SOCIAL INNOVATION CASE STUDY: ROUBAIX

SPIRAL: IMPROVING WELL-BEING AND SOCIAL COHESION THROUGH CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT

Cities for Active Inclusion is a dynamic network of nine European cities – Birmingham, Bologna, Brno, Copenhagen, Krakow, Lille Métropole - Roubaix, Rotterdam, Sofia and Stockholm - each with a local authority observatory (LAO) within its administration.

Their aim is to share information, promote mutual learning and carry out research on the implementation of active inclusion strategies at the local level. The nine observatories are coordinated by EUROCITIES, the network of major cities in Europe, and supported through a partnership with the European Commission (DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion).

www.eurocities-nlao.eu

December 2011
TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. The SPIRAL approach ...........................................................................................2
   1.1 Introduction ..................................................................................................2
   1.2 Objectives ....................................................................................................2
   1.3 The problems in Roubaix’s western neighbourhoods ..................................................2
   1.4 Types of activity implemented in the SPIRAL approach ......................................................5
   1.5 Co-ordinators, participants and beneficiaries ......................................................................6
   1.6 Target groups ................................................................................................7
   1.7 Budget ........................................................................................................8

2. Key elements of innovation ....................................................................................8
   2.1 Innovative partnerships ....................................................................................8
   2.2 New project design modes .................................................................................9
   2.3 New perspectives .......................................................................................... 10

3. Key successes .................................................................................................. 11
   3.1 Outcomes ................................................................................................... 11
   3.2 Challenges.................................................................................................. 12

4. Sustainability and transferability ........................................................................... 13

5. Weblinks and contact details ................................................................................ 14
   5.1 Weblinks .................................................................................................... 14
   5.2 Contact person ............................................................................................ 14

Annex ............................................................................................................... 15

This publication is commissioned under the European Union Programme for Employment and Social Solidarity (2007-2013). This programme is managed by the Directorate-General for Employment, social affairs & Inclusion of the European Commission. It was established to financially support the implementation of the objectives of the European Union in the employment and social affairs area, as set out in the Social Agenda, and thereby contribute to the achievement of the EUROPE 2020 goals in these fields.

For more information see: http://ec.europa.eu/progress.

The information contained in this publication does not necessarily reflect the position or opinion of the European Commission.
1. THE SPIRAL APPROACH

1.1 Introduction
The purpose of a city is, in theory, to offer each citizen the conditions for self-fulfilment. Throughout history, cities have been places where social advancement and the advent of individual freedom in a prosperous society represent the engines of their development. Yet city life consists of highly contrasting situations. Cities fail to meet the needs of the many people who are living in poverty or with low levels of well-being, and for whom the idea of community, civic action, or living peacefully together, appear to be challenges rather than reality. On the contrary, the tensions, sometimes very violent ones, expressed by many people reflect the malaise and lack of social cohesion felt by a large number of city dwellers.

It might seem utopian to try to enhance a population’s well-being. Yet that is what the city of Roubaix is trying to do through the use of SPIRAL (Societal Progress Indicators and Responsibility for All). The SPIRAL methodology aims to improve well-being and social cohesion by making everyone responsible.

1.2 Objectives
The SPIRAL methodology was devised by the Council of Europe. The aim of implementing SPIRAL in Roubaix is to improve the well-being of people who live and work in neighbourhoods that are in crisis. SPIRAL creates a new opportunity for dialogue between people in the community and the municipal authorities. This empowering method enables people to engage in a rational discussion of their various interpretations of well-being, and generates a shared understanding of well-being for their area. The ultimate goal is to improve the community’s well-being: an objective that is shared by public policies and by the people themselves through co-responsibility.

The Council of Europe’s Social Cohesion Directorate has developed a comprehensive guide on how to implement the SPIRAL method, including useful data processing tools and software. The SPIRAL methodology is available to all 47 countries in the Council of Europe: they can apply the SPIRAL principles to the best of their ability in order to improve their citizens’ well-being. The city of Roubaix has been doing this since October 2010, and has asked all the stakeholders in Roubaix’s western neighbourhoods to take part in the SPIRAL approach.

