



# Participatory definition of social needs and solution strategies in vulnerable territories. Catalogue of participatory research-action methodologies

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*PARTICIPATORY DEFINITION OF SOCIAL NEEDS  
AND SOLUTION STRATEGIES IN VULNERABLE TERRITORIES.  
CATALOGUE OF PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH-ACTION  
METHODOLOGIES.*

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**Summary :** This deliverable is an attempt to create a link between WP5 and the rest of CAENTI WPs that is able to work on territory situation. Questions we would like to answer are: What sort of characteristics make the participatory methodologies interesting for participation or which «Quality Letter» pillar they contribute to enhance. How to use them in order to foster participation: according to objectives and means (passage from research action potentialities to their performance) of the Quality Letter. What kind of uses are not coherent with our participation idea or can make more difficult participation itself.

**Keywords:** social needs, vulnerable territories, participation, ethical principles, methodologies

## 1. PREMISE

During CAENTI international conference, happened in Huelva (Spain) last October (2007), was presented a “research action quality letter” edited by Blanca Miedes Ugarte, Dolores Redondo and Laurent Amiotte-Suchet.

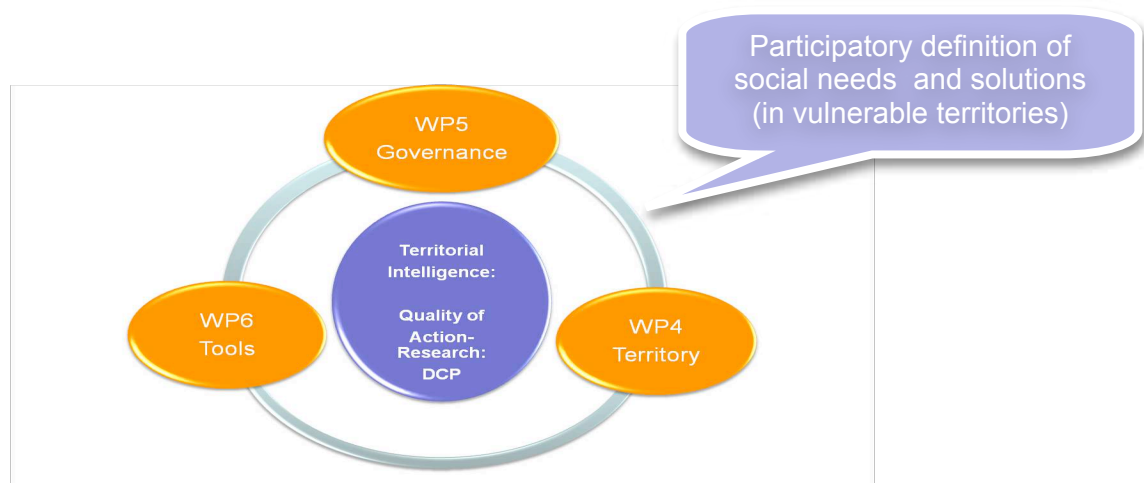
This document has been written considering a great number of meetings between WP5 members and it represents a guide to make a check list for who want to start a research action which promotes involved persons and groups durable participation on interested territory, according to collaboration, co-conduction and results co-evaluation principles.

In this «Letter» are indicated the conditions WP5 considers able to favour a collaborative action between researchers and territorial actors and this «Letter» is just a general orientation and must be adapted to each circumstance and context.

In general this grid was accepted, but it still occurred to reflex on:

- what need it to be operative
- the reasons of lack of research oriented quality indicators
- the reasons of lack of integration research action (prefix “co-”).

This deliverable is just an attempt to create a link between WP5 and CAENTI WP, that works on territory situation.



Source : Miedes-Ugarde B. (2008), *Proposal of discussion at the CAENTI WP5 meeting in Huelva, 13<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup> june*

Questions we would like to answer are:

- What sort of characteristics make them interesting for participation: which «Quality Letter» pillar they contribute to.
- How to use them in order to foster participation: according to objectives and means (passage from research action potentialities to her performance)
- What kind of uses are not coherent with our participation idea or can make more difficult participation itself.

