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**Publication Date**

2009-05-01

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WP 2009-18

# Transformative Planning for Community Development

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May 2009



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## **Introduction**

If we believe in participatory democracy, it's not enough to work in disadvantaged communities, it's important *how* we work in communities. We have to evaluate professional roles in terms of how our community practice dampens or lifts all the voices.

In this paper, I'll briefly outline a definition of community development that makes sense to me, then I'll take a quick look at advocacy planning, the first approach which promoted participation by the people most affected by the results of a planning process. An example from Nicaragua will highlight the difference between different approaches to participation. I'll then describe an outgrowth of advocacy planning, what I call transformative community planning. I'll close with vignettes from four examples of transformative planning, three in Boston and one in Mexico.

## **Community development**

I think we would all agree--community development is the focus of community planning practice. But, what constitutes community development? In my view, genuine community development combines material development with the development of people, increasing a community's capacity for taking control of its own development—building within the community critical thinking and planning abilities so that development projects and planning processes can be replicated by community members in the future. A good planning project should leave a community not just with more immediate “products”—e.g., more housing—but also with an increased capacity to meet future needs. In other words, a quality and sustainable product depends on a quality and sustainable process.

Unfortunately, it's rare when public policy and planning practice reflect this understanding of community development. Perhaps that's why we have so little of it.

Too often success is measured solely by the numbers—the number of houses built, clients served, jobs created, etc. These are important outcomes, but outcomes insufficient for community development. And, if we measure success by the numbers alone, no matter how laudable our long-range goals, we're going to frame our planning practice and lend our support to policies and strategies that we think are going to be successful in terms of those numbers. If we don't include less measurable goals (or at least currently less measured goals) in our criteria for success—goals that have to do with empowerment—we're likely to meet our goals while our communities are increasingly underdeveloped.

On the other hand, if community development as I've defined it is our goal, in addition to looking at concrete “products”, we will be interested in evaluating how successful a planning process has been in “lifting all the voices”, in bringing previously marginalized voices into the discussion, in organizing the unorganized to participate. In the planning process, how many people moved from being objects of planning to being subjects? How successful are we as planners in framing a process that is comfortable and encourages the participation of people who are not used to speaking in public, not facile at articulating their concerns and visions? How culturally sensitive are we to different forms of expression and self-organization? Are we able to

successfully confront dynamics of racism, classism, sexism, and other exclusionary patterns of behavior that block full participation by various groups? What practical accommodations do we make to reduce the barriers to participation for groups that have been left out? Overall, how successful are we at nurturing well-informed, genuinely democratic politics and discourse, dialogue about options and about the "values" and "interests" by which those options for policy and design may be evaluated.

Success measured in this way requires a transformative approach to community planning, an approach that has evolved from the advocacy planning that was connected to the social movements of the 60s and 70s.

### **Advocacy Planning**

In those years, advocacy planning began to successfully challenge the notion of planning as a "neutral science", as apolitical. Today, in the US, advocacy planning has been institutionalized in some limited spaces—it is a recognized paradigm taught in planning schools and it's the modus operandi of many community-based organizations.

Advocacy planning can also take credit for institutionalizing community participation in planning, particularly in the public sphere. Of course, this is a two-edged sword: On the one hand, mandated forums for participation can offer a foothold for struggle. On the other hand, participation today is frequently structured into a win-win framework—if we just hear from all the stakeholders, we can figure out what's best for all. By ignoring power disparities, participation becomes a smokescreen behind which real decisions are made by those who always made the decisions.

The terrain of struggle has changed greatly since the heyday of advocacy planning. Compared to the 60s and 70s, redevelopment (like everything else) is much more privatized. This means that—at least compared to things like urban renewal plans—redevelopment is much more piecemeal and the government role is secondary—supporting private developers rather than playing the organizing and coordinating role. The targets of advocacy planning are not as obvious. Development struggles are dispersed and there are fewer opportunities for broad discussions on development goals and strategies and less political pressure points.

