

Personal Planning Manifesto

Primary Purposes of Planning, Role of the City Planners and their communication responsibilities, and Public Interest

Introduction

Defining city planning has always been an arduous task and more so due to its interdisciplinary nature and overlap with congruous and sometimes incongruous fields. City planning grew out of man's primordial need to establish a sense of order in the random processes of human settlement. Although city planning as an academic vocation and a professional pursuit has only existed for little more than hundred years, the basic tenets have always existed in history of man's city building exercises. The ancient civilizations of Mohenjo-Daro & Harappa circa 2000 BC utilized public amenities such as delineated drainage systems and water supply systems. The Greek and Roman civilizations used public spaces (agoras and piazzas respectively) for cultivating a sense of community and urban life. Their monumental structures, often for religious and recreational (Acropolis and Colosseum) purposes served as focal points in their cities around which the urban fabric of their civilizations was woven.

In more recent times, as a solution to better human living conditions, Charles Booth surveyed the city of London to suggest rudimentary planning principles (Hall, 2002). However, in the American context planning was initiated and dominated by the City Beautiful Movement i.e. planning without social purposes. Changes in transportation technology and incentives for homeownership expanded American cities manifold. The planning field was dominated by many proponents who cited almost as many ideologies for making our cities more livable. The theories ranged from Ebenezer Howard's satellite garden cities to Le Corbusier's Radiant Tower City for Three Million Inhabitants. Lately, there has been a shift to working in tandem with the natural environment while promoting sustainable development as ways to plan efficient cities.

In this paper, I will attempt to define my philosophy for planning and use relevant literature citing urban design principles as my inspirations to contextualize planning in today's times. I will also examine the role of the planners in this rapidly changing world and

attempt to examine their evolving communication roles in the age of continuous shifting trends of information and technology. Lastly, I will place planners within the sphere of public interest and attempt to flesh out their contribution for the planning vocation.

Purposes of Planning

In Process

I have lived and grown up in a bustling metropolis that calls itself Mumbai (Bombay) before finally settling in one of its satellite towns. In August 1998, I traveled to more than nine Indian cities - the rigidly planned Chandigarh, the historically significant and constantly evolving Delhi, the strategically located Agra, the feudal cities of Rajasthan Jaipur, Jodhpur, Jaisalmer, Bikaner, and Udaipur caught in the rapid democratization of India. After moving to the United States, I continued my travel to cities like New York, Chicago, San Francisco, Atlanta, and Miami – almost all of them as different from each other as American cities are different from Indian cities; yet they share a common urban ‘sense of place’ that brackets them with their Indian counterparts. I have slowly but surely come to understand that cities are civilizations in process and even after planned cities are ‘completed’, they continue to evolve in ways often unimagined by their creators. So if cities are a continuing process, can planning also be considered the same?

Chandigarh, a city planned by Corbusier in early 50s was built from scratch and emerged literally on an open site. It was meant to embody the spirit of free India and its urban and design form departed significantly from India’s traditional architecture. However, fifty years after completion much has changed in the way people occupy private and public spaces. Informality has crept back in form of street markets and ad hoc extensions to private residences. Imposition of a strict code regards form has in fact resulted in much strife between planners and residents. On the other hand, Houston enjoys lack of zoning ordinances but suffers from the ills of sprawl that has strained the city’s infrastructure. Planning can be termed as a continuing process that must neither be over-restrictive nor totally *laissez faire*. Planning thus can be a process of “valuation and evaluation not the imposition of fixed values and singular notions of good life” (Campbell, 2002). Planning only

can be deliberated in a contextual manner and idealizations of an urban form usually proves to be ineffective.

