



Project Working Group Report

Guidelines & Recommendations

Communication and consultation of local communities,
direct involvement of inhabitants in deprived urban neighbourhoods

Inter-regional Project Working Group meetings
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Content

1. Introduction	4
2. Checklist on the 'participation deal' - a four-step model for effective participation	5
3. STEP 1: Design and plan	7
3.1. Purposes of the participation process	7
3.2. Identifying limitations and opportunities.....	8
3.3. Stakeholder analysis	8
3.4. What resources are available?	10
3.5. Deciding on the indicators of success	11
3.6. Deciding on the process design	11
3.7. Deciding on decision making.....	12
3.8. Deciding on techniques	13
3.9. Guidelines for Step 1: Design and plan	14
4. STEP 2: Prepare and implement	16
4.1. Preparing an action plan for the participation process.....	16
4.2. Deciding who will run the community engagement process	16
4.3. Selecting locations for community engagement events	17
4.4. Difficulties that might be faced during community engagement	17
4.5. Guidelines for Step 2: Prepare and implement	19
5. STEP 3: Feedback and follow up	23
5.1. Give feedback and follow up	23
5.2. How should feedback be given?	23
6. STEP 4: Evaluation and monitoring	25
6.1. What are the benefits of evaluation?.....	25
6.2. What might an evaluation consider?	25
6.3. What kind of evaluation techniques should be applied?.....	27
6.4. Guideline for Step 4: Evaluation and monitoring	27
7. Elements of success for various fields of action	28
7.1. Elements of success for community building	28
7.2. Elements of success for dealing with tokenism	28
7.3. Elements of success for reaching the implementation of participation outcomes	29
7.4. Elements of success for profiling the area.....	30
7.5. Elements of success for involving 'hard to reach groups'.....	30
7.6. Elements of success for establishing learning communities.....	31
7.7. Elements of success for establishing a 'balanced participation deal' ..	31

1. Introduction

The project working group (PWG) on theme II deals with communication, consultation and participation of local communities and direct involvement of inhabitants living in deprived urban neighbourhoods.

The aim of the PWG on theme II is to explore solutions that contribute towards improving the involvement of local communities or stimulate direct citizens' participation in local development initiatives and to identify elements of success of local initiatives/projects that could be transferred to other areas. In a medium-term perspective, this should help to further develop the quality and sustainability of neighbourhood management policies and, through community participation, increase acceptance of specific measures among all inhabitants of deprived neighbourhoods.

This part of the PWG report summarises the most important experience exchanged by the POSEIDON partnership related to theme II.

A dynamic four-step model for effective participation is presented in the first section of this part of the PWG report. The model is based on the 'checklist on a participation deal' and aims to support the preparation and implementation of the POSEIDON pilot projects in particular as well as other participation initiatives in general. The model gives some normative guidelines for the design of participation processes and brings together the most important issues that a 'participation process developer' should consider and clarify before designing and implementing such a process.

The second section of this part covers elements of success for various fields of action that were elaborated during the PWG sessions.

2. Checklist on the 'participation deal' - a four-step model for effective participation

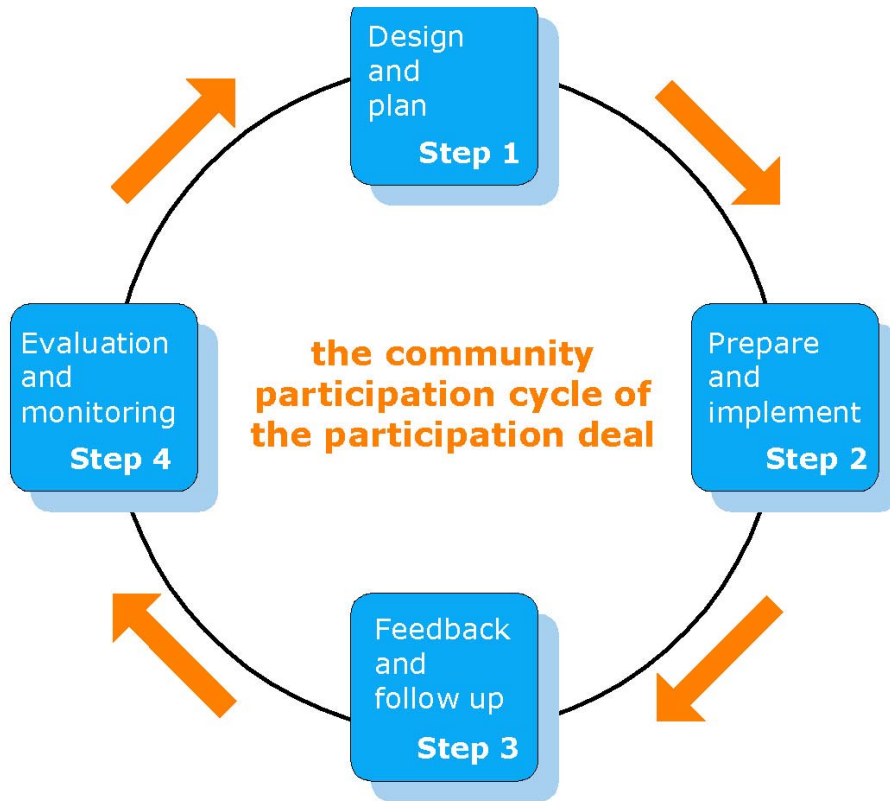
The aim of the 'checklist on the participation deal' is to support the preparation and implementation of the POSEIDON pilot projects in particular as well as other participation initiatives in general. The checklist is addressed to participation promoters and participation managers and is intended to serve as a kind of guide for the design and implementation of participation processes. Since there is no 'right' participation process for all areas, institutional backgrounds and area-specific issues, the checklist just provides a collection of aspects identified as important by the POSEIDON partnership for comprehensive and well-balanced design and implementation of participation processes.

