



## **Local Practice on Institutional and Community Capacity Building: MATRA REGIMA\* Project**

**Özlem ÖZÇEVİK**, Assistant Professor  
Istanbul Technical University, Turkey  
ozceviko@itu.edu.tr,

**Şence TÜRK**, Assistant Professor  
Istanbul Technical University, Turkey  
cembeygo@yahoo.com,

**Cem BEYGO**, Instructor  
Istanbul Technical University, Turkey  
ozceviko@itu.edu.tr,

**İmge AKÇAKAYA**, Research Assistant  
Istanbul Technical University, Turkey  
akcakaya@itu.edu.tr

Among most important factors affecting planning practice in Turkey are the weakness of local governments' institutional capacity regarding participation, the existence of strategic planning processes that are poor in participation and the communities lacking representation by public, private and non-governmental organizations in participatory processes. Accordingly, this study highlights the importance of handling particular planning issues in priority: capacities and educational training of local governments regarding planning, implementation and monitoring; participatory mechanisms in governance; legal justifications of urban regeneration; consistent participation of the community in planning and implementation processes; and neighborhood organization and modeling in local advocacy. Recent national reports suggest that participation should be undertaken neither as a limited phase of planning, nor as a limited institutional or spatial framework that seeks representation of particular individuals or groups. Instead, it should embrace all relevant organizations and spatial scales; it should depend on volunteering; it should hold a visionary approach which stands on creativity for the future of the city and the community.

The purpose of this paper is to render sharing of the results of "Marta REGIMA Project: Sustainable Urban Regeneration in the Republic of Turkey" which is formulated upon participatory action research method to empower skills and knowledge of local actors in urban regeneration practice. The project was implemented between the years 2005-2008 in Zeytinburnu district of the city of Istanbul which was designated as a pilot area by the metropolitan municipality following the 1999 Marmara earthquakes. Milestones and reflections of the project facilitating the regeneration practice in Zeytinburnu Culture Valley are investigated in this paper. Project results underline the essential initial step of institutional and community capacity building prior to realizing urban regeneration. Outcomes of the capacity building program that aims to develop skills and knowledge of local government professionals and local community show that local inhabitants, decision makers and practitioners can altogether have a succeeding role in research and implementation processes. Moreover, the outcomes pioneer a participation model that presents an extensive database to partnerships in meeting local needs of urban regeneration. This model suggests a series of trainings for local government professionals and local community which offer flexibility in providing feedbacks to the public. Results of the Marta REGIMA Project also expose the necessary conditions for revealing expected impacts.

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**KEY WORDS:** Urban regeneration, participatory planning, capacity building, community development.