

**Involvement of Citizens and Neighbourhood Groups
in Municipal Decision-making:
A Review of the Literature**

18 February 2003

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A report for Region of Waterloo Public Health, Planning and Evaluation Program

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1.0 Introduction

Over the course of 2001 and 2002 the Regional Municipality of Waterloo consulted with neighbourhood groups regarding how the Region could best provide support to these same groups. One of the findings in that consultation was the need to integrally involve neighbourhood groups in the decision-making process of policies and programs that affect their neighbourhoods. This led to a staff proposal that a consultation guide be created to direct the Region in involving neighbourhood groups in future decision-making processes. This literature review provides theoretical perspectives on the various roles that citizens can play in municipal decision-making processes.

In a more general sense, the consultation of neighbourhood groups is a question of citizen participation in the decision-making process. “The idea of citizen participation is a little like eating spinach: no one is against it in principle because it is good for you.” (Arnstein, 1969) However, the ‘nitty-gritty’ of *doing* citizen participation is sometimes much more complicated.

Citizen involvement in the decision-making of municipal government policies or programs is extremely diverse. Involvement may take the form of government-designed processes that involve individual citizens directly or invite citizen involvement through mediating structures such as neighbourhood groups. Alternatively, citizens can participate through advocacy and grassroots political organizing initiatives in which citizens develop the agenda and have a significant determine the process. Citizen involvement can have numerous objectives and can have varying degrees of success.

This review begins with an exploration of the definition and history of citizen involvement over the last several decades culminating in what is now, not just an option or even a democratic right, but a pragmatic necessity. Even so, “the wide range of purposes, structures, and strategies for citizen participation needs to be distinguished because there is some evidence that different types of participation are suitable for different objectives and functions” (Kramer & Specht, 1983, p. 92). This literature review continues with the benefits and challenges of increased involvement of citizens within the decision-making process, and highlighting different objectives and strategies of involvement from the perspective of municipal government as the planning organization. This leads into a range of proposed typologies describing the different levels of citizen involvement ranging from expert-driven to citizen-driven processes. The Community Development and Community Design streams of thought – both promoting increased citizen involvement in two different disciplines – are described, as well as a discussion about the techniques of involving citizens. Finally, the unique roles of neighbourhood groups in this process are discussed. Neighbourhood groups are described as partners, mediators, advocates, and capacity builders.

An annotated bibliography is integrated into the list of references – highlighting several key sources and guides in the literature on citizen and neighbourhood group involvement in municipal decision-making.

2.0 Citizen Involvement

2.1 Definition of Citizen Involvement

Citizen involvement is called by many different names in the literature and in common usage – including among other terms: citizen participation, community participation, or citizen engagement.

Definitions range from the technical to normative descriptions of ‘genuine’ involvement. McLaverty (2002b) in his discussion of whether “Public Participation is a Good Thing?” defines public participation more technically as “taking part in the processes of formulation, passage and implementation of public policies” (Parry et al., 1992, p. 16).

Others like Sanoff (2000) decidedly take more of a self-help and capacity-building approach and define citizen involvement as “the collaboration of people pursuing objectives that they themselves have defined” (p. x). Arnstein (1969) goes further in describing citizen involvement in terms of what she believes is ‘genuine’ involvement and describes it as synonymous with “citizen power”.

There are many perspectives on what is the proper type or ideal level of participation. Vandervelde (1979) found “considerable confusion in the social sciences” (cited in Kramer & Specht, 1983, p. 93) concerning citizen participation and proposed that the more generic term *involvement* was more appropriate as it is not as entangled with presuppositions of power and decentralization. Accordingly, the term citizen involvement is used in this paper, except when another term is specifically used by a cited author.

2.2 History and Influences of Citizen Involvement

Citizen Involvement in public decision-making has gone through a number of phases over the last few decades - shifting and evolving, but always present.

This interest in involving citizens has not been contained to North America or even the industrialized countries (McLaverty, 2002). Citizen involvement in public affairs has been pursued, in varying degrees and manners, by many developing countries in their domestic policies (McLaverty, 2002) and through international development by industrialized countries (Sanoff, 2000).

Sanoff (2000) identifies the roots of the contemporary concept of community participation in “the third world community development movement of the 1950s and 1960s, Western social work, and community radicalism (Midgley, 1986)” (p. 1). Burke (1968) describes the discovered necessity of involving citizens in the Urban Renewal movement of the 1950s and 1960s in the United States as being critical. According to Burke, this movement was the beginning of explicit involvement of citizens and the adoption of formal decision-making structures that encouraged participation.

Although citizens were involved in public decision-making before the 1950s it was not until the latter half of the century that participation emerged as a *right* (Burke, 1968). Grassroots

participation in North America was greatly influenced by the activism and civil upheaval of the 1960s and 1970s with the, “civil rights movement, the rise of women’s liberation, the anti-war movement, and the challenges of alternative cultures” (Castells, 1983, cited in Sanoff, 2000, p. 2). One prominent activist of that time, Saul Alinsky held that, “the main problem with the system was the insensitivity of political institutions to the people, who were excluded because of bureaucratization, centralization, and manipulation of information” (Alinsky, 1972, cited in Sanoff, 2000, p. 2). Planners such as Paul Davidoff (1965), also promoted citizen involvement and the role of planners to advocate for groups in society who were shut out from decision-making processes.

The 1960’s and 70’s civil rights movement resulted in a shift from involving only community leaders in decision-making processes to more broadly involving citizens and grassroots groups. Burke (1978) notes that the civil rights movement had several other outcomes or legacies. “The base of participation had been legislatively widened to include specifically identified individuals and groups” (p. 108) such as the poor, as well as all citizens that share an interest in, or would be affected by the policy or program. As well, “the purpose of participation had shifted” (p. 109) to include both supporting the planning process and providing a “source of information and collective wisdom” (p. 109). Lastly, Burke maintains that the involvement of citizens had become institutionalized in a wide variety of processes where involving citizens had become both the norm and the requirement.

