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## Thinking in Circles: A Systems Theory Approach to Public Participation in Planning

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**THINKING IN CIRCLES:  
A SYSTEMS THEORY APPROACH TO PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN  
PLANNING**

A Thesis Presented

by

STEPHEN N. MENO

Submitted to the Graduate School of the  
University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF REGIONAL PLANNING

SEPTEMBER 2016

Department of Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning

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## **DEDICATION**

To the women who led me to this moment:  
Christine Wheeler, Elizabeth Ammons, and my mother, Barbara Nelson Meno

and

To all those out there fighting the good fight for equity and justice. Please remember,

“The spirit always finds a pathway”

-Wallace Black Elk

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **THINKING IN CIRCLES: A SYSTEMS THEORY APPROACH TO PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN PLANNING**

SEPTEMBER 2016

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In the field of planning, there is widespread consensus that the mechanisms in which most planners use to engage with the public are ineffective and exclusive. Although there has been much work done on the techniques planners can adopt to reach out to underrepresented segments of the community, few municipalities have adopted them. This thesis seeks to advance the conversation on public participation beyond the mechanisms and into a discussion of why only certain communities are implementing these more progressive, efficient, effective, and equitable measures. By depicting how public participation functions as a system of interconnected paths and feedback loops, the author identifies twelve places in the system (i.e. leverage points) that could make participation more inclusive. The author tested the applicability of the leverage points by applying this Systems Theory framework to two inclusive participation initiatives in Amherst, Massachusetts and Vallejo, California. Through interviews and documentary research, the author found the framework to be effective in conceptualizing how communities become more inclusive and how participatory mechanisms can help shift the roles citizens, public managers, and planners have in the planning process.

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# CHAPTER 1

## PARTICIPATION IN PLANNING

### 1.1 Overview

In the ever-growing trend toward local and global democracy, public participation stands as a cornerstone of any society that wishes to provide greater equity. The demand for participatory processes is increasing in many different fields such as political science and public health (Glock-Grueneich & Ross, 2008). One piece of evidence of greater participation is that over 1,500 cities around the world have adopted participatory budgeting processes (Menegat, 2002; The Participatory Budgeting Project, 2016). In recognition of this trend, the American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP) list serving the public interest as planners' primary obligation within their Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct (American Institute of Certified Planners, 2009). Moreover, the Code specifically advocates for inclusivity stating "people [should have] the opportunity to have a meaningful impact on the development of plans and programs that may affect them. Participation should be broad enough to include those who lack formal organization or influence."

However, the reality of the application of participatory methods usually does not align with the intended goals of empowering and engaging citizens. While the ethical expectations and legal requirements for public participation in the planning process seek to incorporate many different views of the community, many stakeholders cite feelings of exclusion and frustration with the process and administration (King et al., 1998; Innes & Booher, 2004; McAndrews & Marcus, 2015). Clearly, the legal mandates and entrenched processes for participation are ineffective and do not work in promoting the purpose of

public involvement. Therefore, in order for the planning profession and local governments to live up to the ideals that they set forth, it is critical that the factors that lead to successful public participation studies be analyzed and explored.

As planning guides community development and must navigate this task through laws, municipal constraints, mayoral and community pressure, it is clear that planning is subsumed by a political environment. Albrechts distinguishes that planning is not politics, but cannot escape politics either (2003, p. 251). It is this concept of agenda setting and achieving that agenda (Albrechts, 2002, p. 340) where politics influences planning. Therefore, engaging the community can be an agenda goal for either planners or politicians, and the political environment plays a major role in accomplishing fostering a more inclusive participatory process.

Although the field of public participation may be convoluted (Day, 1997), a great deal of research has been done on the inefficient mechanisms and elements of the process (Innes & Booher, 2004; Webler et al., 2001; Shipley & Utz, 2012; King et al., 1998). In doing so, researchers have explored what constitutes public participation and how to categorize “good” public participation from ineffective or marginalizing initiatives. However, the bulk of this academic research has focused on the mechanisms of enacting public participation processes, yet few studies have been dedicated to determining the context and causes for the creation of poor or progressive public participation programs.

New frameworks must be applied to the field of public participation in order to better understand it. In this research, I attempt to introduce a different way of framing the topic of inclusive participation that may provide greater insight for researchers and practitioners. One way to better understand why a process intended to be inclusive of the

public fails to meet its goal is Systems Theory, which advocates for a more holistic view. Born out of sustainability studies, Systems Theory emphasizes the importance of interconnections; objects and events do not exist on their own, but are a part of systems. As Donella Meadows theoretically defines it, a system is “a set of elements or parts that is coherently organized and interconnected in a pattern or structure that produces a characteristic set of behaviors, often classified as its ‘function’ or ‘purpose’” (2008, p. 188). Yet, as Meadows points out, “changing elements usually has the least effect on the system” (2008, p. 16). Since most of the effort in the field of public participation has been spent on altering mechanisms (i.e. the elements in the system), researchers are focusing on altering the parts of the system that will have the least impact. Instead, it is altering the interconnections between the elements and the purpose of the system that have dramatic results (2008, pp. 16-17). The purpose of this thesis is to adopt a more comprehensive approach to the public participation process in local planning decisions by applying a systems analysis framework. In doing so, I intend to provide a practical method for communities to assess their goals and ability to increase the level of inclusivity within their public participation processes.

## **1.2 Research Goals, Questions, Objectives**

The seeds for this thesis were planted during the Fall 2014 when I took a University of Massachusetts Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning graduate seminar *Public Participation*, in which my classmates collaborated with the recently formed Amherst Together Initiative. Led by Dr. Flavia Montenegro-Menezes, our class conducted a targeted community engagement strategy to gain insight and knowledge from typically underrepresented segments of Amherst. These included non-English



speakers, lower-income families, adolescents, college and university students, the elderly, and businesspeople.

In the spring of 2015, several student volunteers continued the project with a town-wide survey to assess how residents perceive their community and overall quality of life. This survey culminated in the *Perceptions* report written and presented by Dr. Montenegro-Menezes. Originally, this thesis sought to build upon this work as an exploration of the origins of the Amherst Together Initiative specifically and its applicability to other communities as a model. However, in order to efficiently analyze this one case study, there needed to be a greater discussion of power dynamics and the role of voice and representation within the field of planning. Ultimately, by seeing the connection between equity and greater participation, this thesis thus seeks to answer the question of **what are the factors that lead to more inclusive participation within U.S. planning, but more specifically how do those factors interact and affect one another.**

As most of the research on public participation in planning tends to be more theoretical (Shipley & Utz, 2012), the overall goal of this thesis is to develop a practical framework that municipalities can use to foster greater inclusivity. The successful practical cases analyzed within this thesis counteract the litany of examples of ineffective and marginalizing acts of public participation. In order to most effectively examine this goal within the scope and limitations of this thesis, the objectives of this research were broadened to entail multiple examples of inclusive participation.

A Systems Theory framework is used because it simultaneously demonstrates the different facets of context leading to participation while also being presentable and easily

comprehensible. The specific objectives to determine the factors leading to more inclusive participation are:

1. Create a diagrammatic representation of a systems overview of the public participation process in planning using previous literature
2. Evaluate the public's and government's perception of the efficiency of the public participation process
3. Distill the paradigms, goals, elements, and feedback loops that generate inclusive public participation
4. Determine the leverage points in the system that communities can improve upon to make their public participation system more inclusive

Through this method, I hope to contribute to the academic and practical fields of participatory planning and to create a tool to help identify the points within political and social structures that can be changed to foster a more inclusive relationship between government and community.

## **1.3 Scope**

### **1.3.1 Limitations and Delimitations**

I approach this thesis through the lens of participatory planning, meaning that I adopt the view of AICP and some planning theories that consider the role of the public instrumental in decision-making related to urban development. Literature regarding participation in natural resource conservation and other fields was generally not included as part of the review within this thesis, unless its theoretical applications were very pertinent or there was a direct relationship with land use planning.

I have chosen to focus on the seven most prominent subsystems distilled from a meta-analysis of the literature pertaining to inclusive planning: paradigms, goals, legal framework, community values, political environment, and social structure, and their associated leverage points. However, I have limited the discussion of paradigms to a

cursory overview of deliberative democracy theory as planners and public managers typically do not have control over the underlying foundations of U.S. democracy. While the literature is international in scope, the framework is created with a U.S. audience in mind and applied only to U.S. case studies. To be more useful for land use planners and local government officials, the focus is placed on leverage points within their control. Therefore, I acknowledge that there could be other factors that help lead to inclusive participation not addressed within this thesis.

To test whether the framework created from the literature was applicable to the case studies presented in this thesis, the methodology was delimited to the decision-makers who were instrumental in developing and executing the inclusive participatory programs. Further research should be conducted on the role of community and the capacity of community groups in developing inclusive participatory processes. The thesis only analyzes two types of participatory mechanisms: collective impact and participatory budgeting and I acknowledge that differing context may lead to other mechanisms. Furthermore, both of these case studies are in nascent stages of development.

### **1.3.2 Assumptions**

The purpose of this research is not to examine whether planning should adopt inclusive participation methods. Instead, using some important examples and trends in contemporary academic research and policy decisions, this thesis assumes and follows the thinking that planning decisions are improved when input from a wide array of people (who are not typically represented in planning decisions) is sought after. These planning decisions tend to be more effective, long-lasting, and do not marginalize certain demographics within a community. Under the assumption that the public should be an

integral part of the planning process, this research examines the factors in communities that lead to more inclusive outcomes.

Another assumption made in this research is that Meadow's hierarchy of leverage points is accurate and reflective of years of research on the most effective points of change within a system.

#### **1.4 Wayfinding and Outline of Chapters**

Chapter 2 is a review of the literature, deconstructing the meanings of the terms "public" and "participation." Going deeper, the chapter analyzes the different criteria and conceptions of effective inclusive participation to create a working definition as a metric to apply to the case studies of Amherst, Massachusetts and Vallejo, California. This chapter also discusses the underpinnings of Systems Theory and the pertinence of leverage points as a framework for the field of public participation. The latter portion of this chapter is a meta-analysis of the literature using a Systems Theory lens to examine the subsystems of factors leading to inclusive participation: paradigms, goals, legal framework, community values, political environment, and social structure. Within each of these subsystems, several leverage points are identified that can drastically change the system of public participation.

In Chapter 3, I describe my methodology to determine whether the framework developed from the literature accurately depicts the context leading to the inclusive participation in the case studies of Amherst, Massachusetts and Vallejo, California. The methodology is a mixed-methods approach in which grey literature on the case studies and interviews with decision-makers are analyzed to diagram the systems of each community.

Chapter 4 examines the two case studies more in depth beginning with an overview of the community (e.g., demographic information) and ending with the results gleaned from the grey literature analysis and semi-structured interviews. The responses from the interviews are coded according to leverage points and associated subsystems and graphically displayed as well as deconstructed.

Chapter 5 is the conclusion where I assess the role the mechanism of participation plays in influencing the context of a system. I also discuss how the role of institutionalization was an overlooked factor in the literature review but an important element in the case studies. This chapter also discusses the challenges encountered during the thesis process and how generalizable the framework is.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1 Introduction

The field of planning in the U.S. has become increasingly more attuned to the fact that people's voices matter through the method of public participation. Sparked by model zoning acts, which respectively require public meetings for zoning changes and comprehensive plan formation (Standard State Zoning Enabling Act of 1926; Standard City Planning Enabling Act of 1928), most American municipalities now have laws mandating some form of public meeting to allow different voices to weigh in on decision-making processes (Shiple & Utz, 2012, p. 22). In spite of the public meetings mandated by these laws, many citizens faced exclusion and were negatively impacted by top-down planning decisions. For example, many low-income communities (predominately African-American) had little impact in creating urban renewal plans in accordance with the Housing Act of 1949, which led to their forcible removal and displacement from their homes. In response to this widespread mistreatment, the field of planning began to move from a technical, expert-based practice toward the trend of participatory planning. The role of participation in planning returned to prominence by the 1960s, especially with publications by Gans, Moynihan, Rubin, and Arnstein (Goodspeed, 2008).

While it is occurring on a smaller scale in the United States, there was a worldwide effort to encourage community engagement and greater participation that continues to contemporary times, where many parallels can be drawn from. By the 1980s, public participation became a cornerstone of the planning process, now embedded in the U.S. legal framework from local to federal levels. The United Nations argues that

participation is a key component to governance, which they define as “the process of decision-making and the process by which decisions are implemented (or not implemented)” (Sheng, 2003, p. 1). Participation has become a key to democratizing the planning process (Jones, 1990, p. 3) by integrating models of better governance into decision-making processes.

Allen and Feldman (2000) write of the importance of the citizen-user’s knowledge and moving away from seeing the architect or planner as the sole expert on decisions related to how a municipality should develop. In fact, King et al. have demonstrated that more inclusive participatory methods save communities time and energy, which result in stronger, more long-lasting decisions (1998, p. 319) that are more likely to be implemented (Jones, 1990, p. 3). Portney and Berry define this type of governance as “the pursuit of sustainability in public policy” (2010, p. 120). However, unlike the rapid proliferation of zoning after New York City’s landmark 1916 ordinance, many communities are not implementing these innovative participatory techniques. The question remains: why?

This literature review analyzes research that has been published to determine what defines public participation, the meaning of effective, inclusive participation and what that constitutes. Although there is a trend in communities to adopt these innovative participatory styles, many communities still utilize conventional methods such as public hearings and comprehensive planning commissions. Many studies have shown that these traditional participatory techniques are very ineffective (King et al., 1998; Shipley & Utz, 2012). Whether the issue is one of resources (or lack thereof), techniques, values, priorities, power dynamics, legal framework, or other, researchers must investigate these

factors to determine fairer, efficient, and effective processes. Another factor may be that exclusionary participation is the goal of the community in an effort to concentrate voice and power among a few elites. While this review addresses these issues, the focus is on identifying the work that has been done on participation up to this point in order to apply a Systems framework to the public participation process in planning.

## **2.2 Defining Public Participation**

In wading through the diversity of thought in the field of participatory methods, it is clear that there are no universal criteria to define public participation. Not only do the distinct terms used embody different definitions, but even the same term used by academics and municipalities have various meanings (Day, 1997). The purpose of this review is not to decide which term should become the established one for the field. Instead, this review presents an overview of the terms to underscore the different modes of thought in the field, and emphasize that practically, there is not one best method for participatory initiatives, yet, conceptually, public participation should serve to include the public, with public being used in as pluralistic sense as possible. Indeed, diversity in thought is a key component of any inclusionary public participation method because it must be adapted to the political, cultural, economic, land value, and practical contexts of each municipality.

The first way to frame the conception of public participation is through the normative lens, in which typologies are created to show the amount of influence people can have on the decision-making process (Moynihan, 2003, p. 165). According to Rowe and Frewer, a generally agreed upon definition of public participation is “the practice of involving members of the public in the agenda-setting, decision-making, and policy-



forming activities of organizations/ institutions responsible for policy development” (2005, p. 253). Yet it is the very fact that this definition is so broad that impedes research into effective participation mechanisms. Furthermore, the imprecision of defining public participation has allowed for the acceptance of ineffective and passive participation methods as the norm in many municipal systems. Therefore, in order to conceive of participation, it must be framed within the concept of how authentic or effective the process can be, which will be discussed later in this review. For my work, I will define public participation using Rowe and Frewer (2005)’s generally agreed upon definition of a decision-making process, underscoring that there are multiple “publics” who vary in terms of the power they have in the process.

As a way of honing definitions for public participation, various researchers and governmental organizations have created typologies to be more precise in their meaning and focus. Rowe and Frewer, for instance, distinguish between *public communication*, *public consultation*, and *public participation*, claiming that each is a different facet of public engagement that is on a spectrum regarding how much power the public has (2005, pp. 254-5). Communication is the least empowering since the government still controls when the communicating may take place, while participation disperses the control. However, the idea of categorizing public participation along a spectrum originates from Arnstein’s seminal piece, “A Ladder of Citizen Participation” (1969).

Arnstein’s typology is based on eight degrees (see Figure 1) to which the public is empowered, ranging from manipulation to full citizen control. This revolutionary typology came out of a period of politically driven radicalism and a tradition of urban community engagement. The importance of Arnstein’s work is the awareness that what

many governing bodies classify as participation is actually nonparticipation and only a façade of dialogue. In fact, communities uphold these established power systems through the use of these tools. In her view, true participation must empower by placing control in the hands of the people and not the governing bodies.

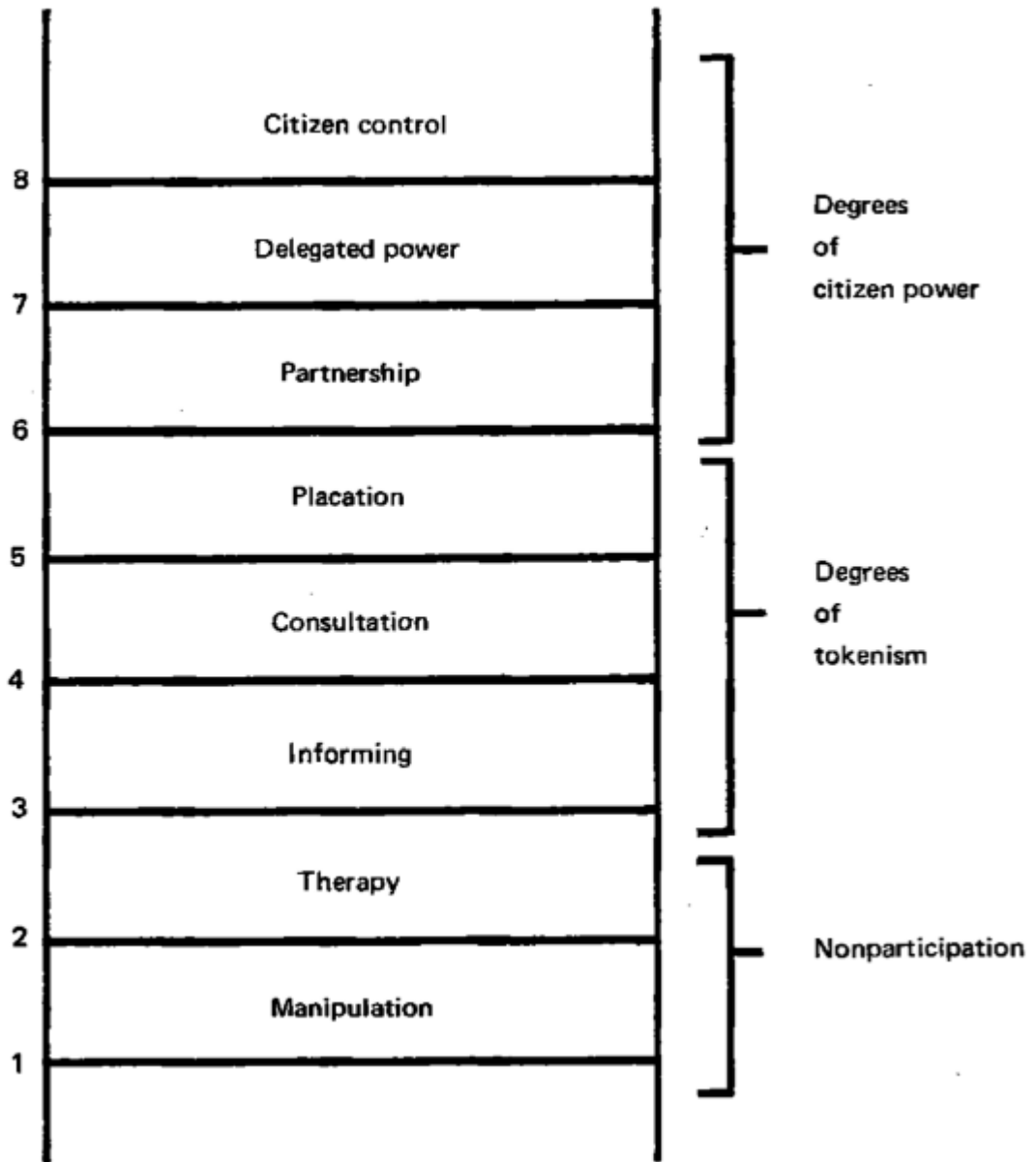


Figure 1: Arnstein's (1969) eight rungs on the ladder of citizen participation

Over time, Arnstein's model has been expanded and re-organized. The International Association for Public Participation (2007) simplifies Arnstein's model for general use for practitioners. The spectrum is truncated, starting at "informing" and ranging to "empowering." They supplement these categories to include goals and promises made to the public. The argumentative tone is sacrificed in this model at the expense of its utility and intended general audience

White (1996) adds another dimension to Arnstein's scale by creating a table that categorizes participation on both form (ranging from nominal to transformative) and approach (e.g. top-down v. bottom up). While Arnstein treated her categories as static labels, White created her typology to show the malleability that can exist within one participation project. Furthermore, what is important about White's model of public participation is that it gives equal weight to bottom-up and top-down approaches and acknowledges both as legitimate forms of participation. Her model moves away from one based solely on power to one focused on context.

The example most widely cited as an illustration of Arnstein's empowerment is the participatory budgeting system in Porto Alegre, Brazil. Researchers on Porto Alegre's Brazil's system use political terminology with the phrase *participatory democracy* (Menegat, 2002; Aragonès & Sánchez-Pagés, 2005; Baiocchi, 2005), although Abers (2000) relies on the phrase *local democracy*. The Participatory Budget (PB) is "a process of collective decision-making that combines elements from both Direct and Representative Democracy: Citizens have the power to decide on policy and politicians assume the role of policy implementation" (Aragonès & Sánchez-Pagés, 2005, p. 2). In this context, the idea of participation is framed around power dynamics and distributions

as opposed to methods of communicating or types of publics. While Brazil has a different political and social climate, participatory budgeting (PB) is a growing trend in the United States. Since the first case with the 49<sup>th</sup> Ward in Chicago in 2009, many cities throughout the U.S. have adopted some version of PB. Therefore, PB is an important example to look at in order to understand the current political limitations and advantages that exist in U.S. politics and values.

Moving away from frames based only on power, Head (2007) takes a more integrative and in-depth approach using the term *community engagement*, which is a commonly used phrase in the literature. Although it carries a specific connotation, many authors use the term interchangeably with public participation (Shipley & Utz, 2012; Baker et al., 2007). Head acknowledges that community itself is a “vague and value-laden” term (2007, p. 441), which could, in practice, only refer to elites who partake in community activities. He also differentiated between community engagement as a more active and ongoing process compared with public consultation, which can be more episodic. His term not only acknowledges the murkiness of defining publics, but also adds a temporal element to the process.

Overall, though there are many different definitions and views of public participation, researchers can agree on some general characteristics. First and foremost, that it is a decision-making process that has the often-omitted power to transform and empower the lives of its citizens. It can take many shapes, ranging from voting to attending public meetings to receiving community news. These degrees of public participation apply to different contexts of project or situation. Understanding the background and purpose for these different iterations of public participation is vital when

analyzing the conditions that are favorable to developing more inclusive and empowering participatory methods.

