

BUILT COMMUNITY - RELEASE ENERGY

The Ecomuseum of Parabiago was designed, and is operating, not according to traditional museum logic, which consists in the institution planning and acting “for” the community, often excluding people from the decision-making and design processes. The purpose, process and planning of the work of this ecomuseum is envisioned “with” the community, according to the logic of participatory planning and active citizenship. A public forum of participation was first created in 2007, and such forums continue to be organised to address community issues and futures. Owners of lands and the cultural heritage, municipalities, museums, parishes, water treatment companies, associations, farmers, traders and artisans, public and private educational institutions, as well as individual citizens, are encouraged to attend. The stated goal of our ecomuseum is that it would engage citizens and local organisations in the issues and forces that are shaping their community. Public meetings are designed to ensure that participants become informed about how an ecomuseum can help citizens shape and respond to the issues and trends affecting Parabiago. Central to the whole idea is that citizens and local interests participate in co-creative processes of planning and implementing long term action plans that activate and utilize their local heritage resources, knowledge and skills to realise the planned actions.

For the Ecomuseum of Parabiago, the co-creative and participatory processes are at least as important as the results and the outcomes of the planned actions. In fact, the interaction of the local actors is essential in order to create a sense of place and community while maximizing impacts. The aim is not only the realisation of participatory activities, but also to trigger cooperation agreements with citizens, for the care, management, and regeneration of the cultural heritage and the landscape, in accordance with article 118 of the Italian Constitution. In this way, the ecomuseum becomes a facilitator that enables people to apply their creative and physical energies, while sharing resources inside the community itself – all for the general interest and to produce and develop common goods. The agreements that were concluded over the years have been both formal and informal. (fig. 1). In 2016, the Municipality of Parabiago, approved a regulation enabling the ecomuseum to use a set of collaborative and co-creative processes for planning and carrying out its vision, in conjunction with the active participation of the community. The overarching purpose of this work was for the creation and promotion of processes of resilient development and wellbeing. Specifically these ideas relate to designing for the care and regeneration of urban spaces, as well as the nurturing of social cohesion and security (fig. 1).

#CONDIVIVO THE PATH OF SHARING

Share Parabiago's commons to build community and release energy!
Propose and cooperate in regeneration projects to improve your town

