

## Exercise 7.4. – The planning project<sup>6</sup>

<p><b>Educational objectives</b></p>	<p>The students understand the structures of mutual dependence in a community during a period of change.</p> <p>The students understand that every decision concerns all members in the community. If a decision is therefore to be accepted and supported, all members of a community must understand it and have the chance to participate in the decision-making process.</p>
<p><b>Resources</b></p>	<p>A description of a real or fictional planning project of an urban neighbourhood. It has to take into account social, economic, demographic, transportation and other problems.</p> <p>The teacher needs to prepare a set of cards for the actors in the role-play. The following examples may serve to give the reader an idea of how a real planning project could be simulated in a role-play.</p>

### Note for the teacher

There are many goals hidden inside this exercise. It is up to the teacher to decide which of these elements should be explicitly discussed and which should just help the teacher to understand and explain to others what the potential learning effect could be.

1. The students develop the willingness to listen to, and understand, different points of view and interests, whether they agree with them or not.
2. The students learn to anticipate the consequences and implications of options in the decision-making process.
3. The students experience decision making in a democratic framework. This needs to find a balance between participation and efficiency (e.g. everyone should have a say, but there needs to be a time limit for each contribution and the process as a whole).
4. Basic insight: in an open, i.e. learning community, the common good (the *volonté générale*) is not defined by any authority but is agreed on in a temporary decision which is open for revision if new problems occur.

### Procedure

1. The students divide into pairs. Each pair receives a copy of the project and one of the cards. One pair of students presides over the debate to follow.
2. The pairs establish a list of all the benefits and problems relating to the project.
3. They do so from the point of view of the person whose role they are playing.
4. They take a common decision for or against the project (15 minutes).
5. In turn, each pair presents its position to the group and explains its reasons.
6. In a debate, each pair has to say what it would like to see carried out. A time limit should be set for each student and the whole debate.
7. The students vote so as to decide whether the project will be implemented or not.

### Follow-up work

8. Are there other groups whose opinions should be consulted?
9. To what extent was your opinion influenced by that of others?

6. Adapted from S. Fountain, *Education pour le développement humain*, De Boeck, 1996.

10. Do the particular interests defended by one of the groups have an effect on the other groups?
11. Are there groups whose opinions and interests deserve more weight?
12. Are there groups whose opinions are rarely or never heard?
13. Does the solution which the majority has voted for represent the best solution for the whole of the society?

#### Extension

1. Individual students act a certain role without the support of a partner.
2. The role-play includes the hearing of experts who can refer to specific aspects of the project.
3. Part of the class acts as a jury or local parliament who make the final decision, without the advocates for certain interest groups participating (representative democracy).
4. Two or three students act as reporters and observers. They feed back on the process of decision making and the roles played by the students.
5. If a real decision-making process is simulated in a role-play, local politicians or journalists can be invited to a follow-up discussion with the students.
6. This model may be used to organise a real decision-making process in school.

#### Material for the teachers

##### Questions for designing role-play cards

1. You are a teacher:
  - Do you see reasons why the project would be a good idea?
  - Do you think it could present any problems?
2. You are the owner of a small business:
  - Do you see reasons why the project would be a good idea?
  - Do you think it could present any problems?
3. You work in a medical centre.
4. You work as a refuse collector.
5. You are a bus driver.
6. You are a recent arrival from another region or another country and are seeking work.
7. You are young people working in the neighbourhood.
8. You are the manager of a small company.
9. You are a political representative.
10. Etc.