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Public Participation and New Urbanism: A Conflicting Agenda?

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ABSTRACT   *The challenges to public participation in planning are numerous. Inclusive and equitable processes are recognised as an ideal in much planning theory and practice, yet this ideal is increasingly difficult to realise in today's societies that comprise diverse and multiple publics. Within the wider sustainability debate, 'New Urbanism' has emerged as a pragmatic alternative to conventional low-density development. Concomitant with a range of prescribed physical outcomes, the New Urbanism movement advocates a process of 'citizen-based participatory planning and design'. Charrettes, with urban design workshops, are the favoured tools for achieving this goal. However, it is argued that the adherence to a single type of participatory tool can be inconsistent with accepted ideals of participation processes and has several implications. Of particular concern is the role of the charrette planner or facilitator, a figure who has the potential to manipulate the public because of his/her inevitable allegiance to the New Urban agenda. In addition, the examination of a charrette process in a small New Zealand town raises several broader questions about the ability of the approach to address issues of inclusiveness and the recognition of difference, two fundamental elements of good participatory processes.*

Keywords: Participatory planning; inclusivity; New Urbanism; charrette

Introduction

A variety of academic and practitioner discourses are now advocating reinvigorated participatory and inclusionary practices in planning and local government decision making. A significant driver for this trend is the shift in Western intellectual thought beyond modernity, reflected in the rejection of rational instrumentalism, objectivism and positivism in favour of the recognition of diversity, complexity and the far-reaching (often inequitable) impacts of public decision making in today's societies.

The planning profession, operating within the modernist project of rationality, represented an objective, technical occupation, with expert knowledge that enabled the planner to make decisions in the (unified) public interest (Beauregard, 1996; Dryzek, 1993; Hall, 1996). It has become increasingly evident that the model of rational planning is not only inadequate in describing what planners do, but is also producing inequitable and socially unjust results. In response, as Beauregard (2003) has suggested, the 1960s notion of participatory democracy has recently been joined by a move amongst citizens towards discursive democracy:

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> The struggles are different; they are less about control over institutions and support of interests than about recognition. Earlier concerns with poverty, slums, and institutional discrimination are less prominent than movements organized around issues of identity and rights. (p. 66)

Similarly, Albrechts (2002) suggests:

> a type of planning has emerged that expands practical democratic deliberations rather than restricts them, that encourage diverse citizens' voices rather than stifles them, and that directs resources to basic needs rather than to narrow private gain. (p. 331)

Thus, academics and practitioners are now recognising the power that planners have in creating deliberative processes and setting agendas that have the potential to include and exclude different publics (see Albrechts, 2002; Albrechts & Denayer, 2001; Forester, 1989, 1999; Healey, 1997, 1998; Thompson-Fawcett & Freeman, 2006; Young, 1996, 2002). However, while there have been examples of improved planning in practice, there are also indications that many participatory processes are still failing. Processes continue to disempower, exclude, silence and marginalise certain groups (Albrechts, 2002; Allmendinger & Chapman, 1999; Forester, 1989, 1999; Healey, 1997; Hillier, 1998; Tuxworth, 2000; Warburton, 2000). Given the raft of literature from both academics and practitioners on public participation published since the 1960s, this is perhaps surprising (see Innes & Booher, 2004). The argument of this paper is that a necessary aspect of 'getting it right' involves creating inclusive practices that address the power relationships between parties and take account of difference.

The New Zealand government for one has encapsulated the concept of such inclusionary practices, evidenced in both the principal planning legislation (the Resource Management Act, 1991), and recent reforms to the Local Government Act 2002. The Local Government Act in particular emphasises community involvement and participation in local government decision making, and the focus of this paper is how local government has been attempting to achieve such inclusion. In the New Zealand context, the adoption by local government of the New Urbanist charrette as a participatory tool has become remarkably popular. But what are the implications of embracing such an approach? The international strength and popularity of New Urbanism means that the movement's approach to participatory planning needs to be examined. In recent work, via several case studies in New Zealand, Canada and Great Britain, the authors have begun to explore the tensions between urbanists' favoured methods of achieving 'citizen-based participatory planning and design' (Congress for the New Urbanism, 2001) and recent edicts in planning theory for inclusive, power-sensitive processes. The authors asked whether the urbanist charrette has the flexibility and sensibility required to meet the challenge of creating inclusive processes.

In exploring these issues in this article, the authors draw on analysis from recent research undertaken in Wanaka, New Zealand, on a particular participatory exercise (the 'Wanaka 2020' process) run by New Urbanists. The Wanaka process is an example of a specific subset of the New Urban charrette approach: the employment of charrettes in relation to visioning exercises, as opposed to their use for specific development projects. Such application of the charrette is popular in Australasia (see, for example, Bond & Thompson-Fawcett, 2006). The research raises several questions relating to power and the role of philosophical agendas and expert knowledge in participatory processes, drawing out key questions for future research as well as issuing some warnings. Before teasing out

the issues of power and inclusion in detail, the following four sections provide an overview of an evaluative framework, an explanation of the research model that was employed, and some contextual and analytical background to both the New Urbanism movement in general and the Wanaka case in particular.

Communicative Planning Theory as an Evaluative Tool

The analytical framework for the research is framed by a review of both communicative planning theory and discourses on deliberative democracy, from which were derived 'ideal conditions' and 'outcomes' for communicative practice. These conditions then served as a measure against which the participatory event was evaluated. Communicative planning theory (and deliberative or discursive democratic theory) is founded on Habermas' rather complex notion of ideal speech and communicative rationality, in which respectful, inclusive argumentation features as the key to reaching shared understanding and, ultimately, consensus. Also articulated via the notions of collaborative planning (Healey, 1997) and deliberative planning (Forester, 1989, 1999), communicative planning theory seeks planning processes that are inclusive, discussion-oriented, consensus building and transformative, in that they engender social learning through a respect for difference and recognition of others' values. Such theory can be viewed as one of Albrechts' (2002) 'emergent' forms of planning practice, in that it seeks enhanced democracy and equitable, sustainable outcomes.

However, communicative planning theory has been extensively criticised in relation to the underlying assumptions resulting from its Habermasian roots, and for its idealism which makes its applicability to practice questionable (see Allmendinger & Tewdwyr-Jones, 2002; Fainstein, 2000; Flyvbjerg, 1998; Hillier, 2002; Tewdwr-Jones & Allmendinger, 1998). Two key problems arise from the twin assumptions that inclusive, uncoerced argumentation is possible, and that consensus is desirable and achievable.

