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Passengers as drivers of innovation in public transport planning? Conceptual issues and experiences

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Abstract

According to economic theory, market forces guarantee efficiency and customer orientation. But in public transport, such a market often does not exist, given that most services are provided under licenses which guarantee the operator an exclusive right to provide the service, thus evidently limiting customer choice. Public transport services are also subject to intense political influences.

The paper examines the position of passengers as stakeholders in transport planning and policy. After the introduction, the main elements of the passengers' interests are presented. The main part discusses the role and scope of citizens' participation in urban and transport planning. A series of case studies illustrates different, more or less formalised, approaches to participation as well as typical planning issues for public transport development. In the Italian context, the Carta dei Servizi and the activities of consumer associations and civic action committees are the most noteworthy forms of involvement.

The examples demonstrate that different methods can be used to permit a greater role of the citizens in planning. An unbalanced approach, one which takes place at the wrong time or is not respected by the other stakeholders, however, is likely to be seen as an obstacle and cause for frustration. Well-designed participation can, on the other hand, lead to better and more accepted planning schemes. To achieve this, it is necessary to choose the necessary methods with caution, considering the topic, environment and the setting of the scheme in the wider planning and decision-making process.

Secondo la teoria economica, le forze del mercato assicurano un servizio efficiente e basato sui bisogni della clientela. Nel trasporto pubblico, un tale mercato molto spesso non esiste, visto che per la maggior parte dei servizi il regime è sottoposto a concessioni che garantiscono l'esclusività all' erogatore, limitando ovviamente la scelta per i passeggeri. Inoltre, i servizi offerti sono fortemente influenzati da logiche di tipo politico.

Il documento esamina la posizione dei passeggeri come attori nell'ambito della politica e pianificazione del trasporto pubblico. Dopo l'introduzione, vengono presentati i principali elementi dei loro interessi. La parte principale discute il ruolo e lo scopo della partecipazione cittadina nella pianificazione territoriale. Una serie di esempi presenta strumenti di coinvolgimento più o meno formalizzati e temi tipici per lo sviluppo del trasporto pubblico. Nel contesto italiano, la Carta dei Servizi e le attività della associazioni di consumatori e comitati cittadini meritano una particolare attenzione come strumenti principali del dialogo.

Gli esempi dimostrano come i vari metodi possono facilitare un ruolo più ampio della cittadinanza. Un approccio non equilibrato, al momento sbagliato o non rispettata dagli altri attori, rischia però di essere percepita come un ostacolo ed un alibi che crea delusioni per tutti. Se fatta bene, contribuisce a creare una pianificazione più "ricca", rispettata e condivisa attraverso l'integrazione del punto di vista del cittadino.

Bisogna comunque fare una scelta ragionata del metodo, considerando anche il contesto, il tema e la collocazione della parte partecipativa nel processo più ampio di pianificazione e decisione.

1 Introduction

1.1 Background and scope of this paper

The mass provision of public transport services in cities started as a private business, but has now been provided for decades either by public sector companies or by operators working under licences granted by public authorities and hence under monopoly conditions. As a result, typically only one service provider is available to satisfy a particular transport need fixed by route, time and additional service requirements. Consequently, customers cannot express dissatisfaction with the service on offer by switching to another operator, hence market pressure as the key incentive to orientate the service to the users' needs is missing. This has left them in a weaker position than consumers of most other services where alternatives are available. On the other hand, political influence on service planning, provision and funding has always been strong.

Hence while under normal market conditions, customer expectations can be assumed to be a main driver of innovation through purchasing decisions or market research, this simple mechanism does not work in the public transport environment. Instead, the (potential) passengers' have to express their demands through individual complaints, pressure groups, political lobbying or dedicated participative procedures organised by transport providers or authorities.

Although such procedures are far from being universally used, a wide range of tools is available and applied to different situations. On the following pages, the role of such "customer involvement" in the development of public transport services will be reviewed with a focus on whether such procedures can stimulate genuine "innovation" in this field such as novel service concepts or vehicles. The paper is mainly based on analyses of public transport planning processes, but the examples discussed below also include some projects with a wider focus where bus and rail services are only one of several topics of a scheme.[1]

Can the involvement of citizens contribute to creative planning? Reasons to doubt this being the case exist as well as counterarguments: Many procedures have a quite narrowly-defined subject, citizens are easily accustomed to the status quo and not necessarily motivated to develop radically new ideas and last not least, the outcome of such processes is often not binding for decision-makers. On the other hand, in an environment with very limited competitive pressure and status quo-oriented thinking, genuine innovation may be more likely outside the professional stakeholders. Furthermore, one should not think of innovation only as a simple link between ideas and their application but consider intermediate and indirect effects as well.

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[1] The research on which the following thoughts are based is documented in detail in Schiefelbusch/Dienel (2009), in particular sections 1.2 and 4.3 to 4.5 (Bodensteiner/Neugebauer (2009), Böhme/Schiefelbusch/Bodensteiner (2009), Schmithals (2009), Schiefelbusch (2009)). Another useful reference on citizens' involvement in transport planning is the handbook/documentation summarising the results of the EU GUIDEMAPS project (Kelly et al (2005)).

1.2 Participation - definition and dimensions

The term "*participation*" refers to various processes of cooperation and involvement between people. A universally applicable definition of the term is difficult to find, since various research disciplines such as sociology, political science, economics, and pedagogy tend to use it in different ways. In the area of transport planning, participation means the *'involvement of the public in planning-related decision making processes'*.[2] This definition is also used in this paper. During planning, the term participation is often equated with *civic participation*. In this case, participation can exhibit various degrees of intensity, ranging from the civic participation at the early stages of urban development planning to the integration of citizen initiatives and decisions.

Theoretical treatises about participation usually assume there are various dimensions or levels of participation. These levels can be represented in a participation pyramid (Figure 1). With every level, the intensity of the participants' involvement is increased.
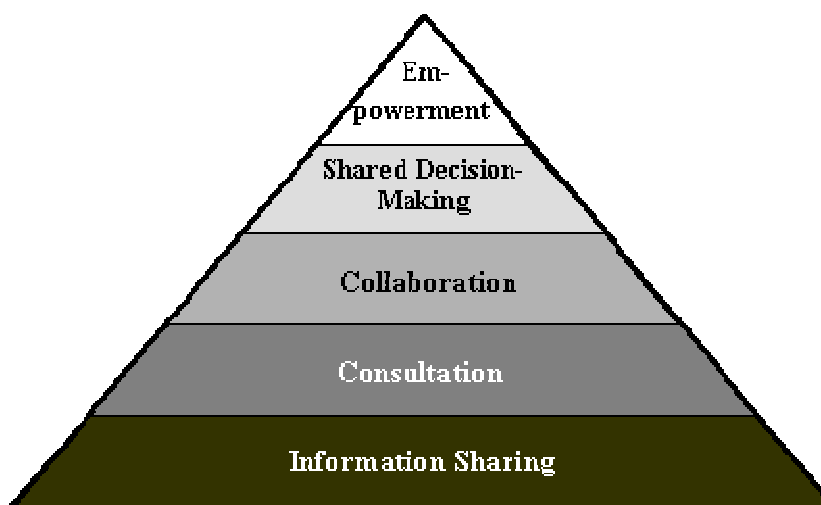

