

**"The Role of Public Participation in Urban Planning:  
A Theoretical Inquiry into the Decline of Citizenship"**

BY

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A Thesis  
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of City Planning

Department of City Planning  
Faculty of Architecture  
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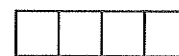
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THE ROLE OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN URBAN PLANNING:  
A THEORETICAL INQUIRY INTO THE DECLINE OF CITIZENSHIP

BY

RANDALL W. HUMBLE

A Thesis/Practicum submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of the University of Manitoba in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF CITY PLANNING

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### **Abstract**

One of the greatest challenges in the planning profession today is the promotion of more meaningful public input in the formation and design of various municipal and community plans. Presently, almost all planning documents (Winnipeg's *CentrePlan*, Vancouver's *CityPlan*, and Kamloop's *Planning Our Future*) make some reference to the need for meaningful public involvement and why it is critical to the success of their plan. It appears that planners, for the first time, have turned to more meaningful democratic principles, yet are shocked and dismayed to find that the majority of citizens now refuse to take part in this process and, instead, have abdicated their once inherent decision-making capabilities to the so-called knowledgeable professionals. The reasons for this abdication of responsibility on the part of citizens, I argue, are two-fold.

First, within the last twenty or so years, there has been a profound shift in western culture - a shift toward individualism. Ours has become a civic ideology centered around a strong belief in the good life - that being the life of affluence, personal pleasures, and material security. Murray Bookchin argues that, as a result, many of the traditional, cultural, ethical, and ecological features that once endeared citizens to their city and community have dissolved (Bookchin 1987).

The second, and perhaps most profound cause in the decline of citizenship and thus public participation is the rise of an adversarial struggle between so-called experts and citizens. This, over time, has resulted in a kind of expert-public gap where bewildered citizens have become intimidated into silence by a profession dominated by rational thought.

The purpose of this thesis is threefold: 1] to engage in a theoretical inquiry into the possible reasons for what I believe to be a decline in citizenship and thus a lack of willingness on the part of the public to participate; 2] to analyze the role that the planning profession, in particular, has played with respect to participation throughout its brief history and up to the present, and; 3] to look to the future of urban planning and public participation and, in doing so, develop possible strategies for encouraging better *Public Judgment* among citizens.

Ultimately, this thesis is about citizenship - why it has disappeared, and how to get it back. It seeks to examine the tensions between various forces that work toward the demise of citizenship and the possibilities for a dynamic process of citizenship reconstruction.

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## Chapter One:

### **INTRODUCTION**

The man who is isolated, who is unable to share in the benefits of political association, or has no need to share because he is already self-sufficient, is not part of the *polis*, and therefore must be either a beast or a god. (Aristotle).

Throughout the history of Western civilization, one of the most persistent themes in political thought and discourse has been how to create a community in which all citizens participate fully in the important decisions that may affect their lives. Such concepts of liberty and democracy and the degrees to which they are truly desirable have been the focus of debate by various intellectuals throughout history, including Aristotle, Alexis de Toqueville, Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Hannnah Arendt. Their's was the dream of self-governance, of free people shaping their destiny together as equals. This thesis is a snapshot in time - a brief glimpse of where this dream presently stands within society and its effect on the profession of urban planning.

#### **1.1. Why This Thesis?:**

When I first undertook the task of writing a thesis involving the concept of public participation in planning, my initial inclination was to examine, what appeared to me, to be a recent trend toward more extensive participatory practices in various planning exercises. Indeed, what drew me to this subject matter was my internship placement at the City of Winnipeg Planning Department, working on *CentrePlan* (a downtown plan for the City of Winnipeg) in the last year of my Master's degree. Upon further researching this subject, however, I became increasingly conscious that the kind of meaningful public participation planners were now seeking was, for some reason, not being realized. The evidence was the number of citizens actually involved in the

various processes. For example, Winnipeg's *CentrePlan* was heralded as a public participation success story, a plan supposedly created by the public for the public, yet in reality, significantly less than one percent of Winnipeg's citizens were involved (if even remotely) in this process. From being actively involved in *CentrePlan* I knew that planners were making a conscious effort to include the views of as many citizens as possible throughout their process, and yet, very few citizens took advantage of this unique opportunity. Why was this so? Could it possibly be that the public just didn't care to participate, and thus simply a case of mass apathy? While this appeared to be the most obvious answer, it also seemed far too simplistic. If citizens were indeed apathetic, the critical question would be - why? Why have citizens seemingly lost the willingness to become involved in the important issues that would ultimately affect their lives? This question was to become the focus of my thesis.

### **1.2 Objectives of Thesis:**

The purpose of this thesis is threefold: First, to engage in a theoretical inquiry into the possible reasons for what I believe to be a decline in citizenship and lack of willingness, on the part of the public, to participate. I will present a theory that illustrates how a combination in the rise of individualism supported by the public's dependency on experts have led to this decline.

Secondly, I will analyze the role that the planning profession, in particular, has played with respect to participation, throughout its history. In doing so, I will examine the present state of public participation within the planning process. I also hope to challenge the entrenched myth of an "apathetic public" as the sole reason for the limited success of the participatory movement.

Finally, this thesis will look to the future of citizenship and public participation and their relationship with the planning profession. In doing so, it will attempt to

address the following questions: Will it ever be possible to have effective and meaningful public participation, on a large scale, in the formation of municipal plans? If so, how will this be realized? What role will planners play in this realization and what onus, if any, must be placed on the citizenry?

### ***1.3 Summary of Argument:***

While the following thesis is meant to focus as sharply as possible on urban planning and thus hopefully be of interest to planners and planning students interested in fostering more meaningful public participation in the planning process, my ultimate aim is that it might provoke interest among other professionals and citizens alike. The subject matter of this thesis is crucial to all of society, because it concerns a human crisis so deep-seated we are hardly aware of its existence, much less its grave impact on democracy. I am referring to the erosion of the city as an authentic arena of political life and the erosion of the very notion of citizenship.

The causes of this crisis, I argue, are two-fold. First, within the last twenty or so years, there has been a profound shift in western culture - a shift toward individualism (Bellah 1985 ,1991; Bookchin 1987; Harvey 1989; Saul 1993, 1996). Ours has become a civic ideology centered around a strong belief in the good life - that being the life of affluence, the life of personal pleasures, and the life of material security. Many of the traditional cultural, ethical, and ecological features that once endeared citizens to their city and community have dissolved. Presently, the city is the first fund into which we make a series of social investments for the express purpose of receiving a number of distinctly material returns. We expect our persons and property to be protected, our shelters to be safeguarded, our garbage to be removed, our roads to be repaired, and our environment to be physically and socially tidy. Like any marketplace, the modern city is the hectic center of a largely privatized interaction

between anonymous buyers and sellers who are more involved in exchanging their wares than in forming socially and ethically meaningful associations. It is not surprising then, that citizens today are typically measured more by their economic progress and ability to consume than by any form of civic or social responsibility.

The second, and perhaps most profound, cause in the decline of citizenship is the rise of an adversarial struggle between experts and citizens (Illich 1977; Lasch 1995; McKnight 1995). On one side are the experts - smaller in number and weaker than the public in formal power but holding an indispensable piece of the solution. As a group, these experts may respect the institution of democracy, but are a little unsure of its significance. Unfortunately, their view of the general public is that it is ill informed and ill equipped to deal with the problems to which they, the experts, have devoted their lives. They dismiss the views of citizens who do not command their factual mastery of the subject and their technical jargon. Often without realizing it, they impose their personal values on the citizenry because they fail to distinguish their own value judgments from their technical expertise. This has resulted in a kind of expert-public gap, where, on the other side, bewildered citizens have abdicated their own decision-making powers and capabilities to the only ones they feel can make responsible and ultimately correct decisions - the knowledgeable professionals.

We thus encounter a modern society in which the power of experts preempts concerns that were once largely within the purview of the citizen and the community. Within this paralyzing force-field, personal power and the average citizen's capacity for action has suffered a crucial decline. Self-recognition has dissolved steadily into a grim lack of selfhood. Inaction has suppressed action with the debilitating result that citizens have retreated into an inwardness that lacks the substance to enable them to meaningfully participate in the decisions and issues that will affect their lives.

#### **1.4 Outline of Thesis:**

Following this introductory chapter, the second chapter, **The Rise of the Culture of Technocracy**, will explore how society has come to be so dominated by expert knowledge. It will briefly examine the history of the expert by focusing on several key individuals whose ideas and writings contributed significantly to the notion that only the "knowledgeable elite" of society have the technical ability and intellectual capacity to make the important decisions on the citizen's behalf. The main protagonists of this philosophy, Claude-Saint Simon and Auguste Comte, believed that experts should play a dominant role in public life because they are presumed to have the knowledge and expertise that ordinary citizens lack.

This chapter concludes that the quest for objective and technical knowledge has culminated in the high prestige now accorded to professionals.

This gives way to chapter three, **Domination By Professionals**, which examines the role professionals play in modern society and how their actions, both intentionally and unintentionally, work to suppress citizenship. Here the views of intellectuals such as Ivan Illich, John McKnight, and Christopher Lasch are presented in order to illuminate the debilitating effect that many professions, working in the "the guise of care" have on the citizens they are attempting to help. The conclusion of this chapter gives a brief glimpse into the mind of Michel Foucault and his perspective on power and domination.

Chapter four, **The Road to Individualism**, provides a broader perspective of the other major inhibitor of citizenship and thus public participation - that of individualism. It is indispensable to my thesis because it offers a synthesis of two very different literatures - that regarding expertise and citizenship and that of the political economy as it relates to individualism. In doing so, it underscores the fact that there are other, much larger, institutional forces at work, ever present, effectively and

efficiently chipping away at the political will and public consciousness of society.

The inspirational and theoretical fodder for this chapter were gleaned largely from the writings of David Harvey who argues that as a result of recent changes in various political-economic practices, a transformation in the extent to which western society consumes goods and services took place in the mid 1970s. From this, I conclude, ours has become a culture now dominated by a much higher degree of individualism. As society leans increasingly toward self-gratification, they in turn, remove themselves farther and farther away from any form of social responsibility.

The goal of chapter five, ***The Planning Profession***, is to narrow the focus of inquiry, in order to examine how a single profession might influence citizenship and public participation. In doing so, I explore the relatively short history of urban planning, the various contextual models that it has employed and what I believe to be its recent orientation toward public participation.

Finally, the last chapter, ***The Future of Citizenship, Participation, and Urban Planning***, provides a positive conclusion to this thesis. It argues that one of the keys to enhancing citizenship and ultimately public participation within the planning process is to create a new balance between the citizen and expert. Today the relationship is badly skewed toward experts at the expense of the public. This out-of-balance condition is not the result of a power struggle (though this is not wholly absent) but of a deep-rooted cultural trend that elevates the specialized knowledge of the expert to a place of high honor while denigrating the value of the public's potentially most important contribution - a high level of thoughtful and responsible public participation. This prejudice is rooted in our dominant culture of technocracy, which on its positive side has made science, the benefits of modern technology, political freedom, and democracy possible. Yet, even with these impressive accomplishments, a serious difficulty exists. Our culture of technocracy saps the

citizens' will to confront the other obstacles standing in the way of meaningful public participation. For a participatory democracy to flourish, it is not enough to have the political will to desire public participation. We need better public opinion (i.e. quality participation), and we need to know how to cultivate it. The public is not magically endowed with good participatory skills. It is something that must be worked at all the time and with great skill and effort. It does not exist automatically; it must be created and fostered.

Ultimately, this thesis is about an alternative notion of citizenship, why it has disappeared, and how to get it back. Citizenship can either be narrowly defined in terms of rights or more broadly defined in terms of responsibilities: the latter is the right of a free and equal individual to pursue his/her interests free from political impediment; while the former is the obligation to undertake an active commitment to work toward a common good. This thesis is particularly concerned with the former definition. It seeks to examine the tensions between the various forces that work toward the demise of citizenship and the possibilities for a dynamic process of citizenship reconstruction. Our ability to realize this lies in our ability to use our inherent political consciousness and to move to some sort of equilibrium with the experts. Both the public and professionals, together, must come to a mutual understanding that the true characteristic of consciousness is not simply technical knowledge, but a balanced use of good judgement and a desire for positive change.

## Chapter Two:

### ***THE RISE OF THE CULTURE OF TECHNOCRACY***

#### ***2.1 Introduction:***

It would be difficult to argue with the supposition that we live in an "age of expertise." Expert knowledge is indeed one of the most distinctive features of modern society; for it is tightly woven into the very fabric of our contemporary existence. The professionals, that is the skilled and learned experts who apply their knowledge to the affairs and in the service of others, are traditionally held in high esteem. Yet recognition of this fact scarcely illustrates the full impact of the deeper phenomenon that it reflects. In the past fifty years or so, the professions have gained a supreme ascendancy over our social aspirations and behavior by tightly organizing and institutionalizing themselves in our lives and communities. At the same time, society has become a virtually passive clientele: dependent, cajoled and dominated, we have become physically and mentally damaged by the very agents whose *raison d'être* it is to help. Our reliance on experts, and their claim to supreme knowledge and truth, has greatly contributed to the decline of citizenship and community and has given rise to its very antithesis - that of the modern individual.

The following chapter will attempt to elucidate how technocracy and expertise in the various professions have come to dominate almost every facet of western culture (what I have come to term our culture of technocracy). I will illustrate the means by which "expert knowledge" and technocratic practices throughout history have become key political resources in the decision-making process, to the ways in which they have taken over our communities and replaced the citizen or community as "care-provider" for that of the expert. These various forms of expertise have, in turn, created over time

a "culture of passivity" in western society, in which the pivotal roles of public opinion and citizen participation are seen as artifacts of a much earlier time.

## ***2.2 The Basic Concepts:***

Technocracy, in classical political terms, refers to a system of governance in which technically trained experts rule by virtue of their specialized knowledge and position in dominant political, economic, and social institutions (Fischer 1990; Yankelovich 1991). Dating back at least to the seventeenth century when the ideas of Henri Saint-Simon and Auguste Comte were first being established, the concept of a knowledge elite has continued to gain political and social significance, culminating in the supreme status that they now hold in the twentieth century. This rise, in what I term the culture of technocracy, will be briefly outlined in this chapter.

While numerous theories have stressed various aspects of this phenomenon, there has been a remarkable consensus as to what constitutes the basic elements of technocracy. The main agreement is on the use of "technical expertise". Although in conventional usage, technical expertise can denote a wide range of specialized skills (from brain surgery to automobile mechanics), in the theory of technocracy it refers primarily to trained expertise in the "applied sciences", particularly engineering, applied mathematics and computer sciences. Within these disciplines, expertise pertains especially to knowledge and skills that further the development of modern "decision technologies" (Fischer 1990, 17).

But technocracy is more than expertise per se. Expertise can be organized to serve a variety of social functions and interests as well. Technocracy, in this respect, refers to the adaption of expertise to the tasks of governance and social welfare. It gives rise to a theory of decision making designed to promote technical solutions to political and social problems. The theory, in turn, supports a political project that

advocates experts as the dominant basis for organizing political and social power. Technocracy, in short, pertains to the use of experts and their technical knowledge in the pursuit of political power (Fischer 1990, 18).

The historical coherence that defines technocratic thought is a deep-seated animosity toward politics and the decision-making capabilities of the average person - coupled with an intense commitment to scientific decision making. It was John Dewey who was first to suggest that the paramount assumption dominating our culture is Cartesian: that there exists a knowable independent ground - an incorrigible first premise or "antecedent immutable reality" - from which the concepts, values, standards, and ends of political life can be derived by simple deduction. Dewey felt that man's "quest for certainty," rooted in "man's distrust of himself," produced a "desire to get beyond and above himself" through the "transcendence of pure knowledge." (Dewey 1960, 6-7). He also suggested that the obsession of social-science empiricists with methodology has, by contrast, led them to place epistemology before ontology. In an attempt to mimic the hard sciences, of which they rarely have a true understanding, these social scientists have tried to subordinate every understanding of reality to some orthodox understanding.

Arguing in a similar vein, Deborah Stone states that the common mission of this "rationality project" was to rescue "public policy from the irrationalities and indignities of politics, hoping to conduct it instead with rational, analytical and scientific methods." (Stone 1988, 4). Moreover, social philosopher, Robert Putnam has derived from the technocratic literature six fundamental tenets, basic to this ideology and the "mentality" it shapes. They are as follows:

- Technocrats believe "that 'technics' must replace 'politics'" and define their own tasks in "apolitical" terms.

- Technocrats are "skeptical and even hostile toward politicians and political institutions."
- Technocrats are "fundamentally unsympathetic to the openness and equality of political democracy."
- Technocrats believe that social and political conflict is, at best, judged to be "misguided, and at worst, contrived."
- Technocrats "reject ideological or moralistic criteria, preferring to debate policy in practical, 'programmatic terms.'"
- Technocrats are "strongly committed to technological progress and material productivity" and are "less concerned about the distribution questions of social justice." From Saint-Simon forward, politics is seen as a process that "can and ought to be reduced to a matter of technique, that is ... political decisions should be made on the basis of technical knowledge, not the parochial interests of untutored values." (Putnam 1977, 385-387).

