“FIRST LIFE, THEN SPACES, THEN BUILDINGS – THE OTHER WAY AROUND NEVER WORKS.”

Jan Gehl
Prague Institute of Planning and Development (IPR Prague)

An executive summary of the Participation Handbook of the City of Prague:

1. A step-by-step guide to participatory planning

2. Presentation of the role of the Participation Office of IPR Prague
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IPR PRAGUE

The Prague Institute of Planning and Development (IPR Prague) is in charge of developing conceptual plans for the city’s architecture, urbanism, development and planning. It is an organization funded by the City of Prague. IPR has 250 full-time employees and represents the city in spatial planning issues. IPR also prepares the Strategic Plan, Land-Use Plan, organizes architectural competitions for new street design, revitalization of brownfields, traffic and infrastructure systems and any other city plans. Last but not least, it is responsible for implementing participatory planning approach across the City of Prague.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION OFFICE

The Public Participation Office was set up in January 2015 as a response to the growing demand for involving citizens in planning. Up until 2015, public participation had a long (if somewhat limited) tradition within the NGO sector as well as with some of the more progressive municipal districts. However, most of the public participation events were designed in the form of protest against new development – sometimes justifiably but more often the protests were against the perceived closeness of Prague’s planning institutions. The first goal of the new Participation Office was to transform the protest-driven energy into a constructive debate about the city’s future. As anyone familiar with urban planning can imagine, this was and still is a long-term agenda rather than something that could be solved overnight.

The second problem was that there did not exist a unified source of participatory planning know-how. In line with the Prague Strategic Plan, the second goal of the Public Participation Office was to consolidate the existing know-how and create a source of information available to the municipal institutions and districts. This is why we have created the Participation Handbook (only available in Czech). At the moment, we are in the process of upgrading it into a web-based application with video-tutorials and downloadable info-packs and other useful tools. We have also developed a training programme for the employees of the City of Prague, its 57 districts and other municipal institutions. Thanks to this effort, participatory planning is gradually becoming a standard approach to the revitalisation of public spaces and large redevelopment sites across the city.

PARTICIPATION HANDBOOK (MANUÁL PARTICIPACE)

Before we started writing the Participation Handbook, we needed to understand the specific post-socialist planning context of Prague. Therefore, we started with a research of selected municipal districts, focusing on their experience with participation. We then supported our findings by studying the existing manuals and handbooks from Vienna, Berlin, London and other cities. Once the Handbook was finished, we tested our findings on dozens of pilot projects (three of them are described further).
The Handbook focused on providing a step-by-step guide to participatory planning, which is briefly explained below in Part A. The most valuable part of the Handbook are Model Scenarios for various types of participatory planning projects such as the revitalization of public spaces, revitalization of brownfields, change of the Land Use Plan and other large planning and development projects (Part B). The last part of the manual describes 22 methods of participatory planning (Part C) from common methods (such as the neighbourhood planning meeting or sociological survey) to the more progressive (such as the World Café or Visioning Workshop).

Parallel to writing the Handbook we have tested the principles promoted in the Handbook on real ‘pilot projects’. This hands-on experience has allowed IPR Prague to advance the knowledge of the specific post-socialist planning context and find out which participation methods work better than others and why. We have learned about the various pitfalls of participatory planning, ranging from the necessity of having a unanimous political support for participation to some detailed aspects of organising events, crafting an efficient communication strategy and helping the results of the planning process materialize into real changes in the city. Throughout 2018, we are planning to upgrade the Participation Handbook and create an interactive e-tool; a web version with videos and other online tools.
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION: WHY PARTICIPATORY PLANNING?

A high-quality planning process starts with an in-depth analysis of all the planning layers of a particular locality – geology, water, natural networks, traffic, streets and buildings. We use an infinite collection of planning norms and guidelines that help us plan the city in line with legal and technical requirements. However, these norms and guidelines can remove us from the most important aspect of city planning: people. They can remove us from the layer of human interaction, of the human understanding of place and space.

