



ADDRESSING KEY CHALLENGES OF SUSTAINABLE URBAN MOBILITY PLANNING

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## Why is **Participation** a challenge in sustainable urban mobility planning?

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## 1 Introduction: Aims of CH4ALLENGE

The EU co-funded project CH4ALLENGE addresses significant barriers for the wider take-up of SUMP in Europe. In a joint undertaking together with research and resource institutions, the project will support European cities at different stages of advancing the take-up of SUMP. Building on previous experiences and lessons from earlier and on-going national and European SUMP initiatives, the consortium has identified common challenges which pose significant barriers in the wider take-up of SUMP in Europe. The project will work on innovative and transferable solutions for four SUMP-challenges.

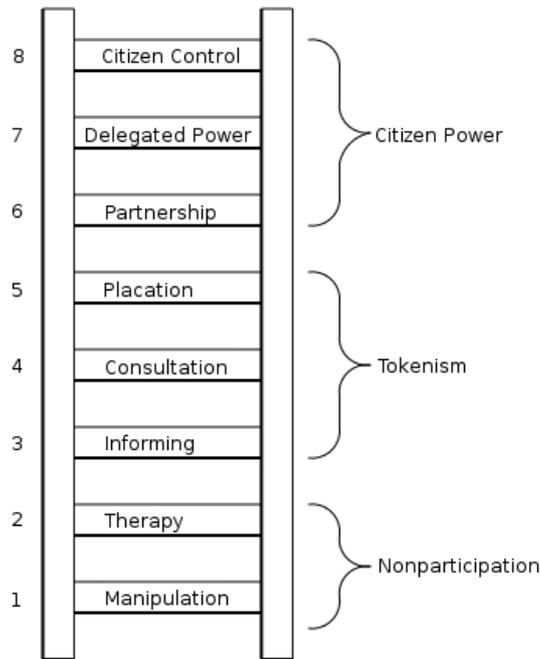
 Participation	Actively involving local stakeholders and citizens in mobility planning processes
 Cooperation	Improving geographic, political, administrative and interdepartmental cooperation
 Measure Selection	Identifying the most appropriate package of measures to meet a city's policy objectives
 Monitoring and Evaluation	Assessing the impact of measures and evaluating the mobility planning process

This document details and explains why participation, in particular, is a challenge for the take-up of SUMP in European cities.

## 2 What is *Participation*?

Transport planning is a frequently controversial area with highly debated decisions that also require, in the light of democratisation of politics, public acceptance. The involvement of stakeholders and citizens can legitimise decisions and moreover, lead to new, innovative governance models balancing different positions and interests.

Participation reflects the overall integration of citizens and groups in political decision-making processes and consequently the share of power. 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.



**Figure 1: A Ladder of Citizen Participation**

Source: Sherry R. Arnstein (1969)

Also other researchers 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 supposed 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 involve very 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.

However, participation is seen to be about gaining knowledge. A large body of work treats participation as developing knowledge, which underpins many of the participatory approaches developed in last 20 years (see further reading).

Krause (2013) 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.

A term commonly referred to when talking about participation is “stakeholder” which may be an individual, group or organisation affected by a proposed project, or who can affect a project and its implementation. It includes the general public, as well as a wide range of other groups (e.g. businesses, public authorities and special interest groups). In transport planning, various groups of stakeholders can be affected such as city retailers. Strict parking management, for example, would have an effect on their daily business. They have a stake as the number of customers might change which, in turn, might affect their business either positively or negatively.

