Eating Spinach:

Future implications of contemporary methods for citizen participation in design

by

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Abstract

This paper has drawn on influential thinkers in participatory practice to understand why mandated participation is not achieving the goal of sharing power with citizens to influence their built environment. When practiced, mandatory participatory methods fall subject to institutional guidelines, appearing as a one-size-fits-all approach responding to accountability rather than actual citizen needs/voice. This investigation sees professionalism as a force limiting meaningful participation, as sharing power with citizens uncredentialed in the fields of planning, architecture, and design is seen by some as undermining professional credibility. The paper analyzes three contemporary methods of participation – consultation, tactical urbanism, and participatory design – for their ability to elicit shared ownership and high future value. Transparency emerges as a key leverage point, and a standardized transparency tool to enable consumer choice about engagement in participation is recommended in order to move towards a sustainable culture of participation defined by high citizen involvement and ownership.

Acknowledgements

Dedication

To all of the "uncredentialed" professionals.

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1.0 Introduction

This Major Research Project originally began as an exploration of the boundaries of design and one of its central questions: *who gets to be called a designer?* Informed by both my personal experience and those of my peers – including those in this program – my interest in this question has grown out of the identity struggle that many of us face as we seek to offer our services as a designer, despite not possessing many of the traditional credentials associated with the profession. Having navigated similar waters within the field of architecture – my undergraduate study and my work has focused on architecture and urban systems, and yet I do not have the certifications needed to call myself an 'architect' – this conversation is particularly meaningful to me and one in which I feel comfortable drawing parallels.

Since deciding, over a decade ago, that my professional passions would be best served by focusing on supporting disenfranchised communities – those that felt marginalized and left without voice in the planning and design of their own built environments – I've witnessed a diverse range of individuals in those same communities find voice as designers, and even architects. Yet, unsurprisingly, these individuals – a group represented across the demographic, professional, and developmental spectrum – exist largely as ghosts. Unable (read: not readily "allowed") to identify as "designers", they are rarely recognized by the discipline as even having made a contribution. It was this lack of

recognition, and my desire to understand why the professional practice has created these rules boundaries (as well as who is guarding them), that motivated this exploration. Design as a discipline is continually evolving, and its tools, processes, and mindsets are being shared amongst a new set of actors who are without formal training. In addition to self-taught (auto-didactic) "designers" (like those mentioned above), there is also an emerging world of "design thinkers" being introduced into the professional landscape, many of whom are also self-taught or have undergone informal training.

Much of the emerging literature on the design profession indicates that design is, arguably, an open system by virtue of this growing number of "uncredentialed" professional practitioners. There is a trend towards large international design firms hiring individuals without traditional design credentials to lead design processes across the fields of Industrial Design, Graphic Design, Interaction Design, Experience Design, and Participatory Design. Additionally, with the emergence of 3D printing, and the open-source movement many of the tools and methods of design practice are being democratized. To challenge their activities – to say these do not represent design – seems limited, when their processes closely resemble those of credentialed design professionals. Norman Potter (1969), a self-identified designer trained as a cabinetmaker, author of *What Is a Designer?* stated that "every human being is a designer…and that for many of us, it is perfectly possible to study design simply by doing it" (p. 10). Contemporary thinkers on sustainability, design, and social innovation such as Ezio Manzini are also

affirming that the discipline of design as changing, and calling for a reframing of the role of the "expert" designer. He argues that experts have to shift their roles to focus on triggering and supporting meaningful social change, by first focusing on how to better collaborate (Manzini, 2015). In this he suggests a new framework for design: *diffuse design*, which is design performed by everybody, and *expert design,* which is design performed by trained designers. His is just one of many attempts to understand how to frame that the profession is changing, and needs to adapt to the circumstances and context of today's changing world. These sentiments exist in contradiction to the attitudes and beliefs of many professional designers.

My experience combined with the changing design landscape then led me to the original research question:

As the field of design sees professionals from a variety of disciplines adopting its methods and processes, how might we draw the boundaries of who is enabled and justified to call herself "a designer"?

As I delved into the research, I quickly realized that in an effort to streamline the debate on who is a "designer" and who is not, my contribution would only serve as more rhetoric for the design profession, more noise into an already cacophonous conversation.

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In an effort to not completely abandon the previous question, as it is a conversation that I believe is necessary, I returned to a reflection on my work. In addition to supporting community participation in the built environment, I have served as an advocate and consultant to institutions trying increase the inclusion of their stakeholders in decision-making processes. Additionally, without any formal credential in this type of work, I have been encouraging these institutions, organizations and communities to work from a design mindset - being human-centered, imaginative, iterative, and risk tolerant - and have found success in bridging the gap between their aversion to participation and the critical need for it. I've learned that what I care most about is how to better enable communities to engage meaningfully in the processes that surround changes in the built environment, and therefore I want to do this research to create something that serves communities in their efforts to do so. On this premise, the research question has evolved to:

How might individuals in communities and neighbourhoods, who do not hold design, planning, or architecture credentials, best inform and influence the shaping of their built environment?

A key principle of design thinking is that good design results when users are engaged in identifying their key problems and challenges, and work alongside an interdisciplinary team to ideate around and co-design solutions to address these problems. I see this

process of collaborative problem identification and co-design as being rooted in participation, and see that the practice of participation – although widely discussed – has not been widely adopted in design processes. This paper will focus on critically surveying the contemporary literature on participation and seeking to identify what is needed to animate the insights from decades of academic and practice-based investigations and begin a cultural shift towards more meaningful participation of stakeholders most affected by development decisions.

Note: I will also be using the term "citizen", "participant", "community", and "public" interchangeably to represent individuals who should be engaged in decision-making processes. Though these relationships exist as an ecosystem, the terms collectively represent those who are affected by the outcomes of capital projects and could improve the quality of these outcomes should they be engaged more meaningfully.

1.1 Researcher identity memo

Since this research is the culmination of almost a decade of my own work in the field of participation, I hold the view that communities are *not* being meaningfully invited into participatory processes, and an assumption that they want to be. My practice has focused on engaging communities in the process of leading capital projects in their neighbourhoods, and as a result, I have practised all of the participatory methods discussed in this paper. The majority of my engagement with these methods was re-

designing them to maximize community engagement and benefit. I have a deep belief that the participatory methods to be critically surveyed in this paper are, at their core, incredibly powerful, yet I do feel that there is a reason yet to be unearthed as to why they should not be used more widely. I feel passionately that if participation were maximized – if communities had the opportunity to opt in to processes they were interested in being a part of – that projects in the built environment would prove to have greater financial, social, and environmental return on investment, and I bring that bias to the research.

Today, it seems that architects, planners and designers around the world are challenging themselves not only to reinvent architecture in its physical form, but the process through which it is created. In Canada, architects have begun to engage with the idea of community design and better public participation, mostly by way of providing pro-bono work for non-profit groups. Exploring participation gives architects, designers, and planners a new and much-needed sense of relevance in places and communities where their role and input has steadily, and considerably, diminished over the last number of decades. Participation can reload architecture with real significance – proving that buildings can be bearers of a fabulous and much needed artistic potency when they are created *by and with* the community, rather than for the community.

1.2 Rationale: Why this problem is important

This is by no means the first attempt at considering how to best support communities to increase their participation in the built environment. There is a significant body of research in what is called *participatory design* or *community design*, efforts to engage communities in the designing of spaces and places that enhance the quality of their environment. Much of this is focused on supporting architects, planners, and designers more authentically and meaningfully to engage communities around development. In this model, it still requires the presence of a "professional" architect or planner to guide the process, rather than supporting the community to initiate development or respond to calls for development that they feel invested in (support or oppose). Methods and approaches have been developed and tested to increase participation and inclusion in processes surrounding the built environment, but of these, few consistently speak to emergent and ongoing needs of the public. They are infrequent at best, and when more commonly practiced, fall subject to institutional guidelines, as a one-size-fits-all, "checkbox" approach that responds more to accountability than actual citizen needs/voice.

This research will contribute to this conversation by identifying a set of participatory methods being most commonly used, understanding why, despite their existence, they have not yet led to a widespread culture of participation, and analyzing them to understand what adaptation is required of these methods (if any) to move towards a sustainable culture of participation defined by high citizen involvement and ownership.

Rather than creating additional theories of participation, the focus needs to be on how current methods can be investigated in order to uncover which ones are most ready for adaptation. It would be ideal to shift away from the approach where a professional is inviting citizens into their design process to a process where the interested public can engage with the process as it emerges and moves forward, specifically in the context of projects in the built environment. We need to find ways for citizens to be involved that reflect the reality of demanding lives that include jobs, children, families, and other responsibilities and investments of their time. Through the analysis of what already exists, we can start to map the opportunities for innovation, and start the process of developing alternatives or even prototypes to support a cultural shift towards more authentic participation.

1.3 Participation and resilience

Critical to understanding the discourse around participation and the ideas I will present in this paper, is the concept of resilience. We are in a time where we are starting to feel shocks to our ecological, economic, and social systems. These shocks appear, for example, as earthquakes, floods, droughts, financial collapse, and political uprisings. These events exist not in isolation, but in close relationship, with the effects of one causing an amplification – or even suppression – of another. The frequency and amplitude of events that stress our physical and social infrastructure seem to be on the rise, and increasingly we are learning that our existing infrastructure may be more brittle

than we had anticipated. One very obvious place where this is happening is in the built environment, as we begin to see structures built to meet the economic bottom line at the time of their construction many years ago are, today, failing to meet the social and environmental bottom line.[1] Resilience has definitions in both the areas of psychology and ecology, where it is described as "having the capacity to function more or less the same in spite of adversity" (*Definitions of Community Resilience*, 2013, p. 2). A strong advocate for resilience has been Fritjof Capra (1994), who brought language of resilience into community development by arguing that if "the great challenge of our time is to create sustainable communities; that is, social and cultural environments in which we can satisfy our needs without diminishing the values of future generations" (p.1), then we should learn from and model ecosystems which are sustainable communities in themselves. Kristen Magis (2010) builds on Capra by arguing that

> *"communities can develop resilience by actively building and engaging the capacity to thrive in an environment characterized by change, and that community resilience is an important indicator of social sustainability. Community resilience, as defined herein, is the existence, development, and engagement of community resources by community members to thrive in an environment characterized by change, uncertainty, unpredictability, and surprise" (Abstract).*

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[1] One example of this is the high-rise apartment towers in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA). Built over forty years ago, in an era that still favored modernism, close to 2,000 of these buildings were constructed. They were built without consideration of future social or environmental impacts, built mostly to maximize density on a site. The design of the buildings did not prioritize sustainability, leaving many of these buildings in disrepair today as a result. A report issued by the United Way of Greater Toronto in 2011 indicated that sixty percent of the towers in the GTHA are housed in the inner suburbs, areas that have become the home of some of the most marginalized populations in the region (Poverty by Postal Code 2, 2011). Today these towers play a key role in housing low-income families in the region, creating what the United Way of Greater Toronto has termed "vertical poverty", and housing forty-three percent of Toronto's low-income families. It has been estimated that these buildings emit 1.4 million tones of carbon into the atmosphere each year (J. Brodhead, personal communication, March 20, 2015), contributing to significant environmental impacts. The cost of "bad design" in this case is now being carried by Toronto's "poor", having to live in extremely marginal conditions in buildings that were built without community participation, and lacking the foresight to see their future impacts.

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Participation, by its very nature, is about diversifying ownership and creating shared

responsibility, through ambiguous, uncertain, and unpredictable processes. Done well,

participation can create sustainable social infrastructure – also called social sustainability

– as it starts to build the networks essential for spreading the accountability for decision

making to a more diverse set of stakeholders. Social sustainability is

> "*a process for creating sustainable, successful places that promote well being, by understanding what people need from the places they live and work. Social sustainability combines design of the physical realm with design of the social world – infrastructure to support social and cultural life, social amenities, systems for citizen engagement and space for people and places to evolve"* (Woodcraft and Hackett, 2011, p. 16).

With that diverse set of stakeholders feeling accountable for decisions being made, it is

presumed that they will take action to collaborate and co-create solutions to move ideas

forward rather than merely reacting to crisis situations and difficult disturbances.

Therefore, participation becomes an interesting opportunity to explore how civil society

can become more resilient.