Fig. 1: The participation pyramid
Source: Brinkerhoff/ Goldsmith (2000) p. 5

With 'information sharing', information flows only in one direction. At this level, the initiator (usually the government) provides information about the intended plans. 'Consultation' implies a two-way flow of information as well as an exchange of ideas between the initiator and other participants. At the level of 'collaboration', the initiator/process leader invites other groups and participants to collaborative consultations, while retaining the authority to make decisions. At the next level, the initiator surrenders this decision-making authority to other parties ('shared decision-making'), who then collectively agree on decisions. Participatory practices in which such collective decisions are made are called cooperative practices.[3] At the final level, 'empowerment', the ability to make decisions is completely surrenders to the participants.[4]

Urban planning (in the sense of physical planning, design of public spaces, development strategies) pioneered the use of these methods with transport planning adopting them with some delay. The main reason for this was that transport planning was per-

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[2]   Fürst (1998), p.6
[3]   See Selle (2000), p. 62
[4]   See Brinkerhoff/Goldsmith (2000), p. 5

ceived as a technical problem-solving process to a greater extent and for a longer time.[5] The same can be observed within the transport sector: More general questions (such as strategy development) on the one hand and "physical ones" associated with new infrastructure seem to be put forward as subjects of participation more often than specific issues of public transport planning.

2   Levels of user interests in public transport planning

Looking more closely at the issue of user interests, it becomes apparent that a comprehensive view on user interests during the whole process of service planning and production is necessary:

1.)   On the *political* or *strategic level*, user interests can be expressed through the general process of political decision-taking, as well as through consultation and participation procedures which can be formal or informal in character. On the political or strategic level, users' interests are directed at topics such as parking schemes, the decision to introduce or withdraw urban rail services, but also land-use guidelines and tax incentives. Decisions at this level have direct and indirect impacts on the balance between modes and the conditions under which public transport services are provided. The general aim is to create an environment that favours public transport, in particular by giving it due consideration in the development of an urban transport strategy and the setting of political priorities.

2.)   On the *planning level*, public transport services are designed in detail. This builds upon the political level, but a distinction can be based on who is involved and who takes the decisions: Issues at the strategic level are normally decided by the legislature while on the planning level, decisions mainly involve transport operators and the local administration. Hence users need to have contact with different institutions.

The topics which fall under this heading are manifold in terms of their scope, geographic coverage and the degree of innovation required to assess the problem. Typical issues include the routing of services, timetables, ticket conditions, design of vehicles and location of stops, but also the development of new service concepts. In reality, the two levels naturally overlap.

Customer-oriented services first require the users' expectations to be known to the planners, second that they are given the necessary attention in the planning procedure.

3)   The operational or *provision level* is characterised by the *implementation* of the concepts (timetable, vehicle design etc.) developed before. In contrast to other utilities such as energy or water, public transport is not available continuously and ubiquitously. Hence users need to reconcile their travel needs with the service on offer which is defined mainly by the timetable, accessibility of infrastructure and vehicles and other regulations or conditions. Consequently, passengers request services to operate as planned, published and advertised in order to be able to plan their movements reliably.

Two main factors can be derived from this situation: First, reliable services require adequate operating conditions and an internal structure of the operator which provides for a high-quality product. Second, the level of information, its detail and provision directly affect passengers' possibilities to plan their trips.

4)   On the *practical level*, however, problems cannot be avoided and therefore one needs to think about practical solutions to problems arising from deficits in quality. Pub-

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[5]   Huber (2001), p. 19-20, Selle (2001), p. 242-244

lic transport operates in a complex environment where various factors both inside and outside the operator's control can lead to service disruptions, missed connections and other problems. Customers therefore request operators to secure suitable alternatives in case of malfunction or provide adequate redress and handle complaints in an uncomplicated way.

3 Tasks and tools for the planning level

3.1 Basic tasks

On the planning level, public transport services are proposed and designed in detail. The topics which fall under this heading are manifold in terms of their scope, geographic coverage, and the degree of innovation required to assess the problem. Typical issues include the routing of services, timetables, ticket conditions, design of vehicles and location of stops, but also the development of new service concepts.

In reality, the two levels naturally overlap: On the one hand, planning matters may become political ones even on a very small scale if users or other stakeholders cannot achieve a solution that satisfies them. On the other hand, political stakeholders may also wish to prescribe small details of the service pattern if they consider this important for their strategy. 'NIMBY'[6] protests against new bus routes and 'political' fare reductions are examples of this. The close links between operators and (local) political authorities as their owners – so far common in many European countries – has certainly favoured such influences.

A practical distinction between the political and planning level can be based on who is involved and who makes the decisions. Issues at the strategic level are normally decided by the legislature while on the planning level decisions mainly involve transport operators and the local administration.

Planning involves dealing with simple questions as well as complex assessment and decision processes. Furthermore, there is a wide range of stakeholders, which makes intensive communication essential. There is thus a question as to what level of knowledge about these processes should be expected from citizens wishing to participate. There are obvious differences between 'lay people' and 'experts', again with a wide range of intermediate degrees of expertise.

Customer-oriented services require firstly that the users' expectations be known to the planners; secondly that they are given the necessary attention in the planning procedure. In this context, user participation aims to counteract typical patterns of behaviour or thought which can be found among product developers:

- *The lack of knowledge* about or *misinterpretation* of user needs. Methodologies for user involvement for addressing the former concern can be divided into four approaches: a) surveying of users' (and non-users') views using e.g. stated preference surveys, b) retrospective analysis of individual comments from customers (but this does not provide a representative overview), c) discussion and assessment of services through participative practices (see below), d) experimental services, observation techniques)
- Deliberate *neglect or devaluation* of these needs in the course of competing objectives. This Some can be summed up as 'political' factors in a wider sense. The passengers' needs are also not homogeneous, and reasons for different ex-

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[6]   'Not in my back yard'

pectations can be based on factual requirements as well as subjective perceptions. It is no rarity to find different and even incompatible expectations in different groups.

Planning requires the ability to recognize isolated interests and value them accordingly based on an understanding of the situation as a whole. A wide range of tools for analysis and appraisal exists for this purpose, for example traffic flow models or cost-benefit-analyses. Their setup as neutral, standardized practices often produces abstract results, which are not easily understood by unskilled people. Furthermore, their uncritical use can distract from the particularities of the problem under review, leading to solutions that are less suitable than they could be.

