Dialogværktøj til udvælgelse af borgerinddragelsesmetoder til en specifik situation
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A dialogue tool for the selection of public participation methods for a specific situation

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2016
The purpose of the tool

A lot of good methods for increasing public participation have been developed during the last few decades. Authorities and property developers have both stated that there is a need for a systematic process in order to be able to navigate through the many methods that can be selected for the specific planning process. Academia is also aware of the fact that there are missing some criteria for how the best possible method for increasing public participation is selected.

Public participation processes are complex because they concern people whose relationships, preferences and social realities are different and constantly changing. This makes it very hard to select the “best” method from some office far away from the area where the plan is to be implemented. Therefore, it is important that public participation methods are selected based on a dialogue with the residents affected and the local actors. We see it as the responsibility of the property developer or the authorities to take the initiative towards launching a dialogue process with interested residents and local actors about what methods to use to get them involved in the context of the specific situation.

This publication is a dialogue tool for the selection of the public participation methods and is intended to be used by the authorities and property developers. It presents a systematic approach for how methods for increasing public participation can be selected based on the specific situation that the planning is taking place under. The dialogue tool highlights that the process, the situation and anchoring are key elements in the selection of methods.

The dialogue tool is inspired by experiences from public participation in Danish and international practice. The tool is based on communicative planning theory and action research. The basic perception is that the most optimal solutions for the issues we are faced with in the planning phase are created through participatory democratic processes, revolving around knowledge sharing and knowledge gaining among the authorities, residents and other interested parties who are involved.

The dialogue tool is not a final model. It needs to be developed through testing, assessments and adaptations. In other words, it is a rough model inspired by research and practice which the authorities and property developers can adapt to their specific projects.

The dialogue tool is not intended to solve all challenges related to public participation and it makes no judgements about which method or which influence is “best”. It is, however, a tool that can be used for having an in-depth dialogue about the opportunities and barriers in the specific situation.
The elements of the dialogue tool

The starting point of the dialogue tool is that the selection of the most suitable public participation method involves a process element, a situational element and an anchoring element. Below, the three elements are briefly described, serving as a basis for a more detailed and action-oriented description on the following pages.

The process element

This element is about creating a dialogue process that can bring the local context into play. This is where the process for public participation is developed and the activities are decided upon. This element emphasises that the property developer and the authorities must be capable of reacting to changing conditions on an ongoing basis by adapting the selected methods to the changes that will occur during the planning process. The most important steps of the process element are:

- Establishing a local resource group for dialogue and the development of the public participation efforts.
- The resource group, the authority and the property developer will design and re-design the public participation process on an ongoing basis.

The situational element

This element is about the specific situation in which the public participation is to take place in. It involves a dialogue on both the needs and resources of local actors and also the needs and resources of the property developer/authorities. This element provides suggestions for what local issues need attention and what criteria should be considered through three steps:

- Dialogue about the needs and expectations for public participation in the specific situation.
- Dialogue about resources involving residents, the property developer and the authority.
- Dialogue about practical issues in the specific participation process.

Anchoring element

This concerns considering the anchoring of projects in the planning phase, even after the project’s formal conclusion. The anchoring element is also directed inwards in the organisations where work is being done considering how experiences, lessons learned and knowledge are gained over time - especially in the case of property developers or authorities. The most important practical steps for anchoring are:

- The resource group considering steps for the future anchoring of the project in the local area.
- Knowledge-sharing and an exchange of experiences in the organisation.

The three dialogue-steps appear as separate elements in order to have a systematic approach in the method selection process. In practice, you start with the process element. Then the elements overlap, because it is continually being considered how new knowledge or new developments can impact all three elements.
1. The process element

The first element in the dialogue tool is the process element. Here, the objective is for the public participation process to be planned through dialogue with the authorities, the property developer and the local community so that both the design of and follow-up on the public participation processes are anchored in the actors and residents who take part in the planning process.

The process element follows the planning process from the first step up until after the planning process is concluded. It is important that the dialogue with the local community is initiated as soon as possible, meaning, as soon as one has decided to carry out a planning process. An early dialogue can help reveal potential problems and allow for reconsidering the ideas behind the planning at an early stage.

