Stakeholder inclusion in urban development processes

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ABSTRACT

Norwegian Authorities have expressed a clear intention of strengthening participation in urban planning processes with the aim of developing communities and the democracy. This article discusses discrepancies between this high level ambition and current practices. Challenges are related to mobilization of stakeholders and to tools and process supporting efficient cooperation. Social innovation points to processes totally based on participation. Citizens as individuals or in groups are seen as a resource, not as obstacles and barriers to proceed with a project. This approach combined with the unique requirements in urban planning could stimulate a change in line with the ambition of the government. The change would involve the planning process, templates for collaboration and attitudes. For planners this would imply proactively seeking input and alignment instead of reactively dealing with comments and objections.

KEYWORDS: Public participation, Urban development, Social innovation, Co-creation, Planning process

1. INTRODUCTION

There are numerous examples from the media of dissatisfaction related to urban development projects. This can be related to the planning process, the solutions and the execution. Complaints may come from users, politicians, or people directly affected by the project. It is not necessarily a bad thing that urban projects generate discussion and are controversial. Some of the reoccurring issues are however related to lack of communication and interaction between planners and users and potentially also politicians [8].

Laws and regulations are established to ensure user input in planning of significant development projects. It is however realized that fulfilling the minimum requirements is no guarantee for an efficient and fulfilling process for real influence. Some typical characteristics of the process have been:

- A mix of professional stakeholders and "regular citizens" with limited understanding of the planning process and ability to interact [8]
- Interaction and input to the planning process too late for real influence [7]
- Input often too fragmented and have little impact [24]
- Late input increases chances for recycling of the planning process [7]

It is realized that the planning process needs to be improved and that one key element is to ensure a wider participation through the whole process. In a guide to the Planning and Building Act [14], the Government states that the intent is not only to improve the planning process itself but also to stimulate democracy in more general terms. Better plans will improve the quality of life and ensure more attractive local communities.

Real participation and influence would also enhance democratic processes [4].

Public participation is a fundamental prerequisite and the cornerstone in local democracy [1]. It allows residents to contribute in the process of creating better planning solutions. The population's active role in planning and decision making processes is emphasized to safeguard our shared values and basic living conditions in a sustainable society. Efficient and well-functioning planning processes are dependent on good participation platforms [14]. Rushing through the initial stages of planning without sufficient contributions from the affected interests does not necessarily lead to more efficient planning processes.

Although there is a general consensus that changes to the existing practice are needed, the changes are slow and have little impact [14]. The political intent is clear. The planning process "as is" seems not to promote real influence and involvement from all stakeholders. It is also unclear how the various participants understand and play their individual roles [15].

This article focuses on the urban planning process and discusses enablers and barriers for more efficient cooperation between stakeholders. I will review requirements and established practices related to a typical planning process, which issues are being discussed at the various stages, how decisions are being made and how various stakeholders are being involved. As a basis for the discussion I will review the potential of what is labelled "Social Innovation" and if research on the topic can offer relevant recommendations. The discussion will aim at analyzing enablers and barriers for broad participation and also suggest changes to established practices.

I will not discuss tools and platforms for collaboration other than pointing to some key requirements to the solution(s).

1.1 Method
This paper is based on literature review from articles on co design and participation, social innovation, and communication theory. Urban planning processes and related participation mechanisms have also been investigated through reading and various interviews. A case has been included to better illustrate some of the challenges related to the planning process.

2. REQUIREMENTS AND ESTABLIESHED PRACTICE

2.1 Background
Urban planning has traditionally been perceived as a complex process [17]. It includes different stages and a variety of stakeholders, and it is not very understandable for regular citizens. Law defines urban planning processes and it consists of certain phases, which require acceptance of stakeholders and decision makers.

Big development projects require a good and comprehensive planning process.
- Developers desire predictable and efficient construction processes
- There has traditionally been a strong focus on the time aspect of planning, while conditions with respect to participation and political considerations have not had the same focus

Effective planning processes must ensure both a broad public and political participation to succeed [9]. Major development projects have been shelved or delayed because of last minute protests from local communities, which in turn has caused politicians to reject proposals entirely.

There is need for a deeper knowledge of planning processes to achieve greater predictability and reduce uncertainty regarding project proposals. True co creation requires transparency, sincerity and knowledge of counterparties' interests and motives [21]. The urban population is not homogeneous. They have different aspirations

and wants. Public participation aims to bridge the gap between the different sectors, allowing dialogue among planners, politicians and citizens. This in contrast to having a group of civil servants and technical experts make plans and present these to citizens when the plans are almost finalized [22].

