

## Achieving Success in Public Participation



a multi-stakeholder perspective on the state of  
citizen involvement and participation in Germany

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## Agenda

- Methodology
- The wide range of Citizen Participation  
– Key Features and Considerations
- Status Quo of Citizen Participation in Germany
- Online-Participation
- „Successful“ Participation: Best Practices and Lessons Learned
- Applicability of the results in other contexts
- Discussion



## Methodology

- Review of research as well as framework documents such as whitepapers, guidelines and toolkits on citizen participation
- Interviews with German actors and stakeholders from different levels (national, regional, local) and different realms (public administration, politics, civil society, project management, academia)
- Interviews with local GIZ staff in various countries (forthcoming)



Notiz Auswertung		1	2	3	4	5
Frage	Antwort					
Frage 1: Beschreiben Sie mit eigenen Worten, wie Sie sich typischerweise auf eine Veränderung vorbereiten. vgl. Ranking-Frage 2/15						
Welche Bedeutung hat die Teilnahme und wie oft haben Sie daran teilgenommen?						
Frage 2: Was genau ist das Ziel der Teilnahme?						
Frage 3: Welche Ressourcen sind Ihnen zur Verfügung gestellt worden, um diese Aufgabe zu bewältigen? (z.B. Zeit, Geld, Personal, etc.)						
Frage 4: Wie haben Sie sich auf diese Aufgabe vorbereitet? (z.B. Recherche, Schulung, etc.)						
Frage 5: Wie waren andere involviert?						
Frage 6: Wie werden Sie die Umsetzung planen?						
Frage 7: Wie haben Sie sich auf diese Aufgabe vorbereitet? (z.B. Recherche, Schulung, etc.)						
Frage 8: Wie waren andere involviert?						
Frage 9: Wie werden Sie die Umsetzung planen?						
Frage 10: Wie haben Sie sich auf diese Aufgabe vorbereitet? (z.B. Recherche, Schulung, etc.)						
Frage 11: Wie waren andere involviert?						
Frage 12: Wie werden Sie die Umsetzung planen?						
Frage 13: Wie haben Sie sich auf diese Aufgabe vorbereitet? (z.B. Recherche, Schulung, etc.)						
Frage 14: Wie waren andere involviert?						
Frage 15: Wie werden Sie die Umsetzung planen?						
Frage 16: Wie haben Sie sich auf diese Aufgabe vorbereitet? (z.B. Recherche, Schulung, etc.)						
Frage 17: Wie waren andere involviert?						
Frage 18: Wie werden Sie die Umsetzung planen?						
Frage 19: Wie haben Sie sich auf diese Aufgabe vorbereitet? (z.B. Recherche, Schulung, etc.)						
Frage 20: Wie waren andere involviert?						



# 1.

## The wide range of public participation – Key features and considerations



## What is public participation?

„[...] **voluntary cooperative arrangements** between actors from the public, business and civil society that display **minimal degree of institutionalization**, have common **nonhierarchical decision-making** structures and address public policy issues“  
(J. Streets 2004)


“Citizen participation means the **possibility for all affected** and interested citizens to represent their **interests and concerns** in public projects.“  
(Voralberger Landesregierung 2010)

“[...]the participation or **co-determination** of citizens in a planning and decision-making process through **information, consultation or cooperation**, whereby formal forms of participation prescribed by law and beyond are possible.“  
(German Federal Ministry of Transport and Digital Infrastructure 2011)

## Key terms

- Citizen Participation
- Public Participation
- Multi-stakeholder participation
- Collaboration

## Why public participation? Exemplary Statements:

- „**Closing** (knowledge, power and understanding) **gaps** between citizens and decision-makers. In this way, we can bring those affected together with those who make the decisions and deal better with **inequalities**.“
  - „PP highlights **values, interests and expectaions** of the citizens and thereby brings better solutions and fastens projects by **minimizing conflicts**.“
  - „It is not possible to plan for people without **involving** the people.“
  - “People who are already involved in planning **identify** better with a project.”
  - “How can we find the best solutions if we don't ask the people **for whom we seek these solutions?**”
  - “In Germany, large, but also smaller, projects cannot be realized if the citizens concerned are not involved. In order to achieve **legitimacy**, it is no longer sufficient to **involve the usual actors** in planning processes.”
- 

## Why public participation? Dimensions:

- Democratic function: Legitimacy & Transparency; democratic ideals
- Societal function: Community & Acceptance; Social learning
- Economic function: Efficiency and Quality
- Empowerment function: strengthening citizen competences; make interests heard
- Achieving political goals