Thus, for the technocrats, the solution has been to replace the "irrational" decision processes of democratic politics (particularly public participation) with "rational" empirical/analytical methodologies of scientific decision-making. To be blunt, technocrats have seen politics as a problem rather than a solution. It is important to note that politics in this sense is defined in its original Aristotelian context - which is much more far-reaching in its connection with civic commonality and responsibility than with the modern definition which, understandably, has acquired a somewhat odious reputation. Presently, politics denotes techniques for the unsavory end of exercising power over human beings.

It is common to visualize technologies as material objects, particularly as machines. Such a conception, however, fails to grasp the full significance and reality of modern technology. In the broadest sense, the term today refers to the totality of rational methods designed to efficiently organize human activities in general - both material and social activities. The word technology now properly refers to a

“systematic, disciplined approach to objective decision making” (Fischer 1990, 22). It incorporates the use of a concept of system to measure and order the means to specific ends.

It is important to note that the realm of technocracy is rooted much more in a way of thinking than in a specific set of political activities. This mode of thought, or “technocratic consciousness,” rests on a common belief system about how the world works, a conception of the way it should work, and a set of procedures for altering it. As Anthony Giddens states, “Technocracy is not just the application of technical modes to the solution of defined problems, but a pervading ethos, a world-view which subsumes aesthetics, religion, and accustomary thought to the rationalistic mode.” (Giddons 1973, 258). Thus, considering how ubiquitously the culture of technocracy has subsumed society, it is indeed understandable to see why the public might look upon with such reverence those they perceive to hold the reigns of technocracy.

For us to embark any further on an examination of how professionalism and expertise have come to dominate our lives and communities, it is important to have at least some understanding of where and how this “world-view” initially gained its powerful ascendancy. In order to do so, the next section will take a brief look backwards, to the Enlightenment period, when expertise and the mechanisms of power through rational knowledge and positivism were first established.

### ***2.3 The Origin of the Expert:***

The people's trust in their new intellectual leadership is, by its very nature totally different from that which they once placed in their theological leaders. Trust in the opinions of experts has a completely different character. The fear that there will be one day established a despotism based on science is a ridiculous and absurd fantasy...such a thing could only arise in minds wholly alien to the positivist idea.

- CLAUDE HENRI SAINT-SIMON

A comfortable, smooth, reasonable, democratic unfreedom prevails in advanced industrial society, a token of technical progress.... . The

technological society is a system of domination which operates already in the concepts and constructs of techniques... . In the medium of technology, culture, politics, and the economy merge into an omnipresent system which swallows up or repulses all alternatives... Technological rationality has become political rationality.

- HERBERT MARCUSE

This section will outline the basic themes in the history of the expert and technocratic theory. It will focus in particular on the European origins of technocratic thought, when the most persistent technocratic conviction, the idea that science is superior to politics, first arose. It will seek to illustrate and clarify the basic ideological dimensions of the idea, especially the ways in which it dominated social forces at the time, and paved the way for future dominance.

Perhaps no social theorist has contributed more to our understanding of the rise and evolution of technical rationality than the German sociologist Max Weber. Weber identified the critical force in the rise of technical rationality and the modern technocratic world view as the appearance in western culture of a specific form of knowledge, scientific reason, and "instrumental rationality." He argued that between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, scientific and technical reason were institutionalized as the dominant forces of society as a whole. In Weber's view, this instituted the "intellectualization" or "rationalization" of the world (Marcuse 1968, 204; Chorney 1992, 86-96).

The notion of technocracy can arguably be traced back to Francis Bacon in the seventeenth century. For Bacon, the defining feature of history was to be the rise and growth of science and technology. Bacon envisioned and sought a technical elite who would rule in the name of efficiency and technical order. Indeed, Bacon's purpose in *The New Atlantis* (1622) was an explicit attempt to replace the philosopher with the research scientist as the ruler of the utopian future. His fictional city, New Atlantis, was a pure technocratic society. It was to be replete with research institutions aimed at

advancing technological progress and scientific rationality was located at the very core of the community. Its research institutions were described as "the very eye of the kingdom." (Weinberger 1980).

Beyond Bacon, the concept of a technocracy continued to grow with the rise of the newly emerging industrial order. Specifically, it was elaborated as the ideology of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment theorists seeking to explain and legitimate the coming of industrial society. Enlightenment thinkers - in large part publicists, economists, politician theorists, and social reformers - derived their principles from their intellectual predecessors of the two preceding centuries, particularly the empiricists such as Newton, Locke, and Descartes. Fundamentally, they believed that human reason could free human-kind from the errors and mistakes of the past and instead lead to perpetual peace, harmony, and perfect government (Saul 1993, 105). Perhaps no other writings, however, were to have more influence on the establishment of technocratic thinking in modern institutions, than those of Henri Saint-Simon and Auguste Comte. It is to the ideas of these two individuals we now turn.

#### ***2.4 Henre Saint-Simon & Auguste Comte:***

It is difficult to convey adequately the full impact of Saint-Simon's contribution to the technocratic project. He was one of the most popular utopian thinkers of the nineteenth century, attracting followers throughout the Western world. One reason for his influence was surely the fact his work incorporated a number of diverse theoretical implications. E.H. Carr has captured this point by describing him as "the precursor of socialism, the precursor of the technocrats, and the precursor of totalitarianism." (Carr, 2, 1985). Friedmann goes so far as to suggest that Saint-Simon "should rightfully be regarded as the father of scientific planning." (Friedmann, 51, 1987).

Saint-Simon's utopian vision was a response to the social crisis erupting in the wake of the industrial and political revolutions in France. Fundamentally, his writings represented an attempt to spell out a new European social order. Howard Segal has outlined the main themes of his vision: Science and technology were "to solve major social as well as technical problems"; technical experts would be needed "to run society"; the "unenlightened masses" would have to be controlled "in order to effect these changes"; there would be a need to establish a new European hierarchy "based not on social origins" but on "natural talent and society's requirements"; and a "need to abandon mass democracy and, in turn, politics" (Segal 1981, 62-63).

For Saint-Simon, the political, intellectual, and cultural unity that had once defined Europe had collapsed under the assault of various movements. Numerous competing forces - religion, capitalism, and nationalism among them - had combined to unravel the foundations of the old established culture. In his view, a new unity based upon an all-encompassing ideology had to be developed. Only a belief in science and technology could replace the divisive ideologies prevalent at the time, particularly those of the church. Essentially, priests and politicians - the old rulers of Europe - had to be replaced by scientists and technicians (Segal 1981, 47).

True progress, according to Saint-Simon, was only to be found in a society free of competing political interests. This was to be achieved through the introduction of a new system of "expert management" in industry and government. The new state, in fact, was called the "Administrative State." Initially, Saint-Simon argued that governance to the new system was to be carried out by scientists and technicians. In his later writings he modified this position by a call for a collusion of scientists and technicians, industrial managers, and philosophers and artists to head the dominant institutions (Friedmann 1987, 67).

No other topic was more important to Saint-Simon than the organization of

these governing institutions. Even though science in all its forms held a privileged position in his belief, he proclaimed one science to transcend all others, namely the "science of organization." The essence of his approach to organization was a system of bureaucratic power directed by a hierarchy of experts. Appealing to the common interest of all, he counseled the working classes to accept authority from the top of the organization in proportion to the expert's enlightenment. Knowledge was stressed as the prerequisite for upward mobility in the organizational hierarchy, although individuals could only be invited to join the technocratic elites by those groups themselves. It was an ideal clearly popular among newly emerging professional groups. (Fischer 1990, 70).

Saint-Simon's principle disciple was Auguste Comte who was taken on by Saint-Simon in 1818 to be his secretary and "intellectual son" (Friedmann 1987, 69). Comte, however, was much more pragmatic and much less the romantic compared to Saint-Simon. In his famous *Course of Positive Philosophy*, Comte set out his principles of "positive knowledge," which Saint-Simon himself had failed to develop. In the six volumes of this study Comte emphasized that real knowledge (defined as empirical knowledge) is obtainable only by the use of the "positivist method." He firmly believed that human freedom could only be established through the submission to "natural, scientifically established laws" (Friedmann 1987, 70).

Two things that are especially noteworthy with respect to Comte, are: a) that he was firmly convinced that there is a rigid functional division of labor between expert - professional on the one hand and practical administrators on the other; and b) politics should be reduced to an inconsequential role. As Friedmann states, "For Comte, science can generate knowledge not only about what is, but also about what ought to be. As a vocation, it is beyond the reach of the masses; it is a hieratic discourse among initiates bathed in the shadowless light of Olympian skies." (Friedmann 1987,

71).

Perhaps the only person who could better sum it up would be Comte himself:

There can be no doubt that man's study of nature must furnish the only basis of his actions upon nature; for it is only by knowing the laws of phenomena and thus being able to foresee them, that we can, in active life, set them to modify one another to our advantage.... The relation of science to art may be summed up in a brief expression: from science comes prevision; from prevision comes action (Quoted in Lenzer 1975, 88).

## **2.5 Conclusion:**

What this section has hoped to give is a backward glance to the origins of an "ideology" that has chiefly replaced traditional politics and community in contemporary society. This look to the past is what Benjamin Barber calls an "inertial frame of reference." (Barber 1984). These inertial frames are uniquely important, for they can be understood to embody in summary fashion all of the pretheoretical givens of a particular paradigm. As Barber puts it, "An inertial frame is a frame of reference against which a theory's development can be charted, a starting point from which a theorist launches his arguments and to which he can safely return when a given philosophical voyage of discovery fails or is aborted. It is a kind of conceptual grid by whose fixed and permanent coordinates both the location and the velocity of every idea in a theory can be measured" (Barber 1984, 27).

Having established an inertial frame, what I will show in the next section, is how the ideas and beliefs of Saint-Simon, Auguste Comte, and the other technocratic reformers have reached their ultimate realization in the major institutions of modern society, namely those involving the so-called helping professions. While having come to dominate those professions related to the governance of society (ie., management, policy analysis, administration, etc.), they have also played a significant dominating

role through the adoption of what have traditionally been characterized as the social service professions (ie., health care, social work, education, etc.). In doing so, they have replaced roles once occupied by the citizens of a particular community. For their part, the citizens have been relegated to the position of mere service consumers. Having relinquished much of their own decision-making capabilities, they are now willing to accept the words of experts as unchallengeable truths.

**Chapter Three:**  
**DOMINATION BY PROFESSIONALS**

**3.1 Introduction:**

Canadian philosopher John Ralston Saul says that, "never have so few people been willing to speak out on important questions. Their fear is tied not to physical threats, but to standing apart from fellow experts or risking a career or entering an area of non expertise" (Saul 1993, 29). Indeed, experts continue to claim sole proprietorship of truth and knowledge in our society, just as Saint-Simon and Comte, in the eighteenth century, believed they should. Now, however, the concept of professional expertise has become such an insipid and dominating force throughout our culture, it has literally destroyed people's ability to fend for themselves and each other. We have entered into what Ivan Illich describes as the *Age of Professions*. For him this age will be remembered as,

the time when politics withered, when voters, guided by professors, entrusted to technocrats the power to legislate needs, renounced the authority to decide who needs what and suffered monopolistic oligarchies to determine the means by which these needs shall be met. It will be remembered as the age of schooling, when people for one-third of their lives had their learning needs prescribed and were trained how to accumulate further needs, and of the other two-thirds became clients of prestigious pushers who managed their habits. It will be remembered as the age when recreational travel meant a packaged gawk at strangers, and intimacy meant following sexual rules laid down by Masters and Johnson and their kin; when formed opinion was a replay of last night's TV talk-show, and voting the approval of persuaders and salesman for more of the same (Illich 1977, 13).

What is so perverse and vexing about this "age of professions", is that the public's unwavering belief in them has not faltered even though they have outright failed to deliver on their most basic promises of material sufficiency, social equity, and democratic rights. Most importantly, however, (and this is the central argument of this

thesis) they have severed the bonds necessary for any possibility of meaningful public involvement and in doing so have created an expert-public gap.

The purpose of this section is to explore how the "expert", in his/her various forms (ie., professions), has come to dominate the public's reality of what constitutes truth, knowledge and power in contemporary society. The "experts" have fostered a culture of dependency in which many individuals and community groups look to them to make the "correct decisions" for themselves and the public good. I will illustrate how the professionals in the social and scientific disciplines have significantly contributed to the decline of citizenship, which in turn has made the possibility for public participation on a mass scale an illusory project for contemporary planners. Thus, first we will take a broader approach by examining professions in general. Specifically, we will look to those which one could characterize as the "helping professions." I will demonstrate how their proliferation in contemporary society has come to dominate community. In using the term domination, I am referring to the power that one social agent (professions) has over another (community).

### ***3.2 In The Guise of "Care":***

Arguably, one of the most powerful developments transforming society since World War II has been the enormous growth of the service economy. Specifically, those services that purport to aid society in some social capacity. The professions that I am referring to are those involved in health care, social work, education, psychology, architecture and planning. Of course, these represent just a small portion of the burgeoning field of service providers that have invaded our communities. While very few of these jobs can actually be considered an expert-related profession, this overwhelming transformation toward service occupations means that increasingly experts will look to the public to create their so-called niche. In the United States in

1900, approximately 10 percent of the paid work force "produced" services. Daniel Bell's projections suggest that by the year 2000, the service work force will represent 90 percent of the employed (Bell 1976, 55). That means in just one century, we will have changed from a society where 90 percent of the people produced goods to a society where 90 percent of the people produce services. Canadian employment statistics show that Bell's projections were not far off. In 1995, 2 out of every 3 jobs in Canada were involved in the service industry as opposed to producing goods (Statistics Canada, 1995). What possible reason could there be for this transformation?

A very recent examination of the rise of service-producing institutions was completed by John McKnight in his book, *The Careless Society: Community and its Counterfeits*. In it, he points out that the service sector and its "pervasive serving institutions" have commodified the care of the community by the service sector, thereby replacing a role once occupied by the citizen and community (McKnight 1995, X). Therefore, the development of a work force of expert service providers has become an economic keystone of our highly educated and technologized society. As McKnight points out, however, in order to provide jobs for all of these service providers there must be a societal need. As a consequence, more and more conditions of human beings are being converted into problems or deficiencies in order to provide jobs for people who are forced to derive their income by purporting to deliver an essential service (McKnight 1995, 29). He gives two examples of recently formed professions that illustrate this phenomenon.

At least one major university in the United States is now training graduates to meet the needs of people with so-called "bereavement deficits" by providing a master's degree in Bereavement Counseling (MBC). The practitioners of this developing profession have organized a professional association whose first objective

is to lobby for clauses in public and private life insurance policies that would guarantee their services for the kin of the diseased. The second group of recent professionals are tentatively called "recluse managers." Their services include identifying recluses, maintaining inconspicuous surveillance, and, at the proper moment prescribed by strict professional standards, intervene in the life of the recluse (McKnight 1995, 23).

While one may argue that these two professions are not at all questionable in that they provide an important service to individuals in need, they do, however, illustrate how the role of community has been replaced by the expert. When a member of a family and community passes away, the process of healing is now no longer aided by kin and community, rather it is facilitated by a so-called expert in the field - the Bereavement Counselor. These newly established professions elucidate an extremely frightening phenomenon of contemporary society - the commodification of people. Or should I say, the commodification of "people in need" or "people with deficiencies." Perhaps this is the main distinction between social reformers of the past and the professionals involved in the social services of today. Where followers of Saint-Simon and Comte earnestly believed experts could improve the public good if they took the decision-making power away from citizens, contemporary experts feel that it is essential to take the decision-making capacities away from the public in order to legitimate and provide stability for their profession.

Even if the professionals were acting out of purely philanthropic concern, one must, as Christopher Lasch points out, be aware of the consequences. He argues that the "ideology of compassion," however agreeable to our ears, is one of the principal influences, in its own right, on the subversion of civic life, which depends not so much on compassion as on mutual respect. He states, "A misused compassion degrades both the victims, who are reduced to objects of pity, and their would-be

benefactors, who find it easier to pity their fellow citizens than to hold them up to impersonal standards, attainment of which would entitle them to respect." (Lasch 1995, 105).

Ironically, the most rapidly growing service professions are those involving "caring" or "helping" (McKnight 1995, 27). McKnight suggests that the main "beneficiaries" of these professionals are the elderly and children. These two sectors of society, he argues, have become the "raw material" for an economy based primarily on the production of the so-called helping services. They are the people in society who are considered most deficient, and thus the most in need.