Initiating a dialogue early also provides better opportunities for taking into account the perspectives of residents and thereby ensuring a real public participation. This is because in the start-up phase of the planning process, a lot is still negotiable. For example, it might be an advantage to open up a dialogue about public participation before the Environmental Impact Assessment idea phase so that the idea phase is completed in a manner that matches the specific situation and ambitions for the process.

Participation is a general concept for the interaction between the authorities, the property developer and local interests in a planning process. The first step of the process involves highlighting the objectives of the participation process and, at the same time, creating mechanisms for sharing knowledge and exchanging experiences related to the process. Participation is also about continually adapting, assessing and anchoring the project on a local level. It is this rough sketch of the development of the public participation process that forms the basis for the design of the process.

Establish a local resource group tasked with designing the public participation effort

The local resource group must be included in designing and re-assessing the public participation effort and thus be a link to a wider participation of the local community in the planning process. The first step in the process element is the identification of the relevant local resource people. For example, one can start with formal local residents’ associations and informal networks in the local area. The resource group is identified through a transparent process in collaboration with local actors in order to gain relevant knowledge of the local area, involve the relevant people, aim to get as many as possible represented and to encourage local co-ownership of the design process. The composition of the resource group should be dynamic, so the group can change as needed. TIP: See specific methods for identifying and mobilising local representatives in "Borgerne på banen" [Residents getting involved].

The setting up of the resource group is adapted to the project’s type (for example, a point project or a stretch project). For point projects such as technical facilities, the resource group will be relatively easy to identify. It can be more difficult to do so for stretch projects, however, that move across several...
municipalities and interest groups. In the event of long stretches, it might be possible to gradually let representatives from the municipalities who are very familiar with the local area represent those areas, and only set up the resource groups for certain stretches of the project. If sufficient knowledge of the local area cannot be gained from the municipalities, one might, as an alternative, consider setting up several local resource groups. In that case, it will be important to coordinate across those groups, however.

The dialogue process

The suggestion for the dialogue process is based on a democratic approach where the objective is to anchor public participation processes locally through designing them in collaboration with interested residents, local actors and authorities. Thus, it is not only the property developer’s or the authorities’ expectations and knowledge that shape the process, but just as much the wishes, needs and challenges that are to be found in the local area. The figure below sketches out how a dialogue process might take place in a project. The figure can contribute to maintaining focus during the process, while at the same time, the dialogue adds sub-themes and contextual issues that characterise the specific area that the planning takes place in.

![Process design for the design of a public participation process.](image)

**The starting point**
The basis for the plan, legal frameworks, etc. Short- and long-term objectives of the project and the public participation efforts.

**Implement process**
Assess the process on an ongoing basis
Attention to changes in local conditions.

**Participation design**
Design of process
Selection of methods

**Local resource group**
The local community (residents, associations, municipalities)

**Re-assess the process**
Overall assessment of how things are going and suggestions for changes. Anchoring of the project in the local area.

**Situational issues**
Local and planning-related opportunities and challenges
Transparency and visibility are crucial for the public participation process. Therefore, the authority or property developer must be visible as it relates to what is the situation (right square), meaning, explaining the formal framework they operate under and their objectives with the project. Subsequently, a dialogue is begun about the issues in the specific situation (right circle) that characterise the local area (see the next chapter). The knowledge that is here being applied is also used for the joint deliberations and planning of the actual participation design (lowest circle). After this, there is a discussion about the implementation (left circle) of the process design for the public participation effort. The dialogue should also include how changes in the planning or local conditions should initiate a re-assessment (top circle) of the design so that it is adapted to the changes. Finally, the participation process in the resource group is assessed in order to ensure feedback and dialogue about the need for a future local anchoring and communication after the formal conclusion of the planning process.

On the basis of the dialogue in the resource group, there will be on-going follow-ups on the process. For example, this could be the mobilisation of new resident initiatives in the process that might mean that the process design needs to be reconsidered. Also consider whether the local resource group can be handed areas of responsibility in the process design.

The figure can be used as a starting point for the dialogue at the first meeting between the authority or property developer and the local area (residents, municipalities, associations, committees). Through the entire dialogue process, it is important that what the parties agree or disagree on is noted. This ensures that there is visibility and agreement about what the dialogue process has led to. This can, for example, be achieved through shared meeting minutes.

