
Erasmus+

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**OPT-T11: CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND PUBLIC
PARTICIPATION**

1. Short description

Culture plays a crucial role in shaping people's values, attitudes and behaviours while engaging in individual and collective in social, political, and civic activities. Cultural norms can influence what is considered acceptable or unacceptable behaviour, as well as what is deemed credible or unreliable information. It provides a framework for interpreting information and events, affects how people respond to new information and what they consider acceptable or unacceptable when acting as individuals and in groups. Accordingly, civic activism and the organisation, management, intensity of and public participation differ across communities, regions and countries due to varying perceptions and trust in collective decision-making that are pre-defined by culture. Understanding the cultural aspects of group dynamics is crucial for designing effective and inclusive participation processes, particularly in managing participatory planning in a way that brings genuine value to communities. Considering the elements of culture and cultural diversity about participatory planning in formal and informal education will add quality to the training programs that are offered with mainstream degree programs and with modular courses that enable planning practitioners, public administrators and decision-makers to upskill as to the concurrent social developments nationally, in Europe and worldwide.

Against this background, the Module provides a general overview the role of culture in shaping individual and group experiences in public life, introduces the principles and practices of public participation, especially in the context of diverse communities and considers different models and approaches to participatory democracy, civic engagement and policy-making about planning. It is designed to equip learners with practical skills and competences to promote inclusion and participation at work. The training content starts with some theoretical approaches to culture and cultural differences and moves to practice-related issues as distribution of power and civic

activism, impact of culture on policy and decision-making, models, and approaches to public participation in different cultural contexts while focusing on planning.

2. Keywords

Culture; Cultural Values; Cultural Diversity; Cultural Context; Civic Activism; Power Distance; Information Permeability; Participation

3. Content

3.1. Culture, cultural backgrounds and cross-cultural aspects - theoretical approaches to cultural differences

Culture is a complex and multifaceted concept that has been defined and interpreted from various perspectives throughout human history. Scholars, philosophers, and social scientists have sought to define it from various perspectives, leading to numerous insights into its complexity. Culture in the ancient sense of the word was represented as culture of the spirit, philosophy, or learning. In the Middle Ages, the concept drifted more towards religion, only to return to antique again during humanism and the Renaissance. It was not until the 19th century that the term culture starts to be used in the sense of cultivation, and culture came to be understood as a complex entity, encompassing knowledge, belief, art, heritage, law, morals, customs, and all the other skills and habits that person had acquired as a member of **society**. **Considering** the emphasis on public participation and participatory planning, attention is directed to those definitions and analytical approaches that offer frames for understanding how culture related to civic engagement and participation in collective decision-making, turning it into a tool for managing and improving the participatory process.

The following definitions outline best the collective or group-dynamic elements of culture as a social construct. According to them culture is:

- 💡 “The complex of knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society”, by Edward Tyler, dating back to 1871 (Logan, 2012).
- 💡 “A historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and their attitudes toward life” by Clifford Geertz, introduced in 1973 (Geertz, 1973).
- 💡 “The collective programming of the mind distinguishing the members of one group or category of people from others, up from those of another. Culture in this sense is a system of collectively held values”, by Geert Hofstede from the 1980’s (Hofstede, 2011).
- 💡 “The set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual, and emotional features of a society or a social group, and it encompasses, in addition

to art and literature, lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions, and beliefs” from the 1982 Mexico Declaration on Cultural Policies by UNESCO (UNESCO, 2024).

All these definitions and associated interpretations of culture have been subject to ensuing critique, upgrade, and modification in scholarship. Nevertheless, and despite the differences, they collectively highlight several essential features that have a significant impact on civic engagement and decision-making processes (see Table 1). These features include the transmission of values, the role of symbols and traditions, the shared nature of cultural norms, and the influence of culture on group behaviour and identity. Such cultural components shape the ways participatory processes are generated, conducted, and produce results.

Understanding these cultural dimensions is crucial for creating inclusive and efficient participatory mechanisms in various societal contexts. For instance, the transmission of values ensures that core beliefs and practices are passed through generations, fostering continuity in civic traditions. Symbols and traditions serve as tools for communication and cohesion within communities, helping to solidify group identity and shared purpose. Recognizing the collective nature of cultural norms helps policymakers appreciate the diversity of perspectives that influence decision-making. By accounting for these cultural aspects, participatory processes can be better tailored to the specific needs and values of different communities, thereby enhancing their relevance and efficacy.

