

Challenges and recommendations in addressing community engagement in public space design in Türkiye *

Desafíos y recomendaciones para abordar la participación de la comunidad en el diseño de espacios públicos en Turquía

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Abstract: The aim of this article is to discuss challenges and to develop recommendations in addressing community engagement in public space design. In this respect, the article examines Turkish planning legislation and analyse three projects from Istanbul, Bursa and Eskişehir from Türkiye. The research methodology is based on literature review and online interviews with the officials and professionals who worked in these projects. As a result, the recommendations related to legal-institutional context, engagement mechanisms, participation and coordination of actors, design and implementation process of community engagement in public space design are presented to create more quality and inclusive public spaces in Türkiye.

Keywords: community engagement, public spaces, Istanbul, Bursa, Eskişehir.

Resumen: El objetivo de este artículo es discutir los desafíos y desarrollar recomendaciones para abordar la participación de la comunidad en el diseño de espacios públicos. En este sentido, el artículo examina la legislación urbanística turca y analiza tres proyectos de Estambul, Bursa y Eskişehir de Turquía. La metodología de investigación se basa en la revisión de literatura y entrevistas en línea con los profesionales que trabajaron en estos proyectos. Como resultado, se presentan las recomendaciones relacionadas con el contexto legal-institucional, los mecanismos de participación, la participación y coordinación de los actores, el diseño y el proceso de implementación de la participación de la comunidad en el diseño del espacio público para crear espacios públicos más inclusivos y de calidad en Turquía.

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Palabras clave: participación ciudadana, espacios públicos, Estambul, Bursa, Eskişehir.

Today public spaces are under threat due to rapid urbanization and they face many problems related to over/under-management of public spaces such as neglect, poor design and quality, abandonment, insecurity, homogenization, commodification and privatization (Carmona, 2010). In this respect, many international policy directions and references emphasize the importance of community engagement in public space design to reach quality public spaces.

Community engagement is generally accepted as a broader concept that can encompass public participation, community, stakeholder or public relations, consultation, government and media relations (Ross, Baldwin & Carter, 2016). The main purposes of participation are:

- to involve people in design decision-making processes to increase their trust and confidence in organizations,
- to provide people with a voice in design and decision-making in order to improve plans, decisions and service delivery,
- to promote a sense of community by bringing people together whom share common goals (Sanoff, 2000).

However, there are also many discussions related to the hindrances of community engagement in urban planning and design such as lack of trust between urban actors, lack of technology to be included in online engagement processes, lack of awareness about planning issues and community engagement and low engagement rates (Cooper, 2021). Undeniably there are also lots of poor practices such as tokenistic consultations on development projects; public exhibitions for an already designed project; engagement leading to disillusionment in some hard to develop locations. Thus, it is not always easy to get it right, and it takes considerable time, resources and commitment (Carmona, 2017).

This article discusses challenges and develops recommendations in addressing community engagement in public space design in Türkiye. The hypothesis considered in the article are the following:

- There is a lack of legal and institutional context related to community engagement and public space quality in Türkiye.
- The community engagement processes and tools that are used in public space design in the municipalities of Türkiye are limited.
- The urban awareness of the stakeholders about community engagement in public space design in Türkiye is low.

In this respect, this study can contribute to strengthen community engagement in public space design by sharing the experiences of public/civic actors and architects from Istanbul, Bursa and Eskişehir cases from Türkiye.

1. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN PUBLIC SPACE DESIGN

Community engagement is an important issue in public space design. It is advised that decisions regarding the creation, management and enjoyment of public space should be subjected to clear and transparent participatory processes with all interested stakeholders (Istituto Nazionale di Urbanistica, 2013). UN-Habitat’s Global Public Space Programme developed an integrated, multi-sectoral and iterative approach to support local governments to create vibrant and inclusive public space networks, long-term urban strategies and national policies, by promoting participation at every stage of urban planning and design processes, from assessment to co-design and co-governance (UN- Habitat, 2012).

Although significant progress has been made in spreading community engagement in public space design in recent years, there are few studies which deals with the quality of community engagement in public space design. One of them presents a participation evaluation matrix which is structured in two blocks of information: one related to the characteristics of the process itself and the other related to the results (Moreno Balboa, 2019). Another study which evaluates the quality of participatory processes in the urban redevelopment policy of Madrid City Council through the examples of the reform of the Gran Via and the Plaza de España presents a remarkable analytical framework related to this issue. It identifies four dimensions as the political, institutional, social and cultural context in which participatory processes originate, the instruments used to implement citizen participation, the actors that initiate, promote and manage participatory processes, and the effects/the results of participation. The authors stated that their analytical framework is transferable to evaluate participatory processes in other local contexts with some adaptations (Medero & Pastor Albaladejo, 2018) as seen in Table 1.

Dimensions	Determinants
Legal and institutional contexts	laws, strategies and regulations; structure of institutions or municipal departments; municipal visions related to community engagement and public space design
Community engagement mechanisms	tools and processes; participation levels related to community engagement in public space design
Participation and coordination of actors	public actors; central and local government, private actors; including private property owners and contractors/developers, but also utility providers, community; including residents, and special interest societies and local groups in participatory public space design
Design and implementation processes	urban/local context; design team; way of acquiring project; aim of the project; implementation

Table 1: Four dimensions of community engagement in public space design. Source: Developed by the author based on Medero & Pastor Albaladejo, 2018.

As the public spaces are publicly owned and managed, national laws, regulations, tools, resources about urban planning/design and community engagement and also the units, capacities and visions of central and local governments which deal with community engagement and public space design are the main references of this issue. This is so because successful participation requires a legal basis for participation and administrators and professionals committed to participation and well trained for effective participatory processes. In addition, a national vision which involves building an understanding for the social, cultural, economic and environmental value of public space can secure political commitment and can be represented both in national urban and local government planning policies (UN Habitat, 2016).

