

Roundtable on Collaborative Planning and Democracy: Building Institutions of Governance for the Network Society

Association of European Schools of Planning 2004 Conference

**Grenoble Universite Recherche
July 3, 2004**

Summary of Proceedings

INTRODUCTION

David Booher of the Center for Collaborative Policy at California State University Sacramento opened the roundtable by thanking all the participants for attending, especially in light of the fact the roundtable was the last session of the conference. He explained that the roundtable is one of many such roundtables that are being coordinated by the Center as part of a network of interdisciplinary and international scholars interested in the issue of collaborative policy reforms to democratic governance institutions. The premise is that there are useful discourses underway in the disciplines of planning, political science, conflict resolution, and public administration that are converging in some ways. But the discourses are still distinct. The concept is to help bring these discourses together to explore the potential synergies around the theme: *"Collaborative Policy and Democracy: Building Capable Institutions of Governance for Network Society"*. The network is designed to achieve four outcomes:

1. The participants will learn about each other's practice and scholarship and make new connections that will enhance their future work.
2. New directions for research and theory will be identified that will help move collaborative policy making forward in addressing issues challenging institutions of governance and enhancing democracy and civil society.
3. A long-term network of scholars and practitioners who are interested in the potential of collaborative policy making for democracy and governance will be created.
4. Publication of a collection of interdisciplinary papers on the topic.

The strategy is to create a network of people in the three fields who are interested in pursuing this concept and collaborating together to organize cross discipline panels and informal dialogues at selected conferences and meetings over the next three years. So far approximately forty scholars from the various disciplines have agreed to participate. This strategy is being carried out with partial support from The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation.

David reported that the first roundtable was held at the conference of the American Society of Public Administration in March in conjunction with several related panels and presentations. This roundtable generated a mapping of goals and sub goals of collaborative democracy and the issues in achieving them. It also generated a proposal to develop a statement for the field to be published in appropriate journals calling on academic programs in planning, political science, and public administration to adopt into their curricula content to develop more expertise and inquiry into collaborative democratic governance. The idea is that participants in the network would sign this statement to enhance its legitimacy.

He passed out copies of the map and of a “trial balloon” of the statement and asked participants to provide him with feedback

PANEL PRESENTATIONS

David then introduced the panel participants: Judith Innes of the University of California Berkeley, Lia Vasconcelos of the New University of Lisbon, Jean Hillier of the University of Newcastle, Alessandro Balducci of the Politechnic of Milan, and Patsy Healey of the University of Newcastle. Other participants in the roundtable introduced themselves. A list of participants is attached.

Lia Vasconcelos

Lia Vasconcelos presented some of her findings from her work in Portugal focusing on public participation in several planning issues. (*A summary of Lia's presentation is attached.*) Findings from her analyses focused in Portugal within the European context show growing demands from a more educated civil society to play increasingly active roles in public decisions and a need of new formats for participation. In addition, new requirements for more participatory processes were established at the European level (e.g. Aarhus Convention, Water Framework Directive) within wider institutional settings of the European Union (Parliament, Commission, Court).

Ongoing research based on participatory observation in structuring and conducting participative workshops, interviews to decision makers, specialists and public officers responsible for setting up participatory processes, interviews to participants in forums created for the implementation of sustainability at the local level show a general agreement on the need for participation, although with different meanings and distinct accepted levels of intervention for the different actors. In particular, participants mention frequently that such forums can contribute to new constructive collaborative solutions and to changes in perceptions, attitudes and action of those involved. It was found that four aspects play a particularly important role for the success of the forums: it must be clear that outcomes can influence the decisions, the operational format must stimulate interaction among the participants, the objectives of the forum and of each of its discussion phases should be clearly stated and pursued, and the results of each phase must be made explicit to the participants.

Two emerging phenomena are developing. Platforms of NGOs resulting from networking within the organized civil society are emerging in Portugal and Europe to articulate actions of intervention in public decision settings. Self organizing actions are increasingly bringing together actors concerned with common specific issues in a short span of time. New information technologies (Internet, e-mail, SMS) are playing an increasing role in mobilizing and organizing these new participatory settings. Formal and informal networking is found to be determinant in these actions.

The current institutional inability to deal with complex situations under the scrutiny of a more demanding educated civil society is generating new participatory ways to cope with changes in the current societal context. They seem to have the capacity to adjust more adequately to the needs, complexity and uncertainty of the informational society.

