

# Participatory Revitalisation of Urban Public Open Space \_

## Urban Planners' Skills Needed for Improvement of Urban Public Spaces in Participatory Manner

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### ABSTRACT

**Urban regeneration is a complex process that involves a variety of actors with different interests, roles, and powers. In recent years, an awareness has risen that local communities have valuable knowledge and abilities that can contribute to the success of the urban regeneration of local environments. On the other hand, there is still bias against a more direct involvement of civil society in the urban planning process due to additional organisational and financial efforts needed, but also due to inadequate knowledge in the field of participatory urbanism on the part of urban planners. The paper discusses people's motivations to self-participate in the reclamation of urban public open spaces and the skills that urban planners need to efficiently cooperate with local initiatives in the urban regeneration processes. Based on a review of scholarly work and case studies throughout Europe, collected within the Human Cities project, it points out the important issues that urban planners have to bear in mind for a better cooperation with citizens. It discusses the expertise and skills needed for an urban planner/designer to be able to moderate such processes and thus contribute to a more sustainable urban development based on local knowledge and skills.**

**KEYWORDS** urban regeneration, public participation, urban planning skills, civil initiatives, urban public space

## 1 Introduction

Public participation in urban planning has been a well-developed concept within the profession for many decades. It is often regarded as a measure of how inclusive and democratic an urban planning process is (Dargan, 2009; Socrates, 2009; Juillet, Sauriol, & Rochette, 2015). In scholarly investigations, there seems to be a wide consensus on its advantageous effects for the parties involved (Arnstein, 1969; Kaza, 2006; Denters & Klok, 2010; Moore & Elliott, 2015). At the same time, a discussion is ongoing about the definitions and attributes of truly participatory processes in contemporary urban planning (Beebejaun, 2016).

Chattopadhyay (2012) argues that there is still a large gap between constitutional provisions for participation and their actual implementation. His distinction between so-called numerical and effective representations addresses an important question: to what level is a general public able to truly get involved in participatory approaches. He argues that most of the citizens, especially those from socially and economically disadvantaged environments, are unable to directly raise any issue and/or participate in discussions, so the numerical representation cannot be automatically translated into the effective representation. This stresses the role of the urban planning profession in setting up the supportive environments for people of all walks of life to become active players. On the other hand, this can only be achieved when trust in the participation process among inhabitants is established (Aitken, 2012).

This relates to the ladder-hierarchy of levels of participation developed by Arnstein (1969). She structured the community participation in eight levels and classified them hierarchically. The first two, manipulation and therapy, are regarded as nonparticipation with the reasoning that their main purposes are to educate or cure the community members. The following three levels are informing, consultation, and placation, and she describes them as tokenism - the participants act as advisories rather than decision makers. The highest levels are partnership, delegated power, and citizen control, which allow the participants to have a stronger voice in the decision-making process. These three highest levels are particularly important in urban public space design because public open space is a common space of everyone and in one way or another affects the lives of all citizens and only a truly inclusive co-design can bring benefits to a wider community (Mitchell, 2012).

In the last two decades, urban open public spaces have been given new attention within the urban planning profession (Madanipour, Knierbein, & Degros, 2014; Andersson, 2016). It has appeared as one of the key topics in the strategic documents that are guiding the future development and qualitative growth of urban settlements at a global scale (Habitat III, 2017) as a part of a sustainable development agenda. Novel approaches to public space activation have been encouraged in order to address the social component of the sustainability agenda, and, among others, the engagement of the civil society in planning

and implementation processes. Through the self-organisation of local communities, public space is seen as a venue for social interaction and public presence, in which tolerance and diversity are also promoted (Holland, Clark, Katz, & Peace, 2007).

If we accept community involvement as a tool to achieve better urban public open space, we have to rethink the established modes of operation of the urban planning profession too. Participation has been embedded in urban planning processes in different planning systems in various forms (Lang, 1987; Carp, 2004; Laurian & Shaw, 2008; Wilson, Tewdwr-Jones, & Comber, 2017; See et al, 2016). Our aim is not to focus on planning systems and their provisions for public participation, but on the role of urban planners in the participatory approaches to urban public open space. In this context, it is crucial to understand the roles of the other key players too – the community and its active citizens, investors, owners of properties affecting public space, local businesses etc. These actors also have to be considered as all of them have their own expectations, demands, and needs, as well as abilities and responsibilities, and only well-balanced and moderated relations between them can lead to a successful co-design process. However, among all these actors, local community has a special role as it acts as a provider and a consumer of a co-created urban public space at the same time.

