



## Assessing the benefits and the shortcomings of participation – findings from a test in Bari (Italy)



Simone Franceschini<sup>a</sup>, Gerardo Marletto<sup>b,\*</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Technical University of Denmark – DTU Management, Produktionstorvet 426, 2800 Kgs. Lyngby, Denmark

<sup>b</sup> DiSEA and CRENoS – University of Sassari, Via Muroni 25, 07100 Sassari, Italy

### ARTICLE INFO

#### Keywords:

Deliberation  
Participation  
Sustainable mobility  
Traffic scheme  
Bari

### ABSTRACT

Participation is advocated as an essential component of strategies and policies for sustainable urban mobility. This paper refers to the overall literature on participation and provides the design, test and ex-post evaluation of a deliberative-participative procedure (DPP) aimed at selecting a new scheme for the regulation of traffic and parking in the “Murat”, a central area of Bari (Italy). The potential benefits and shortcomings of participation were explicitly considered when designing a DPP which integrates three tools: an opinion poll and two deliberative arenas – the “stakeholder dialogue” and the “citizens’ jury”. The ex-post evaluation of the test confirmed ex-ante design choices. The DPP was effective and learning was generated: the use of understandable techniques for deliberation and assessment helped participants to generate an unambiguous final result which was based on the “hybridisation” of the alternative schemes proposed to the participants at the beginning of the procedure. The “last word” given to the citizens’ jury avoided that the most powerful stakeholders may capture the DPP. Only a “frustration” effect was clearly generated because of the limited involvement of the Municipality of Bari, thus confirming that the involvement of the relevant Authority is an essential requisite for successful participation. We suggest that the generation of new knowledge and learning could be further assured by the participation of citizens and stakeholders to the definition of the alternatives they will assess later.

© 2015 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

### 1. Introduction

Many scholars of transportation issues advocate the use of participatory techniques to define and evaluate strategies and interventions for sustainable urban mobility (Willson, 2001; Booth and Richardson, 2001; Hensher and Brewer, 2001; Banister et al., 2007; Banister, 2008; May, 2009; Baumann and White, 2013; Xenias and Whitmarsh, 2013). Practical applications of a participatory approach are presented in several works on transportation, which differ in scope, geographical dimension and sector: some focus on freight (e.g., Dablanc et al., 2011; Hensher and Brewer, 2001; Macharis et al., 2010), but most of them consider the mobility of individuals at a sub-national scale (see Appendix A for a review of the most relevant applications and their results). The support to participation is shared in the domain of transport geography too (e.g., Gil et al., 2011; Ibeas et al., 2011; Milakis and Athanasopoulos, 2014). In particular, geographical tools are

used in many cases in order to back the participation of both citizens and stakeholders, and the communication between them and the involved experts (e.g., Bailey et al., 2011; Milakis and Athanasopoulos, 2014). But a gap is apparent between the current use of participatory techniques as tools for sustainable urban mobility and the overall literature on participation in public decision. Even if the latter confirms that participation may increase the legitimacy of public decision and may improve its effectiveness – mostly by gathering preferences and opinions – it also stresses that a more structured and dynamic approach is needed to close the gap between the goal of citizens’ participation to public decision and the actual implementation of participative tools (Pimbert and Wakeford, 2001; Bailey et al., 2011). Moreover, as stressed by Sherry Arnstein in her seminal work (Arnstein, 1969), the integration of participation into planning procedures may actually result in some forms of “manipulation” or “tokenism”, when genuine “citizen power” is not generated. This point is consistent with the wider idea that democracy strengthens if: (a) citizens can deliberate before public decision takes place (thus leaving room for collective learning and preference evolution) and (b) citizens can vote directly, without the intermediation of elected representatives (thus avoiding the risk that public decision is

\* Corresponding author at: c/o Isfort, Via Nizza 45, 00198 Roma, Italy. Tel.: +39 06852651; fax: +39 0685265299.

E-mail addresses: [simonefranceschini@gmail.com](mailto:simonefranceschini@gmail.com) (S. Franceschini), [marletto@uniss.it](mailto:marletto@uniss.it) (G. Marletto).

“captured” by powerful interest groups) (Cooke, 2000). Such an idea is also found in the criticisms towards standard evaluation tools, such as cost-benefit and multi-criteria analyses (Gowdy, 2004; Vatn, 2009). Being based on the current resource distributions and structure of preferences, these tools are not able to incorporate visions and values that are alternative to the status quo and – maybe most important – they do not ease the generation of knowledge and shared visions. As brilliantly argued by Vatn (2009, p. 2211): “[we must] move from *aggregating* individual measures or bids to reasoning over, and potentially *agreeing* on common priorities”. Many scholars stress that this is especially needed when sustainability issues are at stake (e.g., Martinez-Alier et al., 1998; Sagoff, 1998; O’Neill and Spash, 2000; Smith, 2003). Consequently the direct involvement of citizens and stakeholders into deliberative arenas is considered as an effective way to generate: (a) mutual recognition and learning (i.e., “opening up” participation) and (b) qualitative and quantitative outcomes which help make the final decision (i.e., “closing down” participation) (Stirling, 2008; Dreyer and Renn, 2011). But the relevant literature also signals that three main potential shortcomings of participation should be taken under control (Stagl, 2007): (1) the “black box” effect that takes place when participants cannot go through the whole process and/or if the applied tools are too complex; (2) the “capture” effect that results from the ability of more powerful or “vocal” interest groups to influence the decision process and its results (O’Neill, 2001); and (3) the “frustration” effect that is generated when the decision process does not produce useful results or when the actual decision-maker (usually a public body) does not acknowledge its outcome.

