

The process of participatory governance: an analysis of 40 cases

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INTRODUCTION

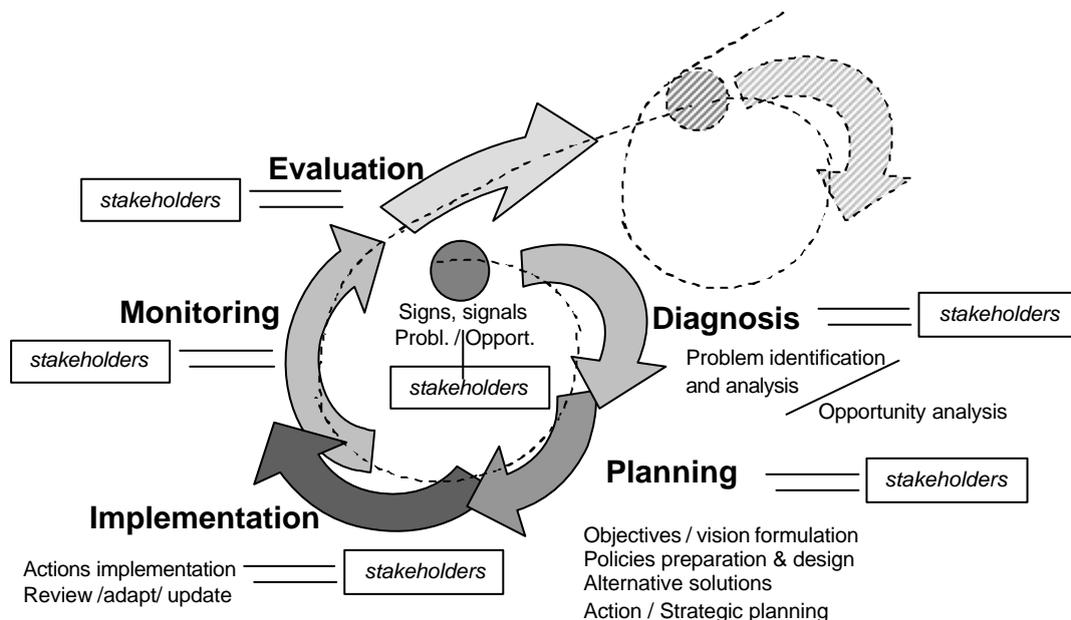
The study presents the methodological aspects of the participation analysed based on elements provided by 40 cases of the Toolkit. To make the cost of participation worthwhile, the process managers need to be sure that the outcomes obtained can help improve public services and development. Therefore, the focus here is on how to plan, prepare, manage and conduct participation activities articulated in a coherent process.

More in detail, will be analyzed further the structure of participation process in the context of intended projects, the phases of participation process with an accent on preparation –and here especially on the relation among objectives, levels and tools of participation- as well as managerial aspects important to consider.

This article incorporates examples from the Toolkit cases as well as other practitioners' experiences when information from the cases was not enough developed to conclude on the methodological aspects intended to detail.

PROCESS

Participation is a MEAN to solve better the community problems or to better use some opportunities, briefly to implement certain programs/projects in more effective, efficient and sustainable way. In such a processes people have to think through what problems they have and /or what they want to achieve, consider some options, and work through what should be done, by whom and with what specific resources to achieve the goal.

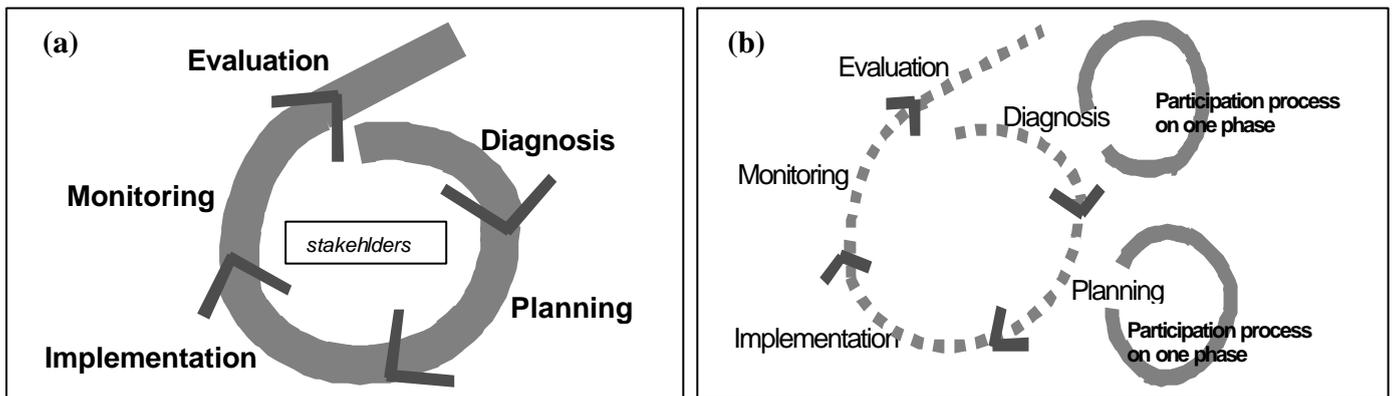


Each of the cases of the toolkit could be assimilated to this cycle or spiral, having specific differentiations in terms of the length of each phase, the moment of stakeholders involvement (or even the moment of their identification) or - in terms of the process organization- the driving force which managed the “spiral development”.

Although the sequence of the phases could be identified in all the cases, it would be interesting to analyse how important is the level of awareness regarding these phases of the process or the process itself. Very few cases show clearly that the process was consciously designed; the majority of experiences seem to describe (or just to mention) the “participation phases” with a retrospective view.

