INCLUDING VOICES OF THE EXCLUDED: LESSONS FROM BUFFALO, NY

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ABSTRACT

This chapter examines two community development case studies related to social inclusion and exclusion in the public participation process. Each focuses on dimensions of public participation in community development organizations and processes. The first case study examines the role of public participation in the governance of community-based housing organizations in Buffalo, NY. Here, public participation is examined in relation to organizational autonomy, patronage politics and bureaucratic structures. This case study illustrates how grassroots control of community-based housing organizations is reduced by institutional constraints placed on community development activities. The second case study examines a neighbourhood planning project in Depew, NY (an industrial suburb of Buffalo). The scope and impact of public participation is explored in the context of planning techniques applied to neighbourhood revitalization efforts in Depew. Competing interests among residents, business and local government are explored. This case study focuses on the manner in which university-based consultants working on community development projects approach resident empowerment. Constraints on achieving full participation due to limited capacity in the public sector are discussed. Combined, the two case studies highlight the barriers to expanding the voice of disenfranchised groups in the governance of grassroots organizations and the planning of neighbourhood development projects. Lessons are drawn from these case studies to outline strategies for expanding the scope of public participation in community development activities, particularly in relation to the role of disadvantaged groups in grassroots decision-making.

INTRODUCTION: PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN WEBER'S IRON CAGE

This chapter begins with the proposition that the promise of full participation in contemporary society is unobtainable. Expectations for achieving an Athenian-style democracy in the contemporary period obfuscate the true potential for democratic participation in the modern era. This critical understanding of public participation is informed by Max Weber's concept of the "iron cage" and his discussion of modern institutions [43;44]. Weber focused much of his work on the nature of bureaucracy, arguing that the rationalization of society has led to the destruction of full human expression. His work argued that modern social life takes place in an institutional setting based on rationalization and formal processes designed to enhance efficiency and control. This institutional context is the foundation of Weber's iron cage. It limits the potential for the

development of democratic institutions. Although Weber described the iron cage in the context of bureaucracy, we expand the use of this concept and apply it to a broader range of institutions and processes. We examine public participation with reference to Weber's iron cage, and argue that the scope of community participation is bounded by institutional constraints unique to modern society. Consequently, we argue that "escaping" from the iron cage and achieving full participation is not an option for disempowered groups. Instead, these groups should focus on asserting themselves within the iron cage and challenging dominant institutions to expand democratic processes and equity in society.

We examine two community development case studies related to social inclusion and exclusion in the public participation process in order to identify avenues for enhancing popular control and promoting equity in the iron cage. Each case study focuses on dimensions of the unfulfilled promise of public participation in community development organizations and processes. The first case study examines the role of public participation in the governance of community-based housing organizations (CBHOs) in Buffalo, NY. Public participation is examined in relation to organizational autonomy, patronage politics, and bureaucratic structures. This case study illustrates how grassroots control of CBHOs is reduced by institutional constraints placed on community development activities. The second case study examines a neighbourhood planning project in Depew, NY (an industrial suburb of Buffalo). The scope and impact of public participation is explored in the context of planning techniques applied to neighbourhood revitalization efforts in Depew. Competing interests among residents, business and local government are explored. The degree to which local government's limited capacity constrains full participation is discussed. The manner in which resident empowerment is pursued by university-based consultants working on community development projects is also examined. Combined, the two case studies highlight the barriers to expanding the voice of residents in the governance of grassroots organizations and the planning of neighbourhood development projects. Lessons are drawn from these case studies to outline strategies for expanding the scope of public participation in community development activities, particularly as they relate to the role of disadvantaged groups in grassroots decision-making.

CRITIQUES OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

In addition to drawing from Weber's work, our analysis of the two case studies is informed by past critiques of public participation. These critiques focus on three dimensions of public participation: participation and public policy, neighbourhood and community control, and grassroots politics. Combined, these three dimensions add to our understanding of the institutional context in which public participation is embedded.

Critiques of Public Participation and Public Policy

Some of the most cited literature dealing with public participation comes from case studies. Perhaps the most widely cited study is Arnstein's analysis of participation in the Model Cities Program administered by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) from 1966 to 1974 [2]. Arnstein's analysis produced a "ladder of citizen participation" that could be used to understand the degree to which citizens had access to the public policy process. The ladder (Figure 1) included eight types of participation which ranged from manipulation of citizens to complete citizen control of the policy process. Arnstein concluded that most participation in the Model Cities Program occurred in the middle and bottom rungs of the ladder, constituting various forms of nonparticipation and tokenism. These types of participation included activities like public information commercials, bulk mail announcing new projects, non-binding advisory

committees, community surveys, and other activities where participants had little ability to influence policy or control decision-making. Subsequent research has resulted in similar findings.
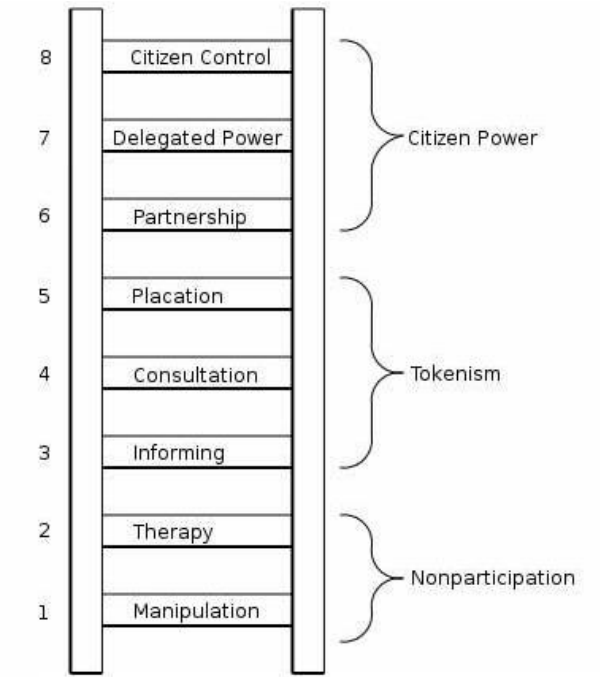

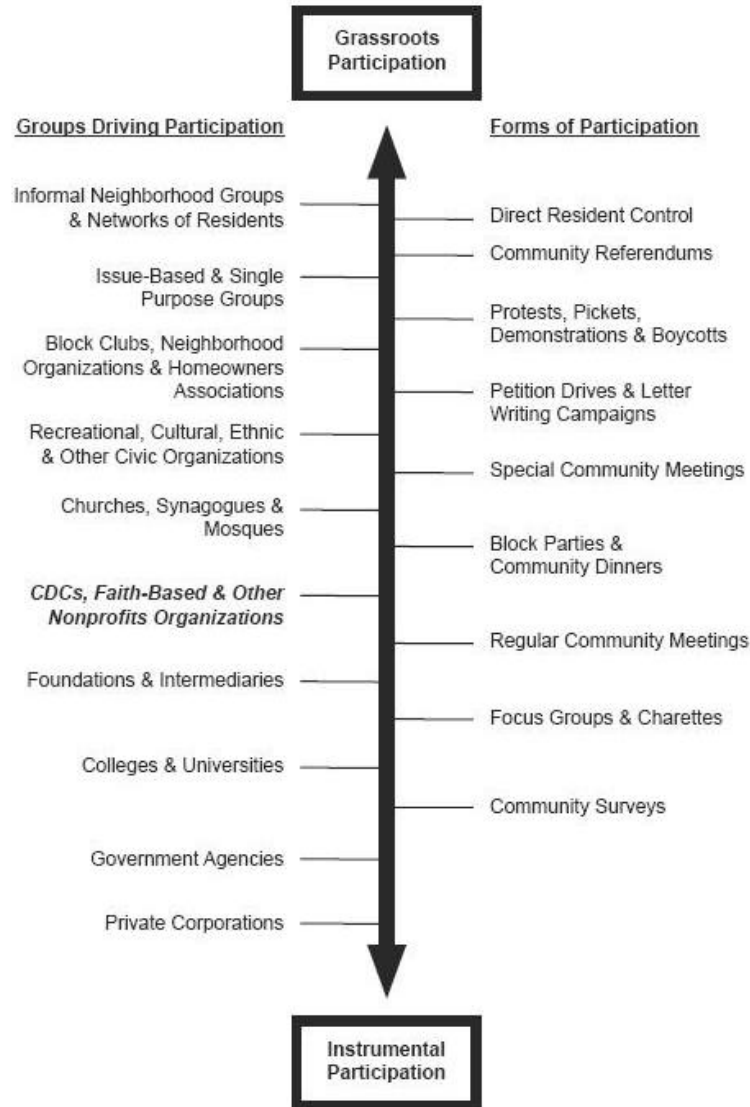Figure 1. The Ladder of Citizen Participation (Arnstein 1969: 217)