## 2 Public Participation and Urban Public Open Space

According to Beebeejaun (2016), the urban planning profession is getting more receptive to bottom-up initiatives. This may partly be grounded in the economic difficulties caused by the global economic recession from 2008 onwards, which forced local governments to rely on local resources, skills, and knowledge to be able to implement urban development strategies (Nikšič, 2014; Resnick, 2016). At the same time, it may be a result of a rising awareness that, after the decades of a rather rhetoric approach to sustainable development, the theoretical concepts must be practiced in everyday life. Both aspects were concisely expressed by Barton (2017), who said that planning is for people, and that the intention must be to evolve towns and cities that are good for people to live in - not for just some people, but all people, no matter what their incomes or abilities.

When the profession is ready to give more power to those who use the end result of spatial planning, i.e. the citizens and other users of the urban environment, this cannot be a rapid change - the whole process is firmly embedded in wider socio-economic environments that are still very much driven by the neo-liberal agendas primarily seeking monetary profits (UNRISD, 2010; Nikšič & Sezer, 2017). The willingness to pass the planning power to people is only one step, albeit a very important one, towards a truly participatory practice. It is essential to offer citizens a variety of options for participation that are also close to their everyday mode of operation (Forester, 1999). In other words, urban

planning professionals shall not only wait for the initiatives to start to exist and act, but shall also propose and develop workable mechanisms and tools for truly participatory urbanism.

Within these endeavours, it is necessary to reveal citizens' motivations for participation in urban planning procedures and analyse the existing approaches to civic improvements of public spaces to understand what does (not) work in practice.

## 2.1 Citizens' Motivations to Participate in Urban Planning Procedures

Since the 1960s, when the official planning systems were opposed by strong, organised civil movements, a lot of scholarly work focused on the motivations of citizens to get actively involved in urban planning matters. The first investigations were mainly focused on the movements arising as opposition to official planning policies (such as Jane Jacobs's movement, 1961) and only later focused on the initiatives that did not necessarily arise from a protest movement, but in which active involvement in urban planning processes came from other motivations. Some selected studies are presented below, with the aim to set up a workable conceptual framework of citizens' motivations for active participation in urban planning and development.

Rosenstone and Hansen (1993), who studied the link between inequality and representativeness, claim that citizens are motivated to participate based on their personal costs and benefits. Similarly, Kaza (2006), based on a research of individuals' and groups' incentives to participate in planning procedures, points out that if these costs outweigh the perceived benefits, it would not be in one's interest to participate, or even communicate, within the participatory processes.

Xu (2007) argues that the dependency on public services is an important motivator for people to (not) take a proactive role – the more dependent people are upon these services, the more motivated they are for these services to be of a correct level – which makes them more involved in common matters and participation. Along with a review of some other studies done in the global west (Rubin & Rubin, 2001; Steggert, 1975) Xu argues that gender, educational and income levels, occupation, ethnicity, living arrangements, and membership of certain types of groups are the key factors that distinguish people who participate in community affairs from those who remain uninvolved. Additionally, she stresses that these factors are deeply culturally conditioned so any worldwide generalisations are not possible. On the contrary – based on the findings of her research in China – she finds some major differences between Chinese and western practices.

The socioeconomic status of the participant is also an important factor according to Verba, Nie, and Kim (1978). They studied the socioeconomic circumstances of individuals, and how these influence the likelihood of their participation. The findings show that socioeconomic status leads

individuals to develop a certain set of civic attitudes, which further leads to a higher or lower probability of participation. According to their findings, participation is higher in smaller communities, while urbanisation decreases participation. Besides economic status, Smith Reddy, and Baldwin (1980) point out that general wealth is an important factor too – they claim that people working in professional occupations, along with those with higher levels of education, more often become involved in organised community activities. However, Xu (2007) came to the opposite conclusion based on research of Chinese practices, claiming that in urban settlements people with lower levels of income and education were more likely to participate. This can be once more explained by their greater dependency on, and thus involvement with, the public programmes and amenities, and again points out the cultural embeddedness and the complexity of mechanisms that influence people's (motivations for) participation.

