Neighbourhood Planning through Community Engagement: The Implications for Place Based Governance and Outcomes.

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INTRODUCTION

The paper focuses on Canada's renewed interest in community engagement, its impact on local governance and potential for urban renewal. Drawing on research funded by the federal government of Canada, the paper examines the issues raised by the recent adoption of a neighbourhood planning initiative (NPI) by the City of Ottawa. The NPI is intended to improve the physical and social quality of life for the citizens of Ottawa by establishing a methodology for a more inclusive and integrated approach to neighbourhood development.

Based on the principles and initiatives of 'community-based planning' and 'collaborative community building' set out in Ottawa's '2020' growth plans, the NPI is an attempt to put these principles into practice and to develop best practices in neighbourhood planning. The approach is intended to build on local knowledge and better reflect the needs, priorities and concerns of local citizens. At the community level, local groups are being brought together in a systematic attempt to enhance local input into neighbourhood development and improve the dialogue between citizens and city staff on a broad range of issues. Currently being piloted in two wards, one urban (Hintonburg) and the other rural (Vars), it is intended that, if it proves effective, the NPI will be used city-wide to develop neighbourhoods - beginning with those seen to be in most 'distress' in terms of poverty, crime, infrastructure and so on.

In addition to engaging more closely with the community, City departments responsible for urban planning and delivering local services are to increase inter-departmental collaboration in an effort to develop a more coherent, place-sensitive approach towards neighbourhoods. To this end, multi-functional teams have been formed to integrate discrete jurisdictions such as land use planning, physical infrastructure planning and social service plans so that the planning process incorporates physical, social and economic considerations. For the first time in the City's history, departments such as Public Works and Services (PWS), Planning and Growth Management (PGM) and Community and Protective Services (CPS) have been brought together at the Deputy City Manager (DCM) level in a formal and cooperative process aimed.

In these ways the NPI is expected to improve both the process and outcomes of local decision-making and neighbourhood development. More specifically, proponents contend that this approach will result in a number of distinct benefits. These include a more responsive local government that is better aligned with local needs, more efficient and effective usage of city resources, improved coordination of services and growth and an enhanced process of local participation and democracy. Our longer-term research will evaluate the project against such criteria, but in this paper we focus specifically on a number of governance issues raised by the NPI, which are, we believe, central to the concepts and practice of community engagement and place based planning.

In terms of methodology, several researchers from the Centre for Urban Research and Education (CURE) at Carleton University have been participant observers in the NPI since the pilot project began in early Spring 2006. While our primary role is to observe and help evaluate the pilot study we also contribute to the project in a number of ways. CURE researchers attend regular meetings and public events in the community, hold meetings with city staff, and conduct

interviews with stakeholders. We have also completed a number of background research papers and conducted a baseline study with city employees and community members.

The paper begins by reviewing the academic literature in order to clarify key terms and locate the NPI within a broader historical, international and Canadian context. In particular we wish to understand why there is renewed interest in community engagement and neighbourhood planning and also the extent to which such initiatives can transfer power from states to communities. From our discussion of the literature emerge five key research themes which are used in the second part of the paper to analyse the City of Ottawa case study.   These examine issues of representation and accountability, capacity building, power and control, the desirability of outcomes, and horizontal management.

CONTEXT AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Participative local governance: current trends and drivers

Local governance has generated renewed debate amongst wide variety of public policy actors including international organizations, federal, local, and municipal governments, non-governmental organizations, and citizens themselves. A recent World Bank publication (Ackerman 2005) for example, from the Social Development Papers: Participation and Civic Engagement series, suggests that civic engagement is becoming increasingly prominent and, as a consequence, its impact will need to be studied further:

> While the forty years after World War II were characterized by a faith in state intervention and the last twenty years have been marked by the acceptance of the market model, it appears that the next wave of development thought will be grounded in a solid commitment to civic engagement. (Ackerman 2005)

As justification for this position, Ackerman found that those who support the argument that civic engagement will be the next paradigm in the development of local governance 'defend the position that state failure can be reconstructed through the action of an informed citizenry that knows its rights and requires the government to uphold them (2005)'.

Another major factor driving interest in participatory local governance is demographic. The majority of the world's population is now urban-based, putting significant new pressures on municipal governments, and 'by 2015, 60 per cent of the world's population will be urban-based (FCM 2004)'. According to Statistics Canada, in 2001, 80% of Canada's population was urban based, which is a significant increase from the 1901 statistic of 37% (Statistics Canada 2006). There are no indicators pointing to a halt of the future tendency for urban growth. At the same time, citizen participation in policy planning and decision making is gaining more prominence, in contrast to the traditional reliance on public officials for exclusive leadership role. 'This trend is expected to grow as democratic societies become more decentralized interdependent, networked, linked by new information technologies, and challenged by 'wicked problems'(Roberts 2004).

A renewed interest in community involvement in local decision making can also be traced to broader metropolitan trends which, like participatory approaches to neighbourhood planning, tend to ebb and flow in prominence depending on government structures and instruments and the vibrancy of civil society. Collectively these trends have been seen as part of the 'local government modernization agenda' and can be grouped into four broad themes:

Modernizing cities and public services: This echoes reforms in other levels of government toward 'new public management' to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of public organizations. Key aspects of this modernization include decentralization, public-private partnerships, citizen-focused services, greater attention to performance, and stronger governance and accountability systems among others. One prominent trend of this management approach is to amalgamate cities to benefit from greater efficiencies on services and programs. (eg. Ottawa, Montreal, and Toronto).

Democratic renewal: With declining voter numbers, Western countries have taken concerted efforts in recent years to help reconnect citizens to local governments. The United Kingdom published several papers in the late 1990s on how to encourage greater interest in democratic engagement. Canada has taken similar moves, particularly at the provincial level with British Columbia, Prince Edward Island, and Ontario taking the lead.

Building the community: Capacity development, local ownership, and the participation of 'primary stakeholders or 'beneficiaries' are regarded as essential measures to ensuring the long-term success of decentralization and other public sector reforms (Pearce and Mawson, 2003). Underpinning this driver is the premise that by 'enabling capacity', communities will be able to actively engage with their own problems and address more of their own needs (Sullivan, 2003). This capacity might contribute to what Robert Putnam refers to as 'social capital' or the social networks, norms and organizations shaping the individual and collective well-being of society (Putnam, 2000).

Horizontal Management: Also referred to as silo-busting or systems-thinking, this initiative is rooted in holistic beliefs that focus on dealing with a person, organization, or community as a whole, in an integrated way, rather than addressing specific issues and problems with separate solutions and strategies. For others, it is a more practical issue of coordination that focuses on the streamlining of services, elimination of duplication, and achieving efficiencies with scarce resources. Horizontal management and multi-sector collaboration have gained prominence as new ways of working at all levels of government and the voluntary sector

Historical Trends

The concept and practice of community engagement is by no means a new phenomenon and can be traced back to the earliest forms of Greek democracy. In more recent times Morse (2006), for example, examines the work of Mary Follett (1868-1933) on public participation and, although her political writings are now eighty years old, claims they have never been more relevant. His paper illustrates how Follett provides concrete answers to some of the primary questions of public participation today: 'Follett's notions of circular response and integration, along with her

thesis of neighbourhood organization as a vehicle for democratic governance speak directly to the practice of a more democratic public administration' (Morse 2006)

Throughout the democratic world, there have been surges in interest in community engagement roughly between the 1960s to early 1980s generally followed by a gradual disbandment of such initiatives. Europe and the United States revived their interest in community involvement policies in the 1990s. Bradford (2006) categorized several time periods according to the relevance of the city as a focus in the Canadian policy. Implicitly the policy time periods that focused on the city also represent the times when citizen participation was a part of neighbourhood planning and reconstruction. The 1900-1930 era of Progressivism and the 1960-1980 Neighbourhood and Regions period both incorporated cities as important political spaces for public policy. However, the 1940-1970 decades of Keynesianism and the 1980-2000 stage of Neo-Liberalism gave priority to national, provincial, and global political spaces in public policy formulation (Bradford 2002).

