

# Methods and Challenges of Community Participation Practices in Planning Public Open Spaces: A Literature Review

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## Abstract

The formation of public open space is an essential element in the existence of cities and neighborhoods. Public open spaces are defined as social locations, such as streets, parks, and local neighborhoods, and are spaces where individuals or groups encounter and interact with one another. Community participation in public open space planning can provide opportunities for potential interactions in the decision-making process to help stimulate social cohesion. Thus, community participation in public open space planning is crucial to producing good public spaces for the community. This paper presents a synthesis of over 20 studies ranging from 1990 to 2023 on community participation in the planning process. It examines community participation practices in public open space planning to identify the methods and challenges of community participation in the planning process.

The paper is based on a review of literature. A keyword search was conducted on the databases Web of Science (WOS) and Google Scholar to identify research studies in peer-reviewed English-language journals published between 1990 and 2023.

It shows that community participation has become widely practiced in planning, although its aims and outcomes are contested. On the one hand, community participation is expected to empower the residents, while on the other hand, it can also be an instrument of social control. Moreover, community participation has faced many challenges and obstacles that limit its application; these obstacles vary depending on the nature of community composition.

**Keywords:** Community participation, Public open spaces, Planning process, Methods and challenges of participation.

## 1. Introduction

Public open spaces and their related policy and design approaches present an opportunity to create places that are socially sustainable and promote the values of cultural diversity. Public open spaces are defined as social locations, such as streets, parks, and local neighborhoods, and are spaces where individuals or groups encounter and interact with one another. It is also an element of the built environment that may foster a sense of community by facilitating chance encounters between neighbors (Talen, 2000; Low et al., 2005). Therefore, the public open spaces that are associated with natural elements and other features could become places that can promote social interactions and social cohesion among the community in cities and neighborhoods (Jenning, 2016; Boessen, 2018; Badar and Bahadure, 2020; Chen and Seo, 2022). Thus, community participation in public open space planning is crucial to producing good public spaces for the community.

The formation of public open space is an essential element in the existence of cities and neighborhoods for many reasons, including social, economic, and environmental, but the current prevailing trend that many have noticed is the decrease of public open spaces instead of their expansion due to urban sprawl over them and their neglect (Ebrahim and Ahmed, 2020). As well as a decrease in the presence and communication of people in spaces for many reasons, including technological development and the emergence of virtual space through modern communication devices and programs, which began to eliminate communication and social interaction in urban spaces of the city. Therefore, there is a need to activate community participation when planning public open spaces to increase their effectiveness because of their positive impact on the behaviors of various groups in society.

Community participation in the public open space planning and management process plays a vital role in ensuring open space benefits are delivered effectively. Public meetings, public workshops, interviews, focus group discussions, and questionnaire surveys are among the tools used to gather the viewpoints of the community (Shuib et al., 2015). Both disciplines of landscape architecture and urban planning prepare a development plan for public spaces in cities and towns. Much of the design and planning of the spaces are done by landscape architects and urban planners without community participation. This practice results in the incompatibility of the spaces for the communities, underutilizing or abandoning the spaces, and worse, vandalizing the properties of the spaces. According to Ismail and Said (2015), community participation needs to be underpinned by a philosophy that emphasizes empowerment, equity, trust, and learning.

In this context, this review aims to understand community participation practices in public open space planning.

Its objectives are as follows:

1. To determine the aspects of community participation practices in public open space planning.
2. To identify the methods and challenges of community participation in the planning process

The paper is organized into six parts; the first discusses the introduction. The second part handles the theoretical basis and general concepts. The literature review is discussed in the third section. The fourth part discusses the research methodology. Findings and discussions are discussed in the fifth part. Finally, the conclusions are discussed in the sixth part. This paper presents a synthesis of over 20 studies ranging from 1990 to 2023 on community participation in the planning process.

## 2. Theoretical Basis and General Concepts

### 2.1 The Concept of Community Participation

Depending on the type of community, the concept of community participation can take on endlessly varied degrees of participation that span a wide variety of distinct epistemic scales. According to Cornwall (2008), the majority of the models use qualitative methods and normative presumptions that range from "good" to "bad." Although there are many community participation models, Arnstein, Roger Hart, Pretty, White, Scott Davidson, and Matrix by Tim Davies are the most well-known and are

typically employed in various industries (Council of Europe, 2015). These models fall under the following two major categories, as shown in Table 1:

**Table 1:** Basic types of community participation model  
Source: Author

Community participation models	Ladder based models	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arnstein's model</li> <li>• Roger hart's model!</li> <li>• Pretty's model etc.</li> </ul>
	Other models	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• White's participation model</li> <li>• Matrix of Tim Davies</li> <li>• Scott Davidson's wheel of participation etc.</li> </ul>

There are many different approaches to conceptualizing participation. The "ladder of citizen participation" model proposed by Arnstein in 1969 offers a widely utilized and highly helpful framework for understanding the broad concept of community participation. The notion of "public participation" is understood to embrace a range of ways that vary in the level of power given to citizens in selecting the outcomes. In 1969, Arnstein created an important work that defined and criticized participation in terms of relationships of power. She developed a "ladder of participation," in which she defined the various participant levels of involvement concerning the delegation of decision-making power (Arnstein, 1969). The ladder of participation states that community participation in planning happens when decision-making power is shared by the community. Here, the concept of community participation is closely related to the empowerment of community groups.

