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Participatory Citizens Panels for co-designing Action Plans: the example of a mobility-related CP applied in Thessaloniki

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Introduction: main concept of practice

- ✓ The **importance of participatory planning** in mobility & transport planning is widely accepted, well established, and acknowledged (e.g. consultation incorporated in SUMPs methodology, etc.).
- ✓ The application of participatory processes & the involvement of users in all steps, **contributes** to:
 - ✓ **Better design/planning** of services & infrastructure, addressing the real needs of citizens
 - ✓ **Approval of interventions** by citizens and engagement of them
 - ✓ **Cost effectiveness**/ expenses avoidance/ budget savings
 - ✓ **Ensuring inclusivity**, addressing challenges that vulnerable people are facing
- ✓ **Multimodality, Transport integration & MaaS** concept pose the need of increased consultation among various actors, agencies and users with the aim of acting supplementary in an integrated way

Challenges for Citizens Panel on sustainable mobility in Thessaloniki

- ✓ A local **Citizens Panel (CP) on Sustainable Mobility** was established in Thessaloniki in 2018 in the frame of PE4Trans/INTERREG Europe.
- ✓ An example form of participatory planning in mobility & transport.
- ✓ Based on a bottom-up approach, the Citizens Panel (CP) aimed to **address** the following **challenges**:
 - ✓ promote sustainable mobility
 - ✓ involve public into policy making
 - ✓ change behaviour towards more sustainable mobility modes
 - ✓ create a culture of engagement and participatory mentality among citizens
 - ✓ co-shape actions to be incorporated into the PE4Trans Action Plan

Participatory process adopted: establishment/creation phase

- ✓ Emphasis was given for the appropriate **selection of CP members**
- ✓ The synthesis of CP would have to **remain the same**, throughout the whole duration of the project, since every meeting would build on the outcomes of the previous one.
- ✓ We ran an **open call for candidates** through communication channels, such as press release, social media posts.
- ✓ A large number of people submitted an application to participate.
- ✓ We selected **25 individuals** trying to ensure **heterogeneity** and **balanced representation and presence** of various societal aspects and groups, elderly, university students, parents, people with disabilities, etc.

Participatory process adopted: preparation phase

- ✓ Every meeting was designed in the form of a **co-creation** workshop
- ✓ **Different aims** were set in advance
- ✓ Agenda was formed using a **special mix of participatory techniques**
- ✓ Five (5) meetings of the CP took place since Dec 2018, in particular:
 - ✓ Three (3) physical meetings
 - ✓ Two (2) online meetings due to COVID-19 pandemic restrictions.
Each one was separated into two distinct parts
- ✓ The outcomes of each meeting fed the next one, resulting to and leveraging the build-on effect
- ✓ We tried to maintain and grow the **interest and the active involvement** of CP members during the periods between subsequent meetings

Participatory process adopted: implementation phase

n	Date	Place/ mode	Aim	Methods	Outcomes
1 ⁿ	Dec 2018	Municipality building	WHY – Definition of long-term visions	Brainstorming in small groups using images for inspiration, Dot-voting, constructive feedback, elaboration of templates	5 visions
2 ⁿ	May 2019	Art gallery (IF Thess)	WHERE – Diagnosis of mobility behaviours and habits	Values map (Schwartz); Brainstorming; Dot-voting; World café; problems solving → 180° degrees, uncovering deep roots by 5 Why's analysis, changing stakeholders' roles	Local needs
3 ⁿ	Nov 2019	Municipality building	WHO - Decision on priorities & profiles for the target-groups	Empathy Map; World Café; Clustering	6 «personas» (target-groups)
4 ⁿ	Oct 2020 – 2 parts	online	HOW – Impact of COVID-19 and co-designing of actions/measures	Brainstorming in changing digital rooms (World Café rationale)	8 actions
5 ⁿ	Nov '21 – 2 parts	online	CHECK - Validation of the Action Plan prepared	Brainstorming, Clustering, Miro	Action Plan

Participatory process adopted: implementation phase

1st CP meeting → elements of visions

- *Technology-oriented vision towards ITS;*
- Accessibility, inclusiveness & interaction between citizens and city;
- Car-free historical center with green spaces;
- Sea transport in Thermaikos bay

3rd CP meeting → target-groups

- *Parents with little kids* → set the good example to their children;
- *People with reduced mobility* → campaigns to raise awareness;
- *Teenagers* → "influencers";
- *Drivers* → limit car use;
- *People living at outskirts, not served by PT* → carpooling

2nd CP meeting → main needs

- Offer education and awareness-raising;
- Restructure and advance PT;
- Improve existing poor infrastructure for pedestrians/cyclists;
- Establish a proper, holistic & integrated strategic planning

4th CP meeting → co-designing actions

- Educate drivers of buses
- Experiential mobility education
- Demonstration of equipment for public health enhancement
- Sustainable mobility campaigns
- Provision of monetary motives
- Wi-fi internet (perceived travel time)
- Open contest to design the ideal experience of traveling by bus
- Social media & influencers

Participatory process adopted: implementation phase



COVID-19 implications

- ✓ The first wave of COVID-19 pandemic (Spring 2020) happened in the middle of our participatory process.
- ✓ **Personal contact and interaction** in physical context were lost damaging an integral and substantial aspect of participatory approach.
- ✓ We tried to **shift the process online**, working more intensively in order to **keep CP members committed** and engaged into the process and apply participatory methods effectively
- ✓ **Challenges faced:**
 - ✓ **Implementation aspect – unfamiliarity:** some people were unfamiliar with online and teleconference tools used
 - ✓ **Content aspects – habits changed:** past outcomes such as values, needs, personas, had to be re-visited, reviewed and adapted, given that mobility behaviours had changed

Replication considerations & qualitative evaluation of the process

- ✓ Citizens will show interest to participate as long as the practice will be well structured and promoted appropriately.
- ✓ Gathering >60 applications of prospective members of CP was much more **beyond our initial expectations**
- ✓ An old, educated man stated in the 1st meeting that he feels “*moved by the fact that [he was] finally participating in a process, where [his] voice could be heard*”.
- ✓ **Keeping CP members “warm”**, committed & engaged throughout a period of 2-3 years is a real challenge and demands continuous effort
- ✓ The successful implementation of the practice requires **knowledge and experience**, to arrange practical & theoretical issues, such as: selection of room, duration, mix of participatory methods, invitation process, etc.
- ✓ The participants expressed their **satisfaction with the whole process** followed, and wished similar initiatives to continue in the future.

Key lessons: concluding remarks

- ✓ It's crucial to try to **include everyone in the design and planning**
process → different groups have → different values → different needs →
different motives → which have to be represented
- ✓ The coincidence of **COVID-19 pandemic and energy/fuels cost rise**
could be exploited towards the promotion of the active, sustainable
mobility options.
- ✓ Close cooperation with public authorities & key mobility actors is helpful.
- ✓ Actions resulting through such participatory processes should be
realistic, feasible and budget/cost secured. Otherwise, their realization
will be in risk, disappointing people involved and worked for them.
- ✓ Participatory planning is important, but its **outcomes are neither holy, nor unquestionable**. They reflect the **knowledge** of participants and the
consensus (not always the “best” decision) reached among them; thus,
being reviewed and challenged against experts' evaluation is needed.



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Thank you!

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Thessaloniki's Citizens Panel:

www.facebook.com/SumvouleutikiEpitropiPolittonPE4Trans



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