By allowing interaction with current and future users of the development or locality, participatory planning helps us understand how people understand the place, how they use it (or how they wish to use it), how it forms their experience of the city and how it impacts their quality of life. In other words, participatory planning is nothing less than user-centred planning. Last but not least, participatory planning provides the crucial platform for discussion between investors, developers, city officials, inhabitants and all other stakeholders. If the process is well planned and facilitated, it helps settle conflicts that may threaten the viability of the project while making sure the (re)development serves its purpose; improving the quality of life of the inhabitants and visitors of the city.
PART A

A STEP BY STEP GUIDE TO PARTICIPATORY PLANNING
Before you start planning the participation process, it is best to identify the opportunities and risks of participation. Apart from serving as a guideline on what to focus on during the planning process (goals and risks), it can serve as a useful argumentation basis for promoting the participatory planning approach with politicians, investors and developers.

TYPICAL OPPORTUNITIES OF PARTICIPATORY PLANNING PROCESS

- Use of local knowledge for planning purposes
- Early discovery of potential conflicts
- Improved legitimacy and acceptance of planning projects
- Better sense of belonging to a place
- Better dialogue between citizens, experts and politicians, improvement of democratic skills

TYPICAL RISKS OF PARTICIPATORY PLANNING PROCESS

- Representativeness
- Efficiency
- Abuse for particular interests:
  - Ideological
  - Political
  - Economic
  - NIMBY

Once you have identified the opportunities and risks, check whether you can tick the boxes of the following prerequisites.
1. PREREQUISITES

DO YOU HAVE SUFFICIENT POLITICAL SUPPORT?

It is imperative for any participatory planning process to be backed by (local) politicians. Lack of political support can threaten the project.

CAN THE OUTCOMES OF PARTICIPATION ACTUALLY INFLUENCE THE PROJECT?

Another necessary box to tick off is to make sure that the outcomes of the participatory planning process can actually be implemented in project documentation and further in the actual construction of the project. The only way to secure this is by gaining the agreement of the key stakeholders, especially the investor.

IS THE PUBLIC INTERESTED IN THE PROJECT? (DOES THE PUBLIC HAVE A STAKE IN THE PROJECT?)

A logical but sometimes omitted condition. If you are building something that the public is not interested in or something that the public considers automatic (such as a water-treatment facility far away from the city), you can save money and people’s time by not involving them in the planning process.

DO YOU HAVE AVAILABLE FINANCIAL AND HUMAN RESOURCES FOR THE PARTICIPATORY PLANNING PROCESS?

Another condition that is often underestimated. Do make sure you have enough resources and that the key stakeholders (especially investors) are willing to spend money and time on the participatory planning effort.

Once you have fulfilled the above four prerequisites, you can start analysing who are the participants, the scope, goals and context of participatory planning.
2. WHO IS PARTICIPATING?

Identify the key stakeholders, actors and target groups. The goal of this exercise is to create a network analysis of people and institutions who will take part in the process and who you are planning to involve. A good start is the socio-anthropological research of the locality and qualitative sociological research (semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders and important local actors).

The network analysis should give an answer as to who are the local stakeholders, actors, users and what are their motivations and relationships.

**Key stakeholders** = people and institutions who are essential to the planning process:
- Investors
- Owners
- Planning authorities
- Management institutions
- Politicians

**Important actors of the planning process** = people and institutions who actively participate in the planning process. The typical members of this group are:
- Local opinion-makers and civic leaders
- Local NGOs
- Neighbourhood associations
- Active citizens, business persons, etc.

**User groups** = people and institutions who do not actively participate but who should be involved. Typically, they include:
- Local residents
- Visitors and tourists
- Any other users of the place (schoolkids, users of parks, cyclists, etc.)

**Grey area**
You will never be able to involve everyone but the key is to involve a representative sample of the target population.

