



**BUDAPEST CORVINUS UNIVERSITY
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PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN TERRITORIAL PLANNING

Executive summary

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ANTECEDENTS

„Aetate alia aliud factum convenit”

’Different ages call for different deeds.’ – wrote Plautus.

Hungary’s accession to the European Union – even if it is not yet very visible – brings changes to all areas of our lives. In addition to the difficulties of integration, we still have to struggle with the fundamental changes that occurred after the changes of 1989, as well as the challenges of globalization and the general economic recession that has hit the west. Hungary’s NGO movements in the past two decades have shown incredible growth. However, qualitative growth moves at a slower pace. The organizations’ operations, networks, capacity for effective advocacy and integration are still well below capacity.

The landscape is the complex unity of man and nature. It is a reflection of culture and a manifestation of space, and thus not comprehensible without an understanding of individuals and the communities they make up. Landscape planning aims at establishing a harmonious connection between man and environment, something that without community participation is ineffective and not sustainable. This is even more so in a democratic society in a sped-up and instable world.

My dissertation explores participatory planning, a methodology that – compared to the profession’s previous practice – is significantly more open and flexible, but still unexplored and fraught with difficulties. European and overseas examples show that involving the community in planning has economic, professional and moral advantages. Nonetheless, integrated planning requires a critical mass of citizens with well-developed civil sensibility, including skills in self-organization and advocacy. In addition to this, it requires an interdisciplinary approach that weaves together various professions, not just landscape planning and urban studies, but also a broader swathe that includes representatives of the social studies (economics, sociology, and related areas). In my dissertation I present the history and characteristics of community participation, as well as the challenges we face in our time. It is my intention to collect and present ideas for landscape planning that our professional literature to date has either neglected altogether or only just touched upon. Spreading this new methodology can be an effective tool for strengthening local community relations and cohesion, as well as improving autonomy and enhancing the stability of the landscape. In exploring and researching this theme it is my intention to provide help to the planning professions, NGOs and local communities so that they may be able to work together more effectively; promote recognition of this professional area; and facilitate greater support of the civil sector.

OBJECTIVES

In preparing my dissertation I set the following goals:

1. Explore and present a new area of international literature, as well as clarify and classify its principal concepts;
2. Research those areas of participatory planning that until now had been little-documented, as well as define new opportunities and tasks for planners;
3. Determine and define participatory planning and its key special areas related to landscape and regional planning, and developing an evaluation system;
4. Provide assistance to facilitate more efficient participatory planning through analyzing, exploring and systematizing international case studies as well as my own experience;
5. Developing a practical toolbox for participatory planning.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research I carried out focused on planning theory and planning methodology, and therefore are not connected to a specific site. However, I considered it necessary to use case studies connected to a concrete site in order to be able to analyze the results of a real participatory planning process.

1.1 SECONDARY SOURCES

Step 1: I reviewed existing literature sources. The spine of my secondary source research consisted of the historical and philosophical, as well as those approaching planning and sociology. The Anglo-Saxon origin of the method and the relatively low level of Hungarian literature meant that the secondary research was predominately international. The topic has become increasingly popular in recent years, hence the greater proportion of sources that come from more responsive, up-to-date sources such as the internet and journals. In the interest of clarity I summarized the most important ideas at the end of each chapter.

Step 2: The second, more specialized part of the secondary research I completed in analyzing the case studies, using a comparative systematizing methodology. Owing to the individual nature of the topic there is a significant number of Internet-based sources, particularly in the case of the international case studies. (Domestic case studies were part of primary source research). In exploring the international case studies I involved my students in the university's „Public Participation in Landscape Architecture” elective course between 2005 and 2007. Their participation was important for several reasons. I consider it an indispensable method for researching and teaching sustainability that the students take an active part in the process. This also required increasing their objectivity, reducing the possibility of self-manipulation, and improvement of the „random selection” method employed in the case studies.

Step 3: I organized the case studies into charts, categorized according to several criteria. This was so as to show the detailed way that they connect to the research topic, as well as to enable me to create a typology. The classification and analysis provided the basis for general, categorical assertions.

Step 4: I prepared interviews with professionals practicing here in Hungary, given that the few years of research are not sufficient to accumulate a significant amount of practical experience. Since the dissertation is planning-oriented, the planning profession is presented as a special group. Preparing the interviews, then, became a tool of participatory planning as well as an experimental example for the research in this particular professional area. In the course of participating, the various participants bring their knowledge, practical experience, potential for action and aspirations. The planners, thus, are at once participants and subjects in the research process.