Table 1 below provides a comprehensive summary of the key definitions of culture and the distinctive elements each one emphasizes in view of civic activism and public participation:

Table 1: Liaison between Theoretical Definitions of Culture and Civic Activism (source: own elaboration based on (Logan, 2012; Geertz, 1973; Hofstede, 2011; UNESCO, 2024))

	Theory	Features	Considerations for Civic Activism
1	Edward Tyler's, 1871	Culture is: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ a system of elements ✓ acquired by an individual in a group and as a group member ✓ based on learned behaviour within and under group influence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Culture has components that define the acquired collective understanding of what is good and what is wrong (e.g. what is the community understands as valuable or detrimental for the common interest) ✓ The group can influence an individual's knowledge, values, beliefs, and so on (e.g. community activism could affect the behaviour of public experts or decision-makers)
2	Clifford Geertz's, 1973	Culture is <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ expressed in shared symbols that affect the way people transmit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Inherited cultural norms, values, beliefs and so on can define the support or opposition of people to causes or community projects and initiative

		and receive information ✓ passed through generations ✓ symbolic communication	✓ It is important how a certain project or initiative is presented or communicated to the community ✓ Civic participation is also influenced by the cultural specifics of the communities
3	Geert Hofstede's, 1980s	Culture is ✓ based on collective groups of norms ✓ refers to shared values ✓ distinguishes one group of people from another	✓ Shared values are important drivers towards change and this explain why in some societies people are more active for common causes than in others ✓ When a community contains different cultural groups, there should be different approaches to involving them in the decision-making processes. In addition, it might be expected that the more active groups can impose their perceptions and preferences in the community projects and initiatives
4	UNESCO, 1982	Culture is ✓ about living together ✓ based on social cohesion ✓ tangible and intangible	✓ Culture influences that ways communities organise themselves and take collective decisions (e.g. it can explain why some societies tend to be less transparent than others). ✓ Planning of public spaces needs to consider the cultural traits of different community groups

Academic theories suggest that culture is socially constructed and defines that way in which people community in groups and the way the groups communicate with each other. Therefore, examining cultural differences could help us understand why countries, nations, or communities differ in their methods of engaging the public in various decision-making processes, the intensity with which their citizens engage in decision-making, and why authorities actively seek public participation. Different countries experience unique challenges and employ diverse strategies when it comes to public participation. Likewise, there are no universal approaches to how to organise and manage participatory processes (Bryson, Quick, Slotterback, & Crosby, 2013). Public participation processes need to be adjusted to the specifics contexts in which they place and are influenced by a multitude of culture-determined elements such as rules, resources, power-distance and others (Bryson, Quick, Slotterback, & Crosby, 2013). Therefore, the automatic transfer of participatory approaches and processes across communities and cultures is bound to be inefficient.

3.2. Concept of public participation and context - distribution of power and civic activism

Culturally different rules influence the way members of a given culture behave in certain contexts. On the one hand, the similarities between cultures bring people closer together and make communication easier, but on the other hand, that differences, however small they may seem, distance people, because, due to their misinterpretation, they cause misunderstandings, disagreements, miscommunication and, possibly, subsequent **conflicts**. **Therefore**, contexts are very important for public participation as well as for participatory planning.

Planning should be recognized as a process shaped by cultural influences, where local planning practices evolve accordingly (Othengrafen & Reimer, 2018). Traditional planning processes may overlook the deep emotional and social connections residents have with their local environments, which are integral to their identity (Hillier, 1997). When planners impose decisions without understanding the cultural traits of the resident communities, their projects may invoke opposition even if they are beneficial from all other community perspectives (Hillier, 1997). To avoid harm and ensure fairness, planning must actively engage with and respect the perspectives and needs of local communities.