Jean Hillier

Jean Hillier then offered a brief summary of some of her analyses of key issues relating to governance issues and collaboration. She suggested that one reason why recent developments in collaborative and relational planning theory are regarded as being controversial by some people is that theorists/practitioners such as Patsy, Judith and Lia are talking about and practicing immanence- uncertainty and fluidity, whereas the broader world of theory and practice is still rooted in transcendence- a desire for certainty and “the good.” Jean suggested new theorizing and practice along the line of determinacy, dynamism, uncertainty, and complexity.

She concluded by suggesting that complexity theory and the idea of emergence may be central to the question of institutional change but that we need to develop the right research questions. She also mentioned the difference between networks vs. hierarchy as a way of institutional actions and the problem of working out who you are working with in networks. *(A copy of Jean’s presentation is attached. Jean welcomes comments to her presentation.)*

Alessandro Balducci

Alessandro Balducci began his comments by noting that he has been involved in many participatory processes, as manager, facilitator and in other ways. He and his colleagues have worked on a collaborative inter-communal plan (this is between communes) in which a group of municipalities get together. They have also included Regeneration projects at the European level where law requires participation and planning has to be done in a participatory way. His department has been asked to help in a variety of processes. This is a growing trend in Europe to encourage collaborative participatory processes.

He has found that the processes are very fragile and linked to two different aspects. He and his colleagues were concentrating on developing the participatory process and people liked it but when it entered the “black box” of public administration it was a failure.

People were not informed about the results. In the spontaneous part everyone was very happy, but at the end they were not.

He observed that when it is written in the law that participation is required (beyond the formalistic public hearing type process) the results are there but the problem is for the participatory processes to resist the issues of powerful players, and the demands for following the rules, and getting money.

Their reaction to this phenomenon has been not to accept just any participatory process. They also insist on being very clear with people about what they actually can decide and to focus on that. That restricts it a lot. In the 2nd case we have to reassess. We need to figure out how get cultural support for collaborative democratic processes. The work of the Collaborative Democracy Network goes to this

Alessandro suggested that great attention also must be given to linking these activities to results. There is a great responsibility in doing this kind of planning. It involves society in a very deep way.

He observed that there are many Fifth Framework projects in the European Union (<http://www.cordis.lu/fp5/home.html>) and it is funding lots of cooperative research in centers across Europe. He is involved in research projects on sustainability on the linkage of leadership and participation. There are many case studies and they will offer empirical information on this. They are nearing completion.

David Booher

David Booher began his comments by noting that he was very gratified to hear that the experiences with these issues in Europe are very similar to his experiences in the United States. He said he was impressed to realize how Europe seems to be addressing authentic public participation issues.

David noted that in the work of the Center they have found that a key issue is the capacity for collaborative democratic governance. They have come to view capacity as involving three elements. First, there is the capacity of public agencies to use collaborative methods in their work. This involves issue like skill in collaborative methods such as facilitation, negotiation, public communication, and process design. But it also involves culture of a public agency and whether it is focused on political, technical, or participatory styles. This goes to some of the issues Alessandro raised. For example, do public officials view collaboration as a cooptation device or are they truly committed to obtaining and acting on public contributions?

The second element is the capacity of the public to use collaborative methods. For example, this involves the public's skills in communicating with agency officials, to access information relevant to policy issues that affect them, and the ability to use collaborative strategies among communities, groups and stakeholders organizations. He suggested that this goes to the cultural change that Alessandro discussed.

Finally, the third element is the capacity of the structure of decision-making between public agencies and the public. He suggested this goes to the issues around how legislation provides for or discourages collaborative processes. For example, he noted that recent research by the Center for Collaborative Policy had demonstrated that open meeting laws in California and the United States were in many cases detrimental to collaborative processes, even though they were enacted to assure openness to the public (www.csus.edu/ccp/) Similarly many public participation laws discourage true collaborative processes and public involvement.

Judith Innes

There are three related challenges for us. One is to learn to live with the paradoxical idea that we have to find ways to institutionalize constant change. We have to accept and encourage change and see it as normal. We still however think that what we seek is stability and predictability. We look for certainty. We need to find ways to institutionalize ad hoc action in policy and planning as a response to this reality. There are not going to be standardized strategies or policies that can be determined well in advance and implemented.