Advocacy planning is an important thread of today's transformative community planning, but, there were significant shortfalls in the vision. Debates among progressive planners today about what our practice should be are connected to these shortfalls. Unconnected to social movements and mostly practiced in the CBO world, advocacy planning today is often reduced to a technocratic practice that differs from traditional planning practice only in terms of who the client is. Dependent on funding sources which count success by the number of products produced, the practice of advocacy planning is primarily representative, rather than participatory.

A lot of progressive planning is stuck at this place. You can be progressive in many ways—hold progressive goals—and still fall into the trap of "thinking you know better" and that it'll just be faster and more effective if you do it *for* people rather than *with* them.

## Pearl Lagoon, Nicaragua

In order to make more concrete what it means to be speaking for people, rather than lifting all the voices, I'm going to give an example from Nicaragua after the Sandinistas had been in power for almost 10 years. In some ways, this example represents the ultimate extension of advocacy planning—a situation in which the government, the culmination of a revolutionary struggle, assumed the role of advocating for all the poor and working class people in the country. And it illustrates the shortcomings of advocacy planning, even when the full resources of the government are invested in it.

In 1989, I was asked to coordinate a planning project in Pearl Lagoon on the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua—an area of the country that was beginning to recover from a civil war and a major hurricane. The Nicaraguan agency in charge of planning sent me their methodology which they were using in all regions of the country—and they assumed we would also use it.

It was very “scientific”—full of quantitative formulae for physical solutions to social needs. A reasonable number of sectors were included in the methodology—e.g., housing, economic base, education, health, infrastructure, etc. In fact, the resulting study would have been comprehensive in terms of the *range* of topics. However, in each area, the planner was only asked to plug numbers (mostly numbers of people) into a formula in order to determine the programmatic level at which, for example, a health center should operate. This level then translated into square feet of building.

It was assumed that every *municipio*<sup>1</sup> would be organized similarly—each one would have a capital town in which services would be centralized. In this way, equality would be assured throughout the country. The methodology did suggest having meetings in each town of the *municipio*, but the purpose of these meetings appeared to be only to *inform* the people of what was being planned, rather than to get their input.

These formulae were to be applied everywhere in the country and with all peoples, even on the Atlantic Coast where an autonomy process was underway, a process which recognized the right to self-determination of the non-Mestizo, non Spanish-speaking ethnic groups that resided there.

Our team rejected using the Nicaraguan methodology and instead facilitated a participatory needs and resources assessment and cooperative planning process with nine Pearl Lagoon villages with three different and recently warring ethnic groups. The development plan that emerged was very different from that prescribed by the standard methodology.

Let me give a couple of examples:

First, it was clear that concentrating all services in the capital town would exacerbate the already deep ethnic rivalries that had played a part in the Contra war; this concentration also wouldn't serve the area well given difficulties of transportation. Additionally, concentration didn't take

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<sup>1</sup> A *municipio* is like a county in the U.S.

advantage of the differential of skills from one village to another. Reflecting these factors, folks preferred a dispersal of services—e.g., in the plan, they opted for trained paramedics in each village, rather than a fully equipped health center in the capital town—and the plan suggested that different economic activities be developed in different villages—e.g., boat building be concentrated in La Fe, a village known for its skill in this area, a pineapple juicing facility be sited in Marshall Point, a village known for its pineapple culture, and wood crafts be built up in Pearl Lagoon, a village known for carving.

Second, emphasis on products over process had produced a situation of inappropriate and overlapping foreign aid projects. For example, shortly after the hurricane, a US NGO sent a bunch of outboard motors to Pearl Lagoon—an area with a severe shortage of fuel, where the more fuel-conservative inboard diesel engines were the norm for the fishing boats that had been destroyed in the hurricane. Within a month all the engines were trashed by young men hot-rodding around the lagoon and precious fuel was wasted.