Not only was citizen participation shaped by the activism of the 1960s and 1970s, but it was further defined by the socio-economic climate of the 1980s and 1990s. McLaverty (2002) notes that in the last several decades of the 20th century, many Western governments faced a growing fiscal crisis with a demand for increased social and military spending. The result was a crisis of legitimacy for Western governments as they were pushed to hold or reduce taxes in an increasingly neo-conservative environment. The legitimacy of the public sector was further eroded with the emerging view in the 1980s and 1990s that “the state sector was seen as inflexible, inefficient and expensive” (p. 4).

McLaverty (2002b) suggests that the recent “massive increase in interest in public participation” (p. 185) is, in part, a response to this pressure to reduce costs, increase services, and prove the legitimacy of public sector services. Sanoff (2000) sees this more recent emergence of a new “pragmatic approach to participation” (p. 8) as distinctly different from the approach defined by the citizen power or activism that characterized the 1960s and 1970s.

In addition to these reasons for the renewed interest in citizen involvement, Philips & Orsini (2002) highlight additional reasons. They point to the broader shift from “government” to “governance” – in essence, involving 1) moving from top-down approaches to a more diverse and inclusive manner of decision-making; 2) emergence of New Public Management which suggests that government should “*steer not row*” (p. 5) – setting basic priorities and policy directions but leaving delivery of many of the ensuing services to the private or voluntary sectors; and 3) a “massive push for increased accountability” (p. 5). Philips & Orsini also propose that there is an increased interest in involving citizens in government decision-making because of changes in the structure and relations of civil society. Citizens are more informed, more organized through voluntary and other associations, and more diverse with more diverse views – and are demanding to be more involved in the decisions that affect them.

In short, citizen involvement evolved from an *option* up to the 1950s, to a *right* in the 1960s and 1970s, and finally to a *necessity* in the 1980s and 1990s.

2.3 Rationale for Citizen Involvement

While involving citizens is generally seen as a worthwhile and necessary endeavour, there are also some dangers or arguments against increasing involvement. There are a wide variety of benefits and challenges to citizen involvement described in the literature. A brief summary of those will be included here.

Benefits of Citizen Involvement

- Burke (1979) notes that citizens primarily play three roles in planning: they “serve as a constituency of support for the planning agency and its activities, ...serve as a means of wisdom and knowledge in the development of a plan and in identifying the mission of the planning agency, ...and act as a watchdog over one’s own, as well as others’ rights in the design and delivery of policies” (p. 115).
- Kramer & Specht (1983) summarize the major purposes of citizen involvement as: “the provision of information and advice, consultation, support and sanction, problem identification, and goal setting, planning, policy and program development” (p. 93).
- Brenneis and M’Gonigle (1992) note that the rationale for public participation is political (increasing legitimacy of or support for government directions), functional (resulting in better and more widely informed decisions), and educational (participants learn through the process and are better able to get involved in the future). Brenneis and M’Gonigle, in addition to others, note that public participation can alleviate one of the shortfalls of representative democracy and provide citizens with input into decisions that affect their lives on a more regular basis than simply through periodic elections. They point out that, “some commentators have noted a shift in expectations toward this extended ‘participatory democracy’ as part of a more fundamental restructuring of society and social decision-making” (Naisbett, 1982, cited in Brenneis and M’Gonigle, 1992, p. 7).
- McLaverty in his essay on “Is Public Participation a Good Thing?” (2002b) highlights a number of reasons for increased participation promoted by a wide range of writers. Rousseau (1968) suggested that, “public participation was desirable because no one is able to express the views of another” (cited in McLaverty, 2002b, p 185). Rousseau (1968) as well as others such as Elster (1998) and Young (1997), argue that participation can enable participants to see that they are a part of society and develop a sense of justice and communality through the process. Other theorists on government and democracy, including individuals such as John Stuart Mill (1873), share the view of participation as a tool for education¹. Not only can public participation be valuable for bettering the individual but it can better the policy or program in question (Cohen, 1996). Furthermore, citizen involvement can not only improve planning outcomes, but the procedures of municipal decision-making as well (Habermas, 1994, 1996).

¹ The role of participation in developing the capacity of people to affect change in their own lives is also promoted by later 20th century theorists such as Ross (1967) in his discussion of community development as a local capacity building endeavour.

Challenges of Citizen Involvement

- Arnstein (1969) states that “among the arguments against community control are: it supports separatism; it creates balkanization of public services; it is more costly and less efficient; it enables minority group ‘hustlers’ to be just as opportunistic and disdainful of the have-nots as their white predecessors; it is incompatible with merit systems and professionalism; and ironically enough, it can turn out to be a new Mickey Mouse game for the have-nots by allowing them to gain control but not allowing them sufficient dollar resources to succeed.” p224
- Burke (1979) includes a number of pitfalls of citizen involvement depending on the approach used. These pitfalls include: broad participation, although unintended, may evolve into simple control by representatives or the informal elite; inability to adapt different citizen participation strategies to organizational demands or task-focused goals; higher levels of citizen control can result in less rigorously planned programs; it can result in constrained choices for the government; it can result in conflict with previously established organizational goals; the complexity of selecting key participants that are able to maintain links and support of the community; involvement can be manipulative and simply a front for the status quo; lack of staff ability to facilitate different aspects of the process effectively; maintaining citizen interest; and citizen involvement can bring up difficult conflict.
- Brenneis & M’Gonigle (1993) note two challenges in particular – namely that “public participation may reduce the speed of decision-making, and raise expectations that certain public preferences will prevail” (p. 6).
- Sanoff (2000) highlights some real or imagined barriers to involving citizens – namely, that involving citizens can be threatening to professionals who have traditionally held control of decisions, it can be more time-consuming and therefore expensive, and for a variety of reasons, it can be difficult to involve all relevant parties.

