

CLIMBING THE LADDER OF PARTICIPATION: ESTABLISHING LOCAL POLICIES FOR PARTICIPATORY PRACTICE

MARGARET STOUT
West Virginia University

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ABSTRACT

This paper chronicles in rich detail the difficult path of institutionalizing participatory practice in local governance policies through community planning efforts in Tempe, Arizona spanning over fifteen years (1989 to 2007) of citizen/practitioner involvement. This All-America City (2003, National Civic League) in the Phoenix metropolitan area is a case study in how collaborative efforts among citizens, grassroots organizers, nonprofit organizations, and advocate city staff led to the adoption of public policies guiding citizen engagement in community development activities on the part of both public and private actors. While the achievement of a formal statement of democratic intent is a substantive benchmark that can serve as an exemplar for other local governments, this case also shows how technique can become tyranny, giving only ritualistic attention to participatory practice in the face of economic pressures and political directives.

INTRODUCTION AND APPROACH

This paper chronicles in rich detail the difficult path of institutionalizing participatory practice in local governance policies through community planning efforts in Tempe, Arizona spanning over fifteen years (1989 to 2007) of citizen/practitioner involvement. This All-America City (2003, National Civic League) in the Phoenix metropolitan

area is a case study in how collaborative efforts among citizens, grassroots organizers, nonprofit organizations, and advocate city staff led to the adoption of public policies guiding citizen engagement in community development activities on the part of both public and private actors. In fact, the case study neighborhoods were responsible for one of three projects highlighted for competition: “The residents of the Riverside/Sunset neighborhood, one with increasing crime, low home ownership, poverty, and lack of neighborhood services, voiced their concerns and are making significant changes” (League, 2003, p. 320). While such national recognition and the adoption of a formal statement of participatory intent are substantive accomplishments that can serve as an exemplar for other local governments, this case also shows how technique can become tyranny in the face of economic and political pressures. At best, participatory practice may give only lip service or ritualistic attention to democratic intent, and at worst it may become manipulative or even harmful to participants (Cooke & Kothari, 2004). As one neighbor describes:

Public participation in Tempe is a sham, you know, they hold it up there like what a great city they are, but they don’t put any stock in it, they just go out and do what they want. And that’s even worse than not having public participation, because you’re actually, in effect, lying to people. You’re making promises and you’re not keeping them. Or, at least you’re leading them to believe that you’re going to do what they want you to do... and that results in you and I sitting here talking about how frustrating it is... I don’t think there’s a strong belief, or even understanding even of public planning, public participation. In fact, the City seems to have... taken this idea of public planning and manipulated

it to their own, to Staff's benefit. They see the value in claiming public participation in everything they do. "We have these meetings, we've invited everybody to come and comment, we've had six meetings on this subject, spread all over town, had these many people attend and respond, so we are public participation organization." And I don't think that's a measure of public participation. (Anonymous, 2001)

These sentiments epitomize the concerns Cooke and Kothari capture in their theory of participatory development practice in which there exists "the naivety of assumptions about the authenticity of motivations and behavior in participatory processes; how the language of empowerment masks a real concern for managerialist effectiveness... and how an emphasis on the micro level of intervention can obscure, and indeed sustain, broader macro-level inequalities and injustice" (2004, p. 14).

Because community planning decisions are some of the more profound powers delegated to local governments, particularly those granted home rule, this arena of citizen involvement is of particular interest for deliberative democracy and participatory practice. Control over the natural and built environment has tremendous impact on quality of life. Indeed, contemporary planning theory is introducing new terms to express the importance of participatory practice in city design decisions, such as "democratic habitation" and "ecological democracy" (Hester, 2006). As shown in extensive research of phenomena such as NIMBYism (Not In My Back Yard) (Livezey, 1980), land use decisions are frequently a source of community conflict and mobilization toward high levels of citizen involvement and influence on decision making processes. As noted by Richard Box from similar experiences in local government, "land is the dominant

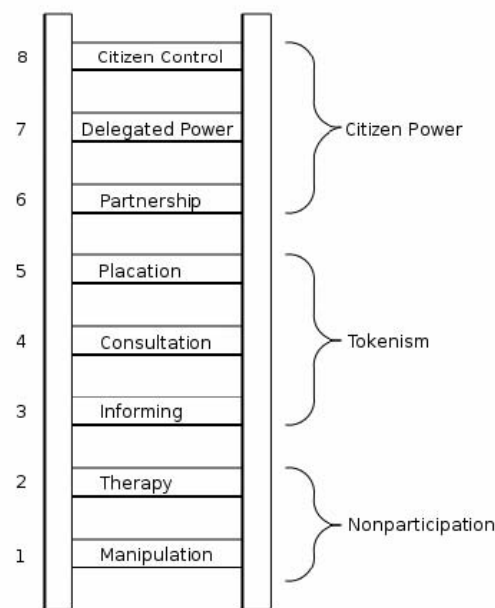
factor in local politics and economics” (1998, p. 48). In fact, Growth Machine theory suggests that efforts to control land use, development, and speculation are “the essence of local government as a dynamic political force” (Molotch, 1976, p. 313). Logan and Molotch (1987) later differentiated between those who benefit from the *exchange* value of land as opposed to those who benefit from the *use* value of land as the primary groups competing for control over land use policy and community development decisions. In such battles, the capitalist interests of the development industry are pitted against the community interests of stakeholder residents.

The principal theoretical concept used to frame the analysis of what has been observed in this case is Arnstein’s (1969) “Ladder of Participation” (see Figure 1). While this grounded theory stemmed from a landmark evaluation of federal War on Poverty programs in the 1960s and their requirement for “maximum feasible participation,” the framework remains quite robust in understanding contemporary land use and development policy contexts. In brief, Arnstein (1969) found that most techniques of public participation can be used in ways that do not authentically engage the citizenry. Her Ladder of Participation depicts increasing degrees of citizen empowerment in community planning and decision making activities: (1) Nonparticipation (manipulation and therapy); (2) Tokenism (information, consultation, and placation); and (3) Citizen Power or genuine participation (partnership, delegated power, and citizen control).

Indeed, a sense of efficacy appears to be of critical importance to citizens. Planners report “experiences in the participation process show that the main source of user satisfaction is not the degree to which a person’s needs have been met, but the feeling of having influenced the decisions” (Sanoff, 2000, p. 12). As an example, Kathlene and Martin’s (1991) empirical study of a citizen survey

panel supports this claim. However, regardless of participant satisfaction, following the advocacy planning model, Forester (1981) believes planners should promote this approach on ethical grounds, in order to expose covert manipulation of agendas, concealment and distortion of information, attempts to distract attention from key issues, and strategic exercises of power. These critical concerns are of import to this case analysis.

Figure 1: Arnstein's (1969) Eight Rungs on a Ladder of Citizen Participation. *Source: Journal of the American Institute of Planners (35)3, p. 217.*



Although the Ladder of Participation is reflected in the more recent “Spectrum of Public Participation” (IAP2, 2007) devised by the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) and policies used by municipalities like Tempe, Arnstein’s formulation continues to offer a

critical view that can be lost in purely technical recommendations for practice (Cooke & Kothari, 2004). It offers a fitting metaphor to describe the arduous climb advocates of community-based planning must often make, particularly in the face of what Motlotch (1976) describes as the powerful business and industry-oriented Growth Machine behind community development. While such forces can sometimes be overcome through broad-based and persistent advocacy (Box, 1998, 2008), it may depend on the economic stakes involved.