## Citizen Participation: Key Features and Considerations

- Context:

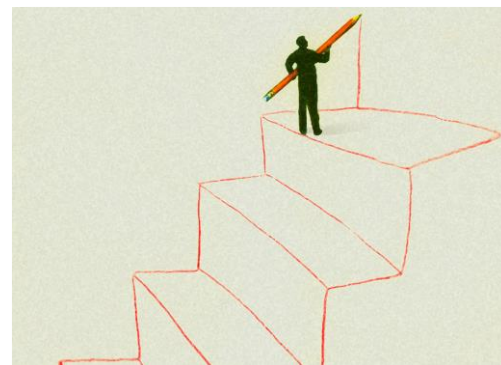
- Institutional framework
- Political interests
- Project-related conditions



- Goals:

Value in itself or means to end?

- |  |              |
|--|--------------|
| – Increase in democratic participation | – Awareness  |
| – Experiencing self-efficacy           | – Legitimacy |
|  | – Acceptance |
|  | – Efficiency |
|  | – Progress   |
|  | – Learning   |





## Citizen Participation: Key Features and Considerations

### Setup:

- when to start
  - „Invited“ versus „claimed“ participation
  - As early as possible or with concrete plans?



- which level of participation

- Citizen control
- Cooperation
- Consultation
- Information



→ active

→ responsive/active

→ responsive

→ passive



## Citizen Participation: Key Features and Considerations

- whom to include?  
Participants as... citizens, representatives, stakeholders, interest groups, the affected
- Guidance: information, moderation, deliberation

