

Chapter 2

Introduction

Public participation may be identified as a *contested concept* because it lacks an agreed-upon, fixed definition (Alfasi 2003; Day 1997). Moreover, various individuals and groups, e.g., planning professionals and lay residents, may define the concept differently depending on such factors as familiarity with the concept, how that individual or group perceives the concept, or whether that individual or group has participated in a participatory planning process.

Regardless, the literature uses the term *public participation* to refer to the participation of the public in city and regional planning processes (Dukes et al. 2001; Lowndes et al. 2001a). Today, this concept encompasses many types of practices and collaborative participation processes that address a wide range of planning issues, both physical and social. Examples of such issues include ecology, environmental protection, transportation, utilities, and zoning (Beierle 1999; Bryner 2001; Chess 2000; Cvetkovich and Earle 1994; White 2001).

Public participation in planning encourages democratic jurisdictional governance (Dryzek 1990; Healy 1997; Niemeyer and Spash 2001); strengthens civil society through the redistribution of power between jurisdictions and residents; and enhances trust among participants and facilitators (Churchman and Sadán 2003). In addition, participatory planning is an essential component of social and environmental justice (Fainstein and Fainstein 2013; Innes and Booher 2004). This type of planning is vital to the enhancement of sustainable development (Amado et al. 2009) and ‘knowledge generation’ (Petts and Brooks 2006, p. 1045), and its initial practical goals are the exposure of residents’ local knowledge and the incorporation of that knowledge into the planning and decision-making processes (Innes and Booher 2000, 2004; Lowndes et al. 2001a).

Local knowledge encompasses the individual and communal knowledge of citizens, which represents the perspective of local citizens, i.e., individuals and communities who could be affected by plans. The epistemological intricacy of local knowledge reflects the city’s/jurisdiction’s social complexity and cultural variance. The ability of governments and planners to efficiently (fairly and sustainably) plan the city is dependent on the availability of local knowledge.

Toward the end of the 20th century, the recognition of the value of local knowledge and the significance of experimental knowledge—which go beyond experts' professional knowledge, governance knowledge, and the knowledge of other stakeholders such as entrepreneurs—is considered a historical turning point in planning thought and theory (Sandercock 1998).

Public participation practice includes a vast inventory of procedures that can be categorized into two basic methods:

- The *unidirectional method*, whereby planners on behalf of authorities use various means to extract local knowledge from the public that could be affected by plans to integrate such knowledge into the planning process.
- The *deliberative method*, whereby local residents together with planners generate an ongoing, collaborative dialog among various stakeholders during the planning process to extract the local knowledge and incorporate it into the plans.

The unidirectional method is a top-down participatory configuration, i.e., citizen participation is a jurisdictional initiative conducted during the planning process as per jurisdictional considerations, whereas the deliberative method is an involvement from below (in a bottom-up configuration) in the form of civil initiative and protest based on project-specific grassroots considerations (Veransky et al. 1999).

The assumption herein is that the specific participatory techniques, as well as other elements used by each method, can affect the degree of success in attaining broad, effective public involvement and “constitute another important factor contributing to the possibility that the participation process will affect planning decisions” (Alterman et al. 1984, p. 181).

Samuel et al. (2003, p. 250) distinguish between two public participation approaches: “collaborative” and “one-way communication”. In their research, the “one-way communication” approach—represented mainly by public hearings, the most popular technique among the jurisdictions in the sample—and the “collaborative” approach included a variety of techniques, such as “open meetings” wherein residents talked to planning staff and coordinated workshops, charrettes, and community forums. Their research explored differences between the two approaches in terms of the extent to which citizens are involved, informed and educated and the degree of citizen empowerment associated with each practice.

In all things related to knowledge variables, although the emphasis of Samuel et al. (2003) is on procedural information and professional knowledge transmitted from facilitators to participants, the present study tests the knowledge variables of participants (local knowledge); the methods of observing, gathering, and processing local knowledge throughout the involvement process; and the incorporation of local knowledge into planning.

Each public participation method assumes that its suggested procedures are capable of uncovering local knowledge and rendering it an active component of the knowledge reservoir upon which the planner can base his/her plans. The question is whether those assumptions stand up to empirical examination of the critical inquiry of planning processes.

There is unanimity in the academic discourse regarding the importance of local knowledge to the planning product (Corburn 2003; Irwin 1995; Krinsky 1984; Wates 2000; Webler 1995; Yearley 2000). Moreover, public participation has frequently demonstrated the ability to extract local knowledge and enable its incorporation into planning products (Hopkins 2007; Innes and Booher 2000, 2004; Lowndes et al. 2001a). Nonetheless, researchers recognize that the integration of local knowledge into the planning process presents a substantial challenge because local knowledge is raw and unripe, i.e., it contains a vast array of knowledge items and information types, some of which are specific and others that are general and abstract, which renders its categorization and interpretation difficult (Alfasi 2003; Campbell and Marshall 2000; Rantanen 2007). At this juncture, there is a need to examine the extent to which various public participation practices can both expose local knowledge and process such knowledge into practical planning information.

