

Preface

This book is based on my Ph.D. work and is dedicated with deep appreciation to Prof. Izhak Schnell, who guided me in my doctoral research study and in the writing of my dissertation inspired thereby. Professor Schnell, a scientist, intellectual, humanist and individual of integrity, will continue to be a role model to me, and I will always think of him with gratitude. I extend my heartfelt thanks to him for his professional instruction and his philosophical and spiritual insight, as well as for his moral support throughout our work together.

This book is the fruit of 5 years of research and 2 years of writing. However, the conceptual and philosophical seeds of this work were sowed more than 10 years ago while I was at the Department of Geography and Human Environment at Tel Aviv University, writing my master's thesis on effective ways to empower the community through planning. I conducted interpretive field research among an underserved and disempowered population in south Tel Aviv to explore effective means of determining their genuine spatial needs and perspectives (i.e., local knowledge) and to use the results to build operative planning knowledge.

The strong desire to make a breakthrough in our ability to adapt the planning product to residents' needs drove me to continue to research the subject in a doctoral framework at Tel Aviv University. During this period, I conducted a comparative study of the abilities of various public participation methods to obtain local knowledge and incorporate it into the planning process.

In addition to introducing a new conceptual framework for public participation in planning, the theory formulated following my doctoral research constitutes the state of the art and generates innovative thought in planning theory and knowledge study based on an empirical comparative examination of the efficacy of various participatory processes, leading to practical solutions for public participation alongside new frameworks and tools.

One of the tools built during this research was the Participatory Methods Ladder, which classifies various participatory methods, practices and procedures according to their abilities to capture local knowledge and incorporate it into planning deliverables. The Participatory Methods Ladder constitutes an innovative development that can calibrate participatory processes according to certain criteria to

improve their respective abilities to extract local knowledge and incorporate it into planning deliverables. My dissertation has been elaborated and rewritten, and the result is presented in this book under the title ‘Public participation as a tool for integrating local knowledge into spatial planning’.

During my doctoral studies, I initiated and developed the extra-academic course “Public Participation in Urban and Regional Planning” for the Standards Institution of Israel. This initiative stemmed from a genuine desire to improve the practices employed in public participation in addition to their theoretical development. To my knowledge, this was the first extra-academic course of its kind with the objective of teaching professional planners, bureaucrats, and decision-makers, as well as environmentalists and interested residents, how to involve the public in planning processes and thereby improve the congruency between planning deliverables and residents’ needs. This extra-academic endeavor and experience not only strengthened my research quality but also generated credible practical guidelines for actual planning.

Tel Aviv, Israel

Tal Berman

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Berman, T.

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