Secondly, the ways in which the participation processes are conducted and monitored and the kind of tools are used in the process are the essential factors. Sanoff (2000) emphasizes that planning for participation requires identifying the individuals or groups who should be involved; deciding about where in the design process the participants should be involved; articulating the participation objectives in relation to all participants; matching alternative participation methods to objectives; selecting and implementing appropriate participation method; evaluating the implemented methods to see to what extent they achieved the desired goals and objectives. Because community engagement has different levels with different impacts. After the ladder of participation diagram defining citizens' (later children's) power in determining the end product (Arnstein, 1969; Hart, 1992), the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) developed a spectrum of public participation which defines the various levels of engagement respectively such as informing, consulting, involving, collaborating and empowering (International Association for Public Participation, 2018). Choosing which level should change according to the context and be special for each project or issue.

Thirdly, community engagement is based on the relations, communication and coordination ways among a variety of stakeholders including municipalities, public and private institutions, professionals, citizens, etc., just because good public spaces must be designed to meet the needs of all users. This means paying attention to quality and inclusive design and accommodating the values and preferences of different groups, ages and abilities. Moreover, integrated planning which encourages a dialogue between all departmental actors with a stake in the public realm is very important as integration links the spatial aspect with other dimensions of urban life (UN Habitat, 2020).

Fourthly, public space design is realized through a series of urban design phases from analysis to implementation. Carmona (2013) remarks that urban design can be represented as an integrated place-shaping continuum incorporating the history, the political economic context and a particular set of stakeholder power relationships. The combined outcomes and interactions

between design (the key aspirations and vision, and contextual and stakeholder influences for a particular project); development (the power relationships, and processes of negotiation, regulation and delivery for a particular project); space in use (who uses a particular place, how, why, when and with what consequences and conflicts) and management (the place-based responsibilities for stewardship, security, maintenance and ongoing funding) shape the experience of space. In this respect, problems or potentials related to urban and local context, ability of the design teams, ways of acquiring projects, design aim and principles and implementation ways are effective determinants to create quality public spaces. These four dimensions can be used to analyze community engagement processes in public space design.

Today, community engagement in public space design is one of the much-debated areas in urban design. In terms of legal and institutional context; deficiency of public actors, lack of planning and policy direction on public space; poor regulatory and legislative frameworks for public space creation and preservation and priority on private interests; lack of communication between various departments of government, limited resources for the creation and maintenance of public spaces due to weakened fiscal revenues and inefficiency of public spending are emphasized as the main challenges.

In terms of community engagement mechanisms, lack of instruments for conflict resolution about use and realization of public space is one of the main constraints (UN Habitat, 2016). Also a critical analysis of digital citizen participation platforms concluded that lack of transparency and feedback related to the internal working of the city councils makes it difficult to legitimate e-participation initiatives and could also negatively influence citizens' future participation levels, since their most important motivation is the possibility of seeing that their contributions are taken into account (Royo, Pina & Garcia-Rayado, 2020).

In terms of participation and coordination of actors, difficulties in taking an effective role of public leadership by many local authorities, weakening of social cohesion, little regard for public goods, declining tendency of citizens to affirm their rights are the main challenges (UN Habitat, 2016). At this point, it seems important to include children and youngsters in public space design to create a participation culture. It is revealed that children have a greater capacity in participatory design processes to identify problems and opportunities to improve public space (González-Arriero & De Manuel Jerez, 2022).

In terms of design and implementation processes, although organizing competitions is one of the best way to be more inclusive in public space design process (NYC Global Partners', 2012), it is stated that participating in urban planning and design does not mean deciding without having any idea of what is being decided or not presenting directly a finished project (in many cases illegible for the ordinary citizen) and answering yes or no, not voting between one project

or another. Participation should be a long, complex process, in which there is an interaction between technicians, politicians and society throughout the development of the project, as a result of a rapprochement of positions on how we want the physical realm of our lives (Fariña, 2017).

2. METHODOLOGY

The research methodology is based on literature review and a case study in Türkiye related to community engagement in public space design. The case study framework (Table 2) were developed to analyse three public space projects from Istanbul, Bursa and Eskişehir (Figure 1) according to four dimensions of community engagement in public space design.

The first case is the urban design competitions (UDCs) mainly focusing on the Taksim Square (Figure 2a) of the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality (IMM) in Istanbul. Taksim Square is located in the city centre in Beyoğlu District (Figure 2a-b). Taksim became a major hub in the city's water distribution network (the name of the square comes from this function) by the 18th century. After the construction of Artillery Barracks, Taksim gained a military character in the 19th century. After the foundation of Turkish Republic, the Republic Monument was constructed on the square in 1928. Between the years 1936-1950 Henri Prost planned Istanbul and had proposed a two parted land-use plan for the Historical Peninsula, Beyoğlu and its surroundings. In the land-use plan for Istanbul, Maçka, Harbiye, Taksim and Dolmabahçe (Figure 2a-b) was marked as the park number two as a merriment and a rest area which would contain an open-air theatre, an opera house and an exhibition centre. Many projects for Taksim Square had been implemented within the scope of Prost's proposals. Artillery Barracks was demolished and transformed to Gezi Park (Figure 2c-d) in 1940. In 1969, Istanbul Cultural Palace was opened, after the fire in 1970 it was renewed as Atatürk Cultural Centre in 1977 and reconstructed in 2021 (Figure 2c-d) on the southeast of the square. In 1975, The Marmara hotel was built on the northwest of the square. In 2012, the Taksim Square pedestrianization project (which included the reconstruction of Artillery Barracks on the Gezi Park and triggered Gezi Protests) implemented. In 2017, Taksim Mosque (Figure 2c-d) was built on the north-west of the Square. Finally, in 2020, Taksim Urban Design Competition was organized. Today, Taksim is one of the important commercial, social and cultural centre in Istanbul, the symbol of the nation-state period of Türkiye, a place for social demonstrations and movements and an underground rapid transit complex (Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality, 2020). Thus, the reasons of the selection of the first case are the renowned character of the square and the way of online public voting for the public space projects after the project competition for the first time as this way triggered many debates about participatory approaches in urban design in Türkiye.