Secondly complexity theory can help us cope with and make sense of this change process. Unlike our classical machine model of the world, the complexity model is one that posits change as normal, interaction as central, and dynamic non linear social and political processes as our focus. Complexity thinking turns our focus to diversity of participants in policy, variation in policy strategies, and evolution and adaptation of systems. It gives us new ways to see what our old lenses cannot.

Finally we need to be evaluating collaborative processes but the standard ways of evaluating programs do not apply. Collaborative processes do not have goals and they evolve and adapt. Complexity theory can help us to frame these evaluations. But they have to be done because collaborative processes are increasingly being used in place of other more standard types of bureaucratic or legislative decision making. They will not be accepted as legitimate without a systematic effort to understand what they accomplish and how they work.

Patsy Healey

Patsy Healey began her comments by suggesting that planning should be part of a movement for change in the policy analysis/planning field. She agreed that we are trying to change a whole body of thought and intellectual structure. We are trying to flip the epistemology and think differently.

There are many strands to this different epistemology and much is in development and/or contested. She noted she was suspicious at first of complexity theory when Judith Innes first talked to her about it several years ago. But since then she has concluded that there are ideas in complexity theory that are important—for example that everything is always

on the move. Where everything is stable that is unusual. She suggested that we need to understand better when and why fixes (new paradigms and new modes of acting) happen. When is a new fix positive and when too rigid? When is there too much fluidity for a new reasonable stable fix to emerge?

She indicated that she is also looking at some of the ideas on emergence. We may need to change the way we think about patterns. Instead of thinking just about the immediate patterns driving a planning issue, we may need to step back and think more about the underlying strategic patterns that derive from the systems in which the more immediate patterns are defined. If we try to think about strategic patterns we can think more about what is involved in attempting to make some new patterns emerge or strengthening emergent patterns.

She observed that she had found that skilled policy makers know when to open up a space for “reading” emergent patterns. As an example, she was reminded of attempts by strategic planners in Newcastle City Council, UK to read the dynamics of local housing markets. They were experiencing growing levels of abandonment in the low cost housing stock, much of which was owned by the Council of Social Housing Associations. The areas abandoned were spatially very concentrated. The planners wanted indicators which would help them predict in advance which other areas were liable to abandonment, so that they could attempt avoiding action. But they could never get reliable indicators. All they could do was to “read” the early signs of abandonment, which meant that already an area in the low cost housing market was destabilized. In the end, they upscaled the problem, and tried to address the emergent patterning of the local housing market as a whole, by key strategic interventions (and there were lots of problems here too!). It was a question of trying to understand the complexity and then knowing how to intervene in a complex system to try to change the underlying dynamics so that a better outcome occurs.

General Discussion

David Booher opened the floor for other participant comments.

Lasse Peltonen explained that in business they use scenarios to help with knowing how to act and how to react (in the context of a complex reality). In business these are used to train the decision makers and to present ideas to public decision makers. Scenarios train you in being creative planners. We too often just extend what comes from the past. Bringing in creativity in thinking about futures is important.

David Booher agreed with this and noted that collaborative processes in the United States often use scenarios as part of the process.

Louis Albrechts also agreed. He said scenarios are for forward thinking, guiding a visioning process and helping with the choice of alternatives.

Patsy Healey asked if there isn't an issue about if you start making scenario construction a fix, how do you define the problem set? Institutional work depends on the starting point and what breadth you allow.

Louis Albrechts responded that you could get input from other people. If you try to think about the pattern rather than what is going to happen, than you can explore all the dynamics that may be involved and think about how they might play out and how you might adapt to change as it occurs. In the process you can learn a lot about how others see these dynamics and everyone can learn, not only about the dynamics but also about each other's take on them.

Lasse Peltonen agreed. He noted that scenarios are the opposite of forecasting. 9/11 is a good example. Intelligence leaders made a decision to focus on their existing practices rather than to think through the different scenarios that might emerge from the dynamics that existed with regards to terrorist networks. Hence everyone was completely unprepared. If they had been doing scenario planning, perhaps the evidence they were getting and ignoring would have instead suggested the potential for what happened and they could have responded sooner.