In the 1970s, infrastructure and other land-use projects focused on community involvement in the revitalization of 'deprived neighbourhoods' primarily through area-based approaches focusing on local policy making and implementation (Pearce and Mawson, 2003). Examples of this approach include the Community Development Programs in the United Kingdom and the federally funded Neighbourhood Improvement Program in Canada in the early 1970s. The most famous proponent of these views was Jane Jacobs, who launched a sustained criticism of 'modernist' urban planning with the publication of *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (Jacobs, 1961).

The late 1970s and early 1980s witnessed a sharp policy shift toward planning that was focused on market mechanisms and was not very participatory. Authors such as Colenutt and Cutten (1994, pg. 237, in Raco 2000), for instance, suggest that 'during the course of the 1980s, policy became refocused not on people and communities but on property and physical regeneration'.
Once resources became constrained in the 1990s, however, there was a resurgence of community involvement through the focus on partnerships as a policy construct for municipal initiatives. Raco notes, however, that the trend toward partnerships has been less about responding to community-led or bottom-up thinking but rather more about competitive processes to obtain government funding (Raco, 2000).

Most recently, Canada, along with Europe and the US has shown renewed interest in community engagement, especially in neighbourhood planning. A number of Canadian governmental and non-governmental publications acknowledged that the local knowledge emerging from the community is an integral asset for future development and growth as well as the implementation of municipal renovation projects. At the federal level, for example, Infrastructure Canada emphasises the importance of 'social infrastructure' in respect of its physical infrastructure programmes and economic growth:

> The social infrastructure of Canada's urban communities is described as the "new frontier" of federal responsibility that at once reflects and yet extends the idea that federal investments in human and civil assets are essential for the economic and social well-being of the country. (2003)

At the local level this theme is echoed in a number of recent reports. In 2003, for example, the Laidlaw Foundation and Federation of Canadian Municipalities discussed local governance in the Canadian context in their joint publication 'Building Inclusive Communities: Cross-Canada Perspectives and Strategies (2003)'. In 2004, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities produced a document 'Our Place in the World: Municipal Government and Canada's International Policies and Programs,' discussing ways of sharing successful Canadian experiences in municipal planning with the developing world. In 2005, Canadian Policy Research Networks (CPRN) discussed place-based public policy in the publication titled 'Place-based Public Policy: Towards a New Urban and Community Agenda for Canada.'

Resident-led models of neighbourhood engagement have also been emerging in Canada with a growing number of government and community sponsored initiatives currently being undertaken. For example, Vibrant Communities, a community-driven effort to reduce poverty in Canada, has been pursuing a collaborative multi-sector approach in fifteen communities. The Government of Canada program Action for Neighbourhood Change is a pan-Canadian project that involves four national and five local partners in an effort to regenerate and improve the quality of life in five selected neighbourhoods. At the municipal level, there are further examples of citizen initiatives, such as Creative Neighbourhoods[1] as well as municipal government led initiatives, such as the City of Saskatoon's Local Area Planning initiative, which gives residents an active role in determining the future of their neighbourhood. Similar initiatives have surfaced in cities such as Calgary, Winnipeg, Toronto and Vancouver.

Definitions and degrees of participation

In spite of the renewed interest in democratic local governance, citizen participation remains an elusive and 'fundamentally contested concept in the literature' (Innes and Booher 2005) Moreover, in debates about inclusive forms of local governance terms such as 'community engagement', 'community-based planning', 'collaborative community building", 'citizen participation', 'civic engagement', 'collaborative participation, and 'public participation' tend to be used interchangeably. While all of these terms and approaches share an implicit commitment to grass roots involvement in civil society and public policy, a clearer understanding of the theoretical and practical implications is required. As Morse (2006) argues, while there seems to be widespread agreement in the public administration community on the importance of public participation, there is no consensus about what we mean when we use the term.

According to Chaskin (2003), neighbourhood-based governance requires mechanisms and structure to coordinate participation and provide for accountability:

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[1] Creative Neighbourhoods is a not-for-profit, Ottawa-based group of planning and design professionals, social planners, business people, artists and citizens that seeks functional and beautiful public space and unique neighbourhoods with vital local organizations.

> By neighbourhood-based governance, I mean the engagement of neighbourhood-level mechanisms and processes to guide civic participation, planning, decision making, coordination, and implementation of activities within the neighbourhood, to represent neighborhood interests to actors beyond it, and to identify and organize accountability and responsibility for action undertaken. (2003)

For the Harewood Institute, 'meaningful civic engagement' means discovering and utilising public knowledge about their communities and establishing value priorities so they can be traded-off when this, inevitably, becomes necessary:

> Civic engagement is appropriate when an agency is seeking to learn from the public. But learning is more than simply soliciting input, adding up the responses, and using that data to make a decision that is allegedly supported by citizens. It is about gaining and using public knowledge. Public knowledge is a full and deep understanding of your community. It is a collection of values that people in the community hold – not their attitudes about various policy choices. It is also about how they rank these values, and what trade-offs they are willing to make when the values seem to be in conflict. This kind of knowledge can only be gained through meaningful civic engagement. (The Harwood Institute, 2005)

A recent Queensland Government report on community engagement alludes to varying degrees of participation.

> Community engagement refers to the connections between the governments, citizens and communities on a range of policy, program and service issues. It encompasses a wide variety of government-community interactions ranging from information sharing to community consultation and in some instances, active participation in government decision-making process (Queensland Government, 2006: 5).

Figure 1: Ladder of Participation (Arnstein)
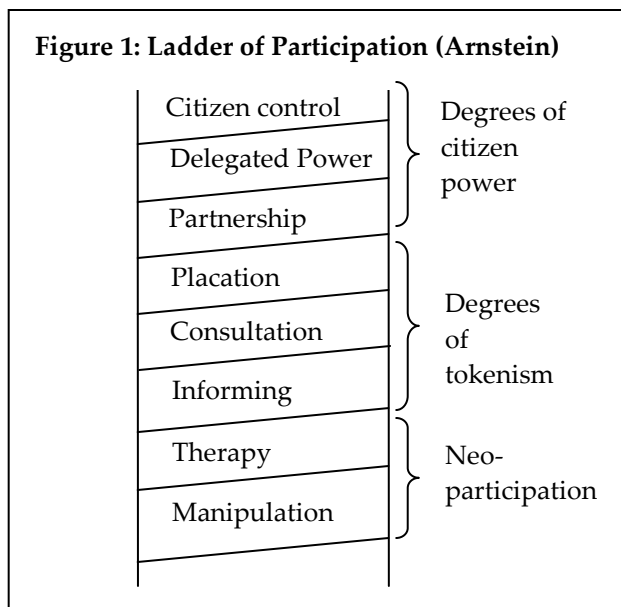
In discussions about government-community interactions the levels of participation are often conflated and yet this is probably the central issue to be considered.

There are different ways to categorize these government-community interactions. Shirley Arnstein's "Ladder of Participation" provides a classic example. Mechanisms of citizen participation are arranged in accordance with their degree of empowerment, moving from neo-participation, to degrees of tokenism, to degrees of citizen power. For Arnstein, citizen control is the epitome of involvement, when "participants or residents can govern a program or an institution, be in full charge of policy and managerial aspects, and be able to

negotiate the conditions under which 'outsiders' may change them" (pg. 223).

Drawing on Arnstein's model, other conceptualizations have been developed, such as the tri-level model proposed by the Queensland Government (Table 1). Information, consultation, and active participation form a "community engagement continuum, with increasing levels of engagement and influence" (Queensland Government, 2006: 5).

Table 1: Levels of Engagement (Queensland Government, 2006)	
Information	A one way relationships in which government delivers information to citizens **Government ⟶ Citizen**
Consultation	A two-way relationship in which citizens provide feedback on issues defined by government **Government ⟶ Citizen**
Active Participation	A collaboration in which citizens actively shape policy options, but where government retains the responsibility for final decisions **Government ⟷ Citizen**

Developing the directional flow of information further, the International Association of Public participation (IAP2) model sets out in more detail the implications and expectations on the state and the public at each level of participation.