Determinants of dimensions related to community engagement in public space design		Data collection techniques for only related determinants and dimensions	Data collection through online interviews for all determinants and dimensions
Legal and institutional context	Laws/ strategies/ regulations	<p><u>Review of related laws and regulations</u></p> <p>Municipality Law, 2005</p> <p>Integrated Urban Development Strategy and Action Plan (KENTGES), 2010</p> <p>Regulation on Making Spatial Plans, 2014</p> <p>Instruction of Urban Design Projects, 2015</p> <p>Urban Design Guidelines Project, 2016</p>	<p><u>Interviewees</u></p> <p>an architect and the coordinator (architect and city planner) from the Istanbul Planning Agency (IPA) for the first case</p> <p>the coordinator of the PWB project (also an academician in the Faculty of Architecture of Bursa Uludağ University BUU) and the general secretary assistant in the Nilüfer City Council (NCC) for the second case</p> <p>three architects from Yazgan Design Architecture and the head of the Odunpazarı City Council (OCC) for the third case</p>
	Institutions/ municipal deps.	<p><u>Web site analysis</u> (Ministry's and municipalities' institutional web sites)</p> <p>The responsibilities of the Department of Urban Design of the Ministry of Environment and Urbanisation, 2013</p> <p>The responsibilities of the related institutions/ municipal departments</p>	
	Municipal visions	<p><u>Review of strategic plans of the municipalities</u></p>	
Community engagement mechanisms	Processes and tools	<p><u>Web site analysis</u> (Municipalities', IPA's, city councils' and design teams' institutional web sites)</p>	<p><u>Interview questions</u></p> <p>What kind of community engagement processes and tools were used in the project?</p>
	Participation level	<p><u>Comparison with the levels of the IAP2's public participation spectrum</u></p>	
Participation and coordination of actors	Public actors	<p><u>Web site analysis</u> (Municipalities', IPA's, city councils' and design teams' institutional web sites)</p>	<p>Who were the main actors and how were they coordinated in the community engagement process in public space design?</p> <p>What were the problems and potentials related to design and implementation process of the project?</p>
	Community		
Design and implementation processes	Local context	<p><u>Web site analysis</u> (Municipalities', IPA's, city councils', design teams' institutional web sites, national, local, social media web sites, architecture web sites)</p> <p>Specifications and other documents about the competitions</p> <p>Media news and information about the projects.</p>	<p>What are the main challenges related to four dimension of community engagement in public space design process in Türkiye?</p> <p>What can be the recommendations related to four dimension of community engagement in public space design to overcome the challenges about this issue in Türkiye?</p>
	Design team		
	Way of acquiring project		
	Aim of the project		
	Implementation		

Table 2: The case study framework: Data collection techniques for determinants of dimensions related to community engagement in public space design. Source: Own elaboration.



Figure 1: Istanbul, Bursa and Eskişehir cities in Türkiye. Source: <http://cografyaharita.com/haritalarim/4lturkiye-mulki-idare-haritasi2.png> (date of reference: 11-04-2023).



Figure 2 a-b-c-d: Taksim Square in Istanbul. Source: Google Earth, 2023 (IPA, 2022b).

The second case is Play Without Barriers (PWB) project which included a built environment education, a design process of a playground with children and the implementation of a neighbourhood’s playground by the Nilüfer Municipality (NM) in Bursa. Nilüfer district (Figure 3a) is the newest and planned developed residential area of Bursa. It is located on the west part of the city and was developed in the Bursa Plain, to the north and south of the İzmir road. It has started to develop rapidly since 1980s and has been the fastest growing district of Bursa since the 1990s. PWB project site (Figure 3b-c-d) is located in the İhsaniye Neighbourhood near the centre of Nilüfer District. There are housing estates and a secondary school around the project site and approximately ¾ of the site is covered with trees (Arın, 2015).



Figure 3 a-b-c-d: Taksim Square in Istanbul. Source: Google Earth, 2023 (Arın Ensarioğlu & Özsoy, 2021).

The third case is Hamamyolu urban deck (HUD) project which included the revitalization of a main street in the historical urban fabric as a green pedestrian axis by the Odunpazarı Municipality (OM) (Figure 4a) in Eskişehir. Hamamyolu Street includes the old baths area known for its hot waters since ancient times and takes its name from these baths. The street where trade was first developed in Eskişehir after 1930s emerged around the canal connecting Akarderesi to the Porsuk River. Today, Hamamyolu Street (Figure 4b-c-d) is the main pedestrian backbone that connects the Historical Odunpazarı District with the Taşbaşı

District, where traditional trade and Republican Period buildings are located, including Köprübaşı, the current centre of the city (central business district). Hot waters and Taşbaşı regions are composed of morphologically small parcels and low-rise buildings, some of which are registered today. The other part of the street, which is connected to the historical Odunpazarı District, has been transformed after the condominium law and the majority of low-rise buildings have been replaced by 6-8-storey apartments including many commercial passages. In the 1990s, the canal was closed due to pollution and a continuous ornamental pool was built on the street to preserve the image of water (Alpan, 2016). The street has assumed the function of a residential, commercial and social centre, but in recent years, it has started to lose its vitality and public use gradually. Hamamyolu Urban Deck project was produced by going through a process with broad participation with the aim of reintroducing this street to the city (Yazgan Design Architecture, 2018).



Figure 4 a-b-c-d: Hamamyolu Street in Eskişehir. Source: Google Earth, 2023 (Yazgan Design Architecture, 2018).

In this respect, the reason for the selection of the second and third cases is that these projects received many international and national awards and nominations as finalists in social responsibility, healthy city planning and best implementation and urban design categories (Yazgan Design Architecture, 2018; Nilüfer Municipality, 2017). It was thought that it could be more beneficial to

make inferences from relatively more sensational and successful projects in Türkiye.

