

# 1<sup>ST</sup> WORKSHOP REPORT

## Participatory transport planning



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## 1. WORKSHOP METHODOLOGY

In exchanging experiences among the metropolitan regions workshop plays the crucial role. Its aim is to deepen and clarify the descriptions from the inventory and to search for synergies, good practices, and possible exchange of knowledge.

### Workshop implementation

The workshop on Participatory transport planning focusses on two most relevant topics that emerge from the Inventory on participatory transport planning:

- Whom to involve
- How to involve.

To each of the two topics we dedicate one workshop session.

The first part of the workshop session is a short introduction that provides some most relevant facts, experiences and questions indicated in the inventory as well as short presentations on good and bad practices that illustrate the most relevant aspects of the topic discussed.

After the introduction the participants are divided into four groups. Thematically, two groups discuss one set of questions and another two groups the second set of questions. After a certain time (30/35 minutes) the groups change the places and discuss the other set of questions.

Each group is moderated by a moderator and keeper of the minutes.

### Summing up the results

During the workshop session and after it the results are summed up and presented on a plenary session by the moderator, who leads the discussion of two groups. Presentation is continued by the next moderator, who discussed the same set of questions by another two groups. The results are jointly compared and thoroughly discussed on a plenary session that draws main conclusion.

The same is done with results for the second set of questions.

## A. WORKSHOP SESSION 1: WHOM TO INVOLVE

The workshop session **Whom to involve** addresses two sets of questions, one on Pros & Cons for public participation and one on Participatory planning in big-scale/regional projects.

The participants are divided in four groups, two dealing with the first set of questions and two with the second set of questions. The groups change after 30 minutes, so every participant can contribute to both topics discussed.

### Pros & Cons for public participation

Questions:

- Pros & cons on general
- Is there something like too much participation?
- Does the public participation slow down the planning process?

Moderators:

Gaja Trbižan, Jernej Tiran

Jani Kozina, David Bole

### Participatory planning in big-scale/regional projects and plans

Questions:

- What are the specifics of big-scale/regional projects and plans?
- Whom to involve?

- How to include important opinion-makers?
- Who can boost the participation process?
- Formal vs. informal stakeholders.
- How to include marginal groups? Who are they?

Moderators:

Matej Gojčič, Katarina Polajnar Horvat  
Nika Razpotnik Visković, Petra Rus

## **B) WORKSHOP SESSION 2: HOW TO INVOLVE**

The workshop session How to involve addresses two sets of questions, one on Relations between planners, administration, politicians and public in planning unpopular measures and one on Implementing the participatory process in practice.

Again, the participants are divided in four groups, two dealing with the first set of questions and two with the second set of questions. The groups change after 35 minutes, so every participant can contribute to both topics discussed.

### **Relations between planners, administration, politicians and public in planning unpopular measures**

Questions:

- What should be the relation between partners, administration, politicians and public?
- How to target unpopular measures?
- How to handle situation, when we cannot keep the promise because of objective reasons?

Moderators:

Gaja Trbižan, Jernej Tiran  
Jani Kozina, Katja Butina

### **Implementing the participatory process in practice**

Questions:

- What skills are needed for leading participatory process?
- How to involve the public?
- How to really include the proposals of the public into the plan?

Moderators:

Matej Gojčič, Katarina Polajnar Horvat  
Matej Gabrovec, Petra Rus

## 2. REPORT ON WORKSHOP SESSION 1: WHOM TO INVOLVE

### Pros & Cons for public participation

Moderators:

- I. Gaja Trbižan, Jernej Tiran with attendees from groups 1 and 3 (see the attendance lists),
- II. Jani Kozina, David Bole with attendees from groups 2 and 4 (see the attendance lists).

Question:

#### Pros & cons on general

Key findings from groups 1 and 3:

- It is very important to know how to target people you want to involve. Different people have different needs and specifics, participatory methods should be enough flexible to capture opinions from all target groups.
- It is hard to gather opinions from everyone. Participants are limited to people, who have time, so the results of the participation can be biased.
- It is difficult to summarize contents from very different views. So it is important to have a wide decision space at the beginning. If we identify common goals and needs first, the participation process is much easier to lead. It is also very important to ask the right questions.
- Creating joint opinion and consensus can be very challenging. Narrowing the decision space during the participation process can help to tackle this issue.
- Some people or stakeholders have very »strong opinions«. This requires special attention and techniques if we want to reach the consensus and successful participation.
- Participation has to begin very early in the process. This is crucial to organize the system and process which create trust. The participatory process has to be transparent from the beginning.
- Leading the participation process is not an easy task. There is also no general solution for a successful participation in all situations. Territories and regions differ in size; they have their own specifics and culture.

