

Public Participation and planning:
The case of Ekebergparken from a democratic perspective

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Landscape and democracy: How is democratic legitimacy supposed to be ensured?

- Representative democracy: Elected politicians take the decisions for us
  - Elections (ensure political equality)
  - Procedures
  - Openness
  - Planners, landscape architects contribute as knowledge producers in the case-preparation
- Elements of direct democracy: Participation in decision-making process
  - Voice
  - Affected actors/interests
  - Channelling in local knowledge and perceptions of space - potential conflicting with the perceptions of professionals

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Why, then, is public participation in planning important?

BETTER RESULTS

- Unique local knowledge – wider range of perceptions of place and landscape
- Better informed political decisions
- Better results, more adequate urban development and place-making.

MORE DEMOCRATIC AND LEGITIMATE DEVELOPMENT OF CITIES AND PLACES

- "The right of the city"? Who are cities and places for?
- All interests and groups are supposed to be heard (affected)
- Increase the trust between elected representatives and voters

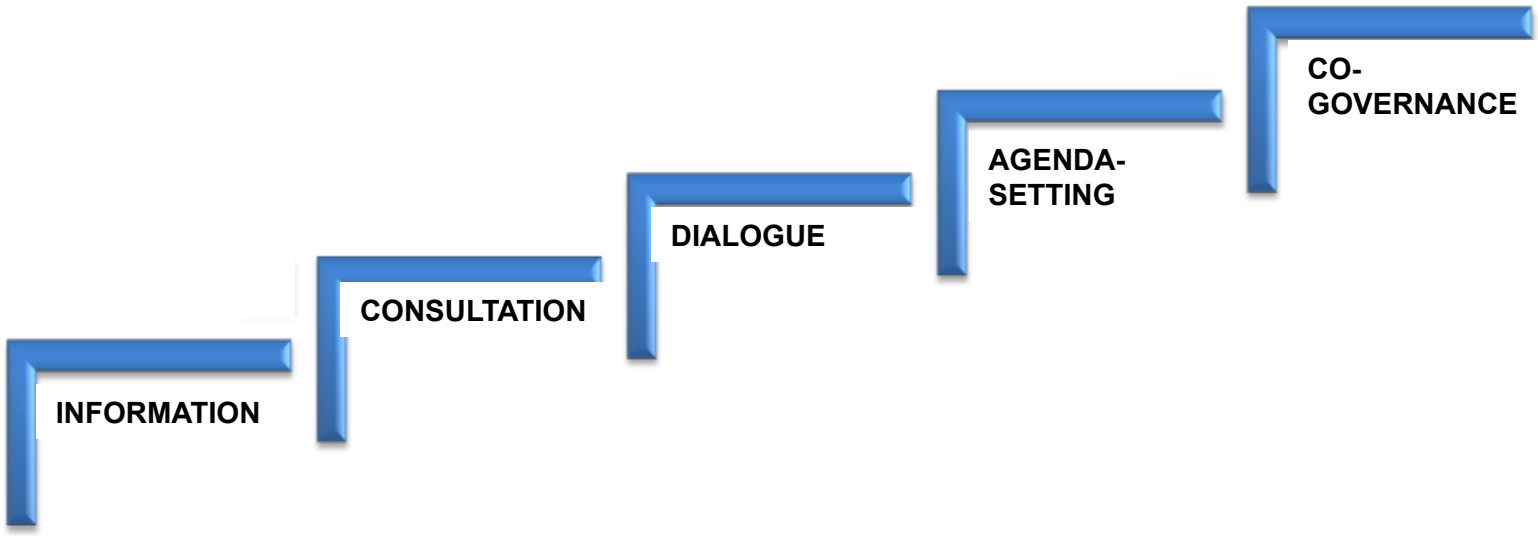
INCREASED ENGAGEMENT, TRUST AND JUST DEVELOPMENT

- Local ownership to planning
- Vitalizing communities
- More just cities and places