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                        ┌─────────────┐
                        │ Grassroots  │
                        │Participation│
                        └─────────────┘

Groups Driving Participation         Forms of Participation

Informal Neighborhood Groups ─────
  & Networks of Residents                 ─── Direct Resident Control

                                          ─── Community Referendums

Issue-Based & Single ─────
  Purpose Groups                          ─── Protests, Pickets,
                                              Demonstrations & Boycotts
Block Clubs, Neighborhood ─────
Organizations & Homeowners                ─── Petition Drives & Letter
  Associations                                Writing Campaigns

Recreational, Cultural, Ethnic ─────
  & Other Civic Organizations             ─── Special Community Meetings

Churches, Synagogues & ─────
  Mosques                                 ─── Block Parties &
                                              Community Dinners
CDCs, Faith-Based & Other ─────
Nonprofits Organizations                  ─── Regular Community Meetings

Foundations & Intermediaries ─────
                                          ─── Focus Groups & Charettes

Colleges & Universities ─────
                                          ─── Community Surveys

Government Agencies ─────

Private Corporations ─────

                        ┌─────────────┐
                        │ Instrumental│
                        │Participation│
                        └─────────────┘
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Figure 2. The Citizen Participation continuum (Silverman 2005: 37)

In a recent study, Silverman [38] elaborated upon Arnstein's ladder of citizen participation and introduced his "citizen participation continuum" (Figure 2). Silverman's citizen participation continuum identified a range of potential grassroots activities and participatory outcomes a community-based organization can pursue. At one end of the participation continuum is instrumental participation. It is task-oriented, with a focus on the completion of specific projects or programs in which a community-based organization is engaged. The continuum predicts that instrumental participation is driven by formal institutions which administer specific projects and programs. At the other end of the continuum is a type of participation identified as grassroots participation. It emerges organically in response to perceived neighbourhood threats. The continuum predicts that grassroots participation is driven by local residents interested in increasing the visibility of parochial issues. Examples of such issues include illegal dumping on vacant lots, abandoned cars, the maintenance of parks and playgrounds, and demands for enhanced policing or social services. The citizen participation continuum identifies the types of organizations and groups associated with various forms of instrumental and grassroots participation. For instance, grassroots groups tend to initiate protests, petition drives, and other forms of activism. In contrast, larger institutions tend to initiate activities like focus groups and community

surveys with the purpose of achieving a predetermined programmatic goal. This distinction highlights the role of institutional power in the citizen participation process and predicts the forms of participation used by organizations and groups. These characteristics of the citizen participation continuum allow for the works of Arnstein [2] and Alinsky [1] (whose work is described later in this chapter) and to be elaborated upon.

In a broader policy framework, scholars like Roberts [32] have argued that the increasingly volatile nature of contemporary public policy questions amplify demands for expanding the scope of citizen participation. This is because institutional and grassroots interests are more likely to come into conflict today than in the past. Roberts identified this new category of public policy questions as "wicked problems." She argued that they encompass issues like threats to the quality of life in communities, hard questions about budget cuts, the citing of noxious facilities, pollution remediation, and other questions that relate to the equitable distribution of costs and benefits in society. In the face of an expanded field of wicked problems, Roberts concluded that it is necessary for dominant institutions in society to provide disenfranchised groups greater access to participation.

Critiques of Neighbourhood and Community Control

In addition to critiquing the scope of public participation as it relates to public policy, scholars have also responded to the increased rationalization of the city and the resulting disintegration of our understanding of the role of neighbourhoods and communities in local politics.[1] Kotler [14] elaborated upon this theme in his discussion of the emergence of the "imperial city." This discussion traced the dependence of neighbourhoods on downtown interests to the rationalization of urban space in order to facilitate the optimization of market and economic efficiency. This period was defined by the consolidation of political and economic interests in the urban core as dominant actors in urban politics. Kotler's response to the emergence of the imperial city was a call for the decentralization of local politics. He advocated for a new form of urban governance based on a federation of democratically controlled neighbourhood level governments. Under this form of urban governance, neighbourhood level governments would replace municipal government and broader public policy would be set through inter-neighbourhood agreements.

At the time that Kotler formulated his treatise on neighbourhood government, others were lodging their own critiques of dominant institutions that controlled neighbourhood development. For instance, Blauner [4] forwarded his theory of internal colonialism and ghetto revolt in response to disinvestment and poverty in America's inner cities and black neighbourhoods. Blauner called for increased community control in the ghetto and a return to neighbourhood-based governance. A priority for Blauner was transferring control of key institutions such as the police, schools, and social welfare agencies from municipal government to neighbourhood residents. Over time, other scholars developed mechanisms for various forms of neighbourhood government. For example, McKenzie [22;23], Barton and Silverman [3], and Silverman and Patterson [37] have examined and critiqued the development of condominiums, gated communities and homeowners associations as privatized forms of neighbourhood government. Poindexter [30] has gone a step further and argued that neighbourhoods should have the right to secede from municipalities in order to enhance resident control and decentralize urban politics.

Recently, another stream of thought has added salience to calls for greater neighbourhood and community control. This new call for community control has manifested itself in the right to the city movement [20;42]. This movement bases arguments for expanding the scope of public participation on a critique of neoliberalism that is reminiscent of Kotler's critique of the imperial city. At its core, the right to the city movement argues that social functions of the city should trump the interests of economic institutions. From this perspective,

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[1] This body of scholarship varies in its treatment of the neighborhood as a geographic unit versus interest-based and identity-based communities. In some literature the neighborhood is treated as a distinct geographic subdivision of a city with relatively interdependent residential, commercial and social institutions. In other instances, scholars define neighborhoods as distinct residential clusters. Scholarship has also recognized that neighborhoods can contain multiple communities based on divergent interests and identities. Lyon [19] and Brower [7] provide insights into these perspectives.

urban institutions like public schools should emphasize curriculum that enhances cultural and expressive development, rather than focus narrowly on obtaining skills used in a given trade. Similarly, the right to the city movement seeks to enhance the scope of public space and expression. For example, private shopping malls are not viewed as exclusively commercial spaces, but also as a modern public square where political debate and cultural expression should flourish. An underlying assumption of the right to the city movement is that decision-making processes should be driven by concerns for equity and the promotion of opportunities for the holistic growth of a community's inhabitants, and not narrowly constructed to facilitate commercial activities and the commoditization of daily life.