As **public participation** refers to the process through which individuals and groups influence decision-making in matters that affect their lives and communities (Academy of European Law, 2024). it operates within the context of **power distribution** and dynamics. The latter refers to the way authority, decision-making, and influence are shared among stakeholders in processes and determines the extent to which participants, including citizens, community groups, and institutional actors, have opportunities to contribute meaningfully and influence outcomes (Bryson, Quick, Slotterback, & Crosby, 2013). Shifting from formal public hearings to one-on-one interactions can reduce domination and marginalization in public participation processes. It also highlights the importance of co-producing agendas and processes to share power more evenly among participants and integrating local knowledge with professional expertise to improve decision-making outcomes (Bryson, Quick, Slotterback, & Crosby, 2013). **Civic activism** plays a critical role in balancing power dynamics and challenging power imbalances by advocating for greater inclusion, transparency, and accountability in public decision-making. In its utmost form public participation evolves to **deliberation** - the process where citizens engage in thoughtful discussion and consideration of public issues before reaching a decision and where open dialogue, exchange of ideas, and collective reasoning to ensure that diverse perspectives are considered in decision-making processes (Bächtiger, Dryzek, Mansbridge, & Warren, 2018) .

Power dynamics and civic activism are predefined by social element of culture and group dynamics. Culture determines the structures of authority and influence in a society. In cultures that emphasize hierarchy and respect for authority, power may be more concentrated in the hands of a few (e.g., government officials or elites), while more egalitarian cultures may promote shared power and more inclusive decision-making processes. Culture influences the forms that activism takes as in some societies, protests against the government decision might be vocal and public (e.g., demonstrations, rallies), while in others, activism might be subtler, such as through art, literature, or local community organizing.

The traditional planning system has power structures that tend to favour elected officials and government officers, who often bring their own perspectives and assumptions about the place and its residents to the discussion (Hillier, 1997). These fixed viewpoints can create a barrier to open communication, causing participants to

talk past one another instead of engaging in meaningful debate. To achieve equality in planning, these preconceived notions must be challenged (Hillier, 1997).

3.3. The impact of culture on policy and decision-making - cultural values that affect participation

In the framework of theories and approaches about analysing the impact of culture on policy and decision-making, it is Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory that offers a means for understanding the efficiency of different participatory approaches and strategies across various nations and regions. Generally, Hofstede's is most widely applied in psychology, sociology, marketing, and management studies (Sondergaard, 1994) and accordingly it can be instrumental in explaining the processes in political studies and governance. Initially, the theory has been based on empirical research with data from over 116,000 questionnaires provided by more than 60,000 participants across 70 countries (Soares, Farhangmehr, & Shoham, 2007). Further, it has been elaborated and upgraded by scholars based on incessant processing and data review from 102 countries (Minkov & Kaasa, 2022).

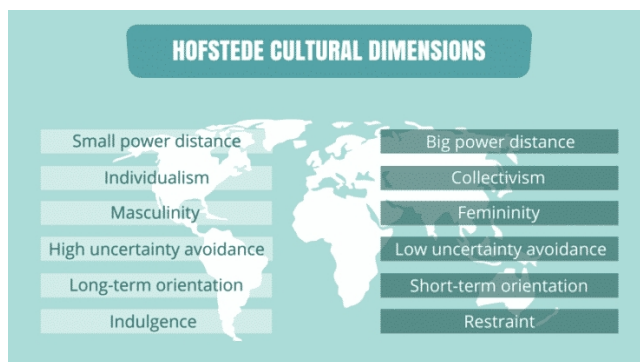
The Cultural Dimensions Theory has influenced the field of cross-cultural studies by far and many other researchers worldwide followed his approach. However, there are now so many studies offering national cultural scores that it has created some problems, such as contradictions between models and debates about whether self-reported data is accurate (Minkov & Kaasa, 2022). Therefore, for the purposes of this training and from the perspective of public participation, the emphasis is kept on the initial frame of the theory as an instrument that can help in explaining the specifics of civic activism processes across cultures.

Hofstede's framework identifies six key dimensions (the last two developed in collaboration with Michael Minkov) through which cultures can be compared and analysed based on scores ranging from 0 to 100, with 50 as a mid-level to distinguish between "low" and "high" values. The six dimensions are to explaining how societal values influence behaviours and organizational practice (Minkov, 2007; Hofstede, 2011):

- 1) **Power Distance (PDI)**, refers to how a society handles human inequality and authority.
- 2) **Uncertainty Avoidance (UAI)**, refers to how comfortable a society is with uncertainty and ambiguity in the face of an unknown future;
- 3) **Individualism versus Collectivism (IDV)**, refers to wheatear a society values individual achievement and personal rights or emphasizes the group's needs and loyalty
- 4) **Masculinity versus Femininity (MAS)**, related to the division of emotional roles between women and men; Masculine cultures value competitiveness, achievement, and material success, while feminine cultures emphasize care, cooperation, and quality of life. The roles of men and women are more distinct in masculine cultures, while feminine cultures tend to have more fluid gender roles.

