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Citizen and stakeholder involvement: a precondition for sustainable urban mobility

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Abstract

Sustainable urban mobility planning, a strategic planning concept promoted by the European Commission, considers the engagement of citizens and stakeholders throughout the Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan (SUMP) development process as one of the key elements. Involving communities in planning is a fundamental duty of local authorities to improve decision-making and is also a requirement stipulated by EU directives and international conventions. This paper looks at academic research on participation in sustainable urban mobility planning, citizen and stakeholder engagement practices in European cities, as well as the challenges of collaborative planning and how to overcome these. The authors make the case that although some participation questions remain unsolved to date, citizen and stakeholder engagement are a precondition for sustainable urban mobility planning.

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1. Why is participation important for sustainable urban mobility planning?

Public participation on issues shaping the city is not in itself a new concept or responsibility. In many places, especially in the European cities of the old Member States, there are already policies and mandatory processes in place on how the public should be involved in major construction projects. Also, there are a variety of examples of how participatory approaches provide a forum for the debate of issues raised by stakeholders, where often conflicting views are expressed, which can lead to changes to projects and successful results. Important questions are how, and to what extent, public participation has increased overall in the context of sustainable urban development, which requires long-

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term decision-making by urban society where ecological, economic and social matters and different interests have to be balanced. A relatively new dimension of participation relates to new media, such as social media and professional forums, which enables a person to be informed about an issue and comment at any place and at any time. Nevertheless, a broad, systematic culture of participation that is unequivocally supported by the participating actors and actively used by the public, has not yet materialized.

There is now momentum building for a new approach to strategic sustainable transport planning across Europe that incorporates public participation as an integral element. In particular, transport planning and transport relevant measures are often the subject of controversial discussions within the urban community. The concept of Sustainable Urban Mobility Planning, which is promoted by the European Commission, establishes the principle that the public should be involved from the very beginning of the transport planning process and not only when the plans are largely completed and only minor amendments can be carried out. This makes it necessary for public authorities to open-up a highly specialized and complex subject area for debate and prepare for participation as part of the planning process. The concept is exciting because stakeholder participation practices across Europe are very different and in some cases, in particular in the new Member States, there is little experience of what it means really to involve citizens in decision-making, rather than just to inform them of the results.

The following article examines the theory and practice of participation in transport planning, mapping the early progress of the Sustainable Urban Mobility Planning process correspondingly. This paper is based on a mixed methods approach in order to maximise the understanding of participation in mobility planning. Desk research and a review of research findings are complemented by a 'state-of-the-art' review of European planning practices and case study analyses. These draw on the experience of previous and on-going European SUMP projects and initiatives, in particular the results of CH4ALLENGE. Within this project, 34 cities gave information on their local mobility planning processes through an online questionnaire and a training workshop dedicated to citizen and stakeholder engagement.

2. Academic perspectives on stakeholder and citizen involvement

Participation reflects the overall integration of citizens and groups in planning processes and policy decision-making and consequently the share of power. A term commonly referred to in participation research is "stakeholder" which may be an individual, group or organisation affected by a proposed plan or project, or who can affect a project and its implementation. Groups with economic interests such as retailers, shop owners or local industry can be considered as stakeholders just like groups representing mobility-related or public interests including mobility, environmental or resident associations. Also cultural and educational institutions such as schools and kindergartens usually have a stake in mobility and often call for involvement (see Krause, 2014). Transport planning frequently affects a great variety of different economic, public and social interest groups either positively or negatively, which often results in complex relationships between the city administration and the groups having a stake in the decisions made.

Public involvement, in contrast, usually refers to engaging citizens in planning and decision-making. While stakeholders usually represent positions of organised groups and have a collective interest, citizens are individual members of the public and unaffiliated participants in the involvement process (Kahane et al., 2013). However, both theoretical and practical distinctions between stakeholders and citizens are blurred since citizens can also be considered a large stakeholder group; citizens can belong to various sub-groups of stakeholders; and a stakeholder representative is at the same also a citizen. In this paper, "stakeholder involvement" refers to the involvement of groups and organisations, to varying degrees, in transport decision-making processes. In contrast to that, "citizen participation" is seen to encourage individual citizens to join the debate and to enable them to be part of collective decision making.

Arnstein (1969) defined citizen participation as the redistribution of power and developed an eight-rung ladder gradually symbolising participation levels starting with nonparticipation, referred to as manipulation and therapy, to citizen control at the top rung. Although the ladder is a simplification, it helps to illustrate the gradations of citizen participation.