Notwithstanding these crystal conclusions, the majority of practical applications of a participatory approach to sustainable urban mobility are limited to gather preferences and opinions (Anson and Willis, 1993; Hodgson and Turner, 2003; Rye et al., 2008; Stangl, 2008; Bailey et al., 2011; Gil et al., 2011; Ibeas et al., 2011; Machler and Golub, 2012) or to increase public policy legitimacy (Taylor and Tight, 1997; Baumann and White, 2013). Learning effects are explicitly targeted only in four cases: mutual recognition (Baumann and White, 2013), changing preferences (Lowry, 2010), generation of new alternative schemes (Violato et al., 2014) and shared visions (Milakis and Athanasopoulos, 2014). Only two papers on urban mobility refer to the potential shortcomings of participation: the lack of political support (Anson and Willis, 1993), the obstructive role of powerful actors (Ward, 2001).

As stressed by Jason Chilvers in his thorough review of the participation research field (Chilvers, 2009), a critical approach to participation, and the ex-post assessment of its actual result, are the only ways to avoid the risk that participation is considered nothing but a fashion. This paper contributes to this overall aim by testing a deliberative-participative procedure (DPP) for sustainable urban mobility that: (a) is designed with the explicit aim of maximising potential benefits (i.e., “learning” and “effectiveness”) and of reducing potential shortcomings (i.e., “black box”, “capture”, “frustration”) and (b) is followed by a structured assessment of the benefits and shortcomings actually generated. In particular, three participatory tools are integrated in the tested DPP: an opinion poll and two deliberative arenas – the “stakeholder dialogue” (Clark et al., 1998), which has the task to carry out a simplified multi-criteria analysis, and the “citizens’ jury” (Kenyon et al., 2003), which has the “final word” on the results of the DPP. The ex-post assessment of the DPP is based on the evaluation of two sets of objective and subjective statements; participants to the stakeholder dialogue were asked to give their opinion on the latter. The test was carried out with the goal of selecting a traffic and parking scheme that may reduce the negative impact of motorised circulation in the central district of Murat, in the city of Bari (Italy). The

Murat district was chosen because it is a multifunctional area, featuring both diverging interests and a lively public debate that allow a DPP to be fully tested.

The following four sections of the paper provide: the design of the DPP and of its evaluation (Section 2); the analysis (Section 3) and the discussion (Section 4) of the results of the DPP; the conclusions and some hints on transferability (Section 5).

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1. The test area

We implemented the DPP in 2012 in the Murat district, a central area of the city of Bari – the regional capital of Apulia (which is one of the largest regions of southern Italy). Bari is one of the eight urban areas covered by the MUSA project, promoted by the Department of Public Administration of the Italian Government. The MUSA project was aimed at increasing the capacity of local authorities of southern Italy to design and implement effective policies for sustainable urban mobility. Citizens and stakeholders of Bari were already accustomed to participatory and deliberative techniques. In this sense, two relevant examples deserve to be mentioned: (i) the formal constitution of the local council of environmental NGOs (Municipality of Bari, 2005) and (ii) the participatory process that led to the approval of the local strategic plan “BA 2015, Metropoli Terra di Bari”.<sup>1</sup> For this reason, this city was selected as a test area for a more direct and advanced participation of citizens.

Bari counts about 316,000 residents and is part of a metropolitan area of more than 1.2 million inhabitants. The size of Murat is 1.05 km<sup>2</sup> and the district counts almost 17,000 inhabitants; population density is very high compared to the average city value of 3000 persons/km<sup>2</sup>. Since 2008, the nearby historical centre is a limited traffic zone (LTZ), and a restricted parking zone (RPZ) was introduced in the inner part of the city, Murat included. The RPZ allows residents to freely park with a yearly pass costing 30 Euros, whereas non-resident must pay per parking hour. Even with the RPZ a supply of 4900 parking slots and an actual average of more than 5000 parked cars are reported, day and night (see also Fig. 1). Since 2007, Murat has hosted the first pedestrian area in Bari, which became the most important urban mall over the time. In 2011, pedestrian areas were extended.

After extensive talks with local stakeholders and experts, we decided – in agreement with the Department of transport of the Municipality of Bari – that the Murat district represents a relevant test site because of two equally important reasons. First, it is a multifunctional area with relevant connections with the whole metropolitan area, where different (and possibly diverging) needs, interests and visions are at stake. Residents are more interested in the local condition of parking and circulation, while non-residents and shop-keepers are more concerned with accessibility to (and through) the area; grassroots NGOs have a vision about the development of the area which is different from that of business NGOs; the use of space is contested between different categories: vulnerable users, car users, public transport users, people accessing to specific attractive points (shopping area, university, theatre, city hall, chamber of commerce, etc.). Second, the preliminary analysis showed an intense local debate about the need of changing parking and circulation schemes in the Murat, with several different stakeholders aiming at different solutions (wider pedestrianisation, stricter regulation of circulation and parking for non-residents, streets reserved for public transport, low-speed zones, etc.). This represented an ideal setting for our test.

<sup>1</sup> For more information (in Italian): <http://www.ba2015.org/>.

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/1059036>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/1059036>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)