As a result, more and more conditions of human beings are being converted into problems in order to provide jobs for people who are forced to derive their income by purporting to deliver a service (McKnight 1995, 29). This would probably be the case in Canada as well, where scientists, engineers and technologists in the natural sciences have the lowest rate of unemployment (5%), and workers in the social sciences (social workers, health care workers, teachers, etc.) have the highest rate of unemployment (9%) (Statistics Canada, 1990). Interestingly a study of problems in the area of the provision of social services in Metropolitan Toronto undertaken by the Social Planning Council in the late 1970s, illustrates the kinds of problems that have arisen due to the rise of social services and decline of community. According to the report, increasing numbers of suburban residents in Metropolitan Toronto have become dependent upon the urban services, rather than their family or community, for a sense of "identity, attachment, reciprocity and care." (Social Planning Council of Metropolitan Toronto, 1980). Similar kinds of problems are diagnosed for single-parent families and recent immigrants. The report concludes that because of the disintegration of "public forms of community life" and the "resulting fewer opportunities for social integration," increased programs, consisting of outreach services, crisis

support, job creation, financially accessible recreation services, and other support services are required (ibid., 228-232).

The Social Planning Council's report speaks directly to the argument I am advancing. What the demands of the report are calling for amounts to a state-sponsored artificial community run by professionals brimming-over with expert advice.

While some may say that McKnight (and this thesis) is providing philosophical justification for those in western society who advocate the slashing of government financing for social services, he does raise some ethical questions with respect to the *raison d'être* of various professions. As such a critical question would be: On whose *need* is the establishment of the service professions based: the *needs* of society or the *needs* of the professions themselves?

McKnight sees the professional expert as providing a service to a person that he/she regards as a *client* as opposed to a citizen. He argues that, as a society, we have been co-opted into becoming consumers of professional services and in doing so we have relinquished our communities' inherent problem solving capacities. As he puts it,

'Client' comes from a Greek word for a person who is controlled. So, if we have many, many systems producing more and more output, and that need more and more people to consume their output, what you are building is a culture of clienthood. And, finally, that is a culture of dependency, where creativity, citizenship and community decline. And clients lose control. And I think that's the problem we face. Is too much of our lives spent as clients and too little of our lives spent as citizens? (McKnight, 10, 95)

Like McKnight, Ivan Illich also sees citizens being turned into a nation of consumers, by experts. Unlike McKnight, however, Illich sees the problem as not just involving the consumption of a perceived social need (ie., health care, family planning, bereavement counseling, etc.), but also as society's need to consume in general. As he states,

Only if we understand the way in which dependence on commodities has legitimized wants, coined them urgent and exacerbated needs while simultaneously destroying people's ability to fend for themselves, can the progress into a new dark age be avoided, an age in which masturbatory self indulgence might be the safest assertion of independence. Only if our culture's market intensity is systematically exposed as the source of its deepest built-in frustrations will we stop the current perversion of research, ecological concern and the class struggle itself. Presently, these activities are principally in the service of an increased servitude of people to commodities. (Illich, 14, 1977)

For him, the role that the expert or professional elite plays in our culture is much more pervasive, and insidious. He argues that our professional institutions have the potential to enslave by creating an illusion within society that the people are born to be consumers and that they can attain any of their goals by purchasing the (right) goods and services. As a result they promote impoverishing greed and individualism. For example, Illich argues that professionals tell us what goods are necessary. They not only recommend what goods we need, but actually ordain why they are good. He suggests that these claims are not so much the privilege of income, long training, nor social standing, rather, it is the new professional's authority to "define a person as a client, to determine that person's need and to hand that person a prescription." For him this professional authority comprises three roles: "the sapiental authority to advise, instruct and direct; the moral authority that makes its acceptance not just useful but obligatory; and charismatic authority that allows the professional to appeal to some supreme interest of his client that not only outranks conscience but sometimes even the *raison d'etat*" (Illich 1977, 18).

Finally, according to Illich, the disabling of the citizen through professional dominance is completed through the "power of illusion." The professionals appropriate their special knowledge to define public issues in terms of problems. The acceptance of this claim "legitimizes the docile recognition of imputed lacks on the part of the layman: his world turns into an echo-chamber of needs." This prevailing

addiction to imputable needs on the part of the rich and middle-class, and the paralyzing fascination with needs on the part of the poor would indeed be irreversible if people actually fitted the calculus of needs. But this is not so. "Beyond a certain level, Medicine, engenders helplessness and disease; education turns into the major generator of a disabling division of labor; and social services create helplessness and legal agencies injustice." (Illich 1977, 28).

Thus for Illich, like McKnight, our major institutions have acquired the uncanny power to subvert the very purposes for which they have been engineered and originally financed. Under the rule of our most prestigious professions, our institutional tools have as their principal product, what Illich refers to as "paradoxical counter productivity" - the systematic disabling of the citizenry. This is the common thread in both of their analyses' - the rise and domination of the expert has led to the decline of citizenship.

### **3.3 Conclusion: Foucault on Domination**

Perhaps, as I stated at the beginning of this section and what reverberates throughout, the issue it comes down to then is *domination* and *power*. The central question of politics becomes: How is power acquired and distributed? Power is means: to be need-driven we must be power-seeking; to be successful hedonists we must be efficient aggressors. Indeed, for some liberal theorists, from Thomas Hobbes to John Rawls, power is not more than the "present means to some future good by which the human animal secures the interests arising out of his defining neediness" (Rawls 1971, 46 ). Quite naturally, politics under these conditions can only be the art or science of power - of who gets what, when, and how.

Thus the questions must be asked: will citizens continue to let experts dominate and have the power to shape their behavior and values, over the community? Will the

experts make the tough decisions politically, or will the public? If society continues to let professionals dominate and influence every aspect of their lives, our communities and our sense of public responsibility will continue to diminish even further than they already have. A weak community is a place where people finally become convinced by all the experts and all of the dominating institutions that surround them that the most important thing is to be a client/consumer. To have the right treatment! Not to treat each other. To have be told what are the correct decisions! Not to discover them for ourselves. And when people believe the right to treatment, the right to have the correct decisions made for them, are the most important rights for them, then we know they have become part of an impotent, dominated, and powerless community.

Perhaps no social philosopher/theorist has attempted to develop a more fundamental understanding of the role of domination and power through social institutions, than Michel Foucault. Foucault is often regarded as inaugurating a totally new discourse about power and domination. In one sense, this claim has some justification, in that Foucault's studies of the development of social institutions and scientific discourses from the Renaissance to the present show the workings of power in a powerful and unsettling manner.

We can see that this is the case by considering the following claim that Foucault makes about the relation between power and truth: "There can be no possible exercise of power without a certain economy of discourses of truth which operate through and on the basis of association. We are subject to the production of truth through power and we cannot exercise power except through the production of truth (quoted in Gordon 1980, 93).

By conceptualizing power and truth as standing in a necessary relation to one another, Foucault places himself firmly in the Nietzschean camp. For Foucault, as for Nietzsche, social domination requires a particular form of truth, of "knowledge", without

which it could not exist. But equally important, a particular form of knowledge or truth can only be conceived of in relation to a particular structure of domination. In our case, it is the contemporary professions that claim sole proprietorship over these privileges.

Foucault's fundamental thesis - taken from Nietzsche but put in starker terms - is that every item of knowledge is equally a means for attaining power. His description of the workings of contemporary disciplinary power is that such power constitutes the human being in a manner that allows it to occupy certain social positions in society (Goldstein and Cascaito 1991, 117 & 118).

Foucault, is also worried about the connection between rationality as a project of the West and the techniques of power that express and implement that project. He asked the questions: "Is this nexus necessary or inessential, inevitable or casual?" "Are industrial societies always tools of power and hence repression?" He is concerned "that the promise of *Aufklärung* (Enlightenment), of attaining freedom through the exercise of reason, has been, on the contrary, overturned within the domain of Reason itself ... taking more and more space away from freedom." (ibid., 118).

What then of a social system which believes passionately that professionalism and specialization are central to raising the human species above the morass of all of our societal ills? When it is believed that this can only be done through a narrow goal oriented education and through action based on expertise. None of this can be lightly dismissed. This is an abstract approach to society and fortunately humans do not function as abstractions. Power lies in the mechanisms that make the whole function. This abstract view of society denies that power to humans. A social system that defines itself by an unquestioned belief in expertise, denies the possibility of a citizen-based society. It therefore denies the citizen as the source of legitimacy and hence denies citizenship and the possibility of mass public participation.

## Chapter Four: *THE ROAD TO INDIVIDUALISM*

### ***4.1 Introduction:***

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the broader societal picture by exploring the effects of the present political economy on citizenship and public participation. In doing so, I will draw upon political economy theory, which in recent years has developed into a large and rapidly growing body of literature. Emerging out of the Marxist tradition, political economy theory, for several reasons, is an extremely useful tool for illustrating the argument that my thesis proposes. Firstly, it often employs urban issues when explaining its societal impacts. Secondly, it is not a static theory, as it sees capitalism undergoing constant evolution, and in this respect it provides some basis for optimism as it sees the present social and economic structure as merely one stage in history and thus there is potential for positive change. Finally, it is a theory that underscores the important role of class. Interestingly, class theory has, in recent times, been given short shrift by many urban theorists, yet as I hope to illustrate in this chapter, we have very recently seen the rise of a new class identity in society, one based on a strong aversion to citizenship and an overwhelming propensity toward individualism.

This chapter will mainly refer to the writings of David Harvey and his view of recent events as a transition in the "regime of accumulation", which implies a particular system in the allocation and consumption of goods and services in a capitalist society (what Harvey refers to as the 'mode of production') (Harvey 1989, 212). Key to each system, however, is the means of bringing and maintaining the behavior of society into some "kin of configuration" that will keep the regime of accumulation functioning (Harvey 1989, 122). These internalized rules and social processes that dominate all

capitalist systems are what Lipietz (1986) called the “mode of regulation.” And it is from this mode of regulation, Harvey argues, that there are derived the “social and psychological propensities, such as individualism and the drive for personal fulfillment through self-expression, the search for security and collective identity, the need to acquire self-respect, status, or some other mark of individual identity - all of which play a role in shaping modes of consumption and life-styles.” (Harvey 1989, 123).

Harvey suggests that a transformation in the regime of accumulation took place in western society during the mid 1970s and with this transition there developed a very different, more intense, mode of regulation in which society was now characterized by a much higher degree of individualism, self-gratification, and consumer orientation (Assuredly, this is not to say that forms of individualism did not exist from 1945-1973, but rather to suggest that the relative level is now unprecedented). The transformation that he is referring to is from *Fordism* to *Flexible Accumulation*. The argument that I wish to present here, is that in this present period of flexible accumulation, with all of its social manifestations and consequences, has made the possibility for meaningful citizenship and public participation a difficult proposition.

Let us now attempt to briefly summarize and compare Harvey's two capitalist regimes in the hopes of illuminating some of the fundamental contrasts between their respective political-economic practices and their social-societal effects.

#### **4.2 Fordism:**

Harvey suggests that a certain set of “labour control practices”, “technology” “consumption habits”, and “configurations of political - economic power”, existed during the postwar boom from 1945 to 1973. He refers to the era in which this system of accumulation existed as Fordism (Harvey 1989, 123).

Obviously, this period incorporated Ford's earlier vision of a new system of labour technology and management based on the assembly line production of automobiles. Of more critical importance, however, as Harvey points out, was Ford's recognition that mass production equaled mass consumption. Similarly, Antonio Gramsci, stated that Fordism amounted to "the biggest collective effort to date to create, with unprecedented speed, and with consciousness of purpose unmatched in history, a new type of worker and a new type of man." These new methods of work "are inseparable from a specific mode of living and of thinking and feeling life." (Gramsci, quoted in Harvey 1989, 126). Ford envisioned that a new kind of consumer society could be built upon and maintained through the proper structuring of corporate power. Thus, in addition to securing worker compliance with the discipline necessary for the maximization of efficiency on the assembly-lines, Harvey argues, the purpose of the five-dollar an hour, eight-hour day was also to ensure workers with sufficient income and leisure time to consume the mass-produced goods that the emerging corporations were about to churn out in ever-increasing quantities (Harvey 1989, 126). As a result, a new mode of regulation had to be devised to match the new Fordist regime of accumulation.

The development of a new mode of regulation was to be inaugurated and maintained by the hands of the major institutions: i.e., powerful corporations and a Keynesian state. As Harvey states, "large corporate power was deployed to assure steady growth, and raised living standards while ensuring a stable basis for gaining profits. This implied a corporate commitment to steady but powerful processes of technological change, mass fixed capital investment, growth of managerial expertise in both production and marketing, and the mobilization of economies of scale through standardization of product." (Harvey 1989, 134).

As for government, Harvey saw it assuming a variety of obligations: "... the state

strove to curb business cycles through an appropriate mix of fiscal and monetary policies in the postwar period. Such policies were directed towards those areas of public investment - in sectors like transportation, public utilities, etc, - that were vital to the growth of both mass production and mass consumption, and which would also guarantee relatively full employment. Governments likewise moved to provide a strong underpinning to the social wage through expenditures covering social security, health care, education, housing, and the like." ( Harvey 1989, 135). Thus the role of the state was more or less an attempt to spread the benefits of Fordism to the masses and to maintain some assurance for the consumption of the newly produced goods. Increasingly, however, it was also bearing the brunt of the rising discontent of large segments of society, that due to the natural inequities of the capitalist system, were being denied access to the much-touted joys of mass consumption. At the very minimum, the state sought to guarantee some kind of adequate social wage for all, or to enact redistributive policies or legal actions that would address inequalities, in addition to trying to cope with rising impoverishment and lack of inclusion by minorities (Harvey 1989, 139). The paradox, however, was that the ability of the state to provide collective goods depended upon continuous acceleration in the productivity of labour in the corporate sector.

Harvey suggests, that in spite of all of its discontents, manifest tensions, and paradoxes, Fordism survived until 1973 (After all, material living standards rose for the majority of the populations of the advanced capitalist countries, and corporations had amassed unprecedented profits). But it was in the sharp recession of that same year, exacerbated by the oil shock, that the framework of the Fordist regime ultimately unraveled (Harvey 1989, 143). The demise of Fordism, however, may have begun much earlier than that. Harvey argues, that the period from 1965 to 1973 was one in which the inability of Fordism and 'Keynesianism' to contain the inherent

contradictions of capitalism became more and more apparent. For him, the critical dilemma of Fordism could best be summed up by one word: 'rigidity.' (Harvey 1989, 142). As he puts it, "There were problems with the rigidity of long-term and large-scale fixed capital investments in mass-production systems that precluded much flexibility of design and presumed stable growth in invariant consumer markets." (Harvey 1989, 142). It was in this realm of flux and uncertainty that evolved a series of novel experiments in the area of industrial organization, as well as in political and social life. As Harvey suggests, these experiments represented the initial steps toward the transformation to an entirely new regime of accumulation coupled with a quite different mode of regulation. The term Harvey adopts for this quasi-paradigmatic shift is that of *Flexible Accumulation*.

#### **4.3 Flexible Accumulation:**

Flexible Accumulation, according to Harvey, is to be considered a direct reaction to the rigidities of Fordism (Harvey 1989, 147). Central to this regime is of course flexibility - flexibility with respect to labour processes, labour markets, products, and patterns of consumption. As Harvey puts it, "it is characterized by the emergence of entirely new sectors of production, new ways of providing financial services, new markets, and, above all, greatly intensified rates of commercial, technological and organizational innovation. It has entrained rapid shifts in the patterning of uneven development, both between sectors and between geographical regions, giving rise, for example, to a vast surge in so-called 'service sector' employment as well as to entirely new industrial ensembles in hitherto underdeveloped regions." (Harvey 1989, 147). Thus the labour market has undergone radical restructuring. Due to the volatility of the market, heightened competition, narrowing profit margins, and an increase in the pools of surplus labourers, employers now push for much more flexible work regimes

and labour contracts. This has resulted in the rise of part-time and term employment, and subcontracting, in addition to what was stated earlier, the unprecedented surge of those working in the service sector compared with the rapid contraction in manufacturing employment. Even regular employees, with a work schedule of a forty-hour week, are often obliged to work much longer hours at periods of peak demand, and compensate with shorter hours at periods of slack (Harvey 1989, 156).

If this new paradigm rests on flexibility, the key to flexibility, for Harvey, is what he refers to as "time-space compression." This term encompasses both the shrinking of the time horizons of public and private decision-making processes as well as the ability to access vast amounts of information instantaneously over what were once considered insurmountable spatial barriers. As a result, what now becomes of critical importance to this capitalist system is immediate access to the most sophisticated and up-to-date scientific and technical knowledge, such as computer and telecommunications technology. Harvey states that, "Access to the latest technique, the latest product, the latest scientific discovery implies the possibility of seizing an important competitive advantage. Knowledge itself becomes a key commodity, to be produced and sold to the highest bidder, under conditions that are themselves increasingly organized on a competitive basis." (Harvey 1989, 160). Thus, the latest and most accurate information becomes a very highly valued commodity in-of-itself, because it allows the capacity for one to respond instantaneously to changes in everything from financial and currency markets to fashion trends.

