#Bengaluru moving X YLAC

participatory approach to urban planning

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abstract

"Inclusive design doesn't mean you're designing one thing for all people. You're designing a diversity of ways to participate so that everyone has a sense of belonging" —Susan Goltsman
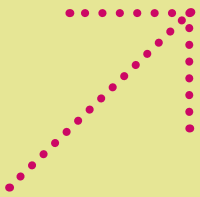
The role of public participation in democratic processes is integral to any democracy. The paradigm of citizen engagement and participative planning today must shift from one of traditional redressal of grievances to that of collaborative solution building bringing both the government and citizen together in the development of local areas. This policy brief attempts to highlight successful models of engagement, institutional structures and processes that allow for effective participation, specifically in Urban Planning. It proposes a framework to incorporate transparency, representation and accountability to bridge the inherent disconnect between citizens and administration in the planning process. The brief attempts to understand the Sustainable Mobility Accords (SuMA)—an initiative of the Directorate of Urban Land Transport in Karnataka—Model and proposes possible interventions to improve it further. It draws insights from successful case-studies and other models focused on participatory urban planning. This brief argues that having an effective participatory approach to urban planning will have a multitude of benefits, one that enhances not only urban mobility but also creates an inclusive and feasible-cost effective model to reform urban planning.

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CHAPTER 1

participatory planning in india— the context

In India, the 74th Constitutional Amendment extended constitutional status to urban local bodies, empowering people and locally elected representatives with the power to act in common interest and have a say in how their communities should develop. The Amendment looked to empower the ward council as an enabling platform for local solutions to local problems to bridge the lacunae in bureaucratic top-down schemes.[1] However, ward committees in India enjoy restricted autonomy i.e., many projects need state government approvals and constantly face political pressures along with threats of erosion of powers. Moreover, the process of selection is often not transparent, with insufficient civil society representation and void of real citizen power and influence. Despite disparate sizes and varying resident populations, many wards receive a standard budget with little connection to their projects or property tax collection.

case studies

Urban planning in Rajnandgaon and Janjgir, Chhattisgarh[2]

Context

PRIA (Society for Participatory Research) tied up with the local government via The Town and Country Planning Organization to develop a participatory Development Plan for Rajnandgaon and a Zonal Plan for Janjgir through a 'bottom-up approach'. A consulting firm Environmental Planning Collaborative (EPC) provided the technical support to the process.

Methodology

1. **Engaging with the government:** The project used technical workshops to educate government officials about the legal, technical and financial aspects of the project. The concerned departments helped in collection of requisite secondary information and data.

2. **Getting the public involved:**

   (i) Preliminary engagement
   Awareness was created through pamphlets, official press releases and commercial advertisements. Public could send their suggestions through phone or post. More detailed engagements were conducted through informal house visits, formal consultations with specific groups. Experts' inputs to address sectoral specific issues were taken from academia, NGOs, technical organizations etc.

   (ii) Secondary engagement
   Detailed ward-level consultations were held with half day camps at nodal centres to understand issues and engage with more stakeholders.

3. **City development strategy (CDS) workshop:** Held to update the public about the status of the project and get inputs from stakeholders on how to improve the project.

4. **Preparing draft plans:** Based on inputs from the CDS a draft plan was prepared that was again sent for feedback to working groups which were headed by local representatives.

5. **Final plan:** A development plan for Rajnandgaon and a Zonal Plan for Janjgir was presented to government officials and the public. After feedback, a final plan for each city was submitted.

Impact

One of the first cases of participatory urban planning in India that used different modes to reach out and collect feedback from citizens, making the overall exercise participatory and inclusive.

Lessons to be learned

Key involvement of all stakeholders during implementation results in a successful participatory model.