## 2. INTRODUCTION

### 2.1. A strategic idea

«Participation» concept, associated with «governance» one, seems to constitute on the one hand a limit to development possibilities of a governmental ethic action, a sort of slow-down, but on the other hand it suggests a more effective way to act in research action projects setting and, more widely, in social and human sciences framework.

The originality of territorial intelligence consists in the connection between cultural dimensions of a territory and ethical principles respect of democratic governance, to guarantee a sustainable development, that means:

- integrated and well-balanced territorial approach (multi-disciplinary and multi-sector)
- actors partnership.

«The concept of territorial intelligence refers to the whole multi-disciplinary knowledge that, on the one hand, contributes to territorial structures and dynamics understanding, and on the other hand, has the ambition to be a tool in the service of territories sustainable development actors» [Girardot 2002].

The European Union has chosen “Sustainable Development Strategy” as one of its priorities and the European Council adopted in June 2006 an ambitious and comprehensive renewed Sustainable Development Strategy for an enlarged European Union. A hierarchical theme framework has been developed on policy priorities basis of the Sustainable Development Strategy.

The ten themes, which may be further developed in the future, are:

1. Economic development
2. Poverty and social exclusion
3. Ageing society
4. Public Health
5. Climate change and energy
6. Production and consumption patterns
7. Management of natural resources
8. Transport
9. Good governance
10. Global partnership

(site of the European Commission Sustainable Strategy)

Sharing a mutual strategic vision of development may be one of the most difficult things to achieve and the only way to meet this condition is to start a long and tortuous dialogue among the local actors which may also be unsuccessful [Moiseyenko 2006]. The difficulties of succeeding in the elaboration of a mutual shared vision are strictly related to the concerned territory.

Citizens’ participation, their interests and growing demand for ethical behaviour should be taken into account by any institution functioning on the territory. The emergence of new ethics changes rapidly traditional forms of governing : it originates with changing social expectations as expressed by consumers, employees, local communities, business partners or other stakeholders.

So, the emerging problem concerns what is the perspective through which it is possible to develop surely and necessarily efficient, but also and above all effective interventions, that are aimed to answer persons real needs. Moreover, what are the tools to follow a social integration logic, getting though to *interaction* based projects with population groups.

## 2.2. A methodology for effective projects

CAENTI WP5 group suggests that effective projects realization can only be developed in well-defined territories that permit to make strong partnerships between citizens and people who govern. This happens, not only because all the citizens represent a real “network system”, but also because they trace an “area of dealing” from which we can only outline useful tools for planning, so it can be developed, evaluated and acquired inside persons relations. From this point of view, the question becomes complex and very complicated: programming and planning policies are possible only if they take-charge of relationality, of the ways in which social subjects, persons and communities express themselves.

A strategic vision for the development of a certain territory is the first step, the local actors pursue to fix collective ideas and images, exchanging interests and values, identifying strengths and weaknesses of their territory, and all the necessary issues for the assessment of future coherent actions.

Therefore planning processes must use indicators to assess the relations and ways in which the multiplicity of activities and of economic, political, environmental, cultural factors impact upon the so-called “quality of life”, in particular on aspects related to disease.

In terms of implementation, this means that we should not deny the specific cultural vocations of a territory, we should devise integrated activities that do not waste the cultural heritage, but rather recycle and retrieve experience, by carving out appropriate participatory measures tailored to different socio-economic and environmental situations, and so on.

Consequently, the fact to consider secondary “hard policies” and encourage shared programming logic, means to follow a democratization path (or sustainability) with many and unpredictable branches. So we can also consider



those possible overtaking concerning existent barriers between “the social North and South”, because our society gives a condition: we have to estimate the passage from an exclusively “vertical” society to a “horizontal” one, in which one of citizens main interests is to understand if they are “central” or “marginal” [Touraine1993].

### 2.3. Operative difficulties

One of the first difficulty to pass from a research point of view, assigned to social, reparative interventions, to a promotional one is just the necessity to contemplate *socially set up* methodological variables. They, instead of attaining to a specialistic language, should contain a typical “duplicity” of those shared terminologies between specialist and inexpert individuals, professional communities and profane ones. So it appears essential a sort of languages homogenization and an agreement will upon different terminological meanings on which *intra-organizational* communication is based. This is made to project as much as possible in an effective *inter-organizational* form.