Traditionally most participants are professional and well familiar with the process, the planning tools, the communication platforms and they also have well established relations lowering the threshold for active collaboration [24]. It is however recognized that the users in general are less involved, be it due to lack of information, interest or ability. This again creates a number of challenges:

- Important stakeholders have little real influence
- Input comes too late and often after key decisions are made
- Inefficient planning process – recycling of plans
- Lack of ownership to plans by users

In addition to negative impacts on the project itself, the lack of influence may also strengthen the feeling certain groups have of being marginalized, and may over time weaken the democracy [7].

Good urbanism is co-creative, inviting a wide variety of stakeholders to participate and collaborate to bring ideas to life [5]. The planning processes do not necessarily follow traditional patterns of top down or bottom up ways of working. Ideas may flow more sideways in a network of participants, being developed and refined as contributions from various parties are being integrated. The ultimate goal is to arrive at the optimal and mutually beneficial solutions. The formal roles are less visible and are not barriers to collaboration and communication. A side effect is that the process itself ensures ownership and alignment to the final recommendations to the decision makers.

Alternative approaches such as top-down planning and design put urban professionals in the driver's seat whereas bottom-up planning does the reverse, and loses the benefits of professional expertise [5]. Working together in multidisciplinary and diverse teams makes 'top-down meet bottom-up'. Effective action planning becomes possible.

2.2 Planning and Building Act
In Norway, the Planning and Building Act requires facilitation for the public to participate in planning processes [14]. Today planning practices are criticized for placing too much emphasis on efficiency and too little on the democratic aspect of urban planning [7].

The Government wants increased attention on local democracy [14]. People's opportunity to participate and have influence is central in this. Well-balanced, knowledge-based and active planning processes can ensure influence and contribute to a beneficial development of attractive local communities. The main objective for the planning is to develop a community that safeguards key common values and good living conditions for all groups, within the framework of sustainable development.

The Planning and Building Act defines public participation as "*an individual's or a group's right to take part in and influence public assessment and decision-making processes*" [14, p.8]. This means that those who live in a community get involved in planning its future.

Public participation in a planning process is mindful of "the best possible plan", and will, as described in the guide, aim to:
- Ensure good solutions that pay attention to everyone's needs
- Enable all affected and interested parties to present their views
- Promote creativity and enthusiasm, and be an arena for democratic participation in the local community
- Provide a solid basis for decision-making

Level of participation

As discussed above; the Planning and building act opens for and requires other non-parliamentary forms of participation such as public debates, exhibitions, workshops and petitions. Ideally, through such forms of direct participation, citizens can express their preferences and interests, and by doing this influence public planning processes. However, the reality is different.

Falleth et.al (2010) identifies four major problems related to the legitimacy of participation in Norwegian planning practices [7].

The first problem concerns at which stage in the process the affected actors are being invited to participate. By the time the plan is made open to the public, key issues have already been formulated and determined. This reduces the opportunity to influence the plan and proposal, which in turn, hinders proactive and constructive participation.

The second concern is the asymmetry in opportunities and resources to participate in planning processes. The developers, be it public or private, are strong and resourceful, whereas local community actors are often small, fragmented, poorly organized and have limited resources characterized by:
- Lack of ability to voice their opinion
- Equal right, but inequality in power

The third problem concerns how the planning law too narrowly defines who are affected by the plans in question. Relevant actors might not only be the immediate neighbors and landowners, but rather a broad specter of citizens with an interest in the area, even if they do not live close to the area defined in the plan. Thus, actors that are in reality affected by the plan may not be taken into account when designing the participation process.

Fourth; even if the Norwegian planning system in principle strive for broad participation, most plans run through the stages only to meet the minimum participation efforts required by law (notification and hearing processes).

Developers may have commercial interests in getting their planning proposals approved in a timely manner. This concern is often the key driver for designing the participation process. For the above reasons civil society actors rarely represent a critical "threat" to developers. There are however cases where larger groups in the population have been mobilized adding weight to the arguments and have been influential [3]. Such groups have also used political channels and challenged the political accountability of elected representatives.

The following table illustrate Sager's simplified version of Arnstein's [1] participation model for characterizing participation [24]. The model describes the shift in power towards citizens moving up the ladder.

