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The People Know Best: Developing Civic Participation in Urban Planning

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Planning, Participation, and the Public Interest

The concept of the public interest is the founding principle that legitimizes spatial and land use controls as state activities. The concept serves as the guiding criteria for planners and practitioners to invoke and use to evaluate policies, projects and plans. Indeed, The American Institute of Certified Planners claims that the primary obligation of the planner is to serve the public interest. However, the public is seldom directly involved in the urban planning process. While the uninformed public cannot provide a complete, cognizant framework for the design of our communities, its input is an essential component for democratically serving the public interest. Participation methods give voice to different interests which together represent a broader (though still incomplete) portion of the public. The purpose of this paper is to advocate why more inclusive public participation methods may not only help create better communities, but will serve the public good by fostering a more educated citizenry and building democracy. I explain and advocate many already emergent methods. I also advocate that for urban planning to truly advance the public good, planners must work in informal contexts to promote participatory methods aimed at developing a better citizenry, as well as promote equality. Each technique helps battle oppression and foster democracy. Just as a diverse society requires diverse voices, we need help from all sides of the participation field to realize our goal of a public interest duly served.

The Public Interest as Manifest in Planning

The field of planning incorporates different, sometimes conflicting methodologies for defining, interpreting, and carrying out the public interest[i]. Historically it has operated within a rationalistic model in which knowledge of the public interest can be scientifically inferred and value-free. American planning methodologies find root in some of the same 18th and 19th century philosophies that helped shape political thought in the founding of the nation.

Classic Utilitarianism, as put forth by Jeremy Bentham and John Stewart Mill, conceptualizes the public good as that which produces the most utility, or happiness, for the greatest number of people[ii]. Market-liberalism in the United States ultimately operates under a utilitarian, *laissez-faire* notion that a free market will provide the greatest net benefit to those in that market. Urban planning serves to foster the public goods which perfectly competitive markets cannot[iii]. Urban planning often runs with the grain of the market to foster efficiency; housing planners facilitate private development, traffic planners minimize driving time, and the widespread tool of Cost-Benefit Analysis evaluates public projects by translating happiness into monetary benefit and maximizing benefit to monetary input.

From the utilitarian, rational train of thought emerged urban renewal. Based in the European Modernist movement, it held the state as a supreme planning power with the ability to construct an alternative future through the shocking transformation of existing conditions. It envisioned the development of projects from the ground-up, which

necessitated the eradication of already present neighborhoods. In practice, this development policy enacted by a wide range of cities destroyed many downtown areas by displacing millions of low-income citizens without compensation. In the process it replaced established neighborhoods and small business districts with highways, large buildings, and grand-scale housing projects. While its utopian ideal of social transformation was admirable, it was manifest with little attention paid to the context of development or the citizens it impacted[iv]. As a physical experiment it backfired, and for most planners, urban renewal is a scar on the face of developmental history from which to learn how to better plan for society. Urban Renewal was a result of poor federal policy, distorted power differentials and bad design. However, it was legitimated by actors claiming to serve a unified public interest in a utilitarian manner.

The legacy of inhumane destruction resulting from utilitarianist urban renewal stands in direct contrast to notions of social justice. Social justice conceptualizes the public good around a collective moral imperative to provide for all citizens. John Rawls' Theory of Justice prescribes a public interest in which society prioritizes individual rights for all and the provision of sufficient material means to enact those rights[v]. This entails a framework of redistributive ethics providing justification for evaluating social policies and allocative distributions such as low-income housing and welfare policy.

The social justice imperative reflects a larger communitarian approach that the principal task of government is to secure and distribute fairly the liberties and economic resources individuals need to lead freely chosen lives. This approach refutes utilitarianism by prioritizing the needs of all peoples, thereby legitimizing policy that is based on the values of a more equitable society and evaluating actions by their

conformity with cultural or ideological norms of equity[vi]. In the planning context, communitarian notions of the public interest are manifest, for example, when development proposals are reviewed for their conformity with community norms and aspirations, as exemplified in regulations such as design controls.