In the spirit of using practitioner story-telling to inform theory (Hummel, 1991, 1998; King & Zanetti, 2005), data for this case study comes primarily from personal experience augmented with document review and interviews to broaden and inform autobiography. Research on community development often uses similar types of participant observation (Valocchi, 2007). However, in this case, most observations were made as a citizen/practitioner—a rather novel perspective to be offered in the field (Hummel, 2007). Indeed, many observations and actions came long before enrollment in a doctoral program, but most have since been carefully documented and catalogued in the form of written communication, various City documents, televised public hearings, web site material, and print media. All sources are deemed “fair game” for scholarly reflection because for public administrators “each conversation, each letter, has to be thought about in terms of possible public agitation, investigation, or judgment” (Appleby, 1945, p. 7). Indeed, practical theory is often developed “at the tangled overlap” of a practitioner’s thoughtful reflection on action and a scholar’s deconstruction and critique of recursive social life (Miller & King, 1998, p. 57).

My experiences were part and parcel of practice in a variety of roles, including neighborhood organizer and activist; neighborhood association and coalition founder;

politically appointed committee member; founding executive director of a community development corporation; subcontractor to the municipality for various planning and program implementation activities; and commissioner serving on a municipal policy advisory body. The contextual governance activities included: policy making, planning, and implementation of neighborhood and land use-related initiatives, including citizen participation policies, urban design, affordable housing, economic development, transportation systems, and city facilities planning. Certainly, my own philosophical commitments color the phenomena I tend to take notice of, capture, and use as examples. This is an inherent characteristic of this type of autobiographical data. Given this limitation, I have endeavored to present the events and opinions expressed and recorded by other parties as accurately as possible.

INSTITUTIONALIZING PARTICIPATION

The City of Tempe recently developed and approved a policy and procedures manual for public involvement in all planning and decision making processes. The objective of this endeavor was for Tempe to reclaim its reputation for a commitment to participatory democratic practice and to regain an important degree of community trust. In what became the *Tempe Involving the Public (TIP) Manual* (Tempe, 2007b), the purpose and practices for informal citizen participation completed prior to formal legal proceedings are laid out for private and public planning. Its contents were developed collaboratively by a working group composed of City staff, consultants, and citizen advisory commission members, myself included. Procedures were crafted based on leading techniques of participatory decision making and process facilitation (IAP2, 2007). Upon adoption in August 2007, the City

Council passed a resolution stating its commitment to participatory practice because it “values resident input... believes the community members should be engaged early on in planning activities... is committed to maximizing public input and engagement in planning activities... [and] appreciates that public involvement increases consensus and builds a sense of community and ultimately produces better decisions” (Tempe, 2007a).

The *TIP Manual*’s primary objective is “to engage people in decision-making processes” (Tempe, 2007b, p. 1). It fulfills an objective included in the city’s General Plan 2030 to develop specific guidelines and procedures for involvement in land use planning and development decision-making processes. The *Manual* discusses both the normative and instrumental reasons for engaging residents in planning, along with the four main types of projects undertaken: private development; and public capital improvements, service planning, and long range comprehensive planning. Using IAP2’s Spectrum of Participation, it describes purposes to Inform, Consult, Involve, Collaborate, and Empower. Each type of involvement has associated techniques and descriptions of how they can be implemented to achieve the desired goal. Finally, the *Manual* offers a template for public involvement program design, covering: project description; stakeholder analysis; community concerns; public involvement objectives; involvement techniques; communication approach; project timeline; process facilitation; documentation; and process evaluation.

For each project type, a scale image (from least to most) is provided noting the level of empowerment the city anticipates. While private development projects are primarily expected to Inform and Consult due to property rights concerns, public projects and service are expected to actively Involve stakeholders, while long range planning is expected to Collaborate with citizens. No approach is

expected to fully Empower. As illustrated in Table 1, using the Ladder of Participation as an analytic lens, the *TIP Manual* provides Inform and Consult techniques that can fall prey to the problems of Nonparticipation and Tokenism, but it does warn against manipulative tendencies and emphasizes techniques in the Citizen Power category of collaboration and empowerment.

Table 1: Comparison of IAP2 and Arnstein Models

Level of Citizen Empowerment	IAP2's Spectrum of Participation	Arnstein's Ladder of Participation
Highest	Empower	<i>Citizen Power:</i> Citizen Control
	Collaborate	<i>Citizen Power:</i> Delegated Power
Moderate	Involve	<i>Citizen Power:</i> Partnership
	Consult	<i>Tokenism:</i> Consultation, Placation
Lowest	Inform	<i>Tokenism:</i> Informing <i>Nonparticipation:</i> Manipulation, Therapy

To avoid manipulative or co-opting tendencies, the National Civic League that awarded the All-America City title to Tempe calls for citizen participation to be “a contact sport,” that is, “citizen participation does not mean holding public hearings after the substantive plans already have been adopted” (Parr, 1993, p. 99). Following suit, the *TIP Manual* explains:

Well designed and executed public involvement brings valuable community wisdom to complex problems. When done effectively, public

involvement fosters cooperation and collaboration among individuals with differing viewpoints to find common ground. Rather than treating involvement as a process of competing interests, it is viewed as a forum where the public learns, forms opinions and preferences, and decides *together*. As a result, public involvement increases consensus, builds a sense of community and ultimately produces better decisions. (Tempe, 2007b, p. 1)

Paired with an intended training program (Hort, 2007) the *TIP Manual* may help municipal staff succeed in the new facilitative role that is being demanded of them, but for which they have been only modestly prepared in the past.

Such practices build not only political efficacy, but community and social capital as well (Dennis, 1977; Sanoff, 2000). This emerging paradigm of participatory practice engages all three sectors of society (government, market, and community) in what has been called “interdiscursive policy formation” (Jenkins & Smith, 2001, p. 26) “discursive democracy” (Dryzek, 1990), “political discourse” (Fox & Miller, 1995), and “collaborative planning” (Healey, 1997).

However, technique cannot supplant purpose. If the intention is not to actually empower citizens, going through the motions will not satisfy them. Because patterns of Nonparticipation and Tokenism persist, many scholars recommending participatory practice claim that at minimum, techniques that characterize Citizen Power are necessary (Denhardt, 1981; Dryzek, 1982; Dryzek & Torgerson, 1993; Fay, 1987; Fischer, 1985, 1992, 1995; Fischer & Forester, 1993; Flyvbjerg, 1998; Forester, 1985a, 1985b, 1989; Fox & Miller, 1995; Healey, 2003; Innes de Neufville, 1975; Yanow, 1993, 1995). As Carley & Smith put it, participation must represent a “genuine devolution of authority to local communities” (2001, p. 198).

For Arnstein's Citizen Power to be achieved practitioners must empower citizens in the processes they facilitate and elected representatives must authorize them to do so. Therefore, some scholars require even more than coordination and consideration from administrators, calling for a transformational role that helps citizens engage in a more reflective and emancipating manner (King & Zanetti, 2005), perhaps even in the face of political adversity. In this role, "participatory theory must distinguish between repressive and genuine participation, recognizing that the latter exists when self-awareness *and* communal self-rule are promoted at the same time" (Bachrach & Botwinick, 1992, p. 58).

In short, while Tempe has created a terrific policies and procedures manual that can serve to guide participatory practice, its use and intended goal is not guaranteed. As King and Stivers (1998) point out, where planning and decision-making are genuinely shared, oftentimes power is not bestowed upon the community, but is rather *demande*d by citizens. As one neighbor describes it, "But to be working out there, what you're talking about is advocating, being an advocacy group, being a pure, hard-core activist. And I'm beginning to think now that that's maybe the more effective thing to do" (Anonymous, 2001). Citizens not only want to be procedurally involved, but to feel efficacy in impacting results. This means that practitioners cannot merely go through the motions of participation, but rather must learn to bring citizens into decision-making, planning, and perhaps even implementation as colleagues and partners (King & Zanetti, 2005). This is a matter of purpose, not mere technique.