Before involving the user groups, it is imperative to facilitate an AGREEMENT about the SCOPE, GOALS and basic properties of the planning process among the key stakeholders and important actors. This will greatly decrease the probability of the collapse of the planning process in the future.
3. SCOPE OF PARTICIPATION

The most important step in the process. Define the themes and issues that the public can actually influence. The scope is defined by technical, legislative or financial limits. You should never engage the public beyond the limits of the agreed scope of participation. This condition may seem harsh at first sight but it is necessary. For example, when you are engaging the public in street redesign and you know that the underground infrastructure networks (i.e. sewers and cables) do not allow for the planting of new trees, you need to exclude the trees from the participation topics (or negotiate the relaying of the underground networks with the investor).

4. GOALS OF PARTICIPATORY PLANNING

The goals of participatory planning are not the project goals but instead the reasons why we involve the public. The definition of goals helps the planner with selecting the appropriate methods of the participatory planning process.

The participation goals can be following:

- Informing about the planning process
- Analysing needs of the users
- Getting feedback to a proposal
- Co-creating a proposal
- Mediation of conflict
- Capacity building, improving democratic skills
5. IDENTIFY THE CONTEXT

Each and every locality has a history pre-defining any new planning projects in the area. When you begin a new project you should map the past development history of the area, especially the involvement of the public and media, the history of local disputes and attitudes of important politicians and institutions. You should also understand the legal planning framework as well as the past resolutions of the City (or District) Council.

Once you have identified who is participating (the network analysis) and once you have defined the scope, goals and context of the participatory planning process by reaching an agreement among the stakeholders, you can start planning the actual participatory planning process.

6. SELECT METHODS

In order to create your own participatory planning process, you need to identify the most relevant participatory methods. Furthermore, the model scenarios in Part B describe which methods are most relevant for specific planning scenarios. Methods are then described in Part C (which includes more information on this topic).

7. CREATE COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

A good communication strategy logically linked with the project schedule is an important part of planning and absolutely essential when involving the public in the process. An example of communication strategy is part of every model scenario.

8. CREATE PROJECT SCHEDULE AND BUDGET

The budget should be realistic and reflect the scale of the planned development. Decide whether you will need external suppliers and plan the budget accordingly.
PART B

MODEL SCENARIOS
The aim of Model Scenarios is to demonstrate which types of planning processes and project planning in Prague should include participatory processes. They show how you may include the results of participatory processes within the baseline analysis for local planning documentation.

The Model Scenarios are not designed as a strict guideline. Quite the opposite; they serve merely as an inspiration or a loose guideline that should always be tailored to a local context. Since the scenarios are tailored to the specific context of Prague planning regulations, we have not included them in this summary. Instead, we have included 3 real planning examples of projects recently carried out by IPR Prague that were designed based on these Model Scenarios.
PART C

METHODS
The last part of the Participation Handbook describes 22 methods of participation. For the purposes of this Executive Summary we have chosen not to translate any of them since we believe that any urban planner is well acquainted with them. We have only included the table below listing all the methods included in the manual and their recommended use for different situations and goals. The table also divides the methods into categories by the level of public involvement.
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The level of public involvement (the extent to which we want the public to participate) has been described in many forms as a participation ladder (e.g. Arnstein 1969). Some authors believe that the higher you aim within the participation ladder, the better the outcome. Based on the experience we have gained carrying out participatory planning projects in Prague, we do not share this view. Put simply, the participation methods should be tailored to the specific (local) context. Sometimes it is enough just to inform people or consult the result, sometimes it may be better to hand over control of the project to the local community. Burdening a community with too much control of the project when the community is not ready creates more damage than not involving the community at all.

Participation is not a singular event or method, but instead a continuous process of participatory activities. Some simple methods cannot be considered as participation per se (e.g. informing about the early stages of public space revitalization). Still, they are vital precursors for a more thorough involvement of the public in later stages (e.g. gathering propositions and consulting the revitalization of public space).
EXAMPLES OF PARTICIPATORY PLANNING PROJECTS

VINOHRADSKÁ – PUBLIC SPACE PILOT PROJECT

SMÍCHOV CITY – BROWNFIELD REDEVELOPMENT PILOT PROJECT

VYBÍRALKA – HOUSING ESTATE PILOT PROJECT
URBAN STREET DESIGN

WHAT WE TRIED TO ACHIEVE

Vinořadská is a major 3.2 km-long Prague commercial street adjacent to the city centre (Wenceslas Square). Today the public space is impeded by high volumes of traffic and less than ideal conditions for pedestrians.