The checklist gives some normative guidelines for the design of participation processes and brings together the most important issues that a 'participation process developer' should consider and clarify before designing and implementing such a process. The 'checklist on the participation deal' is primarily based on the results of the two project working group meetings in Amsterdam and Vienna but also on available literature.¹

The checklist suggests a four-step model for effective community participation in neighbourhood management initiatives. The model is presented as a cycle because community participation processes should have ongoing characteristics and therefore should be regarded as a continuous process.

¹ Compare "Community engagement in the NSW planning system", Department of Planning; Sydney - Australia 2000. <http://www.planning.nsw.gov.au> and Wilcox, D. "The guide for effective participation", Delta Press, Brighton, 1994

Figure 2.1: The community participation cycle of the participation deal





3. STEP 1: Design and plan

3.1. Purposes of the participation process

Clear purposes and objectives are essential for an effective participation process since they shape the process design and the corresponding resources and influence community expectations. Objectives may relate to political issues, empowerment, community building, increasing the quality of local area improvement projects and public relations. Thus participation managers should be clear about the purposes of participation and the issues the participation process will deal with in order to plan and prepare a suitable process to achieve these aims.

Political

It is a political ambition to pursue participation
Participation is used as an instrument to combat social exclusion
Participation is considered to be a right to speak out (part of the democratic system)
To reduce social conflicts
To create a 'better society'
To address sensitive issues

Empowerment

To enable people to solve their own problems
To support people's independence
To increase people's employability
To develop capacities and skills

Community building

To set up (elected) representatives of groups
To make residents responsible for their community/neighbourhood
To develop mechanisms to prevent divided communities
To increase social cohesion
To enable new communities to arise (e.g. in massive urban renewal projects)
To anticipate developments in living environments

Quality

To arrive at a better project/policy

Public Relations

To preserve good relations with stakeholders
To create more support

3.2. Identifying limitations and opportunities

Given the aims of the participation process, a clear estimate of the several potential limitations and opportunities such a process may face will support the development of realistic outputs, objectives, the process design and the underlying participation techniques. Key constraints can be related to financial, political and legal issues.

Financial aspects

- Estimating the budget: who can be helpful in estimating an 'adequate' budget for the participation process? What experience can be built on?
- Funding of the process: will public authorities allocate and guarantee an adequate budget for the participation process?

Political aspects

- Decisions already made: have implicit or explicit decisions already been made on the subject of participation?
- Awareness of the delegation of power: how can awareness of the need for the delegation of power to local residents be increased?
- Support and backing: how will the process be supported and backed by local politicians?
- Tokenism: what methods will decrease the probability that local politicians integrate tokenistic elements into the participation process?
- Commitment to the process: how will political actors commit themselves to support the process and respect and integrate the process outcomes into their local policies and measures?

Legal aspects

- Limitations on the 'free space' for participation: what of relevant legal decisions or legally binding restrictions may influence the direction or the outcome of the participation process?

3.3. Stakeholder analysis

Several factors influence decisions about who to involve in participation processes such as the purpose of the participation process, the nature of the proposal and statutory requirements. Since a participation process should be inclusive, all actors who may be directly or indirectly affected by the outputs of the process as well as all actors interested in the matter and whose involvement is important should be included.

Identification of actors

- Who to integrate: which actors' groups should be involved in the participation process?

The following list provides an overview of actors and actors' groups who should potentially be involved in a participation process:

- landlords who may be affected
- neighbours who may be affected, e.g. next door, those in the visual or noise catchments
- those who might have a cultural, heritage, environmental, recreational, social or economic interest in the proposal
- those who might bring expertise to the process, e.g. scientists, consultants, landscape designers, community workers
- representatives of those groups who might tend to be excluded or under-represented (children and young people, women, older people, people with disabilities, homeless people, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, the local business community and property owners)
- 'communities of interest' whose activities might be affected by a proposal, e.g. cyclists, retailers, road users
- representatives of those with local or regional interests or likely to be positively or negatively affected, e.g.: council(s), local agencies, local business community, regional consultative forums and networks, local government associations, business and tourist organisations, community organisations (environmental groups, school committees, community service organisations), industry groups, infrastructure authorities
- departments of housing, community services, the aged, youth, integration, disability, care and others
- people who have already expressed an interest in the matter
- council community committees e.g. disability access committee
- community activists
- media
- local, federal and national elected representatives.

As can be seen from the above list, the scope of potentially involved actors and actors' groups is rather broad. Because of their diverse resources and capabilities they can make different contributions to local developments and play different roles in the participation process. Participation managers should be aware of this fact and be clear about the different roles and (perhaps hidden) agendas of the involved actors and their main characteristics.

Roles of actors

- What roles should they play: what are the specific roles (rights and possibilities; scopes and limitations; responsibilities) of the different actors' groups?
- Clarity about roles: how will the specific roles and desired contributions of the different actors' groups be communicated to them?
- Is it clear to all involved actors what is in it for them?

Characteristics of actors' groups

- What are the main characteristics of the different actors' groups involved?

3.4. What resources are available?

Inadequate resources can undermine a participation process. It is important to match involvement techniques with available resources. Although participation processes can save money for politicians and public authorities in the long term, they have significant costs (staff, expertise, support materials, equipment etc.) in the short term.

Depending on the participation process, staff running the process might need skills or training in:

- presenting
- facilitating
- interviewing
- negotiating
- conflict resolution
- preparing and using surveys and other information gathering or evaluation methods
- preparing advertising and promotional materials
- handling the media
- recording activities and decisions, preparing reports
- skills for working with specific population groups (e.g. ethnic minorities, the young, elderly, disabled etc.).