The second element that comes out from this idea of projectuality is that the participant policy aim, intended in this way, is to ensure that intra- and inter-organizational interventions could be adapted to knowledge, evaluation, orientation and control building by citizens. This operation is made to avoid an overabundance of information inside organization and a deficit of it between project addressees: «The fundamental contribution of participant dynamics happens when they achieve territorial actors complete involvement in transforming processes of information in knowledge» [CAENTI 2007: 6-7].

The third element concerns the necessity to “accounting for” about made decisions and gradually achieved results to different involved parts. At the same time, it occurs that interlocutors can make other decisions on social choices and actions and resources destination: «Research-action processes have to get, as their aim, an increase of results transparency, both of research and action, able to ease decisions making and contribute so that they become more democratic» [CAENTI 2007: 9].

Above all governance idea implies will and capacity to use a research that understands what are the best ways which citizens taking part can be realized in. This participation has to foresee “conscious citizens” involvement in priority choice and operations planning: «An important contribution has been offered by a great number of strongly involved citizens in communities, institutions, social organizations, their professions carrying out. (...) With this institutional, social or professional competence, they also had a strong motivation to acquire cultural ones: for this reason they are defined “cittadini competenti” [competent citizens]» [Biocca 2003: 29].

If participation can be experienced at different levels (of the citizen/provider relation, of the reticular level of the citizen's life worlds), in this case the level of participation concerns the moment when interested citizens discuss and try to affect decisions about interventions and resources allocation. But above all, a “global level” of participation develops and establishes a correlation between the needs and the wider ecological-environmental issue, which redefines, as a consequence, the role that each citizen plays within his own community. So, the “competent citizens” represent a possible example of “active citizenship” taking part in discussions and decisions over various issues, expressing opinions in a democratic way, helping to define priorities for action and, probably, to assess social policies [Biocca, 2006]: «Participating directly (...) has a twofold value. On the one hand it gives you a sense of personal commitment (...). On the other hand it allows to check even in this field the efficacy of the decision-making processes that political scientists call “inclusive”» [Biocca 2003].

A series of activities developed according to these characteristics certainly raise some problems for administrators [Corposanto, 2006]. *First* of all, there is a problem in terms of applying the code of ethics to behaviours: all too often the pretended participation in the end just consisted of a formal consultations series in which decisions were not agreed upon with the citizens concerned. *Secondly*, there is a problem concerning the visibility of planning: a high level of participation also entails a high level of verifiability of organization's effectiveness and efficacy. *Finally*, there are some issues at stake in the concept of trust, that must necessarily be a “critical trust”: more direct communication channels imply the possibility to bring criticisms and observations that cannot be ignored owing to the principles enunciated above.

Following this reasoning we became convinced that a new public government cannot meet people's needs only by revising administrative rationalization objectives, since governance and culture are inextricably connected by a network of meanings through which men and women interpret experience and orient action. Therefore the only possible type of observers are the “participating observers” who aim to make knowledge and mutual expertise by putting together in a collaborative structure the “technical” expert and the expert “layman”.

Understanding

- the social and territorial distribution of needs,
- the makeup and functioning of the social context within which specific risk factors are at work,



- the dynamics of communicative interaction,
- the cultural dynamics of special social groups,
- mass media processes,
- (professional and non-professional) concepts of needs,
- objective and subjective matrices of lifestyles,

makes a corroborated and supported process by many influential studies that demonstrate how the environment and lifestyle affect needs as much as other determinants.

But for this same reason, once we acknowledge that multiple elements and factors concur in determining the status of a community, even the question that must be answered by the methodological pattern does change, so the initial formulation: “how to...” becomes: “how to... taking account that...”.

A promotion policy forces each project to come to grips with the assessment not only of economic resources, but also of human ones, able to achieve results that can spread to the whole reference framework. As a matter of fact, the achievement of objectives depends a lot on the way in which they are pursued by the individual operative units in their strategies.

We should ask ourselves:

- Do different institutions strategies and practices influence and modify, either directly or indirectly, individuals, communities, social groups, generations resources and bargaining power?
- Are they compatible with widely accepted and officially stated social priorities?
- And with citizens' aspirations?

