CITIZEN PARTICIPATION
IN URBAN POLICY

by

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ABSTRACT

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Citizen participation has always been a hallowed concept
in our form of liberal democracy. It not only legitimizes
the political process but is also a strong force for citizen
education. If properly implemented, participation can be a
constructive component of the local planning process.

There has been a trend in urban government towards the
professionalism of reform. One unfortunate result of this
has been a decline in responsiveness to the needs and desires
of the urban citizenry. Ostensibly desirable public projects
have been met, after substantial expenditures in planning
and design, with severe citizen dissatisfaction. This
distortion of priorities and subsequent waste of resources
can be alleviated by a better reading of needs through
increased citizen participation.

The evolution of the participatory concept is traced and
the reasons for the success or failure of past attempts are
identified. A case study of successful citizen participation
in transportation planning is given. The final analysis
suggests ways to increase the benefit and minimize the
disutility of citizen participation in urban policy formu-
lation.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

INTRODUCTION

Historically, Americans have cherished the ideal
that citizens should have the right to a strong voice in
the running of their government. This tradition, which
manifests itself in all levels of government, is parti-
cularly strong in Massachusetts as one of the original
thirteen colonies. Colonial experience with King and
Governor bred a strong suspicion of executive power among
our founding fathers. The separation of powers and its
corollary doctrine of checks and balances as elaborated in
our state and national constitutions give testimony to this
basic distrust of any excessive concentration of power. As
our commitment to democracy widened, these doctrines were
soon followed by the extension of popular controls over
the executive.[1] It has thus been universally recognized
that every citizen has the right to not only express his
views, but more important, to have those views heard by
the government. To deny this premise is to deny our very
system.

Unfortunately, this heritage has not always been
strictly adhered to. There are far too many areas of

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[1] Robert C. Wood, "A Call for Return to Community", <u>Public
Management</u>, Vol.51, No.7, July 1969.

profound governmental control over which the average citizen has virtually no influence. This is especially true in urban areas where significant portions of the population, such as the poor or minority groups, have virtually no access to the day-to-day decisions which fundamentally affect their lives. As a result, many decisions are made without a clear understanding of the needs or desires of the affected client group. Consequently not only are the programs inadequate but the corresponding negative public reaction impedes any future solution of the problem.

Obviously this is a situation which can be neither ignored nor tolerated. If we truly wish to solve our pressing urban problems, it is essential that city planners and administrators have an accurate reading of not only the problems but also the real and final impacts of any proposed solution. To this end it is proposed that a viable mechanism be established to institutionalize citizen input in the local planning and decision-making processes. It will by the major contention of this thesis that in addition to its intrinsic democratic values, well managed citizen participation is not only beneficial to those involved, but can also be a constructive force in the local planning process.

THE PROBLEM

Traditionally the citizen has had two prescribed forms of access to his government; the election of officials and referendum. Though not truly institutionalized, such things as public hearings have provided an effective, albeit episodic, means of exposing public officials to citizen opinion. Finally a citizen could try to individually influence an official or join a special interest group whose lobbying could conceivably influence official decisions. Although all these forms of participation have their value, the fact remains that the average urban dweller is continually moving further away from his government. There are many reasons for this phenomenon, four of which will be discussed here.

The first major factor in this decline in representation arises from the mere fact that the government has constantly increased its influence over the private lives of its citizens. It seems only natural that as governmental power increases, so should the level of citizen participation. As one participation advocate put it:

> "...the expansion of governmental interventions
> in the economic and social life of the nation
> increases the stakes of participation: the govern-
> ment does more and therfore more is to be gained
> by having a voice over what it does."[2]

Clearly the amount of citizen participation has not kept pace with increased governmental control.

The second factor is a matter of simple arithmetic. Thirty years ago a city councilman might represent 15,000 voters. Today that same councilman may represent 100,000, 250,000 or more voters.[3] Compounding this problem is the fact that many urban communities have maintained the same legislative structures that were originally intended for a vastly smaller population. Cambridge, Massachusetts, for example, still relies on a part-time mayor and city council. It is obvious that legislative representation has also failed to keep up with the greater population.

The third factor involves the growing ethic of "professional elitism" in city planning and administration. The movement for organizational efficiency in government, which spawned such concepts as the city manager, tended to de-emphasize the need for contact with the people. This effect was also unintentionally magnified by the reform movement of the early 1900's. Despite his onerous reputation, the old precinct captain of the machine era performed a

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[2] Sydney Verda, "Democratic Participation", <u>Social Intelligence for America's Future</u>, Allyn & Bacon, Betram Gross ed. Bos.1969.

[3] Thomas W. Gletcher, "Citizen Participation; Walking the Municipal Tightrope", <u>Public Management</u>, Vol. 51,No.7, July 1969.

valuable function by connecting the individual's small
needs with the larger concerns of the government. He was
able to get things done, cut red tape, and in general give
people the feeling that they could touch and use their
government.[4] In the attempts to avoid politically run
cities this valuable liason system has been reformed out
of existence: unfortunately it has never been replaced.
Instead cities are run by professional bureaucrats who, in
avoiding political involvement, have seemingly forgotten
that they are still responsible to the public. Although
professionalism and efficiency are desirable goals, they
seem to have been instituted at the expanse of responsive-
ness to the citizenry.

The fourth and final factor has to do specifically
with the central city. It is a well established fact that
the rapid growth of the suburbs has drastically changed
the composition of the inner city population. The inner
city is characterized by large proportions of the poor and
racial and ethnic minority groups. While these groups have
the greatest need for government services, they also have
the least knowledge of the services available. This means
also that fewer citizens will actively seek a participatory
role on their own initiative. If the city government does

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[4]ibid.

not seriously elicit opinions from these groups their needs and desires simply remain unheard. The resulting alienation and distrust of such a significant portion of the urban population is in itself a harm which cannot be overlooked.

The net effect of all these trends is that the urban citizen's voice in the running of his government is decreasing. While there are those who contend that citizen participation is a desirable end in itself, it is not clear that increased participation will always result in better decisions. It is clear, however, that participation can be useful in preventing seriously deficient programs. Without continuous public participation this safeguard can not be realized. For a specific example of this we turn to the area of transportation planning.

CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT IN TRANSPORTATION INVESTMENTS

Transportation planning has never been one of the more controversial aspects of the urban scene. For this reason there has never been much citizen involvement in decisions of transportation investments. Unfortunately, the production of an ostensibly desirable transportation improvement that is later met with severe citizen dis-

satisfaction. By this time, of course, a substantial
and irretrievable public investment has been made in the
planning, design, or even construction of the facility.
Somehow either a misunderstanding, a change, or a dis-
regard of true public interest is involved. Whatever the
mis-match, the consequences appear too expensive to be
ignored. Citizens in San Francisco, New Orleans, Milwau-
kee, Baltimore, the District of Columbia, Memphis and more
recently Boston have challenged hundreds of millions of
dollars in transportation investments.[5] It has become
painfully obvious that the government and public can no
longer afford to "find out later" that a given facility is
undesirable for reasons that might have been predetermined
by fuller public participation. This is a growing concern
at the local level since more and more responsibility for
transportation planning is being placed on municipalities.

The era of blind faith in and commitment to the
interstate highway program is finished. It is now incum-
bent upon urban localities to develop a transportation
planning capacity hopefully to better serve the needs of
their citizens. As the focal point of both needs and impacts,

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[5]City of Cambridge, Improving the Transportation Planning
Process in Cambridge and Other Small Cities, prepared for
the U.S. Department of Transportation, Dec. 1972.

local government must be the one to determine whether a project will have the support of the citizenry before too much time and money has been wasted.

As later portions of this thesis discuss this problem fully, no further elaboration is required at present. The important point is that the harm subsequent to the lack of citizen participation is definite and substantial. Even a hard core cynic can understand the waste of such magnitudes of money and manpower.

CONCLUSION AND STRUCTURE

While it is easy to discuss and defend citizen participation in abstract terms, its implementation remains a problem. This introduction has established the general problem of lessening citizen involvement and the resultant harms. The remainder of this thesis will examine the real problem associated with making citizen participation "work".

Chapter one will be devoted to the overall issue of citizen participation in urban affairs. The evolution of the citizen participation concept will be traced by an examination of the federally inspired attempts at participation in urban renewal and the poverty program. The

reasons behind the failure of these attempts will also be identified. Finally the most common arguments for and against citizen participation will be presented.

