# Civic Engagement, Spatial Planning and Democracy as a Way of Life Civic Engagement and the Quality of Urban Places Enhancing Effective and Democratic Governance through Empowered P…

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INTERFACE

# Civic Engagement, Spatial Planning and Democracy as a Way of Life

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## Introduction

Lately, a new piece of public policy vocabulary has turned up on planners' horizons: civic engagement. For many older planners, this seems like just another term in a bundle of similar ones relating to involving and engaging the public, citizens, in planning processes in some way—public involvement, advocacy planning, citizen participation, collaborative planning, inclusive partnerships. Is the promotion of the idea of civic engagement just another piece of political rhetoric, which, after some adjustments to formal procedures, relapses into "business as usual"? Or is it something more? Is it a reflection of a wider movement in politics and society towards creating a different kind of polity, with a different way of going about the business of politics and policy making? Does the momentum behind the idea of "civic engagement" reflect a renewed effort to transform democratic life from the kind of elite, techno-democracy so much promoted in Europe and North America in the mid twentieth century towards ideas of more participatory forms of democracy which have continually challenged this elite model? And if so, what is the hope that a more participative model can address the challenges of promoting more liveable and sustainable urban places, for the many and not just the few?

This Interface explores the potential of the idea of civic engagement in this context. There is already literature about a variety of different kinds of techniques for "doing" planning work in more participatory ways, in which citizens, not planners or politicians, take the driving seat in developing policy ideas and project briefs. The Interface of a previous number of this *Journal* (9(1), Forester, 2008) provides a rich illustration of one of these, the "planning for real" approach. In this Interface, we hope to encourage practising planners and researchers to explore the relationship between the practices of "involving citizens", the evolution of the wider polities in which such practices are situated, and the formation of a "public realm" which is not only liveable and sustainable but also which cultivates qualities which foster vibrant, critical and creative political community.

This all sounds very fine and idealistic, cynics will say. But look at the practice of "public participation." Back in the idealism of the later 1960s, this was widely advocated as a way to transform urban politics. But it got taken up instead as a managerial strategy for "regularising" urban conflicts, and turned into procedural requirements which, as David Booher notes in his piece, squeezed the transformative energy out of the social movement. Or did it? Certainly that was the experience in many places. But if we look

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back into the planning histories of places which are now commended for the quality of their urban environments, the liveliness of their political communities and the energy of their civil societies with respect to local environments, places such as Vancouver in Canada (Sandercock, 2005), Amsterdam in Europe (Healey, 2007), Portland, Oregon in the US (Abbott, 2001) and Kobe in Japan (Sorensen & Funck, 2007), we find the impact of the transformative effects of social and environmental movements of that period in changing the substance and process of urban policy. These movements brought into urban politics and administration a new generation of civic leaders and professionals who learned politics in protest movements, who changed agendas and practices, who were prepared to learn from citizens, to give space to citizen voices and demands, and to provide formal support for arenas which citizens designed themselves.

If this could sometimes happen then, could it happen now? Could the idea of civic engagement provide a channel for new political movements to gain sufficient leverage to transform "business as usual"?

By now, the cynical readers of this Interface will be marshalling their arguments. Look who is promoting this civic engagement agenda, some will say. It is governments trying to tame citizen protest, not encourage it to change things. Is not the aim to try to smooth conflict out of planning systems by encouraging everyone to agree in polite, consensual ways? Where is any transformative agenda in that? Or is the aim to harness citizens' energy to public policy objectives set by pseudo-representative elites, because there isn't enough taxpayers' money to fund what really needs to be done? Or maybe it is just a move to make elite representative democracies look more legitimate, in response to the increasing assertion of the diverse and fragmented interests and values of urban polities? If so, where is the energy for this pressure coming from? Is this actually a sign of some kind of transformation happening within civil society itself? Is this towards a much more individualist, consumer-orientated view of society, as Albrechts, in his piece, fears? Or are there new arenas and venues for collective political life emerging. If so, what is their nature and how do these acquire their accountability and legitimacy? And what do the answers to such questions mean for the project and practice of a "spatial planning" concerned with improving and sustaining the qualities of places?

As was argued back in the 1970s in relation to the idea of public participation, this Interface starts from the premise that the discussion of civic engagement cannot be divorced from debates about the kind of democracy in play now and in hope for the future. David Booher starts it off with a reflective essay on the rapidly expanding practice "movement" of involving citizens in public policy making in the USA, in which his own practice has been an active proponent. He shows how these are providing not only new arenas for the "politics of planning", but institutional sites where a "social intelligence" is created which not only changes policy agendas and operational practices, but develops different expectations about how politics should be conducted. Such widening of policy-making arenas and formation of social intelligence contributes, he argues, not just to forming better quality urban places, but to re-awakening a deeper appreciation of what democratic practice should involve. Planning practices thus have the potential to shape not just the physical qualities of places but their political ambience. He underpins this argument with a perspective on urban dynamics which recognises the complexity of the relations and networks which weave their ways across and through urban places, sometimes in conflict, sometimes in synergetic relations, connecting the dynamics which occur within places, to other places near and far. In such a context, the networks which build up around spatial planning

work are themselves part of this relational complexity. Planners, Booher suggests, should give careful attention to where any civic engagement initiatives are situated in this dynamic institutional context, and what potentialities such initiatives might create for developing new planning practices which better promote liveable and sustainable places.

Booher's essay is followed by four commentaries. Jacob Torfing and Eva Sørensen, Danish political scientists, have been exploring the way democratic practices are evolving in the context of the formation of new kinds of "network governance". They put more emphasis on the institutional context within which practices of civic engagement develop. They argue that Booher's emphasis on the promotion of "social intelligence" is not enough by itself. It needs to be accompanied by changes in institutional designs within which governance practices develop, and surrounded by the cultivation of a more "agonistic", or continually challenging, political community. They widen the discussion out not just to finding appropriate techniques and ways of working for promoting civic engagement with transformative potential. They also underline that governance systems need some re-design to enable civic engagement to connect to the energy of civil society. They fear that the idea of civic engagement, attached to existing government institutions will just replicate a managerial "business as usual" and deny the political vigour which comes when all kinds of networks in civil society come to get involved in setting and carrying out public policy agendas. They worry that too much emphasis on collaborative consensus-building will end up being just too polite (a comment used by Abbott, 2001, to describe Portland's governance culture) and rational, rather than relating to the passionate energy of many civil society protests. For planners in practice, they raise the question of when and how to cultivate more vigorous protest, and when to attempt to calm deeply troubled waters.

For Mee Kam Ng, living and working in the special Chinese district of Hong Kong, doubly provided by the British colonial regime and the Chinese government with a top-down non-democracy, there is a clear answer to this question. Civic engagement encompasses social protest. She came into the planning field through local protest activity and she continues to work, as an academic, to challenge a government which has few formal arenas and requirements to be responsive to citizen concerns. In telling the story of her career so far, she highlights not only the need to promote civic engagement from within civil society, but to campaign for changes to formal government. She would also like to see the re-design of the institutions of the planning system to provide more arenas to allow citizens' voices to be heard and to create more checks and balances on formal government to make sure that what citizens say is given consideration in shaping government actions. Thus, she reinforces the argument for more attention to institutional design, to create the space for agonistic forms of democratic practice to interact with deliberative forms.

Pedro Petersen has a more encouraging story to tell from Brazil. Here, as in Spain and Portugal in the 1970s, a commitment to deepening democracy through enlarging citizen participation emerged within the powerful Workers Political Party (*Partido Trabajadores*) after the fall of Brazil's last dictator in the 1980s. He argues, however, that it is not enough to see citizen engagement in isolation. If resources are to be distributed more equitably, and if local governments are to make real contributions to improving the liveability and sustainability of urban environments for the many, then it is important also to have available some formal powers through which those seeking to undermine such agendas are resisted. Citizen voice without such power is an empty vessel. He shows how such

institutions and instruments were created in Brazil to demand that real-estate developers and other property interests promote the wider social function of their development. Practices of broad and deep civic engagement then became, in some instances, vehicles through which this 'social function' could be defined, in strategies and in actual projects. He thus links the promotion of civic engagement to developing the transformative force to challenge the unequal and exclusionary ways in which Brazilian cities have been evolving.

Finally, Louis Albrechts picks up the relation between civic engagement and transforming institutions. Albrechts is well known for his work in attempting to transform the governance and planning culture in Flanders, Belgium, to accommodate a more strategic understanding of development trajectories. He sees an urgent need to invent a new kind of broadly based and imaginative practice for envisioning future possibilities. He sees civic engagement as one source of the power to transform planning institutions, to make them more able to engage in the future imaging which he believes is needed in urban and regional contexts in the coming years. He provides an impassioned manifesto for planners involved in spatial strategy making. Urban polities need to give attention to how to achieve improved spatial quality and sustainable development in an unfolding future which cannot be predicted with any clarity. Futures must be "willed" into being, "summoned up", to use David Booher's phrase. Without the vigorous engagement of civil society in the imaginative work which a project demands, this will hardly come about.

Years ago, when the planning community was exploring the implications of the idea of public participation, many argued that such a practice should never be discussed in isolation from some conception of the kind of polity within which such participation might be promoted. In this Interface, we re-iterate this argument. We hope that the discussion will encourage practitioners, when exploring the potential of the idea, practice and procedures being promoted under the umbrella of the term "civic engagement", to consider not just "what do I have to do with this demand for attention?", but, more generally, "what kind of polity and governance culture am I contributing to when I work with citizens in policy development and operationalisation? And how does engaging with citizen intelligence and energy help to promote a substantive agenda for improving the liveability and sustainability of places? What contribution am really I making to this polity and this agenda, not just when I am engaging in one way or another directly with citizens, but in all the work that I do? Do I like the answers these questions lead me to? If not, what can I, and others, do to change things?"

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# Civic Engagement and the Quality of Urban Places

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In the United States many scholars and practitioners are talking about the emergence of different ideas about citizen involvement in politics. The Center for Collaborative Policy in Sacramento, California, where I practice planning, is increasingly being asked by public agencies to assist them with new approaches to engaging the public in decision making. I participate in numerous networks of scholars and practitioners whose mission is to engage citizens in dialogue and deliberation about public issues and problems.[1] One of these, a network of over 100 interdisciplinary scholars (the Collaborative Democracy Network), published an essay taking note of this trend and calling upon teachers and scholars in related disciplines to incorporate attention to the emerging theory and practices for public engagement in their research and teaching. These practices "aspire to reasoned discussion or discourse among citizens who come together as equals in a non-coercive environment to solve public problems." [2] They seem to portend a shift in ideas about the concept of democracy. After studying examples throughout the United States, one scholar concluded: "We seem to be heading toward a new form of democracy in which public officials bring politics to the people, politics takes place in small groups, and people take active roles in problem solving" (Leighninger, 2006, p. 22). This concept of democracy implies moving away from democracy solely as formal representative government, toward a deeper concept, centered on the core normative values of democracy that are held by most Americans: Autonomy, equality, and responsiveness to the public good. For planners it also brings to the foreground the question of what role citizen engagement has for spatial planning beyond traditional ideas about public participation practice.

