we will turn to Mr Guillaume. Earlier, I said it in my opening remarks, if I summarise, but he will put it in clearer terms, everything starts from a protest that mobilises and then becomes a decision therapy. I think it's worth hearing it from the horse's mouth.

Mr Marcel Guillaume of the Namur Citizen Forum. - Thank you for giving me the floor. Thank you for being here for such an exciting topic, or one that I find exciting at least.

Obviously, some of what I say will overlap with what Mrs Ollivier has just explained to us. However, we are dealing with a situation on a very different scale, since in her case we are talking about a 15-year experience - whereas here we have two modest years of experience - with technical and probably financial means that are very different too. So this is an initiative that is only just starting, that is in its infancy, which we hope will continue, but which is already in difficulty because of a lack of involvement, both in terms of the participation of the population and that of the group that is leading this forum.

As Mr Antoine has just said, the movement was born out of a protest movement. It is a shopping centre project on a green space in the city centre, which is still ongoing. Both the protest movement and the construction movement are conducted in parallel. Throughout this period of protest, all legal democratic means have been used and have not yielded results. We've tried them all, whether the petition, the popular consultation, the communal inquiry, nothing has worked. The idea was then, after spending so much energy and time on it, to switch to a method that is more participative, more constructive, more positive too.

It got to a point where people no longer wanted to stay in a situation of protest, but to propose alternatives. To propose alternatives, you can't only be in a situation of protest, you really have to put in place another operating system that makes it possible to co-construct in a realistic way.

The idea of the citizen forum is to trigger a dynamic that allows the involvement of citizens in all initiatives that affect their living environment or their way of life. We're not just talking about urban planning here. In Namur, for example, we had a regulation on begging a short time ago. This is a subject on which the population would have liked to be consulted but it wasn't. This has therefore prompted a lot of negative reactions and again protests.

Why did we start this process? It is by pursuing the same objectives as yours, to co-construct rather than impose, so to try to ask the authorities and decision-makers, be they political or non-political, to be able to co-construct with them rather than to have projects imposed on them.

To refocus projects on the general interest: sometimes we have the impression, here in Namur, but I think that the same is also true elsewhere, that the projects are sometimes electoral arguments, that the interests behind the projects are not in the general interest. What we would like is to consult the population so that they can ask themselves the question: is it of benefit to the population? Does it improve well-being? Sometimes we have the impression that the projects we are proposed are not focused on the general interest.

To limit sterile and energy-consuming protests: personally, this protest movement, I've been involved with it for six years, entails hundreds, even thousands, of hours of energy-intensive work. It's not very constructive, it's not really there that we want to invest our energy.

To renew the link between decision makers and citizens: this seems to me essential, it has already been the subject of a great deal of discussion.

I also think, and this comes out of the two topics that I will discuss later, that when we involve the population - and this strikes me as truly essential - we arrive at a much better, much more qualitative project. Earlier I mentioned the case

of ordinary citizens, who are not experts. When we put people around a table who, in principle, are not experts, we sometimes come up with extraordinary things.

The project is much more consensual because the citizen was involved. Obviously, it's much easier, it is less contested. This also seems essential to me.

What the Citizen Forum wants to do is work in a very broad way, in other words, it wants to work with citizens, people who live in the place that is concerned by the project, but also people who have the use of this territory. These people may be tourists, or people who work there, they may be traders who do business in the city centre, but who do not live there, so who are not considered as resident citizens and who are sometimes a little neglected. We would also like to involve the politician in such a way that, at the end of the procedure, we do not have to impose the proposed solution on the politician, but it is integrated very quickly in the discussion. This also applies to developers and investors. The second meeting will in fact take place tonight, where the developer, on this subject of Leopold Park and the shopping centre, is part of the discussion. The idea was to integrate them in the discussion very much upstream so that we do not have to push afterwards to get this project accepted.

The method that has been proposed here is a website on which citizens can come to submit the topics that interest them. Any citizen can submit a project. It remains a project at this stage, it can be a single person.

In fact, this project is made public, and it is the other citizens who vote for this project and say: yes, it interests me or does not interest me. If we have ten people who are interested, it will not necessarily be taken up, but if we start having 100, 200 or 300 people, this subject will be covered in a forum discussion. From the moment it becomes a forum, it is our team that must organise the exchanges on the subject. We take care of the logistics, find the facilitators, facilitation methods too, we also advertise the event. We are the ones who will sit down with the participants to summarise the ideas, and on those foundations we will try to build with them a project that is realistic, a proposal that takes on board the summarised ideas, that is realistic.