There is no mention in the scientific literature of a study or model for evaluating public participation methods/procedures¹ in terms of their abilities to expose, extract, or interpret local knowledge or to incorporate such knowledge into planning. This gap in the literature confirms the importance of the proposed research, the purpose of which is to compare the collaborative and unidirectional methods to discern their respective efficacies in uncovering local knowledge and incorporating such knowledge into plans. At this point, three main research questions arise:

1. To what extent do public participation processes—either collaborative or unilateral—expose local knowledge?
2. To what extent does public participation incorporate the exposed local knowledge into plans?
3. Is the collaborative public participation method more efficacious than the unilateral method in exposing local knowledge?

The research objective is to evaluate participation methods in terms of their exposure and incorporation of local knowledge, which in turn will provide the basis for recommendations to improve public participation in planning. This research should constitute a building block for the development of a smart model for sustainable planning that is based on substantial accord between the planning deliverable and the needs of residents. As Rantanen (2007) stated, we must study and

¹At least 10 models for evaluating public participation procedures appear in the literature. These models variously consider procedural elements (Hopkins 2007, p. 639); the scope of participation (Lowndes et al. 2001a, b); profiles of the participating groups and individuals (Plein et al. 1998); the extent of commitment perceived by participants (Marshall and Ozawa 2001); the scope and type of issues addressed in the cooperative process (Dukes et al. 2001); the type of information relayed in the process (Alterman et al. 1984); whether the process is conducted within or outside the establishment (Innes and Booher 2000); the source of the initiative for the process (Beierle and Konisky 2000); the directing of the process vis-à-vis horizon and time frame and whether the process is process-oriented or results-oriented (Plein et al. 1998); and the power of citizens' participation on the Arnstein scale (Arnstein 1969), which comprises manipulation, therapy, informing, consultation, placation, partnership, delegated power, and citizen control.

develop new knowledge management practices that incorporate local knowledge into planning processes.

To accomplish the research objective, two planning processes were studied, one in Haifa and the other in Tel Aviv. Each of these processes included both a unilateral public participation process and a collaborative public participation process. The total sample thus includes four test cases, or four public participation processes in planning, two unilateral and two collaborative.

The research methodology was based on field studies that were conducted for each case selected from the sample. Each field study included three components: interviews conducted via semi-structured questionnaires, the collection and analysis of professional materials, and anthropological research.

Interviewees included both practitioners of the public participation processes and members of the public who participated in these processes. The researcher explored how the various participation processes had been conducted from the perspective of the interviewees and examined various aspects related to the manners in which the processes were conducted and to the modes of exposure and processing of local knowledge used therein.

In addition to the interviews, the researcher analyzed statutory and professional materials that had been prepared during the public participation processes to assess various elements related thereto. These materials included statutory documents, blueprints, simulations, plans, maps, and various texts (e.g., meeting minutes, position papers, letters, and online correspondence).

Moreover, the researcher conducted an anthropological field study among the publics that might be affected by the planning products to uncover their local knowledge, e.g., spatial conducts, needs, and outlooks regarding current environmental and planning issues. The researcher used several accepted anthropology research tools: participatory observation, spontaneous conversation (or unstructured interview), in-depth interviews, and mental maps.

Anthropological fieldwork is documented in the scientific literature as an accepted, effective, and appropriate means of exposing local knowledge. Therefore, the local knowledge exposed in the anthropological study was a significant component of this thesis and underwent comparisons to both the local knowledge exposed and documented in the records of the participation process and the opinions of participants that emerged in their interviews.

The book is structured as follows: first the conceptual context is outlined (see Chap. 3) and the methodology is described (see Chap. 4). Next, each of the two test cases are presented separately (see Chaps. 5 and 6); these presentations include comparisons of the collaborative and unilateral processes used therein. Thereafter, the two participation methods are compared in terms of the inventory of criteria related to the exposure of local knowledge and its incorporation into the planning deliverables based on information gathered during the research (see Chap. 7). Further on, theoretical and practical conclusions will be drawn, a discussion will be conducted, and the main conclusions vis-à-vis the literature will be presented (see Chaps. 8, 9 and 10).

<http://www.springer.com/978-3-319-48062-6>

Public Participation as a Tool for Integrating Local
Knowledge into Spatial Planning

Planning, Participation, and Knowledge

Berman, T.

2017, XXIII, 220 p. 18 illus., 8 illus. in color., Hardcover

ISBN: 978-3-319-48062-6