5	Decision right
4	Codetermination
3	Discussion
2	Information
1	Public access

Table 1. Sager's Level of participation

Meeting legal requirements only takes participation to the lowest level of the ladder. This is however not in line with the expectations stated in the guideline to the Planning and Building Act. Although there might be political guiding, planners are basically responsible for planning of the level of participation. Key issues to consider are the purpose and extent of the plan, time line requirements and consequences.

2.3 The typical stages in the generic planning process

To prepare a better basis to the discussion around challenges related to current development projects, it is useful to have a general overview of the steps that define the process. The following describes the typical stages included when developing an area plan [16] [25]:

1. Project initiation - kick off

At the initial phase an idea is identified – by planners, politicians, "users" or others. The idea has to be formulated and the basis for project has to be prepared. In this phase the municipality addresses what is essential related to the planning process and lays guidelines. The phase is usually characterized by limited technical and cost information but the benefit of the proposal must be evaluated. This stage is closed to the public.

2. Notification on plan startup

At this stage, all affected and interested parties are notified (municipality, neighbors, sports clubs, associations etc.). This happens through a statutory notice of commencement, which explains expected progress and a description of what the plan contains. The notification also provides a deadline for any input. This is published in at least one (local) newspaper, in addition to the municipality's website.

3. Collecting data

For a project to be effective and successful, information needs to be gathered and processed. Planners need to make sure that input and feedback is evaluated and used in the decision process. This will probably be the most critical phase for user input.

4. Proposal – developing a plan

The purpose of this stage is to prepare a detailed description of the project and cost estimates and project schedules. All the formal processes need to be completed. If anyone other than the municipality prepares it, the proposal is drawn up and handed over to the municipality. The municipal administration sees that the proposed plan complies with applicable laws and regulations. When the proposal is thoroughly prepared, it is sent to political consideration and initial treatment. At this stage, public participation is more related to detailed solutions and design.

5. 1st Political treatment – Political committee

Politicians in the planning committee or municipal council consider whether to approve the plan or not. If it is rejected, the proposer must adjust the plan after feedback from the planning committee. When the majority of the planning committee is satisfied with the proposal, it can be published for public scrutiny. Now the key elements have been decided, making it difficult to influence the proposal.

6. Public scrutiny - hearing

After political consideration the plan is up for public scrutiny. Many of the parties who were notified earlier in the process are invited and are now able to voice their opinions within a set deadline.

7. 2nd Political treatment - Opposition

The proposal is again reviewed, along with any input from the consultation period. The planning committee makes a recommendation for a final decision. This recommendation is sent to the council. If the plan still needs changing, a new proposal has to be developed, and the process has to start over (from stage 5).

8. Decision

The plan has been greenlighted and may be implemented. The approval includes information about the deadline for appeals. The planning process has ended.

3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

As a basis for the discussion of how to improve the participation in public planning processes, some basic theories and research results on social innovation and communication are reviewed. Social innovation deals with increased participation and a democratic approach to design processes. Communication is a key enabler for collaboration and the quality of communication defines to a great extent the relations between the participants.

3.1 Social innovation and co-creation
What is Social Innovation?
There is no definite unanimity on the term social innovation. There is wide range of interpretations and understandings related to the term. A recurring definition is "*the development and implementation of new ideas (products, services and models) to meet social needs and create new social relationships or collaborations*" [6,p.6]. In other words, social innovations are innovations that are not only good for society but also enhance society's capacity to act [2][6].

Social innovations are social when it comes both to the work processes and to the desired outcomes [6]. They represent new approaches and responses to social challenges and demands. In its core, social innovation is aimed at improving the quality of the local community and human well-being.

The basis for social innovations is the creativity of and collaboration between citizens, communities, civil society organizations, businesses and public servants and services [6]. There is an opportunity for the public sector to explore and meet the needs and wishes of the citizens and also for the commercial players to understand and to offer what the market wants.

Social innovation - related to planning
Cities need to increase co-creation and cooperation both within their organizations and with a variety of stakeholders [23]. Social innovation offers tools and models for this. At grassroots level, citizens are developing new empowering communities, which play an active role in public and social life. They have taken responsibility and contributed to the development of new solutions to meet their needs. These movements use collaborative processes involving a variety of unusual stakeholders, who often were not previously consulted - as well as new tools, such as IT and online resources [2]. New information technology creates new possibilities for participation in the planning process [11]. Following this trend, some cities have begun to adopt methods and approaches to city governance in order to develop new and effective ways of identifying problems and solutions (e-governments, smart cities, etc.) [2][19]. Cities seek to facilitate these social innovation dynamics, to collaborate better with citizens – the end-users of their services – and to co-produce public services with them [23]. Some of the strengths are: visualization techniques that support the involvement of diverse stakeholders in the process, a user-centered approach to complement top–down methods and fast prototyping to rapidly test models in practice [20].

