



## *We Got a Plan! Now What?*

### *Viewing Policy From the Ground Up*

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Image: Handlungsraumforum public event as part of Perspective Munich (photo by UC studio)

## Abstract

Global cities are producing strategic vision plans that will guide their development over the coming decades. Berlin has identified the characteristics it hopes to achieve for their growing city that enhances the quality of life for inhabitants and visitors. Like many others they include words like smart, mobile, green, creative, inclusive, affordable, and dynamic. The Berlin Strategy is the urban development concept that has defined, discussed and adapted guiding principles and goals, identified metrics and measures to be achieved for the target year of 2030. Berlin has a plan...now what?

Implementation of broader citywide goals into local communities and neighborhoods is a huge challenge for politicians, policy makers, and planners. Engaging citizens and stakeholders into a conversation about the future of their neighborhoods is essential if the city is going to achieve their goals. Agreeing on something that should be implemented in the city is one thing, when it needs to happen in your neighborhood is another. How is Berlin working with its citizens to cope and adapt to this change?

This topic explores current participatory planning practice in Germany (Berlin and Munich) and draw comparisons with New York City.

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In identifying a transatlantic topic for the Bosch Fellowship I was initially set to explore affordable housing, as this was a major focus of New York City where I work as an Urban Designer at the Department of City Planning (DCP). It is a complex subject that cities around the world are grappling with because it encompasses policy, law, finance, land-use, development, architecture, and design. More importantly it involves people, both those living in a particular place today and those moving there in the future. It can be summarized in one word; change. Change in the neighborhoods that we live and work in.

My work at DCP is primarily focused on promoting good urban design through private development projects and neighborhood studies to ensure that they contribute to the high quality public realm of NYC. A great deal of this effort is centered on communication of urban planning policy and design, both internally across city agencies and elected officials and externally with stakeholders and the public. We are one piece of a larger conversation about planning and development in NYC; one with many voices requiring the city to actively seek and continually involve its citizens. How do we participate in those processes and conversations?

## Defining Public Participation: Sherry Arnstein and A Ladder of Citizen Participation

Citizen participation, as defined by Sherry Arnstein, is citizen power. “It is the redistribution of power that enables the have-not citizens, presently excluded from the political and economic processes, to be deliberately included in the future.”<sup>1</sup> Arnstein’s 1969 article “A Ladder of Citizen Participation” examined the methods of US federal social programs – urban renewal, anti-poverty and Model Cities – to understand the decision-making relationship between communities and government.

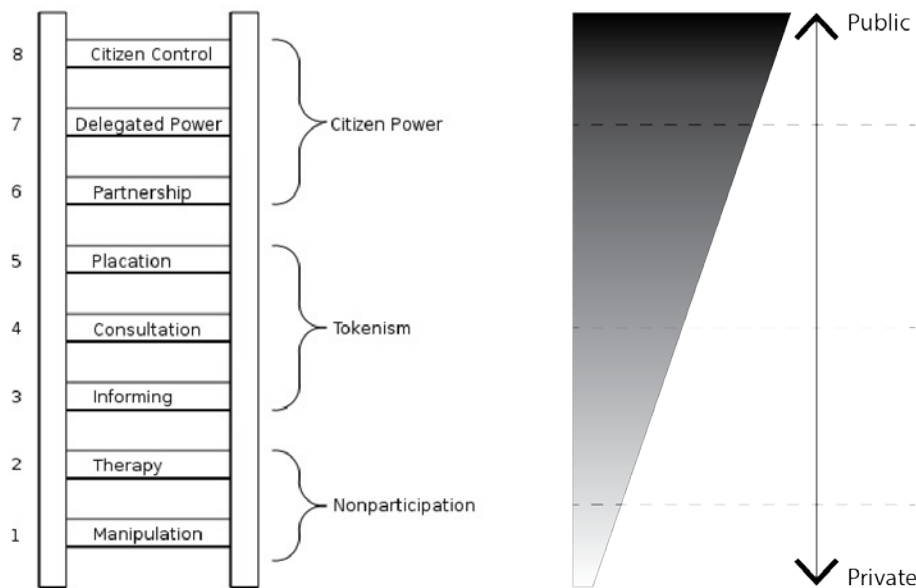


Image: Arnstein’s Ladder of Citizen Participation<sup>2</sup> (left) and it’s relationship with the type of project being discussed and ownership (right, from author)

Utilizing the metaphor of a ladder, Arnstein identified gradations of citizen participation – non-participation, tokenism and citizen power- building from the lower rungs of manipulation to citizen control at the highest. Arguing that without redistribution of power in a participation process, the status quo is maintained allowing “the power holders to claim that all sides were considered, but makes it possible for only some of those sides to benefit.”<sup>3</sup>

Determining what question is being decided on is the first step in any participation process. Often times it is overlooked and confused with providing information on what the city is up to, educating the public on how they do it and taking feedback. Sometimes that feedback can adjust the city’s thinking but typically if participation is not implemented at the beginning stages of a process (the second step) then it will stay at the lower rungs of the ladder. It also depends if the project is private, public or somewhere in between.

<sup>1</sup> Arnstein, Sherry R.(1969) 'A Ladder Of Citizen Participation', Journal of the American Planning Association, 35: 4, pg 216

<sup>2</sup> Arnstein, Sherry R.(1969) 'A Ladder Of Citizen Participation', Journal of the American Planning Association, 35: 4, pg 217

<sup>3</sup> Arnstein, Sherry R.(1969) 'A Ladder Of Citizen Participation', Journal of the American Planning Association, 35: 4, pg 216



In New York we have a robust system that is intended to give neighborhoods a voice via city council, community boards and groups but these processes are often pressured by the speed of real estate developers and a reactionary city government. Occasionally the most effective participatory planning is conducted outside of DCP, being led by a city council member for their district who has the ability (and political need) to begin from the ground up. At DCP we begin with a city-wide perspective combined with directives from City Hall. This sometimes means we often come to the table with a preconceived vision or concept to begin our engagement with the community making it challenging to move higher up the Arnstein's ladder.