The way resilience may sometimes be seen to be lacking in the built environment is that

poorly designed structures, which come at a low initial cost to the decision maker or

institution leading the project, result in low resilience. When faced with shocks, these

poorly designed structures place the cost on the community, with those living in and

using these spaces ultimately bearing the majority of the social and financial

consequences of low resilience. In the case of well-designed structures, that can weather

the shocks of the world today, there is a more significant initial cost to the decision maker/institution, and a lower cost to the community later. What is needed is to find a mechanism through which both the cost of these projects is lowered and the ongoing impacts are shared across a more diverse set of stakeholders.

2.0 Literature Review and Context

The following section reviews the literature on public participation and design professionalism, discussing their intersections and critiques. It serves as an introduction to an influential participation theorist, Sherry Arnstein, and building on her theory, will introduce professionalism as a potential obstacle to true community participation.

2.1 *Participation*

Participation is defined as a process that provides private individuals an opportunity to influence public decisions by having a direct voice in them, and has long been a component of the democratic decision-making process (Parker, 2002). To date, the most influential thinker on the topic has been Sherry Arnstein, a health and social worker, who made a formative case for participation with
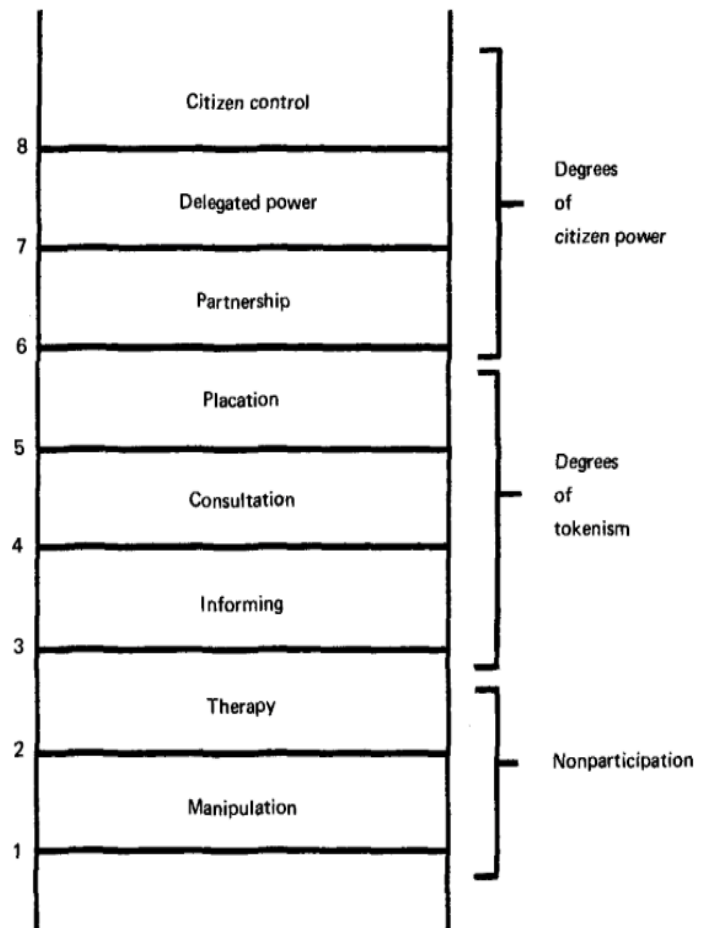
Figure 1. Sherry Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation (Arnstein, 1969).

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the creation and publication of her *Ladder of Citizen Participation* (Arnstein, 1969). This article, a frequently cited piece of literature in the scholarship on participation, defines participation as the "redistribution of power that enables the have-not citizens to be deliberately included in the future" (Arnstein, 1969, p.1)[2]. Her ladder visualizes eight rungs (Figure 1), with each rung corresponding to the "extent of citizens' power in determining the end product" (Arnstein, 1969, p. 2). The higher rungs of the ladder (Partnership, Delegated Power, Citizen Control) indicate a greater depth of engagement and inclusion in a participatory process. Arnstein favours processes that exist in the top three lungs of the ladder, but recognizes that many of the ways through which citizens are actually engaged occurs in the spaces in between the rungs. For the purposes of this paper, I'm going to use the definition of participation set out by Arnstein, and her accompanying Ladder of Participation, as a basis for the research. Furthermore, her aspiration of Citizen Power, where decision-makers and citizens work together in partnership with shared ownership over a process and outcome will be one dimension used to evaluate the participatory methods.

Arnstein other advocates for public participation in decision making processes such as Thomas Beierle, Jerry Cayford, and James L. Creighton have concluded that when citizens are engaged in robust participatory processes, "the outcomes are that the public

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[2] This research is interested in exploring how less powerful stakeholders in a development process, citizens with neither credentials nor expertise in design, planning, and architecture, can be proactively and not reactively included in all stages of the process. For this reason, it is important to clarify that when using Arnstein's definition of participation, the "have-nots" in this circumstance are defined as the individuals without these specific credentials (but potentially with others), in addition to traditionally marginalized groups.

values are represented in the decisions made; the substantive quality of the decisions increases; conflict is resolved among competing interests; there is increased trust in situations (or high degrees of trust are maintained); and finally, the public feels educated and informed" (Alberts, 2007, p. 2337). Additionally, there are benefits that increase the economic bottom line of many organizations, including avoidance of protracted conflicts and costly delays, a reservoir of goodwill and good ideas which will carry over to future projects and decisions, and a spirit of cooperation and trust between the agency and the public (Cogan and Sharpe, 1986).

Arnstein acknowledged herself that the typology had its limitations, that there could be a numerous additional rungs on the ladder (in order to capture the nuance of processes of participation), that in the case of the ladder "the public" was a single entity, and that it oversimplified a process by the lack of acknowledgement of potential roadblocks to participation (Arnstein, 1969). In particular, this homogeneity of "the public" has shown up as a key issue standing in the way effective participation, as even within demographic or socio-economic groups, there exists a diversity of values, opinions, and beliefs that are not always captured by the few voices that self-select to represent a community. Casting groups as homogenous entities while ignoring the nuances and diversity within them can lead to the failure of a participatory process. While it should be acknowledged that in any given circumstance, the "public" in public involvement is never the entire electorate (Creighton, 2005), institutions and decision makers often will communicate that those

who engaged in a consultation process were "representative" when often individuals in the same "community" have very differing opinions and perspectives.

Additionally, the common failure to acknowledge power dynamics within and between "othered" groups that are being invited into the engagement can often further entrench their marginalization (Beebeejuan, 2004). These "othered" groups refer to people who appear to require advocacy because of their marginalization due to race, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, culture, religion, and the like. When this failure to acknowledge power dynamics is compounded with processes and methods that are exclusionary because they are not designed to account for diversity including age, class, education, and culture, they affirm to the participating individuals that the process has not been designed for them to thrive, but rather for them to meet an institutional mandate. An example that occurs often in the North American context occurs when "planners often assume that people of the same ethnic group do or should constitute a community (particularly if in spatial proximity), without taking into account the differences among them" (Jianfar, 2014).

Nonetheless, this ladder has served as a foundation upon which the contemporary discourse on participation was built, and has continued to serve as a frequently cited theoretical underpinning of the participation movement.

It is useful to review the context that led to Arnstein's theoretical breakthrough. Citizen participation is a topic that has been studied extensively in academic literature since the 1960s, as researchers have attempted to understand how to design and advocate for models that would result in inclusive, human-centred environments for shared decision-making. The roots of citizen participation can be traced to "ancient Greece and Colonial New England, but citizen participation became institutionalized in the mid-1960s with President Lyndon Johnson's Great Society programs" (Cogan & Sharpe, 1986, p. 283). Engaged citizens across the age and socio-economic spectrum were pushing for processes that had multiple points of engagement with affected stakeholders, as well as a call for inclusion of a broader range of individuals from the stakeholder group being consulted. The Great Society programs led to the creation of Community Action Agencies and later Community Design Centers, providing opportunities for those living in poverty across America to engage in co-designing the programs that were being developed to improve their lives. These agencies came as a result of the increasing frustration of citizens and professionals concerning the stark disparity between rich and poor in the United States, and the feeling that their government was imposing solutions on them. While the success of these agencies is debatable, they were early prototypes for ways in which to engage citizens in processes that most affected their lives.

These movements were not limited to North America. At the same time in Australia, citizens were rising up against their government, as they were feeling like they were

"being planned at" (Nichols, 2009) and demanded to be included in decision-making. While these uprisings did not focus solely on participation in the context of the built environment, they led to democratic governments around the world making attempts to hear their citizens by legislating participation through consultation. They were ultimately seeding what would become the participation movement that Arnstein later documented.

Participation, at this time, was entering the public zeitgeist as a fundamental tool for democracy. These events in the 1960s can be credited with initiating the move towards public participation becoming a legal requirement in most of the Western World today (Creighton, 2005), and – to the focus of this paper – how it also became a legal requirement of public architecture and planning projects.

Today, mandated participation is one of the few methods through which public concerns, needs, and values are incorporated into decision-making processes (Creighton, 2005). This paper will focus on decision-making around architecture and planning projects, but it should be noted that efforts to integrate stronger participation models into all decision making processes – including budgeting and policy-making – is increasingly re-entering a global zeitgeist. This mindset has extended to an increasing number of governments seeking to ensure enhanced legitimacy and a widened role for citizens in policy and local governance processes (Brownill and Parker, 2010). While this can be credited to a variety of both methods and movements that have happened in the past couple of decades, these

institutions are beginning to understand that public participation actually provides decision makers with information about the relative importance the public assigns to the value-based choices that underlie a particular decision (Creighton, 2005). The importance of integrating both technical and value-based opinions of the public will be discussed later in this paper.

While including people in the decisions that will most affect them may seem like a common-sense approach (especially from a human-centered design mindset), organizations and institutions today regularly exclude or minimize public participation in efforts around planning and architecture, claiming that it is too resource intensive – that citizen participation is too expensive and time consuming. However, development projects are commonly slowed down because of negative public responses to proposals (Parker, 2002). Careful consideration of how the public will be engaged in a decision can result in fewer delays and lower costs on a project, and should be seen as a way more effectively and efficiently to deliver on the financial bottom line of any development.

Arnstein made a point of noting that there is a critical difference between going through the empty ritual of participation (focused primarily on legal requirements) and equipping citizens with decision-making power to affect the outcome of a project or process (Arnstein, 1969). The challenge is that citizens today have come to expect the processes of public hearings, town-hall meetings, and events to involve reaction to a display of final

designs, rather than to involve engaging in the process of developing the ideas. As a result, modern public participation has been reduced to 'consensus building' exercises (Kipfer & Keil, 2002) on superficial elements of projects that limit opportunities or validity of opposition voices, and are more about informing than sharing power. While informing citizens of their rights, responsibilities, and options can be the most important first step toward legitimate citizen participation, the more common emphasis is placed on a one-way flow of information - from officials to citizens - with no channel provided for feedback and no power for negotiation. Under these conditions, particularly when information is provided at a late stage in planning, people have little opportunity to influence the program designed "for their benefit". Arnstein articulated examples of some of these commonly used one-way communication tools: news media, pamphlets, posters, and responses to inquiries (Arnstein, 1969). Mandated participation processes most often appear through these tools (in addition to pubic hearings and town hall meetings), falling by Arnstein's definition, into: Information, Consultation, and Placation - on the lower part of the ladder, focusing more in institutional accountability rather than citizen power. While the tools to share the communication methods Arnstein refers to have now evolved, they are for the most part, simply being underutilized as digital versions of the analog methods.