The city's public transport company planned to revitalise the tramway tracks on Vinořadská Street, which opened up the possibility of coordinating the revitalisation works and create a whole new design concept of the street. The role of IPR Prague was to prepare the urban design concept and coordinate all of the stakeholders (local districts, the City Hall, Public Transport Company, etc.). The overall goal was to improve conditions for pedestrians, to optimise the tramway traffic, and to optimise the street profile for a more balanced transit mix (pedestrians, trams, bicycles, cars).

GOALS OF PARTICIPATORY PLANNING

At the same time the Vinořadská revitalisation was the first project involving public participation and coordination of city institutions on this scale. The main goal of participatory planning was to identify the needs of the users of the street and, later on, consult the proposed urban design. Secondary goals included improving the trust between the citizens and the public administration as well as educating citizens about planning processes.
PROJECT PROCESS

JAN 2015 → Initial negotiations with key stakeholders

FEB 2015 → Analysis
  - Online and paper survey
  - Community mapping
  - Urban Walks / cycle rides

MAR 2015 → First draft and negotiations with key stakeholders

MAY 2015 → Public consultation
  - Consultation stands
  - Exhibition in public space

AUG 2015 → Final negotiations and finalising design concept
The participation consisted of two main parts:

1. IDENTIFICATION OF THE USERS’ NEEDS
   The methods used for identifying the users’ needs were: urban walks, community mapping as well as an online and paper questionnaire. These methods enabled us to identify the needs of diverse types of users by gaining qualitative data that were then supported with quantitative data.

2. CONSULTING THE DESIGN WITH THE PUBLIC
   For the consultation process, we have presented a draft of the design concept to citizens, who could submit their feedback both online and offline. The concept was presented at a consultation stand located at three different locations on Vinohradská Street, where the visitors could discuss the concept with its creators. Further exhibition panels were placed all along Vinohradská Street.

BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES

   The participation process provided valuable input for the urban design concept and achieved the goal of raising awareness about participation and urban planning.

   What we found challenging was mapping and reaching all the target users; the main reason was that we did not carry out a thorough network analysis in order to identify all the potential users and to make use of all communication channels. This was a precious lesson that helped us improve the participatory planning processes later on.

   The construction process will start in 2019 and should be finished in 2020.
Urban Design Concept for Vinohradská street
Participation in numbers

User needs analysis

[Diagram showing various user needs]

Draft consultation

[Diagram showing consultation process]

Photo of people participating in the consultation

Photo of the street with people involved in the urban design concept
BROWNFIELD REDEVELOPMENT PROJECT

WHAT WE TRIED TO ACHIEVE

The area designated for the Smíchov City project is located at the site of the former freight railway station. This brownfield, spread over almost 20 hectares, is one of the most promising sites in Prague with a great potential for transformation. Due to its lucrative location between two metro stations, Na Knížecí and Smíchovské nádraží, a new municipal district has been planned here, which aims to create a new and modern centre for Smíchov in the 21st century.

THE SMÍCHOV CITY PROJECT IN BRIEF:

‣ approx. 20 hectares of modern urban development
‣ 3,300 new inhabitants
‣ administrative buildings and civic amenities offering around
‣ 9,000 new jobs
‣ 40% of the site will be built up
‣ 60% of the site has been set aside for public spaces and green areas (parks, streets) and private areas (interior courtyards)
‣ a new pedestrian boulevard connecting Na Knížecí Square and the Smíchov station transport terminal
‣ two new parks and
‣ a new modern school for 500 pupils with a playground and running track
‣ a quiet neighbourhood connecting parts of Smíchov that have long been divided by a fence and the railway tracks
‣ the district has been designed as a “city of short distances” (the Smart Cities agenda), where everything is within walking distance or within easy reach by public transport
‣ a new cycling route connecting the Railway Bridge and Radlická Street as well as a quiet cycling path along the new boulevard
‣ upgrading the adjacent tram lines and a new bus stop within the site
‣ a new multi-modal transport terminal at the level of today’s Smíchov station, which should combine public transport (bus, metro and tram lines), local trains, a high-speed train (Prague-Munich), P+R, bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure
Due to the large scope of the development and the planned multi-modal transport terminal and surrounding transport infrastructure, we have decided that we will completely exclude the decisions about basic urban fabric and transport infrastructure from public participation. The urban fabric was designed in cooperation with IPR Praha and respects the existing urban network; the volumes and heights of buildings as well as street grid copies the existing 19th century street grid.