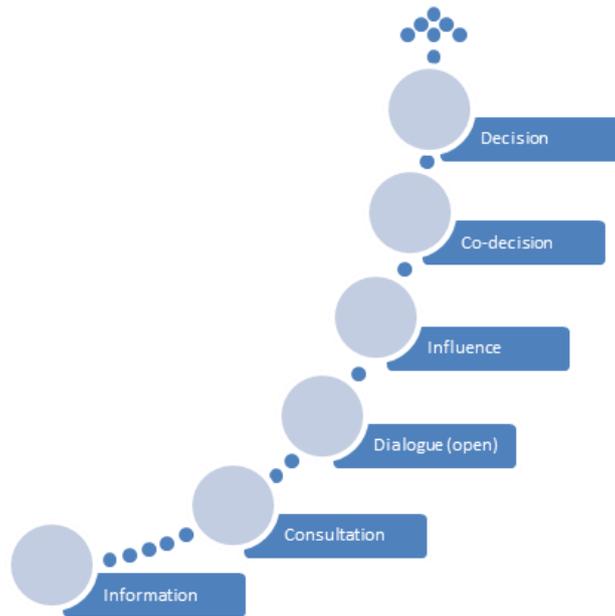
**Stakeholder involvement** includes the involvement of individuals, groups and organisations, to varying degrees, in transport decision-making processes through a variety of tools. In contrast to that, **citizen participation** aims to encourage citizens to join the debate and to enable them to be part of collective decision making.

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 concerns especially groups with less ability to articulate their requirement and prevail in comparison to other more powerful groups. Examples for 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.



*Typical work situation in transport planning, Rupprecht Consult*



**Figure 2: Chances and potential of participation for better transport planning**

Source: Hilmar Sturm (2011/12)

The following table gives an overview about the main barriers preventing effective participation and stakeholder engagement, and strategies how to avoid these.

Barriers	Description	Strategies to overcome barriers
<b>Aim and purpose of participation are unclear</b>	<p>Clarify the aim of the participation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- to understand the needs of certain groups (e.g. people with mobility difficulties; parents and guardians of young children etc.) or</li> <li>- to draw on lay or expert knowledge in developing a transport plan or</li> <li>- to gather information about travel experiences</li> </ul>	<p>Determine,</p> <p><i>who should be involved</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- people who together represent the demographic make-up of the city</li> <li>- demographic representation if the aim of participation is to draw on public knowledge, or to understand public experiences</li> <li>- members of groups if the aim is to understand needs of specific groups</li> </ul> <p><i>what form of participation is appropriate</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- forums allowing debate to use lay or expert knowledge in developing a transport plan</li> <li>- questionnaires or interviews for gathering experiences of travel</li> <li>- question and answer session for helping to explain decisions</li> </ul> <p><i>when to involve</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- explain how public or stakeholder involvement influences decisions.</li> <li>- show people that their participation makes a difference</li> </ul>

Barriers	Description	Strategies to overcome barriers
<b>Accessibility of participation</b>	<p>Barriers to participation occur,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- if people cannot physically reach a venue in which participatory events occur</li> <li>- if information is not provided in a format that can be clearly understood</li> </ul>	<p>Consider aspects such as,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- can people attend after work</li> <li>- is there provision for children at events</li> <li>- is there wheelchair access</li> <li>- what is the availability of transport to the venue</li> <li>- how is material distributed (consider e.g. that online questionnaires are cost effective and have broad reach, but may exclude some groups of people)</li> <li>- how opportunities for participation are publicised</li> <li>- whether information is presented in clear language that can be understood by a lay person</li> <li>- whether information is provided in braille, large text and audio formats</li> <li>- whether information should be translated into different languages spoken in your city</li> </ul>
<b>Public reluctance to engage in participation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Groups that face forms of social exclusion or discrimination may have little trust in formal participation</li> <li>- People feel they have little free time to give to participating</li> <li>- People feel that their word does not count and that the decision-making process remains opaque despite consultation</li> </ul>	<p>While there are no simple answers to problems of reluctance to participate, it is probable that interest will increase to the extent that people see the relevance to them of participating, and feel that the processes are transparent and worthy of their trust</p>
<b>Institutional barriers to participation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Include limitations in institutional resources, and difficulty in securing resources required for participation</li> <li>- Institutional cultures which place low priority on participation</li> </ul>	<p>Might lead to poorly planned participation or a failure to take seriously results of participation (perhaps because of a view that the public are poorly informed). In either case the risk is that loss of public trust will follow.</p>
<b>Limits of participation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Awareness about the limits of what participation can achieve</li> <li>- Ensure that only appropriate claims are made for the participation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Avoid claims that respondents represent the public when only some members of the public, or some stakeholders are involved</li> <li>- Avoid claiming that the 'public' have expressed a given view when it is likely that substantial disagreement exists among the public</li> </ul>
<b>Dissatisfaction with the involvement process</b>	<p>Effective participation can involve members of the public organising themselves and determining among themselves what are relevant questions and challenges to put to decision-makers. Motivation can be a response to forms of 'official' participation which members of the public consider insufficient.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Identify stakeholders and groups to be involved carefully and from the outset so that no one feels left out</li> <li>- Communicate with them regularly and discuss their involvement and influence</li> <li>- If the public is dissatisfied with the involvement process, take action as early as possible and take their concerns seriously</li> </ul>