   I argue that a deeper concept of democratic values should be relevant to spatial planning in two ways. First, informed by such a conception, those engaged in spatial planning can enhance the quality of urban spaces. Civic engagement based upon such democratic values can help planners formulate spatial planning that is more robust for the quality of urban spaces and responsive to the values of distributive justice, environmental well-being, and economic vitality. Second, the manifestation in spatial planning of civic engagement contributes to the quality of urban political life. The kind of social intelligence that grows among a public through practices of civic engagement in spatial planning is itself one element of the quality of urban spaces. I also argue that our understanding of both spatial planning and of democratic practice must evolve for this relevance to be manifested. In the spatial planning literature there are already suggestions that planning practices are emerging as "a democratic politics which expresses these values." Likewise, the discourse centered on the concept of "civic engagement" suggests the evolution of democratic political practice such that democratic values are central to shaping quality urban places.[3]

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This is an important question for planners because many critics are questioning whether the core values of democracy are adequately reflected in existing democratic institutions such as those which play key roles in planning work. For example, the British political theorist Dunn argues that representative democracy, as the particular form of government of the USA, has gained hegemonic status because it was formed and advanced by the capitalist system (what he terms "the order of egoism") as necessary for its success (Dunn, 2005). On a similar note, Castells has argued that "Our economy, society, and culture are built on interests, values, institutions, and systems of representation that, by and large, limit collective creativity, confiscate the harvest of information technology, and deviate our energy into self-destructive confrontation" (Castells, 1998, p. 359). Others have made the case that the inadequacies of democratic institutions have so turned off citizens that most choose not to participate at all and lack the knowledge to do so effectively (Patterson, 2002). Indeed the very word democracy has long been seen as a source of obfuscation. Consider Orwell's argument over 60 years ago that for the word democracy there is no agreed definition and the attempt to make one is resisted because when we call a country democratic we are praising it. The defenders of every kind of regime can claim that it is a democracy and thus fear that they might have to stop using that word if it were tied down to any one meaning (Orwell, 1968).

In the USA, the concept of politics has been dominated by an elite model of democracy, going all the way back to Lippmann (1922) and Schattschneider (1960), who argued that citizens have no role in policy formulation beyond their participation in elections to decide on leaders. In this view the public is too self-involved, uninformed, and generally confused to be trusted with the nuts and bolts of government. Instead these should be left to elected representatives and elites of government and stakeholder groups to be fought out in a pluralist system of attack and counter attack. Voters may then go to the polls and vote out the incumbents if they are unhappy with their lot. Heavy reliance is placed upon a legal system, adversarial in focus, to resolve issues about citizens' rights. Decision making is dispersed among local, regional, state, and federal agencies with most planning decisions occurring at the local, regional, and state levels. Traditional practices, such as open meetings and public hearings, often result in public dissatisfaction or alienation and lead to legal proceedings that can drag on for years. Despite the movements for advocacy planning and public participation in the late 1960s/early 1970s, this concept of citizenship in the USA has resulted in public participation practices in plan formulation that are limited to presentation of draft plans at public hearings where there is little opportunity for dialogue and deliberation by the citizens, and to extensive use of lengthy litigation. But these practices barely contain the pressures arising from citizens and other stakeholders for a different way of getting involved in spatial planning issues. So is the call to more "civic engagement" just a new turn in sharpening up traditional practices, or a call for a new kind of practice?

My argument proceeds in three steps. First, I suggest how the emergence of a new relational way of thinking about strategic spatial planning is creating the context for the importance of new forms of civic engagement in public policy making. Then I briefly summarise some of the new theory and practices of civic engagement that suggest how new democratic values are being summoned up from the experiences of scholars, activists, and practitioners. I offer examples from local, state, and federal venues where these experiences are manifested. Third, I explore how civic engagement practices can play a central role in the creation of urban places of quality, and how civic engagement can enable the cultivation of social intelligence in the daily life experiences that itself is a quality

of urban spaces. I will also point out the obstacles and dangers that are implicated in the application of new ideas about civic engagement to spatial planning. I conclude with observations about how planners can help make civic engagement, as part of the project for deepening democracy, relevant to spatial planning.

## Strategic Spatial Planning with a Relational Perspective

Recently, several planning writers have begun to develop a relational conception of urban dynamics and drawn out the relevance to spatial planning (for example, Graham & Healey, 1999, Healey, 2007). This emphasises the complex relations within which spatial planning activity is situated and the complex processes, including the myriad networks of people in an urban region, which shape and are shaped by the socio-economic dynamics of a region. In this framework, spatial planning is understood not just as physical development. In two profound senses it is also relational. It is situated in the dynamics of both the relational interactions of these networks and the socio-economic forces that engage them. Spatial planning activity also is influenced by and evolves from the changing array of webs of relations that generate the daily life experiences of people in an urban place. The relations within a planning process interact with all kinds of other relational networks in a complex way so that governance activities are iteratively both shaped by and shape those networks (Healey, 2007).

This is a different mental conception of planning than is advanced in much traditional planning literature and practice. In this older mental model, place qualities and connections are understood through buildings and urban structure, particularly the relation between land uses and infrastructure facilities. The government intervenes, utilizing experts (hopefully planners) and privileging expert knowledge, to "plan" in a linear way; from goals and analysis, to plan formulation and implementation, to assessment of outcomes. Although Healey claims that there have been significant efforts in Europe to depart from this mental model, I'm not so sure the same can be said for the USA. Even today if you look at planning laws in California, such as those governing the general plan; zoning and subdivision enabling; and environmental assessment laws, you see the dominance of this mental model. In coping with the disconnection between the practices of this model and their real life experience, planners seem to evolve an "informal" practice that recognises their dilemmas in a kind of shadow state between the formalities of planning law and the realities that they face (Innes et al., 2007).

In the traditional mental model there is little use for civic engagement. Instead there are complicated processes spelled out for the public participation procedures required to comply with the law, but which rarely result in actual citizen involvement or help enable continuing collective citizen engagement to jointly shape future urban places (Innes & Booher, 2004). For example, one important California lake was threatened by the introduction of a non-native fish that endangered the survival of the native fish. The State decided the lake had to be poisoned in order to eradicate the fish. They used the traditional approach to public participation: holding public hearings in which the experts try to educate the public about the need for the action and gain their support. No dialogue or deliberations took place between citizens and experts. The result was anger and resentment. When the eradication failed, the State asked the Center for Collaborative Policy to lead a public involvement program that engaged citizens in deliberations about

what should be done. As a result, a better plan was developed and the community fully supported the new eradication measures.[4]

In contrast, the mental model evoked by Healey's framework summons up a very robust image of civic engagement in spatial planning. In this mental model with its focus on flows, multiple sources of information, and myriad complex relational webs of distributed networks, civic engagement becomes a central dynamic that brings into spatial planning processes much knowledge about future place qualities and builds capacity in the complex system for on-going social learning and actions to help evolve and shape that future. Planners can help create the connections among these relational networks, cultivate open spaces for multiple forms of knowledge and sharing of knowledge, catalyze deliberation about the future of an urban place, and build capacity for continuing social learning among citizens, leaders, and planners.

But there are dangers and challenges in these waters. Connections may be manipulated where one group's mode of reasoning comes to dominate that of others, or if an openly revealed interest gets captured or destroyed by another group. Making connections may be challenged if the formal procedures specified in government rules privilege expert knowledge and linear logic. Then planners may anticipate engagement with citizens as uncomfortable experiences with uninformed publics, highly charged public fights, or "tests" where they have to demonstrate the validity of their analysis and proposals. Similarly, if improperly carried out, venues for civic engagement may be experienced by citizens as frustrating and manipulative. But, understood in the context of a relational urban dynamics, civic engagement is not limited to formal participation arenas. Instead civic engagement happens "in the flow of interaction throughout strategy formation processes and is likely to be part of the ongoing 'flow of life' of all those who 'encounter' urban governance processes in some way" (Healey, 2007, p. 259).

Such a conception requires us to think in a new way not only about strategic spatial planning, but also about civic engagement, the nature of civil society and what constitutes a democratic polity. Fortunately there are numerous experiments with civic engagement in the USA and a blossoming literature on these experiences that may help show us what we need to think about. These take us back to the relation between civic engagement as an idea and a practice, and ways of deepening our democratic way of life.

### Probes in Civic Engagement Theory and Practice

In the past twenty years in the USA there have been a number of threads in both theory and practice that suggest alternative perspectives are emerging to traditional views of democracy as a form of government. I follow Lindblom's (1990) lead in characterizing these as "probes" because they are not integrated threads or threads growing out of a coherent movement. Instead they are experiments across a range of venues that explore how democratic values might be manifest in collective public action in a different way. Some of these threads include self-organizing networks mobilizing around common concerns, new theory about democracy emerging around the term "deliberative democracy", and new methods and practices to bring citizens together to deliberate about public issues. There are also examples from practice of how these threads are woven together. Space does not permit a complete summary of these, but a short description of each thread will help us enquire into what they might mean for civic engagement in spatial planning practices.

In his survey of the Network Society, Castells captured three dynamics that he suggests are important for "potential paths of democratic reconstruction": the flourishing of local democracy in many places, the opportunity offered by electronic communication, and political mobilization around causes (Castells, 1997, p. 350). More recently Putnam and Feldman (2003:5) chronicled twelve examples in the USA of what they called "harbingers of a broader revival of social capital." Many other examples have been documented by scholars.[5] As Castells observed, the flourishing of local democracy and mobilization around causes are located somewhere between forms of social movement and political action because they are citizen orientated and seek to put pressure on public institutions and private firms. But while they seek to influence the direction of society, they usually do not use the regular channels of political representation and decision making.

Since the 1990s, many US political theorists have been debating an alternative to existing democratic institutions and a prescription for the "crisis of democracy" that has come to be called deliberative democracy.[6] These theorists differ on such matters as the goal and conditions for deliberative democracy to be democratic, the appropriate procedural requirements, the design of deliberative institutions, and the relations between reason and politics. (Even if existing democratic practices were perceived as fair and democratic, they might not be deliberative.) They also differ on whether deliberative democracy is focused on deliberation among citizens or among elites. A common definition for deliberative democracy is suggested by Bohman and Rehg (1999, p. ix): "Broadly defined, *deliberative democracy* refers to the idea that legitimate lawmaking issues from the public deliberation of citizens ... it presents an ideal of political autonomy based on the practical reasoning of citizens." The suggestion is that deliberative processes are more likely to result in laws that are recognised as legitimate and are in fact more rational and just. They are also more likely to bridge differences between citizens. Proponents also argue that deliberative democracy will be better at realizing the core normative values of autonomy, equality, and responsiveness to the public good.

