

Participatory urban adaptation to climate change

A guide for the effective collaboration
of local governments and city residents



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Warsaw
Fot. Jakub Zasina

01

Why this Guide?

Climate change, cloudbursts, heat waves, RCB alerts, smog, and climate disasters are words and phrases which appear in the news and media and surround us on an almost daily basis. Anthropogenic climate change poses one of the major challenges of the contemporary world. The consequences of global warming, such as extreme weather events, droughts, floods, rising seawater levels, or rapidly changing temperatures, adversely affect not only the natural environment but they increasingly impact humans and urban infrastructure. As a result, it is necessary to take urgent mitigating and adaptive actions to buffer and prevent the observed changes. Adapting and adjusting social, economic and environmental systems to new conditions resulting from climate change should be combined with mitigating actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to decelerate or stop global warming. This two-pronged approach ensures an effective fight against the emerging climate crisis. Against the backdrop of advancing urbanisation, cities play a crucial role in both those endeavours, becoming not only frontline places at risk but also areas with the highest potential to implement actions that target climate neutrality.

Fortunately, more and more people are aware of how global warming and urbanisation affect their health, life and wealth. According to research by the European Investment Bank (2023), 66% of Poles mentioned the consequences of climate change and the degradation of the natural environment among three key challenges for Poland. Nonetheless, 79% of respondents believe that their own actions may contribute to solving climate problems (EBI Climate Survey, 2023).

A variety of civic initiatives and pro-climate activities have taken place in cities over the last several years. It is notable that green participatory budgets, citizens' deliberations, citizens' panels, hackathons and many other activities of formal and informal groups (e.g. Youth Climate Strike Action) have become common phenomena. Residents of cities initiate actions and unite around common, important affairs, such as living conditions and the quality of the local environment (Fig. 1). There appears to be



Residents of Lodz in defence of trees

FIG. 1.
Residents of Lodz in defence of trees

“Social keepers of trees” is a grassroots initiative that engages residents of Lodz in caring for trees and other forms of urban greenery. The project consists of three parts: monitoring the number and health of trees, educating children at kindergartens and schools and holding open meetings on ecology.

MORE:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Spoleczni-OpiekunowieDrzew/>

and

<https://spoleczniezaangazowani.pl/>

a need for social involvement in establishing and conducting an urban climate policy. Social participation makes it possible to co-decide, but it also makes it possible to gain knowledge, raise awareness and build joint responsibility for implementing climate policies (Brzeziński, Jurczak, Rzeńca 2024).

This Guide aims to help cities adapt to climate change. It proposes that modern participatory mechanisms should be used as they allow citizens and local authorities to make the necessary decisions together (Fung 2007; Mansbridge et al. 2012; Juchacz 2015; Sroka 2018; OECD 2020). The authors believe that the “participatory adaptation” mentioned in the title of this Guide can address the challenges of the climate crisis.

The Guide:

01

results from seeking optimal tools and methods of social participation to build and strengthen the potential for cities to adapt to climate change

02

aims to inspire, guide and motivate local authorities, non-governmental organisations and communities to prepare an optimal model of cooperation to work out solutions for climate change adaptation and mitigation in cities

03

provides municipalities with the competencies that will enable them to implement participation and deliberation mechanisms regarding mitigation and adaptation actions.

The Guide also presents perspectives and experiences from several cities in Central and Eastern Europe regarding participatory adaptation to climate change. It also evaluates citizens' panels as a participatory instrument – a tool for cooperating with citizens in adapting to climate change.

The authors hope this Guide will enable cities to prepare effective adaptation plans and measures while enjoying broad social support (social acceptance) and the genuine involvement of residents in specific actions. The Guide's intended beneficiaries

include city residents, local authorities, local government administration and social organisations. Implementing the Guide’s recommendations will make it possible to introduce adaptation and mitigation solutions in cities, raising inhabitants’ quality of life and reducing the risks and consequences of climate change. Moreover, residents will gain a sense of empowerment and agency. Urban officials will find suggestions and instructions on how to lead dialogues with residents and prepare their cities for climate change. Taking all the above into consideration, the Guide is of major importance for optimising social participation and building a conscious and ecologically engaged civic society at both local and supra-local levels.

Where does the knowledge included in the Guide come from?

The inspirations came from research and a variety of discussions with stakeholders, such as:

Focus group interviews with participants of the 2nd Citizens’ assembly in Lodz

Results of the questionnaires (pre-test and post-test) of the 2nd Citizens’ assembly in Lodz

Workshops with members of Lodz City Hall and experts

Expert interviews with members of local governments of Polish cities (Poznan, Lublin, Gdansk, Wroclaw) and organisations that conduct citizens’ assemblies

Partly unstructured interviews with NGOs and local administration from Budapest, Miskolc, Trnava and Banská Bystrica

Methodological consultations with academics and researchers specialising in city participation and climate change adaptation from scientific centres in Budapest and Miskolc, Trnava and Banská Bystrica

A key strength of the Guide is the combined knowledge and practical experience of the interdisciplinary team of sociologists, economists, and biologists. They worked together with local governments on strategic documents and the implementation of projects related to social participation and mitigating and adapting cities to climate change.



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Public Park

Fot. Kotchasorn / Adobestock

02

Why do cities have to act?

Since the 19th century, the world has undergone rapid urbanisation. Back then masses of people started moving to towns seeking jobs and a better life. The migration resulted in the swift growth of existing municipalities and the establishment of new settlements nearby. As the years went by, urbanisation gathered pace as cities and urban areas adjusted to increasing populations generating soaring demand for housing and its concomitant infrastructure. As a result, city centres became densely inhabited, surrounded by squares, streets, pavements and parking spaces, which were intended to serve residents and satisfy their fundamental needs. Today, cities and their residents are at a crossroads, facing rising aspirations and needs but also anthropogenic pressure (human impact on the environment) and the negative consequences of the excess use of individual transport, concrete spaces, low air quality and natural threats, such as violent rainstorms, heat waves, local floodings and droughts (Fig. 2).

As a consumer society that has become accustomed to the availability of a wide range of products and services, we take for granted the availability of what we need. We purchase goods in bulk and on impulse, often choosing cheap, disposable products that we could easily go without. This behaviour results in wastefulness and generates waste, which we easily remove from cities without a second thought about what happens to it later. We similarly take fresh water for granted despite years of warnings about depleting resources. The same applies to our increasing energy consumption, readily available in our homes to power comfort-enhancing appliances like fans or air conditioners (an example of inappropriate adaptation to climate change). At the opposite end of the needs and aspirations, city inhabitants (but also residents of other urbanised areas) expect access to high and low green areas, places to relax, clean air, limited noise, friendly public spaces, access to good quality water and high standard of low-cost public services. In this context is the issue of optimising public services and urban infrastructure and right-sizing them to financial, technical and other resources. However, various conflicting interests are increasingly emerging due to limited resources (space, services) and their alternative and competitive utilisation.



FIG. 2
City in the age of climate change
Source: Own work.

Cities generate numerous advantages, such as innovations, jobs, and access to higher-end services. However, they also generate costs, which are reflected in city stress – a phenomenon that is hard to measure. It is “a category of environmental stress conventionally used to define a great number of varied physical and social stimuli that the resident of a large city has to face” (Bańka 2002, p. 222). City stress has a financial dimension, significantly impacting the financial situation of a city and its inhabitants, particularly in terms of human capital, i.e. their health, capabilities and capacity for work (Bell, Greene, Fisher, Baum 2004).

The literature also discusses the concept of climate risk, which exemplifies the characteristics of “global risk” (Beck 2012). Wrochna (2018) argues that current (globalised) potential threats are “democratic”; that is, they are applicable to all national states, regions, towns and communes, regardless of their location and time zone, although to varying degrees. For city inhabitants, global anthropogenic climate change causes dramatic consequences in the local environment (Grimm et al. 2008). It should be seen as a potential risk, which ought to be taken into consideration when planning ongoing city operations or when developing regulations and investment plans, similar to how macroeconomic or geopolitical risks are factored in (KPM 2015, KPM 2023).

Accumulated crises rear their head locally, often affecting specific neighbourhoods or housing estates. It is a challenge for cities and their inhabitants to function in changing conditions that stem from climate change and the scale and intensity of anthropogenic pressure. This necessitates action to prevent, inhibit and reduce negative effects, avoid



Freedom Square, Lodz
Fot. wikicommons

threats, and respond flexibly by adapting to those changes. It is crucial to identify potential risks and sources of change (mitigation) and constantly monitor them.

Adapting to change is not a new concept for towns and their development policies. Like other economic enterprises or organisations, towns have long been adapting or responding to changing conditions in their immediate and broader surroundings. Inventions, demographic processes, economic challenges, political events (such as wars and treaties) and natural disasters incentivised changes, new actions and political shifts. Climate change and its consequences pose new challenges for municipalities in the 21st century and require multidimensional, comprehensive management and the engagement of diverse stakeholders. Adaptive actions to support and adapt people, ecosystems and infrastructure to the effects of climate change and minimise the negative consequences should increase the security of people, living organisms, wealth and infrastructure while reducing social, economic and environmental losses (Legutko-Kobus, Rzeńca, Skubała, Sobol 2020). These actions concern people directly and indirectly, their households, workplace and economic activity. Ultimately, they focus on providing a high quality of life and ensuring security.



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03

Why participation? What are the benefits of cooperation?

The city is conceptualised as “a common space that belongs to the community living there, which is entitled to have conditions for their political, social and ecological fulfillment, but assuming the community has a duty of solidarity” (Szołtysek (ed.) 2018, p. 21). While city inhabitants cause adverse changes, they also possess the capacity to reduce, suppress or even prevent them thanks to their actions or lifestyles. City residents have a huge role to play in building adaptive potential and adjusting to the new conditions and challenges associated with the consequences of anthropopressure. Cities can serve as dynamic centres that implement environmental policies, adapt to climate change and undertake eco-innovative initiatives in sustainable urban mobility, circular economy, and energy efficiency improvements, thereby creating friendly and healthy public spaces. When discussing cities, we include all stakeholders, ranging from local authorities, economic enterprises, public institutions and formal and informal groups, to permanent and temporary city inhabitants (including tourists, commuters and recipients of services). The idea of a civic city gains particular significance in this context – a city jointly created by various entities, aiming to provide a high quality of life and opportunities for long-term development while simultaneously limiting and mitigating risks. “Robust local communities are born in participatory processes, which rely on subsidiary rules, transparency, dialogue and partnership” (Strengthening residents' participation... 2024). The role of a city community in effectively adapting municipalities to climate change and benefiting from participatory processes can be considered from four perspectives: biological, social, economic and institutional.

Biological perspective

Since time immemorial, we have been inextricably linked to elements of the biological world, which depends on the uninterrupted functioning of natural systems that rely on energy flows and the circulation of matter (World Charter for Nature 1982). Biological conditions determined the location and subsequent development of towns (Kielczewska-Zaleska 1972), and their significance remains paramount, even today (Krzyżanowska 2009). However, over the course of their existence, towns have undergone such profound changes that they now pose risks to the whole planet. Advancing anthropopressure, mainly in urbanised areas, is a major contributor to the accelerating pace of climate change. This manifests in increasingly frequent torrential rainfalls that lead to flooding, punctuated by long spells of dry weather, exacerbating drought conditions,

fierce winds, and extreme heat. These events pose numerous dangers for both cities and their inhabitants, sometimes even threatening human lives.

Urbanisation is recognised as a major driver of declining biodiversity and is considered by scientists to be the sixth mass extinction event on Earth, or biological annihilation (Maxwell et al. 2016). The progressive loss of biological diversity reduces the capacity to provide ecosystem services, i.e. the benefits that people derive from the existence of diversity in urban areas. As ecosystems (including city ecosystems) struggle to accommodate the impacts of climate change, their ability to support human adaptation and the resilience of socio-economic systems to emerging threats and changing living conditions weaken (Lavorel et al. 2020). Therefore, a crucial question arises: What is the role of urban communities and civic engagement in protecting and building the biological potential of the city?

Cities must actively reverse these detrimental trends by increasing the significance of biological elements within their structures, enabling natural phenomena observed in the natural world (Fig. 3). To preserve biological diversity and ensure the continued provision of ecosystem services, it is vital to focus on integrated actions and engage city inhabitants in the following:

- **active protection of the natural environment.** This involved minimising the use of and preserving the most valuable biological areas in the city while taking actions aimed at strengthening them to ensure sustainable ecological functions and the stability of natural ecosystems.

