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Citizens' participation in urban planning in Azerbaijan

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Table 1. Summary of policy alternatives evaluation

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ICTs - Information and Communication Technologies

NGOs – Non-Governmental Organizations

PFR - Planning for Real

Abstract

This capstone project analyzes city inhabitant's involvement in urban development in Azerbaijan and proposes a policy solution that tackles the lack of citizen participation in urban planning and of mechanisms involving citizens in this process. The proposal is the result of the evaluation of three policies that address the three main causes of the problem: Unprioritized collective urban development solved by implementing the community practice of Planning for Real (PFR); Absence of training and institutional structure for participatory planning with education and training of citizens to participate in urban planning as a social capital; and to solve the exclusionary urban planning and execution process it is proposed to involve citizens in urban planning by using digital tools. After evaluating the policies presented, this policy paper concludes that the most appropriate and inclusive solution for Azerbaijan is to adopt the Planning for Real (PFR) community process in urban developments.

CHAPTER I. Introduction

Citizens' participation - or citizens' involvement - is a key factor in the development of various areas of the state, especially in a democracy. Urban planning is no exception, as citizens' participation is seen as fundamental to sustainable, resilient, and inclusive urban development in modern planning and policy reforms around the world: "Citizens can provide government with valuable information on the state of well-being in their city and even formulate proposals for well-being improvement based on their specific needs" (OECD, 2016). Therefore, the practice of active citizen participation must be a part of the daily urban planning processes and dynamics. However, in many countries the levels of citizen participation are often low and mechanisms for its implementation are not developed well. Unfortunately, the current situation in Azerbaijan is also characterized by a lack of understanding from both parts, the authorities and citizens, on the importance of integrating city residents into solving urban planning issues.

This Capstone project analyzes city inhabitants' involvement in urban development in Azerbaijan. The problem of the Capstone project is that Azerbaijan lacks of citizen participation in urban planning and mechanisms involving citizens in this process are not developed yet.

Citizens' participation in urban planning: the Azerbaijani context

One day your parents receive a letter informing them that the house where they have lived, where you grew up, needs to be evicted for the development of a new park and they have to move out; one morning you go to your balcony to take some fresh air and you notice that machinery has started to dig the base of a 20 floor apartment complex that will block all sunlight to your house and your neighbors'; you are walking around the city with a person on a wheel chair and out of a sudden the sidewalk disappears or the stairs of a bank block the road and you are forced to go by cars line; although your neighborhood has pressing problems with water and sewage, city workers are painting the facades and putting flowers to make the neighborhood look better; close to your job a company is building another offices tower but works seem stagnated, you wish that instead they would develop affordable housing projects so you could move closer and avoid to commute in traffic for a long hour twice a day. Those are situations that Azerbaijani citizens have faced and can be confirmed by walking around the city, talking to locals or foreigners who live in the city, or analyzed more specifically through articles such as: *The Post-Soviet urban renewal and its discontents: gentrification by demolition in Baku* (Aliyev, 2019) or *Baku inconvenient for pedestrians: 6 illustrative examples* (Abdullayev & Aliyev, 2019). Those are circumstances that demonstrate how high executive decisions can have a daily effect in the lives of the citizens by improving or distressing their quality of life through urban developments.

For most of the inhabitants of the country the evolution and change of public and community spaces happens by an invisible hand that changes the urban landscape as it pleases, where they have no influence and no information about. When facing those transformations, unaware citizens adapt and develop new relations with the surrounding environment to meet their needs or maintain their customs and lifestyle, notwithstanding their concern about the uncertainty of the situations that are out their control.

Although, for many others the changes in urban development might have negative consequences that can go from turning their lives upside-down to a change in their family or work dynamic, a financial loss or simply some extra hustle, effort, or expense; some of the individuals might react and protest while the rest bring about the changes resiliently.

Thereupon, when taking decisions over the public space, urban developments, construction regulations and public investments in infrastructure, if not present and actively, citizens and their interest should be taken into account at least virtually, as they are the final client, user and they finance public works partially with their taxes. Besides, as researchers Nasser Barati, Fardin Heidari and Mani Sattar zad Fathi stated in their article related to citizens' involvement in urban plans and projects in Iran: as long as the citizens are actively involved in the management, creation, and utilization of the urban environment, regardless of their geographical, sexual and ethnical differences, its performance will improve (Barati, Heidari and Fathi, 2019).

In the Azerbaijani context, as well as in many cities around the world, urban planning is yet to be more inclusive, if there is any interest to be more connected to the citizens' needs and to allow them to further exercise their rights as part of living in a democracy.

Currently, the institution that carries out the urban planning in Azerbaijan, and would have the task to promote participation, is the State Committee on Urban Planning and Architecture, created by the President Ilham Aliyev in 2006. It resulted from the transformation of previous offices and its purpose is “to improve state governance framework in the country” (arxkom.gov.az); it was given the main duty “to conduct a unified government policy and regulation in urban planning, zoning, architecture, and related design” (arxkom.gov.az), carrying out operations centrally from Baku, the capital.

According to the website of the Committee: “Among top priorities, special attention is paid to housing construction to ensure citizens' comfort”. In that sense, reaching out to citizens to know their needs, besides housing, is primary as their comfort does not only relate to that single aspect but also has to do with mobility, education, health, work, and leisure; as it will be illustrated in Chapter 2; from the results obtained in a survey made to Baku inhabitants.

On that regard, the participation of citizens in urban planning in the theory and the practice have had many models that help understanding the gaps in Azerbaijan case and can provide an approach to put it in practice starting from small initial attempts, as this capstone project will intend to propose in Chapters 3 and 4. Looking ahead is particularly important for the

country in the current state of affairs because the State Committee is entering the implementation phase of the Baku City Master Plan 2040, that was developed with Boston Consulting Group since 2018, who brought to the table their knowledge on international standards and experience producing such planning documents for cities.

While the Plan at first glance does not state any strategy for citizens participation, by having the interest in learning best practices and approaches to the issue, the Committee can start to consider ways to make it a transversal element within the four priorities of the Plan, where civil society is not mentioned explicitly: 1. Sustainable urban development; 2. Urban and environmental regeneration, 3. Care for architectural image and historical heritage of the city; and 4. New content.

For instance, full real participation, for Sanoff (2000), consists of “Community Design”, where participation is the direct involvement of the society in decision-making processes; it includes the notions of community planning, community architecture, social architecture, community development and community participation, and that all these concepts emphasize the inclusion of the local people in the physical and social development processes of the environment they live in.

Similarly, Smith (1983 as cited in Rowe and Frewer, 2000) defines public participation as a procedure developed for the community that will be affected by a decision to influence this decision, aiming to consult, involve or inform the public.

On the other hand, for Wulz (1986) participation is the decision-making process carried out in different ways by the groups involved. Stating that participation can be carried out actively or passively, Wulz defines these two ends as expert-controlled participation and user-controlled participation.

From another perspective, in *A Ladder of Citizen Participation* study, published at the time when the concept of participation in planning and design processes began to be discussed deeper, Arnstein (1969) defines citizen participation as a distribution of power that aims to have a say in the future, especially for economically and politically disadvantaged groups.

Worth clarifying that the previous four academics are only a short list of the many authors that have explored citizens participation in urban planning since the 1960's from different parts of the world, in different contexts and cultures, even in different political regimes. Authors over the decades and into the XXI century have looked into particular cases at all-levels: countries, cities, neighborhoods and particular urban developments, to analyze every aspect of the participation processes and also to find at what extent participation was beneficial for all the stakeholders involved.

Stakeholders involved

The general understanding is that participation of citizens beyond being a trait of a participatory democracy is a guarantee for more successful urban developments and inclusive cities. The consensus is also evident in multilateral organizations such as the United Nations that in the Agenda 2030 in the goal 11 related with sustainable cities and communities included: By 2030, enhance inclusive and sustainable urbanization and capacity for participatory, integrated and sustainable human settlement planning and

management in all countries. Besides UN, multilateral organisms such as the Europe Union have important inputs in the matter as their interest is to promote democracy and the exercise of human rights in the region, where participation is one of the most important ones.

Other organisms such as the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) and think-tanks like Participatory Geographies Working Group, Global Urban, Urban Democracy Lab, and many others continue to study the issue in depth to foster the implementation of participatory practices.

Towards making this happen in Azerbaijan it is important to look at the stakeholders' role and their capacity to participate in urban planning, especially in the implementation of the Baku Master Plan 2040 and the reconstruction of the territories recovered in November 2020 from Armenian occupation.

Firstly, the academia is one important actor, and in Azerbaijan there are several faculties of Architecture, Civil Engineering as well as Public Administration that count with talented professionals that have analyzed Azerbaijani problems over decades and whose knowledge could add up to participatory planning. Their voices as experts should be heard in discussion tables, beyond socialization and information sessions.

In the same way, in the country there are few think tanks such as the Center for Economic and Social Development and the Economic Research Center who have been involved only tangentially and have the potential to collaborate, as it works in other countries, with the academy in the development of policy papers that advocate for citizens' participation in urban planning more directly.

Other important actor that could play a key role to facilitate the participation of citizens, especially vulnerable populations, are NGOs; so, it is worth understanding the context in

which these organizations operate. On this regard, the analysis of the International Center for Not-for-Profit Law is particularly relevant as they have tracked all the advances Azerbaijan has been doing to promote participation of NGOs and at the same time the backlashes on the field. In a nutshell, they identified that over the years some laws that have serve the advance of the sector, but registration of NGOs is still challenging and some laws, according to the International Center, significantly impaired the work of both Azerbaijani and foreign organizations. Although, the government has established meetings with NGO to address their concerns, which could mean an opportunity to facilitate their participation in urban planning processes (International Center for Not-for-Profit Law, 2021).

Beyond any doubt the most important stakeholders to achieve the citizens' participation in urban planning, besides the citizens themselves, are at the high levels of the government: The President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Mr. Ilham Aliyev and the Country's First Vice-President Mrs. Mehriban Aliyeva, as well as Cabinet of Ministers, who within the Urban Planning and Construction Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan instruct and approve the guidelines that the State Committee on Urban Planning and Architecture must implement.

Last but not least, besides those actors and taking into consideration that Azerbaijan looks into international standards and, in its own way, has encouraged urban planning by “dozens of world-class buildings”, and now has the goal of making the cities “internationally competitive in terms of urban planning and architecture” (arxkom.gov.az), the international developers, engineering, architectural and design companies worldwide are important stakeholders to involve.

