

Final Paper

PLANNING BAY STREET:

ANALYZING THE LEVEL OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION OF A
COMMUNITY WORKSHOP

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PREMISE

On October 18th, 2016 a Community workshop was held for the Bay Street area on Staten Island, titled “Plan Bay Street: Community Workshop”. The workshop was organized by the graduate students of the Fall 2016 planning studio for the Masters in Urban Planning program at Hunter College on behalf of their client for the semester, the Staten Island Downton Alliance. The core objective of the project was to re-examine the Bay Street corridor from the St. George Ferry Terminal to Rosebank. The scope of the project was quite comprehensive and was aimed to address issues regarding economic development, housing, infrastructure and resiliency, land use and zoning, public safety, transportation, and urban design.

Key Words

Public Participation
All Inclusive planning

A Community Workshop was held as a way of reaching out to the local community consisting of residents and small business owners, take their opinions and ‘user’ experience on Bay Street as the foundations for determining the future of Bay Street and it’s surrounding neighborhoods. The purpose of this paper the aim is to have a critical look at how successful was the initiative by comparing the participatory process developed for the Workshop and with that illustrated by Sherry Arnstein in her seminal article “Ladder of Citizen participation.



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INTRODUCTION

Public participation is considered one of the key components or cornerstones of urban planning in a democratic society. In the aftermath of Robert Moses planning visions for New York City, his tarnished legacy and the subsequent Advocacy movement by Paul Davidoff in the 1970's, planning has shifted from relying solely on the opinions of experts to understanding the values and needs of the population being served^{1,2}. Concept of a democratic society relies very much on the notion that the voices of the people including the minority are heard and mobilized³. Their opinions are reflected upon so that we live in a just society. Even Jane Jacobs who is renowned for being highly critical of the planning process essentially argues that what makes cities great are not the buildings, the freeways and transit system, but the people who inhabit it⁴. Technological advancements also encouraged the dissemination of information and public awareness. The increased reliance on the internet, especially the social networking platforms in our daily lives has connected us to a wide audience and a huge source of information.

However, while the idea of democratic society which is based on the foundation of public participation and opinion is theoretically beautiful, reality does not always lend itself to such a ideal outcome. The purpose of this paper is to determine how much of the theoretical concepts of public participation apply in the real world by comparing Sherry R. Arnstein's article titled, "A Ladder of Citizen Participation" with the "Plan Bay Street: Community Workshop" that was held in Staten Island on October 18th.

¹ Caro, Robert A. *The Power Broker: Robert Moses and the Fall of New York*. New York: Vintage Books, 1975
This book tarnished his reputation. Moses is blamed for having destroyed more than a score of neighborhoods by building 13 expressways across New York City and by building large urban renewal projects with little regard for the urban fabric or for human scale. Moses's desire for power came to be more important to him. Although, the author is more neutral in his central premise: the city would have developed much differently without Moses

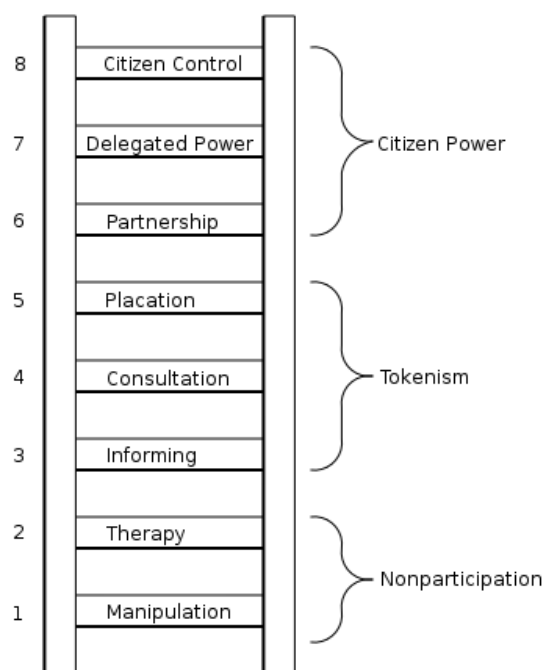
²Davidoff, Paul. *Journal Of The American Institute Of Planners* Vol. 31 , Issue. 4, 1965. The author suggests that The right course of action is always a matter of choice, never of fact. Planners should engage in the political process as advocates of the interests of government and other groups.

³ Davidoff, Paul. *Journal Of The American Institute Of Planners* Vol. 31 , Issue. 4, 1965.

⁴ Jacobs, Jane. *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. New York: Random House, 1961. "Cities have the capability of providing something for everybody, only because, and only when, they are created by everybody"

WHAT IS PUBLIC PARTICIPATION?

In 1969 Sherry R. Arnstein wrote one of her most influential article titled, “A Ladder of Citizen Participation”. The article offers explanation and criticism about the different levels and typologies of public participation and how they contribute to the planning process. To illustrate a rather complex relation between the government and the common populace, the author uses an abstract diagram of a ladder to show the different degrees of public participation⁵. They are:



Non Participation: Here the role of the public is to only listen and not be heard. The government officials already make their planning decisions and only share their results to the public so that they can technically claim to have ‘taken part’ in the planning process. They use ‘Manipulation’ and ‘Therapy’ to achieve their objectives.

Tokenism: This includes participation typologies such as, ‘Informing’, ‘Consultation’ and ‘Placation’. Here the general public is a little bit more informed and involved in the planning process, however the power to make the final decision still rests solely on the hands of the government.