Community participation is defined as people getting involved in local projects to meet their needs and solve problems. People shouldn't be forced to 'participate' in initiatives that have an impact on their lives, but they should be given the chance to do so whenever possible. This opportunity is seen as a fundamental human right and a democratic principle. It can come in many different forms, including discussing ideas for desirable changes, setting goals, criticizing plans, reviewing the work completed, participating in training exercises, and even implementing small initiatives (World Bank, 1994).

When designing public open spaces, local governments utilize design manuals that are appropriate for their circumstances. Effective community participation can increase the success rates of projects influencing the built environment because it enables the agencies and organizations leading a project to understand and respond to local conditions. All of this is done so that the community can utilize public open spaces efficiently and vice versa. According to Cogan and Faust (2010), organizations that foster genuine community participation are better able to adapt to socioeconomic changes that could have an impact on the effort. When people affected by a project are involved from the beginning of the planning process, the likelihood of unexpected or significant opposition when it comes time to implement the project is reduced (Kimley, 2012).

Members of the community have unique knowledge about the local political, cultural, and geographic settings. Effective community participation can also help citizens exchange ideas and support one another (Leyden, 2003). This is known as building social capital. An environment where neighbors know one another, interest in and involvement in local politics, high rates of volunteerism, and a range of social connections are traits of a community with a high level of social capital. These characteristics promote a sense of community, build trust, encourage creative problem-solving, and raise the possibility that stakeholders may provide financial support for community projects (Burton and Mitchell, 2006).

## 2.2 Dimensions of Public Open Spaces

Public open spaces allow individuals to interact with one another in both planned and unplanned ways on what appears to be neutral ground. As a result, public spaces can support community cohesion.

Therefore, parks play a key role in the development and improvement of cities as well as social relations. As a result, parks provide spaces where people can engage socially and culturally as well as join nature (Kara et al., 2011). Urban space within a neighborhood provides a chance for neighbors to communicate, such as through polite conversations in a gated garden or even public gatherings in nearby parks, which can serve as common gathering places, result in social-cultural interactions, and foster a real sense of community (Soltanian and Mohammadi, 2015).

The planning and design of public open spaces have a significant role in encouraging residents to go outside, engage with one another, and spend time together. Space design methods can also be utilized to foster social interaction and a sense of community (Uslu and Gökçe, 2010). The three behaviors of looking, listening, and talking establish the quality of urban spaces. The production of such activities and elements depends heavily on a good space with good facilities and features. While the elements of social urban space include walking trails, gardens, children's play areas, sitting areas, and green spaces (Poodeh and Vali, 2014), these sites help residents maintain social connections and meet their psychological requirements.

Residential neighborhoods attract people and activities if public open spaces are easily accessible. Public places lose a lot of their attraction when there are clearly defined landlines separating them from private spaces, regardless of whether a person is in one or the other (Nozari, 2004). For older individuals, nearby recreational areas are particularly vital. Socio-demographic characteristics have an impact on how people interact in outdoor environments. Residents' attraction to participate in public open space planning is significantly influenced by environmental factors. Place attachment has a significant impact on how parks are used and how people connect with one another; it gives places a deeper meaning, and it also helps to maintain the location as a center for social engagement (Ujang et al., 2015).

### 3. Literature Review

The notion of community participation has been extensively used in the planning process over the last twenty years. The term has mostly been used to describe involvement in community development initiatives, social arenas, and community service. It might imply different things to different people. For instance, grassroots planning, democratic planning, public involvement, participatory planning, bottom-up planning, and collaborative planning are some common terms used to describe community participation. Brynard states the following specific objectives of community participation, thereby encouraging participants to:

- Provide information to communities,
- Obtain information from the community, improve decisions, programmes, projects, and services.

