

## **Distinguishing Participation and Inclusion**

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This paper argues that participation and inclusion are two independent dimensions of public engagement. Through comparative, ethnographic analysis of four decision-making processes in the city of Grand Rapids, Michigan, we define inclusion as involving the public and government in identifying public problems, designing processes that engage diverse viewpoints in deliberation, and making and enacting decisions. Elaborating the literature on communities of practice, we explore how more and less participatory and inclusive practices create different kinds of communities, and find that enhancing inclusion reaps greater benefits from public engagement in terms of capacities to address an ongoing stream of public problems.

Keywords: public management, civic engagement, participation, inclusion, community of practice

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## **The Problem of Conflating Participation and Inclusion**

Discussions of public engagement sometimes recall the parable of the blind men and the elephant. Although everyone seems to be circling around the same general phenomenon, debates abound regarding what the proper parts of public engagement are, and what they all add up to. In this article, we suggest that conflicts regarding the purpose, usefulness, and legitimacy of different forms of public engagement are frequently the result of conflating what are actually two independent dimensions of public engagement: participation and inclusion. Conflation of the two under the overarching category of “public engagement,” or simply “participation,” muddles both the practice and theory of democratic engagement.

The consequences include participation burnout by well-meaning members of the public, government organizations, and politicians. Public bodies may go to great lengths to create forums for the public to provide input on policy choices, only to have the public decline to take part because they do not feel their participation will make a difference, or protest after having participated that the discussion was somehow inauthentic or unsatisfactory. Those who engage may become exhausted after a time, feeling as if they are treading water between one issue and the next, not making headway or needed connections among them. Distinguishing the two dimensions illuminates analysis of the implications of public engagement for the individual and collective sense of community and the capacities of that community. The extensive literature on democratic participation would also benefit from enhanced efforts to distinguish these categories.

In this article, we review a selection of the vast literature on public engagement, focusing on groupings within the literature in terms of the theorization of the relationship between government and the public. We then draw upon the community of practice literature to suggest why those relationships are consequential for the kinds of communities or publics that

engagement practices create. We then turn to our cases to elucidate these concepts. Following a description of our data collection and analysis methods, we provide background information on our case, the city of Grand Rapids, Michigan. We describe four decision-making processes in the city, and then analyze in each one the engagement practices, how they enacted the public-government relationship, and the consequences of those practices for the kinds of policies and political communities that were created. Based upon this analysis, we articulate a working definition of two distinct patterns of participation and inclusion. In the discussion and conclusion, we summarize the benefits of inclusion, how inclusive processes produce these benefits, and the theoretical and practical importance of enhancing inclusion.

### **The Public-Government Relationship**

The body of planning literature and practices potentially relevant to the analysis of public engagement in problem-solving is immense, appearing under the umbrellas of citizen participation, civic engagement, collaborative governance, and inclusion and representation in democracy. To focus the present discussion, we pivot our review upon the question of how different forms of “engagement” – empirically or normatively described – constitute different kinds of communities. There are two major conceptualizations of the relationship between the public and government in public engagement. In one approach the relationship is adversarial and the other it is potentially collaborative. This relationship is consequential for the way that engagement practices are organized and the kinds of political communities that they sustain.

The first approach dichotomizes the roles of the public and government in effecting public engagement. One or the other side initiates the community engagement, if there is any, or the expression of community concerns. In one vein of this literature, the community provides the impetus for public involvement in decision-making. The government may be more or less

receptive, and the public may be more or less aggressive in its insistence to play a role, but the general dynamic is from the outside in: the public must demand a role for itself in decision-making (Arnstein 1969, Alinsky 1971, Friedmann 1987, Reardon 1998, Beard 2003). Another vein of this literature describes people within the government who act on behalf of the public's interests. These include advocacy (Davidoff 1965), equity (Krumholz and Forester 1990, Krumholz and Clavel 1994, Altschuler 1965), and progressive (Clavel 1986) planners who utilize their positions within government, professional judgment, and ethical commitments to address what they know of the concerns of socioeconomically marginalized groups.

This paper builds upon the second approach, which concerns empirical examples of collaborative relationships between the public and government to decide upon the topics, means, and ends of engagement (Healey 1997, Reich 1998, Forester 1999, Denhardt and Denhardt 2000, Hajer and Wagenaar 2003, Fung and Wright 2003, Innes and Booher 2003). We elaborate the literature on inclusive management, described as a pattern of practices by public managers that facilitate the inclusion of public employees, technical experts, the public, and politicians in collaboratively addressing public problems (Feldman and Khademian 2000; Feldman, Khademian, and Quick 2009).

### **Communities of Practice**

We posit that the nature of the public-government relationship is highly consequential in shaping the community of actors who address public problems. The *forms* that engagement takes inevitably imbricate significant, yet often implicit, aspects of individual and community identity, belonging, and legitimacy. Civic processes that involve people in making decisions about a proposed new building in their neighborhood, citywide transportation priorities, or strategies for addressing juvenile crime, for example, all explicitly invite discussion of the participants'

identity, interests, sense of belonging and of the nature of the community they are or desire to be part of. Equally, processes that do *not* include the public communicate which people and issues do (or do not) have a place in political decision-making or the broader community.

The concept of a “community of practice” provides a theoretical lens for surfacing the recursive relationship among modes of public engagement, the experience of the public involved in these processes, and the kinds of communities that these processes foster. The literature on communities of practice examines the connections between practices, participation, identity, communities, and boundaries (Lave and Wenger 1991; Orr 1996; Wenger 1998; Nicolini, Gerhardi, and Yanow 2003). It asserts that practices inevitably create and recreate communities of practice, that without practices there are no communities, and that the nature of the practices shapes the nature of the communities.

Communities of practice are ubiquitous and overlapping. Everyone is part of innumerable communities of practice, and a single community of practice may or may not be intentional or recognizable as a discrete group of people. Communities of practice include, for example, professional and occupational groups (e.g., teachers), identities (e.g., parent) and, as in our case, collections of people gathering to address neighborhood problems. These groups may be amorphous, internally diverse, and impermanent or well-defined, homogeneous, and stable. Participation in a community of practice is marked by and accomplished through “legitimate peripheral participation” in it – learning the practices, tacit and explicit, intended and unintended, that make one part of a community (Lave and Wenger 1998, Brown and Duguid 1991). Knowing how to be a member of Alcoholics Anonymous (Lave and Wenger 1991), photocopy machine repairer (Orr 1996), flute-maker (Yano 2003), gofer (Bechky 2006), or member of a drug cartel or

the law enforcement (Kenney 2007) is produced through participation in the community of practice and the community of practice is produced through the participation.

A “core” or authoritative position that defines a community of practice cannot be externally imposed (Lave and Wenger 1991, Wenger 1998). The practices enacted create what the community is, as well as their fluency and legitimacy as participants. Management practices in relation to developing communities of practice must aim to support emergent communities of practice rather than mandating groups constrained by canonical practices (Brown and Duguid 1991, Orr 1996). In the planning context, this suggests that the designers of participatory processes should manage these processes in ways that allow participants to co-produce the practices through which they define issues, develop ways of addressing problems, and become a community in which these practices take place.