The transport infrastructure of the area is a complicated issue with repercussions over the whole city and beyond. Public participation in the transport realm was seen as counter-productive. Instead, we have made sure to inform the public about the urban fabric and transport plans in-depth through a series of exhibitions and public discussions. As a result, we have focused the participatory planning on two main themes: 1) deficits in the area: local services and amenities, cultural institutions, recreational areas, etc. and 2) the preferred character of public spaces.
OCT 2016 TO MAR 2017 → Initial Phase

Pilot survey
In-depth interviews with local inhabitants, business owners and NGOs
School-children surveys and urban games
Guided Urban Walks with presentations
Indoor exhibition and presentations

APR 2017 TO JUN 2017 → Planning Phase

Large sociological survey (face-to-face, representative)
Online survey
Socio-anthropological survey
Four focus groups with local community
Three community planning meetings
Guided Urban Walks
Two indoor exhibitions at the local district hall

SEP 2017 TO JAN 2018 → Presentation and Consultation

Presentation in Centre for Architecture and Metropolitan Planning (CAMP)
Series of public consultations
Guided Urban Walks

OCT 2019 UP UNTIL 2025 → Construction
PARTICIPATORY PLANNING

The main goal of public involvement was to define the future character of the public spaces (mainly parks and boulevards) and to assess the local needs for additional services (sports, culture, recreation, healthcare, etc.), both commercial and non-commercial. We have chosen a combination of qualitative (in-depth interviews and focus groups) and quantitative methods (surveys) with a great emphasis on thoroughly informing the public about the urban fabric and transport infrastructure.

BENEFITS, CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED

The participatory planning has managed to fulfill its two main goals. Firstly, we have analyzed the needs of the local inhabitants, small businesses and the local district, and via negotiations with the private investor we have reflected them in the project proposals.

Secondly, the 15-month-long information and consultation campaign has alleviated the fears of the local communities from such a massive combination of public investment (multi-modal transport terminal, school, parks, etc.) and private investment (housing and office development). As a result, for the first time in recent history, the Environmental Impact Assessment process has passed without a single objection from the public or NGOs, proving to other investors and developers in the city that a transparent information campaign works miracles.
HOUSING ESTATE PUBLIC SPACE REVITALIZATION

WHAT DID WE TRY TO ACHIEVE

Vy bí ralka is a housing estate locality that is part of the large Černý Most housing estate at the eastern fringe of Prague. The central part of Vy bí ralka is dominated by a large open courtyard with a school, two kindergartens and several playgrounds and sports grounds.

WITHOUT MUCH DIFFERENCE, ALL THE HOUSING ESTATES IN PRAGUE FACE SIMILAR ISSUES:

1. Poor design of public space ("modernist concrete jungle")
2. Poor management and maintenance of the public space
3. Poor offer of leisure/recreational activities in the public space
4. Poor access to services for vulnerable groups: teenagers, the young unemployed, and the elderly
5. Anonymity, low social interaction, low levels of social capital

Over 40% of Prague’s inhabitants live in housing estates, which was the main reason why IPR Prague wanted to test a new, participatory planning process on a typical housing estate locality. We aim to achieve this by improving the quality and usability of public space, improving walkability, humanizing roads and streets as well as optimizing the ecosystem of green spaces. We have also focused on improving the maintenance of the public space as well as the availability of local amenities and outdoor leisure infrastructure.
The whole planning process was defined by an emphasis on placemaking and participatory planning, i.e. to actively involve the inhabitants, users of the public space and stakeholders (such as local non-profits and community-service organizations). One of the most important goals was to unite the local community and find out which services and amenities they lack the most.
**PROJECT PROCESS**

**SEP 2015 TO DEC 2015** → **Initiation Phase**

Engaging the inhabitants in an informal way using a Planning Office Café
“Vybralka25” Festival
Guided Urban Walks

**JAN 2016 TO MAR 2016** → **Analytical Phase**

Dendrology Survey
Analysis of Urban Development
Analysis of Property and Maintenance Plans
Planned-investments Survey
Sociological Survey
(Community) Network Analysis
...etc.