Finally, there is a range of experiments in practice in the USA focused on specific methods to bring citizens together to deliberate on public issues. These represent a rich diversity of ideas about selection of participants, methods to facilitate dialogue, and venues for initiation. Each of the practices is advocated by expert practitioners who specialise in the particular method, and a network of these practitioners has evolved to facilitate learning and discussion among them. They are often supported by foundations such as the Case Foundation (Gibson, 2006), and convened by public agencies seeking to improve their decision making. In some cases the practice focuses on integrating citizen deliberations into stakeholder-driven collaborative processes convened by public agencies, often for planning purposes.[7] In others, deliberative processes may be convened by non-profit groups, civic associations, or public agencies. For example large scale meetings of citizens were organised by the agency AmericaSpeaks to provide input on planning for the World Trade Center after the 9/11 terrorist attack (Hajer, 2005) and for post-Katrina planning in New Orleans. The National Issues Forum, launched by the Charles E. Kettering Foundation, is a nationwide network of organizations which sponsor public forums and training for public deliberation in communities. In another example, the Study Circles Resource Center sponsors deliberations that are meant to place deliberation in the unique context of the community. This method integrates deliberation with community organizing (Gastil & Levine, 2005; Gibson, 2006). Together, these practices, with the deliberative democracy theories they appeal to and the self-organizing networks of mobilization

they build on, offer a complex fabric of threads that planners can draw upon so that spatial strategies both engage citizens in their formation and help develop citizen capacity for continuing learning and action.

Three examples from the local, state, and federal level respectively may help in understanding new approaches that are being experimented with in the USA. In the 1990s the city of Seattle, Washington, developed a set of tools and resources to empower local citizens in the planning process while also holding them accountable for their decisions, based on broad values and goals. City planners served as relational organisers and intermediaries of trust. They provided tools for the citizens such as financial, data, programmatic and process tools that allowed them to do deliberative work. They provided financial resources to the neighborhoods to involve the broad community and stakeholders in defining a neighborhood vision. To obtain this support the neighborhoods had to provide stakeholder analysis that showed the process was inclusive, and not dominated by middle-class citizens. The result was a successful planning process that contributed to the "emergence of a collaborative culture among highly diverse and often contentious community associations, business interests, city departments, and the city council" (Siriani, 2007, p. 373).

In another example from the state level, California's Department of Transportation established a program to encourage collaboration in the development of regional transportation plans. The Regional Blueprint Planning Program is designed "to better inform regional and local decision making, through pro-active engagement of all segments of the population as well as critical stakeholders in the community, business interests, academia, builders, environmental advocates, and to foster consensus on a vision and preferred land use pattern."[8] The goals of the planning program include:

- A more efficient and effective transportation system and land-use pattern,
- A strong and sustainable economy,
- Progress along the dimensions of place, prosperity, and people, which define quality of life for all Californians.

Annually, the Department collaborates with several other organizations including other state agencies, universities, regional planning agencies, and non-profit organizations to assess the progress toward collaboration and the goals. It created a statewide network of organizations, the Blueprint Learning Network, to focus on overcoming challenges and addressing new planning issues. In recognition of the strong ethos in California of local control over land use decisions, the program is voluntary. It relies on the incentive of financial grants. So far, nine regional planning agencies, representing 97% of the state's population, have shared in $10 million.[9]

The final example is the public engagement project on pandemic influenza which was initiated in 2005 by the US Centers for Disease Control (CDC).[10] The purpose of the project is to discuss and rank goals for a pandemic influenza vaccination program and to develop a new model for engaging citizens on vaccine related projects. Planning for a pandemic is not just about science. Deep values around democracy are also implicated. Should society focus on reducing individual deaths and hospitalizations? Or should society focus on equality such as using a lottery or first come first served as criteria for who receives limited vaccinations? Should the most vulnerable receive first priority? Or should the priority be to target vaccinations to assure the functioning of society? The CDC convened a workshop of staff scientists and deliberation consultants to aid in planning for the effort. The CDC purpose was to actively involve members

of the public at large and other stakeholders in group dialogue and deliberation sessions to better inform and shape its agenda setting, decision making, and policy activities. The process included national workshops of stakeholders followed by regional sessions of citizens in which the results of the earlier workshops were shared and discussed. Then in early December the US Centers for Disease Control and other partners hosted an online discussion that sought to obtain public input on the government's ten pandemic influenza vaccination goals. Participants discussed this critical health issue with public health officials as the agency collected input for consideration, along with other information, and refined the guidelines for distributing a limited supply of vaccine.[11]

The CDC focused on four features for deliberations:

- Clarity about purpose, expectations, and other dimensions of the process,
- Commitment of resources and the value of the input,
- Inclusiveness of broad participation, including disadvantaged populations,
- Sustainability, especially providing feedback to participants about decisions.

The program resulted in findings that are guiding the CDC in planning for an outbreak of pandemic influenza. It also received the 2007 award for the best public involvement project by the International Association for Public Participation.

## Democracy, Social Intelligence, and Spatial Strategies

These examples summon up a conception of democracy as more than just a specific set of formal institutions. It is a conception that recalls USA philosopher John Dewey's suggestion that democracy is a way of life, not a certain alignment of government institutions (Dewey, 1954). Dewey's concept of democracy was eclipsed for years by Lippmann's elite model, which argued that citizens are not prepared for active participation, and the two carried on the debate for years. But recently there has been a resurgence of interest in Dewey's ideas in political science and planning. He saw life as experienced in a world of flux and contingency, requiring social learning from and by citizens undergoing the consequences of our actions and adjusting our actions based upon these consequences. This is an intersubjectively generated learning process, Dewey claims, because we have to embrace the idea that despite the plurality of our interests, we are all in this together. In the day-to-day transformative potential of the human capacity for intelligent judgement and action, with the proper conditions, lies the potential for creating better futures. Hence, for Dewey, instead of thinking of our dispositions and habits as accommodated by certain institutions, we have to think of the institutions as being expressions and extensions of these dispositions and habits, and the institutions then act back on us, reinforcing those habits. Social intelligence is the protection and expansion of our capacity for free and communicative inquiry and our shared capacity to perceive the shared consequences of our habits and policies. Hence in a world of flux and contingency, it is through cultivation of social intelligence that we equip ourselves to navigate a dangerous and uncertain future (Dewey, 1954, Kadlec, 2007).

If we provisionally accept this perspective it suggests two key dimensions for civic engagement in spatial planning. First, civic engagement should be a central aspect of summoning up the future quality of the urban place if spatial planning is to legitimately and robustly express the shared experiences of the urban public realm with all its complexity and uncertainty. As Healey points out (2007), others in many networks may

have a better capacity than planners to develop an idea of an urban place that has widespread resonance and mobilization power. But just as important, if spatial strategies are to be adaptive in the face of change, civic engagement in this summoning up builds on and builds up the social intelligence capacity of citizens for social intelligence to continuously experience a shared sense of the consequences of policies and actions and to transform their dispositions and habits based upon that experience. Dewey also argues that social intelligence growing from democratic engagement is the best opportunity for the kind of critical perspective that restrains domination. Castells draws from his understanding of network dynamics to describe this in a different way. In the entities of mobilization he called "embryos of a new society" he sees "a *networking decentered form of organization and intervention, characteristic of the new social movements,* mirroring, and counteracting, the networking logic of domination in the informational society" (Castells, 1997, p. 362, Castells' emphasis). This implies that social intelligence is also one of the qualities of life that are influenced by both the qualities of places and the spatial organization of phenomenon, along with distributive justice; environmental well-being; and economic vitality (Healey, 2007). Civic engagement in spatial planning then becomes a new venue for cultivating social intelligence and democracy as a way of life.

I earlier recalled the warnings about some of the dangers and challenges presented by a relational view of strategic spatial planning: manipulation, working around traditional rules for participation and roles for experts, and planners' fears that connections will result in emotional public fights. These dangers did not materialize in the examples I cited. The case of the CDC is illustrative because the scientists and managers were concerned about these dangers when they began planning the public engagement process. But after observing the process they were reassured by the "public's interest in participating, their rapid grasp of the central issues, and their willingness to deliberate and make hard choices."[12]

There are also other challenges that planners will need to be aware of in exploring the practicalities of expanding civic engagement opportunities in spatial planning practices. First is the potential for like-minded groups to emphasize politeness and familiarity at the risk of becoming more exclusive and homogenous. I run into this occasionally when I facilitate convening of a collaborative process. Conveners will say "we don't want to include Joe because he is too rude and uncooperative." If I don't help them change their understanding of the importance of including all perspectives, including the uncomfortable ones, they not only risk missing important information, but also lose the dynamic that agonistic tension brings to their interactions. It is in this tension that stakeholders are forced to re-examine some of their cherished biases, and creativity is nurtured. Related to this is the potential for civic engagement to exacerbate group polarization, leaving like-minded participants with more extreme versions of the opinions they started with. I see this sometimes when environmentalists or builders meet among themselves to figure out how to work together in a larger collaborative process where they will be dealing with different stakeholders. Without the other voices in the room, they can easily lapse into trying to outdo each other in criticizing other points of view and become more fixed on the most extreme thinking about their own point of view. These dangers point out the importance, for those shaping civic engagement practices, of creating opportunities and making connections between groups with diverse perspectives and interests.

A second danger is that efforts at civic engagement may freeze out the normative desirability of more adversarial challenges to address moral challenges. Planners can help ameliorate this by not insisting that deliberation is to the exclusion of such

confrontational approaches to social dilemmas. In keeping with the complex and contingent relational networks which Healey and others explore, there is room in civic engagement for both dialogic deliberation and more confrontational expressions of deliberation. For example in one process I facilitated, the group decided that one ground rule was that they could all work outside the process to improve their position, as long as they kept each other informed and did not bring the outside style of conflict into the room. We called this dynamic "living in two worlds."

Third, there is the danger that some of those who may enter the public realm may not have the skills and predispositions to enable their differences to be recognized. Planners can work to assist citizens to both gain skills in deliberation and to assist those with the skills to appreciate differences among those who are still learning. For example in the case of the Seattle planning process, the planners were able to bring resources and tools to help participants prepare to be engaged effectively in the process.