In summary, the main benefits of increasing citizen involvement are, the potential for:

- improved quality of policies & programs,
- improved legitimacy of policies and programs
- improved support for and reduced opposition to policies and programs
- greater participant learning, capacity, and general civic involvement
- lower cost of implementation of policies and programs

The main potential challenges of increasing citizen involvement may include:

- slower and more extensive (costly) decision-making process
- unrealized expectations by participants or the government
- shift in the skill set required by planning staff
- difficulty of recruiting and maintaining critical participants
- difficulty of staff or representatives within the traditional decision-making structure giving up influence in the process to citizens

Of course, all of these advantages and disadvantages vary with the situation and the technique chosen. In any particular process, some of the benefits may not be realized and not all of the challenges will materialize.

2.4 Objectives of Citizen Involvement

One of the primary reasons for the widespread appeal of citizen involvement by so many very different groups with very different philosophies and goals is the many possible objectives of involving citizens in decision-making.

Edmund Burke (1968) sketched out a number of different objectives or strategies for involving citizens in planning. These strategies include: Education-Therapy, Behavioral Change, Staff Supplement, Cooptation, and Community Power. These describe the objectives of citizen involvement from the government's perspective and how "citizens can be used as instruments for the attainment of specific ends" (p. 116). Burke suggests that the reason for involving citizens is often about practical considerations and desired outcomes rather than a particular value placed on participation, *per se*. Citizen involvement can, "according to some claims, rebuild deteriorating neighborhoods, devise realistic and better plans, pave the way for the initiation of the poor and the powerless into the mainstream, ... achieve support and sanction for an organization's objectives, end the drift toward alienation in cities, halt the rise in juvenile delinquency, and recreate small town democracy in a complex urban society" (p. 116). In an effort to clarify those specific ends, Burke outlined five strategies of citizen involvement – each of which may be appropriate given the unique goals and environment of a particular situation.

The Education-Therapy strategy presumes that citizens need to be trained, improved or treated. This can simply be the educating of citizens about political workings, involvement, and cooperation. The concrete policy or action being planned is secondary to the education gained by participants. This is part of the emphasis of community development approaches that emphasize process goals of local capacity building by citizens themselves. Among other difficulties, however, Education-Therapy can be a condescending and manipulative approach that sees citizens as generally incapable and unknowledgeable of necessary planning wisdom.

The Behavioral Change strategy is similar to Education-Therapy but the emphasis is on changing the group rather than individual behaviour or thinking. The objective is "to induce change in a system or subsystem by changing the behavior of either the system's members or [usually] influential representatives of the system" (p. 118). This emphasis on representatives is the chief strength and weakness of the Behavioral Change strategy. While key leaders can have significant influence in a community it may be difficult to find, involve, or influence them.

The Staff Supplement strategy is a common rationale for citizen involvement. This approach uses "the abilities, free time, and/or the expertise" (p. 120) of citizens in planning. This usually emphasizes volunteerism and tapping into the ability or time resources of the community to undertake tasks where the planning agency does not have adequate staff resources, or supplementing staff expertise with local citizen expertise.

The Cooptation strategy is an attempt to "involve citizens in an organization in order to prevent anticipated obstructionism" (p. 121). Key citizens are incorporated into the decision-making process to either "neutralize" or capitalize on their influence. The involvement of these citizens is usually also used to legitimize the planning process. This strategy permits "the limited participation of citizens as a means of achieving organization goals, but not to the extent that these goals are impeded" (p122).

Finally, the Community Power strategy seeks to tap into the power of community action and influence. Involving citizens, usually *en masse*, is a means to widespread social or political change.

Burke notes that, “not all strategies are appropriate for all organizations” (p. 124) or situations. One of the key determinants of which strategy is most appropriate is the available capabilities and knowledge of planning staff to implement a strategy, as each strategy entails a different way of working with citizens. Required skills may range from managing group dynamics, assessing community sentiment, leading charismatically, managing conflict, or finding and working with community leaders. Burke asserts that, “planning agencies must be more precise about what they mean by citizen participation, how they intend to implement it, what agency resources will be used to organize and involve citizens, and what voice citizens will have in planning decisions” (p. 125

Burke’s strategies can be helpful in being clear about the actual objectives of involving citizens from the perspective of the municipality organizing the process.

Others, such as the Healthy Communities² movement that promotes collaboration between individuals, communities and local governments, take a more general approach to the objectives of involving citizens. On the level of a municipality or neighbourhood, wide community participation in decision-making is necessary to achieve a healthy community. On the individual level, “people cannot achieve their fullest potential unless they are able to take control of those things which determine their well-being” (Ontario Healthy Communities Coalition, 2003).

Another way of examining what type of citizen involvement is appropriate is on the basis of values – specifically in terms of the level of influence citizens should have in the planning process.

2.5 Levels of Involvement

There have been a number of ways proposed to describing what types or levels of citizen involvement are possible or desirable. Most of them describe a range of options on a continuum between two very different approaches. It is most helpful to start with a description of the two poles of that continuum.

Alan Twelvetrees (1991) clearly highlighted a bi-polar continuum of community work between citizen-driven processes on the one extreme, to expert-driven processes on the other. Twelvetrees called these two extremes: community development (citizen-driven) and social planning (expert-driven), based on an article by Jack Rothman (1976)³.

The citizen-driven approach is one of empowering citizens to assess and affect their own community and building the local capacity to make changes that are locally relevant. The process is centrally about the involvement of citizens in decision-making. This approach, as Rothman &

² The goal of the Healthy Communities movement is “to achieve social, environmental, and economic health and well-being for individuals, communities and local governments” (Ontario Healthy Communities Coalition, 2003) by stimulating and encouraging “collaborative action and efficient use of resources from multiple sectors and community systems” (Community Psychology Network, 2003).

Tropman (1978) describe it, “presupposes that community change may be pursued optimally through broad participation of a wide spectrum of people at the local community level in goal determination and action.” (p. 5.)