As listening is not one of the strengths of the politician in this day and age, at least in this part of the world, if necessary the forum can defend the project. Defending the project means that we can go as far as to demonstrate if necessary, "impose" it so that - as you pointed out earlier - we actually get somewhere. What discourages people obviously is not knowing what you're doing with their project, and unfortunately it's all too often the norm here, but people have to feel that we're behind them, that we didn't just listen to their opinion and that "they don't want it, well, too bad, we'll just shelve it", because that, of course, is very counter-productive.

The ultimate dream of our approach is to see this tool being systematically used for all the important projects that impact the population. When I say it's my dream, I don't say that lightly, because it really still an utopian vision, but it could perhaps become a reality one day. In any case, it's our hope.

For the follow-up, we do have a Facebook page that helps keep people informed of the progress of the projects, which also allows them to react.

This means, in terms of IT, that we are not very participative. I'll say more about that later.

In fact, we, unlike your long experience, have only two projects, two experiences, that have been put forward.

The first is "What citizen project for the Espace Léopold?". This is obviously related to this park and shopping centre problem. As it was still generating a lot of news coverage, it drew a strong reaction. We told ourselves: "We're going to take this ambitious project as our launch pad".

And the second, which has also just been completed, aimed to gauge the aspirations of the population in terms of municipal management, since the municipal elections are due to be held in October, and in fact, it was a white paper - I will talk about that a little later - which allowed us to list the expectations of the population.

What citizen project for the Espace Leopold, this park in the city centre? We went to collect opinions in the public domain, we have the same problem as you, of course, and I'm not going to dwell on it because you've already covered the issue in depth, the problem of reaching out to people. There are people who are naturally inclined to participate and others who have a lot of trouble getting involved.

We organised two days of exchanges using this methodology. We summarised the findings and in fact, the objective was to establish specifications that were given to volunteer architects in Namur, entrusted with the task of proposing one or two concrete projects, which are realistic, and these projects were presented publicly.

In this sense, we were very lucky. I'd like to say a quick word about these six architects. In fact, the way in which the debates were organised made it possible to interest six architects who work on a voluntary basis. You will see that they

did a very remarkable job, an analytical study. Not a quantified, measured work, because it is completely beyond our financial means, but in any case an extremely thorough analysis of the request. They proposed a project that I will not elaborate on because it would take far too long.

But in any case, that means that, starting with a few ideas by a hundred or so people, citizens, and with the collaboration of volunteer experts, we manage to do things which, in terms of vision in any case, are at least as good as what had been proposed before, if not better.

As for the second case - as I've already mentioned - citizens' expectations were listed, for the elections, with the aim of drafting a white paper. We opted for another approach in this case because we had relatively little participation on the first subject, about 80 people. But obviously, we are not at all on the same population scale as you and we wanted to reach out to the municipalities, that is to say rather than centralise it in the city centre here, in a municipality that isn't that big to start with, we organised in a completely decentralised way, six evening debates, in six different locations, so as to encourage people to come.

We heard the opinions, wrote the white paper, and handed it over to the political parties. Now, it is up to them to integrate the ideas, and before the October election, we will evaluate what has been incorporated into their political agenda and see what they have established. That was another method.

We have only these two experiences, at least for the moment. These two slightly different methodology choices were analysed. Clearly, in our approach, the emphasis is put on physical presence. And yet, we can imagine that a computer platform can be used, if the purpose is to ask the opinion of people, with a yes or a no. You said yourself that things get a bit more complicated when you have to argue a case. In the subjects that we had discussed here, we had to co-construct, we had to produce or at least develop a counter-project, a realistic project. That cannot be done on a computer platform. That's the kind of thing that needs to be debated face-to-face and we privileged that. The Internet and IT were used for the dissemination of ideas, for contacts with the press, for the publication of the results and partly also to gather opinions.

I'd like to come back to what you said earlier. Indeed, when it comes to asking a person whether or not they agree, it isn't very hard to have opinions. We also have the reaction, at least of the Namur politician, here at home, claiming that it is valid for petitions, it is valid for online petitions, but signed petitions too. The petition for them is of little value in that the belief is that you can have anything voted on and by anyone. All you have to do is show them the piece of paper - and it's true I've done my share of petitions in recent years - and sometimes people sign, but they do not ask questions and they do not even go as far as the information stage. When it comes to saying yes or no, whether physically, in the field, or in a computerised way, it is true that signatures are easy to gather, but they are of relatively little value. In any case, that's how the politician sees it.