Citizen Power: It is the preferred level of public participation. It includes typologies such as ‘Partnership’, ‘Delegated Power’ and the most ideal typology ‘Citizen Control’. It is assumed that this level allows planning to be truly tailored to the needs and aspirations of a community.

Arnstein herself has admitted that the ladder is an over simplification. Nevertheless, the article gives the reader a sense of the complex power dynamics and the shortcomings of public participation. However, a key criticism of the ladder model is that it is always seen as a process

⁵ Arnstein, Sherry R. "A Ladder Of Citizen Participation." Journal of the American Institute of Planners 35, no. 4 (1969)

that originates from the government level and trickle downs to the local level; meaning it is a top-down approach to public participation. It is not approached as a participatory process that originates from the local level and reaches to the government level. That is a movement gaining momentum from the grass roots level⁶.

Arnstein's ladder does not however, address the challenges and negative aspects of public participation in the planning process. The ladder is too 'abstract' and when dissected, a lot of the nuances of public participation is not elaborated or is unclear⁷. It does not address the question of how to balance competing demands within a community. For example, special representative groups identifying themselves as 'residents' or 'stakeholders' come into public meetings or workshops with their special agenda and in the process drown the voices of other participants. These 'small local groups' might hamper true public participation because of their 'bullying' tendencies⁸Sometimes the challenges are even more complex. Referring to this paper's case study on the North Shore of Staten Island, it was stated by the Department of City Planning that there will be zoning changes in the Bay Street area. The new zoning proposal would convert a predominantly industrial area to residential area with commercial overlays. The proposal would encourage new developments and a potential for tourism. However, it was debated whether the new development and tourism on the Bay Street area would lead to gentrification. A concern shared by some local artist and residents while downplayed by some local business owners in the area. The local business owners welcomed this proposal since they believe it will bring about positive change and economic growth in the area. They saw gentrification as a natural outcome of that phenomenon.

Therefore, it can be argued that although Arnstein's article looks palatable in theory, it is not easy to serve and digest in the real world. The works of Jürgen Habermas and Michel Foucault illustrate this tension in modern public participation; the tension between the normative and

⁶Bratt, Rachel G., and Kenneth M. Reardon. "Chapter 17. Beyond the Ladder: New Ideas About Resident Roles in Contemporary Community Development in the United States." *Policy, Planning, and People*, 2013

⁷ Bratt, Rachel G., and Kenneth M. Reardon. "Chapter 17. Beyond the Ladder: New Ideas About Resident Roles in Contemporary Community Development in the United States." *Policy, Planning, and People*, 2013, 364-66

⁸ Brabham, Daren C., "Crowdsourcing the Public Participation Process for Planning", 2009, 5

the real. Between what should be done and what is actually done⁹. Both philosophers allude to the plurality of the 'public' in the participation process. In fact, these multiple public(s) have distinct identities while at the same time share overlapping characteristics.

It is evident in their writing that they do not envision one homogenous notion of the public. However, where they differ in opinion is when they describe how these public(s) interacts with each other. Habermas sees complete public participation being limited only by the socio-economic and cultural barriers that prevent residents of a community from participating in the planning process. If these barriers were eliminated, and it was a level playing field we would be in the presence of a truly inclusive democratic society. Habermas is by no means naïve when he suggests such an ideal situation, since he is aware that there will be conflict among the various public(s) in a community. However he argues that conflict will be resolved through 'communicative rationality'¹⁰. The final outcome will be a universal consensus born out of discourse.

Foucault on the other hand is much more of a skeptic. He is not impressed with Habermas's idea of a universal and rational way of public participation. These ideas are too abstract and ideal when compared the 'realpolitik' that takes place¹¹. Foucault argues that much of the 'discourse' that take place are ingrained in the local context and history of a society and quite often in a state of chaos and disarray. It is a much more tense and contentious atmosphere and there is a constant struggle for power amongst the stakeholders or those involved in the democratic process. It should be noted that there is a "large gray area between rationality and power," especially in the field of planning¹². The fact is that people are not always rational beings when it comes to discourse. Yet, the ability to dictate the narration (both rational and

⁹ Flyvbjerg, Bent. "Habermas and Foucault: Thinkers for Civil Society?" *The British Journal of Sociology* 49, no. 2 (1998)

¹⁰ Flyvbjerg, Bent. "Habermas and Foucault: Thinkers for Civil Society?" *The British Journal of Sociology* 49, no. 2 1998, 213

¹¹ Flyvbjerg, Bent. "Habermas and Foucault: Thinkers for Civil Society?" *The British Journal of Sociology* 49, no. 2 1998, 213

¹² Flyvbjerg, Bent. "Habermas and Foucault: Thinkers for Civil Society?" *The British Journal of Sociology* 49, no. 2 1998. This is statement is the Achilles heel to the Habermas way of thinking. Power is brought to bear on the problem only after we have made ourselves knowledgeable about it". Reality on the other hand does not always play out this way. Power often ignores or designs knowledge at its convenience.

irrational) whether it is from the top down government level or from the local grass-roots level can yield significant power in the public participation process and shape the outcome of the final plan. Hence, whosoever yields the most power dictates the democratic participation process. Therefore, Arnstein for all her criticism was correct in asserting the distribution of power to have an all-inclusive public participatory process.