### **2.3 Evaluating Public Participation**

While researchers have spent a great deal of analytical energy determining the differing means of participating, many researchers also apply the instrumental perspective to evaluate specific mechanisms used in participatory processes (Moynihan, 2003). Farrington and Bebbington (1993) designed one of the most basic (and useful) models for evaluating public participation methods, which fall along two axes (Figure 2). The first axis measures how involved the public is in the project ranging from shallow at one end to deep at the other. The other axis signifies how much of the public is involved, from a wide group to a narrow sampling. Their typology is quite useful for practitioners to assess the adaptation of their own participation methods and to understand the degrees of inclusion and exclusion that can be achieved. This evaluation framework does not state that one approach is better or worse than another, but it helps visualize the discussion for the context of the project.

SUBJECT MATTER SCOPE	
Narrow	Wide
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Focus on a limited range of farm activities<sup>1</sup></li> <li>● Limited scope for clients to influence experiment</li> <li>● Preference for individual over group approaches</li> <li>● Limited feedback of results into research service</li> <li>● Role for NGO continues unchanged</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Focus on a limited range of farm activities</li> <li>● Lengthy interaction with clients to ensure that options for experimentation meet their needs, and that they 'own' the process of change</li> <li>● Enhanced capacity of clients to interact upstream (e.g. input supply) and downstream (e.g. processing) with public and private commercial sector in support of the technical options</li> <li>● NGO passes increasing share of management responsibilities to the clients</li> </ul>
DEPTH Shallow	Profound
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Broad focus on a range of development options, in and beyond agricultural change</li> <li>● NGO interaction with local groups is limited to, e.g., using them as a source of ideas</li> <li>● Role for NGO continues unchanged</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Broad focus on a range of development options, in and beyond agricultural change</li> <li>● NGOs work with groups in long-term conscientization and empowering modes; work on agricultural change emerges from this process and is set in the context of other economic and societal change</li> <li>● NGOs work to develop links among local groups and create a capacity to draw on public and private sector services</li> <li>● NGO passes increasing share of management responsibilities to the clients</li> </ul>
	Wide

**Figure 2: The depth and scope of NGO approaches to participation. Source: Farrington & Bebbington, 1993**

Tauxe (1995) takes a similar approach by not delineating what is a good versus poor public participation method in her study of North Dakota farmers. Instead, she

divides it along the lines of “local” versus bureaucratic planning. The former is a decentralized method that takes into account the will of the people, while the latter is highly regimented, procedural and government operated. These divergent approaches express different values. While her opinion is that both approaches have their own values within the context of her case study, she does suggest that bureaucratic planning marginalized the local population in this particular instance, and therefore was not an inclusionary method.

The last dominant lens to conceive of participation is through the institutional approach, where democratic processes are analyzed by which role actors should play (DeCaro & Stokes, 2013). Relating back to Arnstein’s “ladder of citizen participation,” King et al. (1998) make the argument that the key to emphasizing a good public participation method is to have citizen control at the center. Not only do citizens need to be consulted (and a wide variety at that), but they need to be integrated into the project from the very beginning, with planners and public administrators server as facilitators (1998, p. 321). James (2012) makes a similar argument in her construct of the intercultural city. Although James does not emphasize participatory metrics per se, she is acknowledging the importance of placing marginalized people at the center of the issue in order to establish a network of multiculturalism. James’ perspective is important to consider within the context of evaluation, which is lacking in King et al.’s model. Their argument does not specify or emphasize the types of citizens at the center of the issue.

While King et al. have some shortfalls in their discussion of “authentic” public participation, they still provide an extremely comprehensive list that achieves an excellent summation of qualities that should be present in inclusive participation methods

(1998, p. 321). Some of qualities include collaboration, trust, equality, a dynamic process that seeks participant involvement early on in the process, and the result emerges due to discourse. Here again, the underlying tone is the distribution of power between the planner and the citizens. Planners act as facilitators and translators of the demands of the people more than orchestrators of planning projects.

## **2.4 Evaluating the Public**

While it is commonly used as such, the term “citizens” does not denote one cohesive grouping of people opposed to public administrators. Instead, the public comprises a mosaic of perspectives, an oft-overlooked element in the discussion of participation. I therefore suggest that context is vital for evaluating public participation methods, and yet most of the literature ignores the nuances of lived experience.

Researchers claim that effective public participation should involve more marginalized people (Webler et al., 2001; Albrechts, 2002), but they lump these populations together (e.g. women, people of color, disabled people, etc.) (Tauxe, 1995), even though they face different forms of exclusion. Since their discrimination comes in different constructs, it is logical that there exist myriad solutions to include the disenfranchised in the public participation process. Sandercock frames this discussion as the existence of differing “ways of knowing,” which contribute to a pluralistic viewpoint of the world (2005).

Generalizing this notion of the “other” marginalized people is one sign of a colonial mentality, a concept in which colonized people adopt and place greater value on the colonizer’s dominant culture. Moreover, Ugarte (2014) makes an even stronger claim that the key to more inclusive public participation methods is by undoing patterns of colonialism and not viewing cultures in a hierarchy. While many authors (Arnstein, 1969;



Innes & Booher, 2004; White, 1996) admit that power redistribution is essential to authentic participation methods, few write of where the power imbalance originates. Therefore, pluralism is a major key to establishing effective public participation (Innes & Booher, 2004, p. 422). In order to achieve “collaborative participation,” Innes and Booher cite dialogue, network building and institutional capacity as necessary elements.

Cornwall takes the most dynamic approach by creating the idea of *optimum participation* that establishes clarity through specificity. In this view, the concept is defined as “getting the balance between depth and inclusion right for the purpose at hand” (2008, p. 276). Balancing power, perspectives and decision-making is vital. In participatory projects with so many different players, effective inclusivity must optimize voices in order to get the best results, facing the reality of tradeoffs. This concept brings a practical approach to handle real world inequity, though the trouble with this concept is *who* determines what is “optimum” for each case.

The other side of the issue of the political environment in transitioning to more inclusive public participation methods is the power of community groups. Although these groups are vital to the success of reaching out to marginalized people and developing collective action, they can only thrive if they have the proper funds and staffing (Arnstein, 1969, p. 221). Therefore, economics and a dispersion of finances is another key factor. From a pragmatic perspective, it would then make sense that since many municipal offices lack resources, they also tend not to have more inclusive methods, which potentially may involve more time and money (King et al., 1998, p. 324).

If planners integrate the various ideas of King et al., Cornwall, Ugarte, and James, then they can establish a very clear and useful working definition of public participation.

By incorporating all these aspects, planners can acknowledge both the existence of multiple publics and the systems in which these publics operate in American society. For the remainder of the review, I will use the term *inclusive participation* to denote the synthesis of these ideas in order to discuss the conditions inherent or necessary to achieve them.

## **2.5 Systems Theory Framework**

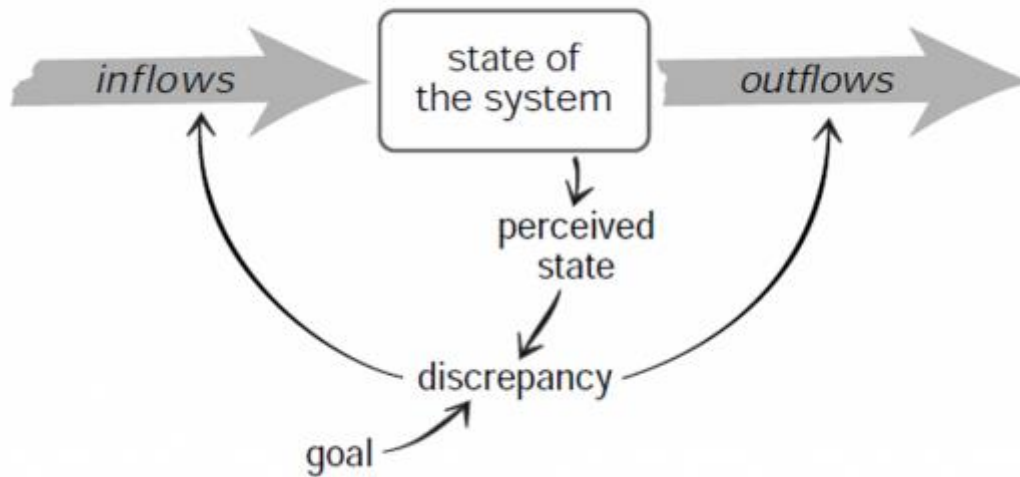
Public participation in planning is typically categorized as a dynamic process (Fung & Wright, 2011; Baker et al., 2007; Innes & Booher, 2004; Shipley & Utz, 2012), that requires “continuous” decision-making (Feldman & Khademian, 2007). Since these constant decisions and events in the process can impact the level of inclusivity, a Systems Theory approach is a relevant framework in which to study public participation.

### **2.5.1 Overview of Systems Theory**

Systems Theory was founded by Jay Forrester to analyze and understand complex processes. Meadows et al. then popularized it as a useful framework in the fields of ecology, economics, and human development theory in their landmark 1972 book, *The Limits to Growth*. A system is “a set of elements or parts that is coherently organized and interconnected in a pattern of structure that produces a characteristic set of behaviors, often classified as its ‘function’ or ‘purpose’ (Meadows, 2008, p. 188). Typically, changing the elements (the most visible part of the system) has the smallest effect on altering the state of the system. While changing the interconnections is more impactful than the elements, the purpose of the system holds the most power to change it (2008, p. 11).

As Figure 3 shows, the foundation of any system is its stock (i.e., the state of the system), which is a quantity of a material or information that has built up over time. Stocks change over time depending on the flow, which is the action that causes stocks to enter (i.e., inflow) and leave (i.e., outflow) a system. Outflows of one system can become the inflow for another system. Even if the flow changes, stock usually change very slowly leading to stocks acting as buffers, delays or shocker absorbers (Meadows, 2008, p. 23). The behavior (or control mechanisms) of a system is based around the system's structure, more specifically, feedback loops. A feedback loop is "a closed chain of causal connections from a stock, through a set of decisions or rules or physical laws or actions that are dependent on the level of the stock, and back again through a flow to change the stock" (2008, p. 27). Reinforcing feedback loops (also known as positive feedback loops) are one kind, which reinforce the direction of change of the stock in the system. The other kind is balancing feedback loops (also known as negative feedback), which regulates the stock flow by counteracting the direction in the change imposed on the system (2008, p. 187).

Every system has a goal (whether stated or not). The difference between the current state and the goals of the system is the discrepancy (Meadows, 1999, p. 4). Over time, systems tend to produce bounded rationality, which are premises that make sense within the behavior of the system, but which are not logical within a wider context (Meadows, 2008, p. 187). This effect contributes to the overall difficulty of changing entrenched system behavior and processes.



**Figure 3: Diagram showing state of systems. Source: Meadows, 1999**

By structuring the system with diagrams of the stocks, flows, and feedback loops, the system's behavior emerges, and shows what latent or non-obvious aspects may be driving it. Over time, the system behavior reveals itself (Meadows, 2008, p. 89). Since systems are complex, they can be very difficult to alter in any profound way. Meadows has identified 12 places in systems in which intervene can change the system. She refers to these as leverage points (See Table 1) and creates a typology in which they are ordered by levels of increasing effectiveness. However, Meadows stresses that this is not a fixed list, but tentative, and exceptions that may shift the order of the leverage points. Although there is greater effect the higher one climbs the ladder of leverage points, "the higher the leverage point, the more the system will resist changing it" (Meadows, 2008, p. 165).

**Table 1: Places to Intervene in a System (Leverage Points). Source: Adapted from Meadows, 1999; Meadows, 2008**

<i>Leverage point</i>	<i>Explanation</i>	← Increasing Impact on System
12. Numbers	Constants and parameters such as subsidies, taxes, and standards	
11. Buffers	The sizes of stabilizing stocks relative to their flows	
10. Stock-and-Flow Structures	Physical systems and their nodes of intersection	
9. Delays	The lengths of time relative to the rates of system changes	
8. Balancing Feedback Loops	The strength of the feedbacks relative to the impacts they are trying to correct	
7. Reinforcing Feedback Loops	The strength of the gain of driving loops	
6. Information Flows	The structure of who does and does not have access to information	
5. Rules	Incentives, punishments, constraints	
4. Self-organization	The power to add, change, or evolve system structure	
3. Goals	The purpose of the system	
2. Paradigms	The mind-set out of which the system – its goals, structure, rules, delays, parameters – arises	
1. Transcending Paradigms	Resisting the concept of limits and the existence of a “true paradigm.”	

### 2.5.2 Systems Theory applied to public participation

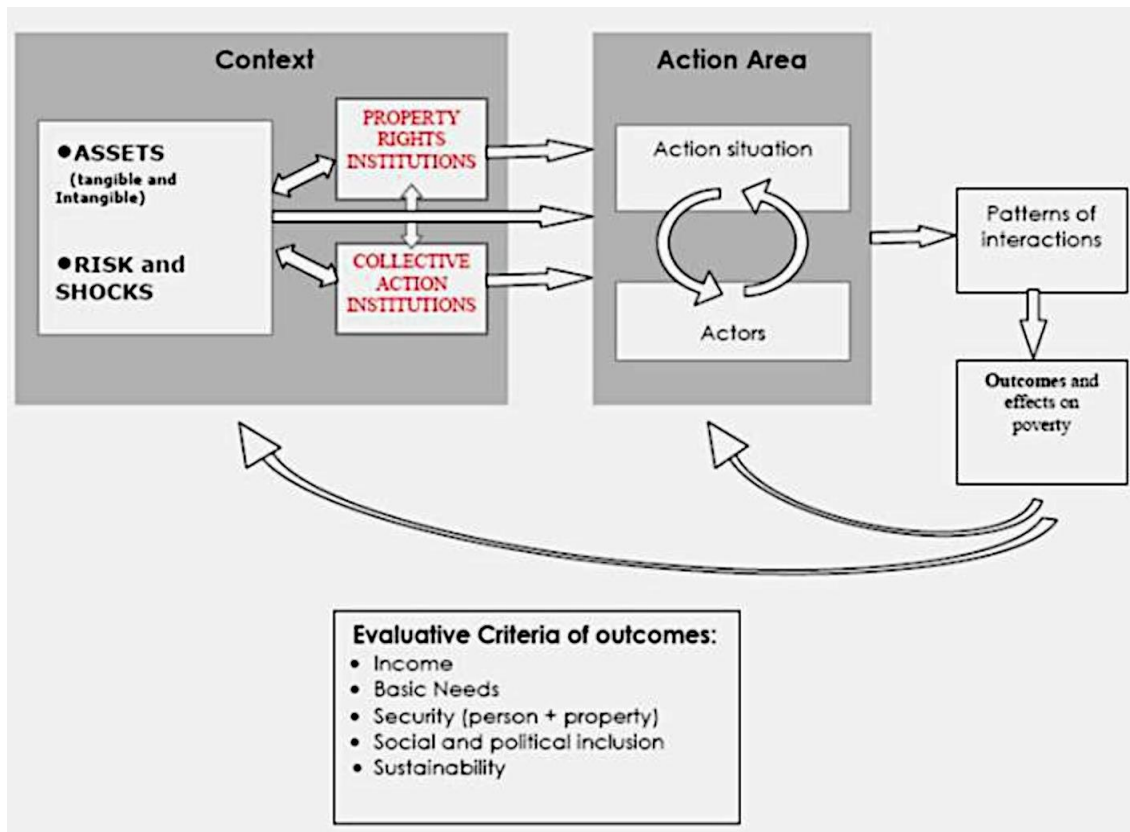
Although the field of public participation may be convoluted (Day, 1997), a great deal of research has been done on the inefficient mechanisms and elements of the process (Innes & Booher, 2004; Webler et al., 2004; Shipley & Utz, 2012; White, 1996; King et al., 1998). As previously stated, changing the elements (or the most visible parts) has the least effect on altering the system because the changed elements still must adhere to the rules and flowpaths established within the system. For example, when a kidney is

transplanted in a human body, the urinary system still functions as intended. In planning, a community may change the outreach mechanism from a forum to a survey, but if the purpose of the mechanism is not changed (i.e. being more inclusive), the system of participation functions in the same manner. This phenomenon could explain why, even though many understand what mechanisms lead to greater inclusive participation, there still remain very few cases of it. While beneficial to research, these studies often ignore the broader context (the purpose and interconnections) that leads to these mechanisms or if these mechanisms would be more useful if the system's goal was different.

Manzo and Perkins (2006) indirectly advocate for “holistic, ecological” approach to understanding the interconnections between place attachment and community engagement. Going further than just place attachment (one element in the system), a holistic understanding of how public participation functions as a system is critical is understanding what needs to be altered across a broad range of levels and sectors and to understand why more inclusive participation methods are happening in certain geographies, but not in others.

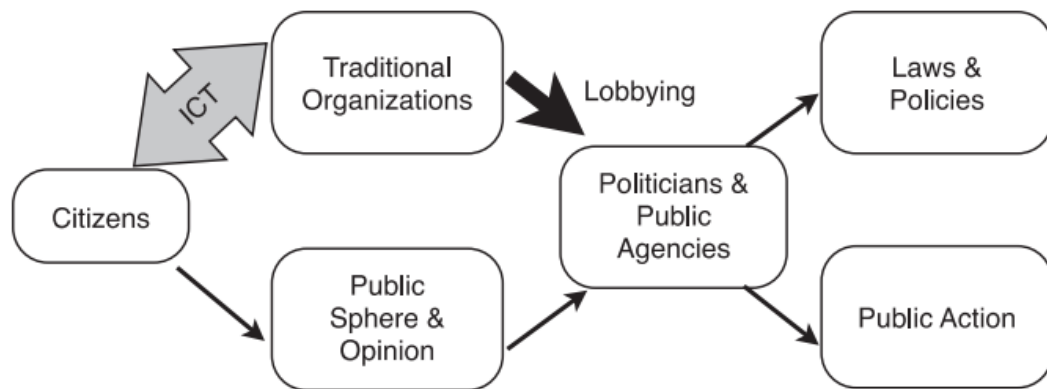
This thesis adopts a similar approach to Mwangi and Markelova (2009), who conducted a literature review using the framework of Di Gregorio et al. (2008) to express the multi-dimensionality of poverty and identify ways to measure and conceptualize it. Figure 4's purpose is to be a guide for natural resource management researchers and practitioners as the framework relates how concepts of property rights and collective action and poverty interact to develop poverty reduction methods. The framework is divided into the “Context,” which depicts the initial socio-economic conditions, which then feed into the more dynamic “Action Area” that shows how actors, their actions, and

resources can lead to change. The Action Area leads to interactions, which ultimately produce outcomes that then can reinforce the system or change it.



**Figure 4: Conceptual framework on property rights, collective action and poverty.**  
 Source: Mwangi & Markelova, 2009

Mwangi and Markelova (2009)’s model is useful in that it attempts to encapsulate the dynamics of change through a diagram. By separating the context leading to action and the action itself, Mwangi and Markelova show that solutions for a problem (in this case, poverty) extends beyond a change in actors and resources. Furthermore, another aspect that I integrate into my framework is the role of outcomes in influencing both the context and the action area, including the distinction that an outcome can reinforce the system or change it completely.



**Figure 5: Diagram showing constituent mobilization in light of information and communication technology (ICT) influence on politics. Source: Fung et al., 2013, p. 41)**

For a very different subject more closely aligned to the research of inclusive participation, Fung et al. (2013) create a diagram that also serves as inspiration for the framework for this thesis. Figure 5 is one of Fung et al.'s six models for how digital technologies affect politics. In it, information and communication technologies (ICT) are shown to strengthen the connection between political organizations and its members (citizens). This becomes a critical tool, because the strengthened political organizations can then influence decision-makers through lobbying. This diagram is useful in its emphasis on the connection between citizens, community groups, and political leverage. Also, it helps visualize the role of technology in enforcing social networks. However, it lacks feedback mechanisms that would show how the resulting public action and laws and policies might influence the citizens and ignores the diversity of citizens.

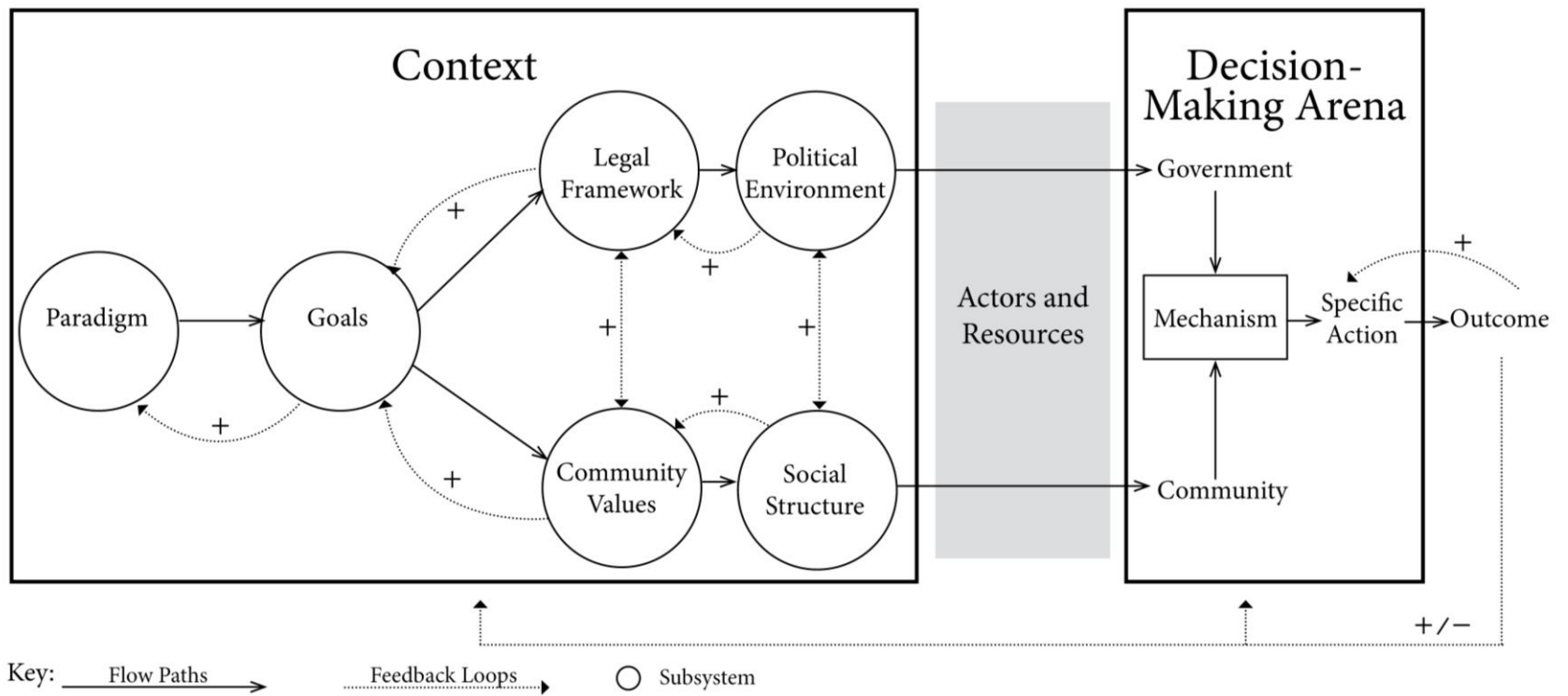
Figure 6 is a model that was modified from a framework created by Dr. Montenegro-Menezes using a synthesis of the literature on inclusive participation overlaid with a Systems lens. The diagram is made up of two interconnected spheres of



the system: the context and the decision-making arena. The context represents the more abstract unseen, and understudied elements of the system, while the decision-making arena represents the more concrete, visible, well-studied sector of participation. Each point in the system is made up of different subsystems, which are also leverage points; the starting subsystem is the paradigm, which is one of the highest leverage points. Paradigms then flow into goals, which produce both political subsystems (legal framework and political environment) and social subsystems (community values and social structure). The actors and the resources act as the medium through which the context is actualized within the decision-making arena. Within the decision-making arena, the community and government come together to create a participatory mechanism (either good or bad), which then has specific actions, which produce an overall outcome. This outcome can then either feedback into the context or the decision-making arena to either reinforce or change the system.