Over the last fifty years, researchers have made several attempts to adapt and deepen Arnstein's ladder. In some cases they have simplified it, and in others they have

attempted to increase the specificity of it, in order to increase its usefulness in practice. Their attempts have been primarily to bring contemporary language into the typology so that stakeholders in the process can clearly map the degree to which they are inviting the affected public to engage. For example, in *The Guide to Effective Participation*, David Wilcox (1994) uses Arnstein's ladder as one of three dimensions upon which to build out the depth and nuance of participation (Figure 2). Arnstein's ladder – simplified in Wilcox's framework) serves as a single dimension of participation, categorized as the "level" or "purpose" for engaging stakeholders (Figure 3). Two additional dimensions added are the stakeholders, the types of stakeholders engaged (Figure 4), and the stage of the process at which they are invited in (Figure 5). Wilcox outlines a key issue which is that some stakeholders
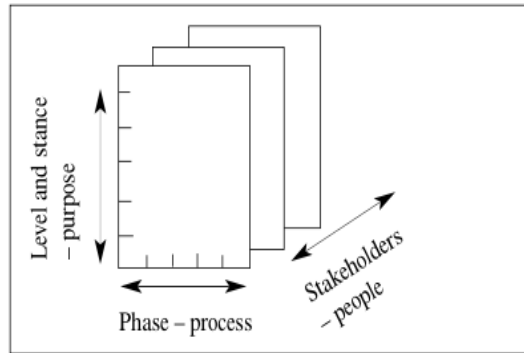
Figure 2. David Wilcox's Participation Framework (Wilcox, 1994).
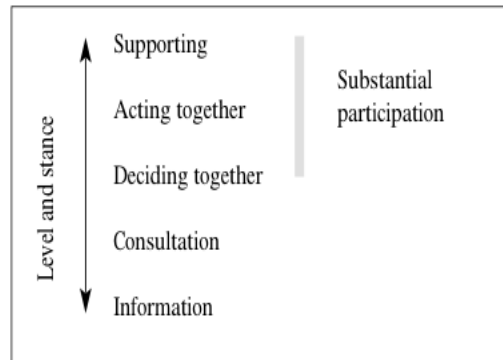
Figure 3. Level and stance of participation (Wilcox, 1994).
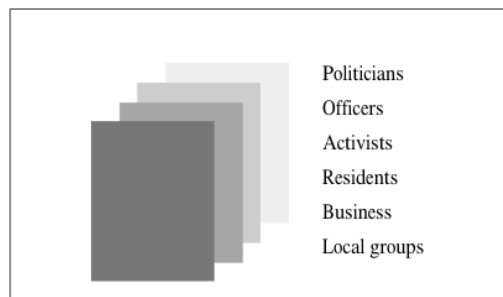
Figure 4. Stakeholders in a participatory process (Wilcox, 1994).
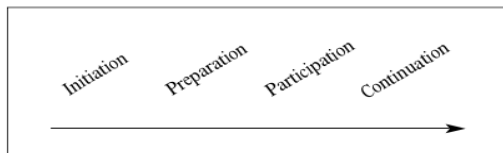
Figure 5. Stages of a project (Wilcox, 1994).

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are happy to be consulted rather than engaged, so long as it is at the stage of the project

that they want to be involved. Wilcox asserts that the added dimensions begin to unpack

the complexity of participation that lies beyond the rungs of Arnstein's ladder.

Wilcox goes a step further to deconstruct more explicitly the "level/purpose" of this

framework – using a simplified version of Arnstein's ladder – with examples of what the

all levels of participation look like in practice from the perspective of the professional

(Figure 6).

Level/stance	Information	Consultation	Deciding together	Acting together	Supporting
Typical process	Presentation and promotion	Communication and feedback	Consensus building	Partnership building	Community development
Typical methods	Leaflets Media Video	Surveys Meetings	Workshops Planning for Real Strategic Choice	Partnership bodies	Advice Support Funding
Initiator stance	'Here's what we are going to do'	'Here's our options – what do you think?'	'We want to develop options and decide actions together'	"We want to carry out joint decisions together'	"We can help you achieve what you want within these guidelines'
Initiator benefits	Apparently least effort	Improve chances of getting it right	New ideas and commitment from others	Brings in additional resources	Develops capacity in the community and may reduce call on services
Issues for initiator	Will people accept bo consultation?	Are the options realistic? Are there others?	Do we have similar ways of deciding? Do we know and trust each other?	Where will the balance of control lie? Can we work together?	Will our aims be met as well as those of other interests?
Needed to start ...	Clear vision Identified audience Common language	Realistic options Ability to deal with responses	Readiness to accept new ideas and follow them through	Willingness to learn new ways of working	Commitment to continue support

Figure 6. Participation levels explained (Wilcox, 1994).

Wilcox is just one example of how the canon has expanded in the years since Arnstein published her theory. The United States-based organization, the International Association of Public Participation (whose founding president was James L. Creighton, discussed later in this paper), as well as the Canada-based Strategy Institute both continue to expand the canon with research, training, tools, and conferences that seek to improve the practice of participation.

2.1.1 Benefits of public participation

To understand participation fully is to understand how it benefits individuals involved in the process. To discuss the effects of citizen participation, it is important to acknowledge that the theoretical contribution of James L. Creighton has been foundational to my own thinking on participation; as a result, I will spend some time introducing his framework here. Creighton suggests that when the public participates in the process at the time it wants to be engaged and at the level (see Figure 3) that it wants to be engaged, it can result in increased ownership and leadership in the process moving forward. Ownership and leadership can have a powerful effect on the long-term success of a project. This accountability theoretically places the affected stakeholder alongside (rather than in opposition to) the architect, planner, and/or developer if the project encounters a roadblock. Participation can increase the likeliness that they will work in collaboration to solve the problem, rather than fall into cycles of blame and conflict. This is important to consider not only on the project at hand, but to recognize that the partnership could build

good will for future projects, creating an ongoing role for the community on new

initiatives as co-creators.

The benefits of citizen participation arise at the micro-scale as well as the macro-scale, as

well as different time scales. Creighton (2005) outlines the key benefits of public

participation:

Table 1: Benefits of public participation
Improved quality of decisions: The process of consulting with the public often helps to clarify the objectives and requirements of a project or policy. The public can force rethinking of hidden assumptions that might prevent seeing the most effective solution. Public participation often results in considering new alternatives, beyond the time-honored, and possibly time-worn, approaches that have been used in the past. The public often possesses crucial information about existing conditions or about how a decision should be implemented, making the difference between a successful or an unsuccessful program.
Minimizing cost and delay The efficiency of making a decision cannot be measured merely in terms of time and costs, but also must take into account any delays or costs created by how the decision was made.   *Figure 7.* Comparison of length of time: unilateral decision versus public participation (Wilcox, 1994).
Consensus building. A public participation program may build a solid, long- term agreement and commitment between otherwise divergent parties. This builds understanding between the parties, reduces political controversy, and gives legitimacy to government decisions.
Increased ease of implementation. Participating in a decision gives people a sense of ownership for that decision, and once that decision has been made, they want to see it work. Not only is

there political support for implementation, but groups and individuals may even enthusiastically assist in the effort.

Avoiding worst-case confrontations. Once a controversy becomes bitter and adversarial, it is much harder to resolve the issue. Public participation provides opportunities for the parties to express their needs and concerns without having to be adversarial. Early public participation can help reduce the probability that the community will face painful confrontations. Nevertheless, public participation is not magic; it will not reduce or eliminate all conflicts.

Maintaining credibility and legitimacy. The way to achieve and maintain legitimacy, particularly when controversial decisions must be made, is to follow a deci- sion-making process that is visible and credible with the public and involves the public. Public participation programs will also leave the public more informed of the reasoning behind decisions.

Anticipating public concerns and attitudes. As the agency's staff works with the public in public participation programs, they will become increasingly sensitized to the public's concerns and how the public views the agency's operations. These views are often internalized, so that staff is more aware of the probable public response to the agency's procedures and decisions even when the issue is not large enough to justify a formal public participation program.

Developing civil society. One of the benefits of public participation is a better- educated public. Participants not only learn about the subject matter, but they also learn how decisions are made by their government and why. Public participation trains future leaders as well. As citizens become involved in public participation programs, they learn how to influence others and how to build coalitions. Public participation is training in working together effectively. Today, individuals may represent only groups or interests. Tomorrow, they form the pool from which regional and national leadership can be drawn. Through public participation, future leaders learn the skills of pulling together to solve problems.

(Creighton, 2005, p. 18)

Creighton speaks about these benefits as a competitive advantage; if developers, architects, and planners can work alongside directly affected stakeholders, including them in the issues that matter the most, they will be able to come to quicker agreements, while others doing projects of the same nature will be slowed by disputes, litigation, and community unrest.

It is ambitious to seek all of the above benefits in a single project. Creighton's benefits come not just as an outcome of a single initiative done well, but more when a continued commitment to participation is cultivated and nurtured in a particular community, decision-making process, or organization.

These benefits have been captured through various methods of evaluating successful public participation. The decision maker on a project normally completes this evaluation; however, in the best projects, the evaluation also includes the public. In a survey of 239 public participation cases of the past thirty years, Thomas Beierle and Jerry Cayford (2002) evaluated public participation based on five social goals:

Goal 1: Incorporating public values into decisions
Goal 2: Improving the substantive quality of decisions
Goal 3: Resolving conflict among competing interests
Goal 4: Building trust in institutions
Goal 5: Educating and informing the public

For the purposes of this paper, the ability of a project to cultivate shared ownership over process and outcome will be considered as an additional evaluation metric for successful participatory initiatives.

2.1.2 Barriers to participation

"The idea of participation is like spinach: no one is against it in principle because it is good for you."

(Arnstein, 1969, p. 216)

In 2005, UNESCO proposed participation as one of five key levers to build cities of solidarity and citizenship:

> *"To turn city-dwellers into citizens through education and citizenship: citizens must be given the means to express themselves in public and have an impact on their city. They must be placed at the centre of choices and decisions for the creation of a multifaceted city by measures to promote democratic discussion and participation" (Kazancigil, 2000).*

The proposal of participation as a mechanism through which citizens and citizenship is developed is acknowledged by bureaucratic decision-making bodies that have legislated participation. However, the fact that in the decades since the legislation, the need to advocate for it is still very much alive, despite the fact citizens meet daily in community centres, city facilities, and public spaces for mandated participation processes. Clearly the legislation is not working as effectively as it could be.

There are a few reasons for this lack of effectiveness. The first is that even though it may be understood that citizen involvement in decision-making is a good thing (that it leads to more inclusive and shared outcomes), it is also widely perceived that such involvement is resource intensive. In the eyes of planners and policy makers, public participation often requires extensive and exhaustive use of social, intellectual, and financial capital. All of this creates an impression of an approach that does not always guarantee a "return on investment" – a consistent outcome – as a result of increased ambiguity regarding how the process will unfold based on citizen needs and opinions. In their discussions on

participation, some researchers note that the process of good public participation, from

design to implementation, requires extra effort, an expenditure of staff time and energy

that agencies do not have to make when they make top-down decisions (Creighton,

2005).

Arnstein herself acknowledges these perceived "failures" of participation:

> *"it supports separatism; it creates balkanization of public services; it is more*
> *costly and less efficient…it is incompatible with merit systems and*
> *professionalism; and ironically enough, it can turn out to be a new Mickey Mouse*
> *game for the have-nots by allowing them to gain control but not allowing them*
> *sufficient dollar resources to succeed" (Arnstein, 1969, p. 224).*

Here, Arnstein outlines a set of key issues that remain unresolved in the practice of

participation today: the cost, the efficiency lost by longer, more ambiguous processes,

and the threat to professionalism. While the idea of a perceived increase in cost (social

and financial capital) and uncertainties (what influence citizens will have on the process

and outcome, as each case is unique) is important, the issue of professionalism requires

further investigation, as it is more nuanced and potentially has a larger systemic impact

on the uptake of participatory practice as opposed to cost and uncertainty.

Understandably from the professionals' perspective, the very act of sharing ownership

with someone who has not acquired the requisite schooling and credentials undermines

their professional credibility as well as challenging dimensions of more personal aspects,

including their ego and confidence in the value of their own expertise. For these reasons,

they are less likely to hand over the power of decision-making and influence that comes with their hard-earned expertise to uncredentialed community members.

Across the participation literature, when participation is ultimately successful the power has been distributed from the "haves" to the "have-nots" to influence or determine outcomes, have agency and participate in meaningful and engaging ways (Arnstein, 1969; Brownill and Parker, 2010). In this case, the "haves" are the ones with decision-making capabilities, and the "have-nots" are the ones without. The have-nots are generally the ones who are advocated "for", which can often further marginalize them. Just because people participate, does not mean they have been empowered or given real influence over the decision. Arnstein's ladder makes the case that participation is only successful when citizens have control and power, and this power is related to professionalism.

Sue Brownill and Gavin Parker (2010), theorists on participation argue that we need new thinking on participation to address the gap between rhetoric and practice, as well as the ongoing attempts to insert meaning into fragmented efforts to improve participation. They suggest that the enduring appeal of Arnstein's ladder is precisely why we need to look beyond it towards a significant gap in the knowledge – "how communities and other actors negotiate around power" (p. 277). The question of professionalism (credentials) and its relationship to how power is shared (or not shared) in participatory processes could serve to address this gap.

Therefore, the aim of this paper is not to survey and provide a history of participation, but rather to look at the participation apparatus that currently exists, *how* people are being invited into participation, start to understand which method(s) make the most sense to evolve by understanding which has the most potential future value to civil society.