Louis Albrechts noted another example: The French tradition in *Les Futuribles*. <http://www.futuribles.com/> He said this is about possible futures (10-15 years) and the main planning organization in France did this. There is a national memorandum that used this.

Judith Innes suggested politicians are afraid of this sort of thing because it potentially lessens their influence and opens the door to change that may be threatening.

David Booher agreed politicians' fears might be a factor to address. He observed that California used scenarios for the state water plan including global warming as a reality. But a Republican governor was elected before the plan was publicly released and the new administration is holding the water plan up for further work. There is conjecture that this hold up may be due to the global warming issue and the potential controversy for Republican supporters because the Bush Administration has been very unsupportive of legitimizing the importance of global warming.

Another participant suggested that in the sense of complex systems scenarios are a mapping of sub-optimal spaces.

Judith Innes noted that scenarios are like complexity in that they show that every run of the scenario will generate a different future.

Patsy Healey added that you do a collaborative process and time passes. It would be interesting to look at these over time. What is left behind? Did it open minds? Was there learning?

David Booher agreed that looking at these processes over time and evaluating them is important. He noted that the Center for Collaborative Policy is doing such a study of one process in California, the Sacramento Area Water Forum. Judith Innes has carried out extensive research on this project. It began several years ago so there is an opportunity to look at the issues Patsy suggests. This research will probably be available late this year and can be accessed at www.csus.edu/ccp/ when it is completed.

Another participant noted that there is a European Awareness scenario workshop 2001 <http://www.cordis.lu/easw/home.html/>. However, it did recently lose funding.

Louis Albrechts reported that he had seen policy makers converted by scenarios. He said he had done training on this and the regional director of the agency changed his way of doing things as a result.

Judith Innes said that in her observation senior administrators are more likely to respond to this than political leaders.

Stephen Connelly argued we should build on theory and literature in related fields. He noted that he is familiar with many similar ideas in the international development field, particularly the work of Robert Chambers. (Chambers, R. 1983, *Rural Development*, Harlow: Longman and Chambers, R. 1997, *Whose Reality Counts?* London: Intermediate Technology Development Group.) The institutionalization and scaling up issues are covered in a couple of edited collections from workshops that Chambers' group was involved in: Holland, J. and J. Blackburn (eds.) (1997) *Whose Voice? Participatory Research and Policy Change*, London: ITDG Publishing and Blackburn and J. and J. Holland (eds.) (1997) *Who Changes? Institutionalizing Participation in Development*, London: ITDG Publishing.

[In a later note to Judith Innes Stephen added: "There is a lot more out of this stable, some of it more or less critical. I worked alongside one of Chambers' group in Eritrea, and even within the group he said there were tensions over the importance of recognizing political and structural constraints, vs. those (including Chambers) who believed that the fundamental changes needed were in approach and ethics, and that exposure to collaborative processes could effect some, at least, of such change.

My sense on coming home after working in the Southern participatory development field was that the techniques and the critiques were more advanced there than here, though obviously a great deal has happened in the past 9-10 years. I do still think that the critiques are worth looking at - two fairly recent Manchester conferences produced some very good stuff, though I suspect you might find them over-Foucauldian. Cooke and Kothari edited a collection from the first, Cooke, B. and U. Kothari (eds.) (2001) *Participation: the new tyranny?* London: Zed Books and the papers from the second (Beyond Tyranny, I think) are on the web."]

Patsy Healey observed that the networks leave behind material objects, routines, codes, and laws. Trace elements and memories. There are quite a few things left behind. It would take a complex form of research to get at these.

Teo van Looij cautioned that networks could be used to manipulate the public. He cited Network City and Perth. He argued that network collaboration should be done in the open.

At this point the conference managers interrupted and asked the roundtable to conclude.

Next Steps

David Booher thanked all the participants for their insights and stimulating dialogue. He indicated that the next step is to send a copy of the roundtable summary to the participants for their review and comments. Then the final summary will be sent to other participants in the Collaborative Democracy Network and the content carried on to other roundtables. The next roundtables will be at the conferences of the American Political Science Association in Chicago (early September), Association for Conflict Resolution in Sacramento (late September), and the Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning in Portland, Oregon (October). David invited anyone going to those conferences to contact him at dbooher@berkeley.edu so you can be included in the planning. He reminded participants to provide him feedback on the mapping and the trial balloon statement and invited participants to let him know if they are interested in being involved in future work of the Collaborative Democracy Network.