In sum, the issue this capstone project addresses is composed by political, social, economic, environmental and technical aspects that make it complex to simplify in one solution. Nevertheless, the deconstruction of the main issue brings the heart of the problem to surface:

civil society needs to be able to have a say in the urban planning decision that affect them. Certainly, the level of involvement is to be determined by the authorities, but the premise is that it needs to be beyond informing, by opening a two ways channels for interaction and communication.

Concurring to the above, this capstone project assumes that the controversy over citizens' participation in urban planning is not anymore on whether it is convenient, pertinent, or strategic, but on the ways to successfully engage it and implement it. Here many countries and cities have either come organically to that conclusion or resulting from research and consultancies, have started adopting measures, learned from the experiences and mistakes and discovered the convenience of the different approaches and how the fit their situation.

With that in mind, in the light of the context of the problem and body of knowledge around the field, for this study, it was of interest to investigate city inhabitants' involvement in urban development in Azerbaijan to provide to State Committee for Urban Planning and Architecture useful insights.

So as to that purpose, the following objectives were set:

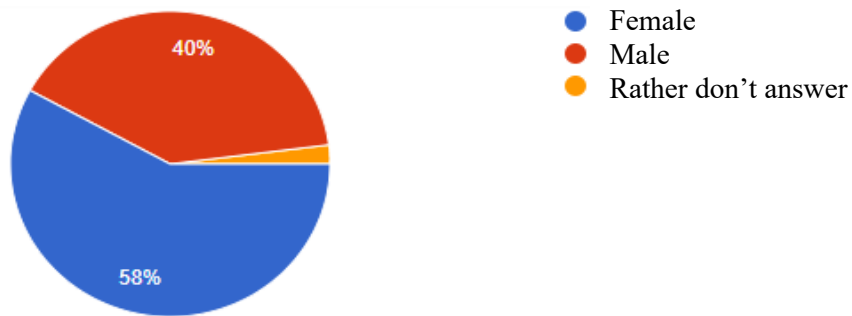
- To identify the current level of citizens' participation in urban planning process of Azerbaijan.
- To examine the key reasons and obstacles hindering the active participation of citizens in urban planning process.
- To investigate pros and cons/challenges of involving citizens in urban planning process.
- To identify the ways to increase citizens' participation in urban planning process.

- To provide solutions/recommendations to increase city inhabitants' involvement in urban development.

1.1. Methodology

In order to achieve purpose and objectives set in this project, primary and secondary data were used. Primary data was collected through both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The core of the capstone project is presented by two methods of research: survey and interview.

The aim of conducting survey was to understand the current level of citizen participation in urban planning process of Azerbaijan and to find out reasons and methods of increasing citizen's involvement in this process. Method of surveying helped to gain a good deal of data in short time, to collect demographic information, citizen's opinion and attitudes towards our research problem. The survey comprised of a structured questionnaire with 30 items divided into 4 sections. In our survey we used dichotomous, multiple-choice and scaling questions (see Appendix I). Survey was conducted online using the Google forms application. The sample size of the study was 100 participants, most of whom were female (58%), and others were male and those who preferred not to clarify their gender



(42%) (Exhibit 1). A significant percentage of respondents were between age of 18-34

(82%) (Exhibit 2)

Exhibit 1

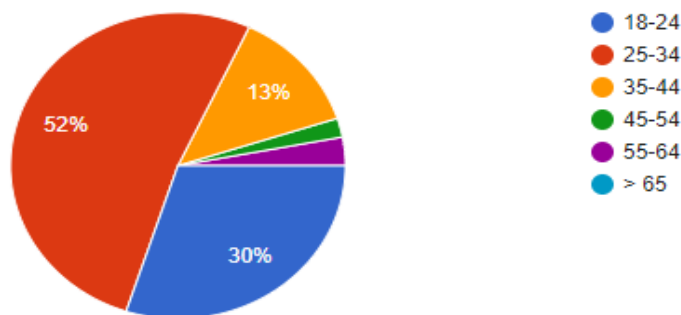


Exhibit 2

As to our second research method, the purpose of the interview was a deeper study and understanding of our problem and exploring research subjects' opinions and experiences. Interviews were aimed exclusively at stakeholders on the issue, that is, academics, experts, architects, public officers, elected representatives, community leaders, developers; persons whose perspective can add up to the case of citizens' participation in urban planning of Azerbaijan. These interviews consisted of 12 questions, which were designed in such a way as to learn more about the process of urban planning in Azerbaijan, to reveal the level of current civic involvement in this process, its pros and cons, obstacles hindering the active

participation of citizens in this issue, as well as its prospects and challenges. (See Appendix II) Overall, we conducted six different interviews. Our interviewees were: urban planner and environmentalist, architect experienced in participatory projects, local architect, urbanist expert in transport, international expert and international project developer.

Two of our interviews were conducted online through internet platforms; other three interviews were conducted in person. On average, interviews lasted 30-40 minutes and were highly productive for our research.

The identity of all participants of the survey will remain anonymous and, as requested by some of the interviewees, the identity of all subjects participating in the interviews will remain confidential and will be referred by their profession.

In terms of limitations, there are two major limitations in this study that could be addressed in future research. First, as the study focuses on problem occurring in Azerbaijan, there is limitation in existing of secondary data. Lack of local previous research studies relevant to our study created some difficulties in providing theoretical foundation for our research. Second one is having limited access to our potential interviewees. Our research problem requires interviewing certain category of stakeholders. However, the problem of not being involved directly in the sector of urban planning in a professional level made this process a bit complicated. In addition, another limitation that took place in our study is the language barrier and the lack of necessary contacts in Azerbaijan, since in our number of researchers, two are not of Azerbaijani nationality.

This paper consists of five chapters. Chapter 1 analyzes problem identification, the context and definition of policy problem, importance and purpose of the study. In addition, methodology of the study, its limitations and organization of the paper will be discussed. Chapter 2 is devoted to the policy problem of capstone project. In this chapter the

background of the problem is studied and its underlying causes are identified. In the 3rd and 4th chapters, solutions for each reason are proposed and evaluated. Finally, chapter 5 summarizes major findings of the study and provides some policy recommendations to solve the policy problem.

CHAPTER 2. Problem Description

Azerbaijan is a country with 10,200,811 inhabitants and a population density of 123 per km², spread in a land area of 82,658 km²; 56.2% consists of urban population (Worldometer) and 23.14% (2,361,016) lives in the urban area of Baku (Populationstat). According to the Baku Research Institute, the capital and the Absheron peninsula only occupy 5% of the country's territory, but almost 80% of its economic potential (Baku Research Institute, 2018); with those demographics urban planning gains importance as a determinant element to assure a fair social and economic development in the city that also impacts the country's progress.

Bearing that in mind, this capstone project examines what are the elements defining the urban planning? How does the process take place? Are Azerbaijanis taking part in urban planning? What purpose is the infrastructure serving to society? Is urban development being assertive with the needs of the people? And the answer to those questions unfailingly drives to the conclusion that citizens are not being involved in urban planning, and the problem beyond is why.

Historically this Caucasus state has experienced shifts between the cultural influence of Persians, Muslim Turks, Dynasties, Mongols, Russians and more recently Europeans. Through that journey, all the different ideas and conceptions of nation, identity, society and

citizenship have evolved and amalgamated into the current political hybrid system that falls into a “gray area” (Guliyev, 2015).

In this context, participation of citizens is still in the process of being further encouraged and effectively advocated. According to experts in politics in the region, after independence from USSR, several countries adopted conceptions of the exercise of power that instead of promoting participation, restrain in general the active involvement of citizens. In spite of the fact that this seems to be a common problem in the region, Azerbaijan has demonstrated an aim to transition to democracy further than some of its neighboring nations.

This chapter of the research emphasizes on the factors that evidence how in Azerbaijan citizens' participation in urban planning is not yet encouraged, advocated or exercised.

2.1. Unprioritized collective urban development

The challenges that came after the second independence of Azerbaijan in 1991 were not easy to navigate for the political leaders and the socioeconomic groups interested in leading the country to the future, while at the same time reviving the unity and strength of the first Azerbaijani Republic. Under the circumstances, influential leaders of all sectors embraced what in academic arena is known as the problem of the triple transition: democratization and marketisation, and because of the weakness soviet institutions Azerbaijani oligarchs also had to deal with the transition to stateness (Kuzio, 2001); all while facing an international war with Armenia.

While doing so, and years after successfully building an identity and when overcoming the hardest times have passed; out of those three transition processes marketization and international recognition has received more attention than the democratization and the transition to stateness. Therefore, the place and role for civil society to participate in dictating the path of the country in development and particularly in urban planning is still to be determined.

When it comes to urban planning, the last general or master plan for Baku was launched in 1985 for 20 years, it was the result of the Soviet administration. Nowadays, urban development, as described by an experts interviewed: “is taking place in accordance with the local legislation in the country” (From personal communication with urban planner and environmentalist), and to the eyes of others seems to serving a clear purpose but it is happening without a widely known plan: to make Azerbaijan and specially Baku an outstanding city that leaves no doubt that the soviet times are behind, and that modernization and cutting-edge designs can coexist with the ancient architecture of the Caspian jewel.

On this regard, Bruce Grant published an article in 2014 where he makes a reconstruction of the transitions that Baku has been through, mainly driven by the oil market and the political context. He argues that Baku has been changing constantly, since the initial settlements transformed by the first oil boom in the 1870s until most recent buildings cover up or demolition, and construction of exuberant towers: “In what was long a modest

provincial city of low-rise buildings overlooking the Caspian Sea, these dozens of new structures of jutting glass and steel stood out for their boldness” (Grant, 2014).

Although, the question of whether there is an actual place for regular people in these new structures or not, raised by the author, has divided answers; there is no doubt that those startling projects, built or portrayed in billboards and screens, achieved the goal of calling for the international attention.