For the case study, online interviews were made with eight interviewees. The interviews mainly took 1-1.5 hours and were recorded. The questions were created according to the four dimensions of community engagement in public space design as seen in Table 2. To evaluate the answers, descriptive analysis was used as a method. At first, four dimensions of community engagement in public space design were accepted as the analysis themes for the interview data. Secondly, the data was processed in detail, classified and sorted according to the relation to the dimensions. Thirdly, direct quotations and strong examples were selected to explain and supplement findings. Lastly, the findings were interpreted and evaluated with the discussions about the research subject.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this section, the four dimensions of community engagement in public space design were discussed in terms of Turkish urban planning legislation and what it means for its application to the three case studies mentioned above.

3.1. Legal and institutional context

Turkish government made some arrangements in local government laws and regulations after the 2000s related to its commitments to comply some international agreements. With the Municipality Law in 2005 (Table 3), community engagement mechanisms became operational. Especially the city councils have gained important roles in terms of developing the city vision and citizenship awareness, protecting the citizen rights, transparency, accountability and participation. Municipalities must assist and support for the effective execution of the activities of the city council, which includes representatives of public institutions, professional chambers, trade unions, universities, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), political parties, neighbourhoods and citizens (Municipality Law, 2005).

In 2010, the need for community engagement was first defined in the Integrated Urban Development Strategy and Action Plan (KENTGES) which recommends design contests or participatory processes for urban and architectural design projects. Preparing design guidelines were also recommended to create safe, accessible quality public spaces with unique identity (Ministry of Environment and Urbanisation, 2010). This was a new point of view for Turkish planning practice because development plans were still ineffective tools in ensuring public space quality as they were based on quantitative measures.

Regarding the institutional structure, the Department of Urban Design was founded within the Ministry of Environment and Urbanisation in 2013. The

Regulation on Making Spatial Plans which includes the definitions, procedures and principles regarding urban design projects was approved in 2014. To create sustainable and lively urban spaces is accepted as one of the general principles of the urban design (Directorate General of Spatial Planning, 2022). In addition to the announcement of approved development plans to get objections from public in thirty days, to ensure community engagement with the opinions of all stakeholders became essential by using different engagement techniques while preparing the plans. Besides, in the Instruction of Urban Design Projects some principles are defined to increase public space quality, legibility and perception. In 2016, the Ministry started the Urban Design Guidelines Project to help local municipalities for the preparation of design guidelines to increase urban design quality (Ministry of Environment and Urbanisation, 2016).

As a result, it can be seen that the Ministry is guiding the local municipalities in providing community engagement and increasing the quality of public spaces in Turkish cities through laws, regulations and researches related to urban design in the last decade. However, there are not any guidelines defining how to conduct community engagement mechanisms in urban planning/design processes. This gap between the law and the practice creates different perceptions and it becomes difficult to define a standard level of community engagement in many cases. Although the community engagement is a must in urban planning/design processes, in many cities it stills depends on the willingness and competence of the municipalities. Since participatory design is expected to be a long-term process often do not comply with local governments' short-term policies, and while the process is simplified and accelerated, it actually deviates from its purpose (Kutluca, Olgun and Alay, 2022).

Nevertheless, in this research it was seen that community engagement has become one of the main principles of the visions of the three municipalities to improve quality of life of citizens. Also new institutions/departments were founded to provide community engagement in urban design.

For the first case, it was a notable improvement that the IMM developed its institutional structure in 2020 by establishing the IPA which aims to determine the role and vision of Istanbul in the global system and to produce scientific, rational and permanent solutions to the problems of Istanbul with participative processes. The Public Design Office is one of the units of the IPA and responsible for developing high-quality, participatory and contemporary design practices in public spaces. The office coordinates urban design competitions, workshops, events and seminars, also monitors and reports the urban design projects of the IMM, provides coordination between the units in the decision-making process for public spaces, make analysis for detecting problems and revealing potentials in public spaces, collaborates with universities and students on design issues, and brings together professionals (Istanbul Planning Agency, 2022a). Furthermore, Istanbul City Council (ICC) was established in 2019 for the first time in order to

strengthen local democracy in Istanbul and to ensure citizen participation. ICC prepares publications, gives seminars, support researches about community engagement through participation school and conducts an interactive participation model by providing brainstorming about the problems of the districts with citizen participation cafe (Istanbul City Council, 2022).

For the second case, the neighbourhood committees which were established by the NM to detect and expand participation and to find out the needs of the neighbourhoods in 2009 within the Nilüfer City Council (NCC) are pioneering. There is not any example of such an administrative unit on the scale of neighbourhoods in Türkiye. The headman (mukhtar) is an extension of the central authority in the neighbourhood, but neighbourhood committees, as a part of the local authority, constitute participation processes at the local scale (Nilüfer Municipality, 2022).

For the third case, it was seen that the OM has been developing different kind of mechanisms, such as common mind workshops to find new ways to involve the public and NGOs to the governance. Also the Odunpazarı City Council (OCC) has an important place to support all segments of the society to take an active part in the local governance and gathers many NGOs under a common roof in Eskişehir (Odunpazarı Municipality, 2022).

Cases Dim.		The urban design competitions (UDCs), 2020	Play without barriers (PWB) project, 2013-2016	Hamamyolu urban deck (HUD) project, 2016-2018
Legal and institutional context	Laws	Municipality Law, 2005 Public Procurement Law, 2002 Regulations for Competitions of Architecture, Landscape Architecture, Engineering, Urban Design Projects, Urban Planning and Works of Fine Art, 2002	Municipality Law, 2005	Municipality Law, 2005
	Insts/ mun.deps	IPA Public Design Office, 2020 Istanbul City Council (ICC), 2019	Nilüfer City Council (NCC), 2009 Neighbourhood communities, 2009	Odunpazarı City Council (OCC), 2014
	Municipal visions	IMM Strategic Plan (2020-2024) Fair, green and creative city and happy Istanbul residents New vision for public spaces: Istanbul regains its public spaces	NM Strategic Plan (2012-2014) To be an exemplary and leading local government institution of Turkey	OM Strategic Plan (2015-2019) To improve the quality of life, to make urban life easier and more beautiful for all Odunpazarı residents

Table 3: Assessment of the three case studies in terms of the legal and institutional context. Source: Own elaboration.