Human resources

- Quantity of human resources: does the executive organisation (e.g. local administration) have enough capacity to roll out a participation process?
- Quality of human resources: is the executive organisation (e.g. local administration) sufficiently qualified to roll out a participation process?

Besides the availability of sufficient 'human resources', the main resources required for the process are sufficient funding for several activities and time for running the process.

Funding of the process

- External expertise: will a budget for external expertise (e.g. moderation, facilitators, accompanists, professionals, mediations, inquiries, interpreters, translators etc.) to support the participation process be necessary and available?
- Materials and equipment: will a budget for materials and equipment be necessary and available?
- Bottom-up initiatives: will a budget for bottom-up initiatives (support, accompaniment, rooms etc.) which unexpectedly arise during the participation process be available and necessary?

Time

- Duration of the process: is the duration of the process sufficient to achieve its aims?
- Timeframe: is the timeframe of the project clear and the consequences of the timeframe for participation accepted by all involved actors?

3.5. Deciding on the indicators of success

Measuring the success of a participation process may be difficult since managing participation as a kind of social work is a communicative process with sometimes invisible and/or intangible outputs and results. Success may be measured in terms of output or input indicators but only up to a certain degree. However, in order to establish lessons learned and monitoring processes an indication of elements of success and/or failure seems reasonable, also in terms of justifying such processes to providers of funds (also see STEP 4 – Evaluation and monitoring for a detailed description of this issue).

Indicators of success

- Indicators: how will elements of success and failure be indicated? Who will decide about what indicates success and/or failure?

3.6. Deciding on the process design

An adequate process design is a crucial factor for the success of participation processes. Participation promoters should be aware of the following aspects that should be integrated into the design in order to be comprehensive.

Rung of the ladder of participation

- Rung of the ladder of participation: which rung of the ladder can be reached with the support and the backing of local politicians?

Transparency on purposes and issues

- Transparency on purposes: how will the aims of the participation process of public authorities in terms of potential results and 'top-down demand on issues' be communicated to the involved actors?
- Restrictions on issues: if there are issue-related restrictions or limitations in the process, how will these limitations be communicated to the actors? How will such restrictions be dealt with?
- Flexibility on issues: how will a necessary degree of freedom and flexibility for bottom-up issues be integrated into the

process?

Embedding the participation process

- Institutional setting: how is the participation process embedded in the institutional setting of the area?
- Communicative setting: how is the participation process embedded in the existing endogenous communication potential (e.g. existing community groups, private associations etc.) of the area?

Process flexibility

- Flexibility: is there sufficient flexibility (e.g. time, aims, issues etc.) in the process design for unexpected occurrences during the process (e.g. bottom-up initiatives etc.)?
- Modification of the process: how will a commitment for a modification of the process design be achieved?

3.7. Deciding on decision making

Depending on the rung of the participation ladder that is reached during the involvement of residents, participation processes may include joint decision making by integrating involved actors' groups into the local decision-making process. Joint decision making must be well prepared since it is related to the distribution of power between the involved actors.

Closure of the participation deal

- Who to integrate in the agenda setting: which actors' groups should or can be integrated into the agenda setting of the participation process?
- Who to integrate in the closure: which actors' groups should be integrated into the closure of the participation deal? Who should be integrated into the negotiations for the characteristics of the deal?
- Transparency of the closure process: is it clear for all actors who has the power to close the participation deal? Should it be clear for all actors?

Influence on local decision making

- Possibilities to influence: what are the possibilities of the different actors to influence the decision-making process?
- Balance of power: how will a maximum degree of 'balance of power' between the involved actors be reached?

Transparency on local decision making

- Clarity about the decision-making process: how will the situation be reached where it is clear for all involved actors by whom, when and how decisions are made within the participation process or afterwards?
- Transparency of decision making: how will you guarantee that

the mode of decision making will be transparent for all involved actors?

Outcomes of the decision-making process

- Information about the arguments: how will the involved actors be informed about the main arguments which lead to the specific outcome?
- Information about outcomes: how will the involved actors be informed about the outcomes of the decision-making process?
- Implementation of outcomes: what will happen with the results of the participation process?
- Binding character: is it clear for all actors whether the results of the participation are binding or not and for whom they are binding?

Direct democratic process – representative democratic system

- Linkage: what kind of formal or informal linkage will there be between the decision-making process of the direct democratic participation process and of the representative democratic system?

3.8. Deciding on techniques

The final task of the preparation phase is to decide on techniques to use. Techniques should be selected according to the purposes, the rung of the participation ladder reached, the environment in which engagement is carried out and the money, skills and time available.

The following questions may help to select the appropriate involvement technique:

- Does it match the objectives of the engagement?
- Will it contribute to the desired outcomes?
- Does it take account of the local participatory history?
- Does it suit the political, institutional, social and cultural environment?
- Does it suit the rung of the participation ladder (information, consultation, co-production, joint-government etc.) that should be reached?
- Can it be run properly with the resources available?
- Can it be achieved in the time available?
- If it is being run in-house, will staff have the necessary skills and experience to run it well?
- Is it best to involve the target communities or other interested parties?
- Is it suitable for the stage in the process (e.g. pre-plan, plan making, ongoing monitoring and review)?
- Does it contribute to the overall process (e.g. will the outcomes inform the next action or engagement strategy)?
- What other techniques does it depend on?

Effectiveness and efficiency of the process

- Effectiveness of the process: what kind of involvement techniques or methods match the purposes or objectives of the participation process?
- Efficiency of the process: what kind of involvement approaches lead to a situation where time required for all involved actors is predictable, acceptable and in good proportion to the expected outcomes of the process?

