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Editorial

The idea of public participating in decision making processes, including planning, is as old as participatory democracy. The primary rationale for public participation in planning is based on the democratic maxim that those affected by a decision should participate directly in the decision making. Various planning theories including transactive, negotiative, and communicative planning, offered between 1970's and 1990's, provided conceptual, ethical, and pragmatic arguments for opening technocratic and expert-driven planning processes to public participation.

Different conceptual models of public participation emerged classifying it along the participation spectrum, beginning with the Arnstein's 1969 Ladder of Citizen Participation. They were accompanied by the methods of participation including public meetings, planning and design charrettes, citizen juries, citizen panels, focus groups, deliberative polling, and citizen advisory committees, among others. In urban planning, the predominant method has been public meeting. Its strengths include an open format, an opportunity for face-to-face interaction, a real-time setting for an argumentative discourse, and an opportunity to create social bonds and trust. Its limitations are the requirement of physical presence in fixed time and place setting; an environment that can be intimidating for those who are uncomfortable with public speaking due to low education, socio-economic status, gender, or other reasons; and low social, demographic, and geographical scalability. The emergence of widely available mapping tools, developments in Geographic Information Systems, growth of information and communication technologies (including World Wide Web), and the proliferation of digital geographic data spurred the interest in the development and testing of new methods supporting public participation in planning. The overarching motivation for these new methods, developed and packaged under different labels including PPGIS, PGIS, Geoweb, and serious gaming, has been the desire to elevate public participation to higher rungs of the citizen participation ladder – from the recipient of information and commentators of planning documents to their co-creators.

The papers collected in the issue of Regional Development and Regional Policy report on the developments and applications of participatory methods in urban planning on the bases of selected case studies from Poland, Italy, and Brazil. The reader will notice not only the discussion of particular methods and tools employed in those cases, but also their cultural and political context, which un-

derscores the recognition that human factors, including political, cultural, and legal, are as much an enabler and an obstacle to successful public participation as methods and tools.

In the opening paper, **Czepkiewicz et al.**, present two methods of supporting public participation; *geo-questionnaire* and *geo-discussion*, and their applications in urban mobility planning on the example of two Polish cities: Poznań and Łodź. Much of public involvement in mobility/transportation planning involves collecting mobility data, which traditionally has been done trough travel diaries. The paper describes how an interactive map linked with a Web questionnaire (i.e. geo-questionnaire) can supplement or even supplant travel diaries by marking on a map the locations of visited places or driven routes and annotating them with comments. The authors argue for the need to facilitate a meaningful public discourse on urban mobility options, and to this end they present in the paper an application of geo-discussion – a structured discussion forum linking argumentative discourse with interactive online maps. The use and the efficacy of geo-questionnaire method are further explored in the paper by **Bąkowska et al**. The authors evaluate the method and the applications of corresponding tool in five case studies representing different scales ranging from an urban market place, through a suburban community, to a multi-neighborhood area. Their findings accordingly, the geo-questinnaire method has a potential not only for collecting people's preferences that may inform planners in their preparations of local plans, but also in designing advertising policy, public transportation solutions or monitoring the broad needs of inhabitants. They argue that geo-questionnaire should evolve from a tool for collecting information into an interactive platform for communication between the decision makers and the public and for monitoring the decision implementation.

The series of three papers that follow focuses on the methodology of *Geodesign* as an iterative and structured approach to rapid prototyping involving the notion of problem that needs to be addressed, processes that need to be taken into account, proposed changes that address the problem, their impacts, stakeholders and their positions, and the mechanism leading to a preliminary design that serves as the point of departure in finding an acceptable solution. In this sense, Geodesign conveys two non-mutually exclusive concepts; in the literal sense of the word – a plan of some intervention (landscape design) that has spatial footprints and consequences (impacts) for various constituents (systems), and in the policy sense – a procedure that leads to achieving the intervention(s). The first of the papers, by **Campagna et al**., reports on the Geodesign study workshop, organized and led by the authors in Cagliari, Sardinia, in 2016. The workshop involved the participants from Cagliari Metropolitan Area who worked in a group collaborative setting on the design of future change alternatives. The authors describe the Geodesign workflow and its steps and present a Geodesign tool called Geodsign Hub. In their findings, they state that Geodesign method can be effective in situations, in which the goal is to develop the shared understanding of problem at hand; there is a need to identify issues, options, and available choices; and there is limited time for finding acceptable solutions. The following

two papers discuss the methodological aspects of Geodesign on the example of two applications from the State of Minas Gerais in Brazil. In the paper by **Zyngier et al**., the authors report on the Geodesign workshop, organized in the City of Belo Horizonte, focused on the design of development plan for the culturally important area of city called Pampuhla. After engaging the representatives of various stakeholder groups and stepping through three iterations of Geodesign workflow, the authors observed the capacity of Geodesign to facilitate a learning process, in which the stakeholders are confronted with choosing problem solutions on the bases of their performance. This forces them to rethink their prior positions, preconceived notions, and biases. The paper by **Moura et al**., focuses on the importance of interoperability in facilitating different forms of visualization that not only correspond to the physical characteristics of study area but also fit cognitive data processing needs of Geodesign participants. The authors argue that the ability to easily navigate between visualization tools increases the capacity to understand data and to participate in the Geodesign process. They describe on the examples of two Geodesign workshops how navigating between different geodata formats enables the visualization of design proposals in 2D and 3D, and inform their description with the opinions of workshop participants.

The closing paper by **Matczak et al**., departs from the focus on geoinformation technology-supported methods and tools for public participation in urban planning and zooms in on the prevalent method of participation – public consultations. The authors compare the process of public consultations in the context of two applications at a regional and a municipal scale. The former concerns a regional water management plan, for which public consultations are legally mandated and involve mostly technical experts, bureaucrats, and NGO representatives. The latter involves local spatial plans in the City of Poznań, it is optional and engages local leaders, individual citizens, business, and NGOs. The analysis of both processes leads the authors to conclude that despite obvious differences both processes are quite similar in their top-down organization and the application of consultation as the principal public participation method. Interestingly enough, the authors argue that given legal, administrative and procedural conditions, public consultations provide the optimal mode of public participation for the two applications at hand. They close by positing that moving up to a higher form of public engagement along the spectrum of participation requires "a gradual learning by both the administration and the public".