It needs to be mentioned that planners themselves can stifle participation by the choices they make about public involvement¹³. Specifically, the ways planners facilitate the participatory process may either limit or enhance planning subjects' impact on material outcomes¹⁴. Also, as previously mentioned The very presence of special interest groups in the planning process, who show up to planning meetings representing the interests of some facet of the public, may intimidate the average citizen with elaborate charts, maps, empirical evidence, and expert advice, thus deterring future involvement by non-experts in the community¹⁵. Gossip and conversations among various citizens in the actual spaces of public meetings also work to dictate the power grabs that occur during the actual public participation segments of planning meetings¹⁶. There are various challenges to public participation even if the intentions are noble.

The "Plan Bay Street: Community Visioning Workshop" that was held on October 18th was the breeding ground for such activities. It was a case study of how public participation actually took place in the real world. The activities that transpired in the Workshop and the level of participation that took place are documented and are the basis of analytical study in this paper.

¹³ Burby, Raymond J. "Making Plans that Matter: Citizen Involvement and Government Action." *Journal of the American Planning Association* 69, no. 1 (2003): 33-49

¹⁴ Carp, Jana. "Wit, Style, and Substance: How Planners Shape Public Participation." *Journal of Planning Education and Research* 23, no. 3 (2004): 242-54

¹⁵ Hibbard, M., and S. Lurie. "Saving Land but Losing Ground: Challenges to Community Planning in the Era of Participation." *Journal of Planning Education and Research* 20, no. 2 (2000): 187-95

¹⁶ Campbell, Heather, and Robert Marshall. "Public Involvement and Planning: Looking beyond the One to the Many." *International Planning Studies* 5, no. 3 (2000): 321-44.

PLAN BAY STREET: Community Visioning Workshop

THE BEGINNING

In 2015 the Department of City Planning (DCP) initiated the proposal to rezone the Bay Street Corridor¹⁷. The report proposed the rezoning of a portion of Bay Street from what used to be a manufacturing district to a residential district with commercial overlays. This ground-up planning process intends to leverage \$1 billion public and private investments recently devoted to St. George and along the Stapleton Waterfront¹⁸ on Staten Island. This proposal has come with mixed responses from the local¹⁹. Some see it as an opportunity for economic growth while others see it as bringing unwanted population growth to an area with underserved infrastructure.

Public participation has come a long way since the 1960s. There was little interaction between the government and a local community. The government would mostly present the community with a plan with little to no public input and the community had to no option but to accept. That is why Arnstein's article has been so seminal as it suggested a 'redistribution of power' leaning towards a much more community oriented planning process. Her article ushered in the new public participation era where we saw the emergence of 'advocacy groups' who on behalf of the local population began to moderate the dialogue between government officials and the local population. This was now more than a one way road. People's valuable 'non-expert' voices were being heard and incorporated into the planning process.

Following in the footsteps of that tradition the Staten Island Downtown Alliance (SIDA), took the opportunity to share their thoughts on the proposal on Bay Street planned by DCP and simultaneously became one of the stake holders in the planning process. The Staten Island Downtown Alliance is a 501 non for profit Local Development Corporation representing the neighborhoods along the Bay Street corridor for nearly forty years, providing small business assistance and property owner advocacy for Downtown Staten Island. A local development

¹⁷ Bay Street Corridor @ Downtown Staten Island, Last Modified Dec 9,

<http://www1.nyc.gov/site/planning/plans/bay-street-corridor/bay-street-corridor.page>

¹⁸ North Shore 2030 Report, Last Modified Dec 9, http://www1.nyc.gov/assets/planning/download/pdf/plans-studies/north-shore/north_shore2030.pdf

¹⁹ Virginia N. Sherry, Last Modified August 31, 2015, Concerns about plan to develop Bay Street Corridor, http://www.silive.com/northshore/index.ssf/2015/08/bay_street_corridor.html

corporation, its mission is to foster community development and commercial revitalization of the downtown Staten Island business district and surrounding residential neighborhoods. They envision the new proposal as an opportunity to promote economic growth in the area²⁰. With that in mind, SIDA approached Pablo Vengoechea, who is an architect, planner and urban designer with over 30 years' experience in site development and zoning; community planning to be their consultant²¹. Pablo Vengoechea is also a professor at Hunter College and he tasked the Fall 2016 studio batch with coming up with a plan for Bay Street. Thus, in September 2016 Plan Bay Street was formed.

One of the first questions that came forth in the initial studio discussions was 'who are we designing for?' It was evident in the first meeting with the client that they were much aware of the planning process. They were familiar with terminologies that are commonly used in Urban Planning. It was also clear that they saw the DCP proposal for Bay street as an opportunity to expand on creating more business opportunities in the area. They wanted business to flourish and expected Bay Street to be a tourist spot. When it was brought to their attention that sudden rapid development often causes the property value to dramatically rise, forcing the local population to either be rent burdened or out priced of their neighborhood altogether, their response was that this sort of 'gentrification' was a natural outcome of development and they do not necessarily see it is a bad thing. Their argument was that those affected by the increase in land value either sell their land provided they are the owners or move to another more affordable place if they are only renters. This point of view placed an ethical conflict amongst the planning students. After much deliberation the conclusion that the studio came to was that: *"As consultants we have an obligation to our client, in this case SIDA. However, as planners we have an obligation to the greater community of Bay Street. The task of the Plan Bay Street Studio would be to marry the two obligations and develop a plan that addresses the needs of the client as well as needs of the community. Also, as planners it becomes our moral obligation to ensure that the plan does not intentionally benefit one stakeholder at the expense of another stakeholder in the community."*

²⁰ "Making Downtown Staten Island Tourism Ready", last Modified June, 19, 2016, <http://www.statenislanddowntownalliance.com/about-us.html>

²¹ Bio- Pablo Vengoechea, Last Modified Nov 21, 2016 , <http://www.vb-architects.com/pablo-vengoechea-bio>

Based on that objective it became imminent that a Community Workshop be held to reach out to local population and get their valuable user experience and input into the planning process.