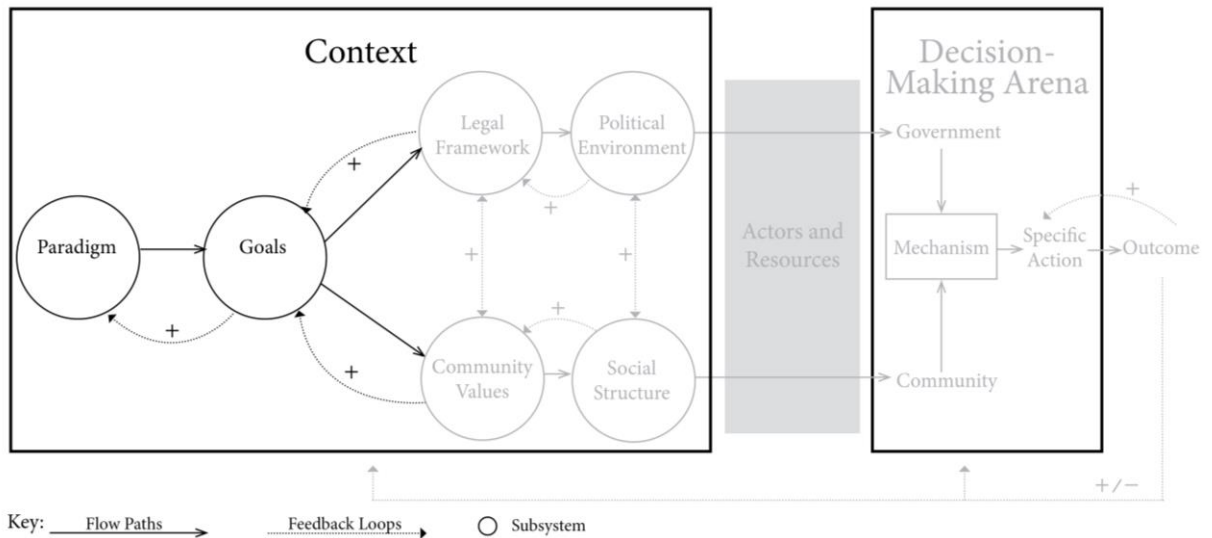
Adopting a Systems Theory lens, the following section distills leverage points based on current literature published in the field of public participation. From the review, four major spheres emerged, which contained various leverage points – (1) The goals, values, and paradigms of the system, (2) the legal framework in which participation takes place, (3) the political environment, and (4) the public's capacity to engage in inclusive participation. In effect, these are each four separate subsystems, which contribute to an understanding of participation as a whole. The follow section represents an analysis of the subsystems and a classification of the leverage points according to impact.

# A Systems Theory Framework for Public Participation



**Figure 6: Diagram depicting the interaction of the subsystems of participation**

## 2.6 Subsystems that favor inclusive participatory practices and their associated leverage points



**Figure 7: Diagram showing path of participation with emphasis on goals and priorities**

### 2.6.1 Paradigms and Goals

The overarching paradigm that pervades the studies of participation is one related to democracy and advancing democratic principles (White, 1996). Although it is beyond the scope of this thesis to analyze the competing theories of democracies, for the sake of this thesis, democracy will be defined according the Oxford English Dictionary as “a system of government in which all the people of a state or polity ... are involved in making decisions about its affairs” (“Democracy,” 1989). Although the literature is not in complete agreement, there is a strong consensus that inclusive participation is a tenet of deliberative democracy. Deliberative democracy is based on rational argumentation and “seeks to transform individual preferences, in contrast to voting, which acknowledges

and aggregates individual preferences” (Beard & Sarmiento, 2014, p. 170). Although he did not originate the idea, Habermas is most closely identified with advancing the benefits of deliberative democracy (Moynihan, 2003; Wampler & Avritzer, 2004), claiming the fundamental source of legitimacy is the collective will of the people (Gutmann & Thompson, 2004).

Ganuza et al. showcase how deliberative democracy was deepened in Porto Alegre’s participatory budgeting program because the distance between the political representatives and the citizens was lessened (2014, p. 2282) because citizens were empowered by voting on how certain public funds should be spent. Ganuza et al. further elaborate on how the role of the individual was promoted to be a legitimate source of public interest (2014, p. 2283). Abers writes of how there is a direct correlation between the deepening of democracy and the growth of social capital (2000, pp. 64-5). In Porto Alegre, this was exemplified by different segments of society who had previously had little interaction coming together to build coalitions to vote in certain infrastructure projects for the city. Inclusive participation is not about abstract concepts surrounding politics, but the real impact of human beings and the ability for them to exert some degree of control and voice over matters that impact their lives. In short, deliberation is decision-making power, which is the basis of empowerment.

Those authors who question what is democracy and what is participation begin to transcend these paradigms. Sandercock’s sentiment of different ways of knowing and the cosmopolis strikes at the heart of transcending paradigms because it actively disregards a correct way of thinking and viewing the world (1998). Similarly, Tauxe argues that in looking at communities that shift from one participatory style to another, one must look

deeper than values, attitudes or customs to “different modes of thought, contradictory discursive strategies, and distinct systems of symbolic reference” (1995, p. 479).

However, few examples of transcending paradigms exist outside academic discourse.

Porto Alegre’s participatory budgeting stands as one notable exception because citizens (especially typically underrepresented segments) are now able to voice their opinions and enact real change by deciding how part of a city budget should be spent. Porto Alegre stands as an example of a paradigm shift for how citizens view their role in society and how governance and administration would function, especially with regard to planning projects. By using the tool of participation to deepen democracy, there is a paradigm shift away from pyramidal power structures to one based around the circle. Instead of hierarchy, humans are viewed as interconnected linkages (Steinem, 2014, p. 31).

Paradigm shifts need not only be brought about by political revolutions and social upheaval. Local governments, especially those in the U.S., can have a great deal of autonomy by implementing progressive and innovative ways of governing and regulating planning. By introducing new ways of governing or facilitating planning projects, both public managers and citizens will begin to see the role of how aspects of government can be run, thus shifting their mindsets. Even small-scale changes can impact people’s outlooks, and thus initiate a paradigm shift.

Outside of paradigm shifts, Matthews (2008) identifies goals as the leverage point with the most impact upon the system. Within the context of inclusive participation, goals remain a very nebulous and flexible concept as the goals of the different actors (politicians, public managers, and the public) can range immensely. The emphasis on the study on methods of good participation and neglect of the goals of the systems, which

create those methods, may be one of the contributing factors hindering the widespread adoption of inclusive participation methods. Determining goals of a system is the only way to understand its entire impact. In his seminal work, Selznick supports the need for goals by his statement that “the tendency to emphasize methods rather than goals is an important source of disorientation in all organizations” (1957, p. 12).

The discussion on goals cannot be decoupled from one of values. Taking a psychological approach, Eccles and Wigfield (2002), demonstrate the interconnection of beliefs, values, and goals with action. Meadows emphasizes that goals are an extremely important mechanism because they establish the direction of any process, such as public participation; and that goals are born out of values (2008, p. 161). Krumholz further supports the importance of values, concluding that an agreement on values corresponds to equity planning (1982, cited in Albrechts, 2003, 263). Albrechts generalizes that inclusive participation requires “difference” and a:

“recognition of diversity, a certain belief in local potential, a need to innovate through tailor made approaches that empower participants, the need to gain a deeper understanding of each others’ perspectives, interests, the need to build social and intellectual capital” (2002, p. 342).

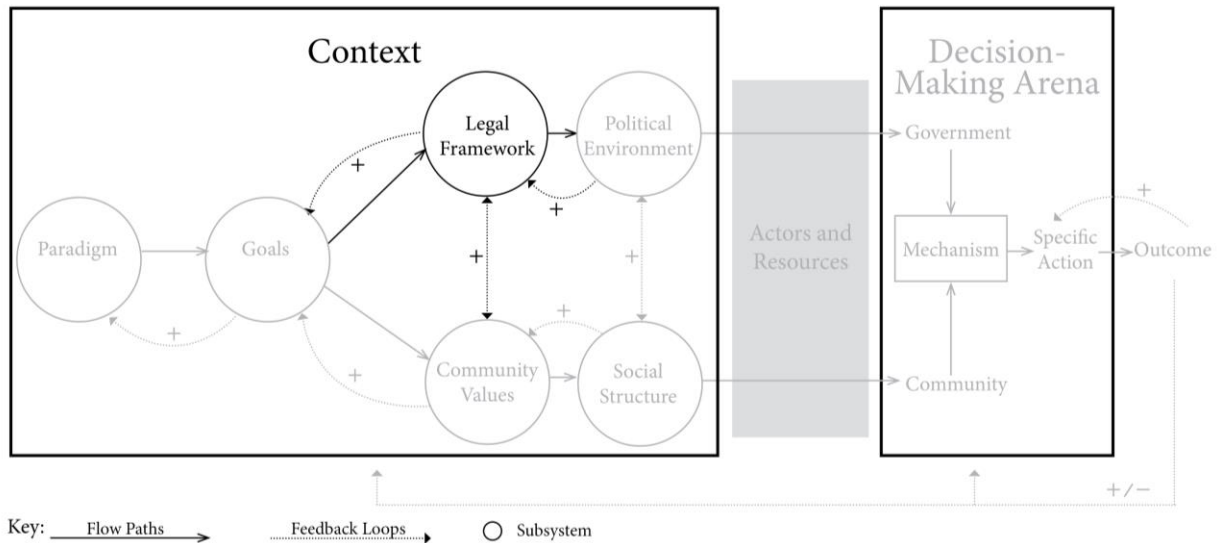
Ideological values can have an immense impact on political goals and objectives. Abers points that one of the reasons the Porto Alegre participatory budgeting system has been successful was because the Worker’s Party, the political party that spearheaded the effort, established the goals of inversion of priorities (the need to benefit the poor) and popular participation (2000, p. 49). Baiocchi and Lerner cite the presence of Socialist and Worker’s Party politicians (2007, p. 10) as one of the major reasons why participatory budgeting was implemented in some South American municipalities. These political parties created a transparent political and administrative environment that valued self-

organization and adaptation of processes and the legal framework (Abers, 2000, p. 103). This system of values not only generated “a city for the workers, it began to speak of a city for all” (Ganuza et al., 2014, p. 2279).

Tauxe (1995) looks at the role of economics in forming values and priorities, by suggesting that capitalism is a major influence in a community’s level of inclusivity in their participatory practices. Using an ethnographic approach in her research, she shows how a rural farming community in North Dakota transitioned from a “local” form of participation to a marginalizing one due to a mining boom and corporate exploitation of resources. More research needs to be done to see if the converse is true and that a return to more equitable or decentralized economic systems results in more inclusive participation. Nevertheless, Tauxe’s account demonstrates a value system where financial gain is prioritized over the voices and culture of people.

Goals, values, and priorities impact every facet of the public participation, including the legal framework, the political environment, and the public’s capacity to promote inclusivity (see the following sections).

## 2.6.2 Legal Framework



**Figure 8: Diagram showing path of participation with emphasis on legal framework**

The discussion of participation in planning is also one of legalities. Usually taking the form of public meetings (Shiple & Utz, 2012, p. 27), participation is required for both the permitting and comprehensive planning processes. However, these laws unto themselves do not necessarily generate inclusive participation. Since laws have the potential to enact either inclusive or exclusive participation, they are an important leverage point. The leverage category that the legal framework falls into are Rules, which is the fifth highest in importance. This section analyzes how the subsystem functions in the absence of rules and in the presence.

### 2.6.2.1 Inclusive participation in the absence of legal requirements

The first notable example of large-scale inclusive public participation in the modern U.S. planning process occurred before it was a legal requirement in 1926 (see Section 2.6.2.2 for a more in-depth explanation). At the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, many dynamic figures were leading the charge for planning of major U.S. cities as part of the



City Beautiful movement. One of the movement's leading figures, Daniel Burnham created the now-famous Chicago Plan of 1909, which called for city beautification, greenification, and the construction of major civic centers. Since previous plans of Burnham's had failed due to citizen apathy (Schlereth, 1981, pp. 72-3), Burnham made public participation a major aspect of this plan. For its time, Goodspeed argues that the Chicago Plan of 1909 is an inclusive (Goodspeed uses the term "pluralistic") model of public participation because the originators of the Plan sought to make planning "open and transparent" by making education such an integral part of the process (2008, p. 12). Burnham commissioned Walter Moody to compose *Chicago's Greatest Issue: An Official Plan*, a 90 page reference guide that publicized and explained the concept of planning and the goals of the Plan. This document was distributed to over 165,000 Chicago homeowners and tenants who paid more than \$25 in monthly rent (Schlereth, 1981, p. 72).

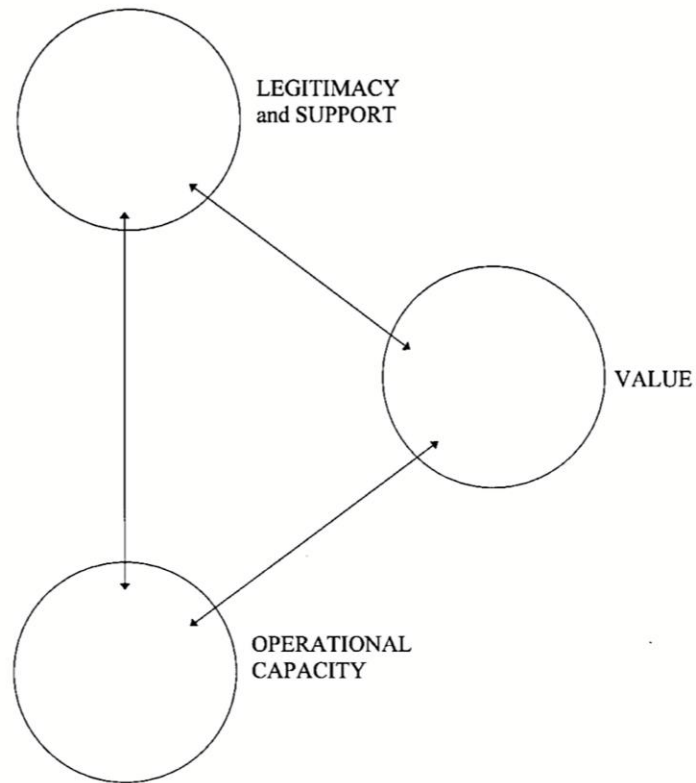
Goodspeed (2008) argues that since planning was in such a nascent stage in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the process needed to be transparent and inclusive in order to gain legitimacy from the public and be enforceable. Since Burnham did not have legal authority in 1909 through zoning laws or official planning commissions, Burnham sought out public support to enact the Plan. The public also held real power as they voted on public bonds that determined infrastructure changes needed to enact the Plan, such as the public bond vote to widen Twelfth Street in 1912.

The success of including the public in the planning process in the case of the Chicago Plan can best be understood when viewed through Moore's Strategic Triangle (See Figure 9). Moore developed The Strategic Triangle as a framework for nonprofit

managers and governmental organizations to develop a strategy that did not rely on the private sector's focus on markets, customer, and competition. Like Systems Theory, Moore analyzes the interconnections and goals of nonprofit management and governmental organization without applying a linear framework. Moore argues that all nonprofits and government organizations have a mission (e.g. curing cancer, building roads) that "defines the value that organization intends to produce for its stakeholders and for society at large" (2000, p. 190) instead of appealing to individual consumers who aim to achieve profit. Moore's use of the term "mission" can be viewed as a proxy for the term "goal" used within Systems Theory. In an attempt to redirect nonprofit management models away from corporate for-profit management models, Moore argues, "the way that a nonprofit or governmental enterprise produces value is to define and achieve valuable missions defined in terms of the achievement of social objectives" (2000, p. 195).

To develop a strategy that achieves the mission of the organization, Moore has drawn a simple diagram in which points (value, legitimacy and support, and operational capacity) interrelate and contribute to each other's success (Figure 9). Value guides the organization, whereas legitimacy and support emphasize where the backing for this value originates, and operational capacity is the knowledge and capability to achieve the value. In summation, "all [the model] says is that in order for a strategy to be a good one, it has to be valuable, authorize-able, sustainable, and doable" (Moore, 2000, p. 198). Essentially, it is a system with positive feedback loops. If more value is created, then more legitimacy and support can be garnered leading to an increase in operational capacity to thus further increase the value.

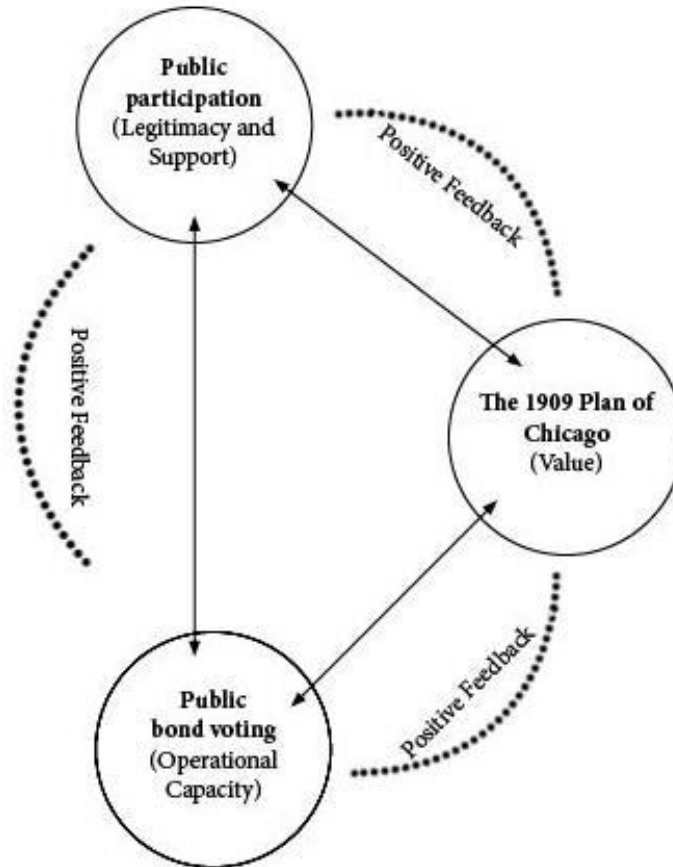
**STRATEGY in the  
PUBLIC SECTOR**



**Figure 9: Moore's Strategic Triangle. Source: Moore, 2000**

Burnham, similarly, was working within a nonprofit model, as his mission was not based around profit, but producing a social good of a better planned Chicago. Figure 10 is an adapted version of Moore's diagram within the context of the 1909 Plan of Chicago. Returning to Burnham's strategy for implementing the Chicago Plan in 1909, his mission/goal was clearly to achieve the Plan he had set forth and transform Chicago into a beautiful city in the absence of legal support and justification. Therefore, he created value by enacting and furthering this plan. He gained legitimacy and support through public participation by educating the public on the value of his plan. This legitimacy and support from the public increased operational capacity for the value of the plan since it was the public who voted on the bonds that would help enact Burnham's initiatives.

Mission/Goal: Enacting the Initiatives of the  
1909 Plan of Chicago



**Figure 10: A Systems Theory application of Moore's Strategic Triangle to the 1909 Plan of Chicago. Source: Adapted from Moore, 2000**

Therefore, in certain circumstances, the lack of legal authority can lead to inclusivity only when the public has the potential and power to be a legitimate form of support. Obviously, the lack of law can also lead to terrible participation practices, since it is not required. Yet in the instance of 1909 Chicago, the public held another form of power, which planners needed to leverage. Also, this system seems to be more applicable to nascent fields.

### **2.6.2.2 Participation codified into law**

Planning formally gained legal authority from the U.S. government when the landmark 1926 Supreme Court case, *Village of Euclid, Ohio v. Ambler Realty Co.*, 272 U.S. 365 upheld Euclid's zoning ordinance as a justifiable extension of the town's police power. Following the momentum of the Supreme Court decision, the Department of Commerce revised and published A Standard State Zoning Enabling Act (SZEa) in 1926 and published A Standard City Planning Enabling Act (SCPEA) in 1928. Both these acts were models for states and local communities to adopt and implement to regulate their land uses.

Possibly due to the newness of the Supreme Court decision, the SZEa specifies that communities who use this model ordinance should "modify this standard act as little as possible" (1926, p. 1). While communities have subsequently expanded and added to their versions over the past 90 years, it is noteworthy that the requirements for public participation have not altered much. Within the ordinance, the public's input is required for:

"regulation, restriction, or boundary [which] shall become effective until after a public hearing in relation thereto, at which parties in interest and citizens shall have an opportunity to be heard. At least 15 days' notice of the time and place of such hearing shall be published in an official paper, or a paper of general circulation, in such municipality" (1926, p. 7)

The SZEa's (along with the SCPEA, which had similar language in regards to public participation) emphasis on community involvement was born out of the concept of procedural due process in the Constitution and Progressive Era beliefs about the benefits of public involvement. The requirement for a public hearing and a notice of such hearing stems from the concept of procedural due process expressed in the Fifth and Fourteenth

Amendments in the Constitution, which is meant to ensure that all government agencies at all levels of government act fairly in decision-making processes that affect the rights of individuals (White & Edmondson, 2001, p. 5).

Under the language of the SZEA, the success of whether a planning agency is fulfilling the public participation requirement is measured on an input (rather than output) system. The inputs are the numbers, whereas an output system would measure “what activities... our inputs produce (Kettl, 1997, p. 449). As Kettl explains, many reformers in governance are shifting to an output-based as it is more expansive view of the effects of the impacts processes have (i.e. systems theory thinking). But as Donahue points out, “measurement of output is often difficult” (1991, p. 41). Therefore, establishing a clear input-based system has greater legal standing and specificity.

While the law included just one meeting as the measure of participatory success, it is understandable during the time when this law was written. Having achieved a relatively new status in legal statutes, the Department of Commerce only wanted to decree a minimum number of meetings to fulfill procedural due process, while also not overburdening planning departments or disrupt local community customs. Yet, noting that one meeting is a minimum, a footnote to the ordinance emphasizes that it “is wise to require by statute that there must be a public hearing before a zoning ordinance becomes effective. There should be, as a matter of policy, many such hearings” (SZEA, 1926, p. 7). Clearly, a pluralistic mode of public participation was seen as beneficial.