1.3 The problems in Roubaix’s western neighbourhoods

1.3.1 Economic problems and socio-economic and intergenerational tensions
The area included in Roubaix’s SPIRAL approach consists of the city’s western neighbourhoods: Epeule, Trichon, Fresnoy and Mackellerie. Because of Roubaix’s industrial past and its closely interwoven industrial and residential areas, Roubaix has been seriously affected by the successive closure of its industrial enterprises. The problems of industrial decline are concentrated particularly in these four neighbourhoods. Unemployment is above 30%; untaxed households

---

1 The Council of Europe drew up SPIRAL in response to the realisation that unequal distribution of wealth, material difficulties linked to unemployment, uncertain future, and absence of shared values and goals in the community were all factors that threatened social cohesion and generated a feeling of ill-being in the most vulnerable segments of the population.

2 These interpretations of well-being take account of all the dimensions: material and non-material, individual and collective.

3 According to the Council of Europe, community well-being is guaranteed first of all by equal access for everyone to material goods and to a set of social, labour, and democratic rights. However, this concept also stresses the idea that the well-being of all depends on the level of harmony or discord in relations between individuals and the community, citizens and institutions, and people and their environment. The well-being of all is thus a social construct that stems from and is fulfilled by a host of interactions and goes beyond the simple aggregation of individual preferences.
account for 60% of the population; economic activity in these neighbourhoods consists primarily of shops and community services which only employ a limited number of people; the residents, especially the young people who account for the largest proportion of the population, have few formal skills; certain areas suffer from violence and anti-social behaviour on a daily basis; and the underground economy and drug trafficking are particularly well developed and destroy the quality of life for a large proportion of the population.

The situation in these neighbourhoods, where most people are on low incomes, confirms the idea that social exclusion (i.e. remoteness from the labour market) has severely damaged the social cohesion that characterised the lower, working class, segment of the French population during the 20th century. Over the past decade or so, the working class segment of the population has splintered into separate categories, differentiated by socio-economic status, nationality, ethnic origins, and remoteness from employment. Today, the reality is that people tend to mix only with their own kind. In Roubaix’s western neighbourhoods, for example, jobless young people are sometimes considered to be delinquents by people on low incomes who lack job security and have families to provide for and expenses to meet.

Urban riots, in which the police clashed with certain young people, broke out in the summer of 2010. As a result, the municipal authorities drew up a specific 2011 Western Neighbourhoods Action Plan. This contains practical operational measures as well as commitments from all the major public sector institutions that govern local life: the state, the city of Roubaix, Nord Department, Nord-Pas-de-Calais Region, Urban Community of Greater Lille, National Ministry of Education, the police, the social funding institutions, businesses, officials and local associations. The 2011 Action Plan stresses the need for co-ordinated measures and also the need to work on several complementary facets of life in order to meet citizens’ expectations.

The municipal authorities have been concerned about the problems in these neighbourhoods for many years. Various specific measures, similar to those in the 2011 Action Plan, have been adopted one after the other in the hope of improving the situation. These measures all used a traditional top-down approach that began with policies, and this brought certain advantages. In particular, they were able to mobilise considerable resources relatively quickly. The 2011 Action Plan, which developed from a brain-storming exercise carried out by various institutional partners, also uses a top-down approach, and this has made it possible to free up extra financial and logistical resources for the short-term. However, this top-down approach has shown its limitations: despite numerous past initiatives, major economic and social problems continue to plague these neighbourhoods, including serious intergenerational tensions between unemployed young people and residents with young families, jobs and their own homes.

---

4 The popular working class culture that used to have a protective and integrating role currently faces the risk of breaking down. The various categories making up the lower classes sometimes even clash with each other and certain groups are victims of discrimination and exclusion.

5 Several possible solutions have been put forward. These include: increased resources for the police and tougher security; implementing community justice by increasing the visibility of certain bodies e.g. by giving a representative of the Justice Ministry a desk at the town hall; works carried out by the city and donors to rehabilitate the neighbourhood and clean up the environment; the adoption of specific mediation measures for target groups, especially young people, with the participation of various social organisations; putting emphasis on vocational training and on bridging the gap between businesses and unskilled people.