ABOUT BAY STREET CORRIDOR

The Bay Street study area has a population of about 51,885 people. Population has increased by nearly 7% in the last half decade. The Study area is quite diverse community, with White population (including Hispanic/Latino) making up nearly half of the population. 1/3 of population is Hispanic/Latino. Puerto Rico has the strongest representation among the Latino population. There is a diverse Asian community in the Study area consisting of people originating from India, Pakistan and most noticeably Sri Lanka²².

The study area's population lags behind both Staten Island and NYC when it comes to maximum educational attainment. Drop-out rate is significantly higher in the study area compared to Staten Island and NYC. Poverty levels are higher within the study area than the rest of Staten Island and NYC. It may be correlated to higher percentage of the undereducated in the area. Staten Island's unemployment is 9%, which is higher than Unemployment rates in NYC of just under 6%. It has been predominantly a manufacturing district and a majority of the people of Bay Street depends on cars as a mode of transport. That is why there is a prevalence of automobiles, 99c stores, small boutiques, cafes and deli stores in the area.

Staten Island is also exposed to substantial flood risk along its South and North shores. As witnessed during superstorm Sandy, the North shore from the St. George Ferry Terminal to the Verrazano Bridge was subject to substantial flooding. Based on the most recent flood data, the entire length of the study area is exposed to some degree of flood risk, particularly the neighborhoods of Stapleton and Clifton. The Bay Street corridor has an intimate sense of scale and community. It is stuck in a limbo between an opportunity to experience rapid socio-economic growth and holding on to a place that is nostalgic of the "Good ol' days". Therefore it is necessary to create a plan that addresses these dichotomies by taking community feedback and incorporating their needs and suggestions into the planning process.

²² Rachel Khona, Heads Up, On Staten Island, Savoring Flavors of Sri Lanka, Last Modified: JULY 15, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/07/19/travel/on-staten-island-savoring-flavors-of-sri-lanka.html>

DESIGNING A COMMUNITY WORKSHOP

CHALLENGES FACED

It can be argued that the structure and content of participatory planning processes can be heavily influenced by planning agencies, resulting in the loss of community input and control²³. This concern was also echoed by the Plan Bay Street studio during the initial development phase of the Workshop, as well as on the day of the Workshop by one of the participants. There were four major challenges in developing an all-inclusive community workshop. They were, defining the term 'all-inclusive community', 'designing a non-prescriptive format for the workshop', 'public outreach', and finally 'time and resources' to carry out all the aforementioned challenges.

First, defining what the studio meant by 'all-inclusive community'. The studio consists of students from different educational and professional background with an individual perspective of how they define a community. Therefore, through an in class discussion and debate it was determined that in the case of Bay Street the community members were, the local residents, businesses entities which includes small business such as the 99c stores and the existing artist community. While defining the community was relatively easy, the term 'all inclusive' proved to be elusive. Also, it was important to be able to distinguish and acknowledge the overlap between 'stakeholders' and 'community' of Bay Street and the general 'public' of the greater Bay Street Corridor²⁴. The Department of City Planning at Staten Island, Educational and Religious institutes were considered stakeholders in the planning process, while small scale

²³Silverman, R. M., H. L. Taylor, and C. Crawford. "The Role of Citizen Participation and Action Research Principles in Main Street Revitalization: An Analysis of a Local Planning Project." *Action Research* 6, no. 1 (2008)

²⁴ Ashford, Nicholas A. and Kathleen M. Rest, *Public Participation in Contaminated Communities*, 1999. Center for Technology, Policy and Industrial Development, MIT, 3

Community: the individuals, groups, or small business owners affected, either directly or indirectly.

Stakeholders: the full range of individuals and groups with health, welfare, economic, and other interests related to the site. These include those involved in regulating, overseeing, and remediating and revitalizing the site; developers; and those concerned with the environment and the welfare of future generations.

Public: a broader collection of individuals and groups, including those not necessarily directly or indirectly affected by the contamination.

business entities fell into both categories of stakeholders and community. An invitation list of important people was also made by the studio. It consist of about 70 notable people or stakeholders who the studio felt would provide valuable feedback to the workshop and held esteemed position in society.

However, there are some groups or individuals in any Community Workshop who are notorious for using ‘bullying’ tactics to make themselves heard and drown the opinions of those less vocal. The list was curated taking that knowledge into consideration. Therefore, it needs to be acknowledged that some people were excluded (although not banned) from the list to ensure a larger voluntary participation of others, who are usually less vocal. While this does not necessarily make the process ‘all-inclusive’ and does show a slight exercise of power, it is argued that the step was taken to allow a more diverse set of opinions and narrative to take place during the Workshop.

To ensure that diverse opinions are truly heard, it was important to address the second challenge of ‘designing a non-prescriptive’ set of exercises for the workshop. The format of the workshop had to be such that it did not lead the participants to any pre-set narration and planning solutions that might be applicable for the future of Bay Street. Rather, the questions and exercises had to be designed in a way that prompts the participants to identify issues they felt were relevant to Bay Street and explore options to solve them.