2.2 Participation and Professionalism

This paper will not undertake an extensive survey of professionalism, but will explore it briefly in order to clarify the term 'uncredentialed' as identified in the research question. 'Uncredentialed' refers to individuals who are non-experts (without formal education, institutional recognition) in the fields of planning, architecture, or design; however, they would be identified as stakeholders to be consulted or engaged in a development process because of their role as residents of a neighbourhood or community. A professional (or expert) is defined as "involving expertise, namely mastery over a body of knowledge and set of techniques" (Blau, 1979). This usually involves several years of education, licensing and credentials, and/or membership with professional associations.

In the above survey on participation, it was noted that most participatory processes are critiqued in their inability to effectively redistribute power. Professionals have power. They obtain this power through institutional recognition. From Blau (1979), power "refers to the ability of persons to affect outcomes in intended ways (Tannenbaum et al., 1974: 218), and the dominant form power takes in organizations is control over decision

making (Lasswell and Kaplan, 1952: 74-78; Pateman, 1970:69)" (p.103). Therefore,

those without it lack the capacity to influence the decisions, and sharing power with

uncredentialed individuals who lack professional experience in the field/issue they are

being consulted on is considered time consuming and irrelevant. However, it is the right

of citizens living in a democracy "to question the authority of expertise in administrative

decision-making that affects them" (Creighton, 2005, p. 15). Power and participation

have a close relationship as participation seeks to increase the power for those who are

marginalized (Jianfar, 2014), yet often is unable to realize that ambition through a single

engagement.

Sharing power is more nuanced than simply handing over leadership to 'uncredentialed'

community members. It is about building trust, and sharing knowledge and expertise to

build capacity and project or issue literacy across *all* actors on a project. This literacy can

be a mechanism of control, as the professional is not required through their duty to

consult to build literacy in the community, they are only required to "inform". If

information is presented to the community without empathy for their degree of

knowledge or capacity to understand, professionals can then "write off" community

opinions, and "depending on how knowledge is understood and defined, will influence

how 'experts' interact with 'everyday' residents" (Wainwright, 2009, p. 95). As a result,

a premise is reinforced of "leaving it [final decision-making] to the experts, as experts are

somehow superior in discerning what is right for society. A corollary is that if an issue is complicated, the public cannot deal with it" (Creighton, 2005, p. 15).

When the public is involved or engaged in a decision-making process, it is commonly about a single project. It is less common to engage communities well in advance of development, to invite them to define problems and co-create processes through which solutions can be found together. Most projects are about efficiency, not building relationships with community. This can be defined as a *project-centric* versus *community-centric* approach. Project questions that are included in participation forums are traditionally generally of a more technical nature, requiring professional knowledge on architecture and planning. Creighton (2005) argues that most government agencies debate the value of involving non-professional/uncredentialed community members (in specified areas) because the decisions to be made are of a technical nature, and that the public need not be involved in technical decisions. However, these technical decisions are often values-based decisions, which require community-input in order to ensure success of the project, which is ultimately measured through its ability to speak to community needs and values.

> *"Experts cannot make decisions without assigning a weight or priority to competing values that society believes are good... These are decisions about values or philosophy… As long as they are considering only one values dimension at a time, whether it is cost, health risk, or feasibility, technical experts are the best-qualified people to make the call…Most hard decisions—what are normally called policy decisions—are essentially this kind of values choice, informed with technical information"* (Creighton, 2005 p. 15-16).

The negotiation between technical decisions and values-based decisions is a nuanced space. It is not always clear where one dimension of value ends and multiple dimensions begins and/or intersects. More often than not, development projects are in fact weighing multiple competing values, which is why participation must be at the core of these projects. While experts may be positioned to make some technical decisions, no part of their training gives them greater capacity to make values based-decisions on behalf of unique communities.

When professionals do want to engage in sharing their expertise and ultimately, their power, they find themselves coming up against the boundaries of their own institutional "systems". If they try to alter the methods, or use the "unregulated" methods of participation beyond public consultation, they discover that these processes are where engagement gets time consuming and uncertain, and requires them to defend why they are incurring these additional expenses within their own institutions. Whether it is the institutions' lack of desire to test new approaches, or their professional associations reminding them of their responsibility to uphold the integrity of the profession, these intrapreneurs have little support or incentive to continue to push the boundaries of the organizations that they are accountable to.

2.3 Manifestations of Participation

There are three contemporary participation methods that are commonly used when professionals offer opportunities for communities to engage. These are:

- Consultation

- Tactical Urbanism

- Participatory Design

While only one of the three is legislated (consultation), these methods are appearing in the landscape with increasing regularity. While there is much literature on public participation and historical mechanisms through which stakeholders do, in fact, get involved, a contemporary critical survey of the methods themselves - with the aim of understanding why participation is not yet a ubiquitous mindset - does not currently exist in the literature. The methods that are currently available to participatory practitioners could adapt to become more accessible and effective for both communities and professionals.

The three manifestations of public participation have been chosen to represent a sampling from the available mechanisms through which the public is invited to participate; however, it by no means serves as a comprehensive taxonomy of the field, as it is not the intent of this paper to do so. This exploratory study serves instead as an opportunity to investigate these current practices and opportunities for stakeholders to participate in

decision-making processes in the context of the built environment, in order to identify opportunities for re-design and/or innovation.

There is an underlying assumption in participatory literature that stakeholders *want* to be involved in influencing their built environment. While this is assumed to be true, an additional layer of understanding is required around how *much* they want to be involved - to what degree is most appropriate for them. The three methods surveyed in this paper will correlate with the different levels of involvement, presented through the following framework (Figure 8):

Light: citizens who want to weigh in on an issue early in the process, but do not necessarily want to be involved in the strategy or implementation. This involvement is usually limited to a few hours of engagement.

Medium: citizens who want to be involved in testing an idea, validating that what they are suggesting is welcome and wanted by the community. This usually involves taking action to advocate for the idea in a variety of ways, including testing it in the public realm. This level of involvement requires days/weeks of planning and a few days for implementation and evaluation.

Heavy: a group of citizens who want to be involved for the entire duration of the project, from concept to implementation. These citizens are flexible and can commit to an

undetermined (usually extended) amount of time for participation. This can be anywhere from a few months to many years. With this nature of engagement, it is a partnership between stakeholders/communities and decision makers to undertake the initiative together, and requires a long-view mindset.
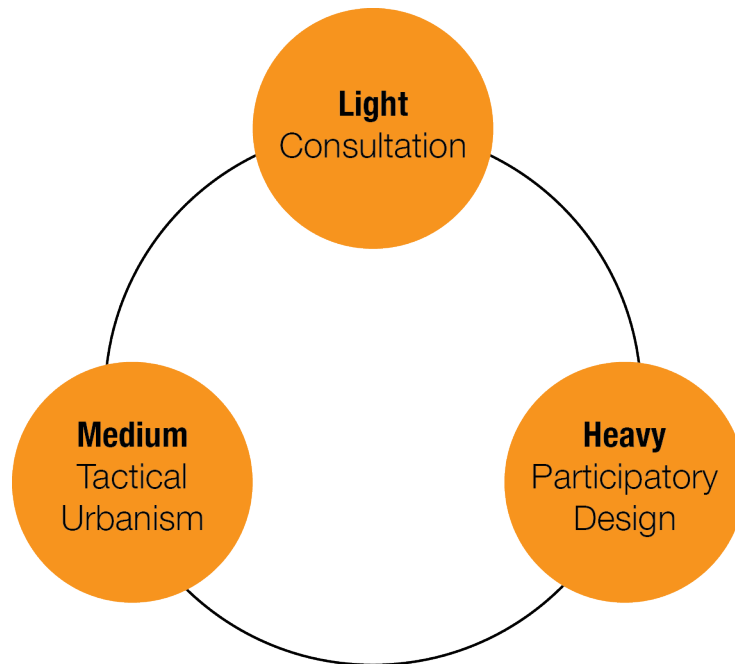
Figure 8. Degrees of engagement

Within each of these areas, participation apparatus have been developed. The desired degrees of involvement – light, medium, and heavy – exist as an ecosystem rather than a hierarchy. Participation is contextual, and these methods could be used both in isolation and in concert as a project evolves. Seeing the three manifestations as an ecology also points to an alternative characterization, with consultation serving as a "top down"

approach, tactical urbanism as "bottom up", and participatory design articulating the space in the middle where the initiating and the subsequent leadership comes from the community as well as the decision-makers. The following section will survey each of the participatory methods.

2.3.1 Consultation

Public consultation is the most common form of citizen participation (likely because it is the one that is legally mandated), and it would be defined as a *light* mechanism through which to inform and dialogue with the community while meeting institutional accountability. In the practice of facilitated community participation, it is widely understood by the public as a mechanism through which they can (attempt) to voice their ideas, opinions, and concerns about an incoming project. The group involved in leading the development project usually initiates the consultation, selects a time and place to host it, and communicates it throughout the community (generally through posters and sometimes notices in the mail). The event itself is a town-hall-like experience where information is shared, people respond and debate, and the decision makers take the information back to their domains to create a record of both the comments and the turnout, and use it as they see fit in their decision-making process. However, it has increasingly shifted towards a one-way communication tool for decision makers to "inform" the public (Creighton, 2005).

While public consultation is a consistent and recognized mechanism through which the

public can engage with a decision making process, these meetings that could potentially

inform decision-making are often designed as inaccessible to the very public they are

trying to inform (perhaps as a way to avoid opposition). Public consultation meetings are

often held in the early afternoon on weekdays, when people who are employed cannot

join, and if they want to, have to take a day off of work. The notices are designed in such a way that it does not appear obvious to the public that they are intended to engage and invite them to dialogue[3] (Figure 9). Decision-makers outline the processes and agenda for the meetings, very often without opportunities for open dialogue about the issues that matter most to the public. Additionally, the only opportunities for the participants in the consultation

Figure 9. Development proposal for 66 Isabella Street (Urban Toronto, 2012).

to speak come at the end, often after lengthy presentations. It requires great courage and

confidence for many community members to approach the microphone to share a

comment, question, or concern, and often, because this design lacks empathy for different

personality types, two stereotypical reactions occur. The first: adversarial, long-winded

comments coming from participants who have been waiting to share their outrage with

the institution (related or unrelated to the project at hand) for some time. The second: a

defeatist approach where the participant feels overwhelmed by the environment,

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[3] There are efforts to recognized government outreach designed to better encourage citizen participation, in the spirit of inspiring clearer invitations to the public to engage. The Dazzling Notice Awards is one of these efforts – a Canada-wide competition inviting municipalities to re-design their public notices to encourage participation.

circumstance, and issue, and does not voice their opinions and insights, but *does* take

away a scepticism about bringing their voice to the table when "invited". These mandated

forms of participation

> *"shift power structures in favor of the 'expert' while trying to define and confine the role of the public, creating a form of participatory 'theatrics' where participation is not used as a tool to advance equality or justice, but as a method to gain legitimacy from the public and to meet legislative requirements. Through physical layout and rules of speaking, power is distributed and outcomes are controlled. The public is only allowed to engage in one-way communication with no structured opportunity for discussion. The rules are set to 'legitimize' decisions and create acceptable behavioral norms, favoring situations where participants are restricted in how they can participate"* (Jianfar, 2014, p. 46).

Privileged citizens with access to political or bureaucratic decision-makers can avoid

these uncomfortable public spaces in favor of private, one-on-one information and

opinion-sharing sessions.

Decision-makers perceive consultation as an opportunity where they get to share a project

with the public, yet limit these conversations to informing citizens as to what is going to

happen at a stage of the project where there are fewer opportunities for course corrections

or changes. When the public are consulted early, it is often quite vague and general, with

the topics citizens want to discuss (such as if this development is right for their

community – values based decisions) are the ones that are left off of the agenda. These

decision-makers are not looking to have a constructive dialogue about sensitive issues,

but rather host these meetings to defuse opposition to the project, and ensure that the

numbers of objectors are kept at a minimum (Jianfar, 2014).

Creighton (2005) suggests that consultation events are designed towards achieving

consensus on a predetermined outcome as efficiently as possible. He argues that in order

for stakeholders to make an informed decision, they need to have adequate information

ahead of time, which is not always provided, leaving participants to engage with opaque

information. Creighton outlines two "procedural" or "checklist" tools in place that

attempt to bridge this literacy gap in the consultation process: public hearings and reports

or publications discussing the topic. He suggests that these allow the decision-maker on

the project to create a legal record of an effort to inform the public, but leave little

opportunity for the public to have an impact on the decision or the opportunity to

problem-solve in collaboration with those leading the development project.