Step 5: On the basis of the methodological information and the particular domestic circumstances, I employed 11 different types of participatory methodology as a model experiment. I coordinated and analyzed the experiment, as the possibilities permitted.

Step 6: Based on my research and experience, I summarized the particularities of participatory planning and the possibilities for its use in Hungary, and presented a proposal summarizing its application and the principal opportunities and possibilities it offers. I outlined the necessary tasks for achieving this effectively.

Step 7: I created a guide for making participatory planning an easier process and avoiding common mistakes. In the course of my research there were two important areas that showed significant deficiencies. First, because of changing systems, it was necessary to show how – regardless of circumstances – what role the planner can count on in the planning process. I outlined and analyzed the different possible roles for this. Second, because planners can struggle with a number of difficulties in the planning process, I created a helpful checklist system to guide the process.

RESULTS

To summarize the scientific results of my research:

1. I showed the new, 21st century planning challenges as applicable to the participatory planning theories and methods first developed in the 1970s.

The last half century has brought significant new changes and challenges to community participatory planning methods, and sometimes the methods dating from the cultural changes of the 1960s are not always entirely applicable to our contemporary circumstances. In going over 100 publications from a variety of foreign sources *I determined that the methodology that came from western democracies at the end of the 1960s cannot be taken wholesale without considerable adaptation. In the course of employing community participatory planning methods we have to both pay careful attention to mastering the approach's various special elements, as well as adapting them to the newest challenges we face.*

In my dissertation *I summarized the new challenges and drew from them the resulting consequences for planning.*

A, As a result of globalization planning tools are increasingly restricted. *Participatory planning today is a tool for ameliorating the damaging effects of globalization and keeping the local planning focused on local landscape assets, where natural, environmental and cultural values protection can happen together with local economic development.*

B, With the increase in mobility and virtual information exchange, the tendencies are that landscape-related processes are becoming more uniform and regional-social units less cohesive, and the accountability processes are weakened. Social segregation and regional polarization are on the increase, and social connections as well as one's connection to a specific local area are also decreasing. *Participatory planning is a tool for regional planning that strengthens landscape diversity, landscape identity, regional control and a stable balance between nature and society.*

C, Landscape connections are weakening and decisionmaking often occurs far from the stakeholders. Authority is increasingly difficult to determine, and all this results in decreased public confidence in planning. *Participatory planning is a tool of legitimacy for decisionmakers and regional planning* that restores confidence, clarifies the roles of the planners and decisionmakers, and stabilizes the balance of power.

D, The general legal environment increasingly makes the use of participatory planning methods necessary. Although even today linear planning is the dominant form, in „delicate cases” we are increasingly utilizing other, participatory planning methods, and today's market economies often blend the distinctive characteristics of both. *In the interest of competitiveness,*

planners need to master new roles, engage in constant self-reflection, and become competent in new areas of professional knowledge. In addition to all this, the planner's role of harmonizing diverse interests still remains – in fact, it becomes even more important.

2. I explored the specific attributes of participatory planning in Hungary, as well as its difficulties and the professional tasks ahead needed for its development.

In comparing both domestic and international literature on the topic *I summarized the Hungarian challenges and deduced the resulting planning consequences.*

A, *The European Union supports regionalism, whereas here in Hungary the system of small-area self-organization – backwards from both an administrative and a civil aspect – dominates, and makes participatory planning on a regional scale difficult.*

B, The cultural legacy of socialism tends to prefer the values system of the neoliberal consumer societies. *Employing participatory planning here in Hungary is exceedingly difficult but also exceptionally important*, because we have all at once to create landscape identity, individual and communal responsibility for the environment, and democratic civil society.

C, Economic difficulties and desperation require better utilization of local resources that dwell in the landscape. *Participatory planning can have an important role in discovering landscape potential and utilizing it effectively.*

Aside from the research of existing professional literature, *the conclusions were based on the semi-structured interviews I carried out with professionals practicing in Hungary. I analyzed the interviews statistically and assembled a set of individual, significant assessments.*

A. Participatory planning is made much more difficult by the lack of knowledge and methods on the part of the planners. Planners are open to using the method. However, often the greatest obstacle is the opposition on the part of the decisionmakers, brought on by either short-term thinking or large-scale corruption. The solution is training at all levels, as well as enhanced openness and communication.

B, The *lack of material resources* and lower fees for planners owing to the intense competition in today's market, the relatively low number of working planners and tight deadlines all contribute to the restriction in planners' ability to use participatory planning tools. It is important to alter these factors, even if it calls for structural changes.