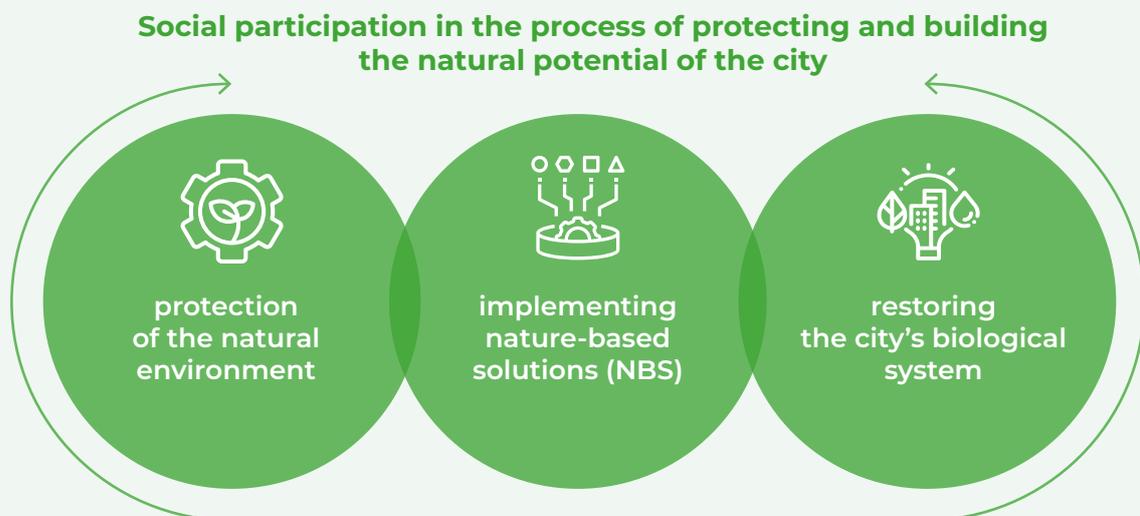


FIG. 3
The importance of participation for the condition of the natural environment
Source: Own work.

- **implementing nature-based solutions (NBS).** Using the potential of NBS on a microscale (housing estate) or in the whole city can create living conditions that are in harmony with nature. These strategies include collecting rainwater, temporary “green” spaces, and increasing retention. NBS are also conducive to the development of blue-green infrastructure, greater availability of water in the city, and restoring biodiversity, all of which are aimed at effective adaptation to climate change (Jurczak, Krauze 2024). NBS have the advantage of adjusting to changing environmental conditions virtually for free (because the ability to adapt is an inherent feature of nature), delivering expected benefits (e.g. climate regulation) and even unexpected or unanticipated benefits (Jurczak, Krauze 2024).
- **restoring the city’s biological system.** This involves the spatial integration of green areas, open areas, and urban forests with aquatic ecosystems (rivers, lakes, ponds), which constitute a natural network (the blue-green network of the city). This network underlies the healthy functioning of the city and all living creatures. An important context in “creating” blue-green networks, apart from strengthening the city ecosystem’s resilience to crises and threats, is the social and economic context associated with the increased availability of natural areas, attractive public spaces and the development of social functions (Wagner and Krauze 2013).

These activities can and should be initiated, coordinated, implemented and developed in cooperation with inhabitants, social organisations, experts and decision-makers as collaborative solutions deliver effective and acceptable changes supported by all parties involved. Additionally, the everyday activities and conscious choices of residents influence the pace of changes taking place in the city. Climate change cannot be counteracted without nature. However, nature itself is subject to biodegradation due to advancing climate change (Legutko-Kobus et al. 2020). Therefore, it is crucial to actively engage communities in protecting the city’s natural environment and in building its natural potential.

Social perspective

In democratic societies, adapting cities to climate change should be preceded by robust social consultations. Inhabitants are the *de facto* owners of their local communities, electing presidents, mayors and city councils to manage them. Accordingly, people should have an opportunity to express their views on the actions and solutions; apart

from the resulting benefits, they are associated with necessary financial and social investments. Moreover, citizen participation in decision-making yields significant benefits, including:

- **increased knowledge,**
- **enhanced public trust,**
- **a sense of agency and influence over decision-making,**
- **enhanced legitimacy of the decision-making process.**

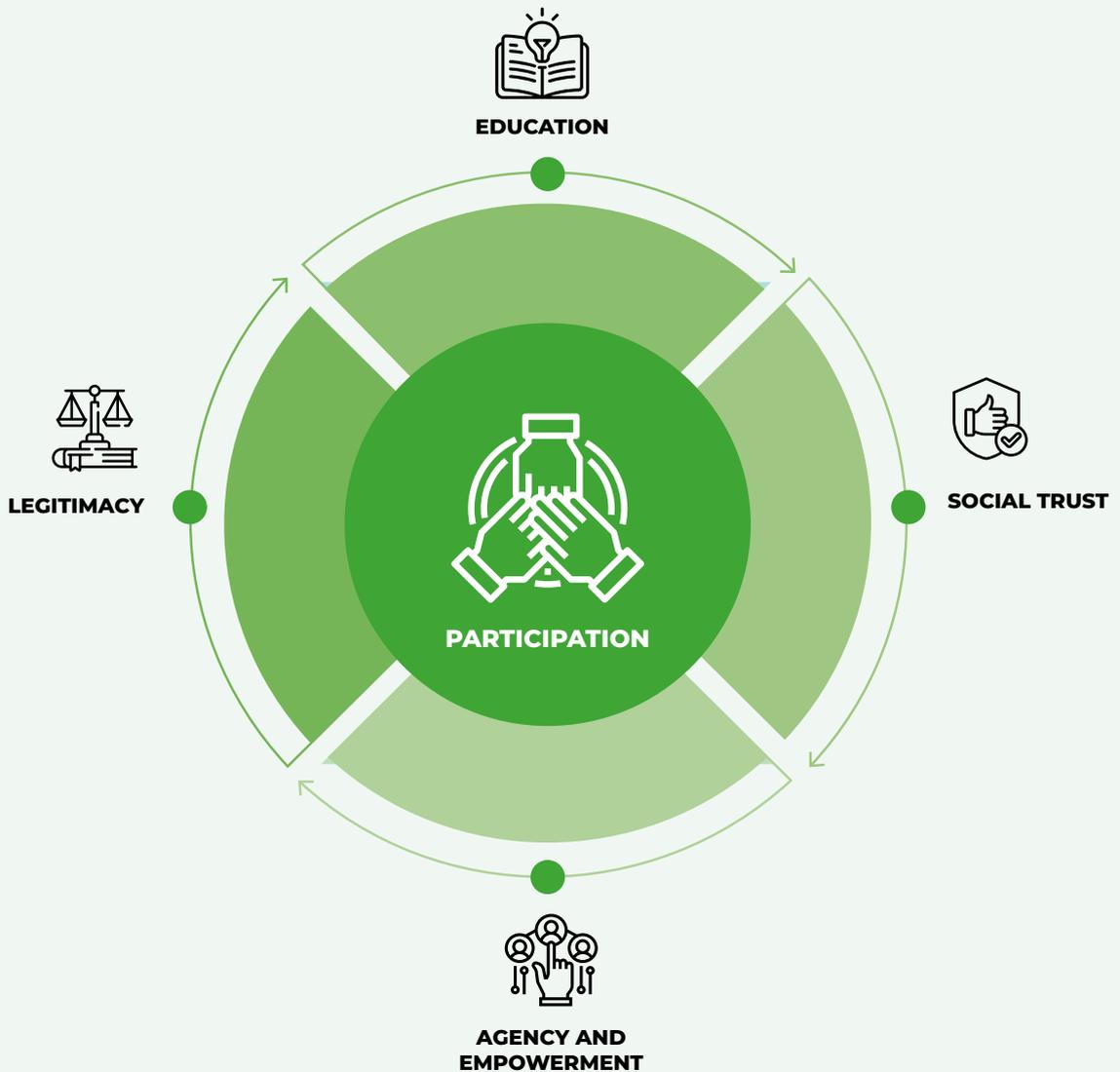


FIG. 4
The impact of direct participation on selected social issues
Source: Own work.

Social consultations, especially those that employ deliberative practices, go beyond thorough discussions of specific problems; they also stress an educational aspect. Climate change and its consequences present challenges that require consideration to effectively tackle the problem and implement proper adaptive measures. Therefore, carefully choosing experts is of key importance for the success of these collaborations, as their role involves disseminating solid knowledge. The way the issue is presented, along with the exchange of experiences between participants facilitated by facilitators and accessible educational materials provided to the participants, enhances understanding not only among those directly involved in the discussions but also among their friends, acquaintances and families. Citizens engaged in participatory events often become informal leaders who pass their knowledge in their social circles (see Roberts 2004). This is extremely important in an era of *fake news*, which frequently refers to climate questions. In an age of late modernity, we live in a society of risk (Beck 2004), and climate risk has become one of the most significant challenges we face. Navigating today's works is compared to constantly "jumping into uncertainty" (Sztompka 2007, p. 21). Trust is the bridge over that abyss.

Trust – defined as the expectation that the uncertain future actions of individuals, institutions or systems will be beneficial for us (Sztompka 2007, p. 99) – is important for the efficient functioning of society. A culture of trust arises from the enduring experiences accumulated in a community (Sztompka 2005, p. 430). Factors that foster a culture of trust in a society include historical heritage, normative stability, the transparency of social organisations, a durable social order, the rule of law, and the consistent upholding of rights and duties. Individual factors also play a role, such as personality traits (e.g. aspirations, activity, success-orientation, optimism), as well as capital resources (e.g., education, connections, family background, health, and spiritual well-being) (Sztompka 2005, pp. 430–431). This understanding of trust enables citizens to navigate uncertain situations and take risks when not all elements or social actors are predictable. Climate change and efforts to mitigate its effects are inherently complex social issues that are hard to foresee. To enhance social trust, it is necessary to involve citizens in discussions on climate issues. Increasing knowledge about the climate crisis and possible actions can reduce the uncertainty associated with ongoing changes.

Social trust is an essential element of a democratic system: "it is both a fruit of democracy and a factor that strengthens it" (Sztompka 2007, p. 342). It acts as a lubricant that enables other elements of democracy to work (Putnam 2008, p. 39). In the context of social consultations, inhabitants must trust the local authorities to analyse their proposals while the authorities, in turn, must recognise the potential of the inhabitants and treat them as a source of rational suggestions and ideas.

Participation in social consultations, especially those with binding propositions, such as participatory budgets and citizens' panels, gives people a sense of agency. When people see that their ideas are being implemented, it reinforces their belief that the municipal authorities are considering and delivering on their recommendations. Individuals whose projects are implemented are proud of their skills and their contribution to important changes.

Local authorities' decisions are better received when they align with social values and when citizens have taken part in the decision-making process. If citizens are involved, they are less likely to question decisions, even if they disagree with certain aspects. Consultation participants often become advocates for the jointly developed recommendations, supporting actions that align with them and defending these initiatives when necessary. Furthermore, inhabitants, who participate in debates and provide input on proposed solutions, legitimise not only these solutions but also the decision-makers who implement them (see Roberts 2004).

For this reason, involving residents in making decisions related to urban adaptation to climate change enhances their understanding of these issues. They feel more agency and influence over the decision-making process, making such decisions more socially acceptable. Notably, this engagement also contributes to an overall increase in social trust.

Economic perspective

Adapting to climate change is a complex endeavour that requires the cooperation of many actors. Inhabitants play a key role as they are the direct beneficiaries of actions aimed at making their lives easier in fast-changing conditions. Their knowledge, experience, creativity and innovativeness (collectively defined as human capital) are the foundations for a proper and effective climate policy. This involvement ensures that actions and projects are tailored to meet residents' real needs and specific urban conditions. Simultaneously, participatory approaches build local human capital by expanding inhabitants' knowledge, understanding and acceptance of initiatives taken in the city (Fig. 5).



FIG. 5
 Economic benefits from social participation processes
 Source: Own work.

Social participation builds a range of economic benefits for a local community:

- Involving inhabitants in climate change adaptation fosters the **optimal use of city resources** – not only those managed by the local authorities (public sector) but also those belonging to residents and other entities. By actively engaging local actors through voluntary actions or their own funds, **the costs of implementing projects are significantly reduced**, and the efficiency of the city’s climate policy is enhanced.
- Engaging local stakeholders in climate change adaptation stimulates **synergistic effects and amplifies multiplier effects** in the city. It unlocks “dormant” urban capacities while fostering interactions and relationships in the local community, thereby increasing the city’s development potential.
- Involving inhabitants in climate change adaptation is a **pillar for creating innovative solutions** that would be difficult to realise without local stakeholders’ participation. Local stakeholders are often the source of new ideas, and engaging them means that these initiatives are more likely to be successfully implemented. They become ambassadors of novel actions, fostering greater acceptance within the local community.
- Involving inhabitants, businesses and various institutions in the planning and implementing of climate change adaptation strategies makes it possible to **engage their financial resources**. Participation processes incentivise the attraction of additional, external funds and facilitate the development of “financial engineering” mechanisms to expand the pool of funds available for activities and projects to adapt the city to climate change.
- The financial engagement of local entities in climate change actions enhances **the city’s capacity to secure external funding**. Thus, it is not only the professional management of the city that is demonstrated but also the ability to integrate local entities around key projects and investments. It also motivates external institutions (donors) to provide financial support for those projects.
- Social participation positively impacts **the city’s internal and external image**, portraying it as a creative, people-oriented place that is able to use its potential. Using innovative social involvement tools (e.g. citizens’ panels) enhances the perception of the city as a modern territorial unit, which follows ongoing changes and can adapt to variable conditions of development. This positive image can contribute to the city’s overall reputation and attract external investors.