Rosenstone and Hansen (1993) link the question of active participation to the question of inequality and representativeness by arguing that the level of participation is an indicator of inequality – the lower the level of participation is, the higher the degree of political inequality and the more serious the problems of representativeness are. This clearly puts part of the responsibility for the operational participation into the hands of politics and official procedures.

The role of administrative structures is pointed out by Denters and Klok's study (2010). They studied a participatory approach to urban planning in one Dutch city after it experienced a devastating fire. They investigated the role of former residents in the reconstruction of a devastated district in the city centre, and showed how a well-ordered process and a mobilisation campaign helped to keep people motivated and actively involved throughout the entire urban reconstruction. By studying people's subjective interests, place of residence (i.e. the distance of their home from the epicentre of destruction), and home ownership they concluded that the two most important motivational factors are people's (various) subjective interests and the physical proximity of their homes to the place(s) that is being examined.

Property ownership was also identified as an important factor in a study by Hooper and Ortolano (2012). It showed that, contrary to the expectations of movement leaders, the question of property (non) ownership was central to the decision of whether or not one would take an active role in a civil movement. The authors report that people who were the property owners were significantly more likely to participate in risky and time-consuming activities than the renters were. The three factors that favoured participation by the owners in this study were the nature of expected payoffs, greater belief in the efficaciousness of the action, and greater connection to place. Renters may be unlikely to participate in activities focused on long-term future payoffs. The authors conclude that it is important to determine what stakes would be attractive enough for all parties, including non-owners.

Pares, Bonet-Marti, and Marti-Costa (2012) pointed to another important issue. Based on the study of ten deprived neighbourhoods in Spain, they argue that it is not the lack of opportunities for participation, but sometimes it is rather the inflation in the number of participatory forums without proper coordination, that limits the range of the participatory approaches, which can ultimately result in a participatory fatigue. Similarly, the inappropriate response of the administration - the production of participatory structures that respond to the functional logics of the administration rather than to the capacities, interests, and dynamics of the local network of civil society organisations - can again lead to the reduced motivation by citizens.

This brief review of selected scholarly work reveals a variety of citizens' motivations to participate in urban planning procedures. There are many factors that may influence a citizen's decision to actively participate, and many of them are culturally conditioned. These factors must be thoroughly considered by urban planners when attempting to revitalise urban environments in a participatory manner (see Table 2.1).

<b>Institutional framework</b>	Amount and supportiveness of administrative structures, level of existing public services	Xu (2007), Denter & Klok (2010), Pares et al (2012)
<b>Community</b>	Size of community, membership of groups, ethnicity enclaves, inequality issues, cultural differences	Verba et al (1978), Xu (2007), Rosenstone and Hansen (1993)
<b>Individual</b>	Gender, education/occupation, income levels, level of social equality	Hansen (1993), Verba et al (1978), Xu (2007)
<b>Residence conditions</b>	Home (non-)ownership, proximity of home to place of intervention, feeling of belonging to the place	Hoger & Ortolano (2012), Xu (2007)
<b>Cost benefit balance</b>	Level of fulfilment of individual's interests versus needed inputs	Rosenstone & Hanson (1993), Kaza (2006), Denter & Klok (2010)

TABLE 2.1 The factors that influence the citizen's decision to actively participate - conceptual framework

## 2.2 The Existing Approaches to Improve Public Open Spaces. A Participatory Manner in Europe – Human Cities Experience

In order to understand some practicalities of participatory provision of urban public open space, this section reviews selected case studies of citizens' appropriation of urban public open spaces in Europe. The review is based on the Human Cities project, which is an EU funded project that has been ongoing since 2008 (Houlstan-Hasaerts, Tominc, Nikšič, & Goličnik Marušić, 2012; www.humancities.eu). It aims to promote urban public open space as one of the key components of urban environments for wellbeing and focuses on the social dimensions of urban public open space by analysing the existing approaches used by citizens to reclaim cities' public spaces. It also supports some existing initiatives in partner cities in their endeavours to improve local public spaces.