Chapter two deals with a specific example of citizen participation. The Cambridge Transportation Forum, a citizens group, established to provide continual input into the local transportation policy-making process, will be the sole subject of this chapter. Topics to be covered include its origin, case history, organization and influence on the planning process.

Chapter three, the final chapter, will offer conclusions and recommendations for the participatory process. A case for increased participation will be presented along with suggestions for painless implementation. The main conclusion to be defended is that the benefits of active citizen participation can be achieved without undue detriment to either the goals of social reform or the efficiency of urban government.

CHAPTER ONE

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION:

An Overview

The term "citizen participation" means different
things to different people. Some envision a select group
of business and civic leaders, sitting around a large
walnut table, rationally discussing the city's economic
problems with the mayor. Others immediately think of an
angry crowd of parents, meeting in a church basement and
planning a march to block a proposed highway through
their neighborhood. Still others equate citizen partici-
pation exclusively with the involvement of the poor or
minority groups. Because this term can justifiably be
interpreted in so many ways, it is essential at this point
to define it more precisely for the purposes of this paper.

Technically, participation can include every possi-
ble input of citizen opinion into the governmental decision-
making process. For the purpose of this discussion, how-
ever, citizen participation necessarily takes on a far more
limited meaning. In general only those forms of partici-
pation which have official government sanction will be
considered. This includes such things as the mayor's
"select citizen task force" or recognized neighborhood

organizations. It does not include any citizens group
which is organized around a particular dogma or a certain
side of an issue. In this category fall political organi-
zations and any special interest groups ranging from the
local chapter of SNCC to the Chamber of Commerce. This
qualification does not deny the fact that such groups
have a profound influence upon and often overlap the more
institutionalized forms of participation. Rather, it
accepts the reality that if we wish to change our approach
to citizen involvement, this change can only be realized
in the participatory efforts which the government initiates
or sponsors.

With this definition in mind, this chapter proposes
to give a picture of the general concept of citizen parti-
cipation at the local level. Its evolution in a number of
different urban areas will be described, to be followed by
the most common arguments for and against the participatory
process.

GENERAL TRENDS

At one time citizen involvement in urban affairs
was viewed rather narrowly by municipal governments. Usual-
ly only the community elites, those who already had politi-
cal or economic power, were invited to participate. Even
the purpose of these "blue ribbon" panels was limited to

advise on the technical aspects of a proposed action
rather than an assessment of community needs prior to the
drafting of any specific plan. But since the plan was so
often coincident with the best interests of these select
participants, no one complained and the entire process was
characterized by consensus and cooperation. Needless to
say this resulted in simplifying the tasks of city planners
and administrators.

The consequences of such limited citizen participa-
tion were inevitable; the interests of the business and
civic leaders of the community were those most often served
by city programs. In urban renewal, for example, legisla-
tion called for the attainment of two potentially conflict-
ing goals: the redevelopment of the center city and the
provision of low-cost housing. The fact that urban renewal
has destroyed far more low-cost housing than it has replaced[6]
gives testimony that the former goal has been given higher
priority. This situation can be attributed at least in
part to the class of citizens involved in local renewal
decisions.

The Sixty's saw a major change in the concept of
citizen participation. Spurred by new federal urban legis-

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[6]Jon Van Til & Sally Bould Van Til, "Citizen Participation
and Social Policy: The end of the Cycle", Social Problems,
Vol.17, No.3, Winter 1970.

lation and a general aura of urban activism, the non-elites
of the city began organizing to gain access to gain access
to decisions formerly controlled by the elites. At first
the traditional city powers found it easy to dispence with
these minor threats to their authority. As time went on,
however, citizen groups became better organized and more
importantly, with every new fight, gained in political
acumen. Soon delays were granted and finally the scrapping
of programs was achieved.

Naturally the traditional decision-makers resented
and resisted the intrusions of this new political force:

> "The American experience has shown that govern-
> ment officials and administrators resist efforts
> at community participation. To them it is a
> threat. To the politician, it creates new politi-
> cal forces that challenge his traditional base of
> support. To the civil servant, citizen involvement
> challenges his professional status, his competence,
> his ability to determine goals according to what
> he thinks is correct."[7]

As a result of this initial negative response, there was
generally very little cooperation between officials and the
emerging citizen groups. The release of any documents to
such groups by an official was seen as tantamount to cutting
one's own throat. City officials opted to clam up and dig
in for the battle.

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[7]Lloyd Axworthy, The Citizen and Neighborhood Renewal,
Institute of Urban Studies: University of Winnipeg, 1971.
Page 15.

The citizens groups, on the other hand, soon realized their inability to propose and have enacted their own solutions. It is not even clear that many of these groups were even able to draw up any consistent plans. Instead they found power in the ability to block the proposals of the elites. This veto power soon became commonplace as community groups grew more suspicious of any city action.

The final result was a stalemate. Neither side saw any hope for compromise; so nothing happened until the non-elites were discouraged and gave up. Unfortunately the experience left great bitterness on both sides and everyone lost. This unhappy chain of events was typical of most citizen participation. To better understand this evolution of the concept, we examine specific areas of urban concern, which were most closely involved with participation: the poverty program and urban renewal.

THE WAR ON POVERTY

Inconspicuously lodged in Section 201 of the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 is a definition which has caused considerable controversy, action and reaction in all parts of the country. The definition holds that "The term 'community action program' means a program . . . which is developed, conducted, and administered with the maximum

<u>feasible participation</u> of the residents of the areas and

members of the groups served." (emphasis mine) Since this

act has proven to be the most comprehensive piece of pover-

ty legislation in our nation's history, one would assume

that it would receive intense Congressional consideration.

Such, however, was not the case either for the Act or for

the issue of resident participation:

> "In retrospect, it is interesting to observe
> that the abbreviated section-by-section analysis
> that usually accompanies bills in Congress did
> not even mention citizen participation at the
> time of the poverty hearings and that Sargent
> Shriver's articulate presentation of the merits
> of the program included merely the innocuous
> sentence, 'Above all, it (the community action
> program) includes the poor people of the commu-
> nity whose first opportunity must be the oppor-
> tunity to help themselves.'"[8]

It is a testimony to the legislative skill of then President

Johnson that it took a mere five months for the entire

Economic Opportunity Act to clear Contress. This expedi-

ency, however, left the newly established Office of Econo-

mic Opportunity (OEO) on very unstable grounds. While

committed to the ideal of meaningful residential involve-

ment, the OEO also was responsible to avoid overstepping

a tenuous Congressional mandate. The intent of the legis-

lation was clear. In a program designed to rehabilitate

people, maximum feasible participation was necessary to

enable the poor to use their bootstraps. The precise role

8Hans B.C.Spiegel, <u>Citizen Participation in Urban Develop-</u>
<u>ment</u>, NTL Institute, 1968: Washington DC P.21.

of the poor, however, was never clarified. The legisla-
tion, in fact, did not even give a hint as to the size of
the ballpark.

Sensing this potentially explosive situation, the
OEO started off with a relatively mild approach. Ini-
tially the poor would be involved in what has been termed
"client participation".[9] The emphasis was to be placed on
organizing and directing the demands of the poor toward
the city agencies which could serve them. In this way it
was hoped that these agencies would be more responsive to
their poor "clients." As OEO became better established,
it began to push for more representation for the poor.
Foremost among its actions was the establishment of a one-
third quota of representation for the poor on CAP Boards.
Meanwhile, attempts to minimize political controversy over
implementation were quickly decaying. The original vague-
ness of the legislation fostered attacks on the OEO by both
the right and left.

Although the traditional local political elites
rarely initiated poverty programs, they quickly became
involved when the political potential of client participa-
tion was revealed (as in the Mobilization for Youth Program).
At the Mayors' Conference of 1965, proposed resolutions

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[9]Van Til, *op cit.*

blamed the participation of the poor for "fostering class struggle."[10] The middle class professionals who ran the service agencies also came out against participation if for no other reason than it greatly increased their work load.

On the other side ther were many organizers who felt that the poor had received too little. The leadership of the Black Community, which had emerged during the struggle for civil rights, was quick to demand that the poor deal not only with administrative issues but the policy considerations of the program as well. Often attempts to organize ethnic groups were made by community leaders who themselves aspired to become political elites. As a result, the emergence of any powerful indigenous organizations of the poor (ala Alinsky) were rare indeed.