As a result, it can be said that the City Councils which were founded depended on the Municipality Law, have been filling the gap as the pioneer institutions in community engagement processes. Table 3 presents an assessment of the three case studies in terms of the legal and institutional context. However, the interviewees also defined that they experienced some challenges in terms of the legal and institutional context of these three cases (as well as in general) as below:

- pressures on municipalities to realize lots of things in five years related to local electoral system in Türkiye.
- political oppositions against every project.
- strong executive power of the municipal council for the final decision over all views of the stakeholders.
- confusion of authorities in public spaces.
- technical/legal limits of the Public Procurement Law and Competitions regulation.
- long bureaucratic processes for approval of projects and long bidding processes for implementation.

3.2. Community engagement mechanisms

In this research, it was seen that all three municipalities used different community engagement mechanisms for public space design projects according to the scales of the projects. In the first case, the process of urban design competitions was explained as below during the interview:

“...We tried to develop more participatory competition processes without contrasting the law and the regulation. After the competitions, equivalent awarded projects were exhibited at the Decision Yours Centres (Figure 5) at the squares and at the web site. Citizens were invited to examine these projects by media and to vote for the projects during twenty five days. Winners explained their projects in moderated online meetings and citizens asked questions to the architects in these sessions. Before the Taksim competition, a meeting point (Convergence Stop Pavilion, Figure 6) was built to create a new public awareness. The jury and the citizens came together in a forum at the pavilion to discuss the dreams about the Taksim Square. Because of the Covid 19 pandemic, we could not realize a face-to-face meeting or a workshop at the Taksim Square. After the Üsküdar competition, we made short videos in which the winners explain their projects. We shared these videos on social media, so the citizens could watch them easily to make a choice...The jury prepared the specification of the Büyükkada phaeton square competition in a participatory way in 2-3 months, it was published as a draft, revised with discussions, then it was announced. Thus, the needs of the citizens are included in the specifications or is added as a supplementary document...” (transcription of the interview with Başak Çelik and Gökçer Okumuş from the IPA).



Figure 5/6: Exposition of awarded projects of Taksim urban design competition - Convergence Stop Pavilion at Taksim Square. Source: Ömer Yılmaz, 2020, available at: <https://twitter.com/oyilmaz/status/1317755727176437762> (date of reference:13-07-2022) - International Design, 2022.

In addition to these, a student idea project competition for Taksim Square was organised in 2020. The main purpose of the competition is to get some suggestions for the use of Taksim Square that will encourage all parts of society to experience it in different periods of time. 55 projects have fulfilled conditions of participation. They were assessed by jury and 7 of them received equivalent rewards and 3 other projects received encouragement rewards. Although it is unclear how the results of this competition affected the international competition, this kind of activities can raise urban awareness and sense of belonging of the youth (Istanbul Planning Agency, 2020).

In the second case, the NM implemented PWB Park after a long term project including a 27 week built environment education program and the design process of a playground with 8-14 year old children as below explained during the interview (Arın Ensarioğlu & Özsoy, 2021):

“...We spent the first 10 weeks to develop a theoretical infrastructure and organized seminars about urban planning, economy, climate change, human psychology, game theory, etc. and had trips to a playground, a greenhouse and a factory of playground equipment. ...In the second semester, we started architectural design studio process (Figure 7). They went to the project site for physical analysis and talked to people in the neighbourhood to learn what they want. They enjoyed working with the model more. We had an interim jury (Figure 8) and their projects were criticized by the experts. Then we organized an exhibition in a park in the neighbourhood. They wanted to show their design intention to people. The visit of the mayor was an important motivation, because they thought that the municipality took them into account...” (transcription of the interview with Sebla Arın Ensarioğlu from the BUU and Özlem Polat from the NCC).



Figure 7/8: Children working with the model - The Interim Jury. Source: Arın, 2015.



Figure 9/10: Exploratory walk in Hamamyolu Street - A public meeting about the project. Source: Hamamyolu working group, 2015.

In the third case, the OCC and the architecture firm used various community engagement tools as below explained during the interview:

“The Mayor supported our ideas and we developed an action plan for the project. We had meetings in every two weeks and also invited an official from the Municipality to our meetings. We listed the problems, set up a free platform where visitors can talk about their ideas and we put a notebook for them to write down their complaints and suggestions. We prepared a check-list to monitor what we did. In order to see the problems, we organized an exploratory walk (Figure 9) on the street together with the working group, officials from the municipality and the representatives of media...” (Hamamyolu Working Group, 2015)

“...Yazgan's office produced a really successful project in this regard. But also, we participated in this process from the beginning. We always talked to local people, had video recordings for the project, made face to face interviews with the citizens and had a live broadcast on the social media...” (transcription of the interview with İsmail Kumru from the OCC).

“...The Chamber of Architects made an open call to the architects...This was the beginning of the participation, we attended the first meeting. They said that every firm could offer a concept project for the Hamamyolu Street, they would choose from among them, and they would implement the project. We designed a concept project and after that we presented it to the municipality. They said that there were people who were already thinking about this place. We got the opinions of the OCC in the meetings (Figure 10). They told us their needs, problems and possible solutions. Many of the people living there participated in the process from the first day...” (transcription of the interview with Kerem Yazgan, Aylin Köse, Evrim Güven from Yazgan Design Architecture).