- 5) **Long Term versus Short Term Orientation (LTO)**, refers to whether a society prioritizes long-term goals, such as perseverance, saving, and future planning, or short-term goals, such as immediate results and honouring traditions.
- 6) **Indulgence versus Restraint (IVR)**, related to the gratification versus control of basic human desires related to enjoying life. In indulgent cultures, there is a focus on enjoying life, leisure, and having fun, while in restrained cultures, societal norms tend to regulate and control desires and pleasures, promoting self-discipline and moderation.

Figure 1: Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory (source: <https://cleverism.com/understanding-cultures-people-hofstede-dimensions/>)



Power Distance

A high PDI reflects a culture that accepts inequality and power disparities, values bureaucracy, and places significant respect on rank and authority. Conversely, a low PDI represents a culture that promotes flat organizational structures, decentralized decision-making, participative management, and a focus on equitable power distribution (Hofstede, n.d.) (Wale, 2023). Table 2 presents the ten differences between small- and large- power distance societies:

Table 2: Small and large power distance (source: (Hofstede, 2011))

Small Power Distance	Large Power Distance
Use of power should be legitimate and is subject to criteria of good and evil	Power is a basic fact of society antedating good or evil: its legitimacy is irrelevant
Parents treat children as equals	Parents teach children obedience
Older people are neither respected nor feared	Older people are both respected and feared
Student-centered education	Teacher-centered education
Hierarchy means inequality of roles, established for convenience	Hierarchy means existential inequality
Subordinates expect to be consulted	Subordinates expect to be told what to do
Pluralist governments based on majority vote and changed peacefully	Autocratic governments based on co-optation and changed by revolution
Corruption rare; scandals end political careers	Corruption frequent; scandals are covered up
Income distribution in society rather even	Income distribution in society very uneven

Considering participation processes and participatory planning in high-PDI cultures the strategies to involve stakeholders should rely on modes that respect traditional authority hierarchies and top-down approaches are more common. Conversely, in low-PDI contexts, planning should emphasize transparency and inclusivity, encouraging participants to engage directly. Formal hierarchies should be minimized in discussions and decision-making, fostering group dynamics that prioritize equality and collaborative problem-solving.

3.4. Uncertainty Avoidance

This dimension looks at how people handle unknown situations, uncertainty, and unexpected events. Societies with a high UAI index prefer clear rules, regulations and predictable processes to minimize ambiguity and eventual risks. They are based on order and accepted guidelines. On the other hand, societies with a low UAI are more open to uncertainty and ambiguity. They are comfortable with flexible or unstructured situations, have fewer rules, and adapt more easily to change (Hofstede, n.d.) (Wale, 2023). Table 3 presents the ten difference traits between societies based on uncertainty avoidance:

Table 3: Weak and strong uncertainty avoidance societies (Source: (Hofstede, 2011))

Weak Uncertainty Avoidance	Strong Uncertainty Avoidance
The uncertainty inherent in life is accepted and each day is taken as it comes	The uncertainty inherent in life is felt as a continuous threat that must be fought
Ease, lower stress, self-control, low anxiety	Higher stress, emotionality, anxiety, neuroticism
Higher scores on subjective health and well-being	Lower scores on subjective health and well-being
Tolerance of deviant persons and ideas: what is different is curious	Intolerance of deviant persons and ideas: what is different is dangerous
Comfortable with ambiguity and chaos	Need for clarity and structure
Teachers may say 'I don't know'	Teachers supposed to have all the answers
Changing jobs no problem	Staying in jobs even if disliked
Dislike of rules - written or unwritten	Emotional need for rules - even if not obeyed
In politics, citizens feel and are seen as competent towards authorities	In politics, citizens feel and are seen as incompetent towards authorities
In religion, philosophy and science: relativism and empiricism	In religion, philosophy and science: belief in ultimate truths and grand theories

Considering participation processes and participatory planning, the strategies for high UAI cultures should be based on well-structured formats, organized timelines, formalized methods for gathering stakeholder input, expert facilitation and clear communication. In low UAI cultures the stakeholders are prone to contribute with new ideas and become engaged in deliberative processes. Here the open-ended

discussions and citizen-driven innovations are expected in the communication between policy-makers and citizens.