Amid this controversy the OEO decided to retreat to a more traditional form of participation: a combination of both elites and the poor. By this time, though, an adversary relation had been established and any bid by blacks or the poor for power ended in stalemate. The hopes for real representation of the poor were further crushed in

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[10]"Shriver and the War on Poverty," _Newsweek_, September 13, 1965, p.24.

1967 when the Green Amendment was passed. This amendment resolved the dilemma between traditional American beliefs and participation of the poor by placing the final power over the poverty program once again in the hands of the established political elites. As Mrs. Green[11] put it in defending her amendment: "those who are helping to pay shall have a voice through elected officials."

Thus, the inevitable link between economic and political power is maintained and the poor may merely reject or accept what is offered. The OEO in the meantime has sunk into oblivion under the Nixon Administration. "Maximum feasible participation" once only a twinkle in the eye of Sargent Shriver is no more than a forgotten nightmare.

URBAN RENEWAL AND DEVELOPMENT

Citizen participation, in one form or another, has long been a component of our urban renewal programs. The Housing Act of 1949 was the first piece of renewal legislation which specified community participation as a necessary feature of a "workable program". The bill called for a community-wide citizens committee to advise local planning

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[11]Quoted in New York Times, Nov.8,1967.

agencies on the administration of renewal plans. It is

important to emphasize the advisory nature of the partici-

pation. Despite government rhetoric, the planning and

execution of the renewal process was principally determined

and run by the local planning agency, with approval of the

local governing body. Even in those communities where the

citizen committee was not soley used for rubberstamping,

those affected by the plans had little voice in the process.

"These committees were often so broadly constituted that the

urban renewal area residents were only a small voice compared

to the more powerful articulations of business, labor,

organized religion, social welfare, industry and education."[12]

As has been alluded to earlier, the results were urban

renewal projects which most benefitted the community elite.

In response to this problem, Congress enacted the

Demonstration Cities and Metropolitan Development Act of

1966. Section 103 of this act required "widespread citizen

participation in the program." Not only were the renewal

area residents to have more say in the project, but they

were to be included in the planning stages. As one HUD

official put it:

> "The convictions upon which this policy is based
> were reached after long and searching explorations.
> These explorations squarely faced the fact that
> federal, state and local proframs involving massive

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[12]Hans B.C. Spiegel, op cit.

physical or social changes were frequently not addressing citizen concerns and were being confronted by resistance where residents had not participated in the planning. The studies recognized that the area in which this program would be implemented had truly, as Congress found, faced marked deterioration in the quality of the environment and the lives of large numbers of people." 13

It is important to note that unlike the poverty program, participation was to include both elites and non-elites. At first this produced easy victories for the elites as in Lake Meadows in Chicago, the West End in Boston, and Kips Bay and Stuyvesant Town in New York. As opposition became more organized, however, neighborhoods began winning delays in implementation. This was due in large part to the efforts of the federal government in assisting citizen groups. In a policy statement issued by HUD, the following requirements were made:

> "The neighborhood citizen participation structure must have clear and direct access to the decision-making process of the City Demonstration Agency so that neighborhood views can influence policy, planning and program decisions . . . in order to initiate and react intelligently in program matters, the structure must have the technical capacity for making knowledgeable decisions. This will mean that some sort of professional technical assistance, in a manner agreed to by neighborhood residents shall be provided. Where financial problems are a barrier to effective participation, financial assistance (e.g. baby sitting fees, reimbursement for transportation, compensation for serving on Boards or Committees) should be

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13Floyd H. Hyde, "HUD Builds Partnership for Participation," Public Management, Vol.51, No.7, July 1969.

> extended to neighborhood residents to assure
> their opportunity to participate." 14

This was of course a big step forward in the concept of

citizen participation. Not only were residents invited to

participate, but they could receive compensation for their

trouble. Unfortunately, despite this help, it soon became

clear that citizen groups once again found power only in

the ability to veto plans. With notable exceptions (ie

Adams-Morgan project) citizens were unable to propose and

have accepted any constructive action. As in the poverty

program, the inevitable stalemate resulted and eventually

citizens lost interest.

THE FAILINGS OF PARTICIPATION

If one were prone to generalizations, one could

safely say that the federally inspired citizen participa-

tion of the sixty's was a dismal failure. This does not

imply, however, that the concept of active citizen parti-

cipation in urban affairs is inconsistent with efficiency

and productivity in city government. Rather it is incum-

bent upon those who still have faith in our democratic

heritage, to determine the reasons for this failure. It

is to this question that we presently turn.

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[14]Department of Housing and Urban Development, Model Cities
Administration's CDA Letter No.3, Washington DC, Oct.30, 1967.

To many academic planners the answer lies in the
nature of the participants. Most of the concerted efforts
at participation to date have been aimed at the socially
or economically disadvantaged. While these people have
the greatest need and the least representation, they also
have the least knowledge of city government and programs.
Furthermore the poor and minority groups have a basic mis-
trust of city hall. In their daily struggle to survive,
they do not feel they have the time to participate in a
government they feel is fundamentally opposed to their
interests. To Banfield and Wilson[15] this translates into
the lack of "community-regarding and public regarding
ethos." (Presumably our urban renewal officials, who for
years ignored the critical need for low cost housing, are
blessed with community-regarding ethos.) According to
Bellush and Haus-Knecht,[16] Citizen participation raises
"unrealistic expectations" for non-elite citizens who have
neither "morale-cohesion", "capacity for effective member-
ship," "leadership", "knowledge" or "awareness", all seen
as "prerequisites for participation." The conclusion
reached, of course, is that citizen participation defeats

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[15]James Q. Wilson and Edward Banfield, "Public-Regardingness
as a Value Premise in Voting Behavior", American Political
Science Review, Vol.58, Dec. 1964.

[16]Jewell Bellush & Murray Hausknecht, "Planning, Participa-
tion, and Urban Renewal", Bellush & Hausknecht, Urban Renewal:
People, Politics and Planning.

the goals of policy reform and implementation. Among many academic critics then there is the inclination toward the professionalization of reform.

I personally find this a hard line to swallow. It is granted that participation among the non-elites is difficult due to their limited perspective of urban ills and solutions. It is never the less mighty presumptuous to equate education and economic status with the ability to act in other than a selfish manner. Perhaps the crux of this matter lies more in the approach to participation. As the Cahns note:

> "People respond to the terms of the question put
> . . . Until recently, there has been no attempt
> to create forums in which the poor have been
> asked to make decisions as composite human beings,
> as human beings who have something valid to say
> about the allocation of resources from the point
> of view of the entire community. Instead, they
> have been forced into the role of responding as
> selfish, dependent individuals. By confining
> the poor to speaking in that role, professionals
> purport to prove an incapacity to function respon-
> sibly in any other role." 17

Just as there are those who blame the intractable nature of citizens, there are also those who blame the intractable nature of the government:

> "The forms of government we now use were suf-
> ficient for providing the caretaker services

17Edgar S. & Jean Camper Cahn, "Citizen Participation", Hans B. Spiegel (ed), Citizen Participation in Urban Development, NTL Inst. for Applied Behaviorial Science, Wash.D.C.,1968.

that were required in simpler days. But, as
instruments capable of handling the complex,
subtle social and human concerns of modern
urban citizens, they are failures. They are
too distant, too bureaucratic, too simplistic
in their approach. What is even more dismay-
ing, they are becoming less and less democratic
- immune to the citizen who wishes to express
himself on problems that affect him." 18

While there may be some truth in this, it does not seem
that our city governments are inherently encapable of
accomodating citizen participation. The problem appears
to be involved more with the present attitudes of our city
officials. Many tend to consider participation as some-
thing separate from the routine activities of government.
Until citizen input is recognized as an inherent component
of the decision-making process, there can be little hope
for success.

Perhaps the most significant criticism leveled
against citizen participation concerns its effect on the
length of projects. The inclusion of citizens often length-
ens the planning process to the point of either obsolescence
or ultimate defeat. It also involves the expenditure of
scarce resources in terms of money and manpower. To many
planners this is simply too high of a price to pay. If
there is indeed a pressing time or revenue constraint, to
the point where participation would endanger the project,

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[18]Axworthy, op cit.

this is a valid argument. It should not be used, though, as a rationalization to dispense with all participation. As one qualified observer noted in this regard:

"The effort to achieve participation cost local officials dearly, not so much in actual delays of planning or construction, but in what the delays revealed about the local government's ability to conduct its business effectively."[19]

Participation necessarily involves the exposure of plans and procedures that at one time were immune to inspection. It is only natural that professional planners would resist such an affront on their competence. It must be remembered, however, that as public servants, planners have an obligation of full disclosure to the public. If the present crisis in our federal executive branch has taught us anything, it is that there is always a danger in the absence of disclosure and review.