Techniques and actors' groups

- How to outreach and involve: what kind of techniques are suitable to reach out to and involve the members of the different actors' groups?
- Which kind of techniques for involvement are suitable to meet the different requirements for involvement possibilities (e.g. workshops, community meetings, internet, e-mail, festivities etc.) of the different actors' groups?
- Threshold level of engagement: are efforts and methods to reach and integrate different actors in line with the threshold level of engagement?
- Inclusiveness of the process: how is the inclusiveness of the process guaranteed? How are equal opportunities and low threshold levels of engagement for the different actors' groups achieved?

3.9. Guidelines for Step 1: Design and plan

Set small but attainable goals for change

Experience indicates that it is reasonable to set modest but attainable goals for change by participatory initiatives. Small-scale projects are often much more likely to match people's original expectations and abilities and provide a base for further change and enhancement of the capacity of local residents. Smaller projects can also build on existing relationships and local resources while large-scale projects need greater political and financial support and may suffer from accompanying constraints. The scale of a project is also a matter of existing perceptions: a project may be small in the eyes of a local politician but rather large in the perception of local residents.

So good results in small-scale projects may help to

- overcome people's suspicion
- change their expectations of being ignored
- demonstrate that citizen involvement is a practical policy
- show people that they can make a change in their neighbourhood
- provide the base for larger participatory projects.

Build in involvement as a part of the organization structure

Establishing participatory processes outside the structure and the processes of public authorities always includes the risk that their outcomes will not influence their processes and working steps. Participation processes must not be thought of as isolated and external to public authorities' working routines but should be integrated into their existing structures and processes. Participation demands new and different working methods and not only an addition to existing procedures. As far as possible, participation should be connected with the political and administrative process and become a part of it.

Establish a continuing process of involvement

Participation seems to be most effective with continuing processes rather than on-off or sporadic events. Sporadic participation may have elements of short illumination and may arise before local election times with tokenistic elements but does not enhance mutual trust, familiarity, confidence and high qualitative communication between the involved actors' groups. So fixed structures enabling opportunities to influence the development of the neighbourhood which provide access and support for newly involved people is an important aspect for effective involvement.

Establishing a continuing participation process and monitoring routines also enhances continuous learning and the steady modification of applied techniques and working approaches.

Develop appropriate forms and forums

Appropriate forms and forums are very important success factors for effective involvement although it is hard to determine what kind of forms and forums are appropriate in practical terms. Forums can differ in their degree of formality, the size of groups, the communicative setting and other elements. Forms and forums should always be designed according to the specific needs of the area and the people involved. According to experience, forums should build on what is familiar in people's lives.

A very good overview of forms and forums can be found at <http://www.communityplanning.net/>. The website provides many useful involvement techniques and communication settings with checklists and practical examples.

Involve all the key participants and actors' groups concerned

In order to achieve equal representation of the different local interests and be able to integrate them into communication and negotiation on local issues all relevant key actors' groups should be involved in the process. Otherwise existing interest groups will see the outcomes of the participation process as biased and will not reflect the other ones. The involvement of all important stakeholders and interest groups increases the probability that participatory outcomes will be implemented.

Prepare
and
implement
Step 2

4. STEP 2: Prepare and implement

4.1. Preparing an action plan for the participation process

Based on the outcomes of STEP 1, an action plan should formalise the outcomes of the design steps. Such a plan can provide a framework to keep the process on track and enables participation managers to review the process and make adjustments if necessary.

At this stage of the process the following aspects are relevant:

- develop a realistic timetable that takes account of the process and techniques selected and avoids shortcuts
- allow the community sufficient time to become involved and to comment effectively
- allow (where necessary) adequate additional funding for: interpreters and translators, reimbursement of participants, travel costs, other costs associated with enabling people to participate such as child care, carers' support, food, religious/cultural needs
- establish/confirm who has overall responsibility for coordinating community engagement
- establish/confirm who is responsible for individual events and strategies
- aim for consistency with community engagement principles
- identify at the beginning how you will assess success.

4.2. Deciding who will run the community engagement process

In terms of qualifications required, it makes no difference if civil servants or external and independent consultants run the participation process. They will need a number of qualifications and skills (see STEP 1 – 4, what resources are available) and should have a good reputation and a neutral position.

The participation manager

- The equal distance position: how is the existence of an independent and professional participation manager (process manager) with 'equal distance' or 'middle-up-down-position' to the different involved actors' groups guaranteed?
- Contact person: who will be a competent and available contact for the involved actors' groups during the whole process?
- Who will chair meetings, make presentations, welcome participants, answer questions, record proceedings, interview participants, liase with the media, write reports, give feedback to participants, evaluate planning and implementation etc.?

4.3. **Selecting locations for community engagement events**

The selection of locations for community engagement events should follow the principle of inclusiveness. Locations should be appropriate for all involved actors' groups. Locations should be convenient for participants, be easily accessible by public transport and be appropriate for the disabled. Locations should also be regarded as 'neutral territory' and must not intimidate participants.

4.4. **Difficulties that might be faced during community engagement**

Even if community participation processes are properly designed and prepared, they may face a number of difficulties and unforeseen events. Participation managers should be aware of this and be prepared to manage these difficulties in a professional way. In order to do so, the process design and the communication skills of the participation managers should be able to deal with them.

Difficulties and unforeseen events may be related to:

- self-interested or aggressive participants
- participants with unrealistic expectations or inaccurate information
- participants who dominate and don't allow others to speak
- dealing with the 'usual suspects', active participants who may not be representative of the broader community
- assessing the views of the silent majority
- participants who digress from the issue
- participants challenging the constraints of the process e.g. wanting to have more influence on decision making
- distrust/cynicism towards the consultation process
- managing conflicting views within the community
- continuing opposition to a proposal
- managing large numbers of responses
- managing negative/inaccurate media coverage
- demands for further consultation/extensions of timeframes; budget constraints that limit the scope of community engagement
- technical equipment problems
- inappropriate venue (size, location, atmosphere)
- participants unable to attend due to other commitments.

