

# Chapter 68

## Enhancing E-Participation in Urban Planning Competitions

**Pilvi Nummi**

*Aalto University, Finland*

**Susa Eräranta**

*Aalto University, Finland*

**Maarit Kahila-Tani**

*Aalto University, Finland*

### ABSTRACT

*Planning competitions are used as a way to determine alternatives and promote innovative solutions in the early phase of urban planning. However, the traditional jury-based evaluation process is encountering significant opposition, as it does not consider the views of local residents. This chapter describes how web-based public participation tools are utilized in urban planning competitions to register public opinion alongside the expert view given by the jury. The research focus of this chapter is on studying how public participation can be arranged in competition processes, how the contestants use the information produced, and how it has been utilized in further planning of the area. Based on two Finnish case studies, this study indicates that web-based tools can augment public participation in the competition process. However, the results indicate that the impact of participation on selecting the winner is weak. Instead, in further planning of the area, the public opinions are valuable.*

### INTRODUCTION

In Nordic countries and in Europe, urban planning and design competitions play a significant role as planning instruments in the field of urban planning. Indeed, such competitions are often used as a way to identify and promote new ideas and alternatives in relation to various urban design projects or even as a starting point for an actual plan. In the context of urban planning, competitions are used, for example, in the planning of new housing areas and in urban renewal projects in areas where changes in land use are envisaged.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-6684-3706-3.ch068

## ***Enhancing E-Participation in Urban Planning Competitions***

In Finland, municipalities have a strong mandate for public urban planning. The land use system is hierarchical, from the regional level steered by the unions of counties to the municipal level of planning. Though the demand for participatory planning is acknowledged in the Finnish Land Use and Building Act (132/1999) and the role of participation has strengthened in recent years, the form of participation varies across Finnish cities (Bäcklund & Mäntysalo, 2010). This has especially been the case in planning competitions, where participation is not taken into account in the Finnish rules for competitions (SAFA, 2008). Even though competitions are used as planning instruments aiming to develop urban areas, participation during the competition process is not mandatory. The official participation process usually only begins after municipal planning has commenced. In this chapter, we study how web-based tools are used in urban planning competitions to enhance public participation in planning.

Various academic studies have been conducted in the field of public participation and collaboration of urban planning. These studies have focused either on the activities in which people are engaged or on the broader purpose of participation (Schlossberg & Shuford, 2005). In very recent years, there has been an increasing research interest in architectural and urban planning competitions (Andersson, Zettersten, & Rönn, 2016). Despite this, research cases concerning public participation in planning competitions represent something of an exception, with relatively little previous work being recorded. The need for enhancing participation in the competition process has recently been identified and studied. For example, a dialogue-based architectural competition model presented by Kreiner, Jacobsen, and Jensen (2011) adds interaction between the contestants and the competition jury; Volker (2010) has studied design competitions from the client perspective; and Grangaard and Ryhl (2016) have approached the topic from the perspective of universal design. However, public participation in urban planning competitions is a sparsely studied area, and there is an evident gap in research of web-based public participation in this context. This study aims to fill this gap by providing insight into how *e*-participation can be implemented in urban planning competitions.

European urban planning has traditionally been based on rational planning thinking, which arose in Europe in the 1960s. In the rational planning process, planning solutions can be based on scientific reasoning; that way, the environment can be planned to improve human well-being (Taylor, 1998). Currently, participatory and communicative planning approaches are on the rise and are challenging the rational planning paradigm. The rational process itself is not in conflict with participatory planning, but, in the tradition of rational planning, there is no space for residents' views, as opinions are not considered to be scientific information (Rantanen & Kahila, 2008). In Finland, the move away from the rational planning paradigm towards a communicative and participative planning practice remains an ongoing process.

At the same time, the use of the Internet and social media has reached a significantly high level in Finland. In 2015, it was estimated that 92% of Finns aged 16-74 used the Internet, and 84% did so on a daily basis. Apart from that, more than half of the population is registered on at least one social media service (OSF, 2016). In recent years, the wide use of the Internet and social media has offered new possibilities to involve people in urban planning processes via the web. The electronic participation tools that aim to support more diverse preparation of plans, enable more efficient and democratic processes, and produce more comprehensive and reliable follow-up are now well accepted (*Evaluation of the Land Use and Building Act in practice*, 2014). In order to become an essential part of future competition processes, web-based participation (*e*-participation) practices should be further developed, and their impact on the planning process should be evaluated.

26 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage:  
[www.igi-global.com/chapter/enhancing-e-participation-in-urban-planning-competitions/295053](http://www.igi-global.com/chapter/enhancing-e-participation-in-urban-planning-competitions/295053)

## Related Content

---

### Transnational Human Trafficking: An Unsolved Issue

Pallavi Gupta (2019). *International Journal of Political Activism and Engagement* (pp. 30-41).

[www.irma-international.org/article/transnational-human-trafficking/235392](http://www.irma-international.org/article/transnational-human-trafficking/235392)

### Resilience as a Protective Factor in Children Exposed to Domestic Violence

Sanja urevi, Marijana Zirojevi, Sran Zirojeviand Žilijeta Krivokapi (2022). *Fighting for Empowerment in an Age of Violence* (pp. 323-334).

[www.irma-international.org/chapter/resilience-as-a-protective-factor-in-children-exposed-to-domestic-violence/311003](http://www.irma-international.org/chapter/resilience-as-a-protective-factor-in-children-exposed-to-domestic-violence/311003)

### Higher Education Pedagogy Revisited: Impacting Political Science College Students' Active Learning, Opinion Development, and Participation

Christopher McCarthy-Latimer (2018). *Handbook of Research on Civic Engagement and Social Change in Contemporary Society* (pp. 63-81).

[www.irma-international.org/chapter/higher-education-pedagogy-revisited/198723](http://www.irma-international.org/chapter/higher-education-pedagogy-revisited/198723)

### Challenges in the Provision of Affordable and Decent Housing for Low Income Earners: The Case of Harare City Council in Zimbabwe

Jeffrey Kurebwa (2020). *International Journal of Political Activism and Engagement* (pp. 13-29).

[www.irma-international.org/article/challenges-in-the-provision-of-affordable-and-decent-housing-for-low-income-earners/258305](http://www.irma-international.org/article/challenges-in-the-provision-of-affordable-and-decent-housing-for-low-income-earners/258305)

### In the Midst of Digital Economy: The Level of Financial Literacy Amongst Millennials in Delhi City

Neelam Tandonand Deepak Tandon (2021). *International Journal of Political Activism and Engagement* (pp. 46-62).

[www.irma-international.org/article/in-the-midst-of-digital-economy/282512](http://www.irma-international.org/article/in-the-midst-of-digital-economy/282512)