Institutional perspective

Climate change is a challenge to institutions at all levels of decision-making. Local governments' scope of competencies and available funding is determined by higher-level institutions, such as the voivodeship, the state and the EU. However, while the framework is defined top-down, it does not mean that local governments' hands are tied. As they work near their inhabitants, local authorities have an enormous impact on reaching an agreement addressing climate change.

What can the local government achieve by including its residents in decision-making? Are policies built together with stakeholders better than those created in municipal offices? Thanks to various perspectives, these policies are **better-fitting** – they better meet the needs of stakeholders. They are also **more effective** – they are better suited to achieve goals faster and more accurately. As a result, their **effectiveness** soars, and cost intensity declines.

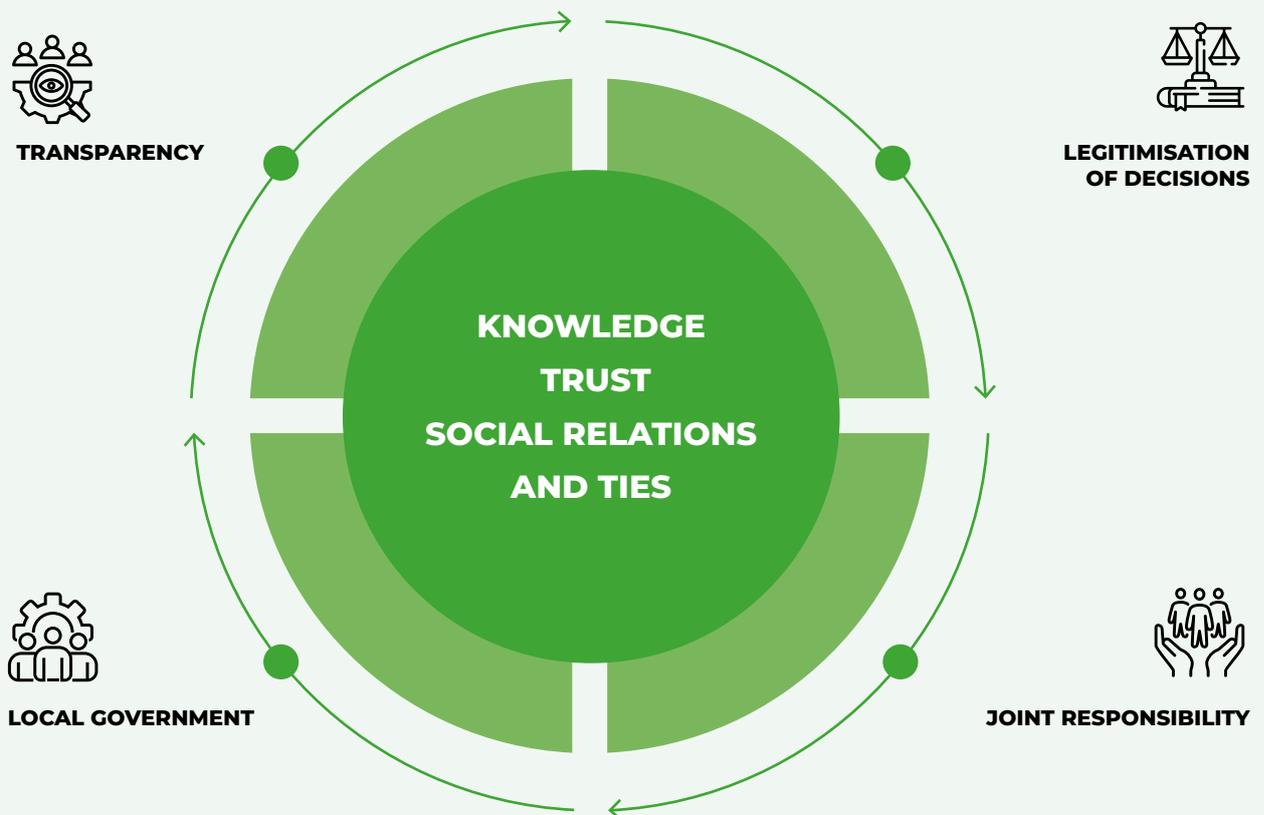


FIG. 6
Institutional benefits from social participation processes
Source: Own work.

Actions and decisions taken by local authorities are not always met with enthusiasm by the public. Those decisions are sometimes inadequate or difficult to accept, e.g. because they require a change in lifestyle or high costs. Local governments face these challenges, especially when implementing climate change adaptation measures – a complex issue fraught with many misconceptions and resistance. Involving citizens in decision-making and allowing them to engage in pro-climate activities can **enhance the social legitimacy of difficult decisions** made by local authorities (Fig. 6).

Beyond stronger support for the decisions made together with inhabitants, local governments gain new partners who feel a shared responsibility for the city's development. This sense of joint responsibility and cooperation with other stakeholders is crucial for effective climate change adaptation, as this challenge is too complex for local governments to tackle alone. **The culture of joint management** creates space for dialogue and the distribution of responsibility among stakeholders, whose actions can benefit the whole community. It also facilitates the accurate identification of sources of problems and the development of remedial actions.

From the perspective of inhabitants, the culture of joint management requires knowledge, such as regulations or infrastructure conditions, as well as a sense of influence over the decisions of local authorities. So, **knowledge transfer** also flows in the other direction – to local authorities – as the local inhabitants can provide insights into local considerations and acceptable courses of action.

Building an effective and efficient climate change adaptation policy requires considering the voices of varied social groups and institutions. It cannot be overstated how helpful it is to involve researchers in decision-making as they can provide a broad and objective perspective that complements the contributions of other participants. This work on specific local problems and cooperation with communities is also a valuable source of data for them. Engaging a wide array of stakeholders in participatory processes not only facilitates the exchange of information and opinions but also **fosters new relationships and knowledge resources**, which will contribute substantial capital to solving future challenges.

While not every participant or local government will have an opportunity to conduct a large consultation process, such as citizens' assemblies on adapting to climate change, it does not mean that complex problems cannot be solved. Smaller participatory activities, such as social consultations on green areas or parking in the city, are equally important. It is crucial to collect and analyse conclusions from all channels of communication with inhabitants and use the data to build the city's policies. Every engagement with stakeholders, even the smallest one, **increases the transparency of the authorities' actions and builds local bonds**. The strength of these bonds determines the community's resilience.



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04

How to engage residents?

A review of techniques used worldwide

Citizen participation has become a permanent fixture in our cities, and the question of whether to include citizens in decision-making to jointly create the city's policy has been replaced by the question: how can it be done? The answer to this question can be found in numerous manuals, guidebooks and reports, one of which (Brzeziński, Kretek-Kamińska, Krzewińska, Zajac 2024) ranks the techniques that have been used to hold social consultations in Poland. They selected techniques based on their applicability in Poland. Formal, organisational and financial constraints can limit the effectiveness of certain techniques in Poland and other Central and Eastern European countries. That is why particular attention was paid to methods that have proven their worth in democratising countries, where societies are still learning how to use the advantages of democracy.

Another important aspect was the type of information which could be obtained through each technique. There are three main types of techniques based on participant engagement:



Obtaining personal opinions – participants independently formulate their opinions and recommendations without any influence from the other participants



Gathering diverse personal opinions through interactions – participants articulate their opinions and recommendations independently but are influenced by discussions and exchanges of views with others



Reaching a common opinion or a set of opinions – participants formulate final recommendations during discussions and teamwork

Table 1 below presents a breakdown of the techniques by type. Each has unique applications and is particularly useful at different stages of the consultation process, depending on the specific goals and desired outcomes (Brzeziński, Kretek-Kamińska, Krzewińska, Zajac 2024).

TAB. 1

Breakdown of the techniques used in social consultations

| | |
|---|--|
| Techniques to obtain personal opinions regardless of the activities of the other consultation participants | Surveys |
| | Individual in-depth interviews |
| | Written statements in response to a prompt |
| Techniques to collect a range of personal opinions formulated in interactions during the consultation process | Research walks |
| | Public hearings |
| | Focus group interviews |
| | Written statements formulated in the discussion on the forum |
| | Open meetings |
| Techniques to obtain a common opinion or set of opinions during discussions or workshops | Citizens' assemblies |
| | Charrette workshops |
| | Future workshops |
| | Deliberative meetings |
| | Deliberative cafe |

Source: Brzeziński, Kretek-Kamińska, Krzewińska, Zajac 2024.

These techniques are recommended for use in Poland or Central and Eastern European countries. However, not all of them were used in climate change adaptation consultations. Social inclusion in adaptation efforts can take various forms. Residents can be invited to cooperate with the city authorities on several stages presented in Figure 7 below. It is notable that according to a report from the “BASE bottom-up climate adaptation strategies towards a sustainable Europe” project (Clemmensen, Haugvaldstad, Vizinho, Penha-Lopes 2015), participatory techniques in European countries are usually used in the first two stages, which take the form of various consultations on intended actions.

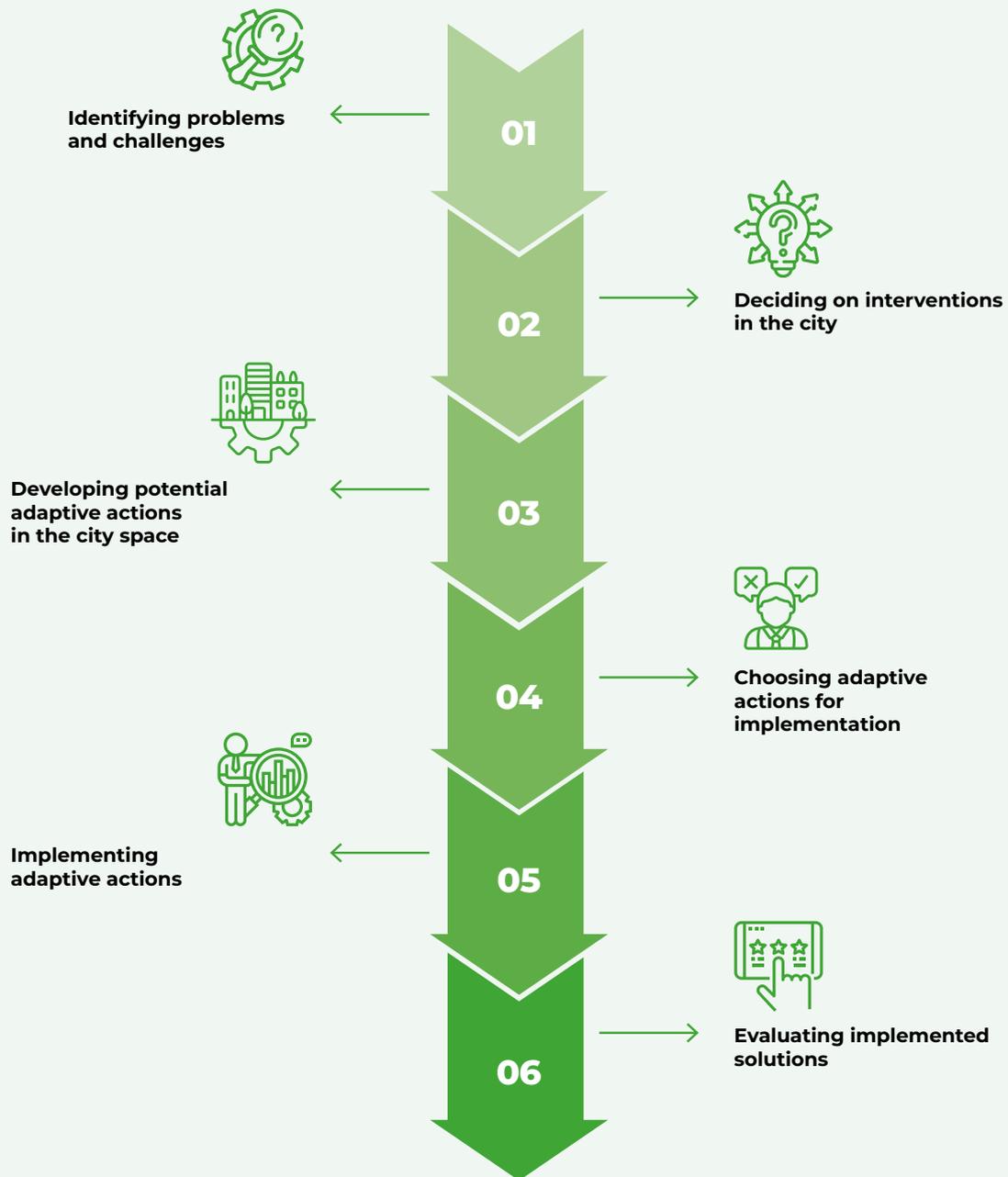


FIG. 7
Stages of social participation in climate change adaptation

Source: Own work based on Andreas Hastrup Clemmensen, Anne Haugvaldstad, André Vizinho, Gil Penha-Lopes (2015). Participation in Climate Change Adaptation. BASE bottom-up climate adaptation strategies towards a sustainable Europe. <https://base-adaptation.eu/participation-climate-change-adaptation.html>

The range of participatory techniques used worldwide in social consultations on adapting to climate change is broad. Table 2 presents commonly used techniques and examples of their implementation. We have evaluated each technique in terms of its cost, time requirements and complexity of implementation for local authorities.