6 E.g. Public works to overhaul public areas, and to regenerate city parks that had deteriorated, made it possible to improve the urban environment. This provided the right conditions for the return of private investment in the area, with the promotion of real estate and with new dynamic shops and businesses.
1.3.2 The limits of the measures conducted previously in these neighbourhoods

Firstly, it should be noted that the measures undertaken in the past to try and improve the situation were divided into separate initiatives, according to the policy sector. It now appears that this excessive compartmentalisation failed to take account of the fact that exclusion is often the result of a complex dynamic process: a chain of many problems requiring an integrated response that addresses all the various dimensions. In addition, this compartmentalised approach probably led to action being focused on certain aspects (e.g., urban renewal, housing) to the detriment of other aspects (e.g., socio-economic integration and the quality of public services). In addition, the compartmentalised approach resulted in many different players with diverse powers acting separately. This made it difficult both for the players and the citizens to have a clear understanding of the government’s initiatives.

Secondly, the social policies in Roubaix’s western neighbourhoods continue to focus on individual responses to people’s problems. The state, regional and local authorities can, for example, make financial payments or arrange specific actions on an individual case-by-case basis, sometimes even in the short-term, to help people meet certain needs. However, this individual approach is not viable now that poverty and people’s needs are increasing while public spending must be reduced. Multiple benefits and financial initiatives also give clients a confused perception of the help available. In addition, by targeting certain individuals or groups, other problems may be overlooked. For example, young people under 25 were recently overlooked in the case of welfare benefit changes.

Thirdly, where a person passively receives benefits, this can lead to the recipient being stigmatised: it emphasises inadequacy and makes the individual seem responsible. Policies that focus on the individual reinforce the idea that individuals are responsible if the policies fail. In contrast, policies that focus on the collective community reinforce collective responsibility.

1.3.3 A new solution

As discussed above, Roubaix’s 2011 Western Neighbourhoods Action Plan has limitations that are intrinsic to top-down thinking: civil society has very little involvement in developing and implementing this action plan. What is more, the measures fail to take account of certain needs. The Roubaix Town Hall therefore decided to look for a way of complementing the 2011 Action Plan, in order to connect with residents who were strangers to community action, and to open up a dialogue for everyone living or working in these neighbourhoods. Roubaix municipality therefore decided to implement the SPIRAL approach, in tandem with the 2011 Action Plan.

---

7 The action was divided into separate initiatives on the economy and local labour markets, town planning and housing, culture and religion, and health and social services, in order to cover all the structural factors that give rise to socio-spatial exclusion.

8 The socially excluded person is someone who has been rejected from, or who has dropped out of, a series of earlier, more or less stable situations.

9 Some people are unaware of their rights (e.g., concerning sickness benefits) and of the help and advice available in certain areas. Some public authorities’ actions are neither seen nor understood by some of the people that they target, especially those who cannot understand the language, and as a result, these people are excluded de facto from certain initiatives.

10 The public authorities offer one-off benefits targeting certain categories of the population.

11 The state and regional and local authorities are overwhelmed and are physically unable to deliver quality services or spend the necessary time with their individual clients to help them to set goals for their lives.
1.4 Types of activity implemented in the SPIRAL approach

The SPIRAL approach is ongoing and cyclical: each cycle consists of eight phases and makes use of the following three types of activity:

- **Consultation and brain-storming sessions:** This initial SPIRAL activity helps citizens to generate a shared definition of well-being as well as relevant progress indicators. The organisers set up a number of homogeneous (i.e. single-profile) group discussion sessions of eight to ten people, representing residents from different segments of the community. The people in each discussion group are first asked to consider the issue of well-being, using the following three simple open questions:
  - What do you understand by well-being?
  - What do you understand by ill-being?
  - What do you already do, or what are you willing to do, to ensure your own well-being?

Initially people write down their own answers, and then they collectively amalgamate their thoughts as a group. Each answer from each resident becomes a well-being criterion. The result, at the end of all the meetings, is a complete list of well-being criteria for the neighbourhood. These criteria are then grouped according to the seven major facets of well-being identified by the Council of Europe:
  - the feeling of well-being/ill-being;
  - personal balance/social balance;
  - civic participation and commitment;
  - relationships between people;
  - relationships with institutions;
  - living conditions and the environment;
  - access to essential resources.

This creates a comprehensive set of criteria that takes account of all points of view.