For Harvey, this intense phase of time-space compression, that has dominated society since the mid-1970s, has had a disorienting and disruptive impact on not only "the political-economic practices" but also on "the balance of class power, as well as upon cultural and social life." (Harvey 1990, 284). It is its effect on the latter, however, that becomes most integral to the thesis I am proposing. That is, what are the ways in

which the norms, habits, and political and cultural attitudes of society, shifted with the transition from Fordism to Flexible Accumulation and how have they, in turn, affected citizenship and the possibility for effective public participation?

#### **4.4 Societal Effects of the 'Postmodern Condition':**

If I were to attempt, in just one word, to describe the social-psychological effects of life under the regime of Flexible Accumulation, without hesitation the term I would employ would be - *Individualism*. Of course, as I stated earlier, this is not to suggest that individualist tendencies did not exist under Fordism, after all it too was a capitalist system and any form of capitalism cannot help but breed such qualities in its 'subjects.' But what I want to stress is that compared to life in the much less rapidly changing society of Fordism, the present regime, with the benefit of time-space compression, has set the stage for reaching unprecedented levels of consumption and self-satisfaction which has, in turn, has catapulted us toward a much more competitive form of individualism.

As the term individualism implies, it signifies concern for the individual or the "self" and therefore with one's so-called guaranteed "rights" and "freedoms." But one must understand the distinction between traditional and modern individualism. Traditional individualism emerged out of the struggle against monarchical and aristocratic authority that seemed arbitrary and oppressive to citizens prepared to assert the right to govern themselves. As Robert Bellah points out, "Classical republicanism evoked an image of the active citizen contributing to the public good and Reformation Christianity, in both Puritan and sectarian forms and inspired a notion of government based on the voluntary participation of individuals." (Bellah 1985 , 142). Modern individualism, however, has its defining roots in seventeenth-century England,

where a radical philosophical defense of individual rights emerged that owed little to either classical, biblical, or traditional sources. John Locke was the key figure. The essence of the Lockean position is an almost extreme individualism much more resembling the state of contemporary society. For him, the individual is prior to society, which comes into existence only through the voluntary contract of individuals trying to maximize their own self-interest. It is from this position that we have derived our present definition.

Unfortunately, in contemporary society, of all of the rights and freedoms that individualism may entail, the one that is most sought after is that of personal happiness. But not the kind of happiness that goes hand in hand with health, family, friends, and a fulfilling occupation. Rather, this is a much more distorted, insidious and twisted version. Today's happiness has more to do with personality than with a state of being. In fact, the pursuit of happiness has become an escape from reality. The first desire of contemporary individualism is to give an impression of choice and daring. Thus men and women hope to express themselves through notions of life-style and self-fulfillment. In essence, it is a societal view that equates one's happiness with one's ability to consume. And while the creation of an arena of consumption and the assurance of its maintenance bodes well for capitalism, it has much more negative implications for citizenship and public participation.

For us to understand why we would equate two such extremely different concepts we would have to once again return to Harvey's theory of time-space compression. As was previously stated, under flexible accumulation, speed-up was achieved in production through intense organizational shifts in labour processes - i.e., sub-contracting, term-employment, etc.. As a result of this successful speed-up came an obvious acceleration in the turn-over time in the production of goods and services and this, consequently, entailed a need for a parallel acceleration in their respective

consumption (Harvey 1989, 285). And this is where the regime of flexible accumulation has been most effective. Through the continuous and unrelenting bombardment of stimuli, simply on the commodity front, society has been left dazed and confused with respect to what constitutes a necessity for self-sufficiency and what constitutes a luxury for pure self-gratification.

Harvey argues that of the many developments in the area of consumption, two stand out as being of particular importance. The first is how, "the mobilization of fashion in mass (as opposed to elite) markets provided a means to accelerate the pace of consumption not only in clothing, ornament and decoration but also across the wide swathe of life-styles and recreational activities (leisure and sporting habits, pop music styles, video and children's games, and the like.)" (Harvey 1989, 285). The second trend was "a shift away from the consumption of goods and into the consumption of services - not only personal, business, educational, and health services, but also into entertainments, spectacles, happenings and distractions." (Harvey 1989, 285). Indeed, of the two, it may be the second trend that is more significant, because as Harvey points out, if there are limits to the accumulation and turnover of physical goods, that is not the case with services, as they can be produced and consumed almost instantaneously (Harvey 1989, 285).

The social-psychological consequences of this massive speed-up in the realm of commodity and service production have been threefold. Firstly, it has accentuated the volatility and ephemerality of almost all facets of life: values; ideas; ideologies; politics; labour processes; production techniques; products; and fashion. We have become what Alvin Toffler (1970) dubbed a "throw-away" society, again, not just of goods but also of our values, lifestyles, sense of community, places, and memory - essentially of our established ways of "doing and being." (Toffler 1970, 40). This transience, as Toffler puts it, creates "a temporariness in the structure of both public

and personal value systems and the diversification of values within a fragmenting society." (Toffler 1970, 40). Perhaps one of the most poignant comments on this experience of time and space and its effect on humanity was established by Marshall Berman in his enlightening book on the experience of modernity. He states,

To be modern is to find ourselves in an environment that promises us adventure, power, joy, growth, transformation of ourselves and the world - and, at the same time, that threatens to destroy everything we have, everything we know, everything we are. Modern environments and experiences cut across all boundaries of geography and ethnicity, of class and nationality, of religion and ideology: in this sense, modernity can be said to unite all mankind. But it is a paradoxical unity, a unity of disunity: it pours us all into a maelstrom of perpetual disintegration and renewal, of struggle and contradiction, of ambiguity and anguish. To be modern is to be part of a universe in which, as Marx said, "all that is solid melts into air." (Berman 1982,15)

The second major social consequence of time-space compression involves the increasingly important and integrative role that advertising and media images have come to play in our society. We are bombarded on a daily basis by all forms of advertising, most of which, when stripped down to their basic message cover one of three themes - sex, money, and power. The images these messages portray often have nothing what-so-ever to do with the product being sold, rather their sole purpose is to manipulate the desires and tastes of prospective consumers.

Media images, however, perform other functions besides advertising products. Large corporations, governments, political and intellectual leaders, all acknowledge the necessity of a stable (though dynamic) image as part of their "aura of authority and power." (Harvey 1989, 288). As a result, the mediatization of politics has never been so all pervasive as it is now. Trained image-makers coach politicians on the use of a rhetorical dialogue that at once makes them appear to the public sophisticated, knowledgeable and in control of the situation (even when they may be anything but). It has become a kind of politics dominated by aesthetics and superficiality. It is a form of politics that requires a conscious sophistication due to the fact that the continuity and

stability of the image must be retained while stressing the adaptability, flexibility, and dynamism of whoever or whatever is being imaged. As a result, image becomes all that more important in competition, and in the end it perhaps replaces reality.

As for the individual, he or she is not excluded from the perception that 'image is everything.' Harvey states, "With respect to the individual, the acquisition of an image becomes a singularly important element in the presentation of self in labour markets and, by extension, becomes integral to the quest for individual identity, self-realization, and meaning." (Harvey 1989, 288). Indeed, how many children complain to their parents that they must purchase the 'right clothes', and are often ostracized by other children for not having them. Moreover, what kind of example do parents set when they work and toil long hours all so they can purchase a newer and faster car or a bigger and better house. Harvey gives us a very amusing but equally sad illustration of the absurdity of image-seeking. He says a firm in California actually manufactures imitation car telephones, indistinguishable from the real ones, and they were quickly bought up by a populace desperate to acquire such a symbol of status.

Finally the third negative effect of time-space compression has resulted in the commodification of almost every facet of life - what Harvey terms, as the "phenomena of simulacra." (Harvey 1989, 300). Its easy enough to distinguish in the more tangible realms of architecture and art, where it is possible for contemporary structures, with modern technology, to replicate the ancient and antique. The problem, however, is what happens when it enters other less visible cultural forms and when the imitations are perceived as real. For example, it is possible to experience everything from food, to culinary habits, music, television, entertainment and cinema all vicariously as a simulacrum without ever having to leave one's immediate surroundings. The most blatant examples of simulacra can be easily found in the multitude of Disney-like theme parks throughout the world. In addition, if it is impossible to see anything of

solidity and permanence in the midst of this ephemeral, transparent, and fragmented world, why not just give up and immerse yourself in the maelstrom? Why even attempt to face a confusing and unsympathetic reality, when one can better optimize ones pleasure through the always purchasable escape mechanisms of television, drugs, and Disney world? As Harvey puts it,

The interweaving of simulacra in daily life brings together different worlds (of commodities) in the same place and time. But it does so in such a way as to conceal almost perfectly any trace of origin, of the labour processes that produced them, or of the social relations implicated in their production. ... Dazed and distracted characters wander through these worlds without a clear sense of location, wondering, 'Which world am I in and which of my personalities do I employ' (Harvey 1990, 300).

#### ***4.5 Its Effect On Citizenship***

What I have attempted to give in the previous section is some sense of what effect the present political-economy has had and continues to have on all spectrums of society. What should be strikingly apparent is that the effects are extremely complicated and not easily distinguishable. Indeed, this is perhaps one of the most vexing qualities of living in the age of Flexible Accumulation, with all of the transience, ephemerality, fragmentation, imagery, and simulacra that have evolved from time-space compression, it is no wonder that it is so difficult, if not impossible, to unravel the layers of this paradigm and make some sense of it. But it is critical that an attempt be made, and Harvey's political-economic approach is both effective and insightful. It is also a theory that meshes nicely with the thesis that I am proposing; that is, that the decline of citizenship and mass public participation is very much a result of and response to our present social environment. The purpose of this section is to illustrate this correlation.

In the previous section, I outlined three social-societal manifestations resulting from our present political-economic practices. The first one dealt with the instability

and ephemerality of the various aspects of our lives; from our lifestyles to our memories of the past. Indeed, it seems increasingly apparent that both physical objects and emotional attachments can be easily obtained and discarded with equal speed. This, I believe, has resulted in a lack of emotional attachment to all things associated with the ideals of citizenship, as well - family, sense of community, common values, responsibility, place etc.. This then implies a lack of commitment to anything that may take time away from the daily routine of working to consume. After all, how could one think of taking time out of a life devoted towards careerism, travel, holidays, sport, exercise, and the caressing of a private state of mind, in order to actively participate in something that may not benefit one personally?

Robert Reich provides one of the most critical accounts of the darker side of such instability. Without any fundamental attachments, he reminds us, people have little inclination to make sacrifices or to accept any form of social responsibility or citizenship. "We learn to feel responsible for others because we share with them a common history,... a common culture,... a common fate." (Reich, quoted in Lasch 1995, 47). Without any attachment to community or place, a growing body of professional elites appear, as Lasch states, "only at home in transit, en route to a high-level conference, to the grand opening of a new franchise, to an international film festival, or to an undiscovered resort. Theirs is essentially a tourist's view of the world - not a perspective likely to encourage a passionate devotion to democracy." (Lasch 1995, 6). This is the postmodern sensibility that Harvey describes which encourage those who covet individualism, turning their backs on their homes and cultivating ties with the international market in fast-moving money, glamour, fashion and popular culture.

The effect on citizenship of the second implication of time-space compression, the increasing role of advertising and media images, has been detrimental, to say the least. Firstly, with respect to advertising, besides it being such a pervasive and

dominating aspect of contemporary society, it actually subverts citizenship through its undeniable promotion of the so-called "hero-individual." John Saul gives us an example of this profoundly disturbing phenomenon by illustrating an advertisement to sell a watch called Rado. As he states, "the ad shows a tall, elegant man in a dark suit, staring confidently and seductively out at the reader. Around him are life-size, white plaster casts of other men. They are like a background of ghosts. The text reads: '*You don't fit the mold. Why should your watch? You didn't get where you are by following the crowd. Neither did we.*'" (Saul 1993, 481). As Saul points out, this ad and many like it simply reflects the importance of being an individual in society. In order for one to "stand out", i.e., succeed, one must strive to be an individual. In striving to succeed as an individual, one has little time nor inclination for any form of participatory practice.

Besides advertising, other media images abound which equally draw the myth of the hero-individual along. Perhaps the most compelling image of the twentieth century is that of the celebrity. We are consistently fascinated by the trials and tribulations of the life of the 'star' (Note the unprecedented television viewership of the O.J. Simpson murder trial). Through their association with movies, television, sports, and politics they have come to epitomize the religion of individualism. Through their use of the media they will unabashedly flaunt their glamorous and exciting lifestyles, while most often oblivious to any sense of social responsibility. Interestingly, it is they themselves that often propagate their own mythological status. Take for example, the most popular American talk-show host, (in addition to being one of the wealthiest women in the world) Oprah Winfrey. In a 1988 cover story in the New York Times Magazine, this woman, who is watched every day by over twenty million people, was quoted as saying:

Everybody's greatness is relative to what the Universe put them here to do. I always knew that I was born for greatness... I'm not God. I keep telling Shirley MacLaine, "You can't go around telling people you are God." It's a very difficult concept to accept. (New York Times Magazine,

11 June 1989, 28).

Not surprisingly, once they saw how easily the public could be manipulated through media images, it didn't take long for corporate leaders and politicians to enter the fray. During the 1950s and 1960s, there was a great movement of technocrats toward politics in the belief that society needed to unite administration and political leadership in rational hands. The 1970s and 1980s, however, saw the rise of a new kind of politician. To be sure, the need for technocracy did not escape this wave of politicians, but now their concentration was directed more toward instilling confidence by proposing seemingly simple solutions. The rise of the contemporary politician produced leaders who were not intelligent but who had a certain flair as performers. They knew how to appear decisive or knowledgeable or in command, even when they were not. For what other possible reason could a B-movie actor, of seemingly limited intelligence, rise to hold and maintain the most powerful political office in the United States. Indeed, Reagan may have insulted the intelligence of the people, but as an actor he understood, full well, that what all of us want, more than anything, is to believe. As Saul put it, "The plausibility of drama has always turned on our willing suspension of disbelief." (Saul 1993; 531). It is not an unwilling suspension. It is one of the characteristics of the individual to want to believe in something. And in wanting to believe, they in turn have abdicated to politicians and professionals the responsibility for the stewardship of society. With this abdication of responsibility and the very notion of citizenship, we could all get back to the task at hand - self-fulfillment through the consumption of goods and services.

Of course, a pervasive kind of irresponsible journalism has contributed to the mythological status of the celebrity, but journalism has also subverted citizenship by its reservations about the reasoning power of ordinary men and women. As Lasch points

out, "According to Walter Lippman, one of the pioneers of modern journalism, the 'omnicompetent citizen' was an anachronism in the age of specialization. In any case, most citizens, he thought, cared very little about the substance of public policy. The purpose of journalism was not to encourage public debate but to provide experts with the information on which to base intelligent decisions." (Lasch 1995, 11).

Thanks to an onslaught of newspapers, magazines, television and movies, society appears to be drowning in information, and yet surveys regularly report a steady decline in people's knowledge of public affairs. Once again, Lasch offers an explanation for this paradox:

Having been effectively excluded from public debate on the grounds of incompetence, most North Americans no longer have any use for the information inflicted on them in such large amounts. They have become almost as their critics have always claimed - a reminder that it is debate itself, and debate alone, that gives rise to the desire for usable information. In the absence of democratic exchange, most people have no incentive to master the knowledge that would make them capable citizens. (Lasch, 1995, 12).

Finally, what are the implications for citizenship and public participation of the third societal effect of time-space compression - the commodification of culture? A pervasive commodification of all things has resulted in the loss of memory and the blurring of the lines between the real and unreal. With the loss of memory we have forgotten where we have come from and what it means to be part of a larger community and the responsibility associated with that. We have forgotten how to care for each other and to show sincere empathy for our fellow citizens. Indeed, movies such as *Blade Runner* glamorize the blight of urbanism and the plight of the poor and thus anesthetize us from the effects of the social ills caused by our political economy. How often does the "new-middle class" turn a blind eye to the decay of the inner-city, when quickly driving home to their hermetically-sealed enclaves from where they work in the downtown?

Instead of memory, which serves to link the present to the past and to provide a semblance of continuity, we are now transfixed by "nostalgia", which is a more-or-less a commodified version of memory. Christopher Lasch makes the distinction between the two:

Nostalgia appeals to the feeling that the past offered delights no longer obtainable. Nostalgic representations of the past evoke a time irretrievably lost and for that reason timeless and unchanging. Strictly speaking, nostalgia does not entail the exercise of memory at all, since the past it idealizes stands outside time, frozen in unchanging perfection. Memory too may idealize the past, but not in order to condemn the present. It draws hope and comfort from the past in order to enrich the present. It sees past, present and future as continuous. It is less concerned with loss than with our continuing indebtedness to a past the formative influence of which lives on in our patterns of speech, our gestures, our standards of honor, our expectations, our basic disposition toward the world around us. (Lasch 1991, 83).