Pedestrianizing Gandhi Bazaar, Bengaluru[3]

Context

The Government of Karnataka with the support of the German Government is currently identifying innovative ways to plan and sell fruits and vegetables in urban areas. A sub-project of this initiative aims at improving the spatial infrastructure of the point of sale, to enhance it as a socio-cultural space that is economically efficient, clean, accessible, safe and comfortable for all users. Recognizing the role of informal street markets, Gandhi Bazaar was chosen to pilot the initiative which is currently approved by the Government and is out for public feedback.[4]

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Methodology

A people-centric approach is the crux of this project. Stakeholders primarily consisting of street vendors, hawkers, residents, shoppers, government officials and parikramas, all were involved in different stages of the planning process:

1. **Discussion with all stakeholders was the first step in the planning process:** to understand the nature and degree of pedestrianization required.

2. **Auditing and reviewing existing conditions:** Data collection through surveys, issue identification and discussion of required facilities, concepts and absolute non-negotiables through three public workshops, each targeted to a specific user group in order to prepare three alternative scenarios.

3. **Assessing and choosing the preferred scenario:** Exhibitions were organised to explain the project, present the findings and data collected, present the 3 design scenarios with its pros and cons, and reach an agreement on the preferred scenario that was agreeable to a majority of users and government agencies.

4. **Feedback:** On the final plan and initiation of an institutional mechanism i.e., a welfare Association of Shoppers and Hawkers (ASHA) with voluntary stewardship to ensure regular maintenance.

5. **Awareness:** An awareness program to present the final plan beyond stakeholders that includes the city at large to make Gandhi Bazaar commercially attractive and a popular spot of the city.

Lessons to be learnt

To overcome resistance from more than 60% stakeholders who feared a decline in income levels due to prohibition of vehicles, 5 representatives of hawkers were taken to Manipur to assess the model of a 250 year-old successful pedestrian market and engage in dialogue. Moreover, mock up models were made to allow stakeholders to visualise first-hand the proposed changes. Capacity building and inculcating trust is key to ensuring maximum participation and consensus.

Participatory Budgeting in Porto Alegre, Brazil[5]

Context

Porte Alegre started an experiment in 1989, to use participatory budgeting as an effective tool of decentralization to engage people in making decisions about how local budgets are spent.

Methodology

1. **People's participation:** District and thematic plenary assemblies hold preliminary meetings after which municipal officials give an introduction about the budget to the people.

2. **Priority lists:** Subsequently the public draw their own neighborhood 'priority lists'. Each district elects two members and two alternates to the city-wide municipal budget council. Following this district wide 'priority lists' are created.

3. **Municipal Budget Council:** Reviews the 'priority lists' and gives quotas for each district.

Impact

Its initial success has led to replication in some semblance by 2,700 governments worldwide.[6]

Lessons to be learnt

Strengthening of local institutions such as the Mayor or civil societies is essential in a bottom-up approach. Deepening democracy saw a change in attitude towards support of democracy.

CHAPTER 3

SuMA + participatory planning

The Cycle Day Initiative

The Cycle Day Initiative[7] was started by the Directorate of Urban Land Transport (DULT) in Oct 2013 as a step towards nudging citizens to "shift" to sustainable modes of transport. After almost 6 successful years of spearheading Cycle Day, DULT wanted to extend this responsibility to the community. The idea that communities can take the ownership of transforming themselves into sustainable neighbourhoods and implement solutions is what sparked Sustainable Mobility Accord.

1. To promote sustainable modes of transport

2. To support communities in formulating specific goals and action plans for transforming themselves into sustainable neighbourhoods

