Research in Action:
A Conversation on Community Engagement Initiatives

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CURE
CRFMU

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Overview

- About CURE
- Research Context: trends, research questions
- About the NPI: goals, benefits
- Emerging themes
- CURE's Role in the NPI
- Tensions & Directions
- Lessons
- Discussion: over to you!

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About the CURE Network

Multi-disciplinary research on:

- Community governance

- Municipal government

- Citizen engagement

- Infrastructure

"There is a need to foster a stronger, more multi-disciplinary community of researchers interested in infrastructure and communities issues and willing and able to generate policy-relevant research"

INFC Performance Report 2005-06, p.12

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The Big Picture: Situating the NPI

- Place matters (again!)

- Multi-level governance
  - New deal-GTF/urban and infrastructure renewal
  - Integrated Community Sustainability Plans (ICSPs)

- Democratic renewal

- 'Horizontality'

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Research Questions

- What approaches can be used to enhance community participation and capacity for sustainability planning. What are their respective strengths and weaknesses?

  INFC PRRS Research Aims 2005

- Can neighbourhood planning and community engagement improve the effectiveness of local governance, infrastructure and development?

  CURE Proposal 2005

5

What is the Neighbourhood Planning Initiative?

- Goals
- Pilot sites
- Projects
- Community Input

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Anticipated Benefits

- Responsive local government, aligned with local needs

- Efficient, effective usage of city resources, improved co-ordination of services

- Enhanced role for local participation

- Stronger, resilient neighbourhoods

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Hintonburg: The Urban Pilot
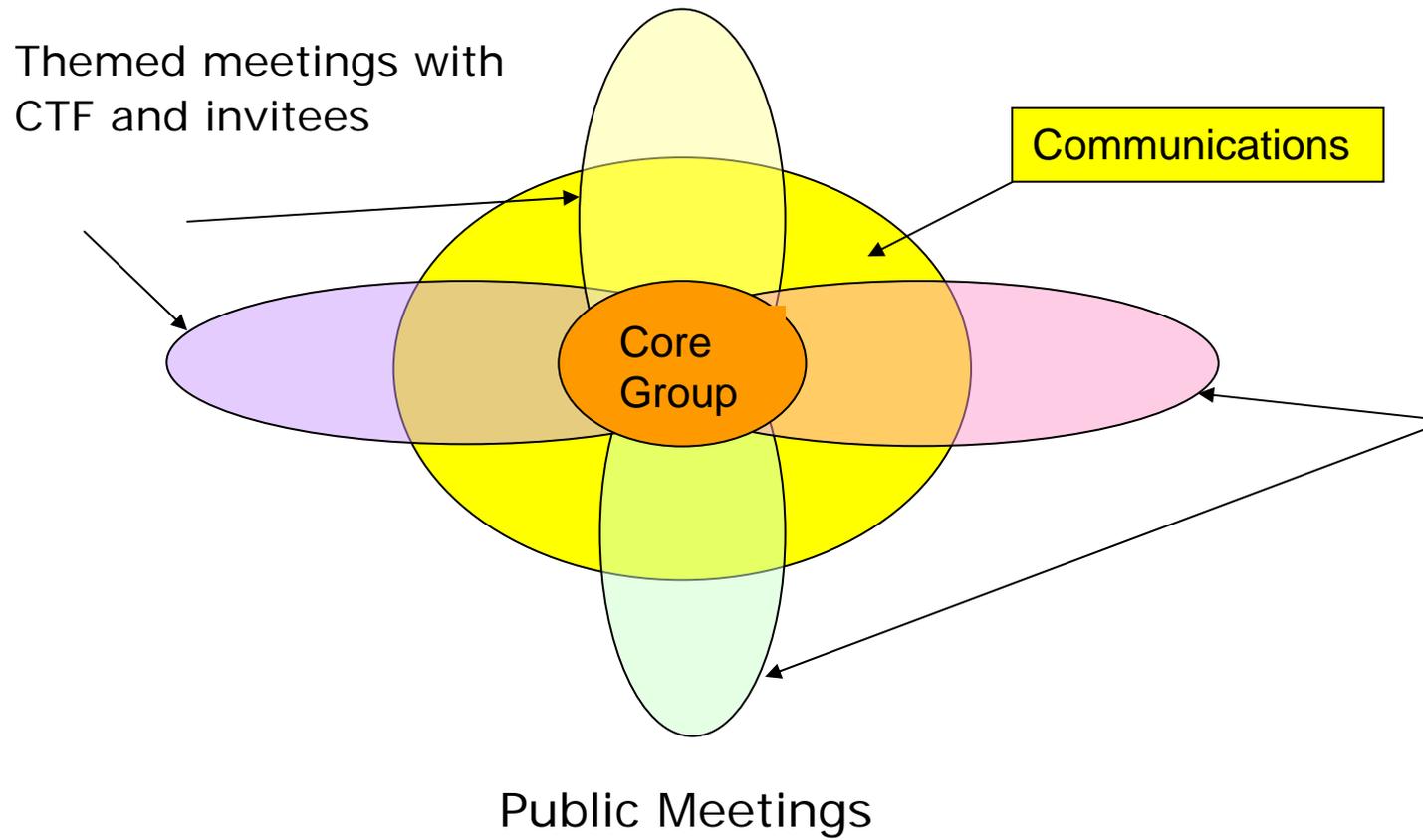
Mixed Neighbourhood