Lasch also notes, that nostalgia finds its purest literary expression in the convention of the pastoral, with its praise of simple country pleasures. The charm of pastoralism lies, of course not in the accurate observation of country life, which at times can be quite brutal and unforgiving, but in the dream of childlike simplicity and security. Pastoral evokes a world without work, politics, or stress - in effect, the carefree world of childhood and of a simpler time (Lasch 1991, 83). It is no wonder then, that we can observe the overwhelming success of entertainment places like Epcott and Disneyland, where millions of people flock daily, as the commercials put it, "to experience the Old World for a day without actually having to go there." (Harvey 1990, 300).

What then happens to citizenship, when the desperate search for roots ends up being produced as an image, pastiche, or simulacrum? I would argue, that when historical tradition is reorganized as such, it puts the aesthetics of place very much back on the agenda. Citizens then become far more concerned with the physical and psychological creation of some localized aesthetic image than with any thoughts of

social responsibility. The building of imitation communities (most recently observed in neo-traditional planning) constructed to evoke images of some folksy and romanticized past, becomes another form of escapism from reality. Indeed, it is nothing more than the 'Disnification' of community resulting in a limited and limiting sense of personal identity and responsibility.

#### **4.6 Conclusion:**

What I have referred to, in this chapter, as individualism, yields neither the pleasures of participation nor the fellowship of civic association, neither the autonomy and self-governance of continuous political activity nor the enlarging mutuality of shared public goods - of mutual deliberation, obligation, and commitment. Freedom becomes indistinguishable from selfishness and is corrupted from within by passivity, alienation, and anomie; equality is reduced to market exchangeability and divorced from its necessary familial and social contexts; happiness is measured by material gratification to the detriment of the spirit. Presently, ours is a world of carrots and sticks resulting in the modern consumer. For he/she can be depicted as greedy, self-interested, an acquisitive survivor who is capable nonetheless of the most self-denying deferrals of gratification for the sake of material satisfaction. The consumer is a creature of a great reason devoted to small ends. His/her cherished freedom is chained to the most banal need. He/she uses the gift of choice to multiply his/her options in and to transform the material conditions of the world, but never to transform him/herself to create a world of mutuality with his/her fellow humans.

The individualist psychology of human nature is founded on a radical premise no less startling for its familiarity: man is alone. We are born into the world solitary strangers, live our lives as wary aliens, and die in fearful isolation. The powerful alchemy of such a mindset has turned the stranger into the individual, and the alien

into the entrepreneur. Indeed, what ancient Athenian, what clansman or tribesman could possibly imagine that to be uprooted, unclaimed, and alone was to be free? What Aristotlean citizen, defining himself as human by virtue of his civic friendships, could say with, architect Howard Roark, Ayn Rand's fictional protagonist and epitome of liberated self-sufficiency:

I came here to say that I do not recognize anyone's right to one minute of my life. Nor to any part of my energy. Nor to an achievement of mine. No matter who makes the claim, how large their number or how great their need. I wish to come here and say that I am a man who does not exist for others. (Rand 1943, 686).

It is the mindset of Ayn Rand, who built a cult following by adapting Nietzsche's theories of aggressive egoism into novels such as *The Fountainhead*, which extoll the virtues of selfishness, that have gradually become primary in our society. Her's is a portrayal of the self that exists only for itself, without regard to species, to justice, to need, to equality, or to civic obligation. It is Man Alone in extremis: man mimicking the self-sufficient God he has created.

And so our great modern free society is all too often one in which men and women do not exist for others; in which there can be no fraternal feeling, no general will, no selfless act, no mutuality, no gift relationship, no disinterested obligation, no social empathy, no love or belief or commitment that is not wholly private. It is no wonder that in such a society, the probability of having true citizenship and meaningful participation, can seem so distant.

## Chapter Five:

### ***THE PLANNING PROFESSION***

#### ***5.1 Introduction:***

The aim of this chapter is to examine the influence that one profession in particular has had and continues to have on citizenship and thus public participation. For several reasons (beyond the fact that this is a planning thesis), the field of urban planning makes for an interesting and obvious choice for examination.

Firstly, there are the seemingly dichotomous theoretical and practical approaches that appear to have guided contemporary planning. Perhaps more than any other profession, planning during its heyday (1920-1950) epitomized the notion of professional expertise guided by rationalism, objectivity, and technical know-how. Robert A. Beauregard accurately summarizes the mission and values conveyed by the modernist planning movement that was, since its inception, mandated to develop a program capable of solving social problems that had accumulated within the metropolis:

In the modernist planning project, reality that can be controlled and perfected is assumed. The world is viewed as malleable, and it is malleable because its internal logic can be uncovered and subsequently manipulated. Thus modernist planners rejected the alienation that is often viewed as part of modernization yet adopted a viewpoint, also modernist, that overcomes alienation through a belief in the efficacy of human action and the importance of commitment. Modernist planners believe in a future in which social problems are tamed and humanity liberated from the constraints of scarcity and greed. Social control is wielded in order to drive society forward along a path of progress; planning is part of the modern struggle to make ourselves at home in a constantly changing world. (Beauregard 1989, 384)

In the 1990's however, the profession appears, at least on the surface, to be increasingly appealing to citizens for a more substantial voice in the creation of public policy. As such, the paradoxical nature of contemporary planning is revealed. Indeed,

it is one of several professions that has, in many ways, contributed to the decline of citizenship through the creation of an expert-public gap, and yet it is one of the few whose continued existence may very well depend on its ability to narrow this chasm through the enhancement of public participation and the re-emergence of citizenship.

With respect to planning, public participation may be defined as the democratic way for government and non-government groups to receive public input. Such participation facilitates the identification of community goals and enables the plan-makers to develop and implement appropriate plans. Often, the effectiveness of a public participation exercise is judged on the basis of various elements including trust (between planners and the public), communication (among participants and planners), opportunity (for input by everyone), and flexibility (in the process to allow for changes as new information and ideas materialize) (Dorfman 1991). Invariably, however, the true success of any participatory process is most often measured by the number of individuals that end up participating.

Secondly, since it is a relatively young profession (established in North America in the early 1900's) it enables one to trace, from its origins to the present, the contextual models which have in turn guided the practitioner's role. Some of these models include utopian planning, comprehensive planning, advocacy planning, and bureaucratic planning. Each relate, more or less, to specific contexts in time, and value ideological premises, thus allowing one to effectively map the expert-public relationship. What I intend to illustrate is that while each of these models may differ (some more than others) in terms of its orientation toward citizen participation, they all share one characteristic that will invariably negate citizenship; the balance of power (thus the decision-making capability) is always in the hands of the expert-planner.

Finally, as was hinted above, urban planning makes for an intriguing case study due to the paradoxical implications that the decline of citizenship could have for the

planning profession itself. Such a notion is maintained by Harold Chorney who argues that while many orthodox planners, who by and large view planning as technocratic and physical as opposed to social and political in nature, there is a growing recognition that some degree of citizen and community involvement in the planning process is not only desirable, but necessary, in order to lend an air of legitimacy to the process and, ultimately, the profession (Chorney 1990, 397).

### ***5.2 Present Crisis of Urban Planning:***

Perhaps what is most disquieting for planners today is the fact that the major urban problems that are now commonplace - the precariousness of living conditions in the poor districts of downtown areas, urban criminality, the deterioration of the environment, the inefficiency of urban transportation, urban sprawl, and the exclusion of certain social groups - retain a curious similarity to those that were already in existence at the beginning of the century and which prompted architects and engineers in North America to create a profession devoted to the solving of such problems. In spite of the knowledge accumulated since the inception of this profession, in spite of the increasingly sophisticated survey and analysis techniques that have been developed by the social sciences, and in spite of the complexity and efficacy of the information networks, we still have not succeeded in solving the major problems that have assailed the city. Henri Lefebvre makes a similar point in one of his last texts referring to urban planning:

...this science of the city has not kept its promises. It has initiated what is today called "urban planning," that boils down to very constraining instructions for architectural creation and very vague information for the authorities and administrators. In spite of some commendable efforts, urban planning has not acquired the status of a philosophy of the city. It has even gradually shrunk to become a sort of catechism for technocrats. (Lefebvre 1991, 16)

In contemporary planning's attempt to redefine its legitimacy as a necessary and indeed valuable profession, it has placed itself in a state of flux. It appears caught between nostalgia for a planning from above model, that has for so long dominated the profession, and a realization that those guiding principles have failed and can no longer be maintained. Beauregard, in a similar vein, states that, "planning is currently suspended between a modernist sensibility whose validity is problematic and a postmodern reality posing serious challenges to planning's underlying assumptions." (Beauregard 1991, 189). He is implying that the modernist planning project (which is still very much alive psychologically among planning practitioners) is currently "hung up" as it were, in both a practical and theoretical sense, between the understandings and methods of modernity and the challenges of postmodernity.

While the objectives of the planners' actions are still primarily defined in pragmatic terms: to find a means of attracting investments, the provision of services, and land-use regulation, there is a greater realization within the profession that planners must now operate on a more "political" level when it comes to developing structures for the creation of public policy. Arguing from an ethical perspective, planning theorist Elizabeth Howe maintains that a central issue for planners today is how they can justify the use of administrative discretion in a so-called democratic society and that ultimately they must have an ethical obligation to be responsive to public values (Howe 1992, 230).

This radical turn that planning practitioners must make is due as much to a crisis within planning itself, as to the uncertainties that now characterize the political and administrative context within which planners operate. Even though they still very much maintain the roles of mediator and expert with respect to public decision-makers, there is evidence to suggest that they are increasingly aware that they cannot have the responsibility to speak for others. That is why their ultimate guarantee, as a

profession, now lies in invoking a more democratic perspective that realizes the necessity of citizen participation in the formation of municipal plans.

However, the problem that now exists is that planners appear overwhelmed with this new challenge of inclusiveness, and with just cause. Presently, most planning documents make some reference (if even just cursory) to the need for meaningful public involvement and why it is critical to the success of their plan (Winnipeg's *CentrePlan*; Vancouver's *CityPlan*; and Kamloop's *Planning our Future*). While one can surely debate the depth of sincerity in these calls for a greater voice, one cannot ignore their significance. As Randi Diehl indicated in a recent issue of *Plan Canada*:

Planners and politicians are confused with the challenge of satisfying the public's need for involvement without grinding the system to a halt with costly and inefficient delays. Communities across the country are designing new public participation procedures for increasing public input into community plans, growth management strategies and public hearing processes. (Diehl 1995, 30)

Indeed, planners are confused with the challenge of inclusiveness. They appear to be consistently disappointed and amazed when they go to what they feel are extraordinary lengths to contact and encourage average citizens to participate, only to find that a very small percentage of the public are actually interested. Those that do show interest, more often than not, either represent an interest group or only participate because the outcome of a particular decision may adversely impact them. One only has to look at the results of some very recent planning documents to understand the reality of the public participatory movement. One such example is Winnipeg's *CentrePlan*. This was heralded as a public participation success story (it was awarded a national planning award for its process), a plan created by the public for the public, yet in reality, significantly less than one percent of Winnipeg's citizens were directly involved in this process. This seems to illustrate, that planners have now

turned to what "appear" to be more democratic principles, and yet are shocked and dismayed to find that the vast majority of urban residents refuse to take part in this process. Over time the public has been psychologically beaten and intimidated into silence by esoteric planning jargon, and are thus willing (if not eager) to abdicate the exercise of political power to the "knowledgeable professionals."

Planners, however, are quick to deflect their disappointment, by pointing out that this is indicative of the inherent difficulty of mass public participation. For planners, the key deterrent to the participatory movement, ever since it first arrived on the planning scene over 30 years ago, has been an overwhelming belief in the notion of an apathetic public. Some theorists go a little further and claim that apathy, plus irrational behavior due to lack of awareness, are the main reasons why mass participation is not only undesirable, but impossible (Pateman 1970, 7; Schumpeter 1957, 256-264). It is important to note however, that these same theorists also agree that social institutions inculcate and encourage the development of these attitudes among people. So if people are "apathetic", it is likely that their social and physical environment has played a significant role in determining their political consciousness. The questions that arise then are: to what degree and in what manner have urban planners influenced citizens and the role that they conceive for themselves in the political life of the metropolis, and by what means has the profession promoted a repressive ideology for the public while masking its effects in the mannerisms and rhetoric of "freedom," "democracy," and "opportunity"? It follows from the argument in the preceding chapters that the planners' own form of ostensibly value free, scientific methods and their perception of themselves as "experts" has very much contributed to this repression. One-time planner Robert Goodman sums up the debilitating impact that such a planning profession may have on society:

As technicians, we are not the visible symbols of oppression like the military and the police. We're more sophisticated, more educated, more

socially conscious than the generals - we're the soft cops. Planners want "social change"; they deal in words, drawings, programs and buildings, not guns and napalm. But the kind of "social change" they usually find themselves dealing with, whether or not they recognize it, is organizing the oppressed into a system incapable of providing them with a humane existence, pacifying them with the meager welfare offerings that help maintain the status quo. (Goodman 1971, 13).

Thus restated, the aim of this chapter is to narrow and intensify the focus of inquiry on one specific profession, urban planning, in order to illuminate the complex manner in which professionals, masked in the guise of expertise, may influence urban citizens and their orientation toward participation and urban politics. In attempting to do so, it is necessary to trace, within the various planning models, the substantive, normative, and procedural practices, that have guided the profession from its pre-institutional emergence at the end of the nineteenth century to its present entrenchment within the municipal bureaucratic structure.

### ***5.3 The Utopians:***

I outlined in the first chapter the very early influences of contemporary urban planning which were based on the principles of positivism expressed by such Enlightenment thinkers as Comte and Saint-Simon. The definition of planning in these terms has resulted to a large extent in the perspective that influential planners have held throughout history.

According to Ernest Alexander, the first planners originated from the design professions such as architecture, landscape design, and civil engineering (Alexander 1992, 4). The utopian views held by these professions can be found in the works of men such as Ebenezer Howard, Frank Lloyd Wright, and Le Corbusier. For such planners, the physical environment became the central tool for addressing the social and economic problems within cities. The entrenchment of the notion that the physical

environment was the determining factor in terms of social behavior and individual welfare, has in many instances made the "architect-engineer-planner" a key player in terms of social change.

The procedural practice that directed these early planners was invariably a top-down approach that was hierarchically structured with the planners at the top and the general public on the bottom. The modernist support for this apolitical and centralized approach is clearly illustrated by the thinking of Le Corbusier:

Paris, the young Corbusier concluded, could be saved only through the intervention of grands seigneurs, men 'without remorse' : Louis XIV, Napoleon, Haussmann. Their 'grand openings' were for him 'a signal example of creation, of that spirit which is able to dominate and compel the mob.' (Hall 1988, 207).

The comprehensive plans of Howard's Garden Cities, or of Corbusier's "Radiant City" serve as examples of the authoritative approach which is characteristic of modernity. According to Ruth Glass (Glass 1973, 55) these utopian planners saw issues in terms of "black and white, and in terms of straightforward interactions". Their firm belief that the environment directly determined human character and social structure, resulted in their perception that comprehensive designs for reform had universal validity, and would assure that the whole of society "would live happily ever after". If for example people had well-designed and well-sited housing, then the incidence of crime, delinquency, narcotics, alcoholism, broken homes, and mental illness would be lowered (Webber 1973, 97-98).

It is questionable to what degree these approaches would be taken seriously to begin with if substantively, planning had not been dominated by the "architect-engineer-planner". It has been pointed out by Ruth Glass (1973, 53-55) that in becoming the dominant field of study such professions were, and to some extent continue to be, conservative in their professional outlook especially in terms of

'guarding their specialization':

In their own fields, they are all used to a mechanistic mode of thought - to a fairly straight-forward sequence of cause and effect, in terms of a limited number of material factors. They have no problems with boundaries: their areas are well defined, and so are their terms of reference. (It is their job, for instance, to find out how a given number of houses for a given group of people should be designed, but not to ask why that should be done). They thus have no urge to establish new relationships, nor to question the reasons for instructions which are comfortably explicit. (Glass 1973, 53-54)

Moreover, Glass points out that we cannot entirely remove ourselves from the ideas of the Utopian planners and thus, in being the originators of the profession, they serve as the *super-ego* in terms of defining the profession's future areas of focus (Glass 1973, 59).

#### ***5.4 Origins of Canadian Planning - The Establishment of the Super-Ego:***

The purpose of this section is to establish how the planner in the role of expert has influenced and guided the planning profession since it emerged in Canada in the first decade of this century. If, as Glass suggests, early dominant figures within the profession and their respective philosophies cannot be easily displaced from the contemporary planner's sub-conscious, it would be useful to examine these early influences for insight into the present condition of the profession.