In order to benefit from the methods of social innovation, city governments need a conscious approach to cooperation and participation [23]. A key aspect is that governance is not defined in a well-defined structure. The authorities need to experiment with new ways of working allowing more responsibilities and space for citizens.

One method used in urban planning is called "charrette" [24]. This is close to the core of social innovation. A charrette involves planners, developers, public servants, organizations and individual stakeholders. The process starts with establishing facts, goals and objectives. Within a limited time frame a planning proposal is being developed, alternatively several proposals, for further assessment by the municipality. The "charrette" way of working implies more commitment than a brain-storming session. It is

an open and participatory process and could stimulate alignment and less conflicts and objections to the final proposal.

In social innovation citizens are regarded as a resource, not someone that needs to be managed [23]. They are closest to the problems being discussed and have a unique interest in finding the best solutions. Political and commercial actors will often come with a different perspective and motivation.

Social innovation approaches may stimulate discussions across a variety of stakeholder groups, will enable a richer discussion and is likely to identify new and better solutions. The process itself may also increase the mutual understanding between the parties and contribute to alignment between the participants.

According to the *Breakthrough Cities* report, cities should engage city administration and stakeholders in creating a sense of mutual responsibility in communities and neighborhoods, so that they can together identify creative solutions to city problems [23]. The purpose of participation/co-creation in planning processes is to achieve a balanced development where short-term private interests must be consistent with longer-term public interests.

Critical assessment
Urban planning needs to relate to distinct requirements and non-negotiables [12]. These

may be technical issues, i.e. what is a technically viable solution. There will be cost and budget limitations. There may also be substantial commercial interests for some stakeholders. Perhaps more complicating; there are often legal considerations needed around liabilities, ownership, applicable laws and regulations and more. Such issues are not often discussed by researchers as social innovation mostly addresses social needs. This suggests some cautiousness when applying ideas from social innovation in urban planning. The role of experts and professionals with the required competence should not be underestimated. Approaches have been seen to be somewhat naïve [12].

3.4 Communication
A prerequisite for meaningful collaboration and participation is the ability for the various stakeholders to engage and to communicate efficiently [10]. A number of issues may impact the situation.

The platforms and tools for communication may play a significant role in how efficiently information, opinions, ideas, etc. are shared. As stated in the introduction, these topics are not within the scope of this article.

Openness and trust, real intention to engage in an open discussion
This is a fundamental requirement to ensure full focus on the issues at hand. Any hidden agenda or suspicion that information is withheld may easily lead to mistrust [10]. Real communication
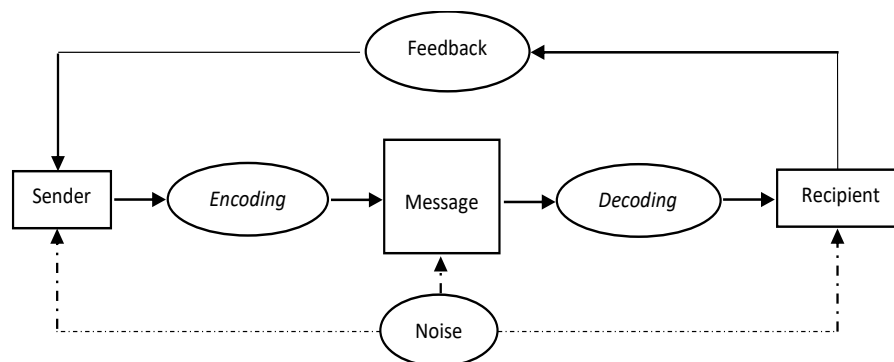

Figure 1. Basic model of social communication

should, according a general model [Figure 1], rely on both a message being sent and that a response is given. The sender has a particular responsibility in completing the loop to confirm that the message is received, potentially also understood, and what the initial reaction was. In the context of a planning process this would imply that the planner is responsible for the quality of the communication. Announcements do not necessarily invite to feedback. The basic assumption would be that no response means 'yes' or 'no objection'.