The problem is that attracting a physical presence is a very demanding method in terms of energy and personal commitment. The people who make up the group, the hard core of the Citizen Forum here, have made a huge commitment in recent years. I think we can count their commitment in hundreds of hours. It is also important to know that the Citizen Forum is a citizens' initiative. We are not so fortunate as to have a structure as elaborate as yours. That means that the financial means come out of our own pockets, at least for the moment, with a little help from an association in which I am a director. This means that we do not have any help in terms of logistics or advertising. Everything starts with the basics and so it's very difficult.

We also realised that one of the major obstacles to this participation is the lack of time. The public consultation and the collection of signatures were carried out by pensioners, by unemployed people and by people in part-time employment. It's a limiting factor, which is really a shame. Eighty people participated in the first topic. One hundred and forty people participated in the second topic. By then, we had decentralised the process. It's still very little compared to a population of 112,000 inhabitants.

The benefits of physical contact seem to me very important, including the human contact that you see in these workshops. There are now quite original facilitation methods, which are not at all the ones we used 40 years ago, which are very interactive and great fun. People are enjoying participating in this kind of thing and there are discoveries.

The greater awareness means that change will call for a greater effort than a simple click. People often feel they have done their civic duty by saying yes or no; a click, they've put an opinion on Facebook or on a website. I think the change will come from an investment that will be much deeper and much more advanced than just a click. It will be necessary to go the extra mile, it will be necessary to get on our bikes and get involved.

The advantage of this situation is that these workshops allowed us to arouse the interest of people who are experts, who are citizens of Namur, but who are also experts. I mentioned the architects earlier. There is also this human experience, in these workshops, of participating in a dialogue that is constructive. We have people in front of us who do not have the same ideas as we do, perhaps, and we have to be constructive and set aside some of our own priorities. The human side is really interesting. In any case, I am very attached to it.

The major advantage is the quality of the final result. When we organised the work on Leopold Park, we organised it in two days. We had one day geared towards an emergence phase and the second day was a convergence phase.

Emergence means that all ideas are welcome and all the ideas are submitted. That means that among these ideas, there really are some really interesting ideas, but there are also some far-fetched, completely unrealistic ideas; not to throw away, but that cannot be integrated into the final result, but we accept everything.

The difficulty, of course, is the people who come to express themselves on a project that is totally local. For example, the layout of the park: "I have a dog, I would like a place set aside for dogs". We take note of everything, we throw nothing away, everything appears in the report in the end.

What's interesting is the second day of convergence. The idea is to start from all these disparate ideas, some very unrealistic, and to turn them into something coherent. I was very scared, after the first day, of all those hard-to-manage ideas. In a very natural way, those who participate in the debate will eliminate the unrealistic ones. They are naturally filtered out and the interesting, realistic, constructive ideas will emerge, which can lead to a final project. This approach is only possible in a face-to-face situation. When we co-construct, when we want to present an alternative, we need a physical presence.

In the case of the Workcafé, these are workshops with a topic of discussion. A number of people meet there, one workshop talks about mobility, another talks about urbanism, another talks about social concerns and people actually come to participate in these workshops, it lasts half an hour. They then go to the workshop next door, see what has already been covered, add their point of view, discuss, renegotiate. It comes back in plenary. This work of co-construction seems to me essential for the quality of the final project. I think physical presence is important, although this clearly means that we will never be able to reach out to some people in that way.

What is also interesting about the physical presence is that the proposals are prioritised by the participants themselves. Let me tell you about the case of the two opposition political parties in Namur who worked on this system, who were waiting for the citizens to submit their ideas to them. It is they themselves who will have to prioritise, who will pick and choose what interests them. It does not seem very democratic to me. What interests me is that the people who participate in the workshops themselves say what is important.

Elevating the level of the proposals towards the general interest means no longer being that person who says: "I would like to point out that on the pavement opposite my house, there are 4 slabs missing and it's difficult for a woman with a pushchair or for bikes". It's no doubt important, but elevating the debate means that from these small local concerns, we need to be able to say "Let's have a global vision of city sidewalk mobility". It's also something that can be done thanks to a physical presence, it seems difficult to me via a computer.

What also comes to the fore is the lack of interest of the population for the political debate. I've been working the streets, in the proper sense of the term, over the past 6 years, through petitions and contacts with the public. Clearly, people no longer believe in it. The most common remark I would hear was: "Do you think you will win this? " The only answer we can give them is to say, "No, I'm not sure of winning, but what I'm sure of is that if I don't try, I would have lost anyway. " That's the only consistent answer I can give them. There is very little encouragement. People do not think that we can actually get something done. Obviously, this is the case with you too, the results of our approaches are not binding. Most of the time, in any case now, they are not given any great consideration. There is little hope of obtaining the results. People don't want to spend time on something that is unlikely to happen.