TAB. 2

Participatory techniques for climate change adaptation

| Technique | Description | Cost | Time | Complexity | Location and subject of climate change adaptation measures |
|------------------------------|---|------|------|------------|---|
| World Cafe | A workshop method used to exchange information and define the needs and expectations of concerned parties. Based on work in several groups discussing different aspects of the problem, where participants change groups to discuss various issues. | + | + | + | Alentejo (Portugal) – identifying and evaluating the effects of climate change and possible adaptation strategies. Kalajoki (Finland) – consultations with stakeholders regarding adaptation plans and to evaluate the effects and costs of potential solutions (Source: https://base-adaptation.eu/participation-climate-change-adaptation.html) |
| Project workshops | Visual representation of a phenomenon followed by a discussion. The method most often used in urban planning. | + | ++ | ++ | Rotterdam (The Netherlands) – part of Delta programme – workshops for stakeholders “From possible strategies to narratives” seeking to reach the first line of reasoning and consensus with regard to the (im)possibility of various strategies for flood management. (Source: https://base-adaptation.eu/participation-climate-change-adaptation.html) |
| Scenario workshops | Dialogue and cooperation between various groups of local actors. This method aims to stimulate dialogue, facilitate the exchange of experiences and knowledge on existing barriers and potential solutions, and promote understanding of the topic/issue under discussion. It helps facilitate a consensus on the proposed solutions among engaged groups. Workshops usually last two days, during which participants work on pre-prepared scenarios and create their own visions and action plans. | + | ++ | + | Kalundborg (Denmark) – a retrospective analysis of implementing adaptation plans. Czechia (project Green Roofs) – developing potential adaptation measures. (Source: https://base-adaptation.eu/participation-climate-change-adaptation.html) |
| Charrette workshops | Intensive teamwork sessions over several days with various stakeholder groups to find a common solution to a given problem or area. It makes it possible to build trust and resolve conflicts at an early stage of planning. | ++ | ++ | ++ | Negril (Jamaica) – the workshops aimed to identify, map and rank local climate change-related threats, and to identify local strategies and preferred adaptation actions. (Source: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/283748693_Community-based_Adaptation_through_Ecological_Design_Lessons_from_Negril_Jamaica_The_Journal_of_Urban_Design) |
| Focus Group Interview | A moderated discussion in a small group of people (who interact with one another) to discover other opinions on a topic | + | + | + | Unley (Australia) – five focus group studies were conducted within the local community regarding emissions and ways to reduce them. (Source: https://www.unley.sa.gov.au/files/assets/public/v/1/environment-hub/unley-insights-focus-group-report-on-climate-change.pdf) |
| Citizen assemblies | The intention is for public administration to consult with a representative group of residents chosen through random sampling. The goal is to jointly develop specific recommendations on a topic. The recommendations are developed following an educational stage and then put to a vote in the final stage. | +++ | +++ | +++ | Camden (Great Britain) – participants discussed potential climate change actions that could be taken at home, in the neighbourhood and by the council. The assembly developed 17 recommendations, which were used in a local plan of action for climate. (Source: https://participedia.net/case/6975) <i>Citizens' assemblies from Polish cities are presented later in the Guide</i> |

Participatory techniques for climate change adaptation

/ continued

| Technique | Description | Cost | Time | Complexity | Location and subject of climate change adaptation measures |
|----------------------------------|--|------|------|------------|--|
| Citizens' summits/ forums | This method gathers citizens' opinions on political priorities and possible courses of action in decision-making based on reliable information. A civic summit is a large-scale public meeting, typically involving between 200 to 5000 people, that culminates in a vote. | +++ | +++ | +++ | Kalundborg (Denmark) – a citizens' summit held as part of the project BaltCICA "Climate Change: Impacts, Costs, and Adaptation in the Baltic Sea Region" to develop strategies for adapting to climate change in the Baltic states. The summit was attended by 350 people, who contributed to the development of the recommendations used in the strategy. (Source: https://participedia.net/case/6935) |
| Civic courts | A small group of non-expert citizens examine a case and announce a verdict, similar to a jury in the Anglo-Saxon court system. "Jurors" obtain materials describing different ways to solve the issue. After studying these materials, they deliberate and formulate their recommendations. This process typically takes 2–4 days. | ++ | ++ | ++ | Leeds (England) – developing recommendations for a zero-emission plan (Source: https://participedia.net/case/7001) |
| Participatory budgeting | Residents can submit projects to be funded from a designated portion of the budget. After the projects are verified, residents vote for the projects. | +++ | +++ | +++ | Lisbon (Portugal) – a green participatory budget for initiatives to improve the natural environment (Source: https://www.centre-forpublicimpact.org/case-study/green-participatory-budgeting-lisbon-portugal) Bierun (Poland) – a green participatory budget for initiatives to improve the natural environment (Source: https://zielonybierun.budzet-obywatelski.org/) |
| Hackathon | A short event (usually 24 or 48 hours) during which software developers, IT engineers and other specialists must solve a specific problem. The task is announced on the day of the event, and projects are subject to evaluation. The solutions developed during the hackathon are then implemented (or first improved) by the city. | ++ | + | ++ | Warsaw (Poland) – Science for climate change. Participants designed solutions in one of three themes: Energy, Intelligent City, or the Circular Economy. (Source: https://akcelerator.pw.edu.pl/hackathon.html) Rzeszow (Poland) – Hackathon Mobility aimed to create new solutions for eco-mobility and alternative transportation methods. (Source: https://w.prz.edu.pl/uczelnia/aktualnosci/hackathon-mobility-w-rzeszowie-1524.html) Bergen (Norway) – Klimathon Hackathon on practical and strategic solutions to challenges connected with planning and implementing adaptation to climate change on a local level. (Source: https://climatehackathon.devpost.com/) |

Legend:

+ low ++ medium +++ high

Participatory techniques for climate change adaptation

/ continued

| Technique | Description | Cost | Time | Comple- xity | Location and subject of climate change adaptation measures |
|--------------------------|---|------|------|-----------------|---|
| Social hackathons | A special form of the hackathon where people with different skills collaborate to solve urgent challenges within a limited timeframe. These events focus on solving social issues, strengthening social engagement and initiating positive changes. These events are particularly effective at engaging the local community. | ++ | ++ | ++ | <p>Miskolc (Hungary) – Participants worked on activities to adapt the city to climate change and to green the city. (Source: https://miskolcioletmaraton.hu/)</p> <p>Athens (Greece) – Engaging the community and companies to create original applications focused on social innovations, such as creating educational programmes for sustainable social development in companies and public institutions. (Source: https://socialhackathon.gr/en/#about)</p> |
| Living Labs | A dynamic environment created to support open innovations through collaboration that engages various stakeholders. They focus on co-creation, fast prototyping and testing while promoting innovation and entrepreneurship. These labs create shared values in various forms for all participating stakeholders. A form of testing solutions and seeing if they can be implemented on a larger scale. | ++ | +++ | +++ | <p>Gdynia (Poland) – the Urban Lab in Gdynia included the #EKOWGdyni social action, which is an element of a pilot program for micro innovation actions chosen in the project “Plans for the City”. This initiative focuses on adapting the city to climate change and is part of the project “UrbanLab Concept Adaptation in Gdynia”. The goal is to promote pro-ecological behaviours among Gdynia residents to mitigate and adapt to climate changes within the city. (Source: https://urbanlab.gdynia.pl/inkubator-miejski/)</p> |
| Educational games | A wide array of activities to increase gamers’ knowledge by playing games. | +* | ++ | + | <p>Nicaragua – a six-level game developed to address a specific issue. Participants played the roles of decision-makers and had to work in specific conditions, which gave them an idea of the challenges faced by local authorities. (Source: https://www.climatecentre.org/wp-content/uploads/AW-wps-games-v5.pdf)</p> <p>Poland: (Source: https://zielonegry.crs.org.pl/pl/)</p> <p>A simulation game, “Housing estate with climate” was created as part of the CoAdapt project. A board game and a computer version were created, where the game board represents a housing estate chosen by the player. (Source: Gra Projekt CoAdapt - Communities for Climate Change Action)</p> |

* The cost intensity depends on the formula of the game.

Legend:

+ low ++ medium +++ high

Source: Own work.



USEFUL SOURCES

Andreas Hastrup Clemmensen, Anne Haugvaldstad, André Vizinho, Gil Penha-Lopes (2015). *Participation in Climate Change Adaptation. BASE bottom-up climate adaptation strategies towards a sustainable Europe*. <https://base-adaptation.eu/participation-climate-change-adaptation.html>

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05

What are cities' experiences so far?

Cities transitioning towards climate neutrality and adapting to climate change are learning how to involve their inhabitants in decision-making. Many experiences from Poland and abroad reveal significant differences between countries and cities in terms of people's involvement, as well as methods and participatory techniques used by local governments. Research conducted in Poland (Lodz, Lublin, Wroclaw, Gdansk), Slovakia (Trnava and Banská Bystrica) and Hungary (Miskolc, Budapest) has identified many of these differences, as well as other considerations and factors (Fig. 8). These Eastern Bloc countries were intentionally chosen due to their shared historical and political heritage, as well as many common social and cultural factors that affect citizen engagement in decision-making (Gherghina, Ekman, Podolian 2019; Mihaylova 2004). These considerations include communist and post-communist influences, simultaneous accession to the European Union on May 1st, 2004, varying levels of civil society development and differing degrees of trust in the state and local government institutions.



II Lodz Citizens Assembly
Report cover

<https://uml.lodz.pl/panel-obywatelski/ii-lodzki-panel-obywatelski/raport/>



II Lodz Citizens Assembly
Fot. Dorota Kudlicka

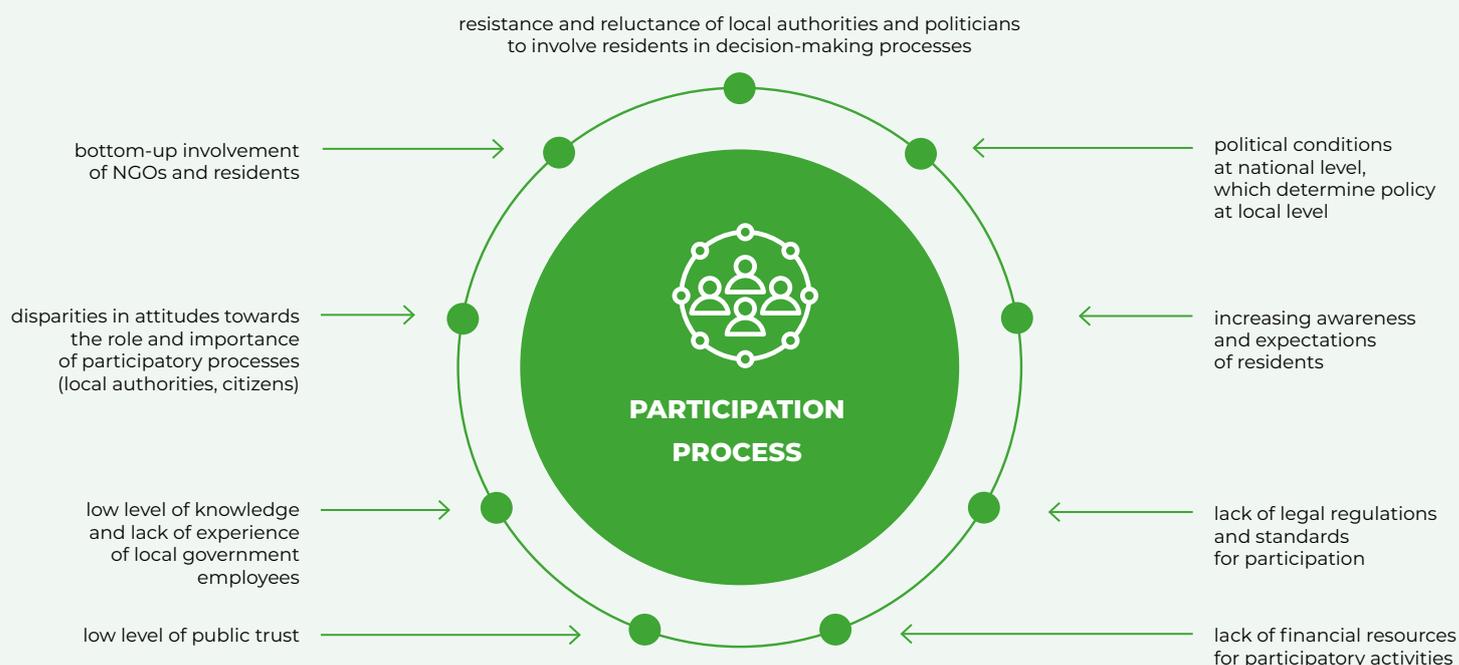


FIG. 8
Factors and determinants of social participation in Central and Eastern European cities
Source: Own work.