Arnstein (1969) affirms Creighton's concern, that when

> *"people are primarily perceived as statistical abstractions, and participation is measured by how many come to meetings, take brochures home, or answer a questionnaire. What citizens achieve in all this activity is that they have "participated in participation." And what powerholders achieve is the evidence that they have gone through the required motions of involving 'those people'"* *(Arnstein, 1969, p. 219).*

She discusses that when consultation is not combined with other participation methods, it

restricts the input of citizens, and keeps participation as a "window-dressing ritual" more

than a true exercise in meaningful participation.

Resources have been developed for professionals in the areas of architecture, planning and municipal governance, who are hosting consultations, to re-examine their practice. These tools invite them to recognize the longer-term benefits of participation, to become more human-centered and focusing on the experience and circumstances of the stakeholders being invited into participate. While many would argue that public consultation processes over the last decade have improved, the fact remains that the redesign of public consultation is not only resource intensive, but also threatens the efficiency of the project. New designs for consultation threaten the certainty of the established process by opening it up to citizens, and thus disincentivizes the effort required to even test them. Broadly, incentives are lacking to test out new approaches to consultation.

As a result of being required, consultation has become efficient – by virtue of its existence for the last forty years - meaning that for a relatively low cost, the appearance of institutional accountability can be met.

Consultation in practice

Like many jurisdictions, the Planning Act of Ontario requires municipalities to host consultations with the public if there is to be an amendment to the Official Plan or Zoning By-Law (Urban Toronto, 2012). These are publicized through posters and leaflets

distributed to the community, and a meeting is held where they have the opportunity to voice their concerns. Depending on when the community is engaged, they can have varying degrees of impact on the final design/outcomes of the project.

While many consultation processes are purely focused on informing the public, there are examples (perhaps less common) when the public's views are reflected in the design as a result of a consultation.

In 2012, the Daniels Corporation held a public consultation on their HighPark Condominiums project at 1844 Bloor Street West. The public voiced their concern about the height of the building, the massing, and the materials being used and as a result,

> *"stepbacks were increased on the east side to reduce shadowing on the neighborhood, glass on the balconies was fritted to mitigate bird-strike (a major concern across from High Park), and masonry was incorporated into the structure to blend the project in better with its context" (Urban Toronto, 2012).*

The fact that the design of the building reflected the public's concerns (Figure 10),

Figure 10. Before and after consultation renderings of HighPark Condominiums (Urban Toronto, 2012)

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and created less opposition to the project as it moved into its next phase is notable, as the developer may be required to inform the public, but they are not required to translate public comment into a building's redesign. This is a rare and ideal outcome in a consultation process, that the decision-maker meets their accountability while satisfying the public's concerns. However, it is not fully engaging the public in validating whether the development itself is speaking to a need or addressing a key challenge in their community. It does not enable the community to identify problems ahead of a development, and seek support to address them.

2.3.2 Tactical Urbanism

"So while citizens may not have the tools to rapidly recalibrate decision-making processes about their city, they are certainly capable of working outside of them, getting on with doing something in the empty and overlooked spaces of their neighbourhood."
(Hill & Boyer, 2013, p. 13)

While consultation (and to a certain extent, participatory design) rely on the leadership of experts, other mechanisms for participation have emerged to respond to the citizen need to voice their interests and concerns *as* they emerge rather than forcing them to wait until they are consulted or engaged. These participation methods seem to lack the adaptive capacity to respond to the shifting qualities of the economy, social structures, and emerging local knowledge (Gelbard, 2015). As a result of this, increasingly emergent and grassroots approaches to city building and participation have gained momentum, one of which is known as Tactical Urbanism: "a city or citizen-led approach to

neighbourhood building using short-term, low-cost, and scalable interventions, intended to catalyze long term change" (Tactical Urbanism, 2015). It is a method of iterative placemaking or early activation (Bela, 2015), initiated formally in 2010 by an organization based in the United States, The Street Plans Collaborative. It manifests as citizen-driven, small-scale urban interventions characterized by their community-focus and realistic goals (Berg, 2012) and led by non-experts and experts, based on social research, and resulting in an immediate intervention into the infrastructure and/or built environment of a city (Gelbard, 2015). Its formal creation in the past ten years and resulting popularity comes as citizens begin increasingly to critique the limited opportunities for engagement in decision making around their built environment. In Tactical Urbanism, they have found an opportunity to engage in urban experimentation. Examples include a variety of interventions that animate contentious, underused, and even abandoned sites to do a variety of "pop-up", temporal activities. These activities usually have a low financial investment required up front, but do require an investment of time by community members and participants to design, plan, and implement the project.

While tactical urbanism has existed without a formal label for decades, it has recently entered the zeitgeist of contemporary planning and community development. The Street Plans Collaborative published a guidebook on Tactical Urbanism in 2011 that, almost immediately after being posted, hit 10,000 downloads, surpassing the limit of the web service hosting it (Berg, 2012).

Tactical urbanism has the potential to go beyond a time-bound opportunity to push a

broad opinion about an issue, but can also draw out key opportunities and flaws in the

design of the city while simultaneously building community ownership of the space and

issue (Gelbard, 2015). The goals of tactical urbanism initiatives are not

> *"simply to do a cool project that will get cleaned up by the city or thrown away,*
> *but to make something - even something temporary - that will change how a place*
> *works and is perceived. And once that change has been made, to figure out how it*
> *can be made again or made permanent" (Berg, 2012, para.11).*

Mike Lydon, the Principal of The Street Plans Collaborative, and the most public

advocate for the method, outlines three common applications of tactical urbanism (Table

2).

Table 2: Common applications of tactical urbanism
Unsanctioned Citizen Action: People alter the physical environment as a means to create a desired experience and to build political momentum.
Expand Public involvement: Municipalities, organizations, and/or property owners seek to widen and increase public involvement opportunities during a formal planning process by working directly with citizens to build out a project that may be experienced and commented on in real-time.
"Test before You Invest": Governments/property owners have long-term plans but want to first test out designs or possible uses so that feedback, data, and information may be gathered before more substantial resources are committed.

(Lydon, 2014)

Tactical urbanism provides a strong value proposition to a variety of stakeholders,

beyond the "guerrilla" actors that are the most visible implementers of the tactics.

Tactical urbanism projects, as a result of often using public space, take a variety of actors

to realize – including local businesses, government entities, and developers – who get involved to support these initiatives because they, too, are frustrated with the systemic shortcomings of their own systems (Lydon, 2014).

For each actor that contributes to realizing a participatory project, there are distinct benefits (Table 3).

Table 3: Stakeholder benefits of tactical urbanism projects
For citizens: Tactical Urbanism is a tool to circumvent sluggish bureaucracies and shine a light on the myriad opportunities to improve our neighbourhoods.
For municipalities and developers, Tactical Urbanism allows 'phase 0' project implementation, or placeholders that test ideas and bring benefits long before permanent infrastructure may be implemented.
For municipalities and organizations, Tactical Urbanism increases awareness and offers opportunities to expand public engagement throughout the municipal project delivery process.

(Gelbard, 2015)

To the Tactical Urbanist, every constraint – spatial, economic, and political - is an opportunity rather than a barrier, as they look for the most accessible entry point into a problem to see if even the most modest of interventions can make a big impact quickly (Lydon, 2014). When professionals engage in tactical urbanism, they see these projects as collaborative prototypes, and microcosms of bigger, city-scale interventions, with public participation as the goal in order to continue scaling and iterating the project (Gelbard, 2015). Additionally, when these groups work with municipal governments, they create

the opportunity for governments as they are "uniquely positioned to create a permitting and regulatory environment that is favourable to the tactical urbanist, and eliminate barriers to would-be leaders in priority neighbourhoods" (Bela, 2015, para.8). It is among few methods of participation that are low-risk for institutions to engage with and potentially very high impact both in terms of providing insights into how citizens may engage with a new development, as well as creating community ownership of the idea moving forward.

Those who critique tactical urbanism argue that its temporary nature does not actually generate any systemic change. This speaks to one of the key pain points of the method, which is that while tactical urbanism approaches can be transformative in highlighting a low-cost, high impact opportunity to improve the quality of the public realm, these efforts can often seem "painfully superficial" (Flint, 2014). Unless the systems that are responsible for putting the barriers in place to these types of development and innovation change, the interventions seem have no lasting effect.

There is also a critical dialogue that this approach is increasingly being used within institutions and decision-making bodies, by "guerrilla bureaucrats" who are doing their best to use these methods to circumvent their own organizations' inherent tendency to resist change (Bela, 2015). One specific critique is that institutions will use tactical urbanism to test new opportunities for development and will validate, for example, a

community's readiness for gentrification by how they respond to a pop-up intervention in their neighbourhood.

Tactical urbanism in practice

The most widely known example of what is now called tactical urbanism is the annual park(ing) day, where parking spots around the world are converted into temporary park spaces and outdoor rooms. Launched in 2005 by a San Francisco based interdisciplinary studio, Rebar, it served as a response to 70% of downtown outdoor space in San Francisco being dedicated to private cars (Rebar Group Inc., 2012). Today, citizens around the world have appropriated park(ing) day as an open-source tactical urbanism movement, using it as an opportunity to advocate for local issues and speak to local needs. In 2009 more than 700 Park(ing) Day events were organized 140 cities, in 21 countries on 6 continents (Rebar Group Inc, 2012). While this movement has experienced dramatic growth, critics of park(ing) day continue to be wary of the lasting effects of the interventions. Without a measure of the conversion rate of how many projects actually ignite change around the issue being addressed, the impacts of the interventions are unknown.

2.3.3 Participatory Design

Participatory or "community" design is the method through which citizens are engaged early in the development process - ideally, at the beginning of the process - as a

collaborative partner on a development project, from conception to design to implementation. The community involvement commonly includes a rapid education on architecture and engineering, universal design, zoning regulations and permit requirements, as well as capital and financial requirements for development projects. In principle, it is about local community determining the needs of their built environment, and being empowered with the requisite literacy and capacity to participate in the conversation. It also requires an upfront investment of time to build trust between all stakeholders, to build a social infrastructure on the project that will enable continued collaboration through all events that will unfold over the course of its duration. It takes time to build understanding that the process, if committed to, will be just as important as the outcome. An additional upfront investment is in building understanding that for all stakeholders, it will be an unusual, non-linear progression of events (Figure 11)
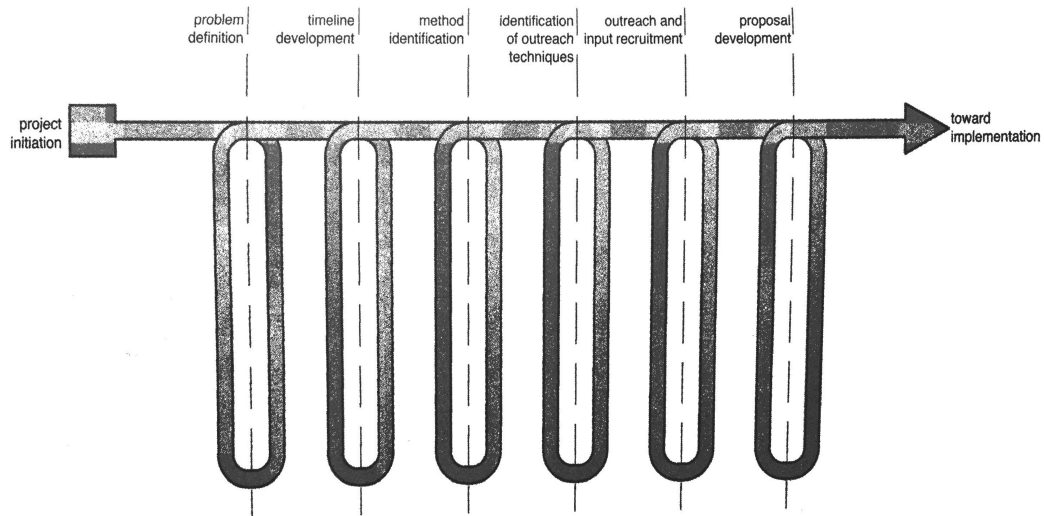

Figure 11. A visual summary of the stages of community design and their nonlinear progression (Toker, 2012, p. 16)

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that will require an extension of each person's trust, patience, and commitment.