We have very little financial means. I think that the two topics we just discussed cost less than 1,000 euros. That's about all we managed to find for the process. These are very limited means, for logistics, for dissemination. For the second topic, we advertised it by distributing 15,000 flyers by hand. We have limited means. This could change if the Citizen Forum in Namur could achieve a result and have at least one victory.

We still have only two topics, the first of which is still under discussion for the time being. If we could achieve a result, people could then become aware - as is the case with you - that together we can achieve something.

To answer the question that the President of CALRE asked earlier about the methods that could be put in place to be really effective, I have no answer. What is needed is a real political will to integrate the population into decisions. This is what seems essential to me. This will change when the citizen has the confidence and awareness that the politician is able to hear them. In my opinion, all the methods will be of use, even the most superficial and perhaps even the least elaborate. But that will only come about when we have earned people's confidence.

I will conclude on this: I am happy to note that you are also convinced that among these citizens - ordinary citizens who, on the face of it, do not have any competence- there is a phenomenal intelligence. There is an extraordinary mine of common sense and realism, although not everything can be taken at face value, and that's important. The second line seems important to me, namely the will of the politician. I have heard it expressed this morning and I welcome it. The

day when the politician really wants to hear what the people have to say, the methods will follow suit and our worries will be over. For me, the major local concern is this one.

Thank you for your attention - I'm delighted to be here with you today - and thank you very much for your interest in this subject that is also close to my heart.

Mr André Antoine, President of the Parliament of Wallonia. - Thank you, Mr Guillaume.

EXCHANGE OF VIEWS AND BEST PRACTICES ON INTERACTIVE DEMOCRACY IN THE CALRE MEMBER ASSEMBLIES

Mr André Antoine, President of the Parliament of Wallonia. - - The time has come for questions, reactions and suggestions.

I give the floor to Mr Alexandre Miesen.

Mr Alexander Miesen, President of the Parliament of the German-speaking Community. - Thank you to you too.

I have a question for both speakers.

You explained that you mainly organise consultations for infrastructure projects. These are obviously very concrete things. We are representatives of parliaments and there is a difference between being a parliamentarian and being a mayor or communal councillor, especially when it comes to projects and the way of working. For example, we do planning legislation, but we are not the ones who implement a concrete infrastructure project on site.

In your experience, do you believe there are projects, cases or even levels of power that are too abstract to organise consultations?

Mr André Antoine, President of the Parliament of Wallonia. - Do we need very concrete subjects to justify a consultation, or could we organise a consultation or a participation on the establishment of a standard for example, with no bearing on any particular realisation?

Ms Dominique Ollivier, President of the Montreal Public Consultation Office (MPCO). - In Quebec, we use a lot of public consultation at all levels of government and even very abstract things.

There is one example that I often like to give: in 2001, from memory, we adopted a framework law on the elimination of poverty. Now that is pretty abstract. It started from a grassroots forum that conducted a decentralised consultation in all the provinces of Quebec and we came up with major themes that could be the subject of legislation. Then these were taken over by Parliament and worked at these different levels. This is an example that comes to mind.

We just had a big consultation. You will tell me that it is still relatively concrete since it affected unemployment, employment, access to housing, etc.; all the parameters and determinants of poverty.

There has also been extensive consultation at the Canadian level on the reform of the parliamentary system that we have - we have a first past the post system - to see if we can switch to other types of systems. Across Canada, nearly 3 million people participated.

What is needed first is a real desire to do things. Then the next step is to see how we can achieve synergy between the parliamentary tools we have, be they parliamentary committees or other methods, and the goodwill of citizens because we must recognise that citizens are the experts in the use of their own life.

If you ask them about things that affect their lives, they will certainly be able to contribute positively. From that point of view, I don't think there are any subjects that cannot be the subject of a consultation.

Mr Marcel Guillaume of the Namur Citizen Forum. - You have more or less given the answer that I wanted to give as well, but actually, when I said earlier that the topics that interest people are often topics that affect their living environment, it is true that these are often reactions to urban planning or land-use planning projects, but we are also very keen to see all topics being taken up that touch on our way of life.

