

# The framework model of the social participation in the process of the local spatial planning

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Different forms of planning and urban design works are used in the process of decision-making on the local level, starting with visions of development, through comprehensive or master plans, finishing with the implemented action plans. Also, various kinds of social participation can be used in the process in spatial planning. The method of participation depends on the range of willingness of the local authority to divide the power and include informing, consultation or placation up to real partnership and delegation of power to citizens. Each form of participation is appropriate for a different situation. Generally, the act of using a specific form of participation in the process of creation of urban design or a planning activity is advisable. This article presents the framework of the model of participation suitable for spatial planning process on the local level. That model would be based on common consensus about the utilization of space. The consensus should be worked out in support of disclosed social and economic interests of important stakeholders from different groups of the local society and the public community as well. It is established using feedback loops on the most important steps of work as a method of gaining the best solution.

**Keywords:** social participation, local spatial planning

## Introduction

The reality is not something that is once consented, but the order of relationships is changing permanently. Nowadays, one can observe a strong transformation of the civilization level and cultural binding norms. The increasing dynamism of development causes changes in availability of resources and in their valuation. In consequence, social relationships are changed. The society has to adapt to suit new conditions. As in society people form groups, in which they work together to gain common benefits, opposite or competitive aspirations to achieve profits bring on conflicts between these different groups [1]. Even an assumption of hostility may be enough to become the source of a conflict. The conflicts may concern different matters [2]. In case of social groups, the most common kind are conflicts of interests, understood as competition for profits or different needs. There are the structural conflicts as a result of a poor organization. And, also, the conflicts around different systems of values of the groups of people. Negative emotions, which arise due to a lack of communication, result in the most difficult kind - the relationships conflict. A prolonged conflict results in its escalation and finally the erosion of social groups bonds. Afterwards, the lost social capital of public confidence is impossible to rebuild. Because of that, one should strive to prevent the conflicts. There are many methods of conflict abatement [3]. The easiest way is to disassemble that the conflict exists. The other method of management is adaptation to the situation for a price of making conces-

sions. It is possible to seek a compromise meant as a solution, when both sides of the conflict renounce a part of their needs, in return for an adequate concession of the other side. Finally, one could try to solve a conflict by treating it as a set of problems, the elimination of which brings common benefits. The two last methods are capable of working out satisfying positions for both sides without any form of domination. In fact, they are forms of participation in the decision-making process. Therefore, participation is a method of removing the natural conflict between the decision-maker and the individuals whom that conflict concerns, as a result of joining in the process of the decision-making. It is a permanent element of social discussion, which serves conflict resolution in a democratic state. Formally, participation constitutes an indispensable element of the planning procedure. It is based on a rule, which says that inhabited environment is functioning better when inhabitants are included actively in making modifications of that environment, according to their needs. However, participation does not guarantee achieving success, but minimizes the number of mistakes. Moreover, it leads to the formation of community as a group of people, who cooperate together for the common goals. Experience shows that the main source of satisfying the needs is not the level of their fulfilment, but the feeling of having influence on the decision-making [4]. But the real social participation in making decisions about the land development planning process requires much deeper involvement of the stakeholders. The aim of this article is to direct the attention to

that part of the planning procedure in which social participation could be advisable in a more active form.

## The participation

There are many levels of social participation in public decision-making [5]. The lowest one is to keep inhabitants informed of authority decisions. Of course, the authority decisions are independent, but the fact that they are given justification may help citizens to accept them. The next level of social participation is consultation. The authority informs citizens about its decision, takes note of social opinions and, finally, may use these opinions to change that decision. The highest level of participation is when the authority cooperates with the society and makes decisions together with inhabitants. In special cases, the power of decision could be delegated from the authority to the social groups, and the decision later checked in respect of legality. Social participation in decision-making is particularly important, when that decision, including spatial development matters, may have some important economic, social, spatial or symbolical influence on citizens. Also, situations in which possessed rights are limited, for example ownership rights, or when the results of these decisions strongly affect one, not the most numerous social group, require social discussion [6]. Participation should be obligatory when it concerns controversial problems for the main part of the society, for example the problem of immigrants. It is necessary to remember, that the interest of the community of state inhabitants must be respected. Individual participants, who build the consensus, have the right to protect their own, particular interest, but the final decision should take public interest into consideration, which also means the interest of people who did not take part in the process of participation. [7]. The starting point for seeking consensus, in the frame of participation procedure, is the disclosure of social and economic interests of the important groups of stakeholders [8]. The stakeholders, that part of the society, whom the results of power decision may concern, can be divided into general four groups [9]:

- individuals – all those who are represents their own interest like inhabitants, owners, users, etc.;
- interest groups – all those who are the representatives of common interest like economic or non-government organizations and religious, citizen or neighbourhood groups;
- public agents, such as employees of public institutions;
- elected officials like mayors, councillors, members of the Parliament.