Canadian urban planning practice and institutions derive from both American and British influences and thus our planning philosophy is very much a distinctive melding of the two. Gerald Hodge argues that in Canada:

A strong corporate orientation emerges from the initial conditions for building cities, from the cultural milieu in which the agenda for planning was set, and from the constitutional circumstances that affected what form of land use regulation was adopted. U.S.- type zoning coexists with U.K. - inspired development control, all in a context of paternalistic review of local decisions by provincial government. The planning process in Canadian communities tends toward a discretionary system operated by professionals leading to an emphasis on accomplishment and pervasive bureaucratic character. (Hodge 1985, 8)

It is important to note, however, that like its U.S. and British counterparts, the roots of Canadian planning did not differ with respect to its concerns with rampant urban growth, squalid slums, inadequate health and safety measures, congestion, and local government ineptness. The corporate orientation did not so much affect the content of planning solutions as it affected the style of practice and the mechanisms of decision making (Hodge 1985, 9).

Planning practice, from its origins, was not afraid to hide its paternalistic nature. Arguing for the profession at the first National Conference on City Planning in 1909, at which many newly established Canadian planners were in attendance, Robert Anderson Pope, a landscape architect, stated:

...city planning through removing the laboring classes from the congested districts promotes industrial efficiency. This increased efficiency comes from the greater health that the ample sunshine and the fresh air which is secured to the city; the greater health that results from contentment with the more attractive surroundings with their trees, their flowers and their playgrounds... for in the final accounting does not their (the upper classes) prosperity depend upon that of the lower classes? (Pope, quoted in Goodman 1971, 143)

Thus, since its inception, it is strikingly apparent that city planning, with its power to regulate land development with such tools as zoning, was not only paternalistic in its attitudes toward citizens, but one may also argue that it was the assurance of the maintenance of class power. Political consciousness at the turn of the century was considered by many reformers, who were very much a part of the business elite, an undesirable mode of behavior. When masses of "less desirable" people became involved in decision-making, then politics, in the reformers' eyes, became corrupt. In their view, City Hall was filled with the wrong people. In many ways planning was seen to embody many of the same values reformers sought for local government - a rational approach, efficiency, and order; or in other words, in keeping politics out of planning.

Robert Goodman thus contends that city planning became (as it continues to be) the equivalent of the "white man's burden" (Goodman 1971, 147). The elite, responsible and objective - those with the moral conscience who could "promote" the interests of the poor, the disenfranchised, and the ignorant. Once again, planner Henry Morgenthau, in addressing the 1909 conference, articulates the ascending profession's role:

To those who have long labored to ameliorate the conditions of those who are forced to live as best they can, not as they should or would like it, it is indeed most encouraging to have the foremost citizens of our community approve those endeavors. It is but another proof of the greatness of this country that these highest in power give heed to the wants of the least favored of the land. The civic endeavors of the intelligent part of our community aim at great efficiency, and the planning is essential to such efficiency." (quoted in Goodman 1971, 147).

Officially, the institutionalization of planning in Canada coincided with the end of World War I when the Town Planning Institute of Canada, the TPIC, (now referred to as CIP) was formed in May 1919 and had 117 members and branches in four cities: Ottawa, Toronto, Winnipeg, and Vancouver (Hodge 1985, 16). The constitution of the TPIC originally set out that membership was limited to architects, engineers, landscape architects and surveyors. This array of professional skills alone reveals a good deal about how planners viewed the task of planning - i.e., a purely objective and technical exercise. But perhaps one of the most critical influences in the emergence of the planning profession in Canada came slightly before that with the recruitment of British planner Thomas Adams, in 1914, to be the Town Planning Advisor for the newly established Commission of Conservation. Striking as Adams's personal achievements were, his importance to the development of community planning in Canada is in the philosophy he brought to his Canadian endeavors and in how he defined the guiding principles of planning. One finds such views, expressed by Adams and his planning colleagues, in the profession's newly established *Journal*

*of the Town Planning Institute of Canada:*

Town Planning may be defined as the scientific and orderly disposition of land and buildings in use and development with a view to obviating congestion and securing economic and social efficiency, health, and well-being in urban and rural communities. (quoted, in Hodge 1985, 17).

While some may argue that Adams may have proposed a holistic approach to urban planning that is perhaps more progressive than today's (Gerecke 1991, 94), his philosophical views, however, were still very much in line with the nineteenth-century utilitarian reformers. The latter, like John Stuart Mill and Jeremy Bentham, championed the notion that the aim of society should be to produce the greatest good for the greatest number. The means to attain this social progress, however, could only be ensured by the expertise of professionals guided by the principles of reason to determine the solutions to social problems and the acceptance of government intervention if the weight of objective evidence suggests that course of action. Ultimately, for at least the next forty-five years, this utilitarian perspective held by Adams, provided the rationalization for the procedural practices of planners and their image of themselves as dedicated professionals providing expert service to the masses.

### ***5.5 The Emergence of Comprehensive Planning:***

The comprehensive planning model evolved from the preoccupation with physical planning that prevailed in the 1920s and 1930s. While characteristics of this model are still very much in use today, it was during the 1950s and 1960s that this form of planning practice was truly the dominant one. It seeks to recognize the complexity of factors affecting and affected by what were previously perceived as purely physical or land-use decisions. These factors include social and demographic characteristics of population; economic variables, such as income and local or

regional economic base; and transportation factors. The objectives of comprehensive planning are to take all these factors into account in a rational, analytic planning process - what is sometimes referred to as systems analysis (Alexander 1986, 75).

Thus the comprehensive planning model is very much based on a technocratic ideology that accepts the scientific legitimacy of the planner's expertise. Moreover, its underlying assumption is that the planner knows or can discover other people's needs, and that a central planning agency should have the authority and autonomy to develop planning proposals through rational analysis, as well as the power to implement them (Fainstein 1971, 341-362). According to Peter Hall, under this model, "...the political system was regarded as benign and receptive to the planner's expert advice." (Hall 1988, 330). More critically, Goodman states that,

with what the planners began to call 'comprehensive planning,' the poor, who traditionally had little access to power were going to have even less. The planning of cities was to be entrusted to professionals, who would supposedly consider all interests of the city in their objective, scientific, non-political analysis and then arrive at a 'comprehensive plan. (Goodman 1971, 157).

What differentiated comprehensive planning from earlier models is that planners no longer prided themselves on personal knowledge of a rudimentary collection of concepts about the city, but rather they initiated a scientific activity in which vast amounts of precise information were garnered and processed in such a way that the planner could devise systems of guidance and control, the effects of which could be monitored and if necessary modified. Not surprisingly, however, it was often felt that such modification would not be necessary in the first place, since the planner would get it right the first time:

The process was therefore not characterized by explicit feedback as the search 'homed in' on the best plan, for the notion that the planner had to learn about the nature of the problem was in direct conflict with his assumed infallibility as an expert, a professional... The assumed certainty of the process was such that possible links back to the reality in the form of new surveys were rarely if ever considered.... This certainty, based on the infallibility of the expert, reinforced the apolitical, technical nature of

the process. The political environment was regarded as totally passive, indeed subservient to the 'advice' of the planners and in practice, this was largely the case. (Batty, quoted in Hall 1988, 324).

What I have hoped to illustrate is that public participation under the comprehensive model was not only nonexistent, but openly discouraged. In many respects, it was considered by most practitioners to have been the "golden age" of planning: the planner, completely free from political interference, comfortably sure of his/her technical capacities and serenely at ease with his/her role in the profession. This complacency, however, would be relatively short-lived: in the late 1960s and early 1970s comprehensive planning and the systems approach would increasingly come under attack. This criticism, fueled by a combination of factors: the disastrous failure of urban renewal; U.S. civil-rights movements; protests against the Vietnam war; and the university free-speech movement, ensured the rise of what was hoped to be a more democratic model of planning (Hall 1988, 332).

### ***5.6 Advocacy Planning:***

Reacting to the overwhelming centralist and technocratic values of the prevailing planning models of the mid-1960s, some planners attempted to create an alternative approach to planning that was analogous to a legal system. The role proposed for planners was to be similar to that of lawyers presiding on the behalf of a client (Alexander 1986, 77). Paul Davidoff referred to this new model as advocacy planning. It was based on the realization that society is not homogeneous but consists of many groups with different interests and values. It acknowledged that in a pluralist society, power is unequally distributed, and access to resources is not the same for the rich and the poor or the educated and the ignorant. On the surface, this new model for planning and the role planners would play, appeared to represent an alternative

paradigm for the profession. The advocate planner would help to inform the public of alternatives and educate them on the planning process and certain terminology. In essence, the planner would be either a "spokesperson" for those in need, or they would provide them with the expertise they needed to make their own voices heard in public decision making (Davidoff 1973).

It was believed that these actions would help make a reality of the democratic vision of power shared by all, because now citizens could have access to a knowledgeable professional speaking for their concerns. The advocate planner, familiar with the rules of the game and blessed with knowledge of the technical jargon would provide the public with its own expert voice. Upon closer inspection, however, advocacy planning was criticized as being more or less a mask for the maintenance of the expert by allowing the poor, disenfranchised, and powerless to administer their own state of dependency (Goodman 1971, 172). In no way did it foster meaningful participation, because it was still the expert providing the perceived solutions. It was still the benevolent therapist-planner, while less authoritarian than the comprehensive planner, maintaining its client orientation and paternalistic nature.

While perhaps forms of the advocacy planning approach were more oriented to social needs than to the physical environment (which was the main focus of the comprehensive model), its net effect tended to be more negative than positive. Despite the optimism with which these approaches were adopted by progressive planners, realizing them in practice proved to be much more difficult. In fact, quite often the practical results of attempting to adopt these approaches were more reactionary than progressive. This was particularly the case when the citizens who took advantage of the increased opportunity for participation turned out to be those who were already well protected by the traditional planning process. Often planner advocates discovered that the constituency, the "community," simply did not exist. The

vacuum was quickly filled by the traditional power elites already active in the planning process (Chorney 1990, 197).

It is important to note that the participatory and advocacy approaches to planning in the late 1960s and early 1970s suffered from a number of important weaknesses. Perhaps the most telling was their fundamental assumption that the citizens of the metropolis, especially those perceived to be in need, saw themselves as members of a cohesive community in which as full citizens they were anxious to participate in the civic process. Progressive planners, instead, found that this sense of community and political commitment were largely lacking. If it did exist at all, it rarely went beyond the immediate group interests of a highly localized neighborhood issue. In a number of instances local residents could be mobilized in a given district around a specific issue such as resisting an expressway planned to cut through their neighborhood. But such mobilization was just as possible around issues such as keeping a group home from locating in their area. On the whole, it was rare that local residents could be persuaded to become active in issues that went beyond their immediate interests and embrace broader community concerns. As a result, advocacy planning, rather than being an effective participatory approach more often than not, resulted in the organizing of one group of residents in defense of their interest against the incursions of another, often less privileged group (Chorney 1990, 199).

The impact of the failure of these approaches upon progressive planners who adopted them was both enervating and demoralizing. From an initially energetic perspective of working with the "community" and advocating their interest, after a period of highly demanding but generally unfruitful commitment, the wounded planner either gave up entirely or retreated to a safer position within the planning bureaucracy, where many simply lapsed into cynicism about the prospect of public participation.

### **5.7 Bureaucratic Planning:**

In the 1980s an alternative model developed. Based on the substantive and normative principles that characterize this model, one may perceive it as a form of bureaucratic planning. Under this model the planner did nothing to really promote participation, but rather thrived on clever rhetoric and wisdom of experience drawn from the past approaches. According to Gerecke,

The city planner of today neither promotes participation nor discourages 'real' participation. The planner plays the safe middle for her/his own self aggrandizement, manipulating every situation to the side of greatest reward, hopefully without anyone being aware of the manipulation. Likeable, knowledgeable of the system, skillful at personal relations, the planner is nothing more and nothing less than suave. (Gerecke 1991, 264).

Under the regime of bureaucratic planning, the planner became the servant of government and elected officials; often playing the role of entrepreneur in an attempt to win support for plans by gathering the resources needed to carry them out (Alexander 1986, 82). This new role for planners was driven by an overwhelming preoccupation with physical land-use and new economic development issues that occurred with the rise of globalization in the 1980s (Kiernan 199?, 69). As a result, the major substantive issues that dominated most planning agendas were large-scale, pro-development initiatives such as the creation of downtown malls and water-front rejuvenation projects. Kiernan argues that this has led to the emergence of the "public corporation" as a dominant player in urban redevelopment and this, in turn, was one of the defining characteristics of the Canadian planning scene in the 1980s (Kiernan 199?, 71). As a result, the planning principles of the late 60s and 70s were severely compromised and ultimately forgotten as the planner's role was increasingly defined by the means of improving the position of the city in the global economy, as such economic development, growth, and efficiency were at the top of his/her priorities. As for public participation, it was obviously much lower on the list. Gerecke and Reid

suggest that, during the 1980s, the laissez-faire interpretation of globalization under which planners operated, forestalled any serious attempt at participatory or ecological practices (Gerecke & Reid 1991, 66).

### **5.8 Contemporary Planning Practice:**

Contemporary planning appears, on the surface, to be a continuation of the various practices that were established in the 1980s: municipal planning practice is still very much confined to pragmatic issues related to physical land-use, subdivision design, and zoning approvals; planners, perhaps more than ever before, firmly believe that the pursuit of economic development will solve the problems of the city; and finally, most planners still hold on to the persistent notion that planning is essentially a rational-technocratic, professional enterprise. Note what a leading Canadian planning practitioner has to say about the role of today's profession:

Modern planning is about effecting positive change in our communities, recognizing that this is more likely to occur through *forethought and strategic thinking* than through spontaneous decision-making. Modern planning can identify and *capitalize on opportunities for economic growth*; it can build commitment for the rejuvenation of core areas; *it can promote the effective and efficient provision of services*. They are *experts* at process. They *facilitate the understanding* of the geographic, cultural, social and economic forces that embody not only our neighborhoods and cities, but the regional and global contexts within which they operate. Through their *expertise*, planners promote the sustainability of our cities. (Couture, 1995, 8), (my italics)

It is interesting that upon inspection, one can see little difference between the underlying narcissism expressed in the above quote with those which described the role of the emerging profession at the beginning of the century.

However, there is evidence to suggest that there is a slight difference between planning today and that of the previous decade. One may argue, that there appears to be a greater acknowledgement among planning practitioners of the need for more

meaningful public involvement in the planning process; especially in the formation and design of official municipal plans as well as an alternative role for planners within the process.

With respect to the latter, there appears to be a push by a handful of progressive planning practitioners for a shift from the traditional professional role of the planner as a "provider" to that of "enabler." (Ashton, Rowe & Simpson 1994, 19). Rather than being the "expert" or "decision-maker," they envision the planner as, more-or-less, a resource person who helps communities help themselves. A planner who "enables" communities is one who supports and encourages community initiatives and respects the direction in which the community wishes to move.

As for public involvement, almost every urban area throughout North America, that has created a municipal or community plan within the last five years make at least passing reference to the role that citizen participation has played somewhere in their plan-making process (Berry, Portney, & Thompson 1993). Several planning documents (for example - Winnipeg's *CentrePlan* and Vancouver's *CityPlan*) even go so far as to maintain that their plans were entirely driven by a "...process committed to consensus-building and inclusion, through intensive public consultation." (CentrePlan 1994, 5).

Closer inspection reveals the stark reality of such claims, which were observed when we noted that less than one percent of Winnipeg's citizens were directly involved in *CentrePlan*. Still, one cannot ignore the overall significance of this apparent transition toward more democratic principles, as it gives rise to various questions. For example, have planners come to realize the possibility for positive change through the challenge of public participation, while at the same time, realizing the limitations of their own professional expertise? Or, is this an insidious form of placation, by which planners desire to legitimize their plans to gain public acceptance, or worse yet, to

abdicate responsibility and blame in case of failure? In reality, it is probably a combination of the two. Harold Chorney has some interesting insight into these questions.

Chorney maintains that while the government has no desire to see the planning process become a catalyst for radical politicization, they have come to see the wisdom of a limited depoliticized participatory planning. Indeed, a number of provincial governments have introduced legislation that allows for this kind of participation, as well as more generally encouraging greater political participation in the local government process (Chorney 1990). There is, perhaps, increasing realization among politicians and planners that some degree of participation is desirable not only for legitimation purposes, but also due to the belief that, along with other "helping-professions", the technical-rational, top-down approach of planning has failed and thus some degree of community is necessary in order to restore or compensate for what has been lost. Thus, the total withdrawal of planners from participatory approaches is not considered desirable by the state. The problem for planners, however, is that with the evolution of a largely fragmented citizenry and disorganized community, these alternative and more progressive modes of democratic decision-making may not be forthcoming in the foreseeable future.