The Process

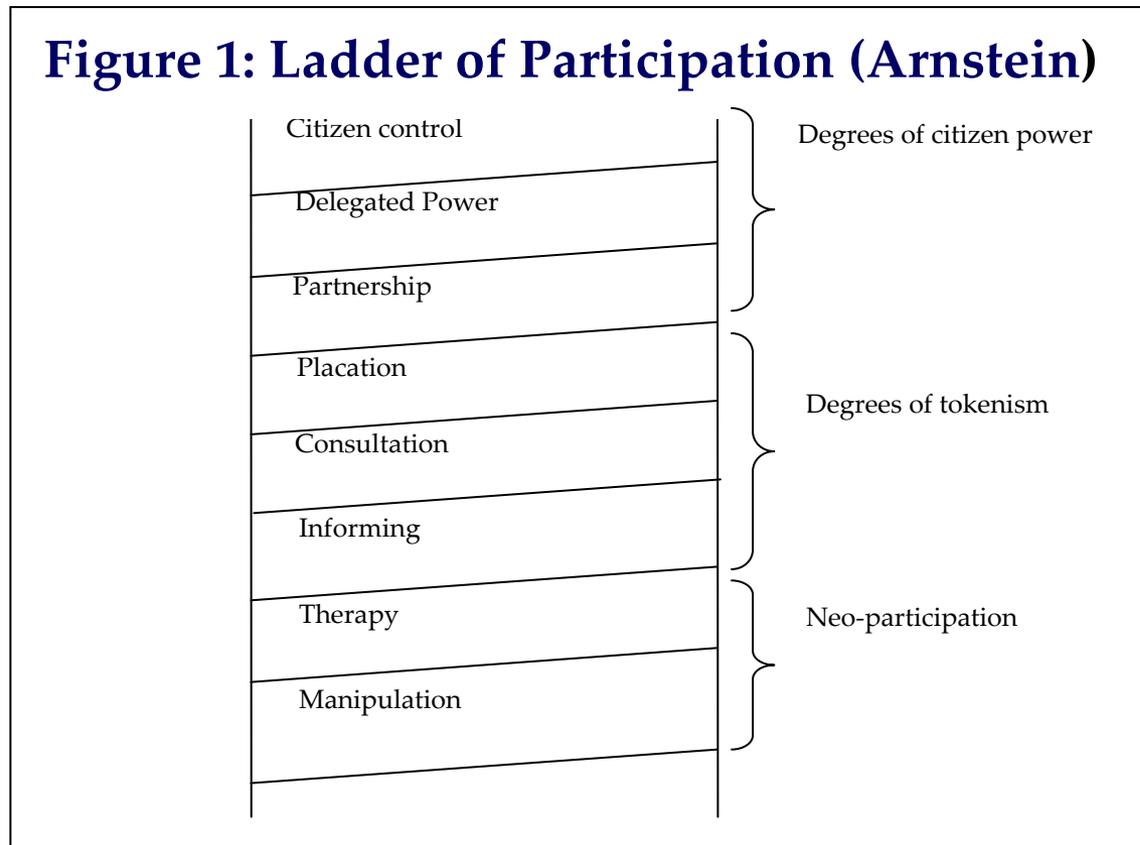# Emerging Themes and Issues

1. Representation & Accountability
2. Power/Scope
3. Degree of structure
4. Neighbourhood vs. city-wide
5. Outcomes
   1. Capacity Building
   2. Utility to planners
   3. Horizontality
6. Sustainability & prospects

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Representation and Accountability
The **Role** of the **Central Task Force (CTF)**

Themed meetings with CTF and invitees

Communications

Core Group

Public Meetings

NPI: Power and Scope?

Figure 1: Ladder of Participation (Arnstein)

Citizen control	Degrees of citizen power
Delegated Power	
Partnership	
Placation	Degrees of tokenism
Consultation	
Informing	
Therapy	Neo-participation
Manipulation	

Power and scope contd..

Levels of Citizen Engagement: Queensland Government	
Information	A one way relationship in which government delivers information to citizens
Consultation	A two-way relationship in which citizens provide feedback on issues defined by government
Active Participation	A collaboration in which citizens actively shape policy options, but where government retains the responsibility for final decisions

Power and scope contd....

Levels of Engagement	Purposes
Informing people	Providing information to people which eventually underpins every other level of engagement
Researching needs, priorities and attitudes	Using research methods and technique to understand needs and priorities
Consulting and learning	Seeking the views and opinions of individuals and groups to inform the decision-making process
Involving communities	Involving communities in decisions that affect their lives and the future of their neighbourhoods
Devolving decisions	Engaging communities is to provide information and resources while leaving them to make their own decisions
Supporting hands on community decision	Helping communities to develop their own plans and to put them into action with minimal "professional' help