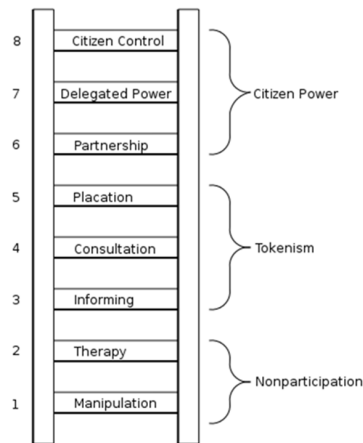


Fig. 1. A Ladder of Citizen Participation (Arnstein, 1969)

Also other researchers have analysed participation from a scientific perspective and refined the idea of sharing power. One of them is the political scientist Archon Fung (2004). He raised three key questions that are intended to help when analysing the level of participation: Who should be involved – or have the opportunity for involvement – given the purpose of the participation? What is the method of communication and decision-making? How much influence and authority do citizens and stakeholders have? This leads to the question about the nature of involvement and how input forms part of the decision-making process.

Depending on the purpose of the participation it may be more appropriate to target the involvement of specific groups, e.g. people with mobility difficulties in a given instance of participation on barrier free travel. However, there is debate not only in research but also in planning practice about the representativeness of citizens and stakeholders and their influence and authority in the decision-making process. Involving a few women in a participation process, for example, does not mean that ‘women’ are adequately represented. Thinking about the justification for giving particular influence to a few members of the population or a few groups the question of influence can be difficult as well.

An important reason for undertaking participation is to gain knowledge that can inform the preparation of a sustainable mobility plan. A large body of work treats participation as developing knowledge, which underpins many of the participatory approaches developed in last 20 years.

According to Glass (1979), public participation has five key objectives: information exchange, education, support building, supplemental decision-making and representational input. Krause (2014) defines the targets and benefits of participation in planning processes as follows:

- It makes decision making processes more transparent.
- It raises mutual understanding between citizens and administration.
- It considers ideas, concerns and everyday knowledge.
- It improves the knowledge basis.
- It has a positive influence on planning processes as it increases acceptability.

Working with stakeholders is generally considered common practice – but in many cases only certain stakeholders actually have a say in planning. It is crucial to involve all different types of stakeholders throughout the planning process, addressing their specific requirements. This especially concerns groups with less ability to articulate their concerns or requirements and prevail in comparison to other more powerful groups. Examples of hard to reach groups are ethnic minorities, impaired people, young people and the elderly, people with low literacy and apathetic groups.

Depending on the groups and representatives involved and the planning phases, different involvement models can be distinguished. Figure 2 shows a hierarchy of intensity of participation ranging from dissemination of information to interaction and real decision-making.

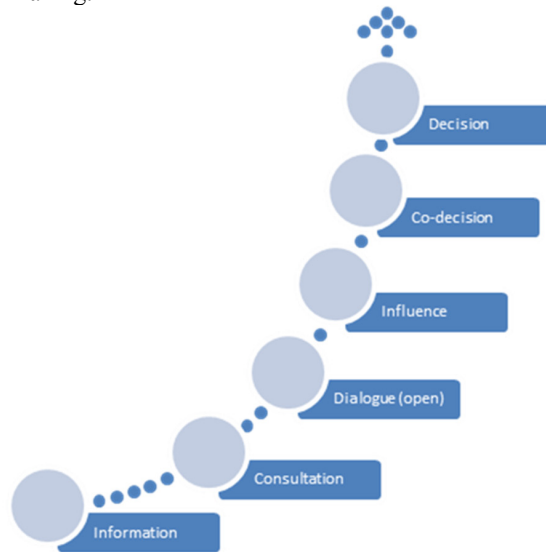


Fig. 2. Chances and potential of participation for better transport planning (Sturm, 2013)

Focusing on the potential for participation to improve the knowledge base informing decisions, Booth and Richardson suggest that:

“The quality of planning outcomes may be enhanced through public involvement by:

- inclusion of new ideas and knowledge;
- increasing the range of options;
- testing evidence and positions;
- addressing uncertainty and conflict.” (Booth and Richardson, 2001: p. 148)

Participation in transport and mobility planning is less studied than participation in other areas of public policy and planning. Yet the last 20 years has seen a gradual increase in the practice and study of participation in mobility planning. In mobility and transport, as in other areas, there is apparent tension surrounding public and stakeholders’ engagement in planning processes which frequently involve very technical questions. This emphasises the value in presenting technical information in as accessible a form as possible. As important though is the consideration of how much transport and mobility planning involves, and can be challenged by, social, political, ethical and cultural questions which the public are well placed to debate (Bickerstaff and Walker, 2005; Mullen, 2012).

