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A Case of Taipei**

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**Internationalizing Education for the
Ecological Transition Challenge :**
*New Stakes for Sharing Knowledge and
Acting in a Changing World*



URBAN REGENERATION, PUBLICNESS AND PARTICIPATION IN SPATIAL PLANNING: A CASE OF TAIPEI

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Abstract:

This study examines the issue of publicness and the practice of public participation in urban regeneration through municipal-led social housing as an approach to urban regeneration. The study examines the case of Taipei through the project process and deliberations to understand the communication and decision-making patterns of the project, which includes an analysis of who is eligible to be a participant, who is ignored, and the extent to which these participants are given decision-making power. As well as, what the public interest discussions are for these final urban regeneration projects. This study found that the participatory process, in this case, was quite ineffective. This is because the communication of the public interest at the outset led to conflicts between the municipality and the residents. And when the participatory process could not reach a consensus within a certain time frame, the one with the final decision-making power (the municipality) made an authoritative decision instead of continuous public communication.

Key words:

Urban regeneration, Taipei, Publicness, Participation

1-B-3

1. INTRODUCTION

The curiosity in this study begins with several local phenomena in Taipei. Firstly, current urban regeneration projects exacerbate complex urban problems such as gentrification and housing speculation. The original intention of urban regeneration is to provide new urban development in the older parts of the city. However, these projects have mainly occurred in areas of relatively new development, triggering unequal urban development. Secondly, privately owned public open space (POPOS) plays an essential role in Taipei's urban areas, as public space is the object of 'trade' in the urban renewal incentive system. It is the product of transactions between planning authorities and private developers in the name of 'public interest', yet there is little discussion about whether these public spaces are public or not. Thirdly, participatory planning was identified as a 'must-have' in the planning system with the political transformation. However, while participatory approaches are seen as fundamental to achieving inclusive spaces theoretically, it remains a challenge to address situations of conflict of private and public interest and property-led developments, as a participatory approach is not a method but a model of governance that should lie between procedural and substantive, so there is no one-size-fits-all package that fits all situations. Hence, the primary query of the research is summarised as: **How does participatory planning influence publicness in urban regeneration projects?**

To answer this question, this study examines one of the cases of social housing as an urban regeneration approach that emerged in Taipei since 2014. This study extracted a wealth of valuable information for analysis through interviews, government meetings, attendance at government workshops, field observations, and a study of all public participation meeting transcripts. I explore the project process and deliberations to understand the communication and decision-making patterns of the projects, encompassing an analysis of the stakeholders and inter-stakeholders, who qualifies as a participant, who is ignored, and to what extent these participants are empowered to make decisions. and what the public interest discussions are for these final urban regeneration projects.

This study brings the discussion back to the implications of public participation in urban regeneration in Taiwan, aiming to address the knowledge gaps in participatory planning theory and specific planning practices. It discusses the implementation process of participation and the dialectical relationship of publicness and public participation in planning. In particular, it examines the competition, evolution and coexistence between public participation and public interest, and how physical space is renewed in Taiwan, which can also feedback to not only local planners but also in other parts of the world that are in a tug-of-war between the market and the state.

Finally, this study attempts to enrich the contribution to participatory planning theory. The issue of urban regeneration has been one of the most cutting-edge issues in urban governance; stakeholder participation and conflict management have been placed in specific planning processes. However, the extent to which participatory planning can be institutionalised or informally incorporated into urban regeneration is relatively unknown. This study analyses this through the case of Taiwan, where, on the one hand, the planning system has always had a centralised and pro-market tradition. On the other hand, the process of marketisation and democratisation offers the possibility of a public dimension to urban regeneration. Therefore, this study will contribute to the understanding of the characteristics of governance models, which influence the formation of socially inclusive public spaces in residential areas.