The Studio was aware that not every ‘community’ member would be able to partake in the Workshop. For example, it was expected representatives from the 99c stores and Automobile workshops may not attend the workshop. The reasons being but not limited to, conflicting time schedules, not being properly informed, or hesitancy to attend such programs in the first place. Therefore, in an effort to reach out to them and to address the third challenge of ‘public outreach’, invitation posters were printed and handed to some of the local stores, the public places and St. George ferry terminal. Invitations were also sent to the greater Staten Island ‘Public’ through Staten Island council woman Debi Rose’s weekly News blast²⁵. The Staten

²⁵Council Woman Debi Rose, Last Modified: December, 6th 2016, <http://www.debirose.nyc/>

Island Downtown Alliance also used their resources to spread the message about the workshop.

Finally, 'Time and Resources' was a big challenge. With the help of SIDA and Council woman Debi Rose a decent number of people were informed about the Workshop. However, the people informed were either associates of SIDA or were subscribers of Councilwoman Debi Rose's weekly email blast. It did not necessarily reach out to the greater Staten Island Public. While using social media and a Studio website did counter that specific issue there were just not enough man power, time and money to do a more extensive publicity of the Workshop. There is limitation to what a studio of only nine people can do to design and execute a Workshop that too in a time period of 1.5 months²⁶.

WORKSHOP FORMAT AND STRUCTURE

The core intention of the Workshop was to be as neutral in navigating the narration as possible. The objective was to nudge the participants to express their thoughts, concerns and opinion about the future of Bay Street. The participants were divided into small focus groups. They were, "Economic Development and Culture", "Housing and Community Facilities," "Land Use, Urban Design and Zoning", "Resiliency, Infrastructure and Transportation". The positive of this decision is that it breaks down the crowd to a more intimate and manageable scale, so that there is scope for more meaningful and constructive conversations. On the other hand, the negative is that the small size groups are not necessarily representative of the population segments from which they are drawn and also, the group may still be dominated by one or a few participants²⁷.

As previously mentioned, the questions and collaborative exercises developed for the workshop were designed to be as non-prescriptive as possible. The intention was to allow the participants to create the narrative on Bay Street while also touching up on key issue and topics pertaining to the area. For example, to break the ice in the focus group sessions the Land Use,

²⁶ The Studio had only the beginning of September to mid-October design the workshop with the maximum budget of \$1000 to execute it.

²⁷ English, M. R., Gibson, A. K., Feldman, D. L. & Tonn, B. E. Stakeholder Involvement: Open Processes for Reaching Decisions about the Future Uses of Contaminated Sites. Waste Management Research and Education Institute. University of Tennessee, Knoxville,(1993)

Urban Design and Zoning group placed a map of Bay Street along with the rest of the study area and asked a very simple question. "What are your favorite spots on Bay Street and what are the areas that you tend to avoid? and why?". The participants were then asked to locate those spots on Bay Street map, put a sticker on it and then write beside it the reason for liking or disliking that spot. These very hands on exercise broke down the initial tension that was looming over the table and quickly turned the mood into something that is fun and proactive. It also set the tone of the conversation for the rest of the evening.

Such open ended exercises also encouraged a more fluid narration on Bay street and allowed for personal stories to seep into the narration that would otherwise have been missed out on, had the participants been presented with a more structured set of questions. For example, the studio would not be aware of all the dating spots sprinkled around Bay Street or how the waterfront boardwalks are the perfect place for proposing someone for marriage. The studio would also be unaware of the fact that Tompkinsville park is notorious for being a sanctuary for drug addicts, who use the premise on high noon for drug use.

THE DAY OF THE WORKSHOP: a brief account

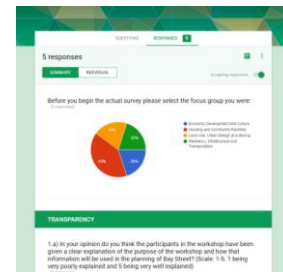
The event started with people coming to the venue for the Community Workshop and being provided light refreshment. Out of the 70 people who were invited, as per the sign-in sheet 59 people attended the event. That means approximately, a 84% successful turn out. The light refreshments were followed by a short welcome speech from a representative from the SIDA. A student from the Plan Bay Street studio did a presentation. It included the studio's first impression of the area – demographic and existing conditions findings – an explanation of the format of the Workshop and how it would be facilitated – and a breakdown of the focus groups for the event. The presenter then asked everyone to choose the focus group they would like to participate in. Interestingly, it was fairly an equal distribution of people. The focus group exercise began and went about for 1 hr. Then all the participants regrouped and the day's

findings were shared either by the facilitator or an individual from each focus group. The findings were expressed in different ways. Either holding a chart, or a map or simply reading from the notes. After the findings were shared the event ended with a thanks and appreciation speech from the organizers.

Post workshop evaluation

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Information on how the workshop should be designed and executed is documented on the daily notes taken in the studio. Each class two students were selected to divide the task of facilitating and taking notes on the class. Sufficient and concise qualitative data can be obtained from these notes. The studio also relied on the website 'slack.com' to maintain daily interaction and communication. This website is a tool often used by firms and organizations as a means to keep track of all the task and conversations that take place during a particular project. Instead of ending up with an overwhelming number of email threads and losing track of all of them, the website streamlines the process and makes it easy to document and browse through this huge accumulation of data.