INCREASING LEVEL OF PUBLIC IMPACT

INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
Objective	Objective	Objective	Objective	Objective
To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, or solutions	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives, or decisions	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public and private concerns are consistently understood and considered	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution	To place final decision making in the hands of the public
Promise to the public	Promise to the public	Promise to the public	Promise to the public	Promise to the public
We will keep you informed	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge your concerns, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and issues are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision	We will look to you for direct advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendatios into the decisions to the maximum extent possible	To place final decision making in the hands of the public

Source: IAP2 International Association for Public Participation.

This model is similar to Arnstein's but is more realistic in the sense that government is assumed to have a leadership role at every stage, including the power to decide if and when decision-making can be placed into the hands of the public. While this is an important distinction to make, public participation can too often be presented as a duality with citizens on one side and the government on the other hand. Conceptualising community engagement in this way tends to set up an 'us' vs. 'them' mentality which can undermine participative relationships. A more constructive and realistic approach is to think of local governance in terms of a symbiotic relationship between the government and the public.

A similar model of community engagement is proposed by the Government of Manchester and show in table 2. It suggests six levels of participation and clarifies the purpose of each one.

Table 2: Levels of Community Engagement (Adapted from Government of Manchester (2006)

Levels of Community 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 decisions	Helping communities to develop their own plans and to put them into action with minimal "professional' help

Choosing which level of engagement is appropriate or acceptable depends on the situation and the decision of the government concerned. It may also depend on the type or level of service (Goetz & Gaventa, pg. 56), policy in question, or place in the policy cycle (Philips & Orsini, pg. 16).

A number of studies have examined what kind of participatory mechanisms tend to be used by local governments. A census-like study of local government in the United Kingdom (UK) categorized practices as follows: consumerist (i.e. complaints and suggestions, service satisfaction surveys), traditional (i.e. consultation document, public meetings), forums (i.e. service user groups, minority ethnic groups), consultative innovations (i.e. citizens' panel, interactive website), and deliberative innovations (i.e. visioning exercise, community plan, citizens' juries).

The study found that consumerist methodologies were dominant, followed by traditional mechanisms of public engagement, and modest experimentation with innovation (Lowdnes et al., 2001a, pg. 208). A similar categorization was used to identify the methods used by UK transport planners, again finding that traditional methods were widespread, but accompanied by experimentation with consultative methods such as focus groups or issue forums (Bickerstaff & Walker, pg. 439). While there is substantial evidence of experimentation with more deliberative means of participation in the United States, practitioners there still conclude that public hearings 'may be the most widely available form of non-electoral citizen participation, at least locally' (Buss et al., pg. 15).

There is some evidence that these trends conform to public interest in participation. For example, most residents in a participatory program pilot area in the UK "expressed a strong preference for relatively passive forms of one-off consultation such as postal surveys and face-to face interviews (36 and 27% respectively)" (Martin & Boaz, pg. 51). In contrast, only 13% of respondents indicated they would be willing to go to public meetings, 6% indicated they would participate in a citizen's panel, and only 3% would participate in a citizen's jury (ibid). These findings about the relative popularity of passive means of participation were largely supported in the literature (see Lowdnes et al. 2001b for similar trends). In fact, the literature suggests that 'it is not realistic to assume that there are many people willing to take on the work of governance' (Robinson et al., pg. 16).

The question of the public's willingness to participate has become central to the debate and divides critics and advocates. Stivers, for example, argues that 'Direct citizen participation is based on a false notion. "Human nature is flawed".' People are either 'too passionate and selfish or too passive and apathetic' to be directly involved (Stivers, 1990, p. 87). Studies have 'demonstrated that the common man is not the rational, self-motivating, and thoughtful democrat of the Jefferson ideal. Rather the picture that emerges is of a lethargic, irrational, and prejudiced individual who neither understands nor is particularly committed to democratic principles' (Hart, 1972, p. 610, cited in Roberts 2004, p.13). Since individual citizens cannot realistically be trusted, they need 'benevolent, but firm, guidance from an informed and politically active minority' (Hart, 1972, p. 611, cited in Roberts, 2004, p.13)."

Many critics regard direct citizen participation with distrust (Dahl, 1989). They doubt the ability of the masses to make a positive contribution to governance; in fact, they are viewed as a potential threat to the system. The masses, says Schumpeter (1943), are 'incapable of action other than a stampede' (p. 283). Such views are consistent with 'a long-standing consensus in Western political thought: that substantive involvement by citizens in governance is unworkable, however desirable it may be' (Stivers, 1990, p. 87).

Strange on the other hand believes that 'the perceptions of the ordinary people are more to be trusted than the pretensions of national leaders and of the bureaucracies who serve them (1996, p.3)'. She also states that 'today it seems that the heads of governments may be the last ones to recognize that they and their ministers have lost the authority over national societies and economies that they used to have. Their command of outcomes is not what it used to be' (1996, p3).

On the issue of participation, it is hard to reconcile the views of advocates and critics of local governance. However, in examining the widely accepted and newly emerging literature on the subject, it is interesting to consider the underlying assumptions of human nature. This is an important and worthwhile task since meaningful debate is only possible if the basic assumptions and their implications are explicit.

RESEARCH THEMES

Representation and accountability

A key research question relates to the basis of representation used in a particular initiative. A variety of practices are used. One common practice is representation on the basis of demographic characteristics (such as age, sex, or ethnicity), where the aim is to mirror the larger society in the participation exercise. Attitudinal representation is also used, especially in deliberative fora, where it is important for the legitimacy of the outcome that different strongly held positions are represented (Crosby et al., pg. 174). Locality based criteria are used, especially by regeneration and social exclusion programs (Barnes et al., pg. 382). A fourth practice uses more of a political model of representation, where the individual represents a constituency, rather than his or her own views (ibid, pg. 383). This model can be used in conjunction with some of the others named above, or with institution-based representation, where relevant organizations send representatives. Finally, representation is sometimes based on "presence", on the premise that disadvantaged groups need to be represented by those who share their identity or experience and direct participation is the only means for their views to be heard (Campbell & Marshall, 2000, pg. 326). After a method of representation has been chosen, random or snowball sampling is sometimes used to select participants. Other methods include self selection and government appointment.

The basis of representation is a critical concern because it affects not only the ability of people to represent themselves, but also how their interests are likely to be represented by others. Sometimes organized citizens' views differ substantially from others (Klijn & Koppenjan, pg. 152). Several case studies illustrated that exclusion from the planning process also led to the exclusion of a particular group's interests in the final policy outcome (i.e. ethnic minority tenants in Baum, youth in Frank, and people with disabilities in Edwards). Without direct measures to involve "hard to reach groups" public attention to their interests is haphazard and ad hoc, relying on the other players to be aware and advocate for them.

A common concern in citizen engagement is the conflict between different forms of representation. A key question to address is the role of political representation, in the form of the local councillor, and the role of neighbourhood representatives. Councillors may feel threatened by a new form of representation and may challenge the legitimacy of neighbourhood representatives. At the same time, councillors were elected to represent all people in their riding, and not only those who are engaged with the neighbourhood initiative. Thus, they may serve as a vehicle to raise concerns of the marginalized, excluded, or dissatisfied.

One final issue concerning representation is the role of community based organizations, or civil society groups. One initiative was intent upon hearing from "real people" – who became "unreal" when organized to participate. Philips et. al propose that civil society groups are an "extension of democracy" because people come together to form and direct such groups. What role these groups are invited to play in a neighbourhood planning exercise should be carefully considered, given the mixed representative functions they serve (i.e. their membership vs. the neighbourhood).

Power and scope

Typically local government shapes the agenda and scope of community engagement initiatives. There were few examples of public engagement in the literature where the citizens or residents themselves determined these factors or took 'full charge of policy and managerial aspects' as Arnstein advocates. The locus for responsibility has the power to include or exclude certain topics from the exercise and determine (in some instances) who participates. For example, Shortall describes a rural development partnership where economic development was prioritized over civic and social development (local priorities) and the make-up of the partnership was determined by the government, excluding important local players (i.e. women's groups) (pg. 120). Keeping certain issues off the table is a significant source of power, one that could be used to maintain local patterns of privilege.