The community of practice framework has been little used in scholarship on planning, public management, and civic engagement. Where used, it generally refers to communities of practice that are formed instrumentally, comprised of a group with clear membership such as an agency or department, as a strategy for enhancing internal cohesion, knowledge management (Bate and Robert 2002; Dawes, Cresswell, and Pardo 2009) or organizational capacity-building (Snyder and Briggs 2004). Communities of practice need not be clearly delimited, intentional, or even self-aware, however. Four recent contributions demonstrate the value of a broader view of the term for enhancing collaboration in public settings (McCoy and Vincent 2007; Feldman and Khademian 2007; Schwietzer, Howard, and Doran 2008; Currie, Waring, and Finn 2008).

“Participation builds community” is a common axiom, yet sometimes “participation” seems to disappoint by failing to build “community.” This paper focuses on the *kind* of community “participation” builds, and *how*. If all practices create communities, even what

Arnstein (1969) characterizes as “non-participation” creates a community, albeit a normatively unsatisfying community of alienated citizens. It seems that participation disappoints when it fails to build a particular kind of community. Viewing civic engagement from a community of practice lens focuses attention upon the nature of engagement practices and the nature of the community enacting and sustained by the practices.

### **Methods**

The following analysis arose from a long-term, continuing ethnographic research project with public managers and community members in Grand Rapids, Michigan that began in 1998. Over this period, we have discerned a pattern of strong commitment to engaging stakeholders in addressing the city’s problems. This has been coupled with ongoing experimentation by public managers, politicians, and neighborhood leaders with the formats for public engagement. On some occasions, all parties appear very satisfied with the opportunities and outcomes of engagement, and at other times there has been indifference to or angry backlashes against efforts to involve the public. Observing these dynamics prompted questions about the relationships among formats for public involvement and the kinds of political communities they sustain.

To illuminate these relationships, in this paper we compare four cases that together demonstrate a range of approaches to engagement and public reactions and for which we have particularly strong data. In addition, our study participants consider these cases exceptional. The Master Plan has “almost been elevated to sainthood status in terms of process and inclusion” by people in Grand Rapids (Ian, city government manager, 10/25/06). Conversely, the Indian Trails decision was vehemently decried as undemocratic. The other two cases are contrasting approaches to addressing a city budget crisis that has garnered intense, prolonged attention from

many quarters. Following a thick description of each case, we pivot our analysis upon the connections among and forms of engagement and communities that were enacted.

The study participants contributing data for this analysis are 14 city government employees and 32 members of the public (comprised of representatives of neighborhood and business organizations, consultants, nonprofit foundation staff, elected and appointed city officials, and individual residents). All are identified by pseudonym. We used a theoretical sampling strategy (Glaser and Strauss 1967) through which potential participants were identified through references from other study participants, observing community meetings, and reviewing meeting minutes and media coverage. They were then invited to participate and interviewed by one or both authors, in person or by phone, individually or in groups. We conducted confidential, unstructured, active interviews (Holstein and Gubrium 1995, Spradley 1979) in which we engaged the study participants not only in accounts of what they observed or experienced, but in sharing their interpretation of those events. They expressed and explained their opinions or feelings about a process or event, compared it with others, and suggested what might have been done better.

In addition, between 2001 and 2009, one or both authors made eight separate visits to the city, toured Grand Rapids with city staff and community organizers, and observed seven community meetings or events related to the cases. We reviewed committee meeting minutes, staff reports, city plans and budgets, community organizations' websites, and media coverage. Data were then analyzed using standard coding, categorizing, and memoing techniques (Glaser and Strauss 1967; Strauss and Corbin 1990; Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw 1995; Lofland and Lofland 1995).

Three features of these data and the broader research project through which they were collected are particularly important for this analysis. First, the data are longitudinal, allowing us to follow events over long periods of time, pursue new lines of inquiry that emerge during the research, and take a process-based view (Mohr 1982, Eisendhardt 1989, Sewell 1996, Langley 1999). Second, to a large extent, they provide us with an insider, or emic, perspective (Goodenough 1970, Geertz 1973, Miller and van Maanen 1979, Agar 1986). For example, 10 of the 46 study participants in this study subset have been interviewed at least 6 times over many years, and have enriched this analysis by providing their own comparisons among the four processes. Third, the data provide us with many different insider perspectives, allowing us to triangulate among various interpretations of the processes and events (Denzin 1978, Altheide and Johnson 1994, Janesick 1994, Yin 2003). Together, these features allow us to generate thick description, enhancing the validity of our interpretive analysis and inductive theory development (Glaser and Strauss 1967, Geertz 1973, Kirk and Miller 1986, Lin 1998, Locke 2001, Yanow and Schwartz-Shea 2006).

## **The Cases**

### **Grand Rapids**

Grand Rapids is a Midwestern American city with a population of 195,000 in a metropolitan area with a population of 1,089,000 in 2003. Manufacturing dominated the local economy at least through the 1990s, but recently there has been large-scale private investment in health services and medical research and development. Several well-funded, charitable foundations established by local families support human services, recreation, and cultural programs and facilities. The city's economy and population have continued to grow even since Michigan began to stagnate in the 1970s. The state's second largest city after Detroit, Grand

Rapids plays an increasingly important role in Michigan's economic, social, and political development. In the 2000 census, 67% of residents identified themselves as white, 20% as African American, and 13% as Latin. Approximately 10% were foreign-born, and over 50% had moved to their current residence within the previous five years. Less than 25% of adults had a bachelor's degree, 16% lived below the poverty level, and the median household income was 83% of the state household median.

The city electorate has repeatedly affirmed a council-manager form of government in which the city manager plays a central role in allocating and managing the city's budget and human resources (Zeemering 2009). One city manager held the position from 1988 to 2008, and for at least the past decade his management team actively invited public input and fueled public capacity to engage in city decision-making. Although the processes and results of civic engagement have varied, generally there is a mutual desire and expectation for community involvement in governance among the public, city government, and elected officials (Feldman and Quick 2009). The two mayors in office during this study period both implemented extensive intergovernmental cooperation with other agencies in the region (LaMore and Supanich-Goldner 2000, Zeemering and Durham 2009).

### **The Master Plan**<sup>2</sup>

Grand Rapids updated its Master Plan starting in 2001 and completed the process the following year. The process operated within strict financial constraints, firm deadlines, and legal guidelines. The update involved broad-based engagement of residents, non-profits, and businesses, and was funded by a local foundation and the city. It was the first master plan for the city in nearly four decades. Politicians and planners working behind closed doors had produced

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<sup>2</sup> The details of the process are foregrounded in the preface and Chapter 1 of *Plan Grand Rapids*, available at [http://www.grand-rapids.mi.us/index.pl?page\\_id=634](http://www.grand-rapids.mi.us/index.pl?page_id=634). Other details in this description are drawn from meeting observations, interviews, other sections of the plan, outreach materials, meeting minutes, and media coverage.

the previous versions. This time, however, the process involved hundreds of community meetings and engaged approximately 3,000 members of the public. Planners, politicians, neighborhood organizers, members of interest groups, and neighborhood residents worked side by side to discuss what kind of neighborhoods they wanted and how to create them.