For an analysis of the day of the workshop itself, data is obtained from a collection of the maps used during the workshop, sticky notes, information taken by the note taker in each focus group and general observation on that day. However, more concrete data regarding the level of participation is gathered from a survey done on the students who facilitated the individual focus groups. In order to have a more holistic understanding of the participation level in the Workshop the survey contained both quantitative and qualitative data. After excluding the author of this paper, all the facilitators who participated in the Community Workshop answered

the survey. Due to the confidential and anonymous nature of the survey their responses can be expected to be a true representation of their thoughts and experience of the Community Workshop. Previous authors specializing on the practical aspect of community planning have suggested set of criteria that can be used to measure and understand the level of public participation in a process, which in this case the Community Workshop^{28,29,30}.

Nicholas Ashford and Kathleen M. Rest, (1999)	English M. Gibson (1993)	Nicholas Ashford and Kathleen M. Rest, Revised (1999)
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. public involvement effort is multi-way 2. provides the basis or structure for shared collective decision-making; 3. consensual and non-hierarchical 4. maintains respect for and reinforces citizen autonomy 5. enhances control or equity by participants 6. The direct involvement of "amateurs" 7. supports distributive or procedural justice 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. transparency, 2. impartiality, 3. recognition of promises 4. including representativeness (pluralism), 5. accountability, 6. confidentiality, 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. transparency, 2. can include accessibility to affect decision making, 3. identification and integration of concerns, 4. the diversity of views, 5. inclusiveness, 6. opportunities for participation or information exchange, 7. independence of the facilitator, 8. adaptability, 9. "amendability", 10. resiliency, 11. durability.

From these suggestions core values of ‘Transparency’, ‘Equity’, ‘Integrity’, and ‘Accountability’ were recognized³¹ and were used as the categories based on which questions were asked to the participants of the survey. The findings from the questions are provided in the next section.

²⁸ Ashford, Nicholas A. and Kathleen M. Rest. Public Participation in Contaminated Communities. Center for Technology, Policy and Industrial Development, MIT, Cambridge, MA. (1999).

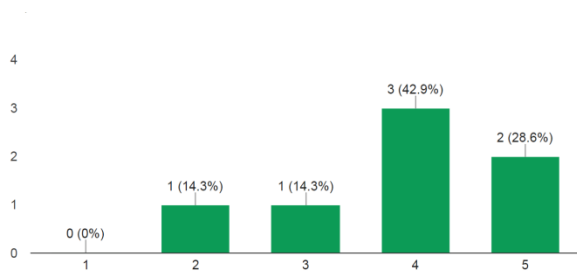
²⁹ English, M. R., Gibson, A. K., Feldman, D. L. & Tonn, B. E. Stakeholder Involvement: Open Processes for Reaching Decisions about the Future Uses of Contaminated Sites. Waste Management Research and Education Institute. University of Tennessee, Knoxville, (1993)

³⁰ Ashford, Nicholas A. and Kathleen M. Rest. Public Participation in Contaminated Communities. Center for Technology, Policy and Industrial Development, MIT, Cambridge, MA. (1999). [Revised Edition]

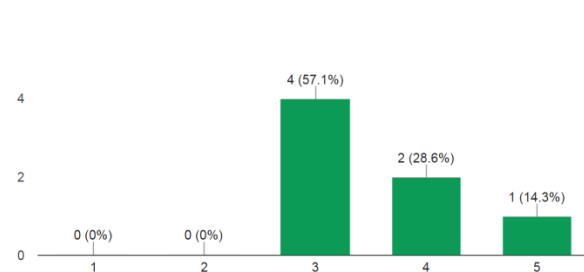
³¹ Evans, Elizabeth. Measuring Success in Public Participation. Paper presented at the International Association for Public Participation, Australian Chapter National Conference, (2002)

FINDINGS

Transparency: On a scale of 1 to 5 the facilitators were asked if they thought the participants in the community workshop were presented with a clear explanation of the purpose of the workshop and whether the terminologies used in the presentation were kept relatively simple. With 1 being 'poor' and 5 being 'very good' the overall opinion was yes.



Bar chart 1: 40% thought the purpose of the Community Workshop was properly explained to the participants. Although, one facilitator did feel the objectives were poorly explained.



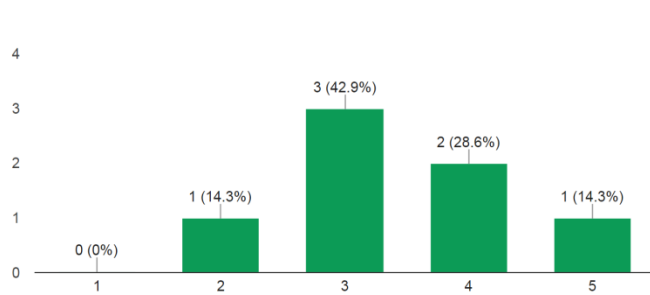
Bar Chart 2: 57.1% thought that the terminologies used in the Community Workshop presentation were relatively simple. Overall opinion is that they were not 'too technical'

The facilitators felt that, goals of the charrette were well explained and that the language being used was curtailed to the audience. They were all careful not to use too much jargon in the booklet, opening statement, or conversations and also careful to explain the process and how planning works in the city to participants who were unaware of it. Also, that based on the feedback received during the workshop it indicated that all the participants understood the subject matter, was engaged, and genuinely excited to see what could come of the project. Although some participants in on group expressed serious concerns about the purpose of the charrette, wanted more explicit information about what the client was going to do with the information,

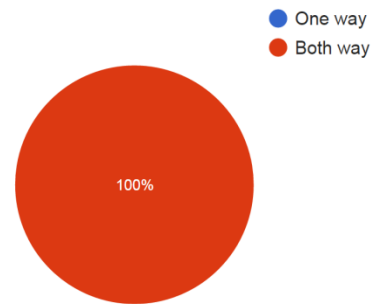
Based on that data it seems that there was a healthy exchange of information and among the participants and the organizers of the Community Workshop and suggests a respectable level of Transparency in the public participatory process.