It is crucial for the participation process to choose such participants, who represent the widest possible spectrum of opinions in potential local conflicts and who take the leading role in an informal social network.

## The planning procedure

In the planning procedure, four general phases can be specified. During phase I, information such as identification of spatial, social, economic problems and potential groups of stakeholders, is collected. The final effect of that phase is definition of the main goals of design works. In phase II, based on the conclusions from phase I, the spatial and functional idea is created. First of all, general guidelines and directions of changes are established and after that, variant solutions are created, of which one may be chosen or a synthetic one may be designed. In the next, phase III, the articulation of spatial local law takes place by drawing the project of plan. The document is discussed with the institutions and public opinions, finally enacted and published. Last but not least, in phase IV the plan is implemented, through the process of infrastructure investment, buying and joining plots etc. There are many kinds of planning works, which concern spatial local development, starting with the vision, through comprehensive plans, finishing with action plans.

In the Polish State law order there are four levels of government administration and only three levels of spatial planning system: national, regional and local. Although citizen participation is guaranteed in the procedure of a local gmina (district) comprehensive plan (*studium uwarunkowań i kierunków zagospodarowania przestrzennego gminy*) and a voivodship (regional) development plan (*plan zagospodarowania przestrzennego województwa*) preparation, there is just one document where the rules of local spatial laws are determined. According to the planning and spatial development act (*Ustawa o planowaniu i zagospodarowaniu przestrzennym, 2003*) [10] only a local master plan (*miejscowy plan zagospodarowania przestrzennego*), including its special form – a local revitalization plan (*miejscowy plan rewitalizacji*) (*Ustawa o rewitalizacji, 2015*) [11], is the place where the social–spatial conflicts could be prevented. Because of that, the following analysis will concern the local master plan procedure. In the formal order of the master plan preparation, the obligatory participation can be conducted at multiple stages. Firstly, in phase I, during the information collection period, which takes no less than 21 days, a citizen has a right to submit motions to the plan. Secondly, in the phase III it is possible to participate in a public discussion during the public 21-days expounding of the plan, and to submit notices to the plan during that period and 14 days after. Between those two phases there is no formal procedure which would serve to include the citizen into the planning procedure, except for a local revitalization plan procedure. In this procedure, a special Revitalization Committee, consisted of different groups of stakeholders, forms an opinion about the concept of the plan. Sometimes, for especially important or difficult master plans, social consultations are conducted. Most fre-

quently, the consultations concern the opinions about various solutions of the plan idea in phase II. Then the citizens have a possibility to voice their opinions about the preferred solution. In phase IV, the city mayor is obligated to prepare a periodical revision of the plan and to assess its level of implementation.

## Discussion

The model of social participation, which formally exists in the phases I and III of the procedure of the local master plan making, including social consultations in phase II, is sometimes not enough to negotiate some matters during a serious social discussion. The citizen submits a motion to the plan, which is then considered and, after many months, receives the answers in form of a finished project of the plan. At that moment, introduction of any changes into the plan resulting from citizen notices, is much costlier than it would be during phase II. Moreover, the consideration of citizen notices to the plan, after public expounding of the project, is in fact a power decision without any social discussion. That procedure works accurately for a plan with a small number of complications, where the solutions are obvious. For a land with more problematic situations, where social conflicts are likely to arise, even social consultations may turn out insufficient to prevent them. In such situations, inclusion of representatives of the groups of stakeholders in early phases of the plan is advisable. In phase I, when information is collected, it seems to be favourable to include stakeholders into the process of defining the main goals of planning and determining the priority of the design works. In phase II, when the spatial idea is created, it is important to determine general guidelines and check, which of the variant solutions is the most favourable. In phase III, the existing formal way of participation consisting of the public expounding of the plan, the public discussion, and collecting the citizen opinions and notices, seems to be enough. In phase IV, the implementation of the plan, it is necessary to introduce some social form of monitoring the realization of the spatial plan, besides the periodical revision.