To achieve uncoerced inclusive participation, two further criteria must be met: there must be both equal access to participate in the process and there must be inclusivity within the argumentative arena. However, both criteria are problematic. First, difficulties in identifying and locating 'hard to reach' groups, let alone encouraging them to attend participatory events is well documented (e.g. Albrechts, 2002; Innes & Booher, 2004; Lowndes *et al.*, 2001a, 2001b). Constraints to attendance may be structural, economic, cultural and logistical. Healey (1997, p. 275) suggests that "the inclusionary challenge is to prevent those *not present* from being *absent*" through maintaining "active respect and appreciation for those members who for one reason or another are *not present*" (emphasis original). Although difficult to achieve in practice, this involves creating a space in which participants can put their own interests aside in favour of a broader appeal to the multiplicity and diversity of their polities (Campbell & Marshall, 2000). Second, some have argued that, contrary to Habermas' original conception of ideal speech (see Hillier, 2002 for a useful discussion of how this has changed over time), interaction within a neutral, uncoerced, apolitical communicative space is impossible. Given that all interaction is textured by a myriad of power relations, 'bracketing' power is *not* "sufficient to make speakers equal" (Young, 1996, p. 122). Moreover, the nature of argumentation expected or, more significantly, heard, in such planning events often privileges certain types of speech and means of expression, while silencing others (ibid). As some critics of communicative planning theory have pointed out, it says little about "resources and the ability to speak" in particular situations (Tewdwr-Jones & Allmendinger, 1998, p. 1988), for example, the power of the facilitators and organisers

to set agendas and topics for discussion, to shape the direction of discussion, and to interpret the discussion, not to mention the competition between participants trying to ensure that their voices are an important part of the dialogue. However, leading communicative planning theorists might respond that they do not, in fact, assume an apolitical power-neutral public sphere. Rather, they are highly aware of the play of power in planning activities within diverse, plural, heterogeneous public spheres, arguing for astute listening (Forester, 1989, 1999), careful facilitation and empowerment, to ensure those potentially excluded are given voice and that power relations are not allowed to distort the planning process (Healey, 1997; Innes, 1996; Innes & Booher, 2004).

The goal of uncoerced participation is often seen to be consensual agreement, yet the virtue and achievability of 'consensus' is hotly debated. The key problem lies in a tension between recognising diversity, multiplicity and difference and the search for a commonly agreed, inclusive outcome (see Hillier, 2002, 2003; Mouffe, 1999; Young, 1996). Different theorists have suggested different approaches to this issue. Dryzek (2001, p. 661) suggests that the tension is irreconcilable, stating that "ideal of consensus has been abandoned by many deliberative democrats" in favour of achieving mutual understanding. Hillier (2002, p. 225) argues for 'con-sensus'—the hyphen suggesting the original meaning of the term as 'joint sense', common feeling or opinion, in acknowledgment of the agonistic space where "democratic decisions are partly consensual, but ... also respectfully accept unresolvable disagreements" (2002, p. 253). This is akin to Barber's (1984) notion of 'strong democracy', in which consensus is defined as "agreeing on how to disagree" (p. 127). A similar position is taken in the current study and the article argues for shared understanding, and a transparency of process, in which the basis and rationale of decision making is understood rather than imposed.

It is accepted that these two assumptions underpinning communicative planning theory are awkward. However, this does not detract from the usefulness of the theory as a tool which provides a basis for analysis. Taken as an ethic for communicative participatory processes, it enabled the study to focus on the conditions and procedural outcomes that it is believed will constitute an effective participatory process. As Innes (1998) indicates, although such an ideal may never be achieved, an approximation to the ideal may "ensure that decisions take into account important knowledge and perspectives, that they are in some sense socially just, and that they do not simply co-opt those in weaker positions" (p. 60). Therefore, the study has developed a framework that reflects a range of theorists' approaches to these issues (see Table 1).

Table 1. An ethic for communicative participation

Conditions *for* communicative participatory process
- Provides an equal opportunity of access to the process. That is, it is inclusive and representative.
- Provides equal opportunities to participate in the process by:
  - Being open, honest, legitimate, and engendering trust; and
  - Accommodating differences in styles of speech, and the capacity to reason.
- Ensures power distortions are minimised through careful listening, interpretation, and facilitation.

Outcomes *of* Communicative Participation
- Shared understanding is achieved.
- Social learning occurs:
  - Shared understandings are developed;
  - Collective interest over-rides self-interest; and
  - Conflict is resolved effectively.
- The process engenders a sense of ownership of the outcomes.

Research Design

The ethic for communicative participation identified in Table 1 guided the data collection and analysis. A case-based, qualitative, multi-method research approach was adopted. While a number of cases were researched, the authors chose to report a single case in this article primarily because of its specific and particular 'intrinsic' qualities (see Stake, 2000). The aim is to shed light on the importance of context to the application of participatory processes via the discussion of critical concrete experiences (see Flyvbjerg, 2001).

Three different methods of data collection were adopted for the research. First, participant observation of two public meetings and a five-day workshop was undertaken. This involved active involvement in the events in order to gain insight and understanding of their nature, as well observation of the interactions and behaviour that occurred within them (Silverman, 1985). Extensive fieldnotes were taken, which detailed approximate numbers of attendees and their demographics; the nature of discussions on different topics; particular storylines and conflicts that threaded through the process; the different methods used to facilitate groups and how information was presented, interpreted and translated into the final outcomes. Second, semi-structured interviews (16 in total) of key players were undertaken shortly after the event. Interviewees included consultants engaged to lead the workshop, local council officers and elected representatives, engineers, urban designers, architects, landscape designers and local residents who were members of the local steering group instrumental in the organisation of the event. Interviews followed a broad schedule derived from the framework outlined in Table 1, with open-ended questions. The course of the interview was in part directed by the respondent, allowing for a more responsive and reflexive approach. Interviews were typically an hour long and recorded for later transcription. Finally, a questionnaire was distributed to participants who attended the final public meeting of the workshop (a total of 90 questionnaires were returned, a response rate of 36 per cent). The questionnaire was self-administered, and designed to gain an insight into the attendee's experience of the process. A Likert scale was used to gauge participants' perceptions of the process in general, the nature of the discussions they had been involved in, to assess whether conflict arose and whether it was resolved and to evaluate the overall value of the event for both the Wanaka area, and for the participants personally. Two open-ended questions in the questionnaire focused on motivation for attendance and participant learning from the event. The final section sought demographic information about the participants to enable consideration of issues of representativeness and inclusivity of the community in the event. In addition to these three sources of data, further documentation of the event was collected for analysis, including plans, relevant reports, media coverage of the event, the contents of the Wanaka 2020 website, and submissions to the Council.

Analysis involved the identification of common themes across the full range of data, enabling the identification of converging patterns and an exploration of their relationship to the communicative framework (Brewer & Hunter, 1989; Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). Background material, interview data, fieldnotes from participant observation, and open-ended responses in the questionnaire were coded interpretively, according to themes established from the theoretical framework, but also in a grounded sense, in relation to patterns emerging from the data. The questionnaire data was analysed through simple descriptive statistics, including cross-tabulations between some variables. Rigour and validity was established through the multi-method approach and by exploring themes and propositions as they emerged in a reflexive and iterative way.

New Urbanism and the Charrette

The authors' understanding of New Urbanism and its use of the charrette process played an important role in developing the research. New Urbanism is a town planning and urban design movement that began to emerge in the United States in the 1980s. It has some distinct variations and some less-than-purist imitators who trade on its name. However, this article focuses on the main constituent of the movement, as endorsed via the (now formally recognised) Congress for the New Urbanism. This movement's principles are based largely on neo-traditional urbanism, promoting integrated regional planning, mixed-use neighbourhoods that prioritise the public realm and the pedestrian over the private domain and the vehicle, and coherent architectural styles that celebrate the local history and conditions (for more specific details see Thompson-Fawcett & Bond, 2003; and http://www.cnu.org/). New Urbanism overtly espouses a commitment to "re-establishing the relationship between the art of building and the making of community, through citizen-based participatory planning and design" (Congress for the New Urbanism, 2001). New Urbanists favour the charrette—an interactive, multidisciplinary, intense design workshop—as the participatory process to facilitate such citizen-based planning.