The fact that local governments tend to convene public engagement mechanisms generally limits the focus to issues over which they have jurisdiction. Given that local areas are subject to many forces of change that originate beyond their borders (regional or national governments, multinational companies, the movement of people, or environmental problems), the problem of jurisdiction limits the potential of these mechanisms to motivate participation and to be able to affect change. Peterman suggests that some of the focus on neighbourhoods as sites of social change has been somewhat disingenuous, raising community expectations unrealistically in light of these external factors (p.59).

Another manifestation of power in community engagement is the way issues are framed and forms of knowledge privileged. How an issue is framed is often contested, and has implications for its success on the public agenda (Milward & Laird, p. 63). Framing an issue consists in identifying it a certain way (i.e. with a certain cause and possible solutions), but also in the use of certain images to characterize the problem. For instance, in a conflict over development of a local landmark for tourism, the anti-development group invoked an image of the "sacred mountain" (O'Rourke, p. 493). This image did not resonate with local residents and excluded other possible uses for the mountain, such as grazing, exacerbating the "us-versus-them" mentality that was developing in the community. Goodwin found that the act of participation itself serves to shape people's self concepts and their understanding of the region, indicating that framing is a dynamic process (p. 393).

Related to issue framing is the dominance of certain forms of knowing and expression. While public engagement mechanisms claim to value local or ordinary knowledge, in practice, preferences for certain types of knowledge emerge. In general, participatory processes favour rational argument and reflect norms of articulate-ness and dispassionate-ness, norms that are

culturally specific (Young, p.38). Social norms value elite knowledge, meaning that academic knowledge can be accorded special privilege - as observed when someone with a Ph.D. in Zoology was accorded more respect than dog walkers in a public hearing on rezoning (Campbell & Marshall, 2000, p. 337). The preference for certain types of knowledge can also be a direct result of the program specifications – for instance fluency in "Single Regeneration Budget" speak with its "strategic objectives" and "quantifiable outcomes" in the United Kingdom (Morrison, pg. 155).

Capacity Building

Citizen engagement is not a naturally occurring phenomenon. It does not follow from making an opportunity available that people will be motivated to participate nor equipped to understand and participate in deliberations. As Smock explains:

> If we are truly interested in creating a more democratic society, we must build residents' skills as public actors, develop their capacity to engage in collective action, create democratic decision-making structures for identifying community needs and priorities, and develop strategic action campaigns to solve community problems (pg. 261).

Recognizing the need to build capacity is only the first step in the challenge, however. The next is identifying what capacities to enhance, how to approach the task, and who should be involved.

 A common distinction in the literature is between personal, community, and system capacity. While municipal staff might tend to focus on the capacity of individual citizens, it is crucial to take community and systemic capacity into account as well. Increasing individual capacity in a context where the new skills are thwarted or not put to use can do more harm than good.

Personal capacity is 'the ability to use personal resources to achieve goals' and includes attitudes, skills and knowledge (including experiential), interpersonal skills, and the power each individual has and can use (Devon Dodd & Boyd, pg. 7). To some extent, the personal capacities required are shaped by the degree of participation required by the initiative. Consultation, lower on the 'ladder of participation', requires less individual capacities than citizen control. The knowledge required for citizen engagement may be specific (i.e. how policy decisions are made, legal rights, procedures, roles, and responsibilities) or general (preferences, patterns). Skills for even the most basic consultation process include communication skills, such as listening, understanding, and assertiveness. Skills required for a more formalized and sustained means of citizenship engagement might include negotiation and conflict resolution, representation (i.e. the ability to listen, report back, be held accountable) and how to practice democratic and collaborative models of leadership (Gaventa, pg. 21). Writers in the context of developing countries also refer to 'preconditions for voice', such as awareness and capacity to organize as essential to the groundwork of building personal capacity.

Community capacity is the community's ability to identify, mobilize, and address issues (Devon Dodd & Boyd, pg. 9). A more detailed definition is that provided by Chaskin:

> Community capacity is the interaction of human capital, organizational resources, and social capital existing within a given community that can be leveraged to solve collective problems and improve or maintain the well-being of a given community. It may operate through informal social processes and/or organized efforts (2003, pg. 295).

This is an important level of capacity, because it is where institutional and individual interests are mediated and community organizing has the potential to mobilize or disempower individuals. The institutional capacity of a representative neighbourhood institution such as a community centre or neighbourhood association is critical here, because it often serves as a surrogate of the capacities of the community as a whole. Sometimes neighbourhood planning unfolds through the use of a community steering committee created for that purpose, and comprised of representatives of stakeholder organizations.

 System capacity is "the ability of a whole system to plan, monitor, and address public problems" (Devon Dodd & Boyd, pg. 10). Gaventa sums up the challenges in this area: 'changing to act with [not for] the community requires new attitudes and behaviours (pg. 22). Examples of relevant skills and knowledge include 'the ability of a system to reflect on and use information from communities, and to synthesize what is learned into new procedures, policies, cultures and practices' (Devon Dodd & Boyd, ibid).

Another critical issue for capacity building is the time required, which varies with the particular capacity. Taking the time required to build capacities and change relationships may test the patience of organizers and evaluators. As Bryson noticed: ' More time will need to be spent organizing forums for discussion , involving diverse communities , negotiating agreements in existing or new arenas , and coordinating the activities and actions of numerous relatively independent people, groups, organizations and institutions (Bryson, 1995, pg. 6)'. Yet experience shows that a particular initiative should not rush to scale or dissemination of best practices – taking time instead for local ownership and networking to take root (Gaventa, pg. 25).

Desirability of Outcome

The large investment by all parties in the process tends to generate legitimacy and ownership of community engagement outcomes, putting substantial pressure on governments to implement them. Irvin and Stansbury refer to this as 'the power of wrong decisions' (pg. 59). When the city government tried to implement a different budget decision than that determined by the deliberative process in Eugene, the public outcry led them to change their actions to comply with the public preferences (Weeks, pg. 365). This problem is really only a problem in circumstances where the local government does not want to implement the outcome of a deliberative process.

The community engagement process may privilege certain kinds of behaviour that lead to a less desirable outcome. In the interests of coming to common agreement, radical perspectives may not receive the same respect and consideration as those in the middle. As Campbell and Marshall found in their study of participatory mechanisms in the Bay Area of California, "results of group decision making tend to favour non-controversial options which weakly satisfy all but are unlikely to challenge the status quo of prejudice and injustice" (2000, pg. 338). This may

have the effect of re-marginalizing marginalized groups who seek the latter kinds of change (Newman, p. 126). Consensus-driven processes are also prone to problems of group decision-making, such as groupthink, that exclude new or different evidence (Cooke, pg. 112). While some of these process problems can be mitigated through design, they impact on the ability of participants to put forward and defend their interests and preferences for reconciliation.

The outcome from a deliberative process may also be undesirable from a public policy point of view. While Miller claims that social norms act as a censure on repugnant preferences being brought forward in public venues (pg. 189), the literature provides some examples of less than desirable decisions. For example, racism coloured how community participants in a community development partnership allocated funds – requests from visible minority groups were subjected to greater scrutiny and mistrust (Wilson, pg. 524). Filion records how the deliberative process of the Neighbourhood Improvement Plan led to the choice to expand services for existing homeowners, while neglecting the need to purchase land for more social housing (pg. 20).

The issue of participatory outcomes that are "hard to ignore" pose a dilemma for local governments. On the one hand they wish to be seen as responsive to public input, which is generally perceived as deciding in accordance with the views presented. The perception that government is not responsive is in part what inhibits participation in the first place. However, the examples of problematic group processes and undesirable policy outcomes (in that they inadequately take all parties needs into account or contradict policy decisions) increase the risk of devolving responsibility.