You talk about poverty, one of the topics that has been debated in Namur, it is also something that is very close to what you just said, namely the begging context which has provoked a lot of negative actions and reactions and where it would have effectively been worthwhile to take the pulse of the public, the opinion of the public on this subject. After all, 25,000 people in Namur took part in this public consultation on the new shopping centre. Clearly, at the level of Parliament,

what we could do and I think it is in progress anyway for the moment, is to review the legislation on public consultation. This is clearly work that can be done at the level of Parliament. To situate this in two minutes, a question appears under people's signature sheets. 13,000 people back a question, the City of Namur decides not to use this question, not to undertake another public consultation, to propose other questions that are contested, because they are too directed.

In any case, at the level of legislation, perhaps at the binding level of the result too, the possibility of a referendum was mentioned earlier, it is also an idea that some people back here. The referendum, of course, makes the result binding, whereas the public consultation, which takes a huge amount of effort, may ultimately not be taken into consideration, in any case the results may not be taken into consideration. All this is demotivating.

At the level of legislation, giving the result a binding nature would of course be much more stimulating and encourage people to participate and to solve part of the problem, precisely the non-participation of citizens. It's mostly at the regulatory level of all of this that you have to work.

Everything that we have experimented with in the last six years has been circumvented in one way or another. I won't go into details, but everything has been tried and everything has been circumvented. It's a little discouraging. At the level of Parliament, we could have stricter rules with regard to these regulations.

Mr André Antoine, President of the Parliament of Wallonia. - If there are no other speakers, I will perhaps be a bit of a devil's advocate, because as much as I believe in participation, sometimes we have to set a few limits too, I would perhaps point to two or three elements.

Participation or the use of a whole series of actions put the brakes on decision-making and its implementation. Sometimes, not always, far from it, it is damaging, because it is very difficult to enrol the public and the citizens in a medium term perspective. We are obsessed with the current point in time. I would like to draw attention to a form also of conservatism and selfishness "It's my back yard. If it's not in my back yard, frankly, you can do it elsewhere, but not in my back yard. " Then you have people who say, my environment is like that, we must not change it, while if we take a look back at history, we will see that our cities have evolved significant, well before we were born and that they have not been frozen in time.

I say that because, as an individual, and this may be more relevant to the people of Namur, but you will be able to react, I am full of regrets, having experienced it myself, about what happened on the 2nd of June 1996.

What am I talking about? It concerned our Parliament. Wallonia was putting together its democratic structure and we had to build or create a new parliament. There was a competition of architects to finally see what was the best project. At the time, I was witness to it, I was in Parliament, the Government had retained a Swiss project by Mario Botta, which was an extremely ambitious architectural design - personally, I found it very beautiful - which was to create a building in the form of a boat on the Meuse right here at Grognon.

This prompted a big demonstration, the people of Namur rallied against it and there was a public consultation. Fifty-four percent of the people consulted said: "No, no way are you touching the Grognon, etc. At the time, the slogan "Decency yes, expense, no" was bandied about, because the project involved 25 million euros, 1 billion Belgian francs at the time, so it was purely scandalous.

We are now in 2018. We have moved into this building, which is very beautiful from the outside, but which for us, on the parliamentary day to day level, is not functional. I say that having used it for many years. You will see it just now, we have a hemicycle that is not a hemicycle, it is an British-style Parliament, face to face. So we have poor visibility, poor interaction between parliamentarians. Today it is not therefore a good solution.

Secondly, having visited a whole series of parliaments; I am thinking, for example, of a parliament that has hit the headlines, the Scottish Parliament, which is quite a major architectural work. Having a somewhat daring architecture draws attention, attracts visitors and puts the spotlight on democracy. This is a second regret.

Then, in total, as far as decency and expense are concerned, I would not dare to say it to the people of Namur, but we have easily crossed the 25 million euros mark simply by re-adapting this building, since we are again going to build an extension on the side that will cost us more than 10 million euros.

I say to myself: were they right? I do not defend Mario Botta, I find personally that the project was beautiful, but that's another matter. Was the population of the time right? Was there not too much conservatism there? If we imagine today a parliament in the form of a boat here in Grognon, at the confluence of the Sambre and the Meuse river, we would have a major building that proudly stands for Namur.

I wanted to ask you the question from a double angle. First to the native of Namur who is specialised in consultation, does he have any regrets or, on the contrary, is it a great victory because we did not do it? I am ready to hear it, you can

speak freely. On the other hand, is participation not influenced by the delivery period? That is to say that we see a project, we get scared, we get mobilised, we are against and sometimes, if the politician, contrary to what I feel, pushes it through, once the project has been completed, I've already noticed how often citizens tend to say: "At the end of the day, it's not that bad. Actually, I may have been wrong. " The delivery period, if you forgive me that expression, favours negative participation because the citizen does not always have the capacity, the time, the information, to imagine what the project will be.