C, Use of participatory planning is often hindered by politicization of the planning processes as well as the deeply-ingrained line between development and protection. Frequently it is the case that both the citizens and the authorities reject both development and protection, which makes productive negotiations extremely difficult.

3. I developed a typology for participatory planning as specific to landscape architecture in which I analyzed 150 case studies on the basis of 12 criteria.

The typology offers help for us to better understand what risks are expected in individual cases. The risks can be better calibrated by determining the planning environment, that is, we can better choose the appropriate method based on this information.

4. I outlined and created a typology for the objects of participatory planning, and indicated the main areas in which it can be employed.

Based on the literature and the case studies, *I certified that based on the participatory tools clear distinctions can be made between the respective scales of open space design and landscape planning*, that is, the planning of an actual site and system planning can be treated as two types, to be approached by two different sets of tools. *Based on the goals I separated them into two subtypes*: 1. primarily environmentally-oriented initiatives 2. Primarily socially- and economically-oriented initiatives. Typical of both types are their geographic siting and the nature of the participatory planning tools used in the process.

I determined the four significant areas in which participatory planning can be utilized:

A In the areas of ***landscape architecture, urban planning and development***, participatory planning is most effectively employed in landscape beautification projects and rural development.

B, In the area of ***protecting environmental assets***, the greatest concentration should be placed on preserving both traditional agricultural landscapes and natural landscapes dominated by water bodies.

C, Of exceptional importance in Hungary is ***education*** at every generation and level, particularly in the areas focused on developing democratic skills, planning methodology and integrated approaches.

D, A significant role should be allocated to participatory planning in the area of ***social integration***, which must be based upon strengthening the local population's connection to the landscape. Of exceptional importance are ethnic and national minorities, women, pensioners, youth and children.

5. I determined the participatory planning process's most important considerations. A

Based on analysis of professional literature and case studies ***I indicated 3 important considerations that should receive priority in participatory planning***, and in view of which the planning tools must be chosen accordingly:

A, ***Clarifying all questions related to the decisionmakers' planning ethic*** is of great priority: who represents whom, who accepts the material or environmental costs, who decides about what.

B, The site's system of checks and balances is determined by the dimensions of the participatory process, primarily by whether it's done on an individual or group basis and whether the local ties to the landscape and interest representation are real or symbolic. An important consideration is whether outside or inside checks are the objective, because this determines the planning theory and method to be used. Ideally the planner's goal should be to have a „self-operating landscape” with internal controls, which can be helped along with an ongoing, broader application of planning techniques.

C, ***Determining the scale of the project*** influences the question of who can be brought into the process. Large-scale planning is currently undergoing significant transformations, which also results in changes in the stakeholders circle and their attitudes. Here in Hungary this scale is less well defined. Within the question of project scale I consider to be a special case the NIMBY syndrome, where the source of the conflict results from the difference in the scale and reach of the realized project and the size of the circle of stakeholders.

6. In the framework of a model experiment I attempted to cast light on lack of practical experience with participatory planning, and the accompanying difficulties.

The experiment served to help in the analysis of aspects particular to participatory planning, both in Hungary especially, and in general. ***The process, which lasted two years, involved utilizing 11 different methodologies.*** I chose the methods and tools from my research based on the interviews with planners and the review of existing professional literature to suit the existing sites, target groups and goals. I also involved several dozen university and elementary school students into the process, as well as several teachers, NGOs and the media. ***In the course of the process I determined that:***

A, ***The difficulties in participatory planning in most cases do not originate from the nature of the methodology itself:*** A fundamental source of difficulty instead originates from the general lack of trust on the part of all participants, as well as general apathy and lack of a positive outlook.

B, ***The awkwardness in planning and realization typically originate from lack of experience.*** Deficiencies in badly-conceived timelines, weak communication, inappropriate tools, and inappropriate delegation of roles typically occur.

C, *Participatory planning can set off negative processes to a site or a society*, and in fact result in worse plans, if the participatory planning tools are inappropriately used. The most typical negative effect is the increase in segregation and polarization, as well as a withdrawal on the part of the participants from community issues. *This is why it's so important to have appropriate expertise and „plan the planning.“*

D, *Different members of society can be effectively activated, if we use the right tools in the right way.*

7. I determined the roles appropriate to a planner working in landscape architecture, and based on the aforementioned criteria system I distinguished 8 different roles for the planner.