Discussion meetings with residents from different segments of the population (rainbow groups) are then held to create well-being progress indicators for each of the well-being facets.

To evaluate improvements in well-being over time, it must be possible to identify what is considered the worst situation at the lowest end of the scale and what is considered an ideal situation at the top end of the scale. The meetings generate five indicators for each facet of well-being: the worst situation, a bad situation, an average situation, a good situation, and the ideal situation.

The table below shows progress indicators for the well-being facet of health, with a scale that goes from the worst situation (being ill and having no access to care), through to the ideal situation (not being ill and being certain of having access to good care). It also shows an example of the proportion of people who might currently be in each situation, and the kinds of people who might be affected.
The members of the discussion meetings then review the existing public policies for their neighbourhood, to assess the effectiveness of these policies in terms of well-being and to suggest ways to improve these policies.

- **Co-construction of pilot actions:** The second type of SPIRAL activity involves citizens and municipal authorities working together to jointly devise and carry out small initial pilot actions to start improving well-being in the neighbourhood.

- **Co-responsibility action plan:** The third SPIRAL activity involves co-operation or co-responsibility between all the various players, both private and public, to develop an integrated co-responsibility Action Plan for the whole area. The various institutions and neighbourhood representatives consult each other, combine their respective power, and create synergies in order to create and implement a plan that meets the community’s needs and ensure the changes necessary to achieve well-being for all.

For more information on the SPIRAL method, please see the weblink at 5.1 below.

### 1.5 Co-ordinators, participants and beneficiaries

The Town Hall of Roubaix is in charge of the SPIRAL project but relies heavily on the western neighbourhoods’ Local Co-ordinating Group, which is composed of people who live and work in the area. The Local Co-ordinating Group has some 15 members: they are responsible for identifying the single-profile groups of people for the discussion sessions, and they represent the full diversity of the area. The Local Co-ordinating Group meets every two to three weeks to keep track of the progress made in consulting the residents. By October 2011, 200 people had participated in the single-profile group meetings in Roubaix’s western neighbourhoods.
The beneficiaries of the SPIRAL process are first and foremost the people consulted in the various discussion groups, whose viewpoints are taken into account directly in devising public action for the western neighbourhoods. The residents and other users of these neighbourhoods are the main potential beneficiaries: they will benefit from improvements to the neighbourhood and the strengthening of social ties that the SPIRAL approach will help to ensure.

1.6 Target groups

SPIRAL is aimed at improving the well-being of everyone in a geographic area. The project enables everyone to consider their neighbourhood to be a micro-society composed of various population groups or categories, including young people, entrepreneurs, homemakers, and older people, intertwined through the dynamics of the various groups. The SPIRAL method requires identification of the various categories of people living and working in the area and of the ties and tensions that exist amongst them. This makes it possible to then devise actions that benefit everyone and that target the needs of one or more specific groups.

Roubaix municipality considered the western neighbourhoods to be an ideal testing ground for the SPIRAL method. Despite the problems mentioned above, these neighbourhoods have a wide variety of community life and people from many different backgrounds. These are important factors on which a participatory, democratic approach such as SPIRAL, that involves the citizens in all their diversity, must rely. Roubaix’s western neighbourhoods are characterised by a relatively wide social mix: people on very low incomes, such as people who are long-term unemployed and people living on minimal social benefits, live alongside people who are considered middle class, such as business people and shopkeepers. These neighbourhoods have a dense network of associations, a variety of clubs, and many volunteers who are committed to improving daily life and upon which the SPIRAL approach can rely to create a dialogue between the residents and the municipality. Some residents are already active on the various committees and neighbourhood councils that have been organised by the local municipal authorities, and therefore already have detailed knowledge of the neighbourhoods and their populations.

The single-profile target groups that have been identified for the consultation and brain-storming sessions in Roubaix’s western neighbourhoods are as follows:

- Literacy group
- Tenants of council housing
- Public service desk employees
- Girls belonging to a Youth Resource Cluster (Deschepper)
- A Year 6 class from a public school
- A Year 6 class from a private school
- Parents of local pupils
- Volunteers
- Entrepreneurs
- Outdoor workers
- Senior citizens and cultural groups
- The residents of a block
- A group of single young women
- Religious representatives
A middle school’s service staff
- Some girls in their senior year of secondary school (Bac-1)
- Some boys in their senior year of secondary school (Bac-1)
- College students
- Middle school pupils
- Gardeners.

