New Approaches to Planning: Participation, Advocacy, and Equity Planning

Introduction

After getting to know the rational comprehensive model in planning and its critics we move forward in time and in thinking to get to the point where to theoreticians and practitioners of planning engages in participation, advocacy and equity planning. The Advocacy Planning model highlights the importance of citizens’ participation in decision-making processes. It also sticks out the validation of public action through public opinion. In this context the model of equity planning is a different terminology to talk about the importance of fighting inequality and segregation in cities. Keeping always in mind that the ultimate goal of planning it is to achieve improvement of quality of life standards of ALL citizens.

This week readings described citizen participation and its different categories and make a description of the Advocacy Planning Model. Then, it provides an analysis of the citizen participation process in the US and proposed the collaborative model as a way of improve it. Besides this, exemplified how participation and local knowledge are integrated in practice with the planning profession in the cases of Cleveland and NYC.

Summary and Critical Reflection


In a brief but substantive article the author discusses the importance of planning in determining public policy and beyond in determining democracy. To do so he embarks on a description of the planning process as a tool to settle the debate on “the justice of the present social allocation of wealth, knowledge, skill, and other social goods”. He also states “the right course of action is always a matter of choice, never of fact” therefore the planning process, which defines the choices, is crucial.

In this context, the planner becomes an actor of great importance, because leads the process. Is important to take into account that the person performing this role has prejudices so there would always be values attached to the rational decision-making process that takes place. By revealing that the author claims, rather than judge, the planer should take an active role as
advocate of the mission of planning and aims for bringing the government closer to the citizens.

The interaction between government and citizens’ is essential to guarantee a two-way communication that would legitimate a comprehensive plans. If the process is not preform that way, planning would be done for different citizens that the ones who live the problem or worse the planner would end up being a physical planner rather than a city planner.

Is clear from the author perspective that the way planning process is develop, how the planning institution works and the type of education the planner received would determine the type of advocate the planner is going to become. But regardless of the individual outcome, as guild planners should tend increasingly towards this vision because people are the basic unit for which planning is made for.

In my opinion this article addresses the issue of Advocacy Planning from the perspective of the role planners should accomplish. It talks about the importance of their role in the process of planning and which must be their actions within it. It calls for the importance of taking into account the citizens not only as recipients of the solutions but also as an active part of the process.


The main points of this article are the definition of citizen participation, its classification and proper explanation. “Citizen participation is a categorical term for citizen power. It is the redistribution of power that enables the have-not citizens, presently excluded from the political and economic processes, to be deliberately included in the future. In short it is the means by which the can induce significant social reform which enables them to share in the benefits of the affluent society”. “The fundamental point is that participation without redistribution of power is an empty and frustrating process for the powerless”.

In this context, citizen participation can be classified in to eight categories grouped in three classes. (1) Manipulation and (2) Therapy classes integrate the “non-participation” group. “Their real objective is not to enable people to participate in planning or conducting programs, but to enable power holders to “educate” or “cure” the participants”. Next we find (3) Informing and (4) Consultation which are “levels of “tokenism” that allow the have-nots to hear and to have a voice”. (5) Placation, “is simply a higher level tokenism because the ground rules allow have-nots to advise, but retain for the power holders the continued right to decide”. The last group begins with (6) Partnership “that enables them to negotiate and engage in trade-offs with
traditional powerholders. At the topmost rungs, (7) Delegated Power and (8) Citizen Control, have-not citizens obtain the majority of decision-making seats, or full managerial power”.

With qualification the author gives clarity about the different dimensions of citizen participation. Each class has one given related processes and by using examples is easy to understand their dimensions. The main idea is that is not only about participation, is about what type of participation you are accessing. Undoubtedly the classes in which they are given voice, vote and decision making power are the most wanted. Because here is where they really can achieve comprehensive planning.


In their article they presented the failures of public participation, the dilemmas of how to put public participation in practice and the ambivalence found in the literature around this topic. They also propose a model for public participation called collaborative participation. The way author explain it is by saying that “participation must be collaborative and it should incorporate not only citizens, but also organized interest, profit-making and non-profit organization, planners and public administrators in a common framework where all are interacting and influencing one another and all are acting independently in the world as well”.