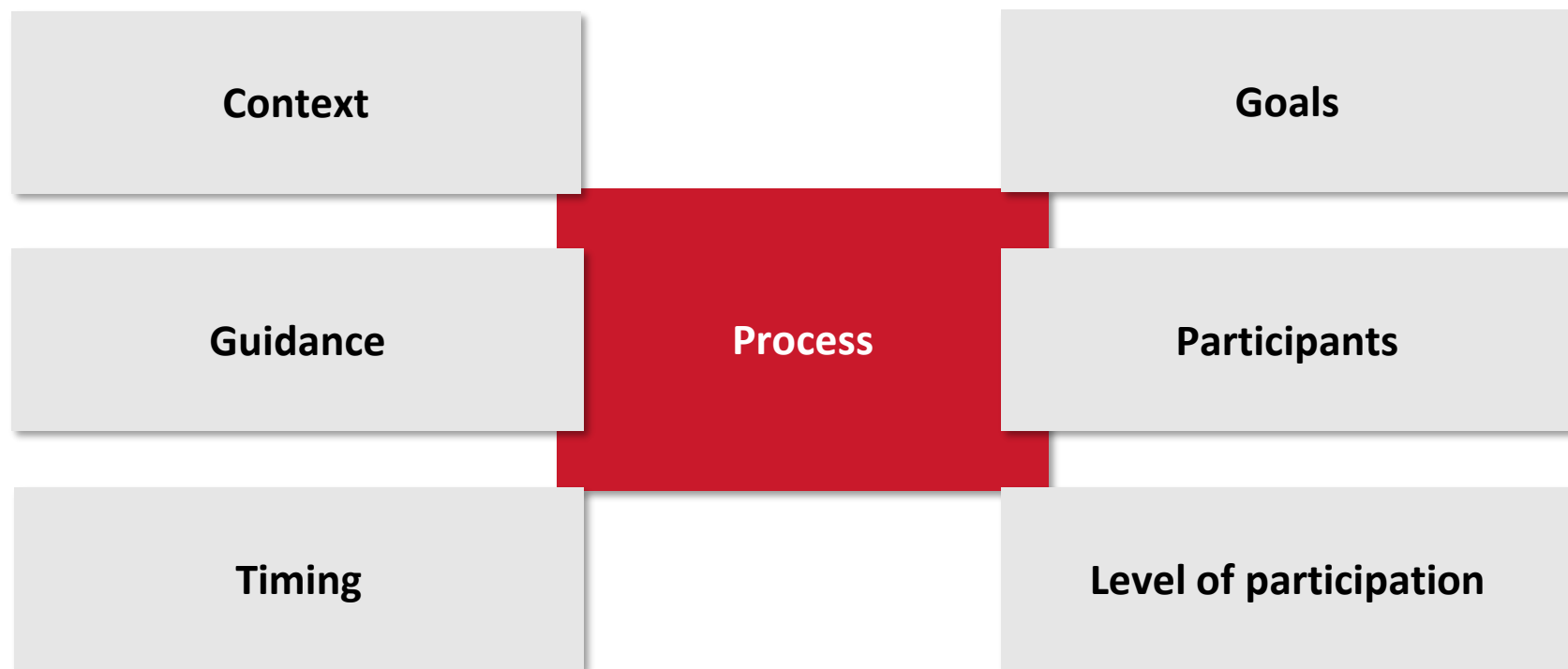


Format: Agreement among all involved on What and How

- Follow-up: attention and effect, feedback and evaluation



## Citizen Participation: Key Features and Considerations



→ There is no blueprint for successful participation.

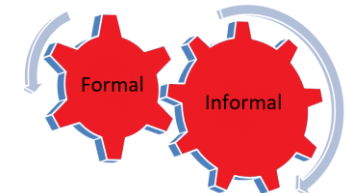
# 2.

## Status Quo of public participation in Germany



## Historical context and current institutional framework:

- representative democracy
- Increase in participatory procedures after the fall of the Berlin wall
- connecting mandatory (formal) and voluntary (informal) participation



## Linking formal and informal participation: the case of the A-40 Rhine bridge in Duisburg



- Formal participation:
  - Information and consultation of the public in clearly defined procedures.
- Informal participation:
  - More dialogue-oriented procedures, the ideas and thoughts of the participants are made publicly visible and the formats can be applied very flexibly depending on the issues and framework conditions.

## Legal framework and requirements

- vertical and horizontal variations of „participation infrastructure“
- early public participation, regional planning and approval procedures
- International framework: the Aarhus Convention, and the SDGs
- push for further institutional reform



# 3.

## Online Participation





## Future of participation or optional supplement?

- Online participation combines the increased public interest and the desire of the population to be involved early and comprehensively in decision-making processes with increasing digitalisation.
- Online formats are suitable for all levels of the participation ladder.
- As with offline formats, online means that there is no ideal blueprint, but that a project-specific decision must be made as to whether an online format can support the participation process.



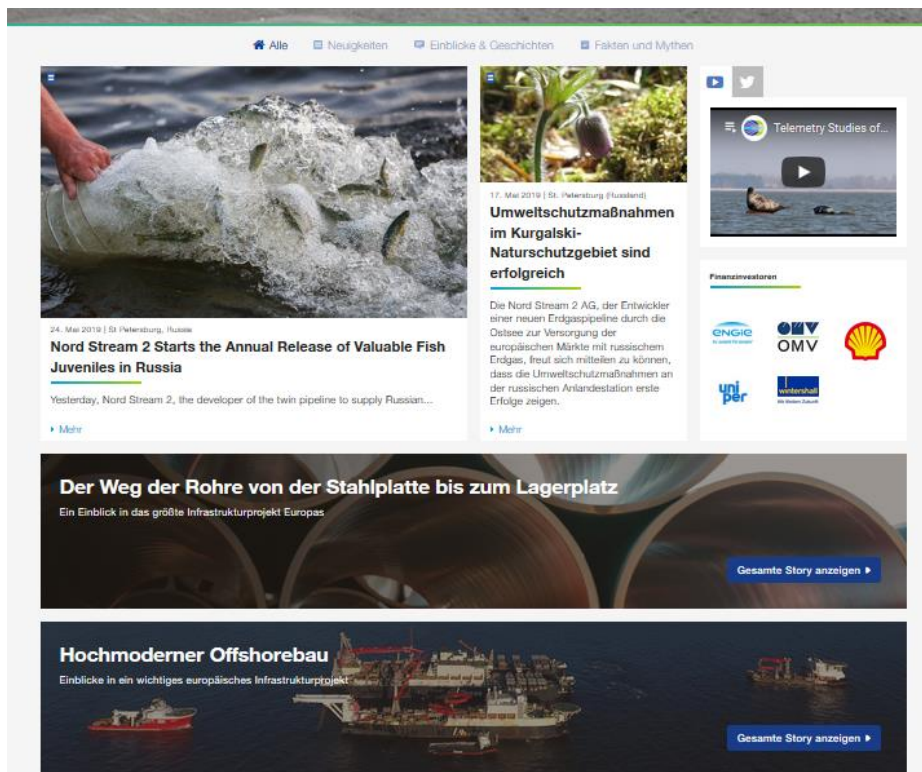
## Future of participation or optional supplement?