In some cases it is indeed an evidence of a well-planned process and a participatory planned one. Usually such experiences were assisted by an external consultant (person or organization) or the process managers were trained prior to the process or at its the very early stages.

Depending on the moment or duration of the stakeholders’ involvement, the problem solving process (or opportunities using process) could be (a) participatory itself or (b) could have sub-processes of participation on different process phases:



A complex participatory process as scheme (a) could be considered one which involve the stakeholders from the very early stages, in which even the general “spiral” is designed (including responsibilities and time frames) in a participatory way –such as for example Ireland -Dublin Local Agenda 21, Estonia –Tallinn Strategic Planning, The Netherlands – Almere Neighbourhood Company ‘Werk aan de Wijk’ or Peru, Villa El Salvador ‘Creation of a Self-Managed Urban Community’.

Only some of the focus areas require –or is was proved as effectively used- an entire participatory process –and these are oriented on long-term perspectives and strategic approaches. In each of the phases, some stakeholders can participate in various degrees or levels, as it will be analyzed later on.

The citizen could participate in certain project stages, as scheme (b), depending on the project, its needs, the initiator attitude, the time frame, budget, costs/benefits, etc. Many experiences present the citizens involvement just in one phase of the process (ex: in Bangladesh, Union Council in Dankonia Union of Manikgonj, citizens were involved only in the implementation

phase of the Culvert Construction and Reconstruction project) or in several ones (ex: Romania, Brasov –citizens were involved in diagnosis, planning and monitoring).

Stakeholders

Relevant stakeholders are those who are or should be involved in a specific development process, as well as those who are mainly affected by it or involved in related decision making. A stakeholder can be an individual (colleague or citizen), institution (including different departments of government), specific groups or classes of people (such as youth, elders, rich or poor), a neighborhood or even a whole community.

To identify stakeholders, project managers should ask these questions:

- *Who will benefit from the activity?*
- *Who might be adversely affected by the activity?*
- *Who might stand in the way or hinder the activity?*
- *Who might have skills, money or other resources to help carry out the activity?*
- *Who is in the chain of decision making about this activity?*

Parallel with the problem solving process (overlapped totally or just as a sub-process for a certain phase), the participation process itself encompass the following main phases:



Initiation: - the phase at which something triggers the need to involve people, and somebody start to think what that involves.

Preparation: -the period when the initiator thinks through the process, make the first contacts, and agree an approach.

Implementation of participation activities: -the phase in which the participation tools are used.

Continuation: - depending on the level of participation this stage could lead to institutionalization of the participation process, setting up partnerships or initiate other participation processes.

Even participation doesn't run on predetermined tracks and every situation is different, there are some key issues that help the processes in particular phases, important to consider.

PHASES OF THE PARTICIPATION PROCESS

I. Initiation phase

This phase involves several distinct events or steps. First, something happens in the locality that one or more individuals believe deserves a collective response. This *something* could be:

- a serious problem or long standing problem that has become intolerable to an increasing number of concerned citizens - e.g., destroyed areas after civil war in Jintia municipality in Uganda; lack of children's health care in Goris, Armenia; low level of literacy (36%) in Bangladesh; alarming situation of public services in Apartado, Columbia;
- a disaster of community-wide proportion just waiting to happen, e.g., illegally dumped toxic wastes that are beginning to seep into the city's water source;
- a formal request by a group of citizens to support some initiatives –as for example in “Promoting Women Income Generating Activities” in Jinja, Uganda, where the women groups asked for support to improve their organization;
- an authority may promote a project – e.g. in Sweden, “Helsingborg Dialogen” when the mayor promoted introduction of IT, or in North Sydney, Australia, “Precinct System” case where the local council initiated the change of decision-making regulation;
- a campaign of protest or repression of an initiative may be turned into a more collaborative program of action (i.e. Villa el Salvador, Peru).
- government may announce funding is available for community-based projects
- external assistance programs may promote a methodology or may assist a certain field of development (i.e. Nicaragua, El Tuma, “Civic Participation for Local Development” -methodology designed by ODESAR or Tanzania, Mwanza, “Community Participation in Environmental Planning” –process was initiated by United Nations HABITAT);
- an opportunity to exploit an economic advantage which didn't exist until now.

Whether it is a problem or opportunity, it becomes the “triggering” event that motivates one or more persons to call for action. They could be local elected officials, city officers and staff, the governing board of a local non-governmental organization (NGO), the director of a small community-based organization (CBO), a church group, a neighborhood club or individual citizens. It is their awareness that a problem exists or their vision that an opportunity is at hand that takes the local government and community to the point where they believe a participatory process could be helpful.

Participatory processes, whether it is initiated by local government officials, members of a civic organization such as an NGO or CBO, or by one or more citizens, is precipitated by one of two major human attributes: *awareness* and *vision*. These attributes are, in turn, triggered by, respectively, two phenomena: *problems* and *opportunities*.