Good planning should always pay attention to the concrete situation, but in everyday practice this is not always guaranteed. There are several reasons for "economising" on planning efforts: Sufficiently detailed information may be missing, time may not be sufficient for a thorough analysis, planners may trust their "professional gut feelings" or the 'objective' results of their assessment tools more than voices from the public.

3.2   *The role of participation*

Participation pursues diverse and differing goals that vary widely from case to case. Nevertheless, specific goals that are sometimes closely related can be identified during the analysis of planning processes. Potential motives for participatory practices include: gained insight, early warning system, conflict avoidance, acceleration of the voting process, as well as increase to acceptance/legitimacy of plans.[7]

1. Gained insight   An essential goal of civic participation is gained insight or information. This applies not only to products and services designed to meet potential customers' needs, but also for conducting planning. Through participation, planners can learn more about the topic or area and about the positions and possible attitudes of the people who live there. This is important because planners normally have a superficial knowledge of the area; that is they do not know it from personal experience.[8] In addition, experts and specialists usually regard their planning tasks from a specific perspective. Due to the job they have to perform, only certain portions of reality are of interest. The perspective these experts have differs strongly from that of those who are affected by and have to come to terms with the plans.

Combining these two different viewpoints by means of civic participation allows a more holistic view of the problem areas. This should help avoid planning errors.[9]

2. Early warning system   Closely related to gained insight is the possibility, with the help of civic participation, of becoming sensitive to the areas that are particularly liable to develop problems in the course of the planning process. In this regard, civic participation can be seen as a kind of early warning system for further planning. 'If you provide information about intended plans early on, you will soon find out soon enough where any resistance lies.'[10]

This is of particular importance if – in the case of local transport – users only have limited freedom of choice with regard to usage or non-usage (captives). Due to the

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7   See Bodensteiner (2005), p. 32 et seq.
8   See Fürst/Scholles/Sinning (1998), Mettler-von Meibom (1999) and Selle (2000), p. 169
9   See Selle (2000), p. 43
10   See Selle (2000), p. 170

largely monopolized structure of the public transport sector, there is also frequently no choice between competing service providers.[11]

3. Conflict avoidance   It is often mentioned that difficulties and resistance can be avoided through civic participation. Resistances to planning can express themselves in various forms – the scope reaches from criticisms disseminated by the media to public criticisms by affected parties and citizens to the normal channels of judicial complaint and protest procedures. This resistance then leads to delays in the planning processes and possibly to decisions in favour of just one party, rather than making use of the available latitude for consensus. To avoid such blockages and restrictions, timely civic participation that brings together as many involved parties as possible and strives, in an informal manner, to achieve consensus amongst them can be quite effective.[12]

4. Gains in legitimacy and acceptance   Civic participation is conducted with the goal of increasing the legitimacy of decisions. For this reason, greater acceptance for the project during planning should be generated among planning officials and the population. An important goal of participatory practices is ultimately to increase the chances that plans will be accepted and executed. Civic participation should help to avoid the rejection or failure of plans.[13] Especially in politics and planning, such practices could improve the legitimacy of decisions and operations.[14]

5. Other goals   In the literature, communicative practices are described as both a possible 'element and expression of a functioning democracy', which can, by offering their support, enable even marginalized groups to take part in planning and politics. Stimulating residents and (local) businesses takes advantage of existing know-how and increases the readiness for action. Furthermore, communicative practices can result in greater self-confidence, greater personal responsibility, and (re-)establish trust in institutions among citizens. In addition, the implementation of (collectively developed) solutions can serve as a 'visible signal' that one has taken the interests of a given district into consideration in order to prevent further damage to one's image and further drifting apart between districts.[15]

3.3   The range of participatory procedures

Participation takes place through communication between different (groups of) people involved in or affected by a proposed scheme (transport plan, infrastructure scheme etc.). Such communication can take place in a wide range of different ways and be more or less structured and formalised. Before concrete examples are considered, the main types shall therefore be presented briefly. A useful guideline for this is the degree of "pre-structuring" (or formalisation) of the procedure under consideration.

Participation is *formally regulated* in many planning areas. For example, plans for expanding transport infrastructure are dealt with in planning approval procedures that legally mandate the involvement of a third party in the planning process. These could be other public functionaries who are tangential to the plans, but also interested individual citizens. A legally regulated form of participation such as this is referred to as *'formal participation'* in this paper.[16] Planning law usually prescribes when such procedures

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[11]   Konrad/Truffer (2003), p. 2 et seq.
[12]   See Selle (2000), p. 170
[13]   See Faust (2001), p. 184 et seq.
[14]   See for example Barnes (1999), pp.60-75 - Webler/Renn (1995) and Selle (2000)
[15]   See Selle (2000); Barnes (1999), Schröder (2003), Behörde für Umwelt Hamburg (2001)
[16]   Böhme/Krause/Volpert (1998), p. 4

have to be undertaken and also include detailed rules regarding who can participate, what kind of comments can be made at what time and how these comments shall be dealt with.

'*Informal practices*' represent the opposite approach: They are not required by law and their range of topics and methods is much larger. In fact, to capture all possibilities, two main approaches should be distinguished:

- *Informal dialogue* through correspondence or meetings of interested parties and political or administrative representatives are the least structured form of participation. Here, the primary concern is the exchange of opinions in order to have an impact on decisions. Participants, location, agenda and other practical issues are decided based on the requirements of the topic, limited only by the participants' willingness to collaborate. Such dialogue accompanies most planning and policymaking processes, therefore its importance should not be underestimated. However, is not necessarily aimed at involving "the public", and the concrete conduct of such processes is hard to trace through publicly available sources.
- *Informal participatory practices*, also called 'cooperative practices',[17] on the other hand, aim to avoid the 'bureaucratic request-review-recommendation model' that characterises most formal procedures. Informal practices tend to be more cooperative. They often entail working in groups and use methods designed to promote a collaborative spirit. Usually processes in informal practices are designed to be open-ended. Hence the criterion 'informal' does not refer to a lack of structure in the participation process. On the contrary, there are various common elements that play a role in the process: Participants are informed as comprehensively as possible about the particular planning problem and exchange their views. Misunderstandings are resolved and – in cases of controversial views – consensus- and decision-building is moderated. The various interests and points of view are compiled and documented.

In most planning schemes or other applications, formal and informal participatory practices can and do *overlap* (see below). Furthermore, procedures that are neither fully formal nor informal can exist where

- additional cooperative methods and practices are employed in addition to formally regulated participatory practices, for example if a scheme promoter considers this advisable to generate additional input to the planning process,
- legal requirements only lay down a framework for public participation without specifying details, in order to leave room for the most suitable procedure to be used, or
- participation is not formally prescribed, but a rather formalised approach is chosen for reasons of efficiency and consistency.