3.5. Individualism versus Collectivism

Individualism (high IDV-index cultures) is focused on concerns and rights of the person, his or her well-being and goals. Individualism is a type of social behaviour in psychological science that emphasizes the individual over the group, and attributes like uniqueness, autonomy or individuality, personal goals, self-reliance, self-sufficiency. In collectivist culture (low IDV index) people define themselves as members of a community, decisions are based on what is best for the group, compromises, selflessness and common goals are favorited. They express themselves within the boundaries of social relationships (Hofstede, n.d.). Table 4 presents the ten difference traits between the individualist and collectivist societies:

Table 4: Individualist and collectivist societies (source: (Hofstede, 2011))

Individualism	Collectivism
Everyone is supposed to take care of him- or herself and his or her immediate family only	People are born into extended families or clans which protect them in exchange for loyalty
"I" - consciousness	"We" -consciousness
Right of privacy	Stress on belonging
Speaking one's mind is healthy	Harmony should always be maintained
Others classified as individuals	Others classified as in-group or out-group
Personal opinion expected: one person one vote	Opinions and votes predetermined by in-group
Transgression of norms leads to guilt feelings	Transgression of norms leads to shame feelings
Languages in which the word "I" is indispensable	Languages in which the word "I" is avoided
Purpose of education is learning how to learn	Purpose of education is learning how to do
Task prevails over relationship	Relationship prevails over task

In high-IDV-index cultures participatory processes should encourage sharing of personal opinions and ideas, acknowledgment of individual contributions and aligning the common goals with the individuals' benefits. In low-IDV-index cultures, the strategies should rely on prioritizing the collective well-being, group harmony and consensus-based decision-making.

3.6. Masculinity versus Femininity

In high-MAS-index cultures material success and wealth highly valued, individuals are often driven by competition and the desire to excel, clear gender roles (women are associated with nurturing roles) and assertive communication. In low-MAS-index cultures successes refer to quality of life, care for others, cooperation, and emotional well-being over competition (Hofstede, 2011).

In high-MAS-index societies participatory processes need to set clear and measurable goals, allow for recognition of individual accomplishments and include mechanisms for efficient conflict resolution. In low-MAS-index (feminine-oriented) societies the participatory processes are based on inclusivity, collective problem-solving, integration of diverse perspectives and with particular attention to social and environmental issues.

3.7. Long Term versus Short Term Orientation

Societies with a long-term orientation focus on future outcomes and are willing to delay immediate success for long-term achievements. They value persistence, saving money, steady growth, and adaptability. On the other hand, societies with a short-term orientation focus on quick success and immediate gratification. They prioritize the present and value quick results and respect for tradition (Hofstede, 2011) (Wale, 2023). Table 4 juxtaposes the main differences between the short- and long-term oriented societies:

Table 4: Short- and Long-Term-Oriented Societies (Source: (Hofstede, 2011))

Short-Term Orientation	Long-term Orientation
Most important events in life occurred in the past or take place now	Most important events in life will occur in the future
Personal steadiness and stability: a good person is always the same	A good person adapts to the circumstances
There are universal guidelines about what is good and evil	What is good and evil depends upon the circumstances
Traditions are sacrosanct	Traditions are adaptable to changed circumstances
Family life guided by imperatives	Family life guided by shared tasks
Supposed to be proud of one 's country	Trying to learn from other countries
Service to others is an important goal	Thrift and perseverance are important goals
Social spending and consumption	Large savings quote, funds available for investment
Students attribute success and failure to luck	Students attribute success to effort and failure to lack of effort
Slow or no economic growth of poor countries	Fast economic growth of countries up till a level of prosperity

Long-term oriented societies (high LTO index) value sustainability and the needs of the future generations over the immediate short-term wins. They are more prone to use deliberative democracy methods. Short-term oriented societies (low LTO index) prefer planning processes that deliver visible and immediate results while emphasizing practicality.