A final criticism of citizen involvement concerns the parochial tendencies of many groups. It is often hard for citizens to think on a community level:

"Participating citizens grind their axes on behalf of their own geographical locality at the expense of the total community and of other localities. The outcome if they are successful is a disproportionate allotment of total community resources to the specific locality whose

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[19]Martha Dethick, "Defeat at Fort Lincoln", The Public Interest, No. 20, Summer 1970.

> participating citizens have been influential
> with the professional planners and the govern-
> ment officials." 20

This of course puts officials who must think in total com-
munity benefit in somewhat of a bind. It is no worse,
however, than allowing a small elite group the only access
to decision-making.

There can be no doubt that there are many potential
dangers in citizen participation. It is essential that
planners and administrators realize the hardships before
any effort is made. This singular fact could explain many
of the failures of participation in poverty and urban renewal.
The Federal government suddenly mandated participation, which
was neither desired nor prepared for by local officials.
The results were disastrous:

> "Officials at all levels often seem to fail to
> understand what they are setting in motion when
> they undertake to engage the community. This
> failure, more than any real threat in the process,
> seems to produce most of the disfunctions and bad
> experiences, which are exacerbated when the fore-
> going obstacles are encountered." 21

Citizen participation is not something to be taken lightly;
unless a total commitment is made by officials, the attempt
will be crippled from the onset. If the commitment is
there, the benefits can be substantial.

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[20] Herald Goldblatt, "Arguments for and against Citizen Parti-
cipation in Urban Renewal", Hans Spiegel (ed) op cit.

[21] Robert C. Seaver, "The Dilemma of Citizen Participation",
Hans Spiegel (ed), op cit.

THE BENEFITS

The fact that certain efforts at citizen partici-
pation have failed to institutionalize citizen input in
social policy does not mean that these efforts have been
without benefit. Citizen participation can be advocated
not only as a necessary condition for the success of urban
programs but also as a desirable end in itself. Thus any
program which offers a chance to participate is valuable
regardless of the effects on social policy. Advocates of
this bend feel that its major purpose is to act as a mili-
tant watchdog in civic affairs. The late Hugh Pomeroy,[22]
a city planner with a distinguished career himself believed
as much: "Shall (planning) then be left entirely in the
hands of bureaucrats - like me for instance?", he asks.
And he answers his own question: "Not at all. I do not
trust myself to make decisions for the community. Planning
is making decisions profoundly affecting the whole form and
character of the community and the manner of life of its
people. That calls for deeply rooted citizen participation."

In a related argument, citizen participation is
often hailed as a force for citizen education. As John
Stuart Mill wrote, "The most important point of excellence

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[22]Hugh R. Pomeroy, "The Planning Process and Public Partici-
pation,", An Approach to Urban Planning, Gerald Breese &
E. Whiteman (eds), Princeton Univ. Press, 1953.

which any form of government can possess is to promote
the virtue and intelligence of the people themselves."[23]
Surely even if the poor never achieved any influence in
the poverty program, they became more politically aware
of the situation. At least those who participated learned
how the poverty program worked and which agency to go to
with their problems.

There are also valid arguments for citizen partici-
pation which bear directly on the successful implementation
of urban programs. Citizens in general are suspicious of
any government program presented as a fait accompli. Oppo-
sition occurs less on the basis of program merits than on
the method of implementation. To avoid such costly and un-
necessary delays, some semblence of citizen participation
is valuable in all stages of the planning and design of a
program. Not only will the program be more likely to ad-
dress the most critical areas of concern, but it will be
less susceptible to community veto. This is often a prime
concern in urban renewal:

> "When there is citizen participation in the
> planning stages of a renewal program, plans
> can be formulated which reflect the desires
> and needs of residents as they perceive them.
> moreover, having had a hand in the planning,
> residents are already predisposed to accept

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[23]John Stuart Mill, <u>Considerations on Representative Govern-
ment</u>, Henry Holt & Comp., New York, 1875.

the plans which they feel they have helped
create, even though the plans finally in-
volve changes in the neighborhood they would
not have agreed to without prior discussion
and change of their attitudes." 24

In many ways citizen participation can be of great

help to the planner. It not only lessens community oppo-

sition but can also relieve political pressure. If it

leads to a better understanding of the needs of citizens,

it can only lead to more effective programs. Seriously

deficient programs can also be more easily identified and

eliminated.

The benefits are too great to be missed merely

because a social scientist tells us that citizen partici-

pation is inefficient and raises conflicts. Any change

which shifts the balance of power will necessarily cause

conflict. The critical challenge to American social policy

in the years ahead lies in developing the participatory

process to its fullest potential and smallest harm.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has demonstrated the current dilemma

of citizen participation. Because of its poor track record,

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[24]William C. Loring, Jr., Frank L. Sweetser, & Charles F.
Ernst, Community Organization for Citizen Participation in
Urban Renewal, prepared by the Housing Association of
Metropolitan Boston, Cambridge Press Inc.,Boston, Mass,1957.

citizen participation has invoked a thorough denunciation by most city planners and administrators. There is a real danger of the pendulum swinging too far away from participation, back to the point of unresponsive city government serving the interests of an elite minority. To avoid this danger, we must commit ourselves to the search for better, moreworkable forms of participation.

The next chapter examines one such effort. By most indications it is an effort which has successfully involved the citizen in the planning process. By an analysis of this program, perhaps a better understanding can be achieved on how citizen participation works. Only by rigorous investigation can we hope to turn participation from an administrator's nightmare into a useful tool for the solution of our pressing urban problems.

CHAPTER TWO

CASE STUDY IN TRANSPORTATION

In the past decade America has witnessed a crisis in urban transportation. Highways, once seen as the savior for the city, have fallen into disrepute. Our recent energy crisis only served to dramatize the folly of depending so heavily on the private automobile. Almost as an afterthought, the methodology of the planning process associated with the highways has also come under increased attack. Many people feel it is the closed and unresponsive nature of the traditional transportation planning process that has caused the distortion of our transportation priorities. Transportation officials are under growing pressure across the nation to more rigorously consider the multilateral impacts of their decisions of the communities they serve. Unfortunately with the death of the highway panacea, officials are left with no clear cut policy to follow. Even more alarming is the fact that no inherent mechanisms exist to guide the structuring of a new policy based on the needs and desires of the urban citzenry. It is to this problem that we now turn.

For ten years after the passage of the Federal Aid Highway Act of 1956, committment to the interstate system was absolute. The federal government provided the funds

and the states were responsible for planning and construction. If localities were consulted at all, it was always in terms of determining the most desirable location for a highway. Few people, including the urban dweller who longed for the freedom of the road, ever questioned the wisdom of building the highway in the first place.

As the negative impacts of highways became apparent, however, people began to take a second look. This was especially true in the central city where costs in terms of air pollution, noise, dislocation and congestion were severe and where benefits were often questionable. Slowly but surely communities began to question the carte blanche of highway advocates. "We have already seen evidence of this throughout the country where transportation officials are facing court reversals of their decisions, overrulings by chief elected officials, rejection of bond issues, and a general lack of support by the very people they are trying to serve." [25] This conflict had two detrimental consequences; not only was money lost but transportation improvement came to a virtual standstill. Across the country, unfinished freeways, overpasses, and other structures stand as silent although constant reminders of the danger in failing to consider community opinion. Clearly, when

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[25]Richard J. Bouchard, "Citizen Participation: How to Get There From Here", Highway Research Record, Number 380, 1972.

litigation must be resorted to in order to block a project that has already claimed millions of dollars, something is wrong with the approach.

Amid all of this controversy, the individual citizen was given only sporadic chances at participation. Before discussing possible changes in the approach to transportation planning, it is well to examine some of the previous attempts at involving affected communities in transportation projects.

TRADITIONAL APPROACHES TO COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

It is generally conceded that there are two basic forms which have traditionally been used to elicit community opinion of a proposed transportation project. Both have serious deficiencies which make citizen participation a mere formality.