Finally, many question the feasibility of civic engagement in a large and heterogeneous society. Planners can work with the network dynamics of society to create multiple opportunities for citizens to engage in social learning with each other. There are a number of techniques that are available, complemented by technology, in which large numbers of citizens, in all their diversity, can be brought together for deliberation. For example, the Regional Blueprint Planning Process in California makes use of this networking arrangement to create a multitude of venues for dialogue at the state level. At the regional level, the Sacramento Council of Governments carried out a region-wide Blueprint dialogue about the future vision for transportation and land use. This process included both community based workshops and large regional sessions with hundreds of participants that used the technology-based approach of AmericaSpeaks that I mentioned earlier.[13] The CDC process included both national meetings of stakeholders and smaller community based dialogues in a range of regions.

These ideas and experiments provide inspiration to help planners to think differently about the context and their tasks. Rather than seeing the public as consumers of our services, we can see them as citizens. In Seattle, the planners did not deliver a planning service to consumers. Instead they helped citizens come together both as responsible and collectively accountable for the future quality of the urban space in Seattle. Rather than asking "what are we going to do to encourage civic engagement in planning?" we can ask "what opportunities can we provide for citizens to convene with others who are concerned about the futures of our urban places to deliberate about these futures and define for themselves the qualities they seek and what actions they will take?" We can ask how we can facilitate citizen-driven engagement so that it becomes embedded in the day-to-day life experiences of the public realm. Rather than asking citizens to relate to existing programs, we can encourage them to decide for themselves what actions to take (Gibson, 2007).

In keeping with a relational conception of the complex networks of urban places, planners can work to involve all community organizations, not only stakeholder interest groups but also organizations like churches, social action and volunteer groups. This means emphasizing connections across diverse networks with different interests and predispositions, as all of the examples from the USA demonstrate. It also means advocating new ground rules for dialogue and deliberation that create a space for divergent cognitive styles, listening, and mutual respect. Many efforts at citizen dialogue collapse in the reality of interactions that do not provide this space. Our experiences at

the Center for Collaborative Policy suggest that creating this space is critical to a collaborative process. Those promoting new deliberative initiatives will need to carefully assess whether the conditions for mutual listening and learning can be established in the specific context, and if so, the steps that need to be taken to nurture the social intelligence that emerges. In California we are seeing many contexts where such deliberative forms of civic engagement are taking hold, at different levels (local, regional, and state), for many issues (transportation, water, ecosystem restoration, and land use).

Planners can also experiment with different techniques for civic engagement. As indicated earlier, an expanding array of civic techniques is now emerging. An earlier section suggested only a few of the techniques that are available. Planners can become knowledgeable in these techniques and identify those that seem most appropriate for the context of their situation, as was done in the examples I offered. In keeping with the iterative and contingent nature of spatial planning and with Dewey's concept of social intelligence, planners have to constantly assess and adapt their approach to civic engagement based upon their experience. Finally, civic engagement, like other aspects of strategic spatial planning, requires adequate resources. Planners can advocate for the resources to sustain a viable strategy for civic engagement as central to forming and acting on effective urban spatial strategies. In the USA many public agencies and foundations are stepping forward to provide these resources. In the case of the California Regional Blueprint Planning program, funding for regional transportation planning was contingent on the use of a robust public engagement process.

Castells, reflecting on his finding quoted earlier about the effects of our culture on our collective creativity and directing our energy into self-destructive confrontation, is moved to say: "This state of affairs must not be. There is no eternal evil in human nature. There is nothing that cannot be changed by conscious, purposive social action, provided with information, and supported by legitimacy" (Castells, 1998, p. 360). Civic engagement developed in the perspective of a relational approach to strategic spatial planning offers an opportunity for such conscious and purposive action. Spatial planning informed by civic engagement and as a catalyst for the development of citizen capacity for social intelligence can be a powerful force to enhance the quality of urban spaces for a perilous world in constant flux. Like creating a garden in a wilderness, this requires creating the conditions in which such a concept of spatial planning can be nurtured and grow. It also requires patience and diligence to maintain those conditions as the wilderness constantly strives to reassert its dominance over the garden.

## Notes

1. For example: The Deliberative Democracy Consortium (www.deliberative-democracy.net) and the National Coalition for Dialogue and Deliberation (www.thataway.org) are active, holding conferences and workshops, supporting Internet based exchanges, and providing technical resources to organizations and the public.
2. See "Call to Scholars", http://www.csus.edu/ccp/CDN/Call_to_Scholars_-_May_2005.pdf
3. The phrase "civic engagement" is still subject to the ambiguity of being used in new and various ways. Here I am using the phrase to name a range of practices where citizens, both elites and non elites, engage in face-to-face dialogue, deliberation and action in the policy arena to help improve collective conditions. But many organizations in the USA also include the encouragement of volunteer community activities and service

learning as elements of civic engagement. See for example, the Case Foundation (www.casefoundation.org) and the American Psychological Association (www.apa.org/ed/slce/civicengagement.html)

4. For the Center's framework for public involvement see: www.csus.edu/ccp/publicinvolvement/. Information about the Lake Davis project is available at www.csus.edu/ccp/projects/
5. Putnam & Feldstein, 2003; Chrislip, 2002; Fung & Wright, 2003; Innes & Rongerude, 2005.
6. For some of the leading theorists see: Bohman, 1996; Gutmann & Thompson, 1996; Richardson, 2002; Young, 2000.
7. See for example the National Coalition for Dialogue and Deliberation (www.thataway.org).
8. See http://calblueprint.dot.ca.gov/
9. "California Regional Progress Report", http://calblueprint.dot.ca.gov/index_files/CA-regional-progress-report-2007.pdf. For another example, California's State Water Plan, see: Ambruster, 2008. Available at: www.csus.edu/ccp/publications/collab_vs_techno_abstract.htm
10. See www.pandemicflu.gov/plan/federal/citizenvoices.html
11. Visit the discussion archive online at: http://www.webdialogues.net/cs/panflu-engage-home/view/di/104?x-t=home
12. CDC, Citizen Voices on Pandemic Flu Choices. A Report of the Public Engagement Pilot Project on Pandemic Influenza, www.pandemicflu.gov/plan/federal/citizenvoices.html, p.1
13. See www.sacregionblueprint.org/sacregionblueprint/home.cfm

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# Enhancing Effective and Democratic Governance through Empowered Participation: Some Critical Reflections

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As Booher rightly notes, there is a growing interest in citizen involvement among politicians, public managers and urban planners. The renewed focus on participatory governance is spurred by the urgent need to remove policy deadlocks by enhancing collaborative innovation, to mobilize private resources and energies from civil society by experimenting with new forms of participation, and to reduce implementation resistance by creating a broad ownership to public governance in general and spatial planning in particular. The promulgation of the discourse of citizen involvement and the proliferation of institutional forms of empowered participation is not only a North American phenomenon. In Europe, citizen involvement is flying high on the political agenda of the EU (European Commission, 2001a, 2001b, 2002, 2005, 2006). In most of the EU member states, national, regional and local governments are struggling to find new ways of engaging citizens and stakeholders in public policy and governance (Smith, 2005), not least in the field of spatial planning (Healey, 1997) and the field of science in society (Banthien, Jaspers & Renner, 2003).

## Broadening the Research Agenda

The surge of citizen involvement in Europe is mirrored by a mounting interest in participatory governance among planning theorists, public administration researchers and political scientists (Healey, 2007; Hillier, 2002; Heinelt & Kübler, 2005; Grote & Gbikpi, 2002; Newman, 2005). Both European and national research institutions are funding a large number of research projects on participation and interactive governance. The huge

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interest in empowered participation calls for a broadening of the research agenda to include a series of new and pressing questions.

First of all, we should focus much more on the role of *institutional design* for augmenting the size, quality and impact of participation. Hence, instead of blaming the relatively competent and resourceful citizens in advanced liberal societies for not participating, or not participating enough, we should critically scrutinize the form and functioning of different institutional forms of participation (public hearings, on-line consultations, deliberative forums, governance networks, etc.) in order to determine their effects on empowered participation, joint ownership and democratic governance. In fact, Arnstein (1969) addressed the question of institutional design long ago, but her famous "ladder of participation" needs to be updated as its *telos* of "citizen control" is highly problematic. Complete popular self-governance is not a feasible option in the increasingly fragmented, complex and multi-layered European polity in which interdependency among a plurality of public and private actors constitute an indispensable condition for public governance.

Second, we need to adopt a multi-level perspective on citizen participation in order to be able to analyse the dynamic links among local, regional, national and transnational levels of participation. The different levels are not only linked by the public authorities that operate on the basis of the principle of subsidiarity and the delegation of political power upwards and downwards. The levels are also linked by individual and organized citizens who can choose to participate at any of these different levels. The citizens' choice of level of participation depends on their capacities and sense of political obligation, their assessment of where the binding political decisions are made, and their perception of the costs and benefits of engaging themselves in the available arenas of participation. The citizens' experiences with participation at one level are likely to affect their participation at other levels. For example, the failure to influence the binding decisions at a particular level through active participation might either discourage further participation altogether, or encourage participation at other levels.

Last but not least, we need to rethink the traditional notion of citizenship, which is based on the idea that membership of a territorially defined community turns individuals into passive bearers of a bundle of civic, political and social rights that make it possible for them to influence the input side of the political system. Such a notion of citizenship does not square well with the new reality of participation where people participate as stakeholders. Stakeholders are not bound to a particular territory and may try to influence decisions that are taken in territorial entities that do not recognize them as citizens. They participate, not because they want to exploit their legal right to participate, but because they are intensely affected by particular decisions and want to influence these decisions. This tends to make the *demos* of stakeholders more selective and in a certain sense also more exclusive and contingent. Those people who are not intensely affected will be excluded from participation. The same goes for those who are intensely affected, but lack the resources, capacities and motivation to engage in interactive forms of governance. Finally, the stakeholders aim to influence political decisions at the output side of the political system where public service is delivered and spatial plans are concretized and implemented. The debate on new forms of "active citizenship" has only just begun and there is a long way to go before we find ways of accommodating the tension between stakeholder participation and the traditional notion of citizenship.

**Beyond Deliberative Democracy?**

We agree very much with Booher's central assertion that citizen involvement in public governance carries a huge potential for democratic renewal from below. The new arenas for citizen participation are not only ameliorating the crisis of representative democracy by responding to citizens' rising expectations of political participation in terms of being recognized as competent and resourceful contributors to public governance and in terms of having a concrete and visible impact on public policy (see Warren, 2002). They are also transforming and reinvigorating our democracy by emphasizing democratic virtues such as political empowerment, joint problem solving, critical engagement with other opinions, decentring of political power and self-government.