The Human Cities experience shows that citizens are no longer merely waiting to be asked for their opinion but get actively organised by themselves too. On the other hand, the initiatives that are successful in

the long term are often related to some forms of institutionalised power, which helps them sustain their activities in the long term and is a basis of a win-win situation for the citizens as well as cities' administrations.

### 2.2.1 Case Study 01: Jardin aux Fleurs, Belgium

Brussels capital region has indicated a need for a comprehensive urban regeneration of some aged and vulnerable neighbourhoods through targeted interventions. The main aim was to improve the living environments by redevelopment of public spaces. The final goal of the interventions is to strengthen these vulnerable environments to stand up to the economic, social, and environmental pressures. The specifics of the neighbourhood Jardin Aux Fleurs are its high unemployment rate, low levels of education and income of inhabitants, and poor public service provisions, including public spaces. As the bottom-up participatory activities were insufficient and unorchestrated, the city supported two local non-governmental organisations, both in administrative and financial terms, to lead the participatory activities. In order to attract and encourage the local community to participate in developing the urban renewal strategy for the neighbourhood, strong interactive communication materials were developed (posters, stands, videos etc.) related to one of the central open spaces of the neighbourhood (Jacques Brel square). This led to a set of one-day moderated workshops where locals expressed their ideas and concerns about the neighbourhood and its public spaces. These meetings were also an experiment to bring in other people from a nearby neighbourhood that borders Jacques Brel and has a very different (trendy and well off) character, and thus functioned as a tool to overcome the social barriers to set up a truly participatory regeneration process.

### 2.2.2 Case Study 02: Unlimited Cities DIY, France

Unlimited Cities DIY is a free smartphone application developed by a group of architects and urban planners as a start-up. It aims to help various stakeholders in the urban development process, from municipalities and public bodies, to communities, citizens, and private institutions, in finding the common visions of future development of concrete spaces, and thus enable and ease the participatory decision making processes. The app is a user-friendly tool that enables an upload of a photo of a concrete place and allows the user to change its appearance by adding pre-designed or newly designed elements to it (such as greenery, street furniture, users etc.). In this way, people that would normally have difficulties in graphically expressing their ideas and wishes regarding the redesign of concrete space can communicate the ideas to others. By uploading these images to the common database, one can also discover the ideas of other users for the same place or check similar ideas in other parts of the world. Another benefiting party can be a municipality – the tool allows a crowdsourcing of ideas for

concrete places and thus provides a wide collection of citizens' opinions and ideas. However, as any approach, this approach has a limitation due to the fact that such an application will be used only by ICT-literates.

### 2.2.3 Case Study 03: THINKtent, Serbia

THINKtent is a travelling physical tent (5 x 5 meters) that travels from one community to another, to provide a safe and intimate space for conversations and dialogue on important issues regarding life in the community. Its main aim is to invite citizens to share their ideas and reflections on the issues of common matters in a less public way, which enables members of different sub-groups within a community to come together and share opinions without any public exposure. The intimate inner space of a tent within an open public space invites people to slow down, reflect, and exchange views and ideas away from the distractions of daily life. It eliminates expectations and hierarchies related to age, gender, ethnicity, citizenship and expertise - everybody is welcome and all become equal inside the tent. The THINKtent as a participatory urban planning tool proves to be particularly successful in the environments where there are many open or hidden tensions among different social or ethnic enclaves. Each session is moderated (see Fig. 2.1) and has a predefined topic to ensure open and focused dialogue, as well as a vibrant discussion that is respectful to different opinions. Facilitation is needed to ensure that the discussion and sometimes-intense emotions are constructive and not destructive.



FIG. 2.1 THINKtent used as a tool for encouraging public debate and participation where the moderator's role is crucial to assure a safe environment for everyone to express freely (photo source: Human Cities Ljubljana archive).