4　Examples

4.1　*Formal consultation: The Swiss timetable consultation*

In Switzerland, the so-called 'Timetable Procedure' (Fahrplanverfahren) has long been implemented and legally supported. It has its foundations in Article 7 of the 'Timetable Ordinance', which regulates the production and publication of timetables as well as operational requirements. Its implementation is up to the regions (Kantone); af-

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[17]　See Schröder (2003), p. 2 et seq.

ter the conclusion of the hearing, they make the decision about how the matters at hand should be handled. The Bundesamt für Verkehr ('Federal Transport Office', BAV) provides for the dissemination of the plans and coordinates the procedure on the national level. Compared to other countries, the formal right to comment on timetables gives Swiss transport users extraordinary possibilities for participation.

For a long time, the publication of draft timetables took place through public presentation within the canton and municipal administrations. In the timetable procedure of 2004, the plans were for the first time additionally publicized on an Internet site. Citizens can then submit comments on the draft timetable to the cantonal public transport offices.

The comments are dealt with in different ways: The 'minimal form' consists of the discussion of the submissions alone between the cantonal department and the transport companies, the most comprehensive form in a public discussion, to which not only objectors but the entire public has access. In most cases to date, there has been no explicit reply to objectors, instead the result was available to be seen only when it was published in the final timetable.

The schedule and the further steps are presented in table 1. This makes it clear that there are only ca. four weeks available for the content review of the comments, discussion with all parties involved and decisions about possible changes. For their implementation, the transport company then has another ca. two months. This already shows the two essential problems of the procedure:[18]

- the participation takes place under significant time pressure, and
- in a late stage of the service planning.

Stage	Date
Orderer's specifications Allocation of funds to the cantons, long-distance transport concept Advance notice of ordering in regional transport	 22.8.03 19.9.03
Preparation of bids by the transport companies	5./24.12.03
Contract negotiations	until 5.3.04
Preliminary route allotment	17.3.04
Publication of potential timetable	16.4.04
Deadline for submissions	10.5.04
Submitting requests for changes by the cantons	11.6.04
Definite ordering and slot allocation	13.8.04
Publication of timetable	11.10.04
Timetable coming into effect	12.12.04

Tab. 1: Timeline for the timetable consultation 2003
Source: BAV

Thus only small changes to the forthcoming timetable can be settled in the context of the timetable procedure. The public is often not conscious of this and thus have many false expectations about the effect of a submission. The timetable procedure is nevertheless used to cultivate fundamental criticism and not only to generate discussion on fixed

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[18]   See Michel (2000)

points. If this is not considered, it is easy to get the impression of an 'alibi event' in which citizens' opinions in reality play no role.

Indeed, it is current practice to use submissions that were not considered due to time constraints as 'follow-up' for the preparation of the next timetable. This is, however, not always satisfactory in the view of objectors. As a result of these difficulties, the 'official' consultation procedure is now seen as a corrective instrument. As such it certainly is qualified to review the plans in terms of mistakes and discrepancies that professional bodies might miss due to 'routine tunnel vision'. Some of the cantonal procedures have begun to provide for complementary participatory elements to establish a true possibility for co-design of services.

4.2 Informal participatory practices: Citizens juries on public transport in Hanover

In a citizens' jury or planning cell, ideally 25 randomly selected individuals work for a limited amount of time (generally four days) as citizen reporters in order to develop proposals for a specific planning problem. Members are compensated for not being able to attend to their professional or private obligations. A planning cell is guided by moderators who develop a program that alternates between blocks with various specialist lectures and discussion rounds in small groups and in a plenum. The results are integrated into a Citizens' Report and made public.

Central features of this practice, which was developed in the 1970s by Peter C. Dienel, are random selection of participants, releasing participants from their obligations and compensating them for their time, as well as the program structure, process facilitation, and support by specialists. It is an advantage of the planning cell instrument that there is a very high probability of neutral recommendations that are oriented toward the common welfare.[19] The planning cell method has been applied frequently, especially for municipal issues. Citizens have been predominantly highly motivated and have also been in the position to familiarize themselves with the issues in the short time provided and to collaborate on an evaluation. Planning cells obtain an exceedingly diverse group of participants and have demonstrably influenced political decisions.[20]

The planning cell method was used in public transport for the first time in Hanover/Germany with the ÜSTRA Citizens' Report. The focus of the project was the current and future requirements for a customer-oriented transport company and for an attractive public transport.[21] There were a total of 12 planning cells with 25 participants each, and issues addressed included for example the evaluation of travel time and speed, safety, fare systems, and citizen participation in public transport. The total programme comprised 16 work units. In each one, the citizen reporters were supported by a two-person moderator team and were advised by specialists.

The results included the recommendation that transport companies should value environmentally-oriented technology, and should offer a transparent fare structure, personal customer care, and customer advising. In order to improve safety, citizens called for more supervisory staff and revitalization of train stations.

The ÜSTRA Citizens' Report, which reached a comparatively large number of participants, also makes the method's weak points clear: its implementation is time-consuming and therefore cost-intensive as well. The citizen reporters, who overall drew mainly positive conclusions, criticized the amount of labour and time pressure, and the

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[19]   Dienel (2002) - Stiftung Mitarbeit (1996)
[20]   Dienel (2002)
[21]   See also Böhme/Krause/Volpert (1998)

lack of direct influence on the implementation of proposals.[22] Overall, however, the method proved its value: the resulting Citizens' Report comprised several hundred practical recommendations for improved public transport in Hanover.

4.3   Permanent consultative structures: Passenger advisory boards in Germany

Passenger advisory boards ('Fahrgastbeiräte' in German) are the most frequently used form of 'formal' transport user involvement in the German-speaking countries. Characteristics of passenger advisory boards include:

- institutions with an *advisory role*,
- consisting wholly or mainly of *public transport users* and/or *members of organizations* representing user interests.
- set up on a *long-term basis* or permanently
- to *discuss and express* the *users' views* on public transport, both on current matters and future plans.
- they have some formal '*foundation*' due to their links to an operator or transport authority

The latter point distinguishes them from the activities of 'user associations'[23] or 'civic action committees' who have no such formal backing and guarantees. Passenger advisory boards are mainly set up on *district level* or for the *operator's catchment area*. Most boards have between 20 and 30 members. A balanced representation of different socio-demographic groups on the board is essential to achieve a good overview of the users' views.

Despite these common features, their specific form varies considerably. Two main types can be distinguished by their members' backgrounds: So-called *'lay users' boards'* on the one hand and *'experts' boards'* on the other. The latter are also referred to as 'association advisory boards', which already points to the main characteristic of these organizations: They are composed of representatives of organized groups, for example passenger associations, organizations representing senior citizens or young people – usually each organization has one member on the board. Vice versa, lay persons' boards consist of people without an institutional affiliation who are chosen from personal applications – sometimes a link to an association is even a criterion for exclusion. Mixed boards can be found as well.

