

SUMMARY

Training 2: Public Involvement



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Public Involvement

Practical information

Date	Friday, September 26th, 2014 (CIVITAS Forum – parallel session)
Venue	Regency Hyatt Hotel Casablanca
Time	9:00 – 10:30
Room	Forum II
Speakers	Jan Christiaens (Mobiel21) and Susanne Böhler-Baedeker (Rüpprecht Consult).
Moderators	Jan, Marjolein van de Nadort (DTV Consultants) and Willem Buijs (DTV Consultants)
Subscribed	45 people (26 participated)

Jan Christiaens welcomes the participants and explains the roadmap for this training: two short introductions with some theory, and then the participants will have to work on a practical exercise.

Susanne Boehler gives an introduction on the relation between SUMP's and participation. She explains why participation is important: it helps in decision making. She shows the 'ladder of participation' showing the hierarchies and intensities of participation.

There are certain barriers to involving stakeholders and citizens successfully, like the lack of political will, limited financial and personnel capacities, lack of skills on how to plan and carry out a participation process or the lack of a participation tradition in a certain country.

Fortunately, there are possibilities to overcome these barriers in participation by improving the internal administrative process of organizing participation. Susanne gives some examples for improvement.

Jan Christiaens introduces 9 steps to engage different social groups in urban mobility. He gives a brief explanation per step. Citizen involvement has been conducted in Hasselt (Belgium) very successfully and Jan explains the approach. He gives two other examples: involving children and involving senior citizens, showing that the 9 steps can be a real important support in the involvement process.

Finally, he explains the exercise:

SUMMARY

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The city of Participolis is planning for a new public transport network in the city centre. The mayor is very committed to the plan and wants to engage as much citizens as possible. He gives the instruction to his officials to organise a citizen engagement process in:

- The routing of the new PT-lines
- Promotion and use of the new PT-network
- Evaluation of the network

Participants were asked to join a separate group (each table in the room had a different target group): children, senior citizens or immigrants. The assignment is to design a process to engage your target group. A map of Participolis was available.

Moderators walked by, asked questions to the groups and ensured progress.

In all groups, a lot of discussion and exchange was going on.

Children

The group that was asked to design an involvement process for children started off with asking themselves: What would children want? This clearly relates being empathic towards the target group, one of the most important tips and tricks in participation.

Based on that question the group listed some criteria for the new PT-line:

- Stops and route should be near schools
- Shops in the vicinity of stops
- Attraction areas such as libraries and leisure areas should be included in the route
- Lines should be colour coded instead of indicated with classic line-numbers
- PT free for children?
- Bus stops should be safe, accessible and clean
- Bikes should be allowed on buses
- Timetables should be available in schools
- Buses should have low seats, that make them more accessible for children

Based on this list, the group comes to a list of topics to be addressed in the involvement process (destinations, pricing, accessibility, tailored information) To motivate children and ensure their involvement, the process and the promotion towards it, could make use of games and events that are suitable for children.

SUMMARY

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Immigrants

The groups identifies 4 steps in the involvement process:

1. Info gathering
 - a. Consult existing databases and statistics to get a rough overview
 - b. Consult with community leaders (stakeholder mapping)
 - c. Check with previous experiences
 - d. Carry out background research
2. Identify the intention
 - a. Organise social events to attract people instead of inviting the target group to a dedicated participatory meeting (soccer, cooking, ...)
 - b. Involve schools
 - c. E-participation
 - d. Organise focus groups
 - e. Find people at places they tend to frequent
 - f. Organize education about participation
3. Share
 - a. Share findings with communities
 - b. Overcome language or cultural barriers
4. Ask

SUMMARY

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Senior citizens

As a first step, the group decided that it is crucial to collect as much information as possible. That would give an idea on needs and wishes of the proposed target group.

As a strategy, the group proposes to organize meetings at places near to living areas of senior citizens, community centers, etcetera. Next to that, the group wants to engage key persons of the senior citizen community via a peer-to-peer-ambassador approach. This would mean that certain senior citizens act as ambassadors for the process and the plan and take the lead towards their peer-group.

As a concept, the group proposes FCAC (free cake and coffee). Although intended a joke, the group clearly recognizes that the target group has certain needs that should be accommodated such as: comfortable, accessible rooms and seating, free catering, short meeting times, dedicated time for stories.



Evaluation

Participants evaluated the training through the (short) Forum evaluation form. The training was evaluated with 4.3 (1-5 scale), so very positive. In general, people were very satisfied about this interactive session.

During the training, people were really enthusiastic about the practical approach: The number of attendants was sufficient to divide the group in three smaller groups, in order to stimulate interaction. In all groups, a lot of discussion and exchange was going on.

Feedback from one of the participants: Your training was really interesting. I think we need to explore more "on the ground" actions than high level strategies.