Drawing on suggestions from a variety of sources, at the outset of the process the mayor appointed a Master Plan Steering Committee comprised of 31 persons representing diverse interest groups:

*They looked for stakeholders that were visible in their parts of the community and asked them to take an active role in making sure that if someone is not at the table, that that person or that group of persons had been identified and invited. There are still many voices not speaking, there are many chairs at the table that are still empty, and there is still much more work to do, but it cannot honestly be said that the city has not made an effort to rectify any deliberate hidden agendas. (Patsy, community member, 9/10/01)*

Committees such as this one or task forces are often used as advisors. In this process, however, the Committee was set up as the primary decision maker:

*It would be very easy for [the city staff] to say, "Look, we're the people who know how to do this. Here's what we suggest and you probably ought to go along with it." They aren't doing that at all. They are willing to give us opinions, but they are not putting themselves into the process. They said from the beginning, "Look, this is your committee, this is your master plan, we're here to advise and help." And they have stuck with that (Todd, community member, 9/7/01)*

It was up to the committee to hire consultants and decide how to proceed. City staff and consultants then provided ample help in mapping out the process map and organizing the public meetings during the 30 months that the steering committee served.

Staff and consultants provided images from Grand Rapids of the planning ideas being discussed, such as different levels of density, or the view from the sidewalk of parking lots placed behind buildings versus facing the street. They created a short glossary of selected planning terms to help make the planning concepts that would be useful accessible to everyone, and otherwise

avoided unnecessary jargon. Participants were encouraged to express their ideas in their own ways, including through telling stories, drawing pictures, and jotting down ideas.

Planning staff or consultants began each meeting with a brief description of the bigger project and the work done to date, to show people how their work was shaping the process and outcomes and to orient newcomers so that they could participate. They disseminated a road map of the process to help people understand how the parts fit together, which they updated and redistributed periodically to reflect new content, additional meetings, or revised schedules, as well as to record information on the number of meetings or persons who had participated so far. The process unfolded in five phases. Newsletters, videos, and press releases announcing each phase and progress to date were widely distributed and carried by all major news outlets and in multiple languages. A website was developed to provide information.

In each phase, the community provided information, the planning staff and consultants would use the community's input to come up with a series of ideas, and then everyone would meet to evaluate whether they had gotten it right yet:

*I think [city staff and consultants] struck a nice balance with getting people's input where it counts, like asking, "What kind of city do you want to be in?" And then saying, "Okay, this is the kind of city you told us you want. Here's how we can do it. We're bringing this back to you to find out if this is where you want to go and how you want to get there." It gives a lot of buy-in for people who may not even have participated. (Todd, community member, 9/7/01)*

The first phase alone entailed 120 facilitated meetings, held at different times and locations around the city, and the subsequent 4 phases each involved many additional meetings. A citywide community forum, attended by 150 to 300 people, was held to launch each phase, to act upon the knowledge gathered to that point, and decide on next steps.

The process changed as it went along in response to the community's engagement. Development guidelines are one example. In early meetings, residents articulated concerns about

the quality, character, and compatibility of development that could arise from different land use designations made through the master plan. Noticing that these kinds of comments were coming up frequently in community meetings, the planning staff and consultants suggested that development guidelines might be a good way to engage questions about what different kinds of permitted development would be like. Community members agreed, and the planning staff and consultants updated the Master Plan scope and process flow diagram to insert a series of additional, parallel discussions about development guidelines to help elaborate particular aspects of the plan. Initial sample guidelines formed the basis for further conversation. From there, the content developed through coupling two significantly different approaches: 1) discussions of abstract themes, and 2) study of four locations known to need change. Extra meetings about the development guidelines were held with stakeholders around the city, including a special workshop that over 100 people attended. Concept plans were developed that translated the abstract themes into specific possible site plans and sketches in the four neighborhoods. Neighborhood stakeholders responded to these plans, and their positive and negative reactions provided input for the development guidelines that were incorporated into the Master Plan for use throughout the city. Three of the neighborhood concept plans met with substantial approval from the local businesses and residents and were included as “drafts” in the final Master Plan.

Not all of the issues that participants raised at the hundreds of meetings were strictly planning issues that could be dealt with through the Master Plan. Representatives from several city departments with specialized responsibilities and city staff who coordinated problem-solving in each city ward under another initiative, Community Oriented Government (COG), attended each meeting. The COG framework, rolled out as the city was undertaking the Master Plan, provided a way of organizing joint efforts by community organizations and city employees. They

addressed problems such as graffiti, abandoned cars, nuisance animals, West Nile disease education, and garbage collection, and successfully cooperated with the school district and U.S. Department of Justice on neighborhood enhancements. The COG and Master Plan efforts were mutually supportive and energizing (Zoe 6/9/03 and 12/6/04, Brenda 1/8/04, and Rachel 5/5/06, who are all city government managers).

The Master Plan was finished on time and within budget. The fifth and final community forum, held September 12, 2002, was both an opportunity to present the plan and to make clear that input was still welcome. The mood of the meeting, titled, "It's a Plan!" was celebratory, with staffed information stations, the plan document and maps on display, and posted images and inspiring quotations about what the community had accomplished and still could do. People milled about visiting with one another, until the chair of the Master Plan steering committee addressed the crowd:

*I am proud of the committee and proud of this project. From the outset this was a community based process, and it still is a community based process. If you'll look at the plan book here, you see that unobtrusively, down in the corner, on the right side, it says "DRAFT." So, we're still looking for input tonight. However, we do hope, because the process has been community based both in concept and in execution, that this plan does truly reflect the will of the community. (Jack Hoffman, 9/12/02)*

The plan was complete ("It's a Plan!"), yet it remained open to input.

Backed by strong community support, the Master Plan sailed through City Commission approval. The process that the Master Plan task had set into motion, however, was not ended. Residents continue to bring their own copies of the Master Plan document to meetings as a reference for making decisions (Planning Commission observation, 5/14/09). The city officials recognized this increased capacity as a resource they could use and embarked on a process of rewriting the zoning ordinances to reflect the city plan. Though the city's planning department could have rewritten the zoning code relatively quickly, staff chose to use another public process.

After hundreds of residents had been involved in the minute details of deciding on zoning definitions and zoning maps, the zoning ordinance progressed smoothly through City Commission adoption in 2008. Relationships built through the Master Plan process have sprouted out into new areas of cooperation, reenergizing a citywide affordable housing coalition and spurring joint planning among adjacent residential and business associations (Jenna, community member, 6/22/05). The process raised community expectations and skills for engagement (Kylah, community member, 6/24/05; and Joe, 8/11/06; Will, 8/11/06; Ian, 10/25/06; and Rachel, 7/25/07, all city employees). As a business association member later commented:

*After the Master Plan process, this community now understands that the City will listen and that this is powerful stuff, and so they recognize that we have an opportunity to have some input here so lets do it. (Frank, community member, 12/16/04)*

A designer of the Master Plan process later reflected that building the community connections and knowledge to move forward into other issues had been an explicit objective:

*What we did with the Master Plan and I believe with the zoning ordinance is 50/50: 50% of the success of the project is the process, and 50% is this great document. Neither one overpowers the other, but in the process you get that whole social dynamic that you're trying to get to, that community wisdom about a specific topic that they can talk about in an intelligent way and talk about to others in the community, and then that will also guide their decision-making process. And then you have this great document that is the institutional memory for the process and is a reference for communities to help remember what they discussed and be able to apply it through policy decisions. (Rachel, 8/14/07)*

## **Budget Survey**

Within two years of the Master Plan's completion, the City began to address severe budget pressures due to declining local income taxes and revenue sharing from the state. In the year beginning July 1, 2004, it lost \$30 million from its \$120 million General Fund, the most flexible portion of the total city budget. For the following year, the City anticipated an additional \$11 million cut that would result in a cumulative loss of 25% of the city's total workforce from its 2002 levels. The managers decided that the budget cuts would have such a significant impact on

city services that it was very important to “get a clear idea about citizens’ priorities about the budget, to know what outcomes they value the most” (Ian, 10/25/06). The managers hoped to obtain scientifically representative information from the whole of the city’s residents, the “silent majority (Will, 8/11/06),” not just the opinions of a smaller number of people who would care enough and be able to attend a community meeting.

