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# Transport planning

## Stakeholder involvement in transport planning: participation and power

Dan Ward

*Could and should diverse stakeholders be involved in urban transport planning? This paper evaluates such attempts at participation using three case studies of transport forums and evidence from semi-structured interviews, document analysis and literature review. A hypothesis that stakeholder inclusion makes planning expensive and inconclusive is falsified. Conversely, a hypothesis that increasing the diversity of stakeholders increases problem definition and innovation diversity is supported. A third hypothesis that stakeholder inclusion will be obstructed by concentrated power structures is also supported. Thus it is argued that diverse stakeholder participation in transport planning is potentially beneficial but difficult to achieve. Powerful actors that could otherwise obstruct a forum might be prevented from doing so by legitimisation of the forum by existing democratic structures. However, in the longer term a greater dispersal of power in society may be required.*

Keywords: stakeholder; transport; democracy

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**T**HIS PAPER SEEKS TO EVALUATE the involvement of diverse ‘stakeholders’ in the planning of an urban transport system (UTS). Stakeholders are here defined as “any person or group that has an interest or concern in something” (in this case UTS design) (Oxford English Dictionary). A UTS comprises all the roads, public transport, bridges, cycle lanes, footpaths and so on in a town or city, and the organisations and rules that govern their use.

A UTS is typically designed or planned as a unit by expert engineers and planners, who may or may not be in consultation with various levels of elected government and stakeholders. Such planning is confined by issues of geography, economics and human demand, and the UTS must integrate with other policy areas such as industrial planning and housing. Nevertheless, engineers and planners, and those they consult, may have a considerable degree of choice as to how they design a particular UTS.

This paper will investigate whether increasing the involvement of stakeholders in UTS planning is possible or not, and if possible, whether it would be a help or a hindrance to the planning process. In particular, three cases of ‘transport forums’ will be investigated from the cities of Heidelberg (Germany), Salzburg (Austria) and Guildford (UK). In each case local interest groups came together with planners to deliberate and decide upon the future design of the local UTS.

Critics of such stakeholder inclusion might argue that participation would make the planning process expensive and inconclusive. It might not be easy to involve a large diversity of stakeholders in transport planning and it could be more difficult still to get them to come to an agreement. Thus the first hypothesis to test is:

“Increasing the diversity of stakeholders involved in transport planning will obstruct the planning process by making it expensive and inconclusive.” Hypothesis 1

Against such a negative backdrop, it might be that participation could actually improve the planning process. Specifically, stakeholders might be able to introduce new problem definitions not previously considered by experts, and suggest innovations to solve these and other problems. Such a suggestion might draw from the work of von Hippel (1988) who reports that users of technology can be very important in making producers aware of problems that a new design needs to address, as well as by proposing or creating innovations to solve them. Thus the second hypothesis is:

“Increasing the diversity of stakeholders involved in transport planning increases the diversity of problem definitions and innovations in the planning process.” Hypothesis 2

Note the phrase ‘increasing the diversity’. This is to recognise that some stakeholders may already be involved in transport planning, and that what is important is the diversity of stakeholder inclusion rather than just that any stakeholders are included. For clarity, the term diversity will be used in accordance with the scheme supplied by Stirling (1999) in which diversity is sub-divided into balance, disparity and variety, as in Figure 1. Note that the number of elements is not important.

It might be that, on balance, including a greater variety, disparity and balance of stakeholders would be beneficial to the planning process. Nevertheless, the potential merits of a participatory initiative for the majority of interests would not prevent particular actors from undermining such initiatives if they felt that their interests would not be well served. In a society in which actors had similar power this would not be a problem since no single actor or group of

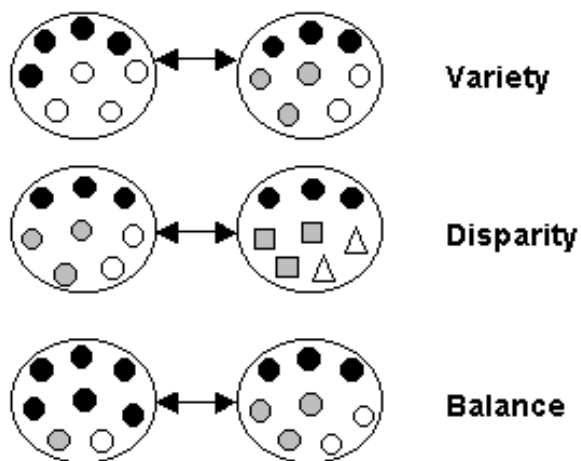


Figure 1. Categories of diversity

Source: Stirlina (1999)

## Concentrations of power are found in many societies and have influenced the evolution of technologies such as centralised electricity generation: thus particularly powerful actors might be able to undermine participatory initiatives in transport planning

actors could prevent the influence of others. However, many societies do not have such a dispersal of power (Smith, 1993).

Power is defined as the ability of actor A to do X (Nelson and Wright, 1997, page 8) or the ability of A to influence B to do X rather than Y through the use of information, coercion or threats (Knoke, 1990, page 6). As such, power is structured into networks of relationships (Knoke, 1990) and may be concentrated in the hands of a few prominent actors or dispersed (Smith, 1993, page 18). Concentrations of power have been found in many societies (Hunter, 1953) and have influenced the evolution of technologies such as centralised electricity generation (Granovetter and McGuire, 1998) as well as UTS design (Hamer, 1987). Thus it might be supposed that particularly powerful actors might be able to undermine participatory initiatives in transport planning and thus that:

“Attempts to include a greater diversity of stakeholders in transport planning will be obstructed by existing concentrated power structures.” Hypothesis 3

Evidence for the case studies with which to test these hypotheses was gathered using semi-structured interviews, document analysis and literature review. These case studies will now be described briefly and then analysed to test the hypotheses.