Participatory initiatives are developing dynamically but unevenly. In Poland, they are most advanced in large cities, where the methods used are most engaging and innovative. This is primarily due to the knowledge and experience of local government employees, the determination of local authorities, as well as better access to specialists, human resources and funds. A similar situation is observed in Hungary and Slovakia, although the settlement structure in those countries differs from that of Poland.

According to organisations and institutions involved in participatory initiatives in Hungary and Slovakia, inhabitants' active participation has little influence on their political decisions. While they get involved quickly, they soon discover that they have little influence over local government decisions, leading to disengagement. Hence, **political decisions determine the level of activity of local communities.** Local authorities' persistence and resistance or even the pretence of participatory actions effectively discourage citizens, decreasing their engagement.

Across Slovakia, Hungary, and Poland, there is a **lack of funds for participatory actions** in local government budgets. EU policies, supported by funds, incentivise cities to include inhabitants in climate change adaptation actions. In Slovakia and Hungary, foreign initiatives, especially those funded by European aid programmes, play a key role in these initiatives. In contrast, Polish local governments' annual budgets may allocate funds for citizen engagement in addition to relying on external aid sources.

Rules in the expanded **legal system** in Poland impose an obligation e.g. to conduct social consultations, organising councils for the public benefit, revitalisation committees and realising participatory budgets in towns with county rights. Towns often have their internal regulations which specify the rules for conducting social consultations

with different stakeholders. In contrast to Poland, Slovakia and Hungary do not have systemic solutions; local governments merely must hold annual public hearings, which focus on collecting information rather than on the real engagement of people in decision-making. Slovakian local governments must publish projects of documents, which enables inhabitants to submit their comments, although there is no guarantee they will be considered. Although there are no such formal obligations, local governments in Slovakia and Hungary are becoming increasingly aware they should cooperate with local communities and start developing joint rules for participation. Cities such as Miskolc and Budapest (Hungary) initiate social agreements or contracts to formalise these processes.

In Poland, Slovakia and Hungary, local governments are responsible for conducting participatory activities, although the initiative is often taken by **local communities, local leaders and non-governmental organisations**. These local and community leaders frequently use modern tools such as civic panels, social research, hackathons and regranting, frequently involving institutions, organisations and industry experts.

Within public administration in some countries (e.g., Poland), teams of specialists are responsible for participation in cities. In other cases, such as Banská Bystrica in Slovakia, one person may combine these tasks with other duties. In Slovakia and Hungary, the number of people employed in this area is much lower than in Poland due to smaller local government structures, lower awareness among authorities and funding shortages.

Participatory activities are impacted by **the way the country is ruled at the national level, which determines state activities at the local level**. While an advanced, robust democracy engages citizens in making and implementing decisions, unfortunately, local political considerations (the ruling political party) can hinder or even block such activities.

Citizens' panels are increasingly used in social participation, and a major theme is climate change and adapting to it. Cities adapt this technique based on institutional, economic, political and social considerations (see Table 3)

Citizens' assembly on climate in Trnava, Miskolc and Budapest

Method characteristics

Trnava (Slovakia)

The citizens' assembly was used as a participatory tool in 2022 to prepare the city for climate change, focusing on water retention, green urban areas and communication between the city authorities and inhabitants. Thirty residents of Trnava participated. The method was not too time-consuming, lasting several weeks and involving three meetings with participants within a month. The method was not too cost-intensive (e.g., remuneration for participants and experts). As it was a pilot project with a small budget, time was limited and there were attempts to cut its budget. The panel included materials prepared for the participants, the workshop method (small group workshops), a plenary discussion, and a panel discussion with experts. The social sector (non-governmental organisations) initiated, actively co-conducted and co-financed the whole process.

Miskolc (Hungary)

The citizens' assembly on air quality took place in 2021, organised by Miskolc commune and two non-governmental organisations (DemNet Foundation and Dialog Association), which initiated the process and substantially contributed to its organisation and financing. The panel was co-funded by the commune and a foreign donor. Of the 10,000 residents invited to take part, 400 responded. From that group, 50 people were drawn to represent Miskolc inhabitants. An important element was experts educating residents on global warming and air pollution in the city. Then, in a moderated process with the experts' participation, the residents developed a set of solutions, which were then verified and prioritised. Finally, they selected and refined seven solutions, which the city pledged to implement. The panel organisation was time-consuming – preparations lasted several months, in addition to two two-day sessions of meetings with participants – and costly due to participant and expert remuneration, as well as organisation costs.

Budapest (Hungary)

In 2020, the DemNet Foundation conducted a citizens' assembly commissioned by the City Hall. The topic was climate change and developing recommendations for Budapest's City Council to address the climate crisis in the city. Ten thousand invitations were sent out to residents; 50 applicants were then drawn to reflect the city's demographics in terms of age, gender, education and place of residence. During two weekend meetings, participants engaged with moderators and experts to study and discuss climate change and ways the city can deal with it. The resulting package of recommendations for the local authorities was to be considered in Budapest's climate strategy. The panel was one of the participatory tools used to develop a climate strategy for the city. Organising the panel was time-consuming (the COVID-19 pandemic significantly reduced the chances of realising all goals) and cost-intensive. The panel was organised by a non-governmental organisation and financed by external, international funds.

TAB. 3

Citizens' assembly on climate in Trnava, Miskolc and Budapest

| Trnava (Slovakia) | Miskolc (Hungary) | Budapest (Hungary) |
|--|---|--|
| BENEFITS OF IMPLEMENTING THE CITIZENS' ASSEMBLY | | |
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The opportunity for people from diverse urban communities to participate, ensuring a representative sample of participants. 2. The involvement of thematic experts who shared their knowledge and experience with the participants. It was an important educational element for the residents, fostering an exchange of thoughts and views among the inhabitants. 3. The chance to learn different opinions, viewpoints, and arguments. 4. A long-term process that allows members of different communities to get to know each other and integrate (promoting intersectoral and intergenerational integration), which leads to better understanding and networking. 5. An opportunity for residents to meet experts and representatives of the local authorities. 6. Building a sense of genuine impact on city life among residents and raising civic consciousness among them. 7. A heightened sense of awareness and real participation in public life. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A wide-ranging invitation for residents to participate in the panel, with 10,000 invitations sent out, ensuring representation from various urban communities. A total of 45 people participated in the panel. 2. Significant emphasis on educational activities with external experts. 3. Integration of diverse communities around a common topic. 4. Building a sense of genuine impact on city life among residents and raising their civic awareness. 5. Substantial engagement of local non-governmental organisations. 6. The city's commitment to implementing selected solutions. Half of them were implemented before 2024. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The representative group of residents offered a wide range of views and interests of the local community. 2. The citizens' assembly was treated as an element of involving residents in building long-term public policies. The panel's recommendations were implemented in the climate strategy for Budapest. 3. Participants had the opportunity to expand their knowledge on a specific topic, enabling them to make informed decisions. 4. There was a genuine sense of influence over creating their environment, which strengthened residents' civic awareness and responsibility for the city. 5. The participants had an opportunity to meet experts and City Hall employees directly, increasing decision-making transparency and fostering trust in public institutions. 6. Participants had a chance to confront their opinions with other viewpoints, fostering broader perspectives and developing reasoning skills. 7. Thematic experts shared their knowledge and experience with the panel participants. 8. The panel fostered integration among participants by creating a space for in-depth conversations and strengthening interpersonal relationships. 9. The panel participants looked forward to subsequent stages of work, reflecting their engagement and willingness to participate further in public life. The participants became ambassadors for the theme in their communities. |
| DIFFICULTIES IN IMPLEMENTING THE CITIZENS' ASSEMBLY | | |
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Substantial difficulties in recruiting participants. 2. Insufficient funds and too little time to conduct the panel. 3. Difficulties in implementing the panel's results due to prior political decisions and a lack of support from the local government for the solutions developed during the panel. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Significant difficulties in engaging residents on various topics. It is easier to involve them for a short period but much more difficult for the long-term. 2. Few local government workers were involved. 3. Uncertainty in the political situation and participatory initiatives depended heavily on political decisions. 4. Difficulties in communicating and reaching inhabitants. 5. An excessively wide-ranging topic for the panel made it difficult to prepare proper recommendations or solutions. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the time for recruiting participants was reduced, and many potential candidates withdrew, fearing infection. 2. The choice of a specific topic that was not too wide-ranging and was clearly defined, which allowed for the development of proper results during the panel. |
| LINKS/USEFUL SOURCES | | |
| <p>https://www.trnava.sk/aktualita/4679/obcianske-zhromazdenie-otvarame-pre-vsetkych-trnavcanov</p> | <p>https://kozossegyules.demnet.hu/kozossegi-gyules-miskolc-2021/</p> <p>https://demnet.hu/en/blog-en/when-seeds-take-root-a-report-on-progress-one-year-after-the-miskolc-citizens-assembly/</p> | <p>https://kozossegyules.demnet.hu/kozossegi-gyules-budapest-2020-demnet-report.pdf</p> |

Source: Own work.

Social hackathons

Method characteristics Miskolc (Hungary)

A Social Hackathon is a 48-hour event during which teams prepare projects in response to a problem or challenge the city has to face. Projects are subject to an assessment by a jury and then are implemented by various entities using different funding sources. Prizes in the contest are funded by local sponsors (local businesses), which substantially reduces organisation costs while also attracting inhabitants to the event. The Social Hackathon in Miskolc took place twice. The topic of the second event was “Racing against time while fighting climate change.” Teams of residents prepared ideas that could help local communities make the city more environmentally friendly. The method did not require a lot of time or funds. An important element of the event was the strong engagement of the social sector (non-governmental organisations); inhabitants and entrepreneurs were involved both in the event and in implementing the projects.



Event benefits

1. The reinforcement of local social activism, raising the interest and engagement of residents and various entities from the private, social and public sectors in implementing proposed solutions.
2. The utilisation of undeveloped public space by small, local communities of residents.
3. Introducing innovative ideas to the city.
4. The possibility to receive diverse support, including funds for existing ideas, substantive support, or simply the implementation of ideas based on articulated needs and expectations, thanks to the involvement of different entities.
5. Integration and building local bonds among residents.
6. Increased social involvement from entrepreneurs and increased promotion of their activities within the city.



Event challenges

1. Diverse expectations among participants, leading to significant variation in the support needed during the implementation of developed solutions (including institutional, infrastructural, financial, material, and organisational support).
2. Difficulty in collaborating with various entities and challenges in finding suitable partners (including institutional ones).
3. Dilemmas connected with the duration of support offered while implementing solutions (How long and in what way should the generated ideas be supported?)
4. Difficulties in providing support for many projects, especially those that require a long-term commitment.
5. An excessive number of people with their own ideas can lead to conflicts during a hackathon or create challenges for participants, making mentor support essential.