While academic and practitioner criticism of the movement is widespread and generally outweighs any praise (Thompson-Fawcett, 2003a; Talen, 2000), the proliferation of New Urbanist-designed projects is astounding. However, most popular and scholarly investigations into the movement have not seriously addressed questions surrounding its approach to participatory involvement in the planning and implementation of projects (principal exceptions being Bond & Thompson-Fawcett, 2006; Thompson-Fawcett & Bond, 2004). Jennings (2004) also makes a useful inroad via an analysis of the Master Planning process for Roxbury in Boston, presenting "a critique of smart growth and New Urbanism as planning concepts in terms of how issues of race, class, and social inequality are approached or ignored" (p. 12) in community participation attempts. But while several commentators have suggested that New Urbanists take a minimalist path in terms of participatory planning, perhaps even one aimed at 'co-opting' rather than collaborating (Fainstein, 2000, p. 20), evidence as to the execution of the New Urbanist charrette is still wanting. This paper aims to address this research gap.

The New Urban charrette can be defined as:

> an intensive design-based planning workshop where all required information and specialists are present to enable relevant issues to be considered *simultaneously* and in an *interactive* way, with resultant decisions on detailed design and planning options. (Rollison, 1996, p. 81, original emphasis)

The emphasis on 'simultaneous' and 'interactive' is a key feature of the charrette process, which attempts to overcome the sequentially reactive nature of formal planning systems (McGlynn & Murrain, 1994; Morris & Kaufman, 1996). The New Urban charrette involves a specific three-phase approach (see also Lennertz, 2003, 2004):

(1) Pre-charrette phase of information gathering, education, publicity and promotion lasting two to six months;
(2) Charrette event, an interactive, multidisciplinary design workshop over several consecutive days with a component of public or key stakeholder involvement. Ideas and concepts are 'tested' through the design of alternatives against what is possible in terms of the geography, context, agency interests and the public input. These are then synthesised into a preferred plan; and

(3) Post-charrette implementation phase, including further feasibility testing, public review and plan refinement.

Slight variations in the procedure occur depending on local conditions and requirements (Lennertz & Lutzenhiser, 2003). However, the design focus, intensity, interactive multidisciplinary nature and speed of the process are fundamental to the approach. Lennertz (2003), co-founder of the National Charrette Institute in the USA and practicing New Urbanist, suggests that nine strategies distinguish genuine charrettes from other participatory processes. Charrettes work collaboratively with all participants, use design to achieve a shared vision and create holistic solutions, design in detail, apply reasonable pressure through a series of deadlines, communicate in short, regular feedback loops, work for at least four to seven consecutive days to accommodate feedback loops, work on site and produce an actionable plan. The charrette process is meant to be 'a transformative event'; over a week it should achieve consensus decisions that might normally take months to agree upon (Brown, 2005, p. 36).

The charrette has been applied in a range of contexts as part of the wider New Urbanist strategy. Most commonly it has been used as a tool in the planning process for specific new community or redevelopment projects. However, it has also been employed in processes aimed at achieving strategic, comprehensive or visioning schemes (see National Charrette Institute, 2006). For the purposes of this study, it is particularly interested in the latter. In addition, as New Urbanism has advanced in North America, Europe, Australasia and beyond (see Thompson-Fawcett, 2003c), local variants on the charrette process have also evolved. While all are very similar, these charrette types have their own minor, but identifiable differences (for details see Bond & Thompson-Fawcett, 2006). In particular, The Princes' Foundation in Britain has developed a tightly defined derivative that they have labelled 'enquiry by design' (and to ensure quality control they have trademarked their template in order to avoid hybrid processes being undertaken). Hence, while the comments here are addressed to charrettes in their broadest definition, it is recognised that individual implementation of the charrette process may vary.

There is little academic commentary on charrettes. The literature available tends to be either a descriptive promotion of charrette processes, lacking any critical self-reflection (for example, Forseyth, 1996; Meisen, 1996; Morris & Kaufman, 1996; Rollison, 1996); or a pragmatic delineation of charrettes in 'how to' handbooks or websites (for example, Sarkissian *et al.*, 1997; Wates, 1999; CharretteCenter.net). The usefulness of the charrette in solving conflict is disputed. Proponents of New Urbanism, for example, Morris & Kaufman (1998) assert that the charrette is "structured to resolve complex, large and controversial projects" (p. 218). McGlynn & Murrain (1994) describe the character of the charrette process as one where the "forum is open, knowledge is shared. It must (and does) introduce and expose the policies and attitudes, emotions, and proposals of all who have a stake in the future of the place" (p. 317). However, Sarkissian *et al.* (1997) argue that the charrette is only appropriate in certain circumstances and that it may not be useful for substantial, multifaceted projects with many divergent or conflicting views.

New Urbanists appear to be protective of 'their' charrette approach. Several proponents attribute the conversion of the charrette from a teaching tool in architecture schools to a public participatory tool in the planning and urban design arena to Andres Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, two leading American New Urbanists (Forseyth, 1996; McGlynn & Murrain, 1994; Morris & Kaufman, 1996). Moreover, the New Urbanists involved in Wanaka 2020 process that is discussed below complain that the charrette "is a very specific process" and that they "don't like the way that word has been misused" and "bandied

around" (interviews, 2002). The commitment of its proponents to the wider agenda of New Urbanism is perhaps a reason for the protectiveness. As Beauregard (2002) suggests: "New Urbanism is not simply about physical form. It is also a doctrinal project with New Urbanists as intent on spreading their ideas as they are on building communities" (p.182). Certainly, the design emphasis reveals a rational and instrumental belief in the role of the expert in producing design solutions, given a specific set of information.

The doctrinal nature of the New Urbanist discourse, the defensiveness displayed with regard to the charrette procedure, and the obvious faith placed in the role of the expert, leads us to ask what the real aim of involving the public in the planning process is. There are several possible answers. One is that there is a genuine commitment to participatory involvement, but that New Urbanists are not fully cognisant of the potential effects of the type of process they have adopted. A second, is that urbanists seek only information, or local knowledge to inject into the project outcomes, rather than the more transformative and often intangible outcomes advocated by many contemporary planning theorists and practitioners with a strong focus on 'bottom-up' approaches, outcomes which include social learning, capacity building, the generation of social capital, and the engagement of local people in decision making that affects them. A third is that, in controlling how they approach public participation, New Urbanists ensure that they perpetuate their own tenets and yet fulfil the increasing demands for public inclusion in planning processes. Interpreted in the last way, the New Urbanists' approach to public participation looks somewhat tokenistic, or in Warburton's (2000, p. 149) words "just a box in the process flow chart", which becomes the 'participation bit' in the conventional project design. Certainly, this interpretation fits with Fainstein's (2000) criticism that "the New Urbanists do not fear playing the role … of persuasive salespersons for a particular point of view" (p. 9). Grant (2006) is also weary of New Urbanist practice in this regard:

> At the same time as new urbanism welcomes a level of citizen participation, however, its fear of local opposition to projects is palpable … In the charrette process, the rhetoric of local control encounters the reality of slick graphics, romantic watercolours, and celebrity designers. Difficult policy or environmental issues are set aside as participants focus on design questions. (p. 184)

Of course New Urbanists would argue against this, maintaining that the charrette is integral to the design outcomes in the overall development process rather than a hollow 'bit' in the middle. However, the choice of participatory process largely determines the power relations that arise in a process, which in turn determines who is included and excluded from entering the process and from having a meaningful role within it. The increasing vigour of the New Urbanism movement in Western planning systems, and the passion with which many New Urbanists promote the New Urban agenda, means contemplation on the matter is of current importance, particularly given that the now recognised need for inclusive and equitable participatory processes is leading local planning authorities like the one in Wanaka to seek a participatory process for deciding upon the future of the their locality.