3. Stakeholder and public involvement practices in Europe

Significant activities on participation have been observed in transport planning over the past two decades and in some cases there has even been “partial success in developing carefully conceptualised, inclusive, and meaningful participation programmes” (Bickerstaff and Walker 2001: p. 431). Stakeholder involvement and citizen participation practices in transport planning do, however, vary across European countries and between cities. Several countries have formal, mandatory consultation procedures for mid- and large scale transport projects as well as for the development of transport plans and SUMPs. Local Transport Plans (LTPs), for example, which UK local authorities are legally obliged to develop, require consultation of both local stakeholders and the public at various stages of the planning process. Other countries such as Germany and France, the latter requiring public consultation when

developing the French urban mobility plan (Plan de Déplacement Urbains, PDU), also apply legally consolidated involvement procedures (ELTISplus, 2012).

A number of European countries have extensive experience in innovative participation instruments in complex planning processes. In Germany, moderated, interactive citizen workshops and workshop series have become a frequently applied tool for joint idea development and creative decision-making in both the development of Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans and also for specific mobility issues relevant to transport planning (e.g. electric mobility). The involvement of citizens in all local planning activities is also set in law in Flanders, Belgium through the ‘Gemeentedecreet’, a decree on the functioning of municipalities (ENDURANCE 2014). A range of Belgium cities have gone even beyond the formal consultation procedures described in this act and developed new participation approaches and routines, such as the idea of transition management which is applied in the City of Gent.

There are also a number of countries in Europe that have no or only very limited formal procedures for involving citizens and stakeholders. Here, transport planning still focuses on traffic and infrastructure rather than on planning for and with people. The transport planning objectives in these countries usually link to traffic flow capacity and speed, while accessibility, quality of life and social involvement have been added only very recently to the cities’ transport agendas. The planning itself is still undertaken primarily by transport and technical experts while citizens and stakeholders are only informed about the planned developments, plans and projects, rather than being involved in the planning processes. Some of the Eastern European countries belong to this group since they have only little experience in collaborative planning approaches that have a democratic component. However, also countries from other parts of Europe have yet to adopt sustainable urban mobility planning that take citizens and stakeholders as the focus.

The European project “CH4LLENGE – Addressing Key Challenges of Sustainable Urban Mobility Planning” (2013-2016) surveyed 34 cities from across Europe and beyond about their transport planning practices and the status of transport plans and Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans, if available. Based on the project’s first workshop, survey results and a self-assessment, the cities were grouped into Advanced Cities which have already developed a SUMP or are currently developing a SUMP, and Starter Cities which plan to work on various steps towards SUMP development.

The survey showed that most of the Advanced Cities have a SUMP or a strategic transport plan in place, or are currently preparing one. Starter Cities have either several topical plans in place or are preparing transport plans at the moment. The survey revealed that air quality and congestion are the two most serious problems in all cities that participated and that the lack of economic growth is seen as the most severe factor complicating transport planning. Also the lack of financial resources and staff capacities were rated as very pressing problems. In general, SUMP Starter Cities assessed most of the given problems as more serious than the Advancing Cities. A variety of objectives ranging from accessibility to the reduction of energy consumption and effective transportation are well addressed by the cities’ urban transport policies. Emissions and air pollution were two of the highest ranked problems – but are not addressed within the objectives of all cities.

Cities were also asked whether and at what stages they involve their local stakeholders, such as public transport providers, environmental, sustainable and social Non-Governmental Organisations) NGOs, motorist associations, or local companies, in transport planning processes. Stages for potential involvement include:

- identifying transport and mobility problems;
- specifying the vision and objectives;
- identifying possible solutions;
- evaluating (appraising) the alternatives; and
- Implementing the chosen strategy.

The results revealed that the majority of cities do involve stakeholders; however, the degree of involvement varies significantly. Stakeholders are mostly involved in the identification of transport and mobility problems, but only in a few cases in other planning stages (e.g. specifying the vision and objectives, identifying possible solutions). Stakeholders that are commonly involved and consulted in more than three planning and implementation phases include public transport providers and sustainable transport NGOs. Retailers and customers, for example, are only rarely asked to participate at later stages of plan preparation, even though they have a stake in SUMP development.

Also citizens can be engaged at various stages of the planning process and through a number of involvement tools. The survey considered approaches ranging from information and communication instruments such as written information that is being distributed to citizens, to more interactive methods like individual consultations with planners or politicians, focus groups or public discussions, up to high-level involvement tools such as joint strategy development processes or referendums. The latter were only rarely applied in the surveyed cities while large-scale consultation events such as public discussions or hearings, which are mandatory planning elements in many of the countries surveyed, are more frequently held. More than half of the cities that participated also indicated that they use focus groups for finding out about citizens' opinions and preferences. In general, cities tend to use less complex involvement tools that give rather little influence to citizens; only a few cities allow citizens to become part of the planning process and directly shape it by contributing their opinion, ideas and knowledge at the different planning stages (CH4LLENGE, 2014).