#### 2.2.4 Case Study 04: Zusammensetzung mit Abstimmung, Austria

With the increasing diversity in the European population, the differences between people in local environments grow too. Graz, the capital city of Styria, is, officially, a hospitable city where diversity and differences are welcomed and where any conflicts are negotiated in a constructive way. This, however, proves to be a challenge in practice. The open public space of the city is seen as a suitable place to solve these conflicts in an open way. The *Zusammensetzung mit Abstimmung* initiative came from the cultural sector. An artist designed a clearly visible open-air sculpture in the form of a long winding table, which invites people to join and discuss common matters in a public open space. This allows people of different social backgrounds to express their opinions in a relaxed atmosphere and confront them with the opinions of the others. These public sessions encourage people in public space to get active, participate, and take a role in improving their living environments across the social and economic boundaries that exist in the city. It also re-inaugurates urban open public space as a place of discussion. The involvement of the city representatives in the process meant that the opinions of attendees could be heard at the decision-making levels.

#### 2.2.5 Case Study 05: V Troje, Slovenia

The Slovenian initiative *V troje* was set up by an interdisciplinary group of young professionals who wanted to introduce new approaches to decrease the carbon footprint in Slovenian cities. It encourages people to use bicycles instead of cars as a mean of transportation in their daily routines, and by doing so not only contribute to better air and a less congested city, but also introduce a healthier lifestyle (see Fig. 2.2). Each year a one-month campaign was organised, which encouraged co-workers to set up teams of three people willing to ride a bicycle to and from work every working day. The teams whose members biked to work more days than drove the car were eligible to win a prize. The initiative was based on a scheme of successful precedents from other countries, but was adjusted to the local scale and cultural patterns – instead of a competition of large teams, a race between groups of three people was introduced. Lately, the initiative has received larger support, and has also grown in organisational terms. It is now known as *Pripelji srečo v službo* and was recognised by some official institutions, media, and large employers that started to encourage their own employees to bike to work with their own supporting mechanisms within companies.



FIG. 2.2 Slovenian civil initiative V troje started as a bottom-up participatory activity to promote cycling to work, but over time grew into a more institutionalised form within an urban planning framework (photo source: *Human Cities Ljubljana archive*).

## 2.2.6 Case Study 06: Tallinn for All, Estonia

In Tallinn, the need to make the city more accessible for all was recognised and addressed by a group of designers, who recognised that the community of disabled people did not have enough strength and power to improve the accessibility of urban locations. To kick-off the process they invited some well-known professionals from other countries to lecture on inspiring projects from around Europe. This was followed by mapping and interviewing exercises in the city, which analysed the situation and started to brief the action plan. The mapping work was mainly done by students and disabled people themselves. All the gathered data was then presented to the residents of Tallinn in a form of so-called Gulliver map for three chosen topics: accessibility in the old city, information design of public transportation, and products and services for visually impaired people. A big map was placed in one of the central city squares where passers-by could write about their experiences in the city while concentrating on the issues of accessibility and functionality for all. This offered the citizens the possibility to express their feelings and aspirations on the exhibited topics. The final goal of all activities was to shed light on the issues that are often overlooked by mainstream society and to find a consensus on strategies for improvement.

### 2.2.7 Case Study 07: M3 Odblokuj!, Poland

M3 Odblokuj! is a platform for spatial and artistic activities for the improvement of the living environment. The activities are organised by the association "Odblokuj", in which architects, designers, graphic designers, artists, and sociologists gather. They carry out a number of interdisciplinary urban projects that aim to show alternatives to existing living standards in a residential area of Warsaw. The main tools are exhibitions and participatory workshops that involve all age groups of the inhabitants of the concerned area. They aim to strengthen the links between neighbours and support the exchange of knowledge and experience among them. The artistic interventions aim to provoke reflection on local identity, usage of public space, and natural resources. M3 Odblokuj! is an example of the participatory processes led by local professionals that successfully use their expertise and experience to lead the participation process and thus show the way towards a more active citizenship. One of the important outcomes is a rise of social capital of the neighbourhood.