On the operative plan, the fact we follow some modalities concerning outlined actions is delayed, not only by the increasing chasm between the potential ability to project and the capacity in systematizing operations from other sectors:

- first, a common language lack and/or one effective communication deficiency between decision makers and operators; operators and citizens; “descendant vertical” communication streams, that grow getting stronger, and “ascendant vertical” ones, that have to be reinforced to favour citizens or social groups contribution, and that seem more and more blocked off, full of problems (sometimes the same technical-political power wants to give up communicative stream);
- in second place, power and decisional processes management consequent problem; at last, the complexity of different territorial realities.

## 2.4. Social compatibility

Only when a project meets such prerequisites can be called “socially compatible” and from certain viewpoints, following this path, we should go back to the concept of “social budget discussion” of interventions, rather than pursuing evaluation as exclusively based on efficacy and effectiveness criteria issued by the same agency that makes projects and operations, assessing them successively (often validating them).

So:

- change,
- sustainability,
- transparency,
- co-responsibility,
- co-learning

are the principles for a good political participative project of governance and also the principles for research action stated in the “Letter of Quality” proposed by CAENTI.

A voluntary technical and scientific action can provide information, but the illusion that planning means preparing refined technical, technological, organizational, legislative grids, thus optimizing projects and ensuring their implementation and development has been denied by reality, as it is proved by so many projects that fail, and almost invariably failed because of their social compatibility lack.

The immediate involvement of stakeholders in the planning process becomes an ethical principle of health planning and governance: this method requires the enhancement of knowledge and the continuous exchange of “hands-on” experience among the different groups involved in the planning-acting process, that look at reality from different angles and possess different types of know-how. Only where these two knowledge ways and levels overlap, we can implement health governance as a product of territorial intelligence and a tool to govern and promote equity.



What we consider now unquestionable is the necessity of an approach to social needs based on knowledge, not only theoretical knowledge but also empirical one, regards the interaction between social relations, economic development, public policies and welfare.

Social capital debate, intended as networks capacity to build benefits for their own members, may be of some help. If we want to simplify, we can affirm that these benefits are generated by two main components : 1) relational element, which is in social organizations to whom the person belongs, and 2) material one, that is constituted by resources which the person can have access to, because of his affiliation to the group. So, we draw out the consideration, regards inequality interpretations in needs, underlines the scalar relationship between socio-economic position and access to tangible material conditions, that can be both fundamental, as food, home or the fact to access to goods and services, and different conditions, as getting a car or house, to access to telephone and internet services or mind and body treatments modern practises.

Psychosocial interpretation, on contrary, assigns inequalities insight in needs to direct and indirect effects regards stress that comes out from being inferior in socio-economic hierarchy or living in conditions of relative socio-economic disadvantage.

Citizens corporations, social forum, participated budgets, quarter committees show that “active citizenship” problem is on the speeches and debates scene and risks every day, as all mediatical words we use a lot, to loose its sense because of its multiplicity of senses people use and because it is at the service of interests that are very far each other.

Usually citizenship implies three elements: civil rights, political rights and social rights, that all together form different kinds of rights granted to citizens. This definition about citizenship is perfect, but commonly it is no more considered in this way now. In its real use, it defines first of all the way in which democratic Countries citizens use their rights in taking part to their towns life, weighing on decisions concerning public life, accessing in political debate and giving a contribute in democratic dynamics. As goal to develop in social welfare promotion and preservation processes, we have consider citizens groups in a dynamics called “of concerted decision making”, intending with this term a real trading, considering strength relations.

So, in the centre of citizenship idea we find the debate and dialectic process that imprint to decision making dynamics a concrete interaction, an interactivity practise between persons: the debate is, at the same time, elaboration, collective affirmation, considering comparison, compromise, collective affirmation, with what it implies about an active position in complex systems that at the end flow into public decisions.

### **3. GENERAL FRAME, DEFINITIONS, METHODOLOGIES AND SOME DIFFICULTIES**

#### **3.1. General frame**

To define what is a participated procedure or citizens participation or participated citizenship it needs first of all to distinguish a territorial information system from a territorial intelligence one, because the last introduces «interests community» concept.

A territorial intelligence system is a territorial actors partnership, who point out to develop a democratic governance aimed to extend sustainable development (Integration software and TICS, CAENTI Deliverable 55, on December 31, 2006, p. 17); consequently a participative government integrates citizens in its ideation and/or decision process (belonging to their territory), so, it means a real ability to affect decisions.