How are my German counterparts working within this realm? How do they convey complex information and ideas on urban planning and design? How are those ideas shared, developed and discussed with the public? What does public participation look like in Germany?

### **Urban Catalyst Studio und der Handlungsraumforum:**

A gigantic area map of Southeastern Munich is laid out on the floor in front of me. Crawling on it are Lukas Pappert (an Urban Designer) and Jans Dubsky (an architect), whom are putting down the last layers of key corridors indicated with bright red tape. Once complete this roughly 30 foot by 30 foot Karte will become an interactive surface on which a dialogue with community leaders will take place for the future vision of the neighborhood. Under the lights this discussion is part performance, part interactive with presentations describing the overall themes to debate as well as sharing of best practice examples.



Image: Handlungsraumforum public event as part of Perspective Munich (photos by UC studio and author)

Large icons of key neighborhood landmarks orient participants to the map. Other icons of light bulbs, people, trams, and arrows represent areas of focus and potential interventions. Comment bubbles are filled out on the spot to capture questions or key points to discuss further. Facilitators scamper back and forth placing these playing pieces on to the map. This performance is being filmed and broadcast on to a large screen so all are able to see how the mapping of a conversation over the future of the area is playing out. At the end a group of participants are randomly selected to come up and place gold chocolate coins down on the potential projects and areas they would like to see realized and discussed further. Sharing in the end how they would proceed moving forward.

This urban planning theater is the brainchild of Klaus Overmeyer, an urban catalyst and landscape architect based in Berlin. He is the co-founder of Urban Catalyst Studio (UCs), a group of like-minded planners and designers focused on spaces in transformation. Specifically the development of new models for design and use of these spaces through innovative strategies for a user based urbanism.<sup>4</sup> The Studio is part planning firm, working on a range of strategic planning studies throughout Germany and Europe, and more recently, part workshop training and enabling stakeholders to design and implement complex development processes in those transformation areas.

The project in Munich was identified as a transformation area in the city's vision plan – Perspective Munich – “the strategic city development concept of the Bavarian state capital. It has continuously been updated since 1998 and forms with its guiding principle, its guidelines, projects and action areas the orientation framework for Munich's future development.”<sup>5</sup> UCs was hired to help design the process by which the larger vision plan would be implemented and integrated into a specific area of the city. The 16-month study focused on this translation of broader city policy goals within the context of what is happening in the neighborhoods of the transformation area. Drawing on input and dialogue with local stakeholders and citizens combined, UCs led multiple workshops, site safaris or walks, panel discussions, and other public events like the Handlungsraumforum (Action Space forum). They also established an expert panel that included urban planners and designers from other cities to help define how this would be developed for other transformations in Munich. Their recommendations outlined how to bring together a group of local stakeholders, methodologies for analysis and reports, established tools for engagement and creation of a new project manager role in each of the ten transformation areas to guide the process.

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<sup>4</sup> Urban Catalyst Studio website. <http://www.urbancatalyst-studio.de/en/mission.html>

<sup>5</sup> City of Munich, Department of Urban Planning and Building Regulation. “Guiding Principle and Guidelines of the Perspective Munich” June 2015. Pg3