### 2.2.8 Case Study 08: Caravanserai, Great Britain

Caravanserai is a public space for locals and visitors that has a commercial and educational function and contributes to the cohesion of a community in Eastern London. It was initiated by a local architectural firm and has many beneficiaries, including trainees involved in the work, local start-ups, and micro-enterprises, as well as the broader local community. The initiative started as a part of a transformation of the wider part of the town during the preparation of the Olympics in London. The idea was to regenerate the area without any prefabricated element. All interventions were designed and constructed locally, thus many local enterprises, groups and individuals were involved. The main idea was to offer visitors food and rest as well as opportunities for cultural exchange and business. In order to set up a supporting environment, many new amenities were provided in a co-creation process (e.g. sheltered tables, community garden, children's play area, open-air theatre, market kiosks for local entrepreneurs, and a micro-manufacture workshop). These facilities gave the once leftover part of the city a central stage for local events and activities, that are collaboratively created by hosts and guests.

### 2.2.9 Case Study 09: Coltivando, Italy

Politecnico di Milano experimented with part of the open space on its premises at Bovisa and turned it into a co-created and co-maintained public green area. In the initial stage, the project started as a part of the study curriculum with the mission to develop a concept of community garden. However, the participation of community members was inevitable and many workshops were organised to involve community

and other stakeholders at an early stage. This cooperation delivered a service model of the garden, sustained by about 30 permanent members and an increasing number of visitors who also take part in maintenance activities, spend time in this green area, or simply enjoy it (see Fig. 2.3). Thus, Coltivando became a public space where interested locals can grow vegetables in an urban environment within the university premises. It also functions as a local meeting point where locals, staff, and students meet and socialise. Even if it officially belongs to the university, it acts as a truly public space of the broader Bovisa neighbourhood. It shows how the readiness to cooperate in a joint endeavour between an institution and the members of the local community can contribute to adding social and environmental values to the local environment.



FIG. 2.3 Coltivando initiative at Bovisa campus of Milan's Politecnico offers a good example of a collaboration between an institution and local community, providing better and socially more inclusive local public open space (photo source: Human Cities Ljubljana archive).

## 2.2.10 Case Study 10: Restaurant Day, Finland

The idea of the Restaurant Day was born in Helsinki and has spread around the world. It is a one-day festival that can happen many times in a year, where anyone can set up a restaurant or a café for a day. The only requirement is to register the event on a global web portal and assure the specified quality and sanitary standards. These pop-up restaurants can take place anywhere, most often in an open public space with provisional equipment set up for a day. The Restaurant Day initiative initially grew out of the resistance towards bureaucracy involved in running a restaurant, but later grew into a convivial gathering of locals for the sake of socialising, along with the enjoyment of food and drinks. It also helps in developing the businesses of local restaurants as it offers a cost-free opportunity to pre-test new dishes and menus, showing what are people (not) interested in and what is in demand. It also shows the success of the schemes that build the participatory

approach around the elements that are part of one's daily routines (production, preparation, and consumption of food) and thus invites everyone to participate.

### 3 **The Urban Planner's Role and Skills Needed in Public Space Related Participatory Processes**

In the rapidly changing role of an urban planner, from decision maker to decision making moderator, a need for new, sometimes experimental, approaches is present. A few skills need to be embraced by the profession in order to be able to act as a relevant and helpful part of the democratisation of the urban planning process, where the citizens will be given real opportunity to co-design their living environments and contribute their skills, knowledge, time, and ideas for a better future city. Reaching this goal would represent an important step towards a more sustainable city, which uses existing resources in an efficient way.

#### 3.1 **Enabling Citizens Operation Within the Institutional Framework**

Civil initiatives or groups of self-organised citizens are rarely equipped with the skills and knowledge about the administrative structure of a city, especially in cases where the cities are managed in a typical top-down manner. On the other hand, the successful initiatives are most often linked in some way to decision making or administrative bodies of the city or other institutions (see Case Study 01: Jardin Aux Fleurs and Case Study 09: Coltivando). An urban planner shall usually have an excellent overview of city's organisation and its departments, and can help to advise the active citizens about whom to address their concerns and ideas regarding built environment improvements, as well as the best communication channels. This initial support to link the citizens to the right departments or people within local administration would normally not require substantial input in terms of the invested time, but may be of crucial importance for the success of an initiative. In an ideal situation, this form of support would be part of public services that are offered to active citizens. These scenarios demand that an urban planner has a detailed insight into the responsibilities and administrative duties of various cities' departments and other relevant authorities. It also demands that an urban planner has the well-developed communication skills to link different stakeholders, as well as promote successful cases of bottom-up projects to the governing structure and the wider public.