We can scheme this path through some points:

- during integration process, subjects take part in making decisions and citizens are called as actors;
- participation asks a citizens mobilization, who involved itself in the action and in making decision processes: this determines a stronger community sense;
- this process actives and reinforces citizens actions to define their own needs, recognizing their role and formal and their informal associations as partner in a development process, rather than as performances and services passive beneficiaries.

A territorial intelligence system constitutes governance policy aim, with a fundamental methodological aspect for making decision, planning and program.

A territorial intelligence system also constitutes a strategy that:

1. point at contributing to policies installation and elaboration for collective asset protection and safeguard;
2. point at reinforce affecting right, in a democratic manner, making decision process for individual and collective territory life;





3. point at inclusion, for local community assume obligations and responsibilities in daily life, because participation starts in each subject daily life.

### 3.2. Scheme for participation quality and level analysis (good- medium- no sufficient)

We ask, for the sharing we discussed above, what are methodological variables able to describe an action or define, in a participated way, social needs and their solutions strategies.

WP5 tried to define a scheme to which an shared action should answer, that is to foresee this points below:

- ⇒ the project is based on involvement of citizens implicated in local life;
  - the starting group is a territorial reality pattern;
  - project promoters have developed a wide dissemination process to involve largely other actors and researchers interested in that project;
- ⇒ inhabitants play an active role during the project elaboration;
  - territorial actors know and know using research tools and methods concerning that project;
  - have foreseen actors training to constitute an expert citizens group;
  - work subgroups constitute of actors and researchers to realize specific goals
  - work subgroups define work shared planning for intermediate and final aims to develop the project;
- ⇒ citizens participation is a resource for the project because they add a plus-value to its idea, to its realization, to its elaboration, to its appropriation in local community, and to its prolonged durability
  - the équipe for needs survey assure the presence of all implicated social sectors;
  - subjects discussed during work meetings have been shared by all involved participants;
  - subjects discussed during work meetings considering all involved participants and interests they represent;
  - priority to start working are shared by all involved members
- ⇒ starting group has an opening look and a will to involve all people, taking them some information, asking their opinions, involving them during its realization
  - the project is realized in a shared collaboration open atmosphere
  - are formed work subgroups, constituted of actors and researchers to realize specific goals
  - work subgroups have defined work shared planning who described intermediate and final aims to develop the project.

### 3.3. Broadly speaking tools

A shared instrument, that is linked to social needs definition, is:

- A. an object, a technique, a concept, a method used by a community to increase governance integration principles
- B. this increasing happens through actions simplification, we make, or through the access to actions that are impossible without this tool use
- C. instrument is something that permits to its users a comparison with their desires.

What are available tools to develop a shared work?

We can try building a typology in the following way:

- ⇒ **object tool** – is a physical instrument we can control;
- ⇒ **concept tool** – is an idea or representation of the mind, that has got many empiric or immaterial objects, for abstraction and generalization of common identified characters;
- ⇒ **technical tool** – technique concerns making, all conservation, management, recycling, elimination processes that use scientific knowledge practises or simply some professions “savoir faire” (empiric knowledge);
- ⇒ **question tool** – the fact to put out a problems block. A well-explained problem can be resolved with less difficulties: so, this tool leads its user to wonder good questions;
- ⇒ **method tool** – a method is a techniques, questions, and intellectual or material instruments set that permit to rationalize all tasks and steps to achieve and get a goal.

All these instruments are useful in realizing territorial co-construction of shared research-action that can detect population needs.

The main difficulty in using them consists in, for persons and involved groups ability, choosing gradually the best tool or tools set, coherently with interested territory and areas.





Tool character, moreover, irrespective of its belonging according to the list above, can constitute an objective difficulty, both from its “profane” use and for the weir that it could determine in communication between researchers and interested population.

One of the most difficult point for a shared research is in choosing tool structure and complexity (not in choosing instrument in itself, as a questionnaire).

### 3.4. Methodology

Starting from suggested tools by « European Quality Letter of Research favouring territorial governance of sustainable development» we ask how:

- share information
- partake knowledge
- constitute a common language.