In order to capture the essence of the new emerging forms of participatory democracy Booher puts forth a model of deliberative democracy. The model provides a promising point of departure for envisioning what democracy might mean in the context of collaborative governance. Governance networks, partnerships and other forms of institutionalized policy interaction may give rise to hard-nosed bargaining and the exercise of veto powers, but public deliberation is clearly an important aspect of participatory governance and a crucial way of ensuring legitimacy. Nevertheless, we believe that the standard version of the model of deliberative democracy (Gutmann & Thompson, 2004) offers both too little and too much when it comes to bringing out and evaluating the democratic potential of citizen participation. It offers too little as it only pays attention to one particular aspect of democracy. Deliberative democracy may well capture the "democratic way of life" that flows from the cooperative engagement of free and equal citizens in public debates based on trust and mutual recognition. However, democracy is both a "way of life" and an "institutional regime" ensuring popular control, representation and accountability. Democratic governance in and through negotiated interaction between public and private actors has little in common with the institutions of representative democracy, but that does not mean that it can be reduced to actual processes of deliberation realizing a set of ideal conditions. Deliberative norms are not enough to ensure that collaborative governance is democratic. They need to be supplemented with other democratic norms that require the formation of institutional mechanisms and the exercise of power in order to be fulfilled.

Our own attempt to provide a broad-ranging set of democratic norms that enable us to assess the democratic performance of collaborative governance, both as a way of life and as an institutional regime, has led to the development of a model for measuring the "democratic anchorage of governance networks" (Sørensen & Torfing, 2005). The basic argument underlying the democratic anchorage model is that the democratic performance of governance networks can be ensured by anchoring the interactive policy making in the network in a series of relevant political constituencies that lend democratic legitimacy to the network and in a democratic grammar of conduct that provides a normative yardstick for assessing the institutionalized negotiation among the network actors. As such, we shall claim that governance networks are democratically anchored to the extent that they:

1. Are controlled by democratically elected politicians,
2. Represent the membership basis of the participating groups and organisations,
3. Are accountable to a territorially defined citizenry,
4. Facilitate interaction in accordance with a commonly accepted democratic grammar of conduct consisting of democratic norms about inclusion, transparency, deliberation, etc.

The first anchorage point expresses the need to establish a close linkage between representative democracy and governance networks so as to ensure that the decisions of democratically elected politicians are not undermined by mandated or self-grown governance networks. However, as persistently argued by several theorists of democracy, the institutions of representative democracy are not capable of providing an undisputed source of democratic legitimacy, as the link between voters and elected politicians has been systematically weakened by a decline in political party membership, declining voter turn-out and the pervasive role of mass media in organizing political communication between the people and their representatives (Barber, 1984; Bobbio, 1987; Pitkin, 2004; Stoker, 2006). Therefore, we propose that this first anchorage point is supplemented by other anchorage points that derive democratic legitimacy from the membership basis of the groups and organizations that the network actors claim to represent, from the citizens bound by the decisions of the network, and from a grammar of conduct that regulates the way in which network actors interact with each other. In fact, the model builds on the assumption that neither of the four anchorage points alone can ensure the democratic quality of governance networks. The four anchorage points compensate each other's shortcomings and together they provide multiple sources of democratic legitimacy.

In a quite different sense, the model of deliberative democracy also offers too much. Hence, we believe that the standard version of deliberative democracy holds a far too consensual view of politics and democracy that not only tends to perceive power struggles and social antagonisms as a threat to the unfolding of a communicative rationality, but also risks undermining the democratic values that it aims to advance. As convincingly argued by Mouffe (2005) and Young (2000), attempts to eliminate power and antagonism from the realm of democratic politics tend to alienate those sections of the population who either believe that the centre-seeking political parties and technocratic policy processes fail to respond to pressing socio-economic problems, or are unable to express their wants and preferences in a civilized, reasoned and articulate manner. The failure of such groups to find a democratic outlet for their political demands and frustrated desires will tend to displace social antagonism from the political realm to a moral realm where conflicts are based on non-negotiable values and the manifestation of "authentic" identities (Mouffe, 2005). The result, which is already visible in Western Europe, is a strengthening of anti-democratic forces in terms of either right-wing populist parties or fundamentalist groups based on religion and ethnicity. So, despite the good intention to deepen democracy by expanding the space of democratic deliberation, the de-politicized vision of a "deliberative democracy" based on public reason should be abandoned in favour of an "agonistic democracy" that aims to accommodate the tension between pluralism and social antagonism. Agonistic democracy is a democracy that appreciates difference, but where the political opponents identify with democratic rules and norms that transform their perception of each other from enemies to adversaries. There is a huge difference between conceiving each other as enemies or as adversaries. An enemy is an opponent whom we do not respect, but seek to eliminate. By contrast, an adversary is an opponent, whose views and opinions we want to engage, problematize, and passionately contest, but whose right to voice and fight for their opinions we respect as a necessary condition for a plural democracy (Mouffe, 2000, 2005). It should be noted that Booher clearly recognizes the importance of agonistic tension. However, he merely conceives agonism as a means to avoid a homogenizing "group think" within participatory forms of governance, that tends to prevent innovation and effective governance. Agonism is not seen as an organizing principle for plural democracy. In the practical world of collaborative governance, an agonistic democracy will require that the public and private stakeholders recognize that consensus is merely an agreement obtained

through political negotiations riddled with power and conflict. Making room for power and conflicts in collaborative governance is crucial to ensure a vibrant democracy, but political opponents should respect each other's right to defend their interests and struggle for their cause—even when this struggle makes them appear unreasonable.

A final comment on deliberative democracy concerns Booher's implicit assertion that the notion of deliberation helps us to move beyond the traditional liberalist conception of politics as an aggregation of individual, pre-given and stable preferences with no common measure. The possibility of forging collective will based on a hegemonic vision of who we are and where we are going is rescued by the idea that social and political actors will tend to change their views and preferences when engaging in a reasoned debate. Although we concur with the assertion of the transformative capacity of deliberative democracy, we think that the underlying arguments need further qualification. First, engaging with other people in a public debate may trigger a revision of one's views and opinions, but we should be careful not to perceive the public space for deliberation as a pre-given and uncontested arena. Instead, we insist that it is a politically constructed space predicated on acts of exclusion (Bang & Esmark, 2007, pp. 9–49). Hence, public deliberation is premised on a certain agenda setting, a hegemonic storyline and a particular truth regime. Second, the implicit argument about "the forceless force of the better argument" tends to invoke the equally problematic assertion that it is rational arguments rather than dislocating events and rhetorical re-descriptions of the world from a new angle that make people change their views and opinions (Norval, 2007). Finally, Booher's apparent attempt to ground the transformative capacity of deliberative democracy in 'the human capacity for free and communicative enquiry' and 'intelligent judgement' tends to downplay the human capacity for imagination, passionate action and bodily desires. This is problematic since if our participatory governance arenas are modelled exclusively on the basis of human traits pinpointed by the enlightenment they will tend to be rather exclusive (Young, 2000).

**Effective and Democratic Network Governance Through Metagovernance**

Under certain conditions, governance networks and other forms of participatory governance may contribute to a democratization of social and political life. However, the primary reason for forming and relying on governance networks is seldom to enhance or renew democracy. Most often, the main goal of public authorities is to enhance the quality and effectiveness of spatial planning and public governance. Effective governance is not only enhanced through the mobilization of the knowledge and resources of local communities, the creation of democratic ownership and the production of more robust policy solutions, but also by facilitating innovation, securing a flexible adjustment of policies and civilizing conflicts (Sørensen & Torfing, 2007). Now, all these good things do not come automatically. In fact, governance networks, partnerships and other collaborative forms of governance are precarious, unstable and prone to failure (Jessop, 2002). As such, they must be metagoverned in order to function properly and realize their inherent potential for enhancing the effectiveness of public governance. If we define governance as the process through which a plurality of actors regulates a multiplicity of social, political and economic practices in accordance with collective goals, we can define metagovernance as "the governance of governance." As such, metagovernance is a reflexive and responsive process through which a range of legitimate and resourceful actors (typically elected politicians, public managers, or strong civil society organizations) aim to combine, facilitate, shape and direct particular forms of governance in accordance with specific rules, standards and goals without reverting to traditional forms

of hierarchical command (Jessop, 2002; Kooiman, 2003; Klijn & Koppenjan, 2004). Metagovernance is an important concept as it helps us to move beyond the frequently aired, but totally misguided, idea that we are currently witnessing a shift from government to governance. Traditional forms of government are not in decline and are not being hollowed out by new forms of governance. Rather, governments at different levels are called upon to metagovern interactive forms of governance through a combination of network design, network framing, network management and network participation.

Metagovernance can be used both to enhance effective governance and to bring out the democratic potentials of participatory governance (Sørensen & Torfing, 2009). However, while the New Public Management discourse and the personal interest in furthering their political and administrative careers easily convince elected politicians and public administrators that the enhancement of effective network governance through metagovernance is a crucial task, their commitment to realizing the democratic potentials of collaborative governance is less obvious. More often than not, the concern for democratic governance is crowded out by the concern for effective governance. The attempt to strike a balance between the normative concern for effective governance and the normative concern for democratic governance requires a deliberate attempt to combat the tendency to de-politicize collaborative governance by conceiving it as a managerial tool for practical problem solving. Democratic demands are brought to bear on political processes and arenas through which values, identities and policy solutions are included and excluded. Therefore, the reduction of collaborative governance to an administrative tool that helps public managers to get things done is highly problematic as it tends to exempt the new interactive forms of governance from democratic scrutiny.

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# One Humble Journey towards Planning for a More Sustainable Hong Kong: A Need to Institutionalise Civic Engagement

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## Awakening

The quality of urban spaces very often reflects a society's play of power. As argued by Ward (1995), "[h]ow cities are governed and organized physically tells us much about the nature of power relations in that society, and about the opportunities for citizen involvement in the management of the city" (p. 300). I learned this truth well before I was drawn to the discipline of urban planning some two decades ago. Following the fate of many closely knit squatter communities in rapidly urbanising Hong Kong in the late 1970s, our family moved into a public housing estate in an outlying island close to the metropolitan area. Our family settled comfortably in the new flat with a spectacular sea view. However, the oil and liquid petroleum (LPG) depots across the street were always a disturbing sight, prompting us to question why residential blocks were built next to these hazardous installations. I later joined a local community group to collect information, meet government officials, raise residents' awareness of the potential hazards and work out alternative scenarios to improve the situation. We succeeded in drawing society's attention to the problem and under mounting public pressure, the LPG depots were eventually removed in the 1990s, more than a decade after the issue was brought up. This lived experience inspired my interest in urban planning.