Another important institutional aspect of the urban planner's support function to participatory practice is the advocating for funds in city's budgets that would be dedicated to the implementation of the bottom-up initiatives. In particular, initiatives at an early stage of their existence may be dependent on financial supports that may be very symbolic in terms of total amounts, but which are crucial for the development of the

proposed ideas. Urban planners with a comprehensive understanding of space and its dynamics can more easily predict the long term benefits of bottom-up activities and can be relevant advocates of civil initiatives proposals when the city budgets are distributed. This role is even more important when the civil initiatives have not yet been well established, and are thus not broadly recognised.

### 3.2 Understanding the Community and its Inner Logics of Operation

Each community has its own characteristics and dynamics. In order to achieve a fruitful cooperation with the members of the local communities, an urban planner must understand each community's very own logics of operation. These may include a detection of the sub groups that may be formed around various factors (age, ethnicity, needs, interests etc.) at an early stage and encourage cooperation and exchange across the boundaries of such groups (see Case Study 04: Zusammensetzung mit Abstammung; Case Study 01: Jardin Aux Fleurs; and Case Study 09: Coltivando). This task is especially important in culturally and socioeconomically diverse communities, and in communities where relations between different groups are difficult. Safe environments for cooperation shall be provided by an independent third party from outside the community (see Case Study 03: THINKtent), and urban planners may take the role of moderators. The ability to understand the functioning of the community must not be limited to the residential population, but should consider other local actors such as locally based enterprises and small businesses (see Case Study 08: Caravanserai).

New technologies can be of great help to an urban planner in gaining better insights into the functioning of a community. The analyses of crowdsourced information can provide important insights (see Case Study 02: Unlimited Cities), while social media and other applications can be also used as efficient tools to encourage discussions between the local players. Therefore, at least a basic knowledge in the field of ICT and social media must be welcomed.

### 3.3 Paying Attention to Individual Cases, Especially People with Specific Needs

Official participatory urban planning agendas must also address the needs of individual members of the community and not succumb to the generalised and superficial understanding of the community. The living conditions of people on the social or economic edge, people discriminated upon due to their personal characteristics (such as age, gender, disability etc.), or people with any kind of special needs must be given special attention. This demands at least some basic knowledge in the field of unprivileged urban groups and the ability to involve additional specialists when needed. The practice shows that disadvantaged people are most often not given a real chance to express

themselves and participate (see Case Study 06: Tallin for all), even if the general participatory processes within a community are ongoing.

The individuals-tailored approach proves to be successful in the cases of non-marginalised groups too – getting to know the specific needs, habits and desires of an average local inhabitant can contribute to the success of any campaign that seeks a collaboration between urban dwellers (see Case Study 05: V troje). In these endeavours, the urban planner's ability to do a crowdsourced data collection is very helpful in the analytical phase, while literacy in the usage of social media is an asset for co-creating individuals' willingness to participate.

### 3.4 Respecting the Importance of a Physical Location and Locals' Affiliation to It

Many studies prove that our living environments shape the way we lead our lives and vice versa (Madanipour, 1996). This finding is important in participatory practice in the sense that the stronger the attachment to one's living environment, the more likely one will get actively involved in its co-design and reshaping (Resnick, 2016). Urban planners shall take the right planning decisions to form a physically and functionally high quality urban environment upon which strong feelings of belonging can develop. This refers not only to physical form and function but also to other intangible conditions, such as employment possibilities, the ratio between rented and privately owned properties, level of public services, amenities etc. Public space is an important medium in this process as it is a common space of everyone and thus exists the element of a common construct of place identity, as well as development of a feeling of belonging to the place.