Top-down planning also produced a punitive attitude toward communities that didn't use aid in the way it was intended. For example, long before we arrived on the Atlantic Coast, we heard a negative characterization of Raitipura, one of the villages with which we were to work, as being selfish, lazy, and individualistic. We were told that this village was undeserving of further material assistance because it had misused such assistance in the past. Gradually, the story came out: Raitipura is a Miskito village that had generally sided with the Contras in the war; many young men from there had gone to fight with the Contras and the village was abandoned during the war. Even before the war, Raitipura had been one of the economically most disadvantaged of the lagoon villages and the land itself was eroding away into the lagoon. People were just beginning to resettle in Raitipura after the war when Hurricane Joan destroyed everything, even seeds for planting. The Sandinista government, wanting to honor the spirit of the pacification of the Atlantic Coast and of the new Autonomy Law, sent the first material aid they received in the wake of the hurricane to Raitipura—zinc for roofs. Raitipurans immediately loaded the zinc into their dugout canoes and paddled or sailed down to Bluefields—a 6 to 10 hour trip—and sold the zinc. The government was outraged! After all, they were supposed to use the zinc to begin rebuilding the village. What the Raitipurans did made perfect sense to me. Here was a people without material possessions, whose sons had more than likely come back from the war, if they came back at all, with drug habits, a people who had lived separated and largely under the influence of a very individualistic ideology for five years, who had just begun to rebuild their village and lives and had suddenly lost everything. By selling the zinc, at least they could buy a bit of food to go on with, maybe even some seeds and lumber for lobster pots. It was utopian to think that people in such circumstances and with that recent history could suddenly begin to work cooperatively with an eye to the benefit of the whole village. Clearly, community development in this case had to start with working with the people to develop trust in each other and in their ability to plan for the future. This sort of capacity-building, however, had no place in the planning methodology being employed. Of course, basic subsistence also had to be provided in this emergency situation. However, the zinc saga had so negatively influenced the thinking of the government that when we arrived seven months after the hurricane, no more material aid had been provided to Raitipura and local government officials had not even visited the village.

As we came to know all nine villages, the overall consensus that emerged from our planning process was that, other than desperately needed subsistence aid, what was most needed was capacity building and leadership development. Teachers wanted in-class training in how to teach in the new bilingual program; farmers wanted help in figuring out more cooperative ways of working with one another that felt fair to everyone; women wanted to have a stronger voice in public affairs; and everyone felt the need for more productive communication across ethnic barriers. But these concerns were totally outside of the standard Nicaraguan approach to planning, which was based on what I would characterize, in a concept I learned from Mel King, as a “dependency model” rather than an “interdependency model.”

I refer to this example from Nicaragua to underline that having progressive goals, being serious about advocating for the interests of historically underserved people, is different than empowering people to articulate their own goals, and to advocate for their own interests in a planning process.

### **Transformative community planning**

Now, I’d like to look more carefully at the difference between what for the most part advocacy planning separated from a social movement has become and transformative planning. In some ways I will be exaggerating the differences in order to make my points clear. There is a spectrum of progressive planning practice—from what I would call a redistributive approach to a transformative approach and I’ll be characterizing the extreme ends of this spectrum.

Although advocacy planners are concerned with economic justice, with redistributing wealth, they don’t seek, in the main part, to support organizing focused on the redistribution of *power* and don’t aim to cede control over planning decisions to oppressed people. The model assumes that the repository of knowledge is in the planners. It’s “we’ll figure out what’s best to do and do it for you,” not, “we’ll help you do it.” On the other hand, transformative planners understand that successful redistribution of resources generally *follows* the redistribution of *control* of those resources.

Furthermore, although advocacy planners frequently have a critical analysis of the structural nature of social and urban problems, they will support organizing that focuses on issues that accept people’s existing ideology rather than trying to take up hard (and potentially divisive) questions such as racism. In part this is because this kind of issue translates more readily into products that are recognizable as legitimate results of a planning process and they concentrate on products over process and on efficiency in reaching product-oriented goals over mobilization and empowerment.