Macro-managing Planning

Planning is basically about making choices, with and for others, about what makes good places (Campbell, 2002). Historically, feudal lords and monarchs have dictated the basic city form while also letting society and market make internal configurations. Ebenezer Howard's Garden Cities, modeled as the best of town and country living heralded the micromanaging of planning. Redistribution of spaces and encouraging/discouraging conflicting land uses to adhere with the master plan of the city was common and even exists in many zoning ordinances all over the world. However, micromanaging planning as in Howard's Garden cities have been stretched to extreme limits often resulting in '*Disney-ish*' creations. The city of Seaside, Florida is both reviled and revered in urban planning circles. The intentions of the creators and residents of Seaside are noble i.e. to create livable and walkable communities that encourage social living. But in their attempts to humanize their city, they have ended up micromanaging planning and design of space that has removed the charm of randomness of cities. Organic cities retain the intrinsic charm that seems not forcefully implemented but rather evolved naturally to reflect the cultural, historical, and social spirit of the people residing within. The cities should ideally reflect the ideas and spirit of the people and not the other way around.

The use of the environment by the people that inhabit them largely dictates future designing of that space. Urban design (discussed later) has pluralistic implications in ways that allows planning processes to evolve from the needs and wishes of people while identifying them as the primary users of "physical space in concrete contexts" (Wates & Knevitt, 1987).

The Urban Design Way

Evolution of a built form in context of its natural environment often leads to conflicts causing much social and cultural duress not only to the settlement's inhabitants but also to the surroundings that it is built on. Even in urban design terms, it is therefore important not only to consider the product but also its processes (Stein, 2001). Urban

design – the way in which humans actually shape the environment is central to our understanding of the continuous evolution of cities. I adhere to the concept of urban design to conceptualize the city form and in practice urban design expresses itself in visual, spatial, and social aspects of planning while creating implications for the technical, creative, and social processes of city planning (Madanipour, 1996). The concept of urban design dictating planning methods is not rooted in the belief that it determines subsequent human behavior but rather in the idea that deliberated and good design can have positive influences on the people that occupy those spaces.

The City Beautiful movement in different cities around the world that build grandiose structures to reflect on human achievements are egotistical statements of cities that often run against the long term wishes of the people. The World Fair buildings notably by Daniel Burnham in Chicago signified short term manifestations of building technology and display of economic prowess. The human scale development favored by Camille Sitte and Kevin Lynch finds favor with residents as popular solutions for their habitable needs on a long-term basis. While the former creates a lasting legacy that is repeated on promotional city posters *for the visiting tourists*, the latter creates an enhanced standard of life *for the citizens*. But not all grandiose buildings are hated by the residents; they can in fact help the city acquire an identity if placed in appropriate context and adapted seamlessly in the existing urban fabric of the city e.g. Eiffel Tower in Paris, Empire State Building, New York, etc. It largely depends on the wishes of the people to revile or revere a city structure and often, their choice can be whimsical and often surprising. As Aristotle rightly summarizes aims of city planning, “a city should be built to give its inhabitants security and happiness”. After all, it is all about the choice of the people that choose to live within the city’s boundaries that dictate the form of the city.

Need for Public Space

Sitte (1889), in his book *The Art of Building Spaces* celebrates public space and in fact partly agrees with the City Beautiful Movement by justifying the existence of grandiose buildings. But at the same time, he observes that the existence of public spaces around such buildings place them in the context of human scale. Having seen both organic and planned

cities in my travels, I agree with Sitte's principles of city building that the modern system of blocks and regularly aligned houses should be abandoned in favor of more exciting and random organization of habitable spaces. In today's era of structured zoning, we seem to have lost the charm of interactive urban connections. Every use, be it residential, commercial, recreational, etc. placed in distinct areas of the city can lend an air of monotony and lead to grouping of cities into specific genres. If we historically examine human settlement, as Sitte did in Europe, we can identify underlying thematic characteristics of every city that distinguish it from the rest of the world. Every city regardless of its origin attempts to identify its primal character over time and planners can help hasten that process by providing an interactive space for its citizens. Public squares, as Sitte observed, are "theaters for principal scenes of public life" that help a city find itself.

American cities often lack a space to commune because as critics suggest, it is "not our culture". But before automobiles and the Interstate system made living away from the city feasible, American cities were also characterized by dense neighborhoods and public spaces. Some older cities like New York, Chicago, and Boston still pride themselves on their urban living and sense of place characteristics with constantly 'buzzing-with-activity' public spaces. I believe, every city needs focus and identifying traits that let it hold on to its past while adapting for the future.