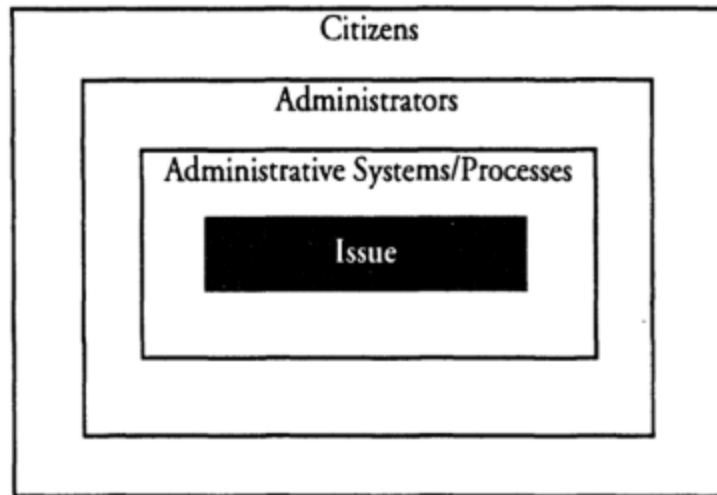
This idea of inclusivity is seen in greater depth within a footnote in the SCPEA, in the section requiring a public hearing in order to create a comprehensive plan. The rationale behind the public hearing is stated as:

“The public hearing previous to the adoption of the plan or substantial part thereof has at least two values of importance. One of these is that those who are or may be dissatisfied with the plan for economic, sentimental, or other reasons, will have the opportunity to present their objections and thus get the satisfaction of having their objections produce amendments which they desire, or at least the feeling that their objections have been given courteous and thorough consideration. The other great value of the public hearing is as an educating force; that is, it draws the public’s attention to the plan, cause some members of the public to examine it, to discuss it, to hear about it, and gets publicity upon the plan and planning. Thus the plan begins its life with some public interest in it and recognition of its importance” (1928, p. 18).

The rhetoric in this footnote is reminiscent of Burnham’s emphasis on public education as part of the Chicago plan and a sign of inclusivity. However, it aspires to develop public interest, rather than relying on it such as the previous case. Furthermore, many current academics in the public participation field would criticize the mentality of this footnote as establishing what King et al. terms, “conventional participation” where the citizen is placed further away from the issue, while the administrative structure has more power (see Figure 11). Thus, in its nascent stage, public participation was not codified as an inclusive model, but as a standard model that should promote inclusivity outside the guidelines established in zoning ordinances.

## Context of Conventional Participation

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**Figure 11: A pictorial representation of conventional participation. Source: King et al., 1998**

What is equally important as the calcification of public participation into law was the establishment of funding for public planning. As Section 5 of the SCPEA law states, funds shall be given to a planning commission to conduct their work that would be generated from either city revenues or a special tax levy (1928, pp. 12-13). Through these laws, planning has been legitimized by legal authority, but also monetary assets in which to enact that authority. No longer did planners need to enact their plans solely through public support, but through what they law decreed. As Goodspeed notes, “once the legal authority to plan through zoning was secured through law, public participation shifted from something absolutely required for planning to something to allow and encourage through meetings” (2008, p. 15) Therefore, laws are one major leverage point for how the system of public participation responds. Adapting Figure 9 and Figure 10, public participation no longer became a legitimizing factor, but a supplementary one. The system and feedback loop process changes once legal requirements for public



participation were introduced. Instead of legitimacy and support coming from the public, it came from the government itself.

### **2.6.2.3 The Role of Language in Law**

This discussion is not to promote that laws granting planners legal authority should be repealed or that they are not useful or detrimental. On the contrary, these laws required processed for public participation, which was a major step for the public. Its failure in fostering inclusivity was in the degree of specificity of the language.

The vagueness and lack of specificity of legal requirements can be traced to public participation's birth out of procedural due process. Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall criticizes this constitutional principle, summarizing "[w]e have often noted that procedural due process means many different things in the numerous contexts in which it applies" (Board of Regents v. Roth, 1972). Therefore, how could the Department of Commerce write specific regulations that would work to include all facets of the public?

Baker et al. (2007) examine how specificity can be inscribed into law and regulatory processes without being overly rigid in their analysis of the United Kingdom's local development frameworks in comprehensive planning. In response to the convoluted, unpredictable, and not customer friendly land use policies, the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (PCPA) of 2004 was passed. Enacted in 2004 and updated in 2008, the accompanying document Planning Policy Statement 12 (PPS12) goes further than the law's requirement for stakeholder involvement. Compared to the procedural due process requirements in U.S. laws, the PPS12 sets out 5 principles, which should guide all community involvement in planning. These are (1) the level of participation should be

appropriate to the stage in planning, (2) the community should be involved from the outset, (3) the community's involvement should be continuous, (4) it should be a transparent and accessible process, and (5) community involvement should be planned ahead as it is an integral part of the process (PPS12, p. 11).

In order to ensure that these principles are adhered to and executed, local councils (the British equivalent of U.S. planning agencies) are required to produce a Statement of Community Involvement (Baker et al., 2007, p. 80). Although the exact methods of participation can be flexible and change depending on how the planning process progresses, planners have to adhere to many requirements in developing a SCI. The process stresses that the most important tasks are to identify the different stakeholder groups that need to be involved at the different stages of the process, explain why the listed methods for participation were chosen and are going to be used at the identified stages, and include information on how the SCI will be evaluated. The added level of inclusivity within the UK system is that the community and stakeholders are expected to be involved in the drafting of the SCI (Baker et al., 2007), so they are involved from the outset, as King et al. (1998) encourages as part of inclusive participation. Compared to the U.S. enabling laws, this example of inclusive participation in the United Kingdom shows that the principles of public participation are not simply an aspirational footnote, but an integral piece of legislation.

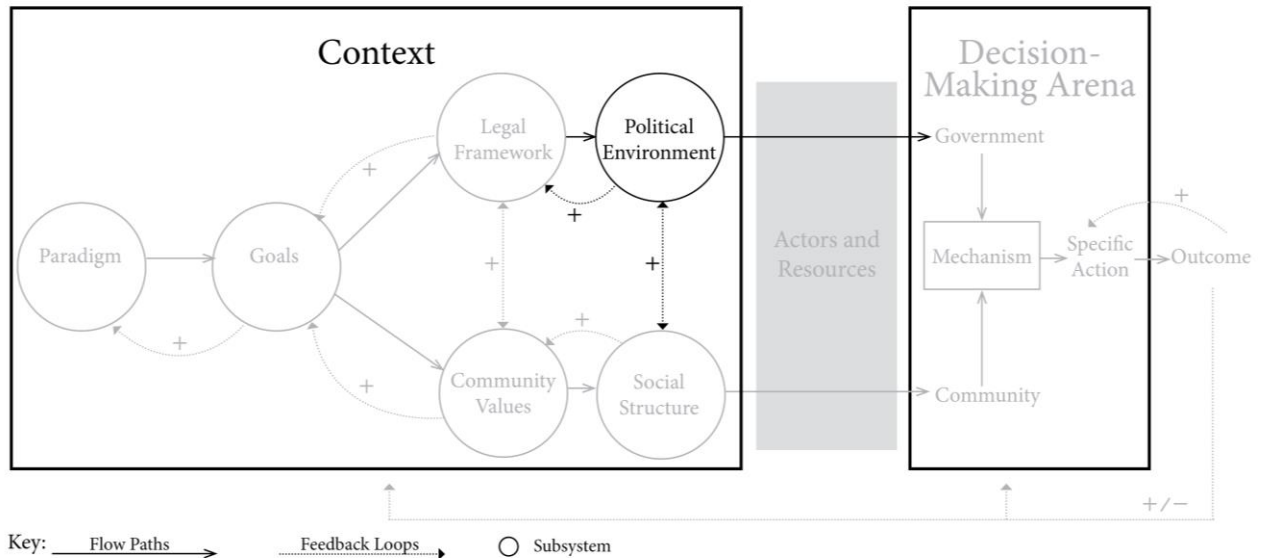
Much as laws are a leverage point for redefining a system, so is the language within those laws and what they specify, and what they leave to the communities to decide. As the U.K. example demonstrates, adding layers of regulations does not make the planning process more rigid. Embracing flexibility, while still requiring certain

principles is more in keeping with an output-based system rather than one solely relying on inputs that may (and usually do not produce) the intended effects. Just like how laws guarantee legal legitimacy, specific language provides intended results.

It is apparent that when analyzing why communities would adopt more inclusive, output-based legal language for participation, the discussion goes deeper than legal goals. Mezey argues that “legal and cultural meanings inform each other such that they are no longer intelligible as strictly legal or cultural” (2001, p. 38). To that end, this reflection on the role of law and legal language in promoting (or subsuming inclusive participation) extends to a discussion on cultural practices as well. Furthermore, the reason why law is just one of the many leverage points discussed is because it is constantly “becoming” (it is not a fixed entity) and because “it is not an arbiter of, but a player in, power and conflict” (Pavlich, 2011, p. 147).

From the examples in this section, it is clear that the absence, presence, and degree of specificity of a law can dramatically change a system. Since rules define the scope, boundaries, and degrees of freedom of system, they have real power (Meadows, 2008, p. 158).

### 2.6.3 The Political Environment



**Figure 12: Diagram showing path of participation with emphasis on political environment**

Although the previous section demonstrates how the law functions as leverage point in creating participatory environments by itself, it is also a leverage point in that it contributes to the atmosphere of the political environment, as it steers the goals and purpose of any political administration. For example, the 1988 Brazilian Constitution emphasized participation as an integral aspect of good governance. More concretely than goals, the greater role the Constitution played in shaping the local political environment was that is decentralized political authority, and delegated appropriate resources to restructure policymaking processes (Wampler & Avritzer, 2004, p. 291). In order for a local government to enact policies to foster inclusive participation, the government must receive the power from the federal and/or provincial (or state) level. Although it may sound counter-intuitive, the local government must gain power, which is then dispersed among citizen participants.

### **2.6.3.1 Political Agendas**

While the government delegating greater power to local governments is necessary to promote public participation, it does not ensure. What is also required is the political regime that controls the local government. For instance, Bräutigam (2004) argues that participatory budgeting is a method of inclusive participation that makes government more “pro-poor,” which, she argues happen when pro-poor political parties gain power (p. 653). The goals of a political party, thus play an important role, as it brings up the same principle of an organization trying to fulfill their mission. As the Worker’s Party, which advanced participatory budgeting in many Brazilian municipalities, most famously Porto Alegre, was formed by union leaders and dissatisfied laborers, the party’s agenda was to empower the poor through participation.

Political agendas (and the parties that promote such agendas) not only do so to achieve their values and mission, but also for strategy as well. Abers explores how not only did participatory governance align with the mission of the Worker’s Party in Porto Alegre, but it helped the party build political support, which helped the party implement broader political goals and stay in office over the long term (2000, p. 108). Not only does participatory policies require political capital, but it can also create and develop more of it, suggesting a positive feedback loop. Albrechts (2002) claims that gaining the commitment of key political actors is essentially into expanding this political capital.

Since political parties and made up of multitudes of actors and factions, it is important that the party be united in achieving the goal of greater inclusion. Abers demonstrates how the Worker’s Party was a party of “lots of different party nuclei” (2000, p. 48), but came together in favor of advancing greater participation. Goldfrank

(2007) also points out an important complement to a strong, unified party, which are lower levels of institutionalization of local opposition parties. The greater any opposition to the participatory agenda is weakened and scattered, then the in-power political party can advance (and even institutionalize) their goals. In Porto Alegre, no other political parties (other than the Worker's Party) was able to garner the backing of major neighborhood associations, and therefore, those other parties lost a great deal of power (Abers, 2000).

An institution "refers to regularized patterns and processes that simplify and order cognition and behavior at the individual, group, organizational and societal levels of analysis" (Fountain, 2009, p. 100). Albrechts points out there "are the three major components of 'institutional capital.' Intellectual capital is defined by shared stocks of knowledge, information and by opportunities for learning. Political capital is defined by the gain in procedural and substantive abilities in reaching agreements and in initiating shared strategies and action orientation or the capacity to act collectively... [and] Social capital refers to features of social organizations, such as networks, norms and trust" (Albrechts, 2002, p. 339).

The process of institutionalization indicates a temporal aspect critical to the success of inclusive participation and is often overlooked. Hernández-Medina does not think of implementation as a gradual process, but one that takes place "at a moment where the political pendulum was favorable to the idea of including the interests of the poor and other marginalized groups [in Porto Alegre]" (2010, p. 528). Keeping that in mind, Wampler and Avritzer (2004) stress the need for a political party to produce short-term successes to garner further support and maintain legitimacy. Institutionalization

takes time because it requires repetition of these inclusive methods to not only demonstrate continued success but also to allow the public to become more accustomed to them so it starts becoming part of the community's identity and culture.

Greater evidence of the role of a political organization being a major leverage point for participatory reform is the fate of these inclusive measures once the party has lost power. Melgar (2014) describes the weakening of local government administrations once the Workers' Party lost power in 2004. While participatory budgeting is still done and has become a major part of Porto Alegre's identity, there is less support on the implementation of the projects since the departure of the Worker's Party. Until participatory prospects are institutionalized by clear laws and culture of participation (Wampler, 2004, p. 78), the continued support and dominance of a political party or coalition that favors and values inclusive participation is key to its endurance.

### **2.6.3.2 Public Managers and Elected Officials**

Public managers play a very prominent role in advancing the timing and implementation of an inclusive participation method. Public managers within the context of this thesis are defined as those who are agents of the government and managers of core government tasks (e.g. planners, mayors, and educators). While a strong political party with a clear mission is important, political leaders play a larger role as they have the power of Self-Organization (the fourth highest leverage point), which is the power to change, add, or evolve system structures. The reason being is that "public managers manage people and/or programs that serve the public... [and] are in a position either to promote or inhibit inclusion" (Feldman & Khademian, 2007, p. 305). While political parties have influence, public managers have clear, identifiable power and leverage.

Albrechts (2003) echoes this sentiment, arguing that planners, specifically, can act as “institution builders” and “initiators of change.” Several studies have been published crediting strong mayors with introducing and sustaining inclusivity (Ganuza & Baiocchi, 2010; Hernández-Medina, 2010; Koonings, 2004; Wampler, 2004).

One source of public management power is access to funding. Regardless of whether it is participatory budgeting (in which votes decide how to allocate certain funds) or some other inclusive participatory technique (outreach methods, etc.), money is required for implementation. Lerner and Secondo point out that participatory budgeting only began in the U.S. because individual elected officials allocated their control over sub-municipal budgets (2012, pp. 2-3). In New York City, four City Council members pledged a portion of their capital discretionary funds to allocated based on a participatory vote. Having executive authority over money allows for quicker implementation. Not having money means that public managers are “unable to allow citizens to make meaningful decisions” (Wampler, 2008, p. 69).

With such power, public managers have many different roles and responsibilities that do not always lead to inclusion. Feldman and Khademian (2007) boil down these roles into two major categories: informational work and relational work. The former has to do with amassing, interpreting, and reformulating information across political boundaries (i.e. transparency and education); the latter concerns creating connections between people (i.e. accountability and motivation). It is due to such broad roles that Feldman and Khademian argue that an inclusive manager requires imparting inclusive values habitually in to ensure that informational and relational work is being done inclusively (2007, p. 310).



Funk describes three categories of reasons as to why political leaders go beyond their legal requirements to foster more inclusive participation: (1) personal incentives, (2) incentives from the public, or (3) political incentives (2005, p. 568). In effect, Funk is discussing the concept of strategy as these incentives help the public manager achieve a certain goal. Evidence of this can be seen in Brazil as mayors sought to transform governing processes with participatory budgeting to promote their own political careers and to benefit and create new supporters (Wampler, 2004, pp. 82-3). In terms of political incentives, Funk describes how in Brazil, mayors who did not comply with federal requirements for participation risked audits and impeachment (Funk, 2015, p. 567). As the current state of most inclusive participation has not been institutionalized, and codified into law (Wampler, 2004), implementing inclusive participatory programs largely rests on the authority of the municipal government, namely the executive branch.

Funk's idea of personal incentives cannot be analyzed irrespective of personality. Several personality traits have emerged in the literature as leading to inclusive management practices. Public managers need to be respected by their publics and colleagues (even if they disagree) (Feldman & Khademian, 2007). Empathy is also a major factor, because it lets people legitimize perspectives different from their own (Rosenberg, 2007). What creates empathy is connection with the public, the community, but also the political realities (Feldman & Khademian, 2007). While those personality traits promote a public manager's ability to value inclusion, some degree of charisma is the characteristic that assists a leader in enacting change and policy (Horn, 2011). Dedication can also be seen by "intense" mayoral involvement in the municipality's civil society (Wampler, 2004, p. 85). Understanding these contradicting personality traits (on

the one hand a dynamic, all-powerful leader; the other, an altruistic figure with empathy) helps create a context for individuals who (on the surface) work against their own interest by dispersing their power and authority to the public.

### **2.6.3.3 Administrative Organization**

The implementation of a participatory reform implicitly requires administrative re-structuring (Ganuza & Baiocchi, 2012, p. 4). A clear, organized system in which to administer the program is a necessary step in ensuring implementation. Many cases of inclusive participation have seen offices to oversee the initiative that were created by elected officials, but managed by different departments. In Porto Alegre, Mayor Dutra set up a specific bureaucratic system with three main elements: the Gabinete de Planejamento (Planning Office, GAPLAN), the Coordenação das Relações com a Comunidade (Community Relations Co-ordination, CRC), and the Regional Participatory Budget Co-ordinators (CROPs), all of which are linked to the mayor's office (Koonings, 2004). In São Paulo, the mayor appointed a participatory budgeting coordinator (who was strongly tied to the party promoting participatory budgeting) to oversee the process and implementation (Hernández-Medina, 2010, p. 518).

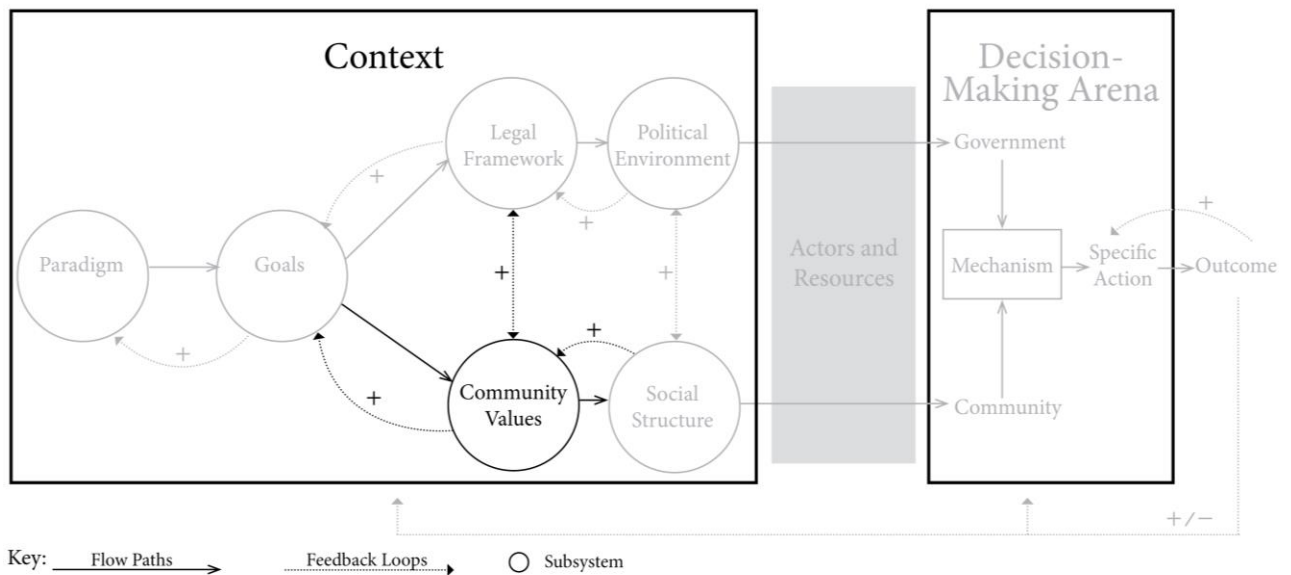
In both scenarios, the formalized bureaucracy helped institutionalized inclusive participation. Although it can have a negative connotation in the U.S., Olsen (2006) argues that bureaucracy can be a useful tool in promoting and advancing forms of democracy, especially when viewed as an institution, not just an instrument. The bureaucracy also helps ensure horizontal accountability (when power is distributed among different actors or departments) (Wampler, 2004). Through organizational competence and political backing, the formalized bureaucracy in Porto Alegre became

central to achieve any goal or accomplishment (Ganuza et al., 2014), thus creating a positive feedback loop to ensure its own power. In fact, when these organizational departments are not central to the participation initiative, inclusion is never achieved and citizens did not have any power (Ganuza & Baiocchi, 2012, p. 1).

Although it depends on the structure of the system, cross-agency collaboration is almost certainly a necessity to ensure the implementation of inclusive participation outcomes. Since the outcome of an inclusive participation campaign can range from capital improvement projects, to school administration needs to resources for the fire department, the coordination of many departments is likely. Fountain argues that cross-agency collaboration is “essential to streamlining and simplification” (2013, p. 39). Since there are varieties of cross-agency collaboration that range from informal to very structured, collaboration across departmental or political boundaries requires articulated goals, agreement on roles and responsibilities and mechanism to monitor and evaluate results (2013, p. 41).

Wampler analyzes the role of cross-agency collaboration in Porto Alegre and chalks it up to maintaining horizontal accountability throughout the municipality. He supports how Porto Alegre thwarted many of the barriers to cross-agency implementation, such as having clear legislation that did not silo different agencies and by having shared funding, as well as unified goals (those produced by participatory budgeting). Although he argues that viewing the implementation of inclusive participation as simply coordinating different parts of government is extremely limiting and requires deeper analysis into the relationship between political and civil society.

## 2.6.4 Community Values



**Figure 13: Diagram showing path of participation with emphasis on community values**

At its basic level, participation is the interaction of the government and the community in a decision-making process. As a corollary to the more overt, concrete legal framework, “implicit in decision making is the need to establish community values and priorities” (Shaffer et al., 2006, p. 68). In understanding what are the values of the community, I will first analyze the three leverage points within this subsystem: the concept of community, culture, and social capital.

### 2.6.4.1 Community Identity

Community is a concept that is both widely used, but tentatively defined, to the point that Fendler argues the meaning is muddy and vague (2006, p. 303). Across many fields, a commonly agreed upon definition is one which emphasizes “shared values, unified purpose, and/or common beliefs” (Fendler, 2006, p. 303). Within the context of

planning, community also has a spatial component, which can vary in scale. Although a community exists within a fixed space, it should not imply that the values and thinking within the community are reduced to a commonality and marginalized certain segments (2006, p. 304). On the contrary, for participation and community to be inclusive, the interests and values of the socially excluded must be present (McAndrews & Marcus, 2015, p. 541).