The survey team administered an anonymous telephone survey to 759 randomly selected Grand Rapids households, asking respondents whether they would prefer that the city stop, reduce, maintain, or increase funding for 42 services. The city managers then advertised four open meetings around the city. The 132 people who attended those meetings worked through a set of paired budget allocations in which they had to decide, for example, whether community services or park operation was more important. They used remote control devices to record their individual preferences, which were aggregated and projected back to the group on a screen. There was no discussion until after all of the voting was complete, which took up to 90 minutes. The meetings were a “raucous” process (Ian, 10/25/06), with people frequently protesting loudly, “You can’t choose between those two!” One participant reported, “The tension in the room was intense, to say the least. One guy threw down his remote and refused to pick it back up” (Ben, community member, 10/20/06).

Using the telephone survey and meeting data, the survey researchers ranked residents’ priorities for services. The city managers proceeded to “budget according to those results” (Ian, 10/25/06), interpreting the lowest ranked services as the first places to cut expenditures. The city manager put together a budget which the city commissioners adopted by a vote of five to two. But some community members vociferously protested that the surveys did not represent the

community's real priorities. People were angry about the ranking system *and* some of the specific budgeting allocations that it produced. With regards to the process, one participant explained,

*People couldn't speak their own mind about what they thought about stuff. If a choice wound up being one of the bottom ones, it seemed like you were giving an okay to cut it, and people weren't very comfortable with that* (Ben, 10/20/06).

And an organizer from a neighborhood where the public swimming pools were closed protested, "Anybody who's voting to close pools is not a person who lives around or with children in a neighborhood. These rules have been made on a different level (Jen, community member, 5/10/06)."

Neighborhood organizations organized a series of alternative public forums to facilitate what one described as more "authentic" input. Instead of "pigeonholing" people into either/or budget allocation choices (Ben, 10/20/06), they invited the public to think about what should be discussed in the budgeting process and how. They educated themselves and the public about how the city budget works, and tried to "flip-flop" the discussion away from viewing the city as a "charity case" and "taking away what was least important" and towards "building a city that is attractive to people" (Paula, community member, 5/31/06; Ben, 10/20/06).

### **Citizen Budget Advisors**<sup>3</sup>

The next phase of the budgeting story took place the following year, when the city anticipated that another \$11 million in budget cuts would be required for the year beginning July 1, 2006. The senior managers and commissioners acknowledged the unhappiness with the previous year's process and outcomes and appointed a group of Citizen Budget Advisors to advise the city manager on the public participation process and specific budget recommendations. The people asked to serve were some of the most vocal critics of the budget survey. Senior

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<sup>3</sup> The Advisor's final report, meeting agendas, and meeting minutes may be found at <http://www.ci.grand-rapids.mi.us>. Other details in this description are drawn from interviews and media coverage.

managers explained that move in a broader context, telling us, “It is kind of our m.o. [mode of operation] to take the loudest complainers and bring them inside the tent” in order to “afford and give them responsibility” for helping to resolve the conflict (Will, 8/11/06) and to “arm them with better information” to generate better options together, or, if the oppositional dynamic cannot be changed, to have a “better fight” that is more productive (Joe, 8/11/06).

Ironically, the Advisors decided against additional public outreach. The 21 individuals who agreed to serve were diverse in terms of place of residence, income, race, ethnicity, affiliations (community organizer, business owner, etc.), and opinions about appropriate uses and sources of city funds (Gabriel, 5/8/06; Karen, 5/10/06; Alicia, 5/11/06; Fred, 5/31/06; all of whom are community members). For example, they were divided in their feelings about raising city taxes, supporting labor unions, and subsidizing recreation for low-income residents. The Advisors decided they could achieve deeper deliberation and produce better decisions if they conferred more intensely among themselves than if they used their energies and time on organizing other public forums. They dismissed the facilitator appointed by the city, appointed their own chair, and branched out into smaller groups to brainstorm options. They gathered opinions from their contacts in the community and worked through options together, coming up with new ideas and positions.

Very early on, the Advisors turned aside from the expected path of making line-by-line budget recommendations. Early on someone posed the question, “What kind of city do you want this to be?” and the Advisors and government managers reoriented their work around that framework. As one participant explained, “We could have argued about which pool to close forever, but asking ‘Do you want our kids to have a pool?’ was an answerable question that let us move on” (Carla, 10/11/06). From hundreds of pages of budget information city staff gave them

at their first meeting, within four months the Advisors had stripped their analysis down to a ten-page final report that laid out “foundational considerations” for how to think about the budget, supplemented with suggestions about just a few budget items. Their final report emphasized broad budgeting principles such as promoting social equity, building long-term community assets, and taking a long-term view of budgeting priorities and constraints.

The city’s senior managers accepted the Advisors’ authority to dismiss the facilitator. They changed tracks from supplying voluminous packets of budgeting information to providing tailored responses to Advisors’ questions. They redirected their technical support towards helping the Advisors to draft their position statement. The city managers then took the Advisors’ final report to heart, referencing the guidelines in their budget and making several specific cuts in accordance with them, including measures they otherwise found inadvisable (Will, 8/11/06). The city commission adopted the proposed budget with a minimum of controversy. Unhappy to have “taken a meat axe” to parks and recreation (Will, 8/11/06), the city commissioners and manager subsequently launched the Mayor’s Blue Ribbon Commission on Parks and Recreation to look at options to preserve these amenities.

### **Indian Trails Golf Course**<sup>4</sup>

In June 2007, a controversial proposal to seek a buyer of this city-owned facility suddenly appeared on the city commission’s meeting agenda without even a 24-hour public notice. Apparently acting on faith in the mayor’s good will and judgment in placing it on the agenda (Teresa, community member, 6/24/08), commissioners barely discussed the item before voting 7-0 in favor of the proposal to spend up to \$100,000 to market the property. Community activists and the editorial board of the local newspaper promptly decried both the sale idea and the

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<sup>4</sup> The Mayor’s Blue Ribbon Commission on Parks and Recreation’s final report, meeting agendas, and meeting minutes may be found at [http://www.ci.grand-rapids.mi.us/index.pl?page\\_id=4990](http://www.ci.grand-rapids.mi.us/index.pl?page_id=4990). Other details in this description are drawn from interviews, the *Grand Rapids Press* (abbreviated GRP), and other media coverage.

decision-making process (GRP 6/25/07), which senior city staff had been trying to slow down to allow public discussion (GRP 6/26/07).