Horizontal Management

While the proceeding research questions address the process of neighbourhood planning out in the community, the final question addresses the process within the City itself: the ability of city departments to work together across traditional boundaries. Improving horizontal management or 'joined-up government' has been a priority of governments at all levels in Canada, as they realize the limits of working in isolation. The Deputy Minister task force on Horizontal Management framed the challenge as follows:

> As departments work in cross-cutting policy areas it is important that they recognize the interdependence of many policy issues and the need to serve the broader public interest -- not just their immediate clients, and stakeholders. In doing so, they need to work collaboratively across interdepartmental lines towards the development of stronger, more integrated policy initiatives. (1996, pg. 3)

Horizontal management is "defined as the coordination and management of a set of activities between two or more organizational units, where the units in question do not have hierarchical control over each other and where the aim is to generate outcomes that cannot be achieved by units working in isolation" (Bakvis & Juillet, pg. 8). Peach suggests that horizontal management involves three tasks: improved integration across government departments, improved integration across levels of government, and citizen and civil society engagement in policy development and implementation. The body of literature and case studies on horizontal management includes best

practices for governments. While written with provincial and federal governments in mind, the following lessons from the literature could also apply at a local level.

In order for horizontal management to succeed, it is necessary to have the right people in place. This includes committed senior management, but also a specific individual who will be a champion for the project (Bakvis & Juillet, 2004). New capacities in the areas of negotiation, communication, and mediation have to be sought or developed.

Secondly, the accountability framework of a horizontal initiative is critically important. It must include 'a clearly articulated strategic framework of goals and specific results-oriented benchmarks' (Peach 2004, pg. 25). Ideally, this framework is developed with all of the participating departments, and it delineates how departments will contribute, specifying 'strategies and performance expectations for departments that are commensurate with the resources available and with political/jurisdictional reality' (Auditor General, 2000). Finally, the accountability framework for a horizontal initiative should include structural incentives. Peach cites four incentives that have successfully encouraged horizontality at the provincial level: results-based reporting and accountability process, reduced demands for procedural reporting and centralized decision-making, the use of the budget process, and recognition and performance bonuses to senior management and staff (pgs. 28-29). Structural incentives indicate the seriousness of the commitment to work together, and free up staff from the problem of conflicting loyalties between the line department and the collaborative goals.

Place based policy making is a specialized area of horizontal management. While similarly acknowledging the failure of the silo approach to address complex problems, place based policy making also rejects a top-down, one-size-fits all approach. It seeks instead "place-sensitive modes of policy intervention – strategies constructed with knowledge of the particular circumstances in communities, and delivered through collaborations crossing functional boundaries and departmental silos" (Bradford 2005, pg. 4). Place based policy making recognizes that increasingly, policy problems and aspects of their solution are grounded in particular spaces – whether a 'distressed' neighbourhood or a community experiencing rapid growth. At the municipal level, a place based approach to policy making focuses on different neighbourhoods or regions within the city.

These five issues: representation and accountability, power and scope, capacity building, desirability of outcomes, and horizontal management pose significant challenges to local government when considering implementing some kind of community engagement program. The next section will explore how the City of Ottawa's Neighbourhood Planning Initiative encountered these issues and others, and offer some lessons and questions for further research.

CITY OF OTTAWA: CASE STUDY

Background and Aims of the Neighbourhood Planning Initiative

Based on the principles and initiatives of 'community-based planning' and 'collaborative community building' set out in Ottawa's '2020' growth plans, the NPI is an attempt to put these

principles into practice and to develop best practices in neighbourhood planning. The approach is intended to build on local knowledge and better reflect the needs, priorities and concerns of local citizens. At the community level, local groups are being brought together in a systematic attempt to enhance local input into neighbourhood development and improve the dialogue between citizens and city staff on a broad range of issues. Currently being piloted in one ward, Hintonburg, it is intended that, if it proves effective, the NPI will be used city-wide to develop neighbourhoods - beginning with those seen to be in most 'distress' in terms of poverty, crime, infrastructure and so on.

In addition to engaging more closely with the community, City departments responsible for urban planning and delivering local services are to increase inter-departmental collaboration in an effort to develop a more coherent, place-sensitive approach towards neighbourhoods. To this end, multi-functional teams have been formed to integrate discrete jurisdictions such as land use planning, physical infrastructure planning and social service plans so that the planning process incorporates physical, social and economic considerations. For the first time in the City's history, departments such as Public Works and Services (PWS), Planning and Growth Management (PGM) and Community and Protective Services (CPS) have been brought together at the Deputy City Manager (DCM) level in a formal and cooperative process.

The dual purpose mandate of the NPI is reflected in the project's objectives. They are: 1) to work closely and intensively with a neighbourhood; 2) to improve collaboration within the City (between departments); 3) to improve how the city collaborates with the community; 4) to collaboratively produce a Community Design Plan (CDP), Functional Design, and a Neighbourhood Plan document, and 5) to learn as we go and try new ways of working.

 The NPI received City of Ottawa Council approval in June 2005, and has slowly been gaining momentum since that time. During the first stage, city staff commissioned a best practices study, and set forward criteria for selecting NPI sites. Initially, three communities were recommended as NPI pilot project sites – Hintonburg (urban), Vars (rural), and Barrhaven (suburb). At the time of this writing, only the Hintonburg project has commenced. Hintonburg was chosen because a major road reconstruction was already planned, there are visible social problems such as drugs and prostitution, and there are organized local groups eager to be engaged.

Hintonburg is a diverse neighbourhood of Ottawa, located to the West of downtown. 2001 Census data reveal that 23.6% of families in the neighbourhood have incomes below the Statistics Canada Low Income Cut-Off (LICO).   Households that spend disproportionate amounts of their pre-tax income on food, clothing and shelter – 20% above the average family – are considered low income according to this measure. The population in Hintonburg is relatively stable, with 76% who had not moved in the last year (reported in 2001). Visible minorities comprise almost twenty percent of the total population. In 2005, the Kitchissippi Ward (which includes Hintonburg) reported 6,302 Criminal Code offences per 100,000, higher than the City of Ottawa average (5,523).

While these statistics describe Hintonburg itself, the actual geographic focus of the NPI is somewhat broader. One of the early issues that the local NPI group had to address was the boundary of Hintonburg, as it was not predefined by the City.   Since the main road

reconstruction went beyond Hintonburg's borders, some people felt that adjacent neighbourhoods should also be involved. Community members advocated successfully that the NPI study area include the adjacent territory of Mechanicsville and West Wellington as well. We will use the term "Hintonburg NPI" to refer to the study area.

The City began the NPI with a series of meetings for City of Ottawa staff, in order to explain the project and get their buy-in. At one early meeting, staff from various city departments gathered around maps of the project area and identified programming underway. The meeting was the first time city staff had used a place-specific focus to inform and coordinate with each other. The city has formed an inter-departmental working group to help move the NPI forward entitled the Urban Neighbourhood Plan Initiative workgroup, comprised of three departments: Community and Protective Services, the Planning and Growth Management Department, and the Public Works and Services Department. There is also an Internal City Stakeholder's group that receives updates on the initiative and a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC). At subsequent meetings, community groups were invited and the institutional design of the NPI began to take shape.

On the community end, the key institution is the Continuity Task Force (CTF), comprised of twenty-five community members who serve as the consistent core, attending all meetings and information sessions. Members reflect a variety of stakeholders in the community, and are supposed to act as two-way conduits of information – bringing their constituency input to the CTF meetings, but also reporting about the CTF and NPI back to their constituency. Complementing the work of the CTF are a series of planning and theme meetings, where the community can draw on resident expertise, as well as a series of public meetings for information and feedback.

The CURE research team carried out a baseline study with city staff and community members in the early days of the NPI. The findings indicate how the respective stakeholders perceive current citizen engagement and collaborative City efforts, and anticipate some of the challenges and opportunities facing the NPI. There seems to be some scepticism about community engagement both in the community and among city staff. Survey respondent comments from the community include "consultation opportunities are window dressing" and "in previous consultation, value placed on residential input was not particularly high". Most striking is that many respondents had little interaction with the city in any form. Community members were also unfamiliar with existing groups and collaborative endeavours within their neighbourhood.