Creating the categories first of all clarifies and organizes those roles that are currently only partially in existence and are often confused and mixed up. The roles have not been, to date, publicly acknowledged, and therefore difficult for participants in the planning process to effectively take on, especially since part of them are still really in the formative stage. In determining the various types my primary consideration was the dissertation's two principal threads: the relationship with the territory and the community . *I have defined both the old and new roles.* The description makes it possible for planners to master the new learning material and thus be more effective in new planning areas, as well as expanding their spheres of activity.

The role definitions are the following: 1. Advisor 2. Assessor 3. Mediator, 4. Facilitator, 5. Spokesperson or advocate 6. Systems manager, 7. Community organizer, 8. Landscape steward. The order of the roles reflects a certain transition between classical and integrated planning roles.

I compared the roles on the basis of their relation to the planner's ties to both the site and to society, participation in landscape transformation, and role-related competencies. The comparative tables help facilitate finding the appropriate planner's role, as well as the appropriate planner.

8. I assembled a checklist to facilitate participatory planning, which I have titled *Sustainable Participation Index. SPI*

SPI serves as an effective way of strengthening the participatory process in landscape and better realisation of sustainable planning. It is equally useful for optimizing the participatory planning process as well as for later examinations of completed projects. Its individual elements were developed with the help of interviews, planning experiences here in Hungary, and my own case studies. *On the base of these I developed five important checkpoints directly related to the landscape architecture planning process.* Out of our conception of the landscape comes the stability between man and nature, which determines the quality and the approach to our activities, alterations and attachment to it. Community participation helps create this stability, and in the spirit of this I developed the elements in the *landscape coherence list*. The realization of a plan – but often the participatory process itself too – goes wrong because of inappropriate or deficient information channels. The *integration list* examines the basic tasks of landscape architecture as well as the strength of the connection between humankind and nature. Since according to our professional convictions the landscape is central to community life and both a tool and stage for social cohesion, and participation can be used in the service of all of these – an examination of social integration is necessary. I considered it indispensable to create a *documentation list*. Keeping a correct and thorough record of all documentation related to publicity and decisionmaking is of high importance. In this way the both the planner's and the citizens' demands are documented together. The *risk factor list* shows where possible problems can occur in the planning and the participation processes owing to specific flaws in such factors as the relationship of local people to the landscape, the landscape's structural features or other factors. It is important that we use the appropriate participatory tools at the right time in the process, which is why the process checklist helps with designing the appropriate timeline.

CONCLUSIONS AND PROPOSALS

It is my conviction that the socialization of planning is an absolutely essential element for our comprehensive interpretation of ecology. It is an organic part of that striving for wholeness represented in the European Landscape Accords and reflecting the integration of man into an ecological system, and a basic principle represented by landscape architecture education in our country. It is for this reason that landscape architecture has exceptional qualities and a significant responsibility and set of tasks in the sphere of participatory planning.

My research focused on the possibilities for adapting participatory planning to Hungarian circumstances, and for this reason I approached the nature-society connection as manifested in the landscape from the social side. By this, my research supports Professor Mihály Mőcsényi's integrated landscape approach, and at the same time can be utilized in landscape architecture planning and education, as well as in research related to decisionmaking:

- My case study analyses help planners to assess the expected challenges and difficulties in the planning process.
- My assessments on international examples as well as aspects particular to Hungary, as well as my risk assessments, help planners to decide in what cases it is worthwhile or recommended to utilize participatory planning methods and tools.
- The fundamental changes to the planning system has brought confusion to all parties involved in planning, and the diversity of the landscape architect's tasks mak it even more difficult to find one's way in the planning and negotiating process. The roles that I have designated, as well as their accompanying analytic tables, help planners to find the appropriate, realistic position for themselves in a changing planning environment. At the same time it helps in finding new tasks, for example in the civil or economic sectors, thus enhancing professional possibilities as well.
- The MPE list helps the planner, the decisionmaker and the civil participants to a more effective, fruitful and problem-free participatory process. The list helps in preparing for the planning process and can supplement the plan's impact assessment.
- The collection of foreign professional literature and case studies can constitute the basis for further research.

Landscape architecture research – with the possible exception of historic research – is generally predicated upon either the natural sciences or technical sciences. The question of community participation typically is addressed in the context of social sciences research. In my work I made an effort to push the boundaries of these areas, since it is my belief that the ultimate goal of landscape architecture research is to seek out wholeness and harmony and build a bridge between the natural and social sciences. In addition to all this I consider it important that landscape architecture principles and the integrated landscape approach should take root not just in the physical environment but in people's minds – it is in this way that our profession can more effectively complete its mission.

RELATED PUBLICATIONS

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