Equity: The facilitators were also asked whether they thought that interactions in each focus groups were one sided; that is whether the facilitators found themselves the only ones talking in the focus group and the participants only listening with minimum to no input. Or did the

interactions go both ways with diverse opinions being shared by individual members in the focus group.



Bar Chart 3: 5 out of 7 people thought there was an average level of diversity of opinions shared in the focus groups.



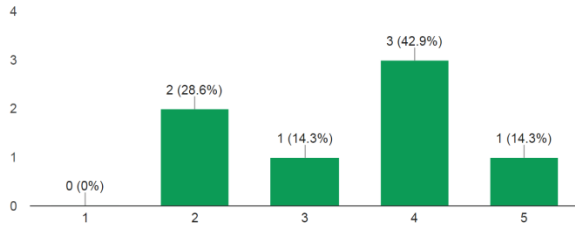
Pie Chart 1: 100% thought the interactions were two-ways and not one sided.

The facilitators felt that, there were moments when some individuals attempted to hijack the discussion and a few instances where it did go 'off the rails.' However, those moments were few and far between. Many diverse opinions were heard but it seems there were two or three people who took up most of the conversation. However, in the 'Housing and Community Facilities' focus group, the participants mostly wanted more time to hear everyone else's opinions and were more worried about the facilitators taking away their time or not listening to them. Also, surprisingly, most of the residents or business owners in the 'Economic Development and Culture' focus group did not participate in the table. However, when some facilitators had one-on-one general conversations with participants after the Workshop, a more diverse set of opinions emerged. Finally when the facilitators were asked if they felt that if all of the Bay Street community was represented in the Community Workshop, the opinion was a conclusive 'No'.

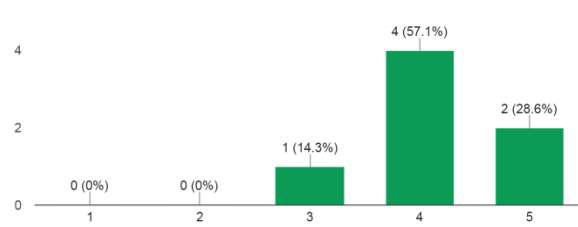
It seems that while charts shows a moderate level of diversity of opinions and an active interaction in the focus group, the personal experience of the facilitators suggest a slightly different scenario. Along, with the fact not all of Bay Street community was not represented in the Community Workshop, it seems the whole participatory process was not as equitable and empowering to the community as the studio had intended it to be.

Integrity: The facilitators were asked if they found themselves being neutral when guiding the overall conversations in their respective focus groups forward as well as remain objective and

unbiased when identifying multiple conflicting opinions on a particular issue and resolving them.



Bar chart 4: 5 out of the 7 facilitators felt that they were neutral to completely neutral when guiding a conversation forward



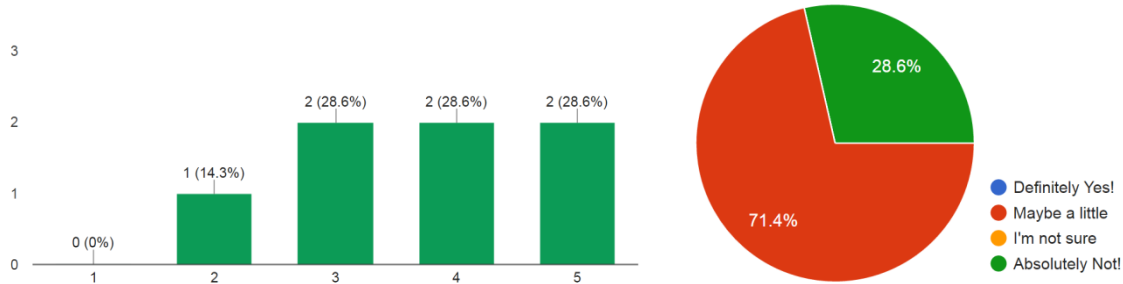
Bar Chart 5: All of the participants felt they were able to remain unbiased.

The majority of the facilitators felt they were able to conduct their task and responsibilities while remaining neutral and not showing any sort of bias towards an individual or any particular section of a focus group. There was a lot of give and take throughout the duration of the focus group exercises. One facilitator wrote, “To me it was very important to have people authentically share their voices so I had group members do the report-back to the larger group and tried to make sure the group's divergent voices were all heard by the client”. That being said, another facilitator acknowledges that it is difficult to fully represent and moderate such a large group while only having the capacity to hold one event. Therefore, the organizers did the best they could under limited resources and man power.