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List of Participants

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AESOP Round Table

View From

Jean Hillier

Introduction

My viewing position:

I've been in England 12 months and this is an outsider's view of the transformation that the central government is trying to bring about in planning practice. I'll give a brief outline of how I see it and link to Judith's and Patsy's material in particular and then make 3, what I see as key, points regarding participation/collaboration and deliberative democracy.

The English Situation

(i) The Old System

As I see it some of the main features of the old planning system were:

- ♣ highly centralised control – central government PPGs etc proscriptive;
- ♣ many different central government Departments did 'planning'-related work – little integration – entrenched bureaucratic and functional cultures;
- ♣ local level – regulation of development proposals on a case-by-case basis;
- ♣ local development plans – policies for development and use of land
- ♣ fairly adversarial system of Examination in Public, Inquiries, Appeals etc;
- ♣ professional 'expertise' led – often silos within LAs;
- ♣ strong idea of what was needed to make the 'good city' and the 'good plan';
- ♣ fairly technocratic – GIS, forecasting etc;
- ♣ still strong rational comprehensive influence;
- ♣ mistrust of local resident groups (NIMBYs), interest groups ('selfish'), developers ('greedy');
- ♣ attitude of participation as time-consuming obstacle to getting things done on time.

All in all, what I would call a 'transcendent' system. That there's something 'out there' that is true and independent, which 'goes beyond' individual cases; a peculiar mysticism – the idea of the 'good' city, plan, process etc regulated by planning legislation.

(ii) The New System

The system of development plans is being changed to one based on Local Development Frameworks (LDFs). The government says that the underlying purpose of the LDF should be

'to give spatial expression to those elements of Community Strategies that relate to the use and development of land' (Planning Green Paper, 2001).

LAs have a duty to prepare Community Strategies. These range from visionary statements to highly developed strategies with detailed action plans and recommendations.

In its guidance (PPS12) on LDFs the government says that Local Development Documents should:

- a) identify inter-dependencies and *functional relationships* that exist between places ...
- b) provide an agreed vision for an area signed up to by the community and stakeholders
- c) give spatial expression to the Community Strategy etc.

There is a requirement to 'front load' community involvement – from identifying issues, to debating options and beyond. Continuing involvement. In many ways, the community strategy drives the Local Development Scheme etc.

Relating this to Collaborative/Communicative Planning

Planning is about planning *with* people, not *for* people.

This has been recognised in new government 'instructions'. So, participation is a key 'technique' as it is called in WA. Consensus has become a buzz-word.

BUT, especially for planning staff used to doing things the 'old' way, and who may feel vulnerable for lots of reasons in a community-led process, there seems to be a call for a template for consensus-building.

But it isn't like baking cookies – can't apply a cookie-cutter model. *Scoping* is vital *before* deciding on what strategies may be appropriate.

As Judith writes, a number of conditions need to hold for a process to be labelled consensus-building. 'If these do not hold, failure ... is likely' (*Planning Theory*, 2004, 3(1): 7).

Don't waste your and the communities' time and effort on consensus-building if it isn't going to happen. Try something else.

Secondly, there's a need for planners to accept that some levels of dissent are inevitable. Practitioners (and theorists) have yet to come to terms with the idea of *agonism* (*not* antagonism) and to think through ways of respectfully dealing with differences and disagreements. Again, this may be because they are stuck in old ways of thinking about permanent 'solutions' and adversarial processes. (See Ploger, 2004).

Relating to Relational Planning

The push is for integrated 'joined-up' working aiming at sustainable development in economic, social, environmental and natural resource terms. The LDDs must therefore integrate the land-use consequences of many other policies and strategies at various spatial scales (international, national, regional, local) and contents (eg regeneration, economic development, education, housing, health, waste, environmental protection, transport etc etc).

As Patsy's work indicates, this entails recognition of:

- ♣ multiple horizontal and vertical networks interrelating;

- ♣ trajectories are multiple, non-linear and *continually emerging*;
- ♣ emphasis is less on fixed structures than fluidity and change.

It's much more *immanent*.

Tensions

The ODPM published a booklet called *Changing the Culture: how the planning reforms are set to reinvent the profession* (2004).

But is culture change happening? This is where I see a *definite need* for new theory to come out of practice and help us understand what's happening.