Cut down to the basics, the built environment serves as the structural framework for societal activities such as production, consumption, and reproduction (Stein, 2001). However, urban design principles for planning help the environment to fulfill these needs and uses to function efficiently in that space. Economic principles of allocating resources to its best possible utilization help define uses but at the same time adhering to urban design guidelines serves the purpose of providing the living environment of people that help them flourish and innovate. The purpose of such an endeavor might be to shape the built environment from a quality of life perspective. Frequently generalized aesthetic considerations of urban design only provide a narrow view of the overall impact that actually seeks to include environmental, social, cultural, and historical aspects of a city form.

Kevin Lynch's elements of city form – paths, edges, districts, nodes, and landmarks – are good starting points for understanding how people perceive city form. Urban design effectively works with these elements by creating more psychologically satisfying urban environments. Common themes throughout in form or philosophy lend each city its unique identifying trait. Planning according to my beliefs is the exploration for this trait and subsequently working with urban design forms to create a socially just environment. The use of paths and edges in a city often lead to segregation of population and diffusion of distinct lines of separation should be encouraged. Ameliorating social and cultural conditions in a city shall be discussed in sections pertaining to role of planner and public interest.

Aggregating Densities

Allan Jacobs and Donald Appleyard in their seminal article, *Toward an Urban Design Manifesto*, argue against lifeless forms of cities and emphasize on livable urban environments. Cities like New York, Los Angeles, London, etc have outgrown their urban form and in parts have ceased to exemplify the upsides of density living that I wish to support. As Jacobs and Appleyard mention in their article, higher densities that organic cities seem to signify are generally preferred over the suburban sprawl the post-World War II cities seem to harvest. Spatial densities must exist in the range between Corbusier's ultra-dense skyscrapers and Howard's luxuriously spaced garden cities. The new vocabulary of urban form that highlights sights, smells, sounds, and feel of a city is better envisioned through the lens of urban design. The recent trends of New Urbanism seek to herald in the era of pedestrian-friendly neighborhoods while making cities less dependent on automobiles. However, the codes encapsulated in the New Urbanist Lexicon prepared by Duany Plater-Zyberk and Company (DPZ) might be too restrictive and bordering on micromanaging the planning process. At the same time, overt liberalism or *laissez faire* also cannot facilitate urban design-centric planning which is inherently public and integrative (Sternberg, 2000). Free-market mechanisms can tend to ignore the public good and long-term public interest and distinguishes citizens as consumers and taxpayers and not real people living in an urban environment (Sandel, 1996). There must be attempts to find a

middle ground in implementing planning policy. It might be relevant to draft an overall policy or instill a value system e.g. Oregon's 19-point core principles that every development adheres to so that each development need not be micromanaged.

Economically speaking, sprawl may reflect the "invisible hand" of an open market planning system but serious negative and irreversible externalities tend to be counterproductive. Regards cities that encourage or tolerate sprawl, Robert Breugmann (forthcoming) harshly rebukes planners and citizens alike, "cities that sprawl and, by implication, the citizens living in them, are self indulgent and undisciplined." Breugmann also exonerates American cities for being prime reasons for creating sprawl and instead places the onus on earlier Asian and European cities. Sprawl thus has proved universal and as Breugmann suggests, does not contribute to the perception of urban life in a city. I beg to differ and suggest that although recent trends in real estate development have brought back the allure of living within the city, this movement has been restricted to the higher-income group of people and created greater divisions among various economic groups. Relying exclusively on the argument of an "invisible hand" dictating the urban form and shying away from the question whether sprawl is good or not, leads us back to ignoring issues of social equity.