Dominant approaches to pursuing the public interest have entailed a series of struggles and compromises between the free-market, utilitarian approach and the redistributive, communitarian approach. Urban planning operates to the extent that intervention is perceived as necessary in land-use to allocate social goods the market doesn't provide for and redistribute in accordance with community norms. The government serves as intermediary judge, regulating the public interest through laws and policy. In a free-market land system, the government operationalizes the extent to which land use may be regulated in order to adhere to communitarian ideals and maintain a favorable social order. Aside from administering laws, financing, and policy, the government acts in judicial or quasi-judicial contexts of plan review or adjuration of plans arising from objections and litigation. The public good as it stands, then, emerges within the tension of these opposing philosophies. Free-marketism produces externalities, interventionism in the name of equality or justice reacts, and the hope is that what is truly good happens somewhere in the process. Planners must constantly play catch-up as to how our field will operate depending on the side of the struggle with more power. Meanwhile, we must also mitigate among institutional constraints and conflicting goals to implement social justice, economic growth, and environmental protection[vii].

Putting the Public in Public Interest

The confines of back-and-forth social policy and a myriad of interests and power holders place planners in the realm of a constant struggle. Struggle in itself can be a generative force, but our tendency to swing between laissez-faire and state-interventionism prevents us from realizing a way to break out of this binary opposition or realize alternatives[viii]. In order to break free from this back-and-forth, we must find new ways to (re)define possibilities for our society. To realize these possibilities, planners must expand the imaginative framework in which we operate. While urban renewal was not well manifest, its imaginative, generative framework propelled it into popularity (Holston). To exclude the imaginary and its inherently critical perspective is to condemn planning to accommodation of the status quo[ix].

Planners can draw on the collective imagination of the public to develop a more inclusive vision for the future and surpass the passive status quo. By reaching out to citizens, engaging them in the planning process, and developing civic capacity, planners can give the public the opportunity to define its interest. Citizens provide feedback and enable communitarian and community ideals to be realized proactively, rather than in a reactive manner. Working with individuals reveals a realm of the possible rooted in the heterogeneity of lived experience[x], enabling a grounded realm of imagination from which to plan for the future. A vision can break open the dull parameters of the present and past that confine and oppress, and can offer new possibilities, prospects, and paradigms[xi]. A vision for planning based in discovering and fostering a participatory society can usher in such possibilities while working towards a more vibrant democracy.

Currently, the role of the citizenry is limited to electing officials who reflect their beliefs as to how the public good should be enacted. In a largely two-party system in which voter turnout is low and citizens of higher class-status are more likely to participate, representative democracy cannot be expected to help hammer out the fine details of planning in the public interest, particularly as many development issues do not fall under a particular political camp or ideology. Additionally, the current planning structure of a master plan created by technical experts with little outside input still largely reflects a utilitarian, government-knows-best attitude. Planners work with elected officials, who ultimately finalize and approve or deny decisions. The citizen serves as a political consumer with only a "yes-no ballot" regarding the comprehensive plan[xii].

In a first-world democracy, we can do better. Spatial development in the United States has left a legacy of oppression still visible in our vastly segregated metropolitan regions. Political theorist C.B. Macpherson asserts that low participation and social inequity are so connected that a more equitable and humane society requires a more participatory political system. Additionally, urban theorist Paul Davidoff posits that amidst the debate about the allocation of social goods, solutions cannot be technically derived, but must be derived from social attitudes. The drawbacks of our present-day spatial landscape reflect a history of technically derived-solutions which have not addressed or accounted for all attitudes and needs in society. Jane Jacobs, perhaps the most influential 20th century urbanist, noted that what makes places vibrant are often a combination of small, unique elements which often go overlooked in large-scale planning

projects[xiii]. The input of citizens can help bring such elements to light. Participation, after all, is a cornerstone to democracy, and its expansion can only enhance the republic.