We indicate below how to achieve these aims:

**Integration and coordination:** territory governmental bodies have to provide to shared interventions and resources according to coordination and integration principles of actions in different areas (cultural, social, economic, and so on).

**Network development** through operative links promotion, reflection spaces and comparison with citizens; protocols of acknowledgement and intervention common programmes with their different organizations (formal and informal).

**Stimulus:** governmental institutions have to assume a reinforcement role of action capacity, above all we register breeding grounds about research activities and reality changes understanding.

**Advocacy e sensibilization:** develop around territorial movements and spontaneous actions a public and collective shared support.

**Territorial animation:** associations and groups identification and reinforcement that are already in movement in interested territories.

### 3.5. Methodology characters (ethical principles)

- Social needs shared definition doesn't consist of a formal hints set
- Agreed decisions with citizens involved have to be respected
- A high level of participation has to imply a high level of verifiability concerning interventions efficiency and effectiveness levels
- Trust has to be “critic” and foresees more direct communication channels that permit developing opinions and observations, we have to consider
- Methodology has not focused on technique or stopped to a transmission channels, supports, media (and so on) set
- It is important what we make with tools, not only the technical tool in itself; in fact the same support can be used for different aims
- To optimize its operative use, methodology should be as simple as possible.

Inside each area, and to develop a direct link between logbook and acts to lead, we need also to be able sub-classify, tools as below:

- A. evaluation tools: used by project actors to make their logbook indicators;
- B. training tools: used to progress project ideas;
- C. action tools: used from project actors to develop their practises.

### 3.6. Suggestions for discussion and analysis

For all people, involved in a research action for the definition of social needs and solutions, should be foreseen a further check-list to integrate what is listing in “Quality Letter” and what is previously shown.

Questions that both researcher and citizens should make concern, above all, three essential elements:



- ⇒ participation
- ⇒ education
- ⇒ cohesion

**Concerning participation tools, we need to verify first of all:**

- **involvement:** is tool coherent with involvement process aimed to taking part in making decision?
- **consultation:** is tool coherent with consultation process, that integrates communicative streams in the two senses?
- **communication:** is tool coherent with communication process that shoots for informing citizens?

**Concerning educational tools, we need to verify first of all:**

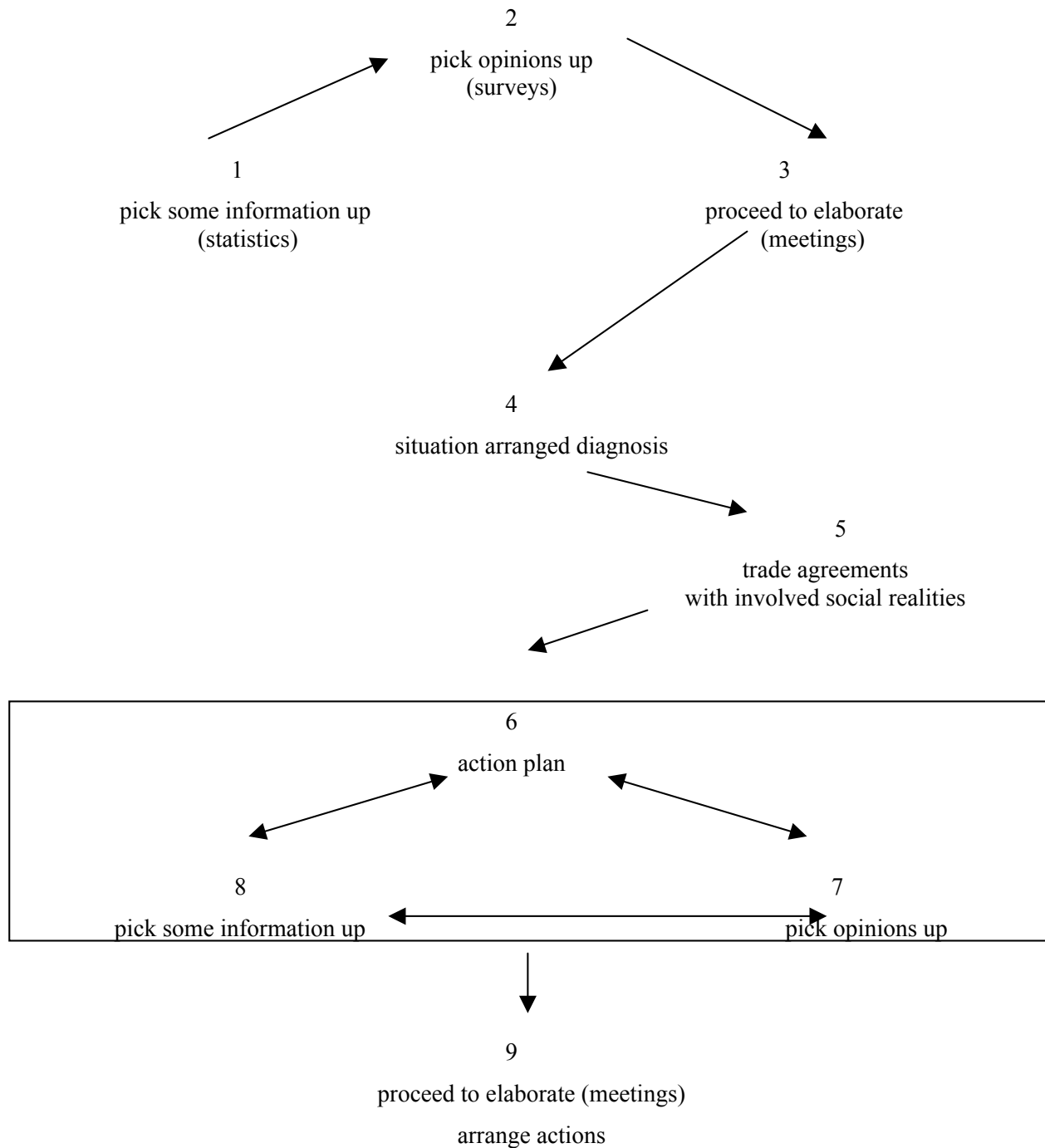
- **training/animation:** does the tool place in training/animation programme?
- **sensibilization:** does the tool favour sensibilization towards environment, health, etc.?
- **information:** does the tool favour information?