#### **2.6.4.2 Culture**

Culture is another vague, multi-faceted concept, which is related to values and customs. Culture's main role in community is that they establish the informal rules of the community (Shaffer et al., 2006, p. 67) and influence formal rules and established by laws (Mezey, 2001). The cultural framework guides aspects of the decision-making process because it helps communities rank their values and priorities in terms of importance and what needs to be addressed (Shaffer et al., 2006).

Cultural differentiations are critical in terms of inclusivity because they help clarify the context. For example, Hernández-Medina explores how conflict can contribute to legitimacy of inclusive participatory programs because it allows for a discourse of different ideas. However, her caveat is that this mode for inclusivity may only be applicable in Brazilian communities since "overt political conflict 'in the street'" is more common in Latin American than in Western Europe or the U.S. (2010, p. 529). Wampler and Avritzer also emphasize how inclusive participation was able to happen in Porto Alegre because the civil society introduced a culture of rights (2004, p. 300).

### **2.6.4.3 Social Capital**

As community and culture can vary from entrenched to malleable concepts, there are certain factors that influence them. Social capital is typically identified as the major influence of community building and bonding, going so far as to be referred to as “the glue that holds communities together” (Shaffer et al., 2006, p. 69). Social capital refers to “the collective value of all ‘social networks’ [who people know] and the inclinations that arise from these networks to do things for each other [‘norms of reciprocity’]” (Putnam, 2016). Increases in social capital lead to greater levels of trust, facilitation of coordination and communication, and templates for future collaboration (i.e. a positive feedback loop where collaboration leads to increased social capital that leads to increased collaboration) (Putnam, 2001; Baker et al., 2007; Su, 2012).

Although there are many advantages of having high levels of social capital, it can also have drawbacks. Portes (1998) has done extensive work in showing the importance of balancing social capital. He argues that, while social capital can have many benefits in the form of trust amongst the established networks, excessive amounts of social capital can lead to four negative consequences. These are (1) exclusion of outsiders, (2) excessive claims on group members, (3) restrictions on individual freedom, and (4) downward leveling norms. Therefore, communities should have some degree of social capital to feel a sense of interconnectedness, but not too much where differences are not accepted due to entrenched normalities.

Moreover, Portney and Berry have conducted work in the connection between social capital and environmental sustainability, finding that cities with stronger sustainability plans tend to be more participatory (2010). They also identify the trend that

participation may be easier to do in cities, with greater concentrations of social capital. There is some evidence to support that there are physical elements, which may facilitate social capital production. Nieminen et al. (2008) analyzed cross-sectional data for adults in Finland to measure the socio-demographic variations of social capital. Among their findings are that “residents of urban and rural regions did not systematically differ from each other in their level of social capital although residents of urban regions participated less and showed less trust than people living in semi-urban or rural regions” (2008, p. 406). They also found that higher levels of education lead to greater social participation and networks. Therefore, the local context is essential in understanding existing levels of social capital in a community and how to increase the levels of it.

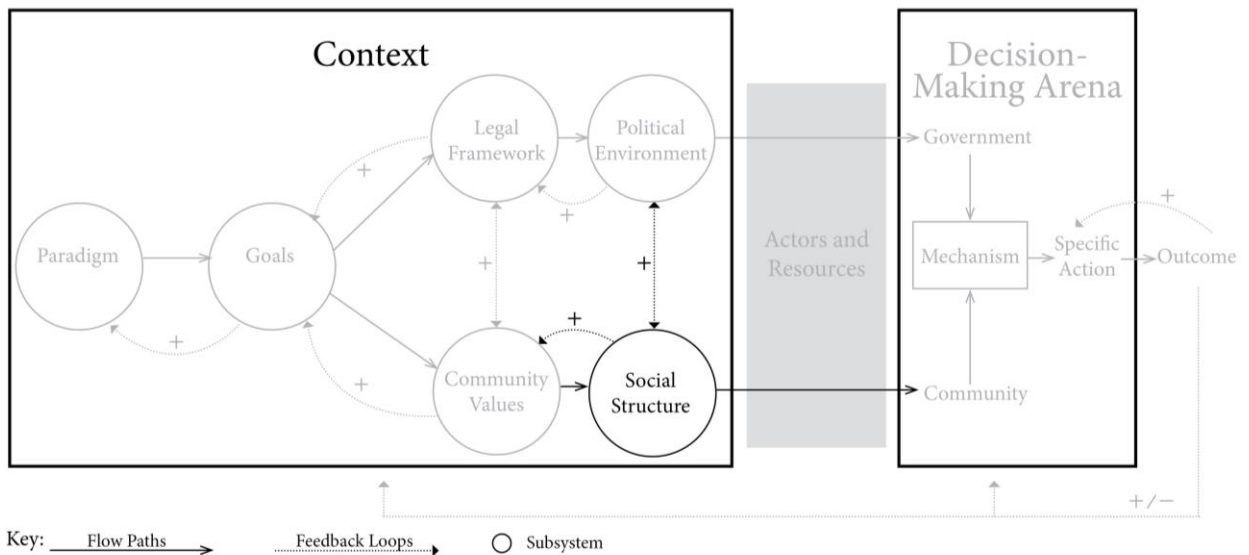
At odds with Nieminen et al.’s conclusion, Jacobs (1993) argues that cities may have greater levels of social capital if they tend to be more walkable and have more public spaces because active streetlife can draw in the public and encourage participation. Oldenburg (1999) also writes of the presence of third places (places other than home and work) as a contributor to greater social capital. Oldenburg’s conclusion supports Jacobs’s because third places tend to be more prevalent in cities and denser urban fabrics.

Koonings (2004) has pointed out an interesting connection between participation, the urban form, and social capital in his analysis of Porto Alegre’s participatory budgeting program. He indirectly describes a feedback loop wherein most of the results of the participatory budget process generated infrastructure improvements, green area conservation, and cultural facilities. Following a Jacobs or Oldenburg conception on walkable urban forms promoting social capital, Koonings concludes that the construction of these public spaces encouraged others to participate, because citizens had greater

access to attend participatory initiatives, they saw an actual result from participation, and because more public spaces enhanced the social capital of the city, especially in the periphery (2004, p. 89). Although there is not a consensus in the field on whether urban, semi-urban, or rural communities are better at generating social capital, it is evident that the physical form of a community plays some role in the type, if not quantity, of social capital.



## 2.6.5 Social Structure



**Figure 14: Diagram showing path of participation with emphasis on social structure**

### 2.6.5.1 Community groups and citizen power

From the values of community, rules of culture, and the power of social capital, social structures are formed. Typically, inclusive participatory systems are only successful when the social movement organization is based on grassroots efforts (Su, 2012, p. 3). Furthermore, citizens must become “real, meaningful players in the policymaking process” (Wampler, 2004, p. 77). One way in which citizens can become meaningful players harkens back to King et al.’s vision of citizens at the center of decision-making processes (see Figure 11). Participatory budgeting can empower citizens and transform the government because the citizens had the power to lead the process and write the rules from the beginning (Lerner & Secondo, 2012).

There is an abundance of evidence correlating the degree to which civil society groups (e.g., neighborhood associations, special interest clubs, ethnic organizations) are organized and inclusive participation. In their analysis of three Brazilian cities adopting

participatory budgeting, Wampler and Avritzer show that initial participation levels during the program were determined by each city's tradition of associations (2004, p. 304). Within inclusive participatory structures, "civil society activists ... often act as intermediaries between political and civil societies" (Wampler, 2004, p. 80). In short, the relationship between the political sphere and the community needs to be strong in order for inclusive participatory outcomes to occur.

Ganuza et al. (2014) extend the role of community associations even further to suggest they function as the "self-organizing" leverage point in the system, which controls the public authorities (p. 2289). This represents one of the few negative feedback control mechanisms in the system, in which as neighborhood associations rise in power, government power is either diminished or stabilized.

Community groups also have a self-reinforcing mechanism within inclusive participatory structures, with an increase in the number of community groups, which correlates to the length of time of the inclusive participation's existence. In Brazil, the number of neighborhood surged in Brazilian cities after they adopted participatory budgets, thus increasing their inclusivity (Koonings, 2004). Even in other countries, this trend occurs. After New York City instituted a smaller-scale participatory budgeting project, "82% [of the participants], reported that they were more likely to join a community organization after working with others on neighborhood problems in PB" (Su, 2012, p. 10).

#### **2.6.5.2 Skills, Methods, and Capacity**

Community practitioners of inclusive participation must also utilize the available skills and capacity to help engage with the government and other members of the

community through the participatory mechanism. Since inclusive participatory requires both wide and deep modes of participation, many different kinds of resources will be needed in order to actualize and produce an authentic process.

Intellectual capital is one of the major resources communities must capitalize on. In Porto Alegre, the Workers' Party utilized the work "of liberal professionals, technical experts, and academics within the administration" (Abers, 2000, p. 100) in order to mediate and facilitate the participatory budgeting process. This is another example showcasing the importance of the connection between the government and civil society. For New York City's participatory budgeting project, a nonprofit called the Participatory Budgeting Project helped facilitate the initiative using the knowledge of previous experiments in other countries, such as Brazil (Lerner & Secondo, 2012).

Innovative outreach tools are also important, especially the Internet in contemporary projects. Porto Alegre decided to allow the participatory budgeting system process to have a component on the Internet to appeal to middle class interests (Koonings, 2004, p. 93). The use of the Internet is by no means supposed to be the only outreach technique, as overly relying on it could result in marginalizing the poor and elderly. However, it does represent one tool that can be used to gain access to certain communities. In New York, the decision was made to let people submit ideas online, but only allow voting by paper to be equitable (Su, 2012, p. 6). Fountain implies that the Internet and resources are a fairly low leverage point as "technology cannot substitute for trust—or for strong city leadership and management—but it can help to build and sustain it by enabling transparency, communication, and coordination" (2015, p. 27).

## 2.7 Concluding Remarks

To put this discussion into perspective, community engagement methods have made monumental strides in inclusivity since the beginning of the twentieth century. Famed planners, like Robert Moses, did not collaborate with communities, but, instead, planned in spite of them (Shiple & Utz, 2012, p. 22). Now, every American municipality is required to have some form of public involvement in planning processes. However, the focus of public participation research is in the fields of defining it and assessing what are the most effective mechanisms. More practical aspects need to be introduced in this discussion to enable communities to adopt these methods and bring greater empowerment to communities. It is imperative to analyze the conditions that are favorable to increasing inclusivity in public participation methods so communities can understand the tools necessary for them to make that shift.

From the research completed to date, it is clear that the system of participation is immensely complex. Distilling it down into different elements through diagrams is a way in which to begin to understand the elaborate interconnections. This literature review demonstrates that there are many places decision-makers and community members can impose change to create more inclusive outcomes. Only by doing more research in this field, can we hope for a more equitable, fairer world.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **METHODOLOGY**

The field of public participation tends to be analyzed from political, sociological, anthropological, and psychology perspectives to evaluate its effectiveness and inclusiveness. Since most of these publications focus on the effectiveness and level of inclusion of participatory mechanisms, I adapted a framework created and provided by Dr. Montenegro-Menezes to examine the less visible factors that create these inclusive participatory mechanisms. This framework was distilled from a meta-analysis of the literature published on public participation using a Systems Theory lens created by Donella Meadows (2008).

Using the Systems Theory framework, I identified subsystems that function to create a system of participation (see Chapter 2). Within those subsystems, several key leverage points emerged, that if changed, would greatly alter the system. To test whether this approach applies to existing examples, I applied the framework to two case studies: Amherst, Massachusetts and Vallejo, California.

The case studies were chosen because they represent two different models of inclusive participation in practice. Amherst, Massachusetts is the location of the Amherst Together Initiative, which is a “collective impact” program that is reaching out to the different facets of the Amherst community in order to assess the town’s identity and future working together. This initiative represents the only one of its kind that uses collective impact to assess such broad topics such as community identity. Vallejo, California is the site of the first citywide participatory budgeting program in the United States. While, there are other notable examples of participatory budgeting in the United

States, they tend to be localized to one neighborhood, ward or precinct. Since there could be different factors that might cause inclusive participation mechanism in only certain areas of a municipality, I chose case studies that were municipality-wide in order to draw a more valid comparison. Both of the case studies used in this study are defined by the researcher as pre-institutionalized, as neither of the mechanisms have been codified into law or become a permanent fixture of the government or community. Although these programs are not part of a comprehensive planning process, they still both fall under the realm of planning by having to do with community needs and infrastructure.

Beyond doing documentary research on the municipalities via newspaper articles and initiative websites, I tested these case studies against the Systems Theory framework by conducting semi-structured interviews with public managers, planners, and civic organizers who oversee and facilitate the programs. These interview subjects were chosen both for their knowledge and role in implementing an inclusive participation mechanism within their community, but also to assess political structures and community environments that may have helped foster this initiative. Although both the Amherst Together Initiative and Vallejo Participatory Budget are not part of the planning department, planners in each community were still interviewed to gain a sense of the political structure and to assess planner's thoughts on the role of the public within planning initiatives.

Potential interview subjects were contacted via email in mid-March 2016 to explain the purpose of my research and to request either in-person (for Amherst subjects) or phone interviews (all subjects were given this option). I must acknowledge that although the medium of the interview (phone versus in-person) may influence the

dynamic and responses, there were physical and logistical limitations which prevented all interviews from being conducted in person. For example, I did not have the funding nor time to travel to Vallejo to conduct in-person interviews and some of the Amherst subjects preferred to speak on the phone as it was better for their work schedules. All interviews were recorded with the permission of the subjects and transcribed by me.

Emails were sent to Dave Ziomek, Assistant Town Manager, Maria Geryk, The Superintendent of the Amherst Regional School District, Christine Brestrup, Interim Planning Director, and Carol Ross, Media and Climate Communications Specialist who oversees the Amherst Together Initiative. Mr. Ziomek did not respond to the email requests, but interviews were conducted with the other subjects between March 17 and March 28, 2016. Superintendent Geryk and Carol Ross were interviewed in person, while Christine Brestrup was interviewed over the phone. Unfortunately during the course of this research, the Amherst Town Manager who was critical in initiating Amherst Together, John Musante, passed away before I could interview him. As a result, his role and thoughts on participation are gleaned from interviews with those who knew him and from interviews and statements he gave to the press before his premature demise.

For the Vallejo Participatory Budget, I reached out to Daniel Keen, Vallejo City Manager, Dina Tasini, Planning Manager, and Will Morat, Administrative Analyst II, who oversees the Participatory Budgeting process. Mr. Keen was unresponsive to my request, but I was able interview Will Morat and Dina Tasini on the phone between March 17<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup>. Unfortunately, some of the recording of Dina Tasini's interview was corrupted due to unexplained reasons. The portions that were inaudible for transcription were supplemented by careful notes I made during the interview, and no direct quotes

will be made from those sections. While, this thesis would have benefitted from directly interviewing Marti Brown, the former City Councilwoman who spearheaded the PB initiative in Vallejo, the deadlines for finishing this thesis prevented me from having time to contact and interview her. Instead, secondary sources and Brown's personal website were used.

Once the interviews were transcribed, the texts were coded using NVivo software based on the different leverage points. These different codes serve as the basis of my evidence to support the factors that led to inclusive participation in both communities.

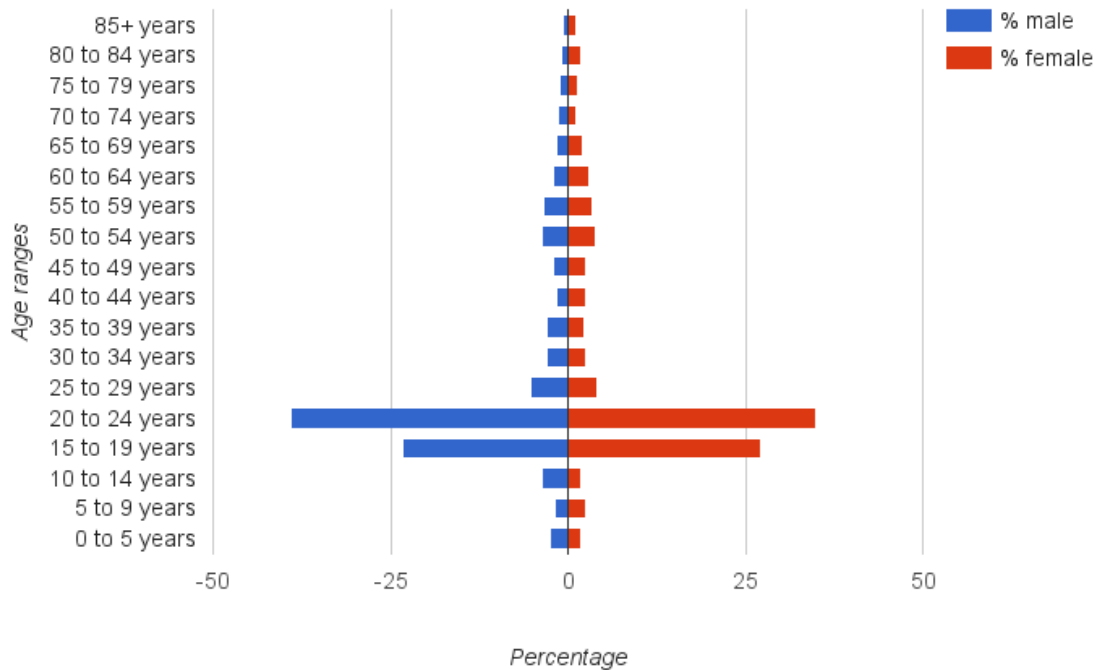


**CHAPTER 4**  
**CASE STUDIES**

**4.1 Amherst, Massachusetts**

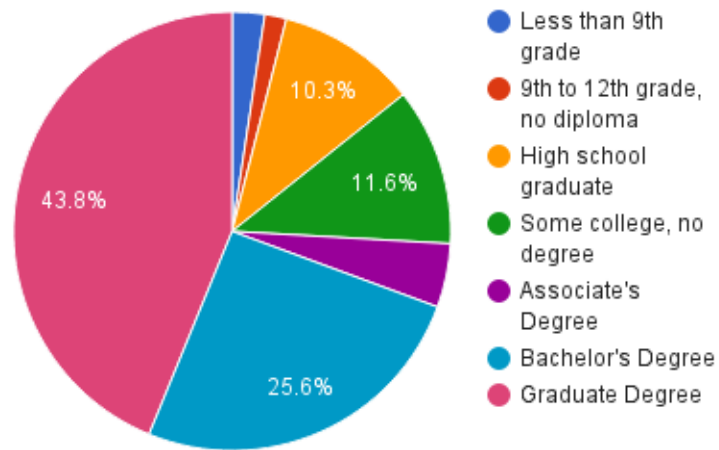
**4.1.1 Background and Overview**

Located in Hampshire County in western Massachusetts, Amherst was settled in 1703 and incorporated in 1759. With 39,260 residents (U.S. Census, 2014), Figure 15 shows the high percentage of students that make up the population of the community. This is due to the town's location to the flagship campus of the University of Massachusetts system, as well as Amherst College and Hampshire College. The large student population of approximately 28,000 (University of Massachusetts Procurement Department, 2014) adds to transient nature of the town.



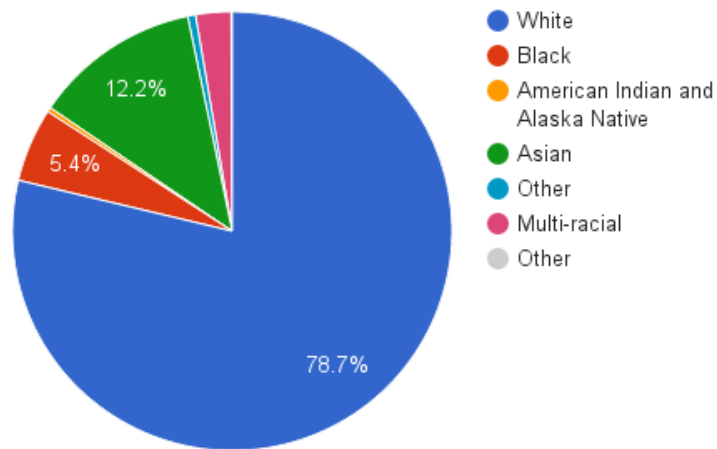
**Figure 15: Population Pyramid of Amherst, MA. Source: American Community Survey, 2014**

The presence of the university and colleges contributes to Amherst’s identity as an educated community. Figure 16 reflects the large proportion of Amherst residents that have earned at higher education degrees. Over two-thirds of Amherst has at least a bachelor’s degree (American Community Survey, 2014). Partly due to the concentrations of educational institutions, Amherst has and continues to be home to many intellectual and artistic figures. Some of the more notable figures include the poets Emily Dickinson and Robert Frost. While this educated reputation is synonymous with political activism, Amherst had only a 7.35% voter turnout in the 2015 local election (American Community Survey, 2014).



**Figure 16: Educational Attainment Levels for Amherst, MA. Source: American Community Survey, 2014**

With a long history, the town gets its name from French and Indian War military commander, Jeffrey Amherst, who is almost infamously known for distributing smallpox blankets as a method of exterminating indigenous peoples. Several times, there have been movements to change the name of the town, such as naming it after Emily Dickinson (“Amherst, Massachusetts,” n.d.).



**Figure 17: Racial makeup of Amherst. Source: American Community Survey, 2014**

Amherst also prides itself on its diversity. Although the town is predominantly Caucasian (Figure 17), 6,183 people are foreign born with 14.7% of the population who speak a language other than English at home (American Community Survey, 2014).

Within the school system, over 40 different native languages are spoken (Ross, 2015).

The town’s economic status also contributes to its diverse and unique character. While the median household income is \$52,537 (compared to the national average of \$51,939), 33.8% of the population lives below the poverty rate. This high percentage is partly due to the large student population, but the non-student population has a wide range of incomes (American Community Survey, 2014). One piece of evidence for this is around 43.8% of the housing units are owner-occupied, while 56.2% are renter-occupied.

#### **4.1.2 The Participatory Mechanism: Amherst Together**

The Amherst Together Initiative was started as a collaboration between the Amherst Regional Public School Systems (ARPS) and the Town of Amherst. It follows a collective impact model, which is a “framework to tackle deeply entrenched and complex

social problems. It is an innovative and structured approach to making collaboration work across government, business, philanthropy, non-profit organizations and citizens to achieve significant and lasting social change” (Kania & Kramer, n.d.). Initially, the goal was to determine ways in which to close the achievement gap within the school system. The Superintendent of Schools, Maria Geryk, invited Harvard economist Ronald Ferguson, who gave a lecture to the community about the need to integrate teachers, students, families, the community, and employees in closing the achievement gap. Recognizing Ferguson’s foundational beliefs that it does take a community to improve a child’s life, Maria Geryk reached out to John Musante in February 2014 to develop a community building partnership.