The Wanaka Charrette

Wanaka is a small resort settlement situated amongst the eastern foothills of the Southern Alps of New Zealand (Figure 1). It is a picturesque township with stunning lake and mountain views and a small but rapidly growing permanent population (5000 according
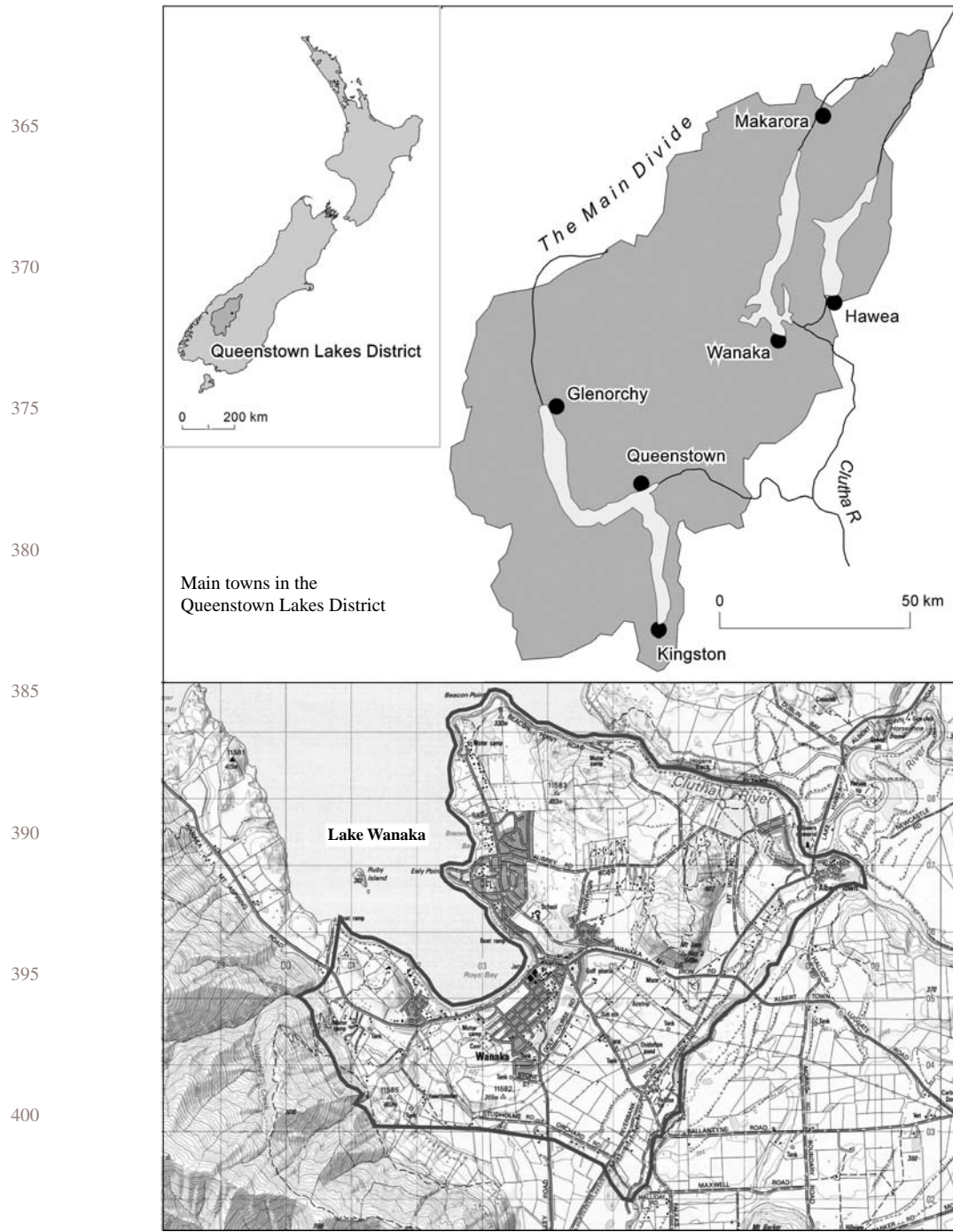
Figure 1. Location and focus of Wanaka 2020 process. *Base map source:* NZMS 260:F40.

to the 2006 census, double the 1996 population). The town experiences a significant influx of visitors and seasonal workers to support summer tourism and the winter ski season. Tourism in the region is also growing significantly. This period coincided with the beginning of a building boom and rapid demand-led growth, resulting in expansive subdivisions across iconic landscapes, pressure on local infrastructure, and local concerns at the lack of strategic planning and growth management. Dissatisfaction with local governance was reflected in the media and in the election, late in 2001, of nine new local-body councillors out of a total of 12, and a new mayor for the district. The result represented a dramatic change in the style of local governance away from the autocratic, pro-development mode of the previous six years. The new Mayor and Council initiated a charrette-based community planning process, Wanaka 2020, almost as soon as they took office. The primary aim was to address community concerns, involve local people in the planning process and inform a strategic plan for the district.

The Council hired New Urbanist consultants as the lead facilitators for the process, who co-ordinated the technical information-gathering prior to the charrette, and led the design workshop. The design team for the charrette comprised mostly local professionals such as urban designers, planners, landscape architects, architects and engineers. The pre-charrette phase lasted about two months, during which time a local steering committee ran a variety of informal meetings with different community groups. In addition, this period involved extensive publicity and two formal public meetings, one of which introduced the lead facilitators. Residents had the opportunity to submit written submissions, and post comments on a website launched to disseminate information. Various local professionals and organisations also gathered background information in the phase leading up to the design workshop event.

Table 2 indicates the schedule for the five-day workshop and the numbers attending. Day one of the workshop involved the lead facilitators debriefing the design team (comprising local planning professionals, architects, engineers, landscape architects and nationally regarded urban designers). Citizen involvement in the process began that evening with a public meeting, which involved a presentation on the issues Wanaka faced, information on how urbanist principles might address those issues, and group discussions in which locals were asked to list likes and dislikes and outline their visions for Wanaka in the future. Public involvement continued in a similar format with a series of presentations and group discussions over days two and three. Day four and most of day five excluded the public while the information was synthesised, and the design team and lead facilitators worked on schematic, typically 'New Urban', plans. The workshop concluded with a public meeting on the evening of day five, where outcomes, in the form of plans, were reported back to the public. In terms of Lennertz's (2003) nine distinguishing characteristics of genuine charrette practice, the Wanaka process represents a good example of this approach. But, from the New Urbanist point of view the process was to some extent compromised by the diminution of the total proportion of time devoted to design tasks as a result of the expansion of time given to public participation, even though the workshop was longer than the minimum recommended timeframe.