Process management and unforeseen difficulties

- Respecting the process design: how will the process manager ensure that the clear rules, the original commitments and the decision-making procedures of the process are respected by all involved actors throughout the whole involvement process?

- Sustaining a process culture: how will a common commitment to a 'process culture' with fairness and respect (e.g. conversation rules), open knowledge and an open atmosphere be achieved?
- Integration: how will the process manager ensure that all contributions of involved actors are equally integrated into the decision-making process?

In the experience of POSEIDON partners and according to existing literature² the following strategies and approaches may help to anticipate and minimise difficulties and enhance the smooth implementation and running of participation processes:

- decide on strategies to deal with potential conflict, such as:
 - reaching consensus
 - convergence of what can be agreed upon
 - presenting a diversity of viewpoints
- keep the programme as informal and flexible as possible
- build an atmosphere of trust
- develop an understanding that the process is not necessarily about consensus but about negotiation of different views and opinions
- don't judge views or opinions
- begin with tentative ideas/strategies
- take an interest in community views
- avoid an 'us versus them' approach
- recognise that conflict is or may be healthy, creative and productive – at least if there is a good communicative climate
- encourage ownership of the project by all involved parties
- allow enough time for negotiations and discussions - do not rush a process
- express honesty/openness – make it clear nothing is being hidden
- provide alternative methods for people to have their say.

Conflicting situations

- Conflict management: what kind of procedures or methods will be integrated into the participation process in the case of conflict?

² See 'Community Engagement in the NSW Planning System', Department of Planning; Sydney - Australia 2000. <http://www.planning.nsw.gov.au>

4.5. Guidelines for Step 2: Prepare and implement

Clarify the limits of involvement

There will usually be some limits to involvement. Within a participation process these may be related to resources, degrees of freedom in joint decision making, legal and technical restrictions or others. Authorities that start up a participation process should communicate their aims, constraints and the timeframe openly and honestly from the very beginning. Exactly this kind of information gives people a rational choice about whether or not to get involved and reduces the possibility of disappointment.

Clarify what kind of involvement is on offer

Any confusion on the side of participating actors about the kind of involvement may harm the process. Public authorities and participation managers should communicate the level and purpose of involvement (information, consultation, advice, co-production) at the very beginning of the process.

Provide access and support

Community participation processes mostly aim to give people a greater say in the development of their neighbourhoods. To reach this aim, residents must have organisational and political access to participation as well as the personal resources and skills to take part. Providing suitable structures and opportunities for participation without offering support and skills creates a difference between the *actual* and the *formal say* of residents. Public authorities must provide both *access and support* to enable the effective participation of residents.

Supporting residents to enable them to take part in participation processes includes:

- supporting people to come together to work in groups (e.g. moderation, facilitation, locations etc.)
- providing practical support for residents (e.g. childcare, transport etc.);
- improving the practical skills of residents (e.g. presentation techniques etc)
- the personal development of residents (e.g. self-confidence, self-esteem, assertiveness).

Involve people right from the beginning

Involving people in participation processes as early as possible brings a number of advantages. Early participation increases the probability of balanced and effective dialogue between involved actors and enhances the sense of ownership in local developments. In addition, degrees of freedom in local decision making will probably become more limited over time, so an early start increases the number of issues for joint negotiation and decision making. Furthermore, it seems far more difficult

to adopt development processes later because their momentum, dynamics and direction will already be built up and established. Therefore, the longer involvement is delayed, the lower is the probability that a balance of power between involved local actors' groups can be reached. Broad-based participation is more difficult to initiate the longer it is left.

Provide safeguards for people's involvement

In order to avoid residents' statements like, "They ask your opinion and then they go and do what they were going to in the first place," it is important that authorities and participation managers provide safeguards for people's involvement. Otherwise there is a rather high probability that participation becomes tokenistic and lacks credibility.

People's involvement is better safeguarded with strong, public, senior-level process commitment from public authorities in terms of resources, time and delegation of power to local level. Integrating the participation process into the organization structures of public authorities as thoroughly as possible also shows commitment. The provision of adequately skilled and prepared civil servants or participation promoters for running the process should also be mentioned.

Such commitments probably also increase the credibility of the process in the perception of the residents involved. Therefore establishing commitment and the resulting safeguards is an important task for public authorities at the very beginning of a participation process. Otherwise the process will have very little credibility.

It may be especially difficult to establish credibility in areas with an unsuccessful 'participatory history' and the corresponding mistrust among local residents. In such areas public authorities must demonstrate an especially strong commitment to the process.

Credibility can also be enhanced by recording and documenting the process properly and giving feedback to all participants to show how their inputs have influenced the process and its outcomes.

Maximise inclusiveness by providing specific measures for the involvement of 'hard to reach groups'

Especially for community involvement processes in socio-economically deprived neighbourhoods it is essential that the involvement approaches and techniques are as inclusive as possible. Being inclusive means understanding who is likely to be interested in or feel the impact of a particular plan or development and to undertake outreaching and involvement activities that meet the demands of all residents and in particular the so-called 'hard to reach' groups.

Experience indicates that it is necessary to make specific provisions for members of ethnic minority groups and/or groups that have some kind of 'distance' to involvement processes.

Participation managers should be aware of, acknowledge and respect the diversity of residents in terms of cultural codes, language capacities, time restrictions and individual abilities and provide special opportunities and support. Participation managers must therefore have a good understanding of the different communities to be engaged.