3. To improve safe access to schools, safe walking routes in neighbourhoods, improvement of public spaces.
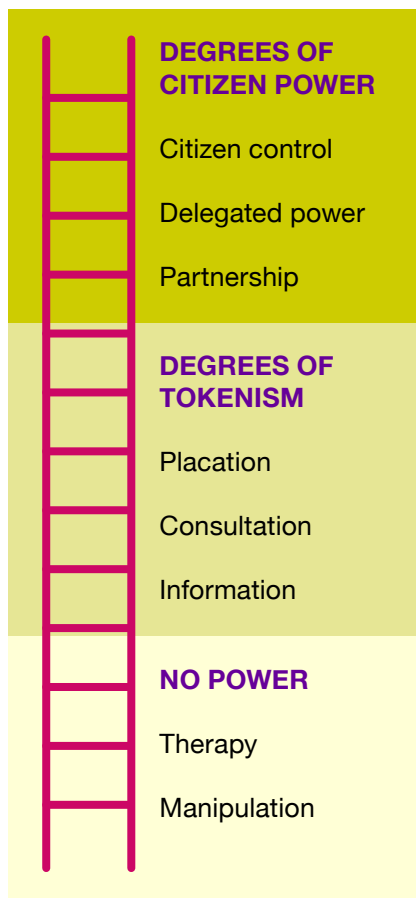
Objectives of SuMA

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EVALUATING THE CURRENT MODEL

PARAMETERS	CURRENT MANDATE	POTENTIAL CHALLENGES
Resources and capacity building	The Resident Welfare Associations (RWAs) are offered finances and assigned the responsibility of project planning, resource sourcing and allocation.	While the current model places the RWAs at the centre of all action and empowers them to take decisions on behalf of the community, it also expects the RWAs to have the expertise and time to take on a year-long engagement. This may not be realistic in all cases.
Representation and Inclusivity	Registered RWAs and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) can apply for a SuMA grant. Before projects are implemented, grantees are required to conduct household surveys and interviews to ensure that different voices in the community are captured.	Most RWAs are constituted by people from the community who give their time on a voluntary part-time basis and may not have the technical expertise to plan interventions that promote sustainable transport.
Budget/finance	DULT provides for funding of Rs. 50L for one year to the RWA/ CSO that has signed the accord.	RWAs/ CSOs are not always representative of the entire neighborhood. While the SuMA model does call for tools such as surveys etc. to be used so that different voices are captured, there might be practical challenges in implementation. In some cases, class differences and lack of expertise in survey implementation may affect survey results.
Communication and awareness campaigns	RWAs/ CSOs are responsible for spearheading awareness campaigns.	While this funding is valuable, there is no specific component earmarked for human resources and expertise that the RWA can leverage for its specific SUMA project.

COMPARISON WITH SUSTAINABLE URBAN MOBILITY PLAN (SUMP) MODEL IN EUROPE

PARAMETERS	SUMP	SuMA
Year of inception	2013	2020
Jurisdiction	Nation-wide	Ward level
Supplementary guidelines	Yes, SUMP Guidelines (2nd Edition) and 17 SUMP Guideline Documents	None
Supporting agencies	European Commission and National Governments	Headed by DULT, Govt of Karnataka through the SuMA Task Force, and supporting agencies
Funding	European Commission with support from bodies like European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF), Regional governments, Connecting Europe Facility (CEF), LIFE program, Horizon 2020 & Climate-KIC. (Funding varies per state project)	DULT provides direct funding of Rs 50 Lakhs per approved ward project
Criteria for long-term vision and clear implementation plan criteria	Should include timetable and budget plan, clear allocation of the responsibilities	DULT has mandated an initial timeline of 1 year where it provides technical Assistance. RWA/CSO are involved in implementation and other aspects of the project
Modes of assessment of current and future performance	Status analysis and baseline - includes an urban mobility audit, performance indicators, measurable and realistic targets	Lack of clarity, possibly because this is currently in pilot phase
Modes addressed	Public transport, Non-motorised transport, Intramodality, Urban road safety, Urban logistics & Mobility Management, Intelligent Transport Systems	Sustainable transport at the moment
Participatory approach	Citizens, as well as representatives of civil society and economic actors in designing and implementation	Includes RWA/CSO, DULT and allied technical partners
Monitoring, review, reporting	Regular assessment on selected parameters, submission of monitoring report. Mandates local planning authorities with oversight	DULT in consonance with technical partners seeks regular reports; local bodies are not directly involved.