The first is the use of a small group of prominent individuals assumed to be representatives of the community. These individuals usually include local public officials, business representatives and other "leading citizens." This method often is tantamount to excluding the public from participation in the study. The views of such a select group more often than not diverge widely from those of the community as a whole. This is not really surprising since

it is common for a group of citizens, such as the Chamber

of Commerce, to have members who do not even live in the

community. What is even more important is that the average

citizen does not consider such selected groups as being

representative of his feelings. Instead people in the

community feel ignored and alienated by the government

and their citizen representatives. Since this reaction

only hardens resistance toward any project, the use of a

select citizens' group not only fails to serve its purpose,

but also inhibits successful resolution of the problem.

The second method of involving citizens is the public

hearing. It is utilized quite frequently because it is often

prescribed in legislation. The rationale of this approach

is that it gives any interested citizen the chance to hear

proposed plans and comment on them. Anyone who has attended

a public hearing realizes the weakness in this approach:

> "Although this method appears to be an entirely
> acceptable one, and one that is in keeping with
> the highly valued principles of a participatory
> democracy, it all too frequently degenerates into
> an arena of conflict. There are numerous examples
> of hearing being prematurely closed or, worse, not
> even allowed to begin because of the unmanageable
> uproar or threat to the personal safety of those
> presiding!" 26

The reasons for this antagonism are related directly to the

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26Kenneth M. Travis and Stanley C. Plog, "Community Involve-
ment in Transportation Planning: A New Approach", Highway
Research Record, Number 380, 1972.

nature of public hearings. Usually the plans presented
at such hearings have already been formalized and few
options are presented. This automatically gives the citi-
zen participant only the alternative of totally accepting
or rejecting the proposal. Moreover, citizens have very
little knowledge of the plans prior to the day of the meet-
ing. Operating without more complete information, people
tend to feed on the anxieties of one another, and antipathy
for the project multiplies. Often citizens come with and
read prepared statements which have nothing to do with the
government proposal. With such lack of flexibility on
both sides, it is easy to understand why confrontation and
bitter conflict almost always result. It is clear that
the public hearing is often counterproductive for all
concerned.

Perhaps the crux of the issue in past attempts at
participation is the fact that they only arise in crisis
situations. Citizen opposition materializes when a direct
threat in the form of a transportation improvement is speci-
fically proposed. By this time considerable time, effort
and money have usually gone into the project. If citizens
are successful in blocking the project, the only conceivable
result is the loss of money and considerable antagonism to
carry over into the next effort.

In order to avoid this unfortunate situation, a new approach is desperately required. The remainder of this chapter will look at one such attempt in the urban community of Cambridge, Massachusetts. A citizen group called the Cambridge Transportation Forum (CTF) has been organized to provide continual citizen input for the transportation planning process. It is hoped that such an approach will do much to alleviate the costs of our current urban transportation crisis.

CAMBRIDGE VERSUS THE HIGHWAY

Cambridge, Massachusetts is an urban community of roughly 100,000 residents. It borders Boston proper, an attribute which makes Cambridge similar to the central city community. It is a diverse community with both the very rich and the very poor. While there is a great deal of industry within Cambridge, most of it is perilously close to obsolescence in light of today's economy. Cambridge is an academic community, boasting the existence of Harvard University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). At the same time it is a community of relatively insular neighborhoods, whose long-time residents have deeply established roots and limited contact with the outside world.

This diversity is both an asset and a liability.
While preventing the sterile homogeneity of many urban
communities, it also makes the policy-making process quite
difficult. The nature of the City government tends to
accentuate this problem. Cambridge has a plan E govern-
ment, which means it has an elected City Council; a Mayor,
elected by the Council from its own ranks; a City Manager,
appointed by the City Council; and line departments, whose
personnel are appointed by and responsible to the City
Manager. In theory, the Council makes the policy which
the Manager dutifully implements. In practise, though,
this is rarely the case. The City Council, which is only
part time without any staff, finds it hard to arrive at
any consistent policy. The reason usually given is the
Council's inability to accurately determine community
opinion. The City Manager, then, without much guidance,
is forced to make most policy decisions. It is often a
toss up whether the independent line departments will in
turn support this policy.

The fragmentation and lack of coordination is
graphically illustrated in Cambridge's fight against high-
ways. In 1966 Cambridge and other Boston area municipali-
ties found themselves confronted by a plan for a network
of inner city highways. For Cambridge, the State proposal

included the construction of three major highways: the Route 2 extension, the Inner Belt and the Intermediate Belt.

The City Council, which had been historically anti-highway, immediately adopted a stance against all three projects, especially the Inner Belt. It soon became clear, however, that this policy was not fully accepted. Many City officials either remained silent or actively worked against the Council mandate. Even the Council contradicted itself on occasion. They passed, for example, a Workable Program submission to HUD which left the structures within the boundaries of the proposed Inner Belt free of any code enforcement. The implication, of course, was the inevitable construction of the highway. Indeed the only thing that characterized Cambridge's response was confusion. With some officials working for, some against, and most indecisive, it seemed inevitable that the highways and their ancillary facilities would be built as the state had planned them.

Into this hopeless situation sprang a citizens group called Save Our Cities. Dedicated to the prevention of any highways in Cambridge, this group began to organize citizen opposition. In order to effectively match State documentation, Save Our Cities enlisted the aid of Urban Planning Aid (UPA), a group of economists, architects, lawyers,

planners and community organizers, mostly from MIT and Harvard, which had been formed to provide technical aid to neighborhood groups. With the help of UPA, Save Our Cities initiated a massive drive against the State proposal. To make a long story short, this effort enabled the City Council to enforce its policy decision in the line departments. Those who opposed the Council position were relieved of their transportation responsibilities. The City Manager's office became actively involved in opposition. After a series of small victories, Save Our Cities, UPA, and the City Manager's office were able, in January 1968, to organize a massive demonstration of Cambridge citizens and officials to march on the State House. Joined by nineteen other Boston area community groups, the demonstration demanded that the Governor stop all construction and planning of highways within Route 128. This called-for moratorium on highway activity was eventually declared by Governor Sargant, sparing Cambridge the intrusion of any highway.

While many people were pleased by this decision, the entire experience had many negative aspects for Cambridge. It demonstrated a total lack of coordination and direction in Cambridge transportation policy. It further showed the unresponsiveness of Cambridge officials to the desires of Cambridge citizens and their elected representatives. But unlike most tales of municipal government,

this one has a happy ending. The experience with highways
gave impetus to a drive for greater citizen participation
in transportation policy. The next section describes how
this goal was identified and finally realized.

THE ORIGIN OF THE CTF

The Cambridge experience with transportation in
the sixties revealed that the transportation planning
process was far from adequate. The need for reform was
further necessitated by the advent of revenue sharing.
Localities have been increasingly expected to bear more
and more of the burden of transportation planning. It
was these conditions that prompted the Cambridge Departments
of Planning and Development and of Traffic and Parking to
conduct a thorough analysis of the local transportation
planning process. The study was funded by the U.S. Depart-
ment of Transportation as a neighborly gesture. (The
Transportation System Center had recently moved into Cam-
bridge.). Released in December 1972 the study was titled
Improving the Transportation Planning Process in Cambridge
and Other Small Cities.

Although it covered many areas concerning the organi-
zation and procedures of the local planning process, the
primary focus of the report was on the input of the citizenry.

The report was based on the premise that "Top-Down" transportation planning (where policy is generated at the higher levels of government) leads to a distortion of priorities. This distortion in turn leads to the aforementioned dysfunction of an ostensibly desirable transportation investment being met with severe opposition.well into the project. To avoid this, the report contends, fuller citizen participation must occur before considerable resources have gone into the design and planning of the project. This participation is only feasible on the local level where the greatest access to officials is provided the citizen. This does not mean, however, that citizen input is restricted to local transportation decisions. Citizens can also provide information so that local officials can better represent the community interests on regional and state levels.

It was for all these reasons that the report recommended the establishment of the Cambridge Transportation Forum. Initially it was to be associated with the City Manager's office. Although other options were explored, such as a City Council Forum, it was agreed that the CTF should be closest to the point of real policy formulation; that being the City Manager. The report went into great detail on how the CTF should be established and operated. The City Manager or his delegate would be the chairman. Representatives from every recognized citizen group in

Cambridge would be invited to participate. Those who were interested but not affiliated with any organization could observe meetings and speak during certain portions of the meetings. With membership came the responsibility of perfect attendance, either by the representative or one of two delegated alternates. The City Manager was also committed to certain CTF responsibilities: to submit quarterly reports on transportation activities, elicit CTF response to budget proposals, provide comprehensive staff assistance, and in general see that the CTF had access to any transportation related material. The study even went so far as to outline the format of CTF meetings.