Inclusiveness implies aiming for equal accessibility and opportunities for involvement. With respect to this, participation managers should choose a variety of involvement techniques that offer the widest possible opportunities to participate and avoid jargon and technical language. Managers should consider the timing, location and style of involvement events and techniques, as well as the support available to participants (such as translators, childcare, out-of-pocket expenses).

In order to overcome unequal access and opportunities, four kinds of access should be addressed.

- **Physical access to buildings** – ensuring an accessible environment to disabled people and others with limited mobility.
- **Language** – enabling everyone to communicate on equal terms.
- **Psychological access** – the unspoken messages and ‘cultural codes’ and the feelings residents have (sights, sounds, cultural and spatial cues) that tell them whether they are welcome.
- **Time** – involvement meetings at times that suit the needs of all interested residents.

Provide adequate information and communication resources

Community participation in neighbourhood management is about providing communication resources for enhancing local communication and joint decision making. Participation managers should always be aware of the fact that communication is multi-faceted and not just include giving information but also information gathering, information sharing, collaborative discussion and joint decision making.

The clear communication of purposes, possibilities and limitations of the community engagement process and agreement on the basic procedures and mechanisms at the implementation stage helps to avoid false expectations.

As a general rule, communication should be open and honest and participation managers should be accountable to those they are seeking to engage. Since communication is a two-way process of providing accurate and timely information, to achieve credibility it is especially important that participation managers demonstrate that residents' feedback is being heard and integrated into the process.

To communicate effectively with residents experience indicates that information should:

- be of immediate relevance, clear, attractive and brief
- be appropriate to people's abilities, experience, knowledge, language and culture

- take into account the particular needs of members of minority ethnic communities and people with limited literacy skills
- link verbal with written information
- be available from clear contact points
- offer the chance to get to know the information-giver, to develop trust and confidence.

Be flexible and responsive

Besides being clear and transparent for all involved actors' groups, experience indicates that participation processes should be flexible during the course of a process. Timetables may change due to changes in the institutional environment or other delaying factors, and bottom-up initiatives may require a process change. The political environment may also change during the process and a new commitment be necessary.

Flexibility at both the planning and implementation stages seems to contribute to the success of participatory processes. Flexibility means that participation managers should always be prepared to review and revise the way they involve communities during the process. In order to do so managers should select a broad range of techniques that enable different communities or sectors to participate effectively and be able to change techniques during the process if necessary.

5. STEP 3: Feedback and follow up

5.1. Give feedback and follow up

Participation managers should give feedback to the involved actors on a regular basis. Providing feedback reassures participants that their input is being heard and their engagement recognised and integrated into the process, local developments and local projects. Giving appropriate feedback on a regular basis generally increases the level of mutual trust and cooperation between the involved actors.

Feedback seems to be especially important after a decision-making phase but should be given after each engagement activity. Feedback should also cover information about the outcomes of process steps that have already been completed and what will be done with these outcomes. In addition to feedback, participants should also be informed about the next steps in the process in order to be able to plan their engagement in the next involvement activities.

Comprehensive feedback to participants may include:

- acknowledgement of the participants' contribution
- a record of the consultation process
- demonstrable evidence that participants have been heard
- an outline of the decisions made
- a record of how final decisions were reached
- details of the next stages or steps in the process
- a report of the evaluation outcomes.

Feedback

- What kind of feedback structures are integrated into the process to enable mutual learning and to avoid situations of 'communication frustration'?

5.2. How should feedback be given?

In order to provide accurate feedback to participants, participation managers should be aware of a number of principles. As a first rule, participation managers should consider the needs of participants and apply effective techniques to meet these needs (e.g. provide information in community languages). It also seems reasonable to provide feedback in various ways to maximise access for the different actors' groups. The establishment of feedback structures should also be integrated into the design of the process to ensure the availability of sufficient resources for giving feedback.

There is a wide range of feedback techniques, some in written and others in oral form. They also differ in their degree of formality. The kind of

techniques that are appropriate is greatly influenced by existing communication structures in the neighbourhood and the capacities of the local communities.

The following list gives an overview but is far from comprehensive:

- write letters to all participants
- use information desk/stand in public space
- provide summary reports of meetings/workshops
- acknowledge written submissions
- provide telephone hotlines
- hold meetings to relay findings following surveys/polls
- offer discussion/issue papers
- publish newsletters
- use a dedicated community engagement project email group
- establish an interactive website
- use informal communications
- issue final reports.



6. STEP 4: Evaluation and monitoring

6.1. What are the benefits of evaluation?

Continuous evaluation and monitoring of community participation processes has a number of benefits. Evaluation and monitoring helps to clarify whether the process is achieving its aims and to decide which techniques are effective and suitable. The findings of an evaluation process are also important for re-engineering the process structure or changing applied techniques if necessary. In general terms, evaluation and monitoring should be regarded as a tool for institutional learning and organisational development.

The following list provides an overview of valuable aspects of permanent process monitoring and evaluation:³

- know what works and why
- provide input to the current process and how it should be adapted to be more effective as the process unfolds
- assist planning for future community participation programmes
- improve the effectiveness of community participation techniques
- develop appropriate techniques for particular objectives
- develop appropriate techniques for participants with differing needs
- increase community participation skills of staff
- provide information to encourage organisational and senior manager support for community participation and outcomes
- ensure mistakes are not repeated and successes are built on
- record the process and outcomes of the community participation
- provide information on a range of issues that will be valuable to others working in those communities
- review overall processes as well as their components
- assess how community participation affects the issues and processes central to its concern. This may require measuring attitudes or levels of knowledge 'before and after' the community engagement.

6.2. What might an evaluation consider?

Evaluation and monitoring of community participation processes is not an easy challenge. Participation as social work mainly consists of communication and sometimes mainly intangible and even invisible outcomes, which may therefore be hard to 'measure' in quantitative terms. Qualitative rather than quantitative approaches to 'measure' successful outcomes, approaches and techniques therefore seem to be more appropriate.