In planning and developing cities, neighborhood involvement from the local communities is required, and communities need to analyze their own problems, express their own thoughts on solutions, and support any community strategies (Anuar and Saruwono, 2013). According to Anuar and Saruwono (2018), the public has the right to know what is happening in the surrounding environment and the right to get involved in the decision-making process, which particularly affects them in the places where they live and work. In the contemporary park planning process, the idea that parks provide benefits to the community using the Benefits-Based Management (BBM) concept was first introduced to the leisure, park, and recreation fields in 1991. This approach embraces the community's voice in park planning and assesses community perceptions of urban park characteristics and the benefits they hope to achieve while visiting urban parks. While Brown and Chin (2013) indicate that outcome criteria were most important to participants, the participation process was ineffective and ultimately failed to influence local planning decisions.

Creative participatory planning, when conducted around the development of public open spaces, can contribute to the place-making process, helping to fulfill the requirements of both the users and the space (Cilliers and Timmermans, 2014). In summary, community participation in public open space

planning can provide opportunities for potential interactions in the decision-making process to help stimulate social cohesion.

According to Turkey Alazzawi (2016), several conclusions can be drawn due to recommendations for supporting the community role and developing it to get involved more seriously and clearly in the planning and designing process, which is the true indicator of the success of the process. Moreover, Adjei Mensah et al. (2017) suggest that to enhance community participation in the management of green spaces in Kumasi, some features of the communicative planning theory, such as dialogue, consensus building, and facilitative leadership, should be given much attention by the city authorities, as the local people were neither consulted nor informed on green space projects (parks and gardens). While other researchers indicate enhancing community participation in the design process of streets and conclude that there are some criteria that should be achieved to fulfill the needs of the residents and the users of the street in general, and who knows those needs better than the users themselves, including them in the process would lead to livable streets (Ahmed and Afifi, 2019).

According to Križnik and Su (2019), the residents were able to affect neighborhood improvement through community engagement in the planning process. At the same time, the research findings imply that the state remains largely in control over the process, which indicates the challenges that need to be considered to empower communities. Moreover, the participation of people in shaping and urban space design is highly effective in ensuring optimum utilization, active urban living, cohesive associations, and harmonious relationships (Keleg and Abdellatif, 2019).

According to Mohammed and Hussain (2020), community participation is influential in a city's master plan, and the study focuses on building a model of analysis and strategic spatial interaction. Moreover, as Abbas and Motlak (2023) emphasize that there is a greater need for a process of awareness, education, and training of people to participate in the upgrading of residential areas. The opinions of the residents were consistent with the planning point of view in many aspects. 71% of the study sample indicated the importance of applying new models to the urban transport sector (Alrawi et al., 2020). Cui and Marques (2023) refer to the fact that participatory planning offers valuable opportunities for integrating public perspectives, fostering a sense of community, and creating inclusive spaces that celebrate cultural diversity.

Overall, previous studies have shown that community participation helps develop appropriate solutions for the planning process. Defining community participation in the planning process requires taking into consideration several aspects, including involving appropriate participants and choosing appropriate methods of participation. Since the nature of the planning process for cities and neighborhoods affects people's daily activities, participation becomes necessary for the public. Public space planning is not only the task of the authorities to develop an appropriate plan, but it is everyone's role to do this together because our environment deserves to receive the community's concerns: material, social, environmental, health, and economic.

Several scholars write about community participation in the planning process. However, most reviews refer to community participation in neighborhood planning and development, regardless of the methods of participation and the obstacles that face community participation. This study focused on aspects of community participation in the planning process, challenges, and methods for community participation in public open space planning, specifically because these spaces are the most important part of community life within residential neighborhoods.

#### **4. Research Methodology**

This paper is based on a review of the literature. A keyword search was conducted on the databases Web of Science (WOS) and Google Scholar to identify research studies in peer-reviewed English-language journals published between 1990 and 2023. The search was conducted in October 2023. It focused on literature that examines community participation practices in public open space planning. Two groups of search queries were developed and entered in the Advanced Search text box using the field tag "Topic" for publication identification. The first group of search strings contains

keywords related to community participation in public open space planning. The terms of challenges and methods of community participation formed the second group of search queries. We used the Boolean operator OR in between terms and the Boolean operator AND to link two sets of search results. Aside from keyword searching, additional studies were identified by using backward and forward reference searching when reviewing the full texts of the included studies.

The initial key words have been inserted alternately as follows:

- (1) community participation;
- (2) community engagement;
- (3) integrating community; and
- (4) public participation in the planning process.

The selection included only research articles. This procedure, after excluding duplicates, resulted in a list of 15 publications. Table 2 shows selected articles. Two articles are missing because it was not possible to download them or contact the authors.

## 5. Findings and discussion

### 5.1 Community Participation in Public Open Spaces Planning

The goal of participatory planning is to get public perspectives into the planning process and actual design of a public space (where public is defined as individuals selected by location and interest and as actual users of the space, as well as stakeholder organizations, experts, and professionals).