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CHAPTER 4

towards effective citizen participation

DEGREES OF CITIZEN POWER

Citizen control

Delegated power

Partnership

DEGREES OF TOKENISM

Placation

Consultation

Information

NO POWER

Therapy

Manipulation

Figure 1 Arnstein's ladder (1969) of citizen participation

In 1969, Arnstein devised the eight-tiered ladder to drive the notion that citizen participation is only possible with redistribution of power (Fig 1). To enable effective citizen participation in an administrative setup one must address challenges such as:

Devolution of powers

Should be backed with institutional, legislative and political support at varied levels of governance and structured stagewise implementation strategy followed by finding an amicable power and responsibility distribution framework, building of capacity, ensuring fair civil society representation and enabling support.

Trust building and transparency

A general lack of clarity in roles and responsibilities contributes to perceived threat and resistance in the devolution of powers. Decisions are sometimes hampered by red tape, bureaucracy and requirement of approvals from the state, with state governments holding most relevant powers. Enabling technological platforms for collective experience-based data along with informal means such as workshops, flyers and in person interviews can allow for percolation of participative practices to low-income groups.[8]

Fair representation

A balance between nominated and elected representatives and a mandated representation from all constituent stakeholders of the neighborhood to comprehensively address the diversity

and complexity of different urban areas is important. There have been cases where ward committees have been interpreted as platforms to protect interests of low-income groups leading to the middle-income spectrum losing interest in the system. Uneven representation of interests can be overcome by clubbing homogenised interests and creating subcommittees within the ward committee.

Enabling resources and support systems

Nature of engagement with the government must shift from redressal to collaborative solution building. Engaging academic institutions as a mediator will also help bridge the gap between citizens and ULB's. The State could allow for reallocation of a certain revenue percentage generated in the area to the Ward committees to incentivise development works and ensure that limited budgetary allocations does not curtail their ability to address on-ground issues. Alternatively, businesses can be allowed to fund infrastructure such as the PPP model in Karnataka[9] which allows funding for signage, street furniture, bus stops under supervision of local bodies.

Urban planning in India is plagued by many **archaic and ineffective laws** that coupled with low State support often **cripple citizen participation. Sustainable Mobility Accord is a welcome approach towards addressing some of these issues, and it will hopefully emerge stronger from the pilot year with a robust citizen-centric approach.**

CHAPTER 5

recommendations for SuMA

Technical partner to enhance capacity building

The current model entrusts the RWA/ CSOs to execute the entire project. Though its intent is to enhance participation and devolve power, projects like SuMA require extensive resources and expertise to be well implemented. It will therefore help if the DULT could create a structured platform to invite non-profits and other organisations and pair them up with the selected RWAs. The non-profit could act as a technical partner for the community, while the community can spearhead and work together with the technical partner to make key decisions.

Ensuring representation and inclusivity

While active representation of all communities in the neighbourhood cannot be enforced, SuMA RWAs should ensure that the voices of all citizens are heard through surveys, audits and participation in workshops. This can be monitored closely and re-emphasised during the review meetings that are conducted by the government.

Participatory budgeting/funding to meet diverse projects

RWA/CSOs should be involved in assessing the scope of the budget to make it more participatory and provision should be made to raise funding through external sources (if DULT has financial constraints) like MPLAD, community funding etc.

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Popularizing the initiative to enhance awareness
DULT can help in popularizing the project and raising public awareness (in line with the open Church Street Initiative) by publishing official advertisements on newspapers, social media about the project. This will help create momentum.

Creating a central platform to enhance cross learnings
While projects may differ from ward to ward, a central platform can help enhance cross learnings. DULT and the SuMA taskforce can organise regular workshops with key representatives from all the wards to foster a sense of engagement and dialogue between different communities.