When city employees were asked which groups or individuals have the ability to influence city departments, they rated residents/citizens last. Comments revealed the perception that local councillors have the greatest influence, followed by developers and city staff. At the same time, a large percentage of employees felt that engaging with local communities impacts public support and impacts the quality of decisions made. Specific comments about citizen engagement included 'groups can have significant influence, if they are organized', 'through my own extensive experience, I've determined that it is the members of the public with their own agenda who are the ones who get involved', and 'sometimes the public is not interested in good planning; they are only interested in the protection of their property values'.

Finally, the baseline study addressed the issue of horizontal management within the city. Employees rated their department's performance in "avoiding duplication" the lowest among performance indicators. 'Cooperation' received the highest ranking, at an average score of 3.66 out of 5 (5 being very good). According to this self-evaluation, there is room for improvement in "joined-up" government. The NPI can be considered the first test of the City's resolve to try placed-based collaborative management.

Five themes for analysis

This section will address some of the research questions raised above, with our observations of the NPI to date. Our observations are derived from personal interviews and baseline studies, but primarily from participatory action research – observing city and community meetings as they unfold.

1. Representation and Accountability: The model of representation adopted by the Hintonburg NPI includes mixed bases, such as election (ward councillor), association (i.e. community health centre) and presence (i.e. seniors). The CTF includes representatives from the following stakeholder groups: Community Association; Ward Councillor; seniors; youth, children and families; non-governmental; low income persons; Business Association rep; non-BA business; local developer/architect; Somerset West Community Health Centre; schools; Creative Business design rep.; faith communities; Community Based Organization; and newcomers representative.

CTF members were not elected – rather a small committee of community members and city staff made the initial appointments and inquiries and some people volunteered themselves. Elections were rejected as being too time consuming, and City Council wanted to see some momentum growing with the initiative. City Council is also concerned that the CTF not be dominated by the wealthy parts of Hintonburg, and that it can be a venue for poorer citizens to have their problems addressed.

CTF members are expected to act as a liaison between their 'constituents' and the task force. Because of the mixed forms of representation used on the committee, not everyone can perform this function equally easily. For example, those who represent an unorganized interest, such as businesses unaffiliated with the Business Association, will have more of a challenge in bringing a wider perspective to the meetings. As one community member commented, 'meeting participants do not know how to engage the businesses and how to get the information to them. There is no mechanism to communicate information between the city and business and vice versa'. There is also the concern that intermediary organizations will serve more as gatekeepers of information than true liaisons – effective dissemination of information and opinion gathering is difficult and time consuming work. This is the challenge, for example, facing the representative of newcomers – to use his staff position at a newcomer serving agency to communicate with his grassroots constituency. CTF members do not have fixed terms and there is no formal mechanism to complain about how a particular population is being represented.
Another area of potential tension concerns the role of the elected councillor. The community has been told that its role is to indicate their priorities and preferences to the city, and the role of City Council and staff is ultimately to make the decisions. Yet the local councillor undoubtedly feels that her role is also to communicate the priorities and preferences of her constituency. There is

potential for discrepancy between the two. Adding to this complexity is the fact that the ward councillor is very directly involved with the CTF as a member and is a regular vocal participant at community meetings. This opens the NPI to potential use for political purposes and may make it difficult for the community to identify and pursue its own agenda. It also makes the Councillor politically vulnerable should the NPI outcomes and community preferences not be adopted by City Council. Clearer lines of accountability could have been drawn by making the Councillor an 'ex-officio' member of the CTF, which would make her more of an observer participant. Another alternative would be to send a staff person from her office, so that she stays informed but is not intimately tied to the NPI outcomes. Political support and involvement is critical for public engagement processes, but the question of the appropriate role for elected councillors has to be addressed.

 Finally, representation is of critical concern for those groups whose voices are seldom heard or who might have a unique perspective to consider. In Hintonburg, these groups might include single mothers, low income people, prostitutes, visible minorities, youth, people with disabilities, and the gay community, among others. Early community meetings indicated that community volunteers were aware of the importance of reaching out to these groups and even making special efforts to include them (i.e. multi-lingual or accessible language communications material, child care provided). However, their representation on the CTF is relatively weak. They have also been under-represented at public events and open houses, suggesting that more intentional outreach may have to take place.

One such strategy is to do public engagement in a different way. One author, for example, promotes the idea of 'private participation', which reaches 'women in their own territory, on women's side of the public/private dichotomy, in the shops, schools, and gathering places, rather than in public halls' (Greed, pg. 175). Perhaps significant minority groups need to have their own parallel consultation process that can feed into the overall plan. Another tactic is to use trusted intermediaries to connect disenfranchised groups with the participatory processes, by for example, partnering with youth organizations or grade schools to solicit youth input (Frank 2006, pg. 369). Inclusion can also be included in the mandate of a participatory initiative - such as the Community Development Block Grant in the United States, which requires the input of people of low or moderate incomes and mandates appropriate actions to encourage the participation of minorities, non-English speaking citizens, and people with disabilities (Buss et al., pg. 12). Such a mandate might be included in the NPI as it rolls out to other neighbourhoods of Ottawa – the Hintonburg NPI could try some of the specific strategies mentioned.

The issue of representation is also important in light of the complete NPI study area. While community residents lobbied the City to include Mechanicsville in the NPI exercise, the participation of people from this neighbourhood has been minimal. Mechanicsville is a lower income, primarily Francophone neighbourhood, and might require specific intervention in order to meaningfully participate.

2. Power and Control: Drawing on the literature review, the early NPI could be characterized as "consulting and learning" – a process that seeks the views and opinions of individuals and groups to inform the decision-making process. On Arnstein's ladder of participation, the initiative would be classified as "consultation", or perhaps "partnership" – not because it is a

power sharing exercise, but because the input sought is open-ended. It is clear that the City will still make the final decisions – community members are not yet being asked to participate in budgeting or higher level decision making, such as considering trade-offs or the implications of their preferences. The depth of input received is difficult to gauge, as the NPI process does not yet require consensus. Instead, community members bring their ideas to the table with no idea if they will be used, and the city appears to remain free to pick and choose from the input generated.

The relationship between city staff and community members had a predictably slow start, but has been steadily improving as city officials and community leaders look to forge a good working relationship.   Early community meetings revealed a degree of scepticism about the process and the community's ability to affect the outcomes. At a meeting October 25th, 2006, for example, community members made comments such as 'What is non-negotiable? What is already decided? Don't waste our time!', 'How do you ensure that the plan is respected/implemented?', and 'Why is community consultation always too late?'. These comments occurred in the context of community members trying to assess the parameters of the project and their own individual levels of involvement.

Three specific issues arose as the community and city staff tried to identify and sort out their respective roles. The first concerns the timeline of the project. At first, city staff wanted the NPI to fit into a pre-existing timeline – namely the deadline for detailed design of the main street, which is October 2007. Community members protested this deadline, arguing that it was too rushed, especially if their input was to include social priorities (as opposed to just hard infrastructure). Initially the city insisted that the NPI would need to be wrapped up by the fall deadline. However, the staff modified their position to allow for two tracks – one that would provide input directly relevant to the main street redevelopment by October, and one that would cover the broader themes of the NPI on a longer timeline.

 The second issue concerns the role of the NPI versus other consultative exercises underway in Hintonburg. Community members were concerned that the NPI be "worth" their investment and questioned which process would be binding or take precedence. This relates to the broader question of the enforceability of the neighbourhood plan. While city staff saw the NPI as a mechanism to bring other mandatory consultations together, the relationship between the processes had to be clarified for the community to feel comfortable with it.