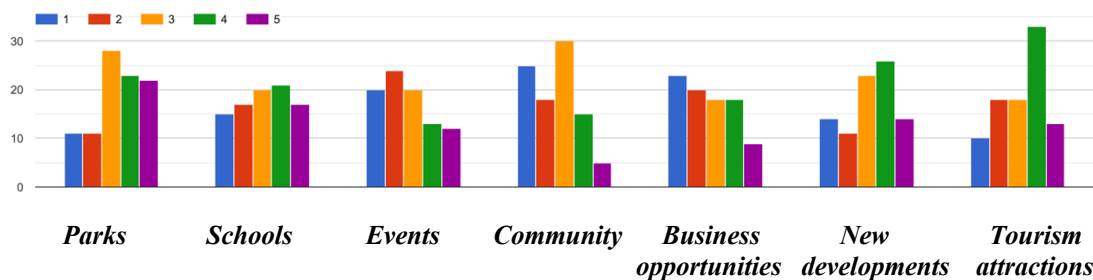


Exhibit 3. Level of contribution of different factors to improving citizens’ life in Baku, where blue (1) is no contribution and purple (5) is contribute a lot.

An evidence of that, is the result of the research by the Journal East European Politics into the motivations of Azerbaijan to host the European Games in 2015, and the case applies to other cultural and sports events, where they found out that for the political and socioeconomic influential actors of Azerbaijan, the event was supposed to “reflect, the attainment of modern standards as expected by the European and Western world”, responding to their priority: to be closer to Europe (Valiyev 2016). But when asked for how much those events impact positively only 25 % manifested that those have contributed them (Exhibit 3).

In general, the construction of public infrastructure is typically a complex problem worldwide and, as it is the muscle of urban planning, it is inevitable and critical that governments monitor closely all urban projects. The last is particularly important considering that while construction business all over the world generates employment and attracts investments, it is also one of the most corrupted sectors in the world. According to an article published in the World Economic Forum: “the value of global construction output is expected to increase by \$8 trillion to reach \$17.5 trillion per annum by 2030... This means that by 2030, unless measures are introduced that effectively improve this situation, close to \$6 trillion could be lost annually” (Matthews, 2016).

On the same topic one of the interviewees acknowledge:

“In general, urban projects, construction, are mostly trying to get corrupted all over the world; changing that dynamic of the sector is a challenge everywhere”. (From personal communication with an urban planner and environmentalist, April 16, 2021)

Hence, the time and need to involve citizens in urban developments as they can help government oversee closely the works made in their neighborhoods, which at the end of the equation are meant to benefit their communities. A more participatory urban planning and execution can help overcome the loss of funds in “corruption, mismanagement and inefficiency” (Matthews, 2016).

Further, an agenda mutually discussed can redirection government efforts to fostering the investment in the priorities of the population such as more affordable housing, cost of living,

traffic, noise, pollution, and other urgent aspects that decrease their quality of life in Baku, instead of luxury towers, hotels, business centers, restaurants, sports or cultural arenas, that might the interest of investors.

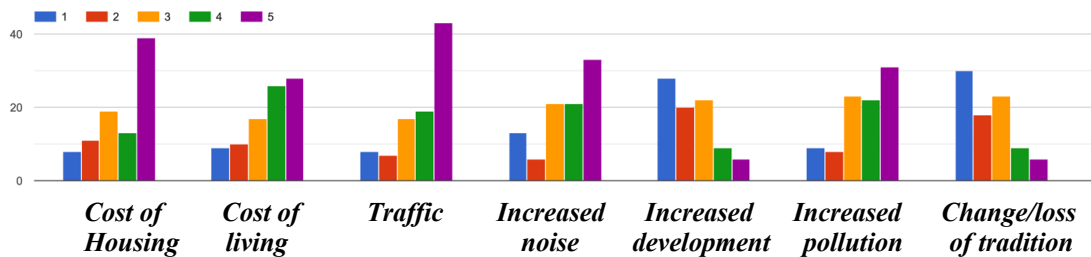


Exhibit 4: Level to which factors have contributed to decrease quality of life in Baku, where blue (1) is no contribution and purple (5) is contribute a lot.

On the other hand, for some academics the urban development in Baku – the focus of infrastructure development has not aimed at the wellbeing of the most but of the few, leaving the vulnerable populations silenced and neglected:

“Massive evictions of less well-to- do households from centrally located habitats and their relocation to the city’s outskirts... exacerbated the already widening levels of social inequality and segregation in urban Baku, where wealthier residents have come to benefit from the city’s amenities and services, replacing a more egalitarian Soviet-era urban structure” (Guliyev, 2018).

All the above, reflect a top-down structure and not a collective horizontal, or bottom-up model, that for many is more beneficial when deciding urban development:

In Azerbaijan there is top- down system mostly where perhaps there is room for private companies or international consulting agents can participate in tenders, but not for citizens” (From personal communication with an architect experienced in participatory projects, April 15, 2021)

With same relevance as education and health, housing and safe environments are human rights and therefore assets all citizens should have access to. Although, in Baku a study made by Firuza Nahmadova showed that the average household in the city, with the situation as it is, won't be able to own a property in the rest of their life due to the impossibility of affording any real estate price (Nahmadova, 2020). From the research it is possible to infer, besides the income limitations, the need of urban planning decisions that respond to the need of families to have an attainable housing solution.

Summarizing, urban planning does not respond or acknowledge the needs of the citizens, their participation is basically null according to all stakeholders interviewed:

“Government decisions don't depend on citizens so why should they ask them or explain them something to them? They don't do it because they don't have to”. (From personal communication with an urbanist expert in transport, April 14, 2021)

“When we say transparency in urban planning has to do with how the decisions taken are justified by the needs of citizens. To determine those needs there must be an assessment of the needs of the people...”. (From personal communication with an urban planner and environmentalist, April 16, 2021)

Besides, 80% of the population who participated in the survey does not know how urban planning takes place in the city and 95% manifested never been involved in any public consultation regarding a new project that would affect them.

All together, these factors have caused a disconnection between the city urban planning and the citizens, resulting in a low sense of belonging. When asked, only 27% of the population manifested a feeling of belonging to Baku (Exhibit 5).



Exhibit 5: To what level do you feel identified with your District/city/neighborhood? Range goes from blue meaning sense of belonging to purple not belonging at all.

Apparently, the government does works that benefit the population and at some level and for the majority quality of life is not bad (Exhibit 6 and Exhibit 7). Although one of the experts consulted, with experience in participatory projects, explains why these results:

“When people live lacking so many privileges, lacking proper sewage, electricity or water what they need is the basic stuff, so the very basic makes them satisfied, they don't know better”. *(From personal communication with an architect experienced in participatory projects, April 15, 2021)*

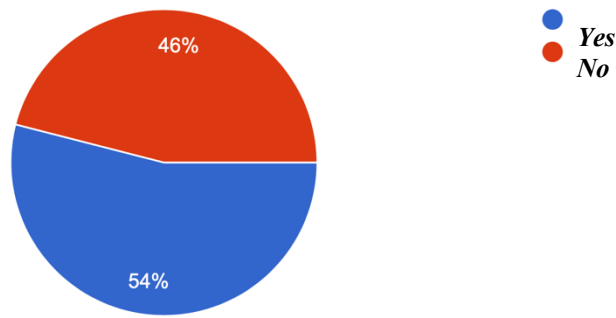


Exhibit 6: Satisfaction with the living conditions in citizens District/city/neighborhood. Blue meaning satisfied and red, not.

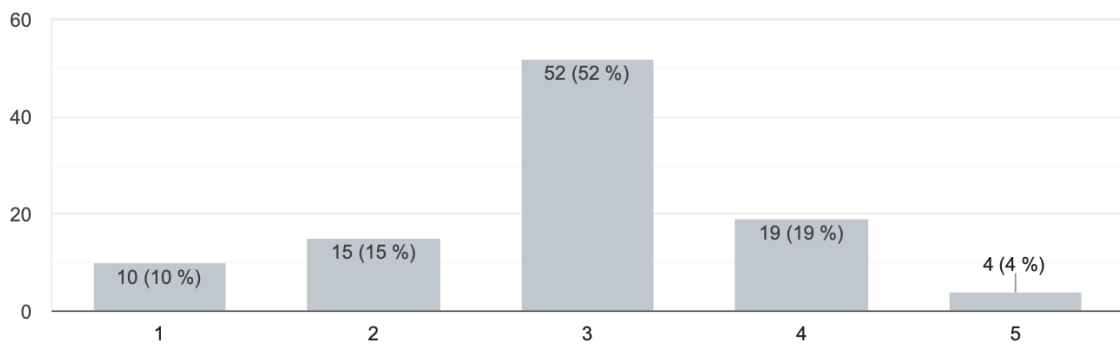


Exhibit 7: Rate of citizens to their quality of life in Baku. Where 1 is poor and 5 is excellent.

In sum, collective urban development is a debt to civil society from the transition processes to democratization and stateness in Azerbaijan. Indeed, it has been delayed because of important steps given by the authorities towards economic development, international influence or national security. Although now the conditions in the country and the world trends in urban planning call for the inclusion of people and in the case of Azerbaijan the recent recovery or territories from Armenian occupation is precisely the ideal terrain to start building territories and spaces together with stakeholders from all levels.

2.2. Absence of training and institutional structure for participatory planning

In the path to democracy that Azerbaijan started in 1991 one aspect needs to be looked into closely. As mentioned previously, Azerbaijan have procured show a renewed face to the world community to be more appealing on the grounds of modernity and democracy. And a first step into that direction is establishing political institutions and executive bodies that allow participation at least through voting. Evidence of that are the recommendations from 2003 and 2007, 133 and 219 respectively, of the Council of Europe and its Committee of Ministers regarding the political and administrative independence that capital cities should have, and Baku does not have yet (Aliyev, 2019).

Furthermore, according to author Samir Aliyev everything is carried out based on the decisions and views of the Baku City Executive Authority (BCEA) whose head is appointed by the Preside, the head of the executive authority creates both advisory and appeals councils, and identifies their heads and members. The Advisory Councils do not include members of the local communities and all the Council members are state officials (Aliyev, 2019). This constitutes a clear barrier for citizens to gain a seat in a decision-making body where their opinions can be heard.