Table 1: Common barriers in participation processes and how to overcome these, CHALLENGE (2013)

### 3 Why is *Participation* important for SUMP?

Current planning examples in Europe like Stuttgart or Bucharest<sup>1</sup>, where controversial urban development projects led to mass protests, show that planning processes without public legitimation can be blocked and, in the worst case, even prevented. Both cases show as well that public's rejection initiated a broad discussion about the planning and also to changing of plans. Therefore, urban transport planning needs more, better and also more active involvement procedures. ICT-based participation tools, for example, can help to involve a large number of citizens and stakeholders and might also reach younger generations.

The engagement of citizens and stakeholders throughout the SUMP development process is one of the key elements of sustainable mobility planning. They should be involved in several planning phases such as in the identification of transport and mobility problems, in specifying the vision and objectives, in the strategy development process, in suggesting possible solutions and also during the identification and evaluation of those solutions.

Stakeholder involvement supports the development of a more effective and (cost) efficient plan. A dedicated strategy is needed for the involvement of stakeholders, drawing on different formats and techniques when dealing with authorities, private businesses, civil society organisations, or all of them together. Citizens are a special group, which do not constitute a homogeneous group. Involving them in planning is a fundamental duty of local authorities to improve decision-making. Involving citizens in planning is also a requirement stipulated by EU directives and international conventions (e.g. Council of Europe 2001 and Aarhus Convention 1998).

### 4 What research and information is available on *Participation* in transport planning?

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 many cases there is requirement to consult on transport plans (see for instance Department for Transport 2009). As noted by researchers such as Bickerstaff and Walker (2001) there is significant activity on participation taking place, and in some cases there has been “partial success in developing carefully conceptualised, inclusive, and meaningful participation programmes” (p. 431).

However much of the research indicates the difficulties in conducting effective participation in transport planning. Bickerstaff and Walker (2001) describe the perceptions that public participation is hampered by on one hand, limited opportunities to participate, and on the other by some unwillingness by the public to take part in participation. While not denying the importance of these factors, the authors emphasise that more fundamental are “issues relating to the purpose of

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<sup>1</sup> In Stuttgart, people protested against the huge urban renewal project “Stuttgart21”. In Bucharest, large parts of the historical centre were supposed to be demolished for road construction. Both projects lacked public participation and communication with the public and media.

participation, the management of process and outcomes, and structural conditions which influence individual decisions about taking part” (p. 431). Other studies report similar findings. In these, problems of participation are attributed in some cases to ‘top down’ organisational cultures in which knowledge and understanding of the public, and in many cases of stakeholders, is dismissed by decision-makers. In other cases researchers found that decision-makers are way of participation because they believe that while elected politicians have a democratic mandate, participation is undemocratic since it involves only small sections of the public (or stakeholders) (Booth and Richardson 2001). Questions of the validity of this concern are complex, although perhaps less difficult, where participation is treated as a means of improving knowledge (see further reading).

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)

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).

Stakeholder involvement and citizen participation practices in transport planning vary across European countries and cities. They can be differentiated between countries with formal, mandatory procedures (e.g. Germany) for planning activities and countries without these formal procedures. Some of the European countries (e.g. Belgium) also have extensive experience in innovative participation instruments in complex planning processes.