Problems and Opportunities

Making decisions for solving problems is one of the most important tasks that initiators perform. Seizing opportunities and acting on them, which is also decision making, are two

others. There are some significant differences between problems and opportunities and the thought processes required to address them successfully:

- **Problems** are often oriented toward maintenance (fix it, solve it). By contrast, **opportunities** are focused on something desirable that someone wants to happen.
- **Opportunities** are, nevertheless, problematic. They almost always involve some risk and uncertainty. Is it feasible? Will it work? If it works, will it result in the intended benefits? Will the benefits outweigh the costs? **Problems**, on the other hand, can become more risky and uncertain if they aren't solved.
- **Opportunities** live in the future and the risks must be calculated against a future not always predictable. **Problems** emerge from the past resulting from actions or inactions that have or have not happened. The results of solving problems, or not solving them, is often more predictable. More often than not, today's problems come from yesterday's solutions.
- **Opportunities** require foresight, a vision about what can be. **Problems**, more often than not, require hindsight, determining what went wrong.
- When tapping **opportunities**, the critical question is What if? The most important question when solving **problems** is Why?
- When dealing with **problems**, we seek solutions. With **opportunities**, the search is for benefits.
- **Opportunities** can be ignored. **Problems**, in most cases, cannot or should not be.
- **Problems** when properly diagnosed in a timely manner can be transformed into **opportunities**. Have you ever noticed how eliminating a **problem** in your life suddenly becomes an **opportunity** to move in a different direction?

Whether triggered by problem or by an opportunity, situations are often messy and unclear, with different people and groups having different views of what is going on. In order to move into a planned process of participation, it is important to start asking some key questions as:

1. Who is going to support the process?
2. Who pays? Who administers? Who convenes?
3. What are we trying to achieve through participation?
4. Which are the key interests in the community?
5. Which are the key interests within any organization promoting participation, and what are their attitudes?
6. What level of participation is likely to be appropriate and acceptable?
7. How will we know when we have succeeded?

In some of the cases presented, we can easily identify the entity that start to ask similar questions at the beginning of the project, becoming the "process organizer". Usually, the process organizers are the same as the initiators:

- executive body of local governments(i.e. Romania, Brasov - Citizen Information Center within the city hall); Sweden, Helsingborg -the mayor initiated the using of IT to consult citizens);
- legislative body of local governments (i.e. Australia, Precinct System in North Sydney)
- NGOs (as in Armenia, Goris case);
- central government (i.e. Bangladesh, South Durgapur case)

- a multi-stakeholders “task force” formed at the very beginning (as in City of Mons, Belgium, for example) or even institutionalised one (as in Johannesburg case, South Africa).

There are very few cases in which citizens are also the “process organizers”. Exceptions are the case of Villa El Salvador, Peru, when a municipality was newly created basically by the citizens, or the case of Almere, The Netherlands, where a citizen initiative took the form of an enterprise able to further conduct the process.

In many cases a “process organizer” -different than the initiator- starts to act at the very early stages of the project. This is often the case when the initiators are central government, citizens (individuals or unorganised groups) or external assistance organizations. The central government often offers a framework of a national initiative, citizens usually offer to an authority signals about problems or envision an opportunity, and external assistance programs initiate the process clarifying the local needs and then assist and support the local stakeholders to manage the process. Here are some examples:

-Dublin, Ireland, “LA21”: the initiator was the central government by a national regulation, but a Local Agenda Steering Group was the process organizer;

-Attabui, Ghana, ”Community School”: the initiator was the central government by its Medium Term Planning (MTP) initiative, but the local government decided to have a participatory process and to manage it;

- Nepal, Dhulikhel Municipality –1, Kavre District Gaukhureswar, „Community Forest”: the initiators were the citizens concerned, but then the activities were managed by local government and District Forest Offices;

- Honduras, Yamaranguila, “Strategic Environmental Tool”: the experience was initiated by an external assistance organization (SNV) by promoting a methodology, but a local task force conducted the process.

II. Preparation phase

The next phase is often weakly described by the toolkit cases, unfortunately. But most experienced process organizers agree that 80% of successful participation lies in preparation, and they identify three aspects:

- a) Clarifying the objectives (and the conditions);
- b) Agreeing the approach - a strategy for participation;
- c) Organizing the process management;

At this stage a “task force” to handle the process further is formed, whether formally or informally. As shown in the toolkit cases, this entity concentrates its effort in preparation alone or already together with some key-stakeholders; other stakeholders will be identified during the preparation stage, depending on the agreed objectives, conditions and approach chosen.

a) Clarifying the participation objectives

The key issue is here, what does the initiator / promoter want from the participation process? The most common **participation goals** are:

- Improving the quality of the outcome - the project or program.
- Increasing ownership and the acceptability of the outcome.
- Developing the capabilities of the participants.
- Building working relationships of benefit for the future.

In preparing a participation process, it is important to consider the mix of these desired goals, and whether they are realistic. It would be an important lesson to learn from the presented cases about how exactly the participation goals and then the objectives were formulated –if in a complete ‘aware’ situation (formulated in written way –during a workshop for example) or just unintentionally perceived. Here an important issue is also the degree of agreement on the participation objectives –if there were formulated in a participatory way, recognized and accepted (easily followed further) or - if not formulated clearly at the beginning– how the objectives were revealed during the preparation phase.

But let’s analyse the objectives mentioned on the toolkit collection of experiences. Usually the objectives of the cases presented are formulated at following levels:

- 1) initiative aims –what to be achieved in general by the initiative;
- 2) participation objectives –two types:
 - a) concrete reasons of participation within the project (the value added through participation): improve efficiency of problem-solving, finding diverse solutions, better responding to the needs or demands, better management of resources, better decision making, assure better implementation (increase ownership), etc.
 - b) oriented to improve participation itself or to assure its sustainability: awareness, promotion, education,

The type a) is represented by objectives more oriented on the project/initiative –for a certain period, the type b) being more oriented on the participation process and its sustainability.