With the above, experts interviewed expressed similar opinions:

“At the institutional level, the city executive power institution needs to be replaced with a city administration with a mayor with a mayor institution. An elected major can engage people to participate in meetings or surveys, to give their opinion.” (From personal communication with an urban planner and environmentalist, April 16, 2021)

“Government doesn’t involve people because there is an institutional issue of mayors not being elected, they don’t report to people that vote for them. If there was a mayor, he would rather talk to people, but instead they report to people who appoint them” (From personal communication with an urbanist expert in transport, April 14, 2021)

This turns out to be even more problematic because, even if more opportunities are open for citizens to participate it will not be easy to make a real impact in urban planning yet. On this matter, experts explain the reasons:

“I don’t think is relevant in this moment, because citizens don’t have the conditions given to exercise some of their basic fundamental constitutional rights. There is a lack of civil society development that allows them able to defend their voice, there is no room yet for that. To engage citizens is not high priority for the government now, not relevant, in the future probably yes. (From personal communication with an urban planner and environmentalist, April 16, 2021)

“For young architects and urbanist there is no academic background in the curriculums that can foster the involvement of communities in urban planning. Besides, the job market for us is mostly in companies that just build, where there is no consultation to citizens... social awareness is a personal call that needs to be encouraged since early stages” (From personal communication with an architect experienced in participatory projects, April 15, 2021)

On this matter, the practical problem that Azerbaijan faces is that education, training and academic institutions lack content that forms citizens and professionals in participatory methodologies, putting special stress on the economic, social and political gains of citizens close involvement in urban planning.

Moreover, the need to strengthen education from primary and secondary levels with special stress put into topics such as: civic, rights and duties of citizens and political constitution; and for superior levels, professional degrees, an emphasis of participatory processes,

sustainable and transparent approaches to every field, even more the ones related to public service.

The missing link between development and democracy, in case of Azerbaijan, seems to be education. As authors, such as Bruce Bueno de Mesquita and George W. Downs debate on their paper *Development and Democracy* (De Mesquita and Downs, 2005), there are examples of both: cases where development led to higher democratization (understood as the power of people to participate in taking decisions that affect them) and countries where it does not; according to the authors it depends of whether the governments see economic development as a tool or as a trap.

But in general, the case being witnessed since mid-XX century is that, as Seymour Martin Lipset studied in dept, well-educated societies are able to participate more effectively and cleverly in any democratic processes: “Education presumably broadens men's outlooks enables them to understand the need of for norms of tolerance, restrained them from a deer into extremities and monastic doctrines, and increases their capacity to make rational electoral choices” (Lipset, 1959).

In the same line, and international expert consulted for this capstone project, highlighted:

“In the case of Azerbaijan, as a relatively young country, it is necessary to start education from little kids, to raise them with a sense of community and the understanding of what they must do for their country and what they can expect from their government”. (From personal communication with an international expert, April 21, 2021)

A more educated society that understands the power of citizenship and will value and promote the participation in urban planning, as it is a matter that affects their daily lives: “Making it easier for ordinary citizens to coordinate and communicate with one another will promote the growth of political freedom” (De Mesquita and Downs, 2005), and that freedom and collaboration are strong drivers of participation; but it all starts with education.

2.3. Exclusionary planning and execution process

Although is not a common situation, in the past Baku residents have witness protest from those feeling unsatisfied with the urban planning decisions from the administration or with the way they had been implemented. Samir Aliyev, civil society activist and independent researcher, wrote an explanation for it in an article published in the Baku Research Institute website: the reason is simple: residents are left out of the decision-making process and they experience the bitter consequences of decisions made against their will (Aliyev, 2019).

Besides, stakeholders consulted, agree that the communities living in the areas to be intervened or in the surroundings are kept completely out of the loop in the urban planning process:

Not sharing the information with citizens is what causes the complains and outrage of people; because they want to know what is happening in their neighborhoods. Although, mechanisms to involve people exist, the projects are not communicated and that's when decisions lack transparency. Giving opportunity to participate and letting citizens raise their voice would make urban planning more transparent.” (From personal communication with an urban planner and environmentalist, April 16, 2021)

Usually, people are unaware of what is being constructed until the project has

started or even completed. Word of mouth seems to be the biggest media for information. (From email communication received by international developer, April 16, 2021)

Additionally, from the population consulted 43% manifested not being involved with the city planning and have a negative perception of the general involvement of citizens into the government's processes of urban planning (Exhibit 8).

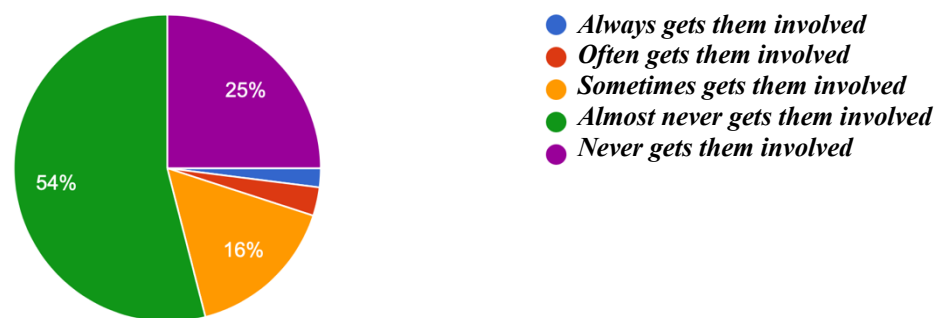


Exhibit 8. Level of involvement of citizens into the government's processes of urban planning according to people perception. Where blue is "always get them involved and green and purple are almost never and never gets them involves, respectively.

Although, grassroots organization have made attempts to participate but the bureaucracy keeps putting stumbling block instead of steppingstones for their involvement. Nazaket Azimli in 2018 made a case for bottom-up participation and highlighted initiatives that can be groundbreaking for citizens participation. At the same time the author recognized that in the practice "the operational restrictions... provide an important backdrop to urban activism

in Baku in general... Due to the generally restrictive nature of engagement in public spaces, resolving this concern took some time” (Azimli, 2018).

As Azimli, other authors and stakeholders, such the person interviewed for this capstone project, are skeptical about the possibility of opening those doors to citizens: “Given the current political situation, it is unlikely that these movements will have an enabling environment to expand the scope of their activities and influence urban policymaking in the near future” (Azimli, 2018).

Until authorities and elites don’t understand that by allowing citizens to express their proposals or at least manifest their needs in urban planning, there won’t be any opportunity for involvement.

Participation at the core depends on the willingness of the governments.

With the willingness all significant barriers disappear and ways to participate will be found successfully. (From personal communication with an urban planner and environmentalist, April 16, 2021)

Other aspect to analyze in dept, to corroborate the level of civil society involvement in planning, could be the profitability of the projects planned and developed so far by the local authorities. A simple observation around the city of the usage and occupation of the spaces, buildings and projects evidences the underused spaces: office buildings with less than a third occupancy or simply empty, complete neighborhoods inhabited such as White City.

In the same way, some urban projects evidence that needs of population in situation of disability are not considered as they cannot access to certain areas, or parking spaces are not available for visitors, aspects that with the involvement of certain actors of civil society could easily be anticipated and avoided.

Likewise, the planning at closed doors could also imply that, beyond some important actors are not involved, the actors involved are disconnected to the realities of the territories and need to have a closer look to the whole picture to do more assertive projects that benefit the population.

“Urban planning needs to be done with a holistic development approach, by asking questions of need, impact and the benefits it brings for people; that is a complete front end engineering plus social environment analysis”
(From personal communication with a local architect, April 7, 2021).

Overall, the causes that had leave citizens’ participation in urban planning behind hand in Azerbaijan, can be overcome with political will and initial steps that bring government, citizens, private sector and international investors together around a common goal: the sustainable and inclusive socio-economic development of the country where no one is left behind.

Thereupon, the policy options, as well as the pros, cons and best practices or citizens participation will be discussed in the next chapter, in an attempt to provide

practical and feasible options that the State Committee of Architecture and Urban

Planning of Azerbaijan could consider embracing.

CHAPTER 3. POLICY OPTIONS

In the previous chapter of this policy paper, the causes of the Capstone project problem were identified and described. In this chapter, bearing in mind the specific elements of each cause, we are offering optimal policy options for each of them. Each policy option was selected based on positive world experience and taking into account the features of the urban planning system of Azerbaijan.

3.1 Implementation of Planning for Real (PFR) collective community planning process based on a 3D model

The units of the public administration that serve citizens most closely are local governments. Their field of duty is to respond to the needs of citizens in daily life and to solve the most basic problems they encounter. Today, local governments can be defined as the most appropriate public administration units in terms of both the establishment of the culture of democracy and the ability of the people to fulfill their control function. Public participation is a must in local governments to ensure democratic governance principles, namely transparency, accountability and efficiency. A democracy functioning at the local level is understood as ensuring that the decisions taken are made at the most effective scale, the active participation of the local people in the decision-making mechanisms and the implementation of the decisions with the participation of the local people. Therefore, active citizen participation should be ensured in local decisions in order to accurately identify

people's needs and problems and to develop policies that will respond to these needs and problems.

Planning, ways of thinking, ways of valuing, and ways of acting are considered as an interactive and relational effort that includes social processes that are actively constructed by the participants (Healey, 1998). Participation in planning is the involvement of individuals or groups in planning processes in order to express and realize their own expectations. In recent years, the need to increase the level of public discourse and participation, to understand the issues together, and to democratize the planning and policy processes in general has been widely acknowledged in order to ensure sustainable and inclusive development. It is clear that the design of a participation process consisting of informing, listening to the local people, and dealing with the solution of their problems and developing consensus is important in terms of meeting the public concerns as well as meeting the needs properly (Creighton, 2005). Therefore, it is possible to define the phenomenon of participation as a social process in the context of the voice of local people for fulfilling needs and demands and providing quality products or services (Healey, 1998; Shuib et al., 2015). On the other hand, planning policies should not be overlooked in the development of discourse and participation levels towards local people in order to ensure sustainable development and addressing problems or needs on the basis of a common consensus. As a matter of fact, research on 'participatory planning' emphasizes the

importance of developing consensus or common consensus and creating shared visions through dialogue (Innes & Booher, 2004; Van Herzele, 2004)

In this context, the right of local communities to be aware of the developments in their environment and to participate in decision-making processes that affect them should be accepted as a requirement of participatory planning philosophy (Mohamed Anuar & Saruwono, 2013). In a clearer language, it can be expressed as the necessity to ensure active participation of local people in decision-making processes in all scopes and scales that concern them (Hjortsø, 2004; Sipilä & Tyrväinen, 2005; Janse & Konijnendijk, 2007). From this point of view, it can be thought that effective participation of the people in administration will provide a significant improvement in the quality of life. In the 21st century, the new network of relations required by the understanding of governance and the changes in the balance of power will increase the role of the local people in the participation process, and will ensure the ownership, continuity and sustainability of them by the people. In this context, consensus will be developed by reducing the delay in terms of time and cost in the decisions taken, providing ease of implementation, anticipating public concerns and attitudes (Loures & Crawford, 2008; Vandenbussche et al., 2015).