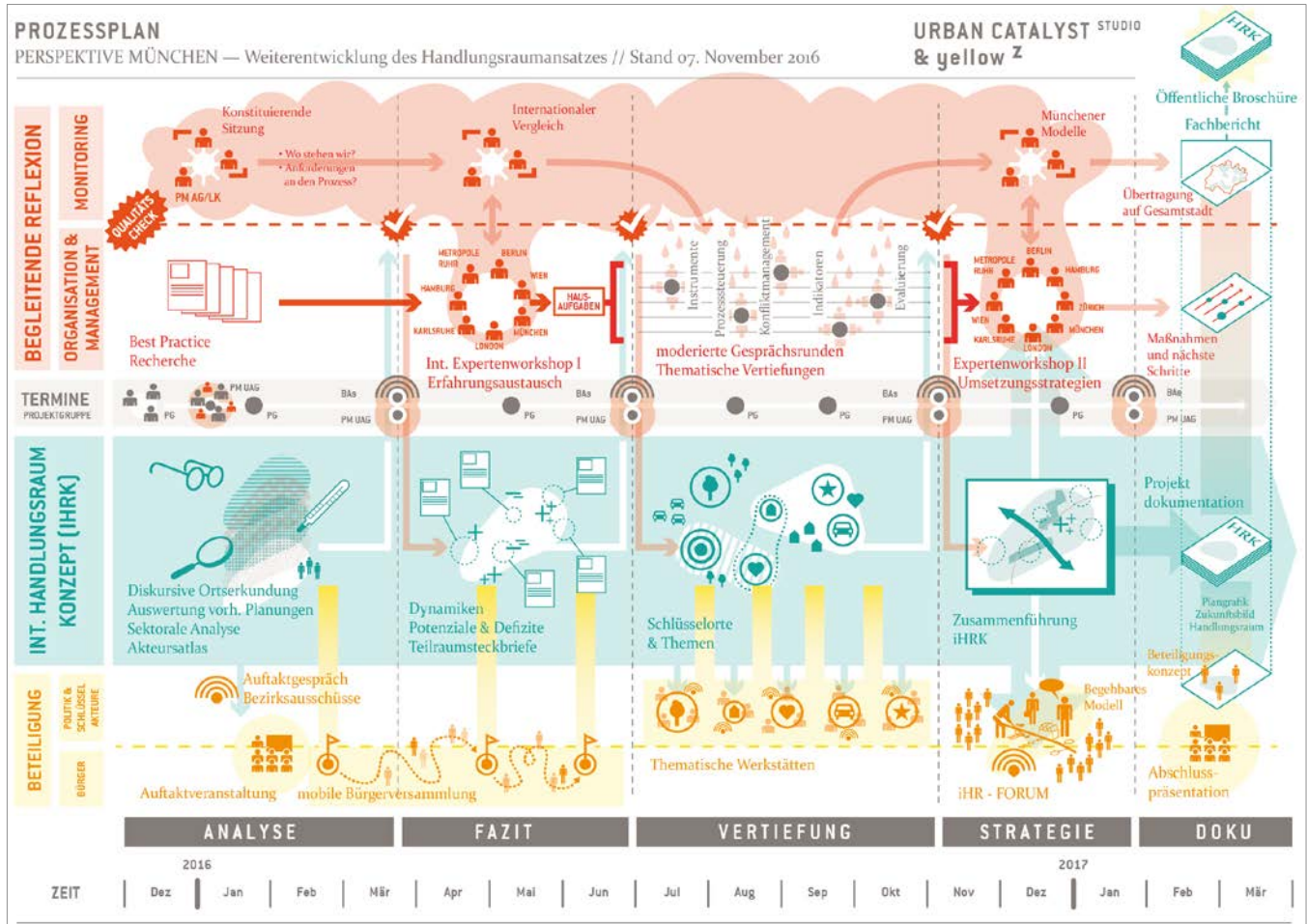


Image: Process plan for Perspective Munich (Urban Catalyst Studio)

UCs is increasingly focused on efforts to not only promote participation but co-production by developing new models for the “collective production of space” that go beyond simply providing information and being transparent. The tools that they utilize at these large public meetings are unique and serve as an easy, accessible way to walk through the working progress made with local stakeholders and citizens. Planners must use methods that are tailored to the discussion at hand taking into account who the audience is and where they are in the process. It is also essential to successfully communicate the complexities of urban development that also creates an environment for ideas, encourages dialogue between participants, and elicits constructive feedback.

UCs is building from the Perspective Munich work and beginning the process of redefining public participation in Berlin that is looking to increase their participation practices in urban planning and development processes.

### Enter the Rot-Rot-Grun Coalition.

*Berlin is still sexy but perhaps no longer poor.* The famous quote of the former mayor Klaus Wowereit back in 2004 “Berlin ist arm aber sexy” to entice creative types to the capital city which at the time had an abundance of low rent apartments. While the city-state is still cash strapped and wages are on



average lower than other parts of the country, it has experienced enormous growth with an influx of over 40,000 people moving to Berlin each year, wiping out housing vacancy and causing rental prices to double or triple what they were a few years back. Like many other global cities, Berlin is struggling to negate the affects of this population surge. They have their visionary document, the Berlin Strategie 2030, setting its conceptual urban development goals. Its crafting was a multiyear process from 2013-2015 encompassing multiple city forums and workshops with the public to guide and address growth. Like other cities with visionary plans the key is translating that higher level thinking into real projects in neighborhoods while keeping in place the high quality of life Berliners expect.

In the fall of 2016 a new government was elected in Berlin and with it a shifting of power to the left and the formation of a new coalition. The Red-Red-Green (R2G) coalition of SPD (Social Democrats), Die Linke (left-wing) and Die Grunen (Greens) has been in existence for over 100 days. Upon their election they have focused their goals on turning the city into a more social and ecological one. From banning cars on the boulevard Unter den Linden, implementing parking zones within the central ring, building up cycling infrastructure with 40 million euros per year and expanding the tram network.<sup>6</sup> The “R2G” is seeking to increase mobility and accessibility. They are also shifting the city’s 50,000 refugees out of temporary shelters and into affordable, mass housing (not just in container villages).<sup>7</sup> This combined with curtailing deportations, implementing the right to dual-citizenship and providing more opportunities to bring refugee family members to live with them are in stark contrast to the views of more centrist and far right parties. Addressing skyrocketing rents and increased gentrification that is making its way into the eastern neighborhoods of central Berlin is a main reason Die Linke received a lot of votes.

In short they have a lot to do in the next 6 years and central to all of these topics is the desire to increase citizen participation across many planning threads – in development planning, competitions, housing authorities – and ultimately leading to einen generellen Ausbau der Planungskultur, - an expansion of planning culture. They therefore intend to develop guidelines for participation at the state, district and neighborhood levels with more intense involvement with and from the public. This is especially important going forward in city-wide planning in updates to the Berlin Strategy and urban development plans or Stadtentwicklungspläne (StEPs) and through an examination of formal and informal processes of planning and development.

## **Stadtentwicklung**

The Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung und Wohnen (SenSW) is the city-state’s agency tasked with planning and development in Berlin and, as such, the one the R2Gcoalition is looking to help usher in a new era of public participation. Their aspirations are slow to take root into existing protocols at the SenSW and other city agencies but there are small steps being implemented.