Key findings from groups 2 and 4:

- The goal should always be to involve the public.
- Participation is good for some cases, but not for all cases (example of bicycle paths in Norway). Participation is not limited to planners – media or the public itself can start this participation process.
- It depends on the plan on whom to involve – no participatory process is the same, so every time the stakeholders are different.
- It also depends on which phase you involve the public. The first phase (targets, goals) is very important to participate with citizens. Not at the last stage but at the very first ideas.
- It depends on how strong are the NGOs in each process. Quite often they represent only their narrow views. In Hungary it is very difficult to involve the public, so the representatives (NGOs) have to be involved.
- We need several different tools to involve more people, not just one tool (as was presented by Magnus).
- You might not get the views of the people who are really affected by the plan. Children, elderly, financially challenged might not be involved.
- Participation is not to force or influence people but instead acceptance and informing the public.
- The intentions are quite sincere to carry out this participatory process, but in reality it is hard to carry out due to lacking capacities. Participation has to change the mind-set not only of the general public, but also of politicians and experts.
- You cannot import decisions from other countries, you need to make your own culture of participation. In Hungary there is no culture of participation, similar to Barcelona.
- Even if Norway has a better culture, there is always a problem that people are not interested in participating. Some people come, the majority don't have the time. When you want them to get involved they are not interested. People get engaged usually 5 years too late.

- The planning process is usually from 5 to 10 years – the cultural background is very important. In this time you can change the thinking of stakeholders. Education is important in any case. Through media channels you can reach the ones that can't get to electronic means.

Question:

**Is there something like too much participation?**

Key findings from groups 1 and 3:

- There is no such thing like too much participation. Slowing down the participation process can increase engagement of stakeholders and ease the implementation of measures, strategies, and action plans.
- You cannot always ask people for opinion. Some decisions should be trusted to experts. In such cases, it is very important that people are informed about what is going on.
- Leading participation process can be very challenging especially when it comes to select and implement measures. But nevertheless, everybody's voice should be heard, also from vulnerable and marginal groups.

Key findings from groups 2 and 4:

- At the very start there should be a selection on whom and how many people to involve.
- There is a big difference in creating a regional plan or smaller local projects: with regional plans you have to involve more people. Participation down to the citizen level is too big, you have to choose representatives.
- Enforcement is usually the more efficient way to get things done.

Question:

**Does the public participation slow down the planning process?**

Key findings from groups 1 and 3:

- Public participation can slow down the planning process, especially at the beginning. But if public is not involved or at least informed about planning decisions, it can raise its voice later, which can make all the process even slower than without participation.

Key findings from groups 2 and 4:

- If you try to involve too much people, then you are very slow.
- Participation definitely slows down the process of planning and it takes much more time. You re-plan with classic non-participation anyway.
- Participation often arrives too late in later phases and then slows down the process. Participation is like a muscle that has to be trained all the time.

## **Participatory planning in big-scale/regional projects and plans**

Moderators:

- I. Matej Gojčič, Katarina Polajnar Horvat with attendees from groups 1 and 3 (see the attendance lists),
- II. Nika Razpotnik Visković, Petra Rus with attendees from groups 2 and 4 (see the attendance lists).

Question:

**What are the specifics of big-scale/regional projects and plans?**

Key findings from groups 1 and 3:

- The regional projects and plans are often not as interesting as small local projects which are more concrete and easier to understand their context.
- The regional projects and plans often already offer concrete solutions before the presentation to the public and before implementation. In this case people felt as if the projects and plans were made without their contribution.
- The public often does not have knowledge about what are the appropriate planning solutions and is not able to give a contribution without preliminary presentation of the plans.

- In a big-scale projects and plans relevant experts from different disciplines are needed to make a decisions and solutions.
- One of the possible strategies when introducing the projects is to prepare several possible solutions and then give the stakeholders the opportunity to speak about them.
- You need to involve public also for vulnerable questions.
- You need to avoid negative conditions when introducing the plans. The exception and adoption is than easier.
- The participatory process should not be only informing, the stakeholders should be actively involved.

