

Informal Participation Methods – An Addition to Formal Urban and Spatial Planning Systems

Marijana Pantić

Senior Research Associate, Institute of Architecture and Urban & Spatial Planning of Serbia, Belgrade, Serbia

Tamara Maričić

Institute of Architecture and Urban & Spatial Planning of Serbia, Belgrade, Serbia

Milena Toković

University of Belgrade – Faculty of Geography, Belgrade, Serbia

Milovan Vuković

University of Belgrade – Technical Faculty in Bor, Bor, Serbia

Dušanka Milosavljević

University of Belgrade – Institute for Philosophy and Social Theory, Serbia

Abstract:

In the field of urban and spatial planning, formal methods often dominate. However, informal participation methods can significantly complement these processes by enhancing community engagement and enriching decision-making. These informal methods promote inclusivity and richness, engaging a broader range of people, including those who may not participate in formal processes. This helps build social capital, fostering trust and stronger social networks within communities. Additionally, informal participation can enhance public consensus and improve stakeholders' understanding of local issues, resulting in more contextually relevant outcomes. Moreover, the promptness of informal methods allows for timely responses to emerging issues.

Despite these benefits, informal methods also pose several challenges. They may require specific skills and expertise not always available to local governments. The associated costs, including new technologies and hiring experts, can be higher than those of formal methods. Furthermore, informal methods may require longer preparation times, as they often involve complex representations and detailed analysis. Lastly, these methods can prolong discussion times, potentially leading to increased friction between stakeholders and decision-makers.

Balancing these advantages and disadvantages is crucial for effectively integrating informal methods into the formal planning system to promote more inclusive and resilient urban development.

Keywords:

Informal participation methods, public participation, spatial planning, public consensus, community engagement.