Participatory design gained popularity in counter-culture movements of the 1960s, with architects wanting to rally against the deterministic and formal principles of the modern movement, by renewing the significance of a social responsibility in architecture (Cooper, 2006). The more radical approaches to participatory architectural projects were later written off as one-off theoretical projects, "where like love beads and student demonstrations, they served as reminders of the unfulfillable social hopes of the sixties" (Crawford, 1991, p. 39). At this time, across Scandinavia, what would be called co-operative design (called participatory design in North America) was emerging as a way of making decisions and building infrastructure (it is a mindset of participation rather than project-based participation), it still remains uncommon as a practice in North America.

While participatory design is relatively well known as a method, it does not get implemented as often as tactical urbanism or consultation, largely because of the perceived high cost of time and money required up front. However, when an investment is made and a social infrastructure built with a commitment from all stakeholders, it is the most participatory (by Arnstein's standards) – moving closest to true Citizen Power, the top rung of her ladder. Participatory design often results in long-term engagement, accountability, and leadership of the project as it moves forward. This accountability

places the community alongside the decision maker at the center of the responsibility should any roadblocks impede the process, calling on a collaborative effort to navigate through and around them.

Proponents of participatory design recognize that expert oriented design tools can be obstacles for active resident participation and work intensively in communities to bridge the planning and design literacy gap in order to build a shared language with stakeholders so that they are able to participate in discussions and activities around changes to their built environment (Hill & Boyer, 2013). The hope is that in building this shared language, a transition happens between simply empowering disadvantaged groups to engaging them to lead long-term participation projects (Toker, 2012). Theorists on participatory design see it as a mechanism through which the most meaningful insights about communities' wants, wishes, and needs can emerge - by focusing on the community's logic as well as the designer's logic, and taking the positions of individuals in the community as signals instead of threats, success on projects is consensus versus compromise. Community Design can not only help develop a stronger sense of belonging but can help individuals increase their influence (Toker, 2012).

Umut Toker, an associate professor at California Polytechnic State University, has practiced participatory design over the past several decades, and has outlined the following set of goals and principles of the method (Table 4).

Table 4: Participatory design goals and principles	
Goals	**Principles**
To let professionals become facilitators in the decision-making process and maximize the use of their technical expertise by hearing about issues.	As receivers of planning and design services, the users of planned and designed environments should have the right to specify the desired aspects of the product they will receive.
To efficiently design, manage, and analyze community design events.	The planner or designer working on a built environment-related project has a responsibility to provide planning and design services that will ensure that the product meets the users' needs and wishes.
To move towards consensus building and away from compromise.	By planning and designing together, users, planners, and designers simultaneously learn from one another. This process contributes to an overall increase in the quality of environments created for people.
To help reach planning and design decisions collaboratively, with the least time and budget expenditure possible.	The evaluation of environments created for people should be based on the users' experiences.
To guide parties that will contribute to and manage implementation so that the decisions made are implemented as desired by the community.	

(Toker, 2012, p. 6)

Like tactical urbanism, participatory design considers inclusion and participation as a proactive, not reactive measure. It cannot exist without high degrees of commitment and participation from the community, as well as a commitment by architects, planners, and all involved parties to work together for however long it takes to complete the project.

There is a reason that participatory design is found less commonly on development projects: it is the most capital intensive of all of the mechanisms for engagement outlined

in this survey. It requires time, energy, and financial resources over an extended period

of time; additionally, it requires a degree of comfort with ambiguity, as the process of

working with a new community can be seen as "messy" and uncertain, and requires trust

and patience on the part of both the organization/planner/designer and the community.

Participatory design can be contentious as

> *"this method seeks to address the inherent tensions in planning around who has power: those who design versus those who live in design. It addresses this premise by engaging those who live in the design to collaborate with all stakeholders involved in the project to ensure that the resulting "buildings and the built environment do not stand in conflict with the lives of residents" (Toker, 2012, p. 4).*

Participatory Design is implemented in a few different ways. The first is that the planners

and architects engage the community in a vision building exercise to create abstract

visualizations of the building and opinions about programmatic uses. They take this

information and integrate it into their design process to ensure that the community's

views are represented within the constraints of the project. This type of participatory

design is more commonly found, as it simply requires a series of hyper-creative

consultations, but consultations nonetheless: making *for* the people (Toker, 2012). The

other type of participatory design shares the decision making and design process with the

community, and requires an entire project design that ensures that no decision is made

without full participation of all stakeholders, and that the projects are led by the

community, this type of design can be called: making *by* the people. These projects are

found infrequently, and are used as "unicorn" case studies because of the complexity

required to navigate from start to finish.

Critics of participatory design worry that this method undermines the expertise of

planning, architecture, and design professionals and hands decision-making over to

uncredentialed individuals (Toker, 2012). Somehow, this ability of communities and the

public to develop the required design literacy and leverage it in a context that has usually

been reserved for professionals, poses a threat to the credentialed elite controlling the

projects. Additionally, it is unclear as to when participatory design *should* be used - is it

required on every development project?

Participatory design in practice

Participatory design is hard to exemplify in practice without bias[4]. Projects in

participatory design can range in duration from a few months to several years.

Organizations like City Repair in Portland, Oregon – a grassroots organization focused

on community development through scaled participatory design projects in public space –

manage to engage the community in a short amount of time to improve the built

environment. Other initiatives, such as the Laguna Child and Family Development

Center, a project of California Polytechnic State University, are more robust, long-term

community design projects resulting in the co-creation of a building from concept to

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[4] As indicated in the "Researcher Identity Memo", I have been a professional practitioner in the field of participatory design. My bias is towards projects that are long-term (over several years), as well as those that invest heavily in the building of strong social infrastructure between professionals and communities.

design to implementation. Regardless of the duration, both of these projects worked with community members to identify a challenge or "pain point" the community was facing, then worked with the community through a series of creative workshops to co-create a body of research to validate the development of a solution, and finally to design and build that solution. In both cases, the professionals equipped the community the skills and technical knowledge required to do the project, while the community equipped the professionals with the deep knowledge of their environment available only to those who reside there.

2.4 The context of participation

The use of participation methods is contextual. It is not always necessary for a project to have a particular depth of participation, and it would be without consideration to the reality of most circumstances to say that every project needs to use the most intensive, *heavy* method of participation. That being said, participation is not yet a default mindset, even though consultation happens every day in North America. Further, new technologies and techniques continue to emerge to increase participation and involvement in decision making, from online participatory budgeting tools to toolkits inviting experts to consider more human-centred approaches to consultation, which signals that citizens have not yet been engaged in the ways in which they want to be.

If the existing 'industrial' systems and built environment are, in fact, vulnerable to unanticipated shocks then they will require some degree of re-design. If there is a hope for these to be built in a resilient manner, it fundamentally requires a shared responsibility, which could be achieved through participation in the design process.

3.0 Qualitative Analysis: An Exploratory 2x2

In this section, the themes from the participatory literature are summarized in order to inform an exploratory qualitative analysis. In the survey of the three participatory methods, four themes emerged that will be used as key attributes to analyze for which method(s) is/are best suited for adaptation. The section also explains the design analytic employed for the exploratory analysis.

3.1 The four themes

The following four themes surfaced from the literature as indicators of why different participatory methods are used (or not used):

a) *Cost of initiating*: who pays the upfront cost? How much is it (social, intellectual, financial capital)?

b) *Risk tolerance:* how likely is it that there will be any benefit? What would these benefits be?

c) *Perceived value*: if there is a benefit, is it something that is valuable to the decision-maker?

d) *Question of roles:* what are the roles, how is ownership distributed? What are the roles of a participant, how many need to be engaged? How often?

In order to reveal the opportunities and the possible directions each of the participatory

methods could take, an adaptation of a design analytic, the 2x2, will be used. This

method will be used to bring an additional lens to the qualitative evaluation of the

manifestations of participation, in order to offer some additional insights to support their

evolution. The analytic maps two key attributes, as revealed through the research, that

are strategically significant in the field of participation. The 2x2 enables analysis of how

each of the methods measure in the context of ideal participatory outcomes, but also their

relative positioning to one another in the broader space of participation (Kumar, 2013).

Though simple in its construction, the 2x2 is a design tool that can reveal key

relationships and opportunities for innovation.

3.2 X axis – Future Value

The 2x2 in this context will also serve as a foresight tool, by adapting the x-axis to

represent Future Value (Figure 12). This x-axis borrows from financial modelling, in that

**Low
Future
Value** ——————————————————————— **High
Future
Value**

Figure 12. Future value of an annuity

it will consider and map each of the participatory methods listed above as an *annuity*. An annuity is a stream of returns on an investment over a period of time, measured against a cost that is incurred at the front end of a process, discounted at a rate that considers the uncertainty of the stream of returns.

For the purposes of this analysis, the *investment* will be defined as an expense of financial capital, human resources, and time; the returns will be defined as the ongoing impact of these investments. The *returns* will be defined as the ongoing impact (social, economic, environmental) that the participatory effort results in. The *discount rate* will be assessed as the likelihood of realizing these returns.

Below are the three factors that determine the future value of an annuity:

a) **Initial cost**: how much capital is required at the start of the process?

b) **Level of uncertainty of the returns**: how likely is it that the investment will yield any returns?

c) **Expected value of the returns**: if the investment does yield returns, how high (or valuable) will they be?

The factors to determine future value of an annuity have been aligned with three of the themes that emerged as determinants of which method gets chosen for a project, in order to be able to map and analyze them in the context of the 2x2.

- Initial cost → Cost of initiating

- Level of uncertainty of returns → Risk tolerance

- Expected value of the returns → Perceived value

Each of the participatory methods – consultation, tactical urbanism, participatory design – will be mapped onto the x-axis, using the above determinants of Future Value. It is important to outline the polarities – which are desirable and undesirable for each attribute – in order to comprehend the subsequent scoring.

a) Initial cost

The most desirable outcome is that *fewer resources are required* to initiate a process or project.

The least desirable outcome is that *more resources are required* to initiate a project.

High resources   Low resources

Undesirable   **Desirable**
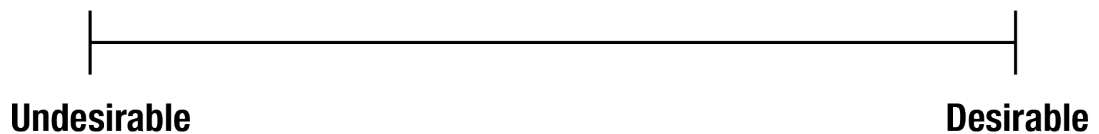
Figure 13. Initial cost spectrum

b) Certainty of return

The most desirable outcome is that there is *high certainty* of returns.

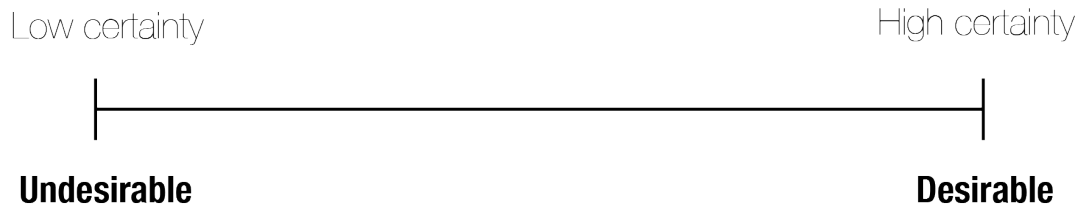The least desirable outcome is that there is *low certainty* of returns.

Low certainty   High certainty

Undesirable   Desirable

Figure 14. Certainty of return spectrum

c) *Value of return*

The most desirable outcome is that the returns yield *high value.*

The least desirable outcome is that the returns yield *low value*.

Low value   High value

Undesirable   Desirable
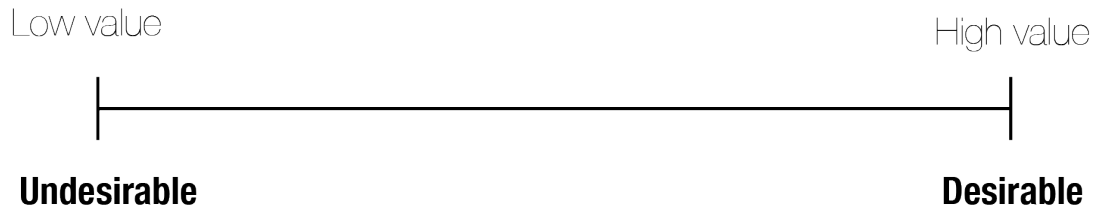
Figure 15: Value of return spectrum

The x-axis therefore represents the value of the annuities (consultation, tactical urbanism, participatory design) over time, measured by the average of the above attributes.

