Street Talk

Street Talk is a low-threshold participation method that takes place in public spaces. Project teams engage directly with people in locations such as market squares, pedestrian areas, or public transport stops. The aim is to gather opinions, experiences, and needs in an informal way while also providing information about ongoing projects and opportunities for participation.
Street Talks are often organised around a mobile information stand that is open, visible, and inviting. This makes it possible to engage people who would not normally participate in traditional public meetings.

Participation Depth	Inform
Project Phase	Onboarding
Goals	Understanding & Gathering Perspectives
Format	Analogue
Duration	Up to 1 Hour
Target Group	Directly Affected, Interested Public
Group Size	As Many as Possible
Characteristics	Simple, Structured

GOAL OF THE METHOD

The goal of Street Talk is to engage people directly in their everyday environment and encourage informal conversations about local issues. The method collects experiences, needs, and opinions while providing information about projects and planned activities. At the same time, it increases the visibility of participation processes and can motivate people to become involved over the longer term.

PROCEDURE

Preparation

1. Define the objective and topic
Begin by considering:

- What information should be collected?
- Which people should be reached?
- Which topics should be discussed?

Also determine:

- what information should be communicated
- how the results will be used afterwards

2. Select the location

Choose a location that offers:

- high pedestrian traffic
- a pleasant atmosphere
- good visibility
- sufficient space for conversations

Suitable locations include:

- market squares
- pedestrian streets
- railway stations or public transport stops
- neighbourhood centres
- local events or weekly markets

3. Prepare the information stand
The stand should be:

- open and welcoming
- highly visible
- easy to understand

Helpful elements include:

- large headings
- short, concise texts
- maps or images
- seating for conversations

Important:

Plan for weather protection, such as shade or a canopy.

4. Prepare a conversation guide

Develop short and easy-to-understand questions.

For example:

- "How do you experience this place in your everyday life?"
- "What works well here?"
- "What could be improved?"
- "What are your wishes for the future of this area?"

The conversations should remain flexible and leave room for spontaneous topics.

5. Prepare the team
The team should be able to:

- approach people openly and confidently
- listen actively
- explain information clearly
- respond respectfully to criticism

It is helpful to clarify roles beforehand:

- Who approaches passers-by?
- Who documents the conversations?
- How should difficult situations be handled?

6. Materials

- mobile information stand or table
- canopy or weather protection
- flyers and information materials
- posters or maps
- clipboards and pens
- questionnaires or maps (if required)
- documentation materials

Execution

1. Set up the information stand
Position the stand in a clearly visible location.

Ensure that:

- information is easy to read
- materials are readily available
- conversations can take place comfortably

An open and inviting layout encourages spontaneous interaction.

2. Approach people
Approach passers-by in a friendly and informal way.

For example:

- "Do you have a few minutes to share your opinion about this area?"
- "We're collecting ideas for the future of the neighbourhood."
- "How do you experience the traffic situation here?"

Important:

Avoid putting pressure on people. Many conversations begin naturally when the atmosphere feels open and welcoming.

3. Conduct conversations

Conversations usually last 10–20 minutes.

During these discussions, participants can:

- share their experiences
- identify challenges
- express wishes and ideas
- receive information about the project

The team should:

- listen actively
- communicate clearly
- ask open follow-up questions
- take different perspectives seriously

Helpful follow-up questions include:

- "Could you describe that in more detail?"
- "When does this issue occur most often?"
- "What solution would you like to see?"

4. Document the results
Use questionnaires or written notes to record participants' responses.

Document:

- recurring themes
- wishes and concerns
- notable comments or ideas

If maps are used:

- mark the locations mentioned directly on the map

5. Provide information about further participation

Inform participants:

- about the next steps in the project
- about future participation opportunities
- where additional information can be found

This helps encourage longer-term engagement.

Evaluation

1. Analyse the results
Organise and analyse the collected responses according to themes, such as:

- frequently mentioned problems
- wishes and suggestions
- conflicts
- spatial patterns and priority locations

2. Document the findings
Prepare a clear and accessible summary of the conversations and key insights.

Useful documentation methods include:

- photographs
- maps
- participant quotations
- thematic clusters

3. Use the results
The findings can:

- inform planning processes
- provide the basis for further participation activities
- identify topics for workshops or public discussions

Source: https://mobilitaetsplanung-hessen.de/methodenkoffer-partizipative-planung/

WHEN USEFUL?

- reaching a broad and diverse range of people
- offering an accessible and informal participation opportunity
- introducing larger participation processes
- providing information directly on site
- capturing spontaneous opinions, impressions, and public sentiment

WHEN NOT USEFUL?

- lengthy or confidential conversations are required
- complex topics require in-depth discussion
- the location attracts very little public activity
- there is insufficient staff available for direct engagement

TIPS

- Approach people in an open and friendly manner.
- Short, clear questions are usually more effective than lengthy explanations.
- Use visual materials to communicate topics quickly and clearly.
- Plan for sufficient staff, as engaging in conversations and documenting responses simultaneously can be challenging.
- The method works particularly well in places where people naturally spend time.

NOT SUITABLE FOR

- lengthy or confidential conversations
- complex decision-making processes
- topics requiring intensive discussion or group work
- quiet locations with little pedestrian traffic

View online: https://methoden.urbankit.de/en/methods/marktplatzdialog