**TIP:** An overview of international literature about process design can be found in Tuler and Webler (2010) and Bryson et al. (2012). Specific methods for assessment can be found in “Borgerne på banen” [Residents getting involved] and “The Community Planning Handbook”. The literature points out the most frequent pitfalls and the opportunities to ensure flexibility in the process.
2. The situational element

The second element in the dialogue tool is about uncovering the conditions in the specific participation situation and then deciding upon which methodical approaches would be relevant to use in the specific situation. The key parts of this element are A) having a dialogue about the local area’s, the authority’s and/or the property developer’s needs and expectations for public participation B) having a dialogue about the actor’s resources for public participation in the specific situation and C) having a dialogue about practical issues in the planning process. Needs and resources are defined by a series of questions on the following pages based on the formal frameworks. They will, among other things, focus on the project’s significance for the local community, geographic and sociological factors and what role residents can and should play in the process. These considerations create a starting point for a joint decision on what public participation methods are best suited to the situation.

As shown on the figure, a dialogue about needs leads to a “wish list” for methods that need to be weighed against the actor’s resources and a series of practical considerations. The objective is to ensure a compromise of expectations between what is needed and what is possible. With an open and honest approach, the dialogue can lead to an important sense of ownership concerning the decisions behind the selection of a tool.

Whereas the authorities’ and property developers’ resources often have a political agenda, organisational frames, experience and skills, the residents’ resources can be a question of organisation in the local area or experience from other participation processes. The resources of both the authorities and property developers are significant in deciding upon which methods make sense in the specific situation.

Every planning process often involves several methods for the interaction between the actors. Therefore, it is important that the dialogue between the property developer or authority and the local resource groups address what is aimed for in the planning process and when various forms of participation are initiated in the various phases of the planning process.
**Dialogue about the need for participation and the expectations for the specific situation**

The needs of the different actors are significant when it comes to the selection of public participation methods, also in relation to the level of participation and the type of interaction. For example, a dialogue about the project’s opportunities for creating synergy effects in the local community will probably work best if it is driven by the local community - they are, after all, the ones who know the local values and opportunities best. It will presumably also require the involvement of many local stakeholders and take place in a creative and confidential setting.

In the form below, questions are listed concerning needs that might be useful to discuss in the local resource group between the authorities, property developer and residents. The answers to the questions form the basis for placing the situation in the figure below, which points to relevant methods. The dialogue must take place during the start-up of the planning process as a part of designing the public participation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The resident’s needs for participation and their expectations</th>
<th>The authorities’ and property developers’ needs for participation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- To what extent is the public impacted by the project?</td>
<td>- How much interest is there in the project?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o How many residents will be affected?</td>
<td>o Is it a politically sensitive planning subject?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o What impacts will the residents experience?</td>
<td>o How keen are the decision-makers to get the plan implemented?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- How do the residents view these kinds of projects?</td>
<td>o Are there tight deadlines?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Are there impacts which make the residents concerned or potential conflicts of interest?</td>
<td>- Can local ideas and suggestions strengthen the plan and the basis for decision making?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o How much are the authorities and project developers trusted?</td>
<td>- Will local ownership be an advantage or a necessity in order to complete the plan?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Do residents need to learn more about the project?</td>
<td>- Is there a need for participation and ownership in order to increase legitimacy?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- How has the project been covered in the media, TV, the local newspaper or on social media?</td>
<td>- To what extent do the authorities and property developer prioritise public participation in general?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- What are the expectations of the residents?</td>
<td>o Does the authority and property developer want a high standard?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o What is the “usual” level of participation?</td>
<td>o Is a good local public reputation important?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Has there previously been conflicts between plans and the local community?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Project-oriented participation**

The authorities seek out knowledge of the local area and enhance local participation in the process

Knowledge can be gained from personal interviews, focus groups, hearings and dialogue café meetings.

**Information**

A limited need leads to minimal participation

Information meetings, announcements, homepages.