3.3 Y Axis - Ownership

The literature suggests that when participation is high, participants in the process feel a sense of ownership, and that ownership has benefits (see Table 1) The challenge in most participatory processes is that the ownership – over both process and outcome – are held by one stakeholder rather than shared by all. When shared ownership exists, power has been distributed across a diverse set of actors, when it does not, it is held by one actor.

60

Shared ownership is in a relationship with social resilience because we need to distribute ownership and accountability more effectively across more stakeholders in order to strengthen capacity to deal with shocks to the system. For this reason, the y-axis (Figure 16) represents social resilience/sustainability through the attribute of shared ownership. It has been grouped with the fourth attribute that emerged from the literature:

- Shared ownership over process and outcome → Question of roles

Shared Ownership (Process & Outcome)

Single Ownership (Process & Outcome)
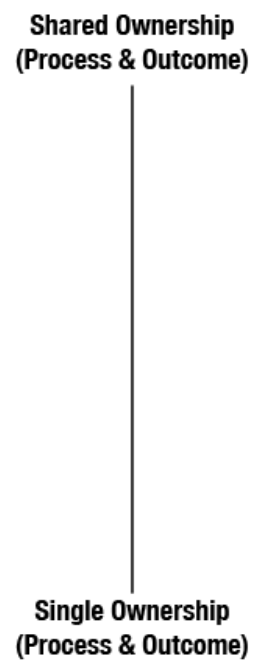
Figure 16. Degree of ownership over process and outcome

3.4 High future value, shared ownership

The goal of the exercise is to understand which method (if any) currently produces shared ownership and high future value (Figure 17), and to understand if there are opportunities for innovation and re-design in one(s) that do not. A method that falls into the top right

quadrant has strong social resilience as well as a high likelihood of future (or ongoing) value based on the initial investment. Shared ownership is important because it correlates with resilience. High future value is important because it means that there is a high degree of confidence that up front investments today will lead to desirable impacts, including certainty that the returns will occur and that these returns will be of high value.
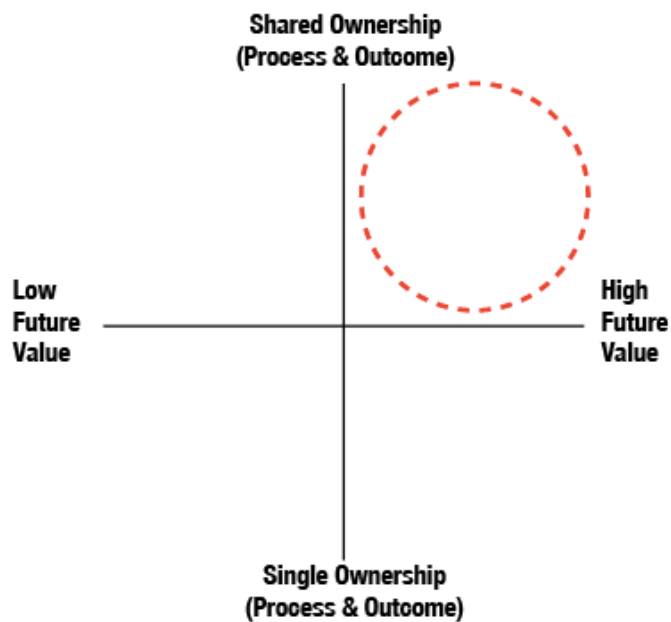

Figure 17. Ideal quadrant

4.0 Insights

4.1 Mapping the x-axis

The participatory methods – consultation, tactical urbanism, and participatory design - were mapped on the x-axis after analysis through the lens of the three attributes outlined in the methods: initial cost, certainty of the returns, and the value of the returns.

Initial Cost

> Participatory Design: Requires a high upfront cost of time, financial capital, and human resources to initiate.

> Tactical Urbanism: Cost varies, but it is in principle a "guerrilla" effort, indicating that it is low-cost in terms of financial capital, but often requires some time and social capital to successfully execute.

> Consultation: As it is regulated, it is already included in budgets for planning and development processes, the costs are relatively low. These processes are designed for efficiency, and therefore require very little upfront investment.

Certainty of Return

> Participatory Design: Participatory design often results in and leads to longer-term benefits that go beyond the project itself. While the outcome of the project itself can be variable, the social and economic benefits can be high as it can lead to increased trust, maintaining credibility and legitimacy, and avoiding worst-case

confrontations down the road (Creighton, 2005). While the project outcome can be uncertain, the long-term benefits beyond the development itself are known to be high.

Tactical Urbanism: The returns on tactical urbanism are highly uncertain. These temporal interventions, led by a group of "guerrilla" stakeholders most commonly point to an issue at a moment in time, but due to their ephemeral nature, do not create lasting impact. While they do build some capacity in the group that is leading the intervention, there is little evidence to show that the returns go beyond the intervention itself. Many of these interventions, due to the fact that they circumvent institutional systems, are shut down due to the fact that they violate local regulations or bylaws.

Consultation: Consultation has been regulated and as a result, the certainty of the return is relatively high. More often than not, the desired return is to be able to communicate that a given project/development has consulted the community, in order to meet institutional accountability. Therefore, this process is used most often *because* of the high degree of certainty of return..

Value of Return

Participatory Design: The value of the return on participatory design is high. Investing in this method yields returns that ultimately shift the mindset towards development, and develop capacity across stakeholders to invest in their common

purpose. When participatory projects are undertaken, they build extensive

capacity and literacy that serves current and future projects in that community.

Tactical Urbanism: While the certainty of the return on tactical urbanism is low,

the value if one is attained is high, and not dissimilar from Participatory Design.

These interventions have the potential to build community capacity and literacy,

and if additional stakeholders support them, yield a high return because they point

to an issue in the community to be resolved, usually one that is at a manageable

scale.

Consultation: While consultation measures as desirable on initial cost and

certainty of returns, it scores low on the value of the return as it does not actively

build lasting community capacity or literacy that can be leveraged later.

4.2 Mapping the y-axis

Participatory Design: High degree of shared ownership across stakeholder groups.

Tactical Urbanism: Usually led by one or a few "guerrilla" stakeholder groups.

Consultation: Ownership only by organization or institution leading the process.

4.3 The 2x2

Mapped together, all of the participatory methods fall short of the ideal quadrant (Figure

18). While participatory design, at its best, comes to the edge of the desired space, none

of the methods as they are now generate shared ownership and high future value. Each of

the methods have strengths in *some* of the areas, but not all. As a result, it is useful to investigate what opportunity exists to explore what it would take for each of these methods to move towards, and ultimately reside in the top right quadrant.
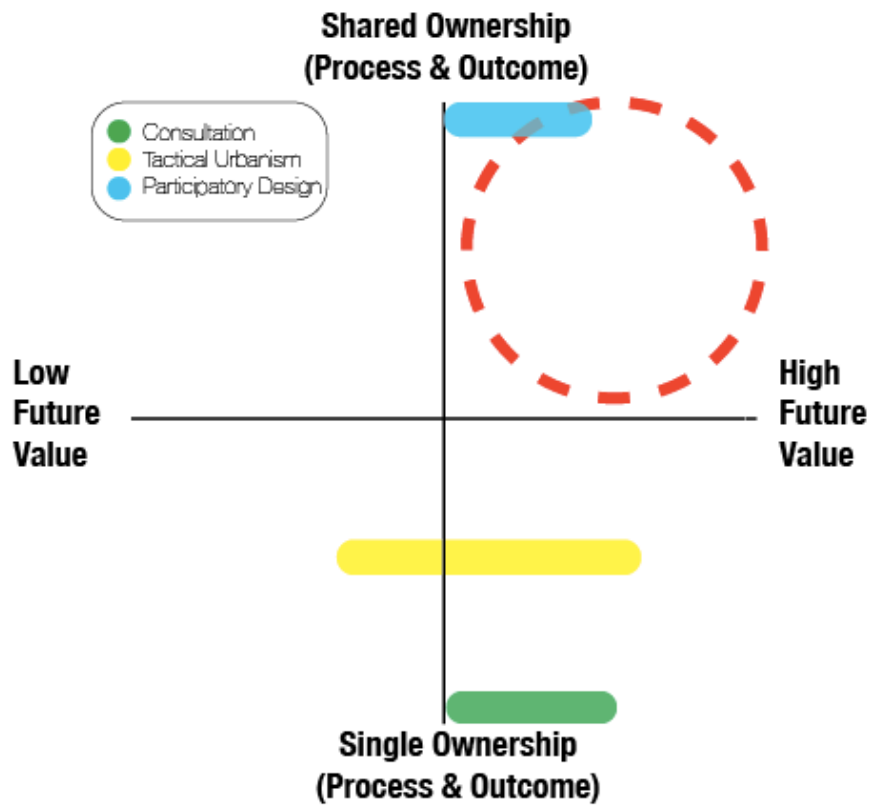

Figure 18. Participatory design methods mapped on the 2x2

4.4 Requirements of each method to reach optimal quadrant

<u>Participatory Design</u>: Participatory design is weakened by its perceived high initial costs as well as the relative uncertainty of the outcomes. The initial costs are less related to

financial capital, and more related to building trust in community at the start of the project, to ensure buy-in over the long term. Participatory design projects lose their integrity as community members encounter confusion or lack of clarity around the process and the outcomes as well as the commitment of the professionals involved in the project. Increased clarity in communication at the start of the process, informing all stakeholders about the ambiguity that lies ahead, but also the potential benefits beyond the capital project itself – could lead to a higher future value. For the purpose of this discussion, this clarity in communication will be referred to as *transparency.*

Tactical Urbanism: To move towards the goal of high future value and shared ownership, tactical urbanism needs to broaden buy-in from additional stakeholders, namely bureaucrats and decision-makers, in order to increase the certainty of the return, and to increase the likelihood of the "tactic" resulting in long-term change.

Consultation: Consultation would need to fundamentally rethink the role of the professional – to redesign the process to share power with the community/public – in order to have higher Future Value. This increased investment in supporting the public to increase their capacity and co-lead decision-making would result in higher value returns, with the public developing systems to make decisions that worked to complement consultation processes.

If we map each of the required changes on a 2x2 that compares the relative effort needed to implement the desired change in relationship to its impact (Figure 19), these

recommendations all map as relatively high impact, with the increased transparency in participatory design yielding the most preferable results (High Impact, Low Effort). While this 2x2 is a hypothetical, it highlights transparency as a potential intervention point. While the upfront costs of time, financial capital and human resources required to initiate a participatory design project are not lowered by simply being explicit about them, but the openness at the start of the project has the potential to invite all stakeholders to share responsibility for acquiring that capital. It can begin to build in resilience by lowering the costs for a single stakeholder and sharing it across multiple stakeholders.
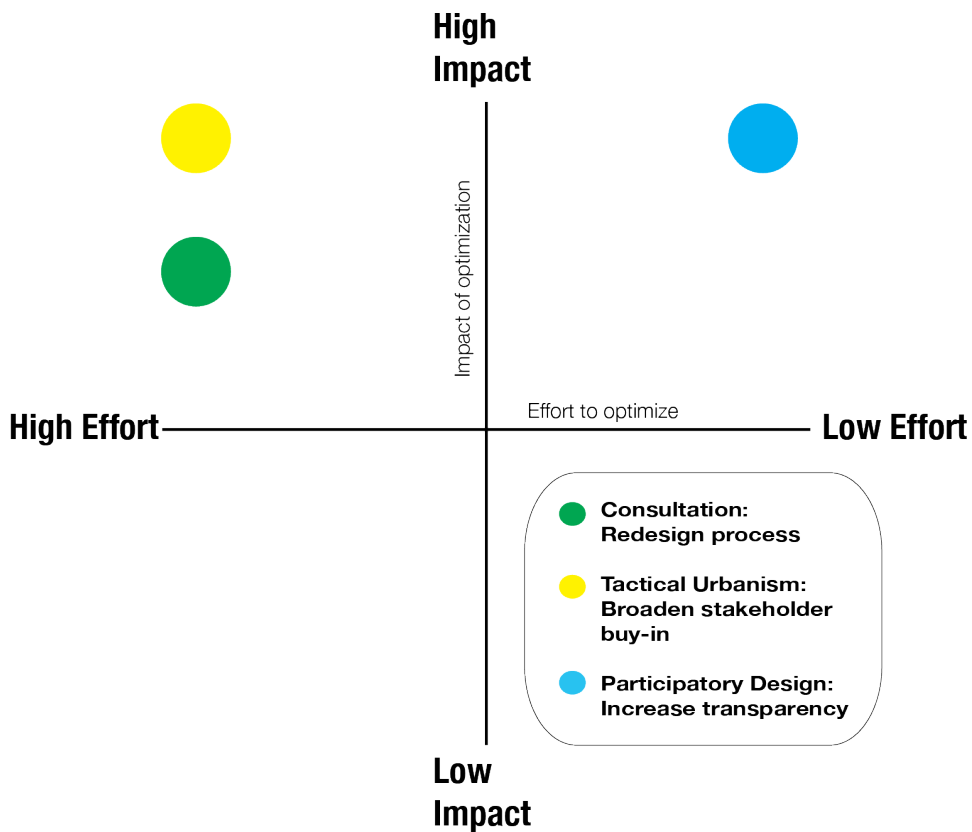

Figure 19. Evaluation of effort required to optimize the participatory methods.