In the German system there are various planning instruments that are both formal and informal. The informal serve more as a means to achieve consensus through a cooperative process and are non-

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<sup>6</sup>Knight, Ben. “Berlin's new left-wing government set to change city.” Deutsche Welle. <http://www.dw.com/en/berlins-new-left-wing-government-set-to-change-city/a-36296560>. Dec 12, 2016

<sup>7</sup> Knight, Ben. “Berlin's new left-wing government set to change city.” Deutsche Welle. <http://www.dw.com/en/berlins-new-left-wing-government-set-to-change-city/a-36296560>. Dec 12, 2016

binding, although they are taken into account in preparation of land-use plans when adopted.<sup>8</sup> - Because they are non-binding there is no formal procedure to prepare one, thus giving local authorities flexibility in crafting and involving the public. One type of informal planning is Stadentwicklungsplanung (urban development planning) that can be viewed more as guiding a political agenda that, through a dialogue process with the public, builds a “framework for urban development suited to meeting the social, cultural and economic needs of a community.”<sup>9</sup> The Handlungraumforum in Munich and the Berlin Stadtforum (discussed later) are examples of Stadentwicklungsplanung. Another is Städtbaulicher Rahmenplan (framework development plan), which falls between formal preparatory and binding land-use plans discussed below, can be viewed as a masterplan for a particular urban area outlining the objectives and structural concept.<sup>10</sup> The masterplan for Haffencity, a well known resilient waterfront development in Hamburg is an example of a Städtbaulicher Rahmenplan.

The formal procedures are binding and include a two step process involving Flächennutzungsplan (FNP) the preparatory land-use plan governing an entire municipality and Bebauungsplan (B-Plan) a land-use plan for a section or site of municipal territory on the basis of the FNP. In short, the FNP establishes the land uses envisioned for the municipality and that it is in agreement with a proposed development and its correspondence to the future needs of the municipality.<sup>11</sup> B-Plans are the second stage of local urban development planning and gives specific form to the FNP through a “plot-by-plot definition of land use.”<sup>12</sup>

At its most basic level in NYC we have the applicant process, typically private development, and city initiatives or studies, typically of neighborhoods or key public sites. The applicant process is the Uniform Land Use Review Procedure or ULURP and is combined with environmental review. It follows a well-defined procedure and aspires to do so within a defined timeframe with its results being legally binding. ULURP is more or less our B-Plan.

City initiatives or studies can take many different forms and can range from aspirational visions to changes in regulations by going through its own ULURP process; meaning they can begin as informal studies that can lead to formal, binding results. Examples include the [Climate Resilience planning](#) as a form of “Stadentwicklungsplanung” or the recent [East Harlem Neighborhood Plan](#), which is more like “Städtbaulicher Rahmenplan.” These are continually reflected on and measured against the vision document [OneNYC](#), New Yorks version of the Berlin Strategy.

B-plans have legal requirements to inform and collect input from the public. Baugestzbuch (BauGB) or Federal Building Code specifies the requirements of participation in urban land use planning which

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<sup>8</sup> Buehler, Ralph and Stephan Schmidt. “The Planning Process In the US And Germany: A Comparative Analysis.” International Planning Studies, Vol 12, No 1, 55-75, Feb 2007. p 199

<sup>9</sup> Buehler, Ralph and Stephan Schmidt. “The Planning Process In the US And Germany: A Comparative Analysis.” International Planning Studies, Vol 12, No 1, 55-75, Feb 2007. p 83

<sup>10</sup> Buehler, Ralph and Stephan Schmidt. “The Planning Process In the US And Germany: A Comparative Analysis.” International Planning Studies, Vol 12, No 1, 55-75, Feb 2007. p 130.

<sup>11</sup> Buehler, Ralph and Stephan Schmidt. “The Planning Process In the US And Germany: A Comparative Analysis.” International Planning Studies, Vol 12, No 1, 55-75, Feb 2007. p 78.

<sup>12</sup> Buehler, Ralph and Stephan Schmidt. “The Planning Process In the US And Germany: A Comparative Analysis.” International Planning Studies, Vol 12, No 1, 55-75, Feb 2007. p 80.



takes place in two stages. Section 3 states (1) “The public shall be publicly informed as early as possible of the general objectives and purposes of the planning, materially different solutions under consideration for the redesign or development of an area, and of the likely impacts of the planning; it shall be afforded the opportunity to comment and debate.” And (2) “The draft development plans shall be publicly displayed for one month with the reasoning and the existing environmental statements which the municipality considers to be relevant.”<sup>13</sup> Citizens are entitled to provide comment.