**Concerning tools regards cohesion, we need to verify first of all:**

- **territorial solidarity:** does the tool favour change, inter-change, sussidiarity and so on of all instances?
- **social integration:** does the tool enhance social relations? does the tool favour the access in making a choice?
- **weak population integration:** does the tool favour shaky population integration as immigrants, handicap persons, old people, young people, gender opportunities and so on?



#### 4. A DESTINED SCHEME FOR DISCUSSION



#### 5. CONCLUSION

As it appears clearly in this document, we are agreed in suggesting that WP5 work is based on the fact that citizens are active experts on life problems in which they are involved, and moreover they can become active subjects or actors in realizing projects that interest them.

A “strategic platform” for participation should consider, as first goal, the construction of a global and integrated intervention strategy, able to take-charge determiners set at the bases of main identified questions and to mobilize, at the same time and in the same sense, the whole social capital of a territory.



That means to push citizens groups to work on themselves, to make up co-action active forms detecting and conquering new territorial representation spaces concerning needs, putting into action and suggesting new decisional mechanisms: «The active citizenship implies the fact that citizens can enunciate and trade what seems desirable to them for their future» as today we have no more doubts on the fact that «citizens capacity to anticipate future, imagine new development paths has become essential for a territory dynamics, as well for universalization concerning one good and right life perspectives» [Hansotte 2005].

There is a subtle balance to promote between a representative democracy and an increased participation requirement by citizens towards collective becoming. There is a subtle balance to promote between who have been delegated to a Country, Region, Common government and who have to assume an evaluation task, a policy management, an argued decision and citizens who have got their own testimony, critics, demand, argued suggestion, policy limitation [Réseau Européen d'intelligence Territoriale 2005].

WP5 group work has consolidated the idea that for population welfare affirmation, belonging to different territories and cultures, we have to make a major effort in defining both needs, in a shared manner, and alternative roads, in treating them in an objective way and accessing to effective decisional processes.

The first consideration is: it occurs a good social, economic and professional sensibility in the communities to build, between different intervention options, those choices that can be closer to citizens, every time we have the possibility. We discussed here about a possible very important transformation that characterizes an approaches change: in fact it means to pass from “making for citizens” form, not only in a symbolic way, to “making with citizens” one.

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