Chorney maintains that the decline in community in the last century, that can be witnessed throughout the metropolises of North America and Europe, has engendered a set of public policies designed to restore or compensate for what has been lost. He gives several examples of various social programs, like Neighborhood Watch, that have recently been established to teach urban residents how to become neighbourly again in order to control such things as crime. Programs such as these, he argues, are necessary because of the inability and failure of the state to cope with such problems. Moreover, he points out that the dilemma that government now faces is how

to re-teach these community skills that were once second nature to citizens (Chorney 1990, 191).

Chorney concludes that the disintegration of community and citizenship that forms the backdrop for the changing nature of public policy in the urban political economy is especially evident in the demands placed upon society in the realm of urban planning and was precipitated in the first place by the historical nature of this profession (Chorney 1991, 190).

Because of the success of the power of the dominating professional over the last century in establishing its hegemony over citizenship, it has nearly abolished the opportunity for effective dissenting visions of any alternative mode of decision making. In the process it may have killed off some of the very things it needs in order to continue to function successfully as a profession. The resulting decline in citizenship has also contributed to the growing sense of anomie within the metropolis as well as aiding in the creation of a culture which no longer wishes to commit itself to the public sphere. The theology of power, under which traditional-rational planning has so prospered throughout its brief history, has paradoxically marginalized the the whole ideal of inclusiveness and therefore that of sensible change. Ironically, opposition on the part of citizens has become a refusal to participate in the process altogether.

Unfortunately, planners have failed to comprehend the complexities of these inherent difficulties with mass participation. Interestingly, planners have been quick to deflect their disappointment by pointing out that an apathetic public has been the participatory movement's greatest deterrent. By employing a term that connotes such negative qualities as indifference, lack of interest, and laziness, planners have left no uncertainty as to whom the blame should be focused on. In doing so, planners may be treading on thin ice. By not fully understanding the complex reasons why the "average" citizen is no longer interested in committing himself or herself to public

participation, planners may be too quick to dismiss the participatory movement entirely. It is obvious what the resulting negative implications of a wholesale dismissal of public participation would mean for the possibility of enhancing a greater sense of citizenship. What is less obvious, however, is what impact it might have on the future of the planning profession.

### **5.9 Conclusion:**

The practice of planning, in the modern sense, began in the early decades of this century. But to trace its ideological roots, we went back to the early nineteenth century, to the work of Henri de Saint Simon and Auguste Comte, in which the vision of science working in the service of humanity took shape. From there, we then looked at the visions of the utopian planners and the emergence of the institutionalization of planning in Canada. What becomes strikingly apparent throughout its brief history is how planning emerged as a distinctive practice with its emphasis on technical reason and social rationality. Planners have claimed that their advanced degrees in relevant disciplines and professional fields gave them privileged access to scientific knowledge and technical know-how. They have also claimed that this knowledge is generally superior to knowledge gained in other ways (from practical experience, for example). In this respect, they elevated themselves to special status as "experts", resulting in a public reality dominated by the aura of professional elites. This has taken place for a long enough period of time that few citizens are now prepared or desire to speak out on the important issues which may affect their lives.

It is my contention that the public's lack of interest is not tied to apathy, but rather, to standing apart from the experts. Citizens simply have become, over time, intimidated into silence by a profession dominated by rational thought. Interestingly however, in spite of the complaining citizens may do, they still harbor a remarkably

durable trust in their experts. Those professional elites, they believe, are made up of the people who have been trained and chosen to deliver the correct and thus best results. Essentially, modern planners, through their various substantive, normative, and procedural practices have, over time, encouraged (or at least aided in the creation of) an urban society devoid of any substantial political or social consciousness.

## Chapter Six:

### ***CONCLUSION - THE FUTURE OF CITIZENSHIP, PARTICIPATION, AND URBAN PLANNING***

#### ***6.1 Introduction:***

In various forms, throughout this thesis, I have posed the following question: Why is the average citizen's political will (i.e. the need to participate in the issues that may affect their lives) growing weaker? The answer to this question, I have argued, lies deep in a contemporary culture dominated by individualism and is very much related to society's movement toward expertism. The gap between the public and elites is an ever expanding one.

As I have shown, this trend is produced by our culture of technocracy. Our culture places a high value on the exercise of technical control over as many aspects of the human environment as it can - the economy, social welfare, threats to health and longevity, and the physical environment. As we have seen, the method our culture has chosen for exercising such control is the application of expert thinking in almost every profession.

My thesis is that the culture of technocracy that planners have, in part, helped create, is undermining the average citizen's ability and desire to involve him or herself in the serious planning exercises that will invariably affect their lives. The average citizen has lost his/her capability for active citizenship because our culture of technocracy, supported by individualism, has developed a series of assumptions that work against bringing them into constructive participation.

Briefly, in order to summarize, our culture of technocracy assumes: 1. that policy decisions depend essentially on a high degree of specialized knowledge and skills; 2. that only experts possess this knowledge; and, 3. that average citizens lack the relevant knowledge, are concerned largely with their own private interests, and are

generally apathetic. Essentially, the relationship between the experts and the public is the result of a deep-rooted cultural trend that elevates the specialized knowledge of the expert to a place of high honor while denigrating the value of the public's contribution - the possibility for a high level of thoughtful and responsible citizen participation.

Before I go further, I would like to point out that for several reasons, developing an alternative model is not a simple task. If one is not careful, it is easy to fall into the opposite trap: the trap of anti-intellectualism and antirational sentimentality, which endows the folk wisdom of the public with special mystical qualities. This has not been my intention, as ultimately this is the path of demagoguery, and it is perhaps worse than the distortions it seeks to correct.

Rather, the final chapter of this thesis will present a means by which planners along with the public, may combat the institutional and societal barriers to effective citizen participation that our culture of technocracy has constructed. I propose that the key to more successful and meaningful public participation within the planning process, lies in the creation of a new, more egalitarian balance between citizens and experts (in this case, planners). The assurance of this new equilibrium is not only an ethical obligation and responsibility for the planning profession, but that it also offers an exciting new opportunity. This is due not only to the fact that planners are in part responsible for the creation of our present dilemma, but also because it offers an opportunity to escape the crisis of legitimacy that the profession is presently facing.

The idea of a new balance between citizens and experts is influenced by Jurgen Habermas's *Theory of Communicative Action* (Habermas 1987), which is based on his concept of rationality as the ability of people to reach mutual understanding even when interests, cultural frameworks, and languages conflict. This contrasts with the conventional definition of rationality as an exclusive thought-process

possessed by a select few individuals. The goals of communicative action are to permit all people to comprehend each other well enough so that common goals and understandings are possible. In Habermas's view, communicative action is the key to building a true participatory democracy.

Communicative action, he urges, is a form of reason just as compelling as those embedded in our technology and objectivist modes of knowing. Reason is not the sole proprietorship of experts. Nor is the highest expression of human rationality technical expertise, but rather, ordinary people speaking and reasoning together on issues of common concern. In Habermas's own words, part of every citizen's natural endowment is "a gentle but obstinate, a never silent although seldom redeemed claim to reason, a claim that must be recognized whenever and wherever there is to be consensual action." (Habermas, quoted in Bernstein 1985, 20). Unfortunately, however, in most people this natural endowment is presently in a dormant state and thus must be revived. I would argue, that if roused, this "claim to reason" can eventually lead to the kind of open dialogue among citizens, experts, and leaders in which there is give-and-take, two-way communication rather than monologue and the genuine encounter between planners and citizens on which meaningful participation ultimately depends.

Thus the question remains: What can we as a profession do to curb the excesses of our Culture of Technocracy and in doing so, narrow the expert-public gap? The purpose of this chapter is to address this question.

## ***6.2 Correcting The Expert-Public Gap:***

If true participation in the planning process is ever to take place, no goal is more critical than bringing the expert-public relationship into better balance. For decades now, a vicious cycle has been unfolding: as the experts usurp more and more of the

citizens' decision making, the public slumps ever more into communities devoid of true citizenship. As a result people have forgotten, or rather, their memory has been erased, as to what it means to be a citizen, or indeed, what it means to be a **responsible** citizen. In today's society, citizenship is largely a matter of rights and of voting. People are far more mindful of the rights of citizenship than of its obligations. The general view is "This is a free country. I have the right to say what's on my mind, move wherever and whenever I want, and do whatever I want so long as it doesn't interfere with the rights of others." Citizenship is no longer tied through friendship, to particular poles rooted in common beliefs, it instead has become an abstraction of the law. This is an extremely narrow view of citizenship.

According to Murray Bookchin, author of *The Rise of Urbanization and the Decline of Citizenship*, the ideal notion of citizenship was best represented by the Ancient Greeks. For him,

The Greek citizen ideal, differed very profoundly from the modern. It was not simply some specious myth of shared heredity that united citizens of the polis with each other but a profoundly cultural conception of personal development - the Greek notion of *Paideia*. *Paideia* is normally translated into English as education, a term that is notable for its sparseness and limitations. To the Greeks, particularly the Athenians, the word meant considerably more. It expresses a creative integration of the individual into his environment, a balance that demands a critical mind with a wide-ranging sense of duty. Excellence in public life was as crucial to an Athenian's character development as excellence in his personal life. The polis was not only a treasured end in itself; it was the "school" in which the citizen's highest virtues were formed and found expression. Politics, in turn, was not only concerned with administering the affairs of the polis but also with educating the citizen as a public being who developed the competence to act in the public interest. *Paideia*, in effect, was a form of civic schooling as well as personal training. It rooted civic commitment in independence of mind (*philia*), and a deep sense of public responsibility. (Bookchin 1987, 59).

What strategies and tactics might planners employ in order to aid in the reduction of the expert-public gap? It would be naive to minimize the scope of the

task. Success requires not only changes in the existing planning profession, but also in other existing professional institutions, such as the media to name just one. Moreover, and this point is critical to my thesis, changes need to occur on both sides of the expert-public gap: the public has to change as well as the experts. First, however, lets us explore what planners can do to reduce the expert-public gap and thus encourage citizenship and true participation.

### **6.3 The Responsibility of the Planner:**

John Forester, in his insightful book, *Planning In The Face Of Power*, posed a similar question to the one in which I am attempting to explore: "What can planners, when they are so inclined, do to foster more genuinely democratic politics in their communities?" (Forester 1989, 9). What I would like to do is briefly present his views, which I might add were also very much influenced by Habermas, and in doing so explore an important avenue which I feel would contribute greatly to Forester's thesis, namely that the public, and not just planners, have a responsibility for enhancing their own participatory practices.

Central to Forester's thesis is that planners can influence the conditions that render citizens able or unable to participate within the planning process. For him, the keys to this exercise are twofold: the control and dissemination of information, and the ability to listen effectively.

With respect to the former, Forester argues that there are several ways that information can be a source of power, each one reflecting the various perspectives or approaches to planning. He believes that each perspective suggests a different basis of power that planners may cultivate in their practice (Forester 1989, 29). For example, on the one extreme is that of the technician which supposes that power lies in technical information: knowing where the data can be found, which questions to ask,

and how to perform the relevant data analysis. Here, because information supplies solutions to technical problems, it is deemed a source of power. This is obviously the most traditional view of planning in that it avoids the whole issue of its inherent political nature. For this chapter, however, I am more interested in Forester's interpretation of the opposite pole, the progressive planner's perspective of information as a source of power. Here he argues that the planner approaches information as a power source because it has enabling and ultimately empowering capabilities for the average citizen. One way in which the planner may use information as a source of power would be for him/her to call attention to the structural, organizational, and political barriers that distort the information citizens rely on to act (Forester 1989, 31). Thus, Forester equates the power of information with the realization of citizen action. He further explains what relaying good information entails: "In every interaction, a speaker may speak more or less comprehensibly, sincerely, appropriately or legitimately in the context at hand, and accurately" (Forester 1989, 37). The extent to which planners adhere to these principles will be realized in the quality of information that they wish to convey to the public. Of central importance to Forester's perspective is that planners, above all, seek to provide information to what he refers to as the "affected but unorganized", or what I would characterize as the average citizen. (Forester 1989, 40). In working toward this goal Forester (Forester 1989, 155-156) developed the following list of suggestions that planners can integrate in their daily practice:

Notify less-organized interests early in any planning process affecting them (the more organized groups whose business it is to have such information will hardly need the same attention - thus also focus on average citizens.);

Educate citizens and community organizations about the planning process and both formal and informal 'rules of the game';

Supply technical and political information to citizens to enable informed, effective political participation;

Emphasize to community interests both the importance of building their own power even before negotiations begin and the importance of effective participation and negotiation in informal processes of project review;

Listen carefully to gauge the concerns and interests of all participants in the planning process to anticipate likely political obstacles, struggles, and opportunities;

Anticipate political-economic pressures shaping design and project decisions and compensate for them, anticipating and counteracting private raids on the public purse by, for example, encouraging coalitions of affected citizens and soliciting political pressure from them to counter other interests that might threaten the public.

The second enabling key to citizen participation, for Forester, is the ability of planners to listen to others (i.e., the public, politicians, and colleagues) carefully and critically. This I believe is where Forester's insights are most profound and where contemporary planning has most faltered and continues to do so. According to Forester, as planners, when we fail to listen, we fail to learn, and in doing so damage our working relationship with the public. He puts it best when he states,

Our failure to listen neglects far more than information; it denies common membership in a common world of action - the city, the organization, or more private relationships. We can quickly cut ourselves off from others, weaken our ties, undercut mutual trust, and undermine our abilities to act together in the future. To listen well inevitably means to ask questions about deeper interests, future possibilities, and reformulations of the problems we seem to face. To ask such questions is at once to educate and to organize, to probe for new possibilities of action, to call into question conventional assumptions and expectations, and to assess new strategies and relationships (Forester 1989, 110).

Thus Forester believes that by planners being truly attentive to citizens - demonstrating an attitude of caring involvement and critical inquiry - they can then foster mutuality and dialogue. By offering an opportunity for reciprocity, planners can encourage others' voice, action, and self-understanding. Following from Forester's thesis, through listening critically, it would be possible for planners to build

relationships, to uncover fears, explore ambiguity and ultimately narrow the chasm that exists between the expert and the public. It is only when this occurs that planners can possibly hope to engage the average citizen in meaningful involvement within the planning process. This, however, is a difficult and time-consuming task. It takes more than just the political will to do it. ("Political Will", unfortunately, is a term that I feel carries far too much weight in political discourse.) Will is easy! On the part of planners it will require *commitment*, *patience*, and an overwhelming *passion* in the belief in the importance of public participation.

#### **6.4 The Responsibility of the Public:**

As I previously stated, it would be arrogant to suppose that planners alone could alter the relationship that has, over a period of time, been institutionalized within our society among our so-called professional elite and average citizen. This is something that Forester fails to acknowledge. The road to change must be taken up, not only by planners, but by the public as well, or it will invariably result in a dead-end. The planning profession must encourage this change and the public must want it. At the risk of over-extending the analogy, it will be a bumpy road, full of massive pot-holes, steep hills and meandering turns, but in the end I am confident that this arduous journey, once completed, will be a rewarding one.

In this chapter's section, I wish to employ the work of Daniel Yankelovich whose unique book, *Coming to Public Judgment: Making Democracy Work in a Complex World*, has been helpful in understanding the public's responsibility for enhancing their own citizenship. The strategy that he poses in his book is that in order to narrow the expert-public gap, the public must strengthen their own form of public opinion, or what he refers to as "Public Judgment." What he means by Public Judgment is a special form of public opinion that exhibits on the part of citizens (1)

more thoughtfulness, more weighing of alternatives, more genuine engagement with the issue, more taking into account a wide variety of factors than ordinary public opinion, and (2) more emphasis on the normative, ethical side of questions than on the factual, informational side (Yankelovich 1991, 5). Thus, what Yankelovich is referring to is a state of highly developed participation that can exist only once people have engaged an issue, considered it from all sides, understood the choices it leads to, and accepted the full consequences of the choices they make. Judgment in this sense, is an old-fashioned word, much valued in society before the current age of expertism and information.

In order to explain this concept a little further, let me refer to an American historian, Paul Gagnon as he describes Public Judgment. According to him, it is an indispensable quality citizens in a democracy must possess to raise the level of public debate. It implies the ability

to question stereotypes... to discern the difference between fact and conjecture... to distrust the simple answer and the dismissive explanation... to realize that all problems do not have solutions... to be prepared for the irrational, the accidental in human affairs... to grasp the power of ideas and character in history... to accept the burden of living with tentative answers, with unfinished and often dangerous business... to accept costs and compromises, to honor the interests of others while pursuing their own... to respect the needs of future generations, to speak the truth and do the right things when falsehood and the wrong thing would be profitable, and generally to restrain appetites and expectation - all this while working to inform themselves on the multiple problems and choices their elected officials confront. (Paul Gagnon 1988, 44)

What makes Yankelovich's concept of Public Judgment so useful for our purposes, is that he moves beyond the realm of theory and into the practical. In his book he outlines a three-stage process through which the public must evolve in order to move from mere mass opinion to Public Judgment. Beyond this, I wish to develop various strategies that planners might employ to aid citizens in their development toward meaningful public participation. Let me first briefly outline Yankelovich's

various stages through which citizens must proceed in order to deal effectively with any one particular issue (see: Yankelovich 1991, 63-65).