To coordinate this inclusive, community building effort, Geryk and Musante hired Carol Ross in July 2014 to serve as the Media and Climate Communications Specialist. With funding coming equally from the Town, the School District and the region, Ross divided the Initiative into three phases. The first phase was an information gathering, which began in the fall of 2014 with Ross partnering with University of Massachusetts (UMass) professor, Dr. Flavia Montenegro-Menezes, and her graduate Regional Planning seminar *Public Participation* to conduct a targeted outreach campaign to the typically underrepresented segments of the Amherst population: low income and non-English speaking families, adolescents, the elderly, businesspeople, and college students. In spring of 2015, student volunteers (from UMass, Amherst College, Hampshire College, and ARPS) continued on with the engagement component by distributing a survey with questions related to residents’ perceptions, values, and goals for their community. In July 2015, the data from this engagement strategy was compiled and analyzed by Dr.

Montenegro-Menezes and published in the *Perceptions* report and presented to the community.

Phase 2, which began in the fall of 2015 and is the current stage of the initiative is entitled “Advancing Social Literacy.” In this stage, there is “a call for a collective understanding of who we are, and of the complex components that determine how we live together--as a community and as a world” (Ross, n.d.). Through art, film screenings, continued engagement, Amherst Together seeks to redefine normalcy and advance the conceptions of citizenship. The last Phase, entitled Collective Impact, will begin with a collective impact feasibility study. Since collective impact models typically revolve around one issue (e.g., student drinking), Amherst Together will adapt the model to learn who Amherst is and its direction for the future.

Not only is this initiative considered inclusive because there was a concerted effort to reach out to typically underrepresented segments of the population, but there was no preset agenda at the start of the initiative. The ultimate goal is to seek knowledge and understanding and who and what Amherst is as a community. While the Initiative may last longer than the three years it was originally planned, the future of it is purposefully nebulous to truly achieve its goal of grassroots citizen participation.

#### **4.1.3 Leverage Points within the Amherst Together System**

This section analyzes the documentary research and interviews with Carol Ross, Maria Geryk, and Amherst Planning Director Christine Brestrup that have been categorized according to the previously identified leverage points.

#### **4.1.3.1 Paradigms and Goals**

The paradigm in which Amherst Together is working within may be quite difficult to articulate, and purposefully so. As one of the interviewees described it as “still is a work in progress...but collective impact and actually engaging with people is much more nebulous than that.” The Initiative’s rejection of rigid pathways, methods, and frames of thought align with the paradigm of introspection. The clear piece of evidence that self-reflection is the framework for Amherst Together because one of the questions that reoccurred was the discussion of “who we are as humanity” and redefining normalcy.

More importantly, however, is that the responses indicate that through the mechanism of Amherst Together, the community is seeking to change the paradigm, by re-conceptualizing identity and even questioning the purpose of labels and paradigms. This is the first piece of evidence that the literature lacks in framing participation as a system. Not only does the context leading to inclusive participation matter, but the mechanism and the effects of the mechanism matter very much as a feedback loop that can affect the entire system by influencing certain subsystems or leverage points. In this case Amherst Together’s outcome is influencing the paradigm and thus re-working the system.

The initial goal of which this project was born out of was developing ways to solve the achievement gap in Amherst Public Schools. However, because of trying to solve this issue through the paradigm of introspection, larger goals developed that are actively working to “chang[e] the world.” That abstract, vague, but wide-reaching goal is intricately connected with inclusive participation. In fact, all three respondents stated that reaching out to the community as one of their major goals while they are in their position.

Although the Planning Department in Amherst is not directly working with Amherst Together, the similarity in goals across different departments reflects a widespread pattern of inclusion. As Carol Ross states, the “ultimate [goal] is to create a climate communications framework” (personal communication, March 21, 2006). In order to do this, Amherst has to understand who they are as a climate beyond conventional conceptions and perceptions. Through their three phrases of information gathering, advancing social literacy, and collective impact, Amherst Together seeks to achieve its goals of inclusivity, equity, and collaboration.

The word frequency cloud of responses (Figure 18) shows that the main themes gleaned from the interviews with participants centered on community, with “people” and “community” being the two most spoken words, and the quest for thought and knowledge. The high frequency of the word “really” could also suggest a quest for veracity and an authentic process to gain that knowledge about the community. This quest for authentic introspective knowledge gained from inclusive participation, “always leads back to the same commonality: as humanity how are we going to live together?” (Carol Ross, personal communication, March 21, 2016). By understanding Amherst’s present humanity, they will be able to develop a plan for the future.





intangible and must be actualized through certain pathways leading to inclusive participation.

#### **4.1.3.2 Presence of Laws**

Although Massachusetts is a home rule state, Chapter 41 of the state's General Laws define the regulations and processes for how cities, towns, and districts must function. With over 133 sections, regulations are required in each municipality with regards to how planning boards and departments should function to how elections should be conducted.

Adapted from the State Enabling Comprehensive and Zoning Acts (see 2.6.2.2 Participation codified into law), public participation in planning is mostly guided by Section 81D, which requires all municipalities to “conduct an interactive public process, to determine community values, goals and to identify patterns of development that will be consistent with these goals.” Amherst's zoning regulations also have requirements for public participation under Section 10.5, Chapter 11 in which the planning department must post notice of all meetings requiring public hearings in the town newspaper two weeks prior to the date of the meeting. The intended goal of this law is to ensure the public has knowledge of the community issues and can voice their opinion on the matter before the Planning Board.

As previously shown in Chapter 2 of this thesis, the inclusion of participation in the laws does not necessarily lead to inclusivity. Although these are the conventional laws associated with participation, they do at least provide a minimum standard that Amherst must adhere to follow in any planning process. For the sake of this system, a more important law or legal structure in Amherst is the town manager form of

government established through the Amherst Town Government Act, last updated in 2001. By having a public manager appointed by the Select Board, there is a figure in the town government who has the power to draft the annual budget and who also has discretionary power and funding.

#### **4.1.3.3 Legal Language**

The premise of Massachusetts laws requiring public input is commendable in its intent. The language of M.G.L Chapter 41, Sec. 81D emphasizes “community values” and “goals” as integral to development patterns for every municipality. These values and goals will be developed through “an interactive public process.” The use of the word “interactive” should not be overlooked. In fact, the very ambiguity of the word speaks to the somewhat ineffectiveness of laws fostering inclusivity. Had the language mentioned representation or creating a multi-prong approach for community engagement, municipalities may feel more pressure to reach out to marginalized members of the community.

In 2010, before the formation of Amherst Together, the Amherst Planning Department had a rather inclusive community outreach program by having over 1,000 people give their input for the Master Planning process through forums and a survey that was sent to every home in the community. Although Amherst made an effort to be inclusive and “interactive,” it is easy to see how some communities may not be, and how this approach may neglect non-English speakers and other underrepresented groups. Therefore, other factors must influence and interconnect to promote inclusivity when the laws give only minimal guidance or requirements.

Although it was not specifically regarding Chapter 41, Section 81D, responses indicated that some zoning laws are “outdated” and “archaic,” and should be changed to better reflect the needs of the community. When the laws do not accomplish goals, there is a negative feedback loop that increasingly makes laws ineffective. On the other hand Maria Geryk mentioned that federal and state laws are putting increasing pressure on school systems to perform in certain ways. This over-regulation still may not achieve the goals of the community and may even limit the functioning of a school system. Therefore, a balance in law is needed that both encourages communities to achieve a certain goal but does not constrain them to the point of inflexibility.

#### **4.1.3.4 Political Agendas**

Political agendas are goals that public managers, elected officials, and influential constituents seek to accomplish within their community. Unlike the cases of political priorities and pressure in Porto Alegre and other communities, Amherst Together was not formed by large political coalitions, but by specific public managers and elected officials collaborating together. All responses related to agendas and elected officials suggest individual and personal goals for the duration of time while they are in their position. While there are many political actors and groups with some degree of clout in the community, they did not dominate the process of fostering inclusivity. What this suggests is that large political parties or constituent groups were not necessary in this instance of forming Amherst Together. In fact, their absence may have helped the process because public managers were able to exercise their power to encourage a participatory agenda. This suggests that political coalitions or political party agendas may only be necessary

when public managers and elected officials do not have enough clout or power within a political system and not be able to advance agendas.

Of the three people interviewed for this case study, connecting with the community was a primary goal of theirs while they were in their position of power and authority. Christine Brestrup described reaching out to the community as a priority for her recent appointment as Interim Planning Director (and probable permanent position). She also emphasized education of the public as an integral part of participation, since many planning concepts (and their implications) can be difficult to understand. Maria Geryk described how she hoped to improve her the students in her school system by connecting all those whose responsibility is the wellbeing of children (e.g. parents, employers, etc). Both Carol Ross and Maria Geryk expressed how one of John Musante's main objectives was wanting people to be happy. Although these are separate agendas by people in different positions, community connection was valued by all as a priority, demonstrating a wider community agenda irrespective of politics.

The greatest evidence for larger scale political agendas is the different departments and boards that have given support of Amherst Together. For example, the Select Board and School Committee were responsible for the initial implementation of this program as it was not part of their own goals or agendas. However, while these political groups may have not been needed to initiate the project, they were necessary in Amherst to sustain it. For example, Maria Geryk has proposed to incorporate the school system's portion of the funding for Amherst Together for the next three years, but the school committee must still approve the budget. Due to Geryk's advocacy, the school

committee has approved it, but it does show that collaboration and unified goals are necessary in maintaining inclusive participation.

#### **4.1.3.5 Public managers and elected officials**

Due to the fact that there were laws granting John Musante and Maria Geryk power to fund this initiative, and their own goals to motivate its creation, public managers and elected officials are an incredibly crucial leverage point in the Amherst Together system.

The idea of using a collective impact model came to Maria Geryk from Dr. Marta Guevara, the Director of Student Accountability and Achievement for the Amherst Regional Public School district. The fact that the idea did not initially come from Geryk shows that a public manager must be responsive to suggestions from others to advance certain goals and agendas. In one sense, responsiveness must be critical to any sort of public managers that authentically values public input and citizen empowerment.

Responsiveness also extends to being able to establish and maintain relations between different public managers and other actors. For example, Geryk claims her relationship with John Musante was such at the time that she felt comfortable approaching him with the idea of starting the Amherst Together initiative:

“John and I, it was about building a relationship that you trusted each other, that you had real meaningful conversation. John understood. John loved our community, first of all. This was his community. And he cared deeply about creating the conditions for everyone to be part of and to feel. So, I think we were very similar in our beliefs and that made it easy to find this connection, and because we worked so well together, we had conversations around our challenges and these challenges within the broader community were not that different from mine.... And he was always, I found, willing to take a risk on something that could make a difference for our community” (Maria Geryk, personal communication, March 31, 2016).

This sentiment also suggests that since inclusive participation can be a risky endeavor for public managers, trust amongst the coalition seeking to enact it is essential. Geryk also suggest empathy and caring about the community is also important because if public managers care about the communities they serve, then they must also care about the people (and their voices) who exist within them.

The other angle in which public managers matter to foster inclusivity is that they need staff to respect them and enact their visions. Carol Ross stated that the only reason she agreed to do the work of running the Amherst Together Initiative “was because [Amherst] ha[s] an amazing superintendent, an amazing town manager, and amazing police chief” (personal communication, March 21, 2016).

The unexpected death of John Musante during the Amherst Together process sheds some light to support Meadows’s claim that actors and individuals do not act as leverage points, since the Initiative has continued. However, I argue that Amherst Together only continued after Musante’s because it achieved some degree of institutionalization. Had Musante passed when the system was in a more nascent stage, it may have changed. Ross claims she did have questions whether the Initiative would continue after his death. However, Geryk stated that even if the succeeding Town Manager did not fund the Initiative, she would have found a way to do it. Furthermore, when a public manager is so dynamic and representative of the community values, there is some effort to maintain the systems they try to put into place, as shown by Geryk’s statement, “that John [Musante] represented the community well, so I think the commitment to the philosophical basis for Amherst Together remains.”

Once a public participation initiative has gained legitimacy from other influences besides the funding of a leader (e.g. laws, community pressure), then a public manager may not be as important in maintaining the system. However, when starting a new endeavor, this support is critical.

#### **4.1.3.6 Administrative Organization**

Since Amherst Together's mission is to be a collaboration between the town, school, and community, Carol Ross was put into place as the coordinating agent between these widespread and different departments. The emphasis on communication and cross-agency collaboration seems to be critical to the initiation of Amherst Together because the town, region, and school system were able to leverage financial support to allow this participatory mechanism to function. Furthermore, as Ross states one of her duties is to ensure that not only is the government communicating with the community, but the government is also communicating within itself, which seems that information flows are critical to initiating and maintaining inclusive participation. Tasked with ensuring information flows, Ross is on the Human Rights Commission and the University-Town of Amherst Collaborative (UTAC), to make sure that the different facets of the community (including the underrepresented ones) are heard and speak with each other. By having one person working for the town whose full time occupation is to ensure communication amongst the different facets of government and community creates the space and procedures for people to begin communicating with each other.

Brestrup has also suggested there is a collaborative environment within Amherst governance by the fact that many different departments coordinate with each on a daily basis and there is a great deal of organization by the Town Manager. In her role alone,

she communicates with the Select Board, the Building Department of Public Works, and the Sustainability Coordinator. By already having a political and departmental culture, where departments are not siloed but encouraged to speak with one another ensures that departmental actions align with each other to achieve community and political goals.

#### **4.1.3.7 Community Identity**

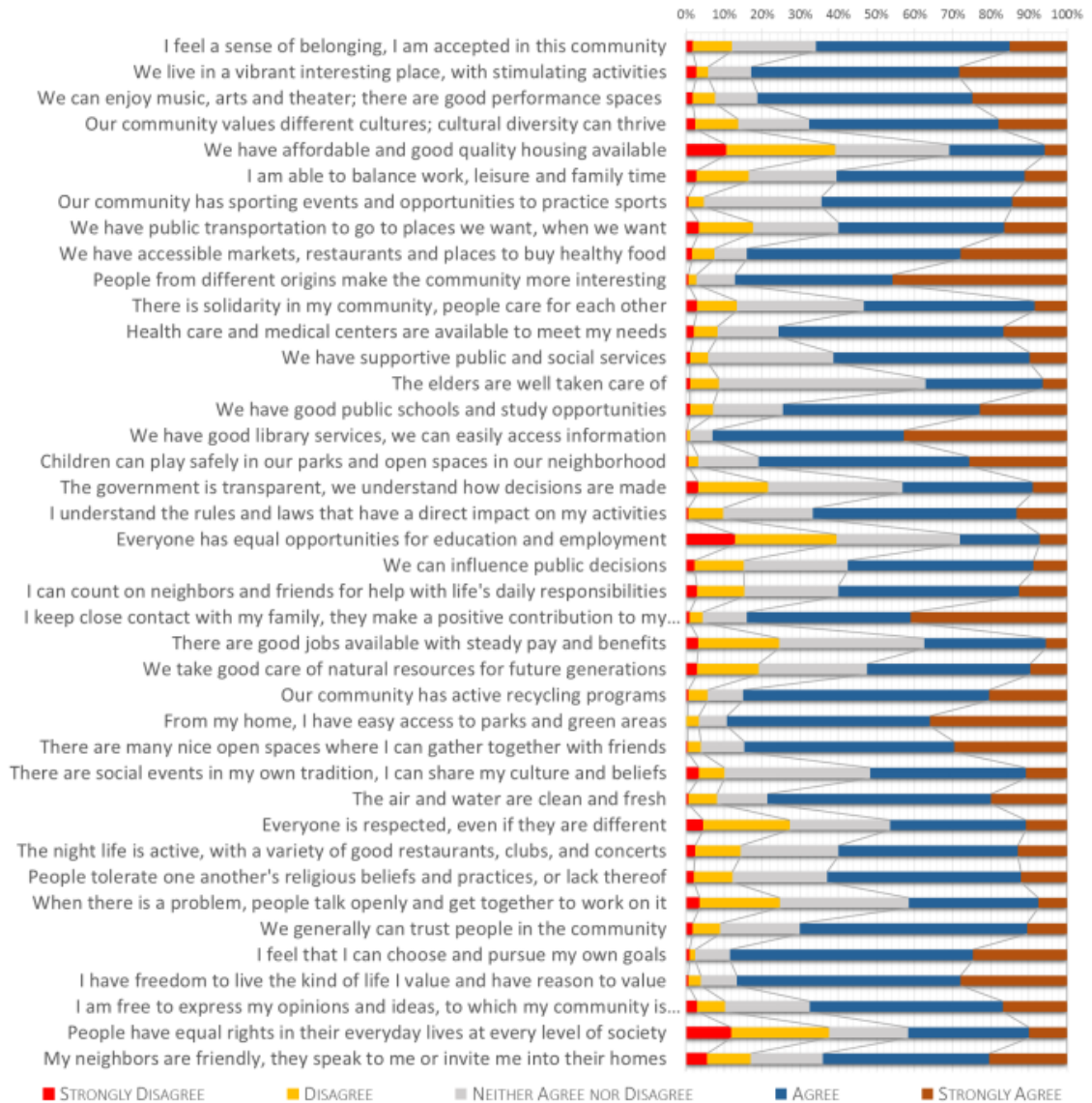
In conversations with the three interview subjects, the three same words emerged when describing Amherst: transient, diverse, and thinking/academic. All of these words, in part, have to do with the enormous college student population in the town. With knowledge as a priority and a part of the character of the community, there is a standard or an image for the government and the school system to live up to. This identity and outward quest for knowledge from academia may be one reason why Amherst Together can re-focus the conversation to gain knowledge from the community.

Furthermore, the diversity as an aspect of the town's identity adds another dimension to the conversation. This diversity is not simply limited to general demographic categories such as gender, age and educational attainment. As the *Perceptions* Report shows, many people in Amherst identify themselves based on their origin, values, and outward appearance (Montenegro-Menezes, 2015). Maria Geryk also pointed to a growing trend of economic disparity in the community. Recognizing and embracing diversity, I would argue, is imperative to developing inclusive participation because it recognizes there are very different segments of the population that need to be brought into community.

Both Maria Geryk and Carol Ross have noticed a shift in Amherst's identity in that it is becoming increasingly more diverse but less accepting. Of the people surveyed



for the *Perceptions* Report, 30% reported experiencing racism or some sort of discrimination (Montenegro-Menezes, 2015). Figure 19 depicts other people's perceptions of the town and its amenities. For example, the majority of people feel some sense of belonging in the community, but there is not widespread agreement regarding people having access and equity in everyday life. So while Amherst's reputation as a thinking, academic community definitely feeds into the original goals of the quest for knowledge, potential changes in that identity seems to be an important factor encouraging participation, especially within the paradigm of self-reflection. Amherst is essentially trying to live up to its reputation as a progressive community by using innovative participatory processes to understand their identity. If the community had a fixed identity, there may not have been enough of a motivation to begin a program to include all the segments of the community in a discussion.



**Figure 19: Graph depicting the community wellbeing, or the quality of place and community from the perspective of local residents. Source: Montenegro-Menezes, 2015**

#### 4.1.3.8 Culture

Logically with a community identity centered on diversity, the culture of Amherst is equally diverse. This is a community that values discussion and dialogue. One reputation of the town is that “the only thing silent in Amherst is the h.” (“Amherst, Massachusetts,” n.d.). Geryk even comments that “There’s always dialogue about every

decision that you make” (personal communication, March 31, 2016). As Figure 20 shows, a vast majority of town residents value open government and having a say on the public decisions impacting their lives. Montenegro-Menezes articulates this cultural value as freedom, “Freedom, whether to express opinions, to choose goals, or to live life, seem to be a value shared by the whole community” (2015, p. 11).



**Figure 20: Graph depicting the community values. Source: Montenegro-Menezes, 2015**

Yet, there is a disconnect within the culture of the town where some people do not feel able to express their opinions (Figure 19). Ross attributes this fear of sharing ideas to

a lack of compassion, “by the same token, if you’re perceived as having and someone disagrees with you, people will be brutal. And not have compassion and not being open to hearing difference of ideas” (personal communication, March 21, 2016). Obviously, this lack of opening up to ideas is a major barrier for inclusive participation. Therefore, having receptive public managers may have played a greater role in fostering inclusivity. Also, with Amherst’s culture of dialogue already entrenched in the community, there was a great platform for a collective impact model to take root because some people already feel comfortable speaking and there are processes for those people to voice their opinions. To foster inclusive participation, the task then becomes one of creating space for marginalized voices to be heard and for those who regularly communicate to listen.

#### **4.1.3.9 Social Capital**

Lack of social capital and people’s humanity was a recurring theme in the responses during the interview. Although the interview subjects and the *Perceptions* Report mention town residents having similar desires and goals (e.g. a vibrant place to live), Ross claims, “there’s a lot of tension in this community. People that are battling, and they think they’re fighting for different things, but they’re all wanting the same thing. And not listening to each other” (personal communication, March 21, 2016). Maria Geryk claims this lack of social cohesion is due to people constantly rushing and becoming achievement and individually focused. However, while people may not be connected within the town, Ross speaks of the small town character and that most people know of each other through similar circles. Similar to the culture of dialogue but not listening, part of the infrastructure for social cohesion has already been established. If people already know each, then Amherst Together can begin bridging those connections.

Lack of social capital is not necessarily a barrier to having an inclusive participation mechanism, but other factors need to be present to help overcome that obstacle.

#### **4.1.3.10 Community groups**

One of the assets identified during the course of the interviews was the presence of community groups and services to provide to the public, including the Amherst Survival Center, a homeless shelter, and the Interfaith group. Although she was not referring to those specific community groups, Ross mentions that, “there are a lot of pockets of people doing very progressive things, but they’re not talking to the other organization doing similar work, and could benefit from that similar work. We’re not talking to one another. When I introduce people, I’m so shocked, ‘you don’t know one another, your work is so much, so similar’” (personal communication, March 21, 2016). This statement mirrors the statements mentioned in sections 4.1.3.8 Culture and 4.1.3.9 Social Capital, in which the presence of action is being done in silos. Brestrup also says that many people are unsure how certain aspects of town government function and that could be a barrier for individuals or community/neighborhood groups to accomplish their goals. Therefore, many groups do not communicate with each other and may have trouble communicating with government.

Before Amherst Together, the town government made efforts to bridge this connection between siloed community groups and the town government. In fall of 2013, the Town/Gown Steering committee was established to begin a dialogue on ways in which to improve university-town relations and begin to think of solutions to issues facing both groups. This is an example of collaborative governance, so the concept was not completely foreign to the community when Amherst Together was first introduced.

Furthermore, by having well-established groups with some degree of voice, Amherst Together was able to leverage and begin speaking with these groups at the beginning of their initiative to start learning about community needs. While community groups may not have helped initiate the program, they provided an accessible place for Amherst Together to begin engaging with the community.

#### **4.1.3.11 Skills, Methods, and Capacity**

Although all three interviewees mentioned money as a limited resource within the community, there were many assets Amherst Together used to help promote itself. Intellectual capital was a major resource the Initiative used to accomplish its goals. By using the ideas of Ron Ferguson and bringing him to Amherst to speak, Amherst Together already had a framework in which to build their campaign around. Additionally, by tapping into the knowledge of Flavia Montenegro-Menezes, who created a methodology to ensure that community engagement and outreach was as widespread and inclusive as possible.