LINKS/USEFUL SOURCES

<https://miskolcioletmaraton.hu/az-otletmaraton-megmutatta-a-kozossegek-erejet-es-kreativitasat/>

Participatory experiences and practices in climate change adaptation in Polish cities

Green Participatory Budgeting in Lublin

Participatory budgets are undoubtedly the most effective consultation tool for engaging town and commune residents. This engagement could be described as a mass phenomenon, with tens or even hundreds of thousands of people voting in successive rounds of civic budgeting in the largest Polish towns and hundreds of projects submitted annually. Can participatory budgeting, which has been implemented in larger regional units since the act on commune administrative division was passed, serve as a tool for participatory adaptation of towns to climate change? Some towns introduce “green ideas” into participatory budgets, working within existing participatory budget procedures and earmarking “green funds” for which new rules are established, e.g., as Poznan and Gdynia did (links below). Lublin, however, decided to establish a separate procedure with a defined budget, and since 2017, it has allocated additional funds for this task. A characteristic feature of this solution is that residents do not vote for it – the decision on fund allocation is made by a Panel of Experts, which consists of landscape architects, naturalists and city officials. By 2024, dozens of tasks had been implemented under this initiative, costing as much as 2 million zlotys. Each edition has a different guiding idea, which indicates the scope of projects that residents can submit.



MORE ON GREEN PARTICIPATORY BUDGETS:

<https://decyduje.lublin.eu/pl/zielony-budzet/aktualnosci/>

<https://www.budzet.um.poznan.pl/>

<https://www.gdansk.pl/budzet-obywatelski/zielony-budzet>

Climate Change Forum in Gdansk

If the citizens’ assembly and citizens’ council are too complicated to achieve their goals (in this case, adapting the city to climate change), other Gdansk experiences are inspiring. The Climate Change Forum in Gdansk, held annually until 2020 in the form of one-day workshops for city residents, aimed to understand residents’ views on a wide array of issues connected with adapting the city to climate change. Participants registered online to take part in the workshops, and the results of their work were treated as a valuable source of data when the Local Plan of Adaptation to Climate Change was being developed. Other editions of the Forum are being planned and will be conducted by an external team of moderators, who will ensure impartial discussion rules. An interesting feature of the form is its cyclicity, which results in consistent contact with inhabitants and builds long-term trust among the participants.



WORKSHOP FORMS OF DIALOGUE ON CLIMATE CHANGE:

Climate Change Forum in Gdansk <https://www.gdansk.pl/wiadomosci/III-Gdanskie-Forum-Zmian-Klimatu-podsumowanie,a,251961>

Dialogues on Climate in Gdansk <https://lis.gdynia.pl/konsultacje-i-badania/gdynski-dialog-o-klimacie/>

“Greening Dabrowski Square?” – Consultations in Lodz

Although the results of social consultations are not binding for local authorities, in order to build social trust, they should be conducted when residents’ proposals and concepts have a chance to be considered. The meetings should be carefully planned and ensure accessible communication for inhabitants. In the context of adapting the city to climate change, consultations increasingly focus on collaborative projects for urban spaces that increase natural diversity, improve water retention, and address the urban heat island effect while simultaneously considering the practical functionality of those spaces for city residents. These goals motivated the local government to initiate a dialogue on Dabrowski Square in Lodz. These consultations were characterised by a multi-stage approach and diverse participation methods. Discussions regarding the future of the Square had been ongoing for many years. The participatory process started in 2021, with on-site consultations held directly on the Square, followed by a series of workshops with specific stakeholder groups. An online survey was also conducted. Based on those actions, three redevelopment variants for the Square were developed, accompanied by professional architectural visualisations. These variants were then presented on an online voting platform, allowing residents to vote for their preferred redevelopment plan.

PARTICIPATORY DESIGN PROCESSES:



Greening Dabrowski Square?

<https://uml.lodz.pl/konsultacje/zakonczone-konsultacje/2021-rok/jak-zazielenic-plac-dabrowskiego/>

Gdynia and Rzeszow – Space for participation

The city is both a space and its people; therefore, it is essential to create an environment for participation and innovation, inviting residents to engage there. In Poland, two *Urban Labs* have been established so far (in Gdynia and Rzeszow) – spaces designed for meetings, discussions about the challenges the city faces, and the design and testing of innovative solutions. A key component of these spaces is the *Urban Cafe*, a space where consultative and educational activities take place, where residents can meet partners from the university, business, non-governmental organisations and local government. Another important initiative involves programs that support the development of urban innovations. Through these programs, residents can submit their concepts for innovations, with the most highly rated proposals being implemented as pilot projects. Many activities conducted in *Urban Labs* focus on adapting municipalities to climate change and addressing challenges related to social life during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. Even if the local government chooses not to set up an *Urban Lab*, it is still a good idea to find a space for dialogue and communication in the city, where committed and active residents can be supported in bringing their ideas for the city’s development to fruition.



PLACES DEDICATED TO DIALOGUE WITH RESIDENTS:

Urban Lab Rzeszow: <https://urbanlab.erzeszow.pl/>

Lab for Social Innovation in Gdynia: <https://lis.gdynia.pl/o-nas/>

Summary of *Urban Labs* activity: https://urbanlab.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/JAK-ZROBI-LISMY-URBAN-LAB_e-book-normal.pdf

Factory of Urban Activity in Lodz: <https://uml.lodz.pl/decydujemy/>

Ruska Street – Citizens' council in Wrocław

The establishment of a social contract is an increasingly frequent condition for local governments when making decisions on important public affairs. Based on expert knowledge, a citizens' council is one method for conducting social consultations with invited stakeholders. One of its principles is to involve “ordinary” citizens, who are representatively selected to reflect the diversity of the local community, and its main goal is to issue recommendations on a specific topic, ensuring that the needs and interests of the widest possible range of parties are considered. As with other techniques, while the recommendations of the citizens' council do not have to be binding, they should indicate the direction of actions for the local authorities.

Wrocław residents were tasked with developing recommendations in the form of a site development plan for a stretch of Ruska Street. The plan was prepared in collaboration with people responsible for the project, including representatives of the housing estate, a non-governmental organisation and business owners from Ruska Street. The participants took part in 4-hour sessions on three consecutive Saturdays, with the first meeting preceded by a research walk around the area in question. The plan was supplemented with a document describing the concept. In spite of the difficulty in achieving the desired turnout at meetings and a low level of citizen involvement, citizens' councils are an interesting alternative for addressing not only macroscale challenges but also local ones.



CITIZENS' COUNCILS:

Ufel W., Rodziewicz A. (2023) *Narada obywatelska jako deliberacyjna innowacja społeczna – analiza przykładu wrocławskiego*, *Annales Universitatis Mariae Curie-Skłodowska, Lublin – POLONIA* VOL. XXX, 2, DOI: 10.17951/k.2023.30.2.161-178

<https://www.wroclaw.pl/rozmawia/jak-odnowic-ulice-ruska-narada>

Warsaw – Residents first, then architects

The social consultations entitled “What should Five Corners Square be like?” exemplify how residents can serve as a consultative voice for architects and urban planners. This initiative concerned the development of a small square (actually, the intersection of Bracka and Chmielna Streets), but it was no less planned than projects that affected the whole city. The consultation aimed to collect Warsaw residents' views on what role Five Corners Square should fulfil, and the resulting recommendation would be the basis for developing an architectural and urban development plan chosen in a competition. Despite the very small area, the consultation process included architectural walks, two meetings (with business owners and with residents), and an online survey to allow residents to share their opinions.

The residents' comments mostly concerned the development of Five Corners Square, traffic restrictions on the Square and the pedestrian area in Chmielna Street, creating green spaces where people could sit and relax, implementing a system to ensure deliveries to service establishments within designated hours, emptying rubbish bins regularly, and enhancing the aesthetics of the Square to turn it into an iconic location within the city. The residents devoted significant attention to the aesthetic aspects

and lack of greenery on the Square. Proposals to green the Square became the main argument for ecological changes. Instead of a noisy, asphalt-covered intersection, the residents now have a new public space without designated pavements or roadways. The Square is open only to buses and bicycle traffic, and it has become an almost exclusively pedestrian area. The surface of the Square is made of large, reinforced concrete slabs. An important element of the new concept was greening the space with deciduous trees with carefully shaped crowns of a specific height. There is also no shortage of small urban architecture, including benches. A new sculpture, “Chick. Song Thrush” by Joanna Rajkowska, was also unveiled on the Square. By placing your ear to the shell of a large model of a thrush egg, you can hear the sounds of a hatching baby bird and its heartbeat.



SUMMARY OF THE PROJECT AND THE CONSULTATION REPORT:

<https://konsultacje.um.warszawa.pl/processes/jaki-plac-pieciu-rogow?locale=pl>

<https://um.warszawa.pl/-/plac-pieciu-rogow>

Zakrzówek – a civic thriller

Implementing spatial development plans has repeatedly shown how complex it is to optimally fulfil a town’s development plans (such as housing developments or building swimming pools, as in the case of Krakow) while also addressing issues related to environmental protection and accessibility for residents. Zakrzówek is an area with high natural value, which is why many people and ecological organisations fought to minimise interference in the natural environment. Initially, the social consultation process (in 2018) aimed to gather residents’ opinions on the investment plans and their environmental impact. In other words, the question was how to balance the development of recreational infrastructure while retaining Zakrzówek’s unique qualities.

Were the consultations conducted perfectly? No. The city made numerous mistakes, such as failing to disclose all important elements, a poor communication policy, marginalising natural environment issues, and lacking transparency in the process and financial matters. The local community proved to be strong and was able to integrate around the idea. Zakrzówek should be a case study for local governments – which mistakes to avoid, but also how they can compensate for them and finally choose solutions which were not initially “on the table”. The city has not only recovered after several years of losses but is now diligently implementing other plans for the protection of natural ecosystems, fauna and flora. Importantly, the city is executing these plans together with ecological non-governmental organisations and experts. Anyone interested in social participation should familiarise themselves with the course of these consultations.



DETAILS OF THE PROCESS CAN BE FOUND ON THE WEBPAGE

OF A NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATION:

https://akcjaratunkowadlakrakowa.pl/?fbclid=IwY2xjawE1jMlleHRuA2F1bQIxMAABHRkhhb3wmmr-JeEwqTg9cPHfBpkXNLFvmM5ePX09r0jh5_bj802XsanNot2Hw_aem_JZQjBpfAmW7LJ-DFixDtDw



DETAILS OF THE PROCESS CAN BE FOUND ON THE CITY’S WEBPAGE:

https://obywatelski.krakow.pl/konsultacje_spoleczne_-_aktualne/280554,2148,komunikat,konsultacje_spoleczne_projektu_uchwaly_w_sprawie_ustanowienia_uzytku_ekologicznego__zakrzowek___enklawa_wschodnia_.html

The citizens' assembly – Polish cities' experiences

The citizens' assembly is a tool mainly used in large cities. Past experiences from Polish cities highlight the advantages and benefits, but also the challenges and limitations in implementing them (Tab. 4). The city of Lodz has organised this panel twice and highlighted its advantages both for the city residents and the local authorities.

The most important advantages include:

recognition of the residents' perspective by the local government, including their readiness to take action on challenges related to climate change

better understanding among residents of how the city operates and their considerations within this context

building trust by identifying the attitudes of residents, local government officials, non-governmental organisations and academics to the topic in question

genuine involvement of the city residents

building a civic society

evaluation of ongoing actions and identification of prospective activities

a sense of empowerment and experience of co-decision-making

opportunities to identify the needs and expectations of city residents and assess the feasibility of implementing submitted recommendations

acquiring knowledge, developing residents' interests, and exchanging viewpoints

discussing important themes for the city

engaging various social groups and diverse groups of residents

integrating residents through conversations, discussions and the opportunity for the free exchange of ideas

informational and educational activities on necessary or required actions

providing residents with professional knowledge and objective evidence on given topics

empowering residents and implementing recommendations

LITERATURE

Cherghina, S., Ekman, J. and Podolian, O. (2019). *Democratic innovations in Central and Eastern Europe: expanding the research agenda*. *Contemporary Politics*, 25(1).

Mihaylova D. (2004). *Social capital in Central and Eastern Europe. A Critical Assessment and Literature Review*, CEU CPS Working Paper Series, Budapest.