Critiques of Grassroots Politics

The scope of grassroots politics is an undercurrent in discussions of public policy and efforts to expand neighbourhood control. Historically, grassroots politics can be traced to Alinsky's [1] model for community organizing that was developed in Chicago's "Back of the Yards" neighbourhood in the 1940s. Alinsky's model organized existing community groups around tangible issues. The model used public demonstrations and the media to bring attention to grassroots issues. Alinsky's model has been adopted by subsequent social justice movements and organizations such as: the civil rights movement during the 1960s, the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF), and the Association for Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN).

A contemporary critique of the Alinsky model has come from feminist scholars, who argue that its focus on dimensions of community organizing which rely on confrontational tactics in the public spheres of society overlooks other aspects of organizing that take place in the private sphere of communities [9;11;24;29]. From this perspective, confrontational tactics in the public sphere include challenges for elected office, debates over public policy, legal proceedings in the courts, and public protests and demonstrations. In contrast, private sphere activities include a broad range of organization building work that occurs through religious organizations, block clubs, and neighbourhood-based organizations, mutual benefit associations, and private membership organizations. Based on this critique, Stall and Stoecker [39] contrasted their women-centered model for community organizing with Alinsky's model and argue for a more balanced approach to community organizing that accounts for public and private sphere activities. One insight gained from this critique is that grassroots politics occurs at multiple levels and that community members find alternative outlets for public participation depending on gender, race, class and other power positions that they occupy in the broader society.

Stall and Stoecker argue that type of participatory behaviour is related to gender. In essence, men are more inclined to participate in the public sphere and adopt confrontational strategies to redistribute power. These efforts tend to be driven by professional community organizers and focus on gaining control of institutions or changing broad public policies. On the other hand, they argue that women are more inclined to participate through organizations in the private sphere and that women are more likely to join collaborative efforts aimed at producing more discrete and tangible benefits for their immediate neighbourhoods or communities. Although Stall and Stoecker focus on gender, their framework for understanding participatory strategies can also be applied to race, class and other social groupings.

How individuals interface with dominant institutions in society through public participation processes is a central theme in the literature. In addition to looking at issues of gender, race, and class, scholars have examined the role community-based organizations play in local political processes. For example, Silverman [36] studied the role of planning advisory boards and found a relationship between their effectiveness in promoting public participation and the degree to which they had sustained support from local government. Similarly, Bockmeyer [5] found that non-profit networks were instrumental in facilitating public participation and shaping Empowerment Zone policies in Detroit, MI. She described how residents relied on non-profit

organizations to provide them with access to institutions traditionally dominated by business interests and local political institutions.

Marwell has taken this topic in a new direction, arguing that community-based organizations can fill the gap left by "defunct political party organizations in poor neighbourhoods" and can "take on an electoral organizing role at the neighbourhood level." In essence, she suggests that community-based organizations can act as powerbrokers in local settings, delivering votes in exchange for government contracts [21]. Yet, other scholars have argued that contemporary urban governance structures have shifted the focus of community-based organizations away from grassroots advocacy and toward program implementation [6;26;31;40;41]. Moreover, there is some evidence that advocacy and public participation through community-based organizations can be weakened as these organizations become more dependent on outside institutions for resources [8;16;28;35].

Finally, individuals within government have historically been identified as advocates for enhanced public participation and disenfranchised groups. Krumholz and Forester [15] described how advocacy planners filled this role in Cleveland during the 1970s. Needleman and Needleman [25] discussed a similar role of planners during the Model Cities Program, and how they gradually adopted guerrilla-like tactics to forward their advocacy work as they faced resistance from the institutions in which they were embedded. However, the extent to which institutional actors continue to advocate for social change has been brought into question in the contemporary period, as neoliberal critiques have emerged and the capacities of local governments have deteriorated [31].

The critiques of public policy processes, neighbourhood and community control, and institutional barriers to grassroots politics raise questions about the future of public participation. These critiques also illuminate some of the facets of Weber's iron cage. Therefore, we now turn to the following case studies which elucidate the concept of the iron cage and help generate recommendations to empower disenfranchised groups.

PARTICIPATION IN THE FACE OF PATRONAGE AND BUREAUCRACY

Case Study Methodology

The data for this case study come from telephone interviews (N=15) with executive directors of community-based housing organizations (CBHOs) in Buffalo, New York. Interviews with executive directors were conducted between May 2004 and August 2004. The purpose of the study was to understand how citizen participation was incorporated into CBHO decision-making processes and to understand the degree to which the scope of citizen participation was affected by the institutional structures in which these organizations were embedded. In essence, the study asked how citizen participation is influenced by Weber's iron cage. The study also focused on a type of organization which falls in the middle of Silverman's citizen participation continuum [25]. This type of organization is of interest, since it blends grassroots and instrumental forms of participation. During the interviews, respondents were asked a series of open-ended questions about how citizen participation was conceptualized and practiced in their organizations. The questions were drawn from an interview guide that consisted of 13 items and 26 probes. In addition to this information, data were collected concerning the demographic characteristics of each organization's staff and governing board. The interviews ranged from 30 minutes to 1 hour in length. To supplement the interviews, field notes, data from the U.S. Census, IRS 990 forms, other documents from CBHOs, and information gathered through informal conversations with local government officials and representatives of intermediary organizations were collected.[2]

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[2] The non-interview data was used to add context to this case study. For instance, IRS 990 forms included information on CBHO budgets and governing board membership, which was used to verify information collected through interviews. CBHO documents, such as the by-laws of organizations, were used for this purpose.

Efforts were made to interview all of the CBHOs in the City of Buffalo. In total 15 organizations were identified using lists of non-profit housing organizations compiled by: the New York State Division of Housing and Community Renewal, the NeighborWorks® America, the Western New York Regional Information Network, and the Center for Urban Studies at the University at Buffalo. The 15 CBHOs in Buffalo included 5 neighbourhood housing service (NHS) organizations, 3 community development corporations, and 7 other non-profits identified as community-based housing services organizations.[3]

Data were analyzed using grounded theory techniques [10;12;17]. Through this process interview transcripts were coded and emergent themes were identified. These themes were then used to develop a descriptive framework for further analysis of archival materials. Using these methods, an understanding of the scope of citizen participation in Buffalo's CBHOs was obtained. Moreover, the relationships between political and administrative structures, and citizen participation emerged.

Resource Constraints and Institutional Barriers to Community Representation

Together, Buffalo's CBHOs formed a patchwork of organizations that impacted virtually all of the city's neighbourhoods. Most of the organizations were founded between the mid-1970s and the early-1980s. In fact, only two of the organizations identified in this research were formed after this period. During interviews, the executive directors of Buffalo's CBHOs identified the following program areas in which they were engaged: housing programs, senior programs, youth and education programs, economic development programs, and social service programs. On average each organization was engaged in two program areas at the time the interviews took place. Typically, one of these program areas involved housing, and in most cases the housing activities of Buffalo's CBHOs focused on moderate and emergency rehabilitation efforts, or housing counselling activities. A small number of these organizations included new housing development among their activities.

Buffalo's CBHOs were imbedded in a distinct political and administrative context which had been shaped by decades of entrenched political patronage and sporadic attempts at administrative reform. The implications of this context and the turf battles that it generated were exposed, particularly in relation to how the geographic areas that CBHOs work in were determined. Ideally, one might expect CBHOs to establish their boundaries based on the identification of distressed areas within relatively small and distinct neighbourhoods (i.e. based on need in a community). However in Buffalo, organizations defined their boundaries in response to cues from the local political and administrative systems. As a result, political and administrative considerations often supplanted neighbourhood conditions when prioritizing where CBHOs would implement projects and provide services.