Key findings from groups 2 and 4:

- On regional level different legislation has to be followed.
- Participatory planning is much more complicated in the countries that don't have official regional level.
- Planning on regional level and including stakeholders is more complex. While on the local level the agreement has to be reached on the level of one municipality, on the regional level agreement must be reached between several municipalities and responsible national bodies (ministries).
- Participation on regional level is more institutional based; it's difficult to get citizens' opinion.
- It takes more effort, time, and energy to explain the regional, strategic issues to citizens. It is not self-evident, it's learning process, and citizens need to learn about institutional perspective too).
- Regional problems/challenges are less concrete; they often don't seem connected directly to them.
- Double role of municipalities: representing dual positions/interest: regional and local. Sometimes they also act that way: representing one position on regional meetings, boards; and another on local one.

Question:

#### **Whom to involve?**

Key findings from groups 1 and 3:

- On a regional level it is appropriate to broadcast the participatory approach as much as possible, that everybody has an opportunity to express their opinion.
- You need to involve wide range of stakeholders, from politicians, experts, NGO, public, vulnerable groups ... they need to be selected by skilled persons.
- The field work should be included in searching for the appropriate stakeholders.
- There should be a careful coordination of politicians in the process.
- Within public and users it is sometimes more appropriate and easier to involve the representatives of users not the users themselves.

Key findings from groups 2 and 4:

- media - media are not stakeholder, but are the voice of the stakeholders
- politicians get the most of the media attention
- bigger municipalities are usually stronger, more influential, have more power; politicians who come from capital cities are usually closer to political structures on national level
- Small municipalities must cooperate; set a common goal to be more powerful.

Question:

#### **How to include important opinion-makers?**

Key findings from groups 1 and 3:

- It is suitable to have expert who has knowledge and skills which opinion-makers to choose.
- The selection differs regarding the theme of the projects or investment.
- They have to be invited on time, few months before the process, to ensure they will be able attend the process.

Question:

### **Who can boost the participation process?**

Key findings from groups 1 and 3:

- It can be boosted by the special skilled expert for participatory approach.
- It would be preferable to organize training for the leaders of public process to be as much effective and persuasive.
- It is advisable to use some of the participatory techniques to encourage stakeholders to participate.

Key findings from groups 2 and 4:

- Unanimous answer – MEDIA!

Question:

#### **Formal vs. informal stakeholders.**

Key findings from groups 1 and 3:

- There are experts who define the formal and informal stakeholders.
- The experts also have to mediate among them.
- The main informal stakeholder is public.

Question:

#### **How to include marginal groups? Who are they?**

Key findings from groups 1 and 3:

- The important marginal groups are: disabled, unemployed, children, older people, immigrants ...
- It is of crucial importance to communicate and involve with representatives of marginal groups who are able to speak in their name.
- The communication with marginal groups should be tailored to their level of knowledge.
- The workshops or other events should be organized at their territory and with their language used.
- It is advisable to use social media to inform them.
- The awareness raising is of crucial importance.

Key findings from groups 2 and 4:

- The problem of NGOs is often that always the same people show up at the events.
- The biggest problem are the people who are poor, living on the “edge of the society”, drug addicts, homeless people... & children; people who feel, their voice is not heard, they don't get attention, they don't vote.
- The problem is for those vulnerable groups, which don't have the representative, which are not organized (no NGO or organization is representing their point of view).



### 3. REPORT ON WORKSHOP SESSION 2: HOW TO INVOLVE

#### Relations between planners, administration, politicians and public in planning unpopular measures

Moderators:

- I. Gaja Trbižan, Jernej Tiran with attendees from groups 1 and 3 (see the attendance lists),
- II. Jani Kozina, Katja Butina with attendees from groups 2 and 4 (see the attendance lists).

Question:

#### **What should be the relation between planners, politicians, administration and public?**

Key findings from groups 1 and 3:

- Relation between planners, politicians, administration and public can be very complex and it is not always evident, who is actually in charge of the participation process. A possible solution can be a horizontal cooperation instead the vertical one.
- During the planning process, the main problems are caused by politicians, and the most problematic relation is the one between planners and politicians. This is happening in majority of the project partners' regions, but it is more evident in the southern regions. Implementation of projects and can even stop or restart after the elections. There can also be a huge gap between wishes of the politicians (e.g. big infrastructure projects) and real needs of planning policy.
- Politicians are not keen on doing so many things at the time and are preoccupied with elections. Therefore, communication and democratic principles are even more essential.