The expert-driven approach emphasizes a technical, rational process of decision-making. It “presupposes that change in a complex industrial environment requires expert planners who through the exercise of technical abilities, including the ability to manipulate large bureaucratic organizations, can skillfully guide complex change processes... the concern here is with establishing, arranging, and delivering goods and services to people who need them. Building community capacity or fostering radical or fundamental social change does not play a major part” (Rothman & Tropman, 1978, p. 6). Citizens are not participants but consumers of the services that are planned for them.

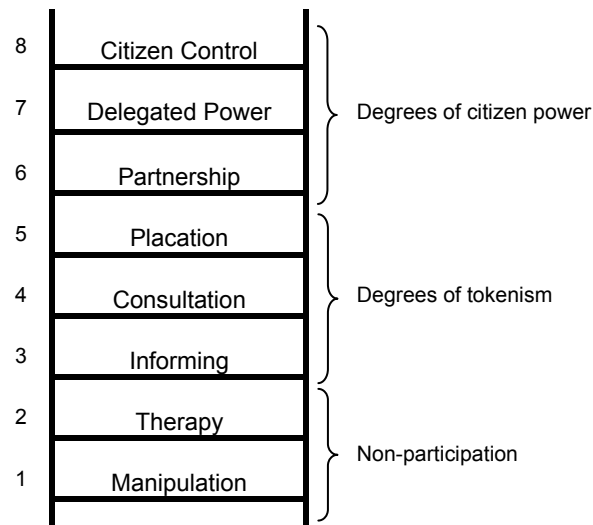
Although governments have traditionally used this top-down, expert-driven approach, many have significantly incorporated more bottom-up, citizen-driven processes.

Furthermore, it is important to note that while Twelvetrees delineated two separate approaches, he also acknowledged that given the distinct advantages and disadvantages of different approaches and their appropriateness for different situations, there is the need to be able to work in both a citizen-driven as well as an expert-driven approach.

Sherry Arnstein further describes this understanding of citizen-driven and expert-driven processes. She wrote a seminal article in 1969 (“A Ladder of Citizen Participation”) about the levels of citizen participation that are used by governments and other planning organizations. Arnstein describes citizen participation in terms of citizen power – “a redistribution of power that enables the have-not citizens, presently excluded from the political and economic processes, to be deliberately included in the future. It is the strategy by which the have-nots join in determining how information is shared, goals and policies are set, tax resources are allocated, programs are operated, and benefits... are parceled out.” (p. 216) Furthermore, Arnstein saw “participation without redistribution of power as an empty and frustrating process for the powerless. It allows the power holders to claim that all sides were considered, but makes it possible for only some of those sides to benefit. It maintains the status quo.” (p. 216).

³ Rothman uses the term “locality development” for the approach which Twelvetrees and many people today call community development.

The typology that Arnstein (1969) delineates has eight levels – the lowest being non-participation to the highest being true citizen power, as in the figure below.



Arnstein describes Manipulation and Therapy as types of non-participation with the real goal “not to enable people to participate in planning or conducting programs, but to enable powerholders to ‘educate’ or ‘cure’ the participants.” (Arnstein, 1969, p. 217) This includes some Citizen Advisory Committees or neighbourhood councils. Informing, Consulting, and Placation are all degrees of tokenism that give the ‘have-nots’ a voice, but often without real decision-making power or the structure that ensures that their input will make a difference. Partnership, Delegated Power, and Citizen Control are then the three degrees of citizen power and true participation. They enable citizens to “negotiate and engage in trade-offs with traditional powerholders” (p. 217) or have authentic control of the process and its outcome.

This is, of course, a simplification of involvement and Arnstein admits that each of these apparently distinct categories lie on more of a continuum. Furthermore, multiple levels might be used in the same process, and the same technique of citizen involvement (i.e. ‘hiring the poor’) can either be non-participation, tokenism, or citizen power (true citizen participation).

Arnstein’s typology has become a seminal starting point for discussions about citizen involvement (Brenneis and M’Gonigle, 1992). Much of the commentary on Arnstein’s article, which was written during the civil rights movement of the 1960s and 1970s, focus on Arnstein’s agenda of promoting only partnership, delegated power, or citizen control as valuable, without acknowledging that other types of involvement may be appropriate in certain circumstances.

Arnstein’s approach takes a value (citizen power) and measures all types or levels of participation by the degree to which they facilitate that same value. Where Arnstein does this on a continuum, others, such as Deschler and Sock (1985), go further and assess this continuum in terms of two types – pseudo or genuine participation. They divide participation according to whether the process either does or does not achieve or facilitate a certain value (in the case of Deschler and Sock this is *empowering citizens*).

Pseudoparticipation includes projects where the control of a project rests with administrators and includes *domestication* (manipulation, therapy, and informing) and *assistencialism* (consultation and placation). In this way, citizens “listen to what is being planned for them.” (Sanoff, 2000, p. 8) Botes et al (2000) notes that what is sometimes called citizen participation can be simply “an attempt to sell preconceived proposals” (p. 43). The second category is *genuine participation* and includes projects where “people are empowered to control the action taken” (Sanoff, 2000, p. 9). Genuine participation includes cooperation (partnership and delegation of power) and citizen control.

Both approaches - citizen involvement either as a polemic or a continuum - have different advantages and disadvantages and draw attention to different questions and motivations as they relate to citizen participation.

Another way of exploring levels of citizen involvement is to assess levels or types of citizen involvement in terms of appropriateness for specific situations. Burke (1979) notes five roles of citizens in planning, which is a variation on Arnstein's eight types mentioned in the ladder diagram above. Burke's five roles of citizens in planning delineate “the extent of influence the citizens have in deciding on planning issues and outcomes – from little influence to major or primary influence” (Burke, 1979, p. 110). Burke also acknowledges that these roles lie on a continuum and are not necessarily discrete roles. They include: Review & Comment, Consultation, Advisory, Shared Decision-making, and Controlled Decision-making.