Public open spaces have a function and have meaning. Successful public open spaces attract people, which helps to create useful areas. The developer and planner must be aware of the preferences of the space's users when planning and designing public open spaces. "Those who frequently use a public open space are the ones who know from personal experience which places are risky and why, which areas are comfortable, where traffic flows too quickly, and how specific features of space should be enhanced. The users of the space provide perspective, useful insights into how an area functions, and a unique understanding of the issues that are relevant; therefore, uncovering and incorporating their ideas is essential for creating a successful public place (PPS, 2011).



**Fig .1:** Urban open space users.

Source: Stiles, 2012

There is general agreement that public open spaces should be planned for the benefit of society, but it is important to identify the specific groups we are considering to meet their express needs (Stiles, 2012). Figure 1 illustrates how difficult it is to identify stakeholders when planning public open space.

As can be seen from Figure 1, it is quite possible for anyone to be a member of more than one group at the same time, while everyone will move through many of the different groups at different times in their life. Members of these different groups have different needs and requirements regarding urban open spaces, and it is important that they are considered thoroughly at the planning and design stage to make sure they can be accommodated properly (Stiles, 2012).

Although community participation has become an essential element in public space planning, the approach followed in the planning process suffers from limitations or a lack of community participation, hence highly recommending the involvement of multiple parties, especially users of public open spaces, in the design process. Previous studies on community participation in the planning process have examined many aspects; there are common aspects such as representativeness, transparency, influence, and information access (Crosby et al., 1986; Blahna and Yonts-Shepard, 1989; Joss, 1995; Petts, 1995; Innes and Booher, 1999; Rowe and Frewer, 2000; Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2005). Table 2 summarizes the aspects of community participation in the planning process based on previous studies.

**Table 2:** Aspects of community participation in the planning process

Source: Author

No	Aspects / study concerns	Author(year)	Description
1	Accountability	Pandeya (2015).	Participation strengthened local planning and accountability systems. and that effective participation often depends on the building agency of marginalized groups, the mobilization of citizens, and on the establishment of vibrant social networks.
		Halachmi and Holzer (2010).	"Maximum feasible participation" can be a way to enhance democracy through better accountability and trust in government.
		Nyawo, 2017).	Effective processes of public participation and more accountable local government gain trust from the public.
		Munyao (2019).	Systemic gaps in the process of public participation that had an effect on the product of the public participation and consequently compromising on accountability.
2	Transparency	Hoa and Garcia (2017).	Transparency and accountability of local governments are two outcomes of citizen participation.
		Row and Frewer (2000).	The process of community should be transparent so that the public can see what is going on and how decisions are being made.
		Nabil (2011).	Accountability and transparency in urban planning projects enhancing for activating Participatory Planning.
		Singh (2013).	Citizens' participation as a tool to ensure transparent and accountable governance.
		Mulgan (2000).	To ensure transparency of the decision making there should be comprehensive, authentic, and legitimate information flow.
3	Empowerment	Bennet (2002); Zimmarman (2000).	Providing or sharing information has been identified as a vital component in empowerment.
		Webler et al. (2001).	Open process ensuring equal opportunities for all participants.
		Palerm (2000); Webler et al. (2001).	To encourage participants to gain new knowledge and to establish that required information and expertise is available.

4	Representative ness	Mahjabeen (2013).	Limited representation and downward accountability resulted in the current urban planning not achieving empowerment for local community groups.
		Petts (1995); Carnes et al. (1998); Lauber (1999); Rowe and Frewer (2000).	The public participants should comprise a broadly representative sample of the population of the affected public'.
		Gray et al., (2001); Lane et al. (2004).	The representation of targeted population in a community participation process determines the extent to which participation really is effective community participation.
5	Early involvement	Blahna and Yonts-Shepard (1989); Rowe and Frewer (2000)	The public should be involved as early as possible in the process as soon as value judgments become salient.
		Brody et al. (2003); Burby (2003).	To identify the timing of the participation process in relation to the decision making.
6	Accessibility to information	Row and Frewer (2000)	Public participants should have access to the appropriate resources to enable them to successfully fulfil their brief.
		Gastil (2006); Stromer-Galley (2007).	Participants are given equal opportunities to actively participate in the discussion.
7	Information	Chakraborty and Stratton (1993).	The information provided to participants must be easy to understand and contain minimal technical language to prevent confusion.
		Edwards et al. (2008); Nabatchi (2007).	To establish the quality / relevancy of the exchanged information and the continuity of dialogue between the parties.
8	Mutual Understanding	Brody et al. (2003); Burby (2003).	Participants can understand the given information and material.
		Laurian and Shaw (2009).	Public participation should build mutual understanding between stakeholders and commit to the public good identified.
9	Collective learning	Edwards et al. (2008).	Participants have the opportunity to learn from each other. A variety of knowledge and positions are presented, shared and discussed.
		Palerm (2000); Webler et al. (2001).	To contribute to an understanding of concerns and values of other participants.
10	Influence	Rowe and Frewer (2000); Butterfoss (2006).	The output of the procedure should have a genuine impact on policy and be seen to do so.
		Edwards et al. (2008), Rowe and Frewer (2000).	Outcomes influence policy.
11	Satisfaction	Butterfoss (2006); Laurian and Shaw (2009).	Good public participation should result in high satisfaction amongst participants.