The choice of one of these models implies different foci of their work, based on their members' backgrounds: *Representatives of organized groups* argue more from a 'political' perspective and aim to direct attention to their organization's interests. They often have a strong personal interest and built-up knowledge through other activities in their association and the information these provide to their members (through magazines, events etc.). Compared to lay users, they have higher expectations of their work on the board. A common aim is, for example, to discuss at eye level with the operator's representatives. On the contrary, *lay users' boards* tend to argue based on their members' personal experiences. Local or even individual views are more prominent than a general or strategic perspective. This applies both to their own concerns and to the feedback they give to topics raised by the providers.

A crucial challenge for both types of organizations is to identify particular interests – be they personal or group-specific ones – and prevent them from dominating the debate.

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[22]   See Böhme/Krause/Volpert (1998)
[23]   Schiefelbusch/Jansen (2008)

Professionals tend to view 'experts' boards' more critically in this respect, due to their ambitions. However, some prefer the professional exchange offered by this concept.

Lay users' views are often appreciated as 'genuine customers' views'. Over time, however, even lay users are prone to a certain narrowing of their interests and/or the development of an 'expert's attitude'. Therefore in some boards, membership is limited to a number of years or terms.

The boards deal with wide range of *topics*. The meetings are dominated by discussions on network and timetable development, other frequent topics are infrastructure (stations), quality standards, fares, vehicle design, carriage of bicycles and other types of building work. Another important theme are '*individual complaints*' - cases of problems experienced either by the board members themselves or reported to them. Representatives of the operator/authority are usually present, but their role is limited to presenting proposals and answering questions.

4.4   "Ballot" on the public transport network: The Berliner Verkehrsbetriebe's Customer Dialogue Process

From 2004 to 2006, the Berliner Verkehrsbetriebe, 'Berlin Transport Services' (BVG), has employed a special form of customer participation. With the changes of timetables that occurred in December 2004, the BVG changed a large portion of Berlin's bus and street tram network. In the preliminary phases of the so-called Metrolinien-Plan, 'metro route planning', the BVG carried out a first-time citizen participatory practice. The core of this practice, called 'customer dialogue', was the possibility to consult about alternative routing options in the early phases of the planning process.[24]

The BVG instituted a public vote to decide routing plan alternatives for the bus and/or street tram networks in 14 zones of the Berlin metropolitan area. For each zone, there were two possible variations presented, and citizens were given the opportunity to vote for their preference (see Figures 2 and 3). The public could take part in the form of street polls / info stands as well as through online polls.

Alongside the vote about alternative routing options, this participatory practice also offered the opportunity to express *qualitative* ideas about the local public transport network. This gave the BVG the possibility of hearing other kinds of opinions, suggestions, and criticisms as well, and in some cases to incorporate these into the planning process.

Over the course of this seven-week process, over 24,000 citizens participated. Among the items, there were very clear decisions for some options, as well as votes that were very close or undecided for others. The *results* of the vote were largely implemented.

Because the design of timetables in public transport generally does not provide for citizen participation, it is very positive that a transport company would seek out a customer dialogue of this kind.

Due to the strong public criticism of the BVG's 'Metrokonzept', the *evaluation* of this process notes a deficiency in the fact that planned cut-backs were not highlighted in the early stages of participation. The renewed implementation of a 'customer dialogue' using a ballot with variants for the following timetable change has shown, however, that the company sees this practice as essentially positive.

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[24]   Bodensteiner (2005), p. 56 et seq.

Fig. 2: Option A from a BVG 'ballot'. This option offers differentiated 'express' and 'normal' bus services on one of the routes
Source: BVG

Fig. 3: Option B of a BVG 'ballot'. The ballot asks, 'Which of these two variations do you prefer?' This option offers a new line, the M69, which runs more frequently
Source: BVG

4.5   Countering public opposition: Communication and opinion-polling in Bochum[25]

Bochum is situated in the Ruhr area in Germany. It has a population of 400,000 in an area of 145 km². The City Council, together with the public transport operator, Bogestra, have begun a programme to improve public transport. This includes a range of measures to improve and extend the existing tram network. As part of this, a plan to change the route of tramline 310 was developed. The current route passes through the outskirts of Langendreer. Only 10% of people in the district live within easy walking distance of the route. Re-routing the tramline through the centre of Langendreer will allow 80% of the district's population access to the tram network.

At the start of the project, there was limited public involvement. The project managers had planned to use technical plans to inform people of the proposals to extend the tramline. Later, when the tramline re-routing was presented to the public as a planned measure and there was unexpected opposition from some individuals. This opposition became more organised and the press presented it as the majority view. Then, the information strategy had to be changed to persuade opponents and to encourage supporters to voice their opinion.

Therefore, the project managers had a new goal: to win people over, and to encourage the silent majority who supported the scheme to make their views known. They launched a comprehensive campaign to change the image of the re-routing project. While the initial small-scale information campaign had been led by the city administration with the support of the public transport operator Bogestra, the roles were reversed in the second, large-scale campaign. Bogestra had more money to invest in such a strategy, and could react faster to new developments. The campaign included public exhibitions, brochures, flyers and meetings with people living in the affected areas. Project leaders also established a local presence, and held one-to-one talks with those most opposed to the scheme.Furthermore, a survey was carried out among the local population to find out what people really thought, and to use the results as the basis for a campaign to change the image of the project. The survey was highly successful, as it showed that opposition was not as strong as feared.

Conducting a survey before the start of the planning process would have identified any likely opposition at an early stage and would have allowed changes in public opinion to be assessed. The administration is considering a further survey after the end of the project to evaluate its success and provide planners with useful information for future initiatives.

4.6   Getting opponents on board: Transport Consultative Forum in Guildford[26]

The historic city of Guildford is in the west of the county of Surrey in England and has a population of 60,000. A Transport Consultative Forum was set up there following setbacks to the implementation of the Guildford Movement Package in 1998/9. As part of this, project managers wanted to redesign Bridge Street by closing one lane of a gyratory system to traffic other than buses and bicycles, and making the other three lanes one way. The package included other bus priority measures as well. A copy of the plans were leaked to the media and the local newspaper published an article on the Bridge Street scheme, which took it out of context and failed to explain it was only at the draft

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[25]   This section is based on Kelly et al (2005)
[26]   This section is based on Kelly et al (2005)

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stage. The resulting opposition derailed the plans, and councillors decided to redesign them.

The failure of this important element of the scheme led to the county and borough councils to find ways of solving transport problems with public support. A project was launched with consultants to involve relevant people in interactive forms of participation and build support for mobility management measures. Neither the councils nor central government were directly involved in the engagement project. The people involved could be described as the 'great and the good of Guildford'. They included representatives from businesses, the public transport operators, environmental groups and schools. The engagement project was in two phases:

- Phase One: meetings with councillors, businesses etc. Two public meetings. Interim report.
- Phase Two: Revisiting the above groups, further discussions.