Both advocacy and transformative planners would acknowledge that there is a political nature to all we do, that all of our work has implications for the distribution of power in society and that there is no such thing as a value-free social science. However, while the advocacy approach reserves this awareness to the planner, transformative planning requires the raising of political consciousness as a necessary corollary to any successful community development process.



A successful transformative planner must actively listen and respect what people know; help people acknowledge what they already know; and help them back up this “common sense” and put it in a form that communicates convincingly to others. At the same time, it means challenging people on exclusionary, narrow-minded thinking; having enough respect for people to challenge them. In working in a racially divided city such as Boston, this means not basing our work on the superficial pasting together of short-lived, issue-specific coalitions, but rather focusing our work on transforming relations between groups.

Successful transformative community planning also means planners who are willing to acknowledge that into each planning situation we bring with us our own attitudes and biases—biases that flow from our own class background and location, our own gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and so forth. And, along with acknowledging the baggage we bring with us, we must recognize that our preferences for certain planning and development outcomes are typically based, at least in part, on these biases and they’re not always about being “right”—our preferences are just that, they’re our preferences.

Successful transformative community planning means wielding our planning tools in a way that frames real alternatives; that elaborates the tradeoffs in making one or another choice—that puts real control in the hands of people most affected. It does not mean making everybody a professional planner—a possessor of the particular set of skills that planners have developed through professional education and practice. It does mean using our skills so that people can make informed decisions for themselves. And, it means including in the trade-offs the consequences of different decisions in terms of overarching community values.

So who’s doing transformative community planning? There are lots of examples, but I’ll quickly mention three in Boston and one in Mexico with which I’m familiar.

### **Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative**

My first example is the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative—DSNI. Begun in mid-80s, DSNI took on the task of engaging residents of a particularly devastated section of Boston in creating a vibrant urban village.

In the late 70s, early 80s, we referred to this area of Boston as the Bermuda Triangle—an area in which half the housing disappeared through arson and abandonment in less than 10 years; an area where the number of businesses on the two main business streets in the area reduced from 339 in 1950 to 73 in 1980. The area had become a dumping ground—I once even saw a whole side of beef in a trash-strewn lot. The one playground in the area had been taken over by drug dealers. Tensions between the African American, Latino, Cape Verdean and a small white population sometimes exploded into violence.

Today, the neighborhood boasts more than 400 new homes, many thriving small businesses, a greenhouse that grows organic produce for local restaurants, several safe parks and playgrounds and a \$100 million community center in construction. A community land trust, Dudley Neighbors Incorporated, assures that the housing will be permanently affordable. Perhaps more

importantly, a resident driven board of directors representing the diversity of the community as well as institutions in the area and almost 4,000 dues-paying members truly run the organization. Hundreds of volunteers lead and participate in DSNI activities from numerous working committees to community-wide meetings and planning processes to neighborhood cleanups and festivals. There is a particular emphasis on youth development and two of the current staff started with DSNI as youth representatives to the board, including the current executive director. From the beginning DSNI has been committed to a transformative approach to community development—meetings are held in three languages, most work is done through standing committees of residents with staff as facilitators and in 1998, DSNI began the Resident Development Institute with nine different popular education modules, in which hundreds of residents have taken part.

But, remaining committed to the principle of bottom-up planning has not always been easy. Like many community development and planning organizations, DSNI has had to grapple with the contradictions between their mission and what public and private funders are willing to support. Let me give one example.