Participation, conservatism, selfishness. Participation, speed of decision and its relevance.

I took an example that was important to us because it is our Parliament.

Mr Miesen can tell you about his Parliament's adventure too, because it wasn't easy. In his case, it wasn't so much the building itself, because the building existed, but probably the nature of the expense, etc. If Belgium's German-speakers had been asked for their opinion, they would probably have voted against it.

I give the floor to Mr Marcel Guillaume.

Mr Marcel Guillaume of Namur Citizen Forum. - I think you have clearly identified the limits of the consultation. In these consultations, the first rule would be to avoid anything that is only personal interest, which is only a matter of taste, of brick colour, of architectural form. It should be possible to eliminate what is purely emotional and far removed from the general interest; we are aware of it.

For the Botta, I cannot answer you, because I do not think I was that involved at that time, I wasn't in this approach. I cannot give you my opinion today on this Parliament, but I agree with you. When you spend a lot of time with people and listen to their opinion, you hear opinions that are much too focused on personal interest, on something that is futile and unrealistic.

You said earlier that when people are asked: "Why are you against? ", this is when you sense the mental block. You have people who sometimes agree with the points of view that I put forward. I ask what interests them in particular and I am told: "I agree with you" and the dialogue is over.

When I was answering the gentleman earlier, maybe there would be a possibility of having a somewhat more binding effect on the final result, I also think that if we attract a very broad participation one day, we will have something much more coherent, much more realistic because precisely this opinion has been shared by many people. You manage to attract a participation that is representative, coherent and realistic. We are far from having reached that point.

When we proposed the counter-project to the shopping centre, we had architects working on it. We proposed it to the City of Namur who said that it was interested. It worked for four months on the project, which is the proof that indeed, it is interesting. The developer was interested too but this work, initially with only 80 people,, along with the work of the experts, actually lead to something. It goes without saying that if, during a consultation on an important project, 200 of Namur's population participate, it is not representative. It must also be said that in order for it to be representative, it must be possible - as you said earlier - to reach a broad spectrum of the population, in any case one that is representative.

I was saying earlier that I was in contact with two opposition political parties that consulted the people to build their election platform. In fact, when you look at the results, you realise that they have very different results in terms of priority simply because these two political parties are addressing a population that is very different and so they have results that are completely different.

To ensure that the aim of the project is realistic, clearly it is important to reach a whole spectrum of people. And most importantly, you've noticed it too, you have to inform people. That's the problem, the information needs to trickle down and that is very difficult because people have access to information, but it is very superficial and they may not always have, in any case, this vision in the medium or long term. And that remains a problem. So, we need the information and representativeness of all layers of the population. But it is a difficult job and I am very much aware of it.

Ms Dominique Ollivier, President of the Montreal Public Consultation Office (MPCO). - If you would allow me to add something, examples as you name them, there are plenty of them. I remember when I first saw the Louvre Pyramid, for example, I thought it was terrible to take the work of Louis XIV and distort it like that. No, that was Versailles, the Louvre was well before Louis XIV, but I thought it made no sense.

Today, the structure is just part of the landscape. So yes, it's important and when I have to talk about participatory democracy, I say we have to see how it relates to representative democracy.

Representatives, elected representatives were elected to decide. Although we could make this more binding, I will just say that if we hold a consultation, what must be binding is the duty of accountability, to explain why we came to this

decision, regardless of the rest. I often say that it is necessary to triangulate the wise mix of citizens. Then, one must be able to draw, of course, on the technical knowledge of the civil servants, on what is feasible or not, both in the legal framework, the financial framework, etc. and finally respect the capacity of the elected representative. to have will, to have a vision.

Let me give you an example. When I was little, I was maybe seven or eight years old, so it's been more than forty years, a bike path was created near my home. It was a time when the car was everything. The path passed along on the edge of a canal, which at the time was a place where industries dumped their waste, so something absolutely polluted, not green, just wasteland. A bike path was created there and everyone said: "But why do we want our kids to ride their bikes there? First of all, it goes from nowhere and it's not going anywhere and it's not being used by anyone, and we've spent our public funds doing that, what a scandal! ". Forty years later, the canal has been cleaned up, the canal bike path is starting to look like what you have here, the houses have developed around it and it's one of the jewels of Montreal and people keep dreaming of extending it so that it carries on all along the shoreline.