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**Manipulation**

After graduation from the urban planning programme at the University of Hong Kong, I worked as an administrative officer in the district office of a new town built on reclaimed land against a picturesque rural setting at the foot of a green mountain range. To cope with increasing municipal solid waste, the government planned at that time to build a landfill site northwest of the new town. This would lead to numerous waste collecting vehicles passing through the tranquil villages. In preparing an information paper to consult the villagers, I was advised by colleagues in another department not to disclose the considerable number of vehicles that would pass through the villages on a daily basis, unless, one remarked, I would like my office to be swarmed with protesting villagers. This story took place two decades ago when Hong Kong knew no democracy and information was monopolized by the executive-led government.[1]

**Enlightenment**

The successful application of a fellowship allowed me to study under Professor John Friedmann at UCLA in the late 1980s. While I was deeply inspired by the prospective magic of improving the environment through public dialogue as expounded in Friedmann's theories of transactive planning and empowerment, Jurgen Habermas' communicative action, John Forester's planning in the face of power and Leonie Sandercock's passionate quest for an inclusive multicultural society, the Hong Kong that I left behind had started a long social and economic restructuring process as China stepped up her open door policy. Years of rapid economic integration with China and frenetic growth had reinforced Hong Kong as an "economics first" society that paid scant attention to issues of environmental sustainability and social justice. So when I returned to Hong Kong in 1990, my intellectual values were severely challenged by a very much top-down elite-driven planning system. In a lunch meeting with alumni from the planning programme who were then working in the Planning Department, I, as an advocate for participatory planning, was bombarded by planners who lamented at how wasteful of resources citizen participation endeavours were, as even local district councillors did not have a clue about what urban planning was about.

**Give Them Voices!**

In the late 1990s, when we undertook a research study on urban regeneration in Hong Kong, the research team put forward various suggestions to the renewal authority in order to make the projects more socially sustainable. Not only were all our suggestions dismissed as unfeasible in the eyes of the responsible officers, we were repeatedly told that tenants were greedy while owners' concerns with urban renewal were merely matters of compensation. Hence, in 2000 my ex-colleague, Alison Cook, and I decided to launch a community planning workshop within the urban planning programme at the University of Hong Kong. We encouraged planning students to work with various stakeholders in local communities, to give them voices, to identify local social and environmental regeneration issues and develop sustainable development blueprints for their districts. The district where we started our first community planning workshop has undergone dramatic changes in the last decade as a result of urban renewal. One of the proactive local community groups fought a courageous battle in attempting to save their homes and local businesses by producing an alternative redevelopment proposal to the Town Planning

Board to conserve their unique streetscape. The proposal won them a silver medal from the Hong Kong Institute of Planners. In spite of this, their buildings were eventually bulldozed.

## Let Some be Socially Intelligent First!

Perhaps the decade-long economic depression triggered by the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis has awakened many money-orientated Hong Kongers. In any case, for reasons that require further research, Hong Kong in the past decade has seen the rise of different voices trying to tell stories other than justifying the making of a few dollars more: about how the government should stop reclaiming the beautiful central Harbour for grade A offices and return the harbourfront for the enjoyment of citizens; about green groups' successful conservation of a man-made wetland, a bird haven, by objecting to the building of a railway spur line on a viaduct, forcing the rail company to go for the more expensive tunnel option; about the "rescue" by active green groups and local residents of a brand new public housing estate by the waterfront from being trashed after it was sold to the private sector that originally contemplated redeveloping it into a luxurious seaside residence; about how the failed attempts to preserve the old Star Ferry Pier Clock Tower ("a cousin of London's Big Ben") and the Queen's Pier put a legacy of making heritage conservation on the agenda of the new Secretary for Development.[2]

These episodes or stories highlight the importance of civic engagement in a non-democratic setting such as the case of Hong Kong. Here, civic engagement is as yet a proactive act by the government to assemble knowledge, develop understanding and conceptualise the meaning of places (Healey, 2007). Very often, the government is forced to engage, as a result of criticism arising from social frustration and scepticism towards its planning intentions, forcing some stakeholders to voice out their concerns, which usually results in varying forms of civic engagement, sometimes initiated reluctantly by the government, sometimes organised by civil society itself (Ng & Chan, 2005). Unlike other democratic polities, it is difficult to guarantee a level playing field in civic engagement in Hong Kong's executive government-led political system. In a way, people know that the process could be frustrating, manipulative and exhausting. Nevertheless, this kind of "frustration-led engagement", while energy draining, can still produce a certain level of "social intelligence" (a form of empowerment) among the participants who can then inspire others to participate and counteract the biased institutional set-up shaped by the play of power in the city, proving that Dewey is right in asserting "social intelligence" as the best weapon to "restrain domination" (see David Booher's piece in this *Interface*). The saga of the continuing court battle of the planning of the Wanchai (Little Bay) waterfront is a case in point.

## Civic Engagement: A Double-Edged Sword?

Sitting east of the Central District, Wanchai has become the natural extension of the Central Business District (CBD). Wanchai is of strategic importance in completing a circular highway that would link up the whole territory. However, the original plan that involved reclamation in the district was taken to court by the Society for the Protection of the Harbour, a civil society organisation instrumental in backing up a legislative council member before 1997 to formulate, pass and enact the Protection of the Harbour Ordinance. To cut a long and complicated story short (Ng, 2006; Ng, 2008), the court ruled that the Wanchai plan breached the Protection of the Harbour Ordinance, which requires that all

public officers and public bodies shall have regard to the principle that "[t]he harbour is to be protected and preserved as a special public asset and a natural heritage of Hong Kong people, and for that purpose there shall be a presumption against reclamation in the harbour" (PHO, 1999, articles 1 and 2). As a result, the plan had to be returned to the drawing board. The court commanded that any proposed reclamation project would need to go through an undefined "overriding public needs test". To tackle the problem, the government set up a tripartite Harbourfront Enhancement Committee, inviting civil society organisations, private sector representatives and individuals as members to "advise the Government . . . on planning, land uses and developments along the existing and new harbour-front of the Victoria Harbour . . . in line with the principle of sustainable development."[3] Engineers who were responsible for managing the project started with the premise of offering the general public seven options for the alignment of the strategic highway and consulting them about what to do with the left-over spaces after the construction of the road network. This engendered heated debates among the non-official members, many of whom were active professionals and social advocates.

   With much persuasion, the government finally agreed to start with community engagement in envisioning the Harbourfront of Wanchai and its surrounding areas, rather than asking the general public to choose one out of the seven road alignments. The exercise aimed to be inclusive, dialogic and informative (everything was on the web and an engagement kit was produced to prepare members to participate in a meaningful way). In order to establish the need for the strategic highway, an expert panel on transport was set up and an inclusive community forum was held. Participants were furnished with critical statistics and projections. In the forum, activists and lay persons alike realised that the main "culprit" of the need for so many roads, besides the existing high density development in the CBD, is the planned development on the reclaimed land. While the exercise established the need for the strategic highway, "social intelligence" also emerged and the community of activists insisted on the importance of restraining growth in the Central district and the putting in place of a sustainable transport system. With the community's voice loud and clear, the recent consultation digest of the urban design study of the new Central Harbourfront saw the slashing of 86,235 m$^2$ (25%) of the gross floor area from its original outline zoning plan, an unusual concession by the executive-led government. However, as for the Wanchai project, the Society for the Protection of the Harbour which is also represented in the Harbourfront Enhancement Committee, ironically took the government to court again after three years of intensive civic engagement and won the case on a technical point.[4] In fact, another developer whose interest would be affected by the gazetted strategic road link has also filed to the High Court for a judicial review. The building of the strategic highway is on hold again, a heavy blow after three years of experiments of civic engagement and tripartite partnership in monitoring reclamation and harbourfront planning and development.

### Is a Positive Spin Possible?

Unlike Western Europe, spatial planning in Hong Kong is still very much about land uses and infrastructure. Unlike the USA as discussed by David Booher, "deliberative democracy" and "civic engagement" experiments are very often seen as rather tokenistic (Arnstein, 1969). And Hong Kong is paying an extremely high price for these outdated practices. By insisting on the government's views in planning and developing urban spaces, the city seems to be insensitive, if not blind, to the fact that "the materiality of everyday life is constituted through a very large number of spaces—discursive, emotional,

affiliational, physical, natural, organisational, technological and institutional' (Amin, 2002, p. 289). How can planners develop a full appreciation of these invisible spaces, links and threads and help formulate plans that explicitly address issues of growth, justice and sustainability? The secret is through genuinely engaging various stakeholders in the planning process! In situations such as the Wanchai saga above, the government was forced into experimenting with tripartite partnership in civic engagement. However, the problem in a non-democratic polity that emphasises the rule of law, administratively organised, voluntary civic engagement activities not backed up by legislation have little legitimacy. Hence, even with three years of intensive civic engagement, the Wanchai project was put on hold again as a result of lawsuits and one of them was launched by a member organisation in the Harbourfront Enhancement Committee that has undertaken and endorsed the very project itself! Such confrontation in the midst of engagement is disheartening. Short of a democratic political system to back up the engagement process, what can be done to guarantee its legitimacy and make the results of the deliberation binding on all involved, as David Booher asks?

As "glocalisation" impacts differently on local stakeholders, the most ideal case is for planners to develop a capacity to capture all the forces underlying socio-economic, political and environmental changes and identify how these forces affect the lives and livelihoods of the various people residing and working in a locality. However, as argued by Friend & Jessop (1969), uncertainties abound in identifying these interlocking phenomena, including uncertainties about information, values and related decision making areas. The question is how we can institutionalise a set of mechanisms to overcome these various types of uncertainties so that planners and other decision makers can work with the general lay public to comprehend the various forces and complex interlocking networks shaping our cities in a more intelligent manner? My brief review of my humble path of becoming a member of the planning profession suggests that a number of things can be done:

- Auditing and reviewing existing planning standards and guidelines by different stakeholders to identify problematic areas and change them for the better;
- In the process of generating a plan, work with different stakeholders to arrive at an agreed public engagement schedule and process to ensure inclusivity, representativeness and legitimacy of the discussions and conclusions arrived at. Consider ways to ensure accountability by all parties concerned after a plan is formulated; and
- In formulating a policy or undertaking a project, relevant experts should engage the community to conduct sustainability impact assessment exercises to identify short, medium and long-term social, economic and environmental impacts on affected stakeholders.

Perhaps the most challenging task is how to institutionalise mechanisms that can expose complex forces operating in society and the consequent interlocking, sometimes unjust, sometimes depressing, life stories and then utilise collective wisdom to maximise collective choices and ensure collective responsibilities in planning for a more sustainable future.