Key findings from groups 2 and 4:

- Relations between planners, politicians, administration and public are complex. However, all the groups should collaborate and work together through the whole planning process.
- At the same time, every group should be aware about its particular role in the planning process and do its task (e.g. planners suggest solutions, politicians take decisions).
- Intensity and direction of relations between the groups depend on particular case – its sensitivity and expected impact. If there is going to be implemented a minor technical measure, then there is no need for politicians to intervene. But if there is going on something very sensitive, then politicians should address and inform the public.
- Generally speaking, public should be informed about the planning process at the early stage to be able to express opinion. Politicians should also be involved from the very beginning to be able to better understand specific solutions. Planners should present different variants and explain pros and cons of each solution.

Question:

#### **How to target unpopular measures?**

Key findings from groups 1 and 3:

- In a democracy, you have to plan something that is popular, at least at the beginning! However, we are facing the lack of trust in experts and this can be crucial when unpopular measure take place.
- Goals should be popular and democratically set. But that always requires some unpopular measures. Therefore, it is essential to communicate a goal, not a measure itself. Besides that, there is no such thing as popular and unpopular measures – in reality, it is always something in between. To target unpopular measures, it is also important to gain support from the right groups.
- It is crucial that planning is strategic and that goals are set in a long term.

Key findings from groups 2 and 4:

- There is no one-size-fits-all recipe. It is important to rotate the picture until it fits in.

- In certain cases it is better not to include (too much) participation. The public should not be asked too much expert/technical questions.
- It is important to clearly expose the advantages and find supporters that are benefitting from the measure. Unpopular measures for some are popular for the others.
- Timing is crucial. It is important not to run the game just before the elections.
- Although true, clear and objective information is the most important, it is also possible to come out first with even less unpopular measure and then reach a mutually agreed solution as originally planned. Sometimes it is important not to give an option of accepting/rejecting the measure but to let the public select only between variants of the same unpopular measure.

Question:

**How to handle situation, when we cannot keep the promise because of objective reasons?**

Key findings from groups 1 and 3:

- If budget is scarce and we are not sure to fulfill our promises, the solution can be a long-term process and telling public they have to be patient («we are on the way to get there»). On the other hand, it is not wise that politicians make promises during the planning process.
- It is important to have a »plan B« and communicate to public that there were objective reasons for not to reach a promise. Then we propose an alternative way how to do it. Alternative measures should also come in package.
- It is crucial (and possible) to explain why if the promises are not fulfilled, which requires diplomatic and communication skills. There has to be an intensive communication with locals or the most affected group. Apology can make people at least more ready to except an unexpected situation.

Key findings from groups 2 and 4:

- In order to avoid this kind of situations, preparation phase is of crucial importance. Plan should be realistic and politicians have to be clearly aware of what they are promising.
- If politicians are not able to keep the promise, they should at least provide an explanation.

**Implementing the participatory process in practice**

Moderators:

- I. Matej Gojčič, Katarina Polajnar Horvat from groups 1 and 3 (see the attendance lists),
- II. Matej Gabrovec, Petra Rus with attendees from groups 2 and 4 (see the attendance lists).

Question:

**What skills are needed for leading participatory process?**

Key findings from groups 1 and 3:

- The leaders of participatory process have to be skilled people with experiences in communication, moderation, mediation, psychology of relations.
- They have to be able to listen to people's ideas.
- They have to be trustful and neutral person.
- The language of the majority has to be used.
- They have to have courage to open a discussion, also to communicate with politicians and media.
- The leaders have to have a professional background and need to know content very well.

Key findings from groups 2 and 4:

- Expert on communication should be involved.
- Mediator who knows the tools.
- Different skills for different situations.
- This is a profession.
- Important to stick with main objective.

- Person with ethical capacity
- Expert that can handle the conflicts
- Not to speak too professional language.
- Independent person.