Examples:

Type 1) :

- “**to improve the infrastructure** condition of the rural areas” (Bangladesh, Union Council in Dankonia Union of Manikgonj, “Citizens’ participation in the Culvert construction and Reconstruction Project” - 477);
- “**to reduce the levels of crime**, delinquency, drug and alcohol addiction, homelessness and poor health” (Belgium, Mons, “The Security and Society Contract”–604);
- or more general: “**to improve population's life quality** of Apartado Municipality” (Colombia, Apartado, Antioquia Department, “The Administrative and Organic Process by the Apartado Municipality's Population” -504);
- “**to eradicate the high level of illiteracy** that is perceived to be the primary cause of underdevelopment in the area” (Ghana, Atabui, “Community School” –539);
- “**to improve the delivery system in health care**” (India, Indore, “Madhya Pradesh (MP), Rogi KalyanSamity (RKS), Maharaja Yaswant Rao Hospital” -446);
- “**to improve the provision of safe water supply** for Yamumbi community” (Keyna, Eldoret, “Community Participation in the Provision of Safe Water Supplies´-598);
- “**to renovate two market centers** which had been dilapidated during a civil war” (Uganda, Jinja, “Community Centers renovation” –591)

-**“to provide communities from informal settlements with basic infrastructure and a much more habitable environment”** (Zambia, Kitwe, “Urban Self-Help in Informal Settlements” –510)

Type 2) a):

- “to find an appropriate solution and to further implement it** by involving the local authorities into the dialog with citizens” (Armenia, Goris, “Participatory problem solving process for the creation of the children’s Health Care Center” –579)
- “through participation of community people **to provide useful views** in the culvert construction and reconstruction” (Bangladesh, Union Council in Dankonia Union of Manikgonj, “Citizens’ participation in the Culvert construction and Reconstruction Project” – 477);
- “the use of public resources to implement coordinated, preventive actions** to target social and crime-related problems within Mons” (Belgium, Mons, “The Security and Society Contract” –604);
- “involving the community in the provision of school buildings in order **to engender commitment and reduce costs**” (Ghana, Atabui, “Community School” –539);
- “to reach** better inter-institutional **co-ordination** within the municipality” and **“to increase** the environmental **awareness** at all levels -population, municipality council, governmental institutions, NGOs etc.” (Honduras, Yamaranguila, “Strategic Environmental Tool” –605);
- “to ensure regular maintenance in a Govt. hospital with **physical and financial contribution by citizens** [...] This is to compensate Govt's incapacity to provide adequate resources” (India, Indore, ‘Madhya Pradesh (MP), Rogi KalyanSamity (RKS), Maharaja Yaswant Rao Hospital” –446)
- to elaborate a plan that follows the citizens “whish and concerns” (Ireland, Dublin, “Local Agenda 21” –553)
- “to establish a net of international and national relationships **to collect resources**” (Mexico, Zaragoza –Veracruz, “The Civic Participation as Basis of Government's Exercise” –453)
- to increase the effectiveness of the implementation through ownership feeling (“**democratic consensus**”) (Peru, Villa El Salvador, “the Creation of a Self-Managed Urban Community” – 528)
- better decision-making for resource management (Romania, Brasov, “Participatory Budgeting” –586);

Probable the best example of such objectives is the following:

-**“to encourage the residents in identifying safety and security concerns within their precinct and then work out and implement their own solutions”** (Singapore, Tanjong Pagar Township, “Resident's Participation in Community Safety and Security Programme (CSSP)” –518)

or the one formulated very clear and simple:

-**“to engage the community in addressing problems afflicting them”** (Uganda, Jinja Municipal Council - Walikuba and Kakindu Communities, “Community Centres Renovation” –591)

Type 2) b):

-**“to facilitate a participatory approach** that would **engage the entire community** in prioritising and planning the infrastructure projects” (Albania, Tirana, “District 50 Project” – 576)

- “**to awaken the interest** of the locals, no matter their origins, **to participate** in the Practice” (Argentina, San Marco Sierras, Province of Cordoba, “**Social inclusion** of descendants of the Henen peoples in local government” –522)
- “**to represent and exercise the authority** of the community people through involving them” (Bangladesh, Union Council in Dankonia Union of Manikgonj, “Citizens’ participation in the Culvert construction and Reconstruction Project” - 477);
- “**the encouragement of active participation** by the public in initiatives” (Belgium, Mons, “The Security and Society Contract” –604);
- “**to give priority to people's participation, transparency in local matters, democracy, access to information and parcels**” (Brasil, Icapui, “Department of Ceara, Participative Budget Integration” -469);
- “to help the City **to become much more citizen-orientated** in planning processes as well as in the public service delivery” (Estonia, Tallin, “Strategic Planning Process” -581);
- “**to ensure that all sections of the community are empowered to participate in decision making**” (Ireland, Dublin, “Local Agenda 21” –553);
- “**to promote** and to develop the civic participation” (Mexico, Zaragoza-Veracruz, “The Civic Participation as Basis of Government's Exercise” –453);
- “To install citizen participation processes in local management experiences” (Paraguay, Tobati, ‘Strategic Participatory Plan and Local Decentralisation” –567);
- “**to re-institute the concept of public work as a part of citizenship**” (USA, Seattle, “The Seattle Neighborhood Matching Fund Programme” -480);

Of course, very often it is difficult to separate these types of objectives. The participation activities usually lead to an increased education on participatory processes. Very often certain objectives of type b) are used at the beginning of the process in order to facilitate the implementation of the next stages/steps/levels.