### Heidelberg

Heidelberg is a city of 140,000 people in southwest Germany and until 1990 had been designed as a ‘car-friendly city’ (*autogerecht Stadt*), typical of most of Germany (Hajer, 1995, page 32). The city was held on such a pro-car course by an alliance of the local Chamber of Commerce, trade and business associations, Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and motoring organisations. Groups existed which opposed this trajectory, such as the local Verkehrs Club Deutschland (VCD — analogous to Transport2000 in the UK) and local neighbourhood organisations (Jasper, 1997, page 89), but the lack of participatory structures in transport planning meant that these interests could not balance those of the car (Jasper, 1997, page 92).

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In 1989 and 1990, an SDP–FVW (Social Democratic Party–Free Voter Union) council coalition and new SDP Mayor were elected. A main plank of new Mayor Beate Weber’s policy was to increase democracy, particularly in transport planning where it was recognised that existing democratic structures provided insufficient problem resolution, representation of interests, or opportunities for deliberation (Sellnow, 1994, page 159). A major part of such a change was the establishment in April 1991 of the *Verkehrsforum* (transport forum), which was open to any relevant local interest group and had the explicit aim of recommending a new transport plan for the city.

Over 100 groups took part in the forum, meeting 34 times over two years, with an average of 64 groups per meeting and over 10,000 volunteered person hours. The diversity of stakeholders involved in the forum is shown in Table 1, along with the diversity of problem definitions and innovations that formed part of the recommendations.

The forum was mediated by Reinhard Sellnow, a professional and independent mediator from Nuremberg. Experts provided information where requested and the forum began by negotiating a series of ‘aims and priorities’. These were then used as a basis for recommending a list of 65 short-term ‘immediate measures’ in 1992 and a series of longer-term and infrastructure measures in 1993, both of which were scrutinised and approved by the city council (Sellnow, 1994).

The short-term measures were implemented in 1993 and included a reorganisation and upgrading of the local tram system which led over the following three years to a 35% increase in passengers set against a national trend of continuing public transport decline in favour of the car (UPI, 1999). By 1998, public transport had risen from 12% to 20% of all trips.

Other initiatives included lowering speed limits in certain areas. Some of the longer-term measures were also implemented, including provision of more cycle lanes, car-pooling, city logistics and ‘job tickets’ for all public transport.

The CDU regained control in 1995 following an election. Not being able to physically rewrite the previously agreed transport plan, the CDU nevertheless managed to thwart particular implementation projects, such as traffic-calming measures, and introduced new projects, such as building a new multi-storey car park, which blatantly contradicted the recommendations of the forum (Jasper, 1997, page 96).

The forum’s recommendations also ran into trouble through more direct power play. In 1995, the local Chamber of Commerce (IHK), despite being a member of the transport forum throughout, campaigned vigorously against its recommendations. The power and influence of the IHK was particularly manifest through the local daily paper, *Rhein-Necktar*, which is politically conservative and known for its close associations with business groups and especially the IHK

(Rothfuß, 2000 interview). In general, newspapers often serve business power since they are typically owned and controlled by business élites (Smith, 1993, page 28).

In Heidelberg, the local newspaper published articles, editorials and letters attacking the forum and its recommendation (Jasper, 1997, page 97). In 1995, a front-page article written by the IHK, under the headline a “car hostile city”, denounced the recommendations of the forum and claimed that economic factors had not been considered; this was misleading because economic factors had, in fact, been an integral part of the negotiations (Stadt Heidelberg, 1993).

Those who supported the recommendations were not afforded the same opportunity to voice their concerns. For example, Jasper (1997) from the local UPI institute reports a study which found that letters received by the newspaper that opposed the forum were much more likely to be published and placed in more popular editions than those supporting the forum. There is only one daily local newspaper in Heidelberg and it has significant power over both public opinion and policy-makers (Rothfuß, 2000 interview).

Opposition to the forum, particularly through the newspaper and local council, prevented the implementation of many of the recommendations, including the introduction of traffic calming and the extension of the tram network (Rothfuß, 2000 interview). It would seem difficult to argue that this was a representative response or outcome. A large number and breadth of local interest groups were involved in the forum and a large majority of them (85%) recorded that they were broadly satisfied with the recommendations (Stadt Heidelberg, 1993, page 120). Rather, it seems that particular, powerful actors, by obstructing the implementation of the forum and maintaining the *status quo* in transport, served a privileged minority of interests committed to maintaining current levels of car use.

## Salzburg

Salzburg is a city of 150,000 inhabitants in central Austria. In the last 50 years, transport policy has mainly been synonymous with ‘road planning’; growing congestion in the 1970s and 1980s was responded to by road widening, increased car park provision and building more tunnels (Grabner, 1999). This pro-car trajectory has been maintained by a close alliance of mutual interests and contacts between local business associations, hotels, motoring organisations and conservative politicians, especially of the People’s Party (Artz, 2000 interview; Grabner, 1999). Public calls for change and official proposals, such as new 30 kph zones, have been thwarted by opposition particularly from the Chamber of Commerce, which has a statutory right of consultation over all new transport plans (Huber, 2000 interview).

In the 1990s, the local council became deadlocked

Table 1. Diversity of stakeholders, problem definitions and innovations in transport planning before and within the forums