Both the CH4LLENGE survey and also previous research show that citizens' interest in participating in SUMP development is rather low. Interest in specific mobility measures, in contrast, is much higher – especially when citizens realise that they are directly affected by a proposed measure. As a reaction to the suddenly emerging conflicts, politicians often start a dialogue process trying to solve these. However, at this point, the project or measure is often already in a late stage of development. This phenomenon is known as the “dilemma of participation” (Team Ewen, 2010; Krause, 2014: p. 36). It reflects that the interest of citizens is low in early planning phases when processes are still open and flexible. As soon as planning processes and proposals become more concrete and at the same time more inflexible, citizens' interest increases as they now feel directly affected. Accordingly, one of the challenges for cities is to select different participation approaches and tools for different planning phases in order to ensure active participation and to raise the number of people involved.

The survey showed that there are also other barriers to involving stakeholders and citizens successfully, including:

- the lack of political will and support for carrying out an (in-depth) participation process, resulting in a low priority given to participation also within the administration;
- limited financial and personnel capacities within local authorities to set-up, manage, carry out and evaluate an involvement process and to arrange its internal administrative process;
- a lack of skills on how to plan and carry out a participation process including lack of knowledge about suitable involvement tools and about which steps to take at which stage of the planning process; missing overall structure, plan, or strategy for participation resulting in uncoordinated and fragmented involvement actions;
- a so called ‘consultation fatigue’ mirroring the low interest and awareness of transport planning among citizens and stakeholder groups;
- an imbalance of stakeholders with interest groups that are able to strongly communicate their opinion while weaker stakeholders have difficulties to contribute their interests to the process;
- difficulties to initiate behavioural change; and
- the lack of a participation tradition in Eastern European countries in particular, where institutional cultures still place low priority on participation rather than allowing citizens and stakeholders to actively contribute to the transport planning process and form its outcomes.

4. Common barriers in participation and how to overcome these

The CH4LLENGE survey revealed a plethora of barriers that local authorities face when conducting an involvement process. This chapter looks at two common participation barriers: the internal administrative process of organising participation; and the question of how an appropriate involvement technique in urban mobility planning should be selected. It also suggests procedures and tools that help to overcome these.

4.1. Institutional barriers to participation

The involvement of citizens and stakeholders is closely connected to administrative processes and a local authority's public management procedure. Cities often face limitations in institutional resources and difficulties in securing the staff and finance required for participation; also the internal administrative organisation of participation

is a common challenge. Administrative processes and the roles and relationships of administrators are often unclear. In addition, the responsibilities and input required from other departments and municipal institutions may not be well defined.

A structured approach towards participation may help local authorities to carry out a consultation process successfully (for the following steps see Bock et al., 2013; and GUIDEMAPS, 2004). The identification of the status of participation within an administration is a crucial first step to clarify the position of both high level officials and civil servants on participation and to assess the relevance they give to it. Reflection on the understanding of the concept, a comparison of what involvement actions have been taken in the past and what the scope of future activities should be, set the ground for the definition of targets.

Experience has shown that the development of a participation strategy is an important preparatory step for involvement. It should define rules, procedures and responsibilities within the administration as well as the overarching principles of participation. The departments involved in drafting the engagement strategy should also consider the following questions (Rupprecht Consult, 2014):

- Why is the engagement process being undertaken? How will it influence the strategy/scheme?
- Who should be involved in the decision-making process? How can such people be identified?
- How will engagement be undertaken? What tools and techniques should be used?
- When should different activities take place? When is it not appropriate to engage?

When the overall strategy and timeline have been agreed, dialogue structures and the process organisation within the administration need to be set up. It is necessary to define who is in constant dialogue and how (e.g. dialogue between a unit's civil servants or heads of units), whether this dialogue happens on a constant or project-base and who takes the lead.

The latter aspect links to the general question of responsibilities. Participation can be arranged on a decentralised basis, with responsibilities spread over different departments. Alternatively, participation may be led a special unit, preferably with direct contact to the mayor, which has the sole responsibility for process organisation and institutional cooperation. It is the practical questions that are often marginalised but which are highly important for the management of the process such as: who should be invited to consultation events? Who decides how often these take place? How are they documented and by whom?

The last and most relevant step before conducting the actual participation is the clarification of resources and skills. Personnel, time and financial resources need to be reviewed and assessed. A fixed budget that is dedicated to participation clearly helps in setting up the involvement procedures. However, in many European cities there is no budget reserved exclusively for citizen and stakeholder participation (in transport planning). Therefore, it needs to be carefully assessed whether the activities planned and the budget available match, and whether further funding is required. A review of skills and participation competences within the administration is another essential element in process organisation. The identification of expert knowledge but also knowledge gaps among municipal staff members leads to the question of whether capacity building, in-house training or external support is required.