Sometimes the type b) of objectives are somehow separated by the ones related to a specific project –that means sometimes some projects are used as pilot application of participatory processes or they are indeed aimed directly to educate the community or local governments on applying these processes. Sometimes it is a needed to formulate separate objectives for education or awareness –because of the specific field, country or region conditions, or initiative characteristics: a pilot limited project or the opposite, a too general subject.

The effort to separate such clusters of objectives is worthy in terms that the level of participation is clearly dictated by the participation objectives.

Based on different practitioners’ experience the following checklist could be used in formulating participation objectives:

- What does the organization want to achieve from the participation process?
- What is the history of the issues, and what are the positions of the various parties?
- What are the limits of the task? What is fixed, and what is still open?
- What is the “real” agenda? Are there any hidden agendas?
- What resources are available? How much time is there?
- What level of participation is appropriate with the different stakeholders?

Objectives formulation:

A project is an action, an activity or a series of actions and activities, which need to be planned and conducted in a clear manner, in order to lead to correct results. A very important stage in creating a program is to set its goal, objectives and outcome measurement indicators.

The aim of a project is the formulation of its general desired results linked with one or more needs of the community, institution or group.

The objectives of a project are the concrete, measurable, (and often all intermediary listed) results to be reached. It is mandatory for each program to have at least one objective – a concrete result to be obtained.

The following criteria must be applied in drafting an objective:

- *to be specific, to establish what needs to be done in as few words as possible;*
- *to establish a final result and not an activity;*
- *to match the wished of a personal organization and group;*
- *to be measurable and time bound, both in value and quantity;*
- *to have a completion term;*
- *to be achievable in the accepted time;*
- *to be under the control of project managers .*

b) Agreeing the approach - a strategy for participation

The precise nature of the participation strategy will depend upon objectives consistent with the circumstances. In this stage a sequence of participation levels is agreed and participation tools start to be prepared consequently. If well formulated, the participation objectives lead immediately to the level of participation sought with different interests.

For example, an objective as “**to provide useful views** in the culvert construction and reconstruction through participation of community people” (Bangladesh, Union Council in Dankonia Union of Manikgonj, “Citizens’ participation in the Culvert construction and Reconstruction Project” - 477) ask for a consultation level; one as “**to use public resources to implement coordinated, preventive actions** to target social and crime-related problems within Mons” (Belgium, Mons, “The Security and Society Contract” –604) means consultation, participatory decision-making or even risk-sharing or self-management. Let’s take a look on the correspondence among objectives –level and tools designed on some of the experiences:

City Region	Country	Name	OBJECTIVES (shortened)	PARTICIPATION LEVELS / TOOLS	TOOLS
Tirana	Albania	District 50 Project	<p>- to prioritise and plan the infrastructure projects through a participatory approach that would engage the entire community;</p> <p>- to provide a transparent and successful process for the implementation of the projects identified by the community;</p> <p>- to encourage the citizens' involvement in decisions; to create sustainable mechanisms at the local level in order to represent the community.</p>	<p>Information Consultation Decision – making.</p> <p><i>The citizens were informed regularly about the progress of work, results, and follow-ups. They've decided the priority of their infrastructure needs. Citizens were consulted and their suggestions were taken into consideration.</i></p>	<p>-Public meeting</p> <p>-Community outreach</p> <p>-(participatory) design (of plans)</p> <p>- Citizen advisory group</p> <p>- Joint project-teams (teamwork)</p>
Goris	Armenia	Participatory problem solving process for the creation of the children's Health Care Center	<p>-to find an appropriate solution and to further implement it by involving the local authorities into the dialog with citizens</p>	<p>Information -through public hearing</p> <p>Consultation and consensus building -public meetings between community representatives, NGO, media, local government.</p> <p>Partnership - joint group for monitoring and evaluation</p>	<p>Public meeting</p> <p>Public hearing</p> <p>Participatory design of plans</p> <p>Citizen advisory group</p>
Union Council in Dankonia Union of Manikgonj	Bangladesh	Citizens' participation in the Culvert construction and Reconstruction Project	<p>- to provide useful views in the culvert construction and reconstruction.</p> <p>-to represent and exercise the authority of the community people through involving them in the PICs as members.</p>	<p>Information - in the public gathering the community people share their problems with the councillors i.e. decision makes of the project.</p> <p>Consultation - i.e. engineers utilise their skill and expertise on the relevant experience.</p> <p>Supervision and sometimes decision making - through the project implementation committee</p>	<p>Collect information and consultation</p> <p>Formation of committee</p> <p>Committee meeting</p> <p>Create scope for income generation</p> <p>Public meeting</p>
Indore	India	Madhya Pradesh (MP), Rogi KalyanSamity (RKS), Maharaja Yaswant Rao Hospital	<p>-to enhance citizen's financial participation in a Government hospital.</p> <p>-to ensure regular maintenance, improved medical facilities, modern equipments in a Govt. hospital with physical and financial contribution by citizens through a committee represented by all sections.</p>	<p><i>Public meetings served to remove misunderstanding, resistance/opposition. It also provided the necessary confirmation. The survey helped check and fine tune the information. Focus group discussions served as forms of consultation and consensus building. They also helped in decision making, risk sharing and partnership. The joint project team (the societies) culminated in self-management.</i></p>	<p>Public meeting (regular)</p> <p>Public hearing</p> <p>Community outreach</p> <p>? Focus group</p> <p>Citizen advisory group</p> <p>Forums</p>