	HEIDELBERG			SALZBURG			GUILDFORD		
	Included stakeholders	Problem definitions	Proposed innovations	Included stakeholders	Problem definitions	Proposed innovations	Included stakeholders	Problem definitions	Proposed innovations
PREVIOUS	Planners	Car Access	More car	Planners	Car access	More	Planner	Congestions	More car
	Politicians	Congestions	parks	Politicians	Congestion	Tunnels	Politicians	Car access	parks
	Motoring associations	Noise	More roads	Business		More roads	Business		Park & Ride
			Noise walls	Motoring associations		More car parks	Motoring Associations		
IN FORUM	As above +	Car dependency	Job ticket*	As above+	Car access	City	Disabled	Car traffic	Wiggly buses*
	Students	Car culture	Car pooling*	Ecological	Disabled access	logistics*	Planners	too high	
	Ecological	Inadequate public	Calm traffic	Students	Inadequate public	No tunnels	Public transport	Inadequate public	30kph zones
	Cycling	transport	Cycle lanes	Health	transport	Some 30kph zones	Ecological	transport	Bus lanes
	Pedestrians	Inadequate	Cycle park*	Public	transport	Parking	Cycling	Inadequate cycle	Cycle lanes
	Public transport	cycle	Extensive 30kph zones	Cycling	Inadequate cycle	revenue to public	Freight	provision	
	Health	provision	Traffic*	Children	provision	transport	Police		
	Political	Excessive car	management	Disabled		Park & Ride	Residents		
	Pedestrians	provision	Park & Ride	Elderly		No traffic	groups		
	Disabled		Restrict parking	Women		calming			
	Residents groups		Educational measures to reduce car culture*	Pedestrians		Adequate parking			
			City logistics*	Residential groups		Traffic* management			
						Cycles & public transport not to restrict cars			

Note: \* Novel suggestions to the city

Sources: Stadt Heidelberg (1993); Land Salzburg (1995); Jasper (1997); Grabner (1999); Cotton (2000 interview); Bentley (2000 interview)

over transport issues. The Green Party transport councillor, environmental groups and residents' associations pressed for change but this was resisted by conservative councillors and allied business influences. In this context of deadlock and public frustration, the transport councillor proposed the formation of a transport forum, which began in February 1995. It was created in the knowledge of the previous Heidelberg forum and the same person, Reinhard Sellnow, was invited to mediate. Over 50 groups and individuals attended a meeting from which it was hoped 20 representatives could be chosen.

From the outset, however, power play was manifest in the forum, and even this initial 'enrolment' phase was affected. Business groups refused to be part of the forum unless they were given many more representatives than any other single interest. Moreover, other interest groups, planners and the mediator took this threat very seriously and felt that they had to abide by it, given the power of the business groups in the city and thus their ability to prevent the implementation of plans made without their consent

(Grabner, 1999). Five of the 21 representatives were given to business groups.

Moreover, the representatives of local hotels and the two local motoring organisations (ARBO and ÖMTC) allied themselves with the business block and, together with its other members, delegated negotiating responsibility to the Chamber of Commerce. There is "strength in numbers" (Strasser *et al*, 1989, page 281) in multilateral negotiations of all kinds; this was borne out in the Salzburg forum with the large business-motoring-tourism block dominating subsequent proceedings (Artz, 2000 interview).

The concern here is not that business in particular but that any single interest does not deserve such a relatively large amount of representation. The other members of the forum included an environmental group, children's, women's and disabled peoples' representatives, a labour union, a cycling group, a public transport group and an association of local residents. These groups are very heterogeneous and did not ally to form a single block. Moreover, it is unclear as to why at least some of these groups do not deserve

a comparable level of representation to that of business élites.

Beyond its representational power, the business–hotel–motoring block influenced the process of the forum even more in their favour by threatening to “walk out” (Huber, 2000; Arzt, 2000 interview) on numerous occasions when things were not going in their favour (and actually doing so for one meeting) and being much less willing to compromise than the other groups (Arzt, 2000 interview; Grabner, 1999). These are both attributes that are commonly found in the more powerful party in negotiations (Pruitt and Carnevale, 1993, page 131). In addition, these threats were taken very seriously by other members of the forum.

In general the “state of play within the forum resembled the power outside in the city environment” (Arzt, 2000 interview). The business lobby, despite not being entirely happy with the outcome, felt that their problem definitions and suggestions had been influential on the recommended plan (Huber, 2000 interview). By contrast, youth, women’s and disabled groups felt that “it was very hard indeed to have any influence on the recommended plan” (Arzt, 2000 interview). Even the environmental group, with allies in the council, had to compromise far more than the business group (Grabner, 1999).

The forum, however, did manage to produce a transport plan recommendation for Salzburg, which, though skewed in favour of business interests, did represent a compromise between economic, environmental and social concerns (see Table 1). New suggestions were brought to the attention of transport planners, such as city-wide freight logistics, and the diversity of problems addressed by planning processes was widened.

However, despite agreement in the forum and a previous agreement by the council to respect the forum’s findings, the recommendations were not passed by the council into a formal plan. Councillors, especially those representing business interests, refused to be guided by a process which they labelled as “undemocratic” and “instigated by the Green Party” (Grabner, 1999).

This final act of power meant that the forum had little influence at all on the transport system. Though carried out by a democratic institution, as in the case of Heidelberg, it is hard to argue that the council’s veto served a broader or more representative breadth of interests than had been included in the forum, which had agreed an albeit skewed set of recommendations.

## Guildford

Guildford is a large town of 100,000 people in south-east England. Guildford’s transport system has been designed by engineers and planners having a statutory obligation to consult groups such as the AA (Automobile Association) and Freight Trade Association but without wider participation of other groups or the public (Bentley, 2000 interview).

Correspondingly, the UTS design has had a car-focused ‘problem definition’ with the 1970s and 1980s seeing car park construction and a decline in public transport.

Over the last three years, the level of consultation of local people in transport planning has been rising in Guildford. A number of surveys and questionnaires have been conducted and public meetings have been held. Similarly and over a longer period, individuals and organisations have contacted local transport planners and responsible councillors in writing, with complaints about failings in the transport system and ways that the design might be improved (Bentley, 2000 interview).

In June 1999, a transport forum was set up in Guildford by local planners and included a mix of social, environmental and business groups mediated by a local vicar, Robert Cotton, who was chosen by the groups as a seemingly neutral person (Bentley, 2000 interview; Cotton, 2000 interviews). The transport forum increased the general level of consultation in Guildford and improved upon surveys and meetings, which had been found not to produce a very ‘considered’ input into planning (Bentley, 2000 interview).