2. THEORETICAL REVIEW

Urban regeneration

Urban regeneration

Before the 1970s, most policymakers recognised that the straightforward spatial transformation approach was to demolish old neighbourhoods and replace new buildings and public infrastructures. These inner-city wiping out policies have been criticised and resulted in changes that policymakers and planners started to recognise a greater emphasis on rehabilitation and improving spatial quality rather than merely demolishing the existing neighbourhoods. A new method that integrates social and spatial transformation has been implemented (Stouten, 2010). This new idea leads to planning practices shifting from narrower space and building renewal to broader urban space and functions regeneration aspects. It is the turning point from renewal to regeneration, especially in Western European cities (De Magalhães, 2015; Stouten, 2012). Urban regeneration is not merely the renewal method of urban areas or buildings. However, it also attempts to address new challenges such as global economic and urban competition, climate change adaptation, and socially inclusive development through integrating urban governance strategies and spatial planning. However, its multidisciplinary nature, as well as multi-scale, multi-channel governance and networks (Davies, 2002; Mossberger & Stoker, 2001; Rhodes, 2000; Stoker & Mossberger, 1994), and increasingly sophisticated planning mechanisms have led to complex and lengthy regeneration processes and incoherent goals. This has further led to the perceived ambiguity of the proclaimed public interest in urban regeneration. a more explicit analytical framework is necessary. urban regeneration from three interrelated perspectives: Property ownership, publicness and participation in spatial planning

Public participation in spatial planning

Spatial planning is considered to be an essential public service that introduces public participation (Baker et al., 2007). The earliest and widely spread theoretical participation model is the 'ladder of participation'(Arnstein, 1969).It takes the extent to which people are involved in decision making as the only measure of participation. It distinguishes between eight forms of participation, ranging from no participation to low levels of citizen power ('manipulation', 'therapy') to partial participation ('informing', 'consulting' and 'appeasing'), then to full involvement in the decision-making process ('partnership', 'delegated power' and finally 'citizen control'). The ladder gives a spectrum of participation in decision-making processes. However, ways of communication (how), authority (to what extent) and who should be participated (who) in a specific topic is more complex than solely indicating. Planning theorists thus introduced 'collaborative planning' (Healey, 2006) and 'communicative planning' and the concept of 'stakeholders' to expand more participatory dimensions (Fainstein, 2014; Innes, 1992; Innes & Booher, 2015; Monno & Khakee, 2012; Puustinen et al., 2017; Tayebi, 2013). The new planning theories depict the planning ideal as multiparty communication involving private interests, public institutions and citizens. As Innes (1992) proposes, by introducing an 'arena' of decision-making where different stakeholders are involved, communicative planning can "closed the theory-practice gap (Innes, 1992: 183)". Nevertheless, this 'arena' unavoidably faces power inequalities between stakeholders and the contradictions between their value systems. As a result, the planning and management tools have become increasingly complex, but also increasingly distant from existing urban problems. This has led to the emergence of the concept of 'planning as conflict management. It emphasises conflict as central to spatial and land use planning, which in turn creates opportunities to broaden the participation of stakeholder groups (Rogers, 2016) and to resolve disputes in land use planning arising from scarce resources (Bartos & Wehr, 2002; J. Campbell et al., 2005) and contested values through more sophisticated governance (Cullingworth

& Nadin, 2006). In Taiwan, with democratisation in the late 1990s, Huang observed that Taipei municipality institutionalised participatory planning for the first time. An attempt was made to combine civil society and planning techniques, allowing community action to act as participants in planning and weakening the government's dominant role (Huang, 2006). However, issues such as the conflicts arising from the institutionalisation of participation in Taiwan and the interests of the various stakeholders have not yet been given much attention.