Early on DSNI won eminent domain rights to vacant land and buildings in their area. As a condition, the City set a deadline for the start of housing construction—the mayor needed to be able to point to his accomplishments before the election. As the staff hustled to meet the deadline, organizing/base-building took a back seat. When it became apparent that DSNI had become a largely staff-driven not resident-driven organization, they were in a bind. In an unusual and risky move, the director, at that time, Gus Newport, stood up to the mayor and called a halt to the housing work while attention was brought back to organizing. The City backed down although beforehand that was a far from assured outcome. Yet DSNI was willing to take the chance in order to remain true to their values.

Although DSNI's large projects—such as the new housing and community center—get most public attention, sometimes their transformative approach is even clearer in smaller projects. When John Barros, the current ED was a teenager, he wanted to paint a mural and sought permission of DSNI to do so on one of their buildings. Instead of just giving blanket approval, DSNI staff said “What a great idea—here’s some thoughts on how you can involve the youth of the neighborhood in designing and painting the mural.” What John thought would take a couple of weeks or months stretched into a year and half project. The result was a brilliant piece of organizing and a mural that expressed the concerns and hopes of the youth of the neighborhood. As a result, many of these kids became directly involved with the organization and were the first organizers of the Youth Committee, still active today. Twenty years later, this mural has never been defaced with graffiti. Awhile ago John remarked: “That mural expressed the thoughts of *my* generation; now if the mural gets defaced, it will mean that it’s time for a new mural.”

## **District 7 Roundtable**

The District 7 Roundtable, an all-volunteer organization in Boston, was formed when African American community and labor organizer Chuck Turner was elected to the Boston City Council from the district in which Boston's population of color is concentrated. The roundtable was seen

as a way in which Chuck could use the office to more sharply define issues and stimulate activism in a community that had become somewhat listless by the late 90s. After a surge of grassroots activism in the 80s, the political center of the community had devolved to the nonprofit agencies, the service providers, who had no real constituency, rather they saw the community as clients. These community leaders were prepared to advocate for what they perceived as being the interests of their clients, but they were not interested in empowering them to advocate for themselves.

The Roundtable was initially organized into issue-oriented committees and monthly forums. Both in the committees and in the forum, outside “expert” speakers tended to treat the roundtable as an opportunity to enlist folks to their particular cause, not to inform and engage. People came to the forum for the social/cultural aspect but passively listened to the experts. Action wasn’t happening in the community, nor was the development of people. So, a couple of years ago, the committees were scrapped and the monthly forums were organized as popular education workshops. Now folks came to the forum and actively participated, working in small groups with interactive exercises facilitated by advisory committee members and invited others. The Roundtable recently received nonprofit status and is seeking funds to develop into a research and education organization, still focused in District 7, but not formally attached to the District 7 City Council Office.

One of the first issues the newly organized Roundtable took on was reforming the Criminal Record Information System (or CORI). Soon they discovered that although this is a critically important issue, the reality is that there are not even enough jobs for those in the neighborhood who don’t have a record. This led to a broadening of the focus to organizing the unorganized and unemployed. At three events held at different locations, they used popular education exercises to get discussion going—for example, photographs were used to generate stories; people who were reticent to reveal their personal histories could talk about the anonymous person in the photo. Several hundred attendees began to understand that lots of other people were in the same boat as they. To make an interesting but long story short, the Boston Worker’s Alliance (BWA) was formed—the first of what organizers hope will be many spin-offs from the Roundtable. Understanding that it is unrealistic for the Black community to look to government and corporations for allies, the BWA is setting up a community-based temp agency and they are working with the Industrial Cooperative Association to develop workers’ cooperatives.

Although Chuck Turner is now an ex-officio member of the Roundtable, the organization remains a place where he has an opportunity to share what’s going on in the City and to get input. He is clear that he can’t do much on the Council without being attached to a base of activists. And, he’s still asking the question he put to me years ago: “To get free of the old paradigm—how do we construct opportunities for thought and action, not just struggling for growth, but for change?” Perhaps the roundtable—focused on “funding the dream” of Martin Luther King and fighting the 3 evils he identified—militarism, economic exploitation and racism—will be a partial answer.