TAB. 4

Topic and characteristics of Citizens' Assemblies (CA)

| LUBLIN | GDAŃSK | WROCŁAW |
|---|---|---|
| <p>Conducted in 2018. The CA was related to reducing smog and concluded with 55 binding recommendations out of 250 submitted, including heating systems, transportation systems, spatial development planning, greenery and education.</p> <p>60 participants and 12 stand-by participants were chosen in a two-stage drawing.</p> | <p>Conducted three times:</p> <p>1st CA – How to prepare Gdansk for heavy rainfall. A total of 63 panellists took part, and eight recommendations were submitted for implementation.</p> <p>2nd CA – How to improve air quality. A total of 56 panellists took part, and nine recommendations were submitted for implementation.</p> <p>3rd CA – How to support civic activity in Gdańsk. In light of the proposal for Gdansk to adopt the European Charter of Equality of Men and Women in Local Life, it was suggested that the panel identify specific actions to support equal treatment in Gdansk. A total of 56 panellists took part, resulting in 39 recommendations submitted for implementation out of the 56 proposed actions.</p> | <p>The 2021 CA aimed to answer the question, "How to improve moving around the city of Wrocław with a view to raising the quality of life and climate protection." The key question was followed up by detailed questions: "Which means of public transportation, bus or tram, should connect the city centre with the Jagodno, Maslice, Muchobor Wielki, Oltaszyn, and Psie Pole housing estates?" and "Should we, in our efforts to improve the quality of life and care for the natural environment, introduce zones with special traffic regulations? For example, we could restrict access to vehicles with specific engines, implement paid access for vehicles, create pedestrian zones, and extend paid parking zones."</p> <p>A total of 56 residents participated. The panel concluded with 20 recommendations that are binding for the city.</p> |
| BENEFITS OF IMPLEMENTATION | | |
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Engaged a completely new group of residents to actively participate in city affairs. Thanks to the way participants were drawn, the panel attracted people who had not been involved in participatory budgeting or prior consultations. The participation of "new" active residents in the panel led to further willingness for social activity among participants, with some qualifying for district councils. The educational part of the CA was important not only for panel participants as a substantive introduction to the panel topic but also for directors of internal departments of the City Hall, who learned a simple method of communicating with the residents (formal vs communicative language). The courage of the City Hall to conduct the CA encouraged them to continue implementing new participation tools, bringing about further participation. The involvement of Fundacja Stocznia, a renowned national NGO that is experienced in participatory initiatives. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> An opportunity for City Hall to respond to genuine problems and challenges. Educational value. Clerks and panellists gained, developed and extended their knowledge. Strong curiosity and eagerness among residents to learn new participation tools, fostering active involvement. The residents had a sense of participating in something important and unique. They had an opportunity to meet with academics and the city president. The participants stated that they were given a fair hearing and they could decide about important city affairs. The recommendations developed and selected during the panel render it possible to monitor and verify how they are executed and how effective the City Hall is. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> The educational part served as a preparatory stage for discussions with residents. The tool's representativeness. It provided a strong social mandate for specific decisions. It offered an instructive experience for the local officials and NGOs implementing the panel. Thanks to this knowledge, it is easier for them to implement other participatory tools, e.g. citizens' councils. Collaboration with the local NGOs, who know the character of the city, as well as its social, urban and official contexts. |
| IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES | | |
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Challenges in persuading internal departments of City Hall, which were formally responsible for the discussed areas, to take part in the CA. Establishing proper relationships and rules of cooperation between the City Hall and the operator (NGOs). Individualism of the project leaders and the opposing attitudes to other CA participants. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> The topic was too broad. The costs were too high. Ideological topics are not suitable for CPs. The best panel topics are those where technical recommendations can be developed, enabling discussions focused on facts rather than beliefs. Overly assertive experts can be a disadvantage when a substantive discussion turns into an ideological one. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Organisational and financial efforts were not commensurate with the results. An assumption of the binding character of the panel is notable. In fact, with poorly prepared recommendations (actions that are not within the competence capacity of the city), it may be impossible to implement. Be mindful of conflicts when political decisions do not support social decisions. Recommendations whose implementation is stretched over time. |
| LINKS/USEFUL SOURCES | | |
| <p>https://partycypacjaobywatelska.pl/strefa-wiedzy/przyklady-dzialan/transport-i-srodowisko/panel-obywatelski-w-lublinie/</p> | <p>https://www.gdansk.pl/panel-obywatelski</p> | <p>https://www.wroclaw.pl/rozprawia/panel-obywatelski-wroclaw</p> |

Source: Own work.

06

What are the key challenges?

Research conclusions

Below are several important challenges that were identified in the course of field studies and the development of this Guide.



Most people in Poland are aware of the consequences of climate change, notice its impacts and increasingly often connect it with a need to change their own behaviour (see Chapter 1). However, they do not translate this awareness into concrete actions. Therefore, encouraging citizens of Polish towns to introduce changes and start small, individual-level revolutions is a challenge. In fact, we argue it is extremely difficult. It is necessary to find a way to transition between two stages: **I have a view on a topic and know that changes must be made, and I am making those changes.**



All types of consultations are an opportunity to learn from one another, not only for the organisers (e.g. the city authorities) but also for the residents. Even if we do not plan to develop educational materials or invite experts from a given area, the fact that the city residents can hear what others think about that topic enables them to broaden their cognitive horizons. Through such consultations, we can learn, among other things, that: a) we are different, so not everyone has a similar view to ours, b) there are various ways to solve every problem; what is more, some of them are equally effective, and c) it is worthwhile to meet and discuss, because synergy effects are sometimes achieved in a group, meaning that a discussion among several people can generate more interesting solutions than speaking with each of them individually.



Changes introduced in cities must result from close collaboration among all entities responsible for the creation and implementation of urban policies related directly and indirectly to climate. Residents of the city should play a significant role in this collaboration. For that reason, **we should choose work methods that involve groups of stakeholders, give them opportunities to express their views and take action, and enable the evaluation of actions that have already been undertaken.** Given the diversity of entities above, it is recommended that proposed methods of cooperation should not be restricted to one type of action but should offer a whole range of options. For example, those who are willing to engage in discussions should be provided with conditions for debating and a venue where

- ✓ they can meet others who are interested in this type of activity. Meanwhile, those who face internal barriers or have external limitations (e.g. they cannot leave home) should have access to a virtual version of the forum, which will enable them to take part in the discussion or merely express their views. We consider it a challenge to create a diverse range of methods that would expose stakeholders to other viewpoints. In many cases, focusing on only one way of reaching stakeholders is preclusive.
- ✓ For the proposal of creating a range of opportunities to participate in consultations to be viable, initiators and organisers should be knowledgeable in alternative consultation methods and have the relevant skills to conduct them. **It is helpful to learn from experts who have already used that method and exchange observations or good practices with them.** This will help avoid mistakes by using appropriate solutions that have already been tested.
- ✓ Adapting to climate change must be a continuous rather than sporadic process to make it effective. Both climate change and adaptive actions are constantly changing so findings from one point in time can become outdated sooner rather than later. Therefore, it is **worth repeating activities used to research opinions and develop recommendations and solutions for adaptation to climate change.**
- ✓ The saying “all hands on deck” is also relevant to climate change adaptation actions. **The wider the reach** of invitations to take part in consultations and implement recommendations, **the more likely these actions will be successful.** In addition, knowledge on the topic will reach a wider audience and, consequently, the number of people working for that cause may also increase.
- ✓ **None of the proposed solutions can be implemented without incurring costs.** Only by securing adequate financing for climate change adaptation activities can urban decision-makers avoid the expenses associated with addressing the consequences of these changes.



II Lodz Citizens Assembly
Fot. Dorota Kudlicka

07

How to engage residents effectively?

Recommended techniques for participatory climate change adaptation in cities

An array of participatory techniques was described in the earlier sections of this Guide (see Chapter 4), along with several cases of consultation initiatives aimed at adapting towns to climate change (see Chapter 5). Findings from the research conducted with organisers of participatory panels in Poland, Slovakia and Hungary (including local governments, non-governmental organisations, and academics) were also discussed (see Chapter 6). Taking all this information into consideration, a few participatory techniques have been chosen that are recommended for use in consultations on urban adaptation to climate change. Those techniques take into consideration the socio-cultural contexts of Polish society and Central Eastern European countries, as well as the organisational capacity of local governments in these countries.



FIG. 9
Recommended techniques for participatory adaptation
Source: Own work.

The selected techniques are ranked from those requiring the most substantial outlays and organisational, time, financial and human resources to those that would suit smaller local governments interested in involving their residents in participatory adaptation to climate change (Fig. 9). Apart from focus group interviews, an important element of each technique is **deliberation**, i.e. jointly considering and discussing a problem or topic. It was a conscious decision to choose techniques that require an in-depth discussion and exchange of arguments from participants. Deliberation facilitates a better understanding of a problem and, as a result, leads to higher-quality decisions and increases their acceptance. It also reinforces civic competencies – participants have an increased sense of responsibility for decision-making and develop reasoning and cooperation skills. In conclusion, the chosen techniques can contribute to more effective, impartial and acceptable decisions in various contexts, especially regarding adaptation to climate change.

CITIZENS' ASSEMBLY

The citizens' assembly is a novel form of democracy based on a random drawing of residents. They are tasked with analysing a specific problem, discussing possible solutions and making a rational, conscious decision. The participants are a representative sample of a community (a city) in terms of gender, education and place of residence.

Panel participants are drawn in a two-stage process, the first of which involves sending information to a selected group of residents about the panel and an invitation to the event. Then, out of those who respond to the invitation and decide to take part in the event, a sample of people is randomly drawn to represent the community regarding its socio-demographic factors.

The citizens' assembly usually involves two stages. The first is educational, with participants gaining knowledge on the topic in question from invited experts, who discuss various perspectives and solutions. It is also possible for panellists to listen to members of non-governmental organisations and other interested parties. This stage can take a few meetings.

In the second stage, **the deliberative phase**, participants debate in groups, analysing a problem and potential solutions. With the support of independent facilitators, participants prepare thoughtful recommendations before voting to choose the key recommendations. The recommendations which pass with at least 80% of votes should be implemented by the local authorities.

The panel concludes with a public announcement of the results by the participants. The local community, which will receive the accepted recommendations, is informed about them in dedicated press conferences, via the Internet and in traditional media. The progress of the city in implementing these solutions can be monitored by following posts on the local government's webpage.

The first citizens' assembly took place in British Columbia, Canada, in 2004 with the goal of developing recommendations to reform the electoral system (Lang 2007; OECD 2020; Podgórska-Rykała 2023). Since then, this method has gained popularity all over the world, notably in Ireland, where it addressed controversial issues such as same-sex marriages and abortion. In Poland, the concept of citizens' panels was introduced by Marcin Gerwin in 2018. The first citizens' assembly was organised in Gdansk in 2016, focusing on preparing the city for heavy rainfall caused by climate change. Another city where the citizens' panel was conducted was Lublin. In 2018, the residents discussed and decided on actions to improve the city's air quality. Other Polish cities such as Cracow, Lodz, Poznan, Rzeszow, Warsaw and Wroclaw have also conducted citizens' panels on topics addressing climate change.

Conducting the citizens' assembly is a complex process that requires careful planning and the involvement of different stakeholders.

To organise it, it is necessary to:



- 01.** Clearly define the topic of the panel by identifying and specifying the problem precisely.
- 02.** Appoint an organising team that will be responsible for planning and preparing the whole initiative, including securing funds, logistics and human resources.
- 03.** Recruit participants by drawing a representative sample of residents and sending them invitations, and then choosing a final group of panellists with respect to demographic criteria such as gender, age, education and place of residence.
- 04.** Prepare the educational phase, which should include:
 - Choosing independent experts and members of parties (non-governmental organisations, institutions, informal groups) interested in presenting their views.
 - Developing educational materials that will help panellists better understand the problem and available solutions.
 - Organising educational meetings during which experts present information on the topic in question.
- 05.** Prepare the deliberative phase, which should include:
 - Conducting group discussions where panellists, supported by facilitators, analyse the problem and discuss various solutions and their consequences.
 - Supporting panellists as they prepare recommendations based on their knowledge and discussions.
 - Conducting preferential voting to choose key recommendations for implementation.
- 06.** Present the accepted recommendations to local authorities, monitor implementation and inform panellists from the local community.
- 07.** Publicly announce the panel results, e.g. in the media, at press conferences and on websites.
- 08.** Prepare and disseminate the final report, which should include detailed information on the proceedings of the panel and its recommendations.
- 09.** Conduct evaluation research to assess the panel's effectiveness and identify areas for improvement.

While organising a citizens' assembly is a complex endeavour, such panels can serve as a remedy for a crisis of democracy by effectively involving citizens in broader democratic processes (Nielsen, Sørensen 2023). Citizens' panels are also noted for their potential to transform political culture by fostering trust and co-creating a joint vision of the future (Vrydagh 2023). Thanks to careful planning, transparency and the involvement of various stakeholders, citizens' panels can lead to informed and thoughtful decisions that will have a tangible impact on local communities. It is important that panels are based on a social contract, which manifests itself in the binding character of their recommendations.