So, you have to respect that ability of a politician to have vision. We had a highway that passed right through the city centre, and we had a politician who talked about turning it into an urban boulevard. Everyone said to themselves: "Him again! " It was a former mayor who was trying to come back. They said to each other: "Yes, it's the guy who spends the money on crazy projects", and so on. Sixteen years later, this highway has been transformed into an urban boulevard and everyone is happy. In a way, you have to take the high road and everyone has to assume their own role.

The role of elected representatives is to decide and to have vision. It has to be assumed. That's what I want to say about that. When we hold a consultation process, if we want to highlight the common good, we have to define what the needs are and where we want the citizens to contribute. If we want to draft bills, we must explain to the public on what part of the bill they have an influence. We must succeed in extracting the issues at stake and then say: "What would be the solution for you to this issue? " to solve an issue and then translate it into a bill. It must be remembered that they have the responsibility.

When I hear the new Mayor of Montreal say: "We will do what the Office recommends," I say: "That's fine with me, Madam Mayor, but, in a way, that's not why you were elected. You've been elected to have vision. I can make a recommendation to the best of our knowledge and that best reflects the public opinion, which would be a good decision-making process, but you must take the responsibility of taking the final decision. Otherwise, we will be in a state of immobility that will never stop". That's the difficulty.

Mr André Antoine, President of the Parliament of Wallonia. - Taking advantage of the time I have, I wanted to ask you about modern technologies.

I mentioned it in my introductory speech, they are clearly useful, because we can more easily converse, dialogue and listen to our fellow citizens. Yet here too, there are limits. I think that social networks give us the chance to access information and not necessarily knowledge, which is already a first difference.

The second limit is the instant side. I will give an example on a planetary scale: today, we have the feeling that Donald Trump manages by Twitter. Every day, there is a decision in 10 words that falls and moreover that changes from morning to afternoon. It's also a fear that I wanted to express, it's the instant side: "I am asked my opinion, I will answer right away. That way they'll know". Does not that also lead to a form of radicality in the expression and perhaps not enough distance, nuance and reflection?

To give an anecdote, in my commune, there is a computer tool called "BetterStreet" or how to improve the street. Our citizens can walk around with an iPhone and, if there's a sign that leans a bit too much, they take a picture and they send it. The idea is generous, it is to inform the municipality of a number of malfunctions, and so on.

What did we find after a year? We were very disappointed because we had 500 contributions, which was wonderful, but 420 of them were sent by one and the same person. We've come to the point where we see him walking in the street and we wonder what he will still find. When he has sent the photo or sent his email, three days later, he says: "But where's the solution? You're trying to fool the citizen! ". In fact, we're not trying to fool the citizen, but work sites do have a schedule to follow. We won't just take the municipal workers off one job and send them to solve a problem he's just identified, which is sometimes of secondary importance and which is sometimes crucial. I'm not saying that everything he detected was of no interest, but at the end of the day we cultivate a habit by telling ourselves: "I'm going for a walk and I'm going to find something that's wrong".

My intention was to hear what you have to say about these social networks, about the reaction, which is extraordinary, but which is not well adapted. An important and large-scale project sometimes requires six, seven, eight years. There, in 35 seconds, I've decided on its fate. I wanted to see how you set the record straight.

Mr Marcel Guillaume of the Namur Citizen Forum. - Again, I completely agree with you. That is why, as I was saying earlier, I think that when we are lucky enough to have people who can sit around a table, to whom we can explain the context, in the first topic we rolled out on the Espace Leopold, again, we spent more than two hours explaining the context, the interests, hearing the commercial interests, the urban planning interests as well. In that case, there was the process of informing the people who were participating.

The other benefit of having physical participation in contrast to this knee-jerk reaction on social networks is that there is a constructive process. We feed on the opinion of the other, the information given and we arrive at something that seems much more realistic.

When you talk about radicalisation, I agree with you again. It would be enough for the first to say: "Wait, it's a crazy project, it must be abolished" and the second is influenced by it. The idea that we defend is co-construction through personal investment and by physical participation, but with all the limits of availability set out earlier.

I've been on Facebook for a year. There is indeed information that I have via it and that I would not otherwise have - I don't read the newspapers that much because I don't have the time - but it has its limits. Taking a decision based on the reactions on the social networks is completely utopian.

Ms Dominique Ollivier, President of the Montreal Public Consultation Office (MPCO). - We're in agreement.

That's why I introduced you to our method earlier. We firmly believe that there must be an information stage and then a consultation stage, a time to hear opinions, then there must be a neutral third party who can help analyse public opinion. This is what makes the Office's method so successful.