Indian Trails is a no-frills municipal golf course known for its affordable fees and short wait times. Golfers who are low-income or non-white are most likely to choose Indian Trails among the courses in the area. The local newspaper editorial team, criticizing the sale proposal, opined, “If ever there was an ‘everyman’ course, Trails is it” (GRP 6/25/07). It is a popular for hiking and snow play among the residents of the adjacent neighborhoods, which include many of the lower-income areas of the city (Mac, community member, 1/22/09; Tonia, community member, 3/9/09). People objected to the sale because the community uses Indian Trails, and because closing it seemed elitist.

As important, critics protested the decision being reached hastily, without community deliberation. The Indian Trails proposal had not arisen out of any systematic review of public assets for possible sale. The Mayor’s Blue Ribbon Commission on Parks and Recreation had not suggested closing it in their final report, submitted only 3 months earlier. When the idea had come up, the Blue Ribbon Commission members felt it would be controversial and short-sighted to give up the green space and community amenity, and indeed had been told by city staff that any such sale would require a public vote (BRCPR minutes 11/20/06, 12/18/06, 1/22/07). The general sense was that the public did not have the complete story on the mayor’s motivation or timing to propose the sale (Grand Rapids forum of urbanplanet.org, June 2007; Rachel, 6/25/08; Ira, city government manager, 6/26/08; Rich, community member, 3/5/09).

## Analysis

### Distinguishing Participation and Inclusion

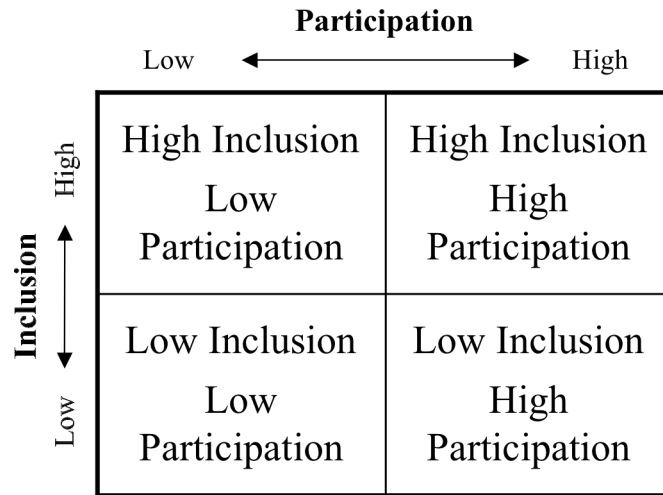
The varying community reactions to experiments with different approaches to civic participation – ranging from enthusiastic participation to vehement criticism – led us to analyze how the different processes were designed. In particular, we asked how the Citizen Budget Advisors’ format, a process involving only 21 self-selected critics, could be more participatory than the budget survey involving 759 households. The answer, we find, is that it is *not* more participatory. In this case, it is *more inclusive*. That is, through analysis of the four cases, we have discerned two distinct categories of participation and inclusion (Table 1), based upon the public’s experience of a process for solving a public problem.

**Table 1. Distinguishing features of high participation and high inclusion.**

<i>High Participation</i>	<i>High Inclusion</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Many people are welcomed and enabled to participate and/or do participate.</li><li>• Efforts are made to reduce constraints (location, time of day, language, medium of expression, etc.) on open participation and to ensure the representativeness of participants.</li><li>• Community input on the problem slated for discussion, or on various options for action, is collected and considered by decision-makers.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Diverse views are engaged in a deliberation in which new understandings of problems, opportunities for action, and the common good may emerge.</li><li>• The participants in the process take part in defining the problem, the process for decision-making, and the decision outcomes.</li><li>• Individual deliberations are part of an ongoing stream of issues, not one-time or one-issue discussions.</li></ul>

Inclusion is *not* a term we have coined to describe participation that we believe has been done particularly well. Indeed, participation may be done well or badly, as may inclusion. Rather, inclusion and participation are two different approaches to public engagement, with different implications for the roles of the parties involved, the kinds of decisions reached, and the kind of community fostered by engagement. A process may be characterized by one, neither, or both. To

visualize their interaction and independence, we use a two-by-two rubric to portray the two concurrent dimensions of a civic engagement process. The first dimension is a continuum of low to high participation and the second a continuum of low to high inclusion (Figure 1).



**Figure 1. The two dimensions of participation and inclusion.**

We now return to analyzing the four cases within this rubric. For each case, we first explain why we identify it as high or low inclusion and high or low participation, analyzing how it illuminates one of the four quadrants, and bringing out a few unifying points about the categories of inclusion and participation. We then turn to community of practice questions about the kinds of communities that are formed, and the relationship between the forms of participation and community

**High Participation and High Inclusion: The Master Plan**

The Master Plan process fits the category defined as high participation/high inclusion. The multiple venues, meetings and efforts to reach out and make participation possible make this process a model of participatory decision-making. It was open to everyone. Anyone who was interested was welcome and supported in their participation even if they could not attend every meeting. The process was also highly inclusive. A series of deliberative conversations engaging

diverse views resulted in the mutual creation and redefinition of community concerns and issues. The development of the design guidelines is just one example of a way that participants interacted that took place repeatedly throughout the planning process. Through such interactions, the process not only produced a Master Plan but also a community. The Master Plan process fueled the expectation and capacity for ongoing engagement in five key ways.

First, it framed the Master Plan as ongoing discussion rather than one-off engagement. The iterative and developmental nature of the practices enacted within the Master Plan process helped develop an orientation to ongoing engagement with emerging issues. The development guidelines provide a good example of these practices. They demonstrated that the process and the interpretation of community input were open to redefinition. The scope of the Master Plan was expanded to include the guidelines midway into the process when participants asked questions about the quality and feel of development and site planning that the land use designations would allow. They were developed through an arc of deliberation occurring iteratively over different stages of the Master Plan, involving many people in meetings of different kinds. They produced “guidelines” rather than rules, communicating that their role is to enable further conversation about appropriate action rather than to decide what people should do. This kind of iterative process not only provided many opportunities for people to “have their say,” but also created an orientation to a dynamic rather than a static process. While there was general agreement on the way to move forward, the iterative nature of the process created many opportunities to revisit and revise. One of the Master Plan organizers advised a peer who wanted to do something similar in his city, “You may set out to get from A to E, but pass through Q on the way to D, depending upon what people bring to the process (Rachel, 8/14/07).”

Second, the orientation to ongoing processes and emergent issues would have been an inadequate basis for inclusion if the community that developed this orientation had been constituted by a privileged and exclusive group of people, or used the guidelines to disenfranchise people. The efforts to involve many people created opportunities for participation. Other practices made these opportunities for meaningful inclusion, including creating the glossary of useful planning terms, using images of local sites to illustrate different land uses, and drafting neighborhood plans to visualize how development guidelines would play out in familiar and meaningful settings. The practice of iteratively using multiple vocabularies enabled decision-making through the perspectives of people who live in the neighborhoods, bridging between how residents experience the city and the abstractions involved in setting plans into text and maps.