As a result, it can be said that although the IMM has been developing new community engagement models through urban design competition processes, there is a lack of monitoring processes and it is hard to follow all phases of the participatory processes on their websites. For example, citizens cannot learn what happened after the project was selected or at what stage is the project nowadays? According to Gülsün’s interviews (2021) with well-known academicians and architects, it is highlighted that the participation of users in the competition process is an important step that will enrich the process and raise urban awareness, but also some critiques were made such as the exclusion of people who may directly contribute to the process as stakeholders or experts, not realistic answers of non-expert users, necessity of wider time for competition processes to find and present what the public need instead of asking the public what they like. According to Köksal, Sarıca and Yanar (2020), if the right to the city is a collective right, it has a political importance that cannot be determined by competition, how the urban space will be shaped according to whose needs, cannot be imprisoned within the boundaries of the competition, cannot be executed hastily, and must be the product of a collective mind rather than a competitive way. In this respect, it seems better to develop a citizen participation process to understand the problems and needs of all the stakeholders through a comprehensive and systematic programme. On the other hand, the PWB project process came forward with its systematic approach including a built environment education, as community engagement processes require education, knowledge, time and money to develop a participation culture in the society and to provide the conditions that will create the desire of participation (Gülsün, 2021). In the HUD project process, it can be seen that the community engagement techniques were not conducted in a systematic and organized way. Nevertheless, UDCs in Istanbul and HUD project in Eskişehir provided public participation goals from informing to involving by working directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations were consistently understood and considered. PWB project in Bursa provided public participation goal as empowering by placing final decision in the hands of children.

Table 4 presents an assessment of the three case studies in terms of the community engagement mechanisms. However, the interviewees also defined that they experienced some challenges in terms of the community engagement mechanisms of these three cases (as well as in general) as below:

- superficial community engagement efforts like make up (but this can also create an awareness), harms of tokenistic consultations.
- only giving information or taking opinions in a very short time, not making serious investments for raising awareness.

Cases Dim.	The urban design competitions (UDCs)	Play barriers without project (PWB)	Hamamyolu urban deck (HUD) project
Community engagement mechanisms	<p>Preparation of the konkur.Istanbul website</p> <p>Preparation of the competition specifications (International Taksim Urban Design Competition/ “Imagine Taksim” Student Idea Project Competition for Taksim Square)</p> <p>Meeting at the Convergence Stop Pavilion at Taksim Square</p> <p>Exposition of awarded projects at the squares and the related websites</p> <p>Online meetings with the winners of the projects and citizens</p> <p>Online voting between 3 equivalent awarded projects (25 days)</p>	<p>A 27 week built environment education program (theory + analysis + design)</p> <p>Technical trips</p> <p>Interim jury with experts</p> <p>Exhibition and discussion about the project in a park in the neighbourhood.</p> <p>Meetings with stakeholders</p>	<p>Regular meetings of OCC Hamamyolu Working Group</p> <p>Free platform and notebook for complaints and suggestions</p> <p>Video recordings, face to face interviews with the citizens and live broadcast on the social media</p> <p>Checklist for monitoring the project process</p> <p>Exploratory walk along the Hamamyolu Street</p> <p>General public meetings about the project</p> <p>Meetings with the OCC and the municipality and interviews with the local shopkeepers, citizens, glass art manufacturers by the architecture firm</p>
Part. level	Inform, consult, involve	Inform, consult, involve, collaborate, empower	Inform, consult, involve

Table 4: Assessment of the three case studies in terms of the community engagement mechanisms. Source: Own elaboration.

3.3. Participation and coordination of actors

The actors which played different roles in the community engagement processes of the three cases were defined in the Table 5. In this respect, volunteering and diversity were essential in all cases. Interviewees’ responses from the second and third cases can be seen below:

Cases Dim.	The urban design competitions (UDCs)	Play without barriers (PWB) project	Hamamyolu urban deck (HUD) project	
Participation and coordination of actors	Public actors	İstanbul Metropolitan Municipality (İMM) İstanbul Planning Agency (İPA) Department of Cultural Assets The Competition jury	Nilüfer Municipality (NM) Departments of Architecture and Education from Bursa Technical University, İstanbul Technical University and Uludağ University The District National Education Directorate The Chamber of Architects and the Chamber of Landscape Architects - Bursa Branch	Eskişehir Metropolitan Municipality Odunpazarı Municipality (OM) Regional Council for Preserving the Cultural Heritage Municipality Control Department The Chamber of Architects
	Community	İstanbul City Council (İCC) İstanbul residents 8-14 year old 23 children (3 disabled children)	Nilüfer City Council (NCC) Bizim Ev Social Life Support Center for the Disabled. 8-14 year old 23 children (3 disabled children)	Hamamyolu Working Group Odunpazarı City Council (OCC) Eskişehir Union of Chamber of Merchants and Craftsmen Board of Directors and Members Eskişehir Chamber of Commerce Local merchants Local producers Local media

Table 5: Assessment of the three case studies in terms of the participation and coordination of the actors. Source: Own elaboration.

“...This project was associated with volunteer participation. An open call was made to all schools and the children in the neighbourhood to design a park where disabled and non-disabled children can play together. We worked with 23 children, 3 of them were disabled. We learned how we should communicate with disabled children from the professionals and they supported us during this process...”(transcription of the interview with Sebla Arn Ensarioğlu from the BUU and Özlem Polat from the NCC).

“...The OCC Hamamyolu working group was established with the participation of 15 citizens, the headman of Hamamyolu, shopkeepers and their director, citizens, an architect, a civil engineer and an urban planner in 2015. We visited the Mayor of Odunpazarı and talked about our ideas, dreams and projects about Hamamyolu Street...”(Hamamyolu Working Group, 2015).

Besides, it can be seen that in all three cases, City Councils as civic organizations took important responsibilities to provide participation of citizens and to coordinate the participation processes. Interviewees’ responses from the first and third cases are as below:

“...The public voting processes were conducted by the Istanbul City Council independently. In some cases, for example, before the Bakırköy Square competition, with the support of the Chamber of Architects, the public and stakeholders were invited to get their ideas about the project site...”(transcription of the interview with Başak Çelik and Gökçer Okumuş from the IPA).