I think what you say is interesting because we are experiencing the same thing. Earlier, I mentioned our famous project to stop transit traffic. If I had opened a platform that made it possible to duplicate the petition that people had online, to say whether they are for or against, I would have a lot more results. Having said that, having 1,000 people taking the time to think, to identify, to give me arguments, to give me solutions, that's worth 38,000 people who just said yes or no. We must fight against the instant and the temporal.

I told people: "You can vote for or against the pilot project that we are rolling out now when it's over". They know on the Internet site that there will be a time when they can say yes or no to the pilot project, but that time will come on 31 October, in four months' time. Introducing deadlines can have the effect of calming things down. If I asked them their opinion today, it is an opinion based on the use they make of it today. In four months' time they may realise that this will not have created more congestion in the surrounding streets - or maybe yes - but the information they will give in four months will be based on their experience of the pilot project. It is therefore important to respect the timing.

You must also have foreseeability. From the beginning of the process, we have to tell people how it is going to happen. If I take your example of "BetterStreet" it may be useful to tell them: "Okay, you send us a photo. We will take two months to analyse it, three months to prioritize it and then we undertake to send you something that will give you the priority level of this requested repair". At that point, when things are foreseeable, people tend to act with more common sense than when they try to catch you out. For us, it's important from the outset that people are familiar with all the steps of the process and where it will end.

Mr André Antoine, President of the Parliament of Wallonia. - Well we are doing well in terms of timing at least. This is not always the case in parliamentary life, but this time, thanks to you... I would like to take this opportunity to thank you, Mr Guillaume and Mrs Ollivier.

CLOSING REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE PARLIAMENT OF WALLONIA, MR ANDRÉ ANTOINE

Mr André Antoine, President of the Parliament of Wallonia. - We will have to report to the CALRE General Assembly, under the presidency of Ms Ana Luis, and perhaps we could draw five conclusions, if I may, that I have reached by listening to you.

First, there can be no decision if there is no information or knowledge. This time of preparation, information, knowledge before projecting into the decision is important.

The second lesson or conclusion that I would like to propose to you is that the protest is not enough if it is not accompanied by a motivation. This is probably what I learned most this morning: the importance of getting, if not forcing, citizens, whether against or in favour, to motivate their position. Mr Guillaume, you said: "I agree with you" but you said

very aptly: "Explain why you agree with me". It seems to me important that the reasons are given for the protest or the support.

The third conclusion I take from you, Madam, who told us, and it's a little revolutionary for us: "Disregard the quantity and go for quality". How many times have we not heard in our municipalities or as parliamentarians: "There was a petition signed by 3,000 people". Incidentally, sometimes there are petitions that circulate in the opposite direction and we see people signing both petitions; which is quite amusing, we can cross check the names. Thank you for reminding us that quality should prevail over quantity.

The fourth conclusion - and here again, it is something that makes us happy as politicians, the women and men who commit to these mandates - you said: "The reaction can never be exonerated from a vision". This is probably the most noble part for a politician. We talk about vision, we talk about horizon, we talk about projects, whatever, but what is the perspective that we want to offer citizens? Whether good or bad, there is at least a perspective. I found it very interesting to be reminded of our obligation of vision. The main virtue of the politician is to have this vision. Sometimes we're right too soon or we're wrong too late, as the case may be, but this is still something I believe in.

The last conclusion is very important. We launched this platform "A decree by all, a decree for all" where citizens were asked to react. Several of them said: "It's very simple: we propose a political life without parliamentarians. If we achieve that, then the savings will be significant". I obviously do not know by what they would have replaced it. You leave us with an important conclusion for us, that participation - you both told us - cannot be organised without legitimate representation. You said, madam: "They are elected and I do not want to be the only person writing the score for the mayor". Mrs Ollivier cannot write the words and the music; otherwise, we'll keep you ourselves because we always need inspiration. It's important not to have pitted one against the other. This is an essential conclusion for me: representation is enriched by participation, but it can never replace the election of representatives, whether we like them or not, and whether or not that support evolves, but it's important to allow for both at the same time.

I do not know if you want to react.

If CALRE had to carry five messages, now that we have heard the experts, we will quote you. That will allow us to protect ourselves. Hence the importance of listening to both of you, to your experiences and knowledge of the field of participation.

My heartfelt thanks to each and every one of you, especially our President because I know she has a busy schedule. She jumps from one commission this morning to another and then she has to go home. A very big thank you because it is the pledge and the guarantee that we will be able to return with our conclusions to the CALRE Plenary Assembly,

The meeting is adjourned.

- The session is closed at 11.56 a.m.