The first type of citizen role is reviewing and commenting on the proposed plans while the planning organization makes no obligation to modify the plans according to the citizens' comments. It is a passive role in which there is often one-way information flow from the planners to the citizens. This reviewing and commenting type of citizen role typically utilizes strategies such as public meetings and information released through the media.

The next citizen role is one in which the citizen is consulted in order to give information or specific advice regarding proposed plans. This role acknowledges the particular expertise of citizens (usually knowledge of the local needs, potential support or obstacles, key supporters, etc) and begins to give them a valued role in the process. However, while this role is more two-way than reviewing and commenting, “the decision to accept or reject the advice is the exclusive judgment of the planning organization” (Burke, 1979, p. 111). Consultation tends to include techniques such as questionnaires and focus groups.

Burke's third citizen role is advisory. This is similar to consultation but the role is formalized within the planning organization in policy and planning committees. While the influence is greater than previously mentioned involvement, the advisory role still maintains decision-making control within the planning organization. The function of this role is “to seek out both information and organized support for planning activities” (Burke, 1979, p. 111).

The next role is one of shared decision-making in which citizens and planners are equal partners. Shared decision-making is a process that is structured in such a way so as to arrive at solutions that are agreed on by both planner and citizens. The medium for this role is often found in a wide variety of committees and other participation structures.

Lastly, citizens can have the role of controlled decision-making in which, “citizens exercise ultimate authority over all policy and planning decisions” (Burke, 1979, p 111). Planning staff then facilitate the process and provide information and advice to the citizens who make the actual decisions. Burke acknowledges that citizen-controlled decision-making is rare. This level of citizen involvement is a mechanism of decentralized, political decision-making and may be set within the context of an issue-specific, ad hoc committee or a more general neighbourhood-level government such as a Neighbourhood Council that is directly connected to municipal government.

2.6 Discipline Approaches to Citizen Involvement

A brief overview of the literature reveals significant discourse about participatory approaches in the decision-making process in a variety of areas including: social work, planning and design, ecology and environment, international development, political science and public administration, and health and health promotion⁴.

Within the field of social work, substantial citizen involvement has been recognized as foundational to health promotion and is a core value of the community development stream of thought (Florin & Wandersman, 1990; Green, 1986, cited in Frankish et al, 2002). “Community development can be tentatively defined as a process designed to create conditions of economic and social progress for the whole community with its active participation and the fullest possible reliance on the community’s initiative.” (United Nations, 1955, p. 6.) This community development approach tends to advocate for shared or citizen-controlled decision-making, as compared to the social planning approach in social work, which tends to value review and comment, or consultative methods (Rothman & Tropman, 1987).

Parallel to the social work discipline, but within the planning and design fields (planning, architecture, landscape architecture), there is also a range of approaches from traditional expert-driven approaches to more citizen-driven approaches. A complement to the community development stream of thought but within in the planning & design fields is the community design movement⁵. Community design promotes increased citizen involvement with a variety of techniques – some of which are more or less unique to planning and design such as charrettes⁶, walking tours, or art exhibits (Sanoff, 2000). Also similar to community development, the community design approach is “based on the principle that the environment works better if the people affected by its changes are actively involved in its creation and management instead of being treated as passive consumers (Sanoff, 2000, p. x). The theoretical roots of the community design approach lie within a theory of planning that sees the planner not as a technical expert as much as they are a facilitator of a consensus-based community process. This type of planning theory is called by different names like “communicative planning” (Healey, 1992) or “collaborative planning” (Margerum, 2002).

In the field of Environment and Ecology, the awareness of the value of broad participation has become quite widespread (Webler, Tuler, & Krueger, 2001). Diverse methods (from consultation

⁴ This is not an inclusive list but is given to provide a sense as to the breadth of disciplines approaching citizen involvement and the diversity of ideas within those disciplines.

⁵ The term community design embraces streams such as community planning, community architecture, social architecture, community development, and community participation in the planning and design fields (Sanoff, 2000).

⁶ A charrette is an intensive design exercise usually undertaken over a few hours or days.

to citizen decision-making) appears to be most pronounced in areas that inevitably affect the public, such as environmental impact assessment processes, public land resource allocation (e.g. Williams, Day & Gunton, 1998), and ecological risk assessments (e.g. Glicken, 2000). Participatory streams in these areas promote a consensus-building, partnership model – as opposed to the more paternalistic, expert-driven or confrontational approaches⁷. Some practitioners and theorists such as Gunton & Flynn (1992) and Todd (2002) suggest that consensus-based and Alternative Dispute Resolution⁸ (ADR) approaches can be especially effective in dealing with acrimonious and highly charged issues such as logging or wolf management – arriving at better solutions with less divisive conflict.

In the international development arena, the newer emphasis of participatory processes and specifically mutual self-help (Choguill, 1996) differs considerably from the traditional paternalistic approach. Choguill (1996) proposed “A Ladder of Community Participation for Underdeveloped Countries” that is built on Arnstein’s ladder of citizen participation noted above. She suggests that Arnstein’s ladder is inadequate when applied to participation in underdeveloped countries and suggests another ladder with the following steps: empowerment, partnership, conciliation (these three being support for citizen involvement), dissimulation, diplomacy, informing (these three being manipulation), conspiracy (rejection of involvement), and self-management (neglect of involvement altogether). Choguill notes that in the latter extreme case when governments completely disregard and neglect citizens, self-management emerges as a positive, grass-roots and NGO (non-governmental organization) response to the lack of opportunities for involvement. However, these initiatives rarely succeed because of the lack of governmental support.

A number of proponents of citizen involvement in the field of political science and public administration have focused on institutional reform (Raco & Flint, 2001). One common proposal is to more integrally involve citizens through mediating or decentralized structures that are closer to the people. This may take the form of decentralized service delivery through neighbourhood associations or similar organizations (Rich, 1979), local governance through neighbourhood government or committees (e.g. Yates, 1973; Ulbig, 1999; Musso et al., 2002), or participation in mediating institutions like health authorities or commissions (e.g. Tenbense, 2002).