4.2. How to select an appropriate involvement technique in mobility planning?

Low interest in mobility planning among citizens, a general consultation fatigue and dissatisfaction with the participation process are common challenges cities face when moving on from planning and preparing the consultation process to implementing the engagement activities. Planning experience from the CIVITAS ELAN project (2008-2012) has shown that involving citizens and stakeholders from the outset and establishing direct and continuous communication are crucial factors for a successful involvement process. The presence of an engagement plan outlining aims and objectives, issues for discussion, timing and how consultation results feed back into the decision-making process also raise the willingness of citizens to get involved (CIVITAS ELAN, 2012).

The question of the most appropriate involvement tools in mobility in planning is not easy to answer. Careful preparation of the consultation process does not guarantee high participation rates and successful results; however, it clearly influences the level of participation, satisfaction among citizen and stakeholders and the effectiveness of the process.

The selection of involvement tools depends on a variety of factors. The identification of stakeholders gives first insights into local interests, from groups that support the given measure or plan to be developed and groups that are ambivalent, through to groups that oppose the measure or plan. Stakeholders frequently interested in being involved in mobility planning are the following (GUIDEMAPS, 2004):

- Government/ authorities: e.g. politicians, higher-level authorities, neighbouring cities, traffic police, emergency services, project managers, professional staff.
- Businesses/ operators: e.g. business associations, major employers, retailers, utility services.
- Communities/ neighbourhoods: e.g. local community organisations and interest groups, cycle/ walking groups, citizens, landowners.
- Others: e.g. research institutes and universities, experts from other cities.

Stakeholder mapping can also be complemented by an analysis of stakeholder constellations which is based on different criteria or attributes such as interest, power, or coalitions. “The objective of a systematic analysis of actor constellations is to get a clear picture of conflicts of interests or potential coalitions and to be able to better determine clusters of stakeholders who may exhibit different levels of interest, capacities, and interest in the issue in question” (Rupprecht Consult, 2014: p. 30). An influence-interest matrix can help for the identification and grouping of stakeholders (e.g. the matrix model developed by UN-HABITAT, 2001).

When it is determined who to engage – a wider audience or targeted groups, or a mix of both – the selection of involvement tools follows. The purpose of a consultation can be information giving and gathering including distributing printed material, telephone and broadcasting, online information and surveying individuals (tools 1-12, Figure 3), or interactive engagement covering information events, the engagement of selected stakeholder groups or the involvement of large groups (tools 13-27, Figure 3). The purpose of a consultation needs to link to the stakeholder groups identified and their interests. If there is the risk that certain groups or citizens may feel left out or do not show any interest in the transport project but will be affected at some point, this needs to be carefully considered in the selection of involvement tools.

Further factors that should influence the decision on engagement techniques are the budget available, the time frame and duration of involvement, the type of project (e.g. a specific transport scheme or the development of a Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan), and the stages at which citizens and stakeholders are to be consulted. Figure 3 gives a detailed overview about suitable involvement instruments in relation to the factors mentioned above.

Classifications ● generally applicable ○ partially applicable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27
	Letters	Posters, notices and signs	Leaflets and brochures	Fact sheets	Newsletters	Technical reports	Telephone techniques	Radio shows & TV shows	Internet techniques	Web-based forums	Questionnaire surveys	Key person interviews	Exhibitions	Information centres	Information sessions/briefings	Public meetings	Topical events	Community visits	Focus groups	Workshops	Citizen juries	Technical working parties	Stakeholder conferences	Transport visioning events	Weekend events	Planning for Real®	Open-space events
Who to engage																											
Wider audience	○	●	●	○	●		●	●	●	○	●		●	●		●	○	●		○			○			●	○
Targeted audience	●	○	●	●	○	●	●	○		●	●	●			●	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	●
When to engage																											
Problem definition	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	●	○	○	●		●	●	●	●	○	●	●	●
Option generation				○				○		●	○	●		○	○	○	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Option assessment	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	●	●	○	●	●	●	●	○	○	●	●	○
Formal decision making	○			○		●				○		●			○						○	●					
Implementation plan	○	●	●	●	●	●		○	●				●	●	●	○	○	○		○		○			○		
Monitoring and evaluation						●	●			○	●	●							○			○			○		
Type of project																											
Strategy	○	○	●	○	●		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Scheme	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	●	●	○	●	●	●
Duration of engagement																											
Restricted	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Continuous		○			○		●		●	●				●								○					

Fig. 3. Overview of engagement techniques in mobility planning (GUIDEMAPS, 2004)

The following two participation examples showcase how to engage a variety of political, technical, academic and local mobility stakeholders in SUMP development through a roundtable, and how to stimulate creative thinking and changes in mind-sets in transport planning with the aim of enhancing a city's sustainability, attractiveness and liveliness.