In addition, discussions with groups of people from different social sectors (known as rainbow groups) will also be held.

1.7 Budget

To start the SPIRAL approach, the City of Roubaix worked in partnership with the University of Lille 1. The city trained four university students in the SPIRAL method, capitalising on their existing skills and their willingness to be involved in the pilot SPIRAL pilot programme in the western neighbourhoods. The cost was €4000.

As a result of the willing participation by residents and because the city wished to continue the successful community dynamic that has been generated by the initial implementation of the SPIRAL method, Roubaix applied to the Regional Nord-Pas-de-Calais Council for a grant. The application was accepted, and the municipality was given €31,650 to fund a co-ordinator who ensures continuing discussions with the inhabitants. In the future, the city can use these resources to finance other actions to promote shared responsibility.

2. KEY ELEMENTS OF INNOVATION

2.1 Innovative partnerships

2.1.1 Creating a dialogue between citizens

As indicated earlier, certain social groups in Roubaix remain on the sidelines of public life and tend to keep themselves to themselves. Their feelings of ill-being partly stem from the social divisions which help to weaken the ties of solidarity and feelings of belonging that used to exist in working class neighbourhoods. Through the discussion meetings of single-profile and rainbow groups, the SPIRAL method makes it possible to achieve co-operation amongst various, sometimes opposing, segments of the population.

In the rainbow groups, the SPIRAL method enables the participants, each of whom represents a different social sector, to work together: firstly to develop indicators for defining and measuring collective community well-being, and secondly to build collective actions to improve this community well-being.

As highlighted earlier, when social policies in France give priority to individual benefit payments and when problems are addressed on an individual case-by-case basis, these policies fail to create the vital community dynamics that are needed to combat the problems of social isolation faced by many members of society or to restore social ties. What is more, in the past, when people have been consulted about a project such as a neighbourhood renewal scheme, the consultations have not taken into account that there are various ways of discussing issues with citizens and that citizens’ concerns vary, depending on whether they are younger or older, newly arrived or long-standing members of the community, and so on. So, when public authorities hold public meetings
and invite everyone to attend, the same segments of the population often turn up time and again. These are people who are already involved in local politics, often members of the middle and upper classes, and often with high levels of cultural capital.

The SPIRAL approach is innovative in that it is designed to make it possible to take into account the situation and views of every segment of the population. What is more, SPIRAL encourages each individual to think beyond the issues faced by their own segment of society, and to think about the well-being of everyone in the area, across all the different groups.

### 2.1.2 Creating a dialogue between citizens and institutions

SPIRAL creates a new form of partnership between people and their institutions. With SPIRAL, people have a true responsibility for establishing a project’s goals and actions, and in carrying out these actions on the ground to achieve well-being for everyone. The Local Co-ordinating Group and the discussion groups are mainly composed of local residents and other users of the neighbourhood. They have a central role to play in each phase: from identifying the well-being criteria and indicators, to assessing local public and private policy, through to drawing up the Co-responsibility Action Plan.

The residents are jointly responsible for planning and agreeing the operations. During the discussion group meetings that took place in Roubaix’s western neighbourhoods, the facilitator from Roubaix’s Town Hall had to take care not to stray from a very specific role: the facilitator was there to ask questions and encourage dialogue, but was not supposed to influence the participants’ responses. The participants had to be able to express themselves freely, using their own words, examples, and references. In this way, the SPIRAL method makes it possible to engage in a true bargaining process between ordinary citizens and those who wield power and design public policies.

This type of participatory process of elaboration, where measures are planned and executed through painstaking attention to detail through consultation with everyone involved, is completely new to France. Indeed, the current organisation of politics and administration in France gives the people’s elected officials and representatives a predominant influence over decision-making. Depending on the context, leaders inform citizens about projects, often using advertising and public relations techniques. They may use consultations to ask citizens for their opinions but there are no guarantees that citizen’s views and proposals will be taken into account. Finally, in France, participation in the form of a partnership between the general public and the political leaders is very rare. The SPIRAL project, which brings together an area’s residents, other users, and various private and public players, is thus truly innovative: it enables an agreement to be made that takes account of the interests of all stakeholders and draws up an action plan that meets local expectations and that will have a truly positive impact when implemented.