Frankish, et al. (2002) point out that in the health and health promotion sector, “citizen participation has been included as part of health reform, often in the form of lay health authorities” (p. 1472). They note several reasons for a pronounced emphasis on citizen involvement over the last three decades:

- “the doctrine of informed consent that individuals’ preferences must be reflected in treatment choices and decisions (Boyce & Lamont, 1998);
- a public demanding greater responsiveness of health professionals and policy makers to communities (Green & Frankish, 1994);
- calls for greater accountability for allocations of economically-pressed health resources by governments, health-care providers and organizations (Alexander, Zuckerman, & Pointer, 1995; Morfitt, 1998);

⁷ These three models (paternalistic, consensus-building, and confrontational) are presented by the American Bar Association’s Sanding Committee on Environmental Law. (Glicken, 2000)

⁸ Gunton & Flynn define Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) as a formal process of negotiation designed to reach consensus.

- increased interest in ‘social capital’ and the role of community-level factors in generating ‘healthy communities’ (Eastis, 1998; Lomas, 1998; Veenstra & Lomas, 1999); and
- the idea that programs may be more effective if they emerge from local consensus and priorities (Zakus & Lysack, 1998)” (p. 1472).

Beyond the distinctives in each of these noted disciplines, there is much overlap of philosophy and method between the participatory streams of thought in different fields.

2.7 Techniques of Citizen Involvement

There is a wide range of techniques for involving citizens in the decision-making process. The technique selected in a particular process depends on the intended objectives and level of involvement as delineated above, as well as the available resources and other constraints.

With a variety of techniques, governments often fund or provide financial assistance to support these processes – providing staff time to record or facilitate, space and refreshments, possible remuneration or financial support for participants, or reproducing supplemental information. Brenneis & M’Gonigle (1992) suggest that government support is critical and that, “commitment from the political and operational levels of government is an overriding factor in determining the success of any public participation process” (p. 5). However, many community groups (including neighbourhood associations) and collections of passionate individuals may also participate or enable broader participation using their own resources. Usually citizen participants in these planning processes volunteer their time to provide input. This resource, as well, should not be underestimated.

There are many ways to list the wide variety of techniques mentioned in the literature but one typology, adapted from Sanoff (2000), is to categorize techniques into four groupings according to the degree and type of interaction.

- one-way communication
 - information transferred through the media or a static exhibit
 - walking tour or open house
- structured and limited, two-way communication
 - referendum/ballots
 - questionnaire/survey
 - Internet input form and other forms of digital technology⁹
- open ended, two-way public interaction
 - public hearing
 - public meeting/forum
 - participatory telethon
- open-ended, two-way, small group interaction
 - neighbourhood council or community planning committee

⁹ The advent of the Internet and new technological capacities over the last decade or so has given rise to a number of new (or significantly re-packaged) methods of involving citizens (Philips & Orsini, 2002; Sanoff, 2000). The Internet allows for quick and simple surveys or polls as well as a means for widely available (24 hours a day from anywhere in the world) information exchange not only from citizens to municipal governments or other planning organizations but, as importantly, from governments to citizens giving them information about government policies and programs. However, it must be

- citizen representatives
- advisory committee
- workshop/conference
- charrette¹⁰
- deliberative poll¹¹
- participatory action research¹²
- co-management bodies

Each technique listed can be applied to a variety of situations, causing significant fluidity between the categories noted below. For example, a citizen advisory committee can be a forum for meaningful and substantial interaction between citizens and government - an opportunity for citizens to actively participate in the creation of policies and programs. On the other hand, through ignoring any input or criticism from the advisory group this means of citizen involvement can become simply a tool for one-way communication, or even a front where no significant communication occurs.

However, in spite of the wide diversity of methods and the wide variety of objectives and levels of involvement, Brenneis & M'Gonigle (1992) present a list of ten components of successful public participation process. From a review of the literature, they suggest that the following are critical and common components of public participation processes in general, and public land and resource planning and management process in particular. The components are:

1. an understandable process for participants,
2. democratic accountability and framework,
3. proper and adequate notification for all interested or affected parties,
4. a clear and legislated mandate for the participation process,
5. comprehensive opportunities (including at the developmental stages of the process),
6. access for all to relevant information,
7. adequate resources for participation for all parties,
8. written responses given to participants and the broader public outlining the process and subsequent decisions,
9. conflict resolution mechanisms,
10. appeal mechanisms for decisions that are made

Involving citizens, particularly outside of land and resource planning processes, will likely involve a number of elements not included here or may not cover each of the above components. Each citizen involvement process is as unique as the people that plan or participate in it, the rationale and objectives directing it, the discipline within which it occurs, and the technique selected.

remembered that while Internet use is increasing and is available at many public sites, many people may not be comfortable with or able to use this technology.

¹⁰ One notable example of this type of citizen involvement method is the Blueprint for Affordable Housing charrette held on April 4-5, 1990.

¹¹ James Fishkin (2003) suggests a still-experimental technique called a Deliberative Poll. Bardach (2003) describes the process as involving, "(1) selecting a representative panel of citizens, (2) educating them about some issue currently before the polity, (3) structuring a weekend-long 'deliberation' among the panel members, (4) polling the panel's opinions on the issue before and after the deliberative process, and (5) making the results known to decisionmakers and the general public" (p. 116).

¹² Local examples of participatory research include the 1999 Homelessness in Waterloo Region Backgrounder process, community research highlighted by Banks & Mangan (1999) by the Company of Neighbours in Hespeler, or the variety of visioning processes in municipalities across Waterloo Region over the last decade.