The literature has indicated multiple aspects of community participation in the planning process, and these aspects serve as evaluation variables for community participation. Rowe and Frewer (2000) suggest that evaluation criteria may be divided into two basic types: process criteria, which relate to the effective construction and implementation of a procedure, and acceptance criteria, which relate to the potential public acceptance of a procedure.

Various aspects characterize effective community participation in the planning process, the most important of which are accountability and transparency. Accountability and transparency in urban planning projects are enhanced by activating participatory planning (Hoa and Garcia, 2017; Nabil, 2011; Nyawo, 2017). A growing body of literature on community participation highlights it as



the process of sharing decision-making power among communities or bringing empowerment to communities (Arnstein, 1969; IAP2, 2007). Representation is one of the aspects of community participation in the planning process that scholars have examined. The representation of the target population in the community participation process determines the extent to which participation is effective community participation (Gray et al., 2001; Lane et al., 2004).

Accessibility is an essential aspect of the design of various facilities and cannot be overlooked. It is a fundamental right for all individuals to have equal access to public spaces, including buildings, parks, and other recreational areas. Prioritizing accessibility in facility design is vital to creating a safe, inclusive environment that meets everyone's needs. So, participants are given equal opportunities to actively participate in the discussion (Gastil, 2006; Stromer-Galley, 2007). There are many benefits to accessibility. For society, accessibility can lead to increased inclusion and participation, as well as increased diversity and innovation. Prioritizing accessibility in facility design promotes inclusivity. It ensures that everyone, regardless of their physical abilities, can access and use the facilities, and this enhances the sense of community.

It is worth noting that providing the community with the necessary information and resources to understand the planning process through workshops and public forums enhances community knowledge. Information provided to participants should be easy to understand and contain a minimum of technical language to prevent confusion (Edwards et al., 2008; Nabatchi, 2007). Moreover, influence and satisfaction are other aspects that characterize community participation, which indicate acceptance criteria and relate to the results of community participation. It is important to specify the exact nature and parameters of the participation task. It is crucial to make sure that there is as little confusion and dispute as possible about the parameters of a participation exercise, the results that are expected, and the workings of the process. These aspects should all be defined in detail. Any dispute caused by misunderstandings has the potential to influence both the effectiveness and credibility of a process (Edwards et al., 2008; Rowe & Frewer, 2000).

## 5.2 Community Participation Methods

This section explains the old and new methods of community participation. There are various trends in community participation methods. According to Smith (1983), public participation encompasses a group of procedures designed to consult, involve, and inform the public. A consideration of the literature reveals the existence of a variety of methods and guidelines that might fall under the public participation category. Ranging from those that elicit input in the form of opinions (e.g., public opinion surveys and focus groups) to those that elicit judgments and decisions from which actual policy might be derived (e.g., consensus conferences and citizens' juries),.

In Table 3, the key features of eight of these approaches are described: Other procedures are less well developed; some are simply putative procedures; others have been implemented by perhaps a single group of researchers or consultants in several practical projects. It is possible that some of these innovative approaches, particularly those that combine a variety of methods or that provide variants on the more standardized procedures, will ultimately prove to be the most efficient mechanisms for engaging the public.

**Table 3:** Several of the Most Formalized Community Participation Methods

Source: Author

N o	Participati on Method	Nature of Participants	Time Scale/Duration	Characteristics / Mechanism	References
1	Referenda	potentially all members of national or local population; realistically, a significant proportion of these	Vote cast at single point in time.	Voting is usually a choice of one of two options. All participants have equal influence. Outcome is binding.	Buchmann, (1995); afWählberg, (1997)