Brasov	Romania	Participatory Budgeting	- to raise citizens awareness and involvement in the local budget development and monitoring, for the prosperity of their community	Workshops - Information, self-management Survey – Consultation Focus groups - Consultation Task force - Self-management, resistance Public meeting - Information, Consultation Questionnaire - Consultation Citizen Advisory Groups - Partnership, consultation, decision-making	Public meeting Community outreach Workshop Focus group Survey Citizen advisory group
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As we can see, for the same level of participation needed, there are different tools that could apply. This is because the local conditions as: tradition, budget/effort/time available, local relations among stakeholders, etc. But if detailed enough, the participation objectives could offer more exact guidance on which participation tool is appropriate to achieve it. For example, an objective as “to gather information on a variety of issues from a large number of citizens” would lead to use a Public Hearing as tool, one as “ to identify the nature and intensity of feeling within a group about a set of issues’ asks for a Focus Group, another objective as “ to stimulate the flow of creative ideas for decision making” requires a Workshop, “inform people about a project and convince them to support it” will be made through a Public Meeting, “solicit input/reaction from time to time from a selected group on work in progress” will be made through Citizen Advisory Groups, etc.

The next table tries to summarize the relation between the participation level required and participation tools that can be used, as a step that should be considered in the stage of choosing the appropriate approach or strategy:

CP TOOLS	LEVELS	Resistance/ Opposition	Give Info (LG)	Collect Info (LG)	Awareness /Education	Consulta tion	Consensus Building	Deciding together	Risk sharing	Partner ship	Self Mgmt
Open House											
Using media											
Public meetings Public hearings											
Community Outreach											
Workshop											
Participatory planning											
Focus group Survey											
Mediation / Negotiation											
Citizen Advisory Group											
Referendum											
Resource Centrum											
Lobby											
Forums											
Joint project-teams											

Explanation:

-  The tool is responding to this level by definition
-  The tool responds to this level as preparation for an upper level
-  The tool could respond to this level depending on the context

The levels listed in the table are modified compared with the ones of cases format due to slight differences or similarities in the corresponding tools:

- the resistance and opposition levels are analysed together;
- the information level is separated into two: give and collect information;
- a level of awareness building and/or education as added as being mentioned often in the toolkit cases.

Unfortunately only few cases provide some information about how the stage of agreeing on the approach and participation strategy was organized. Anyway, what is easy to notice is how important is to clarify what exactly each tool means and how to be prepared. In the analysed cases several participation tools are mentioned with very different understandings.

That is why it is important to overview further some of the participation tools definitions – those often subject of confusion- as they are accepted in general by the experts in the field (and as they are used in the above table) and to point out the examples which respond to this definition as the tools were described in the cases.

Public Meetings and Public Hearings

“Public meetings” and “public hearings” are meetings to exchange information between local government officials and interested citizens. Information exchanges like these can take an almost infinite variety of forms. The “task force” or organizers should approach such meetings creatively, and should choose – or invent – a format that best fits the purpose of the meeting and the needs of the citizens.

Public meetings are the most flexible and informal forums for information exchange between the local government and its citizens. A public meeting is characterized by **an active exchange of ideas**. Some examples of reasons to hold a public meeting:

- to discuss a problem and possible solutions (i.e: Albania, Tirana, “District 50 Project”; Armenia, Goris, “Participatory problem solving process for the creation of the children’s Health Care Center”; Bangladesh, Union Council in Dankonia Union of Manikgonj, “Citizens’ participation in the Culvert construction and Reconstruction Project”; Ghana, Atabui, “Community School”)
- to inform citizens of a proposal or a plan and to provide an opportunity for discussion and exchange of views (i.e.: Ireland, Dublin, “Local Agenda 21”; Romania, Brasov, “Participatory Budgeting”)

Public hearings are usually more formal than public meetings. A public hearing is characterized by **attentive listening** by public officials. A public hearing is usually held when the city has made a plan, has carried out a public information campaign, and is about to make a commitment. The essential characteristic of a public hearing is that it provides an opportunity for officials to **listen and hear** citizens’ views before a final decision is taken. **At**

the hearing, officials listen and usually do not provide answers, so a public hearing is not an opportunity for interactive exchange (compare discussion of public meetings, above). Ideally, it should be the culmination of a process of public consultation that has included a continuing public information campaign, public meetings and perhaps other ways of getting public views such as focus groups, opinion surveys or advisory groups.

Examples would be before the local government signs an agreement regarding an investment, or before a city submits a proposed budget for city council review. In this context, a public hearing allows interested citizens to express their views on the almost final plan and allows local government officials to hear those views and to consider whether the plan needs last-minute modifications.

Focus Groups

Focus groups are facilitated interactive interviews with small groups of citizens. The moderator leads the focus group participants through a set list of questions about a particular subject. The private business sector invented the idea of focus groups in the 1950s as a way to find out customer attitudes and reactions to specific product lines, innovations and advertising campaigns. Focus groups proved to be a very good way to get reliable public opinion information. Since then, focus groups have become widely used in the public sector, education, research and political campaigns.

Citizens are invited to come to a focus group, and only those invited may come – a focus group is not an open meeting. Typically, there are 7 – 12 participants drawn from a particular population or stakeholder group (e.g., schoolteachers, pensioners, residents from a particular homeowner's association, university students, mothers of young children, etc.).

Participants are asked to take part in a discussion that is structured around a pre-set "questioning route." The focus group moderator, or an assistant, makes a written record or summary of the answers. The focus group is repeated several times, using the same questioning route, until no new answers are being heard. At that point, focus group initiators can be reasonably confident that they have complete information about the attitudes and opinions of the participant population on the focus group topic.

