

05 HOW PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT CAN IMPROVE CLIMATE SOLUTIONS

HOW IT IS DONE

When developing a city's climate adaptation plans, it is critical to involve and engage with all stakeholders. This, however, is not always done. If you make a decision before you engage, this can result in suboptimal solutions and lack of power to implement. To establish a process that allows for public involvement in a way that benefits and strengthens climate solutions, consider the following:

- Involve key stakeholders as early as possible and continuously, to ensure co-ownership and reduce negative impact from public resistance.
- Take an open, holistic and dialogue-based approach to make sure that no needs are ignored.
- Assess stakeholder's knowledge base, likeliness to act, bias, and favourite causes to ease prioritisation and resource management.
- Use socioeconomic impact assessment as an integrated part of political and administrative decision making to ensure long-term positive impact.
- Be agile and ready to act on public input to realise possibilities and maximise synergies.

The challenge of involvement

Planning and implementing climate solutions demand a certain level of prior understanding. Identifying the different interests at stake can seem like a mountain to climb, and it remains a central barrier for involvement of society stakeholders, whether it be the voices of the business community, knowledge institutions, social organisations or the actual citizens. Sometimes, not all relevant voices are heard before initiating a climate adaptation project. When this is the case, it is often a question of restricted resources and time – not lack of will or intent. Yet, the negative impacts of not engaging the most relevant society groups in the decision-making process are likely to exceed the initial investment in early involvement.

There are at least three society groups that can influence climate investments:

- It is crucial to examine the needs and wishes among business leaders. If not, you may miss the commercial concerns and lose out on investment, green growth potential and job creation.
- It is necessary to consult knowledge institutions and industry experts. If this step is omitted, you may lack the evidence-based insights needed to invest in a solution that actually works and stimulates long-term development of the city.
- Finally, involve the citizens. Skipping this step implies that you risk developing a technical solution that only contributes to create resilience, and does not support overall liveability goals that benefit the general public.

The lesson is that the point of departure cannot be defined solely by decision makers' own perspectives and perception of who is central to the project and who is not. Meanwhile, resource management is a key topic to address in stakeholder management and civil society involvement. Assessing what projects will lead to the greatest long-term positive impacts and how to prioritise them is a determining factor for the level of public involvement.

Mapping so that no one is left behind

The process of engaging stakeholders in climate initiatives can be divided into two phases: Identification and involvement. The benefit of incorporating these two phases in the decision-making process is that your city becomes more resilient and better equipped to tolerate climate change.

The two phases can be further detailed into the following compartments:

Identification

- Ensuring that no significant stakeholders are overlooked takes an open, holistic and dialogue-based approach to the initial identification and mapping of relevant stakeholders.
- When decision makers engage with people, they should anticipate perspectives, needs and wishes to arise – some can be foreseen while others will appear new and enlightening. This process demands openness, agility and a readiness to act accordingly until every possible angle of a project – including opportunities, risks and threats – has been covered and addressed.
- To be holistic entails that cities assess environmental as well as socioeconomic and political impacts at all relevant stakeholder levels.

Involvement

- When the influenced stakeholders are mapped and the project is well-defined, the specific involvement and engagement initiatives can be determined.
- Stakeholders must be involved as early as possible in a co-creative shaping of the project and design of the solution, both initially and continuously throughout the implementation steps to evaluate and refine the project as it proceeds.
- Some cities tend to make decisions first and engage afterwards, but in doing so you miss the opportunity to incorporate knowledge and context in the design of specific solutions.

Activating society in the decision-making process

If you engage your society early in the decision-making process, you will experience less resistance and higher buy-in. It will become a project that is co-created, rather than a project, which is forced upon them.

The earlier and the more targeted you engage stakeholders, the better the chance of positive feedback you will likely experience. In addition, the risk of negative impact will be reduced, because you enable early interventions before conflicts or misunderstandings manage to grow too large to handle. In other words, projects become easier to complete with a higher success rate.

By taking more factors and local actors into account, projects will become more integrated and tailored to combined public needs. This approach will create higher engagement and a sense of ownership that is integral for a successful project which moves beyond the technical solution and enhances the quality of public life.

Best practice examples have shown how citizen involvement can inspire user-driven, innovative solutions, because all levels of society contribute to define them. Ideas, opportunities and synergies rise to the surface, inputs that would not have materialised with a less involving approach.

Civic involvement and ownership can improve multi-purpose climate solutions and make them long-term sustainable, because they do not only meet the demands of the policy makers but also the needs and wishes of people. If performed systematically and holistically, the investment in involvement is marginal compared to the potential value-creation and long-term socio-economic benefits.

THE IDEA BROUGHT TO LIFE

Gaining access to travel and traffic data in the EU

Multimodal travel and traffic data is the basis for creating journey planners that offer a choice between different modes of transport. Through a comprehensive social impact assessment, the EU Commission has gained an overview of possibilities and barriers for strengthening the availability of and accessibility to transport data in Europe. By consulting relevant stakeholders, the Commission has obtained new knowledge about the ways different policy options can affect key stakeholders and how negative impacts can be mitigated and positive impacts enlarged.

Ramboll conducted the study by examining the availability of, access to and interoperability of travel and traffic data on the European market and help identify the appropriate policy response. The assessment included desk research, case studies in eight different EU countries and interviews with stakeholders.