This would help look at the problems holistically and not in silos, eventually improving the broader urban planning in the city.

endnotes

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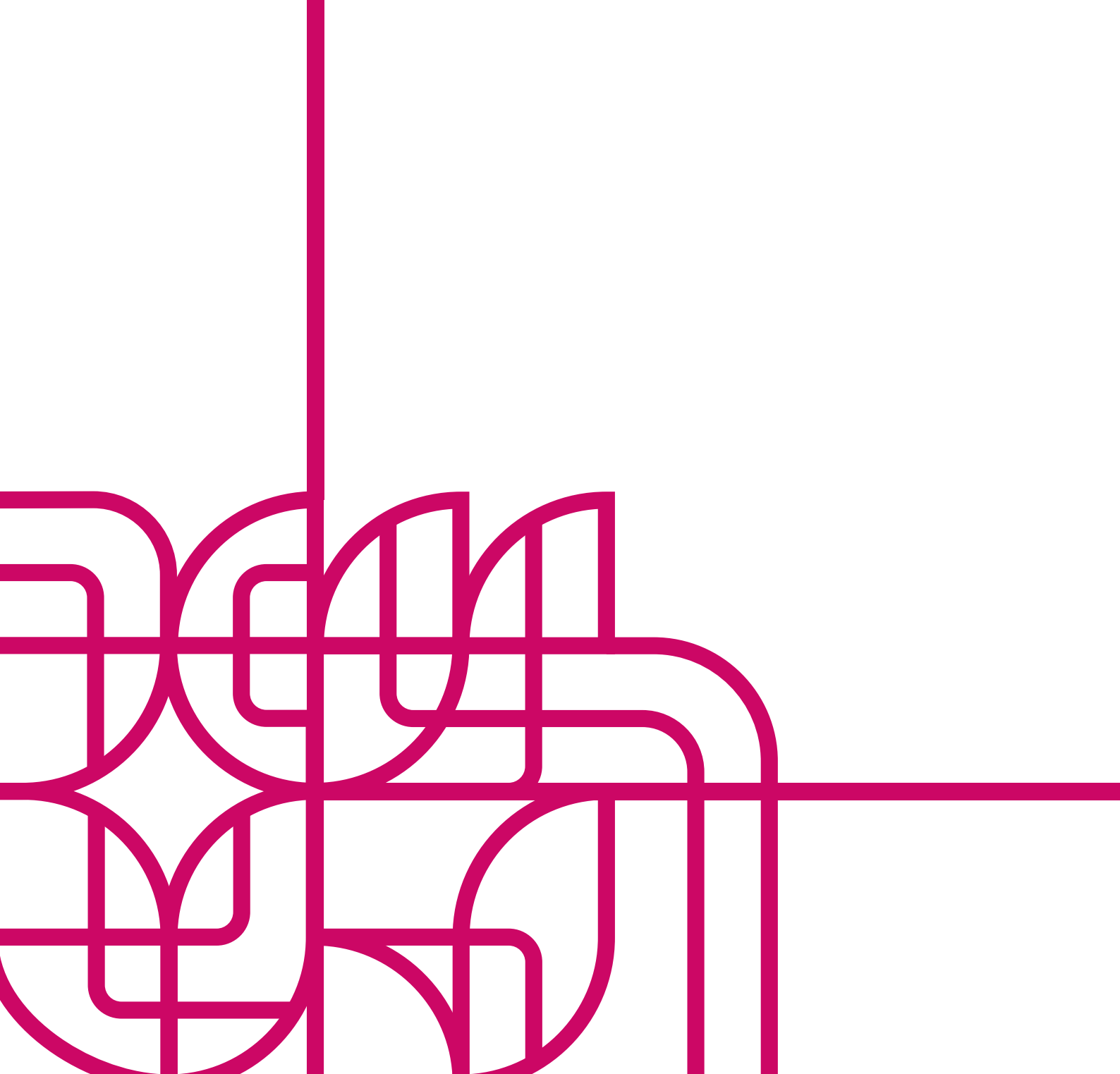set-city-budgets-experiment-captivated-
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9 Participatory planning processes in Indian cities: its challenges and opportunities
www.oidp.net/docs/repo/doc187.pdf

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