Third, opportunities for input were never defined as final. While the city staff and consultants analyzed the input provided through community meetings, a practice of checking back with community members to see if their analysis was faithful to the community input reinforced a sense that the consultants and city staff were working for the community members. Even as the planning process was drawing to a close, the “It’s a Plan!” / “It’s a Draft” celebration reflected that implementing the plan – building the city - was an ongoing project that required broad-based involvement in implementation and that remained open to new ideas.

Fourth, it made process and outcome equally important. While the nominal task was creating a new Master Plan, the way that the process was enacted created connections between many different individuals and groups and between many different issues that provided the city as a whole with a capacity to engage various issues that have since developed. It created expectations for ongoing public involvement in creating a city the community wants to live in.

Going forward, the 50/50 rule is about creating a plan for the community to use to discover new ideas for their community, not (just) for planning staff to regulate proposals that come in.

Fifth, the Master Plan asked specifically, “What kind of community do you want to be?” The organizers encouraged participants to find new connections with different people, groups, and issues. While the Master Plan was formally oriented to envisioning the physical attributes of land use and design that could enable people’s desired quality of life, the way the question was explored enabled other aspects of building community. The inclusive process reconstituted and reenergized communities, through building new connections and visions of community that fueled, among other efforts, the zoning ordinance and affordable housing campaigns. It sustained a particular kind of political community in which residents “expect and want to be involved in decision-making, and city staff and city commissioners want residents’ involvement” (Rachel, 7/25/07).

### **Low Inclusion and High Participation: The Budget Survey**

The budget survey fits the category defined as low inclusion and high participation. It was highly participatory in that it involved many people: the telephone survey reached 759 households. Efforts were made to make their input as demographically representative as possible of the city as a whole, through re-weighting their input to be proportionate to the percentage of racial and ethnic groups in the city as a whole. The four neighborhood meetings were also highly participatory because they involved 132 persons, were broadly advertised and open to anyone interested, and were held at a variety of times across the city. City managers used the input collected to make the city budget.

It was not inclusive, however, because there was no room for deliberation about the choices that were presented, to address concerns not on the survey, or for participants to present

their knowledge and perspectives other than through voting. The surveys followed a script of identifying preferences among predetermined choices on a menu of issues that the city set forth. Participants felt “pigeonholed” by the forced pair choices and sometimes refused to continue participating. The opportunities to participate were staged as a single phone call or meeting, without any connection to an ongoing series of discussions about the budget and related community issues or even a report-back to the participants about how their input was used. When they saw how the input was used, the community was angry: they objected to having their input aggregated into a ranked list of priorities, protesting that when forced to prioritize “A” versus “B,” they had not meant to endorse eliminating either. They felt they had not had enough influence in framing the city budgeting problem, opportunity to deliberate options and contribute their full range of knowledge, and control over the decisions that were reached.

The process reaped community anger and many claims that the participatory process had not been legitimate. Neighborhood organizers’ desires to organize a more “authentic” process are telling. The experience of civic engagement in the surveys and neighborhood meetings was that participants learned to do things the city’s way, through making either / or choices. It was not intrinsically difficult to understand this method of participation, but those that threw down their remotes or stopped voting were unable to participate because they could not accept the format. At this stage, the process organizers did not remove barriers to people feeling more able to engage; they did not change the format (partly because they were aiming for statistically consistent results across all of the phone calls and meetings) by, for example, providing space for open discussion of budgeting issues and choices before, during, or after voting.

The experience did, however, generate community amongst individuals who experienced solidarity in their frustration around the process and its outcomes. The public felt duped, as if the

real community of decision-makers did not include them, and as if their issues and concerns had no place in the budget considerations, despite their having been invited to provide input. There was suspicion that city managers or commissioners had already made their decisions, and that the survey and meetings were just intended to give a gloss of participation. Despite the intentions of the city managers to be representative and democratic, their engagement methods did not foster a vision of one community – residents, city government, and businesses – being united behind a challenging budget problem. Instead, the format that they choose for civic engagement ended up creating an “us versus them” community dynamic, marked by community anger, negative media coverage, stalled budget decision-making, and neighborhood organizers’ putting together “alternative” community meetings.

### **High Inclusion and Low Participation: The Citizen Budget Advisors**

The Advisors’ process exemplifies low participation because it involved a relatively small number of people and was not to everyone who was interested. However, there was substantial diversity among the Advisors, not only in terms of their demographic qualities their divergent initial opinions about budgeting priorities. The fact of their diversity alone might not have yielded substantially different results than the budget survey had they just been asked to provide their individual opinions. Diversity in a context in which input is merely gathered is a marker of participation.

It is what the Advisors *did* with their diversity that resulted in a highly inclusive process. The Advisors’ connection to their constituencies was important to their legitimacy and the legitimacy of the process, but they did not merely serve as vessels carrying and representing the interests of their constituents. They decided not to expend their time and energy on community meetings in which they might only be able to gather additional individuals’ input in a brief,

cursory way. Instead, they felt the diversity they brought to the table could result in a richer, more thoughtful set of recommendations if they engaged in in-depth, repeated, deliberative conversations among themselves to weigh different approaches, discover new understandings, and explore new options.

The “What kind of city do you want this to be?” question is an example of their discovering new understandings and options and of collaboration to redefine the problem and process. It was a reframing of the original question – what to do with a line item budget – and the Advisors and government managers then took on that new framework together (indeed, it is no longer clear who first asked the question). Within that framework, the Advisors and managers iteratively and recursively rediscovered and redefined the problem, their questions, and the data and its meaning. Their actions enacted a new orientation that produced funding principles rather than budget item recommendations. The original designers of the Advisor process – the city managers and elected officials – made way for the process to be reinvented by, for example, switching gears to respond to questions posed by the Advisors. The authority for the Advisors’ process flipped over to the Advisors.

The Advisors process created a very different kind of community than the budget survey had. Most obvious, the Advisors explicitly considered community building, just as the Master Plan process had. The Advisors asked what kind of community the budget aimed to create, and directed their work to create guidelines for building a desirable community, which they defined in terms of social equity and sustainability. The community dynamics their process created were also different – in contrast with the “us vs. them” dynamic of different camps battling for influence and legitimacy over budgeting decisions observed following the survey, the Advisors process reestablished trust between the critics – now Advisors – and the government managers.

Community uproar and efforts to undo or protest the decision structure and outcomes greeted the budget survey. In contrast, political leaders, news media, and the community at large accepted the legitimacy and content of the Advisors' process and recommendations. Even though the ultimate responsibility for designing the final budget rested with the city managers, the city managers signaled that the community of decision-makers was more inclusive in several ways. They had begun by appointing the most outspoken critics of the previous budgeting process and outcomes as Advisors, and in the end enacted several recommendations from the Advisors that the managers would not otherwise have implemented.