It was also hoped that the forum would decrease the antagonistic and uncompromising interaction between groups and planners, common to bilateral exchanges (Bentley, 2000 interview). By interacting with each other, it was hoped that groups would better understand each other’s perspectives and the necessary trade-offs involved in transport planning. This was also done to avoid negative reactions to transport proposals such as had recently occurred when it was suggested by planners to close one particular road to traffic (Whitelegg, 2000 interview).

There were tensions, however, in the status and purpose of the forum, which were never made clear, even to its members (Cotton, 2000 interview). Transport planners seemed to have intended it more as a cosmetic rather than an efficacious initiative. Through the forum, planners were able “to demonstrate to national government that they had consulted” — a necessary prerequisite for acquiring government funding — whilst they hoped and presumed that “the forum would not challenge existing plans too much as it was hoped that they were doing the right things anyway” (Bentley, 2000 interview).

By contrast, the chairman of the forum conceived of its role as “thinking in new and different ways about transport planning than transport planners had” and as part of a trend of “moving from producers to users”. Moreover he feared “the forum had not had a significant impact on planning” and suspected that this was because “planners don’t like to be told what to do” (Cotton, 2000 interview). The planners thus seemed to have created an institution that attempted to take on a wider role than intended, which had been that the forum would rebuild trust and public understanding of the transport planning process without significantly altering it. This situation has

been found for other lay participation in the UK (Levidow, 1998).

Whatever the motivation of planners, the outcome was clear: the forum was given very little impact despite demonstrating a potential to contribute to transport planning. The negotiated recommendations of the forum increased the diversity of problem definitions and innovations, and did so both by emphasising measures that had previously been only marginally considered, such as 20mph residential zones, and by introducing new concepts such as 'wiggly buses' (buses that alter routes to pick up passengers upon request) (Cotton, 2000 interview).

However, there was no evidence of these recommendations in the new local transport plan despite the forum demonstrating a general potential for experts to learn from lay groups, as conceded by participating planners (Bentley, 2000 interview). Moreover, if this potential is not soon realised, it is unlikely that the other benefits will continue, as forum members have already professed their unwillingness to commit more time and effort without any real influence on planning being achieved (Cotton, 2000 interview).

Beyond planners being unwilling to significantly empower the transport forum, the forum process was partially obstructed by friction with, and hostility from, the existing local council. Guildford Borough Councillors were specifically anxious about the forum being privy to official transport proposals, such as for new bus lanes, which were not then public knowledge (Cotton, 2000 interview). More generally, the councillors took issue with the forum because it was unelected: thus they argued that it was less representative or democratic than their own institution (Sharp, 2000 interview).

These concerns, however, should be set against a background where councillors themselves, working part time and to short electoral cycles, have limited control over full-time and permanently employed official planners. Moreover, the new initiative should be put into perspective: whilst the councillors "have their knives out for the forum" (Cotton, 2000 interview), the forum is only seeking to supplement and not replace the council's transport function. It is thus hard to avoid the conclusion that part of the

councillors hostility was, in fact, resentment towards the forum as a challenge to existing processes of power, though this remains to be shown.

## Discussion

The time frame and existence of each of the three forums represented an increase in the diversity of stakeholders included in urban transport planning. Groups, such as environmental organisations, which had previously had some influence on transport decisions, saw their relative inclusion increase, whilst some neighbourhood and social groups were involved in planning for the first time (Artz, 2000 interview; Cotton, 2000 interview; Jasper, 1997).

Conversely, in Heidelberg and Salzburg the forums represented some comparative reduction in the privileged influence of business and motoring interests on transport system design. Thus the balance, disparity and variety of included stakeholders had increased in each case and this allows the hypotheses to be tested by investigating how and whether this change was accompanied by changes in considered problem definitions and innovations, financial costs, inconclusive results or manifestations of power play.

### *Stakeholder diversity*

In all three cases above, increasing the diversity of stakeholders included in transport planning accompanied increases in the potential, and in the case of Heidelberg actual, diversity of problems and solutions considered and integrated into UTS design (see Table 1). Moreover, in the case in which the included diversity was greatest (Heidelberg), the diversity of problems and suggestions was also greatest. In Salzburg where especially the balance of stakeholders was much less, given the greater relative size of the business block, the resulting diversity of suggestions and problems were similarly less balanced, in the favour of business interests. In Guildford, where the disparity (see Figure 1) of included stakeholders was lower than in Heidelberg (for instance, no children's groups, motoring organisations or pedestrian groups), the resulting diversity of innovations and problem definitions was also less disparate and mostly concerned with infrastructure, for example, no child 'job-ticket' or 'traffic management' suggestions.

Increasing the diversity of stakeholders included in transport planning, via the forums, appears to have increased the diversity of problem definitions and innovations in two ways. First, the forums brought new problems and suggestions to the attention of planners that had not previously been considered by them. For instance, car-pooling in Heidelberg, wiggly buses in Guildford, city logistics in Salzburg. This changed the variety and disparity in each case.

Secondly, the forum altered the weighting amongst innovations and problem definitions from how it otherwise would have been and thus altered the

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**Groups such as environmental organisations saw their relative inclusion increase and some groups were involved in planning for the first time: also there was a comparative reduction in the privileged influence of business and motoring interests on transport system design**

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balance in each case. For example, introducing 20mph zones in Guildford, extending the cycle network in Heidelberg and discouraging more road tunnels in Salzburg (Sellnow, 2000; Cotton, 2000 interview; UPI, 1999).

Beyond depicting how problem and solution diversity changes accompanied those of stakeholder diversity, it was also possible to trace the origin of the consideration of particular problems and solutions to the inclusion of particular stakeholders. For example, the VCD and a cycling group in Heidelberg proposed, respectively, the recommended jobticket and cycle park innovations, whereas the Chamber of Commerce proposed the parking management system in Salzburg and local neighbourhood groups proposed extensive 20mph zones in Guildford.

Moreover, the recorded voting in Heidelberg shows not only how the consideration of, but also the support for, particular innovations were contingent upon the inclusion of particular stakeholders (Stadt Heidelberg, 1993). This evidence combines with that above to support, and not falsify, the hypothesis that increasing the diversity of stakeholders involved in transport planning increases the diversity of problem definitions and innovations in the planning process (hypothesis 2).