Public Participation Then and Now

Since the 1950's standardized methods for public participation have been codified into law. Developmental proposals now require public notification in affected neighborhoods, as well as review and comment procedures. The civil rights movement of the 1960's enabled an expansion of participation in urban politics by disadvantaged groups. Policy soon mandated some amount of participation, and some programs even called for direct citizen involvement in the planning process[xiv]. However, as politics died down in the 1970's, these avenues narrowed in scope and impact. And as citizens gained new opportunities for participation via administrative procedures, they were, in turn expected to use those avenues and not others[xv]. The predictability of institutionalized methods stifled the power of those citizens who tried to use them, as more powerful groups could anticipate and overpower potential agonism. Disadvantaged inner-city residents, whose central role in the civil rights movement made the expansion of participation avenues possible, experienced the limits of participation methods more than others because their former methods had so depended on disruption[xvi]. Middle and upper-income groups also have more of the political resources needed to be effective in routine modes of participation[xvii].

Current participation methods are justified in that public preferences can play a part in decision-making, decisions may be improved by incorporating citizens' local

knowledge, and they help gain legitimacy for public actions[xviii]. But while the rhetoric of participation gives legitimacy to public decisions, methods often have little impact on the planning process. Planners generally structure meetings around a list of projects using technical jargon inaccessible to participants. While anyone can participate, it is often only when plans have already been all but enacted, and in reality the powerful and organized drown out other voices and succeed in private deal-making processes[xix]. They rarely offer citizens the opportunity to fully understand, let alone address the vast power differentials underlying the development process. Interpreted under Sherry Arnstein's influential ladder of citizen power, these methods prove tokenary; they give citizens no formalized power, instead serving a ritual purpose[xx].

Participation Prerequisites: Advocacy and Information

The failure of participation methods to truly involve the public betrays the bureaucratic, depersonalized role that the planner has historically played. Planners often approach participation skeptically and distrustfully[xxi]. Urban planners serve in a profession with a liberal ideological point of view, but the field's secure career path, moderate level of status, and regular salary increases often attracts individuals more focused on the values and philosophies of business that help their status, income, and security[xxii]. In a field that already has a constrained capacity to enact change, professional planners have erred towards

caution, working in a passive administrative manner, making incremental decisions, and rarely taking unpopular positions[xxiii].

For participation methods to succeed, planners must (re)imagine their role beyond that of technical experts towards political agents acting on behalf of, and with, their public. The field of planning is currently working towards a more politically engaged model in research, theory, and pedagogical techniques. Norman Krumholz, the most recently elected AICP president, serves as the primary proponent of equity planning, in which planners operate openly on behalf of vulnerable populations[xxiv]. Theorists have also called for planning to embrace contentious criticism, accepted as healthy in politics, as a part of the planning process[xxv]. A sense of duty towards the public serves as a necessary prerequisite to respectful, mutual collaboration with that public.

Effective collaboration with the public also requires ease of access to information. The access of information in order to rationally determine best solutions proves a key component in the capitalist ideology that governs the United States. Economic theory posits access to perfect information as the key component to a truly free market. Access to unbiased information also prevents citizens from the influence of propaganda or interest groups. Planning's function to intervene in a utilitarian manner is predicated on similar requirements for access to information in order to make rational, well-informed decisions. Information can change the participant by shaping the problem, defining the choices, and providing a perspective from which options are viewed[xxvi].

Despite the fact that rationality and market theory necessitate ease of access to information, it is not always forthcoming in the participatory process. Planners often approach participatory requirements skeptically, and speak from an analytic standpoint inaccessible to the layperson[xxvii]. By failing to teach citizens how to communicate in an effective way, planners render the participatory process inaccessible and increasingly irrelevant. Participation methods should ideally require that programs provide stakeholders with a full range of planning data, information, and proposals during the process. By providing access to such information, planners can make citizens more aware of both their looming vulnerabilities and practical opportunities. The success of participation in the development of a comprehensive plan in Seattle was partially attributed to full access of information by stakeholders, as they were able to make better informed decisions about how to develop the area and had realistic expectations for the future[xxviii]. The participation process can serve as an educational platform from which planners not only gain valuable input but help develop an empowered public better able to understand, discuss, and advocate planning causes.