³ See 'Community engagement in the NSW planning system', Department of Planning; Sydney - Australia 2000. <http://www.planning.nsw.gov.au>

Success and failure

- Lessons learned: what kind of lessons learned tools are integrated into the process?
- Evaluation elements: what kind of evaluation elements should be integrated into the process?

Comprehensive evaluation and monitoring of participation processes should cover the different kinds of outcomes (e.g. plans produced, developments induced in the local communities, empowerment processes induced, communication structures and channels established within the neighbourhood and between the different involved actors' groups etc.), the level of participation reached (information, consultation, co-production, joint government), the influence of engagement on local developments and the evaluation of individual activities and the applied underlying techniques.

Comprehensive monitoring and evaluation may cover the following aspects:

- whether the objectives of the participation were achieved
- how well they were achieved
- which participation techniques drew the highest response rates and the highest level of satisfaction from which participants
- to what extent target groups participated in the community engagement, e.g. in terms of numbers and the range of views expressed
- which techniques were most effective in clearly conveying information and the adequacy of the information
- to what extent participants expressed their views
- how useful was the information obtained
- the impact community participation had on decision making
- adequacy of the timing, funding and other resources
- cost-effectiveness of the participation
- whether participation was representative of a diversity of views; particularly those affected by the issues. If not, why not, and what can be done about it if participants from all target groups were adequately represented, including those identified as having special needs (e.g. people with disabilities, from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds, women, young people, homeless people etc.)
- whether there was an even gender mix
- whether people with special needs (e.g. disabled access, interpreters, child care) considered that their needs were adequately met
- whether people from all participant groups feel that they were listened to and their views adequately recorded.

As is the case for feedback structures, sufficient funding for external evaluation expenses should be integrated into the budget structure of the participation process. Although permanent evaluation costs a significant

amount of money it seems worth establishing comprehensive evaluation approaches. It should be regarded as an investment in future participation processes in order to leave behind 'trial and error' involvement approaches that constitute considerable 'sunk costs' in the long run.

6.3. What kind of evaluation techniques should be applied?

Qualitative evaluation techniques are very broad. The following list gives just a short overview of the most important techniques and methods to gather material that can later be analysed.

Such techniques and methods include:⁴

- surveys by questionnaires (mail, telephone, face-to-face)
 - interviews (structured, semi-structured, in-depth, focus groups)
 - observations to assess the quality of participation (structured, unstructured, participant observation)
 - reviews of process documentation including records of events, issues raised, decisions made, submissions, feedback forms
 - tear off forms with tick box answers
 - process evaluation forms designed to be filled in by key actors in the process
 - self administered testing at the time of engagement i.e. pre- and post-tests to measure changes in responses, knowledge, values
 - informal discussion.
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6.4. Guideline for Step 4: Evaluation and monitoring

Establish structures for continuous learning

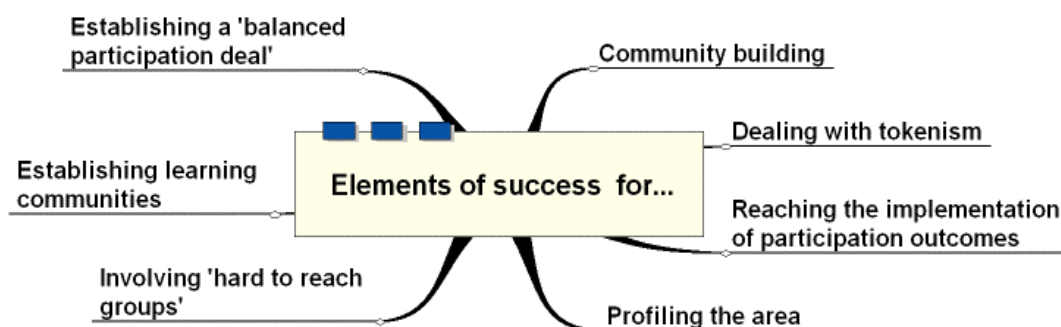
As already noted, 'trial and error' is probably not the best strategy in applying participation techniques. Continuous learning on participation approaches is therefore essential for pushing forward participation techniques. A main task for participation managers is therefore to build on past experience and to acknowledge mistakes in order to learn from them.

One approach to achieve continuous learning is to monitor and evaluate ongoing processes regularly and to modify already applied approaches if necessary. Accompanying monitoring and evaluation can be carried out by an external institution but also by encouraging community feedback on the process itself and on the subject of the participation. The monitoring and evaluation results should be reported back to the institutions that started up the participation process to ensure that the organisation learns from the process.

⁴ See Alston A. and Bowles W. 'Research for Social Workers: An Introduction to Methods', 2nd edition, Routledge, London 2003

7. Elements of success for various fields of action

During the project working group sessions in Amsterdam and Vienna a number of important fields of action related to community participation were identified and discussed. The formulation of success elements for these fields of action was an important result of these sessions. A detailed description of the discussions and corresponding results is given in part A of this report. This section of part C gives an overview of the elements of success identified.



7.1. Elements of success for community building

Enhancing community building by community participation is an important aim for many participation processes. The following elements of success were formulated during the workshop:

- Undertake intensive outreach work to involve not only the 'usual suspects' and the 'traditional leaders'.
- Collect socio-economic data to get an overview of the endogenous potential of the neighbourhood.
- Build up a common vision for the area by exploring common interests (e.g. good education, healthy environment, personal freedom etc.) for enhancing bridging activities.
- Establish low-barrier meeting places for participation.
- Contribute to intercultural and inter-community communication by mediating, translating and bridging between the diverse communities (e.g. organising intercultural activities for translating cultural codes).
- Establish a balanced team of community workers consisting of 'community natives' and 'outsiders'.
- Avoid 'ethnic-budgeting' but supplying money for intercultural activities to reach local community-led bridging activities.