Publicness in spatial planning

Planning often involves multiple antagonistic parties, and there may be less common ground on how to address different needs and establish priorities. Land use and environmental issues involved in spatial planning require more attention to scientific and technical considerations and socio-economic impacts, which can involve long-term and irreversible effects. In general, spatial planning involves the juxtaposition of choices made by those dealing with three broad categories of public interests: 1) allocation of limited resources; 2) prioritisation of policies; and; 3) concerning environmental quality and sustainable development, which also encompasses the maintenance of physical environments and human well-beings: mental health and safety. Therefore, spatial planning practices inevitably involve restraining and regulating private property rights, which are highly conflicting because they involve stakeholders based on their divergent interests and identities (Cullingworth & Nadin, 2006; Peltonen & Sairinen, 2010). In this research, I divide publicness in spatial planning into public interests and public spaces. Public interests are the weighing of different interests, and public space is about creating, using and managing a physical space that is freely accessible for the public (often called urban open space). Public space can be seen as the physical realisation of public interest. For example, we need a community public space as the interaction of people in the community is one of our public interests. As experienced in the UK (Maidment, 2016) and the US (Ward, 2004) have shown, the public interest is the legitimacy of representative democracy; however, in practice there is no direct mechanism for the public to participate in the planning process.

Similarly, planners were thought to encourage public participation in planning, but not asking why (H. Campbell & Marshall, 2002b). In the practice of making decisions about specific planning proposals, the public interest is perceived to be about preserving public space or promoting economic growth, which is not easily settled (Tait, 2016). For example, in developmental states like Taiwan, planning is used as a tool to facilitate economic growth development (J.-Y. Hsu, 2005; J. Y. Hsu, 2011; W. J. Huang, 2019; Shin, 2019a, 2019b), which is an unquestionable public interest. On the one hand, in Healey's (2012) view, the consequence is that many people feel excluded and ignored and that the state responds to public concerns because of intense media pressure rather than discussing them with the general public. Citizens are not allowed to meaningfully engage in debates about addressing them (Owens & Cowell, 2011). This can be partly attributed to a lack of clarity in the way the public interest is addressed. On the other hand, planners find it difficult to know to whom they have obligations and where public participation fits into planning activities (H. Campbell & Marshall, 2002a). These issues are consistent with the difficulty of identifying a single public interest while recognising social diversity and reconciling the presence of diverse publics at different scales. In order to deal with this complex dynamic process, theorists have proposed different approaches. In particular, the expansion of participation as a mediation of policy and planning decisions. Ross & McGee (2006) highlights the importance of social impact assessment, particularly of those affected groups, to understand the conflict and identify participants. Interactions between stakeholders are not limited to debating their interests but are mediated to serve the actual needs of the stakeholders (Forester, 2006) Participation is, therefore, more than just the exchange of information, or the more meetings, but a deliberative activity based on the fundamental interests of the stakeholders. The role of participation is not only to ensure the quality of decisions. Participation can transform individual

action into collective action in pursuing public interests in spatial planning.

Conceptual framework

Synthesising the above discussion, therefore, a state-of-the-art conceptual framework is needed in order to understand current practice. This study on urban regeneration starts from three interrelated perspectives. Property ownership (and the planning interventions or private dominance it entails), publicness and participation in spatial planning. Fig. 1 illustrates the conceptual framework for this study. The aim as participation is to understand publicness (the specific public interest), which can be realised through urban regeneration. This public interest is multi-scale, from a region, a city, to a block and a building.