### *Stage 1: Consciousness Raising*

Consciousness raising is the stage in which the public learns about an issue and becomes aware of its existence and meaning. It means more than mere awareness. One can be aware of an issue without feeling that it is important or that anything needs to be done about it. When one's consciousness is raised, not only does awareness grow but so does concern and readiness for action. With respect to planners, their role could be to aid in the raising of the public's consciousness about the important issues affecting their communities.

### *Stage 2: Working Through*

Once the consciousness-raising stage has been completed, the individual then must confront the need for change. To an extraordinary degree, the requirements of the working-through stage differ from those of consciousness raising. When working through, people must abandon the passive-receptive mode that works well enough for consciousness raising. They must become actively engaged and involved. Rarely is working through completed quickly. Typically, it takes an irreducible period of time - much longer than the time needed to convey and absorb new information. The length of time depends on the emotional significance of the change to the individual. It is largely an internal process that individuals have to work at and ultimately achieve for themselves.

### *Stage 3: Resolution:*

This stage is the result of successful consciousness raising and working through on the part of the public on a particular issue. Resolution is multifaceted. On any issue, to complete working through successfully, the public must resolve where it stands cognitively, emotionally, and morally.

Cognitive resolution requires that people clarify fuzzy thinking, reconcile inconsistencies, break down the walls of the artificial compartmentalizing that keeps them from recognizing related aspects of the same issue, take relevant facts and new realities into account, and grasp the consequences of various choices with which they are presented.

Emotional resolution means that people have to confront their own ambivalent feelings, accommodate themselves to unwelcome realities, and overcome their urge to procrastinate and to avoid the issue. Of all the obstacles to resolution, none is more difficult to overcome than the need to reconcile deeply felt conflicting values.

In arriving at moral resolution, people's first impulse is to put themselves and their own needs and desires ahead of their ethical commitments. But once they have time to reflect on their choices, the ethical dimension comes into play and people struggle to do the right thing.

### ***6.5 Strategies and Tactics:***

The crux of Yankelovich's argument is that citizens must come to the understanding that making an intelligent contribution is hard work. In order to meaningfully participate in the decisions and issues that will affect their lives, citizens must be as equally committed as planners. To enhance citizenship, the adversarial relationship between all experts and the public must be transformed into a cooperative, mutually supportive one. There is no need for conflict. The experts should not permit personal values to preempt the rights of citizens to make their own value judgments and the public should be committed to educating themselves on the various issues and not try to play amateur expert .

So what strategies and tactics might be employed in order to have the best chance to accomplish these goals and how much confidence can one have that they

will do the job?

### **6.5.1 The Media:**

If citizenship is to be realized, the critical lever of action is cultural change and perhaps the single greatest present-day cultural influencer are the media. Interestingly, in recent years, the media have grown increasingly conscious of their vast influence; they take pride in it, but do not quite know what to do with it. They are more comfortable when criticizing others than being criticized, and they tend to be thin-skinned, and defensive.

Despite these drawbacks, it is worthwhile, indeed indispensable, to find a way to work with them. I believe they hold enormous potential for strengthening citizenship. In order to advance quality public opinion, it would be beneficial for planners to support and work with those in the media who see the standard for measuring journalism to be its effect on the quality of public deliberations. Consciousness raising alone and presenting expert facts do not by themselves do the job the communications media should be doing. Media that tell the public everything about an issue except what its choices are have not done their job. As was noted, the evolution of sound public opinion is a three-step process: from consciousness raising to working through to resolution. In blocking out the working-through stage, the media inadvertently make the task of forming public judgment almost impossible. If the media could somehow involve themselves in the working-through stage of public opinion as skillfully as they now carry out the consciousness-raising stage, the quality of public opinion and ultimately participation would improve immensely.

The media should also play a more central role in modifying the dominant culture's concept of what it means to be a good citizen. Instead of always focusing its attention on the kind of hero-individuals that were mentioned in Chapter Four, the

media should instead promote the work of those individuals and groups that, in various ways, enhance citizenship through the positive work they do within the community.

But to interest the media in raising the public's consciousness about the broader reaches of citizenship requires that the media raise their own level of consciousness. Unfortunately, like so many institutions, the media have a grand vision of their mission (most of all as guarantors of free speech) but a narrow interpretation of how to implement it. The media accept, indeed welcome, the challenge of informing and influencing public opinion (after all, that and of course entertaining the public is their business), but as we have seen they too often equate this task largely with simply conveying information.

### ***6.5.2 Reducing Epistemological Anxiety:***

In previous chapters I have shown that the positions of honor and status go to those who are perceived to be the most skillful and knowledgeable, and in our culture that is the professional. Being special means being different from the mass, a cut above. For some, it is wealth or physical appearance that confirms their special status. For the professionals, their status derives from their expertise. It is their prize possession, the source of not only their livelihood but their status and self-image. It distinguishes them from the majority of society by giving them a privileged vantage point, as befitting people who are "special." They naturally resist when someone comes along and says to them, in effect, "You are less special than you think. The expertise you possess does not make you superior to the public simply because you are better informed."

This form of resistance is what Yankelovich terms Epistemological Anxiety (Yankelovich 1991, 182-184). It is an anxiety that is created when an expert feels

his/her status being threatened or expertise devalued. It is inevitable, that when you suggest putting the so-called uneducated and untrained on the same level with the well-educated that the common reaction would be for the latter to clutch even tighter to their perceived power. Epistemological Anxiety thus creates in some experts a kind of primal fear of public participation which ultimately results in a lack of commitment to it. Yankelovich states, that

It is the tinge of epistemological anxiety experts feel when anyone suggests that their habitual cognitive style - the information-driven modes of knowing on which they rely day in and day out - are less authoritative, narrower, and more inadequate than they have assumed. Taken together these resistances form a formidable obstacle to public participation (Yankelovich 1991, 253).

I believe that the task of creating the conditions for reducing such anxiety among experts could fall on the shoulders of planners (Indeed, it should entice many other professions as well, as accomplishing it also requires a high-level of expertise!). While it is a difficult resistance to counter, it is by no means impossible, as there are several very self-confident planners who are not in the least threatened by engaging the public in dialogue. It is they, I feel, who could lead the way. Indeed, they may not see the point in doing so, or understand how to do it skillfully, but they might be receptive if they came to understand its value and purpose. Once all planners come to understand that a populist attack on their credentials is not being mounted, they need not be defensive about protecting their turf. Once thoughtful planners understand that they are being unnecessarily self-protective of their habitual modes of dealing with reality, and that they are thereby blocking their own personal growth, the anxiety they feel should eventually loosen its grip.

### **6.5.3 Conversation and the Need for "Third Places":**

One way in which planners can aid in the promotion of meaningful public

discourse is the subject of an interesting book by Ray Oldenburg, *The Great Good Place: Cafes, Coffee Shops, Community Centers, Beauty Parlors, General Stores, Bars, Hangouts and How They Get You through the Day*. His central argument is that the decline of participatory democracy may be directly related to the disappearance of what he terms "third places" - a number of which are noted in the title of his book (Oldenburg 1989). He argues that civic life requires settings in which people meet as equals, without regard to race, class, or national origins. Unfortunately, however, as neighborhood hangouts give way to suburban shopping malls, the essentially political art of conversation is rapidly disappearing and is instead being replaced by mere shoptalk or idle gossip. (Oldenburg 1989).

Interestingly, Bookchin provides us with a historical account of the importance of physical space for turning citizenship from a periodic institutional ritual into a living, everyday practice. He identifies the agora as the indispensable open space, where the citizens discussed business affairs, gossiped, met friends, occasionally philosophized, and almost certainly engaged in vigorous political discussion (Bookchin 1987, 61).

In its emphasis on direct, almost protoplasmic contact, full participatory involvement and its delight in variety and diversity, there is a sense in which the agora formed the space for a genuine ecological community within the polis itself. Thus politics originated in the daily ferment of ordinary life in the agora. Its informal genesis reveals the organic way in which important policies slowly developed into popular ideas before they were formulated as verdicts and laws in the courts and official assemblages of the polis. The democratic institutions of Athens, for all the ritualistic panoply that surrounded them were merely the structural forms in which everyday debate and gossip were hardened into the legislated expression of an easy-going, unstructured, and popular politics - one that was embodied by and earnest, spontaneous, and an extraordinary active citizenry. (Bookchin 1987, 62).

Oldenburg and Bookchin illustrate how the physical environment might foster citizenship. If the re-emergence of citizenship depends on the ability of individuals to partake in meaningful discourse, there must be appropriate places for this to take

place. Urban planners should always be aware of what affect the physical environment of a future development may have on either creating or disuading citizenship and always work to ensure that various "third-places" are included.

#### **6.5.4 Recognition of Power Structures:**

If planners continue to preempt community involvement by defining problems as overly technical or as too complex for non-professionals to understand, they may further engender political passivity, dependency and ignorance. Thus planners must assess encompassing power structures and recognize how their own actions can work either to discourage or to encourage citizen organizing. A brief example will further illustrate my point.

The replacement of informal associations by formal systems of socialization and control weakens social trust, undermines the willingness both to assume responsibility for oneself and to hold others accountable for their actions, destroys respect for authority, and thus turns out to be self-defeating. Consider the fate of neighborhoods, which serve so effectively, at their best, as intermediaries between the family and the larger world. Neighborhoods have been destroyed not only by the market - by crime and drugs or less dramatically by suburban shopping malls - but also by enlightened social engineering. The main thrust of social policy, ever since the first crusades against child labor, has been to transfer the care of children from informal settings to institutions designed specifically for pedagogical and custodial purposes. Today this trend continues in the movement for day care, often justified on the undeniable grounds that working mothers need it but also on the grounds that day care centers can take advantage of the latest innovations in pedagogy and child psychology. This policy of segregating children in age-graded institutions under professional supervision has been criticized some time ago by Jane Jacobs in *The Death and Life*

of *Great American Cities*, an attack on city planning that applies to social planning in general. She stated that, "The myth that playgrounds and grass and hired guards or supervisors are innately wholesome for children and that city streets, filled with ordinary people, are innately evil for children, boils down to a deep contempt for ordinary people." In their contempt planners lose sight of the way in which city streets, if they are working as they should, teach children a lesson that cannot be taught by educators or professional caretakers: that "people must take a modicum of public responsibility for each other even if they have no ties to each other." When the corner grocer or the locksmith scolds a child for running into the street, the child learns something that can't be learned simply by formal instruction. What the child learns is that adults unrelated to one another except by the accident of propinquity uphold certain standards and assume responsibility for the neighborhood. With good reason, Jacobs calls this the "first fundamental of successful city life," one that "people hired to look after children cannot teach because the essence of this responsibility is that you do it without being hired." Neighbourhoods encourage "casual public trust," according to Jacobs. In its absence the everyday maintenance of life has to be turned over to the expert.

Ideally, what is needed to reverse this creeping expertism is a new public philosophy for the twenty-first century. One which would give more weight to the community and citizen responsibility than to the expert. One that would stress the importance of vigorous public debate over information.

As we have seen, it is the act of articulating and defending our views that lifts them out of the category of mere "opinions," gives them shape and definition. In short, we come to know our minds only by explaining ourselves to others. In promoting more participatory practices, planners offer an educational form of democracy, as it extends the circle of debate as widely as as possible and thus forces all citizens to articulate

their views, to put their views at risk, and to cultivate the virtues of eloquence, clarity of thought and expression, and sound judgment.

#### ***6.5.5 The Formalization of Citizenship:***

With the rise of individualism in society one of the most commonly heard reasons for not participating - is one's lack of time. Indeed, between one's career, family life, and need for leisure, it appears to be a reasonable excuse. Saul, however, does not accept this stance, instead he suggests that our culture uses time as a weapon (Saul 1995). It plays upon our fears of death or ceasing to exist. How many times have we heard the phrase, "Time is limited", "There is no time to lose", or "There is no time like the present." The whole discourse of necessity and inevitability that surrounds individualism, from corporatism on down to the payment of debts is constructed around a now-or-never threat. Time the great enemy will defeat us if we hesitate for a moment to think or to doubt. Panicked we flee toward certainty.

In the late 20th century, however, a paradox exists - individuals have never had so much time. In this century alone, Westerners have added some twenty-five years to their life-expectancy. We now have fifty percent more time to do whatever we wish. Given our general standard of living and our education, why couldn't we be using at least some of that time to think more and to replace the race toward leisure with a more responsible form of public commitment.

Look, for example, at the manner in which many people organize their lives today, from our education on through their careers. The pattern increasingly represents a desperate rush, as if driven by the threat that time will leave us behind. The result is that increasing percentages of our population are now faced by a quarter century of inactivity. We call it retirement and part of it is welcome - but twenty-five years? Traditionally, this has not been an activity (retirement) with any interest in, or

commitment to the shape of society or the individual as citizen. Moreover, over the long term, no society will be able to finance twenty-five to thirty-five years of retirement. So why not take five to ten years at the end of a life and transfer it to the beginning. In other words, why not actually make some humanist use of the time won through longer life-expectancy.

The problem, however, is that such an approach, inserting citizenship into a more formal aspect of our lives, would ultimately change the dynamics of society, and that would not be in the best interest of the corporate elite. Corporatist society has structured itself so as to eliminate citizen participation in public affairs, except through the isolated act of voting and through voluntary activities. These voluntary activities involve sacrificing time which has been put aside, formally, for other activities. Thus sports, meals, holidays, to say nothing of work, are actually structured into our financial and social reward system. Citizen participation, however, is not. In fact, almost everything we do, except our participation as citizens is formally structured into our social system. And yet, by simply formalizing the citizen's participation - that is by setting aside a certain number of hours a week through our structuring of the official activities of the individual - we would be able to launch large numbers of people into public activity.

With respect to how we might possibly formalize citizenship, let's take the example of post-secondary education. Previously, I mentioned how many people in society are desperately front-end loading their lives with education and careers so that they may have an increasingly longer retirement period. As a result, we are seeing more and more university graduates with little or no basic education, because the requirements of the job market (technical skills) so influence the courses required for their degrees. Universities are presently churning out twenty-one year old specialists, equipped with no historical and ethical context, and no sense of the larger shape of

society. (Moreover, how many university students graduate without ever having to actually read a book [a science text-book doesn't qualify] or even write a term paper?)

It seems to me that there is ample time for serious periods of experience in public service before entering into thirty or thirty-five years of a career. So why not make it a requirement? Why not take the time to give a solid, well-rounded undergraduate education. In other words, a humanist education to future business students, medical students and economists, before allowing them to narrow their minds through specialization. This would have an important impact on their approach once they are unleashed upon society. For one thing, it would strengthen their sense of existing outside of their professions as responsible citizens. For another, it would allow them to appreciate and understand participatory processes. For those young people not interested in university, why not require a mandatory period of time, upon graduation from high school, for some form of voluntary public involvement? This way, young people might (re)learn civic obligation, responsibility, and what it means to be a citizen in today's society.

## **6.6 Conclusion:**

I should like to stress that this final chapter is intended not as a definitive "last word," but only as a first step toward the renewal of a structurally sensitive, practically engaged, ethical and political alternative for future planning practices. Ultimately, however, it is about changes in our dynamic. Change in not only the way professionals perceive themselves and the society in which they wish to help, but also in the way citizens' perceive the experts and invariably themselves. For planners to realize this goal, key to their success is the exploration of the management of citizen's attention: how authorities make decisions, how economic and bureaucratic power sets agendas, and how subtle political and cultural forces shape citizens' conceptions of

their own needs.

For citizens alike, their responsibility is equally great. The citizens of today understand the freedom they possess, appreciate its value, defend its prerogatives. But they are confused when it comes to recognizing the social obligations that make their freedom possible in the first place. They are, in a word, unclear about what it means meaningfully to participate. In order for us all to expect a political voice, we must begin to travel the long road toward Yankelovich's concept of Public Judgment or good-quality public opinion.

Thus to resolve the expert-public gap, two things must happen. The first is that the public's freedom to contribute to self-governance must be revived, strengthened and built-up. Second, expert resistance to having this happen must be reduced.

When experts, influenced by the Culture of Technocracy, conceive of themselves and the knowledge they hold as something separate and apart from everyday life - the property of a trained class of specialists - then the deepest ideals of citizenship will continue to be a fading memory. Reason is not the exclusive property of a class of experts whose training and credentials certify the possession of a special endowment. Reason is a more humble, more universal, more democratic gift.

For me, these are stunning insights. They mold a vision of democracy that encourages people to listen to each other and to weigh each other's view seriously. It is a vision of planning practice that involves those who wish to make the necessary sacrifices to be involved. Finally, it is a vision of what it means to be citizen in an extremely complex world.

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