## Acknowledgement

## Notes

1. Hong Kong became a British colony in three stages: the island of Hong Kong was ceded to Britain in 1842 after the first Opium War; in 1860, after the defeat of the second Opium War, Kowloon Peninsular (south of Boundary Street) was also ceded to Britain in the first Convention of Peking; and in 1898, a further area was leased to Britain for 99 years. This last phase gave rise to the 1997 question. Since the People's Republic of China does not recognise the "unequal" treaties, through the Sino-British Joint Declaration, China reclaimed the sovereignty of Hong Kong in 1997 and the city has become a Special Administrative Region under the policy of "One Country, Two systems" that is, the city can remain as a capitalist enclave with a high degree of autonomy within the Socialist system for another 50 years.
2. Hong Kong used to be governed by politically neutral civil servants. However, since July 2002, the first Chief Executive of Hong Kong introduced what he called "Principal Officials Accountability System"; that is, policy secretaries would be political appointees by the Chief Executive with the endorsement of the Central People's Government in Beijing. When the first Chief Executive stepped down from his position in March 2007, the second Chief Executive formed a new "cabinet" and created a new Bureau for Development when he assumed power on 1 July 2008.
3. Harbourfront Enhancement Committee, Terms of Reference, http://www.harbourfront.org.hk/eng/content_page/terms_of_reference.html?s=1, accessed in May 2008.
4. To follow the vision of the general public, the government decided to build the highway in the form of a tunnel along the harbourfront to minimise visual impact. In order to do this, some "temporary reclamation" would be required. Basically the court established that the Protection of the Harbour Ordinance also covers temporary reclamation.

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# Civic Engagement and Urban Reform in Brazil

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Booher argues that the emergence of a "relational strategic spatial planning" is helping to change the dynamic of planning practice, from expert-orientated, bureaucratic policy making to a collaborative exercise, where stakeholders operate within flexible (often informal) networks as equals. By encouraging, and even demanding, civic engagement in the planning of cities, such a collaborative/deliberative spatial planning serves a pedagogical role, generating "social intelligence" that can flow into other parts of our public lives. In essence, Booher describes a self-reinforcing relationship where democratic values contribute to shifting planning from a physical to a relational "mental model" and this very shift strengthens the democratic nature of our society. The result of this symbiotic interaction is a planning practice that can more efficaciously produce quality urban spaces.

I fundamentally agree with Booher's argument that spatial planning institutions ought to be designed to foster civic engagement rather than simply creating procedural venues for citizens and experts to come together and exchange information. However, I found it slightly perturbing that there was little discussion of the role of spatial planning beyond its capacity to serve as a potential (and highly valuable) "school of democracy" (to borrow terminology from Fung & Wright, 2003). Under the same linear mental model of plan making through survey, analysis, plan formulation, and implementation, spatial planning still serves as a fundamental interlocutor between the market and the public good. At its best, planning allows the state, through decidedly imperfect democratic institutions, to regulate the market-driven production of urban space to meet long-term public needs. There is a real danger that, in overstating the capacity of civic engagement alone to produce quality urban spaces, we can fail to provide these institutions with policy instruments that allow citizens to produce such spaces in the face of powerful interests.

Booher's paper raised two important questions, which I will try to address using examples of participatory local governance and planning in Brazil. First, does the adoption of a more relational perspective in strategic spatial planning and the shift to a new mental model necessarily require a departure from the old mental model of plan making and other forms of local policy formulation in favor of more dynamic institutions that might (or might not) engender deeper civic engagement? Or is it possible to design these institutions to foster deeper forms of citizen participation and produce plans that are, at once, flexible enough to meet complex and changing public needs, while retaining strong policy instruments that give "teeth" to civic engagement?

Experiences in local governance and urban planning in Brazil since the 1980s show that it may not be necessary to fundamentally change the mental model of local policy making in order to achieve significant civic engagement in spatial planning. In fact, since 1988, when Brazil ratified its Federal Constitution effectively ending twenty-four years of military dictatorship, progressive local governments have engaged in deeply participatory

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processes to formulate traditional policy instruments. Many of these experiments were led by the leftist Workers' Party (*Partido dos Trabalhadores*), following their motto of an "inversion of priorities." Here, the shift in the mental model meant a strengthening of local control over urban policies coupled with the opening of new channels for popular participation in municipal governance.

I will give one example from existing literature, Porto Alegre's participatory budget, and discuss the "New Master Plans"[1] being formulated throughout Brazil since the approval of the Statute of the City in 2001. My discussion of the Master Plans will focus on the municipalities of Mesquita and Nova Friburgo, where I conducted field research in 2006 for my master thesis.

Porto Alegre's participatory budgeting process has been widely analyzed elsewhere (Abers, 2000; Santos, 1998; Baiocchi, 2003), but it is worth discussing as a paradigmatic case of civic engagement through an established and traditional local governance process: municipal budgeting. Porto Alegre's participatory budget is a year-round process in which citizens establish priorities for local capital improvements. Through a series of plenary meetings, and through elected delegates and councillors, ordinary citizens and civil society groups gain intimate knowledge about the workings of Porto Alegre's budget, and get to establish investment priorities in issues ranging from basic sanitation infrastructure to cultural activities.

The process has no legal/institutional standing; it is regulated by its internal bylaws and maintained through the widespread legitimacy it has acquired among citizens over the years. Santos (1998) highlights three major principles that guide the participatory budgeting process: 1) all citizens are allowed to participate and organized groups are given no special status; 2) it works through a complementary balance between direct citizen participation and a level of delegation and representation that allows for more effective deliberation; and 3) the allocation of resources relies on a combination of "general criteria" derived from citizens' prioritization of investments and "technical criteria" whereby the municipal government screens project demands for economic and practical feasibility. Since its inception in 1989, the City's formerly corrupt and clientelistic budgeting process has actively involved thousands of citizens and has vastly improved the municipal government's ability to meet the needs of its poor. Remarkably, the process is governed by a Participatory Budget Council (COP), with rotating civil society membership, which has deliberative powers over the by-laws, the technical and general criteria, and the overall governance of the process.

Other important examples of civic engagement in local governance in Brazil are the new municipal Master Plans developed since the passage of the Statute of the City in 2001. The Statute made the Master Plan mandatory for cities with more than 20,000 residents, and has become the central piece of municipal legislation in cities throughout Brazil. Brazil's 1988 Constitution and the Statute of the City establish that urban property ought to fulfil a "social function" to be defined in the Master Plan. According to the Statute, the local Executive and Legislative powers must guarantee "the participation of the population and associations representing all segments of society" (Article 40, Paragraph 4). Civil society groups may bring a legal action against a Mayor or City Council that fails to complete a Master Plan under an established set of guidelines (including opening the process to public participation).

The notion that urban real estate and the city itself ought to fulfil a social function radically reframed the idea of spatial planning from a purely technical, expert-based exercise into an open, democratic, and explicitly political process. Rather than avoiding political conflict through a technical discourse, the Master Plan should make conflicts and contradictions explicit. In this sense, the new Master Plans come close to Booher's "mental model with its

focus on flows, multiple sources of information, and myriad of complex relational webs of distributed networks … as well as the opportunity to tap into the knowledge and mobilization potential of citizens." However, this reframing of planning practice required a reframing of Brazilian society itself. As Caldeira & Holston argue, "The new plans consider that citizens lack resources, are poor, and have their rights disrespected, but not that they are ignorant, illiterate, backward, incompetent, incapable of making good decisions" (Caldeira & Holston 2006, p. 407). The Master Plan should guarantee citizens' "right to the city" which Fernandes (1997) further interprets as "the right to urban planning." The theoretical foundation for this new model was developed by a movement of planners, academics, and activists called the National Movement for Urban Reform.

In addition to guaranteeing citizens the right to participate in the spatial planning of their communities, the City Statute codified several redistributive policies to make the Master Plan an effective tool for social change. Most of these policies had already been put in practice by popular municipal administrations, particularly those headed by the Workers' Party during the 1980s and 1990s, but often encountered opposition from developers, real estate interests, and conservative municipal legislatures. These policies included the ability to increase taxes on vacant or underutilized property located in central areas, tools for regularizing informal housing settlements, and the ability for municipalities to "sell" development rights above certain densities to pay for public improvements in underserved areas. Furthermore, it granted adverse possession rights to squatters on private land, or leasehold rights in public land, enabling municipal administrations to give land titles to millions of urban residents living in irregular tenure conditions. Lastly, it created mechanisms by which cities could establish "zones of special social interest" to enact specific social goals, such as regularization of informal settlements, environmental protection, economic development, and so on. These instruments generally play one of three broad functions: 1) capturing value increases in private property that result from public investments, which can be redistributed through investments in poorer areas; 2) curbing speculative land practices in central locations through punitive measures; and 3) giving municipal administration flexible, yet powerful, planning tools to enable land tenure regularization schemes.

In 2006 I conducted research in two municipalities in the State of Rio de Janeiro, Mesquita and Nova Friburgo during the process of formulation of their Master Plans. In both instances the processes were framed as Participatory Master Plans. Although the processes differed in some ways, they followed the same general four-step model. First, each municipality launched their planning efforts through a "Conference of the City" where the Mayor educated residents, local NGOs, and neighborhood associations about the new requirements and policy tools created by the Statute of the City. Both cities created Oversight Commissions of citizens and municipal administrators to serve as deliberative bodies and act as a bridge between civil society and the state. The second step was to elaborate two parallel "readings of the municipality." One reading should be performed by planners hired as consultants, featuring analysis of demographics, geography, infrastructure necessities, and the like. The second reading involved the community's own assessment of conflicts, potentialities, and other issues that should be addressed by the Master Plan. Third, based on the parallel readings, the planning consultants formulated the plans in consultation with the Oversight Commission. Lastly, the plans were put up for a vote in each City Council and were sanctioned by the Mayors.

The two processes differed in some important ways. Mesquita, a city in the periphery of the Rio de Janeiro metropolitan area, had well-organized and active civil society with neighborhood associations, youth empowerment hip-hop movements, women's rights organizations, and so on. There, these groups took advantage of these new channels for

participation and the Oversight Commission played a fundamental role in drafting the Master Plan. Nova Friburgo, on the other hand, did not have such a strong presence of civil society groups. It did, however, have more entrenched local elites that tried to colonize the process, as well as a very effective (and progressive) municipal administration. In Nova Friburgo, the Oversight Commission did not play an important role in the process, but the administration was able to galvanize interest among particular groups to counter often fierce opposition from local developers, real estate and tourism interests to formulate a plan that included several urban reform policies.

In my Master's thesis (Peterson, 2006) I argue that the civic engagement seen in the formulation of these new Master Plans is not as robust as that of a process such as Porto Alegre's participatory budget. However, they provide a powerful combination of redistributive planning tools and new channels for public participation, involving previously excluded groups as actors in a "politicized" planning. It is clear, however, that different groups appropriate these new channels for civic engagement for different purposes. For left-wing municipal administrations and urban reform planners, these processes built legitimacy for redistributive policy instruments that may not have otherwise been approved by municipal legislatures. However, well-organized civil society groups in Mesquita and Nova Friburgo also appropriated participatory channels, sometimes as elite groups colonizing or undermining the process, others as previously excluded actors laying a claim to their "right to urban planning."