Nonetheless, many aspects of the workshop appeared to work well. Publicity prior to the event was extensive and enthusiasm for, and attendance at, the workshop was commendable (interviews, 2002; fieldnotes, 2002), perhaps owing to the previous council's failure to provide opportunities for effective public involvement. Interviewees and questionnaire participants generally rated the communicative elements of the discussion groups highly. Questionnaire results showed group discussions were generally felt to be open, honest and comfortable, and that participants were listened to and were able to

Table 2. Charrette workshop schedule and attendance

Day	Time	Session	Attendees	No.
Day 1	09.00–17.00	Design team briefing	Design team	20
	19.00–22.00	Workshop Opening: public meeting: – Weekend format explained – Essential information provided – Group discussions	Public	~200
Day 2	09.00	Introduction to topical sessions	Public	~150
	09.20–11.00	Wanaka Future Growth Management: 7 group discussions on: – Town edge issues – Infrastructure – Surrounding rural character		
	11.45–13.30	Wanaka Town Centre: 9 group discussions on: – urban character and style – traffic, parking		
	14.15–15.45	Recreation and Open Space: 8 group discussions on: – Lake access and use – Reserves, walkways, cycleways – Community facilities		
	16.00–17.30	Economic Development – Employment opportunities – Affordable Housing – Tourism		
Day 3	09.00–10.30	Panel Discussion: Developers of some current proposals share their views on planning for Wanaka's future	Public	~120
	10.45–12.30	Housing Character and Architectural Style (7 groups)		
	13.30–15.00	Parallel Sessions: – Social issues (education and health) – Young people's session – Children's session	Public	50
			15–20 yrs Children <8 yrs	13 5
	15.15–16.30	Public Forum: Comments from the floor on issues arising from the weekend's discussions	Public	~150
Day 4	09.00–16.00	Briefing session followed by design session	Design team	25
	16.00–18.00	Design Studio open to public	Public	50
Day 5	0900–1600	Design Session	Design team	25
	19.30–21.30	Concluding public meeting	Public	~250

speak freely. Most participants felt their views were respected. However, as discussed in subsequent sections, there were also indications by questionnaire respondents that these perceptions were not unanimous.

Similarly, in relation to the communicative ethic established in the framework, many participants indicated that they learned during the process. One council officer indicated that "people allowed themselves to be educated" as they began to learn why extreme positions were held by different individuals (interview, 2002). There was further evidence that some participants changed their views in light of more information about an issue (interviews, 2002). In addition, the questionnaire revealed that many respondents learned about the planning system, planning issues, participatory processes, about themselves and their opinions, about compromise and listening to others' views, and about the broader Wanaka community (Table 3). While the questionnaire respondents tended to be

Table 3. Selection of comments from questionnaire respondents on what they learned through attending the Wanaka 2020 workshop

| Theme	Respondents comments about what they learned from Wanaka 2020
The community has similar views for the future of Wanaka	• "That my views are consistent with my fellow residents"; • "Incredible consensus as to town development, restriction of sprawl, lake use and boat launching"; • "There are many people in my community interested in the same as me"; • "That most people think the same way".
Planning processes, growth management, town service requirements	• "An overall understanding of the massive amount of aspects covered to keep a town and surrounding areas running smoothly"; • "Central town planning—space etc. Being made aware of major problems in all areas"; • "A lot about town planning principles—fascinating".
Participatory Processes	• "How the process worked, and how peoples ideas were used"; • "Importance of the process—open discussion and ability to listen to special interest groups"; • "Importance of facilitators to keep it moving".
Others' opinions	• "View points and concerns of others in the community"; • "A great deal about individual views of local citizens as well as of developers …"; • "Variety of opinions of residents".
About themselves and their opinions	• "How I really feel and think about different issues. Has made me think"; • "What I really feel about the situation"; • "I feel more informed and connected with the future processes and opportunities for Wanaka"; • I feel more empowered by knowledge gained".
Compromise and listening to others	• "That it is possible to change our views and ideas"; • "Compromise"; • "That you should listen to other members of the community and take on board their concerns, before coming to any conclusions".
Community	• "That we all have to think 'outside' our patch for the wider good of the community"; • "Good community spirit" • "Great community input … meeting like-minded residents".
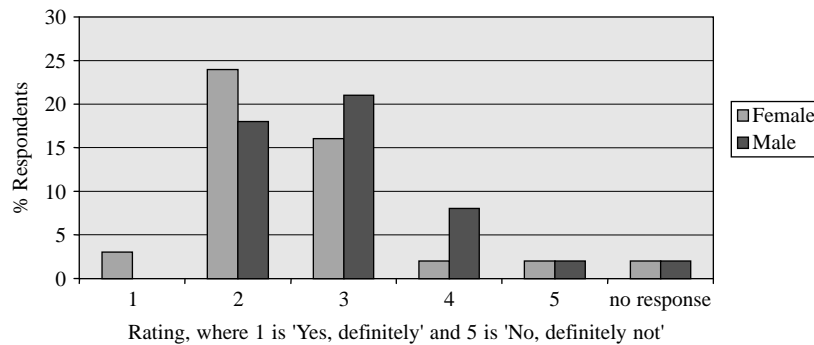
Figure 2. Respondents' perceptions of whether collective agreement was reached.

neutral on whether a collective agreement had been reached (Figure 2), over 70 per cent of respondents indicated that they agreed with the outcomes presented on the final evening. Moreover, over 90 per cent of questionnaire respondents indicated that the process was valuable for the future of Wanaka and to the Wanaka community as a whole (Figure 3).

Thus, the effectiveness of many aspects of the participatory process is not in question. However, the research revealed that the urbanist agenda was not received well by some local members of the design team, the steering committee, and the Council. It is worth noting that the New Urbanist influence on the Wanaka 2020 process was confined to the lead facilitators and, to a lesser extent, one member of the design team. As discussed in the following section, both the Council and many members of the design team were ambivalent about the New Urbanism. Rather, they were focused on gaining genuine public input into a community plan. Therefore, while recognising the potential of the process to be substantially effective in participatory terms, it is considered there are issues and questions that need to be raised. These are the subject of the remainder of this paper.

Two key issues are discussed in the following sections. The first concerns the potential for the New Urbanist agenda to distort the outcomes of a charrette participatory process.
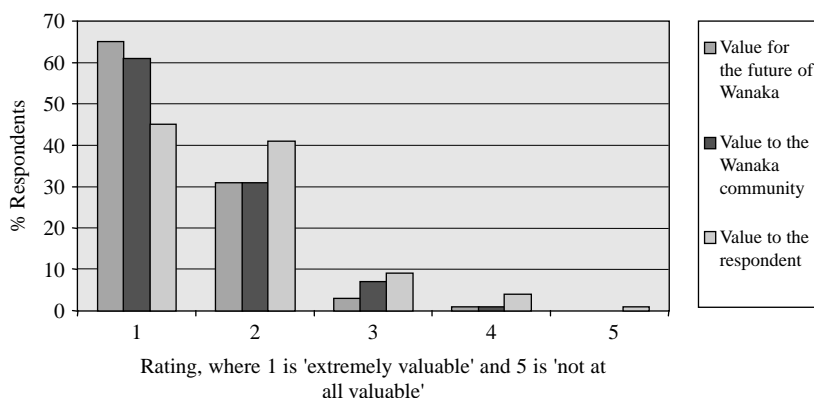

Figure 3. Respondents' perceptions of the value of Wanaka 2020.

The second concerns the workings of power within the process, and the potential for the deliberative approach to marginalise and exclude some groups and yet privilege others.

Ideology and the New Urban Agenda

The potential for power relations to have a pernicious influence on public participation processes has long been recognised in participation literature. Over 30 years ago, Arnstein's often-cited 'ladder' of participation established a typology categorising levels of public involvement ranging from 'non-participation' and manipulation of the public, to 'citizen control', defined by a high degree of participation which allows the public to have direct influence over decision making (Arnstein, 1969). The ladder has generally been interpreted as a hierarchy, suggesting that 'citizen control' is the ideal, although subsequent adaptations emphasise the appropriateness of different types of participation process for particular contexts and objectives (for example, Jackson, 2002; Sarkissian *et al.*, 1997; Wild & Marshall, 1999). However, with regard to research by the authors, Arnstein's warnings about tokenistic and manipulative processes are just as relevant today as they were in 1969. Given its adherence to a single participatory approach and its 'evangelical' spirit, the power relationships established by the New Urbanist brand of public participation urgently requires further exploration.