### **Low Inclusion and Low Participation: Indian Trails**

We categorize the Indian Trails decision as low participation because the absence of adequate public notice for the city commission meeting where it was made provided barely any opportunity for public knowledge and scrutiny of the decision that was made, much less for public input about it ahead of time. We categorize it as low inclusion because the decision-makers – the mayor and six city commissioners - did not engage in a deliberative discussion of the issue and recommendation before acting on the mayor's request. Their actions signaled that neither the public nor concerns about access to parks had a place in the decision. The community of decision-makers was very limited in size – the mayor and 6 commissioners – and the haste of the announcement and action erected numerous obstacles for the public to influence or even observe their actions. Treating it as a one-off decision created barriers between Indian Trails and relevant community concerns and public processes. No connection was made between closing an “everyman” golf course and the previous, intense community outcry about excluding low-income kids from recreation options by closing public swimming pools. Furthermore, Indian Trails seemed to contradict the mission of the Mayor's Blue Ribbon Commission on Parks and

Recreation to undertake coordinated, long-term strategy for preserving public parks. The urgency of the decision and its disconnectedness from community sentiment and ongoing deliberations excluded many voices and issues, leading some to feel they could not trust city commissioners to act on their behalf.

### **Discussion**

In our analysis we have shown that participation and inclusion are different and that they can vary independently of one another. As a result one can have processes of community engagement that are high in participation yet low in inclusion, and vice versa. In this discussion, we argue that inclusion provides benefits not provided by participation. We present three themes that summarize the benefits of inclusion and the way that inclusive processes produce these benefits. We conclude by suggesting that there are good reasons for wanting the benefits of inclusion.

### **The 50/50 Rules**

We have heard the “50/50” rule invoked in various forms. Sometimes it means that both process and outcome are equally important. Sometimes it means that the people involved in a process should be about 50% participants from prior, related processes and 50% newcomers. Sometimes it means that the effects of a process on community building are as important as the task completion. It acknowledges past conversations or decisions and being open to new ideas and developments that may alter the previous consensus. The general commonality between these specific instances of the 50/50 rules is the re-conceptualization of what is sometimes thought of as an either/or relationship to a relationship that is complementary and synergistic.

From the perspective of the 50/50 rule, things like process and outcome or task and community are not in a trade-off relationship. They cannot be sacrificed for one another: if you

sacrifice one, you also impair the other. Indeed, they are not even separable: in inclusive processes, creating an ongoing civic community is a means *and* an end (Feldman and Quick 2009). Thus, you cannot talk about accomplishing the task of the Master Plan without enacting a community that constitutes the Master Plan. To be sure, that community does not have to be created anew just for the Master Plan, as it could build upon communities and relationships that are already in place. Nor does it have to be inclusive, though once the inseparability of task completion and community creation become clear, then it is clear that choices about organizing the task are also choices about community creation. Just as any practice embodies a community of practice, an inclusive process and inclusive community are mutually constitutive. Any form of civic engagement to enact a public decision also enacts a community, even if – as in Indian Trails - that enactment is a lack of civic engagement that signals an apparent lack of “community” in terms of what persons and issues are legitimate parties to the decision.

A distinguishing feature of inclusion, then, is that it involves practices for connecting the forms of civic engagement to community building, namely by creating connections to constitute an ongoing community (Feldman and Khademian 2008). In the Master Plan, for example, providing a glossary of useful planning terms and summarizing the project and progress to date at the beginning of each community meeting are ways to make the work of becoming a “legitimate peripheral participant” (Lave and Wenger 1998) explicit, transparent, and a shared responsibility, not just a challenge for a newcomer to overcome.

An inclusive orientation to the 50/50 rule creates benefits that go beyond the benefits of participation. It goes beyond gathering a community merely to accomplish the task at hand. Keeping process and outcome, newcomers and old-timers, and past and present in play are ways of creating connections across individuals, groups, interests, and issues. It feels worthwhile to

stay engaged in the process because it is neither stagnant nor, at any point, done. Tasks are accomplished. Plans are completed. Budgets are adopted. Yet opportunities continue to be open for revising as well as for moving on to the other issues and tasks that emerge or are next in line. Potential resources for action become apparent as people come to understand the nature of problems in the community as well as each other's capabilities and concerns. The Master Plan, for example, rolls into a zoning ordinance and neighborhood planning processes. In these and other processes the Master Plan, itself, is an active and changing participant. When people bring copies of the Master Plan to meetings and use it as a resource for deliberation, its meaning and import grows and changes.

The 50/50 rule sheds light on the shortcomings of the "participation builds community" axiom by suggesting how engagement practices may build a democratic community. The community of practice lens has enabled us to identify several specific practices that do – and do not - build the kind of "democratic community" sought by theorists who find that political participation in deliberative processes produces "better citizens" through enabling a broader sense of community interest (Abers 2000, Grant 2008, Mansbridge 1999). The 50/50 rule involves not participatory but inclusive practices, and does so in order to foster a particular *kind* of community, comprised of individuals and relationships that provide capacity and momentum for ongoing civic engagement in solving problem-solving. The 50/50 task/community rule also points to the necessity of having a focal point for action and outcomes: concluding that participation was "for the sake of participation" rather than to influence the outcome – as some evaluated the budget survey process – is a damning critique. The 50/50 rule's orientation to engagement via community and task resonates with Dewey's (1927: ch 5) assertion that the only "non-utopian" idea of democracy is to understand democracy "as community life itself," in which a democratic

“public” can emerge only through citizen communication and interaction. The sense that inclusion is part of an ongoing stream of issues, with 50% of those engaged in one process or concern rolling forward into another, is also consistent with theorizations of democracy and civic engagement as an ongoing inquiry and never-finished project (Dryzek 1990, Fung and Wright 2003).

### **Change as a Medium of Inclusion**

The hallmark of deliberation in inclusion is not so much the deliberativeness of a single conversation as an arc of change over the course of the process. The people convening the Advisors and Master Plan processes invited the participants to be involved and told them that their input would be valued. However, this could have been an invitation to yet another civic engagement process that could be deemed inauthentic democracy, as the budget survey and Indian Trails processes were. One of the key practices we have observed in the high inclusion processes is that their organization enabled and communicated inclusiveness through their openness to change. Furthermore, material objects were used to make those changes legible to the people involved. Thus the repeatedly revised and annotated process flow diagram for the Master Plan, updated to include design guidelines and neighborhood concept plans, represented a redefinition of the problem that the process was working on. It was simultaneously a tool to figure out a new process to address the new questions, a road map for the community to enact the changing process as they went along, and an accounting of what they had done and their influence on the process and outcomes. Similarly, the Advisors’ tossing out their 6” binder of budget line items in favor of a 10-page final set of budgeting guidelines embodies the reframing of the budgeting problem, the Advisors’ coming to control the process, and a different kind of decision outcome.

These material objects both enabled and traced changes (Latour 2005) made by those who accepted the invitation to “come into the tent” of policy-makers. The changes they marked are part of the legitimacy of the inclusive processes and outcomes. They enabled individuals to articulate the changes they wanted, to orient themselves as a community to new practices required to enact that change. They became icons for identification with that process and community. Other actions – such as the Advisors’ turning away from their charge to oversee public participation and deciding to deliberate among themselves – are less material but equally legible. Several scholars have emphasized the importance of boundary work and boundary objects to bridging across, tracing, and constituting communities of practice (Suchman 1995; Bechky 2003a, 2003b; Carlile 2004; Dourish 2004). Using boundary objects in a dynamic way shows that the process is open to change. In this way, the medium is the message: the process is an important aspect of the community-building outcome.