Many of Buffalo's CBHOs were ambiguous about the boundaries that defined where they did their work, and indicated that these boundaries oscillated based on available funding sources. But when pressed, it became clear that boundaries were shaped by Buffalo's political and administrative systems. Seven of the CBHOs indicated that their boundaries were identical to those used to demarcate Common Council Districts in the City of Buffalo.[4] Drawing boundaries in this manner allowed their organizations to be aligned with local elected officials for patronage purposes. These types of institutional constraints on where CBHOs did their work represent an example of Weber's iron cage.

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[3] Since the time that this research was conducted two of the NHS organizations merged with other organizations in the metropolitan area, and another CBHO ceased operations. These changes were brought about by changes in funding priorities by NeighborWorks® and other agencies. Despite these changes, there has been a high degree of continuity in terms of the number and geographic distribution of CBHOs in Buffalo since the research was conducted.

[4] The Common Council is the elected city council in the City of Buffalo. There are 9 Common Council Districts in the City of Buffalo, their boundaries are determined by population and redrawn after every decennial US Census through a redistricting process overseen by political officials.

In contrast, eight other CBHOs were designated as community housing development organizations (CHDOs) by the City of Buffalo's Office of Strategic Planning and assigned boundaries. Under federal regulations, CHDO status is granted to local non-profits after they meet criteria to receive federal funding to develop affordable housing under the HOME block grant program.[5] In accordance with HOME requirements, the Office of Strategic Planning used its administrative authority to divide the entire city into ten CHDO areas and assigned an organization to each of them.[6] This was a purely bureaucratic process which was administered internally by the staff of the Office of Strategic Planning with no public input. Again, this represented another example of an institutional constrain linked to Weber's iron cage.

Whether CBHO boundaries were based on Common Council Districts or CHDO areas, the combined boundaries of these organizations encompassed the entire city. One repercussion of such broadly constructed boundaries for CBHOs as a group was that the city as a whole became synonymous with the environment in which they operated.

The Limited Scope of Public Participation in CBHO Decision-Making

The scope and depth of citizen participation tools adopted by CBHOs was extremely limited in Buffalo.[7] In part, participation was hampered by the broadly defined service boundaries of CBHOs which diluted the visibility of the city's most distressed neighbourhoods in discussions of affordable housing.[8] This situation was aggravated by a lack of autonomous grassroots organizations in the city. The scope and depth of citizen participation tools was further limited by the narrow range of techniques used to bring residents into the process of administering housing programs. In addition, the limited scope of participatory techniques was an outgrowth of the ambiguous manner in which politicians and administrators defined citizen participation requirements and the lack of funding for community organizing activities.

In this context, executive directors conceptualized and practiced citizen participation in a circumscribed manner in their CBHOs. They identified their governing boards as the primary mechanism for citizen participation in their organizations. Executive directors also identified their organizations' staff as an important source of citizen participation. They indicated that citizen participation was promoted by hiring staff that lived in their organizations' service areas and had networks in the communities their organizations served. Since many of these organizations' service areas mirrored Common Council Districts, these networks often included ties to the local patronage system. By restricting participation to interactions with governing boards and an organization's staff, Buffalo's CBHOs shifted their emphasis to instrumental forms of participation identified in the citizen participation continuum. This shift had several implications for the scope and depth of participation.

It is often argued that residents achieve virtual representation in local non-profit organizations through that organization's staff and governing board. This type of representation is argued to be present when the composition of staff and governing board reflect the features of a community along the lines of class, race, age, gender and other characteristics. Such representation is one indicator of resident access to the decision-making

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[5] The HOME Investment Partnership Act of 1990 is the largest federal block grant program for state and local government with a focus on affordable housing. HOME funds are distributed by formula to state and local governments and 15% of HOME funds are earmarked local CHDOs.

[6] At the time the research for this chapter was conducted, the Office of Strategic Planning had not designated a CBHO for two of the CHDO areas.

[7] The scope and depth of opportunities for participation has a direct effect on the level of participation in a community. Neighborhoods are composed of diverse interest and groups that require a variety of participatory mechanisms in order to have access to decision-making. By limiting the scope and depth of participatory tools, overall levels of participation are reduced.

[8] Buffalo is a city where pockets of poverty and physical decay are often found adjacent to stable areas. For example, neighborhoods with concentrated poverty and boarded-up housing can be located adjacent to neighborhoods that lack these conditions. Defining CBHO boundaries broadly, had the effect of diluting the focus on the most distressed areas of the city. As a result, affordable housing resources were diverted to buttress stable neighborhoods while the most distressed areas continued to decline.

process of an organization. In terms of community demographics, one would expect CBHOs' staff and governing boards to mirror general population characteristics. There was mixed evidence to support this claim in relation to Buffalo's CBHOs. Buffalo's population is characterized by concentrated minority populations, high poverty, and a distressed housing market. According to the 2000 US Census, the city's population was 38.2% Black and 6.7% Latino. In 2000, median household income was $23,688 and 27.8% of the city's population fell below the poverty level. Moreover, rental property comprised 57% of occupied housing units, 16.1% of all housing units were vacant, and the median housing value was $56,019.

Similarities between population, staff and governing board characteristics would lend support to arguments that residents' concerns are reflected in the programs and policies of local non-profit housing organizations. Of course, similarities along the lines of race and gender would not be definitive proof of virtual representation, since these characteristics do not always correlate with political and economic interests. Nevertheless, they can serve as a starting point for examining the degree to which virtual representation is present.

Interviews with the executive directors of Buffalo's CBHOs indicated that there were contrasts and similarities between community demographics and the composition of CBHO staff and governing boards along the lines of race and gender. These characteristics of the staff and governing boards of Buffalo's non-profit housing organizations are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Staff and Governing Board Characteristics of Buffalo's CBHOs (N=15)

	Staff	Executive Director	Governing Board
Total Number	197	15	176
Mean Number	13	--	12
Median Number	6	--	11
% White	*47.2*	*60.0*	*56.3*
% Black	*27.9*	*26.6*	*39.8*
% Latino	*22.8*	*6.7*	*3.9*

Source: This information came from open ended interview with executive directors of CBHOs in Buffalo, NY.

In terms of contrasts, the information in Table 1 indicates that Blacks were underrepresented on the staff of Buffalo's CBHOs, while Latinos were overrepresented. However, it should be noted that this contrast was largely the by-product of a single organization with a sizable Latino staff. When staff composition was considered with this organization removed from the analysis, the racial composition of CBHO staff was similar to the racial composition of the city as a whole. When the composition of executive directors was examined, another contrast between community demographics and CBHOs came to the surface. Blacks were underrepresented among the executive directors while whites were overrepresented in this group.

In contrast to staff positions, the racial composition of CBHO governing boards in Buffalo was strikingly similar to the city's population as a whole.[9] It is noteworthy that 11 of the executive directors indicated that anywhere from one-half to two-thirds of their governing board members were residents of the communities that their CBHOs served. Moreover, eight of the executive directors indicated that their organizations' bylaws required that at least 51% of their governing board be composed of residents. In most cases, the directors attributed the adoption of requirements for resident control of governing boards to administrative requirements passed down to their organizations by federal and state funding agencies.