**Resident-oriented participation**

Residents seek out answers and set up meetings in order to get influence

Residents set up meetings where politicians and experts participate, pop-up events, social media

**Participation and shared influence**

Mutual need for maximum participation with an open dialogue and shared influence

Resource groups, local management projects, co-ownership, providing residents with decision-making powers

The situational element 8
Dialogue about resources for participation in a specific situation

Even though the actors involved might have specific expectations for the public participation process, there may be issues that limit the selection of methods or argue in favour of other methods. These issues are here referred to as “resources”. It is very critical having a dialogue about that actors’ resources in order to enhance/ensure trust and credibility. In the form below, there are a series of questions that may help in placing the specific situation in the figure and thereby see what methods might possibly be appropriate.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The resources of the residents</th>
<th>The resources of the authorities and property developer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| - Are the residents organised in a manner which is advantageous for the participation effort?  
  - Are vulnerable and/or marginalised residents organised?  
  - Is there a strong local culture of participation?  
  - What methods do the resident have experience with?  
  - Is there a significant difference in the ability of the various community groups to argue their case?  
  - Do the residents already have a good degree of understanding for planning projects and their significance for the local community? | - What competencies can be brought into play?  
- What means are accessible for the participation process?  
  - Hours, people, money  
- Is the organisation “geared” for public participation?  
- What political options are there for the residents to gain influence?  
- Are there types of information that one does not want publicised? |

When the specific situation is placed in relation to needs and resources, the two figures can be compared. If the situation is placed in the same spot in the two figures (for example, top right in both figures) it is often a
straight-forward choice to select the participation method. If the situation is placed in two different spots, it will require a dialogue about how this difference is to be managed. For example, residents impacted by a windmill project might have a strong need for participation without having the resources to do so, while authorities and the project developer have a low need but the right resources. Comparing the two figures therefore helps to reveal if there are potentially damaging issues that could lead to problems later in the process if they are not highlighted and discussed.

If there is a need for more specific knowledge about the various public participation methods, then one can - when the selection of the method has been narrowed down - get inspiration from various publications such as the easy-to-read method overview of the International Association for Public Participation IAP2 (2006), the method descriptions in “Borgerne på banen” [Residents getting involved] or in Rowe & Frewer (2000). See more publications in the bibliography.

**Dialogue about practical issues related to the situation**

In the third and final step of the content element, attention is diverted towards the more specific and practical details that need to be taken into account. The starting point is the knowledge that was gained from the dialogue concerning needs and resources, and, as in the previous steps, the practical issues are revealed in a dialogue with the local resource group. Other publications have covered the key questions, such as: *Who should be involved? How many? For which subjects? Where? When?* (See *Borgerne på banen* [Residents getting involved]). Beyond this, the research on the area indicates that there are a series of subjects that are particularly important in the dialogue between the resource group, property developer and authority.

### Particularly important issues

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trust</th>
<th>How is the level of trust between residents and authorities, and what does this mean for the selection?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How is the trust between residents and the property developer in projects such as these, and what does it mean for the selection?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Representation</th>
<th>How does one ensure a wide representation of community groups and geographic areas?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How is it being taken into account that there are differences in the community in relation to values, cultures and interests?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Equality in participation</th>
<th>How are local organisations that need special attention being taken into account? Strong groups, supporters, opponents?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How are those residents who are not organised being taken into account? This could be those residents who are vulnerable, marginalised, not usually participating or groups with different age profiles?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communication</th>
<th>How should the process be designed in relation to dates for meetings and addressing participation?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What places are suitable for events? Meeting rooms, community centres, pedestrian streets, public squares, institutions? Remember to take into account the “neutrality” of the settings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How can a dialogue be established about the professional/technical aspect of the project with those who are not experts in the field?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. The anchoring element

The third element of the dialogue tool is directed towards the local community’s knowledge sharing and learning in relation to participation in planning processes and also directed towards the authorities and property developer’s organisational learning and anchoring. According to several people working for authorities or property developers, there is missing an element of knowledge sharing concerning public participation. This means that the good and bad experiences that authorities and property developers have with public participation risk not benefiting the actors and the local community in future activities. Therefore, it is important to create specific arenas for assessments and dialogues in the organisation and between the organisations that can help strengthen and develop a public participation practice.