Social Justice for All

The question of imposing a sense of justice toward minorities or oppressed class of the population against popular opinion is often the topic of discussion in planning circles. Social and economic policies such as provision of low-interest mortgage loans (along with mortgage interest deduction) and creating a public education system based on neighborhood locations had unintended consequences of encouraging segregation. Integrating population is important for the social health of a city. Suppressed frustrations and continuing discrimination can manifest itself in form of outbreaks of violence and general disruption of city life leading to complete breakdown. Frequent incidents of such violent behavior on part of citizens can often taint a city with instability and create a disincentive for potential immigrating population causing stagnancy or even negative growth.

For e.g. Paris and other cities experienced bouts of violence exposing decades of segregation and discrimination against minorities however, another French city Marseille was spared due to its documented history of successful integration. Unlike other French cities where architectural treasures are cared for in the city center and ungainly human settlements are pushed to the periphery, Marseille has successfully integrated residents within the city core while also preserving its historic traditions. Thus, integrating social policies with planning principles can have positive spillover effects that are often not seen in the short term. Sense of social justice even if it flies in the face of popular opinion should be reinforced in a public forum and policies to encourage racial integration, mixed-income neighborhoods, etc should be adequately supported by planning principles.

At One Glance

A general theory of planning according to my personal beliefs should be rooted in context that dwells highly on enhancing the livability aspect of a community. The environments, as Jacobs and Appleyard describe, should be designed for those who use them and are affected by them rather than for those who own them. Historic preservation for sake for furthering our understanding of the urban fabric should be promoted and encouraged but at the same time, citizens should be encourage to break free from the traditional mold of urban living and seek innovative ways to create social networks. Creating a sense of awareness for your historic past is important but it is more important not to put it up on a pedestal but in fact weave its existence within the city's functional form. Revitalized historic buildings that are put to use and form a functional niche within a city are often protected or even loved by its residents e.g. Victoria Terminus in Bombay. Connecting citizens to their historic past while adapting their sense of living for the future by incorporating functional usage helps balance out the conflict in urban settlements.

Complexity should not be designed against but rather embraced to highlight distinguishing characteristics of a particular city. Absence of diversity, spontaneity, and surprise, as Jacobs and Appleyard put it, are remnants of the modernist era that placed function above form and effectively created strictly regulated (Charter of Athens: CIAM) city forms. The recently formed post-modernist ideas seek revisiting the past in terms of re-

imposing human scales for planning and emphasizing better form and image of a city. Humanization of a city is central to urban design and post-modern principles. Public spaces are vital in inculcating the sense of place to a city and offer a platform for social interaction. Cities with integrated public spaces are the most vibrant and tend to be viewed as more friendly and better to live in.

Sense of social and cultural justice even if unpopular should be central to a progressive city's spirit. Discrimination against immigrants will result in stagnation and deprive the city of a vibrant cultural environment. Migration trends are often dictated by economic trends and exclusion of certain sections of population is not possible even if desired so by the majority of the residents. Integration should not only be encouraged but in fact, the minorities should be welcomed in participatory governance measures and accorded due respect in planning procedures.

Role of the Planner

Redundancy of "Rational Participatory" Planning

Planning can be identified as one of the more public activities in the urban landscape. Consensus as opposed to conflict tends to be more productive even sometimes at the cost of the most appropriate solution. As mentioned earlier, planning is a continually evolving process and its effects are far-reaching than any other decisions made in the public sphere. Traditionally planning has been considered a top-down process wherein erudite scholars and urbanists imposed their ideas of an ideal city form on unwilling citizens who usually learnt to adapt the imposed forms to their convenience. This usually led to social conflicts which were ideally given political hues and ultimately ignored (as seen in the Paris riots). In order to reduce the social and political gap in the planning process, attempts to give due representation to every (affected) section of the society were encouraged. However, not all succeeded.