 Finally, there was some role ambiguity as the project gained momentum. Initially city staff were clearly "in charge" of the project – calling and chairing meetings, deciding who to invite, etc. Community members wanted a greater say in some of these strategic decisions, yet were reluctant when the city staff tried to hand over responsibility, perhaps hesitant about what demands on their time this would make. With the CTF up and running, the two parties seem to have settled into a pattern whereby the CTF takes the major process decisions and the city staff provide the necessary communications and administrative support. In future projects these responsibilities could be delineated earlier, although much will always depend on the confidence and capacity of the particular local community involved in the NPI.

 One final observation about how power is manifest in the NPI concerns the dominant forms of knowledge and how issues are framed. While the NPI intends to address social and infrastructure issues, planning language and process have tended to dominate the early meetings. At one meeting, for example, social issues, such as the loss of French language culture, concern about the effects of development on taxation, and the maintenance of affordable housing were raised, but could not effectively be inserted into the process. Instead, the process tended to elicit comments on "hard infrastructure", such as building height and design, streetscapes and zoning.

3. Capacity Building: So far, it appears that the City of Ottawa is taking a 'come as you are' approach to personal and community capacity, with some intent to address the need for special outreach to encourage the participation of marginalized groups. The existence of organized local groups was one reason that Hintonburg was chosen as a pilot site, so this may be one reason that a more deliberate capacity building strategy is not in place. The model proposed in the Best Practices book includes long-term capacity building measures such as city support to non-profit organizations for training and leadership or a neighbourhood grant system.

What are the consequences of this approach to capacity building for citizen engagement? While the pre-existing capacity is certainly a strength, the expectations placed on volunteers and officials could easily lead to burnout. Due to the concern over burnout, the community chose a model of organization that involved high demands on time for the CTF, with more flexible involvement of others who might be interested in one particular topic or area. If neighbourhood planning is going to be an on-going process, a strategy for new leadership development and capacity building will be required.

 Secondly, the 'come as you are' approach to capacity building may not be a good fit with the type of input the NPI would like to elicit. For example, rather than provide a series of options for the main street reconstruction to which people could respond, the City asked residents to generate their preferred option. This requires a greater level of expertise and specific knowledge on the part of participants, as well as a greater time commitment. It may also not be the type of role community members envision for themselves - the open ended demand for input seemed to be a cause of anxiety and uncertainty. At one meeting, a local business person made the comment, 'Wouldn't the City have a plan already of what they want? My impression so far is that no one appears to know what they are doing – you are the experts, shouldn't you be telling us what to do!'.

As this comment suggests, the open-ended method of soliciting input does not make full use of city or community expertise; engineers for example, need to be able to contribute their expertise when so many of the issues concern redevelopment and thoroughfares. At a meeting on traffic and parking, for instance, it was a city employee who raised the crucial issue of traffic flow close to the meeting's close. Had all of the considerations been laid out for community members at the start of the meeting, it might well have been more productive. The mechanism for participation should recognize the capacity of community people, but also has to balance this with the expertise, knowledge and experience of city staff.

 The third potential problem with a laissez faire approach to capacity building concerns the accessibility of the exercise.   The CTF and themed meetings may attract knowledgeable

individuals from the community, who can engage with city engineers and others on the more technical aspects of planning and road design. However, how accessible is the NPI to the average resident? NPI information is starting to be disseminated to the wider community – there was an open house on February 24 with posters and city employees to field questions, a website has been set up, and the first NPI newsletter has been printed. The latter tended to emphasise technical planning language however, focusing primarily on the three planning processes underway in the area. Comments from involved community members indicate that they are aware that the workplan model, for instance, might be too technical to engage many citizens, and that communication needs to use plain language. One comment from the community baseline survey proposed teaching people about community planning in general, and using neighbourhood institutions, such as libraries or the resident association, as local catalysts for neighbourhood planning. This comment points to the potential need to equip people first, in order for them to participate, particularly if the municipality is seeking specific technical input rather that broader representation.

The city also needs to develop the 'system capacity' to respond and make use of the input generated by neighbourhood planning. One indicator of the City's willingness to be flexible and respond to community concerns is the new position adopted with regard to the timeline of the NPI. Initially it seemed as though the city was going to be inflexible and exert their power and control over the process in this regard. However, as noted above, staff are willing to be flexible, even though this compromises slightly the collaborative effectiveness of the project – the street redevelopment will go ahead possibly without all of the relevant input necessary to do it 'right' the first time.

This anecdote reflects that perhaps the most important capacity to develop is the ability of the City and community to trust each other and work together. Initial meetings were tense, with community members revealing their scepticism and anxiety about the process. In turn, City employees have at times needed to be defensive in response to criticism and questions. However, the process of building up confidence has gradually unfolded, resulting in a markedly different tone of cooperation and trust at later meetings. It will be interesting to see how this trust is deepened and maintained as the NPI is completed, approved, and implemented.

4. Desirability of Outcomes: While it may be too early to tell if the Hintonburg NPI outcomes are desirable, as they are not yet determined, there are some potential seeds of tension. The first possible area of tension concerns discrepancy between the Hintonburg NPI outcomes and one or more facets of the City of Ottawa's growth management strategy, Ottawa 20/20. As part of the Ottawa 20/20 process, the city created five growth management plans: official plan (focus on land use, community design, transportation and infrastructure planning), human services plan (focus on provision of community services), arts and heritage plan (focus on arts and culture), economic strategy, and environmental strategy. Community design plans are the key mechanism for connecting local plans with Ottawa 20/20. CDPs 'focus on providing solutions that are innovative and attractive while respecting the policies expressed in the Official Plan' (Official Plan, pg. 10).

While it is difficult to predict how the Hintonburg NPI outcomes will compare to city objectives, it is possible to imagine a conflict between the interests of residents of one area, and

the 'public good' or other policy goals which the City of Ottawa intends to pursue. At one meeting, for instance, a resident raised the idea of introducing turning lanes to help traffic move faster. A city planner indicated that this idea was a 'non-starter', because the City is committed to reducing traffic and encouraging the use of public transit. The impact of this public transit policy on the liveability of Hintonburg was not considered, and could lead to potential tension with what the community desires.

A second possible tension in the neighbourhood planning concerns the different needs and interests of community members, and how these are respected and included. There has been some concern that the needs of sex trade workers, for instance, are not directly being considered. Understandably, the dominant frame used by many community members sees prostitution and drug use as social problems to be 'cleaned up' and 'moved out' of their neighbourhood. Potential divisions were raised at an early community meeting, when one person commented "condo owners want people who are marginalized to move out". However, in another meeting, a community member said that she moved to Hintonburg because of its diversity and mix of residents of different socio-economic circumstances and feared gentrification. As mentioned above, it is less likely that a neighbourhood plan will reflect the needs of particular groups if they have no direct input into the process – this means that the lack of diverse representation noted above could also affect outcomes if special measures are not taken.

Finally, the method of community participation which the city has chosen is potentially open to misuse by groups that are motivated to seek their own changes through the process. Organized groups are generally organized for a purpose, and if you invite community participation through these mechanisms, they do so through the lens of that purpose. This has been raised as a concern unfolding in the NPI process particularly in relation to developers and business interests.

5. Horizontal Management: Capacity building also needs to take place among city staff and Councillors. In fact, improved coordination and the ability to work together are explicit goals of the NPI. The baseline survey indicated that city employees thought that horizontal management could be improved, and our observations support this assessment.

Several anecdotes illustrate how new working together across departments was for the City of Ottawa. We have already alluded to an early NPI meeting that brought city staff together for the first time to consider their cumulative interventions in a particular place in the city. This meeting was an occasion for some city employees to meet each other for the first time. Another new area was sorting out respective responsibilities concerning the project – at one early meeting, there was considerable tension between city departments over who should chair the meeting, and which department was responsible for NPI-related costs.

Some improvements have been noted since the project began. The three departments that comprise the Urban Neighbourhood Plan Initiative workgroup have collaborated in other new ways, such as issuing a joint Request for Proposals and joint appointment of project consultants. However, one interviewee stated that, as of November, 'many departments involved in the NPI still see it as an *'add on'* without changing the way they do anything themselves within their own departments'. This dynamic was in part attributed to the difference between securing manager buy-in at higher levels, versus the buy-in of front line staff.