### 2.2 New project design modes

SPIRAL aims to develop policies that are more aligned with the residents’ needs. It relies on the local identification of people’s needs in a defined reference area, in this case, in Roubaix’s western neighbourhoods, and it capitalises on the residents’ abilities to identify their own problems, and the resources available to them, and to think up ways to improve their daily lives.

---

12 The elaboration process is a process in which a common framework of reference (knowledge, indicators, and visions for action) is consciously developed and shared by the people. It is necessarily a long-term process. The participants are involved in the various stages of developing and constructing the framework, using a forward-looking approach aimed at improving a situation by sharing responsibility, both for the current population and for future generations.
It then becomes possible to understand what truly affects people: what makes them feel good or ill at ease in their neighbourhoods. For example, during the discussions that took place in the single-profile groups in Roubaix, various residents and users of the western neighbourhoods asserted that for them, well-being means ‘having one’s culture and/or lifestyle recognised’; others said that well-being means ‘feeling good in one’s family environment and in one’s neighbourhood, with nice neighbours who are mindful of each person’s peace and tranquillity’.

By questioning people directly about their own definition of well-being and about what they are willing to do to enhance well-being, the SPIRAL approach does not simply measure their difficulties and their resources (economic resources, social capital, and cultural resources). Instead, the SPIRAL approach looks at their ability to use the resources they have, even if these resources are limited. The discussions about well-being highlight each person’s view of their own environment, their social networks, the informal relationships that develop in the neighbourhood, and the survival strategies of people who live in deprived areas. These views become the foundations of the action plan, which ensures that the action plan is truly in tune with local needs and circumstances.

In the Roubaix discussion groups, one person stated that there were certain places that attracted annoying groups of people who drank alcohol in the street, and who left bottles lying around or shattered them on the pavement. He emphasised that these areas generated a feeling of ill-being in the neighbourhood. Residents also emphasised the existence of ‘labels that some of the neighbourhood’s residents wear’, and ‘being judged for what you look like’. They mentioned the crimes of being black, North African, poor or a migrant etc., and raised the issue of the negative impact of these stereotyped views. In this way, rather than simply underlining the lack of ability or lack of resources, the SPIRAL approach starts with the needs of the residents and others involved in the neighbourhood, and then makes use of their potential, and fosters their involvement and the development of community awareness.

This bottom-up approach begins by concentrating on small-scale social relations and their positive role, rather than focusing on large-scale economic development strategies. The people who took part in the group meetings talked about the importance of the little things in daily life: leisure activities, relations with their neighbours, going home after school, etc. The discussions generated new questions, new needs, and new demands that had not been mentioned previously. In addition, because residents’ views about the little things in life were taken seriously in these group discussions, this encouraged them to talk and think seriously about larger issues, such as their relationship with work, social ties, and cultural life. What is more, this bottom-up approach complements the dominant top-down way of thinking.

### 2.3 New perspectives

#### 2.3.1 Joint development of well-being indicators

The method for building the well-being progress indicators (see diagram in the Annex) creates new perspectives for assessing public policies. It creates an analytical grid developed directly with the residents that reflects their definition of well-being. This analytical tool can be used to re-examine the aims and impacts of each public policy that has a component of well-being as its goal, such as health, town planning, or social services. These policies can then be changed to more closely residents’ needs and wishes.

---

13 The state plays a central role in setting public policies and does so on the basis of principles and values that are supposed to be applied to the whole country. The regional and local governments also have considerable weight, but they must enter into contracts with the state, which maintains the right to oversee the development and implementation of their actions.
The brainstorming consultations carried out in Roubaix’s western neighbourhoods culminated in the formal identification of more than 1800 criteria, some of which were significant, for example:

- **Well-being criteria:** ‘carry out one’s plans successfully’; ‘engage in leisure activities’; ‘safety in the street’.
- **Ill-being criteria:** ‘solitude’; ‘hanging around in one’s own neighbourhood with nothing to do’; ‘young people riding around in cars with music going full blast’.
- **What can we do?** ‘convince people that together we are stronger’; ‘donate one’s time’; ‘share’; ‘improve the living environment’.