This case provides ample evidence that such approaches are in demand by real people in real neighborhoods and cities. This is not pie-in-the sky theorizing, but an on-the-ground call for institutionalized democratic process. However, if the past is any predictor of

the future, Tempe can expect to continue its arduous climb up the Ladder of Citizen Participation to ensure empowerment goals are achieved. To understand this claim, we will now turn to the case history.

UNDERSTANDING THE CONTEXT

The City of Tempe is located in the heart of the Phoenix metropolitan area, and is the only land-locked municipality in one of the most rapidly growing regions in the United States. It is centrally situated, giving it tremendous location attraction, and is home to the original and largest campus of Arizona State University. The regional economy rests heavily on the twin pillars of tourism (Associates, 2006) and land development (Heim, 2007). However, due to the growing infrastructure costs of sprawling development, local governments increasingly rely on use and privilege taxes as well as bond issues, impact fees, community facilities districts, tax increment financing, and certificates of participation rather than property taxes alone. Similar to these “fiscalization of land use” (Chapman, 2007; Pincetl, 1999) strategies, intensification of development through planning and zoning changes is used to increase municipal revenues (Heim, 2007). Furthermore, there are few state limits on growth. In fact, a law restricting the ability of governments to use zoning tools and eminent domain in a manner that might reduce property value was passed by voter referendum in the last general election (“Arizona Private Property Rights Protection Act,” 2006). All combined, Tempe is under tremendous pressure to grow *in and up* since it cannot grow *out*. However, as has been predicted, an unintended consequence of revenue through growth promotion strategies can be at least the perception of excessive developer profits (Chapman, 2007; Stout, 2007).

The group of neighborhoods located adjacent to

what will be referred to herein as “Downtown” chose to mobilize toward community-driven development in the mid 1990s. In actuality, Downtown includes the Rio Salado Project (a master-planned waterfront development along the banks of the Salt River and Town Lake converted riverbed reclamation project), the historic commercial district (also known as Mill Avenue), and Arizona State University’s original Tempe campus—all of which are in the oldest and most northwestern third of the city’s approximate 40 square miles. At that time, redevelopment plans for Downtown were in full bloom, replacing locally-owned businesses, particularly those fulfilling basic goods and service needs, with entertainment and tourist-oriented development, along with massive high-end office and condominium projects.

As a result, land speculation was rampant in adjacent neighborhoods, which was only exacerbated by the City’s prior rezoning of many existing single family properties to multifamily zones of varying densities. Rental rates increased, housing quality decreased, and what once were apartments for university students became the homes of low income families, many of whom were immigrants from around the globe. Single family homes increasingly became rentals for groups of students owned by absentee landlords or one local entrepreneur who owns hundreds of poorly maintained homes in the area. This combination of disinvestment, zoning intensification, and adjacent publicly sponsored redevelopment activities put historic homes with quaint mother-in-law cottages at risk of assemblage and demolition for new condominiums and town homes.

Ultimately, ten of these neighborhoods banded together to visualize, plan, and implement the strategies needed to sustain and improve their unique environmental, built, social, and economic characteristics. They wanted to develop deliberative processes through which planning and decision making were genuinely shared with residents—

what Arnstein (1969) refers to as Citizen Power. The process began independently with two different groups: the Maple Ash neighborhood and the conjoined Riverside/Sunset neighborhoods. When the leaders from these two groups met and became friends, the seeds of what would become the Northwest Tempe Neighborhoods coalition, the NewTowN Community Development Corporation, and the Tempe Community Land Trust were planted. I am one of these individuals.

CLIMBING THE LADDER

Nonparticipation

Prior to neighborhood organizing, community development processes were highly professionalized practices with support from those who have been described as “boosters” of development in high-growth regions like the American southwest (Bridges, 1997)—civic leagues, chambers of commerce, development-related professionals, and the politicians they support. Accordingly, city staff members were selected based on their capacity to make the deals necessary to move development forward. Associated public processes met the requirements of the law, but consisted predominantly of one-way statements traded among interested community members and both volunteer citizen advisory boards and the elected City Council. Typical practices included executive sessions, blue-ribbon advisory panels, open houses, general opinion surveys, and formal public hearings, all of which would be characterized in Arnstein’s (1969) model as Informing at best, manipulation or therapy at worst. These were the types of practices I witnessed in 1989 upon moving to Tempe.

Many long-time community members described these activities as public relations vehicles for power-holders, providing no more than “rubberstamp” legitimacy to pre-determined policies based on closed-door deal-

making. Some of the more interactive efforts at times devolved into a form of manipulation through which residents were told that their views were inappropriate and that alternative views described by professional staff were correct. As one neighbor expressed, “We’ve been basically been told why we can’t do things, and that’s pretty sad” (Anonymous, 2001). At best, public meetings were one-way communication vehicles in which information was disseminated and opinions were exchanged and catalogued. But such consultation often felt as if city staff were merely going through the motions.

As King and Stivers (1998) describe this pattern, there were “a plethora of administrative regulations aimed at getting citizen input. In practice, however, many of these regulations were interpreted in a fashion that turned citizen participation into an instrument for the achievement of administrative objectives rather than genuine collaboration or the sharing of authority with citizens” (p. 54). In sum, if residents objected to a pro-development agenda, they were called “delusional” (Durrenberger, 2001, 2002) or “communist” (Benton, 1999) by those in that camp.

Grassroots leaders began to emerge in neighborhoods adjacent to Downtown in response to what they felt were dissatisfying processes and resultant undesirable land use policy and community development decisions. As a result of initial organizing and advocacy on the part of the Maple Ash neighborhood, the City of Tempe created the Neighborhood Program in 1987 to “help preserve the integrity of Tempe’s residential areas and to promote a sense of community” (Tempe, 2008). The program identified and named neighborhoods throughout the city, proceeding to mobilize volunteer associations and provide technical assistance for organizing and sustaining them. Practices moved from mere Informing at best to Consultation and Placation.

Tokenism

Tempe's first and most active volunteer neighborhood association (MANA) represented the Maple Ash neighborhood; a unique blend of gentrifying homeowners and the students to whom they rent accessory dwellings and multifamily houses. In the early 1990s, MANA had produced a vision statement about the importance of preserving their neighborhood's historic character and buildings, being comprised of some of the oldest remaining subdivisions in Tempe (platted in 1909 and 1924). According to MANA leaders, the vision was largely ignored by the City. Led by Lucier, the board members established a nonprofit corporation in 1994, the Maple Ash Restoration Coalition (MARCo), with plans to buy, restore, and sell to owner occupants important and strategically located historic homes. This effort was hoped to deter land speculation and redevelopment, which was well underway due to intensified zoning overlays and market conditions.

Somewhat simultaneously, three neighbors from the Riverside/Sunset neighborhoods—Tim Walters, Todd Green, and I—revitalized two defunct associations that had been named by the City, mobilizing interest in forming a coalition with shared leadership (RSNA). Bridging the diverse concerns of these neighborhoods' third-generation Hispanic families, incoming young urban professionals, and immigrants from around the globe was no simple proposition. Door-to-door, neighbor-to-neighbor conversations, and many house meetings eventually created sufficient trust and comfort to begin more formal meetings in the elementary school cafeteria and Boys & Girls Club activity room.

We created a vision statement that identified eight areas of opportunity and need for creating a socially, economically, and environmentally sustainable future. Rather than prioritizing any one, neighborhood champions

took on their preferences as advocates with the City. This document was presented to the Tempe Interdepartmental Service Team, and adopted as an informal policy guide for future operations. Patterns of two-way dialogue and deliberative Consultation were established.

However, actual policy decisions such as land use plans and development approvals were still being made through the formal public hearing process. While neighborhood associations were recognized as representing a constituency, their input was given little more weight than the numbers of neighbors who could be mustered to appear at such hearings would warrant. As an example, while MANA represented a large number of resident homeowners and business owners in Maple Ash, a rental property owner group called M.A.P.L.E. (Maple Ash Property and Landowner Entity) with a handful of members was given equal credibility in decision making processes. Both were placated with assurances that they had been equally included according to procedure.