Despite pressure from these funders for greater resident involvement in the governing boards of Buffalo's CBHOs, there was still a predisposition for boards to be primarily made up of middle class residents and

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[9] In the aggregate, the racial composition of governing boards paralleled the racial makeup of the city as a whole. However, it should be noted that many neighbourhood in the City of Buffalo, and areas served by CBHOs, are highly segregated. The racial segregation of neighbourhoods was reflected in the makeup of CBHO governing boards. For instance, 5 CBHOs were located in areas that were predominantly white and the governing boards of these organizations were 100% white. Similarly, 3 CBHOs were located in areas that were predominantly African American and the governing boards of these organizations were 100% African American.

professionals from the community. Although board members shared ascribed characteristics with other residents, they represent divergent social and economic interests. When discussing the composition of their organizations' governing boards the executive directors were quick to point out that in addition to residents, their boards included: representatives from the banking and insurance community, university faculty and administrators, representatives from local government, members of the clergy, local business leaders, and other professionals.

It was common for CBHOs to designate up to one-third of their governing board seats for such institutional members. Moreover, local political interests were taken into consideration when designing governance structures and selecting governing board members. For example, one CBHO director said that on her 19 member governing board,

> …the Mayor gets two appointments, our county legislator gets one appointment, our [common] council member gets one appointment, the [local] business association gets one appointment, and the [local] senior nutrition group, they get to appoint one person.

In addition to the creation of governing board seats that were designated for political and institutional members, many of the other board members in Buffalo's CBHOs were drawn from middle class and professional residents.

Direct representation of low-income and minority residents was limited on the governing boards of Buffalo's CBHOs. Although many organizations required that community residents make up a majority of governing board seats, these seats tended to be occupied by more affluent and professional members of the community. The remaining non-institutional, resident members of governing boards were often retirees and homeowners. This pattern was a reflection of the degree to which CBHOs were structuring citizen participation in response to pressures from elected officials, local administrators, non-profit foundations, and other funding agencies. Given the governance structure that CBHOs were embedded in, few incentives existed to actively recruit governing board members who represented a broader spectrum of the community's interests.

This outcome was problematic for a number of reasons. It essentially denied low-income and minority residents access to CBHO decision-making processes. This made it less likely that activities pursued by organizations would benefit them. At the same time, it legitimized the status quo by stacking governing boards with professionals, affluent members of the community, homeowners, and retirees. These groups tend to represent more conservative interests and are less inclined to support CBHO activities that benefit renters, the poor, and individuals in need of social welfare assistance. At the same time, representation of poor minorities was diluted by this constellation of board members. This was the case since Buffalo is a city with a growing minority-poor population, but the cohorts that board members were being drawn from tended to be older and more racially homogeneous. This caused boards to serve as bulkhead against demographic change in communities. Whites and middle-class minorities tended to maintain control of CBHO agendas, while members of the growing minority-poor segment of the community were denied a seat at the table.

The tendency for governing boards to be composed primarily of institutional actors and middle class residents was reinforced by the adoption of relatively expansive boundaries based on Common Council Districts and CHDO areas defined by the Office of Strategic Planning. It is important to note that the adoption of such boundaries occurred in response to political and bureaucratic considerations which were often divorced from resident concerns at the neighbourhood level. Boundaries were drawn without public input and residents had few opportunities to influence how institutions defined their neighbourhoods. This represented another example of Weber's iron cage. The adoption of relatively expansive boundaries, which encompass as much as one-tenth of the city's land mass, diluted access that low-income, minority residents had to decision-making in the organizations. As a result, while institutions and the middle class were well represented on governing boards, none of the executive directors indicated that renters, the poor, or other indigent groups were highly visible. On the surface, it appeared that governing boards provided a broad spectrum of residents with access to

the decision-making processes of CBHOs. However, a closer examination revealed that groups most in need of representation were at a disadvantage.

It is frequently argued that renters, the poor, and other indigent groups are less likely to participate because members of this segment of society face added constraints to participation. For example, members of the working class and working poor must juggle childcare, work and other responsibilities. These responsibilities reduce the amount of time individuals have for civic engagement. Although these issues represent real barriers to participation, it should also be recognized that institutional representatives and individuals from the middle class also face similar constraints to participation. Yet, society provides these individuals with greater incentives to participate. For instance, institutional mechanisms, such as the use of governing boards as the primary vehicle for participation provided professionals and institutional representatives with a familiar organizational setting from which to operate. Governing boards operate using rules and procedures that parallel formal organizations in the private and public sector. They are driven by decision-making tools like strategic planning, cost-benefit analysis, budgeting and accounting systems, formal meeting agendas, and other processes that are common in professional environments. These relatively rigid structures crowd our opportunities for open dialogue, public debate, and dissent. Organizationally, these structures comprise another dimension of Weber's iron cage. Also, adopting broad service boundaries for CBHOs shapes the agendas and outcomes pursued by organizations. This is the case for reasons noted earlier, and because the adoption of broad service boundaries promotes the dilution of resources across interests in a community. Rather than committing all resources to addressing problems that impact the poorest members of a community, resources tend to be spread across interest groups. Since professionals and middle class members of communities have greater influence of the distribution of resources, CBHOs run the risk of aggravating existing inequalities. As a result, citizen participation can disproportionately benefit interests that represent the status quo. On the other hand, the poor and indigent groups are rarely provided with technical assistance to put them on an even playing field in such a participatory process and the likelihood of actualizing benefits at the parochial level is low.

Barriers Due to Competition Surrounding CBHO Boundaries

The manner in which CBHOs define the boundaries of their target areas can either facilitate or become an obstacle to citizen participation. The executive directors of seven CBHOs in Buffalo indicated that their boundaries were based on Common Council Districts. When asked why organizational boundaries were drawn in this manner, executive directors indicated that the Common Council played a strong role in assisting with the early development of the city's CBHOs. As a form of reciprocity, organizations defined their boundaries according to Common Council Districts and were subsequently institutionalized in the local political patronage system. This was advantageous to the organizations when they applied for community development block grant (CDBG)[10] funds from the City, since these funds were historically distributed through the local patronage system.

The alignment of CBHO boundaries with Common Council Districts had important implications for how organizations were perceived by the general public, and subsequently the scope of citizen participation. Some executive directors complained that their organizations were frequently mistaken for government offices. For instance, one executive director made this comment:

> A lot of people in the neighbourhood confuse us [with the City], they believe we're a government agency of some sort. It's sort of a misconception that we try to correct, that we're really not a government agency or a City agency, but we're a private non-profit.

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[10] The community development block grant program is a federal block grant program established in 1974 to provide communities with a flexible source of funds to address community development needs in impacted communities. Community development block grant funding is distributed to localities by formula by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

The perception that CBHOs were part of the local patronage system fostered an agency-client relationship between the public and organizations. Residents were inclined to view CBHOs as an extension of local government, akin to a social welfare agency or municipal department. As a consequence, this discouraged the development of broad-based participation. Residents perceived CBHOs as being controlled by elected officials, rather than functioning as vehicles for broad-based neighbourhood decision-making. This set of relationships weakened neighbourhood identity, contributing to the dearth of neighbourhood-based advocacy organizations in the city.

The majority of Buffalo's CBHOs gained access to resources by working with elected officials on the Common Council. However, others were able to find more autonomous funding from other sources, such as: the federal and state government, national and local foundations, and professional administrators inside of county and city government. One CBHO executive director discussed the benefits of not being "beholden to the Common Council:"

> We have been as apolitical as we can be… I try really hard to stay out of [politics], and I think it's a detriment to developing housing. It doesn't win us a lot of friends on the Common Council though…. [In the past] they've purposely excluded us… I think it's because they couldn't control us. They couldn't tell us 'this is what you have to do, this is who you have to hire, this is how much money we're going to give you, and we want you to spend it this way'.

Some executive directors found an alternative route to gaining access to municipal resources by collaborating with the Office of Strategic Planning. In fact, competition between the traditional patronage system and professional administrators over the control of local community development resources had intensified in recent history. This was illustrated by expanded efforts to redefine CBHO boundaries.

In 2003, the Office of Strategic Planning published a map designating CHDO areas that would guide future community development block grants (CDBG) and HOME allocations. These boundaries were drawn in a manner that did not correspond to Common Council Districts. Once granted CHDO designation and assigned boundaries by the Office of Strategic Planning, organizations had increased access to community development resources. Conditions were tied to maintaining CHDO status. For instance, CHDOs were required to: set aside a proportion of the seats on their governing boards for community residents, participate in the Office of Strategic Planning's monitoring process, and use CHDO funds for projects within their designated boundaries. In essence, the Office of Strategic Planning created an alternative route to funding community development projects. In contrast to the local patronage system, funding decisions were based on: the level of professionalism in a CBHO, the presence of targeted development activities, and the existence of measurable outcomes. These requirements promoted the professionalization and formalization of CBHOs. In reference to the citizen participation continuum, this moved them away from grassroots forms of participation and created incentives to adopt instrumental forms of participation.

The increased emphasis placed on designating CHDO boundaries that differed from Common Council Districts can be interpreted as an effort to weaken the local political patronage system and create transparency in local decision-making. Still, the manner in which this approach was implemented is not completely complementary with efforts to expand citizens' access to decision-making within local non-profits. In part, this is because the Office of Strategic Planning adopted an approach to community development which was heavily influenced by a relatively centralized comprehensive planning process. In addition, CHDO boundaries were not determined by residents or local community-based organizations. Instead they were simply drawn on a map by planners in the Office of Strategic Planning.

Although the Office of Strategic Planning implemented administrative reforms that offered an alternative to the local patronage system, these reforms lacked a grassroots focus. Instead, the reforms created a new governance structure that emphasized program and service delivery which provided little support for community organizing activities among CBHOs. Definitions of citizen participation used by administrators

remained ambiguous, governing boards remained the primary mechanism for citizen participation in Buffalo's CBHOs, and little emphasis was placed on community organizing activities by the Office of Strategic Planning when making funding decisions. As a result, the voices of low-income and minority groups remained diluted in discussions concerning community development policy, as well as in the governance of local non-profits that increasingly implemented such policy.

A great deal of uncertainty exists about the permanence of the administrative reforms adopted by the Office of Strategic Planning. When these reforms were adopted, the Office of Strategic Planning was relatively insulated from patronage politics and run as an autonomous administrative unit. In March of 2008, the Executive Director of the Office of Strategic Planning resigned from his position in order to become the City Manager of Inglewood, CA. Since that time, the Executive Director's position in the Office of Strategic Planning has remained vacant and the duties related to that position have been overseen by designees in the Mayor's Office. In essence, the patronage system has reasserted itself by absorbing the reforms adopted by the Office of Strategic Planning into the Mayor's Office. Consequently, there are now two distinct patronage routes for CBHOs to seek public funding in Buffalo. One is through the Common Council and the other is through the Mayor's Office. Given this institutional environment, there is no reason to believe resident participation will expand in Buffalo's community-based organizations.

This exemplifies the significance of Weber's iron cage when attempting to understand participation at the local level. Expanding the scope and depth of participation is unlikely, unless efforts at reforming the institutional structure that it is embedded in are successful. In order to achieve that goal, a primary goal of structural reforms must be to expanding participation and community control. In the case of Buffalo, reforms did not succeed. In part, the failure of reform was the result of the Office of Strategic Planning's neglect to empower neighbourhoods through the development of greater levels of participation and community organizing. Instead, a parallel system for funding community development projects was created which focused on increasing the levels of professionalization in CBHOs. This model did not focus on making CBHOs more responsive to residents or grounded in their communities. It also did not use expanded participation as a tool to develop new leadership at the grassroots level. Instead it proposed that CBHOs trade their institutional dependence on political patronage for dependence on a bureaucratic agency. In this instance, entrenched political interests won. If the outcome had been different, and bureaucratic reforms had prevailed, the long term sustainability of the emergent system would still hinge on the extent to which residents participated in decision-making. This is the case, since the legitimacy of such reforms depends on the degree to which they are responsive to neighbourhood and community needs.

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING AND LIMITED LOCAL GOVERNMENT CAPACITY

Case Study Methodology

The data for this case study come from participant observation research conducted by two of the co-authors of this chapter, Silverman and Taylor. Both were members of a team of university-based consultants who were hired to develop a plan for neighbourhood revitalization for the Main Street neighbourhood of Depew, NY (an industrial suburb of Buffalo). At the onset of the consulting activities, a conscious decision was made to collect reflexive data on the process as it unfolded. This was done in order to critically assess the role of citizen participation in the neighbourhood planning process. It was also done as a form of praxis, where our observations informed decisions about how the consulting work would be undertaken. The planning process being studied occurred between November 2003 and July 2004. During the time that this planning process occurred, field notes and other data were collected. At regular intervals during the consulting work, members of the research team met to reflect on the relationship between the work being done and theories of

public participation. These reflexive meetings guided subsequent aspects of the neighbourhood planning process. In addition to the qualitative analysis used in this case study, secondary data were collected to frame and contextualize the issues being examined. These materials included 1990 and 2000 US Census data, as well as archival materials gathered in the research site.

The Main Street Neighbourhood

The Village of Depew is a working class suburb of Buffalo, NY.[11] Historically, it has been the home to manufacturing and transportation industries. Although most of the industry that once was in the village is now gone, a variety of small industrial businesses remain alongside idle industrial property. In addition to light industry, small retail businesses and brownfields, a number of railroad lines run through the village and the flight path of the Buffalo-Niagara International Airport is directly above it. At the center of the village is the Main Street neighbourhood. At one time, this neighbourhood was a core component of the village. It contained: a large factory which produced railroad components, a facility that assembled tank turrets, housing for factory workers, and the Main Street commercial strip. Following the Second World War, industrial and commercial activity declined and conditions in the Main Street neighbourhood deteriorated. Employment and commercial activity migrated to other areas during this time and much of the property along the Main Street commercial strip was either converted into low rent apartments or it became vacant. The boundaries and land use characteristics of the Main Street neighbourhood are identified in Figure 3.

Figure 3. Main Street Neighborhood Land Use.

Like the Main Street commercial strip, the Main Street neighbourhood has transitioned into a low-income residential community with vacant property and a small number of retail businesses disbursed in it. Although the population, employment and housing trends that have transformed the neighbourhood are long-term in nature, they continue to impact development efforts and pose obstacles to citizen participation. In essence,

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[11] In New York municipal governments can be organized as Cities, Towns or Villages. Depew is an independently incorporated village adjacent to the City of Buffalo.

households in the Main Street neighbourhoods confront a number of time and resource constraints that impinge upon their ability to participate in civic affairs. During the last decade these constraints have intensified. An examination of trends in the US Census between 1990 and 2000 highlight the scope of these obstacles. In 2000 the neighbourhood had a population of 1,000; it had experienced a 6.5% population loss between 1990 and 2000. Despite declining population, the area remained a racially homogenous community, with over 97% of its residents reporting to be white in 2000. The area also remained economically disadvantaged during the decade. In 2000, the median household income in the Main Street neighbourhood was $24,940 and 15.2% of the residents in the Main Street neighbourhood lived below the poverty level. Likewise, 8.2% of the households in the Main Street neighbourhood received public assistance in 2000. Employment trends in the Main Street neighbourhood presented additional obstacles to citizen participation. In 2000, there were 575 individuals from the neighbourhood above the age of 16 in the work force. This represented a 12% decline in labour force participation since 1990. Over 78% of these individuals were concentrated in sales, service, pink collar, and low skill trades positions.

Housing trends in the Main Street neighbourhood compounded the obstacles to promoting citizen participation in the local planning process. There were 511 housing units in the neighbourhood in 2000, which represented a 3.2% decline in the number of housing units since 1990. The median value of owner occupied housing units in the neighbourhood was $73,800. This was $11,340 below the median value of owner occupied housing units in the rest of the village, despite similarities in the age and architectural features of housing units. Of course the biggest contrast between the neighbourhood and the village involved housing tenure. Renters made up over 70% of housing occupants, while they made up less than 30% of the occupants in the village. Finally, the neighbourhood had an 11.5% vacancy rate, which was almost three times the vacancy rate in the village.

The many obstacles experienced by the community were compounded by the limited capacity of local government. The village has a small government composed of a part-time mayor, a six member board of trustees, a five member zoning board, and a five member planning board. It also has a small cadre of full-time and part-time civil service employees who managed basic services such as: police protection, public works, building inspections, and other administrative functions. These activities took place under the supervision of a single village administrator. The capacity of the village government to deal with issues outside the scope of the day-to-day operation was limited.

Community Workshops as Participation

It was incumbent upon the university-based consulting team to incorporate citizen participation into the planning process for revitalizing the Main Street neighbourhood. The central focus of this effort involved two community workshops, designed to allow citizens to identify community needs and critique proposed plans for neighbourhood revitalization. It is noteworthy that this model conformed to the instrumental approach identified in the citizen participation continuum. This was a reflection of the focus and institutional sponsorship of the neighbourhood planning process. The first community workshop was scheduled at the beginning of the planning process. It occurred before any specific plans for neighbourhood revitalization were developed. Neighbourhood residents were notified of the workshop through advertisements in a community newspaper, hand delivered fliers and small neighbourhood businesses.

The first community workshop was held in the early evening on a weekday. The workshop was in the village's senior center, which was within walking distance of the Main Street neighbourhood. Since the meeting was planned for the early evening, food and beverages were provided. As they came into the senior center, residents were given a copy of the agenda for the workshop as well as a brief survey about the neighbourhood. The agenda was broken down into six activities: an introduction, an overview of the project, two mapping sessions, a visioning session, and closing comments. Each activity was scheduled for 15-25

minutes. The general purpose of the meeting was to supply residents with information about the planning effort and the existing conditions in neighbourhood. Using that information, residents were divided into working groups where they were asked develop maps identifying areas of concern and plans for neighbourhood revitalization.

Twenty-one people attended the first community workshop. There was an even distribution of men and women in the workshop, the average age of the group was approximately 50 years, and all of the workshop participants were white. About half of the people attending the workshop were residents of the neighbourhood and small business owners from the Main Street commercial strip. The remaining workshop participants included village and county administrators, and elected officials from the village. Missing from the workshop were representatives from the village police department, business owners from the industrial site adjacent to the neighbourhood, and landlords who owned property in the neighbourhood. In addition to workshop participants, the local community newspaper sent a reporter to cover the first community workshop.

Given the total population of the neighbourhood and the relatively mundane nature of the proposed planning activities, turnout for the first workshop was somewhat low. Key segments of the resident population were underrepresented at the meetings. Missing from the meeting were younger members of the community and a cross-section of the renter population. It was believed that a broader spectrum of the population would have turned out if the planning activities involved not-in-my-backyard (NIMBY) issues, or a significant alteration in land use. The turnout was also suppressed because of the socio-economic characteristics of the neighbourhood. As a result, the influences of other stakeholders in the planning process were heightened while renters and younger members of the community were not well represented.

During the course of the community workshop, participants identified a number of priorities for neighbourhood revitalization. In some cases, they discussed needs that overlapped with those identified by village officials. For instance, residents believed that there was a need for infrastructure improvements and roadway development in the area. These improvements were also seen as a way to reduce the level of isolation the residents perceived between the neighbourhood and the rest of the village. Residents thought that a historic connection existed between redevelopment in the neighbourhood and the adjoining industrial site, since the industrial site was once a major source of jobs to neighbourhood residents. They also agreed with the general notion that housing rehabilitation and commercial development would improve the community. However, residents discussed additional issues which expanded the scope of subsequent planning activities.

In terms of housing and neighbourhood conditions, the residents had added concerns about absentee landlords, they discussed the need for more parks, and there was concern about the negative stigma associated with the neighbourhood. They believed that their neighbourhood was perceived by others in the village as impoverished and dilapidated. This stigma contributed to residents' alienation from the broader community. In terms of business needs in the area, residents were more inclined to view the industrial property adjacent to the neighbourhood as blighted, and more likely to have concerns about contamination on the site. At the same time, residents had specific suggestions for the types of commercial businesses that were needed along the Main Street commercial corridor. In the same way that residents raised concerns about the industrial site, they also had concerns about their past relationships with local government, and the police department in particular. In addition, they had concerns about parochial issues that affected the quality of life in the neighbourhood such as: drug dealing, the need for block clubs, and animal control. In essence, residents recognized the need for physical improvements in the neighbourhood and they brought a number of additional social concerns to the table. The residents made it clear that a successful neighbourhood revitalization effort would entail attention to both physical development and social needs. To the residents providing for social needs like public safety, recreation, civic engagement, education, as social welfare were critical to the neighbourhood revitalization process.

Following the first community workshop, a series of planning meetings were held with business owners in the industrial site adjacent to the Main Street neighbourhood and with representatives from village and county government. The main focus of these meetings was on developing plans for a road expansion project in the

industrial site. The project would ultimately connect the industrial site to the Main Street neighbourhood and facilitate the upgrading of infrastructure related to water service in the entire area. This aspect of the planning process was disconnected from broader neighbourhood planning goals. Local governmental officials expressed their belief that the proposed roadway development would benefit both businesses in the industrial site and residents in the adjacent neighbourhood. They also felt that the roadway would strengthen the local tax base and alleviate fire hazards in the area. The business owners felt that the roadway improvements and related utility upgrades would be beneficial as well. The dialogue generated in these closed meetings solidified a consensus among participants that the Village and County should first push forward with roadway improvements, and then follow-up with other elements of the neighbourhood revitalization plan. Residents of the Main Street neighbourhood did not have an opportunity to participate in these meetings. The lack of resident access to the meetings is an example of an instrumental form of participation. In hindsight, the decision to hold closed meetings had important ramifications for the overall impact that residents had on the neighbourhood planning process.

The second community workshop was scheduled about four months after the first and following the planning meeting where the roadway expansion project for the industrial site was discussed. In addition to advertising the workshop in the community newspaper and delivering fliers to all of the residential properties in the area, business owners from the industrial site and other stakeholders were invited. Turnout for this workshop was higher than the first. Thirty-four people attended the second community workshop. The composition of the participants in the second workshop was similar to the first; however, there were a few noticeable differences. Unlike the first workshop, business owners from the industrial site were in attendance. These individuals came after participating in closed meetings about roadway development. Landlords from the Main Street neighbourhood also came to the second workshop. Their attendance was motivated by feedback they had received from tenants who attended the first workshop. Like their tenants, these landlords lived in the neighbourhood and they had concerns about other properties owned by absentee landlords. In part, the presence of these stakeholders was a product of our outreach efforts. However, the larger turnout for the meeting may have also been an outgrowth of greater awareness about the planning process generated through word-of-mouth in the community and coverage of the process in the community newspaper. Prior to the second workshop, the community newspaper ran a story about the developing neighbourhood plan. This piqued interest in the community and made attending the workshop more salient to residents. As was done for the first community workshop, the local community newspaper sent a reporter to cover the second workshop.

The agenda for the second workshop was broken-down into six activities: an introduction, a summary of the first community workshop, a discussion of the preliminary plan for roadway improvements, a discussion of the unifying theme, time for community feedback, and closing comments. Each activity was scheduled for 15 minutes, with the exception of the time for community feedback which was allotted 45 minutes.

Although there were a variety of interests discussed at the second community meeting, there was a great deal of agreement on the need for the revitalization plan to move forward. There was no general disagreement about any specific element in the preliminary plan, but various groups prioritized activities differently. The main distinction in priorities was between the residents and other stakeholders. As was the case in the first meeting, the residents articulated a stronger link between physical improvements in the area and social issues. Among issues discussed by residents were: the need for parks, the need for enhanced building code enforcement by the village, problems with absentee landlords, the need for tenant screening in the neighbourhood, and concerns about environmental risks associated with the industrial site.

Residents spoke the majority of the time in the workshop. Their participation in the community workshops raised the awareness of other stakeholders to the connection between physical and social development. Through their dialogue with other stakeholders in the workshop, residents were afforded an opportunity to be heard, and other stakeholders took them seriously. Residents' concerns influenced the planning process in other ways as well. For example, residents' critiques of the preliminary road expansion design led to substantive modifications in the final plan. After receiving feedback from residents, sidewalks were added to

the proposed roadway design. In response to residents' comments, the proposed roadway became pedestrian friendly and had improved neighbourhood access to public transportation.

In addition to increased stakeholder awareness of residents' concerns, there was some indication that the tone of media coverage began to shift. Prior to the community workshops, headlines such as "Crack Bust Made on Main Street" helped to define public perceptions of the area [33]. After the community workshops, coverage of the area also included front page stories that reflected the concerns of residents about issues like: absentee landlords, environmental contamination, and neighbourhood revitalization [34].

One of the effects of incorporating citizen participation into the planning process was that residents' concerns were pushed to the forefront. As a result, residents' priorities were incorporated into the final plan for neighbourhood revitalization. It should be noted that the outcome of this planning process was relatively modest and merely resulted in an improved neighbourhood revitalization plan from the perspective of residents. Despite improvements to the planning document generated from this process, there was no guarantee that items added by residents would materialize during the plan implementation process. In fact, at the time that this analysis was written little progress had been made toward developing the proposed road expansion project or other elements of the plan. However, some improvements to sidewalks and streets in the neighbourhood that were scheduled before the planning process took place had occurred. Despite improved communication between residents and other stakeholders, the full potential of citizen participation remained hampered by the limited capacity of local government to sustain efforts to empower residents. Public participation was further hampered by the dominance of the community and economic development processes by traditional interests such as: local business, industry, professional consultants, and public officials. In the case of Depew, their groups were involved in the public participation process and had exclusive access to closed meetings where roadway planning was initiated.

CONCLUSION: EMPOWERING THE TIRED, POOR AND HUDDLED MASSES

The two case studies examined in this chapter illustrate how institutional factors hamper efforts to promote full participation in society. In the case of Buffalo's CBHOs, historic patronage politics and a lack of organizational autonomy led to a limited scope of participation in the governance of local non-profit housing organizations. In the case of participatory planning in Depew's Main Street neighbourhood, efforts to expand the influence of working poor residents in the planning process were hampered by the limited capacity of local government. As a result, prevailing political and economic interests in both communities tended to dominate key elements of the community development process. This manifested itself through the decision-making processes surrounding the definition of the scope of community problems, mechanisms for financing community development, and the timing of plan implementation. Although public participation was a part of the process, it did not flourish. Two theoretical mechanisms help to explain this outcome. In both case studies, participation was circumscribed due to its embeddedness in Weber's iron cage. Also, both case studies illustrate how professionalization and the involvement of larger institutional actors in community development promote the adoption of instrumental forms of participation.

In light of these observations, we advocate for a sea change in the scope and role of public participation in community development processes. In particular, we argue that greater attention needs to be placed on expanding the role of groups currently excluded from public participation. Our recommendations are centered on two areas of community empowerment that require further policy development. The first area involves the need for enhanced federal and state activism in the area of community empowerment. The case studies examined in this chapter highlight impediments to public participation at the local level of government. They include issues surrounding patronage politics and the resource dependency of community-based organizations on local government agencies. In addition, public participation is hampered due to the limited capacity of local

government. Because of these circumstances, we recommend that state and the federal government enhance mandates for public participation in community development processes. In addition to mandating broader participation in all federally funded programs, federal and state government should expand mechanisms to provide additional funding and technical assistance for public participation to all local agencies that implement community development policy. These reforms should emphasize empowering low-income groups traditionally left out of the public policy process. In essence, there is a need for federal and state government to take the lead in institutionalizing broad based public participation in decision-making at the local level. Without adequate resources, monitoring, and oversight from funding agencies, the culture of public participation wanes in contemporary society. There are currently few incentives for institutional change at the local level of government. Mandates for community-based decision-making, which emphasize grassroots forms of participation and partnerships with neighbourhood-based organizations, must be a prerequisite to accessing resources for community development.

The second area of community empowerment that requires further policy development grows out of the first. This area entails the need to stimulate autonomous, grassroots activism in community development processes. There is a need to enhance the influence of groups currently excluded from local decision-making and leverage community development resources in a manner that promotes their interests. This shift would require mobilizing these interests and increased activism. At the local level, this type of grassroots activism would entail mandates for local control over community and economic development activities. This type of control would manifest itself in requirements for things like community benefit agreements (CBAs) that link jobs, investment, and other community benefits to local economic development projects [18]. Local control of community and economic development processes would also be enhanced with the adoption of grassroots models for neighbourhood-based governance [4;13;14;30]. The restructuring of local governance accompanied by federal and state mandates for public participation in the implementation of public programs would strengthen local community development and the voices of those excluded from decision-making processes. Finally, efforts to promote local control and greater input from disenfranchised groups in the public policy processes must be forwarded by the institutionalization of community advocacy within government. This would entail the development of a culture of advocacy and dissent within government along the lines described by Needleman and Needleman [25], Krumholz and Forester [15], and O'Leary [27]. From this perspective, the role of local government should be redefined as a tool for empowering disenfranchised groups. Local government should be recast as an institution designed to organize communities, advocate for the poor, and pursue community development guided by principles of equity planning.

As noted earlier in this chapter, escaping from Weber's iron cage and achieving full participation is not an option for disempowered groups in society. Instead, the disempowered should focus on asserting themselves within the iron cage and challenging dominant institutions to expand democratic processes and equity in society. Succeeding at this will depend on the degree to which institutional relationships shift in the future. In order to prompt those changes, federal and state mandates for public participation and citizen control need to be enhanced. These mandates must be reinforced at the local level by increased grassroots activism and advocacy within government. Without these changes the promise of public participation will remain unfulfilled.

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