## **Roofless Women’s Action Research Mobilization**

The third example, The Roofless Women's Action Research Mobilization, a community-university collaboration, had two objectives:

- Create a strategy to change public policy and social services, based on the experiences and recommendations of women who had experienced homelessness.
- Promote the leaderships capacity of women who have experienced poverty and homelessness.

Roofless Women was a leadership development, college access, participatory action research project. Working together, several community and governmental agencies and my college supported a group of recently homeless women to earn a BA degree from the College of Public and Community Service at the University of Massachusetts Boston, while leading a participatory research project looking at women's homelessness in Massachusetts, around which much of their academic work was focused. As with my other two examples, much could be said about this project, but I'm going to focus on some of what I learned about internalized oppression and the limits of standard social science research through working with these remarkable women.

I entered into this project with the idealistic notion that because the women had a recent shared and traumatic experience—that of being homeless—they would rather naturally and easily form a cohesive and supportive group. I was totally unprepared for the individualism, competitiveness, and negativity towards one another that characterized many of the early interactions in the group. In retrospect, and after a lot of reflection and discussion with the group, this makes sense to me. When we need to access services directed to low-income people, typically we must do so individually. I must present my individual case, and frequently I have to show that I am more worthy of help than my sister. Services I obtain will likely be offered in a punitive manner and my self-esteem will be undermined. Often, I have to withhold some information—that is, be untruthful—in order to obtain what I need. I become marked by individualism and competitiveness and I know myself to be somewhat untrustworthy as a result of the experience of struggling to obtain needed services from a government and service industry intent on blaming the victim. All of the Roofless Women had recently shared *this* experience as well as the experience of being homeless. And it marked our relations with one another. That the group grew fairly rapidly into a mutually supportive group and that they now reach out to others similarly hampered by these barriers attests to the hard work we all did to overcome the strength of this individualistic and competitive ideology.

Some of the Roofless Women researchers (like most of the 150 women surveyed) initially blamed themselves for their own homelessness. The role of consciousness raising and education can't be over-estimated in unraveling this sort of internalized oppression. Yet often this is not a fundable part of a community planning project. Since the project was partially structured as a university course, I had the freedom to facilitate sessions in which the women exchanged experiences and had discussions with analysts and organizers on the interrelationship of homelessness with poverty, capitalism, sexism, and the lack of affordable housing. This helped participants to move away from self-blame to an understanding of how their situation reflected these underlying issues. For example, early-on one woman said, "*If only I'd known how to balance my checkbook, I wouldn't have become homeless*". A few months later this same woman was able to describe the structural causes of women's homelessness on network television. But, I

took some heat from funders and even some of the agency steering committee members for delaying the start of the field work to take time for this educational work.

The way in which the Roofless Women conducted their survey interviews challenged standard social science research methodologies which dictate that a survey should be administered to each respondent in exactly the same way and that the interviewer should not enter into discussion with the respondent—doing so would run the risk of distorting responses. However, the Roofless Women shared their own experiences with the women they interviewed. In fact, dialogue is a critical element of participatory research; it is a means of discovering the sharedness of a problem and the common ground for action. Dialogue is the basis for eliciting unusually forthright responses, more detailed and possibly more truthful answers to interview questions, especially in the investigation of a controversial, personal or stigmatized topic such as ours. In fact, this was one of the outstanding strengths of this project.

Listening to the tapes, you can hear the women opening up, feeling that "Here's someone who won't judge me, who will understand, because she's been in my shoes." Many interviewees expressed gratitude for a sympathetic ear. And sometimes the example of the Roofless Women interviewer herself was empowering for the woman being interviewed.