In CHALLENGE, 31 cities have been surveyed about their participation practices in urban mobility planning. The results revealed that the majority of cities involve stakeholders and citizens; however, the degree of involvement varies. Stakeholders are mostly involved in the identification of transport and mobility problems, but only in few cases in other planning stages (e.g. specifying the vision and objectives, identifying possible solutions). Stakeholders that are commonly involved include public transport providers and sustainable transport NGOs, while retailers and customers are only rarely asked to participate. The survey also showed that the main barriers in involving stakeholders and citizens successfully include the lack of political will, limited financial and personnel capacities, lack of skills, lack of a plan or strategy for participation, low interest and awareness (so called consultation fatigue), an imbalance of stakeholders, difficulties to initiate behavioural change and the lack of participation tradition in Eastern Europe countries.

The survey of 31 cities and also other research show that citizens' interest in participating in SUMP development is rather low. Interest in specific measures, in contrast, is much higher. This phenomenon is known as the "dilemma of participation" (Team Ewen 2010). It reflects that interest of citizens is low in early planning phases when processes are still open and flexible. As soon as planning processes become more concrete and at the same time more inflexible, citizens' interest increases. 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.



CHALLENGE Participation Workshop, July 2013

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The European urban mobility projects GUIDEMAPS (Gaining understanding of improved decision making and participation strategies) and CIVITAS produced manuals and guidance documents which assist in developing and implementing participation strategies and tools (see links below). These projects showed that the involvement of stakeholders is a permanent and long-term activity and that the degree of participation is linked to a variety of factors such as the economic situation, the development of democratic experience as well as to history and culture and to the emancipation of the individuals from the power of government.

The European Commission's CIVITAS initiative seeks to help cities in Europe to develop a new mobility culture focussing on decision-making processes under different cultural, economic and political conditions. A CIVITAS handbook was designed for transport practitioners helping them to involve stakeholders in the planning process (CIVITAS-VANGUARD Project, 2011: Involving Stakeholders: Toolkit on Organising Successful Stakeholder Consultations). The handbook is structured in a six-step strategy illustrated with European city showcases.

1. Specify the issue(s) to be addressed.
2. Identify which stakeholders to involve.
3. Analyse the potential contribution of various stakeholders.
4. Set up an involvement strategy.
5. Consult your stakeholders.
6. Evaluate and follow up.

In the CIVITAS ELAN project, a citizen engagement strategy<sup>2</sup> has been defined and guidelines for the engagements of citizens have been developed (Citizen Engagement in the Field of Mobility – CIVITAS-ELAN Work and Lessons Learned Related to Citizen Engagement). The ELAN model cities all had different starting points with regard to culture, legislation, institutional setups and practices for engaging citizens. The cities of Brno, Zagreb and Ljubljana have practised participation before ELAN;

<sup>2</sup> "Citizen Engagement is a process that enables local people to be part of addressing problems, and involves them in the planning and delivery of innovative solutions to those problems." (CIVITAS 2012a, p 9)

however, these were early attempts rather than comprehensive and strategic participatory approaches. Citizens were informed but neither were their opinions and suggestions taken into account nor were they involved in the decision-making process. Until the ELAN project, citizens had not been engaged in transport planning consultations in these cities.

The handbook “GUIDEMAPS: Successful transport decision-making - A project management and stakeholder engagement handbook” was published by the GUIDEMAPS project in 2004. It addresses transport professionals working in local authorities or transport companies and provides a set of methods, analysis tools and practical decision-making guidelines such as checklists, covering different types of transport schemes and stages of the policy process as well as good practices (GUIDEMAPS Handbook 2004).

In addition to practical advice from hand- and guidebooks, the following examples might serve as guidance and inspiration for other cities:

- The City of Bremen re-launched its Transport Master Plan with a strong participation approach. The main elements of the participation process were a project advisory board, decentralised organised citizens’ forums, a consultation of the regional committee and of the bodies with a statutory consultative role as well as an internet survey/online dialogue. An external consultant was contracted for supporting the entire transport plan’s re-launch through a Europe-wide tender which also included stakeholder and citizen participation.
- The City of Dresden initiated a round table for its “Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan 2025+”, a comprehensive, integrated mobility plan. The role model for the process was the urban development planning process of Berlin conducted some years before. A number of committees were established, 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 neighbours as well as citizens are 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 moderation of the round table by an experienced external moderator is seen to be essential for successful discussions. The city of Magdeburg is now copying the process in Dresden.
- The City of Gent started involving stakeholders in 1990s. In the beginning the communication was one-way – from the city to the citizens, and around 2000 it started