The dialogue in this interface forces us to think about the role of planners within new theoretical paradigms that value what Holston (1995, p. 48) describes as "the constitutive role of conflict and ambiguity in shaping the multiplicity of contemporary urban life." The mental model where planners serve as experts guiding an uneducated public through the maze of public action, as Booher correctly points out, has not adequately been able to capture the inevitable conflict and ambiguity that makes urban spaces so complex and vital. As Booher also notes, this model is antithetical to democratic values. Under the mental model described by Booher, a new role for planners is to serve as intermediaries in dialogues between groups, ensuring that policies and processes capture the complexities of urban society in order to generate quality urban spaces. However, while cities and urban spaces are undoubtedly complex, they are also unequal, exclusionary, and unjust, perhaps in ways that dialogue and collaboration alone may not adequately address. The two cases presented above of urban planning and local governance innovations from Brazil show that planners can still be experts while serving as moderators, providing policy tools that enable civic engagement to make urban spaces more just.

### Note

1. The Master Plan (*Plano Diretor*) in Brazil is closer in essence and scope to the General Plan of cities in California, or General Municipal Plans in the Italian planning system than to "master planned communities" throughout the United States and elsewhere.

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# Setting the Scene

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The quality of places (urban and regional) and sustainability, both understood in a broad sense, are core business for spatial planners. David Booher argues that democratic values should be relevant to spatial planning to enhance the quality of places. I go along his line but argue that we need transformative practices to cope with the continuing and unabated pace of change driven by the (structural) developments and challenges in our cities and regions. Transformative practices focus on the structural problems in society. They construct images/visions of a preferred outcome and how to implement them (see Friedmann, 1987). The construction of alternative futures, which requires creativity and original synthesis, lies at the very heart of transformative practices (Ozbekhan, 1969, p. 87).

   The spectrum for transformative practices cannot be so open that anything is possible, as if we could achieve anything we wanted to achieve (see Ozbekhan, 1969; Berger, 1964; Ogilvy, 2002). Conditions and constraints on what is and what is not possible are placed by the past and the present. These conditions and constraints have to be questioned and challenged in the process, given the specific context of place and time. This defines the boundaries of a fairly large space between openness and fixity. Thus transformative practices become the activity whereby (within certain boundaries) that which can be willed is imposed on that which is, and it is imposed[1] for the purpose of changing what is into what is willed.

   For me, this draws the contours of a new modernity for spatial planning, based on the capacity of human beings—in response to problems, challenges and potentials—to create, improve, and reshape their places with the aid of knowledge (scientific as well as local knowledge), innovation and transformative practices that work with history and overcome history. Transformative change rarely occurs in instant revolutions. Changes evolve in many small ways, building a ground of understanding and experiences which, over time, eventually come together in what history may then describe as "a transformative moment" (Healey, 2005, p. 158; Healey, 2006, p. 541). In this way change is the outcome of a great number of acts (individual, group, institutional) of re-perception and behavior

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change at every level. Such a creative challenge should unite stakeholders behind the creative effort, and evince empathy for the difficulties of the creative process. In our response to this creative challenge, we should balance freedom and discipline. Consequently, we have to construct a systematic approach that provides a critical interpretation of the challenges, problems and opportunities and encourages creative thinking about possible answers and how to get there. So, in many places in Europe a shift can be witnessed from a sole emphasis on a more regulative, bureaucratic approach to planning work, towards a more strategic, implementation- and development-led approach. But, it is also clear that not everyone (individual planners, groups, institutions, citizens) wants to give up power associated with the status quo.

## Strategic Planning and Civic Engagement

Just as there are many different types of planning, generally speaking, there are also many different types of strategic planning. For me, strategic spatial planning is a transformative and integrative, (preferably) public sector led socio-spatial process through which visions, coherent actions and means for implementation are produced that shape and frame what places are and what they might become (Albrechts, 2001, 2004, 2006). It is a practice which focuses on imagining futures. Strategic spatial planning processes with an appreciation of "relational complexity" demand a capacity to "hear", "see", "feel" and "read" the multiple dynamics of a place in a way that can identify just those key issues that require collective attention through a focus on place qualities (see Healey, 2005, 2006). The focus on the spatial relations of territories allows for a more effective way of integrating different agendas (economic, environmental, cultural, social and policy agendas) as these affect places. This focus also carries a potential for a "rescaling" of issue agendas down from the national or state level and up from the municipal and neighborhood level, the kind of multi-level governance which Torfing and Sorensen in their piece advocate. The search for new scales of policy articulation and new policy concepts is also linked to attempts to widen the range of actors involved in policy processes, with new alliances, actor partnerships and consultative processes (Albrechts et al., 2003).

What is the implication of such a focus for the practice of civic engagement? For me, the purpose of civic engagement is to promote transformative structural change in order to improve individual and collective potential, to respond to problems, needs, opportunities and challenges, and to take, therefore, an active part in the processes of decision making, plan making and implementation. From my own experience, I have learned how revealing it can be for citizens to learn that they are not bound by their past to live out a future that is predetermined and therefore predictable. I have also learned how liberated citizens can feel when they realize that the future of their places need not be merely temporal extensions of the here and now (more of the same).

This calls for processes (visioning, imagining) that help people to think more creatively and broadly about the future and its driving forces and to realize that their own actions may move a place towards a particular kind of future. We must be aware of the impact on the social and psychological milieu of a consumer society that teaches citizens how to think about themselves and their goals. Citizens' tastes, priorities and value systems are, to a large degree, manipulated by the very markets that are supposed to serve them (Hamilton, 2004, p. 66). Within (and constrained by) this established framework of the market society, places and communities face the challenge to construct (or reject) and implement the discourses of cultural diversity, sustainability and place quality and, subsequently, to creatively transform their own functioning and practice. Imagination can

be used to escape mentally from established patterns of thinking, and to keep us exploring and connecting our thoughts. Imagination challenges "mental models"—of planners, governors and citizens—and lifts the "blinkers" for designing and formulating structurally new concepts and discourses (see Schwartz, 1991).

My clear choice for a broad involvement of all relevant actors is based on my trust in the creativity from below, the wisdom of crowds (Surowiecki, 2005). It is an acknowledgement of the fact that there are multiple publics. I have learned that the involvement of all relevant actors helps to expand the set of possible solutions and to conceptualize problems in novel ways, and it has also helped me to cope with the danger of manipulation and one-sidedness (for instance an elitist concept of spatial quality or sustainability) (see also Godet, 2001; Surowiecki, 2005). Imagination processes help citizens to think about how places will operate under a variety of future possibilities and enable the civil society to detect and explore all or as many as possible alternative futures so as to clarify present actions and subsequent consequences. They identify contingent decisions by exploring what places might do if certain circumstances were to arise, and they reflect on a series of "what if" stories. For Schwartz (1991, p. 192) this is "rehearsing the future." Moreover, imagination processes help citizens to understand the dynamics at work shaping the future and are an attempt to identify the primary driving forces (social, economic, technological, cultural, political) at work in the present. Some of the driving forces are fixed in the sense that they are completely outside our control and will play out in any narrative about the future. Therefore the "possible futures" must be placed within a specific context (economic, social, cultural, political, and power), place, time and scale regarding specific issues that are of interest and within a particular combination of actors. The context provides the setting for the process but also takes form and undergoes changes in the process. Imagination processes allow participants to step away from entrenched positions and identify positive futures that they can work at creating. They allow for a high degree of ownership of the final product and illustrate that citizens do have a responsibility for the(ir) future. For me, as a planner, the real test is not whether I fully achieve the "conceived" future, but rather whether anyone changes his or her behavior because he or she starts to see the future differently (see also Schwartz, 1991).

Imagination processes must be transparent and guarantee the right of citizens to be heard and to have a creative input in matters affecting their interests and concerns at different scale levels, and they must cope with unequal power structures between social groups and classes (see also Friedman & Douglas, 1998). The challenge is to expand practical, open-minded deliberations rather than restricting them, to encourage diverse citizens' voices rather than stifling them, and to direct resources to basic needs rather than to narrow private gain. This type of approach uses civic engagement to open up real political opportunities, learning from action not only about what works but also about what matters (see Forester, 1989).

## What are the Consequences for the Planners and the Planning?

In planning systems, a climate conducive to new ideas and to trust-building must be created. Planners need to think beyond customary job descriptions, beyond technical expertise and traditional government structures, to address problems in new ways, and to accept that the past is no blueprint for how to go forward. Planners need to trust the creativity of residents. I acknowledge that planning, as I am promoting it, requires a kind

of approach and attitude which is more participative, more deliberative and more agonistic. A sustained, positive and creative involvement of civil society requires an adequate, fair and timely response to problems and challenges being faced by the community.

Since the planning actions themselves are clear proof that such planning is not only instrumental, the implicit responsibility of planners can no longer simply be to "be efficient" or to function smoothly as neutral means of obtaining given and presumably well-defined ends. Planners must be more than navigators keeping their ship on course. They are necessarily involved with and instrumental in substantiating, formulating and implementing that course (see also Forester, 1989). In this way they take a stand on substantive issues.

Spatial quality and sustainable development, broadly understood, are key substantive issues which spatial planning must attend to. Spatial planners capitalize on the "locus" using the characteristics of space and place, the natural as well as the built environment, the socio-spatial structure, the multiple dynamics of a place, the flows and the (spatial and social) tissue. In this sense, space acquires its own relative autonomy. It serves as a medium and as an integration frame for human activities. Planners have to fight off what I call the poverty of the substantive part of strategies and plans. Indeed, plans and strategies too often fail to grasp the identity and specificity of places. There is too much repetition of the same discourses and concepts in current planning practice. Civic engagement helps us to understand the full complexity of places and it helps us to broaden the scope of the answers. Although I deeply share the values of the empowerment of citizens, the democratization of processes, and the fight against exclusion, I refuse to reduce space and place to the status of a mere means for achieving these values. A community planner/social planner will focus on citizen participation for the sake of participation. As a spatial planner, my purpose is different. I do not get involved in participation and empowerment processes for their own sake, but because and insofar as these processes contribute to spatial quality, to sustainable development, and to the implementation of fair spatial strategies. I also argue that in order to actively contribute to enhancing spatial quality and sustainable development, planners must use all the power available to them and their imagination. This seems in line with Booher's argument that democratic values should be relevant to spatial planning in order to enhance and to contribute to the quality of urban spaces.

This brings me back to the transformative agenda for a new spatial planning approach for the twenty-first century. The underlying idea in this agenda, echoing Booher's essay, is a strong belief in the capability of human beings to construct their places (within limits). This includes organizing the capacity (political, intellectual, socio-cultural and technical) to construct fair and challenging images, good governance structures, and the legitimacy to adequately deal with the challenges, problems and potentials their places are facing. This includes a clear and persistent call upon the civil society for a renewed civic engagement.

## Note

1.  Although "imposed" may refer to a top-down jargon, I use the term very deliberately. As soon as directions based on an emancipatory practice are agreed upon, they must be imposed for action.

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