The report was submitted to the City Council for approval on April 3,1972, and on April 10, the Council passed a resolution supporting the Forum concept and urging its speedy implementation. At this point in time it seemed that all systems were go and that Cambridge would soon embark on this experiment in comprehensive citizen participation.

Somewhere along the line, however, something went wrong. Although the CTF was included in the work program of the Planning Department, it was given very low priority; it was so low, in fact, that it received neither funds nor staff support. According to one Cambridge official this was due to the recalcitrance of certain municipal officials

who felt threatened by the entire CTF concept. So while supporting the program publicly, these officials quietly impeded the project by not supporting it financially. For six months after all the positive rhetoric, the CTF floundered from lack of support.

The Mayor and City Councillors who supported the CTF were naturally perturbed by this situation. There was little they could do, however, since they did not have any staff themselves. By a fortunate coincidence this problem did not persist. Under the direction of Justin Gray, MIT initiated a project to provide staff for the City Council. Twelve graduate and undergraduate students were assigned, whose aim was to ensure the policy-making role of the City Council. John Hixson and I, both MIT Urban Studies undergraduates, were assigned to the Council Committee on Transportation and Parking. This appeared to be the perfect opportunity to begin the CTF. Because the Planning Department had shown so little desire to establish the CTF, it was decided that it would be formed under the auspices of the City Council. This was actually more practical than the original proposal since the Council theoretically possessed the power to formulate transportation policy. As will be seen later, the final product represents a compromise between these two positions.

Actual work on the CTF began in the early spring of 1973. As of this writing, the CTF has been fully established and already shows signs of having a significant effect on Cambridge transportation policy. The remainder of this chapter will consist primarily of my personal observations of citizen participation at work.

START-UP OF THE C.T.F.

When John and I first entered the project, we had little idea of what to expect. Because so many facets of the original proposal had been abandoned, it was like starting from scratch. We were fortunate at this stage to have the able assistance of Henrietta Davis, a social planner.with the Department of Planning and Development. She was helpful in providing the connections we needed in the Cambridge bureaucracy and also in securing the necessary clerical assistance. This link proved to be very valuable in the early stages of the CTF, offering an informal avenue of communication between the CTF and the Planning Department. Although Henrietta often felt the pressure of divided loyalties, her very presence helped develop a feeling of cooperation between the citizens and the Planning Department. Unlike many cases where citizens complain of undue influence on the part of the government, Henrietta was pressed, often against her will, to take an active role in the early leader-

ship of the CTF. This tended to reduce anxieties on both sides which reduced the potential for antagonism.

The first step taken was to determine if there was indeed any public interest in the CTF. Through consultations with City Councillors and transportation officials, we put together a list of people who had already demonstrated any interest in transportation. These people were telephoned, and Councillor Duehay, the chairman of the Committee on Transportation and Parking, sent out formal letters of invitation for the first meeting. A campaign was also launched in the media. For three weeks before the meeting, articles or meeting notices appeared in the local newspaper urging the attendance of any interested citizen.

The first meeting was held on June 7, 1973, in the Mayor's office. The meeting was chaired by Councillor Duehay and attended by the Mayor, Planning Department representatives, and about twenty-five citizens. After the concept and history of the Forum had been explained, citizens were given a chance to express their views. It soon became clear that a great number of people were interested in the CTF. Another meeting was scheduled and a steering committee established to set up an agenda.

Once the steering committee had been set up, things began to happen. Meeting twice a week, the steering committee began considering various organizational schemes and a

series of issues suitable for the CTF. It is important to note that membership on the steering committee was open to anyone. In the meantime, John and I performed all the routine tasks of running any organization: writing and mailing minutes, sending our meeting notices, doing background research, issuing press releases, etc. We also served as a liason between the CTF and the City Councillors. Our weekly meetings with the Mayor assured at least continual cognizance on the part of the Council that the CTF really did exist.

A blow by blow description of all that happened that summer would bore even Saul Alinsky. Before moving into specific issues concerning the CTF, however, a number of general statements must be made.

Unlike the Planning Department approach where the citizens would have moved into a predetermined structure, the Council preferred a "hands off" stance. Mayor Ackermann and Councillor Duehay, the two main proponents of the CTF, felt the CTF would be stronger in the long run if the citizens themselves determined the structure and operational policies. In this way the strength of the CTF would be dependent not upon an artificial link with the government but on its own ability to formulate a reasonable point of view. This inde pendence was also to be reflected in terms of the CTF leadership. The Planning Department called for a member of the bureaucracy as the chairman. When the point of entry changed to the Council, there were those who felt that either

Duehay or Ackermann should appoint a chairman. This idea
was quickly vetoed by both for a very simple reason: the
citizens would have much more faith in a leader elected from
their midst as opposed to one forced upon them from above.

In general the Council was saying the following to
the citizens: "We have gotten you together and told you
what we want. Go away (taking your two MIT students with
you), organize yourselves, and come back when you have some-
thing responsible to say."

This is what they came back with:

MEMBERSHIP

Of any issue, membership was the one most hotly debated
in the early stages of the CTF. The controversy centered on
the question of whether any sort of restrictions or require-
ments should be placed on membership.

One group of citizens favored an approach similar to
that of the Planning Department Model. This view held that
membership to the CTF should imply definite responsibilities.
To join, for example, a person would have to attend a certain
number of meetings and then be voted in by the rest of the
CTF. To maintain the priviledge of membership, a certain
attendance record would be required. The reasoning behind
this view was that without any restrictions people would

not take the CTF seriously. The fear was also voiced that special interest groups would stack a meeting if it was concerned with their particular issue.

The opposing viewpoint was that membership should be left completely open; if one came to a meeting, one was automatically on an equal standing with everyone else. Proponents of this position argued that it would be hard enough to attract participants without any restrictions. Transportation is not exactly a "hot" issue; so even if a person would not attend regularly, his participation should be encouraged. It was also pointed out that an open membership policy would preclude any attacks on the CTF on the grounds of exclusion. It would be hard for anyone to criticize a CTF position if that person could have participated and did not.

The latter of these two positions eventually won. The CTF today has only minimal conditions pursuant to membership. Many of the fears of the former position have proven to be groundless. So far no special interest group has flooded any of the meetings. Neither has the lack of regulation seemed to have had any effect on the level of commitment.

The current membership concern has become that of representation. Since the CTF is only an advisory body, its

influence depends largely on how representative its membership is. The City Council has even stated that it will not take the CTF's recommendations seriously unless it can demonstrate that it is truly speaking on behalf of the community as a whole. Unfortunately, it is difficult to attract representatives from all factions of Cambridge. The Forum's openness and lack of dogma tends to attract only a certain type of person. In order to elicit representatives from all parts of the city, it is often necessary to actively seek out spokesmen. The steering committee has done much in this regard by visiting neighborhood groups, attending community school meetings, etc. While the situation has improved over the months, the CTF is still far from being ideally representative. Hopefully as the Forum becomes better known, and more established, representation will increase. At least the open membership policy assures that no one is excluded, except by their own decision not to participate. The task now becomes making sure that everyone is aware of this opportunity and its value.

SCOPE OF CONCERN

Many past attempts at citizen participation in Cambridge have failed simply because the citizens were unsure of their function. Either the scope of the group was unreasonably broad, resulting in confusion, or the citizens were

confined to relatively inconsequential matters. This was
perhaps the major concern of those citizens who gathered in
the Mayor's office for the first meeting. Many had had a
great deal of experience in citizen groups and knew that
with no direction, citizen organizations soon degenerated
into aimless discussion groups. Since the CTF had no speci-
fic issue to be based on, it was essential that the citizens
be given a good idea of what was to be expected of them.
At this stage guidance from Councillor Duehay and the Mayor
was critical. The most important qualification of scope was
that the forum would deal only with policy questions, as it
would be expected to help the Council fulfill its policy-
making obligations. As has been said before, the reason
for the Council's failure in this respect had been uncertainty
of public opinion. The CTF was to fill this gap.