For the authors participation should accomplish the following purposes: (1) Find out what the public’s preferences are. (2) Improve decisions by incorporating citizens’ local knowledge. (3) Advancing fairness and justice. (4) Getting legitimacy for public decision. (5) Fulfill law requirement. The effectiveness of participation methods is given by the level of collaboration the interaction, inclusiveness and dialogue obtain from the multiple participants. Ideally participation process should be prospective exercises and not reactive consults.

The most remarkable thing about this article is the self-critical character of the public participation processes with in the United States. The authors’ takes a step forward and propose an inclusive model of participation in which all players receive the same treatment. Furthermore, the analyzed the favorable tendencies to set this proposal in motion.


The articles starts by stating that “local knowledge can improve planning in at least four ways (1) epistemology, adding to the knowledge base of environmental policy; (2) procedural democracy, including new and previously silenced voices; (3) effectiveness, providing low-cost
policy solutions; and (4) distributive justice, highlighting inequitable distributions of environmental burdens”.

The local knowledge is the wisdom acquire by the community member through experience, evidences and day to day testing. “Local knowledge is mediated through cultural tradition. Is generally tested in public narratives, community stories, street theater, and other public forums”. For the author there are two models for approaching community knowledge the deficit model and the complementary model. The first model states “the public needs to be educated in the ways and knowledge of professional experts to meaningfully participate”. In the second model “the public is asked to offer values, raise questions of fairness, and provide “political” insights, but scientific experts retain autonomy over technical issues”. Besides these models, the article propose a “third model called “co-production,” where all publics are understood as potential contributors to all aspects” of planning process.

The author makes a strong defense of local knowledge and highlights its importance and especially its validity. Local knowledge is an equally crucial input to planning process as economic resources. The article is a assertion of the high quality inputs stakeholders can provide to planning process.


This article written by Norman Krumholtz former director of City Planning in Cleveland is a story of how he in reality the exercise of the profession of planner. It is clear throughout the story that the main concern was to achieve a more just and accessible city for its citizens. This Planner is an exponent of Equity Planning in USA and especially how to do a reality even if the context is adverse.

The author tells how his planning office managed relations with elected city officials, city council members, private entrepreneurs and citizens for 10 years. From his perspective, is vital that the planner take action to make visible the studies and proposals to tackle the main challenges cities face. The planner should be an active actor in the run for improving the welfare of the city and its citizens. His entire point is illustrated through the cases of transportation, commercial development and light utility service in Cleveland.

The main contribution of this author is presenting how this idyllic vision of advocating for a fair and inclusive city can be a reality. He definitely gave some valuable insights of how political relation should be maintained and how an active role from the planner is most required.
Conclusion

The model of Advocacy Planning / Equity Planning is a commitment to highlight and to keep track of who and why it exists planning. Planning is a process of construction of solutions to problems related to the quality of life of citizens in cities.

The way in which the planning process is given in the Advocacy Planning / Equity Planning Theory is closely related to the Rational Comprehensive model. Because Local Authority wants to make conscious decisions considering several options based on gather data. The innovative element is that this theory invites citizens as active actor. In this sense it develops models to include local knowledge and inclusive forms of participation in which citizens have real power.

In a sense we can say that Theory progress has been incremental. It began by defining an apolitical model of decision making, then it moved towards the consideration of the political sphere and how decisions should be made gradually and then radical a turn was made to include citizens. Specifically to include their knowledge in the planning process (METIS mentioned by Scott) and to validate actions and make them more legitimate through their participation.

Questions

After going through all the content of the reading there are questions that arise for further and deeper reflection:

• ¿Who are summoned to participate to ensure representativeness?
  ▪ ¿What day and what time participation exercises are done to facilitate the participation of working people?
  ▪ ¿How do you increase citizens interest over planning issues?
  ▪ ¿How to make citizen participation an easy access tool but also effective in supporting the solution of public problems?