*‘The Living Street’ Project in Gent, 2013  
(Photo Jan Gheldof)*

developing as a two-way communication. Thus, the city began to ask about citizens' opinions on certain projects, e.g. at special designated discussion evenings or through other communication tools. This led to a change in the mind-set of the administration which realised that they do not have the solutions to all problems. The change of mentality of the planners was from "we know what is good for you" to facilitating (not steering) processes. The city administration also needed to learn how to deal with many different opinions. These two processes needed much time to evolve and were difficult to accept. Nowadays, Gent is performing more facilitation rather than steering. The city is now focussing on concepts of strategic niche management co-creation. The example of Gent also shows that support of the political body is essential. In several cases especially in dialogues with business participation would have not been possible without the strong commitment of the mayor.

## 5 How does CH4LLENGE address *Participation*?

A thorough preparation of the stakeholder involvement process is the first challenge in SUMP development. This requires creating clarity on the objectives of participation and determining the best tools and methods. CH4LLENGE's first training workshop (Gent, July 2013) looked at involvement concepts and methods, and discussed participation experiences shared by the nine CH4LLENGE Cities and various Follower Cities. Workshop results are available on the project's website (see Further reading). Further, CH4LLENGE will review existing stakeholder involvement tools and analyse previous experiences with participation processes in the project cities. It will be examined what the goals of participation and instruments were, at what point in the planning process participation took place and who was involved and why. CH4LLENGE will provide a portfolio, based on the cities' experiences, of potentially applicable instruments.

Five of the nine project cities (Brno, Budapest, Krakow and Zagreb) will develop participation strategies with the help of the project's SUMP experts. The strategies will follow the essential steps of the SUMP development process stated in the SUMP Guidelines (see Further reading). Among other aspects, the strategies will identify the stages of plan development where stakeholder involvement is advised and stages where stakeholder involvement should be avoided; they will identify stakeholders to be involved, recommend tools as well as techniques to be applied at different stages and consider the analysis, monitoring and evaluation of involvement.

Subsequently, the CH4LLENGE cities will adopt their participation strategies and put them into practice. In various pilot projects, the cities will apply the participation recommendations, steps, instruments and methods developed for selected stages of SUMP development. The aim is to take relevant steps forward in SUMP development by overcoming barriers to participation. Also the cities of Dresden, Gent, Amiens and the County of West Yorkshire, all having substantial experience in participation already, will improve and fine-tune their involvement processes in CH4LLENGE.

The CH4LLENGE Participation Kit (consisting of a quick-fact brochure, manual and an online learning course) will recapitulate the lessons drawn from the cities' strategies and pilot schemes and the results of the project's training activities to facilitate the take-up of SUMP in Europe.

## 6 Further reading

### *Project results*

CHALLENGE (2013): Participation Workshop Results. <http://www.sump-challenges.eu/content/gent-workshop-participation>

CIVITAS (2011): Involving Stakeholders: Toolkit on Organising Successful Consultations [http://www.eltis.org/docs/tools/Civitas\\_stakeholder\\_consultation\\_brochure.pdf](http://www.eltis.org/docs/tools/Civitas_stakeholder_consultation_brochure.pdf)

CIVITAS (2011): Reaching the Citizen: Toolkit on Effective Communications and Marketing [http://www.eltis.org/docs/tools/CIVITAS\\_toolkit\\_on\\_marketing\\_communications.pdf](http://www.eltis.org/docs/tools/CIVITAS_toolkit_on_marketing_communications.pdf)

CIVITAS (2012a): Citizen Engagement in the field of mobility <http://www.rupprecht-consult.eu/whats-new/news-detail/news/new-civitas-elan-document-citizen-engagement-in-the-field-of-mobility.html>

CIVITAS (2012b): Citizen Engagement Shelf [http://www.civitas.eu/sites/default/files/documents/file/citizen\\_engagement\\_shelf.pdf](http://www.civitas.eu/sites/default/files/documents/file/citizen_engagement_shelf.pdf)

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