3.8. Indulgence versus Restraint

In societies with high indulgence (high IVR index), people spend more money on luxuries and enjoy greater freedom in their leisure activities with well-being and life-satisfaction highly valued. In contrast, societies that are more restrained (low IVR

index) focus on saving money and spending on practical needs rather than luxuries. People are more focused on control, social norms, and regulation of desires.

Considering public participation and participatory planning, the successful strategies for the indigent cultures should underline to the positive effects of the community initiatives, voluntary contributions and opt for creativity. The strategies for the restrained societies need to focus on the long-term benefits, collective good and participation that is an expression of social responsibility.

3.9. Culture, behaviour and information permeability

The efficiency of public participation processes is highly dependent on the how the information about them is spread and processed in communities. The ways in which information is delivered and processed by individuals and groups is of great importance and highly influenced by culture that Hofstede metaphorically defines as a "collective programming of the spirit" (Hofstede, 2011).

Dependence on the group in collectivist and individualist societies is very important for understanding the channels for information sending, transmission, receipt and perception. Individualism pertains to societies in which the ties between individuals are loose - hence opinions are formed based on persons' individual judgement and the group's pressure is **weak**. On the opposite, collectivism pertains to societies in which people are integrated into strong, cohesive groups that have overwhelming influence in the formation of individuals' opinions.

Cultural factors can significantly influence how people respond to mis- and disinformation as well as the extent to which individuals are inclined to conform with collective norms, trust authorities, rely on established information channels, yield to community and peer pressure and so on. Certain cultural beliefs or biases may make individuals more susceptible to certain types of twisted information. For example, a deep-rooted distrust of authorities may make people more receptive to conspiracy theories, while a culture that values scientific evidence may be more resistant to pseudoscientific claims.

Cultures that emphasise individualism may encourage independent thinking and a willingness to question and challenge information. People in these cultures are more likely to evaluate information independently, relying on their own analysis rather than deferring to collective opinions or authority figures. This can lead to the rapid **dissemination of information within peer circles and interest groups**.

On the other hand, cultures that are more collectivist may prioritize group harmony and conformity, leading to a higher acceptance of information shared by the community or social group. Information that aligns with the collective values and beliefs of the group is more likely to be readily accepted and propagated among members. This can lead to the rapid spread of information within the community.

Communications processes about public participation can be greatly improved by using targeted communication and technology, such as geographic information systems, computer-generated visuals, interactive websites, keypad voting, and

strategy mapping tools. These technologies help provide technical information and make complex contexts easier to understand. Visualization tools and other technologies can promote shared understanding and encourage interaction between participants and the information being shared. However, it is important to recognize that not everyone has access to technology, and planners may have limited resources to use these tools effectively (Bryson, Quick, Slotterback, & Crosby, 2013).

3.10. Models and approaches to public participation in different cultural contexts

Public participation has become an integral part of policy-making nowadays but it occurs differently in different countries and its impact and efficiency are valued differently as well. The modern priorities in Europe and worldwide refer to sustainability, inclusion, empowerment, community resilience and other related aspects, still we see these priorities manifested in differently in different contexts. One of the explanations for these differences stem from the different cultural characteristics of the societies that implement the participatory processes.

Culture shapes legislative norms and public institutions because it influences the values, norms, beliefs, and behaviours that guide how societies organize themselves and govern their communities. Public institutions and governments, are a reflection of the cultural context in which they are formed. These institutions adopt rules, practices, and policies that align with the collective cultural identity and social expectations of the population they serve.