4.3. The SUMP Round Table: stakeholder involvement in Dresden, Germany

The City of Dresden initiated a stakeholder round table for its "Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan 2025+", a comprehensive, integrated mobility plan. A number of committees were established (see Fig. 4-5), e.g. the Steering Committee led by the mayor including also representatives of city council groups, heads of department, City of Dresden officials, councillors, project managers and round table facilitators. At the round table a large number of actors are involved such as the transport providers and associations, business associations, city council groups and others. A scientific advisory board consisting of representatives of transport and transport-related studies as well as the Dresden University of Technology and other German research institutions form another important advising actor. Also regions and neighbouring communities as well as citizens were involved. The round table is the centrepiece of the participation process where stakeholders decide on the main directions of the plan and comment on the drafts prepared by the city. The round table is moderated by an experienced external moderator, which is seen to be essential for successful discussions. All committees, groups and boards are in a continuous dialogue process.

As a result of the implementation of the round table involvement tool, planning processes for the Dresden SUMP are even more complex and require more time than usual. Dresden found that it is extremely important to communicate to citizens and stakeholders that, in order to ensure the transparency of mobility planning, the discussion and decision-making process (decisions, preparation of documents, responses to comments, etc.) is necessarily long and time-consuming.

The City of Dresden contracted an external consultant through a Europe-wide tender to support the development of the urban mobility plan. However, it is the city administration itself that organises and manages all participation processes (CH4LLENGE, 2013).

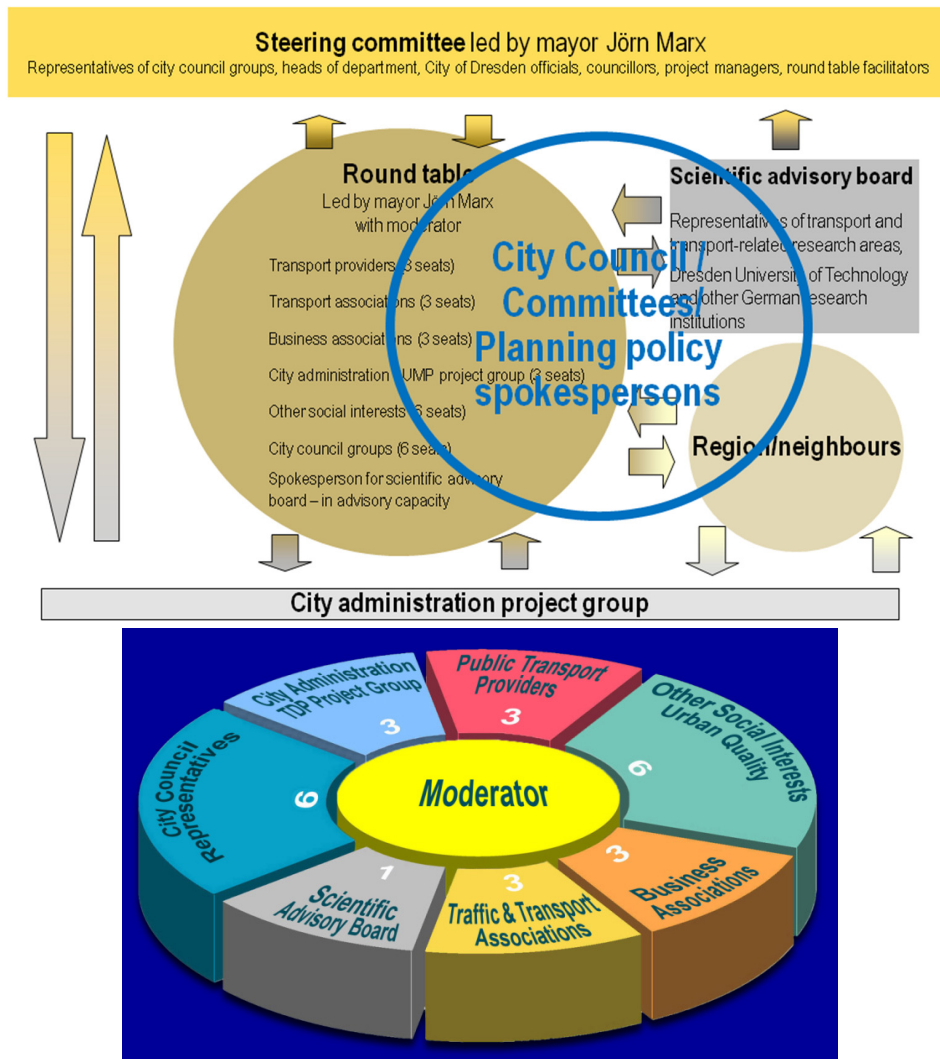


Fig. 4-5: Set-up of round table in Dresden (City of Dresden/ CH4LLENGE, 2013)