### 2.3.2 Building pilot actions jointly

The SPIRAL approach also involves carrying out innovative pilot actions. These are drawn up jointly with the residents after the well-being progress indicators have been developed, and enable residents to put co-responsibility into practice for the first time.

In Roubaix’s western neighbourhoods, the first pilot actions consisted solely of initiatives by citizens that were based on associative logic and did not require finance: they were designed to strengthen self-esteem, civility, and ties of solidarity between residents. For example, 30 people signed a petition in favour of banning quad bikes in one street.

The pilot actions in the SPIRAL approach are designed to begin promoting co-responsibility and civic commitment amongst an area’s residents: they are a necessary precursor to the development of the larger, area-wide, Co-responsibility Action Plan which will help improve well-being for everyone, and which will ultimately involve shared responsibility across all key local issues (economic, educational, etc.) by all the stakeholders: citizens, public authorities, and socio-economic players.

### 3. KEY SUCCESSES

#### 3.1 Outcomes

By October 2011, the citizens of Roubaix’s western neighbourhoods had built their well-being progress indicators and had started the process of assessing public policies against these indicators. They are now developing their own pilot actions, and are starting to think about what should be included in their Co-responsibility Action Plan.

The SPIRAL approach has already defused some of the tension that has plagued Roubaix’s western neighbourhoods since the summer 2010 riots. It has developed ties of solidarity amongst those residents who participated in the various discussion meetings; and it has restored a vision of the future to all those who were informed of, or who were interested in, launching the SPIRAL approach. It has also helped to recreate collective awareness and to foster civic commitment. For example:

- **The SPIRAL method has enabled new community-minded people in the neighbourhood to emerge.** Many of the people who participated in the single-profile groups had never before taken part in a conventional public consultative meeting, such as a neighbourhood council meeting. They were therefore not known to the municipal authorities and consequently had not been identified as people who might get involved. However, certain participants showed enthusiasm and a desire to take part in the SPIRAL project and in neighbourhood life long-term. They responded to all requests and have volunteered to continue the approach.
As a result of the SPIRAL initiative, some of the traditional municipal participation bodies have recovered their legitimacy and credibility for some residents. For example, some 30 more people than usual attended a neighbourhood council meeting that directly discussed the SPIRAL approach.

Up to October 2011, across all the phases so far, 166 citizens have participated in Roubaix’s SPIRAL approach.

As the discussions progressed about the possible meanings of collective well-being, certain ways of thinking and mental images specific to these residents emerged. As everyone was free to speak during the meetings, each participant was able to use their own references, highlight their own experiences and those of relatives, and share their feelings directly with the other participants, based on what they knew of a given aspect of the neighbourhood or their immediate environment. The residents also perceived the willingness of municipal officials to listen to their concerns and to restore legitimacy to what ordinary citizens had to say. SPIRAL therefore made it possible to re-establish ties of trust between certain individuals and the municipality.

The implementation of the SPIRAL approach in Roubaix was the subject of an issue of Territoires, a national magazine that covers local democracy issues in France and worldwide. (For details of this coverage please see the weblink at 5.1 below.)

3.2 Challenges

One of the main challenges that Roubaix has overcome in using the SPIRAL approach relates to the time required to put SPIRAL into practice. It takes some time to implement the complex methodology developed by the Council of Europe in the field. Some residents had problems in understanding and adopting the approach. The issue of well-being and how to measure it is vast, and encouraging discussions about well-being relies on many abstract, theoretical references that can create confusion in the ordinary citizen’s mind. To overcome this, initial meetings were held to explain the approach in detail, to listen to residents, and to answer their questions.

The neighbourhood’s residents were not the only group to be puzzled about the SPIRAL approach: Roubaix’s Town Hall staff had a great many questions about SPIRAL’s relevance and how it would be carried out. The initial consultation phase took some time as care had to be taken to ensure the effectiveness of the multiple participatory processes and to find representatives of each groups to achieve the best possible implementation of the SPIRAL method.