Focus groups are a relatively simple, quick and inexpensive way to get citizen feedback. They can be used in a variety of situations, for example:

- Needs assessment – to find out the needs of a specific group.
- Testing – new government services, programs, displays, slogans, prices, rates and fees, billing procedures, etc.
- Service provision/customer satisfaction – can use before, during and after service provision or improvement.
- Survey development – use to test the survey questionnaire

In the analysed cases, the tool "focus group" is usually mentioned characterizing in fact some other tools as: advisory groups (i.e.: Ghana, Atabui, "Community School"; Nicaragua, El Tuma, La Dalia, "Civic Participation for Local Development"; Belgium, Mons, "The 'Security and Society Contract' of the City of Mons, Belgium, to combat social exclusion and crime") *public meetings* (Colombia, Apartado, Antioquia Department, "The Administrative and Organic Process by the Apartado Municipality's Population") or *group discussions* (India,

Indore, “Madhya Pradesh -MP, Rogi KalyanSamity -RKS, “Maharaja Yaswant Rao Hospital”).

The only case containing a detailed explanation about using focus groups is Romania, Brasov, “Participatory Budgeting”, on testing the local government method proposed to allocate the local budget money in the education field (how to share the money among schools): “Two focus groups were organised in order to establish the criteria for allocating the money from the local budget for the education (building repairing and maintenance and capital investments).[...]Each focus group started with a presentation of the money allocation for education. The participants to the focus groups have answered a set of questions that revealed their reaction towards certain intentions concerning the financial and budgeting policy and towards some changes to occur in the schools management for a better co-operation with the local government.”

Citizen Advisory Groups

The use of citizens’ advisory committees, commissions or task forces is to provide ongoing advice to local governments on very many different issues. We will refer to these groups as Citizens’ Advisory Groups -CAGs.

A CAG can be established whenever the local government has a task to do that will benefit from ongoing citizen consultation. The local government must define the task the CAG will do, how many members it will have, how the members will be selected, how long they will serve (commonly between one and five years) and sometimes other matters such as how often the CAG will meet. Usually, the local government provides logistical support for the CAG, such as a meeting place and a staff assistant to make meeting arrangements, assist with agendas, minutes and supplies, and facilitate access to city information.

Members of CAGs are volunteers. They may be selected by the city or chosen by election or self-selected.

CAGs could be organized on specific focus area (environment, local budget, education, local transportation -) or on neighborhoods – when they deal usually with all the neighborhood issues.

Some CAGs are permanent and have ongoing responsibilities that continue from year to year. Other CAGs have a specific and time limited assignment.

An interesting case that describes how two different types of CAGs were used is “The ‘Security and Society Contract’ of the City of Mons, Belgium, to combat social exclusion and crime”:

- Conseil Consultatif de Prévention Intégrée (CCPI) including different “Commissions, made up of selected professional and voluntary members of the CCPI General Meeting. Currently, there are four Commissions: on Health, Schools, Addiction, and Security & Urbanism. The Commissions’ main tasks are: become experts on their subject-matter; send reports, policy recommendations and proposals for specific projects to the CCPI General Meeting; and implement policies and projects decided in the General Meeting. The Commissions meet regularly, at least thrice a year.”
- “Consulting Groups (Groupes de Réflexion): ad hoc temporary groups set up to reflect on specific issues (for ex. Methadon, vandalism, sports) and work out policy proposals.”

Community Outreach

A lot of sub-tools are used in this category, offering a reason to consider it better a kind of participation level. "Community outreach" could encompass tools as: articles in written media, leaflets, exhibitions, TV broadcasts, interviews, public meetings, etc .

For example: "The basis of citizens' participation in the design and execution of the Contracts is information. The Service de Prévention makes extensive use of press conferences, articles in local door-to-door newspapers, informative "Conference-Debates", neighbourhood meetings, posters and efforts to get the media to make radio and television programs on Contract activities. In all of these ways, the Service reaches out to Mons citizens, inviting them to become active." ("The 'Security and Society Contract' of the City of Mons, Belgium, to combat social exclusion and crime") or "Personnel from the district assembly visited the community on the need to take up self-help projects in the course of which the assembly will also come to their aid. The outreach took the form of discussions in which the mechanism for participation in the project were agreed upon." (Community School , Ghana, Atabui)

An interesting and very specific collection of tools that could be included in "community outreach" is offered by 'Citizens Participation in the Total Literacy Movement Programme' Bangladesh, South Durgapur Union of Comilla Sadar Thana: miking (announcing something through loud speakers in the community), drum beating, slide projecting, leaflet/banner, notice, postering / bill board, torch procession, cycle procession, forum, door step visit, street meeting, street drama, cultural programme, courtyard meeting, media.

As conclusion at this stage, it is very important to agree (in an participatory way) on the concrete objectives of participation and their correspondence with the participation levels and tools. This stage it is a decision itself, because it plans the engagement of lot of resources (financial, human, time). It may not be possible to agree everything at the start: some of these issues may have to evolve with the process. But it seems worth the effort to get some action off the ground and work out the details as the process evolves.

c) Organizing the process management

There are several good examples of structures built in place to manage the participation processes. Just mention ones:

- Honduras, Yamaranguila, "Strategic Environmental Tool": a task force/working group formed by international and local experts;
- Ireland, Dublin, "Local Agenda 21": important organizational structure formed by Local Agenda Steering Group, City Development Board and Dublin City Local Agenda 21 Citizen network
- Malaysia, Penang: "The Sustainable Penang Initiative (SPI)" formed by 6 members of the Steering committee and 3 salaried staff
- Uganda, Jinja Municipal Council - Walikuba and Kakindu Communities, "Community Centres Renovation": A Community Centre Rehabilitation Committee was established to manage the implementation of the project. Monitoring and evaluation: The Rehabilitation Committee was transformed into

a permanent Community Centre Management Committee to manage programme development and maintenance of the centres.