The asymmetric relations, language, terminology, know-how
There is an obvious challenge in the communication between professional planners and the general public. There are elements like power, knowledge and the use of specific terminology making the whole situation a bit intimidating for many. It may be tempting for planners when challenged and questioned, to turn to a professional language and procedures [10]. This will only increase speciesism, regarding both the message and the intention. Planning proposals are often sensitive and involves emotions and feelings and may directly impact citizens. The planners on the other hand, have usually no personal interest in the proposals being discussed. The asymmetry in sender/receiver relations needs to be recognized in order to eliminate barriers for efficient communication [7].

Unbiased information would invite to a dialogue, be balanced, discuss alternatives, inform of formal requirements, discuss risks and opportunities – all with the purpose to allow the participants to make their own assessments and formulate their point of view [10].

3.5 Case – Bygdøy
The municipality of Oslo has extensive plans for reducing use of cars in the city center. One key enabler is to promote cycling by establishing new infrastructure ensuring accessibility and safety. One element of the plan is to build a new bike track at Bygdøy [18]. This is an area with historic places, listed areas and beaches for recreational use. After a comprehensive planning period, the City Council approved the proposed solution in 2010. The plan was to start the building process in 2016. Media coverage of the plans triggered strong opposition in the local communities [3]. An interest group was formed expressing concerns about the impacts claiming that the bike track is not really needed, that the new track and road system is ruining the landscape and objects to the cutting of old trees along the existing road. There are also concerns about the safety for young bikers. The group has been able to develop an alternative proposal and individuals are willing to physically stop the building activities if started. The City refers to the participation by the local community and information to residents in the area in the planning phase. Based on this unfortunate situation a few questions may be relevant: Did the planning process allow for involvement and participation? Did the society groups understand the consequences of the plan?

4. DISCUSSION

4.1 Key challenges and opportunities related to current practices
There are some high level challenges related to the early phases of the planning process.

Real intent by public and private planners to ensure participation
With reference to the guide to the Planning and Building Act, there is a clear political intention to further enhance broad participation in the planning process [13]. It is crucial that this intent is followed up and operationalized by planners. There will be cases where the plan for participation is designed more to "tick the box" and just to meet the minimum requirements. A key question is what it really implies to meet the legal requirement and political intent of securing participation in planning processes. Should this by example require verification that information of planning initiation is received and understood

(ref. figure 2)? Should it also require that planners actively seek input? Word such as "publication" and "hearing" being used to describe various stages of the process indicate a low level of participation [12]. They do not resonate well with the ambition of collaboration between all stakeholders as equal parties.

The approach in social innovation is in contrast based on the value in collaboration. The best solutions are found when parties with various backgrounds and competencies are engaged in the discussion and problem solving. Much of the research is focusing on how social innovation is an enabler for meeting social needs – "by citizens for citizens". The processes in urban planning may be different in that there are formalities and technicalities guiding both the process and the solutions. Professionals may therefore have to play a significant role (ref charrette in 3.1). It might be difficult to remove the asymmetry in know-how and ability. However, when it comes to the approach and attitude to collaboration the ideas and experiences from social innovation may be of relevance in planning the participation process. To turn it around; without a real intention to cooperate the below discussion becomes irrelevant.

Understanding and alignment on the overall objectives, goals and process of the plan/project
It is impossible to have good collaboration if there is no common understanding of the task. The whole process needs to be framed defining objectives and goals, rules for collaboration, the option screening and decision process and the overall schedule. With reference to the planning stages in section 2.3 the framing process is usually closed to the public. As pointed out in section 2.2 the participation often starts too late. There is of course a danger that the framing is too narrow and restricts the discussion. The framing should therefore not point to solutions, but more the limitations (area, scope), the need for a plan and so on. By outlining the work flow it is possible for all stakeholders to understand how and when to engage. Equally important is to be informed of

how contributions to the discussions are being handled in the final evaluation.

The use of "charrette" in Oslo seems to deal with above challenges in an efficient way. The process implies a discussion on the various participants' goals and priorities. The stakeholders are involved in balancing needs and wishes and as such develop an understanding of the final proposal.

As discussed above, the quality of communication can be a barrier for efficient collaboration [10]. The professional language being used is difficult to understand for most citizens. Various communication and visualization techniques are being discussed to inform of the objectives and possible solutions. There is also a need to find ways of explaining the planning process and also to visualize the various stages and milestones. Experience shows that stakeholders often are not properly informed or for some reason have misunderstood the schedule. This could imply that contributions and objections are filed too late and not forcefully enough, ref. the Bygdøy case.

Mobilizing the various stakeholders
It is a requirement to inform of the start of a planning process. This is however not enough to insure involvement and participation. A much more active approach is needed. The plan for participation must take into account who the stakeholders are and their ability to engage in the discussions.