The view is taken that design and planning professionals and their activities are "deeply and inevitably political" (Forester, 1999, p. 72), and are thus imbricated with power relations. However, this leaves the question: where does one draw the line between a planner whose work is imbued with a particular planning philosophy and, a planner who uses that philosophy as a 'persuasive sales pitch' for their particular point of view? (Fainstein, 2000). There is no question that many New Urbanists are highly partisan. In fact they state that a precondition for the charrette process is the existence of a clearly stated design philosophy which accounts for community concerns and is reflected in the selection of the design team and lead facilitator (McGlynn & Murrain, 1994; Morris & Kaufman, 1996). Hence, from the 'outset' of any New Urbanist project, many decisions have already been made that can distort or stage-manage the public process.

Whether New Urbanists sufficiently acknowledge the potential their philosophy has to sway the public during a charrette is questionable. Indeed, the tenacious nature of the movement and its desire to sell its ideas arguably precludes or limits such an acknowledgement. For example, Andres Duany emphasises the importance of maintaining "principles that are inviolate … you must be polemical" when confronting a planning issue (Duany, cited in Fainstein, 2000, p. 9). Similarly, Beauregard (2002) suggests that New Urbanists are sure of their purpose, have clarity and certainty in their use of language to present ideas, and are confident in the 'rightness' of their principles in creating sustainable urban forms. He argues that this indicates a belief and commitment to "essential truths" (2002, pp. 188–189) which ignores the political and contextual nature of planning and urban design.

The commitment to essential truths is evident in the New Urbanists' use of information in the charrette process. The workshop typically consists of several sessions in which stakeholders are formally presented information on aspects of New Urban developments and principles, usually in a charismatic and persuasive way (Fainstein, 2000; Thompson-Fawcett & Bond, 2003). The presentations inform the small group deliberations, each facilitated by an 'expert'. The Wanaka example proved to be no exception. The lead facilitators presented their version of sustainable urban developments (using examples from New Urbanist developments in the USA) as the only solution to unsustainable urban

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forms. Although they did concede to the Wanaka public that the images presented might not be right for Wanaka, the principles were offered in a polished fashion, with a confidence that asserted the suitability of their ideals, with no reference to any alternative visions (Bond, 2002). The use of a single canon and set of principles excludes other perspectives and alternative visions of places and spaces that may be equally sustainable. Those who are persuaded by New Urbanist rhetoric do not have the opportunity to envision or consider other forms of sustainable urbanism.

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So when does expert knowledge or a professional agenda become a negative exercise of power? One particular member of the design team was astute in his comments about the role of expert knowledge in the New Urbanist process. He argued that the principles of New Urbanism "get shaped differently by the local cultural [conditions] and by the local geography" as a result of the public input into the process (interview, 2002). In his view, being "prepared to spell out [the philosophical approach] means that anybody can challenge it, discuss it, review it, reject it, agree with it, add to it, whatever. [It's] all you can do" (ibid). In addition, he acknowledged the problematic role of expert knowledge within participation processes:

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> true participation is not entirely possible because you don't have everybody in the community with an architectural degree, and a planning degree … the only thing is not to pretend that you are doing something that you are not doing. (ibid)

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While the commitment to New Urbanism by the lead facilitators was obliquely acknowledged in the Wanaka 2020 process (described as 'sustainable urban design' as opposed to unsustainable urban sprawl) (fieldnotes, 2002), several interviewees indicated that this agenda had an overly strong impact on the process. For example, one member commented that the lead facilitators had a "pre-formed opinion or marked their own opinion onto a plan or recommendation rather than the community one" (interview, 2002). Others suggested that the lead facilitators designed outcomes without a clear mandate from the public and did not "hear everything" as a result (interviews, 2002). Concerns were expressed that "the principles New Urban designers are putting forward aren't well tested. Some of them are good but I think you need to be a bit careful about where they are coming from" (interview, 2002). Similarly, one councillor was "very uncomfortable" with the New Urban agenda, arguing that you cannot "automatically transplant all that around the world" (interview, 2002).

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One story in particular lends support to these views. One task for the Wanaka 2020 process involved designating an urban growth boundary for the town. There was general support at the workshop for the boundary to follow logical geographical features, which were identifiable in all but one area, known as Hillend (interviews, 2002; fieldnotes, 2002). Here then, drawing the urban growth boundary was a fairly arbitrary exercise. Ordinarily, this may not be an issue. However, at Hillend, a proposal for a large clustered resort development on rural land was already before the Council, and consideration of the application had been delayed pending the outcome of Wanaka 2020. On the evening of the first design session (day four), the issue was raised at a small feedback meeting between the design team, local elected representatives and the steering committee, in which Council asked for an indication on how the Hillend development proposal fitted into the direction the workshop was taking. The facilitation team responded that the growth boundaries had been agreed, and the resort proposal fell outside those boundaries, thereby suggesting that the Hillend development should not be given consent (fieldnotes, 2002).

Several interviewees had concerns about this issue. A steering committee member suggested that the logical route for the boundary differed from that drawn in the workshop plans. In his view, had designers followed the logical placement of the boundary the site of the Hillend proposal would have fallen within it. He claimed that "the map that's drawn at the moment has a line across it about two kilometres inside of [that logical placement], and the Hillend [proposal] is outside that area" (interview, 2002). He further acknowledged that the developers of the proposal had consulted with the public on the matter, well beyond the minimum legal requirements prior to the workshop, "and got great acceptance and no-one had grizzled then, no-one grizzled since, no-one grizzled at the weekend" (ibid). He felt that because there was no discussion of the proposed development in the workshop, the public did not endorse the location of the urban boundary at Hillend and had therefore not expressed any disagreement with the proposed development. Rather, he suggested that the location of the boundary might have reflected the facilitators' negative opinion of the location and style of the proposed development (interview, 2002). A design team member shared concerns on this issue:

> There didn't seem to be much discussion at all about Hillend ... yet we had [some members of the facilitation team] wanting to direct that Hillend not be a development area. And to me there wasn't a public mandate to say that. So it might have been their professional opinion and they were free to express it as a professional opinion, but they shouldn't have tried to make it sound like it was an outcome of the workshop. (interview, 2002)

The development proposal was subsequently rejected by Council, on grounds that it had a significant residential component, and fell outside the growth boundary as established in Wanaka 2020. While this may be consistent with the generally agreed principles at the charrette, it is questionable whether the decision on the location of the growth boundary at Hillend was the result of the public mandate or whether it was the professional opinion and philosophy of the facilitation team who may have been opposed to the development in this location.

The question inevitably returns to the tension that a strong professional philosophy imposes in a participatory process. Were the facilitators sufficiently open about their adherence to this agenda? Did their agenda have an impact on the ability of the public to participate and be involved in decision making in a meaningful way?

While there were clear indications of the potential for the New Urban influence to distort the process, these were mitigated by several factors. First, the high level of local concern about growth management issues meant that the Council and the process were under scrutiny by the public and required a high degree of legitimacy and transparency, which was ultimately achieved (interviews, 2002; questionnaire respondents, 2002). Second, the local community board and Council were to be responsible for the implementation process, rather than it falling within the remit of a wider New Urban development project. Third, the local council was involved in the whole process, and was strongly committed to altering the recent pattern of local governance and allowing local communities to have a voice in decision making that affected them. One councillor involved with the process showed personal commitment to genuine participation by reiterating to the New Urban facilitators that the process was not "about you throwing up designs for the community to say yea or nay to, this is about you using your best energies to figure out what these people really want" (interview, 2002).