Although it was a big challenge, the studio feels the Workshop was well handled. Each facilitator was very passionate about their topic of focus and did their best to stimulate rather than insist. Gentle guidance was more effective than directed questions. As one facilitator simply puts, “We had the up-islanders, the Bay Street residents, and the special interest groups and I think we did a good job moderating in an unbiased way.” While it is difficult to take this particular finding without a grain of salt, the qualitative answers suggest that the facilitators were aware of their role in the Workshop, their limitations and tried to maintain a high ethical standard under those circumstances.

Accountability: Finally, the facilitators were asked how significantly will the feedback and suggestions provided by each of the focus group will be incorporated to the final Plan Bay

Street report and do they think the Community Workshop allowed the participants to make any significant change in the decision making process for the Plan of Bay Street. In other words, did the workshop provide the basis or structure for shared collective decision-making process?



Bar chart 6: 6 out of 7 facilitators feel the community feedbacks will significantly incorporated in the final plan

Pie Chart 2: 71.4% feel the Workshop did very little to influence the final plan and 28.6% feel 'Absolutely not'

As the chart illustrates, majority of the facilitators believe that the suggestions and feedbacks will indeed be incorporated into the final Plan for Bay Street. Mainly because it echoed what the Studio already knew. For example, in the Workshop many people spoke about the need for open space, which the Studio had found in their walking tours and using secondary data such as GIS maps. In regards, to actually influencing the final Plan, the opinion appears rather grim. The majority of the facilitators feel that the participations of the community in the Workshop will do very little to actually influence the final plan.

There are quite a few reasons to share this sentiment. First of all, although the project did prove to be interesting, four to five months is really a short time to carry out site surveys – design and execute a workshop – and develop a final report by the end of it. The limited resources also prevented the Studio from having multiple fruitful interactions with the members of the community. The Workshop was the only time there was a formal interaction with the community. Any other interaction was informal and was solely based on the self-initiation of the individual students of the Plan Bay Street studio.

Therefore, while the motivation and inspiration behind the Community Workshop was pure, the level of effectiveness with which it could create an all-inclusive community based participatory process remains to be a work in progress.

LOCATING THE RUNG

To summarize the elaborated understanding of the previous findings some salient points have surfaced regarding the level of participation during the Workshop:

1. There was a healthy exchange of information and transparency between the participants and organizers of the Community Workshop. This is a positive outcome for the public participatory process.
2. Overall, there was a moderate yet active level of diverse opinions and interaction in each of the focus group. However, everyone from the Bay Street community was not represented in the Workshop and the community has little influence on the final outcomes of the plan. Therefore, the participatory process was not equitable and empowering for the community.
3. Nevertheless, the focus groups were facilitated with integrity and enthusiasm. Participants were encouraged to be involved in the conversations with no form of favoritism in order to level the playing field.
4. However, Due to limited time and resources, the Workshop was the only time that the studio reached out to the community officially. Although, their competing voices and opinions have been acknowledged and most of their suggestions will be incorporated into the final plan, it does limit the community's active involvement in the decision making process

Based on these salient points it can be concluded that when compared to Sherry Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation, the "Plan Bay Street: Community Workshop" held on October 18th in Staten Island falls in the rung of 'Consultation' under the broader category of 'Tokenism'. However, it should be mentioned that Final Report would serve as a blue print based on which future and more specific proposals for Bay Street would be developed. The Plan Bay Street Final Report essentially contains a possible approach to deal with the future developments and the things to take into consideration when doing so. It is also important to mention that the intention of the Plan Bay Street Studio team is to release the Final proposal into the public domain after submitting the final product to the studio's original client the Staten Island Downtown Alliance.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of the paper was to analyze the level of public participation the "Plan Bay Street: Community Visioning Workshop" finds itself in and which rung of Arnstein's ladder of citizen participation does it belong to. However, in doing so, it also acknowledges the oversimplification of the ladder, therefore elaborates on the nuances of public participation through

the philosophical lens of Jürgen Habermas, Michel Foucault and Bent Flyvbjerg. To have a constructive comparison to the ladder, the Workshop was analyzed based on quantitative and qualitative data collected from recorded documents during the preparation and execution stage of the workshop. The data sources include, daily notes, a very crucial online survey as well as observation during the workshop.

From the quantitative data it was observed and verified that public participation is complicated and challenging to say the least. Unlike Habermas's notion of an even playing field, public participation is quite often chaotic and tough to navigate. There are quite a few external factors that prevent the participants from having a constructive 'rational' discussion. It is more dependent upon the local context that akin to the 'chaos and disarray' that Foucault alludes to. Most importantly 'Power' plays a key role in the participation process. Whether it comes at the government level who limit their interaction with the local community to avoid a constructive discourse or the fact that sometimes discussions get hijacked by small groups or individuals in a Community Workshop. Whoever control and narrates the public discourse, yields the most power and dictates the direction of the democratic participation process.

From the qualitative aspects of data it is observed that the Workshop organizers invited community members, informed them about their intentions and the planning process as well as took community feedback regarding the future plan for Bay Street. While this is a legitimate step toward full participation, since the community does not have much influence over the final outcome of the report this level of participation is a form of Consultation and falls under the category of 'Tokenism'.

This rung of the ladder is far from a full citizen control scenario. However, on a positive note it was mentioned that the final report will be made available to the public. Not only to those who attended the Community Visioning Workshop, but to anyone who wishes to access the documents. Therefore, this initiative might nudge and relocated the level of participation of the Workshop to the space between Consultation and Placation. If the tactic really serves its purpose, one can only hope that this will lead to an alternate form of 'redistribution of power' and thrust the participation process into the realms of 'Citizen Power'.

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