This consultation was followed by the Transport Consultative Forum, which met between September 1999 and March 2001. The forum was established by Surrey County Council for consultation on the forthcoming Local Transport Plan. Project leaders hoped to reach consensus on transport options for Guildford wherever possible. Participants discussed transport issues, and gave the county council feedback on its draft Local Transport Plan (LTP). The Transport Consultative Forum was chaired by a local clergyman. Officers from both councils attended, and offered advice. Members of environmental and business groups, transport operators and local individuals were invited to join. Councillors were excluded during the first year, but were allowed to attend as observers in the second year after some complained. The forum involved:

- Open meetings.
- First round of meetings: five between September 1999 and March 2000. Visioning exercises and feedback on LTP. No councillors allowed.
- Second round of meetings: five between September 2000 and March 2001. Visioning exercises. Councillors allowed after some complained. Interest waned gradually, and the chairman resigned.

Both projects are thought to have helped widen acceptance of bus priority measures and to have developed new ideas. The engagement project in particular was well-regarded by participants, and seen as cost-effective by officers. Participants in both processes criticised the council for failing to act on their suggestions.

Decisions about the LTP were made by a Joint Task Force of officers and councillors from both councils, and ratified by the Guildford Partnership Area Transportation Sub-Committee, made up of councillors. The plan incorporated some suggestions from the Forum. They decided to introduce bus lanes, starting on the edge of Guildford where there was less opposition, and begin work on a revised scheme for Bridge Street.

5   Excursus: Italian approaches to civic involvement[27]

5.1   *Context and framework of the Italian transport system*

Italy re-emerged as a nation state in 1861 after long having been divided into several previously independent states. Contrasts in cultural and social conditions as well as differing standards of living in the individual parts of the country can still be felt today.

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[27]   Abridged version of Schiefelbusch/Dienel (2009), chapter 5.6

Large differences exist especially between the strongly industrialized North with its dense population centres of Milan, Turin and Genoa, and the rather rural South.

For a long time, the national level was determinative in almost all fields of policy. In the course of various reforms[28] since the 1990s, the regions in particular have gained additional responsibilities and competences that stretch into the transport sector. In particular, the 1997 Law 422/97 (also known as the 'Bassanini Law') transferred the planning and financing of local and regional transport to the regions, while local transport remains the responsibility of the provinces and municipalities. Regions are required to pass a regional local public transport Law that regulates the allotment of competencies between region, province, and municipality. In reality, there are however still cutbacks to be made in the implementation of the reforms to date. Thus passing the regional local public transport laws stretched into the year 2002, and the composition of new institutions is still not concluded.[29] The situation is thus significantly more heterogeneous now than just a few years ago.

With 591 passenger cars per 1,000 residents, Italy has the second-highest *level of motorization* in Europe, and including the 11 million motorized cycles it takes the prime position. But the orientation toward automobiles that earlier shaped transport politics has differentiated, which has been influenced by ecological problems as well as institutional reform. International recognition of this view was made possible by the *'shutdown' of the inner city* for MIT in Bologna in the late 1980s.[30] Since that time, many Italian cities have such 'traffic-free' zones. However, there are more or less substantial exceptions and limited supervision which demonstrate the 'pragmatic' understanding of politics.[31]

An essential feature of Italian local public transport is the pricing, which counts among the least expensive in Europe. In the 1960s and 70s, fares were not raised in order to win more passengers and to make mobility possible for less-advantaged social groups. Even today prices in urban transport are 80 cents to EUR 1.20 per single ride, significantly lower than middle and northern European levels.[32] The subsidization of transport services in all areas is part of Italy's political tradition because it is often not possible to introduce new technologies without partial public funding, due to limited industrialization.[33]

Despite low fares, numerous surveys show a high degree of dissatisfaction with public transport among Italians. Particularly criticized are unreliability, lacking information, cleanliness and coordination of different modes of transport with one another.[34] The train tends to receive lower ratings than other transport services. Alongside the aforementioned factors, this also demonstrates public transport's difficult starting point.

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[28]   See for instance Grasse (2004), Bramezza (1998), Dente (1999)
[29]   Detailed information on this topic is to be found in ISFORT (2006a), CNEL (2005).
[30]   See Apel (1992), Pinardi (1994).
[31]   ISFORT (2005), p. 7, 9
[32]   See BASIC-Consortium (2005), p. 52 - 68, CNEL (2005), Carminucci et al. (2005), p. 61 et seq.
[33]   See Maggi (2005)
[34]   EUSG-Consortium (2006a), p. 192, Carminucci et al. (2005), p. 30 et seq., ISFORT (2006b), p. 36 et seq., ACI/Eurispes (2006), pp. 7 - 9.

5.2 The 'Carta dei Servizi'

The Service Charter ('Carta dei Servizi'), which only exists in this form in Italy, is an instrument for the formation of connections between transport companies and their passengers. It is a document that states the company's activities, standards and goals for quality, information for usage of the service, and possibilities for making complaints and receiving compensation.

The concept of a service charter was introduced in 1994 with a government initiative to improve the quality, transparency, and customer-orientation of public services. Every company is required to publish a service charter and to update it annually. The government developed detailed requirements for the content of the charter with its principle decision and the following sector-specific ordinances. It is incumbent upon the company to formulate regulations and determine standards that fit their respective situations.

According to the service charter's overall goal, customer participation in the design of customer service is to be addressed in the charter. Consulting with consumer associations about charter proposals is thus one of the formal participation possibilities and is regularly practiced. The governmental ordinance even mentions a general dialogue requirement. In any case, however, the participation is purely consultative, which the consumer associations see as insufficient.[35]

The service charter has also been looked at sceptically by user consumer associations and customers themselves. Their own experience of quality deficiencies and the disinterest of companies leads to a general mistrust of such declarations of intent. The mode of performance description is also seen as rather unhelpful: the quality indicators, which are often determined on the company level, do not correspond with users' experience and thus seem non-reproducible to the point of potential manipulation. This means that additional 'trust-building steps' need to be taken by the service provider in order to allow the service charters more acceptance.[36]

Several Italian studies also come to the conclusion that the service charters have not yet fulfilled the expectations allocated them by policy. Among other things, the following aspects have been criticized:

- the usage of technical and/or unclear language,
- the often lacking updates or comparative data from earlier periods,
- lacking public relations on the company's part,
- inconsistent, non-reproducible quality criteria,
- lacking sanctions for non-compliance with the standards defined in the charter,
- presentation of satisfaction levels without naming their methodical foundation.[37]

5.3 Public Participation in Planning

For infrastructure projects, there is a multi-stage practice of planning the outline and the details, which provides that the planning documents be made publicly available. As long as funds are needed from the central government – which is almost always the case – the project must also be presented to the Economic Planning Commission.[38] There are also transport development plans on the national and regional levels which, however, do

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[35]   Assoutenti Lombardia et al. (2005), p. 5
[36]   See D'Alessandro (2000)
[37]   See Istituto per la promozione industriale (2003), Centro Studi Federtrasporto (2001), p. 109 et seq., Prosperetti et al. (2000), p. 197 et. seq., Assoutenti Lombardia et al. (2005), p. 5, 39 et seq.
[38]   Comitato Interministeriale per la Programmazione Economica (CIPE)

not yet guarantee that the projects they contain will be carried out. Citizen participation in their composition is not provided for.