CITIZENS' COUNCIL

The citizens' panel described above is a time-consuming, costly, and resource-intensive technique. Consequently, there are increasingly simplified alternatives that allow both local governments and entities with limited funding to use the advantages of deliberation. One such technique that is gaining popularity in Poland is the citizens' council. It is “a **form of social consultation aimed at preparing qualitative recommendations on a specific issue**. This goal is achieved by engaging a randomly selected, diverse group of people who jointly participate in two stages. In the first educational stage, they familiarise themselves with expert knowledge and activities of the Town Hall, and in the deliberative stage, they prepare social recommendations for the local authorities” (Ostrowska et al. 2024: 6). The council differs from the panel in several key elements: (1) no invitations for participation are sent to randomly selected residents or households; after promotional efforts by organisers, residents voluntarily express their willingness to take part in the council. Then, out of those voluntary applicants, a group of participants is chosen to reflect the community's socio-demographic diversity. (2) Another difference is **the number of participants; the council usually includes about 12–20 participants**, while the Polish citizen's panels usually involve about 75–100 individuals (Ufel, Rodziewicz 2023). (3) The third significant difference is time and a number of meetings: in the citizens' panel, participants tend to deliberate over 4–5 days for 7–8 hours each day (ibid.) while the **citizens' council can be conducted over 3 days for up to 6 hours a day**, with simplified versions potentially taking place over a weekend or even within a day lasting only 6 hours (Ostrowska et al. 2024: 23). In addition to drawing inspiration from citizens' panels, some observers note that this formula derives its inspiration “from *consensus conferences* and *citizens' juries*, which are popular in Western Europe and USA” (see Ufel, Rodziewicz 2023).

In summary, the citizens' council has similar features to the citizens' panel, apart from the differences presented above (i.e. the lack of randomly sent invitations, fewer participants and the amount of time required). It also consists of an educational part, where, thanks to experts, participants gain knowledge on the topic, and a deliberative part, where experts and participants discuss and work on solutions (recommendations), which are submitted for voting in the final stage.

To implement a citizens' council, similar preparations must be made to those of the citizens' assembly, apart from sending invitations to randomly selected residents or households.

Therefore, to organise the citizens' council, it is necessary to:



- 01.** Clearly define the topic of the council by identifying and specifying the problem precisely.
- 02.** Appoint an organising team that will be responsible for planning and preparing the whole initiative, including securing funds, logistics and human resources.
- 03.** Conduct wide-ranging promotional activities among residents. Subsequently, choose a group of participants based on demographic criteria such as gender, age, education and place of residence.
- 04.** Prepare the educational phase, which should include:
 - Choosing independent experts.
 - Developing educational materials that will help participants better understand the problem and available solutions.
 - Organising educational meetings during which experts present information on the topic in question.
- 05.** Prepare the deliberative phase, which should include:
 - Group discussions, where participants analyse the problem and discuss various solutions and their consequences, supported by facilitators.
 - Supporting participants while they develop recommendations based on their knowledge and discussions
 - Preferential voting to choose key recommendations for implementation.
- 06.** Present the accepted recommendations to the local authorities, monitor the implementation and inform participants and the local community.
- 07.** Publicly announce the council's results, e.g. in the media, press conferences and on websites.
- 08.** Prepare and disseminate the final report, which should include detailed information on the proceedings of the council and its recommendations.
- 09.** Conduct evaluation research to assess the council's effectiveness and identify areas for improvement.

DELIBERATIVE MEETINGS

Deliberative meetings bring together carefully selected stakeholders who are interested in the problem under discussion. The selection of stakeholders can also be expanded by inviting people who are directly or indirectly affected by the issues at hand. It is important that participants represent diverse views on the topic, and their numbers should allow for the creation of at least two subgroups for discussion (to ensure participant comfort, the number of people in a group should not exceed ten). Naturally, more complex topics require more participants and more discussion tables. Participants should be purposely seated at particular tables to ensure diversity at each table. **Before the meeting, participants should receive educational materials that provide concise, clear and impartial information about the topic.** The materials aim to level the participants' understanding of the relevant facts before they arrive.

The meeting is overseen by a **host**, whose duties include welcoming participants, introducing the consultation topic, communicating basic discussion rules, managing time and elaborating on topics of particular rounds, and thanking the participants at the end. **Highly skilled facilitators** are also present to support group discussions, supervise the proceedings, and ensure a good atmosphere while keeping to a minimum their influence on the substantive content of the discussions.

The whole procedure should take a few hours at most, and it is worth dividing the discussion into a few rounds. The most effective and comfortable format for participants consists of two rounds, each of which lasts no longer than 120 minutes. The topic of the deliberative meetings should always be important to both the initiators and participants. Before proceeding to table discussions, it is a good idea to prepare a detailed script of the meeting. This allows facilitators to lead the discussion in an orderly manner, ensuring that in subsequent rounds, each group discusses the same issues and executes the same tasks. All participants' answers should be recorded, as the outcomes of this discussion are mostly qualitative data related to suggested solutions and supporting arguments.

Before conducting consultations through deliberative meetings, it is essential to determine whether the initiator (such as the city president or a high-rank decision-maker) is open to all arguments presented during the discussion. For desirable resolutions, this includes being receptive to various – even “inconvenient” – views and considering solutions submitted by participants that may differ from their own ideas. Although the script should include specific topics to be discussed, there remains flexibility in terms of arguments, examples, opinions and concepts.

To organise a deliberative meeting, it is necessary to:



- 01.** Precisely characterise the stakeholder groups and determine how to reach them. Establish a plan to assign people to tables, which is important to ensure a balance among participants with diverse attitudes to the same topic.
- 02.** Develop educational materials and decide how they will be distributed.
- 03.** Write the script of the meeting with detailed tasks for each group and time allocated for the whole meeting and individual rounds.
- 04.** Specify what form the outcome of the deliberation will take, i.e. recommendations, instructions, prescriptions, or assessments of various solutions. This largely impacts the tasks of the deliberative groups (working on directives differs from choosing one solution from several propositions).
- 05.** Find facilitators and prepare them to work and follow the script. In addition, decide who will lead the consultations as the host.
- 06.** Establish the location, date and time of the meeting. Book suitable rooms, but remember that one large room is better, where you can put several tables, than a few smaller rooms which can hold only one table. Having participants sitting at other tables is motivating and increases engagement in the tasks.
- 07.** Prepare various materials needed for leading a discussion on the topic (e.g. photos, maps, plans, drafts) and for completing tasks (e.g. paper and writing supplies). It is a good idea to have the necessary equipment to support the facilitators (e.g. laptop, multimedia projector, microphone, loudspeakers, voice recorders) if the discussions are to be recorded.
- 08.** Supply soft drinks and snacks if they are included in the meeting plan.

A deliberative meeting starts by welcoming participants and explaining the goal of the meeting. Participants are then assigned to tables through a drawing process and given an explanation of the meeting order (including the division into rounds) and deliberation rules. Towards the end of the meeting, before thanking the participants for their contributions and work, each group's outcomes should be presented. However, it does not mean that the final results of the meeting will not be shared with the participants.

After concluding the meeting, the organisers or implementers compile the gathered materials, e.g. by preparing a transcript from the deliberations. It is also recommended that they meet with facilitators, who will have an opportunity to share their observations and opinions on the meeting and the participants.

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS

The focus group interview (FGI) is a popular research technique in social sciences that could also be effectively applied in social consultations. This technique involves conducting a group discussion led by a moderator, who asks questions and ensures a friendly and safe atmosphere while encouraging the participants to share their opinions freely. **A typical focus group comprises 6 to 12 people**, and it is advisable to create a few such groups – usually about four – within a project. Each session should last up to two hours and take place in a specially adapted room, which is equipped with a large table, recording equipment, and video cameras and separated from an observation room – where the research team will watch the meeting – by a one-way mirror. It is also possible to conduct the session in an ordinary room that is suitably arranged. The point is to record all discussions, which makes it easier to analyse statements afterwards.

Group interviews are conducted according to **previously prepared scripts**, which consist of thematic blocks ordered in a logical sequence. The script should be simple, comprising three to four major threads. Various projective techniques are often introduced to make the discussion more attractive and help to elicit participants' hidden views.

FGIs consist of three major parts: an introduction, a main discussion and a conclusion, which includes a summary and thanks to participants. Key elements of a well-conducted interview include a clearly defined problem, suitable participants, a competent moderator, a well-prepared script and a strategy for conducting the interviews.

Choosing and recruiting participants are important and sometimes challenging issues. **A significant feature of FGIs is the aim to create internally homogenous groups** (people who are similar to one another) while also being diverse enough to allow the participants to feel more secure and share their experiences freely, e.g. a focus group can consist of male and female residents of a town who vary in terms of age and education level. In this case, the element that ties them is living in the same area.

To organise Focus Group Interviews, it is necessary to:



- 01.** Define the subject and intended goals of the discussion.
- 02.** Recruit a group of participants with specific socio-demographic characteristics relevant to the issues being addressed. In an FGI on climate change, it is advisable to seek a diverse group to gain various perspectives. There should be 6-12 participants in the group.
- 03.** Maintain contact with those who agreed to participate in the discussion, reminding them about the date of the meeting, among other things.
- 04.** Hire a qualified moderator who can effectively conduct the discussion and manage group dynamics. The moderator should ensure that the participants feel safe and comfortable during the meeting.
- 05.** Prepare a script of the interview that includes a set of suggested open-ended questions that align with the goals. It is crucial that questions are simple, clear and impartial. In addition, the script should comprise the following parts:
 - An introduction, which should include the following elements and information:
 - Welcoming participants and introducing the moderator.
 - Introducing the goals of the meeting and discussing the rules of cooperation during the discussion.
 - Informing participants about confidentiality and ways to use information from the meeting.
 - A warm-up to make participants feel secure and comfortable by asking general questions that help integrate them.
 - The discussion part proper, which should include problem areas for discussion and suggested questions.
 - A conclusion, which should comprise the following points:
 - A revision of key discussion points.
 - Asking participants for their final thoughts, reflections and conclusions.
 - Thanking the participants for their time and contribution.
- 06.** Choose and prepare a suitable room. FGIs are usually conducted in specially adapted research rooms called “focus rooms”, which consist of at least two rooms: one equipped with a large table, recording devices, and video cameras, and an observation room equipped with a one-way mirror, which makes it possible to watch the discussions. FGIs can be conducted in other rooms that ensure comfort and security for participants, e.g. adequately large rooms in community centres.
- 07.** Provide participants with light refreshments and remuneration for participating in the discussion.
- 08.** Send feedback to the participants, e.g. a report or the main conclusions of the discussion.

While there are many variants of FGIs, from the point of view of the purpose of this publication, two are notable: **mini-groups** and **repeated groups**. Mini-groups usually consist of 4 or 5 participants, and their small number is usually due to the topic of the discussion. They could be experts who are difficult to gather in one place and at one time, or the topic could be sensitive, which requires the participants to articulate longer and more frequent statements. Repeated groups involve the same participants who take part in two sessions (see Lisek-Michalska 2013). Both variants could be used in the participatory adaptation of cities to climate change. Mini-groups could be employed for consultations with experts, while repeated groups could be used for meetings with residents, during which educational materials will be provided in the first session, and they might be asked to review them before the next meeting.

In conclusion, FGIs can generate valuable information if conducted properly. They are easier for participants because they are not required to reach a consensus in those sessions. The opinions gathered are particularly useful when solutions are being developed rather than when choosing from final propositions.

Participatory urban adaptation to climate change, as was shown in the Guide, is a complex endeavour whose success relies on openness to change, and the cooperation of many entities, both in developing an attitude toward adapting cities to climate change and using deliberative techniques for this purpose. In this process, it is equally important to exchange experiences and share knowledge on successes and challenges in using participatory techniques, along with their potential and limitations. As the authors, we hope that the Guide will draw you to participatory urban adaptation to climate change and encourage and motivate you to implement the techniques and methods presented for creating an urban climate policy. This, in turn, will make it possible to master this process in practice, modify and update it, and implement new solutions.

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USEFUL SOURCES

Methods and techniques for conducting social consultations <https://www.press.uni.lodz.pl/index.php/wul/catalog/view/1004/5026/2807>

Social participation in creating the city's climate policy in Lodz <https://wydawnictwo.uni.lodz.pl/produkt/spoleczny-udzial-w-tworzeniu-miejskiej-polityki-klimatycznej/>

Citizens' panel. A guide to democracy that works https://citizensassemblies.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Panel-obywatelski-przewodnik_PL_web.pdf

Citizens' council on climate. A guide for organisers of councils https://poledialogu.org.pl/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/NOOK_PODRE%CC%A8CZNIK_ROZKLADO%CC%81WKI.pdf

Deliberative Café: citizens' panel, easy to conduct <https://citizensassemblies.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/PL-Deliberative-Cafe.pdf>

Focus research. Methodological and ethical problems https://wydawnictwo.uni.lodz.pl/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/LISEK-MICHALSKA_ebook.pdf

Participedia – a global network and a platform for researchers, educators, practitioners, decision-makers, activists and all interested in public participation and democratic innovations <https://participedia.net/>

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