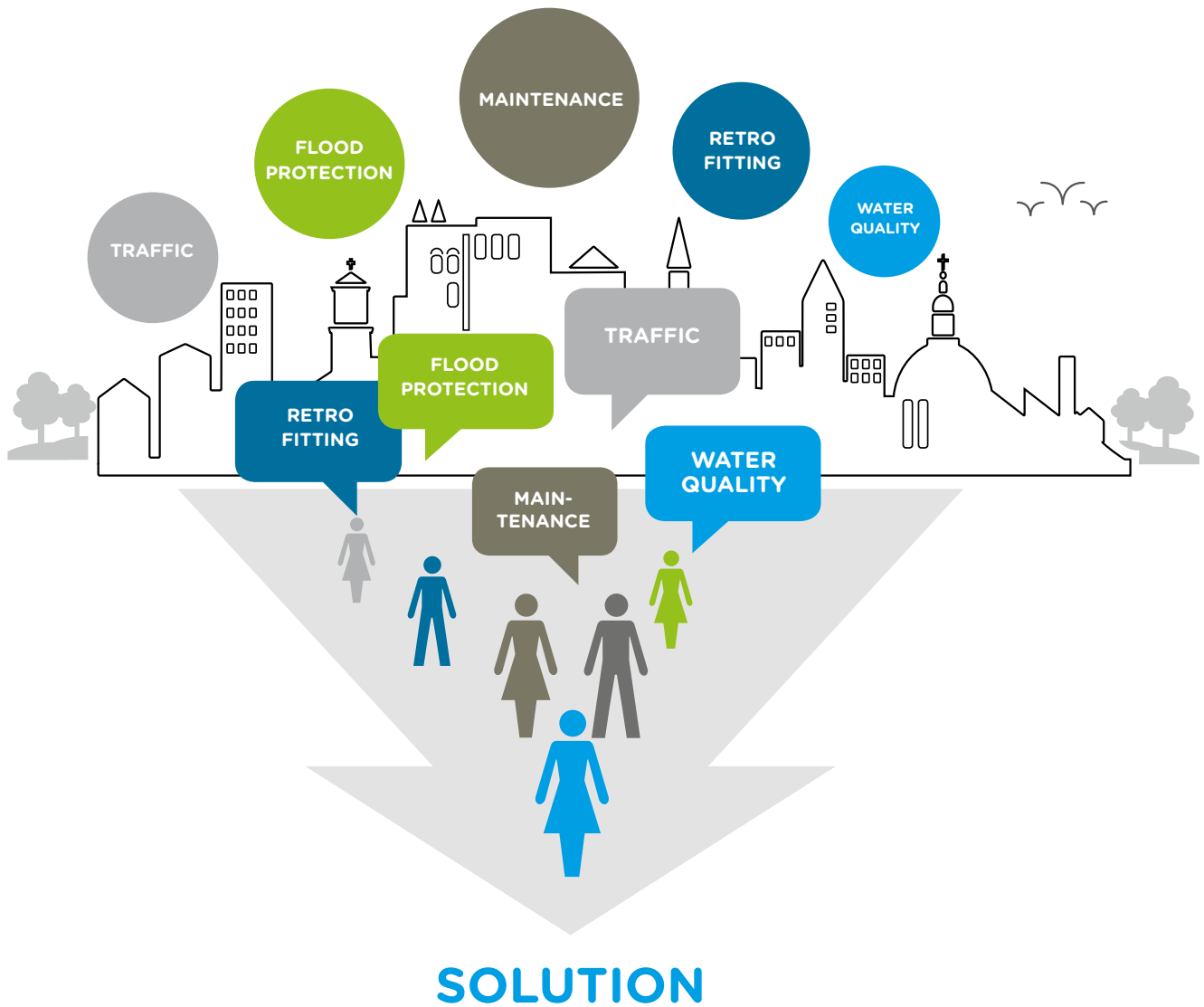
A new way to involve citizens in public decision-making, Germany

Setting the direction for an entire region is like flying a plane with hundreds of captains in the cockpit. That is, if you're ambitious enough to invite them in. The German State of Schleswig-Holstein finds itself in the middle of a complex development process where the level of citizen participation reaches new heights. And the forecast is that the approach will empower the regional strategy to become long-term sustainable.

While the approach may seem simple, the complexity of the project is huge. Like many European regions, Schleswig-Holstein deals with more than a few challenging changes: Demographic and climate changes, energy policies, debt-ceiling, increased individualisation and the demands of the knowledge society, just to name a few.

Co-development is at the core of the strategy. From the very beginning of the process, citizens and stakeholders have played a strong role. The idea has been to kick off the strategy building with very limited pre-defined input and content requirements from the government and leave it to citizens and relevant stakeholders to define topics from scratch. Usually, citizen participation begins at a later stage when key aspects of the decision process have already been defined. The risk is that citizens will only get the chance to comment on an existing draft with little chance of changing it. This represents a new way of involving the public in political decision-making.

THE MULTI-STAKEHOLDER URBAN PLANNING PROCESS



When planning a city's climate adaptation plans, it is critical to involve and engage with all stakeholders.

**\$1 TRILLION
- PROJECTED
ANNUAL COST
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URBAN AREAS
GLOBALLY BY
2050**