“...This project reveals that when there are right stakeholders in a project and when there is a common mind, it works, this is the evidence that participatory processes will always be successful...” (transcription of the interview with İsmail Kumru from the OCC).

The participatory perspective of the OM, the willingness of the OCC and the motivation of the architecture firm for participation presented a strong synergy for community engagement in design and implementation processes of the HUD project. On the other side, low participation rates were one of the biggest challenges especially in Istanbul. The citizen participation to the voting process did not result as expected because the total number of votes were only 387.740, the 0,28 % of the relevant population. The most voted competition was the Taksim square as it is the most well-known square of Türkiye (209.728 votes) (Istanbul City Council, 2020). However, it should be accepted that it will take time to develop a participation culture in a big city like Istanbul. The interviewees also explained some challenges in terms of the participation and coordination of actors in these three cases (as well as in general) as below:

- rapid change of agenda in Türkiye, difficulties to keep people together on urban issues.
- exalted position of community engagement in urban planning/ design practice in contrast to citizens' perceptions.
- high number of stakeholders in public spaces, difficulty and need of much time in bringing all stakeholders together and reaching a consensus.
- lack of knowledge of citizens/local tradesmen about participation, urban design and related laws, being in a learning stage.
- not having a common perspective of public interest/urban benefit among citizens.
- not having enough pedagogical formation to include children/youth.
- low participation rates of local tradesmen, to keep motivations' of participants high in all phases of projects.
- resistance of local tradesmen in some cases and lack of power to persuade them.
- negative prejudice due to bad examples of community engagement and withdrawal of citizens from the process.

- limited individual good examples related to participation and public space quality.
- lack of coordination between public institutions.

3.4. Design and Implementation processes

In terms of design and implementation process, it can be seen that the cases were in different contexts in three cities, UDCs were organized for important public spaces of Istanbul, the PWB park was created in a neighbourhood of Bursa and the HUD was implemented on a pedestrian commercial axe in the historical city centre of Eskişehir. Thus, the ways of acquiring the projects and choosing the design teams were various. The UDCs can be seen as more democratic ways to obtain more inclusive projects for the public spaces which concern all of the citizens in Istanbul and to provide consensus there is a need to work with professional design teams in public space design projects in Istanbul.

Organizing design competitions is one of the legal way of acquiring projects according to the Public Procurement Law in Türkiye. They should be organized according to the Regulation for Competitions of Architecture, Landscape Architecture, Engineering, Urban Design Projects, Urban Planning and Works of Fine Art (Table 3). The IPA has arranged fourteen design competitions since 2020 and the eight of them were related to public space design of the most well-known squares of Istanbul (Taksim, Bakırköy square, Salacak, Kadıköy square and Commemorating Architect Sinan in Üsküdar). “Istanbul regains its public spaces” is the main theme of these competitions except the last one and at the beginning of the specifications, the general design principles which should be considered in designing these squares were explained (Istanbul Planning Agency, 2022b).

On the other hand, the PWB park and the HUD are more local projects which mostly interest local citizens who were the designers themselves or selected their designers themselves. Interviewees’ responses from the second and third cases are as below:

“...The NM drew the implementation project in line with the children’s design. The children objected the project prepared by the NM in the meetings and the design was updated a few times. At the end, they agreed on a common ground and the implemented project was almost 80% similar to the children’s design (Figure 11-12-13)”(transcription of the interview with Sebla Arın Ensarioğlu from the BUU and Özlem Polat from the NCC).

“...We saw all of the project proposals and we recommended Yazgan’s project to be implemented...” (transcription of the interview with İsmail Kumru from the OCC).



Figure 11/12/13/14: PWB design and implementation projects - The PWB park. Source: Arın Ensarioğlu & Özsoy, 2021 - Author, 2023.

Besides that, while the aims of the projects change related to visions of the municipalities or designers and needs/expectations of users, the implementation process mostly depend on the scale of the projects, the financial resources, the coordination and reconciliation among the related institutions. Interviewees' responses from the second and third cases are as below:

"...The children also followed the implementation process. We organized a workshop to design the door of the park with a ceramic artist. The children worked for 2 days to complete one side of the door. They also wanted their names to be seen on the tree figure at the entrance of the park (Figure 14)...” (transcription of the interview with Sebla Arın Ensarioğlu from the BUU and Özlem Polat from the NCC).

“...The aim of the project (Figure 15) was to reveal the existing values and potentials of the city centre to enrich the city life with new elements that can turn into a game for people (Figure 16) of all ages, to integrate these elements into the daily life, and to establish a relationship with local production and local art (Figure 17), to preserve and renew the historical street of the city, and to create a backdrop for urban life with spaces that can be rediscovered and experienced every day (Yazgan Design Architecture, 2018)...the project site was in the old city centre, and it had a history, we analysed them carefully. ... We met with the glass art manufacturers, made interviews with the local merchants and citizens. We worked with the different departments of the Municipality and made presentations to the citizens...So these were the most important part of a good analysis. Without this, I don't think the Hamamyolu project could have been designed...”(transcription of the interview with Kerem Yazgan, Aylin Köse, Evrim Güven from Yazgan Design Architecture).



Figure 15/16/17: The Hamamyolu Street plan - Game spaces - Art spaces in the Hamamyolu Street. Source: Yazgan Design Architecture, 2018.



Figure 18/19: Atatürk Congress Center and Taksim Mosque at the Taksim Square. Source: Author, 2022.

In this respect, the HUD and PWD projects became examples of success in terms of being the first participatory projects designed and also implemented by the municipality, taking into account that most of the participatory urban design projects stay on papers. But the Taksim Square of Istanbul (Figure 18-19) has always been a problematic public space between different political forces because of its symbolic character; and the project (Figure 20-21) has not been implemented yet because of the long bureaucratic processes.