The emphasis on policy is critical. The Forum might
consider the possibility of more emphasis being placed on
mass transit; it should not, however, go on to investigate
possible alignments for new bus routes. This is the function
of the Planning Department. Thus any administrative concerns
were defined as out of bounds for the forum.

It is often quite difficult to convince citizens of
this important distinction. Policy formulation, though
actually more crucial than administration, is easier for

citizens to handle. One does not need technical expertise, but rather a good idea of what one wants. The problem is then to combine all the different wants into a general policy statement. Despite nearly constant reminders to this effect, some citizens went on for months bringing up the timing of walk lights or the routing of the mini-bus. As the distinction was finally absorbed, the CTF was able to accomplish far more in a meeting.

Another restriction on the CTF's range of concern was that only community-wide issues should be considered. Once again many people found this hard to fathom. They preferred to spend the entire meeting talking about the potholes in their street. The CTF was not meant to be a transportation ombudsman. There were already many avenues, such as neighborhood organizations, to deal with localized problems. In addition such discussion tended to take up too much time in CTF meetings. There were some transportation officials who warned that if the CTF became a clearinghouse for individual complaints, they would not support the Forum. Fortunately persistence paid off and the incidence of spleen venting tapered off.

A final limitation in scope came from the pragmatic realization that the CTF can only affect Cambridge transportation decisions. It is useless, for example, to discuss

matters over which only the MBTA has control. The Forum does not even have the time to cover all local decisions, much less those under extra-local jurisdiction. This was another limitation which was stated at the outset and which greatly reduced wasted effort and time.

It is clear that one of the prerequisites for successful citizen participation is a clear understanding from the beginning of the role of the citizens. Without this direction, the citizens might either antagonize officials by going off in all directions or lose interest from not knowing what to do. Fortunately the CTF did not suffer from this lack of purpose. Not only was this issue thoroughly reviewed and determined in the Planning Department/DOT Report, but city Council proponents were on hand to assure that the citizens knew their purpose. The question was then left up to the citizens on how to best fulfill this role.

ORGANIZATION

The CTF as a whole meets only once a month. Obviously this does not leave enough time to deal with very many policy issues. In order to compensate, it was essential that work be done between meetings. This called for some kind of organization. In the initial stages, there were those citizens who did not feel that the CTF should have any complex

structure. As the term "Forum" implies, these people thought that the CTF would fill enough of a need by providing a place once a month for citizens to air their opinions. Fortunately, most of the citizens had more ambitious plans.

In July of 1973, the steering committee began grappling with the issue of organization. After months of drafts and redrafts, the CTF finally approved an organizational scheme in the late fall. According to the plan, primary CTF work would be done in five standing subcommittees: Traffic and Parking; Public Transportation; Goods Movement; Bicycles and Pedestrians; and Special Mobility, including the elderly and handicapped. These subcommittees would meet at least once a month and any work or proposals would have to be approved by the entire Forum. Every Forum member would be expected to participate as a working member of at least one subcommittee. A permanent steering committee was also established to include the officers of the CTF (chairman, vice-chairman and secretary) and the chairmen of the five subcommittees. The chairmen of the subcommittees were to be appointed by the chairman of the Forum.

This structure, though simple, has proven to be effective. In October, elections were held and a slate of responsible officers was approved. By now all the subcommittees have been established and are fully operational.

Depending on the chairman, these subcommittees have proven to be indespensible in making the Forum effective in its policy advising role.

The present organization and structure of the CTF is a far cry from the highly structured and restrictive model in the original Forum report. Nevertheless, it fulfills its purpose and, more important, is accepted by the citizens who devised the organization.

INFORMATION AND STAFF

One easy way for officials to hamper the efforts of a citizen group is to withhold information concerning its projects and proposals. Without this information, the citizens can not formulate any responsible position.and may end up by opposing everything on general principle.

This has not been the case with the CTF. The officials of the Planning Department and the Department of Traffic and Parking have been extremely cooperative. For the first few meetings of the CTF, the main objective was to aquaint the citizens with the myriad of transportation issues facing Cambridge. To assist in this "education", the Planning Department assembled a ten page document explaining the major transportation activities that were underway in Cambridge. In addition the top officials of many City depart-

ments came and spoke at these meetings to assure that the
citizens realized what they were working on and how they
were limited. Since this initial period, the Planning
Department, Traffic Department and Police Department have
sent representatives to all CTF meetings in order to answer
questions. If nothing else, the citizens at least now have
a good idea of what is going on in Cambridge transportation.
To my knowledge, the CTF has never failed to receive any
information that it has requested. This cooperation has
not only helped the CTF to formulate better policy decision,
but it has also alleviated what might have been an adversary
relationship between the citizens and the bureacracy.

Staff support is also an essential element. The CTF
has relied so far on the assistance of MIT students. Since
the work is not extremely technical, this has been an ade-
quate arrangement. The Planning Department has been helpful
in this respect by providing John and me with office space
and access to clerical assistance. As an extra benefit, our
presence in the office has established an informal communi-
cation link with the bureacracy.

The MIT project of staff assistance is soon to be
ended; however, the City Council has approved funds for con-
tinuing support of the CTF. The future thus looks bright
for further operation.

AVENUES OF INFLUENCE

Under the present agreement the CTF is officially an advisory body to the City Council Committee on Transportation and Parking. The issues that the CTF reviews are wither referred to it by the Committee or initiated with the consent of the Committee. The CTF is expected to make all of its recommendations directly to the Committee or its chairman. Since the Committee is a committee of the whole, the CTF influence is dependent on the City Council. It is unclear how much the City Council will respond though it clearly depends on the range of citizen support that the CTF can muster.

While this relationship sounds fine theoretically and gives the CTF its legitimacy, it cannot be depended upon to give the CTF much power. The City Council is a part-time position and really does not have much power itself. Unless the Council is unanimous in its policy, there is no way to enforce its position among the bureaucracy. Furthermore the councillors barely have time for their own work, much less time for the CTF. In order to truly influence transportation policy, it is clear that the Forum cannot depend exclusively on the City Council.

To make up this gap the Forum has developed other informal avenues of influence. Foremost among these is its relation with the Departments of Planning and Traffic.

There are many officials who feel a responsibility to the Forum since it was they who originated the concept. These officials have bent over backwards to be responsive to the CTF. In return the Forum has on occasion provided these departments with support. An example of this was when the Planning Department wanted to make a 24 hour truck survey in Cambridge. Lacking the adequate manpower, they requested and received volunteers from the CTF. It is this air of cooperation that has increased the informal range of CTF influence.

Most professional planners and administrators will accept any competent criticisms or suggestions. It is incumbent on the CTF to maintain its high standards and thus perpetuate this now fruitful relationship with the City departments.

RESULTS

The CTF has been fully organized and operational for little more than six months. It is thus hard to say whether it will continue to be a viable and influential organization. All indications to date are that it will.

The biggest issue that the Forum has influenced concerns the Cambridge position on the Clean Air Act of 1970. On September 4, 1973, Governor Sargent released his proposed

Clean Air Transportation Plan for the Boston Region. This
plan was a modification of a plan previously proposed by
the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Both plans
were developed to achieve the air quality standards and
deadlines mandated by Congress in the Clean Air Act.

In general this plan called for a series of parking
restrictions aimed at reducing the number of cars coming
into the area. There were two levels of severity with the
more restrictive regulations applying to an inner "core"
area. This distinction was critical for Cambridge since
they had the option of being included in the core area.
Initially the City Council decided to ask to be included.
The reasoning was that otherwise Cambridge would become a
parking lot for the spillover from Boston.

The Department of Planning and Development did not
agree. In a report submitted for Council approval, they
contended that Cambridge's inclusion in the core area would
have substantial economic detriments. They went even further
in some cases to oppose restrictions that were to be imposed
area-wide.

In order to resolve this dilemma Councillor Duehay
requested that the CTF look into the matter. The first
reaction of the Forum was that the Planning Department ana-
lysis was marked with serious deficiencies. This was under-

standable in that the Department's report was prepared
under a state-imposed deadline which was later extended.
The Forum decided that more time and study was required
before the City could formulate a position.

Over the next few months the CTF conducted an
intensive investigation. A number of Forum meetings were
devoted almost exclusively to the issue. At one of these
meetings the planning Department was given the opportunity
to present and defend their position. Other groups also
appeared to present their views. All possible issues from
the enforcement requirements to the health aspects were
researched in detail.