Citizen Power: Partnership

After receiving RSNA's vision statement, two staff members took on an advocacy role that would change the city's relationship with the neighborhoods fundamentally—at least for a period of time. Mary O'Connor, then responsible for alternative modes of transportation, used the vision statement and an associated position paper on the neighborhood collector to begin grant writing for a traffic calming and pedestrian/bicycle design project that was ultimately not only implemented but award-winning. Dave Fackler, then director of Redevelopment and Special Projects recommended that the neighborhoods create a "Specific Area Plan" that would more firmly guide and realize the vision described. Unfortunately, because the long-range planner was dedicated to a revision of the General Plan (2020), staff assistance was not available. But

Fackler did suggest that neighborhood grant funds might be used for planning, and that the local association of architects might be able to help. Perhaps unwittingly for these two administrators, the combined need for community revitalization and the lack of internal resources set the City of Tempe down an untraveled path of neighborhood empowerment and collaborative planning—the City and neighborhood leaders entered into Partnership.

As the Co-Chair of RSNA, I garnered funding and support to host a planning process in 1995. Using a \$5,000 grant from Tempe's Neighborhood Program, a \$1,500 supply grant and team of professional volunteers from the Rio Salado chapter of the American Institution of Architects, and the paid design charrette facilitation from a planner and architect duo (John Minett and Rick Phillips), we launched a year-long community-based planning process that included over a hundred neighborhood residents, business owners, land owner/developers, school and nonprofit representatives, Downtown business district representatives, and representatives from most of the City's departments, in addition to a City Council member who resided in the neighborhood. In short, it was a truly collaborative effort that utilized extensive dialogue and deliberation. As one neighbor reflected, "I think they've really listened and responded to our concerns" (Anonymous, 2001).

Simultaneous to this planning effort, I was appointed by the City Council to the volunteer committee and smaller "Select Vision Task Force" assisting the long-range planner (Atis Krigers) in the General Plan 2020 revision process. Working directly with Krigers on drafts, I advocated for community-based planning policy language on behalf of my peers, ultimately securing inclusion of an objective to "encourage neighborhood planning", describing associated strategies for various levels of community-based planning with increasing levels of legal

authority:

1. **Neighborhood Action Plan:** a plan focusing on one or more problems that can be presented by an ad hoc basis by individual residents or groups of residents, including a neighborhood association. These plans are acted on directly by City staff.
2. **Neighborhood Strategic Plan:** a plan in response to a neighborhood association recognizes the need for a long-term, yet flexible plan to direct the neighborhood's future in an effective, comprehensive manner. These plans are reviewed and accepted by the City Council prior to being acted on by City staff.
3. **Specific Area Plan:** a plan that goes beyond the strategic plan in the level of formal public process and inclusiveness of all stakeholders, and resulting comprehensiveness and specificity of information. This plan is adopted through formal legal procedures into the City's General Plan by reference, and carry the full legal weight of that document. (Tempe, 1997)
- 4.

This language provided the first official claim to Citizen Power in Tempe by establishing policy for planning documents that could be developed by citizens themselves. As described by Fackler, the community members thought they were developing a Specific Area Plan—a legal policy document that would guide development.

Also in 1995, Lucier and I were recognized by the City's Neighborhood Program as active contributors to the vitality of our neighborhoods and were given scholarships to attend the Neighborhoods USA conference in Birmingham, Alabama. The theme was "Reaching Common Ground Through Strong Neighborhoods," with

workshops illustrating the vital role that neighborhood organizations play in the shaping of their cities' futures (NUSA, 2007). The conversations started there led to a rapid expansion of the Northwest Tempe coalition movement. Members from adjacent neighborhood associations began participating in the RSNA planning process as observers and professional volunteers, spreading the news about how the neighborhoods were being empowered through a community-based deliberative process. As interest grew, it became evident that a coalition of neighborhoods was possible and of value in terms of synergy as well as political clout.

However, it also became clear to us that unless the neighborhoods continued to bring resources to the table for implementation, they might revert back to a position of need rather than partnership with the City. Indeed, as observed by Arnstein (1969), community groups with financial resources and expertise cultivate bargaining power through which citizens can demand empowerment. I recommended the establishment of a community development corporation, to which Lucier responded with the offer to transform and expand the mission of MARCo. The proposal was readily accepted by the board of directors, as the larger purpose promised better chances for fundraising and successful implementation of preservation efforts. The neighborhood partners were institutionalized.

Citizen Power: Delegated Power

I was hired in 1996 as the founding Executive Director of the Northwest Tempe Neighborhoods Community Development Corporation (NewTowN) and with generous support and technical assistance from the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) and Fannie Mae the organization was off to a running start. With Lucier acting as the founding Board Chair, we hit the streets to gather support from the growing neighborhood

coalition. Board members were recruited from nearly every adjacent neighborhood association in an area bounded on the south and west by industrial park; on the north by the Rio Salado Project; and on the east by the central commercial district and Arizona State University. As it turned out, this service area was fully within an Arizona Enterprise Zone, a City-identified Revitalization Area, and was home to several low income U. S. Census tracts. In this context, development tended to be “based purely on profitability rather than the intrinsic value of the existing residential fabric” (NewTowN, 1999).

As NewTowN was being established, RSNA completed their neighborhood planning process, with the resulting *Riverside/Sunset Neighborhoods Strategic Plan* being presented to the City Council in 1997 and accepted as a statement of *preferences*, pending adoption as a Specific Area Plan amendment to the General Plan (*policy* document) and other zoning tools, such as redevelopment and preservation overlay districts (*regulatory* documents). However, as the City was aware of NewTowN’s establishment, this process was put on hold to allow the remaining eight neighborhoods in its service area to complete similar planning efforts. Thus, NewTowN’s first order of business was to replicate the RSNA planning process. This time a \$20,000 grant from the Tempe Neighborhood Program was more than matched by outside nonprofit funding sources, and a planning team including two process facilitators (Venture Catalyst) and a land use planner/attorney (Rick Counts) were hired, with project management provided by me as the Executive Director of NewTowN. In addition to the objective of completing the Plan itself, due to the adoption of General Plan 2020, the team acknowledged that we were inventing and setting precedent for future community-based planning processes in Tempe. For the first time, neighborhood leaders felt truly empowered:

From the beginning, I mean, we set out to fight a battle and we were doing it on our own. In my mind anyway, because, um, we didn't feel the City shared our vision and we didn't think the City would provide that for us and we needed to do it by ourselves in order to achieve it. They then offered and stepped up and committed to do things... I really felt that, working with the Staff, you know, here's somebody that has structure and credibility and the force of law behind it. And I was really hopeful that we could really change things. (Anonymous, 2001)

The planning process followed a very similar pattern to that of RSNA's, being broadly inclusive and collaborative with various City departments and other stakeholders. As before, the planning sessions used a variety of interactive methods, including educational workshops, visioning, strategic planning, and design charrettes. All processes were deliberative in nature, allowing for extensive amounts of dialogue prior to decision making. The opinions of residents, property owners, and local business owners were weighted above those of developers and outside organizations. Paid consultants and Tempe professional staff alike were considered "on tap" and were never allowed to dominate discussion or decisions. But it must be noted that at no time during these processes did they attempt to do so. Even participating developers were respectful and seemed genuinely engaged. Indeed, the atmosphere was fully creative, collaborative, and rather exciting—I recall members of MANA and M.A.P.L.E. describing one event during this time as a "love fest." The only people empowered to direct anything were process facilitators, who co-designed the rules of engagement with participants.