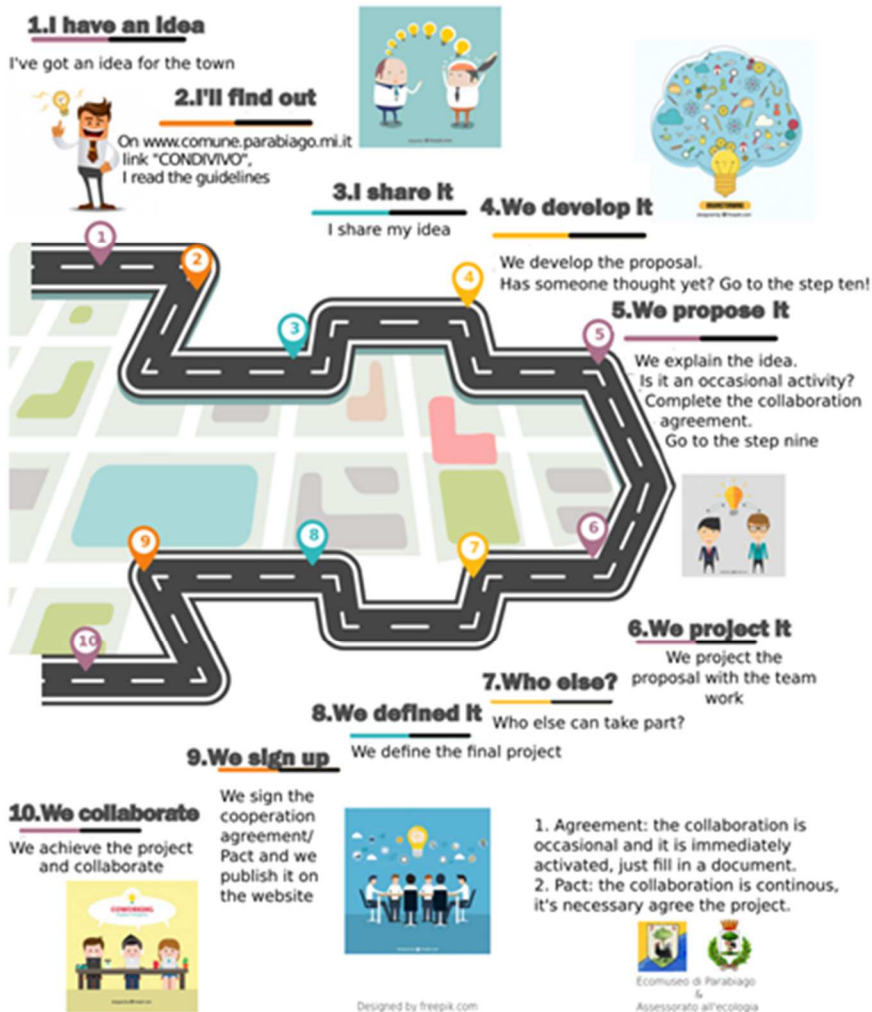


Fig. 1 - The path of sharing

Ideas submitted to the Ecomuseum by active citizens are first reviewed by the Ecomuseum staff, which:

1. evaluates the general interest of the idea and the coordination with other activated project
2. identifies relevant trends that need to be either supported or redirected
3. identifies stakeholders and the living heritage who need to be involved in the project
4. defines the way that projects might be funded, the ways of facilitating, empowering and training of the active citizens,
5. identifies and defines the monitoring programme of desired impacts on, and within, the community (identifying what kinds of change are being sought).

When the idea becomes a fully scoped project, the Municipality's council approves it. Next, the ecomuseum and the citizens sign an agreement and start to work together in full autonomy.

In this way the Parabiago Ecomuseum climbed the 'Stair of Participation' to inspire relevant changes in the community and maximise cultural impacts (Dal Santo, 2019; see Fig. 2). In turn, the Ecomuseum's participation process grew in complexity in subsequent projects.

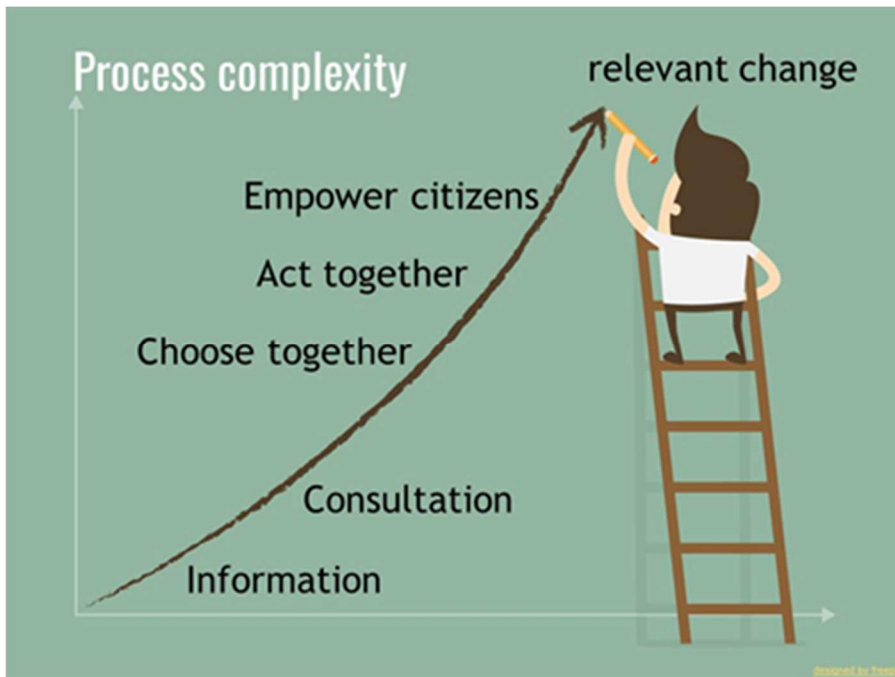


Fig. 2 - The stair of participation

From 2017 to 2022 the ecomuseum facilitated the creation of 39 community agreements. When increasing participation combines with increasing process complexity, the result is relevant change. Some of these agreements were monitored and renewed. New projects emerged from ongoing dialogue with community stakeholders. Accordingly, the flow chart in fig. z should be re-envisioned in a circular way. In fact, the monitoring of each concluded agreement gives essential feedback to better design new agreements.