**MAR 2016 TO SEP 2016** → **Planning Phase**

Planning Workshops
Presentations
Exhibition in Public Space
Drafting the Revitalization Plan

**OCT 2016 TO MAR 2017** → **Consultation Phase**

Consultation of the Draft Revitalization Plan with the local community

**OCT 2017** → **Approval by the Prague City Council**

**OCT 2019** → **Construction**
1. INITIATION
At the beginning, we wanted to engage the inhabitants in an informal way. So we created a Planning Office Café, which we used as a base for talking to the public, as a starting point for guided urban walks and for the Vybralka25 Festival celebrating the 25th anniversary of the housing estate.

2. ANALYSES
In order to prepare for the planning phase, a range of analyses was carried out. We also started collecting data using surveys and key stakeholder interviews with the inhabitants, local NGOs, businesspeople and the local district representatives.

3. PLANNING
The planning phase was launched by an exhibition in the public space and another series of neighborhood gatherings. We organized 4 planning meetings, a sociological survey, and interviews with locals (with a focus on excluded groups) as well as planning workshops with school kids. We drafted the Revitalization Plan after we gathered the data.

4. CONSULTATION
In autumn 2016 we started the consultation process with the locals. Originally, it was planned for one month. In the end we spent another 6 months negotiating the details of the Revitalization Plan; all the disputes revolved – traditionally – around parking. In the end, we managed to reach an acceptable consensus and finalized the Revitalization Plan, which was later approved by the City Council.

BENEFITS, CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED
The main benefit was the impact of the planning process on the local community. Despite the initial scepticism, after 18 months of participation the local inhabitants and community leaders became acquainted with the municipal institutions and understood the planning process, resulting in better cooperation between themselves as well as with the municipal institutions.

Another benefit was the participation of the involved institutions; the local municipality, dozens of City institutions and local NGOs all had their say in the design of the area. We do believe that experiencing such a planning process has a positive impact on how the individual stakeholders perceive each other.

The biggest challenge was to align the interests of all the stakeholders without too much of a compromise. This was caused by the initial mistake of setting the scope of the revitalization too loosely. In the end we managed to battle through the consultation process without giving up on the main revitalization goals, but next time we will have to be much more adamant about the scope (limits) of the participation.
NEXT STEPS

Over the past months and year, it has become clear that the Handbook cannot be presented in a printed version alone, but instead should become an **e-tool**: an interactive document that is continuously updated and upgraded along with our growing know-how. For this reason, we are developing a website that will present the contents of the Participation Handbook with toolkits and explanatory videos. The website is called SpoluPraze.cz (= TogetherForPrague) and will also feature information on current projects in which citizens participate. We are planning to launch it in March 2018.

Apart from going online, our goal is to be more offline, i.e. serving as a consultancy and training centre for the municipal districts and other municipal institutions. For this reason, we have developed an 8-hour **training module**. The training takes the participants though the step-by-step guide to participatory planning; from analysing the context to preparing the participation plan to choosing the right methods and organizing public events. The module is open both to political representation and the planners from the municipal districts.

Parallel to training the municipal districts we are conducting a research of their experience and competence in participation. In line with the goals of the Prague Strategic Plan, we plan to create a city-wide **institutional mechanism** for participatory planning; create a structure of employees who are in charge of participation at the City Hall as well as at each of the (larger) districts. The research will also enable us to design new and more specific training modules for the coordinators. The Participation Coordinator Program should be implemented towards the end of 2018.

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