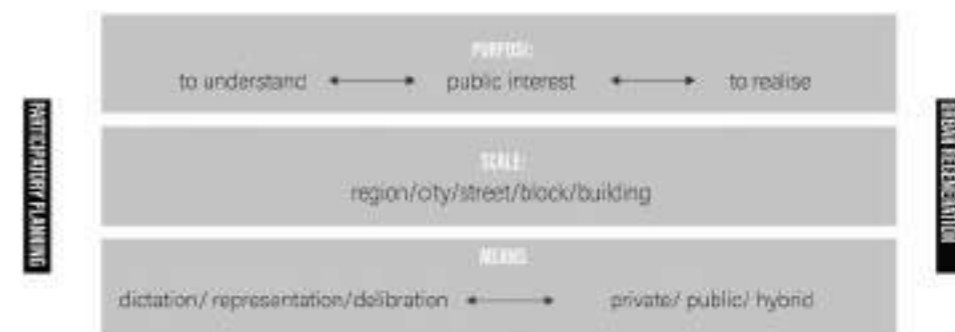


Fig. 1 Conceptual framework

3. CASE INTRODUCTION

Starting in 2014, social housing was formally introduced abroad as a rental-based scheme with affordable rents and reasonable living conditions for the general population, not limited to the lowest income earners. The new era of social housing in Taipei has begun.

With the announcement of the first attempt of the social housing project, the municipality framed it as a project that go through participatory process with the residents in the surrounding area, as the municipality expected it to realise urban regeneration in the surrounding area and also in the hope that the means combing social housing and urban regeneration will alleviate residents' concerns about the impact of such large-scale housing on their residential areas. The municipality and the commissioned architects have committed themselves to realising the public spaces and services provided by this large housing complex in a way that meets the voices from the residents, and which will be transformed to achieve the urban regeneration of the area.

The planning and design challenge in this project was the large volume of the building to accommodate the new 507 homes for social housing tenants. The project is proposed as an urban regeneration approach that would not only allow for a reduction in the impact of the large social housing complex on the neighbourhood, but would also create a new urban public space that enhance the quality of the living environment for the whole neighbourhood (see Fig. 2).

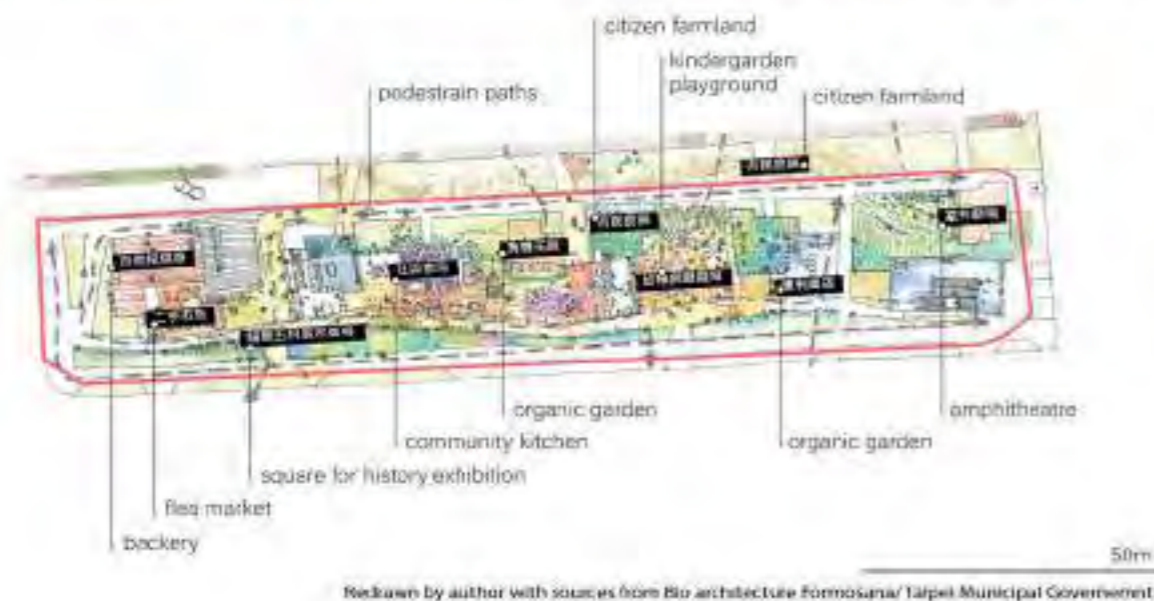
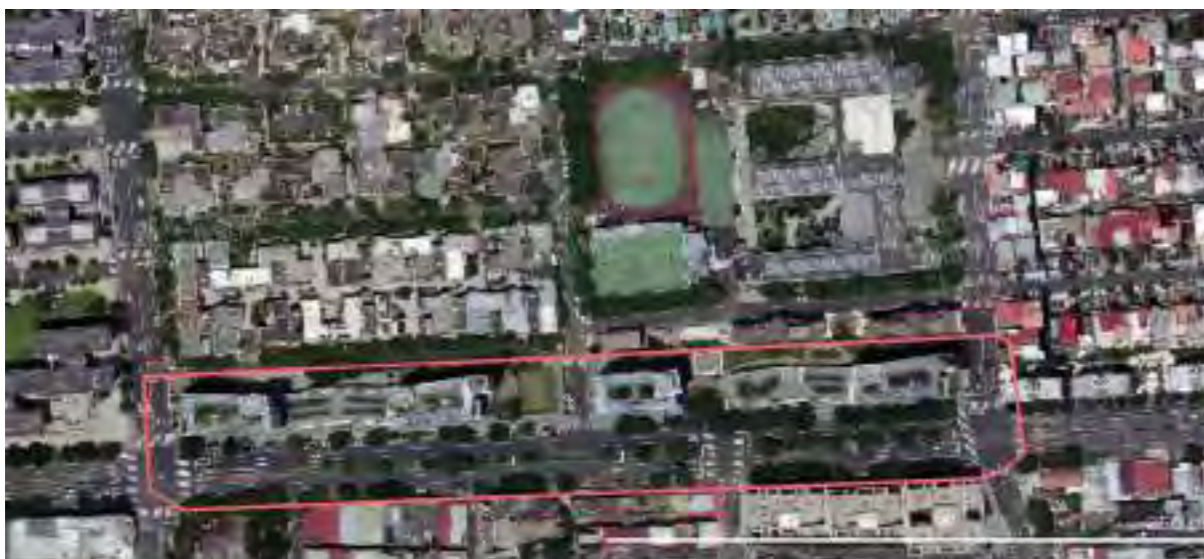