Human capital was also essential to the development of the Amherst Together Initiative. By integrating the community outreach campaign in her UMass Amherst Regional Planning graduate level course, *Public Participation*, Dr. Montenegro-Menezes was able to use her students as outreach agents. Other students from Amherst College also helped collect qualitative data. Many of these students were able to translate material into different languages and act as translators at meetings. Ross also uses other high school and college interns to help coordinate media and public relations efforts.

In order to have a multi-media and integrate art into her approach to connect with the community, Ross was able to use technology and equipment from the school's IT

department. The resources in that department allowed Ross to create videos, posters, and other forms of media to make the Initiative appealing and to engage as many residents as possible. The beauty of Amherst Together's approach is that is related back to the original goals of a community-wide outreach campaign by using members of the community to collect the data.

#### **4.1.3.12 Outcome of the Mechanism**

Since public participation does function as a system, each decision and action has effects on previous stocks within the system. More importantly when we discuss the context leading to inclusive participation, we must discuss what kind of mechanism would best suit the initial goals. For example, should the mechanism be a temporary measure (e.g. to do an inclusive outreach about a singular short-term topic) or should the goal be to create long lasting equity and collaboration in a community? If the goal is the latter then the outcome of the mechanism matters a great deal because it lead to events that help institutionalize the mechanism or embed its permanency. At this point when this thesis is being composed, the topic of effects of Amherst Together can only be analyzed within limited terms due to the fact that the process is only in its second phase. However, from the year and half this Initiative has existed, there is some data to measure the effectiveness of Amherst Together's outcome.

Since major action plans have not yet been proposed, the ways in which to measure the success of Amherst Together is looser. Amherst Together has gained notoriety by presenting the town-wide collective impact model to the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education three times. Furthermore, members of the community have taken the initiative more seriously. But also important is that

people are coming together who have not been in the same room before; different segments of the population are interacting and exchanging ideas. This is an example of how the specific actions of Amherst Together have a positive feedback loop with the context of the system; in this case, it is regarding the social capital leverage point. Therefore, not only can you change the context to generate better participation, but the participation itself can generate effects that allow the factors to increase and thus further increasing participation.

Amherst Together has not only affected some of the less impactful leverage points, it has made inroads on goals. “The dynamics have changed.... And I’m learning, and it changes, and it’s shifting... I think we have to remember that the journey is equally important. Because as soon as we reach a place, there will be another place to go to. You know that’s just the nature of communities, particularly the nature in the Amherst community, because it’s so transient” (Ross, personal communication, March 21, 2016). Ross’ sentiments reflect how the community identity of transience affect the outcome, and then those outcomes from the mechanism have altered and changed the goals.

The most interesting aspect of Amherst Together’s outcome is related to its effect on the paradigms and goals of the system. The goal of the system was to gain knowledge in order to understand how, as the community of Amherst, can they live together. Under this goal, Amherst Together was not intended to become a permanent fixture of the community, at least in terms of an office attached to the school system or town. So, Ross measures success of Amherst Together when “people will at some point not know where to point. And that’s ok. As long as people start to work together and relationships are building, conditions change for residents and students, then it’s been successful. Whether



people say, ‘oh that’s because of Amherst Together or not, I don’t really care. I just want to see the change’” (Ross, personal communication, March 21, 2016). Thus, the steady state of a participatory system in Amherst would be when there is a “constant flow of connected people.” But until that time, the outcomes of Amherst Together must affect the paradigm of the ways people conceive their community and the goals for their community and how to communicate within that community.

#### **4.1.3.13 Discussion**

As Amherst Together has not become a regular part of the government structure, it still remains in a pre-institutionalized state. The case of Amherst shows very important leverage points that were able to be switched to allow the Amherst Together collective impact model to take root. The initiation of Amherst Together is absolutely due to the credit of certain individuals. Marta Guevara first had the idea of using collective impact and was able to bring it to Maria Geryk, who then formed a partnership with John Musante. While Meadows does claim that since actors are elements in a system who have the least impact on it, she also mentions one exception when “changing an element also results in changing relationships or purpose” (Meadows, 2008, p. 17). In effect, Geryk and Musante were changing the ways the system of governance functioned in Amherst.

But Amherst Together was able to form not only because of support by two public managers and the funding to back it. There was already a culture of discussion present in Amherst, a culture that predisposed the community to gain knowledge from one another. The introduction of collective impact as a tool in which Amherst can accomplish their goals of fostering connection and determining who they really are as a community was the catalyst in the system leading to better participation.

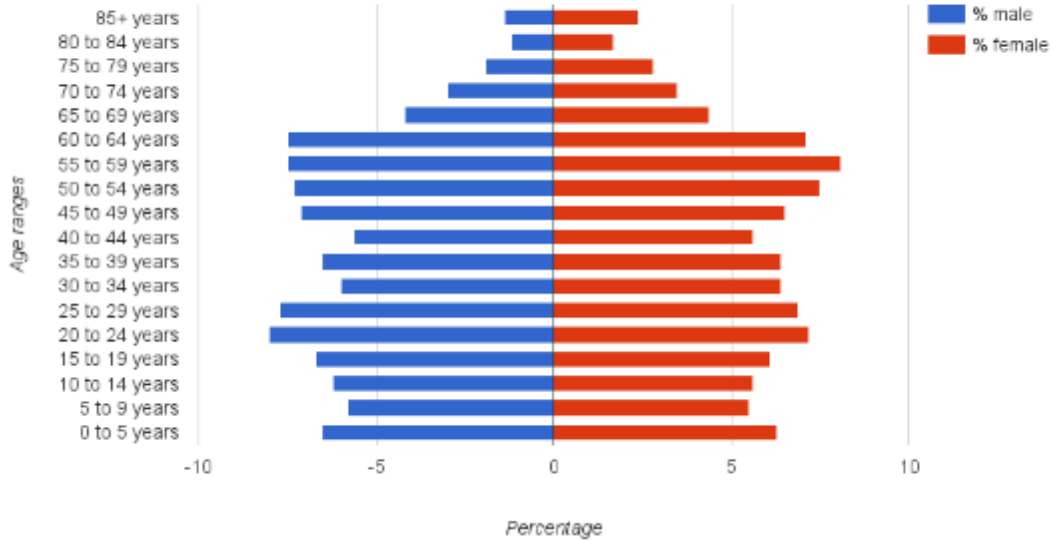
Overall, Amherst Together's impact cannot be understated, even within the short time of its existence. There is evidence to support that the outcome of the Initiative thus far has positive feedback on certain leverage points, such as social capital. Through the participatory mechanism, people are developing greater bonds with members of the community and are more likely to participate in the future. However, there is one major path from the outcome that feeds back to the paradigm of the system. By engaging with the community and learning of overall perceptions, the paradigm in which the people of Amherst think is starting to change. Since the outcome is changing the paradigm subsystem instead of reinforcing it, it is a negative feedback loop. In effect, the outcome of a pre-institutionalized public participation program is shifting the frame of the system.

## **4.2 Vallejo, California**

### **4.2.1 Background and Overview**

Part of the San Francisco Bay area, Vallejo, California is the largest city in Solano County with a population of 115,942 people (U.S. Census, 2010), which is fairly evenly distributed (Figure 21). Founded in 1851 and named after Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo, the city stood at the epicenter of California's fight to gain admittance to the U.S. as a state. For many years, Vallejo's economy and community identity were based around the Mare Island Naval Shipyard, which was established in 1854. As the first U.S. naval base on the Pacific Coast, Mare Island Naval Yard served an important role in both World Wars. However, the Navy ultimately decided to close the base in 1996 (City of Vallejo, 2013). Currently, Vallejo is known as the site for Six Flags Discovery Kingdom and

several universities and colleges, such as Touro University and California Maritime Academy.

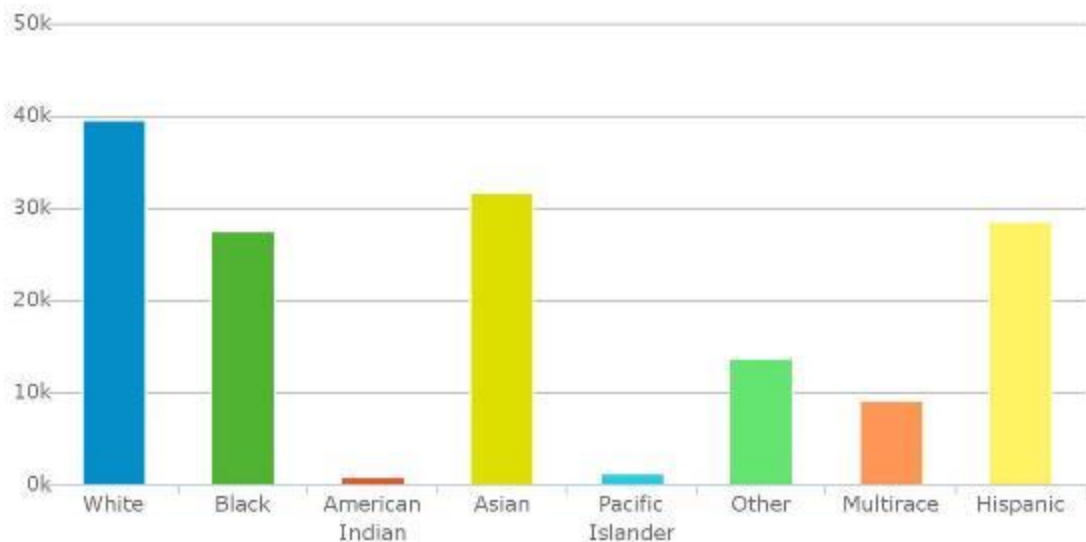


**Figure 21: Population Pyramid of Vallejo, CA. Source: American Community Survey, 2014**

On May 6, 2008, Vallejo was the largest city in California to file Chapter 9 bankruptcy at that time. With a 7-0 vote by City Council, the intent of the bankruptcy decision was to allow the City to continue maintaining city services while freezing its debt of up to \$16 million. The cause for the major debt was high salaries and benefits for fire fighters and police officers, and a plummeting housing market (Jones, 2008). After \$8 million in legal fees and financial restructuring, a federal judge released Vallejo from bankruptcy in November 2011 (Jones, 2011).

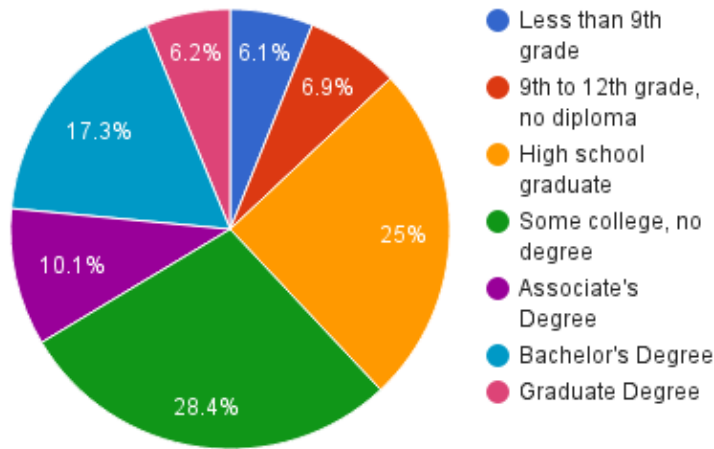
Today, Vallejo remains an extremely diverse city. Figure 22 shows that the racial makeup of Vallejo is roughly one quarter Caucasian, one quarter African-American, one quarter Asian (mostly Filipino-descent), and one quarter Latino. There is a large

immigrant population with 33,401 residents (28.3% of the City’s population) who are foreign born. Further evidence of Vallejo’s diversity is that 38.2% of the population speaks a language other than English at home (American Community Survey, 2014).



**Figure 22: Racial Distribution of Vallejo, CA. Source: City of Vallejo Demographic Data**

Vallejo’s diversity extends beyond the color of people’s skin. Figure 23 shows that roughly one quarter of the residents have earned a high school diploma as their highest degree, and another quarter that attended some college, but did not complete a degree program. With the median household income of \$58,472 and 18.3% of the population living below the poverty line (American Community Survey, 2014), Vallejo is not a very affluent city. While the majority of people reside in owner-occupied units (57.2% of the population), the low median rent (\$1,208) is a draw for people who cannot afford the much higher rents in nearby San Francisco and Oakland (American Community Survey, 2014).



**Figure 23: Educational Attainment Levels for Vallejo, CA. Source: American Community Survey, 2014**

#### **4.2.2 The Participatory Mechanism: Participatory Budgeting**

As part of the plan to transition from the bankruptcy state, Vallejo passed the referendum Measure B, a ten-year 1% sales tax, whose revenue would go to City services. Originally promoted by City Councilwoman Marti Brown, in a 4-3 vote the Vallejo City Council voted in 2012 to use 30% of the revenue from Measure B for a participatory budgeting (PB) project. Thus, Vallejo became the first citywide example of PB in the U.S. Very controversial for a city emerging from bankruptcy with limited resources, the rationale behind the project was twofold: (1) to ensure that the new funds would not be diverted to the police pension funds, and (2) to bring greater transparency to Vallejo government (Semuels, 2014). The goals of PB have now been expanded to (1) Improve the city, (2) Engage with the community, (3) Transform democracy, and (4) Open up government (Vallejo’s PB Program, 2016).

Each cycle of PB is divided into five main stages. In February and March, there are budget assemblies in which resident brainstorm ideas for using the budget. From April to September, delegates from around the city transform the brainstormed ideas into

proposals with the help of experts. Residents then vote on the proposals in October, with evaluation of the process and monitoring the implementation of the projects commencing in November (Vallejo's PB Program, 2016).

Vallejo contracted the Participatory Budgeting Project, a nonprofit that seeks to advance this tool for governance, for its first cycle of PB. With \$3.28 million in revenues from Measure B, Vallejo was able to fund 12 projects voted on by just under 4,000 members of the public during the first cycle. These projects ranged from pothole and street repair to community garden construction ("Cycle 1 Projects," n.d.). During its second year, the PB system in Vallejo was brought under the office of the City Manager and is now managed by two dedicated staff members, Will Morat and Alyssa Alford. Vallejo finished its third PB cycle in November 2015 and is preparing for its fourth cycle (Vallejo's PB Program, 2016). So far, taxpayers have allocated \$6.6 million for 25 community-approved projects (Participatory Budgeting Project, 2016). The success of this initiative can be seen from national press coverage in Atlantic magazine, and participating in a forum on encouraging participatory budgeting in local government hosted by President Obama (Garvin, 2014).

Although only 4,000 out of Vallejo's 117,000 residents have participated in the project, there are several reasons why it is considered and categorized as an inclusive form of public participation. First of all, all residents 16 years old and above can vote in the process regardless of their citizenship status (Participatory Budgeting Project, 2016). Secondly, all outreach and ballots are in English and Spanish to reach as many people as possible. Third, as of the third cycle, people are allowed to vote online to attract younger demographics. Therefore, there is a conscious effort to include all segments of the city.

### **4.2.3 Leverage Points within the Participatory Budgeting System**

This section analyzes the documentary research and interviews with Will Morat, and Vallejo Planning Manager Dina Tasini that have been categorized according to the previously identified leverage points.

#### **4.2.3.1 Paradigms and Goals**

The paradigm that Vallejo seems to be working within is one of U.S. democracy and running a municipal government. Democracy and working within that framework was a common thread between the respondents, especially with recurring phrases referring to citizen rights. Although Vallejo, like many other cities, is subject to the boundaries and traditional thoughts of what a city is expected to accomplish, the city is using innovative measures to work within those boundaries.

The goals that come from reconfiguring the role of a city government and its relation to public are articulated well. Vallejo is using participatory budgeting (PB) to (1) Improve the city, (2) Engage with the community, (3) Transform democracy, and (4) Open up government (Vallejo's PB Program, 2016). Many of the words in Figure 24 focus on the government: city, projects, government, manager, and council. This suggests that unlike Amherst, which has a community system, Vallejo's approach is a bit more top-down. But Vallejo is not top-down in the conventional sense of dictating to the public. On the contrary, the exact purpose of participatory budgeting is for the public to dictate to the government. However, the emphasis on the government cannot be overlooked because the ultimate goal of this project is for the government of Vallejo to gain the trust back from the public.





#### **4.2.3.2 Presence of Laws**

Vallejo has a council-manager government. The City Council is composed of seven members, one of whom is a separately elected mayor. The City Council then appoints the City Manager to enforce the policies of the Council and to oversee all government departments.

Although the 1% sales tax (Measure B) was enacted through a referendum, it is up to the City Council to decide how that money will be spent. A budget is proposed by the City Manager and then voted in by the Council. Currently, there are no laws mandating PB; each year it is voted on in June whether the program will continue.

When asked about legal mandates and participation, Tasini's responses focused on the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Under CEQA, government agencies must disclose all significant environmental effects of any proposed project by creating various impacts reports depending on the scope of the project. Several different kinds of meetings are required, such as scoping meetings, public review hearings (notice must be given for this), and any judicial action, where the public is allowed to give their opinions (California Department of Fish & Wildlife, n.d.). Although CEQA is not very relevant to the discussion of PB in Vallejo, it signifies that state-level planning requirements acknowledge the importance of public input.

Tasini made the point that the presence of laws requiring participation "do[es] achieve...better projects...because people who live here really have the desire and the feeling about the community, whereas most of us don't live in the communities that we work in" (personal communication, March 23, 2016). Therefore, the rationale behind these laws is not only that residents should have a say in their community, but that

residents also have knowledge of their community that is pertinent to planning and development projects.

#### **4.2.3.3 Legal Language**

While CEQA mostly follows standard levels of requiring public participation in the planning process, Tasini points out some different limitations, “I think the tool is brilliant, to create another mechanisms where we as planners can regulate better and to take into account when you build a building or something, it has an impact on the resources, on the person who lives next door, on traffic, on air, on whatever, it does have an impact, there’s no way to change, but what does that mean? Is it significant or isn’t it? I think the tool is brilliant but I think we’ve overused it and now it takes a year plus to get through an environmental impact report process and you still litigate for the next three years, so it’s not the greatest model. I think it’s a great thought process” (personal communication, March 23, 2016). Tasini’s commentary has more to do with the drawbacks of the environment impact reports mandated by CEQA and less to do with public participation.

Still, although an in-depth analysis of CEQA is beyond the scope of this thesis, Tasini’s commentary is important to note because it reflects a recurring pattern where the goals of laws are not achieved. Therefore, California suffers from a burden of excessive litigation in the matters. Namely this is due to the fact that CEQA is open to many different judicial interpretations that cause the process to be onerous (Hernandez, 2015). Since public agencies already face many issues related to lack of time and funding, clearer laws that reduce chances of litigation are important to allow public managers more time to focus on achieving their mission and goals. Furthermore, while

CEQA creates opportunities for citizen engagement, there are no requirements that suggest greater levels of inclusivity.

#### **4.2.3.4 Political Agendas**

In the wake of Vallejo's bankruptcy and their recovery, there are many political agendas related to using the limited resources the city has to the best of their ability and augmenting their current staff and resources in order to better serve the community. Working within those overarching goals discussed in section 4.2.3.1 Paradigms and Goals, the tone and scope of the political agendas mentioned during the interviews stemmed from City Manager Dan Keen's vision and direction. These goals relate more to organization and functionality, as well as how to improve Vallejo both physically and governmentally.

Fostering better relations with the community is definitely one of the major political goals. In addition to the City Manager's use of different outreach techniques and PB, other departments are prioritizing this goal as well. For example, the police department has adopted a community policing model, in which police officers are seen as proactive members of the community rather than an authoritarian enemy. In addition to doing greater outreach with the community (such as monthly coffee talks), the police have also expanded their role to focus on quality of life issues. Through creating a community service section of the police department, Vallejo is showing signs of a more holistic view to governance by seeing how different trends intersect and how solutions may not be enacted by one department.

In addition to communicating with the community, Vallejo has made communication within government a priority. As part of their overarching goal to be

more transparent, Vallejo city government is seeking to put a more public face on projects to not only demonstrate what the city has accomplished but to also show residents where their tax dollars are going. It should also be noted that there is an intentional effort to make Vallejo's actions citywide and to make sure the different segment of the communities are treated more equitably.

Another agenda of Vallejo's city government is adhering to fulfilling the duties of cities as effectively as possible considering financial and staff limitations. According to Morat, cities are responsible for the roads, for infrastructure, public works, the police force, and the fire department, among other things. Therefore, there is an effort to specify the boundaries of what PB can go toward to ensure that the city can be efficient. Part of this is also to reduce overhead and administrative costs, so that more of the budget can go to implementing projects. Overall, it is clear that Vallejo's political agenda is one relating to creating a resilient governing structure following the bankruptcy in which a system of community between residents and political actors is at the core.

#### **4.2.3.5 Public managers and elected officials**

In Vallejo, elected officials and public officials have both played important, yet distinct roles in bringing PB to Vallejo. Since the City Council has control over how the funds from Measure B will be delegated, they play a fundamental role in the formation and continuation of the project. Marti Brown, one of the more progressive City Council members introduced the idea for Vallejo and ultimately got it voted in. Interestingly, Brown's background is in planning, but she has a true activist spirit and is a self-described advocate for healthier communities and better government (Brown, n.d.).

Obviously, her passion for better planning and better governance led to her to introduce such an experimental system for the city.

The City Council also plays a role in the cycles of PB. Clearly, they are the body of government that votes to decide whether a percentage of money from Measure B will be used to fund the initiative. But, Morat pointed out another cycle in a recent trend where several people who are campaigning for City Council previously served on the PB steering committee. In effect, the City Council initiates a feedback loop where they foster greater citizen participation, and those citizens (now more engaged), then participate by campaigning to join the City Council.

The City Council also has the responsibility of hiring the City Manager, who both interview subjects regard with esteem. Tasini credits City Manager Keen with setting the precedent for a collaborative governance framework. Although Vallejo has a smaller staff for a city its size, Keen “sets the tones of ‘we’re a team, we have to get this done, we’ve got limited resources for what city council wants.’ And he delivers a very strong message and a very clear message and has been a very wonderful, kind of refreshing kind of change” (Tasini, personal communication, March 23, 2016). Morats explains that the City Council hired Keen not only for his governance acumen, but also because he offered to bring better forms of management to the city, including ways of having greater participation and transparency.

Morat also credits Keen for being a good manager in the sense that he hires the best candidates for each job and does not micromanage. There is an inherent trust between the City Manager and his staff, which almost acts as a parallel between Vallejo and their trust in the public by letting them decide which projects funding should go

toward during the PB process. It should be noted, however, that the City Council ultimately votes in the PB project recommendations, so it is a regulated trust. The City Manager and his office must ensure that the recommendations from PB are legal and achievable. Therefore, the City Manager plays an important role as the focal point between the City Council, the public, and the administrative staff of the city.

#### **4.2.3.6 Administrative Organization**

Stemming from the political agenda of greater communication and a strong public manager, Vallejo has a very collaborative governance structure. A clear example of that is Open City Hall, which is an online forum to encourage civic engagement. In this platform, citizens (after they verify they are residents of Vallejo) can anonymously post comments and feedback on other comments regarding current city projects. These statements are then incorporated into the greater decision-making process (City of Vallejo, 2013).