That theory will probably include elements of

- ♣ psychology/psychoanalysis – people's behaviours and why they act in certain ways;
- ♣ organisational literature – how organisations manage change;
- ♣ philosophy
- ♣ social/cultural theory, as well as more 'mainstream' planning theory.

What are my initial thoughts on this theory?

For me, the issue of 'affect' is vital, not just in an individual, but in a collective (eg LA planning section) sense. There are people and institutions who thrive on change. They welcome it, seeing it and new ways of thinking as a stimulating challenge. Unfortunately, they seem to be in a minority in professional disciplines.

More often we meet people who value continuity, certainty, order rather than difference and fluidity.

Initial discussion with a few LA planning officers at lower levels (ie those people who write the plans, do the participation etc) about how they're coping with the requirements of the new system indicate a variety of responses:

- ♣ it'll all blow over and settle down and we can carry on as before;
- ♣ it's only rhetoric – I'll keep doing what I've always done;
- ♣ it's too different/confusing/difficult - I'll keep doing what I've always done;
- ♣ there's so much guidance and it's all confusing and contradictory – I'll wait until it's clarified before I do anything;
- ♣ but the 'traffic engineers' [etc] don't understand planning – we don't talk to them;
- ♣ the community development section has already done the Community Strategy. It's just a vague wish-list that's too general and not relevant to planning. So we'll make our own list of ideas;
- ♣ but what if the community gets it wrong? We can't base our whole strategy on the whims of a few NIMBYs;
- ♣ the community never sees the big picture. They don't think beyond their back gardens or the next few years.

In these generic statements there's a general antagonism to forces of flux or immanence. There's still a tendency to want order, predictability, the idea that planners know 'better' than the community, to have a silo mentality and a need for clear instructions and 'rules'.

They have an imagination of what a good system and good outputs are ie a transcendent system.

For me, this explains why the philosophy underpinning the ODPM's new way of thinking and Judith's and Patsy's empirically-informed work rub up against a lot of people and other theories. The ODPM, Judith and Patsy are thinking about immanence (uncertainty, fluidity, evolution) [we can maybe come back to the need for 'rules' and transcendent aspects of both in discussion] in a theoretical and practical world geared to transcendence. Planners I've talked to are attempting to 'master' this new philosophy by simplifying it, contracting it, ignoring it.

So, what kind of theory do I want: it's *poststructural*.

What's poststructural? it's about not letting the definition or location of something (eg planning or politics) be determined in advance. So it's not seeking the underlying structure of something but rather searching for why and how structures become undone or incomplete. It would be about:

fragmentation
multiplicity
rupture
agonism
fluidity
transformation
transgression
undecidability – not either/or but both/and

But it isn't a retreat into relativism or irrationality. No event is un-conditioned but there is no absolute, transcendent conditioning origin.

It will have a bit of psychoanalysis (Lacan) in it – to help me understand desires and behaviours and what may be going on below the level of consciousness (Bourdieu?). And I'm drawn to Foucault's ideas of immanence and to Deleuze and Guattari's ideas of becoming which is about moving beyond. It allows for unexpected elements to come into play and things not to quite work out as expected. It allows me to see planning and planners as *experiments* enmeshed in a series of modulating networked relationships in circumstances at the same time both rigid and flexible where outcomes are volatile. Problems are not 'solved' once and for all but rather are constantly recast, reformulated in new perspectives. (eg smog in WA. Is it due to traffic fumes or burning off stubble?) It's an issue of problematisation rather than solution.

My new abstract definition of planning would be something along the lines of
the investigation of 'virtualities' unseen in the present;
the experimentation with what may yet happen;
the temporary inquiry into what at a given time and place we might yet think or do.

It's an exercise in building new spaces for thought in the midst of things' (Rajchman, 1998: 2).

The name of the game is not to rediscover the universal but to find the conditions under which something new may be created (Rajchmann, 1998: 33).

So, planning practice for me is a kind of 'spatial investigation' proceeding by experiment and induction, which allows disparate points of view to coexist; which has a concern

- ♣ *for indeterminate essences rather than contoured, ordered ones,*
- ♣ *for dynamic or emergent properties rather than fixed ones,*
- ♣ *for allowing intuition and uncertainty, multiplicity and complexity rather than systematic certainties.*

This leads to questions about the very nature of the powers and potentials of built and non-built space – of what it may be possible to be and to do.