Benefits	Limits
an infinite amount of information can be prepared and made available	Requires additional resources
Independent of place and time	lack of user commitment
Simple instrument for continuous communication	Deliberative and collaborative effects can only be achieved through direct dialogue.
can activate groups, who would not join an offline-participation	Excludes certain groups that would participate in offline participations

→ Optional addition that can support specific dimension, but must be linked to offline procedures

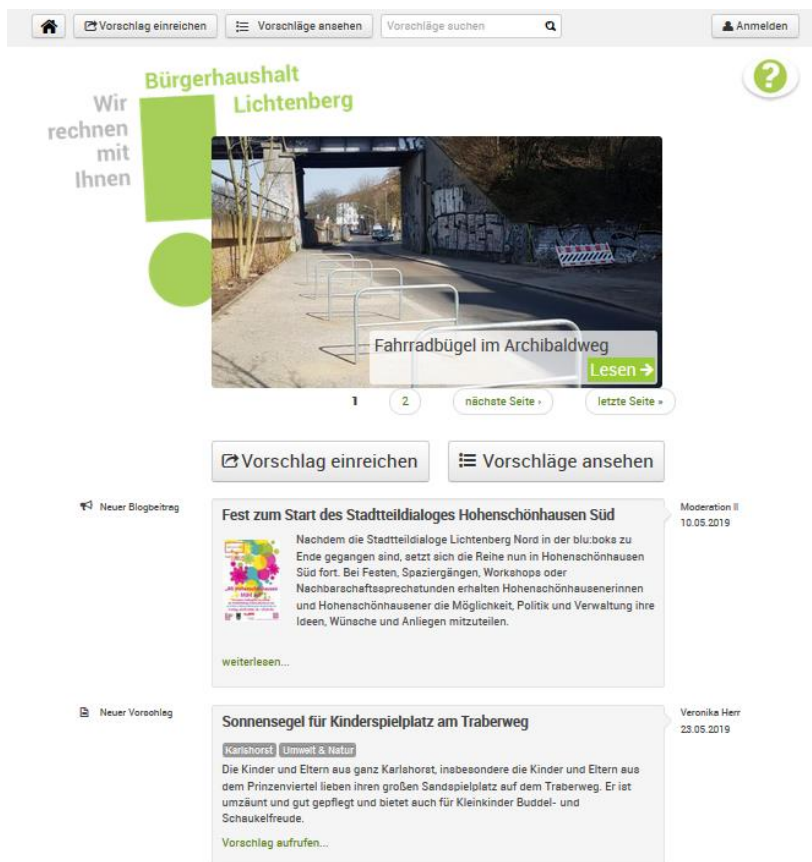


## Online formats as information platforms



- Continuous information flow from project owners to target audiences
- Transparent, yet still interest-driven
  - Participation
  - Project
  - Approval
- Shared knowledge base
- Asynchronous contact possibility

## Online formats as platforms for concrete participation



- Complementary possibility to submit proposals for participatory budgeting
- Users can vote for and comment on submitted suggestions
- Additional tools such as an interactive map facilitate the submission of proposals compared to postal voting.
- Suggestions can be easily understood as to what happens to them

# 4.

## „Successful“ Participation: Best Practices and Lessons Learned



## Study on Citizen Participation in Germany – Scope

- A culture of participation?
- frameworks, guidelines and scoping
- actors, institutions, interest groups, sponsors
- role(s) of citizens and civil society
- mobilization and inclusion
- formal and informal participation, specifics of policy areas
- evaluation and learning
- the value of crises for progress



## Study on Citizen Participation in Germany – Interview Partners

- Parliament (national)
  - German Bundestag: Petition Committee
  - German Bundestag: Interior Committee (tbc)
- Public Administration (regional)
  - Land Baden-Württemberg: Office of State Minister on Civil Society and Participation
  - Land Berlin: Senate Administration for Urban Development: Unit on Participation
  - Land Berlin: Senate Administration for Urban Development: Unit on Housing
- Public Administration (local)
  - Administrative Department Berlin-Lichtenberg: Unit on Public Participation
- Civil Society (national and local)
  - Berlin Institute for Participation
  - 100% Tempelhof e.V.
- Project Management and Advice (national and local)
  - Institute for Advanced Sustainability Studies
  - Technical University Darmstadt: Darmstadt Citizen Panel