In a situation, when the plan concerns an expensive investment, which demands collaboration of many subjects of the political environment or which are important for local development, it is crucial to gather the most important stakeholders and bring them together into a community with common goals. The best time for such action is phase II, when general decisions about the priorities are taken. That kind of deeper participation may assume the form of dynamic planning, which means the method of achieving the planning consensus as a result of a series of feedback loops of workshop meetings between a multidisciplinary team of professionals and the stakeholders, for example in the form of *charrette* [12]. In such way, the design ideas are reviewed fast and repeatedly. The achieved solution ensures creating a holistic plan accepted by the major-

ity. A good example supporting the opinion about the need for stronger citizen participation in the planning procedure, is the case study of the Jazdow housing estate in the centre of Warsaw. The estate has been constructed in 1945 for the employees of Warsaw Reconstruction Office. In 2012, when the City started preparing the plan project, the estate consisted of 27 wooden cottages, from which 14 houses were empty. In 2013, when the public expounding of the project was taking place (phase III), inhabitants of the estate and city activist groups protested against the idea of creating an embassy district in that place. In answer, in 2014, the local authority conducted social consultations. From 1800 of volunteers, a group of 80 was selected, who represented very different citizen groups (inhabitants, neighbourhood units citizens, professionals). This group was divided into 6 homogeneous teams, which were called: hosts, neighbours, Warsaw citizens connected and unconnected with the place, experts and visionaries [13]. Each of the teams prepared a concept of changes of the area. Then, a group of elected representatives of each team made one common idea of future functional and spatial development of the Jazdow estate, which would constitute guidelines for a new plan. Nowadays, in 2017, after 5 years, the works of local master plan of that area are continued, on the basis of those final guidelines.

It should be emphasized that citizen participation has existed since towns were established and it has had the form of an indirect democracy – a town council. The elected representative of a town district casts the vote on a spatial solution in a plan and creates new local law. There is a question about the size of a group of people, for whom that system works effectively and allows any citizen to have an influence on the process of decision-making. Paul Goodman proposed a rule, that no citizen should be more than two friends away from the highest member of the local unit [14]. Assuming that to be true, everyone knows about 8 – 12 people in their local community, optimal size of a political community would be between  $8^3$  and  $12^3$  (512 – 1728) households or 2000 – 7000 inhabitants. That size of community means a really small town or a neighbourhood unit which has an area of 15- 30 ha. For such pieces of land, citizen participation in the form of indirect democracy could be effective because of individual contacts between the community members without using any other forms of participation. In Poland in 2014, one representative was elected on average by: 250 active citizens to a gmina (district) council, 1375 a. cit. to a powiat (county) council, 2200 a. cit. to a city with powiat status council, but by 21500 a. cit. to a regional (voivodship) council [15]. Assuming that the size of an effective decision-making team could not be bigger than 8-10 people, a group of 10 representatives has a mandate to decide about 20 000 households (70 000 inhabitants) of a city and about 2 500 households (9000 inhabitants) of a gmina. But 1231 from 2479 gminas (districts) have less than 7500 inhabitants.

Also 25% cities with powiat status (17 from 66) have less than 75 000 inh. Because of that, it seems that the major part of local spatial conflicts in gminas or small towns could be solved by using a traditional form of participation – by negotiation with members of gmina, town or city councils.

## Conclusion

Citizen participation is a permanent element of the legal planning procedure. According to the planning and spatial development act, it takes the form of information or, more rarely, consultation. But in certain situations, participation should achieve the level of partnership in the decision-making process. The fast and the best, but the most expensive solution of participation in spatial planning, seems to be the formula of dynamic planning, in which all groups of stakeholders are involved. Citizen participation should take place in all the phases of the planning procedure, but especially in the phase of the creation of the plan idea. The effectiveness of the process of citizen participation depends on multiple conditions [16]. First of all, the society should be willing to cooperate. Secondly, the participation process should be prepared and managed appropriately. All the important stakeholders must be involved in the process, not only random inhabitants. Finally, all the works should have some clearly visible sense and a possibility of implementation. For that, simultaneously with preparation of the participation process, an implementation plan must be prepared. The possibility of making decisions about one's surrounding environment is one of the basic human needs and constitutes one's feeling of freedom. The show of respect for those needs allows to build, from inhabitants of a common space, a civil society.

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