### *Impeding Innovation?*

Having discussed the benefits of the forums, any possible drawbacks need also to be considered. First, counter to possible concerns, the forums were not especially expensive initiatives. Representatives of interest groups made a voluntary and long-term commitment to the forums; for instance, in

Heidelberg, stakeholders attended 34 meetings over two years without remuneration. They were happy to do so, appreciating and learning from the experience and finding it rewarding, as has been found in other cases of participation in decision-making (Fiorino, 1989). Furthermore, in Guildford and for some of the time in Salzburg, even the mediator worked unwaged.

Secondly, the forums were not 'inconclusive'. Indeed, in Guildford and Salzburg, the forums managed to alter situations of disagreement and deadlock between groups into substantial consensus and compromise. In Heidelberg, a long list of recommendations was compiled and agreed upon and, as in Guildford and Salzburg, the influence of the forum was obstructed not by indecision but by power play (see Figure 5).

The creation of consensus within the forums seems to have been possible given that, by interacting with each other, stakeholders came to better understand each other's perspective and the need for compromise in policy-making. For example, in Salzburg, the representative from the Chamber of Commerce stated in interview that "our previous very difficult discussion base with the environmental group was changed by the forum into a much more positive relationship" (Huber, 2000 interview), while the representative of children's interests stated that "despite initial differences, understanding and deliberation on a personal level between representatives including business became quite constructive" (Arzt, 2000 interview). Moreover, in Heidelberg a majority of stakeholders recorded that the forum had taught them about other perspectives and the need to compromise in policy-making (Stadt Heidelberg, 1993).

However it might have been achieved, all three

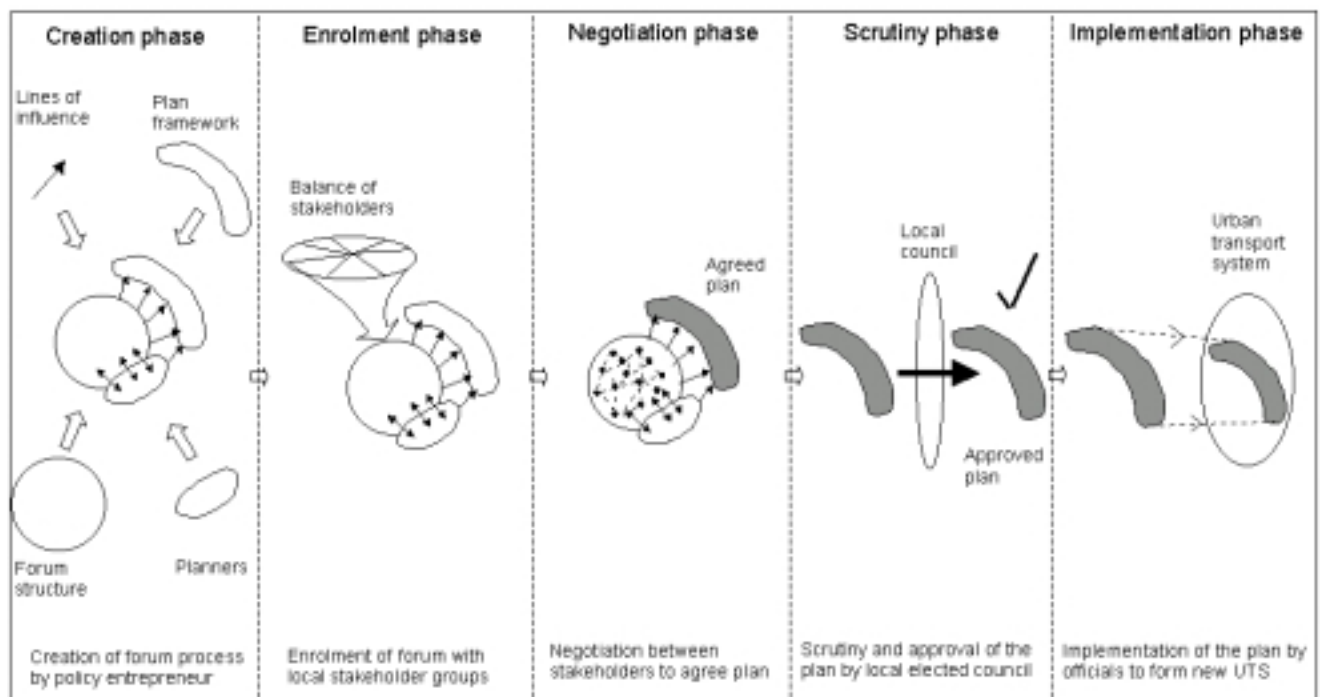


Figure 2. Schematic of an ideal forum process



forums did produce consensual and conclusive agreements. Thus it could be argued that including a greater diversity of stakeholders in transport planning seems not to render the planning process prohibitively expensive or inconclusive and thus hypothesis 1 is falsified.

Including a diversity of stakeholders in transport planning might not be expensive or inconclusive but it is time-consuming. In each of the three case studies, stakeholders and planners committed many hours to the forum process. However, it could be argued that this is time well spent. The forums were productive in terms of imparting new problem definitions and innovations into the planning process and creating consensus amongst stakeholders.

More generally, an investment of time in a forum may save time in the long term. By increasing consensus and understanding amongst stakeholders, a forum may have the potential to reduce the number of antagonistic and time-consuming bilateral consultations between planners and stakeholders, and overcome indecision and deadlock in transport planning; this requires further research.

Having thus discussed the potential benefits and drawbacks of a forum process, it is now necessary to discuss whether it can be achieved in practice.