7.2. Elements of success for dealing with tokenism

Tokenistic behaviour of involved actors can seriously harm the progress of participation processes. Formulating strategies and approaches to deal with tokenism is therefore an important task for participation managers. The following elements of success were identified:

- Achieving maximum transparency on:

- the modes of information sharing between involved actors' groups
- the rules of engagement in terms of rights and duties of involved actors' groups
- the rules of decision making within the process
- the rules for spending available funds for the implementation of outcomes of the participation process.
- Participation managers must have an 'equal distance' position and translate the operational and strategic logic of the involved systems.
- Get a public commitment from local politicians to implement accountability and responsibility. Such a commitment should include:
 - the rules of engagement in terms of rights and duties of involved actors' groups
 - the available budgets for the implementation of outcomes
 - the permanent process structure
 - the requirements of representativity for decision making.
- Build in participation as a part of the working structure of city departments and other authorities supplying mainstreaming services.
- Define the advantages of participation and the problems without participation processes.

7.3. Elements of success for reaching the implementation of participation outcomes

According to the POSEIDON partners participation processes are sometimes 'unsuccessful' because their outcomes (e.g. plans for the neighbourhood) are not implemented. This also seriously harms future processes because those involved lose confidence that real change in the neighbourhood can be achieved. The following elements of success for increasing the probability of implementation were identified.

- Achieve balanced cooperation between the involved actors to integrate all different interests in project proposals.
- Establish local partnerships and local networks without losing the responsibility and accountability of the several involved stakeholders.
- Build in involvement and participation as a part of the structure of city departments to induce ownership.
- Induce horizontal cooperation between vertically organised city departments at the beginning of a co-production process.
- Integrate external technical or legal knowledge after the 'fantasy phase' to introduce 'reality checks' and avoid planning loops.
- Undertake public relations and lobbying for the participation process and its outcomes and define the benefits for local politicians in giving their commitment – best done in advance of the process.
- Establish a participation process that is flexible enough to integrate bottom-up initiatives.
- Balanced cooperation, the integration of different interests and a well performed public relations strategy increase the probability that the necessary funding is provided by local politicians.

7.4. Elements of success for profiling the area

The profiling of an area can be an important aim of participation processes. Creating a feeling of 'ownership' among residents for a change in the neighbourhood is also an important field of action in terms of its profile. The following elements of success has been figured out for profiling the area.

- Activate endogenous potential in the area and build on existing resources (e.g. local networks, communicative infrastructure, social infrastructure, history etc.).
- Create a unique label for the different renewal activities in the area (e.g. New Deal for Communities).
- Support bottom-up initiatives – improve the image with local people instead of changing the image and the people (be aware of gentrification).
- Support local communication by improving public spaces, communication infrastructure (e.g. local newspapers or radio), (inter-)cultural projects and festivities.
- Promote existing local institutions and their activities (e.g. cultural associations, museum, recreation areas etc.).
- Establish a residents' board for fostering local communication and establishing 'local ambassadors'.
- Use success stories of local residents as 'role models' (e.g. youth sector, business sector etc.) to show that it is possible to make a real change.
- Regard cultural diversity (if existing) as an asset and create a positive label for diversity.

7.5. Elements of success for involving 'hard to reach groups'

Involving members of the so called 'hard to reach groups' is an important issue for neighbourhood managers. Not reaching these groups results in 'biased' participation processes. The following elements of success were identified for involving hard to reach groups:

- diversity of professional teams (mixed teams)
- make clear 'what's in it for them' (those you would like to participate)
- fluency in local vernaculars
- trustworthy, approachable and flexible people
- networking skills (use official and unofficial networks)
- try to meet people where they are and do not force them to come to you
- form separate female groups, if necessary
- use local radio and television
- communications strategy – continuous
- celebrate success
- know the cultures
- identify common issues

- make use of 'bridgers' and 'bonders' – lifestyle model to identify target groups
- acknowledge and understand the target groups' hesitation and fears of failure (low self-esteem).

7.6. Elements of success for establishing learning communities

Establishing learning communities is an important task for community workers and neighbourhood managers. The concept defines a process of continuous development in which each participant (community members, policy makers, politicians, small businesses etc.) takes up an active attitude towards learning and that all aspects of the planning and development process are interconnected. The following elements of success for establishing learning communities were identified:

- keep focussed on the real work and do not to drift into abstract ideas
- seek what unifies rather than focussing on issues that cause differences
- build from the good and keep it simple
- see that the facilities are in place; a good space is needed;
- act as a real host
- make people feel welcome and appreciated
- attract informal community leaders
- apply tools such as process mapping, storytelling and scenario design. All these tools leave maximum space to individual contributions within a clear framework.

7.7. Elements of success for establishing a 'balanced participation deal'

The term 'participation deal' refers to an agreement between local authority and citizens and should clarify what elements should be dealt with: on what, with whom and when to conclude. As a product, the participation deal should provide transparency on the use of power and the perspective of citizens. Delegation of power and delegation of responsibilities are complementary elements that play an important role in the definition of a participation deal. A participation deal is a process and a product of negotiations. The following elements of success for formulating a balanced participation deal were identified:

- thorough preparation before setting up a participation process facilitates the process
- an open, transparent process is a key element for successful participation
- clear communication makes or breaks the participation process
- manage expectations of different actors in the process
- make clear what's in it for stakeholders/groups to be involved
- monitor and evaluate the process
- try to reveal the characteristics of all involved groups

- run the participation checklist as a tool to design the participation deal.