Fig. 2 Upper: The concept for the ground plan showing the integration of pedestrian routes and open space plan.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This study investigates the different stages of participation: from public opinion surveys to public meetings. The study is based on the objectives, the topics discussed, the presentations made by the residents and the organisers of previous presentations and workshops for the residents. The following summarises the findings of this study:

Ambiguous stakeholder identification

The participant recruitment process in this case was open and targeted through the specific recruitment of residents from the four boroughs adjacent to this case, as well as the free participation

of residents outside of these districts (if they were aware of it). This reflects the municipality's identification of stakeholders in NIMBY (not in my backyard) as residents of these four boroughs. The municipality's delineation of the zone boundaries for stakeholders has not been researched and investigated, nor has it explained why residents of these four boroughs are considered stakeholders of equal weight. For convenience, the municipality used the residents of these four boroughs as the primary stakeholders in this case and also used these identified stakeholders as participants in the process. This ignores the fact that residents in the four boroughs are not all affected to the same extent. For example, those who live just across the street from that social housing are affected differently from the others; the impact of new high-rise social housing on the neighbourhood is also different from other residential areas in the same neighbourhood, but their differences are not specifically highlighted.

Such stakeholder identification was also challenged by residents living closer to the location of the case, who felt that those living further away (or not adjacent to the site) would be less affected and would therefore vote in favour of the government's social housing decision. It is also clear from the voices in the minutes of the meeting that those who spoke against the decision were mostly representatives of the housing blocks close to the site.