The project stimulated a number of changes in government and agencies regulations regarding services for the homeless, but, overall, the most stunning strength of the project was the growth in self-confidence and skills of the researchers themselves. They became a strong support group for one another. Each continues to be an effective advocate for social justice. They have spoken out in a many public settings all over the US and even internationally. Two have gone on to earn graduate degrees and a third is currently in a graduate program. All have gained good jobs working on issues of homelessness, housing, childcare, public education and union organizing, and all serve on agency boards partially as a result of their connection to Roofless Women. In other words, each woman has continued, with increased capacity, to work for social justice in whatever setting she finds herself—each continues to work for the collective good and not just to develop herself individually.

### **San Miguel Analco**

Last year, along with my husband Chris Tilly, and a Mexican colleague, Mercedes Arce, I coordinated a participatory planning course through which doctoral students at the Colegio de Tlaxcala worked in a strategic planning process with the residents of a small, poor, rural community in the state of Tlaxcala, Mexico. Here we confronted deep skepticism on the part of both students and residents that anything good could come from a so-called participatory process. It seems that in Mexico, participation has a bad name, having been attached to gatherings organized by politicians in which, in order to garner votes, promises are made which are promptly forgotten after the election. Furthermore, to get folks to attend these meetings, the political party gives everyone a gift—a sack of cement, a blanket, or maybe just a t-shirt. We had nothing to give except our energy and skills and we weren't about to promise anything specific, just that we would carefully listen to the community and help them transform their ideas into action and that we would not impose our own preferences.

We constantly had to pull our students back from leaping too soon to specific solutions to problems and we had to divert the community from seeing petitioning the government as the only viable strategy. Instead, we helped folks focus on their visions of what a better community would be and on what resources there were within the community to achieve their vision, rather than focusing on problems and on getting the government to solve them.

This was not always, or even often, easy. Some focus groups were poorly attended—the one scheduled for day laborers attracted only one couple and when we went to the fields to try to get others to come. The first man we approached immediately asked, “What are you going to give me?” It was also difficult to get a discussion going in the focus groups—mostly, people responded to questions posed by the facilitator. Getting a sizable attendance at a community-wide assembly required basic organizing work—leafleting people as they left mass, door-knocking at every house and sending a sound truck around. But, in the end, it was worth it—the assembly marked a turning point in the project and produced a committed task force of volunteers who worked to develop strategies and action plans and have continued to work on developing their community.

What made the difference? In my opinion, there were at least two factors: before the project, the community of Analco was very divided because of controversies in the past. But in the assembly the residents found that they had consensus about the main goals. Also, in the assembly we concentrated on visions and the human resources within the community, not on the problems. As a consequence, people became enthusiastic about the possibilities for the future.

On the basis of interviews and focus groups organized around various sectors of the community, we formulated very broad general goals or visions of what the community might look like in 5 years. In the assembly, attended by about a quarter of the adults in Analco, the community prioritized these goals. The volunteer task force then worked to develop strategies to achieve three priority goals. Action plans were developed for several strategies that relied primarily on resources within the community. As these plans were realized, an interesting thing happened—the community undertook additional projects and the government actually came through with a number of resources that had previously been promised, but never provided (e.g., a long-needed sewage treatment plant). The elected auxiliary mayor told us: “We were stuck in a pothole. You helped us finally get out of it.” In the end, several of the students, who had started out so skeptically, ended up changing their dissertation topics in order to continue to work in Analco and the Colegio is making participatory action research and planning a regular part of the curriculum of both the masters and doctoral programs.

## **Conclusion**

What I’ve learned after close to 40 years of working as a progressive planner is that every community, like those I’ve touched on in this talk, have a combination of promise and peril. Every community has experiences and traditions of working collectively, of listening to what the most humble and marginalized have to say, of imagining a better world. Every community also

has external pressures to conform and compete within the status quo, and internal cynicism, self-interest and despair that undermine efforts to work together.

The challenge is to build on the positive, and to find creative ways to overcome the negative. The challenge is to constantly expand ordinary people's self confidence, their trust in each other, their ability to understand and strategize about their situation, and through this their *control* over that situation.

Meeting this challenge is what I call transformative community planning.