4.5 Is transparency a solution?

This analysis identifies that transparency is potentially a high leverage point. It points to the simple possibility that communicating to all stakeholders the level of commitment required as well as the potential of the outcome, could yield the preferred result.

The highlighting of transparency in the case of participatory design lends itself to discussion as to whether transparency may be a powerful tool to apply to all participatory methods. Perhaps if the intentions and the potential outcomes of the participatory method were explained up front, citizens could self-organize around the appropriate choice of method that they saw having potential for the greatest future value. Perhaps it is because communities do not fully understand the participatory apparatus available to them that they are to use the tools at their disposal. Based on the conversation on professionalism, to choose from a theoretical/academic perspective which participatory method is ripe for evolution seems against the principle of community ownership and leadership. If there was a possibility for a radical transparency about the elements of each of the participatory methods, would the public legitimize or self-organize to advocate for one?

The literature surveyed in this paper affirms that the resources in place to increase participation across these processes are all targeted at professionals and high-capacity individuals who host these processes, rather than community members/the public who would participate in them.

If there were some sort of recognizable features or standards that indicated whether or not a participatory process had the intention of consulting the community versus engaging them in participation, members of the public could decide for themselves whether or not to engage in the process with full knowledge of how their investment will be managed.

A potential solution could be that we need to create opportunities for citizens and communities rapidly to measure the intentions of a participatory process. A public-facing indicator of the healthfulness of a process would allow citizens at the very least to know that when they engage in a process, their ideas and opinions are more/less likely to be represented in a final product. An example of this is nutrition labels. Since they were introduced into the public zeitgeist, they have enabled individuals to understand how healthy or unhealthy a food is for them. This has not resulted in a widespread abandonment of unhealthy foods, but rather it has increased accountability on behalf of the producer and as a result, equips the consumer with the knowledge he/she needs to make a decision about what/whether they consume. Many consumers still choose to consume unhealthy foods, but they do so knowingly. Should we have this kind of radical transparency – a "nutrition label" on all communication inviting participants into a participatory process of any kind (consultation, tactical urbanism, participatory design) – we may be able to take the first step towards enabling citizens to articulate which method is ripe for evolution. With this in hand, citizens can then legitimize these practices, and their participation in each indicates to what degree they want to be involved in the

shaping of their built environment, as well as how much it matters to them that a process is "token" versus "participatory".

This nutrition label or even, "integrity meter" would need to have a consistent process through which the values were audited, in order to avoid misleading potential participants with biased information. Perhaps an independent regulatory body could audit and measure the processes in order to keep them honest and neutral. There would have to be some kind of auditing to ensure that the integrity – the consistency between what was claimed and what done in practice – was upheld to avoid the kind of cynicism that comes now with public consultation.

The nutrition label enables a type of informed consumption that does not already exist; yet it is not as dynamic as it would need to be to serve the function of continually being a contextual indicator of integrity. A dynamic dimension would need to be added so that the nutrition label was constantly evolving, but the same citizen "data" or information was being shared. The analogy of an Application Programming Interface (API) is useful here. An API is an interface used across the Internet to enable applications to share data (Young, 2013), and to customize how they use the data to suit their unique needs. As a result, the data available to custom applications is consistent across users, and they can use it as they see fit. As an example, the API quality of this tool could aggregate all of the current information and conversations that have happened around a particular project in

order to understand and communicate the stage of the project that the public is being

invited into. It could then serve as one dimension of the nutrition label – how far

advanced the project actually is – to let the public know explicitly where they have

opportunities to influence its direction. The goal is not to make a "stamp" to certify

integrity, but rather to bring the true intentions behind the participatory method being

used to the public.

A nutrition label with the qualities of an API adds a dimension of interoperability to what

could end up becoming another static solution, especially if it were to be legislated. It

allows for a continued evolution of the tool itself, while ensuring that the source from

which information was coming was consistent, and has a certain measure of integrity.

Just as nutrition labels have done for consumer diets, this could be a new way to assess

transparency for the public. Additionally, the production of a label – the very act of

meeting public accountability around participation – could serve as a starting point for

decision-makers to consider opportunities to make their processes more inclusive.

To illustrate the metaphor, suppose OCAD University was engaging its community

around the construction of a new building on McCaul Street. Advertisements for a

consultation would be placed on analog and digital platforms. These advertisements

would share the time and place of the consultation, but somewhere on it, would have a set

of three visual indicators to inform the potential participants of the influence they could

have by attending. The three indicators could be: stage of project, relative importance of topic of consultation (to the project as a whole), and the level of influence their opinions will have. The visual components of the indicators could mimic streetlights – green, yellow, and red – to provide a recognizable, universal signal of the degree of real opportunity to influence. The API component of this would aggregate publicly available data for each indicator. For example, it could survey the number of consultations that have already happened, the stage of the construction process the building is in, and the permits that have been approved at city hall, to result in a red dot beside the the "stage of project" indicator. This indicating that the project is almost complete, allowing potential participants to decide if the engagement is worth their time.

The use of spinach, nutrition labels, and API's – even the concept of movie ratings – all serve as useful metaphors to ignite a design process; however, they can also be constraining. Nutrition labels, though common and recognizable, require additional education to fully understand. For example, a consumer could read that there is 45 grams of sugar in a product, but may not know what the safe threshold for sugar consumption in a single serving of food is, or even their daily recommended allowance. It took years for consumers to fully understand the nutrition labels, and even now, public education on the elements of nutrition move slowly from one element to the next (i.e. sugar, carbohydrates, fats, etc.). With this in mind, I suggest these metaphors as learning

opportunities in the development of an "integrity meter" for participation, rather than definitive approaches.

In getting to a measure of this sort, a complex set of questions would need to be addressed. Those questions include:

- How might this label be universally understood through its design?

- How would the public co-create this tool?

- How will the "level" of integrity or healthfulness be measured?

- Who measures it?

- How would this measure be audited to ensure that the public was not being misled?

- Through what mechanisms and channels would the public be able to adapt it and share their iterated versions?

- How would literacy be built about the tool itself, as well as its capacity to adapt and be iterated?

Assembling a multi-stakeholder group to start by understanding how these questions are to be answered would be the first step in moving towards developing this idea further.

Another option emerging from this could be to legislate that community consultation be led by paid "community consultants". These "community consultants" would perform the same role as those who currently lead the consultation processes, and would be hired by

the decision-making body (or developer) to design and lead the consultation process in a manner that spoke to the community's unique preferences (cultural, linguistic, etc.). While they would ultimately still be performing consultation, it could be the much-needed first step to sharing the power with the community by investing in their capacity to convene conversations on meaningful issues.

5.0 Conclusion

This project investigated the contemporary manifestations of participation in the process of shaping the built environment in an effort to understand how citizens best shape and influence it. The exploratory research revealed that while participation is important and understood as such, much of the reason that it is not implemented widely is due to the fact that professionalism hoards the design process and inhibits the sharing of power with the public. Without the shared power, there cannot be shared leadership and ownership of the processes and outcomes, which is a key element of participation. Additionally, the "duty to consult" abstracts the foundational responsibility to provide the community with the capacity to understand the decisions and the context of those decisions before contributing to them.

The process of evaluating three representative methods to understand which is most ready to evolve surfaced an existing bias towards supporting professional practitioners rather than community. An emerging possibility could be a call for a radical transparency to enable people to self-organize and effectively legitimize (or de-legitimize) the tools in order to indicate the level of participation they are seeking. What could be needed now is a "nutrition label"-like indicator on invitations to participation that makes transparent the purpose, how open the leadership is, and how committed the conveners involved are in seeing the process through. This idea of a nutrition label is offered more as a departure

point for further research and design, rather than a validated approach to addressing the issue.

A more practical first step towards meaningful consultation could also be to legislate "community consultants" to facilitate all local consultation processes. While not a systemic change, it would be a starting point to integrate some participatory "spinach" into a process that is already legislated, and start to build the capacity of community to understand the issues being addressed and to design process to convene dialogue.

5.1 Areas for further research

The development of this nutrition label would need to be an in depth set of trials run over a number of years in order to be able effectively to measure the choices the public would make, as well as to look closely at how those choices influence the participatory method. It would also require an extensive public survey of the attributes that the public would be looking for around engaging in participatory processes.

In the process of this research, and discussing the potential "nutrition label", numerous municipalities have begun to engage my firm, archiTEXT, in a discussion about a complete rethink of their consultation processes across all departments. The possibility has captured the imagination of municipalities and organizations that seek to improve

participation, and discussions have begun to understand how the outcomes of this study could catalyze renewed investment in research and design of participation approaches.

5.2 Reflections on the process

This research is the culmination of almost a decade working in the field of citizen participation with a focus on the built environment. As a result, the challenge of writing about content that I have such a close relationship with made it extremely difficult. Wanting to include everything, I had to choose only the most effective authors and theories to communicate one simple idea. The simple idea is that what we do not need right now is a new way of engaging citizens, but rather a way of communicating that the current methods available to them make the process highly challenging. In the process of writing, a participant in a fellowship that I have been mentoring reached out to me to share a graphic that she felt represented the process of learning about design thinking. The graphic itself was created to discuss the process of learning how to code, but it applied nicely to the field of design thinking as well.

I tried to use this visualization to visualize the process of engaging in a participatory process, then I realized that what this best exemplified was the process of writing a Major Research Paper (Figure 20).

In the process of writing this paper, rich discussions with colleagues ensued about their confidence and comfort level with their own credentials. This has sparked a new collaboration with multiple colleagues

Figure 20. Why learning to code is so damn hard (Trautman, 2015)

who are "experience-credentialed" to publish a series on "uncredentialed" designers. Recently, an established (though institutionally "uncredentialed") designer colleague, Jen Leonard posed the question that I see most fit to close this paper: "when the work is being done, and it's for social good, why do the credentials even matter?"
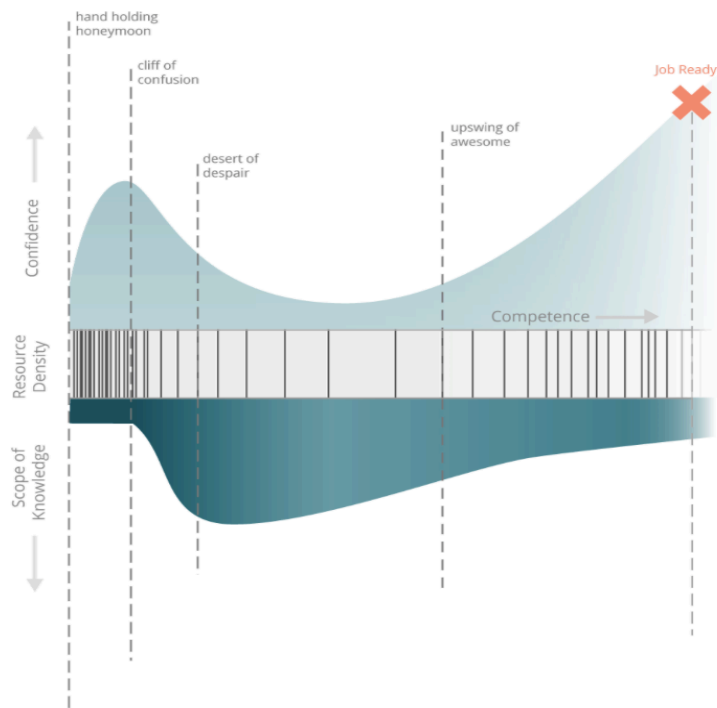
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