Participation methods may also be improved by broadening the scope of effective levels of participation. Few individuals bother to participate in formal methods like public meetings unless they have a direct stake in the land issue in question. Meetings can be long, boring, and seemingly irrelevant. Forums which enable citizen input without the requirement to sit in city hall for hours are more likely to cast a wide net and give planners greater feedback. Planners should develop systematic procedures to take into

account concerns and preferences expressed through informal channels such as petitions, communications to elected officials, or reports by members of citizen groups who have had discussions with residents[xxix]. A wide range of involvement techniques and media can also ensure that there is adequate information output, stakeholder preference input, and dialogue between planners and stakeholders[xxx]. Additionally, the more types of techniques employed by jurisdictions, the more stakeholder groups participate in the planning process[xxxi]. Ann Arbor planner Wendy Rampson found that while participation for a downtown development project was not sustained formally, many community members blogged their opinions much later into the development process[xxxii]. Planners can incorporate new technologies as a means to explore citizens' opinions and gain real-time feedback.

Towards Feminist Models of Participation

Feminist scholars have long commented on planning's deployment of a scientific rationalism that precluded a logic based in sentiment, nurturance, and obligation[xxxiii]. Legal participation-based methods institutionalize this mode of thought. Participation is expected on the part of citizens in the event that they must react to a plan contrary to their self-interest. In the spirit of Nam Cao's quote, "Life is a shared blanket; one person pulls and the other is left cold," the process serves as a zero-sum game with clear winners and losers. Citizens prove this mentality as they frequently address public hearings in terms of war metaphors[xxxiv].

The argument that dominant participation processes are antithetical to feminism has also been made in the field of community organizing. Indeed, its primary school of thought was founded by Saul Alinsky, a white male whose central philosophy posited that people operate based on self-interest. The field of Community Organizing has grown and become more inclusive largely due to the embrace of more feminist forms of participation[xxxv]. Women-centered organizing defines human nature from an ethic of care, in which justice is achieved not just through a compromise of self-interested individuals, but practical reciprocity in the network of relationships that make up the community. Power is not conceptualized as zero-sum, but as limitless and collective. The women-centered model emphasizes the maintenance and development of personal connections with others that provide a safe environment for people to develop, change and grow. Leaders are those who are embedded in local networks and can speak for the collective interest[xxxvi]. The goal of such models is "empowerment"—a developmental process that includes building new skills through repetitive cycles of action and reflection that evokes new understandings, and in turn provokes new and more effective actions[xxxvii].

Like Alinskian community organizing, the field of urban planning operates under a paradigm in which different agents act upon their self-interest. Rationalism served as the leading model from which planning has been taught and implemented, positing that planners should serve as technical experts objectively capable of making decisions. In rational theory, the planner focuses non-objectively on providing the best for the most and the citizen looks out for

himself[xxxviii]. However, planning is inherently value-laden, and in practice relationships and power structures inevitably shape the planning process[xxxix]. Governmental entities, institutions, and citizen groups are comprised of human beings with real and complex dreams, constraints, and relationships that shape their behavior and desires in ways that cannot be made rational or foreseen. While planners have moved in some ways beyond the rational model, which fails to account for the constraints of the human condition, it still persists— particularly in participation methods[xl].

To reconnect with the human beings whose collective goals comprise the public interest, planners can enact more feminist forms of participation. Just as the broadening field of community organizing has been enhanced by following relation-based models, feminist planning approaches can improve participation. While the positing of these different models is not inherently linked to biological sex, both the similarity in feminist critiques for "male-centered" models of organizing and planning, and their resulting approaches, enable the use of gendered language to categorize oppositional modes of thought. Feminist approaches to planning imply participatory means of gaining knowledge and determining context-specific solutions to planning problems[xli]. They entail the development of consensus for adversarial approaches, protection of the weak, and the importance of emotional bonds[xlii]. Numerous theorists and planners have taken steps towards developing more inclusive and holistic methods of citizen participation and community collaboration that fall into the field of feminist participation, including mediation, consensus-building, and other relation-based methodologies.