For local public transport, so called 'service programs',[39] produced every three years, are of special importance because they concretely describe the extent and structure of the service and are indeed the foundation for the description of transport services. They are produced by the respective transport authorities (region, province, municipality) which must comply with regional local public transport laws.

Participation possibilities and practices come, at present, in various forms. The Lombardian law provides for an advisory work group for transport and infrastructure issues to meet regularly in which providers, political parties, unions and passenger representatives work together. They discuss current issues such as the needs plan or contract specifications. However, the local public transport Law and the transport policy in Lombardy are, compared to the rest of the country, comprehensive and well-developed. In other regions possibilities are usually limited to discussions without a formal foundation.

It is evident, that participation almost exclusively takes place through consumer associations and their representatives. Informal participatory practices which enable laymen to take part have no tradition in Italy. This applies particularly to the transport sector. Transport is still dominated by technically educated planners who mistrust the 'common sense' of users. The formal participation that occurs only late in the planning process seems even counterproductive in that criticism of experts, at this stage, is often seen as a debasement of their work. Some examples of informal participatory practices are, however, to be found in city and district planning and are in part combined with the expectation that such practices can be applied more often in the intermediate term.

There are many accounts of protest actions by dissatisfied customers, which belong to the category of 'civil disobedience'. Examples include the demonstrations and track blockades by commuters affected by service disruptions and delays.[40]

On the other hand, lack of interest in civic involvement is partly a hindrance to formal as well as informal participation. This can be traced back to a different understanding of politics.[41] In this respect, there are major differences between the North and the South of the country. As a rule of thumb, the citizens' willingness to get involved, as well as the administration's openness, declines as one goes farther south.

5.4   Interest Representation and Lobby Groups

Associations or groups that represent particularly the interests of local public transport users are rare in Italy. The only nationally active *passengers' association* is the 'Associazione Utenti del Trasporto Pubblico' (UTP) founded in 1982 in Milan. *General consumers' associations* are far more numerous and have far stronger memberships. There are currently 16 such groups that are nationally recognized. All offer their members consultation and support in disputes with companies, and provide user information and political lobbying as well. The individual associations distinguish themselves through their backgrounds (some are church-based, some affiliated with unions of political parties) and their points of focus. The recognized associations also act as dialogue partners for transport companies and local authorities in formal participative practices such as

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[39]   Programma Triennale Servizi (PTS)
[40]   Legambiente (2006), pp. 15–16.
[41]   See Gangemi (2004), p. 39.

preparations of the Carta dei Servizi. Because their work is generally conducted on a voluntary basis, their wide range of functions is problematic because their activities can lack on-site expertise.

Corresponding with the gradually developing consciousness of ecological issues, *environmental protection organizations* have played a relatively limited role in transport politics – outside of discussions about pollutant emissions. Since 1998 under the name 'treno verde' (the green train), the Legambiente Association together with Trenitalia has conducted measurements of air pollutants and information campaigns in a specially equipped train. The citizens' rights organization Cittadinanzattiva (Active Citizenry) has organized yearly train station parties since 2000 together with train companies.

In contrast to the aforementioned groups, the '*commuter committees*' are not fixed entities. They are formless, partially temporary conglomerations of train customers that gather along one or several lines. Their motivation is usually directly experienced service problems. They work without a charter and with minimal resources (word-of-mouth advertisement, mailing lists, websites), but are at least somewhat integrated into the dialogue between companies, transport authorities and the associations. The exact number of such committees is unknown because there has been to date no national co-ordination. 18 committees are known in Lombardy which cover 37 corridors.

5.5 Conclusion: A Long Road to Customer Orientation

Public transport in Italy has obviously been suffering from decades-long neglect, which cannot be hastily overcome. The problem in this is not only providing the industry with the necessary resources. There are 'cultural' factors to be considered as well. The high degree of motorization, too, shows that a change in attitudes may be difficult in this country.

With the State and administrative reforms of the 1990s, major goals were attached to the areas of efficiency, transparency and citizen-orientation. In public transport, too, there was a portion of this: organization and planning procedures began to offer truly comprehensive possibilities for listening to and including passengers.

Because most measures only date back a short time, it is still too early to judge them. In some regions and municipalities, the new possibilities are clearly being used; overall however, it must be attested that many initial approaches have not been carried out, that implementation has been sluggish and that political goals have not yet been fulfilled.

The most visible sign of the effort towards a new orientation to date is the Carta dei Servizi. The widespread scepticism about their actions is all the more astounding in view of the considerable effort that the government has made for the presentation and support of their implementation. Despite of this, it has not been possible to communicate the meaning of these measures to the concerned stakeholders on an emotional level.[42] This is, however, decisive for success – for the success of citizen participation in general.

6 Participation and innovation

Innovation can take place in different ways. Systematic research, revolutionary changes caused by spectacular breakthroughs or new ways of thinking may be the most evident examples, but gradual improvements, adaptation to changing needs and acciden-

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[42] see D'Alessandro (2000)

tal discoveries are probably at least as important. Their contribution to usability and user satisfaction must also not be underestimated.

These case studies described above represent a set of situations which occur quite frequently in transport planning. In each case, participation is part of a process that includes many other steps, too. It can be built into the process from the beginning or, as in the case of Bochum or Guildford, introduced later on to come to terms with opposition against the original scheme. Even this sequence of events is not uncommon in everyday planning practice.

As drivers of innovation, these examples, on the whole, clearly promote incremental rather than radical changes. This is due to the setting of the participatory practices in a wider process where key features of the planning task are addressed elsewhere. Three contexts can be identified:

- The "timetable procedure" and "BVG ballot" have a narrowly defined subject and are closely linked to rather technical planning processes. They ask for comments on specific proposals, other ideas can only be accommodated with difficulty. The same can be said about the opinion poll in Bochum, where the citizens' views seem to have been sought to *confirm* the initial scheme in the light of its critics rather than modifying it.
- In case of the Consultative Committee in Guildford, the process gives participants more leeway in expressing their views and formulating their own ideas. However, this took place in the context of a planning scheme that was largely predefined by the spatial, environmental, financial and other conditions as well as influenced by political and strategic decisions that had already been taken.
- The instruments "user advisory board" and "Citizens Jury" are the most open ones. The latter in particular can be designed to stimulate creativity without preconditions and allow sufficient time for the development of ideas. This was also a reason why this approach was chosen in Hanover. As permanent institutions, user advisory boards in principle also have the opportunity to develop new concepts, even though experience shows that their work over time tends to be dominated by more routine topics.