## Best Practices and Lessons Learned: **Pre-participation**

### Participation culture and mindset

- Citizens:
  - Awareness among citizens of options and ways to participate
  - Democracy education and learning, and willingness to contribute
- Decision-makers:
  - the “if” of participation requires political will and commitment
  - Politics cannot outsource participation
  - the “how” requires readiness to plan participatory processes
  - Participation is not only an technical approach, but also a political one
- Stakeholders:
  - willingness to participate
  - openness towards results of the process





## Best Practices and Lessons Learned: **Pre-participation**

### Institutional framework

- Provisions and guidelines for formal and informal public participation
- Ensuring accountability, building trust, avoiding frustration
- Institutionalizing participatory knowledge on all levels



### A “participation contract”

- mutual agreement of all parties involved on the What and How of the process (based on guidelines)
  - shared understanding of the issue, the process and the goal
- openness and transparency; early public participation requires open mindsets regarding format and outcome
- Citizens quickly notice when participation is only a facade that consolidates existing power structures.



## Best Practices and Lessons Learned: **Pre-participation**

### Timing

- start early on
- have resources in place

### Scoping

- map needs, stakeholders, formats, and goals
  - For every project, there are preexisting opinions
  - Early Participation helps to identify conflicts and enables to deal with them upfront



## Best Practices and Lessons Learned: **Participation**

### Participant selection

- “participants” or “stakeholders”?
- representation: “citizens as experts” and “expert citizens”
- lottery might balance demographic effects, yet not perfectly

### Mobilization

- Participation dilemma
- active recruitment via various channels as self-recruitment is oftentimes insufficient
- commitment is rooted in personal interest, incentives, and emotions
- collaboration is what keeps citizens on board
- establish real-world relevance for participants



## Best Practices and Lessons Learned: **Participation**

### Format selection

- Culture before Format
  - Use existing formats on site
  - Adapt format to participants and ideally develop jointly
  - inform participants about limitations regarding format as well as substance
- 
- self-efficacy may be created through a wide range of formats and activities
  - e-participation can support processes, but cannot carry them
  - Continuous communication even and especially in times of no participation



## Best Practices and Lessons Learned: **Participation**

### Support by public administration

- requires rules and regulations for administration to respond to requests and accompany processes
- involve administration to gain understanding and trust
- transmit political decisions and enable administration to follow up
- make necessary resources (financial, personnel, networks) available
- adjust to public administration rationale and procedures in place
- leave room for collaboration and achievements

*Current estimate: 60 to 70 processes to establish local guidelines for participation ongoing  
→ transferability of practices is limited*



## Best Practices and Lessons Learned: **Participation**


### Diversity and inclusiveness

be aware of (unconscious) bias due to...

- **Accessibility**

- Attend to groups that are underrepresented
- Inequalities are based on different characteristics and are sometimes difficult to detect
  - see political, resources-based, technical (power to know how to get things done), and epistemological (power to decide which knowledge is acceptable) criteria...
  - ...as well as socio-economics, origin, gender.

- **Modes of interaction**

- Ensure dialogue at eye level, even if certain groups enjoy a highlighted position:
    - Formalized power-sharing rules
    - Informal/tacit rules
    - Access to information
    - Moderation and rules of discussion
    - Mode of decision-making
- 

## Best Practices and Lessons Learned: **Post-participation**

### Continuity

- follow up and follow through, be transparent and explain outcome
- make sure that participants are being heard, create awareness among decision-makers and stakeholders

### Monitoring and Evaluation

- citizens and stakeholders may constitute “early warning system”
- Evaluate input, process and output

### Participation and Learning

- Democratic innovation is oftentimes driven by crises and frustration
- Continuous involvement to prevent NIMBYism and, in turn, foster emancipation of citizens



# 5.

## Applicability of the results in other contexts





## What to consider?

- History and cleavages leading to...
  - Injustice
  - Inequality
  - Different modes of knowledge
- Different frameworks
  - Standards
  - Administration
- Politics
  - Distribution of power
  - Political support
  - Participatory knowledge
  - „White-washing“ of former practices



## What can participation contribute?

- Balancing power inequalities
- Balancing conflicts
- De-politization
- Legitimacy and acceptance for change
- Coordination between different sectors, stakeholders and interests
- Better solutions to public problems
- Balances bottom-up and top-down approaches



## Discussion

- Which aspects catch your eye?
- Which aspects are very relevant for your work?
- Which aspects are not applicable in your context?
- Which aspects should be analyzed in more detail?



**Thank you very much for your attention!**

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