3.0 Roles of Neighbourhood Groups

Although there is not one agreed upon definition of neighbourhood groups, several definitions are proposed. Logan & Rabrenovic (1990) in their research into neighbourhood associations in Albany, USA, define a neighbourhood association as, “a civic organization oriented toward maintaining or improving the quality of life in a geographically delimited area” (p. 68). Kretzmann & McKnight (1993), from a community development approach, define a neighbourhood association in terms of “citizens working together” and that they are the basic tool for “empowering individuals, building strong communities, creating effective citizens, [and] making democracy work” (p. 109).

Steinberg (1977) states that from the citizen’s perspective, the primary functions of neighbourhood associations are protective and integrative. The neighbourhood association’s protective function is primarily exercised by gathering citizens, that on their own have very little power to affect change, to form an association that can have much greater, collective influence. The neighbourhood association plays an integrative role in linking citizens and government, and involving citizens in the life of the community and society.

Peterman (2000) and others suggest that neighbourhood associations developed in two ways – as Resident Associations (with roots in the Neighbourhood movement) in higher-income suburbs or as Community Development Associations (with roots in the Settlement House movement) in inner-city and ethnic slums. However, in practice there is abundant overlap, blurring, and evolution of those two streams.

Most neighbourhood groups are organized and supported primarily on a lower-tier municipal level that, among other areas, is focused on development and recreation. As such, some neighbourhood groups may be focused on those issues. However, neighbourhood groups are extremely diverse and often develop not so much according to a logical municipal model but more in response to locally relevant issues (Logan & Rabrenovic, 1990). This means that many neighbourhood groups have developed numerous social support and health promotion programs that are more aligned with an upper-tier municipal mandate. This makes them very complex but also very flexible and promising supports in local communities.

Philips & Orsini (2002) suggest that involvement of individual citizens in government policy development and the involvement of civil society organizations (such as neighbourhood groups) are complementary processes. Not only can the involvement of neighbourhood groups in municipal decision-making complement individual citizen involvement but it can be the means of effectively involving individuals. The four roles noted below synthesize the variety of neighbourhood group participatory roles suggested in the literature.

3.1 Neighbourhood Groups as Partners

Neighbourhood groups can be partners with government – cooperating in facilitating community input in government decision-making, and in the delivery of government programs.

One of the challenges of citizen involvement is the process of gathering citizens that are interested, or able to participate. Organized groups that are rooted in the community but connected to government have the potential to play a key role in connecting government directly to these citizens. Alternatively, in some issues, the neighbourhood groups can represent the interests of the community and provide the government a simple method of gathering input into policies and programs.

Neighbourhood groups can also partner with government in delivering programs that are planned through the above process. Rich (1979) delineates three roles of 'locality-based voluntary associations' in the delivery of services: "as consumer cooperatives seeking to secure public service from other organizations, as alternative producers of desired services, and as organizations of citizen co-producers wherein service-delivery levels are determined in partnership between neighbourhood residents and governmental agency staff" (Kramer & Specht, 1983, p. 94). It is specifically in their third role as co-producer with government of public services that neighbourhood groups can most clearly be seen as partners. While not all neighbourhood groups deliberately play this role, it is certainly an important role of many neighbourhood groups in Waterloo Region.

Anderson (1983) highlights the role of neighbourhood associations in decentralized service delivery as a means to providing effective services while "allowing a local government to closely involve citizens in service options and be responsive to citizens' needs" (p. 1). Certainly, neighbourhood groups can be partners with municipalities in both gaining community input as well as the implementation of policies and programs that affect those neighbourhoods. Kramer & Specht (1983) address potential municipal weaknesses in both of these areas when they suggest that, "the empowerment of neighborhood groups and primary social systems such as the family, peer, and other informal groups is advocated as a way of combating [both] the inefficiency and undemocratic character of large public bureaucracies" (p. 94).

3.2 Neighbourhood Groups as Mediators

Neighbourhood groups can also play roles as neutral mediators or brokers between citizens and government or other large decision-making bodies. Being situated between these two groups can allow neighbourhood groups to facilitate problem solving and conflict resolution, as well as putting the words of each into terms that the other will understand.

Jane Jacobs (1961) suggests that the need for brokers is also a democratic one. She suggests that there needs to be "a broker organization between the street neighborhoods and the city government if neighborhoods are to gain access to power" (Peterman, 2000, p. 157).

Not only can neighbourhood groups be mediators in the sense of working through conflicting positions of citizens and governments, but they can also be a safe place where citizens, especially marginalized or vulnerable citizens, can feel comfortable beginning to get involved in the decisions that affect them. Berger & Neuhaus (1977) suggest that neighbourhood groups can be "mediating structures between the individual and the mega-structures of public life'." (cited in Kramer & Specht, 1983, p. 94).

3.3 Neighbourhood Groups as Advocates

Neighbourhood groups, in addition to playing a neutral role, also play a role of advocating for the needs of the community. Logan & Rabrenovic (1990) found that advocacy is a primary reason for the initiation of many neighbourhood groups, especially in fighting landuse, development, and growth issues. However, neighbourhood groups also advocate for specific services that are needed in the community or work for more general economic or social improvement. In either case, these groups can be critical in the process of formulating either municipal policies or programs.

Paul Davidoff wrote an influential article (*Advocacy and Pluralism in Planning*, 1965) that suggested that planners – not only outside of government but within as well, should act as advocates of particular sides in planning disputes. Neighbourhood groups have the ability to be advocates in this sense in communities that may not otherwise have strong advocates for their particular interests. In this way, neighbourhood groups can provide expert technical or political support to citizens in their participation in municipal decision-making.

3.4 Neighbourhood Groups as Capacity Builders

Largely promoted through the community development literature, neighbourhood groups can also be key agents in building local capacity in citizens and the neighbourhood as a whole. This capacity building can either be in the form of social capital or the ability to mobilize for participation in a particular issue, building individual political and technical skills to enhance the quality of participation, or to simply build an individual's confidence that they can participate and have meaningful input.