Mediation processes serve as a relation-building approach to the planning process. Mediation brings together diverse stakeholders to devise a common solution to planning dilemmas. Trained mediators help diffuse adversarial tendencies and bring parties past relational issues and into realizing their mutual stake in building a better future. Mediators employ strategies to explore real issues, enable learning, and simultaneously build relationships[xliii]. As an active process, mediation empowers all stakeholders to work together in real time[xliv]. Mediators slow the argument process and help all individuals to learn about their multiple and diverse underlying interests. Mediation also helps planners redefine their role to be not innocent professionals, but active agents implicated in the production of the world[xlv].

Consensus Building focuses specifically on building relationships so that all groups implicated in a decision can make it together with increased understanding. It requires a full range of stakeholders, meaningfulness to participants, mutual understanding, dialogue with equal opportunity to participate, self-organization, and accessible information[xlvi]. Defining the model as "authentic dialogue", consensus building pioneer Judith Innes posits that it can produce joint learning, as well as improve individuals' capacity to enact social and political change. The growth of networks fosters an environment for increased collaboration over time, making the process one that actually generates increased power over time[xlvii]. According to Innes, consensus building best functions when controversy is high, where goals and interests conflict, and where contradictions prevent bureaucracies from acting and political deal makers from being successful.

The City of Seattle's 1994 comprehensive plan enacted successful, collaborative policy through a threefold approach to citizen participation. The key to its success was the employment of a diverse set of project managers whose primary role was to engage citizens, build relationships, and develop accountability mechanisms. They did this with three primary methods: relational organizing, which builds relationships through face-to-face conversations about values and interests in order to build trust among diverse stakeholders; asset-based community development, which emphasizes mapping and mobilizing underutilized community assets to solve problems; and accountable autonomy, in which neighborhood groups are empowered to develop their own plans deliberatively, but with clear procedures for accountability to the city[xlviii]. Neighborhood managers were expected to become a part of the community, believe that the community had wisdom and be willing to trust in it. While the program experienced difficulties with tension, it was largely praised. Its success lead the author to conclude that all cities should have staff engaged as relational organizers and facilitators, stating, "a city that genuinely values civic democracy should have such staff within virtually all of its agencies"[xlix]. While funding the diverse, interactive, relation building agents was a large investment, it had a payoff; the involvement of the community in the planning process facilitated the widespread support needed for the mayor to pass a series of bond levy measures to improve the area[l].

Limitations to Institutionalized Participation

While the previously addressed methods vary, their approaches centered on empowerment and relationship building developed from a feminist reaction to the field of urban planning and offer appealing alternatives and improvements to traditional participation methods. Each method faces a similar group of constraints to effective implementation. Primarily, the results attainable through public policy are seriously constrained by the economy, and the employment of mediation, collaboration, or participatory agents requires skill development and staffing[li]. Processes bringing together diverse stakeholders cannot work if the stakeholders have no incentive to come to the table[lii]. Moreover, as with all forms of participation, those most likely to engage are those privileged enough to have the money, time, and effort required to do so[liii]. Integration in social networks is also related to participation and impoverished and historically underrepresented groups tend to have less well-established social networks[liv]. The conflict which emerges in these processes also necessitates ample time to smooth out before agreements can be reached[lv]. In a multicultural society, diverse communication styles, cultural nuances, and conceptions of issues can prevent effective communication[lvi].