Exchanging information is also commonplace for the city workers. Tasini describes a great deal of “sharing” between the different city workers. Furthermore, as PB is under the City Manager’s department, they have a lot of control over guiding the PB process and ensuring that the PB recommendations are legal and align with city responsibilities and goals. They are also responsible for enacting the approved recommendations, which requires coordination with public works and the planning departments.

#### **4.2.3.7 Community Identity**

Both respondents emphasized Vallejo's diversity when characterizing the city; in fact, it was the first adjective both used. In addition to Vallejo's population being equally divided among people who identify as white, black, Asian-American, and Latino, the city is quite integrated; it does not have extremely segregated neighborhoods found in other cities across the U.S. (Morat, personal communication, March 17, 2016). With its diversity, respondents also stressed its affordability compared to surrounding communities within the San Francisco Bay area. The recognition of diversity in the city suggests that in building and shaping a better community post-bankruptcy, Vallejo must include all the different segments.

#### **4.2.3.8 Culture**

Due to its affordability, Vallejo is beginning to attract many artists, which is contributing to the culture of the city. Even more, due to the diversity, Vallejo has many different cultural events and festivals held throughout the year. Although a comprehensive study on the values and perceptions of people has not been conducted, like in Amherst, Morat says the Vallejo public has simple priorities for their community. These include improving public safety, infrastructure, road maintenance, and park areas. Evidently, the community highly values improving their physical surroundings. Therefore, PB can tap into that value system to create an engaging process by which members of the public can decide how to allocate funds to improve the bones of Vallejo, thus becoming integral to the planning process.

#### **4.2.3.9 Social Capital**

As Morat mentioned, developing greater social capital is as an overall goal for the city. Morat's view on social capital is that it extends beyond just improving the physical space. He says it is important to have higher density housing, open space access, which are both necessary to being more environmentally and socially sustainable. However, he argues that people also need to become more involved in things in their communities; in fact, Morat claims that community events are a major drive of increasing social capital. Since, the open space allows people places to host festivals, there is a feedback loop, where events encourage social capital and more engagement through PB, which can then be a process to allocate more funds to parkland to host more festivals.

Since social capital is a major goal of PB, one metric to measure the success of the initiative is to survey people asking them how many people they met during the process and how many more of their neighbors' names they now know. The participants' responses show great increases in the different people they have come to know during the PB process. However, Morat is careful not to exaggerate the effect PB has had on increasing social capital in the community, as typically only 4,000 out of the city's population of 115,000 participate.

#### **4.2.3.10 Community groups**

Since the city government is trying to become more user-friendly for their residents, Vallejo is moving away from a public meeting model for outreach and participation. Instead, they are attempting to tap into pre-existing events that community groups have already organized, such as the Juneteenth and Filipino cultural festivals.



Therefore, community groups serve as points of entry for the government to reach out to encourage participation and advertise PB.

Conscious of the many segments of the population within Vallejo, the City Council appoints a diverse group of people to the PB Steering Committee, which helps oversee the process and helps to ensure inclusion. To maintain that atmosphere of inclusion, steering committee members who are appointed typically have some association with a community group. For example, the current steering committee has representatives from the African American Alliance, Vallejo Heights Neighborhood Association, and Vallejo NAACP (City of Vallejo, 2015). So, community groups function as a metric to ensure inclusion and play an integral process in guiding and facilitating the process.

#### **4.2.3.11 Skills, Methods, and Capacity**

Considering that the city is recovering from bankruptcy, money and finances are definitely an issue for Vallejo. Yet, interestingly, in the inaugural year of PB, Vallejo hired the Participatory Budgeting Project to facilitate the process. Vallejo was utilizing the intellectual capital of the nonprofit whose expertise is in executing this participatory mechanism. Logistically, the PB Project was hired because Vallejo lacked the staff capacity needed to run the initiative properly. However, there is an underlying symbolism to the fact that with limited funds, Vallejo would spend money on outside consultants. The act suggests that Vallejo wanted to ensure that the process could be done right so it could potentially keep going. The Participatory Budgeting Project helped ensure the continuation of PB in Vallejo by creating a rulebook, which future cycles would be able to use.

Technology has also been a major resource for Vallejo in their effort to reach out to the community. One way has been through Open City Hall, which creates a more accessible platform for community comment. Another tool Vallejo uses is Textizen, which allows people to vote in the PB process through texting instead of going to voting centers. The latter platform is intended to attract people 18-35 years old, a typically underrepresented demographic in the PB process. The last tool Vallejo utilizes is probably their most important resource. The Crowdsourcing Democracy Team at Stanford created the online ballot for Vallejo, and is currently developing ways to target online advertising to better reach certain demographics.

Technology as a leverage point is not that important because it is more so a tool of the mechanism, rather than something that helped generate the mechanism. What is more important is that Vallejo had the ability to draw on these nearby resources, such as Stanford University, to provide free labor and technology as part of class projects and academic research.

#### **4.2.3.12 Effects of the Mechanism**

Since Participatory Budgeting must be approved every year by the City Council, the City Manager's office uses many different metrics to measure its success. Morat stresses that since Vallejo has many improvements needs, there are a lot of demands put on the income that comes in from the Measure B money; therefore, PB must constantly demonstrate it is worth it to allow citizens to decide which projects to allocate funds to, that potentially other city officials would have steered to other areas of governance.

After conducting a cost allocation plan, Vallejo found that for every \$1 invested in PB, there was a \$1.17 return in community value when volunteer hours and other

metrics were taken into account. Other quantitative measures relate back to the original goals of inclusion and fostering social capital. Within each PB cycle, the city does not consider their job done until the PB process matches a representative sample of the Vallejo population based on age, gender, race, and income. Different approaches, such as using online platforms are then used to ensure that underrepresented demographics are brought into the process. Another metric is how many people's first names did residents in their community know before and after the PB process as one way to assess increases in social capital.

Vallejo has gained national publicity, which validates the efforts in some way. As Vallejo has achieved the esteem of being the first citywide U.S. example of PB, there is more at stake in deciding whether to discontinue the effort. Media outlets like The Atlantic Magazine and Time Magazine have profiled the initiative. PB in Vallejo has been awarded one of the Top 10 Innovations in Public Engagement Award from the Ash Center at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government and the League of California Cities 2014 Helen Putnam Award for Enhancing Public Trust, Ethics, and Community Involvement. Furthermore, delegates from Vallejo were invited to attend and present at 2014 White Summit on Participatory Budgeting. While this recognition has helped institutionalize PB in Vallejo, many citizens are still unaware of the program and there is currently no proposal to make it a permanent fixture in the city's government. Therefore, internal support may be more important than external recognition in developing a long-term, institutionalized inclusive participation method.

#### **4.2.3.13 Discussion**

As another pre-institutionalized system of participation, Vallejo's PB system is very much dependent on individuals and the ideas they bring to governance as the catalysts for fostering inclusivity. In a similar pattern to Amherst, one person (Marti Brown) had knowledge of an innovative participatory mechanism, in this case participatory budgeting. Through campaigning, she was able to get buy-in from other City Council members to allow a trial of PB.

Instead of a culture of discussion and value information sharing, the drive behind Vallejo's inclusive participation program was their goal to improve the city's image and relationship with the community. While PB is an important mechanism in the ways in which Vallejo decides how to govern and plan, it is just one of many ways Vallejo is trying to be more transparent and serve their public in a more efficient manner. Thus, the public manager served as an important leverage point that fed back into the initial goals of the system to initiate a chain reaction of change. The outcome of this system is also feeding back to the paradigm because by bringing citizens and government together through participatory budgeting, there is change in the way people frame and conceive of how governance and planning should be done.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION

#### 5.1 Overview and Challenges

In order to increase the numbers of communities applying inclusive participation systems, the discourse must move beyond which mechanisms facilitate inclusivity. Academics and practitioners alike have found that using a mixture of tools that directly target underrepresented populations who are brought into the process earlier will lead to better, more effective outcomes. By framing public participation as a system, planners can begin to understand the typically less visible context that fosters inclusivity in making planning decisions. At its most basic level, participation is about interaction. And through Systems Theory, we are able to visualize those interconnections to determine which stocks can be altered to improve the function of the system. While the literature has recognized some of the feedback loops between the effects of the participatory mechanism on the community, there has yet to be a comprehensive, holistic approach that conceptualizes both the seen and unseen aspects that foster inclusive participation.

Through a thorough investigation of the literature, I formulated six subsystems that influence participatory mechanisms: paradigms, goals, legal framework, political environment, community values, and social structure (see Figure 6). In order for this framework to be most useful for communities to use to evaluate how their community's participatory system functions and to see where changes can be made, I identified leverage points within each of the systems. These leverage points are based on Meadows' twelve identified leverage and their increasing order of impact (see **Error! Reference source not found.** Paradigms and goals are the only leverage points within those

respective subsystems. Within Legal Framework, the two identified leverage points are the presence of laws and the language used within those laws written. The Political Environment has three major leverage points: public managers and elected officials, administrative structure, and political agendas. Within the Community Values subsystem, the three overarching leverage points are community identity, culture, and social capital. These feed into the last subsystem, Social Structure, where community groups and skills, methods and capacity represent points of change.

This theoretical framework was then applied to two case studies, which represent different models of inclusive participation: collective impact in Amherst, Massachusetts and participatory budgeting in Vallejo, California. The Systems framework worked very well in parsing out the different subsystems and leverage points on the system. They also demonstrated one limitation of the original modeled generated through the literature: that a true system should have feedback from the end product to the earlier portion of the system. Therefore, Figure 25 represents a comprehensive model of inclusive participatory systems.

The original goal of this thesis was to create a framework for researchers, citizens, and planning practitioners to use to assess how to better generate inclusive participation. In one sense, that goal was met through the generation of Figure 6 and the testing of effectiveness of the leverage points in the case studies. However, through this process, I encountered several challenges, the first being the user-friendliness of the model. While the diagram of the Systems Theory framework does help to captivate that there are many factors that go into creating an inclusive participatory mechanism before the moment government and community come together. Yet, this diagram does not include the

leverage points. This decision was made in favor of simplicity and visual cleanliness. In turn, this framework does require further explanation to not only understand its function, but how to use it. Further work needs to be conducted to refine and clarify this model before it can become a finished tool that communities can use.

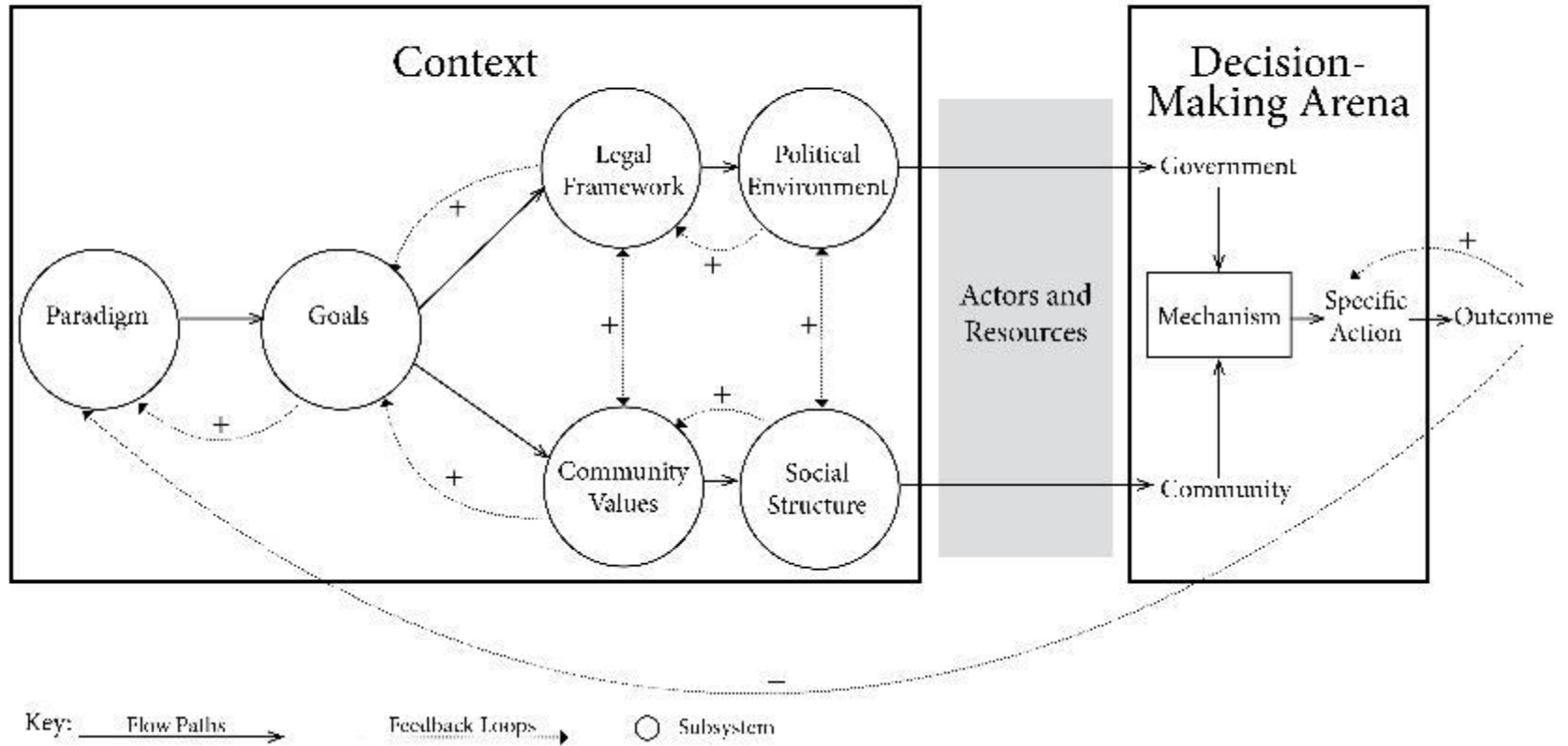
The limits of this framework also speak to the ways in which the model should be used. This research project was an intentional effort not to generate a checklist or to-do list for planners and community members to adopt more inclusive measures. Instead, the model in this thesis functions more as the start of the conversation to better understand how a community's participatory culture in planning and governance already functions, and what can be done to improve it. This framework merely serves as an attempt to guide dialogue about developing inclusivity, not as a panacea to exclusive forms of participation rife in local U.S. planning. By starting the conversation with my attempt at modeling the context leading to participation, I hope to contribute to the field of participatory planning and attempt to introduce certain ideas that may help develop better tools and approaches.

In terms of the framework's generalizability, while its intention was to be used for local U.S. communities, since it was born out of a literature review that was international in scope, there is an argument for its applicability to other countries. Since planning tends to be a field focused on local communities and regions, the framework (in its current state) is most useful at a smaller scale. However, the framework could potentially be applied to both state and federal level, although with larger areas, identifying clear leverage points in the model may become untenable (e.g. trying to identify what is U.S. culture without disregarding all the regional variations). Before the model reaches the

state of being used by larger regions, it must be developed even further with a focus on community-based participation. I only mention generalizability in this thesis to point to the potential benefits of this model once it becomes more refined.



## Pre-Institutionalized Public Participation Systems



**Figure 25: System approach to visualize pre-institutionalized systems where the participation outcomes influence the paradigm, and subsequently changing the entire system**

## **5.2 Other Findings**

Based on an analysis of the interviews with decision-makers in Vallejo and Amherst, several overarching conclusions can be made based on the case studies in addition to the applicability of the systems theory framework used through this thesis.

### **5.2.1 The Role of the Mechanism and Institutionalization**

This thesis does not discount any of the detailed research that has been done on participatory mechanisms; cultivating a knowledge of effective mechanisms is of the utmost importance to fostering inclusivity. However, this emphasis on researching mechanisms usually downplays the role of context. In studying the subsystems and associated leverage points that are important in creating inclusive participation methods, I found that the role of the mechanism to be extremely important. For one thing, the type of mechanism (e.g. collective impact or participatory budgeting) must align with the context or the goal of the system will not be achieved. Furthermore, changing the participatory mechanism may not have a long-lasting effect on the community unless the outcomes of it feedback and influence earlier parts of the system, such as the goal.

Interestingly, altering the mechanism within an inclusive system of participation can have enormous effects on either changing the system or stabilizing it. The difference in feedback largely depends on whether the inclusive participation system is institutionalized (i.e. a regular, somewhat permanent part of government structure) or discretionary (i.e. not a fixture of government that can be stopped quite easily). If the participatory system is institutionalized (e.g., Porto Alegre, Brazil), then the outcome of

the participation mechanism will feedback into the goal. However, if the system does not have the certainty of being a long-lasting part of local governance, then the outcome will feedback to the paradigm. This slight, yet dramatic, difference pertains to the fact that once inclusive participation is considered part of community and governmental culture (i.e. institutionalized), then decision-makers and residents' thinking is already geared toward a certain way of thinking, or paradigm, so only the goals within that paradigm may change. However, if the inclusive participation system is new and not a fixture of the government, then each outcome of a successful inclusive mechanism will feed back and change how people think of their communities and their government, thus altering the paradigm.

In Systems Theory terminology, a pre-institutionalized system has not reach a steady state, and is therefore more dynamic. Why this is important in thinking of factors that lead to inclusive participation is that decision-makers must recognize that fostering inclusivity is not an easy process and may involve multiple stages. I actually think a true inclusive participation process must initially have a feedback loop between the outcome and the paradigm and undergo a dynamic state, because through the collaboration and knowledge sharing, the way in which people think and conceive should change. In Vallejo, the new paradigm is how governance is conducted and what governments can do; in Amherst, it is what is a community, and how do people think of a community.

All inclusive participation systems must enter through a pre-institutionalized state. However, not all participatory systems must become institutionalized through law or regularity. It all depends on what the goal of the system is; if the goal is for the mechanism to be temporary to achieve some short-term goal, then a pre-institutionalized

system may be all that is needed. However, if planners are to achieve inclusive participation as part of regular practice, then institutionalization must be the ultimate goal. This is not to say that the participatory mechanisms thus become inflexible and static. On the contrary, having achieved a paradigm of inclusive participation, planners can then shift goals to address different situations. And institutionalization may not necessarily mean a law, but it could also suggest a culture within the community.

Until some degree of institutionalization is achieved, individual actors within the system are vital to its success. The reasoning being that these certain individuals (usually public managers or elected officials) are driven by their own agendas or goals, which are intricately tied to their values. If their goals or agendas are not spread into the political environment or social structure, then there is a greater likelihood that the inclusive system will fail.

### **5.2.2 The Role of the Police Force**

Another interesting trend between the two case studies is that police officers were both mentioned during questions about public managers. The reason why police officers matter very much to inclusive participation is that they are the literal face of power and government. While many citizens may not even know what the mayor or city manager is, police men are more likely to be people's day to day experience. Therefore in order to foster relations between government and community through participation, one face of the government (the police) must convey trust, safety, and openness.

### **5.2.3 Distillation of subsystems of the system**

During this process of distilling the different subsystems and leverage points, the statements and points of data became increasingly blurred and hard to separate from one another. A public manager may be talking about how community groups influence their job or how the effects of the mechanism change their goal. When the lines between the different subsystems become fuzzier and the political framework is not solely interacting within itself ahead of the mechanism, then there is greater inclusivity. However, the other side of this statement is that the lines cannot be blurred too much where the role of the town manager is not distinguished from that of a community leader; that would be chaos. Inclusive participation is this paradoxical system in which a flexible order is established that not does adhere to rigid roles. Inclusive participation can only happen when government reaches out to the community and the community reaches back. But in order to get that moment of connection and coming together during that mechanism (be it a forum or survey), then there has to be some interconnections ahead of time, some signs showing that this exchange will matter, that there is trust, voice, impact, and respect. When it becomes harder to parse out the different subsystems, like the community culture from the politics, when we see these overlapping attitudes between government and community, then we can see the beginnings of inclusive participation.

### **5.2.4 Expectations of Change**

One of the reasons for writing this thesis was I wanted to see if the barriers to implementing inclusive participation was due to limited staff and resources. Both case studies mentioned having constraints in both of those areas, yet were able to execute

inclusive participation mechanisms. Therefore, the path to changing communities to ensure that they adopt better participation methods goes deeper than money; it has to do with changing entrenched and preconceived patterns of how government and communities should be run.

By developing this framework, I am by no means suggesting that fostering inclusive participation can be done by the flick of a switch or in a day. Instead, the purpose of this thesis is show areas in which the system is already gauged and ways that changes may start to progress toward this mentality of public participation. Altering community identities and culture cannot be changed instantly by signing a law into effect or hiring a new public manager. Public managers and community members should be strategic about what can be accomplished with the resources they have and atmosphere they are working in by choosing to focus on a leverage point that will maximize the impact on the system within the limitations of the community.

One way or another, inclusive participation only arises from collaborative governance. Both case studies focused on internal as well as external communication within governance that spread to planning. This seems to be a major factor. By communicating, you can establish clear goals and objectives. This could be initiated by one public manager, who then creates a culture. But ultimately the values are the same; departments should not be cut off from another because they can share knowledge and resources, and people should not be cut off from government because they can provide the same exact thing. In closing, creating inclusive mechanisms should be a priority of planners as they should live up to the ethics preached in both academia and professional organizations.

# APPENDIX A

## IRB APPROVAL LETTER



**University of Massachusetts Amherst**  
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**Research Compliance**  
**Human Research Protection Office (HRPO)**  
Telephone: (413) 545-3428  
FAX: (413) 577-1728

### Certification of Human Subjects Approval

**Date:** March 11, 2016  
**To:** Stephen Mero, Landscape Arch Regional Plan  
**Other Investigator:** Flavia Montenegro Menezes, Landscape Arch Regional Plan  
**From:** Lynnette Eddy Stever, Chair, UMASS IRB

Protocol Title: Thinking in Circles: A Systems Theory Approach to Public Participation in Planning  
Protocol ID: 2016-2959  
Review Type: EXPEDITED - NEW  
Paragraph ID: 6.7  
Approval Date: 03/11/2016  
Expiration Date: 03/10/2017  
OCOA \*

This study has been reviewed and approved by the University of Massachusetts Amherst IRB, Federal Wide Assurance # 00003809. Approval is granted with the understanding that investigator(s) are responsible for:

**Modifications** - All changes to the study (e.g. protocol, recruitment materials, consent form, additional key personnel), must be submitted for approval in e-protocol before instituting the changes. New personnel must have completed CITI training.

**Consent forms** - A copy of the approved, validated, consent form (with the IRB stamp) must be used to consent each subject. Investigators must retain copies of signed consent documents for six (6) years after close of the grant, or three (3) years if unlimited.

**Adverse Event Reporting** - Adverse events occurring in the course of the protocol must be reported in e-protocol as soon as possible, but no later than five (5) working days.

**Continuing Review** - Studies that received Full Board or Expedited approval must be reviewed three weeks prior to expiration, or six weeks for Full Board. Renewal Reports are submitted through e-protocol.

**Completion Reports** - Notify the IRB when your study is complete by submitting a Final Report Form in e-protocol.

Consent form (when applicable) will be stamped and sent in a separate e-mail. Use only IRB approved copies of the consent forms, questionnaires, letters, advertisements etc. in your research.

Please contact the Human Research Protection Office if you have any further questions. Best wishes for a successful project.

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