The concept of Culturally Sensitive Factors Affecting Participation (FAPs), elaborated by Maleki and Bots (Table 5), shape how public participation processes occur and take form, while also being shaped by cultural values and norms (Maleki & Bots, 2013):

Table 5: Culturally sensitive factors affecting participation (FAP) (Source: (Maleki & Bots, 2013))

Code	Name	Description
Category 1 - Input of public participation		
FAP1	Public demand	Extent to which people want to participate
FAP2	Preferred participants	Acceptance of and/or preference for powerless vs. powerful participants
FAP3	Role and intention of participants	Participation as individual vs. representative, for taking care of self-interest vs. collective interest
Category 2 - Process and interactions in public participation		
FAP4	Process format	Structure, style, formality, and arrangement of the participatory process
FAP5	Process scope	Duration, speed, and number of participants of the participatory process

FAP6	Inter-party trust	Trust between policy makers and the public and/or within these two parties in the participatory process
FAP7	Communicativeness	Extent of being communicative, participative, explicit, critical, and reflexive in interactions, and indifferent to rank
Category 3 - Outcome of public participation		
FAP8	Outcome expectation	Acceptance and/or expectance of optimal solution vs. satisficing consensus
FAP9	Conflict resolution mentality	Acceptance of and/or preference for compromise vs. defeat in conflicts

The relationship between the culturally sensitive factors affecting participation and the indicators of the cultural dimension theory are outlined in Table 6.

Table 6: Summary of cultural indicators relevant to FAPs (Source: (Maleki & Bots, 2013))

FAP	Factor name	Relevant indicators
Category 1 - Input of public participation		
FAP1	Public demand	power distance, institutional collectivism
FAP2	Preferred participants	uncertainty avoidance; masculinity
FAP3	Role and intention of participants	individualism/collectivism; institutional collectivism
Category 2 - Process and interactions in public participation		
AP4	Process format	uncertainty avoidance; indulgence/restraint
FAP5	Process scope	future orientation; masculinity/femininity
FAP6	Inter-party trust	interpersonal trust index; uncertainty avoidance; confidence in government index
FAP7	Communicativeness	individualism/collectivism; assertiveness; power distance
Category 3 - Outcome of public participation		
FAP8	Outcome expectation	masculinity/femininity; assertiveness
FAP9	Conflict resolution mentality	monumentalism; future orientation

The applications of the FAPs and the indicators of the cultural-dimensions theory in public participation can be studied using the collection of good practice on participatory planning gathered in the DEMo4PPL Project:
<https://www.demo4ppl.eu/good-practices/>

4. Classroom discussion topics

1. Discuss how does culture, as defined by scholars like Edward Tyler, Clifford Geertz, and Geert Hofstede, shape the ways in which people engage in public participation and collective decision-making?
2. How can planners ensure that public participation processes respect local cultural identities and avoid the imposition of decisions that may face resistance, while also balancing power dynamics and promoting inclusivity in decision-making?
3. How does information permeability shape the efficiency of citizen engagement and participatory planning processes?

5. Summary of Learning

Q1: What is understood under public participation according to the Academy of European Law?

A: Public participation is the process through which individuals and groups influence decision-making in matters that affect their lives and communities

Q2: How would you define deliberation in the context of democracy and participation?

A: Deliberation is the process where citizens engage in open discussions about public issues before making a decision and work together to make sure everyone's views are considered.

Q3: How many are the main dimensions of Hofstede's Cultural Dimension Theory and which are they?

A: Six: Power Distance, Uncertainty Avoidance, Individualism versus Masculinity versus Femininity, Long Term versus Short Term Orientation and Indulgence versus Restraint

Q4: What the Indulgence versus Restraint dimension measure does the community-based tourism?

A: IVR measures the extent to which a s is prone to yield to or suppress desires and the pursuit of personal happiness.

Q5: Which are the main elements of UNESCO's definition of culture that have relevance to participatory planning?

A: Culture includes tangible and intangible elements and refers to living together.

Quiz

Q1: What is the main idea behind the historical development of the concept of culture?

- a) Culture was only understood as philosophy and learning in ancient times
- b) Culture evolved from philosophy to religion, and later to a broader understanding encompassing various aspects of life
- c) Culture is a process
- d) The concept of culture has always focused on art and literature

A: b

Q2: How does Clifford Geertz understand culture?

- a) As shared symbols and inherited cultural norms
- b) As a combination of attitudes and behaviours
- c) As policy and decision-making
- d) As tangible and intangible

A: a

Q3: Which definition of culture can explain why in some societies people are more active for common causes than in others?

- a) Tyler's
- b) UNESCO's
- c) Geertz's
- d) Hofstede's

A: d

Q4: Which of the following can be an impact of cultural differences on public participatory planning?