On the contrary, laws that fund by formula, elected officials who earmark funds and the understanding that reelection depends on “bringing home the bacon” all discourage participatory methods whose results cannot be preconceived[lvii]. Political economy concerns may not stem directly from a lack of financing, but from the desire of

certain groups to retain power. The introduction of new methods requires a re-education and adjustment of the status-quo, to which already overworked municipal members may resist[lviii]. While the benefits of improving participation are numerous, entrenched institutions and power holders many not necessarily want conditions to change.

Institutionalized forms of participation also entail a geographical shortcoming in the spatial boundaries which divide our municipalities and the disparate resource distribution among them[lix]. The United States is highly segregated by class, with larger areas of concentrated poverty than most of the developed world[lx]. Those communities most able to enact improved civic participation methods are generally those with a large amount of financial resources. If the entire public within one of these municipalities is accounted for, can the resulting plan really be called the “public good”? As much as theory may favor equity and diversity, our spatial segregation ensures that a greater form of equity can only be realized on an artificial, local scale. Municipal harmony is a valid goal, and acknowledging and addressing developmental power differentials on a local scale is a necessary prerequisite to producing broader level of cooperation. But in a planning infrastructure focused on local municipalities, formal methods have a limited ability to realize the public good. A better realization of democratic practice entails both an effective, responsive state and an aware and organized citizenry. Forms of participation which citizens themselves shape and choose may be critical in developing the political capabilities, tactics, and confidence with which to pursue meaningful engagement in invited spaces[lxi]. Thus, where institutional models fall short we can also enact steps to foster political participation of the underrepresented groups: the poor, oppressed, and marginalized who face the greatest constraints to

participation. Their capacity to participate is also enhanced through planning for greater social equality.

Developing Informal Participation Methods

Our conceptions of what is 'good' and 'just' are constructed through relations of power, and power-holders, even if informed by citizens, cannot monopolize the institutionalization of the good[lxii]. Bottom-up struggles inspired the institution of participation methods, but their success is contingent on coming from the outside, and institutionalized forms of participation cannot outweigh or replace them. Planners can improve spatial development by working with outside groups. Planning that addresses grassroots mobilizations and those practices that empower, parody, derail, or subvert state agendas serves to gain a more complete picture of society[lxiii]. By working with citizens actively engaged in redefining social practice, planners can obtain new ideas regarding the development of new practices and narratives about belonging to and participating in society[lxiv].

Planners may contribute to participatory means by taking their skills to the people directly. Many scholars have argued for planners to take their skills to the grassroots level as an "insurgent and contentious but constructive complement to government planning"[lxv]. Urban planners have a comprehensive skill set that has much to offer nongovernmental efforts to build citizenship. Planning is by nature an interdisciplinary activity that helps planners gain access among disparate groups in society. As credentialed professionals, planners gain entrance to organizations with extra local scope,

learning about other cases and contexts[lxvi]. Planners are trained to analyze data, an expertise that can back up social movement claims by making information credible and understandable. Planners also understand interpersonal power relations that help them negotiate conflict and flexibly mediate uncertain situations[lxvii].

Planners may contribute to the local participatory process by working with and advocating for the strength of civil society organizations. Civil society organizations, such as non-profits, community groups, and other non-governmental organisms, offer individuals the opportunity to find a collective presence and join the effort to politically affect mainstream policies and institutions[lxviii]. Such organizations offer the opportunity for a wider spectrum of people to interact in new ways, and often emerge to represent historically oppressed or underrepresented groups. The empowerment of these groups can help raise levels of political efficacy as a whole. Because private organizations are further removed from the political economic realities that constrain municipal government, participation does not run as great a risk of being cast in terms of consumer choice, but focuses on expanding individual opportunity and expanding choice[lxix]. However, because such groups often depend on governmental grants, they often accommodate their mission to the demands of national agencies and refrain from pressing officials.