Based on this view, in any recreation area example that is envisaged to be realized, a participatory and consensual planning-design model based on a common vision can be experienced, based on the expectations, tendencies and desires of the local government and local people. This experience should be considered important in terms of observing the

participation reflects of both the local government and the local people in planning-design processes by using the "planning for real-PFR" participation method. It is thought that this experience can contribute to the implementation level as an exemplary method in terms of planning approach based on establishing interaction and dialogue between local governments and local people.

This method focuses on the sharing of experiences regarding the planning-design and implementation process, which includes ensuring the participation of local people in the decision-making mechanism of the local administration in the context of the sample area.

In this framework, a participatory decision-making method can be followed for the revitalization of any public space by taking the opinions and suggestions of the local people and making it available as a recreation area.

100 responses

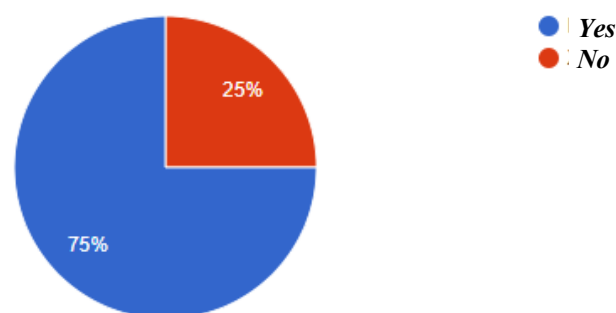


Exhibit 9. If you are invited to participate in the urban development process in your neighborhood, do you think you are ready to do it? 75% – yes, 25% – no.

This method is based on developing knowledge and skills at the level of expertise and informing about the importance of social participation in the development process of local

communities, adapting to the needs of each country with practical techniques and tools expressed as "planning for real-PFR".

Within the scope of the method, a planning process that takes into account the opinions and suggestions of the residents of the neighborhood is followed through the land model prepared using three-dimensional 3D modeling. This process is based on cooperation / solidarity and authority sharing or transfer, and it is the determination of planning-design strategies by contributing to the reveal of the individual identities of the local people and their capacity to act together and their innovation and entrepreneurship skills in the context of new ideas. A need for such collective participation method can also be seen in the survey results conducted with the participation of 100 people.

In the "planning for real-PFR" method, the participatory planning approach can be evaluated as an analysis process consisting of five stages:

- Participation of the facilitators,
- Participation of local stakeholders,
- Preparation of the 3D model,
- Participation of the local people
- Prioritization and time plan.

1. Participation of the facilitators. The first stage is bringing together the institutional stakeholders within the scope of the participation of the facilitators. In this framework, as the first of the implementation activities of the participatory planning method,

preferably, a two-day local facilitator-trainer training should be held within the responsible local government institution. Within the scope of these training meetings, information should be provided on the process design, and opinions and suggestions regarding the role of stakeholders in the participation process should be discussed. In the context of training, PFR values, encouragement of participation, community involvement, role of the facilitator-educator, model making, how to have a good consultancy process, use of the model, recording information, planning priority and time - problem solving and scheduling activities, effects of the PFR process, introduction of other PFR tools or resources, views on planning real implementation projects, PFR training support, training facilities for local trainers, and project planning can be addressed.

In this framework, the activities to be done in the field of work and work sharing are carried out with local trainers, facilitators and external experts under the coordination of the appropriate local government. In this context, an activity timeline should be created that includes the announcement of participatory planning studies in the appropriate district, the definition of the study area, the determination of human resources, even the promotion of children's participation, the creation of the 3D model, public participation activity, prioritization study and project planning for the field.

2. Participation of local stakeholders. In the second phase, in the context of the involvement of local stakeholders (local trainers, facilitators) and external experts (professionals) come together to start working as a team to share knowledge and develop

what is best for the community, overcoming the difficulties and obstacles identified during the communication activities. The kick-off meeting can also create an opportunity for different external experts to come together and collaborate.

3. Preparation of the 3D model. The third stage is the preparation of the 3D model (land model). In this context, a plan for a pre-defined public area (recreation field) which is determined as a sample application area is prepared by the facilitators with the support of local trainers and facilitators-external experts under the coordination of the local government or other responsible organization.

4. Participation of the local people. The fourth stage is the involvement of the people in the unanimous decision-making process, where people work together to overcome disadvantages and discrimination, to find solutions to common problems and needs, mainly to the participation of local people and the maximum participation of all key stakeholders in the project, involvement of a large community, open and transparent processes. In this context, it should be ensured that authorization, mutual education and exchange, knowledge, skills and capacity are improved at individual or group level, individuals and groups are empowered to make decisions and to be effective on political systems, and individuals and groups should be empowered to be active in the society they belong to.

Appropriate use of participation methods (Rowe and Frewer, 2000) and effective communication strategies, for example, the use of e-mails, personal contacts, face-to-face or formal meetings with authorities can help to ensure effective participation and to fully integrate public participation in relevant decision-making processes (Shan, 2012). In order to bring together residents and facilitators-external experts to present their views on the field, brochures, posters and etc. that describe the method primarily intended for the revision of the intended location can be prepared and distributed using different methods in different

parts of the planned district in order to mobilize local people and reach more people. For example, through the local bus companies' information can be provided to the passengers, brochures can be delivered to the local schools, and also posters at certain points in the district can be posted in order to make the public announcements about the project.

5. Prioritization and time plan. In the fifth stage, the prioritization of the needs for the arrangement of the pre-determined / planned area by using priority cards on a schedule and the time plan process includes positive suggestions that need to be considered in detail. This stage is the stage where there is a mutual exchange of ideas for the development of knowledge and opinion and it can also be considered as a bridge that is built between residents and experts to process the knowledge.

As listed above, the "Planning for Real" method with the aim of serving the local government in line with the public opinion can be summarized with the following 5 designation; The first is the development of a sense of spatial belonging-identity by enabling the local people as user groups to define and shape the area foreseen for their future, and the second is to eliminate the concerns arising from the management with a transparent and collaborative participation process based on having a voice in decision-making and making processes. Third one is by taking the opinions and suggestions of the local people as a basis in the planning process, meeting the needs in a realistic and effective manner, and the fourth is to provide the opportunity to adopt the shared vision for the future of a region with the contribution of the society to local decision making. At last, the corresponding public institution obtains concrete data on the thoughts, wishes, expectations and approaches of the local participants about the recreation area.

3.2 Education and training of citizens to participate in urban planning as a social capital

As discussed in chapter two, there is a missing link between the democracy and the development in Azerbaijan, which is the education of people in this direction. Lack of content in academic institutions with regards to the participatory methodologies and their importance prevents the current individuals of Azerbaijani society to act and perform as an active individual who can understand and evaluate the social responsibility as well as the results of his decisions, votes. As described in chapter two, there were many studies done confirming the link between the effectiveness of participation and the training and education of people. Democracy in urban planning does not necessarily represent the effectiveness of the participation of the citizens. To achieve such level of consciousness in the active involvement process is through the development of social capital quality that is conveyed with the application of education and training on participatory methodologies and their importance.

Based on the relational approach between the individual and the society, the individual assumed by the required form of control is an active individual due to his active involvement in the process. What is meant by an active individual is an actor who can bear the social responsibility of his actions, in other words, he is an individual who can be active for the society, not for himself. There is a definition of an individual who does not play an active role in the interaction of interest distribution and political loyalty, but who can be active in the establishment of treatment according to rights and merits. The actor here is a social entity, in other words, a social actor that has internalized the culture of rights and justice. Such a level of consciousness is possible with a distance from an atomistic or a populist understanding that regards itself as distinct from other individuals in the society.

If you don't want to participate in urban planning, please specify the reason
33 responses

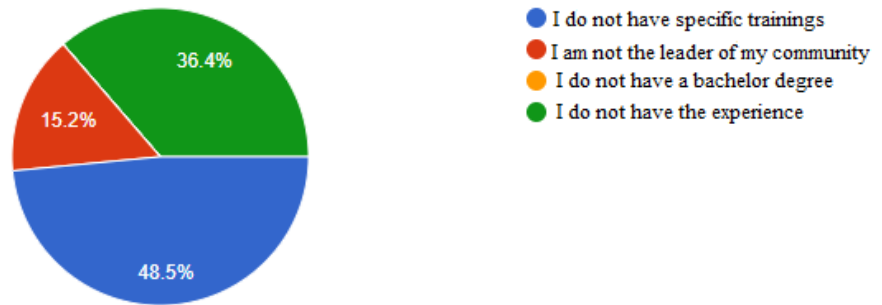


Exhibit 10. To the question: If invited to participate in an urban planning process in your neighborhood, 33/100 persons responded they don't do prepared to do it and why.

The way to achieve this is basically through the development of social capital, which can be roughly expressed as the capacity to do business together. The need for the training and education of citizens to participate in urban planning can also be observed in the results of survey question discussed in the previous policy suggested. The majority of participants who voted to not participate in the urban planning had "I don't have specific training" as a main reason for it.

According to Putnam (1995), social capital is "structures consisting of the characteristics of social organization such as trust, social norms and networks that enable actors to act in cooperation and effectively in order to achieve common goals". In his theory, it is the capacity to work together that is more essential than achieving personal goals. Cooperation is based on reciprocity and the ability to come together and interact. Social capital is in the field of interest of many sciences, especially economics and sociology. In addition to being a research subject in the field of planning, social capital is also important because it is one

of the basic qualities that the subjects of this profession, that is, planners. Education and training in planning has a significant role in the development of this quality.

As to Dewey, who is known for his studies on democracy and education, education and civil society at school are two basic elements that need attention and restructuring in order to strengthen applied knowledge and pluralism. The prominent idea in Dewey's (1993) studies is the great belief in democracy and its inclusion in politics, education and communication. According to him, the concepts of democracy and the ultimate ethical ideal of humanity have the same meaning. Dewey argues that full democracy cannot only be achieved with the right to participate in decision-making, but also requires a strong public opinion and communication between citizens, experts and politicians. According to him, democracy is an ethical ideal rather than a political arrangement, and its essence is participation rather than representation. It emphasizes the harmony between democracy and the scientific method: Continuously growing and self-critical communities act on pragmatic principles and constantly renew their ideas in the light of new evidence.

Another view that complements Dewey's view that the right to choose is not sufficient for democracy comes from Sartori, who said that freedom of choice and participation in decision-making is not a sufficient condition for democracy: "we say participation should be free. This is true, but not enough, because thoughts and convictions must also be truly free. If thought and opinion are not free, free choices mean nothing. We say the people should rule. But an empty sovereign without relevant education and training who has

nothing to say, no thoughts and convictions of his own, is only a yes master, not the ruler of anything. " (Sartori, 2014).

The human profile that can adapt to the information society is the individual who can think critically and has the competence of the creative mind, so corresponding educational institutions should train citizens suitable for this profile. Every new knowledge acquired through creative mind is an extension of a new experience and has a cyclical structure that enables rethinking. The development of the creative mind is not possible because the citizen is passive in the outdated and rote learning method, which accepts the mind of them as an empty container. Learning and understanding can only take place in a free environment and through critical thinking. The type of production that is dominant in the information society has not only changed the knowledge itself but also affected the definition of educated people and the learning-teaching approach. When the educated person is mentioned, instead of the individual who memorizes the information and stores it in her mind, individuals who are aware of how to use the information and at the same time have the ability to produce new information from it stand out.

Today, the plane on which planning is carried out, is an environment that has decision-making processes together and also it is based on a horizontal network with relevant actors forming opinions as a result of negotiations. This location of the planning area also clarifies the position of the planner. It is not difficult to see that the way to adapt to this environment is to ensure that the educational environments in which the planners grow up have these dynamics. If the main purpose of educational institutions is "learning how to live" in

Dewey's words, it is possible to carry this approach to the education of planning that prioritizes process-oriented approaches in the participation of citizens in urban planning. In the transfer of this approach, institutional environments appear as suitable grounds in planning. The citizen's feeling of being a part of the process is a result of the learning-centered education, in other words, the learning to learn paradigm. Learning to learn itself is process-oriented like the transformation in the planning field. The fact that an interrogative and collaborative learning process itself is as important as the information learned in the process coincides with the situation that the planning process itself is at least as important as the product that comes out at the end of the process.

In cases where a structure cannot go beyond offering new spare parts to an old system that reproduces its inoperability, it is difficult to expect adaptation to the new conditions. An understanding in which participation mechanisms cannot be internalized will also dissolve practices that pose a risk for its own existence. It is understood from this that the trainings of the citizens as planners are necessary but not sufficient to reduce this deficit: Planning education, in which new paradigms are taught through applied lessons, can achieve its main purpose when it is a part of the general transformation to be achieved in education, as well as transformations in management and control forms.

3.3 Involving citizens in urban planning process by using digital tools

As it was stated earlier, the third reason for our problem indicates that planning and execution of urban development are behind the closed doors, which means that residents are not aware of how decisions regarding housing projects, construction of new buildings, roads, parks, and any other urban planning affecting city residents are made. This phenomenon takes place due to the fact that people are not involved in decision making process of urban planning. Our survey results confirmed it:

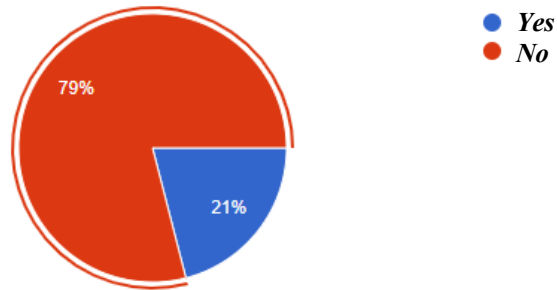


Exhibit 11. Do you know how the city takes decisions regarding housing projects, construction of new buildings, roads, parks, and any other urban planning affecting city residents? (79% - no; 21% - yes)

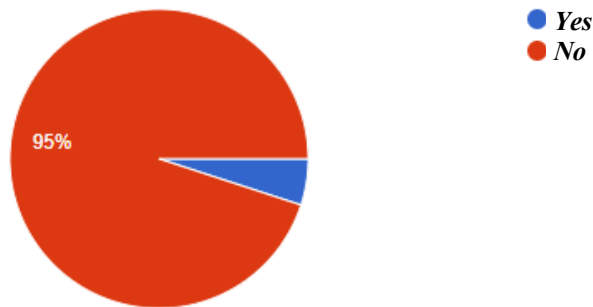


Exhibit 12. Have you ever been involved in urban planning processes regarding construction of housing projects, new buildings, roads, parks, and any other city development? (95% - no; 5% - yes)

But there, it is important to mention that people do not mind, but rather express a desire to participate in the urban planning process:

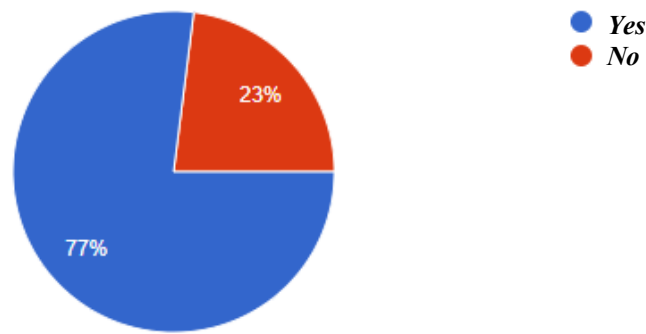


Exhibit 13. Are you interested in participating in urban planning process? (77% - yes; 23% - no)

Therefore, we consider it important to find the best way to involve citizens in the urban planning process. For this, we propose to involve them by using digital tools.

Modern urban planning practice requires methods that enhance the role of communicative and collaborative planning. “Digital technologies create an opportunity to reshape the planning process by improving interactions and information exchanges among urban planners and citizens, which are central in the move towards more sustainable, responsive planning.” (Hasler, Chenal and Soutter, 2017) Digital tool method will foster citizen participation, enable residents to collect information about their own living environment, and assert their role as experts in that environment. “Digital technologies are effectively a new way of coping with the shortcomings of participatory planning processes.” (Ertio, 2015)

Researchers Stephanie Hasler, Jerome Chenal, Marc Soutter devoted their research work to this issue: "Digital Tools as a Means to Foster Inclusive, Data-informed Urban Planning".

They examined the impact of digital citizen participation on urban planning and decision-

making processes and the advantages and disadvantages of this method of citizen engagement. They also explained how digital tools can help provide planners with citizen-centric data for more inclusive and flexible planning. Results of their study showed that “digital tools increase participation by allowing more people to participate and produce input. It also makes it possible to reach new socio-demographic profiles such as young people and families and is therefore a way of amplifying unheard voices.

Moreover, digital tools provide access to more diverse data in terms of type and format. It also makes it possible to collect data that were inexistent or difficult to gather, like information on perceptions, real time data, opinions or ideas. Such citizen-centric urban data collected using digital methods generate both novel and more accurate insight about the city”. From their result, we can conclude that the method of involving citizens in the urban planning process using digital tools is an effective.

Likewise, this method is already used in modern developed countries. For example, in Germany, the city of Hamburg uses map-based tools to encourage citizen participation in urban planning. “The online tool has been used in 38 participation processes, and the onsite tools in 4 processes; generating positive feedback from the public, as well as from civil servants for its technical capacities and positive communicative effects.” (Lieven, 2017)

There are several types of digital tools:



Websites could be used not only to inform citizens about urban planning processes and projects that are planned, but also to involve them in these processes. For example, online questionnaires on official websites can be created that will allow planners to find out the opinions of residents, which will later be used by them while making decisions.

The mobile applications that are used for urban space development idea gathering are also developing now rapidly. For example, there are such programs as AvaLinn, EarthAutopsy for Android and IOS platforms, which have tested and proven to be effective tools.

Social media is also a powerful tool for engaging citizens, as now the role and importance of social media in people's lives cannot be overestimated. With the help of social media, it is possible to reach a larger number of audiences than, for example, with the help of a website, since now almost everyone has an Instagram, Facebook, Twitter profile, etc.

Also, online meetings can be a good tool for engaging citizens. From our experience during the pandemic, it became clear that replacing face-to-face meetings with online meetings is possible and, in some cases, even a bit more convenient. Therefore, they can be used for our purposes as well, that is, to hold meetings about urban planning processes with citizens to exchange views.

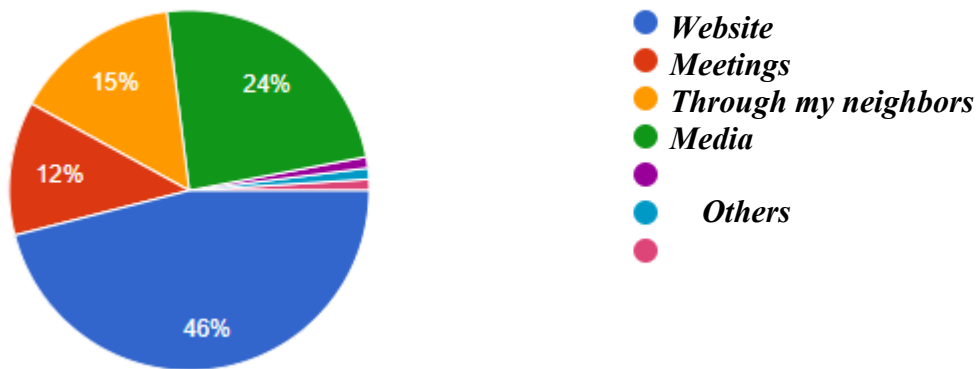


Exhibit 14. How would you like to be involved in the city planning?

Coming to the Azerbaijani case, all the previously mentioned digital citizen engagement tools could be suitable for Azerbaijan. However, relying on the survey results, they showed that most people would like to participate in the urban planning process through websites. Therefore, we suggest involving citizens through them. But in our opinion, a social network would also be a good choice given their popularity among the citizens of Azerbaijan

To sum up, for three identified causes, three policy options were proposed: implementation of Planning for Real (PFR) collective community planning process based on a 3D model, education and training of citizens to participate in urban planning as a social capital and involving citizens in urban planning process by using digital tools. In the next chapter, each policy option will be evaluated based on five criteria.

CHAPTER 4. EVALUATION OF POLICY ALTERNATIVES

In this part of the capstone project the provided solutions discussed in the previous chapter will be analyzed and assessed based on 5 criteria: effectiveness, efficiency, equity, feasibility/implementability and flexibility. Assessment of each solution will provide better understanding of the advantage and disadvantages of them and the most suitable policy will be chosen as the best proposed solution that would address the existing problem.