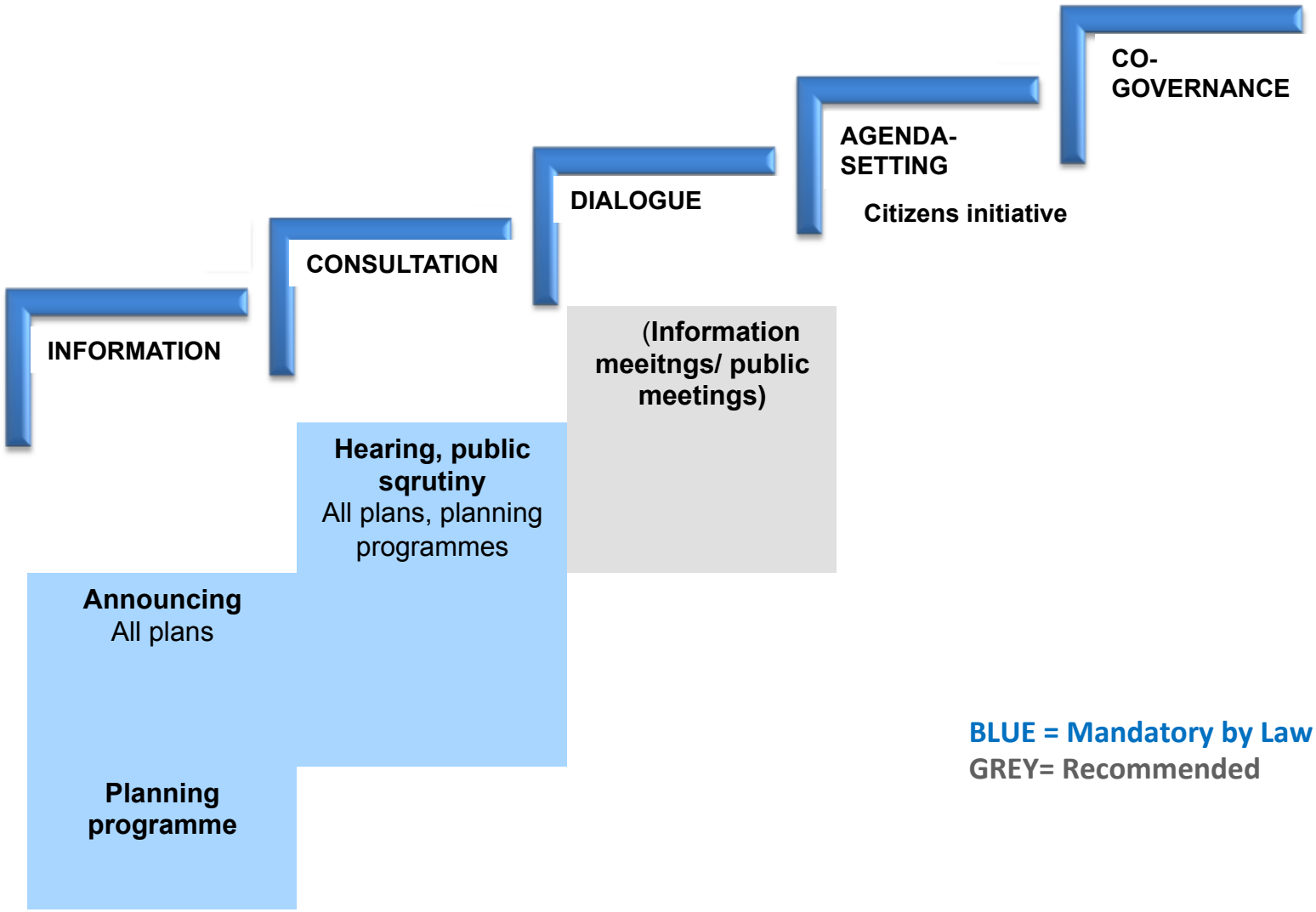
EMPOWERMENT AND SOCIAL CAPITAL

- The right to be heard
- Health promotion perspective

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BLUE = Mandatory by Law

GREY= Recommended

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Challenges for civil society involvement

- The formal channels: too early and too late
- Plan-formulation phase of private plans
  - Civil society are not invited
  - Find it hard to get their voices heard
  - Accused for being NIMBY's and defined as non-legitimate interests
- Who are shaping the physical environment we all live in, who are defining public space
  - Developers, architects, landscape architects and planners (politicians decide)
  - Not the inhabitants
- Implications for local democracy
  - Frustration, alienation
  - Lack of trust in planning processes
  - Lack of trust in local politicians

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The case of «Ekebergparken»

- Huge urban public park (nature- and recreational area), 255 acres
- Owned by the Municipality of Oslo since 1889
- Private gift of 300 mill NOK to sculpture-park + 50 mill NOK to operating expenses
- Detailed plan-process, decided in 2011, including a public-private agreement
- The redesigned park opened in 2013 (Landscape architects Bjørbekk & Lindheim AS)