Lost in mutual trust, listen as spectator and express preference

The promise made by the previous mayor that social housing would not be built without the consent of a majority of residents gave residents a sense of trust at first, while the team of architects, despite their lack of experience in participatory planning and design, were willing to try and work with residents. Subsequently, the way in which the public opinion survey was conducted and the way in which it was responded to did not work. On the one hand, the participants began to perceive the participation process as a convincing exercise by the government, and the team of architects was perceived as a partner in the city's convincing efforts, which in turn influenced the spatial participation process of the team of architects. On the other hand, the team of architects came to see the residents as selfish and seemed to care more about the value of their property being affected by the social housing. In the end, the municipality could only try to convince local residents by packaging the social housing policy in the name of public interest. This all adds to the uncertainty of mutual trust.

The issue of responsiveness also needs to be extended to the planning system, although this seems to go beyond the original setting of this participatory process. After all, the municipality claims that this social housing project will have an urban regeneration effect. Under the current blueprint planning system, the application of adaptive planning principles is highly unlikely, with planning review cycles of as little as five years and as long as ten years or more. This makes it difficult to adapt the plan to new changes in society and to new spatial needs, such as down zoning or the adjustment of the level of public services in the residential area to the new social housing. As a result, even if participants requested a reduction in the number of households of the social housing and more green space, the municipality is unable to give a specific response as to how this should be approached in the participation process for the social housing.

Conflicting values in the spatial transformation

In this participatory process, the main thread of spatial transformation focuses on public space, but there is a difference between the municipality and the participants in terms of the impact of public space on the neighbourhood. For the municipality, it was about convincing residents that not only would there be no negative impact, but that it would even lead to urban regeneration for the area, as the new public space created was sufficient to improve the quality of life in the community, while the participants were concerned about the impact of densification on the community's landscape, open spaces and the provision of public services.

This seems to be a typical NIMBY scenario: residents are opposed to new high-rise developments in their neighbourhoods, and are particularly concerned about the quality of social housing and the quality of its tenants (McNee & Pojani, 2022; Scally, 2013; Scally & Tighe, 2015; Wassmer & Wahid, 2019). In this regard, the NIMBY phenomenon is a confrontation between local residents and developers (or municipalities) over land-use interests (or values), and even though the former may consider new development to be beneficial to the area (Eranti, 2017), they are more concerned with whether their own interests are being compromised. Thus, inevitably, in different cases, NIMBYism carries negative connotations (McNee & Pojani, 2022; Petrova, 2016) and is seen to have a negative impact on the social inclusion of the city (McNee & Pojani, 2022).

There is, however, a more long-term perspective that may have been overlooked in the discussion of NIMBYism. In this case of social housing participation, the public interest of the residents differed from what the municipality perceived from the long-term neglect of the planning system. Although the lack of public space following the regeneration of early post-war housing was highlighted in the municipality's planning documents as early as 1984, there was no strategy to address this until the latest master plan in 2009. It is no coincidence that, despite the "selfish" voices of some in defence of their own interests, the concerns about neighbourhood living space are also the result of a long period of the planning system's inaction.

At the same time, this case illustrates the problem of the densification of large-scale social housing. In many lower density cities, the concept of urban densification or compact cities is used as a sustainable development strategy. In empirical studies of cities, a more compact and dense urban form is thought to lead to a more environmentally, economically and socially sustainable city (see Bibby et al., 2021; Burton, 2000). Nevertheless, Taipei has a different context, with a highly concentrated urban population, where increased density may lead to a further reduction in living space. This is particularly evident in residential areas where urban green spaces and public service provision have been neglected for a long time. Spatial transformation as the realisation of public interest in urban regeneration is therefore not in this case what the municipality claims it to be.

Controversial and compromised direct authority

The political propaganda of the former mayor promised the local residents the authority to approve or reject the government's social housing programme by voting directly, which directly led to the continuation or suspension of the policy. The question is, does such power contribute to urban regeneration and better neighbourhood living conditions? It seems to be a matter of the local residents voting for or against social housing that are seen as NIMBY facility, with the local residents seemingly having the final say.