Ultimately, the Wanaka process achieved some useful community input. The Council and organisers demonstrated a sincere interest in allowing the public to be involved.

However, the concerns raised by interviewees about the influence of New Urbanist philosophies on the process raises a question which it is thought requires further investigation: in a situation where the whole project is overseen and implemented by New Urbanist protagonists, is adherence to a particular set of urbanist principles likely to impact on the effectiveness of the participatory process? In such circumstances the outcomes may not necessarily be the best solution for those affected. Beauregard warns (2002), "the principles of New Urbanism represent a self-delusion and a dangerous political ploy that stifles alternative urbanisms" (p.189). He admits that this criticism is harsh, but suggests it serves as a caution to planners regarding the influence of the views New Urbanists espouse, and the problems with transplanting of their set principles into different and varied locations and historical contexts. This issue raises further questions, discussed below, concerning the effect of the choice of process on participation.

Process and Difference

A vast range of public participation tools are now available to planners, from the infamous public meeting, questionnaires and submissions, to the more interactive processes such as focus groups, workshops and collaborative joint ventures. Each tool has advantages and disadvantages, making some types more appropriate to certain contexts than others. Similarly, some processes are more accessible to certain groups than others. As outlined in the second section above, accessibility must be considered in terms of both equal opportunity to attend a process, and meaningful participation within that process. Both aspects of inclusivity are, in part, dependant on the way that difference is addressed and voices heard. Moreover, conflict often arises as a result of difference, and must consequently be managed. Use of a single, short-term tool as the only participation process may be inadequate in a situation that is multicultural, multi-sectoral, or multifaceted, because its very style may be exclusionary and it has no inbuilt mechanisms for managing strongly opposing views.

The Wanaka case was a fairly good example of an inclusive process, yet there were still areas of discontent in this regard, and room for improvement. While there were disagreements, there was only one that could be regarded as conflictual which remained unresolved. But two factors are important. Wanaka cannot be described as strongly multicultural, multi-sectoral, nor particularly multifaceted. In addition, due to the political and social context—the historical lack of consultation and rapid change as a consequence of unchecked urban development—the Council sought to alter the pattern of governance and engender a more positive relationship with local polities. As a result, its members insisted that the consultants provided a greater proportion of public involvement than would ordinarily have occurred in a workshop of this type. Therefore, what the Wanaka process highlights is that given these conditions, and evidence in some of the literature on the nature of the New Urbanist discourse, the charrette as a tool used in isolation may not be capable of being sufficiently adaptable to be inclusive in all contexts.

Ensuring that there are equal opportunities to become involved in participatory processes requires recognition that those with particular resources (such as time, material wealth, expertise, effective organisation, and access to various forms of media coverage) are more likely to become involved than those without such resources (Fainstein, 2000; Forester, 1993; Knight & Johnson, 1997). Social structures and cultural difference also affect how people see opportunities to participate. The charrette process, which involves extensive promotion, media coverage, and the presentation of information to the public through the pre-charrette phase, privileges those with access to such resources. It potentially excludes those who are used to different modes of communication or who

struggle simply to survive day to day living and have little time or energy to be involved, even if they are aware of opportunities to participate.

Although the Wanaka process had more time allocated for public input than a 'textbook' charrette, it was evident that both the steering committee organising the promotional phase and the lead facilitators were short sighted about the opportunities for discussion that they provided. One member of the public complained that she would have attended the workshop if childcare had been provided, yet the steering committee admitted it was not something they had considered (interviews, 2002). Moreover, one of the lead facilitators, when asked if those present at the workshop were representative of the wider community, stated that "these things are never representative of the total community, they're representative of those who are active and care, and in Wanaka's case they were a good representation of those who are active and care" (interview, 2002). Arguably, such a statement shows either an ignorance of lives other than the hegemonic, middle-class 'ideal citizen' with the resources to take up opportunities offered to participate in public processes, or a lack of concern for truly inclusive practice. While it is difficult to ensure that all sectors of the community are involved in a process like Wanaka 2020, the questionnaire data measured against 2001 census data showed the under-representation of young people (under 30 years), Māori, non-resident property owners, and those in lower-income brackets in the workshop (Bond, 2002). This does beg the question of how well the charrette process would address issues of inclusion and empowerment in a more culturally diverse, socio-economically disparate or conflictual context. Moreover, it raises the question of whether New Urbanists really want to incorporate more diversity in their participatory processes (or projects per se, see Day, 2003).

Furthermore, deliberation within the charrette process privileges certain ways of interacting. According to Young (1996, p. 137), deliberative processes favour those who are comfortable arguing in a quasi-adversarial rational style, while denying a voice to those who interact in different ways. Similarly, Beauregard (2000) suggests that in deliberative processes, individuals must "don the role of the ideal citizen and the views and interests of specific groups must be subordinated to universal considerations" (p. 57). New Urbanism and by extension the New Urban charrette have been criticised for promoting a particular set of idealistic values which fit well with Beauregard's concept of the 'ideal citizen'. Lehrer & Milgrom (1996) suggest that the traditional forms New Urbanists are influenced by are "derived from a segregated, racist city form, [and] are culturally biased in favour of the dominant classes and races of the model period" (p. 61), that is, small town America prior to the 1940s. Other critics have made similar comments regarding the activities of New Urbanists, both in terms of their conception of 'community' and in terms of the singularity of their programme (see Beauregard, 2002; Falconer Al-Hindi, 2001; Falconer Al-Hindi & Staddon, 1997; Harvey, 1997; Robbins, 1998; Till, 1993). While some of these criticisms do not apply here, given Wanaka 2020 was primarily aimed at achieving a vision and strategy for growth management, Wanaka 2020 workshop attendees can be fairly characterised as middle class. The questionnaire data indicated that 64 per cent of the respondents had achieved at least three years of tertiary education, and only 7 per cent described themselves as of an ethnic origin other than European New Zealander. Similarly, as against 2001 census data for the Wanaka area, lower-income groups were very under-represented, whereas higher-income groups were over-represented at the workshop. It is probable that the latter groups simply found it easier to attend the event, and were more comfortable arguing and debating in this kind of deliberative sphere.

If, as Beauregard (2002) suggests, New Urbanism has instrumentalism at its core, it is likely to privilege logical rational argument. Various norms of interaction, such as 'articulateness', 'dispassionateness' and 'orderliness' can exclude different voices (Young, 2002, p. 56). Young suggests that "a theory of democratic inclusion requires an expanded conception of political communication" (p. 56). Several theorists make similar arguments relating to embodied, emotional participation rather than rational, dispassionate, formal and often exclusive public involvement (Beauregard, 2003; Forester, 1999; Sandercock, 2000). Forester (1999, p. 3) describes 'astute planning' as a process that includes sensitive listening, deliberation, dialogue, facilitation, learning and trust. Such planning allows for transformative social learning which enables both participants and planners to learn about others and about the planning process from what their fellow participants say, from how they speak, from the reasons they give for their position, from the character of the arguments that they make and from incidental details that they reveal (Forester (1999, p. 131). In the process of such transformative learning, tolerance, empowerment and social capital can be engendered. While it was noted above that social learning did occur in the Wanaka case, it is suggested that those who learned were already empowered and possessed a degree of social capacity and that, given the lack of cultural diversity amongst participants in the process, the perspectives of attendees were not challenged by those from different backgrounds or social and economic groups.