Also, the elected officials and the residents wondered what tangible results would come out of SPIRAL. However, although the first pilot actions were not entirely satisfactory and failed to make the project’s promoters and beneficiaries completely happy, these pilot actions did reveal SPIRAL’s potential and the possibilities of finding concrete applications that would improve well-being.

It is also difficult to predict a long time in advance what the content and thus the effects of the SPIRAL methodology will be. The approach is cyclical and the Co-responsibility Action Plan is therefore under constant development, the well-being indicators are continually reviewed, and the groups of people involved in the consultations and brain-storming in Roubaix should be constantly broadened. For example, one of the organisers would like to expand the Local Co-ordinating Group. This has an impact on the funding required for sustainability.
4. SUSTAINABILITY AND TRANSFERABILITY

SPIRAL promotes values aimed at giving new impetus to fundamental, lasting changes in public sector practices and services. The concepts of co-responsibility and increased public involvement in developing and administering public policy are fundamental concerns of those who are conducting the SPIRAL projects in the western neighbourhoods of Roubaix, regardless of their respective jurisdictions and areas of expertise.

The SPIRAL method is not a linear process with a starting point and an end point. It is designed to be a self-perpetuating cycle that ultimately extends multipartite consultation and co-responsibility to all policies affecting community life, especially policies for the economy, town and spatial planning, health and hygiene, social affairs, culture and so on. The purpose of the SPIRAL methodology is to trigger a review of the policy objectives in each of these fields so that they completely match the public’s needs. SPIRAL promotes better co-operation, around common objectives, amongst all the stakeholders in these various fields.

The SPIRAL methodology is a way of working that is fully transferable from one institutional, administrative or geographic context to another:

- Firstly, SPIRAL advances the universal values of respect for citizens’ rights, well-being for all, and shared responsibilities that underpin democratic countries in Europe and elsewhere.

- Secondly, the set of tools that SPIRAL generates (such as the well-being definitions, progress indicators, policy analysis, pilot actions and co-responsibility action plans) are flexible enough to be adapted to a wide variety of legal, institutional, administrative, and political frameworks.

- Thirdly, SPIRAL’s goal is specifically to enable the various people involved in an area to get to know the area’s particular characteristics, strengths and weaknesses. This means that local policies can be tailored to the specific local context. SPIRAL helps people to define what the context is and define the specific community dynamics and the opportunities the area contains. SPIRAL is inherently designed to be adjusted in line with the context.

The SPIRAL method has already been tested in several contexts across Europe. For example, the paper manufacturer Stracel, based in Strasbourg, used the SPIRAL approach in 2006. The city of Mulhouse applied the SPIRAL method in a secondary school in 2005. A number of cities in Romania, Italy, and Cape Verde have also implemented SPIRAL methods to build well-being indicators, to help improve their public policies and thereby increase social cohesion and well-being.
5. WEBLINKS AND CONTACT DETAILS

5.1 Weblinks

- For more information on the SPIRAL method:
- For coverage of Roubaix’s SPIRAL project in the national magazine Territoires:

5.2 Contact person

Bertrand Sauvage, Director, Department for the SPIRAL Social Cohesion Project, Roubaix
bsauvage@ville-roubaix.fr
Telephone: +33 3 20 14 10 41
ANNEX

Diagram showing SPIRAL’s main facets of well-being (with examples of indicators):

**Personal balance**
- Life paths, time management
- Family, working and citizen life

**Social balances**
- Equity in access to rights/resources
- Social mobility
- Equal opportunities
- Respect for cultural diversity

**Relations between persons**
- Recognition
- Respect
- Sociability/socialization
- Sharing/solidarity
- Family
- Friends

**Relations with institutions**
- Institution-citizen relations
- Partnership/consultation
- Reconciling security/risk
- Dialogue
- Consistency/transparency

**Access to essential resources**
- Employment
- Income
- Housing
- Social services
- Education
- Mobility (transport)
- Culture
- Information

**Feelings**
(subjective well-being)
- Satisfaction/frustration
- Self-confidence
- Optimism for the future

**Commitment/participation**
- Civic-mindedness
- Citizen responsibility
- Responsible consumption
- Respect for community norms

**Living environment**
- Manageable-sized towns
- Accessibility
- Cleanliness/non-pollution
- Areas for social harmony, social mix
- Forums for meetings and discussion
- Security