The resulting *Northwest Tempe Neighborhoods*

Strategic Plan was ratified item by item, with line editing during the final public meeting where necessary to achieve consensus. No item was allowed in the plan that any person could not live with, with exception to one dissenting opinion refuting the notion of a plan altogether (Hondorp, 1998) which was attached as an addendum. In a plan covering nearly two square miles, areas of contestation were reduced to a matter of the parcels in four contiguous half-blocks. The city staff participating in the process characterized this outcome as not only successful, but bordering on miraculous given the contentious nature of past planning and development decisions (Fackler, 1998; Krigers, 1998).

In sum, Delegated Power seemed to be working. The *Northwest Tempe Neighborhoods Strategic Plan* was completed in November 1998 and accepted by the City Council in the summer of 1999 as a guiding document, having been presented to all boards and commissions related to land and transportation development beforehand.

A Regulatory Sidebar

A sidebar is needed to explain the planning terminology being used in this article. The original intent in both neighborhood planning processes was to create both a *policy* and *regulatory* document. In other words, the Plan would clearly state preferences to guide policy decisions, but would also provide regulatory control over things like design guidelines above and beyond those found in the zoning ordinance. In very small and specific locations, recommendations for actual zoning changes were even made, usually based on the agreement of the property owners in question. Furthermore, the Plan called for mixed use zoning, which at the time did not exist in Tempe ordinance. This same understanding was held by residents in the remaining eight neighborhoods as they began the second planning process. In this way, residents established

expectations that the deliberative processes in which they were engaged represented genuine collaboration with the City to create both policy and regulatory tools.

However, General Plan 2020, stated a Specific Area Plan is “adopted through formal legal procedures into the City’s General Plan by reference, and carries the full legal weight of that document” (Tempe, 1997). Thus legally, a Specific Area Plan could not fulfill the expectations of the community to produce a *regulatory* effect. Furthermore, the City insisted that because they did not fully control the planning process, the RSNA Plan did not meet what was now considered “a plan that goes beyond the strategic plan in the level of formal public process and inclusiveness of all stakeholders, and resulting comprehensiveness and specificity of information” (Tempe, 1997). This differentiation of policy versus regulation and demotion of the Plan to the status of Strategic Plan would play a key role in the community’s perception of backsliding down the Ladder of Participation into disempowered positions of cooptation and Tokenism.

To complicate matters, state legislation known as Growing Smarter was launched in 1998 and updated in 2000 (Council, 2002). These acts changed the regulatory capacity and processes required for local land use planning throughout Arizona. The Growing Smarter laws brought new control over how municipalities and counties were allowed to produce and adopt long-range General Plans, as well as various zoning tools. Of key interest to the case in question are the requirements that land use policies in the form of General Plans must be adopted by all local governments via popular election; that major amendments to the General Plan be considered through a detailed public hearing process only once per year; and that regulatory tools be approved by the majority of affected property owners. In the state’s terminology, Specific Plans are considered regulatory in nature. Thus, the Tempe General

Plan's definition was in conflict with state law, and the entire notion of Specific Area Plans was put into limbo until General Plan 2020 could be revised.

Because of the Growing Smarter laws, it would not be until General Plan 2030 was adopted on December 4, 2003 that the community's desire for a *regulatory* type of neighborhood plan would even become possible under both Tempe ordinance and Arizona state law. General Plan 2030 defines a Community Plan as including "any elements present in the General Plan, such as a land use map, a transportation plan, urban design strategies, park master plans, and economic development plans. These plans amend the General Plan and are adopted by the city Council" (Tempe, 2003, p. 76). This definition corresponds to the previously named Specific Area Plan. However, following the new state laws:

Specific Plans are created if implementation of a Community Plan requires changes to the *Zoning Ordinance*, or to create other land use planning tools listed in the *Land Use Element* of the General Plan. A Specific Plan may include requirements that change the zoning map or code text of the underlying zoning district in regard to such characteristics as: development design guidelines, landscape design guidelines and urban design guidelines. (Tempe, 2003, p. 78)

Therefore, to generate the policy and regulatory effect the community desired, both a Community Plan and a Specific Plan would be required. With these clarifications in mind, the history and the changing nature of community empowerment in the case history will be clearer.

Back to Delegated Power

Given changes in state law, the neighborhoods' Plan would require additional public process in order to meet requirements for a *regulatory* Specific Area Plan in addition to being adopted as a General Plan amendment. A

process and schedule through which these two tasks would be accomplished were set by NewTowN and Tempe staff.

By June 1999, the two Strategic Plans were merged in a draft document that was to be carried forward as a single General Plan amendment and Specific Area Plan for all ten Northwest Tempe neighborhoods (NewTowN & City of Tempe Development Services, 1999). The City's preliminary schedule for the draft plan's review and adoption was to release the draft June 11, 1999; hold public meetings July 14 and 31; hold public hearings before the Planning & Zoning Commission August 24 and September 14; and request City Council adoption October 7, 1999 (Calfee, 1999). In actuality, it was not presented until November 1999 and its unveiling represented the last time it would be addressed by the city staff and council. The explanation of this delay and dismissal represents the beginning of the slide back down the Ladder of Participation for northwest Tempe.

THE MARKET PUSHES BACK

In order to implement some of the recommended strategies in the Draft Specific Area Plan, a Redevelopment and Preservation district and plan was recommended to balance community needs with individual property rights in specific areas. In other words, it was understood that to create the sustainable urban village described in the Plan, the market would have to be bent toward that purpose in a sensitive manner. In some cases, properties might have increased zoning controls placed on them for historic preservation. Others might be recommended for municipal purchase or easement in order to enhance open space or pedestrian connectivity via paths or alleys. Yet others would be intensified in development capacity through mixed use zoning, density increases, accessory dwelling allowances, or urban design guidelines that increase

buildable area. Increased municipal investment was requested to redesign transportation corridors to create better pedestrian and transit linkages, to enhance urban design in small blocks with alley access, and to redesign parks and community facilities. The Plan even called for a free neighborhood circulator bus that would require funds from an anticipated transit tax, and school redesigns that would require district approval and funding.

NewTowN representatives considered themselves advocates for this community-based planning and implementation of resulting plans, providing financial and professional resources to the effort. However, the City of Tempe had other ideas. First, due to the changing state laws, Tempe was reticent to accept neighborhood plans as regulatory Specific Area Plans, and required that they be renamed Strategic Plans and adopted as policy tools until the regulatory dust had settled. Exacerbating this reticence was the insistence of nearby neighborhood coalitions like the North Tempe Neighborhoods and the Apache Boulevard Neighborhoods to receive similar planning assistance. The City Manager was concerned that they would not have sufficient resources to meet the increased planning expectations of neighborhood groups throughout the city (Manley, 1998). Third, community members who did not get all they wanted from the neighborhood plans (Gitlis, 1999; Tseffos, 1998) or disagreed with their existence in the first place (Hondorp, 1998) challenged the representativeness of NewTowN as an advocate for those plans. Last but not least, resistance from prominent local developers to the limitations represented in the neighborhood plans (Benton, 1999) created a concern that they would be too unresponsive to the market, thereby hindering the revitalization desired. These concerns were the bellwether of the City's retrenchment to safer Tokenism practices of Informing, Consultation, and Placation rather

than Citizen Power practices of Partnership and Delegated Power.

To sort out the manner in which all such neighborhood planning would be carried out in the future, Tempe created a new long-range planning position of Neighborhood Planner and delayed the *Northwest Tempe Neighborhoods Specific Area Plan*'s review and adoption process until the position was filled and the new hire was brought up to speed. The City hired Bonnie Richardson, a local architect, a resident of Tempe in an adjacent neighborhood and a close friend of a prominent developer (John Benton) who publicly opposed the community's Plan. This was a controversial hire in the eyes of neighborhood leaders: "You don't know what forces are at play, and, it would be nice if you did, you know. There's a lot of suspicion that there are other people that are influencing City Staff... But you don't know that, I don't know that for a fact... I guess I'm suggesting developers, local developers" (Anonymous, 2001).

NewTowN's response to planning delays was to begin service area expansion discussions to include the other neighborhoods requesting community-based planning to help relieve staff overload concerns as well as to expand the grassroots coalition. We also sought to establish a neighborhood Planning Area Advisory Board (PAAB) that would function in a representative advisory capacity to both NewTowN's board and the Tempe City Council in further planning and implementation activities associated with adoption of the *Northwest Tempe Neighborhoods Specific Area Plan*.

Perhaps in an effort to show good faith in this difficult time, then-Mayor Neil Giuliano established the PAAB in December 1999, with members chosen by the ten Northwest Tempe neighborhood associations and ratified by the Mayor. However, the group served as an advisory board to the Neighborhood Planner rather than to the

Council as recommended. As one member reflected, “I think, rather, the leadership in the City sees that, the PAAB, as a bone. They’ve thrown us a bone. They’ve given us some staff and they’ve given us a place to voice our opinions, so, you know, OK, they’ve given us enough” (Anonymous, 2001).

The PAAB’s principal tasks were to: (1) provide input and guidance in the development of the Northwest Tempe Neighborhoods Specific Area Plan; (2) advising the City’s development review staff, boards and commissions on current development issues; (3) review development proposals for conformance with neighborhood goals; (4) provide a forum for developers to communicate with the neighborhoods proposed development projects; and (5) obtain comments from the neighborhood constituents on issues presented to the board (Tempe, 2000).

However, rather than moving forward with the 1999 planning task and schedule reported above (Calfee, 1999), the Neighborhood Planner only allowed items pertaining to the development review and recommendation function to appear on the PAAB agenda. As another member reflected, “Yeah, the Specific Area Plan has been in existence, but it’s not, uh, formally accepted or whatever. That’s created quite a... hullabaloo in the PAAB” (Anonymous, 2001). In several meetings I observed in 2000, Richardson appeared to tightly control the board, placing herself and her staff assistant on either side of the Chair (Roy Hoyt) at the table, passing him notes on an ongoing basis throughout meetings, and engaging in fairly intense altercations with several board members when they challenged her regarding promised planning activities. Richardson also selected and appointed new members to the PAAB without either Board or City Council action, ostensibly to better represent businesses in the neighborhoods. One member later reported that the staff members had been chastised about directing the meetings and were moved away from the table

as observers only (Anonymous, 2001). As another member reflected, “In the beginning they brought food, and ‘Let’s change the world’... and the other extreme, is, you know, cat fights. Literally, you know, between a Staff member and a board member. And it was incredibly tense” (Anonymous, 2001).

Rather than the promised draft Specific Area Plan review and adoption process, Richardson began anew with a series of community workshops meant to educate neighbors on urban design concepts and to produce new information needed to update the neighborhood plan. A number of rationales were given for this move by Richardson and Fackler, depending on the audience and point in time: (1) the Riverside/Sunset plan was now at the end of its anticipated five-year lifespan and needed renewal; (2) the plans were not appropriately responsive to changing market conditions; (3) the planning processes had not been sufficiently inclusive of business and land owners; and (4) the plans were not created with appropriate professionalism. In sum, these claims express a concern that the community-based plans represent a “tyranny of decision-making and control” (Cooke & Kothari, 2004) in the sense that they usurped the legitimate authority delegated to city officials, both elected and hired.

The professional consultants and residents having given hundreds of hours as volunteer planners over the course of many years firmly reject these claims, sustaining a debate that continues to date. “We have worked incredibly hard and make a lot of sacrifices... you know, we’ve been at it for years and years and years, and we actually had a commitment from the City and the City has yet to follow through on that commitment” (Anonymous, 2001). The community claims that both the process and its product are legitimate and should be honored as promised.

None of the subsequent City meetings had the deliberative character of the community-based processes,

based on personal observation and conversations with my neighborhood peers who continued to participate. Instead of dialogue among experts and residents, information was given in a formal manner that felt quite patronizing to me, considering the years of planning experience gained by residents, the expertise offered by resident professionals, and the pioneering role our neighborhood plans had played in developing things like mixed use zoning ordinances, pedestrian-oriented design guidelines, affordable housing policies, and small-scale neighborhood transit service. In short, techniques which may have had a genuine intention of Informing or Consultation felt like Manipulation and Therapy in light of previous efforts in Delegated Power.

After over two years of redundant meetings and complaints from citizens about the unnecessary use of community volunteer time to develop a new plan, Richardson unveiled a draft for adoption as an amendment to the General Plan, which was firmly rejected by the community. It had little resemblance to the original neighborhood plans and was difficult even to compare for comment given its radically different organization and content. The land use designations were vastly different from the hard-earned agreements obtained during the community-based planning processes. The maps represented significant intensification of uses and a patent expectation of zoning changes, land assemblage, and redevelopment. Some of these areas also happened to coincide with land holdings of Benton Robb Development, casting suspicion on Richardson's motives. Furthermore, there was a stated intent by the City to completely bypass the promised redevelopment/preservation plan developed with a citizen advisory committee. Instead, the draft plan identified blocks of the neighborhoods for which city-crafted Request for Proposals would be submitted to the development community for plan, design, and build. In fact, a local developer reported receiving a personal

notification from Richardson of this eventuality and was asked if he would be interested before the draft plan was even released to the public (Claasen, 2001). Such development agreements have been described elsewhere as market-driven “de facto long-term planning” (Pincetl, 1999, p. 198).

As community critiques of the City’s draft *Specific Area Plan* were lodged, the PAAB came under fire, seemingly in retribution. Reminiscent of Arnstein’s (1969) notion of therapeutic efforts to “fix” public opinion, its members were depicted by a local newspaper columnist as “delusional” (Durrenberger, 2001). Not surprisingly, the columnist lived in Maple Ash, the most contested neighborhood, in a project built by Benton Robb Development in partnership with M.A.P.L.E. leader Steve Tseffos—both public detractors of the neighborhood plans. With counter-argument editorials from PAAB members also being published in the newspaper, the final altercation took the form of anonymous flyers being posted in the neighborhood in December 2001 that called Richardson an “urban terrorist” (Durrenberger, 2001). Following just months after the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington, D.C., the entire project was questioned and the PAAB was formally dissolved by the Mayor in March 2002, followed quickly by the elimination of the Neighborhood Planner position and Richardson’s reassignment to another department. A Mayor-appointed Neighborhood Advisory Commission was formed to meet the rhetorical need for policy input from neighborhoods, without making them geographically representative and without empowering members with any type of planning or development review authority.

Sentiments in the neighborhood could not have been more disheartened:

I thought that working with the City, you could really be more effective. You know, whether it be infrastructure or bringing businesses into the neighborhood, and you could be more positive. That was my hope. And those beginning meetings were very positive, they were very creative meetings. There were good people there. Um, and it's decayed. I've seen very little, very little result. I know I've heard people argue differently, but I can't think of any tangible results, anything physical that's come from this. I suppose there was some recognition, and um, there was some education, I mean... there was a perception of some kind of progress, because there was a consciousness-raising. But, as of late, I think even that has suffered. (Anonymous, 2001)

THE COMMUNITY CLIMBS AGAIN ...OR MAYBE NOT

As has been noted, when citizen participation is used as a tool of manipulation or cooptation, a "cycle of instability and distrust between the government and its citizens" (Roberts, 2004, p. 344) is established. That is precisely what has occurred over more than the last decade in Tempe. While Richardson's draft plan was tabled by the City, it remained in potential competition with the community's two *Neighborhood Strategic Plans* and the original draft joint *Specific Area Plan*. A seemingly irresolvable conflict pitting the community's vision against that of the Neighborhood Planner was created, and as a result no plans were referenced by staff or developers. One member of the Planning & Zoning Commission noted that had it been adopted "we wouldn't be having a fraction of the debates about development projects that we're having" (Anonymous, 2001).

Perhaps because of these ongoing difficulties, an effort was made in 2002 to determine precisely what went wrong with the City's process and what could be done to rectify the situation and bring a Specific Area Plan to successful conclusion. Consultant Lance Decker was hired to facilitate a mediation process between the City and community members. His final recommendations included: "Two strategic plans are in place. Abandon the current SAP [Richardson's Specific Area Plan] process and when greater definition of community direction is needed by City staff and boards, use the neighborhood strategic plans for reference.... Only after a clear, compelling and unified community-based desire for change is established, should redevelopment and/or preservation proceed" (Decker, 2002).

General Plan 2030 was adopted at the end of 2003 with new language pertaining to community plans. Unfortunately, the previous objective to encourage neighborhood planning was replaced with language like "educate and involve the public in city processes"; "allow for public comment through all stages of a clearly defined planning process"; and "inform neighborhoods of land use plans and provide a forum for them to comment, as well as a mechanism for providing feedback that ensures the neighbors that their input has been considered" (Tempe, 2003, p. 114). However, as a member of the Neighborhood Advisory Commission, I secured inclusion of a strategy to "develop and implement a Planning and Public Involvement Policies and Procedures Manual that describes the specific planning and public engagement processes for all city planning tools." These new tools, in accordance with state Growing Smarter laws, included:

Neighborhood Vision (Strategic Plan) –When accepted by the city Council, this plan becomes a guiding document for city department action in the

area. (Tempe, 2003, p. 77)

Community Plan –These plans amend the General Plan and are adopted by the city Council. Deviations from the Community Plan would require a General Plan amendment. (Tempe, 2003, p. 76)

Specific Plan –Specific Plans are enabled by state legislation and adoption of the document the city Council carries the weight of the *Zoning Ordinance*, and would require a variance hearing for deviations from the plan. (Tempe, 2003, p. 78)

Finally, neighborhood expectations for a *regulatory* tool were matched by ordinance language. So we continued to push for review and adoption of our draft *Specific Area Plan* and rejection of Richardson’s version once and for all. However, neither staff nor city council members were willing to do so. Through supportive advocacy efforts from the Neighborhood Advisory Commission, a recommendation was finally made early in 2004 to hire a new consultant (Peggy Fiandaca of Partners in Strategic Action) to not only complete the failed plan, but to establish policies and procedures for future community planning efforts to prevent such a debacle from happening again. With concurrence from the City Council, funds were allocated and the Commission members were charged with overseeing the consultant’s work in order to provide ongoing advice to staff and the City Council.

In March 2005, yet another community planning process was kicked off. However in accordance with General Plan 2030, the City’s goal was to produce a Community Plan, a *policy* document, not a *regulatory* tool. Fiandaca spent the majority of public meeting time gathering new input and feedback about the neighborhood vision. Once again, long-time participants requested that the consultant go back to the community’s draft *Specific Area Plan* as a starting point, as the language in the two

strategic plans from which it was composed were the last consensus-based statements achieved. New neighborhood participants gave very similar input to that garnered many years earlier. Fiandaca reported large agreement between the new public input and the existing neighborhood plans, noting that she could see where Richardson's draft departed from that vision. We became hopeful that at long last, the barriers had been overcome.

Disappointingly, Fiandaca attempted to merge elements of a variety of plans into a draft that was even more confusing and impossible to compare to the community's plan than was the draft produced by Richardson. There was no documentation indicating where ideas came from, why they were chosen over others, why many strategies from the neighborhood plans had simply disappeared, or why so much was included from Richardson's rejected draft. Once again, the process was tabled until March of 2007 when a *second* draft (lacking any explanation of changes) was presented to the community in two public meetings scheduled one week apart.

At this point, Fiandaca was asked to return to facilitate the meetings, but a new Neighborhood Planner (Decima Sever) was hired to see the project through and the Assistant City Manager (Jeeff Kulaga) stated his personal commitment and official assignment to oversee its completion. The emotional tenor of neighbors during the first meeting and the first hour of the second meeting was very tense, heated, and was characterized during the meeting by Fiandaca as communicating "a clear sense of betrayal." Two points of contention related to empowerment became apparent. First, all drafts proposed by the City and its consultants were under suspicion by members of the community due to their deletion of highly valued strategies and their inclusion of what were perceived to be inordinately pro-development policies. An example

given during the meeting was an objective that had read “Protect residential areas from negative impacts of road improvements and new development” (NewTowN & City of Tempe Development Services, 1999) which had been changed to “Promote new development, road improvements, and investment that improve residential areas and respect the Northwest Tempe Community unique quality” (Tempe, 2006, p. 11). Such changes represented a clear difference in development and preservation agendas.

Second, the community expected a Specific Area Plan that included zoning type regulations, and many of its most valued strategies were of that nature: design guidelines and zoning tools that would ensure the achievement of their goals and objectives. The City was only offering a policy level tool in the form of a Community Plan amendment to the General Plan and therefore continued to delete all Plan elements that had a regulatory effect because they do not belong in that type of instrument. Becoming aware of this misalignment of goals during the public meeting, the Kulaga suggested that *two* plan documents might be brought forward to the City Council: (1) a Community Plan that would go through the adoption process as planned; and (2) a Specific Plan that would be a draft starting point for review and adoption as a whole, or through a variety of possible zoning tools such as zoning overlay districts with character area design guidelines. Some community members balked even at that idea, demanding that only if a Specific Plan were presented simultaneously for adoption would they accept a Community Plan amendment to the General Plan. However, consensus on what to do was not sought.

With a renewed hope that the City might consider excluded regulatory items for a Specific Plan or various other zoning tools, a true resolution of community conflict looked promising. While it is quite certain that the adoption of such tools would be controversial and fraught

with conflict as they move forward, Tempe would have successfully achieved its original promise made nearly ten years earlier—to bring the community’s vision for a sustainable future forward through both policy and regulation.

Ultimately, the *Northwest Tempe Community Plan* was slated for adoption as a major amendment to the General Plan in October, 2007 without mention of an accompanying or intended Specific Plan. It began its way through the formal hearing process as a minor amendment with a first stop at the Development Review Commission (DRC) prior to consideration by the City Council. It was first slated for the DRC on September 25th, but was continued to November 13, 2007 so that staff could make further changes to the draft plan based on internal review (Sever, 2007). Upon hearing very little public support and a great deal of opposition (well into the early morning hours), the DRC voted unanimously that it be rejected based on insufficient evidence that it was necessary in light of recent changes to state law and city ordinance, and questions regarding whether or not it was in fact representative of the thousands of residents in the area (Lathrop, 2009). As of this writing, it has not yet appeared on a City Council agenda and the document continues to appear on the City web site as “*Proposed Northwest Tempe Community Plan*” (Tempe, 2009). The community’s original draft *Specific Area Plan* is not listed at all (the document that competes with the many drafts produced by City staff and consultants), while the two original *Neighborhood Strategic Area Plans* are provided.

A CALL TO ACTION

What is surprising about this case study is not so much that a community has been persistently climbing up the Ladder of Participation only to be pushed back down

again by powerful market interests. Indeed, in her dissertation inquiry, Holmes (2005) suggests that such empowerment reached a zenith of Delegated Power in federal programs sometime in the early 1990s, with government retrenching back into positions of Informing and Consultation in the last decade or so. What is troubling is that in the 40 years since Arnstein developed her model, we seem to have gotten much more sophisticated in our methods and rhetoric to *appear as if* we are pursuing Partnership, Delegated Power, and even Citizen Control, while still resulting in outcomes typically associated with Informing, Consultation, and Placating at best, and Manipulation and Therapy at worst. Participatory practice in this case could be described as a “tyranny of methods” (Bell, 1994) in which technique is applied without critical awareness of how it perpetuates social injustice or status quo power relations. While Tempe’s policy manual is ostensibly designed to enhance citizen participation, it may serve only to better disguise actual intentions to co-opt or control citizen participation.

This case study suggests that pursuit of the “spirit” of meaningful citizen involvement in public administration requires attention to both purpose and technique simultaneously. We cannot get wrapped up in making policies for procedures and methods without equal attention to the goals for participation and how those intentions play out in attitudes, practices, and actual outcomes. As Weber noted, “in a so-called rational culture, he observed, progress becomes identified with technique. The ability to discern purposes declines” (Hummel, 2006, p. 325). Without the critical lens, we may lose sight of the forest (democratic purpose) for the trees (technique).

A technique of “public meeting” or “focus group” or “design charrette” can be made to serve rhetorical goals of Consultation or Partnership or devolve into Manipulation and Therapy based on the motivations at

play, the attitudes expressed, and the manner in which communication occurs—in other words, the ethos of government action.

It would be convenient if we could simply marry tools to purposes as implied by the IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation (IAP2, 2007). If technique were synonymous with purpose, we could say things like: “When you use open houses, you are only serving to Inform the public by providing balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding problems, alternatives, and/or solutions”; or “When you use Citizen Advisory Committees, you Collaborate with citizens in each aspect of the decision making process, including development of alternatives and identification of the preferred solution.” Ideally, as a practitioner, I could look at the *TIP Manual* and select a technique based on a goal to Involve the public, look up the associated techniques and directions in the appendices, and achieve the purpose of ensuring that public concerns are consistently understood and considered. This would be similar to contextual purpose-issue matrices that have been proposed in theory (Walters, Aydelotte, & Miller, 2000).

Unfortunately, practitioner attitudes and intentions color the actions taken while using these techniques and stated purposes may not be authentic or shared by all. If I do not *really* want to empower citizens or if I do not want to consider ideas that contradict my own, I will merely go through the motions and that input will not impact outcomes. Furthermore, my authenticity will likely be questioned by those participants based on their perceptions during the process and the results that follow: “The Staff needs to understand its role as a public servant and to act as a public servant... You know, how can we oversee Staff and be subordinate to Staff at the same time?” (Anonymous, 2001).

In theoretical terms: How do we remove Nonparticipation and Tokenism from participatory practice? This Tempe resident calls scholars and practitioners alike to action:

How would you measure public participation? That's a good question. I think that's something that the academics should explore and maybe suggest. Um, you need to find a way to measure how responsive you are to people... They pass out cookies and punch, they have somebody speak, then they'll let everybody there make all kinds of outrageous remarks, and say "thank you very much for coming." I'll tell you what a good measure would be; to collect everything that's said at these meetings and then see what influence it had on any decisions. (Anonymous, 2001)

In other words, the proof of the pudding is in the eating, not in the recipe. As an example of this, the *Northwest Tempe Neighborhoods Strategic Plan* can trace the very language of its strategies back to archived sticky notes, flip charts, and marked-up maps created by neighbors.

As Arnstein emphasized, we cannot ignore power and decision making authority as they are "central to the concept of direct citizen participation" (Roberts, 2004, p. 320). At best, policies and procedures might establish clear definitions of what "maximum feasibility" means for specific types of public decision, rather than leaving it as an ad hoc choice. However, the question of feasibility must be about level of empowerment, not type of procedure. If the local action is required by federal or state law and citizens cannot really have input at the local level, is Nonparticipation acceptable? If the decision involves private property rights that cannot legally be challenged, is Tokenism acceptable? If the decision is the domain of the

City Manager or City Council, is Tokenism acceptable? If the decision involves awarding increased rights to private actors may community advocates demand Citizen Power, regardless of City Council purview?

Answering these questions requires a deeper look into the forces that perpetuate Nonparticipation and Tokenism in community planning and development processes. From this case study, it would appear that resistance to Citizen Power is explained well by Growth Machine theory (Logan & Molotch, 1987; Molotch, 1976) and its contemporary extensions (Boyle, 1999; Bridges, 1997; Cox, 1999; Jessop, Peck, & Tickell, 1999; Lauria, 1999; Logan, 1991; Logan, Whaley, & Crowder, 1999; Molotch, 1999; Short, 1999). In short, the ideation of community as a marketplace for exchange among profit-oriented actors opposes and supersedes that of residents who view community as a home for which diverse quality of life objectives exist beyond property values and profit motives. Because local governments, particularly in development-oriented economies, are in league with market interests (Bridges, 1997), participation efforts have taken on increasing characteristics of co-optation (Selznick, 1949), to the point where critical theorists, practitioners, and citizen activists are likening participatory practices to governmental tyranny (Cooke & Kothari, 2004).

Along these lines, this case might lead toward a specific focus on the impact of highly mobile financing on local community development and postmodern social conditions in which agreement is increasingly difficult. This analysis could seek explanations for why Tempe has evolved from what could be described as an “amenities community” (Williams & Adrian, 1963) or “middle class progressive regime” (Stone, 1993), into a “promotion city” (Williams & Adrian, 1963) or “development regime” (Stone, 1993). In short, why is community as marketplace privileged over community as home?

Based on the analysis of the case presented here, I do not believe that the barriers to participatory practice are a matter of technique and training as might be deduced from prior studies (see for example King, Feltey, & Susel, 1998). No amount of learning on the part of citizens about empowerment, re-education of administrators on the facilitative role, or changes to administrative structures and processes of interaction can overcome an underlying system of power relations within society that permeate those roles and practices. Rather, we need a more honest and practical discussion of how to change the political economy that drives the attitudes that shape implementation of participatory techniques.

While it is impressive that the *TIP Manual* specifically explains levels of public influence as “*the degree to which authority is vested in the participants*” (Tempe, 2007b, p. 4), it takes a *reflective* practitioner to admit what the underlying goals might be and a *brave* practitioner to seek to change them if they are unjust. Even if empowerment intentions are authentic, there are still knotty problems of private property rights and political purview that constrain practitioners. These power issues are systemic to our political economy regardless of practitioner or technique (Cooke & Kothari, 2004). Thus, the problems of participatory practice, at least in community development, cannot be resolved without fully engaging two issues that are traditionally held beyond the scope of public administration: (1) private property rights versus community rights; and (2) democratic representation versus direct self-governance.

We must determine how to resolve these tensions in order to make effective recommendations for participatory practice so that communities like Tempe can move beyond conflict and stalemate. These conflicts over the legitimate use and distribution of political and economic power cannot be simply placed in a black box for other disciplines to

resolve because administrators practice on these very “battlegrounds” (Roberts, 2004, p. 316) of political economy. Public administrators cannot effectively implement participatory practice or facilitate deliberative democracy without a supportive context. As Bachrach and Botwinick query, “How can power be effectively exercised over status quo defenders of the existing political system so as to construct new participatory structures—structures that would expand the freedom of ordinary people to exercise their *power to participate*?” (1992, p. 57).

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AUTHOR PROFILE

Margaret Stout is an assistant professor of Public Administration at West Virginia University. Her research explores the role of public and nonprofit practitioners in achieving democratic social and economic justice with specific interests in administrative theory, public service leadership and ethics, and sustainable community development. Her published work can be found in *Public Administration Review*, *Administrative Theory & Praxis*, *International Journal of Organization Theory and Behavior*, *Journal of Public Affairs Education*, *Encyclopedia of Public Administration and Public Policy, Second Edition*, and *PA Times*. She serves on the executive board of the American Society for Public Administration section on Democracy and Social Justice.