To enable inclusive practices to occur, planners must have the skills to acknowledge the impacts that their proposals impose. Moreover, planners must not only hear, see and learn from all voices, but must create a space where those voices that may be ignored or marginalised are heard and empowered. A few participants in the Wanaka 2020 process indicated that such space was not created within the deliberative process. One younger participant felt strongly that her views were neither heard nor respected because of her age (questionnaire respondent, 2002). Other participants commented that "he who shouts loudest is heard", and that people "tend to talk past one another and not listen" (ibid). Moreover, a situation of conflict was left unresolved in at least one instance. A small group of local farmers with histories in the area spanning several generations were strongly opposed to a particular proposal because of the impact it would have on the annual agricultural show. Many others in the deliberation were positive about the proposal. Yet, the dominance and superiority with which the opposing group stated their opinions ultimately resulted in the proposal being dropped. In fact, at the debrief on the Monday morning after the public sessions, a statement from the lead facilitator directed the design team to "steer clear of highly contentious stuff" (fieldnotes, 2002). Hence they shied away from the conflict, rather than attempt to explore the historical context (and emotion) behind it. Thus, the facilitators failed to create, a "transitional space, between past and future, where participants can share the illusion of being apart from time" which may enable participants to remove themselves from the threat of losing their identity (Baum, 1999, p. 11). The lack of such a 'transitional space' resulted in passionate opposition to the proposal. Similarly, in this instance, there was little evidence of Forester's (1999, p. 75) 'astute planning', where planners and the public work towards solutions together and the planner or designer is able to "learn, to be able to reframe options" through the deliberative process.

The strength and commitment to their agenda limits the ability of New Urbanists to learn and reframe options outside that agenda. But more fundamental to problems of addressing difference and conflict is New Urbanism's adherence to a single type of participatory process. Because of the intense nature of the charrette, time is always at a premium. Yet, it takes time to address conflictual situations at a deeper level, especially in circumstances where diversity or difference is the cause. Clearly, the New Urban charrette

may be appropriate for some situations, and, despite the weaknesses outlined above, it was generally a positive process for Wanaka. However, it is suggested that on its own it may not be appropriate for all of the different contexts that arise in today's cities and regions.

For the Wanaka process, the consultants lengthened the participatory component of the charrette at the Council's insistence, thus showing their ability to adapt the process to some extent. However, it is suggested that the flexibility of the process remains limited. Certain characteristics of the charrette process are inherent—the design emphasis, the guiding urbanist principles, the intense timeframe and the rigorous testing of different proposals through multidisciplinary collaboration. For the consultants in Wanaka, there was evidence of some concern about the time allocated to public input and design. The consultants were unhappy at the compromise that extended the consultation period because, in their view, it resulted in a weak product. They commented that "you would not normally have two full days of community consultation and so little design", and "that it was undercooked, it was undersupplied in design resolution terms, it needed … more rigour" (interviews, 2002). This suggests a strong design focus, a point noted by a councillor, who suggested that the workshop process was seen "very much as a design opportunity" (interview, 2002). While there is no question that the charrette is design-focused, and it is accepted that this is a strength, it is suggested the claim that it is a method of "citizen-based participation and design" may over-emphasise its participatory capabilities. As Sandercock (2000) argues:

> a more democratic and culturally inclusive planning not only draws on many different ways of knowing and acting, but also has to develop a sensibility able to discern which ways are most useful in what circumstances. (p. 26)

Given that a wide variety of different participation tools are available, one must take the assumption that one tool will fit all situations with a great deal of care. It is the opinion of the authors that New Urbanist procedures demonstrate a faith in urban design expertise and new urbanist principles over and above the broader benefits of achieving inclusive participatory processes.

Conclusion

A key question for the present study was whether the Wanaka 2020 process was an effective means of enabling community participation in planning. Many participants learned about planning issues, about other members and groups within the wider community, and about themselves. In a sense, for those participants, it was transformative. Therefore, the local authority was successful in its intention to empower some of the community. Moreover, the process was clearly of value to a large proportion of participants. However, the weaknesses that were displayed in the Wanaka example, namely the exclusion of certain groups and the risk of power distortions in the process, can be attributed to the nature of the tool, rather than its implementation. The study contends that those weaknesses would have been exacerbated in a more typical rendition of a New Urbanist charrette. Because the New Urbanist agenda was moderated in the Wanaka process due to the local authority's commitment to participatory democracy, it did go some way to meeting the challenge set for planners in the 21st century, that is, to continue to plan while acknowledging difference within our societies. The process is an example of planning practice that has begun to move beyond the modernist planning paradigm. Yet it also exemplifies the risks associated with the broad application of a 'one size fits all'

participatory tool, when it is employed without due regard for the potential power plays that might arise, given the political nature of planning.

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While the New Urbanists indicate that they encourage local democracy in the development of their projects, their recorded performance via the many charrettes that they have facilitated generally reveals that they do not have in mind the kind of long-term, interactive participatory involvement that is counselled in collaborative, communicative or agonistic planning theory. This is borne out not only by the Wanaka example, but in the authors' wider research into the application of New Urbanist principles and methods in other cases in the UK, Canada and Australasia (e.g. Bond & Thompson-Fawcett, in press;

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Thompson-Fawcett & Bond, 2003, 2004). Grant's (2006, p. 185) review of New Urbanist texts also suggests that their "commitment to democracy is weak", and New Urbanists explicitly declare that they are spearheading a pragmatic movement with a focus on Q5 "whatever works best in the long run" for their specific urban mission (Duany, 2005). If local authorities and other practitioners are going to continue to use a New Urbanist

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approach and a charrette process (which certainly appears to be the case in many countries), there is still much that can be done to improve performance beyond the quality of current practice.

It is important that an open critical debate about the impact of New Urbanism is pursued at both the theoretical and practical levels. A significant start has been made in

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researching 'on the ground' examples of New Urban developments (see for example Till, 1993; McCann, 1995; Falconer Al-Hindi & Staddon, 1997; Thompson-Fawcett, 2003b; Thompson-Fawcett & Bond, 2003). However, as Beauregard (2002) notes, only a few academics have "taken up New Urbanism as a theoretical task" (p. 191). Furthermore, he suggests the next step is "to develop a cadre of scholars to explore New Urbanism's

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intellectual foundations, write its history, assess its accomplishments, and establish its relationship to contemporary trends" (p. 191). Talen (2005) in particular has begun some systematic work in this area, but her focus is on theory of urban form and New Urbanism in a physical sense. It is suggested that the distinct lack of research into New Urbanism's process, and in particular public involvement in that process, in relation to contemporary

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trends in participatory design and planning needs to be addressed.

A multidisciplinary approach to examining both the theoretical and normative framework of the charrette and its employment in practice is warranted. As far as the normative framework is concerned, future research should address matters such as how inclusionary the process can be, how communicative it can be, the extent to which learning

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will occur, how conflict is intended to be addressed, what decision-making procedures are available, and how the process relates to the governance context. Then, as for implementation, research might focus on the actual power relations experienced in a charrette process. Who participates and how? What are the motivations for participation? How do participants interact? How do facilitators perform? What is the influence of local

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systems and institutions? Once future research has established what is intended by New Urbanists, what takes place, why the process works as it does, and how relations of power influence outcomes, it will be possible to start to move beyond acknowledging the persistent weaknesses in participatory approaches such as the charrette and begin to understand what needs to be done to improve the process.

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Whatever the approach, local government needs to ensure that it maintains its democratic legitimacy when embarking on new exercises in governance. Of course, issues of equity and effectiveness will always arise when implementing any localised participatory endeavour. Therefore, leaders consciously need to avoid reinforcing the local hegemony, and instead pay particular regard to difference in their community.

470   *S. Bond & M. Thompson-Fawcett*

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