Understanding the roles of the participants
It is beneficial that the participants understand the roles they are "playing" – as public servants and officials, politicians, business representatives and private individuals/groups. There will be various expectations and relations between the groups involved. Citizens may prefer a direct communication with the politicians as they after all are elected to represent their interests. Politicians may want to

push planners and public servants in front and not be exposed to sometimes unpopular proposals and decisions. Private planning proponents may prefer a direct dialogue with the public planners as they may be easier to influence than politicians being accountable to the voters. At another level the status and power between the actors will vary from case to case. As mentioned in section 2.2, professional planners will benefit from knowledge, competence, terminology and means, including owning the planning process. Politicians have authority as decision makers but are also accountable towards the general public and need to find balanced solutions. Citizens may often be the weaker part. In cases where they represent a larger and well organized group they will have increased influence as per the Bygdøy case. Citizens groups also have easy access to media. Cases where the interests of the regular citizen are set aside to the benefit of the bigger society and/or commercial interests are often good news [3].

4.2 How to improve

In accordance with the discussion above, enhancement of participation in urban planning needs to address both the process, templates for collaboration and people issues. These factors are interlinked and for the full benefit of a change program they should not be seen in isolation.

Process

When comparing the established practices for urban development with methods discussed in social innovation, a fair comment is that planning processes are not designed to maximize the benefit of participation. Changes may be needed for all phases. It seems however to be essential first to look at the initial stages of the process (ref. 2.3). The requirement of "announcing" the planning process already from the beginning indicates a one way process. There is no feedback and verification that the message is received, that the purpose and possible consequences are understood by those affected. A good basis for further cooperation is that there is a general consensus on the purpose of the plan, on the

problems to be solved and on the overall goals (ref Bygdøy case). This would suggest that increased focus on mobilizing the relevant stakeholders and to align on overall objectives is a prerequisite for a successful process.

A clearer process with better defined stages would enable a more constructive dialogue. The initial stage could focus on objectives, drivers and success criteria, time line and decision process. A second stage would involve identification of possible options and solutions and the final stage would address the evaluation and impact assessment before a final decision is made. Participation is needed in all stages.

Templates for collaboration

There are examples of creative ways to facilitate collaboration, such as the use of "charrette" in Oslo. In general the lack of good tools and templates for communication and participation is evident. Already in the initiation phase, the means for reaching out to all of those being involved and affected is a problem. Tools for efficiently explaining and illustrating both the stages of the planning process as well as various solutions and planning proposals are not adequate.

Municipalities may need new infrastructure and templates for extended communication with citizens, not only related to urban planning but for improved dialogue in general. The task of establishing such tools and templates should probably not address the urban planning activities alone, but also a wider scope. Common tools should be progressed at a higher level, potentially by the Ministry of Local Government.

People issues

Collaboration is in nature a people process. The quality of the process is highly dependent on ability and attitude to engage in an open discussion. The approach to collaboration in social innovation and co-creation places people in the core of the process. As for the above discussion on tools and templates the municipalities need a holistic strategy and plan

for engaging the general public in developing the communities. Addressing only urban planning may not facilitate a deep enough change.

Collaboration is also strengthened by establishing lasting relations between individuals and groups (Ref 3.1 social innovation). This could be particularly relevant for planning within a smaller community/area. Diversity in participation should strengthen ownership to the plans and the feeling of being included, resulting in a strengthened democracy as pointed out by the government [14].

At the end collaboration means commitment. The parties need to be part of the whole process, not go in and out as they please. This means that citizens should not be involved only in fragmented hearing processes. Politicians need to be involved and be accountable in all phases of the project. Commitment implies a responsible mindset and the dated expression of being "part of the solution, not only the problem" applies also here.

5 CONCLUSION

The government has clearly stated the need to enhance participation in urban planning processes. This should improve the plans, enable more efficient planning and decision processes and also support the democracy and strengthen communities. There are however discrepancies between this high level ambition and current practices. Challenges are related to mobilization of stakeholders and to the tools and process related to efficient cooperation. Research on social innovation points to processes totally based on participation. Citizens as individuals or in groups are seen as a resource, not as obstacles and barriers to proceed with a project. This approach combined with the unique requirements in urban planning could stimulate a change in line with the ambition of the government. The change would involve the planning process, templates for collaboration and attitudes. For planners this would imply

proactively seeking input and alignment instead of reactively dealing with comments and objections.

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