- a) Cultural differences make communication easier and help bring people closer together.
- b) Cultural differences, even the small ones, can cause misunderstandings, miscommunication, and potential conflicts.
- c) Cultural differences have no impact on public participation or planning processes.
- d) Cultural similarities are the primary reason for disagreements in public planning.

A: b

Q5: How does power dynamics in public participation processes be made more efficient?

- a) Via relying solely on formal public hearings to include all stakeholders.
- b) By encouraging top-down decision-making to streamline the planning process.
- c) Via substituting formal public hearings with more personalized one-on-one interactions
- d) When avoiding the integration of local knowledge in the decision-making process.

A: c

Q6: How may culture affect civic activism and the power structures in a society?

- a) In hierarchical cultures, power tends to be concentrated in the hands of a few, while egalitarian cultures promote shared power and inclusive decision-making.
- b) All societies practice the same form of activism, regardless of cultural context.
- c) Culture has no influence on how activism is practiced or power is distributed in society.
- d) Culture only affects activism through public demonstrations and rallies.

A: a

Q7: Which of the following is true about Power Distance (PDI) in participatory planning?

- a) High-PDI cultures emphasize equality in decision-making and minimize hierarchical structures.
 - b) Low-PDI cultures emphasize transparency and inclusivity, minimizing formal hierarchies.
 - c) High-PDI cultures favour decentralized decision-making and encourage participative management.
 - d) Low-PDI cultures respect traditional authority and favour top-down approaches.
- Correct answer: B) Low-PDI cultures emphasize transparency and inclusivity, minimizing formal hierarchies.

A: b

Q8: What does the Uncertainty Avoidance UAI index measure?

- a) How a society handles the division of emotional roles between males and females.
- b) How comfortable a society is with uncertainty, ambiguity, and the unknown future.
- c) How a society values individual achievements and personal rights.
- d) How a society balances between long-term and short-term goals.

A: b

Q9: In cultures with a high IDV index, participatory processes should:

- a) Prioritize collective well-being over individual achievements.
- b) Avoid recognizing individual contributions in decision-making
- c) Rely on consensus-based decision-making and group harmony.

d) Encourage sharing personal opinions and aligning individual benefits with common goals

A: d

Q10: (True or False) High UAI cultures prefer flexibility and unstructured situations with fewer rules.

A: False

Q11: (True or False) In low-PDI cultures, it is important to maintain traditional hierarchies and top-down approaches in participatory planning.

A: True

Q12: Match the economic measure of a participatory planning process with the tool it belongs to using arrows:

Cultural Dimension	Implications for Participatory Planning
A) Power Distance (PDI)	a) In high-MAS societies, participatory processes should set clear, measurable goals and recognize individual accomplishments
B) Uncertainty Avoidance (UAI)	b) Emphasizes flat organizational structures and decentralized decision-making.
C) Individualism vs. Collectivism (IDV)	c) Planning should prioritize group harmony and consensus-based decision-making
D) Masculinity vs. Femininity (MAS)	d) Societies with low UAI encourage open-ended discussions and citizen-driven innovations
E) Long Term vs. Short Term Orientation (LTO)	e) High-IVR cultures emphasize creativity and voluntary contributions
F) Indulgence vs. Restraint (IVR)	f) High-LTO societies value sustainability and future outcomes over immediate gratification

A: A-b; B-d; c-C; D-a; E-f; F-e

Q13: (True or False): In collectivist cultures, individuals are more likely to evaluate information independently rather than conforming to the opinions of their social group.

A: False

Q14: (True or False): Cultures that emphasize individualism encourage independent thinking and critical evaluation of information, making people more likely to question and challenge information.

A: True

Q15: (True or False): Technologies like interactive websites and geographic information systems can help improve communication processes in public participation by providing technical information and making complex contexts easier to understand.

A: True

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7. Glossary

Civic activism: the set of actions taken by individuals or groups of citizens on their own initiative to bring about social, political, or environmental change, taking the form of advocacy, demonstrations, or other organised and unorganised forms.

Group dynamics: modes, behaviours and relations of individual persons when acting a group

Social construct: concept or structure that is created and maintained by society rather than naturally occurring or inborn.

Transgression: the act of breaking established laws, social conventions, or ethical standards, leading to consequences such as punishment, social disapproval, or moral conflict.

UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization