

Geographies of Power and Participatory Planning: Community Case Studies from Ecuador and the U.S.¹

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Abstract:

Geographies of power are inscribed in urban streets and rural roads, in the design of public space, and in the availability of shelter. They also are inscribed in the mix of flora and fauna, or their disappearance, in the flow of water and the condition of the air. But pockets of resistance do exist to the bold inscription of power on the landscape. Participatory planning is an important weapon in that resistance, because together with certain other fields, applied anthropology has become involved with theories and methods of participatory planning. Sometimes it means working with full-scale community development and sometimes it means eliciting community input into planning more focused projects such as green space protection, handicrafts production, disability services, or bilingual education. In this essay we contrast selected approaches to participatory planning, using two case examples. One is from rainforest Ecuador and one from a "Visioning Process" in the U.S. We focus on how social organization and power are handled in these participatory planning examples.

Participatory Planning

At its simplest, participatory planning has sometimes been reduced to holding a public meeting to facilitate community dialogue and formulate a "plan." The effectiveness of such a one-shot approach must be questioned. Selener defines "participatory action research" as a more sustained community planning process, "a process through which members of an oppressed group or community identify a problem, collect and analyze information, and act upon the problem in order to find solutions and to promote social and political transformation" (1997, 17). This definition combines research, education, and action. The most complicated and sustained approach to participatory planning is full-blown community development.

Community development has its roots in Latin America, drawing on the work of Paulo Freire (Freire and Macedo 2000) and other 1960s radicals and includes a concern with "critical thinking, critical consciousness, conscientization, and empowerment. . . . A distinctive characteristic of this approach is that, in the long term, those applying it hope to shift power relations within a community and, ultimately, within society as a whole" (Selener 1997, 7-8).

Even with less ambitious objectives, participatory planning usually includes compiling basic contextual information; e.g., community history, needs and problems assessment, available organizational and financial resources. Such compilation promotes forums for ongoing community dialogue and, sometimes, for devising a way to implement plans and evaluate long-term outcomes of community planning. In many cases,

an additional aim is to enhance the skills of community members through training and practice; such training promotes more sustained citizen involvement and increases the likelihood of success.

Research in Participatory Planning

Good information on target issues and questions is essential, and experts can often gather this more efficiently than citizens. But as Ervin points out, "powerless or marginalized peoples frequently become angry when others define what their problems are" (2000, 199). Known as participatory action research (PAR), this process contributes to bottom-up planning and policy-making. In some settings PAR helps to ameliorate social isolation because the work goes on in groups of community members. In other settings, PAR increases dialogue and cooperation between traditionally opposed community and/or ethnic groups. Ervin points out, "A radical transformation in the lives of the people involved is possible when there is full and active participation. It is a process creating a greater awareness of community members' own resources. It is a scientific method of research that also represents a democratization of research" (2000, 200). Participatory planning often has as an explicit aim, the transfer of skills or "competencies" to community members; e.g., training them in techniques for gathering information or monitoring program outcomes.

Methods of Participatory Planning

Useful techniques for participatory planning include the following: need/problem assessment; social and or environmental impact assessment; community history

collection; organizational profiles/histories collection; community activity calendar development; and community map drawing (then and now). Photography/video production is also useful. Additional techniques include freelisting (especially but not only for environmental monitoring), problem elicitation, and the holding of gatekeeper interviews, focus groups, and large community forums, goals and priorities elicitation, and overall action plans.

Evaluation and Advocacy

The domain of evaluation and advocacy is where questions of power come up most visibly. It is all very well for citizen groups to gather information, hold dialogues, and make recommendations. But what happens then? Often, citizen groups must become involved in evaluating outcomes and conducting advocacy for particular policies or programs in order to have significant or enduring impact. Moving into that domain is difficult, but vital. Erwin comments that, “. . . participatory action research is usually associated with advocacy – the results demand improvements in the conditions of the group and require communication to other levels and sources of power within the society” (2000, 201).

Authors’ Involvement in Case Studies

We became familiar with the two cases described here through our own fieldwork. By way of introduction, we want to briefly describe the context of that fieldwork in Ecuador and in the U.S. in Arizona. Ecuador is the home of more than a hundred participatory planning projects, in the highlands, on the coast, and inland in the interior jungle. Many of these planning projects have been facilitated through the efforts of a grassroots development organization called COMUNIDEC. Fernando Moreno Arteaga has been involved with this organization for more than ten years, working at the village level in teams of specialists from multiple disciplines. Moreno was one of the trainer/facilitators and Laurie J. Price was present as an observer/interviewer in the Ecuador project, which was a meeting/workshop of twelve rainforest Indian organizations held in Puyo in 1998.

Flagstaff, Arizona, a town of about 60,000, began in 1995 to prepare for a community planning dialogue called “Flagstaff 2020 Visioning Process.” A flyer described this project as “a community partnership . . . through which the greater Flagstaff community will create a vision, goals, and action plans to balance social well-being, economic health and environmental quality

in the ongoing development of the community.” During the fall of 1996, Price taught a graduate seminar in which eight students conducted field research on Flagstaff 2020. She also attended twelve of the associated events as an observer or participant observer, analyzed interviews with 30 informants, and collected media and other contextual materials associated with the Visioning Process. In this project, these anthropologists were involved primarily as observers/archivists, as it was run by an out-of-state city planner.

Case 1: Ecuadorian Rainforest Indian Planning

This case study concerns a participatory planning project conducted among Amazon Indian groups in Pastaza, Ecuador: the Shuar, Achuar, Rainforest Quichua, Cofan, Siona, Secoya, and Huaorani. The project was motivated by the previous failure of an Indian federation, known as OPIP, to work together with an agricultural organization, SAMAY, in meeting conditions of a Conservation Grant from the European Union. Due to discord and operational problems, funds had been suspended. COMUNIDEC agreed to work with the seven different Indian tribes to help facilitate a more effective participatory planning process so that a new project could be funded. The grant monies potentially available totaled \$650,000, so there was significant incentive to accomplish effective planning. Before turning to the specific events, however, we offer some background on the some of the organizations in this planning process.

COMUNIDEC

This organization is a freestanding umbrella organization that has facilitated the work of a hundred or more grassroots development organizations in Ecuador. It is headquartered in Quito, but interacts with projects all over the country. Carlos Moreno founded and directs the organization. In 1998, at the time of this project, it had about five staff in the main office and another eight or ten community consultants. COMUNIDEC received the Paul Getty Conservation Award for its efforts with indigenous, Black, and peasant communities in Ecuador. Much of its early funding in the 1980s came from the Inter-American Foundation. However, by the 1990s Inter-American was subject to budget slashing by the U.S. Congress and COMUNIDEC had to scramble for funding from a number of other sources, including the World Wildlife Fund and the European Union. COMUNIDEC’s philosophy is expressed in this statement:

From its inception, COMUNIDEC has been rooted in a radical approach: . . . development projects should be formulated and managed by the people's own organizations in the countryside and the city, while NGOs and other actors are co-participants in these processes. . . the mission of COMUNIDEC is to transcend conventional schemes of "helping the poor" through a cultural focus on grassroots development that allows Black, Indian, and Mestizo organizations to prioritize their needs and interests in the implementation of plans and programs (Descriptive Manual 1994).

Working mainly with Indian groups, many of the COMUNIDEC-sponsored projects include community planning. In 1995, with the help of Inter-American Foundation and World Resources Institute, COMUNIDEC published a manual that describes in simple, readable style the general approach they use for PAC (*Planeamiento Andino Comunitario*) and many of their innovative group-based techniques (COMUNIDEC/Galo Ramon Valarezo 1995).

Manual de Planeamiento Andino Comunitario

In the Andes, the roots of participatory planning can be traced back to Incan times. The PAC process has six central themes: 1) developing holistic perspective (to avoid making plans problem by problem); 2) adopting objective methods for gathering information and identifying options; 3) promoting reflexive understanding of society through analysis of present conditions through comparisons; 4) encouraging better understandings of the causes of problems; 5) defining a concrete time and space to address every identified problem; and 6) drafting workable proposals for action on identified problems.

The PAC Manual states, "In Ecuador, the systemization of a grassroots planning method came about in two ways: first, as the fruit of a powerful ethnic revitalization that led indigenous groups to manage their own projects; and, second, through knowledge of Rural Participatory Diagnosis that has been accomplished by other Third World working people." Approaches known as "Methodologies of Empowerment" include cultural revitalization, project evaluation, conflict mediation, sustainable agriculture, and training in participatory planning. It is the last of these, participatory planning, that we are especially focusing on here.

COMUNIDEC is always working to refine its methods for community development; any manual is,

by definition, a snapshot in time. A variety of specific techniques are used and taught, including: community organizational histories; free listing of natural resources and their uses; group sketching of community space, past and present; family life interviewing; collecting a history of the community; formulating a sketched calendar of community activities and sketched representations of life in different parts of the community; sharing information to better understand internal and external institutions that shape or interface with the community (including relations with businesses and *mestizos*); eliciting community rules for managing natural resources, proposed solutions to problems they have sketched, and ideas for collaboration in solving problems. Many, many of the techniques are either collectively drawn representations, or have a sketched component. This makes them especially appropriate for use by a population that is not fully literate.

Structure and Events in Rainforest Indian Planning Project

A team of six COMUNIDEC staff conducted the first participatory planning workshop in Puyo in early January 1998. Getting to Puyo meant taking a six-hour trip east from Quito in the COMUNIDEC van. We gathered in a beautiful conference center, constructed in the Native style by the indigenous federation CONFENAIE (*Confederacion de Nacionalidades Indigenas del Ecuador*). It was a large circular structure accommodating 200-300 occupants. The upsloped roof was thatched with artistically woven palm lashings. About 50 people attended this training session. The official participants consisted of representatives from OPIP and SAMAY, and at least two representatives from each of twelve associations, from both the interior and the "frontera" (rapid development) zones. Most of these were community associations, but some were trans-community groups, such as conservation alliance OMAERE. Members of several different tribal groups were represented: Achuar, Shuar, Rainforest Quichua, and Huaorani.

The meeting was officially designated a *Taller de Capacitación* (training workshop). In the first three hours, COMUNIDEC staff briefly described the aims and methods of the three-day event. The Quichua speaking president of SAMAY briefly provided an overview of the problem that was being addressed, saying, "*Como pueden las organizaciones internacionales saber mejor donde queremos andar?*" ("How can the international organizations better know where we want to go [in planning and development]?")

There were three major confusions that had to be cleared up, and it took all morning. At first some of the attendees were skeptical, saying “*Un curso más?*” (One *more* training?) They had to be persuaded that this was not just one more workshop that would go nowhere.

Second, partly because of a particular warm-up exercise, participants became confused about how the session would be conducted. In this exercise, pieces of paper were passed out to attendees and they were asked to write or draw their expectations for the workshop. There was some resistance to doing this exercise and one man said, “It’s clear what we’re here for.” Eventually participants went along with the exercise. But in so doing, some got the idea that the gathering was more flexible and open-ended than a “training workshop” really is. So they started voicing opinions about various perceived community problems, such as language preservation and bilingual education, and job creation. COMUNIDEC staff and the presidents of SAMAY and OPIP both addressed this issue; e.g., saying, “*Esto es un curso, no una asamblea*” (“This is a course, not a meeting”), and “This is a workshop to learn methods so that we may hear information from each community.” Finally, the aim was clarified as learning to do the work to understand and organize the communities, not a meeting to actually make the plans for them.

Third, when some of the techniques were described in a general way, again people voiced suspicion and skepticism. One participant said very emphatically, “Communities are tired of research projects.” COMUNIDEC’s director, Carlos Moreno, explained to the group:

We are not doing research; we are doing teaching so that you can find out what you need to know in your own communities. All these activities are oriented to support the organization. It would be easy to just decide on a project, but that would not reflect the participation of communities. This is a project designed with SAMAY and OPIP. The information you get will serve the communities and associations. It is not for COMUNIDEC to publish some book.

One participant took issue with asking questions about family problems, seemingly rejecting these methods as invasive, even when done by fellow villagers. COMUNIDEC staff responded to this by assuring participants that the workshop techniques and handouts were “a guide for the work. If you don’t agree with certain questions, that’s fine.”

The afternoon sessions were configured with about 15 persons in each group. After three hours of sometimes-heated discussion about meta-issues in training and the overall planning approach, group members appeared willing to understand and approach the workshop with an open mind. The participatory techniques were winning support. In the small groups on the first day, they worked on “organizational history,” “mapping natural resources,” and “natural resource inventory methods.” In the mapping method, small groups gathered around large pieces of butcher paper on tables or on the floor. They worked collectively with markers to sketch conditions in their villages. For instance, one group sketched “*Rio Capa de Ayer*” (a pseudonym), the village of Rio Capa of about 10-20 years ago, and “*Rio Capa de Hoy*.” The picture of the “old Rio Capa” contains different kinds of animals, a jungle canopy, a river with fish in it, thatched houses constructed of natural materials, and three roads. The picture of Rio Capa of today contains about twenty roads laid out in a perpendicular pattern, no animals, few trees, little color, small square houses. In the course of completing these sketches, the participants had a dialogue about problems in the community; e.g., trees getting cut down by an outside company, contamination of the river, AIDS brought in by outsiders, lack of trash collection, inadequate sanitary system, disappearance of certain kinds of animals and plants from the area.

The next part of the workshop followed logically from the sketching exercises: participants learned to do group-based free listing interviews for natural resource monitoring. Each small group (5-8 persons) practiced collective listing of species of animals, fish, and plants they knew of and their uses. The lists were written down on large pieces of butcher paper. Then, the exercise was carried out again, asking the group to list all the species of “animals” for example, that they knew had existed in the area 10-20 years ago. The contrast in the length of the current lists and the past-time lists seemed to strike a dramatic chord for many groups.

At the end of the day, as the whole group reconvened, the large sketches and lists were attached to the assembly hall walls. When everyone walked around to view these collective products, the dialogue extended beyond the village level into a regional perspective on resources and organization. When specific methods were evaluated by the collected group, almost every technique they had learned got a “happy face” on the wall. A skeptical and distrusting attitude had evolved into a generally positive response to the workshop.

The COMUNIDEC facilitators held follow-up community and association meetings and collected planning information of various types in the year after this training workshop. OPIP then conducted a conference to draft a report based on information from, ultimately, 18 organizations. A large assembly was held to discuss the report and plan a specific proposal for European Union conservation grant funding. There was no further dissension in the participating communities about the methods being too invasive, too dominated by outsiders, or too much trouble.

Participatory planning methods of this sort have been introduced in more than a hundred Andean communities at this point, with successful outcomes in most cases. Understanding one's "back yard" and the community's social organizations in detail, and having a procedure in place to monitor environmental changes, are the first steps in protecting one's bond with the land, a core value in these settings (Ibarra Iláñez 1987; Meisch 1992). Part of the success of this participatory planning approach can be traced to the group feeling that develops. Since this grassroots research was carried out in community groups facilitated by community members, not outsiders, it facilitated dialogue and, often, the development of greater unity within communities. Of course, participatory dialogue has ancient roots in these egalitarian tribal cultures. What the new planning methods add is the capacity to develop a sketched and written record that can be accessed in the future and can be used for advocacy purposes as appropriate. In addition, because the methods are different from the traditional forms of community dialogue and participation, they also add to the likelihood that women and other under-represented constituencies will become active in new ways.

Finally, the methods can support growth of a regional resistance to encroachment. The indigenous tribes that met in Puyo to learn these methods, to synthesize information into a report, and to draft a project proposal for the European Union, are engaged in "constructing cultural identity": a pan-Indian identity. Seven different tribes, different languages, customs, concerns – and sometimes a history of hostility or conflict – are finding some common ground in participatory planning as a "language" in which to understand and support each other. This process began among indigenous groups in Ecuador in the 1960s and 1970s (KIPU 1998; Meisch 1992). The kinds of training that the COMUNIDEC workshop provided to organization representatives is key in securing their domain vis-à-vis outside settlers and unfavorable government and commercial policies. Because the

training brought together different tribal groups, it helped develop cross-tribal networks and a common "language." All of these were positive developments for tribal groups in the geography of power.

Case 2: Flagstaff 2020 Visioning Process

To reiterate from the introduction, participatory planning can include research, education, dialogue, and action. Planning of the community development type, in the long term, aims to shift power relations within a community. This is an explicit part of the COMUNIDEC approach in Ecuador. What about the Visioning Process in America?

Community Visioning

During the 1980s and 1990s, the visioning process was carried out in many American locales, and some in Canada as well. It has been used in towns as small as 5,000 people, and in large metropolitan areas with populations of a million or more. Many projects have taken place in the State of Oregon, partially supported by state planning funds; e.g., Corvallis, Portland, and Newberg (Ames 1993, 1997). In the visioning process a community engages with these four questions: 1) Where are we now?; 2) Where are we going?; 3) Where do we want to be?; and 4) How do we get there? (Ames 1997, 8). The third question means coming up with possible and preferred scenarios for the future. The fourth question means arriving at concrete goals and priorities, strategies, and plans for action.

Steven Ames, who coordinated the Flagstaff 2020 Visioning Process, noted, "Visioning can be a jolt to a community because of a history of adversarial-type planning where the public feels like they might be deceived or manipulated. . . . Some people are not used to having a fair, open, accessible, non-manipulative public process, and that is kind of sad." (Flagstaff Live 1997, 11) As an example of success, Ames points to Corvallis, Oregon. This community used the vision process to rework their land-use plan, highlighting the goal of revitalizing the downtown and river front areas, and improving economic development in the industrial area. According to the Corvallis city planner, about 90 percent of the plan has been achieved.

Origins of Flagstaff 2020

As Northern Arizona University ethnographic methods students discovered in doing their interviews, people had somewhat different origin stories about the Flagstaff 2020 Visioning Process. According to one city

official, the “Alliance for the Second Century,” a public sector group, got the idea that Flagstaff needed “a really broadly based visioning approach” and undertook to bring this about. Another version comes from the president of the Chamber of Commerce:

In the fall of 1994 . . . our [Chamber of Commerce] Board of Directors had its annual planning retreat, this happened at the Arizona Snow Bowl . . . Well, we went through a process of ranking five to ten priority areas for the Chamber. The number-one priority turned out to be the issue of growth. And specifically growth vs. no growth and the community attitudes toward that. There was a feeling two years ago that the community was beginning to be polarized again. There were some people that were adamantly against growth of any kind. There were others, in the business community and so forth, that (sic) felt some growth was good. The board was concerned that the community was beginning to split, or fracture, again, and so we said this will be our number-one goal.

The Chamber decided to meet with at least one other community organization to discuss growth, and chose the Grand Canyon Trust. Some of those interviewed felt that perceived polarization on growth was a major motivator in getting the Vision Process underway; others disagreed, seeing the approach of the year 2000 and the passing of the 50,000 population mark as reasons for the enthusiasm.

Ideas for a planning process were discussed with the mayor and city manager. Between April and June 1995 the Steering Committee put together a concept paper. The cooperation of private and public sector entities was not automatic at all, but required a lot of one-on-one meetings and tentative dialogue. Even after commitment to a partnership was secured, disagreements developed around the type of planning, the budget, the length of time, who would lead, the role of the consultant, the role of the Management Committee, and the type of public participation. Ack, of the Grand Canyon Trust commented:

It was such a new beast for everybody to experience . . . Just getting comfortable with each other, the process of gradually building trust and confidence in each other, of knowing what the restrictions were on each party, what the pressures were, who were the constituencies that were most affecting the different entities at the table, who they had to satisfy and please.

In the fall of 1995, the Chamber of Commerce and the Grand Canyon Trust paid Steve Ames to conduct a one-day brainstorming session about community planning. As noted above, Ames has been involved with coordinating “community visioning” events in a variety of places since 1985. Ack remembers, “That event was the pivotal decision in getting agreement, because everybody got really excited by Steve’s presentation and by the discussions we had, and after that it was clear we were going to do this.”

The 2020 Management Committee was organized to oversee the participatory planning process. It consisted of nine organizations from the community (two members each), and two citizens-at-large. The four non-government organizations were: Chamber of Commerce; Northern Arizona Homebuilders; Grand Canyon Trust; and Friends of Flagstaff’s Future. Of these, the first two are fairly pro-growth, and the second two are anti-sprawl. The five public sector organizations on the Management Committee were the City of Flagstaff, Coconino County, Northern Arizona University, Coconino Community College, and Flagstaff Public Schools. The Committee bid the planning process out to locate the most appealing consultant firm. Six bids were received; interviews were held in February. Ames’s firm was chosen because he had written a book on visioning and had organized successful visioning processes elsewhere. The budget for Flagstaff 2020 was just over \$170,000: \$50,000 from the city; \$50,000 from the county; \$20,000 from NAU (in-kind value of social surveys); and the remaining \$50,000 from the private sector.

The next step in the process was to recruit members for the Vision Task Force (VTF). This was to be a group of 35 community members who would be particularly active in the Visioning process. They were selected from among the eighty or so applicants by the Management Committee. The VTF held a half-day orientation in fall, 1996. Overall, the VTF held ten collective meetings. After several collective meetings, the VTF divided into smaller issue-centered working groups. Each was supposed to arrive at a working plan in its target area based on general VTF discussions and public forums. Therefore, a typical VTF member attended between 15 and 20 meetings in six months; some were all-day events. This represented quite a commitment of time and energy.

The Visioning Process sponsored four major public forums in 1996 (Heads Up Flagstaff, Probable Futures Meeting, Youth Visioning, Vision Summit), and ten smaller meetings. The large forums were attended by

roughly 40-100 people, with attendance of 200-300 at the final "Vision Summit." Held near the beginning of the public forums, the Probable Futures Meeting was the least liked, partly because it focused on worst-case scenarios for a Flagstaff of the future. One gloomy bit of information concerned housing. Flagstaff has one of the highest costs of living and one of the lowest per-capita incomes in Arizona. The median price for new homes at that time was \$152,000, a price that more than two-thirds of Flagstaff households cannot afford. Average rent is also high, at \$650 per month.

As noted above, the last public forum, the "Vision Summit," was the best attended and most enthusiastically received. The event began with reports from elementary and middle school students concerning results of their school visioning forums. This part of the meeting was very well attended and included many parents and friends of the students. After a short break, participants seated themselves at round tables, each labeled with one of the seven issue areas: Growth Management; Improving Housing and Liveability; Protecting the Environment; Fostering Human Development; Promoting Health and Safety; Creating Economic Opportunity; and Strengthening and Sustaining Community. Members of the VTF had specialized in each of these seven issues and were present at the designated tables. Small group discussions proceeded for about an hour, and participants generated lists of goals associated with each category. Composite lists (from multiple tables) were written on large sheets of butcher paper.

After the composite lists had been attached to the wall, forum participants were invited to vote on their top 15 priorities. They placed a sticker by whichever 15 issues were of greatest significance to them. The Vision Summit had the great advantage of combining intimate small group discussion, where people got to know one another better and heard an array of positions, and whole group interaction in the priority-setting vote toward the end. Having children begin the Summit on this day was a stroke of genius since it reminded the adults of one of their major motivations for being concerned about the future.

The strongest value expressed in all the Flagstaff Visioning events was concern about protecting the environment. Beautiful wilderness is the reason many people settle in Flagstaff, and also the reason many people stay there in spite of low salaries and the high cost of living. The community members reiterated this position again and again during the Flagstaff 2020 Visioning dialogue.

What isn't clear is how much weight this will have in Flagstaff City council decisions around zoning and land-use, and especially land development in the Greater Flagstaff area outside the city limits. There is little land left to build on in Flagstaff, and as immigration continues, the increasing profits from development will be hard to resist for businesses and individuals in the position to make a profit. A high percentage of land on the outskirts of Flagstaff is controlled by the National Forest Service, the State Trust, and the Bureau of Land Management. Even if the Flagstaff community is unified and resolved (a big "if"), it may have difficulty influencing the decisions made by these state and national regulatory agencies with regard to land swaps and similar deals.

It is not clear what the Flagstaff community would have to do to achieve the 2020 Visioning goals. The power differentials that characterize the political geography of Flagstaff—the strain between pro-growth and anti-growth sectors of the community—were not explicitly addressed in Flagstaff 2020. The Visioning Process champions democratic dialogue to identify "core community values" and "a shared image of their preferred future" (Ames 1997, 8). This assumes that consensus can be achieved within the community in spite of deeply divisive social class differences and situated purposes. In a somewhat opaque manner, Ames notes that the most common criticism of planning projects is the "perceived lack of tangible results." The Visioning Process has action plans built in, he says, for just that reason. The Visioning Process can take community members up to the point of goals and plans for implementation, but it stops short of recommending or even acknowledging the possible need for political struggle.

Flagstaff 2020 fell short in achieving broad participation in some ways, but it had a positive political impact on the community, nonetheless. In our interviews, a number of informants expressed disappointment about the low turnout at many public events. Some voiced additional concern that particular constituencies were underrepresented; e.g., Native Americans, Hispanics, college students, and young working people. Acknowledging these gaps, Ames and his staff set up focus group meetings to get information from "missing constituencies" such as renters and Native Americans. However, these focus groups were not well organized; recruitment was haphazard; turnout was low (as low as two participants in one case), and they were not tape recorded. Overall, the Flagstaff Community Visioning process did not bring large numbers of previously passive citizens into the political

process as had been hoped by many members of the Management Committee and Vision Task Force. America is a time-pressured society, especially for lower-income people with families, who often work two jobs and also try to spend some quality time with their children. These activities come before political involvement.

However, the Flagstaff 2020 events did function to get already active people talking to each other in some new ways, across different organizations, and from diverging viewpoints. This fostered a denser organizational web and, hopefully, more cooperation between government agencies, the private sector, and NGOs. It remains to be seen whether this leads to effective citizen “guard-dogging” around implementation of Flagstaff 2020 goals, especially environmental protection, over the next twenty years.

Participatory Planning and Geographies of Power

Both models of participatory planning presented here – PAC (*Planeamiento Andino Comunitario*), and Community Visioning – offer engaging and useful methods that move community members to think and talk to one another about the future in new ways. Certainly, these planning dialogues could be useful to each region for multiple reasons. It is instructive that in both the Ecuador and the Arizona locales, the communities focused their planning dialogues most intensely on land-use and conservation. Many, though not all, residents of both regions are concerned about disappearing green space and disappearing habitats for wildlife. Collective sketching of past and present community conditions, group listing of animal and plant species to monitor development impacts, group-based listing of change and preservation goals: these and related methods promoted focused discussion, a reflexive look at one’s home, and expanded socio-political connections between residents. Are there important differences between the two approaches? Here, we address questions of community empowerment and sustainability, and contrasts in core paradigm.

In the Ecuadorian case, organization and village representatives attended intensive workshops; the COMUNIDEC training enabled the representatives to return to their own communities and organizations, to collect information for their own, local purposes and for collaboration with other indigenous organizations. This format promoted skills for ongoing participatory planning and environmental monitoring in these locales. The cost was relatively low because most of the

information collection, community dialogue and planning meetings, were conducted by these trained volunteers working in their own organizations. COMUNIDEC did compile the information needed for project proposal development since it was important to put this in a coherent and retrievable format for later consultation. The immediate objective was to devise a specific nature conservation project on which seven different tribal groups could successfully collaborate; there was a \$650,000 “carrot” to achieve a workable plan. The organizations that receive the funding will help ensure sustainability of efforts to implement the planning objectives.

In Flagstaff, too, the planning project entailed training community members to be more effective politically, but in a much less explicit context. Vision Task Force members were chosen partly because they were already involved in the community: demographic profile showed that 80 percent of them were homeowners and highly educated, whereas only 50 percent of Flagstaff residents are homeowners. But VTF members did learn quite a bit about planning methods, local politics, and implementation strategies during their six months of intensive meetings. They also networked with one another. Most were strengthened by their VTF experiences in resisting undesired changes.

In Flagstaff, the Visioning Process depended on an outside consulting firm and cost about \$170,000. The various phases of the process together lasted about two years. An intensive effort to involve “the public” in the Visioning Process lasted about six months and was somewhat disappointing. The purposes of Flagstaff 2020 were a bit more abstract than the project we described in Ecuador since the Visioning plan was meant to generally guide City Council and County Board of Supervisors decision-making for the next twenty years. Specific plans did emerge from the 2020 Visioning Process; e.g., “park and ride perimeter parking lots, rail system to the Grand canyon, expanded urban trail system, upgraded libraries, public artwork displayed through community, land bank of property for future development of parks, libraries, and community centers, assisted care housing for the elderly, community outdoor amphitheater . . .” Some of these have been quite controversial; e.g., one local newspaper column stated, “The Vision statement sounds wonderful. However, there are a number of economic inconsistencies in the statement. . . . To implement all of the elements of the statement will be very expensive and will put a tremendous economic strain on the community. . . . The results will be a

community with high taxes, expensive housing and a high cost of living. It's doubtful that many new, high-paying jobs will be created in such an economic climate" (Crowley 1997, 7). Sustained efforts to implement the specific aims that emerged from Flagstaff 2020 depend on the ongoing efforts of community members to remind government agencies and the Chamber of Commerce of broad-based community concerns and goals. Holding the line on protecting green space or on affordable housing and community amenities will require ongoing political struggle. But the notion of struggle was implicit, not explicit, in the Community Visioning paradigm. Political struggle is not something most American citizens are prepared to spend time on. That may be why another student project at Northern Arizona University (called "Flagstaff Tomorrow," coordinated by anthropologist Reed Riner) reports considerable gloominess about uncontrolled growth. One chapter concludes, "Since my informants see growth as most likely benefiting only a minority, we may understand why my informants sound so pessimistic about 2019 in Flagstaff" (Abramowicz 1995, 40).

Issues of Power in Participatory Planning

Where these two participatory planning approaches differ most is in their underlying paradigm of society and the political process. COMUNIDEC begins with the assumption of critical power and wealth differences in society, both between center and periphery and also, possibly, within the local region or community. Andean Community Planning is explicitly devoted to helping small groups understand how power is being applied to their locales at a rapid rate. The elicitation and mapping methods are designed so that people can participate in a dialogue about power and thus come to a greater realization of how power is affecting them. These realizations can then be used to locate better ways to resist and to create counter inscriptions in the geography of their homelands. The tensions between center and periphery, between the wealthy and the not-wealthy, are explored in these collective dialogues.

In contrast, the language of Community Visioning minimizes power differences in society and in the community; rarely did the word "power" come up in the forums. This is consistent with an American ideology that all citizens are equal and that the majority rule in a democracy, regardless of wealth. In his summary treatise on Visioning, Ames writes:

The American people know in their bones they are the ultimate source of power. Yet, democracy is a

learned system of government – one that must continually be informed in order to function. . . . Once, major social, economic and political institutions all reinforced the centralization of power. Today, a countervailing trend of decentralization is moving in the opposite direction. (1997).

This paradigm of decentralized power is appealing, but unfortunately it may overlook many realities of 21st century America. The 525 square miles in the Greater Flagstaff area include 384 miles of lands managed by the Coconino National Forest and 41 square miles managed by the Arizona State Land Department. The Flagstaff growth rate was 2.85 percent during 1970-1995 and the Flagstaff 2020 Profile notes: "As private land becomes more scarce, pressure will intensify to exchange or sell U.S. Forest Service land, and/or State Trust land to private individuals" (1996, 24) In Flagstaff, it was the Chamber of Commerce that originated the participatory planning process. Their motive, at least according to some informants, was to reduce community polarization over land development. Arizona Homebuilders and the Chamber of Commerce were leading members of the Management Committee, in addition to the City and County governments. However, the VTF and the "public" that participated in the Visioning process were composed more of atomized individuals than organized groups. The Process stopped short of explicitly naming or describing the kinds of struggles and accommodations necessary to protect open space and achieve other parts of the vision of the majority. In the final analysis, Flagstaff 2020 went part but not all of the distance in preparing participants to take control of their geography in the coming decades.

Notes

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