4.1 The implementation of Planning for Real (PFR) collective community planning process based on a 3D model. In terms of effectiveness, the implementation of Planning for Real technique would stand out as beneficial for numerous reasons. Firstly, the method appeals to the people of all ages, which means the outcomes of such collective planning process under PFR model reassures the impact of the people coming from all age groups within the Azerbaijani society. Secondly, the model provides a technique where the participants are able to see the whole plan of the recreation area on the map with the help of 3D modelling. Thus, it provides better understanding of the overall project and increases the chance of better outcomes from the participants. The reason for this circumstance is that with the help of 3D modelling, participants are able to notice concerns of the planning area and be able to produce better practical outcomes collectively. Thirdly, with each and every outcome produced, the technique helps to increase the feeling of ownership and entrepreneurship among the members of the particular community. Third benefit of this technique, however, has less direct impact to the outcome for planners compared to the others stated above. Yet, the frequent implementation of this method in participatory urban planning processes would surely increase the amount of its direct impact to the outcome of model in the long run.

In order to assess the PFR method on the criterion of efficiency, both cost and benefits of the technique should be taken into account. In addition to the benefits of this method as it was discussed earlier, there are 3 main factors that can be classified as the costs of PFR collective community planning processes. First of all, in order to bring people together the method relies on the numerous amounts of the events and to make it happen it requires the availability of medium-sized venues. The reason for such circumstance would be the necessity for the optimum number of the participants involved in the process. That is, only group of citizens up to 50 persons would be acceptable for sound implementation, because many more that number of participants in any session would be inefficient and unworkable. Secondly, in order to conduct these sessions within the framework of PFR technique, a trained facilitator would be necessary. A trained facilitator is an important figure for conducting these sessions for the community members / participants. The last factor for the costs of PFR method would be the preparation of three-dimensional models. All in all, although these factors are considered as the costs of these method, there are quite enough ground for the alleviation them. In western practices, mostly these events are conducted in an open-air without the necessity of a venue. Even with such necessity due to the weather conditions, it is hard to believe that a local government or corresponding responsible body for the planning of particular urban project would not be able to conduct an event for the participation of maximum of 50 people inside its own public building. Furthermore, the 3D models can be usually created at schools of Baku or by local groups which is not necessarily expensive.

With respect to the equity criteria of the PFR model, it should be taken into account that although the costs of the process are solely on the responsible body that is implementing the urban planning of the project, the method benefits both parties. Because as it was stated previously, this process is based on cooperation and transfer of authority between the citizen

and the urban planner, and it is the determination of planning-design strategies by contributing to the reveal of the individual identities of the local people and their capacity to act together and their innovation and entrepreneurship skills in the context of new ideas.

Related to the implementation of this method, there are several factors indicate the easy implementation probability of the process. Since the technique itself would be relatively new to the society of Azerbaijan as well as with the eye-catching and amusing nature of the process it would be reasonably easy to involve people that would not normally be interested at all. Secondly, the Planning for Real model reduces the necessity of using verbal and literacy skills with the processes which involves more of a practical technique. Although it requires a reasonable amount of time to prepare in order to achieve efficient citizen attendance, the technique itself does not involve complex decision-making processes that would make it not feasible to implement. Additionally, as stated previously, because of the eye-catching and amusing nature of the process it would be reasonably easy to involve people that would not normally be interested, which also means that there would not be a ground for any opposition from the public either.

Finally coming to the flexibility criteria of the PFR method, there are a lot of ground for making amendments to each 5 steps mentioned in previous chapter. The reason for such circumstance is that the activities explained in the technique does not necessarily follow the strict code of any protocol and can be amended as the possible situations require.

4.2 The education and training of citizens to participate in urban planning as a social capital. The second solution proposed for the existing problem is the education and training of citizens to participate in urban planning as a social capital. In terms of effectiveness, the education and training of citizens towards the concept of urban planning would be beneficial both for the society and for the urban planners in both the short and the

long run. The need for such training and education in Azerbaijan reassures the effectiveness of the policy. Because the majority of the citizens who answered as no in the survey question where they were asked whether they would want to participate in the urban planning had claimed in the follow up question that the particular reason for such choice is the lack of education and training in them.

With regards to the efficiency of the suggested solution, it would depend on the scale and as well as the short-term or the long-term nature of the policy. Long-term implementation of the education and trainings of citizens to participate in urban planning would include extensive curriculum and program and it would address greater number of people in terms of the scale of the program. Thus, it would have much higher costs over the time but also long-term benefit in terms of the preparation of the citizens as a social capital in urban planning. For the matter of short-term implementation, the process would include small sessions with the participation of facilitators and trainers and the scale of this educational program would be limited only to the participants of the project that were selected in advance.

In terms of the equity, the solution meets the criterion. The cause of the circumstance is that whether the program is or not aimed to cover short-term or long-term education for the citizens, the education provided would always remain as an asset towards the development of citizens as social capital. Even the slightest awareness through small trainings with regards to the urban planning would leave a ground for future advancements in this subject. Because, specific to Azerbaijan, even the idea of the participation of citizens in urban planning does not exist within the society. With that being said, the scale and term of the trainings and education on this subject would depend on the plans of authorities for Azerbaijan's urban development. Nevertheless, the need for participatory urban planning

will be always required in order to ensure the quality of outcomes on this subject where the education would be the first steps to achieve it.

Regarding the implementability, the solution would only meet the criteria if it is implemented in the short-term. Because the long-term implementation would require many processes to go through in order to involve considerable amount of people to the project. The long-term implementation would require the population of entire city in terms of the scale which also would result in the necessity of much extensive awareness campaigns in order to attract citizens to participate in the training session on the subject of participatory urban planning.

Finally, coming to the flexibility criterion, the solution meets its demands because there is no structured curriculum for the training and education in Azerbaijan on the subject of urban planning. It is relatively new practice to the country and it has many perspectives in terms of the development and implementation.

4.3 Involving citizens in urban planning process by using digital tools. In terms of effectiveness, this policy option will play a significant role in improving the urban planning system of Azerbaijan, since the goal of the policy option is precisely to involve citizens in this process. As we mentioned earlier, world experience and some research show that the method of involving citizens by digital tools has succeeded in this. Accordingly, with citizen involvement, planning will be more efficient and more people-centered, which will significantly accelerate the urban development of Azerbaijan.

Turning to efficiency, here the policy option will be evaluated in terms of cost and benefit. Cost of implementing this policy option is not so high, or putting it differently, policy option provides more benefits in relation to costs. If we take a closer look, the cost of implementation of this policy will consist of the cost of resources for installing special

programs, creating online opportunities for citizen participation, Internet resources and others, which will not require high expenses. Moreover, by involving citizens in the urban planning process, we also can save unnecessary expenses, since the opinion of citizens may guarantee us the prevention of errors in urban planning, which can lead to additional costs. Also, if we consider benefit in general, then the benefits from the involvement and improvement of the urban development system of Azerbaijan undoubtedly exceeds these insignificant costs.

Regarding the equity criterion, there might be some problems. As it is known, equity implies fair distribution of policy benefits across population subgroups. However, in our case, not all citizens have access to the Internet, some – are not aware of how to use social networks, and some segments of the population do not have necessary technology (phones, computers), especially in remote regions. Of course, the percentage of this category of people is not high, but this does not exclude the fact of their existence. Therefore, this policy option is not suitable for involving all citizens, but only available to those who have the opportunities.

Concerning the feasibility/implementability of given option, it is undoubtedly can be easily adopted. Because if we analyze feasibility of policy alternative from different perspectives like political, social and technological feasibility, we can see that probability that it will be accepted and supported by officials and public is high as it does not require any complicated processes, and technology, equipment and means needed for policy implementation are available. Moreover, the policy option does not contradict the legislation, policy and traditions/customs of Azerbaijan.

Finally, the option is flexible and improvable because digital tools are developing along with the progress of technology, and, accordingly, they can easily be built for changes

occurring from the outside. Moreover, by digital tools we mean different tools which can be chosen depending on the actual issue and the suitability and usability of the tool for a particular case, which shows adaptability of the policy option.

Table 1. Summary of policy alternatives evaluation

<i>Policy alternative</i>	<i>Effectiveness</i>	<i>Efficiency</i>	<i>Equity</i>	<i>Feasibility</i>	<i>Flexibility</i>
the implementation of Planning for Real (PFR) collective community planning process based on a 3D model	+	+	+	+	+
the education and training of citizens to participate in urban planning as a social capital.	+	-	+	-	+
involving citizens in urban planning process by using digital tools	+	+	-	+	+

To sum up, three proposed policy options: the implementation of Planning for Real (PFR) collective community planning process based on a 3D model, the education and training of citizens to participate in urban planning as a social capital, involving citizens in urban planning process by using digital tools have been evaluated on five different criteria. In next chapter, based on results of evaluation the preferred policy alternative for the problem will be chosen.

CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this capstone project is to analyze city inhabitants' involvement in urban development in Azerbaijan and propose a policy solution that tackles the lack of citizen participation in urban planning and mechanisms involving citizens in this process. Research through primary and secondary sources unveil the roots of the problem, each related to different stakeholders and edges of the situation. Firstly, the fact that collective urban development has not been prioritized in the country yet because historical and currently economic and political reasons has left many important actors out of determinant discussions that affect the society as a whole; this results in a low sense of belonging, inaccuracy to meet citizens needs and gaps in the services provision and spaces to exercise citizenship widely and freely. Second cause of the lack of participations that surfaces is the absence of training and institutional structure for participatory planning, this not only related to education and training at higher levels, but from the basic civic education that should be imparted to the children and teenagers that would prepare citizens with greater abilities to contribute to the country development through their commitment and coordination. And the third cause identified is related to the urban planning and execution that happens behind the closed doors where not only citizens have no part on, but furthermore are not even informed about the how, where, when, why of the urban projects implemented in their neighborhoods by the government or by private companies.