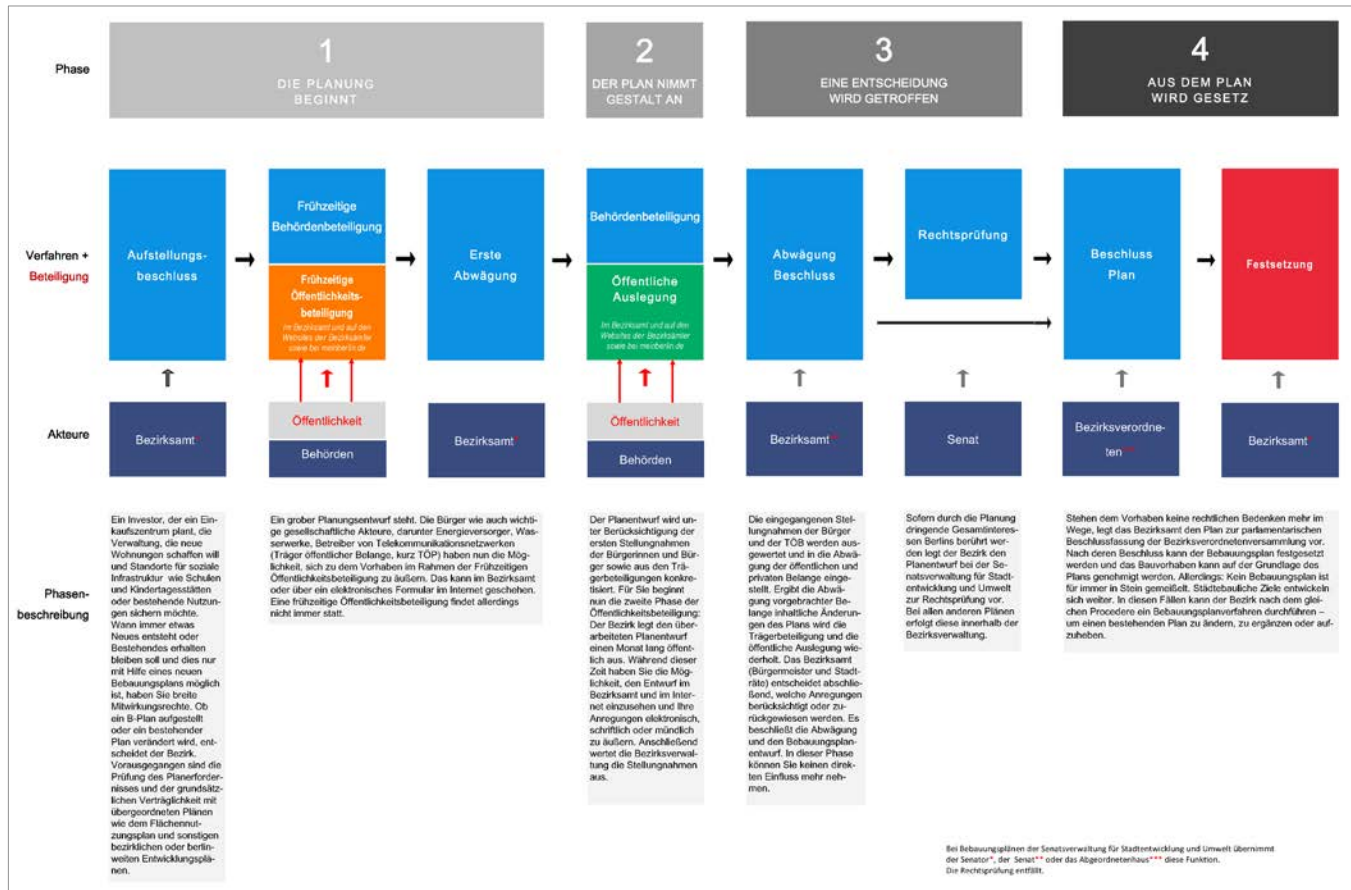


Image: Process diagram for B-Plan<sup>14</sup> (Berlin Stadtentwicklung). The public participates in the first two phases of a B-plan.

It is interesting to look at the outputs of these processes and how they are visualized and communicated back to the public. B-Plans for instance are primarily comprised of a color-coded plan drawing with various technical notes, which are difficult for the average citizen to comprehend, get a sense of what was incorporated from the feedback given or let alone clearly show how the project is aiming to achieve the goals defined from the framework development plan. Information may be available on the Stadtentwicklung website but often times it is difficult to find but there are plans to change that.

<sup>13</sup> German Federal Building Code, Baugesetzbuch, Nov 2014, p13.

<sup>14</sup> Berlin Stadtentwicklung webstie. <http://www.stadtentwicklung.berlin.de/planen/b-planverfahren/berlin/de/allg.shtml>