Under these restrictions, radically new ideas may still come up, but to pursue them requires a longer timeframe, further activities and more comprehensive assessments, which better take place in other participatory formats. Experiments or future workshops are useful tools for such activities. The format of future workshops has been shown as being particularly suitable for the "unrestricted" development of ideas, also for mobility services.[43] Experiments, simulations and games (for complex issues) can be used to get user feedback on ideas which have already been developed to sufficient detail to present them to outsiders.[44]

But even participatory practices with a narrow focus can be designed to at least take note of ideas which go beyond the intended theme of the process: The "BVG ballot" sought to take account of ideas that did not fit into the "A or B" approach by providing room for additional comments. The same is de facto done in the Swiss timetable consultation when the transport departments postpone such comments as a 'follow-up' for the preparation of the next timetable. The ÜSTRA Citizens' Report was the starting point

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[43]   For an example see Gassner (1997)
[44]   See the examples in Schiefelbusch (2005) and Schönberg (2007) for a discussion of the use of games and other procedures in transport planning and policy.

for several thematic working groups and more detailed work, again involving the participating citizens.[45]

7   Conclusions and recommendations

Given these experiences, which recommendations can be given to those wishing to introduce participatory elements?

- *Powers*: Research so far has shown the positive influence of participation, but whether it is used often depends on *voluntary* initiatives of operators and administrations. The problem - from the users' view - is that the current framework leaves them in a disadvantaged position if the other stakeholders - with greater formal rights - decline to co-operate. Hence is seems desirable to include a (minimum of) *formally guaranteed* possibilities to participate in the relevant processes.

- *Flexibility*: The instruments should be chosen in a way that covers all planning issues adequately. Some (such as timetable development) require detailed reading of proposals, others are better discussed directly in an open forum. Small-scale problems must be dealt with as well as bigger ones.[46] For the former, a permanent panel of citizens or advisory board seems desirable.

- *Timing*: Participation must take place at the right time and leave those consulted enough time to assess the question. The former refers to its position in the planning process and integration with its other steps (cf. Swiss timetable consultation). The latter points at the way information is given: A concise presentation is helpful to reach a wider audience, but it still needs to be clear and not misleading.

- *Forming of opinion*: A key element of public transport is the *aggregation* of many people and their travel needs in one product or vehicle. Hence different opinions are unavoidable. Procedures should assist those involved to find a compromise, but apart from that be used to make these differences at least transparent to assist planners in their assessment.

- *Representation*: Those taking part in participation on behalf of users should represent all their facets (age, abilities, habits etc.) adequately. They should also do so over time instead of taking a too professional view. However, given the imbalance of influence referred to above, there is also a need to build up competencies and to follow developments also over a longer period.

Another important question for the 'proper' implementation of a participation method is the *character of the project*. The problems that are solved through project planning and participatory practices can be divided into two categories: '*problems of innovation*' and '*problems of conflict*.'[47]

The main tasks of participative approaches to *problems of innovation* are to search for and invent new, user-friendly solutions. Thereby, participant's creativity should be activated because a 'normal citizen's' knowledge, experiences, and the ideas are frequently not used in internal administrative planning.

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[45]   Projektbüro Bürgergutachten üstra (1997)
[46]   Hannover Region (1999)
[47]   Dienel (2005)

With innovative project design, practices can inspire the creativity of the largest possible number of participants. Problems can be identified which would not otherwise be recognized. Since new ideas are particularly in demand, it is necessary to enable as many participants as possible to use the full force of their creativity. To develop the citizens' creative potential, participatory practices need to be chosen that give them sufficient time to "think through" and develop ideas. Furthermore, while it may be necessary to provide background information, this must not be done in a way that directs the participants' activities in a certain direction.

Figure 4 ranks various forms of participation in terms of how new and how complex their topics are. The newer and the more complex the topic is, the more time and creativity is necessary. Therefore, as higher demands are placed upon participants, they must be more intensively supported, which requires procedures with a rather smaller number of participants and a rather longer duration.

The main task of participative planning for planning *problems involving conflict* is the development of *collectively binding decisions*. Planning often involves the allocation of scarce resources and thus creates 'winners' and 'losers'. In such cases, participation can be used to reach a sustainable compromise or at least to make the general parameters for such decisions more transparent and comprehensible. Essential requirements are an atmosphere that promotes listening to each other and the consideration of all concerned groups in a fair and balanced way. This must not only be guaranteed during the process, but also demonstrated in its results. Because participatory practices often have an advisory role with the actual decisions being taken elsewhere (e.g. by politicians), they must produce credible outcomes. If varying perspectives enter into the discussion, citizen and user participation can give both voice and importance to the opinions of those concerned.[48]
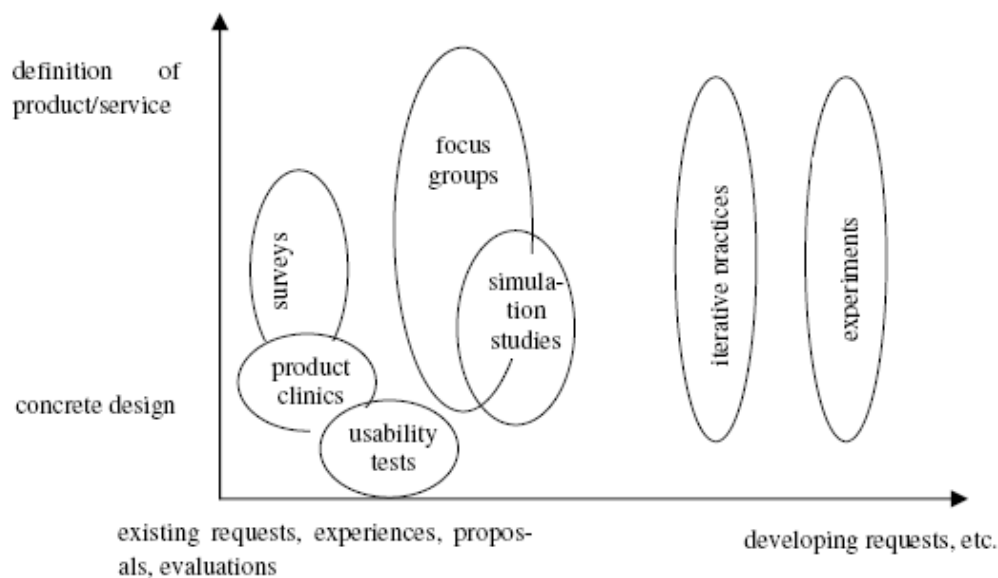

Fig. 4: Suitability of user participatory practices for different topics
Source: Konrad/Truffer 2003, p. 9

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[48]   Konrad/Truffer (2003), p. 7–8

Whether a public consultations is "extra work" depends on the success of actually channelling comments to other the right steps in the planning process. In other words, the better the organization of participation and handling of customer expectations in the preliminary phase, the fewer complaints there are to be expected in the detail phase.

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