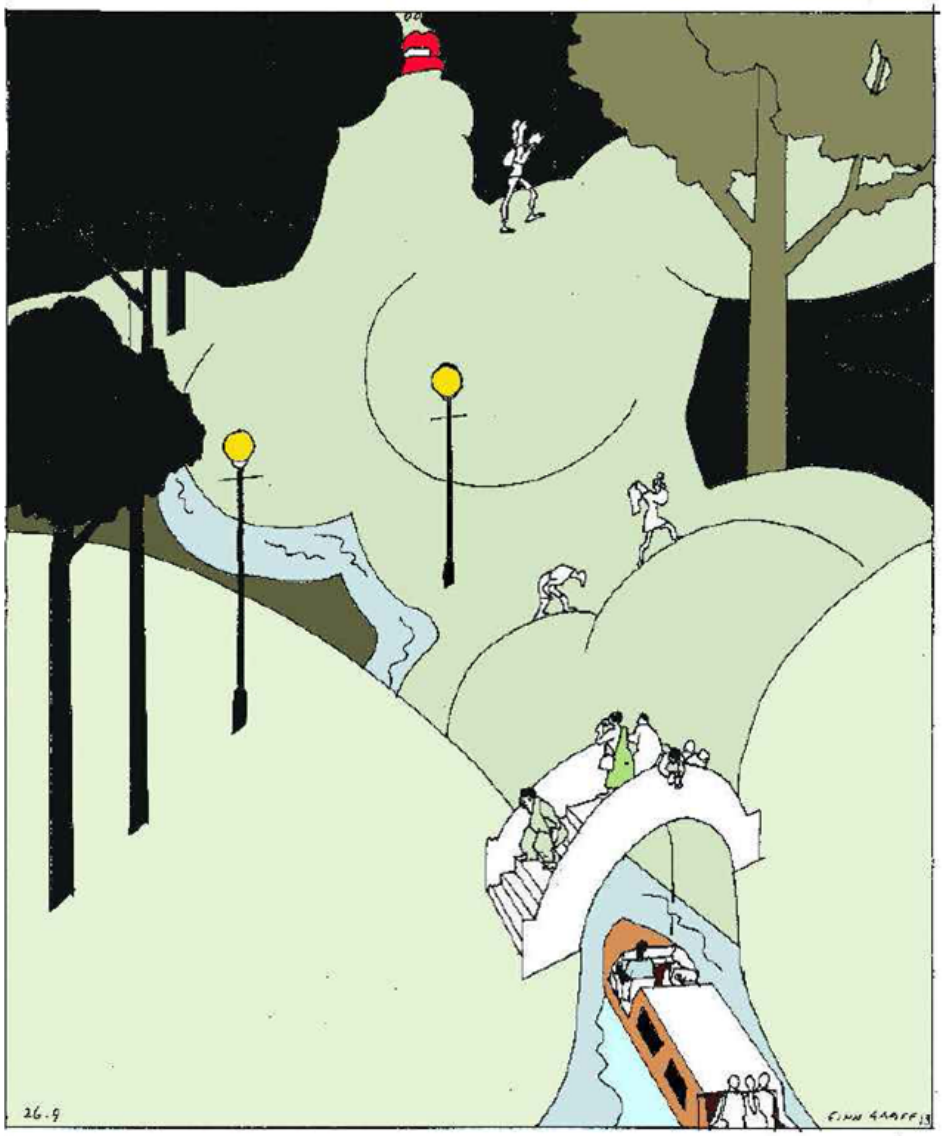


Ole Hoksnes, Bjørbekk & Lindheim *(Bildet er beskyttet av opphavsrett)*

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Multiple layers of controversies

- The definition of the theme of the sculpture park
  - *«A tribute to the female»*
  - *Classical or modern art*
- The redefinition – from nature to park
  - Wilderness – urban forest
  - Biodiversity
  - Accessibility – from “silent place” to “mass turism”
- Historical sites
  - Stone age, bronze age, recent history (WW2)



Prosedural controversies – related to accountability, participation and legitimacy

- How to ensure <u>equal political rights of influence</u>
  - A publicly owned area
  - A private gift of 350 mill NOK
  - Thousands of users (inhabitants)
  - Privately financing of the municipal planning-process, how to ensure Weberian bureaucratic ideals?
- Who are allowed to <u>redefine the public good</u> which the park is?
  - How much definition power to the donor (Ringnes) – compared to ordinary inhabitants?
  - How much definition power to the landscape architects – compared to inhabitants? Who's perception of place?
- Who is responsible?
  - For designing the pr
  - Politicians ~~are to bal~~ that are very cons

”It requires an extra professionalism by local politicians, that they are not dazzled [by the gift], and to not adapt to the preferences of the private donor, but stick to the broader public interests” (Transparency International)

Evaluation from a democratic perspective

Democratic aspects	The gift from the private donor C. Ringnes	The plan process	Public debate and engagement
Better results (output legitimacy)	-Increased system capacity: 350 mill NOK - Increased capacity in the planning process	-Required new knowledge-mapping (historical sites, biodiversity)	-Large engagement, 752 signatures - Resulted in a more thorough process - Qualitative better results -BUT: do other donors dare to do the same?
More democratic and legitimate processes (input)	- Juridical agreement gave the politicians huge influence -HOWEVER: Gifts may reduce the trust in local politicians and planning process (corruption, accountability)	-Institutionalised participation (hearing) -Politicians decision-makers (detailed plan + agreement) However: financing public planners, reduced trust in process	-Important debate about accountability in publ-priv agreements -More voices were heard -Politicians more conscious of the need to take a leading role in the process - Larger acceptance of the results
Increased engagement (input)	-Stimulated to broad, local engagement -Broad public debate -Engaged politicians	-Open info-meeting - 37 (+16) hearing statements But: Why not involve the public more – as this was a public park? Charettes, workshops..	-BUT: Public good for whom? The small or the large community? -Important that democratic processes allow conflicts (Mouffe) - Consensus (Habermas) → Both elements observed
More openness and transparency (throughput)	-The case was sqrutinized by the complaint from the political party «Rødt→ assessment by the County governor	- Openness about process and documents	-More openness and aspects illuminated -Surely a hassle for the donor, but ***essential to ensure democratic legitimacy***