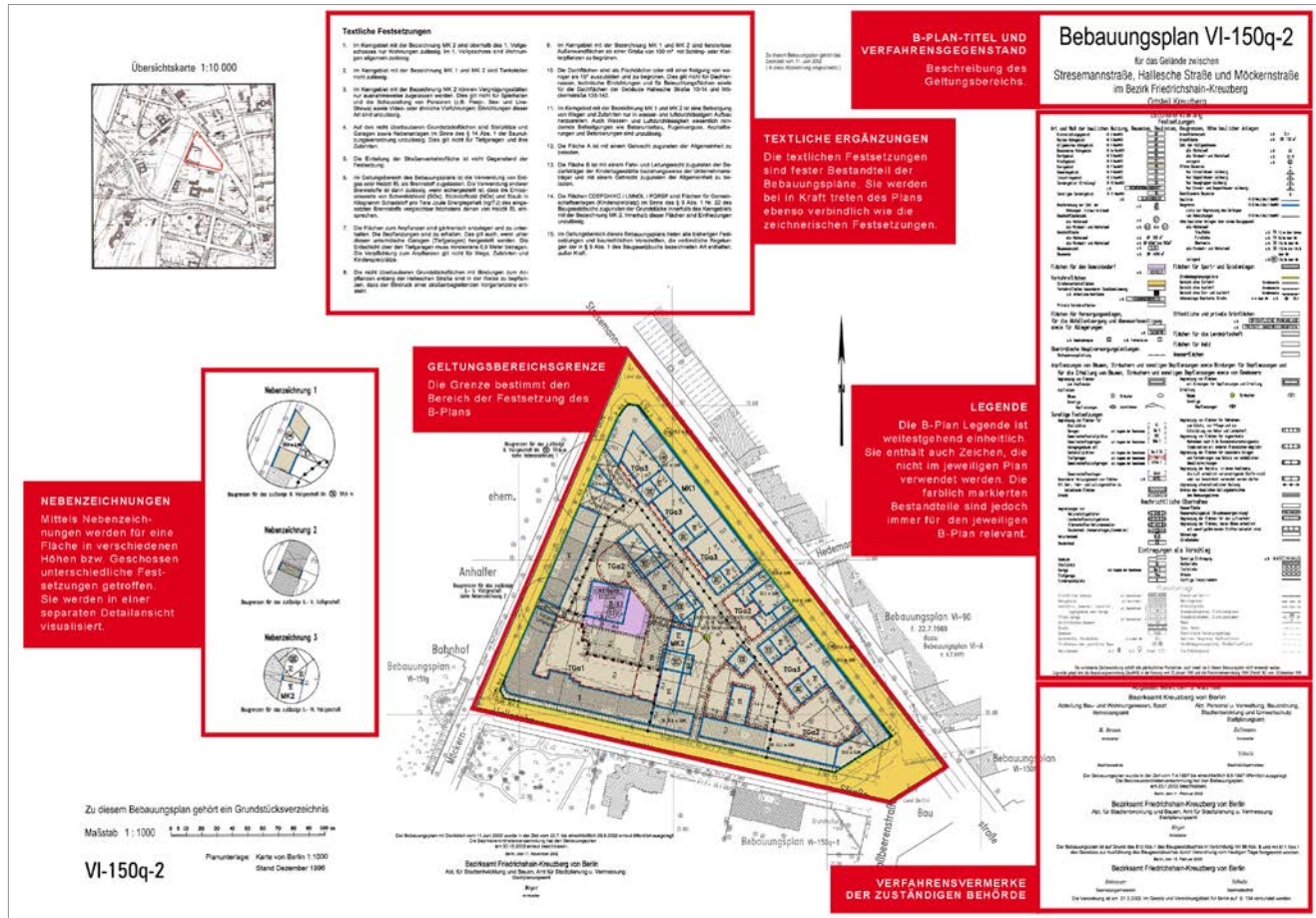


Image: How to read a B-Plan<sup>15</sup> (Berlin Stadtentwicklung). Typical B-Plan drawing with a few notes on how to interpret it.

## mein.berlin.de – A starting point

Mien Berlin die Beteiligungsplattform, a platform for public participation, began in 2015 allowing citizens to review, question and provide feedback as well as tracking events and key dates of a process or project. This centralized location is where one can find all projects that are legally required to have citizen participation which tend to fall across broader categories of Bürgerhaushalte (participatory budgeting), Bebauungsplanverfahren (zoning process), Stadtforen (city forums), and Kiezkasse (neighborhood cash). Mien Berlin is a starting point but improvements need to be made to ensure that information on projects in one's neighborhood are much more accessible with project presentations, key events and dates for discussion in addition to steps for and possibilities of participation.<sup>16</sup> The Senate has plans to revamp the site to achieve better user interface and also provide a map that includes all urban planning and building projects in the surrounding area.

<sup>15</sup> Berlin Stadtentwicklung webstie. <http://www.stadtentwicklung.berlin.de/planen/b-planverfahren/berlin/de/allg.shtml>

<sup>16</sup> Lompscher, Katrin and Regula Lüscher. "Partizipation in der Stadtentwicklung." Klausur der Fraktion die Linke Berlin. Feb. 2017

## **Stadtforum Berlin: Beteiligen!**

One event taking place in the summer of 2017 is tackling participation head on. The Berlin forum, a biannual public meeting on the subject of urban development that has taken place since 1991, is asking “how do we talk about urban development in the future?” under the motto of “making the city together.” Communication and participation are at the core of strategic planning and the new government coalition seeks to modernize the city forum in order to promote the debate between politics, the administration and citizens on current projects and staff. The ultimate goal is to create binding guidelines for participation in urban development plans (StEPs) by the end of 2018. Central to this is the urban-spatial effects of growth and discussion of the consequences. How, when and where do districts and neighborhoods grow while preserving their particular qualities and characteristics? How can this growth have a positive effect for those that have been there already?

The event is being developed and administered by UCs and is taking place at the Markthalle Neun in Kreuzberg. Conceptually it is meant as a pause, a reflection and rethinking on a higher level of how to create access to make a common city. The evening session is broken into a series of smaller discussions bound by a key note address from the Senator for Urban Development and Housing, Katrin Lompscher and co-moderated by experts in the field of participatory planning and UCs. At the heart of the event is the Ideenmarkt in which representatives from selected city-initiatives set up booths and share their project through the lens of public participation: How does participation work in this initiative? Which approaches have been successful and which have not? What can be built on and should be given consideration when drawing up guidelines on participation?

This reflection with the public on recent initiatives about what can be improved upon in participatory planning processes is something that does not occur often enough, if at all. We are much more focused on the out come than how we arrived there.

## **Baukollegium and moderating design in Berlin:**

The Public interest within private development is a key lens with which we view projects at the NYC Department of City Planning, not unlike many planning institutions across the globe. Perhaps what might be unique is having an Urban Design Office (UDO) within the agency. The UDO is charged with providing a clear and consistent perspective and advocacy in all matters that will affect the public realm. Most of our work is working with private applicants as they traverse through the ULURP process by finding ways the development can engage with existing context and add value not just to the bottom line but also to the neighborhood. This might be through tweaking the program of the ground floors so that active uses front a sidewalk or shifting of building mass to better match adjacent context. We often times operate behind the scenes and the general public can be largely unaware of the work we do.



Image: Bakollegium in action (photo by author)

While there is not a true equivalent to the UDO in Berlin, there is a committee that might be the closest comparison. The Baukollegium or Building Council, “is an instrument of voluntary dialogue”<sup>17</sup> between developers and administrators and serves as a consulting platform that “advises, mediates, and persuades in complex building processes from the ground up.”<sup>18</sup> This non-binding committee is led by the Senate building director and is made up of administrators from both the Senate and the District in which the project is located and a panel of design experts with backgrounds in architecture, landscape and urban design. They meet regularly throughout the year with development teams – architects, lawyers, and developers - and their projects. Baukollegium is “the act of defining and negotiating quality requirements”<sup>19</sup> through the interrelationship and situational appropriateness between city planning and construction details. The council is tasked with “finding a yardstick for things like architectural quality and atmosphere which often times cannot be measured with rules or scales, but rather made objective through a dialogue with experts.”<sup>20</sup> As senate building director Regula Lüscher states “A good design, good urban design, and good architecture are not simply conjured into existence. Instead, they find the things about a place that fit or that make a place into that which characterizes it and that integrate into the city.”<sup>21</sup>