### Power play

The effects of power structures on the forums will be analysed by comparing the case studies to an 'ideal' forum, as shown in Figure 2. First, a forum framework needs to be created in which stakeholders can interact with planners to directly influence a transport plan. Secondly, the forum needs to be enrolled

with a balance of stakeholders. Thirdly, these stakeholders need to have a balanced negotiation as to the details of the plan. Fourthly, the recommended plan will need to be scrutinised and approved by the local council. Finally the plan needs to be implemented by local officials. Whether concentrated power structures obstructed any of these five phases will now be considered, for each of the three case studies.

### Still born

The Guildford forum, despite demonstrating a potential to contribute to transport planning, had no real influence on the local transport plan (Bentley, 2000 interview). This was not so much because of obstacles encountered by the process of the forum, but rather because the forum had not been designed to be influential. The forum was obstructed at the creation phase and thus an attempt to increase the diversity of stakeholders in UTS design was 'still born'.

As depicted in Figure 3, the Guildford forum was not given the ability to influence the transport plan directly. Any influence had to occur via the planners, who had designed this 'gate-keeping' function themselves as they were the policy entrepreneurs behind the forum initiative (Sharp, 2000 interview). Moreover, the planners had not expected that the forum would influence transport planning, intending it more as a public understanding initiative (Bentley, 2000 interview). In addition, the forum Chairman supposed that the planners "don't like being told what to do" (Cotton, 2000 interview).

It thus seems unsurprising that the forum had little influence on transport planning, despite demonstrating a potential to do so (in terms of increasing innovation and problem definition diversity), and despite the Chairman and stakeholders being eager that the forum should have an impact. Moreover, there seems no practical reason why the Guildford forum could not have influenced transport planning, if allowed to do so by planners, since this has been achieved in other places such as Heidelberg.

It might be expected that all planners would resist being influenced by the perspectives of stakeholders, especially if they are unfamiliar with participatory initiatives. Thus what is important is not that more amenable planners are sought but that it is ensured that any reluctance on the part of planners is not able to prevent influence by stakeholders on design. In particular, planners themselves should not be the ones creating a forum process.

Rather, as in Salzburg and Heidelberg, other actors such as democratic representatives should be involved in the creation phase to ensure that planners are not gate-keepers and cannot prevent diverse influence, and that stakeholders work *with*, and not *through* planners to directly influence design. As will be discussed below, however, such an involvement might be a necessary, but is far from a sufficient condition to ensure the success of the whole forum process.

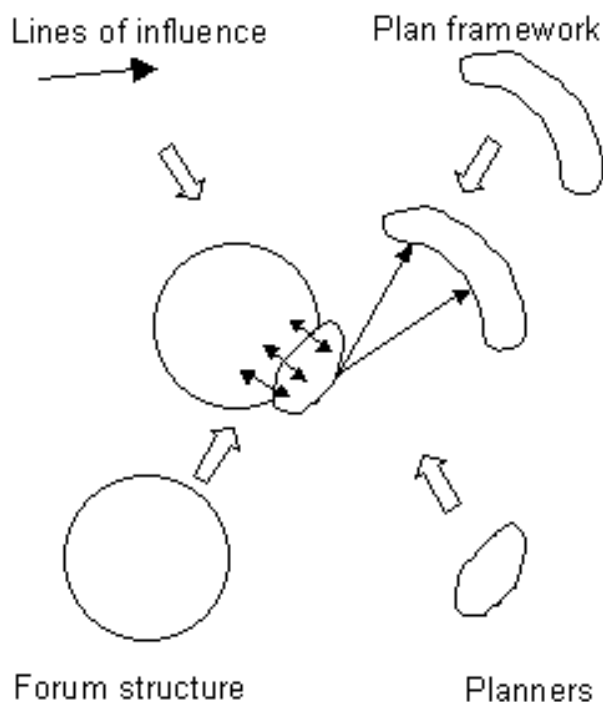


Figure 3. Creation phase in Guildford

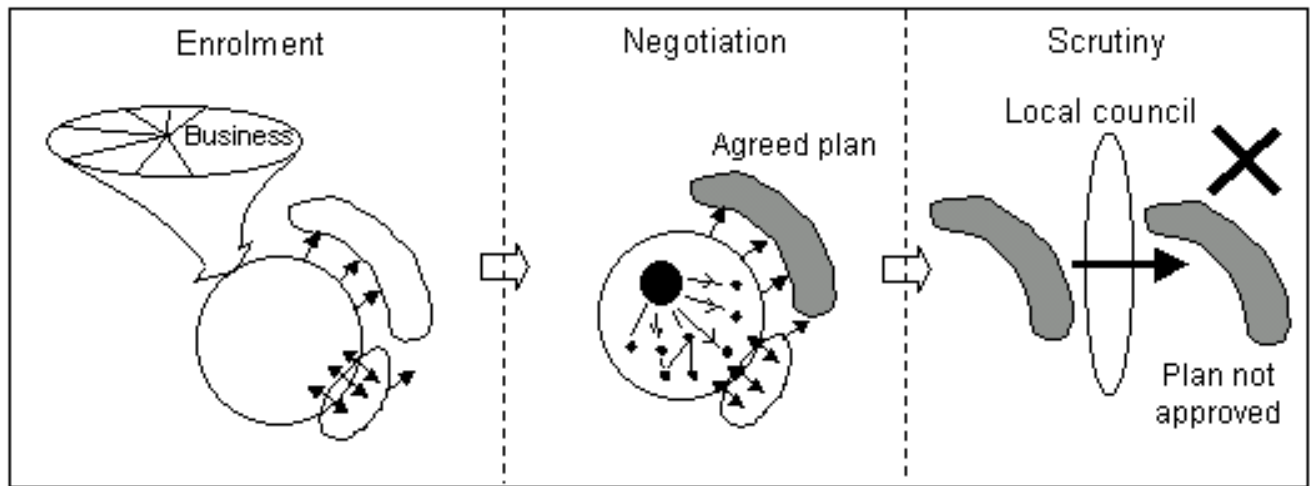


Figure 4. Process of the Salzburg forum

However it might have been overcome, it would seem that in Guildford the concentration of power in the hands of transport planners obstructed an attempt to increase the diversity of stakeholders in design; noting that to include stakeholders in UTS design requires not only that they can deliberate but also that they can influence the resulting design. Thus, in this case, hypothesis 3 is supported and not falsified.

