

COST Action TU 1002 - "Accessibility instruments for planning practice in Europe"
München, Germany, the 8th and 9th of December, 2011

München, 21th December 2011

Scientific Report

In this meeting of the COST Action TU 1002 - "Accessibility instruments for planning practice in Europe" the work of Workgroup 3 was started. This Workgroup is assigned with designing the workshops that each local workunit is going to run with their accessibility instrument. This work is divided into developing a uniform protocol for these local meetings and a protocol for observing how the participating planning actors rate the usability of the respective accessibility instrument. This meeting served for the participants of this specific Workgroup to meet, to be introduced with the work and to make some first steps.

The first day (8th of December) was focussed on the process of the workshops. Here, we first had an introduction by Professor Raine Mäntysalo. He introduced a four step process that could work to structure the interaction between the accessibility instrument and the users in the local workshops. To illustrate this, he used an example of regional planning from Finland. This triggered a debate about the workability of these steps and if they covered the most important steps. Also, a discussion was raised about if this rigid structure would be flexible enough to cope with differences in contexts (planning scales, experience of participants with accessibility instruments, planning issue, etc.). The rest of the afternoon the group was subdivided to make the proposed steps as concrete as possible. The day was closed with a plenary discussion on the issues that each subgroup encountered when making the steps concrete. A central element was that to deal with the complexity of issues (in the light of one short workshop) a number of the steps need to be performed prior to the workshop.

On the second day (9th of December) the focus shifted from the process of the workshop towards measuring instruments to test the usability of the accessibility instruments. This was kick started with an elaborate presentation by Roger Mellor (and Carey Curtis), via a Skype connection. Roger proposed a multidimensional approach in which several instruments are connected to provide a rich and holistic view on usability. They can also be used as triangulation of findings. The local workshops need to be accompanied with a pre-workshop survey (to establish the characteristics of the context and the level of knowledge under the participants), participant observation during the workshop, a post workshop survey (to establish the view on usability of the accessibility instrument) and a semi-structured focus

group. After the presentation, discussion started on how the differences in context among the members of the Action could be bridged with a usability measurement framework, trying to find a balance between a rich context and a rigid structure that allows comparability. Also, the size of each measurement instrument was discussed trying to find a balance between comprehensiveness and simplicity (to prevent survey fatigue). The rest of the day, the group was split into subgroups that each focussed on one of the measurement instruments. To close the day (and the meeting) the groups presented to each other. After that, each group decided to continue the work on the measurement instruments, taking into account the issues that were raised in the plenary discussion.

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