The discussion is not, however, public. Doing so Senator Lüscher argues would make the process void of authenticity with everything being coordinated beforehand and forgoing a process of mutual discussion. It is seen as an “instrument for accomplishing work” not as “a space for discussing the

<sup>17</sup> Beeck, Sonja, Peschken, Martin, Willinghofer, Jürgen. “Baukollegium Berlin.” Jovis 2016. forward

<sup>18</sup> Beeck, Sonja, Peschken, Martin, Willinghofer, Jürgen. “Baukollegium Berlin.” Jovis 2016. p 8

<sup>19</sup> Beeck, Sonja, Peschken, Martin, Willinghofer, Jürgen. “Baukollegium Berlin.” Jovis 2016. p 51

<sup>20</sup> Beeck, Sonja, Peschken, Martin, Willinghofer, Jürgen. “Baukollegium Berlin.” Jovis 2016. p 47

<sup>21</sup> Beeck, Sonja, Peschken, Martin, Willinghofer, Jürgen. “Baukollegium Berlin.” Jovis 2016. p 52



culture of building publicly.”<sup>22</sup> The council meets about four times a year in a large room. The development team shares their project focusing on the design. The council may ask any clarification questions prior to the development team leaving the room. The council then deliberates on the project and attempts to come to an agreement on the feedback it will provide. The development team is invited back into the room and is given the feedback from a council member. The development team may elect to forgo taking the advice as the process is non-binding but often times they seek to address the concerns of the council which may result in them returning for a future meeting with updates to the project. The entire meeting takes place in one and a half hours.

As part of the new initiatives to more fully engage and involve the public these meetings will be open to the press later this year. While not fully accessible by the public it is hoped that increased transparency into the Baukollegium and its process will show one mechanism by which city is translating policy into projects at the neighborhood scale.

### **Leitlinien für Bürgerbeteiligung**

Bezirk Mitte is the central district of Berlin. It encompasses the birthplace of the city – Museum Insel and Alexanderplatz, it is home of the “Band des Bundes” – Band of the Federal buildings – and tourist attractions like Tiergarten park and Brandenburger Tor. As one of two districts that were part of both East and West Berlin, it has seen incredible transformation since reunification, going from a no-man’s-land on the west and the center of Communist urban planning ideas on the east. Today it is the most upscale district in the city and in its post-gentrified state you are likely to hear more English spoken than German.

The Bezirk Mitte has recently developed guidelines for citizen participation to aid in the broad based development process. “The guidelines help a lively and successful participatory culture to create a reliable and binding basis for all stakeholders as well as clear regulations.”<sup>23</sup> They represent the first of their kind in Berlin and one that the city as a whole is monitoring closely with the potential to inform the guidelines applicable to the entire city. The guidelines were derived from past participation processes like the “Alte Mitte – neue Liebe?”, a Stadtdebatte or city debate in 2015.

District List provides overview of all the projects currently being examined by the Bezirk regardless if citizen participation is part of the process or not. The goal here is to ensure that citizens are informed about the politics and administration of planning processes. The District must follow formal participation procedures prescribed by law, i.e. BauGB. In certain cases that it is not required or if the project is informal, the district has established protocols for when participation can or should be implemented into the planning process. This includes working with the District office of Citizen participation to propose participation for projects on the list for which none has been planned. In these instances the project must meet certain criteria – significance of the project for the district, number of affected persons, affects local infrastructure, - among others. If it is determined to meet the criteria the District can place the project on the list for participation. It has also outlined a

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<sup>22</sup> Beeck, Sonja, Peschken, Martin, Willinghofer, Jürgen. “Baukollegium Berlin.” Jovis 2016. p 51

<sup>23</sup> Bezirk Mitte. “Leitlinien zur Bürgerbeteiligung.” <https://www.berlin.de/ba-mitte/politik-und-verwaltung>

resolution process in the event that it does not meet the criteria but is still desired by citizens. In these cases they work through the Ombudsmen within the district office.