4.4. Bottom-up mobility visioning: the transition management in Gent, Belgium

The City of Gent started to engage stakeholders in mobility planning from the 1990s onwards. Until the early 2000s, the communication was one-way, from the city to citizens. Step by step, a two-way process of communication has evolved. The city began to consult citizens about their opinion on specific mobility projects, for example, by inviting them for discussion nights. A change of mentality in the city administration started with the realisation that they had move away from the “we know what is good for citizens” attitude to facilitating, instead of steering, transport planning processes. The city administration also needed to learn how to deal with the wide range of different opinions

given by citizens and stakeholders. This mutual learning process for both the administrative staff and also the groups involved needed much time to evolve (CH4LLENGE, 2013).

Little by little, the City of Gent tried various engagement techniques ranging from public consultation events and stakeholder workshops, to the use of social media and the approach of co-creation. The most recent governance approach in Gent is transition management. This term refers to shifts in structures, mind sets and practices by involving actors from a variety of levels and disciplines (Roorda et al., 2012). The transition management process is structured in successive phases (see Fig. 6). It starts with establishing a Transition Team and exploring a city's dynamics (Phase I-II). This is followed by forming a Transition Arena group that meets regularly and jointly envisions a sustainable city, drafts visionary images and develops transition paths and a transition agenda (Phase III-V). The visions' dissemination, the initiation of actions and enlargement of the network are the final steps of the transition process (Phase VI-VII; see Roorda et al., 2012).

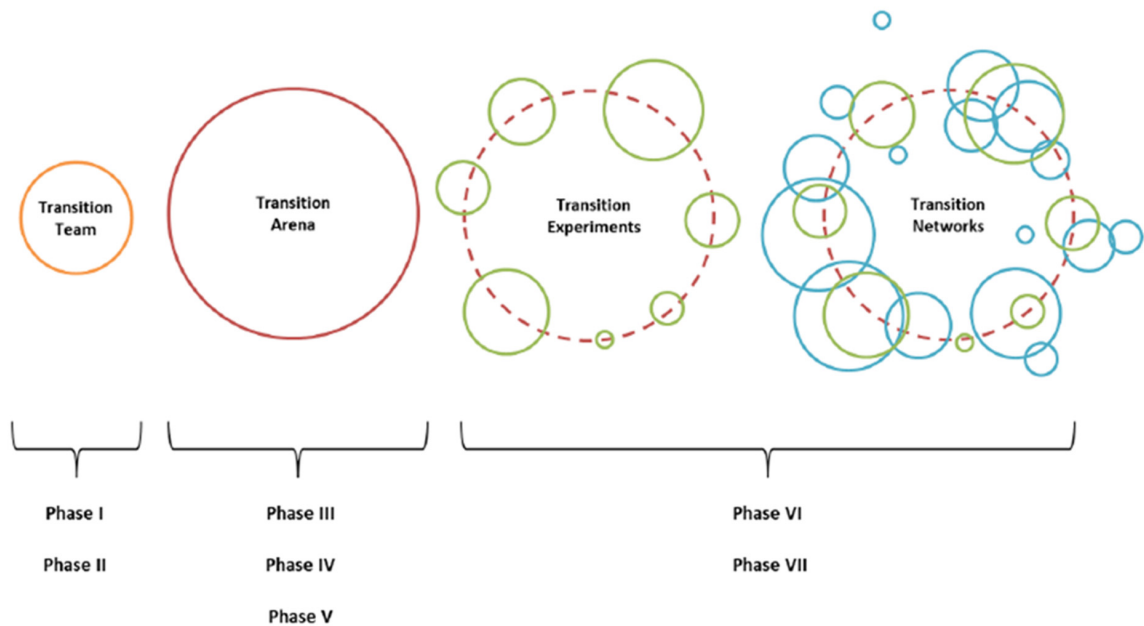


Fig. 6: The transition management approach (Roorda et al., 2012)

Developing fresh approaches to changes in urban mobility, public space and people's awareness and attitudes in order to make the city more liveable city in 2050 – this is the aim of Gent's Transition Arena, a group of about 25 creative people from various backgrounds including young entrepreneurs, citizens, architects and transport professionals. The Transition Arena was initiated by the city's Environmental Department and Mobility Department; however, it was the Transition Arena participants who developed the ideas. After one year of brainstorming ten icon projects were devised showing how Gent could look like in 2050. One of the visions is "The Living Street" which has already been tested by citizens in two streets. For one month the streets were cut from the road network and turned into a car-free zone allowing temporary street furniture and creating places for residents to meet. New forms of mobility were tested such as e-bikes and cargo bikes, as well as car sharing and home delivery. All activities were solely organised by the residents themselves. The icon project attracted significant interest from regional and national media.