Question:

### **How to involve the public?**

Key findings from groups 1 and 3:

- The public should be involved from the beginning of the process.
- They can be involved by different societies, associations, NGOs.
- The right and tailored questions have to be asked about the process.
- At the early stage more impersonal approach can be used, but thereafter during the process more personal approach is often more effective.
- You should use internet, webpages to present a project and if it is possible have a facilitator on the internet who lead the communication (on the internet there is a two way communication 24 hours a day).
- If needed organize a workshops, seminars to present a project and also have a facilitator who is able to answer the questions.
- All the information should be present in a simple way that anybody can understand.

Key findings from groups 2 and 4:

- Some groups do not participate on their own, go to the street, do not invite to your organisation – go to the people, in municipality, village.
- It is important to find proper time and place according to the group.
- Kiosk where people can drop in their opinions.
- People should know that their opinion will be included in final results.
- Try to avoid referendum...there are different ways.
- Focus groups! After you go to wider public.
- It is important to give information in proper and understandable way (not 1000 pages document).
- Process should be ethical !

Question:

### **How to really include the proposals of the public into the plan?**

Key findings from groups 1 and 3:

- You have to ensure to make a plan visible.
- Have to organize public meeting, workshops, forums on the internet.
- The investors have to be open to new ideas.
- During the process the facilitator should observe all the ideas.
- You should always explain why some ideas are reasonable and others are not.
- There should be a neutral group of experts (not politicians) who make a decision about the proposals.
- The investors have to have in mind that the projects also contribute some positive consequences to the public, have to compensate with the public (for example new jobs, protective walls ...).

Key findings from groups 2 and 4:

- Important question is why to involve people? What is the reason to involve it? We should know what could be changed with the engagement of the public.
- Feedback to public proposals is important.
- Example: In Slovenia, there were a lot of proposals on web portal in frame of integrated public transport project, but there was no feedback given.
- Public should be included at every stage of the process.

- Budapest good practise: Experts and planners proposed a solution, public had a possibility to evaluate the transport plan; a lot of remarks were accepted.
- Controversial topics need more participation.

## 4. COMMENTARY

The aim of the workshop ‘Participatory transport planning’ was to share experiences among metropolitan regions, to search for good practices and possible exchange of knowledge and to finally deepen the knowledge from the inventory. In general the participants agreed that participation process in transport planning is essential – but the participatory process differs from country to country (culture to culture) and also differs according to what we want to achieve. In some cases, participatory planning is not realistic, in some cases it is wide-scale and in some only small scale. All groups agreed that this process is particularly challenging and not easy.

Opinions varied on the topic of ‘too much participation’. But all groups agreed the level of participation depends on the scale – local transport projects can include a wider variety of the general public, while at regional scale the participation is limited to key stakeholders and their representatives. All groups agreed that this kind of planning is long-term and it takes more time than the conventional transport planning.

The participants agreed that participatory transport planning is much more difficult at big-scale regional projects, since they are often more complicated and are difficult to comprehend by the general public. The legislation also plays a big part, since projects in some countries are constricted by the rigid legislation and procedures that cannot fully support participation process. Hence, participatory planning should be institutionalised at the regional level.

On the regional level stakeholders should be carefully selected, including the politicians and the media. The politicians and important policy and opinion makers should be invited extra to the planning process, even before it begins. The public should be informed about the planning process at the earliest stages but politicians from the very beginning to be able to better understand specific solutions and to avoid conflicts later on. Planners should present different variants and explain pros and cons of each solution. A good mediator familiar with participatory techniques should lead the process and should communicate planning goals and activities in ‘familiar’ language, close to the general public. Extra care should be made to invite the disadvantaged groups to the process as they are usually poorly represented by the NGO’s or similar organisations but are important users of the transport system.

Handling unpopular measures is the most challenging part of the participatory planning. Participants had several ideas but acknowledged that there are no universal solutions. Focusing on the end goal rather than the unpopular measures itself or to show the advantages coming from this measure could be possible solutions. Participants agreed that the timing is vital and that they should not be discussed at election time. Keeping the promises realistic, having contingency plans and involving the public at early stages were also mentioned.

Participants were united in their opinions on the skills needed to lead participatory process: the person should be a good mediator, have a neutral position with good communication and even psychological skills to reach the widest public. It is important to combine personal face-to-face contact (via workshops, meetings, focus groups) with online participation methods and awareness-rising (via social networks, web pages ...). Getting support for active participation should be made by meeting people and going to local communities and not just by merely inviting people to events. For participation process it is also important to communicate the results in understandable terms for the general public and to always provide feedback to citizens proposals, even if they are negative.