Kretzmann & McKnight (1993) remind, however, that it is critical that a group should not come from outside the community, or even a neighbourhood group within the community, and take over *for* the community. They suggest that, "outside resources that overwhelm, dominate or replace the work and potential of local citizens, their associations, and the institutions they control will weaken rather than enhance the development process" (p. 376). It is critical that dependency not be created and that "development must start from within" (p. 274).

3.5 Balancing Roles

Obviously, some of these roles can conflict. It is certainly difficult to be both a partner with government and an advocate for the citizens in the community – on top of being a neutral mediator. Peterman (2000) argues that, "brokering only succeeds when the process involves creative tension. This implies that the process of revitalization is an ongoing struggle to find a middle ground between the desires and interests of the overall power structure, as well as the desires and interests of those people living in local places" (p. 157). Peterman proposes four criteria for successful neighbourhood development – the last one being, "the relationships between the community and those governmental agencies that have interests in and responsibilities with respect to the community must be neither too friendly nor confrontational. An atmosphere of 'creative tension' appears most appropriate." (p. 155). This suggests the need to involve neighbourhood associations in multiple ways and not to expect neighbourhood groups to be purely a partner with government or else an advocate against governments and other neighbourhood

forces. This complements the research of Logan & Rabrenovic (1990) that found that municipal governments are both the primary ally (especially on lifestyle and collective consumption issues¹³) and the primary opponent (especially on development issues) of most neighbourhood groups. It would seem clear that there is a need for a creative tension especially between the three neighbourhood group roles of advocate and partner and mediator.

¹³ Logan & Rabrenovic used this term for services or facilities that affect the convenience of living in the neighborhood...[such as]; parks and playgrounds, streets and sidewalks, garbage collection, traffic congestion, shopping facilities, and health care facilities" (p. 80).

4.0 Summary

Citizen involvement, in some form, is a cornerstone of our democratic political system. Furthermore, it is widely touted as potentially beneficial and, in more recent decades, as necessary to the effective and efficient working of municipal government decision-making.

However, the wide variety of objectives for involving citizens (education, change, staff support, cooptation, or community power) and levels of involvement (from expert-driven to citizen driven approaches) make this a very complex undertaking. This paper clarifies those objectives and levels of involvement from the recent literature on citizen involvement.

There is also a wide array of techniques for involving citizens, of which this paper briefly outlines a few. This is an area for further research that could involve a review of best practices of citizen involvement in municipal decision-making.

Neighbourhood groups are critical players in the process of involving citizens in the decisions that affect them and their area. Neighbourhood groups can be valuable partners, neutral mediators, grassroots advocates, and community capacity builders. They can make the involvement of citizens in municipal decision-making both more effective and more efficient.

It is critical that planners understand the roles and options, and the rationale behind them to ascertain what is most appropriate for a particular situation, as well as to capitalize on the benefits and manage the challenges of different citizen involvement approaches. This literature review is a component in that process of ongoing learning and improvement.

5.0 Annotated Bibliography

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This short report, although written in 1983, provides a helpful examination of the benefits, obstacles, and steps for successful neighbourhood-based service delivery. The services range from social services like counseling to infrastructure services like garbage collection, but focuses on four categories of services that are amenable to neighbourhood service delivery. These categories are: services being shifted to smaller-scale operations; services geared toward limited-mobility groups; services that must be sensitive to particular socio-economic, ethnic or cultural community norms; and any physical or social service that directly influences a neighbourhood's status, livability, and economic viability.

Arnstein, Sherry (1969). A Ladder of Citizen Participation, Journal of American Institute of Planners, Vol. 35.

This article provides a seminal typology of citizen participation that has become a starting point for most discussions about citizen involvement – being cited by several hundred other articles in academic journals, both internationally and in North America. Arnstein sketches out a ladder of participation ranging from manipulation and expert-controlled processes to partnership and citizen-controlled processes. She clearly defines participation in terms of citizen power and the article is written with an agenda of promoting partnership, delegated power, and citizen control, which Arnstein calls *genuine* citizen participation.

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Botes & Van Rensburg summarize nine pitfalls of many community participation processes in South Africa – as well as twelve related guidelines to avoid those pitfalls. The pitfalls they mention are: the paternalistic role of development professionals; the inhibiting and prescriptive role of the state; the over-reporting of development successes; selective participation; hard-issue bias; conflicting

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This article explores the components of the public participation process with a focus on public land and resources. It surveys a number of land use decision-making processes in Canada and abroad, and assesses to what degree they exhibited the components mentioned in the article.

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This article describes the history of citizen participation in the United States as well as refining Arnstein's citizen roles in planning. He includes five citizen roles (review and comment, consultation, advisory, shared decision-making, and controlled decision-making) – all of which are appropriate in different situations. Burke also describes five citizen participation strategies (education-therapy, behavioral change, staff supplement, cooptation, and community power).

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Feldman, Martha & Khademian, Anne (2000). Managing for Inclusion: Balancing control and participation. International Public Management Journal, Vol. 3.

Feldman & Khademian state that both participation and control are necessary for a democratic government. "In the two main models of public management, control trumps participation. The traditional model, Managing For Process, relies on

centralized authority over process and emphasizes rules and regulations.” In this model, citizens are involved outside of government. The newer model, which they call Managing for Results, “permits decentralized control over process but relies on centralized control of results” (p. 149). They suggest a third model that balances participation and control that they call Managing for Inclusion. This proposed model focuses on the internal culture of government and making changes that will have the effect of promoting substantial citizen involvement.

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This book is a classic of the asset and capacity-building approach to community work promoted by John McKnight. It is a how-to manual for community workers, outlining skills and methods in working supportively with individuals, groups, organizations, institutions, and the entire community.

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The three models of community organization (social planning, locality development, and social action) described in this article were originally suggested by Rothman in an earlier article. These models – their assumptions, approaches, and theoretical frameworks - are each described in this article. These models have become starting points for discussions about the nature and methods of social work.

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