How are we to conceive of, and therefore deal with, potentials or forces that depart from the possibilities of given forms, structures or ideas, affecting us in ways that go beyond what we can wholly grasp and working in other ways than through overall organisations or blueprints? (Rajchman, 1998: 116).

The 'virtual city': the city that holds together the most, and most complicated, 'different possible worlds', allowing them to exist together along a constructed plane with no need of a pre-established harmony (Rajchman, 1998: 117).

It's agonistic. It allows insurgencies and encounters.

Virtual planning isn't about setting out all possibilities in advance – it constitutes a space whose rules can themselves be altered through what happens in it. But what would a virtual plan look like? It would allow for a great number of points lying at the intersections of many entangled lines with a host of complex connections made from them. It's role is not to predict but to 'remain attentive to the unknown knocking at the door' (Deleuze). It's about connections ... 'and'.

'To make connections one needs not knowledge or certainty, but rather a trust that something may come out, though one is not yet completely sure what' (Rajchmann, 2000: 7) but 'a belief of the future, in the future' (Deleuze, *Difference & Repetition*, p. 6).

Emerging ways in public participation

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Findings from analyses focused in Portugal within the European context show growing demands from a more educated civil society to play increasingly active roles in public decisions and a need of new formats for participation. In addition, new requirements for more participatory processes were established at the European level (e.g. Aarhus Convention, Water Framework Directive) within wider institutional settings of the European Union (Parliament, Commission, Court).

Ongoing research based on participatory observation in structuring and conducting participative workshops¹, interviews to decision makers, specialists and public officers responsible for setting up participatory processes, interviews to participants in forums created for the implementation of sustainability at the local level show a general agreement on the need for participation, although with different meanings and distinct accepted levels of intervention for the different actors. In particular, participants mention frequently that such forums can contribute to new constructive collaborative solutions and to changes in perceptions, attitudes and action of those involved. It was found that four aspects play a particularly important role for the success of the forums: it must be clear that outcomes can influence the decisions, the operational format must stimulate interaction among the participants, the objectives of the forum and of each of its discussion phases should be clearly stated and pursued, and the results of each phase must be made explicit to the participants.

Two emerging phenomena are developing. Platforms of NGOs resulting from networking within the organized civil society are emerging in Portugal and Europe to articulate actions of intervention in public decision settings. Self organizing actions are increasingly bringing together actors concerned with common specific issues in a short span of time. New information technologies (Internet, e-mail, SMS) are playing an increasing role in mobilizing and organizing these new participatory settings. Formal and informal networking is found to be determinant in these actions.

The current institutional inability to deal with complex situations under the scrutiny of a more demanding educated civil society is generating new participatory ways to cope with changes in the current societal context. They seem to have the capacity to adjust more adequately to the needs, complexity and uncertainty of the informational society.

¹ The author structured and conducted more than 70 participative workshops.

SUMMARY OF THE POWER POINT PRESENTATION

Emerging ways in public participation

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A. More demanding contexts

- **Community Funds** expanded public policies effects
- **Institutional setting** enlarged towards the EU (Parliament, Commission, Court)
- The entrance in the EU implied new demands in **environmental** policy and in **participation**

B. Aarhus Convention

participation of citizens in environmental issues

(signed Jun 25, 98 and transferred Feb 25, 03)

- Right to **participate** in the decision processes
- Right of access to **information**
- Access to **justice**

“Interested public” “those that can become affected by the adopted decisions”

C. Emerging Ways for Participation

- Demand for *forums*
- *Networking* within the organized civil society
- *Self organizing* actions

D. Complains

- **Technicians / Decisors**

“The population does not want to participate”

- **Population**

“To participate does not bring any change”

- **Result**

“A gap between population and technicians/decisors”

E. . . . that implies

- Lack of effective participation
- New requirements for intervention (+education; +information)
- Absence of adequate formats
- Democratic deficit

F. Justification for not participating

What participants said about the forums

“A lot of time politicians complain that the citizens do not participate.