Subsequently, a policy option was explored and displayed to address each the causes of the problem mentioned above. Thus, implementing the practice of Planning for Real (PFR) in collective community planning process based on a 3D models is presented as the alternative to start seeing the transformation and evolution on the city spaces together with stakeholders directly involved at the experts' level and at the citizens' level in a collusive manner. From this option is particularly positive the fact that is inclusive for all ages and sectors of society and its explicit visualization allows all actors to get involved more effectively. Besides, it is a practice that can be adapted to available resources and by participating people increase their capacities and can share with others, as a cascade of knowledge, which makes it flexible and extensive. Correspondingly, to address the second cause the proposal is to foster the education and training of citizens to participate in urban planning as a social capital. This policy proposed grabs a current aspect that citizens identified as a barrier for participation in the survey carried out, that is education. In that sense, this policy demands a more complex coordination other ministries and government offices, which certainly requires a bigger effort but at the same time brings a greater good for the whole society as education in civic values and citizenship not only will benefit urban planning but other areas of society where citizens will start to exercise democracy in a more informed and responsible way. Additionally, the benefits of building social capital are a gain that will last for the decades to come and will strengthen society cohesion. For the last cause, this capstone project proposes to involve citizens in urban planning process by using digital tools. This approach propose is the one that perhaps represent the highest level of

innovation and investment towards tuning Baku into a modern digital city of the world. Once the country starts going through this path of Information and Communication Technologies (ITCs) more and more solutions can be implemented progressively as citizens will be more familiarized with new technologies and not only the youth and educated will be able to benefit from them. Initiatives towards digitalization have already been implemented in Azerbaijan and the use of digital tools and social media can be one step forward that, as the second policy proposed, will be positive not only for urban planning participation but for other areas of development.

The result of the analysis and evaluation of the policy options show that, according to the five assessment criteria, that the best option to address the problem is to implement the Planning for Real (PFR) collective community planning process based on a 3D model. The conclusion is that through that model the aim of building social capital is also achieved, in the sense that by participating citizens learn, feel empowered and engage in the exercise of their citizenship. Although, the power of participation in the PFR cannot be compared to the impact of education, its transformation potential can be exploited by a holistic and optimal planning of activities. In the same way elements of digital tools can be introduced to the collective exercises to facilitate and magnify the impact of the policy. To conclude is key to highlight, that any solution starts by engaging executive powers in Azerbaijan into the positive prospective of widening the role of citizens in the building of their country.

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APPENDIX

CITIZENS INVOLVEMENT IN URBAN PLANING INTERVIEW

STAKEHOLDERS TAKE ON THE ISSUE

Target: Academics, public officers, elected representatives, community leaders, developers; persons whose perspective can add up to the case of citizens participation in urban planning in Azerbaijan.

Aim: Comprehend the pros and cons, the opportunities and challenges and the relevance of the matter particularly in Baku.

1. To your knowledge and from your area of expertise, how does the urban planning process take place in Azerbaijan?
2. Do you consider the decisions taken regarding new constructions, building roads, or any infrastructure developments are transparent in the country? How so?
3. From your perspective, how would you describe the involvement of citizens in urban planning projects in Azerbaijan?
Is it sufficient, nule, positive, needs to be improved or is not relevant and why?
4. Have you been informed or involved in any attempt to involve civil society in the urban planning process? Please describe that experience.
5. What is your opinion on the citizens reaction to urban planning decisions taken by authorities? Is it proactive, reactive, passive or aggressive?
 - a. Do you think that is positive or negative?
6. To what extent do you think the society should be involved in urban planning? what role can citizens and civil society play?
Is it relevant for Azerbaijan in this moment?
Is Azerbaijan ready to engage its citizens?
7. In your opinion, why mechanisms for active participation of citizens in the city planning process are not developed in the country yet?
8. Do you think citizens have the necessary skills for participating in urban planning?
9. What are the current barriers for active citizen participation in urban planning?
10. What do you think are the pros and cons of citizen involvement in this matter?
11. Which could be suitable means of engaging Baku citizens in the urban planning process?
12. In your opinion, what are the challenges of having wide involvement of citizens in urban planning processes?

CITIZENS INVOLVEMENT IN URBAN PLANING SURVEY

The purpose of this questionnaire is to understand the current level of citizen participation in urban planning issues in Azerbaijan. At the same time, the survey attempts to find out why and how to increase citizen involvement in urban planning matters.

I. RELATION WITH THE CITY

1. a. In which type of housing do you currently live?

Apartment	
Town home	
Other	

b. How many people live at your housing?

- 1
- 2-3
- 3-5
- 5+

2. District/city/neighborhood of residence

3. Why did you choose to live in this District/city/neighborhood?

- a. Suitability of living conditions (ease of transportation, clean and safe environment, adequacy of infrastructure services, etc.)
- b. Economic and family obligations
- c. Familiar environment
- d. I have relatives here
- e. Don't have any other options
- f. Price
- g. Other _____

4. For how long have you lived in Baku?

- 1-5 years
- 5-10 years
- 10-20 years
- 20+

5. Are you in general satisfied with the living conditions of the District/city/neighborhood?

- a. Yes
- b. No

If **Yes** What are the reasons for your satisfaction?

- a. Presence of parks, green areas and playgrounds
- b. Infrastructure (sidewalk, stairs, barriers, ramps for disabled, parking lot etc.)
- c. Transport facilities are sufficient
- d. Safe and clean environment
- e. Location
- f. Prices
- g. Other _____

If **No** What are the reasons for your dissatisfaction?

- a. Lack of parks, green areas and playgrounds
- b. Infrastructure (sidewalk, stairs, barriers, ramps for disabled, parking lot etc.)
- c. Transport facilities are not sufficient
- d. Unsafe and not clean environment
- e. Location
- f. Prices
- h. Other _____

6. To what level do you feel identified with your District/city/neighborhood?

- a. A lot – I feel I belong here
- b. Very
- c. Identified just enough
- d. A little
- e. Not at all – I don't feel I belong here

7. Which is your favorite place of the city?

- a. Your neighborhood
- b. The city parks
- c. Old City
- d. Torgovaya
- e. The boulevard
- f. None
- g. Don't know
- h. Other _____

8. In a scale from 1 to 5, being 1 *not at all* and 5 *a lot*, how much these factors have contributed to improving your quality of life in Baku?

	1	2	3	4	5
Parks					
Schools					
Events					
Community					
Business opportunities					
New developments					
Tourism attractions					

City growth					
Others					

9. In a scale from 1 to 5, being 1 *not at all* and 5 *a lot*, how much these factors have contributed to decreasing your quality of life in Baku?

	1	2	3	4	5
Cost of housing					
Cost of living					
Traffic					
Increased noise					
Increased development					
Increased pollution					
Change/loss of traditions					
More competition for employment/business					
Others					

10. On a scale of 1-10, where 1 is poor and 5 is excellent, how would you rate the overall quality of life in Baku today? (please circle one number)

1 2 3 4 5

II. CURRENT INVOLVEMENT IN URBAN PLANNING MATTERS

11. Do you know how the city takes decisions regarding housing projects, construction of new buildings, roads, parks, and any other urban planning affecting city residents?

- a. Yes
- b. No

12. Have you ever been involved in urban planning processes regarding construction of housing projects, new buildings, roads, parks, and any other city development?

- a. Yes
- b. No

13. On a scale from 1 to 5, where being 1 *not involved* and 5 *very involved*, how would you rate your level of involvement with the City?

1 2 3 4 5

14. On a scale from 1 to 5, where being 1 *very satisfied* and 5 *dissatisfied*, how would you rate your current involvement with the City urban planning?

1 2 3 4 5

15. From the following options which do you think is the way the urban planning decision are taken? You can select more than one option.

Residents affected by projects are consulted directly	
Community leaders are consulted by the city administration	
Elected representatives propose the projects for their constituencies	
City officers that study the needs and problems of the city decide	
High level officers decide deliberatively	
Investors propose new projects and city approves	
Professional consultants research and determine what is better for the city	

16. How would you describe the current level of involvement of citizens into the government's processes of urban planning?

- a. Always gets them involved
- b. Often gets them involved
- c. Sometimes gets them involved
- d. Almost never gets them involved
- e. Never gets them involved

17. If invited to participate in an urban planning process in your neighborhood, do you think you are prepared to do it?

- a. Yes, why?

- b. No

If *No* What makes you think that?

I don't have specific training	
I am not a leader of my community	
I don't have higher education	
I don't have experience	

18. On a scale from 1 to 5, where being 1 *Very good* and 5 *Nonexistent*, how would you rate City's communication with residents?

1 2 3 4 5

Why did you give that rating for City's communication with residents?

III. LOOKING FORWARD

19. Are you interested in participating in urban planning process?

- a. Yes
- b. No

20. From the following factors, which motivate or would motivate you to become more involved in the urban planning process? You can select more than one option.

City will make a big road in front of my house	
The sewage system in my neighborhood collapsed	
Investors will make a big mall in what is currently a park where I visit	
Traffic to and out of my home/work is becoming very bad	
City will move a place of my interest because of a new development	
City will relocate me because my block needs to be demolished	
I want to move and can't find affordable adequate housing	
The children's playground in my neighborhood is broken (or do not have at all)	
My neighborhood has been waiting for public lighting	
The roads in my district haven't been paved	
Location of the school of my child/children	
Good organization of pedestrian ways	
Reorganization of roads with addition of bicycle lanes	
Car parking problems	
There're not enough green spaces in neighborhood	
Other, _____	

21. To what extent would you like participate and feel comfortable taking part in your city decisions regarding the urban planning? (or/and What would motivate you to participate)

- a. A lot. I would like to participate in City council's decision process
- b. Some. I would like my opinions to be heard
- c. If necessary, I would like to be asked on matters of my interest
- d. I don't necessarily need to participate
- e. I don't care about those matters

22. If you were to give an opinion about something you want to change on the city, who would you approach?

- a. Government Website
- b. Send a letter
- c. A friend that works at government
- d. My elected representative
- e. No one. I don't know who to approach

23. How would you like to be involved in the city planning?

- a. Website

- b. Meetings
- c. Through grassroots organizations
- d. Surveys
- e. Other, _____

24. How would you like to be informed about the city planning?

- a. Website
- b. Meetings
- c. Through my neighbors
- d. Media
- e. Other, _____

25. What matters you would like to be informed, consulted or participate on?

- a. New housing developments
- b. Constructions of roads
- c. Changes on my neighborhood
- d. Big business investments
- e. New infrastructure objects (theaters, hospitals, sports scenarios, schools)
- f. Other, _____

IV. DEMOGRAPHICS

26. Sex

Female	
Male	
Rather don't answer	

27. Age

18-24	
25-34	
35-44	
45-54	
55-64	
> 65	

28. Employment

Employed by a company	
Public servant	
Self employed	
Unemployed	
Homemaker	

Student	
Retired	

29. Education

No schooling completed	
Secondary education	
Some / Institute/University, no diploma	
Bachelor's degree	

30. Please share any further comments
