

Preface

Collaboration, the main focus of this year's 26th DLA Conference, is an important building block for active participation in planning and decision-making processes. In recent years, it has become clear that acceptance of large construction projects or complex decision-making processes is dwindling. Why is this the case?

What play a role in this are, among other things, the declining credibility of many stakeholders, social changes in a networked society, and the complexity of planning processes. For these reasons, it is necessary to think about and organize direct dialogue and participation that react flexibly to new situations. Various participation formats, which can be implemented both analogue and digitally, are available for this purpose.

The basis of collaboration is the barrier-free provision of information to all participants. To this end, the conditions must be created so that different stakeholders can be actively involved according to their cultural, social and professional backgrounds. Digital possibilities have changed considerably over the last few years. While in the early years of the DLA conference, the focus was on interactive or 3D visualization, this was supplemented over time by possibilities for providing information and knowledge in the form of (geo)information via web technologies. The aim had been to decouple the participation processes from time-limited discussion forums and create continuous availability. Visualization made it easier to understand planning scenarios or spatial developments.

However, in order to realize active participation, we must go a level higher. Digital tools are available that can leverage the knowledge and needs of local people (people of the place). Approaches such as Volunteered Geographic Information (VGI), citizen science or the development of decision support systems or participation platforms can be used for this purpose. Today, these are often combined with simple apps to ensure the possibility of actively providing information. In recent years, a variety of approaches of varying complexity from different countries have been presented and discussed at the DLA conference. This has provided important starting points for gathering valuable information and advice. At the same time, it is subsequently necessary to provide participants with feedback on how objections are handled, and a transparent presentation of how the final decision-making process comes about.

In order to achieve the highest level of participation, i. e. collaboration, it is necessary not only to collect information but also to actively involve the stakeholders in the decision-making process. Approaches exist for achieving this together in virtual space, for example, through the use of complex decision support systems, the use of AR or VR or as part of the GeoDesign approach. In this way, applicable framework conditions, such as areas at risk of flooding, can be visualized and made comprehensible for all parties involved. With the implementation of evaluation systems, development scenarios can be assessed and sustainable solutions compared via dashboards. The development and use of technical and professional standards or the BIM method for integrating information from different sources facilitate the provision and processing.

In the future, the use of machine learning or AI methods can further support knowledge transfer and thus active participation. On the one hand, this will facilitate the evaluation of information by all stakeholders, and on the other hand, it will be possible for participants to develop their own (design) ideas via image generators and contribute them to the decision-making process.

The DLA conference has been making, and continues to make, a significant contribution to collaboration over the last 26 years.

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