2	Public hearing/ Inquiries	Interested citizens, limited in number by size of venue. True participants are experts and politicians making presentations.	May last many weeks/months, even years. Usually held during weekdays/working hours.	Entails presentations by agencies regarding plans in an open forum. public may voice opinions but have no direct impact on recommendation.	Fiorino, (1990); Davison, Barnes, and Schibeci, (1997)
3	Public opinion surveys	Large sample (e.g., 100s or 1000s), usually representative of the population segments of interest.	Large sample (e.g., 100s or 1000s), usually representative of the population segments of interest.	Often enacted through written questionnaire or telephone survey. May involve variety of questions. Used for information gathering.	Feldman and Hanahan (1996); Vidal (1998)
4	Negotiated rule making	Small number of representatives of stakeholder groups (may include public representatives)	Uncertain: strict deadline usually set days/weeks/months	Working committee of stakeholder representatives (and from sponsor). Consensus required on specific question (usually, a regulation).	Susskind and McMahon (1985) and Fiorino (1990)
5	Consensus conference	Generally, ten to sixteen members of public (with no knowledge on topic) selected by steering committee as 'representative' of the public.	Preparatory demonstrations and lectures (etc.) to inform panelists about topic, then three-day conference.	Lay panel with independent facilitator question expert witnesses chosen by stakeholder panel. Meetings are open to a wider public. Conclusions on key questions made via report or pass conference.	Joss and Durant(1994); Grundah (1995); Ellahi (1995)
6	Citizens jury/ panel	Generally, twelve to twenty members of public selected by stakeholder panel to be roughly representative of local population.	Not precise but generally involve meetings over a few days) e.g., four to ten	Lay panel with independent facilitator question expert witnesses chosen by stakeholder panel. Meetings are not generally open. Conclusions on key questions made via report or pass conference.	Crosby, Kelly, and Schaefer (1986); Coote, Kendall, and Stewart (1994); Lenaghan)
7	citizen /public advisory committee	Small group selected by sponsor to present views of various groups or communities (may not comprise members of true public)	Takes place over an extended period.	Group convened by sponsor to examine some significant issue. Interaction with industry representatives.	Lynn and Busenberg (1995); Perhac (1998); see Creighton (1993)
8	Focus groups	Small group of five to twelve selected to be representative of public; several groups may be used for one project (comprising members of subgroups)	Single meeting, usually up to two hours.	Free discussion on general topic with video /tape recording and little input/ direction from facilitator. Used to assess' opinions /attitudes.	(Fife-Schaw and Rowe (1995)

Regarding methods of participation, there are a variety of community participation procedures that exist that aim to consult and involve the public, ranging from the public hearing to the consensus

conference. Unfortunately, a general lack of empirical consideration of the quality of these methods arises from confusion as to the appropriate benchmarks for evaluation. According to Rowe and Frewer (2000), several theoretical evaluation criteria that are essential for effective public participation are specified. These comprise two types: acceptance criteria, which concern features of a method that make it acceptable to the wider public, and process criteria, which concern features of the process that are liable to ensure that it takes place in an effective manner.

Studies have indicated that the lack of adequate methods is an important obstacle to the effective implementation of participation in planning practice. Therefore, participation methods must be developed to obtain knowledge from residents and effectively integrate it with expert knowledge to produce inputs to the communication process, which may lead to consensual planning proposals. Studies have shown that the use of the traditional questionnaire has proven effective in acquiring existing local knowledge and has also shown that traditional workshops have a valuable contribution to the in-depth analysis of local knowledge and values, thus enhancing the participatory planning process (Golobič and Marušić, 2007).

Moreover, in the past, public involvement methods were non-digital. Interestingly, a study by Wilson et al. (2019) discover that digital approaches to public participation in the urban planning process made residents think critically about their local zone and what they would want to witness in the future. Moreover, the roles played by the government and planners are changing and becoming catalysts for community participation. As a combination of top-down and bottom-up methods, the collaborative workshop is a useful model for community participation in the planning process, which promotes the cooperation of the government and the public through consultation and negotiation. The collaborative workshop ensures the appeal of stakeholders' interests and the equal allocation of resources (Li et al., 2020).

Daher et al. (2021) reveal the degree to which digital tools create an inclusive environment to exchange and implement planning process-related ideas and the extent to which they could lead to an integrated and coherent engaging method for citizen engagement. This study also pointed out that the meta-design model is one of the methods of community participation, where the benefit of the meta-design model is the ability given to the designers to accommodate changes and modifications in the design that can be asked by the end-users with less time and effort and a guarantee that the requirements are still considered in the iterations. Another benefit of the meta-design model is the ability given to end-users to assess, investigate, and compare different iterations for planning solutions.

Above studies in Table 3 have shown that the new methods of participation are more effective and beneficial compared to the old methods because the new methods of participation have made people think critically and effectively about their areas, in addition to promoting the cooperation of the government and the public through consultation and negotiation. However, the the old methods of participation have been limited to specific groups, which could constitute an obstacle to the effective implementation of participation in planning practice.

### **5.3 Challenges and Obstacles of Community Participation in the Planning Process**

Although there are many benefits to securing enhanced community participation in planning, it has often been either difficult to achieve or has remained relatively low (Holman and Rydin, 2013). Table 4 shows the challenges and obstacles of community participation in the planning process, according to the previous studies that indicated it. These studies have shown that the obstacles to community participation are diverse and that the timing of participation is one of the most significant restrictions facing the public that prevents their participation. As well as the methods of community participation, traditional methods lead to the participation of a small percentage of the population, while digital methods of participation have made residents truly think about planning their area.