Table 6 presents an assessment of the three case studies in terms of the design and implementation processes. The interviewees also explained the challenges related to the design and implementation processes of these three cases (as well as in general) as below:

- not designing street network hierarchically with suitable functions.
- nostalgic design demands of citizens.
- revisions in projects after the competitions.
- implementing a project with quick decisions without further investigation.
- slow progress of implementation phase due to large number of stakeholders.
- inability of implementation due to security or maintenance difficulties.

Cases	The urban design competitions (UDCs)	Play without barriers (PWB) project	Hamamyolu urban deck (HUD) project	
Design and implementation processes	Local context	Taksim Square, the most important, wellknown and problematic square in Istanbul city centre Project area: 160.280 m2	PWB park, a playground in İhsaniye neighbourhood in Nilüfer Park area: 4700 m2	Hamamyolu Street, a historical street in the city centre in Odunpazarı Street length: 1.5 km Project area: 25.000 m ²
	Design team	beoffice + Şerif Süveydan + Sezer Bahtiyar (the team of the most voted project)	Children and the Nilüfer Municipality Project department	Yazgan Design Architecture
	Way of acquiring projects	Taksim urban design competition An international, two-stage urban design competition 146 projects, 28 rewards (3 equivalent reward, 5 equivalent honorable mention, 20 projects that pass the first stage)	Design of the children developed by the NM	An open call to architecture firms by the Chamber of Architects The presentation of concept projects in a public meeting The selection of the architecture firm by recommendation of the OCC
	Aim of the project	to develop solutions for the problems at one of the major public spaces of Istanbul, to highlight economical, original and qualified design approaches as well as functional and innovative solutions that could provide insights into today's architecture	to develop a preliminary design for a playground accessible for all children having different physical and mental abilities.	to preserve and renew the historical street of the city, and to create a backdrop for urban life with spaces that can be rediscovered and experienced every day
	Implementation	Not implemented yet March - September 2020 (competition period)	Implemented October 2013-June 2014 (built environment education and design process) July 2014- October 2016 (implementation process)	Implemented 2016 - 2018 (design and implementation process)

Table 6: Assessment of the three case studies in terms of the participation and coordination of the actors. Source: Own elaboration



Figure 20/21: The most voted project of the competition, plan and rendering. Source: IPA, 2022b.

4. CONCLUSION

Today, it is accepted that the participatory design process should be based on mutual information exchange with all its stakeholders, with qualified feedback throughout the process, and transparent; rather than simply asking simple questions to the public, it should be based on a system that receives the necessary consultancy support on issues that require technical expertise (Kutluca, Olgun and Alay, 2022). If participatory planning is a goal, it is necessary to understand that participation must be well organized and planned in order to be completed. Participation processes/meetings should be carefully planned and directed in a way that gives participants the feeling that they are an important part of the process. Meetings should be able to give participants the satisfaction of creating something common (Tekeli, 2021).

As it is seen, the three cases in this study lead to various positive outcomes in terms of community engagement in public space design in Türkiye. In addition, there are also successful community engagement processes presenting multi-partner learning experiences in tactical urbanism/ placemaking projects in Türkiye such as Maltepe Zümrütevler Square Interim Implementation which increased pedestrian safety by shifting our angle to see the city from an elevation of a 3 year old child (Superpool, 2019), and Open Space Gökçeada Project which presented an editable modular design that responds to the daily needs of the residents of the island, instead of a finished public space design, to create a living and dynamic community hub (UNDP Türkiye, 2021).

Given that tactical urbanism/placemaking projects are mainly based on participatory approaches, they are more open multi-partnerships and for Türkiye these kind of small-scale projects can be useful steps to spread community engagement in public space design. On the other hand, it was revealed that there are many challenges related to the four dimensions of community engagement in public space design, mostly focused on the participation and coordination of actors in Türkiye, similar to the constraints in many countries aforementioned in the first part of the study. Thus, the hypothesis of the article can be proved.

Finally, this article tries to gather some recommendations based on the interviews in order to achieve quality public spaces and to ensure and steer community engagement in public space design in four dimensions as below:

For legal and institutional context;

- to establish a large consortium which should act together to advance and decide in all participation processes (in Istanbul) (the IPA).

For community engagement mechanisms;

- to solve problems by identifying real needs without hurrying in a proper timing and program not to waste public resources and to create sustainable solutions (the IPA).

For participation and coordination of actors;

- to increase and spread participation not to work with the same people in every project (the NCC).
- for the city councils to be involved in every urban issue, to enlighten, guide and be the voice of the relevant stakeholders; to be in contact with the neighbourhood to understand urban problems better and outside from an institutional and technical perspective; to ask local people their wishes and problems they experience; to include especially disabled people (the OCC).
- to enable actors from different disciplines to take part in the design competition processes, not only for evaluation, but also during analysis, design and implementation stages (Yazgan Design Architecture).

For design and implementation processes;

- to organize more national design competitions to spread the participation culture and to discuss it on a wider platform; for architects, to analyse the project site in detail; to listen to local people/city councils; to understand different dimensions and sectors of the city; to integrate public spaces with the city, its history and nature; to establish an interrupted circulation for pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles; to design places with full of activities (Yazgan Design Architecture).
- to focus on user benefit to create functional, safe and active places in addition to urban design principles; to identify user needs and habits through observations by empathizing, to embed them into the design process; to invite people who represent different user groups in design phase; to start with small-scaled projects which create some changes in users' daily lives to see the results directly without losing motivation in the short term to create a participation culture (the BUU).
- to include citizens in design and implementation experiences, not to present finished projects; to design and build the place together to show how their ideas realize, to give them the opportunity to work in the

implementation process, to place or paint something, to make them enjoy design, follow the process and demand more public places (the IPA); to create a sense of belonging and urban consciousness with the belief that dreams can come true (the NCC).

This article demonstrates community engagement challenges and recommendations to increase community engagement in public space design through a systematic analysis based on three cases developed in Türkiye. It is thought that the results will contribute to find new ways to strengthen community engagement in public space design and also to create quality public spaces to reach sustainable cities.

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