Learning and anchoring involves assessing the processes with relevant people and, at the same time, anchoring the knowledge gained through handing it over to future processes. Below, the two aspects that might contribute to strengthening a public participation practice locally, at the property developer or at the authority are described:

1. Knowledge-sharing and anchoring of the project on a local level
2. Knowledge-sharing and anchoring at the property developer or authority

**Local anchoring of projects and future-oriented knowledge-sharing**

When a property developer or an authority concludes a planning project, then they typically withdraw from the local area, conduct an internal assessment and then get started on the next project on their list. However, just because the property developer or authority pulls back from a project does not necessarily mean that it is finished from the perspective of the residents. On the contrary, it may only just be taking form and becoming a part of the local area.

The authorities or property developer must consider whether the project or parts of the project can be turned over to the local area. If there has been a good collaboration between the municipality, authority and property developer, then maybe in this case there will be the opportunity to transfer ownership or co-management to the municipal level, which the residents have easier access to. This could, for example, be if - during the planning process - there has been the suggestion or establishment of local initiatives that have created value on the local level. At the same time, it will be a strong learning process for the local community to create a forum where there is a local collection of the experiences that participation in the planning process has provided.

**Local anchoring of projects**

- Is the project of a type where it makes sense to think in terms of future-oriented anchoring initiatives?
- What actors in the resource group might have an interest in carrying on with the project in a local context?
- Can areas of responsibility be handed over to local authorities or others?
Knowledge-sharing and anchoring in the organisation

Beyond the assessment of the specific participation process (together with the local community, as suggested in figure 1), it is important to ensure an internal assessment is also conducted in the organisation. Some organisations have standing procedures for these assessments, often described as a formal procedure, wherein a document is filled out and archived. However, there is a lack of knowledge-sharing procedures that ensure that the experiences from the individual projects are articulated so that they can be used going forward.

Therefore, it is recommended to set up systematic dialogue arenas where there will be the opportunity to share knowledge across project groups and departments in the organisation.

Opportunities for knowledge-sharing in the organisation

- Regular recap meetings or workshops among those who are involved in the various public participation processes.
- Meetings with the participation of other departments in the organisation where the internal collaboration and participation processes’ significance for other parts of the organisation are in focus.
- Thematic meetings focusing on experiences gained, for example, concerning political, practical or communication-related aspects.
- Meetings where other organisations participate in order to gain new perspectives on the work.

The potential for an improved public participation practice depends on the extent to which the experiences are anchored; dialogues about experiences are not always sufficient to change a practice or an organisation’s culture. Therefore, it is recommended to put the focus on anchoring through specific adaptations of processes and initiatives in upcoming projects. Anchoring is to a large extent dependent on management-level support. Support should be both directional and substantial. For example, this could involve setting aside time for the employees, articulating public participation as a focus area and conducting public participation efforts both internally and externally in the organisation.

As an inspiration to the organisational anchoring, here is a list of a various initiatives that can be undertaken by either the property developer or authority which might help ensuring and launching the anchoring in the organisation.

Possibilities for anchoring in the organisation

- On the basis of the experiences gained, workshops or meetings can be held concerning public participation. This will allow you to focus on the areas that are most critically in need of attention.
- One can also set up an internal public participation group from among the employees of the property developer or authority which will act as a sharer of knowledge and a developer, and one which also has its ear to the ground in relation to public participation efforts. Time needs to be reserved for this group.
- In every individual planning process, one person is selected who will have a special responsibility for ensuring that the public participation in the planning process is based on previous experience in the organisation and who will contribute experiences to the future work of the organisation.
- 15 minutes of knowledge-sharing concerning public participation in every section meeting.
The model's academic basis

The document is one of the publications in the project “Konstruktiv Borgerinddragelse: Det videnskabelige grundlag for en forbedret interaction” [Constructive Public Participation: The scientific basis for an improved interaction] which is support by the ForskEL programme and contains specific practical examples in cooperation with, in particular, Energinet.dk.

The primary references in the development of the tool are:

- Dialogue Designer. Online engagement design system http://designer.dialougebydesign.net

The tool is also based on investigations conducted by the project “Constructive Public Participation”:

- Lyhne et al. What leads the most engaged citizens to invest numerous hours in policy-making? Submitted to Environmental Politics in 2016.