The role of the “process managers” could encompass different activities depending on the situation, but nevertheless there are some common actions that this formal or informal structure usually takes or should take:

- Clarify (continuously) the objectives of the process and how progress will be evaluated.
- Decide on the appropriate approaches and techniques, taking into account objectives, time scale, resources, openness of information sharing etc.
- Influence the style and tone of the process.
- Delegate precisely each authority.
- Establish the ground-rules: how to deal with each other?
- Plan the resources available within the conditions attached.
- Provide the technical and administrative services.
- Set up the mechanisms for recording and disseminating information.

III. Implementation (of participation activities) phase

During this phase it is about running events, producing materials and using a range of methods. How the “process managers” accomplished these activities is difficult to find with precision from the cases analysed. A clue about this effort is offered for example by what a member of the process management team mentioned in Brasov., Romania (Participatory Budgeting):

„Lot of work! Lots of telephones! Lots of papers! Lots of meetings! Lots of people! Lot of experience. Good experience for us. We were really in the focus of the public participation process. And at the end... we were the public servants facing the citizens but also we were them, the citizens, because we are part of the community!!! We felt more competent, closer to our clients, the citizens, more optimistic, enthusiastic and full of hopes!”

The same case offers some information on how specific tools were implemented (i.e. how and who prepared the materials for the public meeting, where this meeting was organized, some data about logistic, etc).

At this stage is also important to mention the role of (professional) facilitators as a “must” for successful implementation of certain tools –as public hearings, focus groups, participatory design of plans – and their important characteristic: neutrality.

The cases which underline the importance of facilitators are:

- Colombia, Apartado, Antioquia Department, The Administrative and Organic Process by the Apartado Municipality's Population
- Honduras, Yamaranguila, Strategic Environmental Tool.

Training has an important role as well in assuring an appropriate and efficient implementation of the participation tools –examples as Icapui case in Brasil, or Brasov in Romania prove the utility of training: necessary skills of “process managers” were built to be used in planning and conducting the participation processes.

Is possible to mention here some of general tips for “process managers” offered by experienced practitioners about this phase of the process:

- Divide the issues into bite-sized parts.
- Start with people's own concerns and the issues relevant to them. Don't superimpose your own ideas and solutions at the outset.
- Build in visible early successes to develop the confidence of participants. ‘Staircase’ skills, trust and commitment to the process: offer a progressive range of levels of involvement and help people to move up the ladder.
- Direct empowerment training for participants may not be appreciated - it may be better to develop skills more organically as part of the process.
- Continuously review and widen stakeholders’ involvement.
- Nurture new networks and alliances.
- Plans must be meaningful and lead to action.
- Manage the link between the private ability of the various interest groups to deliver on their commitments and the public accountability and control of the implementation.
- Make sure people are having fun!

IV. Continuation phase – assuring participation sustainability

This stage should make clear how any agreed proposals are going to be taken forward. How this is done will depend very much on the level of participation. At one level - of consultation – probably some prepared options are worked through with different interests and then agreed to take the results away for evaluation and implementation. At another level – risk sharing – probably a new partnership organizations is set up.

It is the stage of evaluation the process achievements and the happiness of the stakeholders. At this point is also very important to assure that the appropriate reports are sent to the citizens describing the process outcomes. The lessons learned should be analysed as well in order to improve the next process.

Probably new responsibilities will be clarified to continue the process or to carry out some follow-up steps.

The cases analysed showed that the sustainability is usually assured by institutionalise the participation processes. Different structures that carried out the process could prove are useful as permanent local government departments or some consultative structures could receive a formal recognition becoming a local government partner.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

To ensure a broad and coherent approach to community participation, we have to consider the following aspects:

- **Commitment**
The nature and extent of commitment to participation amongst all those involved has to be made clear at the very early stages; the major differences have to be assessed and addressed as well.
- **Initiation**
Actions have to be done to ensure that the pattern and detail of participation activity is not determined totally by whoever initiates it; to be sure there is a shared feeling of “ownership”.
- **Education for participation**
Some opportunities should be provided to ensure some positive ‘induction’ to the participation process for local people to plan, manage, implement or contribute to the process.
- **Scope and objectives**
All parties should be clear about, and should accept, the level of participation in order to achieve the fullest possible involvement.
- **All Stages**
Participation should be started as early as possible even in the planning phase of the process (planning the problem solving, planning the participatory planning) to be sure that process to go right through from initiation to completion and even into later sustainable continuation.
- **Approach**
Those managing the involvement process, along with other parties, have to agree an overall, coherent approach that ensures that all relevant issues are addressed and which considers the participation process over time.
- **Relevant Tools**
The participation tools to be used must be carefully chosen to relate closely to the aim of the project, participation concrete objectives, the stage and level of the involvement and the available skills and resources.

- **Resources**

All resources available for the work have to be assessed, considered and valued - including 'work equity' by community groups and others; an agreement should be reached about how those resources are best disposed throughout the work.

- **Management**

The means through which the participation process will be managed have to be clear and to create a sense of trust within the community about the fairness and neutrality of the process.

Also should be clearly considered and planned how the manner in which the many views and ideas emerging from the participation process are assembled, weighted and used in relation to reaching any decisions and who exactly will do this.

- **Going forward**

Thought have to be given to how practice should be evaluated in retrospect and time given, for all parties, to consider how best to take forward the lessons learned into subsequent participation activities.