#### *Dominated*

In Salzburg, the forum was not obstructed at the creation phase and structures were put in place for a forum of stakeholders to consult with local planners and directly influence and construct a new urban transport plan (Artz, 2000 interview). Nevertheless, the inclusion of a diversity of stakeholders in design was obstructed at the enrolment, negotiation and scrutiny phases, which combined to skew the recommendations and prevent their influence (Grabner, 1999), as shown in Figure 4. This obstruction was caused by power play from representatives of business interests and thus the forum was dominated by one particular interest group.

Business representatives obstructed the forum by demanding more representation than other groups, threatening to walk out halfway through unless others compromised, being themselves the least willing to compromise and in the final assessment using influence over the local council to prevent the agreed plan from being approved (Grabner, 1999; Artz, 2000 interview). They were able to do so because they were more powerful outside the forum than the other groups, which lacked business's social contacts (Grabner, 1999), financial resources with which to organise and lobby (Artz, 2000 interview) and statutory consultative status over transport planning (Huber, 2000 interview).

Like all participatory initiatives, the forum did not take place in a social or political vacuum. The power of the business block was both real and perceived. Business lobbies had obstructed transport plans that they did not agree with in the past (Grabner, 1999),

and it might similarly be supposed that even if they had not been party to the forum, they could nevertheless have obstructed the implementation of its recommendations. Moreover, other groups and the mediator believed that the business groups would carry out their threats (Artz 2000 interview).

Business groups, and thus business interests, dominated the forum. This is not to say that business groups or representatives were more 'selfish' than other groups, but that they were more in a position to be able to dominate and refuse to compromise. If, for example, environmental groups were more powerful than others, it might similarly be supposed that they would force through their agenda and suppress those of others.

It might now be considered how such domination might have been avoided. As below, and unlike in Salzburg, the Heidelberg forum was not dominated and obstructed by business interests, at least until the implementation phase. The two forums, however, shared the same mediator, basic general structure and range of interest groups. Moreover, both cities have a powerful business lobby (Jasper, 1997; Artz, 2000 interview) and a weaker environmental lobby with some previous association with planners (UPI, 1999; Grabner, 1999). It could be that, despite these similarities, power was more dispersed in Heidelberg than Salzburg, at least during the lifetime of the forums. However, an equally plausible explanation would seem to be that unlike in Salzburg, the Heidelberg forum was supported and legitimised by existing democratic structures.

The Heidelberg forum was instigated and overseen by the directly elected Mayor. It was also legitimised as an explicitly democratic initiative and accompanied by a recognition that existing planning processes and representative democracy provided insufficient rigour or representation in transport planning (Sellnow, 1994). Furthermore, Mayor Weber played an active role in the forum and aimed to ensure equal representation of interest groups (Weber, 2000), and the support of the SDP-FVW coalition for the forum process enabled its

recommendations to be approved by the local council (Jasper, 1997).

By contrast, the policy entrepreneur in Salzburg was a Green Party councillor and thus the forum was perceived by some as a 'partisan' initiative and argued as such by business representatives in the council and the forum as a reason why they should not be bound by its recommendations or process (Grabner, 1999). Moreover, the Salzburg forum was instigated as a last resort to overcome deadlock in transport policy deliberation; any democratic function of the forum was not legitimised and was denied by conservative local councillors (Artz, 2000 interview), who prevented the recommendations being approved.

Any conclusions here are tentative, but this discussion does highlight that existing democratic structures can be supportive or obstructive of attempts to increase stakeholder involvement in transport planning. Furthermore, it would seem that support from democratic structures might be able to prevent obstruction of a forum from existing concentrations of power, though more research is needed on these and other cases.

Such support is contingent and politically located. It seems no accident that in Heidelberg the centre-left Mayor and council supported the forum whereas the conservative council and Mayor in Salzburg failed to do so. This highlights that those who advocate including stakeholders in transport and other planning may need to take on an explicitly political role and ally themselves with actors and institutions that will support and not obstruct such attempts at broad participation.

However it might have been overcome, the Salzburg forum was obstructed at the enrolment, negotiation and scrutiny phases by powerful representatives of business interests in the city. Thus, an attempt to include a greater diversity of stakeholders in transport planning was obstructed by existing concentrations of power and thus in this case, as in Guildford, hypothesis 3 was supported and not falsified.

### Unravelling

Unlike Guildford or Salzburg, the Heidelberg forum managed to complete the first four 'phases' much as had been intended. Created and enrolled as a balanced forum with real influence on transport plans, it performed lengthy negotiations in which groups were fairly evenly involved and open to compromise; it recommended a plan which was approved by the local council (Stadt Heidelberg, 1993). Nonetheless, having created an inclusive, approved and seemingly viable transport plan, many of the forum's recommendations were not actually put in place over the subsequent years (Deligiannidu, 2000 interview). Thus the forum was obstructed at the implementation phase and 'unravelling', with only fragments of the plan being implemented.

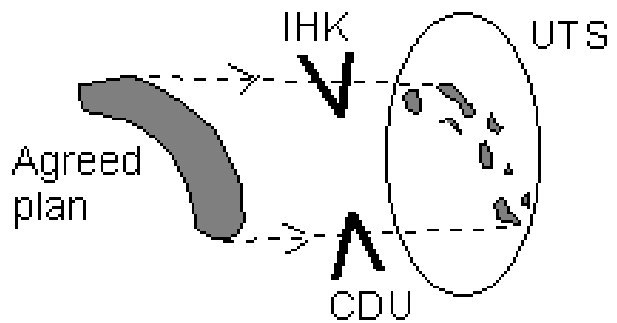


Figure 5. Implementation phase in Heidelberg

As shown in Figure 5, the Heidelberg forum was unravelled by two related actors: the conservative CDU party and the Chamber of Commerce (IHK). Both had been involved in the forum yet both sought to unravel its recommendations and frustrate their implementation. By doing so they sought to serve their common interests in maintaining the *status quo* in terms of a transport trajectory focused on the car (Rothfuß, 2000 interview). The CDU party is known throughout Germany to be close to car manufacturers and users, and the IHK is particularly concerned with vested business interests in car use (Jasper, 1997; Rothfuß, 2000 interview).