**Table 4:** Challenges and Obstacles of Community Participation in the Planning Process.

Source: Author

No	Categories of challenges and obstacles of community participation	Clarification	Author(year)
1	The statutory defined parameters and rigid language	Strict standards set by local authorities that residents reject as not meeting their needs, and rigid language that residents find difficult to understand.	Conroy and Evans-Cowley, (2006)
2	The nature of community formation	Participation is not generated in any community, whatever its nature or size, except in the case of the availability of factors that help in the emergence and development of community participation.	Cowley, (2006)
3	Representativeness	It is important to determine who participates and who will be impacted by decisions made, especially by experts. Despite being included in the participatory planning process, the public could not be a true representation of the "public" as a whole.	Dietz & Stern (2008) Yao (2006); Eccleston (2000)
4	The timing of participation	Participants are typically not included in the crucial stages of planning, design, and assessment.	Yao (2006)
5	Procedure of community participation	Procedure for community participation in the decision-making process tends to be drawn out and complicated, as well as expensive, time-consuming, and all-around ineffective.	(Doelle and Sinclair, 2006; Dola and Mijan, 2006)
6	Bureaucratic constraints	Bureaucratic constraints contribute to the public's exclusion from the process. The exclusion is caused by a lack of knowledge about public participation and low levels of education among the public.	Marzuki (2015)
7	Few users	Often lack enough users. This may be caused by a lack of information on the process, barriers in culture, understanding, or accessibility, or even low motivation to participate.	Drazkiewicz (2016)
8	Wrong users	People willing to participate in urban planning processes rarely represent most inhabitants or involve (potential) opinion leaders.	Bhattacharjee (2012)
9	Communication issues	the communication of complex design issues to the public in the early project life cycle when concepts are still little-shaped and hard to convey to non-specialists.	Manzo (2006)
10	Process deficits	If a public participatory process lacks transparency, inclusion, and fairness, it will lead to poor decisions that may cause more disagreement than if it never took place.	Manzo (2006)
11	Conventional techniques	often result in residents being forced to read long and intricate documents that are unfamiliar to them and can be excessively time-consuming.	Brody et al. (2003)
12	The lack of awareness and knowledge	Limited knowledge, particularly among marginalised groups, has hindered their capability to access the public process.	Halim, Salleh, and Omar (2011); bin Yaakob (2012); Marzari and Hay (2013)
13	Absent of transparency and accountability	The community believes that the local authority makes decisions secretly without consulting them, thus influencing the perception of the community on the substance of the participatory process.	Dola and Mijan (2006); Omar and Leh (2009); Marzuki and Hay (2013)

Community participation has faced many challenges and obstacles that limit its application; these obstacles vary depending on the nature of community composition. Table 3 explains the challenges and obstacles to community participation in the planning process. The statutory defined parameters and rigid language have been identified as reasons for a reluctance for the public to get involved in planning (Conroy and Evans-Cowley, 2006); only a small proportion of the public actively engage with the planning system, a factor that has not changed significantly over many decades (Fagence, 1977) and remains a problem even since the introduction of neighborhood planning (Parker et al., 2014).

Community participation is a major concern for the urban planning process in landscape architecture (Anuar and Saruwono, 2018); however, the challenges and difficulties faced by planners to implement it and make it prominent in the community participation process become critical issues. Participation is not generated in any community, whatever its nature or size, except in the case of the availability of factors that help in the emergence and development of community participation, and these factors differ from one country to another and even within the borders of the country. Therefore, the obstacles and problems facing community participation that limit its application vary according to the nature of community formation.

Representativeness is one of the most common barriers to participatory planning; the problem mentioned by Dietz and Stern (2008) relates to the challenges of identifying those who might be impacted by an environmental decision. According to the authors, it is important to determine who participates and will be impacted by decisions made. Despite being included in the participatory planning process, the public could not be a true representation of the "public" as a whole. Dola and Mijan (2006) further argue that although there are several methods for implementing community participation, one of the most effective is Focus Group Discussion (FGD), which enlists the assistance of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), political parties, local officials, industry associations, and business associations. Despite this, there are still concerns about whether these groups are regarded as sufficiently representative of the entire community. According to Yao (2006), even when a framework for community participation has been established, the public may not be adequately represented in actual practice. According to Eccleston (2000), people who attend public meetings tend to be more educated and technologically adept than the general population and have an interest in the outcome. It is, therefore, suitable to state that one of the main obstacles to community participation in the planning process is the question of representativeness.