CURE's 4 Roles in the NPI

1. Evaluation and Research Support (the "friendly auditor")

- 9 Background Papers

- 4 Surveys

- 10 interviews

- Countless community meetings!

2. Convener

• Stakeholder design workshop (May 2006)

•Workshop at the Ottawa Social Forum (Imagine Ottawa, Oct 2007)

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3. Interlocutor

Learning and exposure on the NPI:

• Federal government (INFR Conference, 2006)

• City-wide (CBC event at CU, 2006; Centretown News, 2007)

• Academia (CPSA, 2007; IRSPM, 2007; CU-Expo, 2008; ANSER, 2008)

• Within SPPA (8 student RAs)

4. Resource

- Sounding board for city and community groups

- New bilingual web site

www.cure-crfmu.org/

Tensions and Directions

Tensions

- "Insider" vs "Outsiders"
- Time
- Independent of vs. Influencing the NPI
- Credibility of Research
- Est. trust
- Representation
- Resources

Directions

- Increased breadth and depth of research
- Research integration
- Dissemination in accessible and multiple formats
- Co-ownership of data
- Scale-up learning and application (esp. policy level)
- Sustainability of the partnerships

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What we're learning (so far)...

- Reflect on Who You are in Relation to Others

- Be Open to Changing Roles

- Continually Develop and Expand Your Knowledge and Skills

- Recognize and Resolve Multiple Accountabilities

- Build Mutual Trust

- Co-Production of Research and Results

- Leverage Relationships and Resources

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Discussion

1) How can university researchers become more useful to community engagement initiatives?

2) How can CURE expand and extend the relationships and research developed through the NPI? (e.g. service learning, spin-off projects)

3) How should CURE apply and scale-up learning from the NPI findings? (e.g. comparative case studies)

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