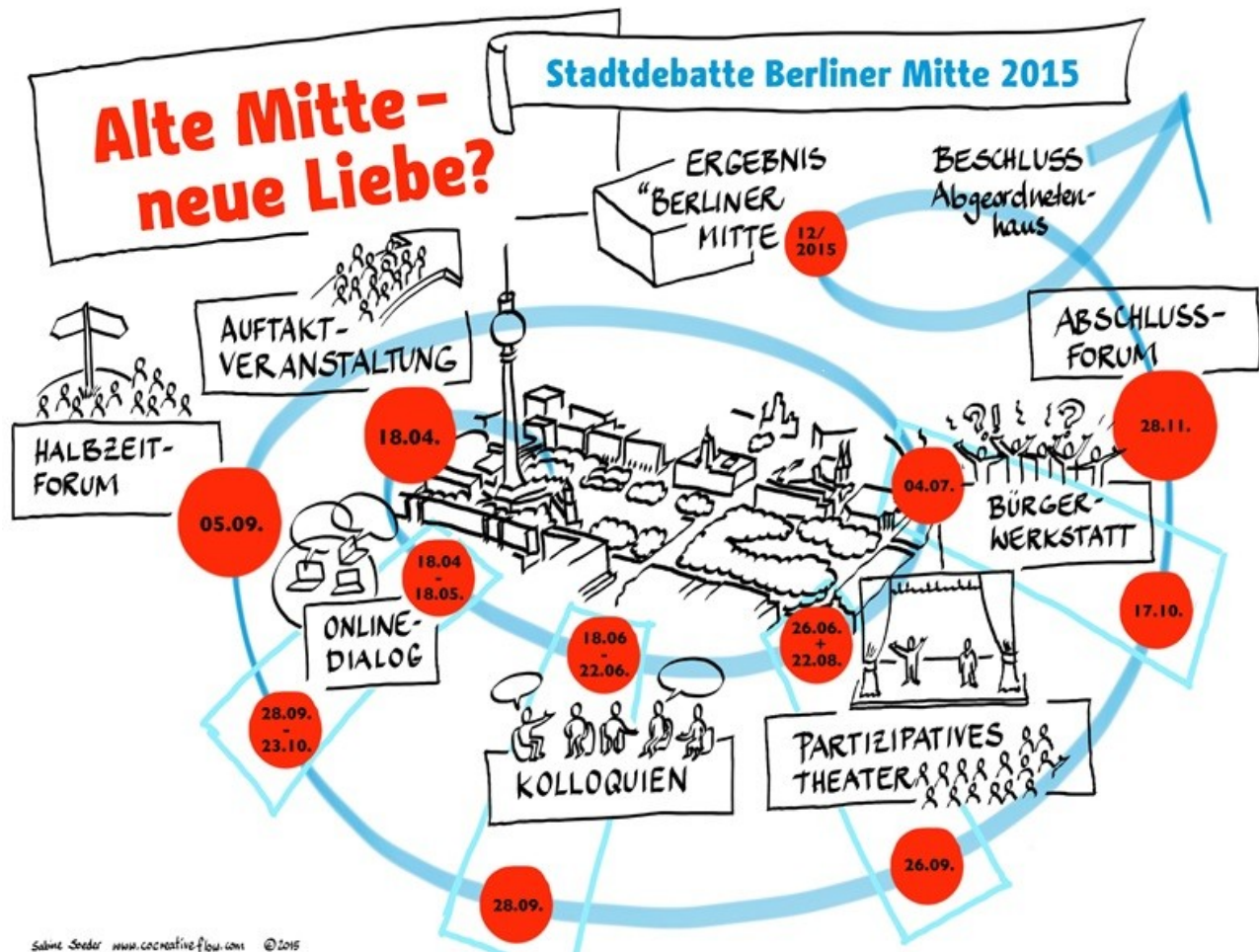


Image: Diagram of the participation process for the “Old Center, New Love? City debate (conceptual art by Sabine Soeder).<sup>24</sup>

The guidelines go on to further layout how the procedures are made public, who is involved – both politically and administratively as well as any specific target groups within the district, and establishes general ground rules to help aide in a respectful, fair and open process. They list different methods of participation from visual drawings, models or animations, site walks, surveys and other types of events. Finally it identifies documentation of the process and outlines results and liability, determining how it will be incorporated into the decision-making process as the project moves forward and brings a level of accountability with a clear statement for how the decision was reached.<sup>25</sup>

The Mitte Guidelines are a comprehensive first step for public participation in Berlin and the knowledge gained through them will ultimately feed into the Senate’s development of their own.

<sup>24</sup> Berlin Stadtentwicklung und Sabine Soeder, [www.cocreativeflow.de](http://www.cocreativeflow.de). Conceptual art City debates. [http://www.stadtentwicklung.berlin.de/staedtebau/projekte/historische\\_mitte/dialogprozess/](http://www.stadtentwicklung.berlin.de/staedtebau/projekte/historische_mitte/dialogprozess/)

<sup>25</sup> Bezirk Mitte. “Leitlinien zur Buergerbeteiligung.” <https://www.berlin.de/ba-mitte/politik-und-verwaltung>

## Conclusion

As an urban designer interacting with these formal and informal processes the challenges or questions are: 1) How are we contributing to make the proposed actions better through good urban design? 2) How are we communicating the physical and spatial changes of the proposed actions? With respect to participatory planning, visual communication is an invaluable tool to aide in translating complex land use actions and lexicon into an understandable and accessible format providing a base of information for elected officials, fellow administrators and the public. In the same way one accepts Terms and Conditions without taking the time to read through a few pages of legal terms, most members of the public and indeed some elected officials and planning staff, do not read through the entirety of a ULURP and environmental review document. Even if they found the documents online, their ability to fully comprehend the actions taking place and the potential impacts on their neighborhood is very challenging given the required, complex documents and drawings.

While we have come a long way since the publication of Arnstein's article, some of the critique put forth is still relevant and present. Most would agree that participation of those affected by the changes being explored and implemented in their neighborhoods is a good thing. The challenges persist for many projects in many municipalities about when to engage, what information to share and, most importantly, what is the citizen deciding on. Transparency is the foundation of any participation process and increasingly sought by municipalities worldwide. This is difficult to achieve in the bureaucratic processes, which are not easily adapted to the changing needs and wants of communities. Government typically does not get rid of laws it just creates new ones that seek to change course.

Participation can take on many forms and must adapt pending the type of project or study. What is needed for a private residential development versus a public library will have vastly different approaches to engagement. In NYC, a private developer has the ability to proceed with little to no public input while a public building requires a partnership early on with the communities that the project aims to serve. This is not to say that private development should go unchecked and without public input, which is why a platform like the Baukollegium is needed.

Combining traditional slide presentations with interactive, visual tools of engagement are key to successfully conveying information to the public and provide the foundation for a dialogue process that lead to successful participation in planning processes. However the key is one half defining what the public is actually deciding on and one half finding ways to get people involved. It is also important to also make it clear of what public sector can do and what it cannot do. These are not easy to achieve given a city's complex political environment and competition for the everyday citizens attention. It is clear that creation of one comprehensive and accessible online site like Mein Berlin is something that NYC could benefit from. Not to mention a set of guidelines for public participation.

Talking to and involving people about change in their neighborhood. It sounds simple enough right? Berlin is taking the steps needed to understand how they have been engaging with its citizens and ways to improve upon it.