The City of Ottawa could benefit from some of the lessons learned from the literature on horizontal management, especially those pertaining to the importance of a joint accountability framework. If some of the city budget were dispersed through the NPI, for instance, there would be less conflict over who pays for it, and it would be seen as more integral to the work of each participating department. Horizontal management does seem to have support from the top – it may be that time is required for it to trickle down to the staff level. Structural incentives might assist with this process.

At the same time, the literature makes clear that horizontal management incurs costs, such as the transaction costs of coordination. Working with the community is also labour intensive, often requiring employees to be available outside of regular work hours. These costs need to be taken into account when evaluating the City's effort at horizontal management, as well as in consideration of future collaborative efforts.

CONCLUSION

The Hintonburg NPI is still in the early stages of mobilization. Our observations reflect, in part, the growing pains of implementing a new pilot project. The NPI can be considered an ambitious project that appears to be providing considerable scope for the community to shape their social and physical surroundings and is providing a framework around which city departments can collaborate. Possible areas of concern include the representativeness of the project, in particular the low level of participation among marginalized populations and residents of Mechanicsville, the burden placed on City staff and community volunteers, and whether the NPI will successfully address social as well as physical issues. Nevertheless, the growing level of trust between the City and community bodes well as they work together to address the remaining challenges of process and implementation.

However, in raising these issues of potential concern, we feel it is important to keep neighbourhood planning in perspective. In the literature, as in the neighbourhood itself, expectations can often seem unrealistic in terms of representation and democratic governance, for example, and the bar appears to be set far higher for community engagement than it does for the highly centralised and top-down forms of service delivery that most of us accustomed to. While it is possible to criticise community engagement generally, and the NPI specifically, for not devolving power to the point where it can be described as 'citizen control', there is no evidence that citizens in Hintonburg currently demand this degree of influence. Trained incapacity and even false consciousness may play a part in this, but the end result is the same; community engagement encounters significant apathy.

Because of the resources and expertise required, the state will always have a prominent role to play in delivering large infrastructure projects and in our political system governments are ultimately accountable for the social well-being of neighbourhoods, towns and cities. In terms of neighbourhood or place based planning it may be that a more focused and circumscribed form of participation is entirely appropriate and will garner the kind of information needed to improve the physical and social well-being of the neighbourhood. While representation is important, mass participation, especially if it is ill-informed, may make the process unworkable and

counterproductive in the long-term. However, having a representative system does require structure and a framework of accountability. Along with logistical demands the danger is that the process becomes overly bureaucratic with *process* limiting *progress*.

There are sceptics who regard local governance as a hindrance to the 'efficient' functioning of centralized, government-formulated and implemented public policy. Day, for example, argues that citizen participation is the '"Achilles heel of planning": the dilemma is that planning is more successful with citizen engagement but at the same time, procedurally, it cannot afford to be dominated by the participatory process (1997).' Perhaps the key challenge then is to find a balance that accommodates the coexistence of the bureaucratic process, characterized by impartial precise and systematic procedures and the democratic process, characterized by emotion, politics and debate. The pace of the project is therefore crucial and, as the NPI is demonstrating, it is challenging to maintain momentum whilst ensuring space for deliberative participation.
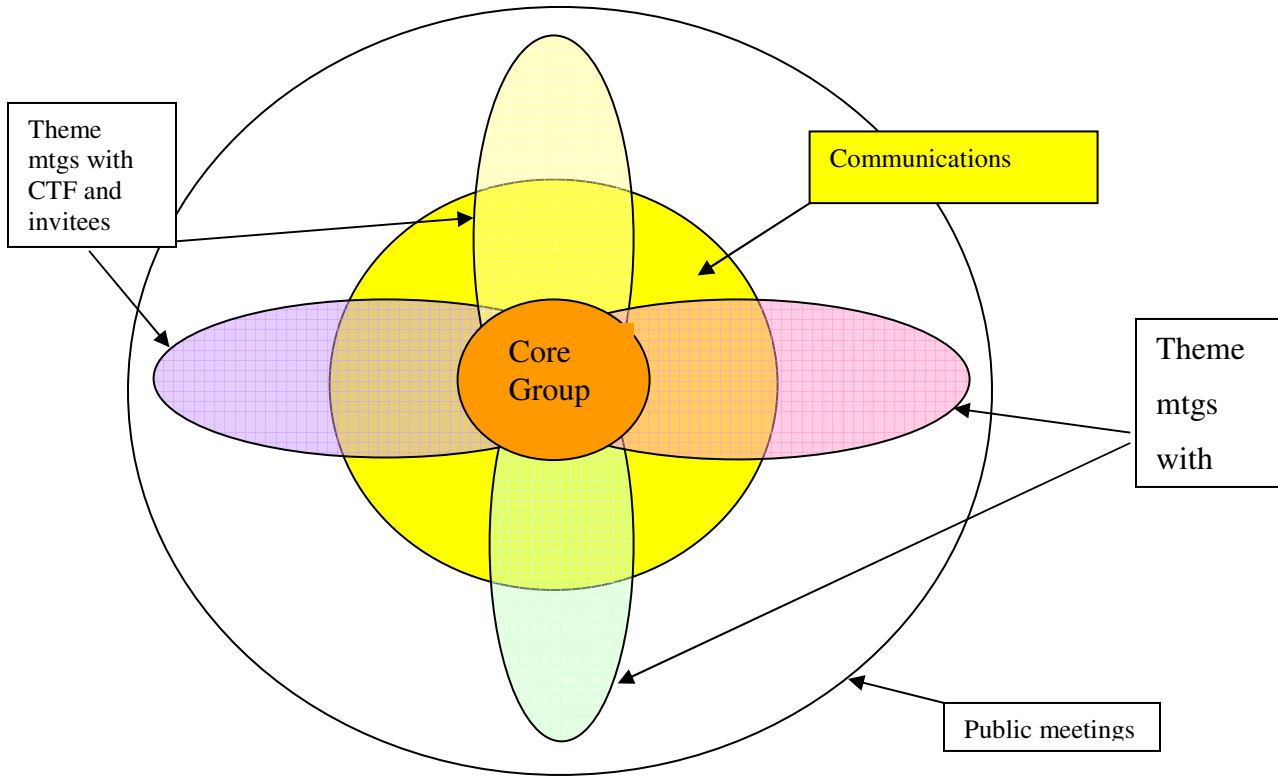
Balancing conflicting goals is fundamental to the process of participative community engagement. Faced with a fundamental contradiction to spend and at the same time control spending (Martlew 1983), governments encounter a series of conflicting goals when engaging the public that gives rise to tensions and in turn requires negotiation and compromise. For example, the municipality has to juggle leading and following, centralising and decentralising, deciding and delegating, controlling and sharing, exclusion and inclusion and so on.

The community is also faced with making choices and compromises about priorities and it will be interesting to see how trade-offs are made once dollar figures are attached to wish-lists and the budget constraints become known. The crucial process of managing expectations has already begun with community representatives being encouraged to think of the priorities that emerge through the NPI as a 'statement of preferences' that can be used to 'negotiate with council over funding and resources'. If the council can obtain a clearer picture of what community preferences are as a result of this process, then it might well produce better outcomes and provide for a more effective use of resources.

In the longer term, there remain outstanding research questions. What is the long-term impact of a process like the NPI – does it lead to a sustained improvement of relations between the City and neighbourhood, or between neighbourhood residents themselves? Which community priorities will take precedence if those determined through the NPI process are not shared by the local councillor? Do the benefits of the process outweigh the costs, especially in terms of the impact on infrastructure planning and community well-being? As additional neighbourhoods in Ottawa undertake neighbourhood planning, how will tensions between them be identified and managed? And finally, will the City itself sustain interest in neighbourhood planning, or is this merely a period of popularity that will fade into obscurity, like others before it?

Appendix 1: Urban NPI Model –

The Role of the Central Task Force (CTF)

Theme mtgs with CTF and invitees

Communications

Core Group

Theme mtgs with

Public meetings

Source: NPI correspondence 18th November 2007

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