Under the auspices of the Council Committee on
Traffic and Parking, the Forum organized and conducted a
series of public hearings on the EPA guidelines. A question-
naire was written and distributed to citizens and businesses.
The results showed that citizens overwhelmingly favored the
EPA guidelines with Cambridge included in the core. Even
the business response showed that the economic concerns of
the Planning Department were not widely shared by local
businessmen.

In the final analysis the CTF recommended that the
City support the EPA requirements with Cambridge included
in the core area. Councillor Duehay agreed with this

position and asked for assistance in writing a report on behalf of his committee. The report, written primarily by the CTF, was presented to the Council in January 1974. One council man commented that it was "the best report to come out of the council in years." The rest of the Council agreed at least in part and adopted all of the report's recommendations. As of this writing, that report is the official Cambridge position to the State and the EPA.

This entire episode greatly enhanced the status of the CTF. The members saw that they did not need any specific delegated authority to influence decision-making in Cambridge. A coherent, responsible position with demonstrable support of the citizenry is sufficient at least in the eyes of the Council. As the first real test of the CTF under fire, this situation demonstrated that citizens not only have something worthwhile to say but also that their government will listen.

CONCLUSION

The story of the CTF bodes well for the future of citizen participation in urban policy. Amid widespread cynicism of the participatory concept, the CTF has succeeded in gaining the acceptance of citizens and government officials alike. Its benefits have been substantial in terms

of citizen education and improvement of the transportation planning process.

The key element in its success has been the attitude of government officials. The CTF is not considered as a non-symbiotic entity thrown in to satisfy federal requirements. It has instead been accepted as a valuable tool in the decision-making process. No decision has ever suffered from the addition of input.

From this position of responsibility, the citizens have acted in a responsible manner. They have gained in respect for their government and their government's problems. This is truly refreshing in an age where the people and the government seem to be drifting further apart. The next chapter proposes to extend the singular success of the CTF into general policy statements for all attempts at citizen participation.

CHAPTER THREE

CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The trend of the last few decades in urban government has been towards professionalism in planning and administration. Our elected officials have continually abdicated their power in terms of policy-making. Many major decisions are now made by professionals who have never had to worry about what will happen next fall at the ballot boxes.

This trend is not bad per se. With regard to efficiency and honesty in government, this trend has even proven to be beneficial. There is, however, a danger in the lessening of responsiveness to the needs and desires of the citizenry. When this lack of responsiveness leads to widespread dissatisfaction on the part of citizens it is clear that something must be done to increase the input of citizens in the decision-making process. Somehow the lessening of representation through elected officials must be balanced.

Citizens across the nation have been demanding greater access to the decisions once held by these professionals. The majority of the attempts to date to provide this access have resulted in failure. Many practicing and academic planners have equated whis with the inherent weakness of the citizen participation concept. Such a view is indeed short-sighted. Not only are we committed to this concept by our

democratic heritage, but the reasons for failure are more often the fault of the approach rather than the ideal.

We must then continue to advocate a greater role for the citizen in urban government. This chapter proposes a number of methods which could ease the implementation of citizen participation.

ELEMENTS OF SUCCESSFUL PARTICIPATION

It is often hard to generalize about citizen participation. Every effort is unique and the reasons for its success or failure may be determined by the personalities involved, the issue considered or the form of government present. It is entirely conceivable that a set of circumstances exist which entirely preclude successful participation. Nevertheless it is possible to identify certain key elements which increase the chances of success.

Foremost among these elements is the need to institutionalize citizen participation. The input of citizens should not be considered as something added on to government but as an integral part of the decision-making process. This may call for actual changed in the structure of local government:

> "The point of these criticisms is that if citizen involvement is to be a positive factor in the planning of the cities, then there must be a redesigning of governmental institutions and a reshaping

of administrative and political practises to
incorporate citizens as legitimate actors in
a way different from their normal roles as
voter or recipient of programs. Presently
government is not structured for a partici-
pative kind of involvement. Citizen involve-
ment is grafted onto the structures that exist
and is therefore unnatural or non-symbiotic." 26

Whether actual structural changes are required depends on

the individual circumstances. The crux of the issue is

that the citizen group must be seen as internal. To keep

citizens outside the normal structure of government is to

deny their permanence and value.

The success of citizen participation is also depen-

dent on temporal consideration. The timing of action is

sometimes as pertinent as the form of action. Participation

if possible should not be in response to a crisis situation.

A crisis usually implies the existence of two opposing view-

points. In such an atmosphere it is too easy for an adver-

sary relationship to automatically develop between the

citizens and officials. One must also realize that the evolu-

tion of a responsible citizens group is a slow process.

When thrown into the lurch without adequate preparation,

citizens will react primarily on an emotional level.

Participation should not be initiated around a speci-

fic issue. When this occurs, citizens will enter the process

with a fixed point of view, which once again sets the stage

for premature conflict. This does not mean that a definite

26Axworthy, op cit.

purpose can not be established at the beginning of the participation. Indeed it is important that the citizens know what is expected of them. The group as a whole, however, should be neutral at the onset. This initial objectivity is not possible when the participation is centered on a specific issue.

It is better to have no citizen participation than to have a half-way attempt. If the government decides to form a citizens group, it has the commitment to support that group. This means sufficient financial and staff assistance. This commitment also extends to information. Before they can truly have an impact on decision-making the citizens must have access to all relevant material. without which they can not be expected to reach a coherent, rational position.

In a related argument, if the government initiates citizen participation, it must be willing to accept what the citizens have to say. It is for this reason that it is preferable that the government who initiates the participation also be the government which is participated in. Many of the problems in poverty and urban renewal resulted from the fact that the federal government dictated what the local governments had to live with. It may take more time, but it would be better if citizen participation at the local level were initiated by local government. To

go through the motions without a firm commitment is an exercise in futility.

There are bound to be conflicts between the citizens and the government. If there were not, there would be no reason for citizen participation. There must thus be mechanisms and techniques to accomodate debate and discussion of differences in position. Enough communication must exist so that even if the conflicts can not be resolved, both sides understand the reasoning behind the other's position. In the final analysis, the decision rests ultimately with the government. It is our elected or appointed officials who must bear the responsibility for government action. I therefore do not believe that citizen groups should have any delegated authority. Their power instead results from an ability to influence officials. If it is clear that the citizen group represents the community, the officials will listen.

In terms of the make-up of the group, it is always the safest policy to exclude no one from participation. When one begins to impose restrictions, it is hard to set the limit. We do not want a return to the elite group of "leading citizens". These citizens will probably make up the majority under an open system anyway. It is important not to prevent any citizen from taking an active role in his government. When citizen participation becomes

institutionalized and is no longer seen as a way to "get back" at officials, only those who are willing to work will remain.

Although citizen participation under this new system becomes part of the government, a certain amount of independence is still required. Citizens should be allowed to determine their own leadership and organization. To impose these from above automatically puts citizens in a subordinate role. Citizens will have a far stronger commitment to something that they created. This also averts later criticism that the government was only interested in token participation.

Many of these requirements for successful citizen participation can be attributed to the correct attitude. There must be the attitude on the part of elected officials, concerned professionals and citizens that the plans are the end product of their joint efforts. Officials must not consider participation as a lessening of their authority but as an additional input for better decision-making. Citizens must not enter the effort with the feeling that planners and officials are their adversaries but rather that they are partners in the effort to make things better. Only when this cooperation exists can citizen participation be utilized to the mutual benefit of all.

SUMMARY

It is too late to dismiss the concept of citizen participation with the excuse that it raises conflicts or is inefficient. Our urban problems require that we use every means available to identify and fill the needs of the urban citizen. This can only be accomplished if our government has a better idea of what the needs are.

No one, especially the author, will contend that citizen participation is an easy concept to implement. The notion that the people and the government are somehow natural enemies has been deeply ingrained. Although a certain wariness is healthy, this should not be taken to the extreme where the government is so out of touch with the people that it can no longer serve them. It is essential that we commit ourselves to the concept that people have the right to a strong voice in the operation of their government. The only solution is a concerted attempt at citizen participation.

This chapter has proposed a philosophy by which we can successfully reap the gains of active citizen participation without suffering undue detriment. The road is long and arduous and there will undoubtedly be many failures along the way. But the benefits are great and definitely within our reach. With the government and the people finally working together, we can not lose.

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