As in some direct democracies (for example, referendums), the polarised voices are concentrated into mere support or opposition, rather than talking about more vision and concrete ideas for incremental improvements. And in the worst case, still, the majority decides on an option from a limited number of options in a limited amount of time. In terms of the authority and power axis, the direct authority in participatory mechanisms is through the inclusion of participants in decision-making at an early stage of planning and policy formation (Fung 2004; Fung and Wright 2003). There is a significant difference from this direct democracy.

This is because in this case, the participants cannot participate in social housing policy and planning with the municipality at the policy formation stage and can only passively choose to accept or not accept the municipality's social housing policy at a later stage. Although the ability of residents to overrule the municipality's social housing decisions by a majority vote appears to achieve direct authority on the axis of Authority & Power, this is merely at the surface, as in practice the authority to discuss and consult is lacking. Participants' suggestions and consultations on policy are difficult to discuss separately on the two options of support or opposition, and therefore, agenda setting,

policy evaluation, and consensus building, for example, are not explicitly involved in this case. As Fung argues (2004), direct authority differs from voting in that the former results in an open-ended process rather than a choice of the most popular preference among a limited number of options.

5. CONCLUSION

Following the aforementioned vein, this first example of social housing participation process in Taipei is fairly ineffective. This is despite the fact that the communication process seeks a resolution of conflicts between stakeholders defined as a 'win-win' rather than the 'zero-sum' mentality that occurs when stakeholders bargain according to their own fixed interests. However, when consensus building cannot be achieved in a participatory process over a certain period of time, those with the ultimate decision-making power will make compromises rather than endless negotiations and bargaining.

For the municipality, as the decisive authority, it has unusually reserved a large number of housing units for the neighbouring residents as part of the compensation in order to keeping them from voicing their opposition. As mentioned earlier, as a social housing policy to help the general public solve their housing problems, it should be open to applications from households of the general public, with the exception of special social groups, yet in this case up to 30% of the units were reserved for residents who originally lived in these four boroughs (in this vein, the social housing project is indeed seen as a NIMBY facility, but dubiously, the residents are opposed to it, yet benefit from it). For the team of architects, they felt that they came with bona fides and were guardians of public interests. Initially they were willing to allow participatory planning and design to play a more important role, their experience of engagement was however frustrating. Consensus building was not taken seriously, although they felt they had also tried to make the message more transparent and helped to guide participant discussions. The strong response from the team of architects was revealing in its frustration: "...we are the guardians of the public interest. Promoters of the quality of public space. we bring the public and the government together to strike a balance, but maybe the residents didn't think of us in this way..." This highlights the dilemma of the roles of the (commissioned) expert in participatory processes. On the one hand, they are usually commissioned by the public and private sectors to perform professional services (in other words, they have clients to serve), but on the other hand they are seen as neutral (both by themselves and perhaps by the participants) in the role of facilitators in the process. Once the manner of communication has led to a crisis of trust, the former is more likely to be perceived by the participants as their role.

Finally, in this case, the limitation of time was significant. Consensus building is an important part of this collective meaning-making process, which involves 'voicing one's opinion' from widely differing positions, dialogue and response between the municipality and the architects' team. However, the endless response places a huge burden on the municipality's policy makers and planners, as both the municipality and the architects' team were under pressure to meet policy realisation deadlines and therefore cannot engage in an endless participatory process, which must be contained within the framework of a 'participatory scheme' to be carried out. Furthermore, prolonged participation can lead to fatigue among the participants, especially when responsiveness from the municipality is perceived as insufficient or when trust is not built. The concept of the 'cost of time' is therefore important in participatory planning. It has two implications: on the one hand, fostering trust and consensus in a short period of time requires sophisticated design. A clear participatory plan must be in place at an earlier stage, as the laypersons need a longer period of time for gathering and build their agendas and consensus. A better participatory mechanism is one that is in place on

their daily basis, as ad hoc participatory processes will make it difficult to achieve trust. Secondly, an excessively long participatory process with no specific response will reduce the effectiveness of participation.

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