The CDU was able to obstruct the implementation phase because it had regained control of the local council after an election in 1995 and the IHK was in a position to do so because it was more 'connected' than competing groups, especially via the media (Jasper, 1997). The environmental lobby was internally divided, contingent upon support from particular officials who did not remain in office, and lacked the resources and social contacts of the business groups (Jasper, 1997).

These power differentials were not manifest in the forum, perhaps because of support and legitimisation of the forum by the Mayor and council, as discussed. However, outside and after the forum a framework for a balanced influence of interests was absent, supported or not.

It could be argued that the CDU should have been prevented from unravelling the transport plan by keeping the SDP-FVW coalition that had supported the forum, but this would be to deny the people of Heidelberg their right to elect who they choose. Similarly, it might be argued that the forum's recommendations should be given legally binding status but that would deny the local council its legitimate role of scrutiny and approval, and would prevent the plans being updated as a result of unexpected outcomes and further social learning.

Extending the forum of interest groups to oversee implementation as well as negotiation might help prevent obstruction by party politics but would not mitigate against power play via the media, and may be an unrealistic long-term commitment. Thus, if diverse stakeholders are to influence a transport plan that is actually implemented, wider structural changes may be required in society towards a greater

dispersal of power such that particular minority interests cannot obstruct the influence of others.

It is interesting in this regard that attempts in the Netherlands to include diverse stakeholders in transport planning and to implement resulting ecologically and socially friendly UTS designs have been quite successful (Bloemkolk, 1997). This would not seem to be because the Dutch have different values from others such as the Germans, since recent surveys have shown, for example, that the Dutch are actually less environmentally concerned or aware than their German counterparts (SCPR, 1998, page 108).

Rather it would seem that the very pluralistic power structure that typifies the Netherlands (Andeweg and Irwin, 1993) has allowed diverse stakeholders to have real influence over transport planning and other areas. If we wish to reproduce successful stakeholder inclusion outside the Netherlands we may need to export not just participatory practices but also their contextual societal structures, for instance, a 'pillarised' media and political system. Pillars are subcultures in Holland each with their own newspapers and influence on political decisions (Andeweg and Irwin, 1993, page 27).

However it might have been overcome, an absence of balance in the local media and local council allowed powerful actors to prevent the implementation of the approved recommendations of the Heidelberg forum. Hypothesis 3 is again supported and not falsified. Thus, in all three case studies, attempts to involve a greater diversity of stakeholders in transport planning were obstructed by concentrations of power in the hands of business élites (Salzburg and Heidelberg), local officials (Guildford) and elected representatives (Heidelberg, Salzburg and Guildford).

## Democracy

Democracy might be defined as:

“the form of Government in which the sovereign power is in the hands of the people and exercised by them either directly or indirectly.”  
(Cassell English Dictionary)

Thus a forum could contribute to democracy, given that by involving a greater diversity of stakeholders in transport planning, more power is indirectly “in the hands of the people”. Each local interest group involved in a forum may have many members and by involving a large diversity of groups, the interests of most people may be represented, including those with a diversity of interests in transport. By contrast, planners and even local politicians may only represent a subset of interests.

In some cultures, particularly in the UK, there is a tendency to associate democracy purely with the election of representatives. However, whilst

representatives must be elected in a democracy, because societies are too complex for everybody to be involved in every decision, they may not encompass the full range of interests on a particular issue such as transport because they are elected on many issues simultaneously (Lindblom, 1980).

Participatory democracy, such as forums, may also be required so as to allow the people to ‘voice’ their concerns over a particular issue (Hirschman, 1970). Moreover, forums may be preferable to other forms of participation, such as surveys and referendums, which tend to be less consensual and just answer what is asked (Hajer and Kesselring, 1999). This was confirmed above, particularly in Guildford where planners found the forum to offer a more ‘considered’ input into planning than previous surveys (Bentley, 2000 interview).

Transport forums can play a valuable role in local democracy, complementing existing representative democracy and improving on other forms of participation. However, in all three case studies, some elected councillors themselves opposed and criticised the forums on the grounds that they were ‘undemocratic’ (Grabner, 1999; Jasper, 1997; Sharp, 2000 interview). Such opposition seems unwarranted and may be because local councillors are unfamiliar with participatory democracy or reluctant to support a process that might challenge existing processes of power. Moreover, unless transport forums are supported and not opposed by elected representatives, they are unlikely to succeed in the face of opposition from other powerful actors, as discussed.

## Conclusion

This paper has sought to evaluate the participation of diverse stakeholders in the design of a UTS. A hypothesis that such inclusion would obstruct planning by making it expensive and inconclusive was falsified. Conversely, a hypothesis that increasing the diversity of stakeholders in design increases the diversity of problem definitions and innovations in the planning process was supported and not falsified. A third hypothesis that attempts to include a greater diversity of stakeholders in transport planning will be obstructed by existing concentrated power structures was also supported and not falsified.

Thus it is concluded that involving a diversity of stakeholders can on balance be beneficial to UTS planning. However, participation of a diversity of interest groups that is influential on plans that are actually implemented, may be difficult to achieve. In particular, existing concentrations of power in the hands of business élites, planners or politicians may obstruct the inclusion of stakeholders. This may be mitigated against by existing democratic structures setting up and supporting the forum. However, in the longer term a greater dispersal of power in societies may be required such that minority interests cannot obstruct the influence of others.

This paper has been limited to the evidence obtained from three case studies. Interviews with more forum members, from more cases would improve the research, as would better understanding of the power structures in the cities concerned.

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