The change in the definition of the problem, decision-making process, and outcomes between the initial launch of the process and its completion is more pronounced in the Advisors process than in the Master Plan. However, we think that the degree of change is less important than the fact of change: by definition it is hard to imagine an inclusive process beginning and ending exactly as the designers of it originally set it out. This goes beyond making a public decision on the basis of democratic participation. In what we have characterized as highly participatory processes, individuals’ input presumably does and should influence the outcome. However, there is a difference between decision-makers’ using public input to approve, deny, or revise a proposed project, ordinance, or budget versus being more open-ended about defining the problem at hand to begin with. Ferguson (1990), Escobar (1995), Schneider and Ingram (1997), and Rabinow (2003) have theorized the power enacted in policy and government arenas through

what Foucault described as “problematization,” the practices that constitute something as an object of analysis and action. We extend this to suggest that inclusiveness of problematization – the definition of the problem at hand, its connection with other issues, and who gets to define the problem and those connections – is one of the hallmarks of inclusive processes.

### **Representativeness as Premise and as Consequence**

A persistent concern of the literature on civic engagement concerns who is or is not “at the table” to influence decision-making (Manin 1987, Young 2000, Mansbridge 2003, Gastil and Levine 2005). Here, we make a distinction between a participatory orientation to representation and an inclusive orientation. Participatory representation emphasizes “who is at the table” and assumes that ways of knowing the problem and communities that know the problems are already defined and need to be brought into the discussion. Participation values the representation of the demographic characteristics and interests of individuals and then aggregates them to gather a picture of the “public” preference. Good representation in this context consists of the representativeness of the individuals who provide their input. It might be measured in terms of the match of the bodies in the room to the proportion of those characteristics in the community at large, as the budget survey data was adjusted to increase the weight of answers provided by respondents from ethnic minorities who were proportionally underrepresented by the survey sample. Or it might be based on stakeholder analysis to be sure that all persons or interests with a “stake” in the question are represented. Good representativeness at the outset of the process is a *premise* of good participation.

While we support the importance of having diverse voices at the table, we find the focus on simply participating may be insufficient or even counter-productive. If problems and communities were independent of practices, then participatory representation would suffice. But,

if problems and communities are defined through practices, then the practices through which they are defined are important to the representativeness of the process. If these practices are exclusive, the definitions of problems and community will also be exclusive. Attention to the inclusiveness of the practices is, therefore, important to achieving representativeness.

An orientation to inclusion focuses on how diverse perspectives are engaged to influence the process and outcome. Inclusive processes also seek diverse representation of interests and demographic characteristics at the outset of the process, but they bring that diversity into an arc of deliberation in which new understandings may be discovered. It was relevant that the 21 Advisors were highly diverse in terms of numerous demographic and interest group characteristics. Their diversity of opinions about what to do about the budget gave them a rich ground for exploring many concerns and options. More important, they felt that a series of deliberative conversations was necessary to take advantage of that diversity in ways that would produce a better outcome than more broad-based participation that would involve more people through added public hearings. They sought an outcome that would be not necessarily be more representative of individual preferences in the community, but that would be better informed by a dynamic, challenging discussion. They did attain a different set of outcomes than the aggregate of their initial individual understandings: they achieved new connections and change.

In this inclusive process, representation was a *consequence* of the process, not its premise: the outcomes are representative of the process and the community created. This is not to say that a deliberative group must reach consensus, a single position representing their conclusion. Rather, if there are areas where participants have failed to agree, a representative outcome acknowledges those gaps. An inclusive process allows those involved to gain a deeper appreciation of others' interests, and involves emergence and discovery of new understandings and options. Inclusive

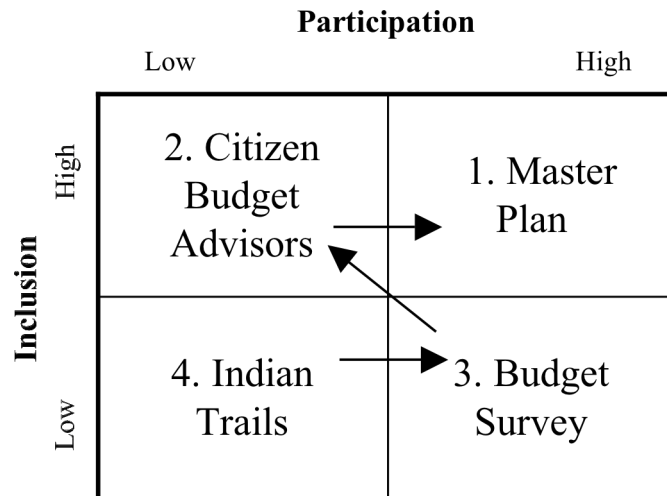
practices that invite mutual responsibility for their people's ability to become legitimate participants – such as summarizing the process and progress to date at the beginning of each Master Plan meeting to make it accessible and accountable to new and returning participants – render transparent the work of making a process and its outcomes representative. Managers' practices help participants to make a difference and recognize their contributions through their participation. Complicating the understanding of the problem was necessary to engage diversity in an inclusive process. Wrestling, collaboratively and creatively, with practical problems that they have decided are important for their community, getting into the messiness of the problems and striving for a solution, continually reenergizes the sense of purpose of the community of practice and the momentum for participants' continuing involvement.

### **Community Satisfaction**

We note that, among our four cases, the processes with high inclusion produced more satisfaction and approval in the community than the processes with high participation. The budget survey, carefully designed to enhance participation, was criticized as inauthentic and resulted in public anger and lack of trust in public officials. By contrast, the Advisors' process, with less participation but more inclusion, has been overwhelmingly met with approval and legitimacy and has increased the sense among citizens that public officials are listening and working with the community.

In practice and scholarship on designing engagement processes, most of the emphasis is on achieving public involvement through what we have characterized as a movement from lower to higher participation. In these cases, however, we have observed that the more dominant driver of the public's sense of the legitimacy of a process and its outcomes is the movement from low to high *inclusion* (Figure 2). Our discussion themes indicate that inclusive practices provide ways

for the community to develop through continued engagement around the pragmatic nature of defining and addressing problems. This points to the importance of sorting out the participatory and inclusive dimensions in the design and implementation of engagement as well as in practical and scholarly evaluations of engagement efforts.



**Figure 2. Community satisfaction with the civic engagement processes, with rankings and arrows showing the flow from least to most satisfaction.**

### Conclusion

Our paper draws attention to the salient distinctions between inclusion and participation. We argue that attention to this distinction is both a theoretical imperative for scholars and a practical imperative for planners and other managers of public processes. A premise of our work, drawn from the community of practice literature, is that knowing is situated and occurs in and through practice. In our case, we find that *choices about the design of public processes have important implications for how learning and knowing are realized*. Managers who have been successful in launching inclusive public engagement have designed open-ended processes that provide ample, ongoing opportunities for participants to redefine the “what” and “how” of the problems they are trying to address. Key practices in inclusive processes can be identified, but our

research indicates that it is a pattern of practices and how they are enacted, rather than discrete methods or techniques, that make a process inclusive. Attention to the ways in which practices enable participants to become a community of participants with connections to one another as well as to the problems that they identify and engage allows planners and public managers to reap the benefits of inclusion as well those of participation.

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