Sometimes that ends up happening because the idea of participation of the politicians is that people be present but that do not provoke the debate;

People get tired and they end up not showing up” (NGO member)

(in Henriques, 02)

G. New ways to act

What participants said about the forums

*“It were working sessions where all of us were **actors**, they were no spectators”*

(technician)

*“This integrated, inter-sectorial, global approach is important, for **sustaining municipal intervention**”*(technician)

(in Henriques, 02)

H. Results

What participants said about the forums

*“... The main issues were materialized, the **collective intelligence** worked through the building of consensus, resulting from a group work where **the whole is more than the sum of the parts**; (...) it is a mystery, but the whole results better than the sum of the parts.”* (NGO member)

(in Henriques, 02)

I. Important to the environment

What participants said about the forums

*“... It is **indispensable** in the area of environmental management; it results from the assumption that it is necessary to **share responsibilities**.”* (technician)

(in Henriques, 02)

J. Vision

What participants said about the forums

“... Because the methodology used in the working sessions make that all the present participants think about the problem and try to find the solution.

*A **joint vision** emerged,*

*a **consensual vision***

about the theme being considered.” (resident)

(in Henriques, 02)

L. It worked...

What participants said about the forums

*“all the municipalities should have this initiative; we could achieve a development situation where the decision making is carry out based in **what the people want and say, and not (just) in governmental decisions**”* (NGO member)
(in Henriques, 02)

M. What worked...

What participants said about the forums

*“the **shading**,
the **diversity** of the population **flew**”* (politician)
(in Henriques, 02)

N. LEADERSHIP

FORUM – *Debate-* *for creation of communication and meaning*

ARENAS- *Decision-* *for decision making*

COURTS- *Conflict Resolution-* *to enforce ethical principles*
(in Bryson *et al.*, 1992)

O. Networking:Portuguese NGOs

O.1. PORTUGAL-Recent Example: Press Release (Oct 2, 2003)

- **Implementation of the Strategy of the National Sustainability Plan**
- **...the signing NGOs require the opening of this discussion to the whole civil society in a dynamic and articulate way”**

O.2.Networking: European NGOs

“Investing for a sustainable future”

P. Self Organizing Actions

- “The democracy is not a system that generates only a government of the majority.
- It produces a government of the **organized**.
And, frequently, of the organized majority.”

(in Fareed Zakaria, 2003)

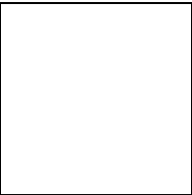
Q. Self Organizing Actions

And the democracy of the **disorganized**?

R. Self Organizing Actions

R.1. Spain

- *March 11, 2004: Madrid wakes up with an unexpected bombing. Governmental officials come to the media to attribute the authorship of the terrorist attack to ETA.*
- *ETA denies right away. Later in the day, an Islamic group claims the authorship of the attack in a press contact to a UK media, as in retaliation to Spanish presence in the war in Iraq.*
- *Nonetheless, Aznar’s government continues to advance the ETA hypothesis as the most probable.*

- 
- *Unexpectedly, much turbulence takes over the Spanish political scene, only three days away from parliamentary elections.*
 - *Previous opinion polls were giving the lead to Aznar's PP, the party in office. People all over Spain mourn lives lost and become infuriated by Aznar's insistence with ETA's authorship.*
 - *Popular protests **emerge spontaneously***
 - *May 12: 11 million Spanish protest against terrorism.*
 - *May 13: all over major Spanish cities, thousands of people assemble in public spaces in protest to what is said to be a "governmental manipulation of the dead", just to serve electoral purposes.*
 - *March 14: Aznar's PP is defeated in the election and steps out of the office. In just four days, Spain was turned upside down, and what was very certain turned out with an unpredictable result.*

(Baptista, 2004)

R.2. Portugal

- *Sunday June 27, 2004, four thousand people got together in a demonstration claiming for immediate elections. The Portuguese Prime-Minister had been invited for the EU presidency and rumors indicated that he was going to accept, leaving unwanted followers in his substitution. Emails and cellular sms started intensively to circulate the previous day mobilizing the population to express its disagreement.*
- *Tuesday June 29, 2004 the Prime Minister makes public his acceptance and again a new demonstration mobilized by sms takes place expressing the participants disagreement and requiring again immediate elections*
- *It is now the role of the President to decide!*

S. CONCLUSION: Present Situation

- ...current institutional **inability** to deal with complex situations under the scrutiny of a more demanding civil society
- generate **new participatory ways** to cope with changes in the current societal context