Another body of study suggests that one major obstacle to participatory planning is the timing of participation. Participants are typically not included in the crucial stages of planning, design, and assessment, according to Yao (2006). Doelle and Sinclair (2006) follow by pointing out that the lack of meaningfully timed participation discourages participation and, in fact, fosters conflict. In addition, it has been discovered that the procedure for community participation in the decision-making process tends to be drawn out and complicated, as well as expensive, time-consuming, and all-around ineffective (Doelle & Sinclair, 2006; Dola & Mijan, 2006). These statements further emphasize the fact that the timing of participation is also one of the significant obstacles to participatory planning. While Anuar and Saruwono (2018) indicate that obstacles arising from issues such as the timing of participation, audience capacity, interaction between decision-makers, transparency in decision-making, and cost could be among the main obstacles to community participation in the design process, Also, a study revealed that community participation is rarely a condition of the client; this means that landscape architects only do their duty to meet the requirements of the clients, and these restrictions are often the result of factors such as misunderstanding, mistrust, and conflict (Madonsela, 2010).

According to Marzuki (2015), community participation process is sometimes threatened by bureaucratic constraints caused by the lack of a systematic approach and an inadequate public administration system, which contribute to the public's exclusion from the process. The exclusion is also caused by a lack of knowledge about public participation and low levels of education among the public. This indicates that the process of community participation must consider more effective public participation in which the audience can express themselves more freely, and decision-makers must

consider the opinions and concerns related to those decisions, thus increasing accountability and transparency in the decision-making process. In addition, technology should be adapted and used in the community participation process, given that technological development is advancing rapidly.

Moreover, former investigations identified various key problems with community participation, including.

**Few users:** especially in publicly initiated participatory activities, they often lack enough users (Drazkiewicz, 2016). This may be caused by a lack of information on the process, barriers in culture, understanding, or accessibility, or even low motivation to participate (Giering, 2012).

**Wrong users:** as most participatory processes embrace everybody, they are faced with self-selection biases (Bhattacharjee, 2012). As figured out in many studies, people willing to participate in urban planning processes rarely represent most inhabitants or involve (potential) opinion leaders.

**Communication issues:** participants in public processes are influenced by many factors, such as prior thoughts, feelings, and beliefs (Manzo, 2006) and their level of knowledge of the presented problem and the objectives to achieve. Another core problem is the communication of complex design issues to the public in the early project life cycle, when concepts are still little-shaped and hard to convey to non-specialists but easy to influence and re-direct. Process deficits: if a public participatory process lacks transparency, inclusion, and fairness, it will lead to poor decisions that may cause more disagreement than if it never took place. Furthermore, conventional techniques often result in residents being forced to read long and intricate documents that are unfamiliar to them and can be excessively time-consuming (Brody et al., 2003). This has led to the active participation of a small percentage of the citizens in the urban planning process.

## 6. Conclusion

In the 21st century, we are facing new threats to public open space—not of disuse but of patterns of design and management that exclude some people and serve to reduce cultural diversity. Such exclusion can reduce the vitality and vibrancy of space. Therefore, community participation in the planning process is one of the approaches to creating inclusive spaces and fostering a sense of community. The review shows that community participation has become widely practiced in planning, although its aims and outcomes are contested. On the one hand, community participation is expected to empower the residents, while on the other hand, it can also be an instrument of social control. In addition, the review shows various aspects that characterize effective community participation in the planning process.

Regarding methods of participation, there are a variety of community participation methods that aim to consult and involve the public. Studies have indicated that the lack of appropriate methods constitutes an obstacle to implementing participation in planning practice. Current studies have shown that traditional questionnaires and collaborative workshops are useful models for community participation in the planning process. Digital methods of public participation have created a comprehensive environment for exchanging and implementing ideas and can lead to integrated and cohesive participation.

Community participation has faced many challenges and obstacles that limit its application; these obstacles vary depending on the nature of community composition. The obstacles to community participation are diverse, as studies have shown that the timing and methods of participation are among the most important restrictions facing the public that prevent their participation. This indicates that the process of community participation must consider more effective public participation in which the audience can express themselves more freely, and decision-makers must consider the opinions and concerns related to those decisions, thus increasing accountability and transparency in the decision-

making process. In addition, technology should be adapted and used in the community participation process, given that technological development is advancing rapidly.

In conclusion, the review paper highlights the understanding of community participation practices in the production of public open spaces. Adopting community perspectives in the planning process contributes to creating healthier and more livable living environments. The research clarified the issue of challenges and obstacles in community participation that prevent its implementation, in addition to explaining the old and modern methods of community participation and their impact on the implementation of participation. The findings provide valuable insights on the limitations and strengths of community participation in the planning process. Although this review spans three decades, it may not fully reflect the rapid changes in community engagement practices as a planning approach. We strongly encourage further interdisciplinary discussions on this research area.

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