In this respect the role of urban planning and related disciplines is not limited only to their official positions, but also to their citizenship – as holders of a specialist knowledge they can act as important initiators or catalysts of participatory changes in their own local environments (see Case Study 07: M3 Odblokuj! and Case Study 08: Caravanserai). People with specialist knowledge can play important roles in urban co-creation processes in their home environments as they are better equipped with knowledge and can better navigate through the administrative structures of any city. This also enriches their personal experience with participatory urbanism– they can experience the process from the other side, through the eyes of the citizen, which helps them understand the obstacles in the processes they would normally not recognise.

### 3.5 Taking a Cost-Benefit Balance into Account

The busy daily routines in the lives of contemporary citizens make one's spare time a precious resource. As the time spent in participatory activities is the most common investment of an average citizen, the participation is less likely to happen if a citizen will not get something in the return for their invested time. The urban planners that aim

to moderate the participation processes based on the voluntary cooperation of citizens must be well aware of this and give realistic promises to the participants in terms of what can be achieved in return for their participation. An effective tool that urban planners can use is the creation of the window of additional opportunities through official plans for the active members of the local communities (see also Case Study 10: Restaurant Day) – e.g. in a form of urban planning and management regulations that are tailored to some specific local needs and initiatives. Thus, a tribute to active communities can be made and participatory activities rewarded.

Table 3.1 upgrades the previously set up framework to reflect the skills and competences needed by an urban planner to successfully support the participatory urban planning in the field of urban public open space provision.

<b>Institutional framework</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- urban public open space is a common space of everyone and can act as a space for open dialogue – make it an important part of urban (re)development agendas and invite citizens to have a real say</li> <li>- introduce supplementary participatory tools and approaches to rather rigid top-down official procedures – experiment to find the most suitable approach as there is no one-suits-all recipe</li> </ul>
<b>Community</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- develop communication skills in various communication channels (oral, graphic etc.) and technical modes (one to one communication, use of ICT etc.) and use a common language, as not everyone can understand the professional terminology</li> <li>- learn to listen and hear the community groups and individuals</li> <li>- be aware of differences and possible tensions within communities – they are not one homogenous group</li> <li>- build on a roll-off effect – expose good examples to attract the wider community into participatory processes, at the same time be aware that bad publicity also spreads fast</li> <li>- pay tribute to cooperative communities by flexible and supportive urban plans and policies</li> </ul>
<b>Individual</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- do your best to make the voice of marginal and often excluded parts of the community heard</li> <li>- employ specialists who can deal with specific demands of gender/education/occupation/income etc. differences within communities when needed</li> <li>- provide safe space where individual points of view can be freely expressed and respected</li> <li>- pay special attention to individuals' knowledge and skills</li> </ul>
<b>Residence conditions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- support designing of the pleasant living environments where people will love to live and develop a feeling of attachment to the environment, thus increasing the probability of constructive participation</li> <li>- aim for a diversity of urban environments in terms of programmes, housing types and users - a variety increases the participation capacity at different stages of the process</li> </ul>
<b>Cost benefit balance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- residents' willingness to contribute to the participation activities is not always self-evident – learn to communicate the benefits of taking part in participation processes for any individual and/or the community as a whole</li> </ul>

TABLE 3.1 Skills needed by urban planners in participatory processes

## 4 Conclusions

Urban open public space is a common space that belongs to everyone and represents an ideal venue for an urban dialogue on the possible futures of the city. The sustainable development agendas must therefore pay special attention to development of this space in a truly participatory manner. In this way, the knowledge, skills, and abilities of citizens can be recognised and implemented for common good and the sustainable future of a city where existing resources will be fully utilised. In such conditions, the role of urban planners and related professions has been, and will be, further challenged and changed – from the head of these processes to the moderator and facilitator of the processes. This does not decrease the importance of urban planner's



role; on the contrary – all the traditional urban planning knowledge will be needed to successfully moderate these complex processes. What will be changed further is the level of skills and competences that an urban planner will inevitably need: the ability of analytical work and comprehensive strategic thinking will have to be upgraded with strong communication, moderation, and mediation skills. In the long term, this will most likely result in new specialisations within urban planning, especially in relation to the use of new ICT technologies to support participatory urban planning processes. It should not come as a surprise if urban planning partly merges with some newly-emerging professional disciplines.

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