"On Wheels" is another of the ten icon projects and refers to a Belgium law stating that a car park may be occupied by any object that stands on wheels. This inspired the Transition Arena to think one step further: why not use car parks

for resident-friendly activities and set up objects such as barbecues, picnic tables or urban gardens? Each based on a chassis with four wheels like a conventional car.

Ideas from the Transition Arena might appear futuristic at first, but are growing bottom-up providing a sense of direction for mobility in the long-term.

5. Reflections and conclusions on participatory mobility planning

Involving stakeholders and the public is one of the fundamental requirements of sustainable urban mobility planning. It embraces the idea that citizens and stakeholders can articulate their ideas and concerns, and can contribute creative and innovative solutions to transport problems. Further, it encourages citizens and stakeholders to take ownership of sustainable mobility ideas, transport policies and projects. At the same time, it is an opportunity for city administrations to incorporate local expertise and feedback into their work thus achieving eventually the best possible outcome in terms of consensus finding. Disregarding participatory principles in mobility planning does not only mean that it cannot be considered “sustainable urban mobility planning”, it also misses the opportunity to raise awareness for local urban mobility challenges and solutions, for more efficient and effective policy choices, for a more transparent decision-making process and for narrowing the gap between citizens (or stakeholders) and politicians.

The emerging trend in cities to move from top-down planning approaches to collaborative planning is debated in both academic research and planning practice. Due to the plethora of large-scale participation processes cities are carrying out nowadays, some experts already speak of the phenomenon of “particitainment” (e.g. Selle, 2013). However, the general difficulties in conducting effective participation in transport planning and the failure of involvement methods in the past mean that the new paradigm of participation is also put into question. This touches, on the one hand, principle questions of participatory planning such as:

- Questions of democracy: does participation actually fulfil democratic requirements since it often involves only small sections of the public or stakeholders (Booth and Richardson 2001)? Is it a representative decision-making process, if only those that are directly affected and those who regularly visit consultations actively participate in a participation process – representing only about 1% of a city’s inhabitants (in cities with >50,000 inhabitants; see Selle, 2013)?
- Questions of acceptance: Does participation actually ensure acceptance? Carrying out a complex and costly participation process neither guarantees the acceptance of a Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan nor the acceptance of a specific transport policy or measure
- Questions of quality: some researchers argue that the quality of decisions does not inevitably increase when consulting the public and in some cases even decreases, inter alia because of a wide range of less significant interests and a lack of expertise (Dietz and Stern, 2008).

On the the other hand, there are still practical questions that local authorities face when carrying out participation processes:

- How to progress after having involved stakeholders and the public in workshop series, online consultations and transport visioning events? How to integrate the results into the decision-making process?
- How to take the results into account in the on-going technical transport planning process?
- And how to come to a joint, accepted decision if claims and proposals from the public are unrealistic, unfeasible and – one of the major concerns – financially not viable?

There are, admittedly, a number of questions that have not yet been solved completely in participatory planning. However, moving back to non-participation is no option either. Current planning examples in Europe like Stuttgart or Bucharest, where controversial urban development projects led to mass protests, show that planning processes without public legitimization can be blocked and, in the worst case, even prevented. Many other European cities are experiencing similar situations and there is a striking trend of people realising and showing that transport planning in practice does not accord with their ideas and expectations. Not only citizens, but also researchers and politicians are calling for an

increase of direct democratic methods and citizen participation in planning to ensure compliance of the view of politicians and private industry with the view of the „ordinary“ citizen.

Local authorities need to react to this call that has emerged over the past decade(s) so that citizens and stakeholders, actually being the target groups of urban mobility, are heard and that their views and opinions are taken into account. At the same time, participatory planning processes can educate citizens and stakeholders on how to contribute their knowledge and experiences to mobility planning and how to successfully contribute to democratic decision-making in general. For both parties, collaborative planning is still a new approach requiring a learning curve on both sides, just as the Gent case study shows.

Local authorities can develop more effective and (cost) efficient mobility plans and projects by involving citizens and stakeholders from the initial to the final planning stages and by identifying controversial issues before a decision is made. Participation can prevent opposition and the failure of a plan by bringing the local stakeholders together and reaching agreement on how to progress. Thus delays and costs can be reduced in both the planning and implementation phases. Last but not least, participation frequently contributes to a sense of ownership of decisions and measures, and creates a greater sense of responsibility among politicians, planners and citizens and stakeholders.

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