The field of community organizing offers a step further afield from the constraints and influence of government, and has a deliberate focus on oppressed groups. Community organizing often rejects government partnerships and grant-chasing that may dilute its capacity to rally around the issues its base finds most important. Organizing builds power by building relationships among people, organizations, and institutions. Following the principle to "never do anything for people that they can do for

themselves," organizers identify and develop leaders who in turn further broaden their power base[lxx]. Organizing provides the citizens that the past has disadvantaged access to influence power holders and implement change. By creatively building off of indigenous resources and talents, organizing unites people, breaking down barriers of social isolation and cultivating the social capital necessary for participation[lxxi]. Community Organizers need the cooperation of the government, which has the legal authority to assist in or resist change. The grassroots Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative in Boston experienced a true renaissance when it was able to purchase and renovate many lots into affordable housing, which would not have been possible without the cooperation of municipal officials, influenced by planners[lxxii].

By promoting non-governmental participatory practices, planners advance the public interest by fostering political action that leads to a more empowered and educated citizenry better equipped to take an active stake in their communities. Through political action, individuals can transcend their consciousness of themselves as consumers. By realizing their capacity to act, citizens may then better engage in all forms of participation, including formalized methods.

Fostering a Participatory Environment

While the focused efforts of planners to build civic capacity through informal methods of participation is a critical step towards engaging with and empowering a marginalized public, all planning efforts focused on the reduction of inequality indirectly serve the participatory cause. Because participation is stratified, with the most

marginalized and underserved groups the least likely, or even able, to participate, the reduction of social and economic inequality serves as a prerequisite to a more representative participation[lxxiii]. Planning for a more equal society helps reduce the disparity between groups' capacity to engage. Efforts from all sides of policy to foster equal access to material means and societal opportunities help lay the groundwork for greater participation.

Conclusion

While certified planners have a sworn duty to serve the public interest, the profession has not trusted the public enough to hear out its multiple interests. Historically, urban planners have instituted the public good under a narrow philosophy which defines the public good as a struggle between market determinism and government interventionism. In this struggle, energy has been lost to infighting, civic capacity has been undermined as the public's role in a democracy remains underdeveloped, and solutions have been overlooked as the public itself has been unheard. To expand the imagination of planners, discover new solutions, and realize a multi-faceted public interest, participation methods must grow.

Solutions to the participation debacle have developed. Planners may re-evaluate their pledge to the public interest as a commitment to advocacy. Information must be conveyed on a broader scale to society in order to move closer to the ideal of perfect information that prerequisites rational thought and a

truly free market. Feminist thought has had a profoundly positive impact on participation methods, and the enaction of such methods will help build the consensus necessary to move a multitude of publics forward. Focusing on individual, outside efforts to build civic empowerment and increase equality foster the civic mindset and material means necessary to effective participation.

By developing civic participation from the top-down and the bottom-up, we can actively help develop better policy, a more capable public, and a more just democracy. However, in order to promote the means for a better democracy, we must demonstrate a need for it. Political theorist C.B. Macpherson explains three points that may help society move towards a liberal democracy of inclusive participation: the increasing awareness of the costs of economic growth, the increasing awareness of the cost of political apathy, and the increasing doubts about the ability of corporate capitalism to meet consumer expectations while reproducing inequality[lxxiv]. Each involves, fundamentally, a shifting of the public consciousness towards a greater skepticism of the status quo. In order to move participatory methods forward, we must (re)costruct a social awareness of their necessity. In the midst of economic crisis, citizens grow increasingly aware of the costs to quality of life that our society has enabled. Drawing attention to these costs, and encouraging individuals to challenge their current conditions, is a necessary component to incentivising participation. However, the contentious idea of how professional planners can essentially promote skepticism in the very government they often serve under has yet to be explored. Herein lays the next realm of

imaginative exploration for realizing representative participation. Armed with a better understanding of participation methods, we must work towards capturing participatory motivations. Perhaps we can work with institutions that educate citizens, perhaps we can develop new means of outreach, or perhaps we can connect with already active means of promoting awareness. Drawing a direct link between civic dissatisfaction and the means to turn it into action will help expedite the move towards a civic participation system that planners and citizens alike can be proud to call direct democracy.

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