Arnstein (1969) lists the "ladder of citizen participation" that ranges from the minimalist form of collection information from the public and keeping them informed to the all-inclusive form of public control over decision making. The planner plays a central role in these processes ranging from a facilitator to a consensus-builder. The planning participatory

methods can be a political placatory measure as well by enforcing only remedial measures and including only elitist or the most vocal activists. Apathy on part of the citizens is often both a blessing and a curse in applied planning. More number of stakeholders can mean more opinions and voiced concerns that many planners might not be willing to work with. All-inclusive participatory processes also can lead to “participation-fatigue” and subsequent ignorance either by citizens or planners. Seeking out all stakeholders can imply a rational process that often is time consuming and requires vast amounts of financial, technical, and time-related resources that most cities lack. Pure participatory planning processes can be chaotic and often lead nowhere. Citizens are often not best equipped to understand or relate to complex urban problems that are mired in several interconnected layers. Composition of neighborhood groups also is not always fair and severely disadvantaged and extremely low-income sections of population may never be represented.

Norman Krumholz advocacy planning approach can be an effective and active form of planning method that is usually also planner-centric. Although advocacy models are considered planner-centric and often reflect the planner’s value and belief system, planners do not necessarily find themselves at the center of the dialogue. Krumholz methods centered on empowering the erstwhile disadvantaged communities and lending a voice to sections of society that were previously ignored in the planning process. The grassroots approach although a tad slow can prove to work toward eliminating racial and social differences in a society. Planners can provide the much needed technical assistance and planning insights that ordinary citizens may lack while not imposing direct solutions for creating an urban form. The planner’s role would be to initiate and encourage dialogue to begin the planning process. Identifying needs and wants in a community can often be as easy as going out and asking citizens or may need additional work by trying to sift through layers of distrust and biases those decades of ignorance and exclusion may have imposed.

However, advocacy planning may fit well with distressed communities that have been neglected over the years but in the general sense of planning needs, communicative planning through citizen participation albeit slow processes are considered favorable processes for long-term solutions. Equitability and political feasibility are direct outcomes of

such a process and have greater chances of implementation. Recently in the city of Mumbai, almost 700 acres of erstwhile mill lands was reallocated for private development. Located on prime land, these lands were dubiously planned for commercial development without any public participation regards future use. In order to advocate for a more equitable use of these prime lands, few citizen groups filed a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) in the Mumbai High Court and managed to reverse the reuse development plans. Through the Court's injunction, more than sixty percent of the lands were reserved for open spaces and urban infrastructure projects. Thus, an active lobbying effort by citizen groups can significantly affect planning decisions. Such a move also goes a long way in creating an equitable land distribution system and allocates the city lands for public utilities which otherwise wouldn't be possible in a free market model that is prone to manipulation by powerful business interests.

Value Systems in Planning

The value-neutral planner as envisioned by the rational decision making models of planning is a utopian concept and honestly, doesn't exist in the real world. Actually, it helps if the planners do not hold any allusions for value neutrality but instead work on identifying their core value or ideological beliefs that might mold their planning processes. Values for planning are better understood if it is considered that planning is a societal activity rather than a system.

Knowledge is never all-encompassing and we forever remain in pursuit of the transitory truth that is excessively dependent on context. However, knowledge can be placed in context of overarching values of equity, justice, and respect for sustainable environments. Free market proponents argue for the rational behavior of planners to come up with ideal solutions while advocacy planners aim for consensual processes rather than focusing on final solutions. Planners are often not only seen as ineffectual but also "servants of a state apparatus dedicated to furthering the interests of capital, most particularly those owning property" (Fainstein & Fainstein, 1979). Such notions often emerge from top-down planning processes where planners remain disconnected from stakeholders and eventually succumbing to vested interests who are not only vociferous in staking their demands but

also politically influential to fulfilling them. Planners caught “muddling through” potential solutions often abandon their value systems and approach the planning process from a compromise-first perspective. Win-win solutions are rarely argued for and instead planners make do with “*least worst*” option when faced with uncertainty and conflicting circumstances (Bolan, 1983).

Forester (1989) highlighted strategies employed by planners in real-life situations to help guide developers and residents alike through the planning processes. Mastering conflict resolutions skills must rank as one of the top skills a planner should possess. Adjudicating between warring groups whilst keeping their professional demeanor intact and remaining loyal to their value system is an art not easily learnt. Forester’s work (1982) with Norman Krumholz highlighted the importance and practical reality of implementing socially responsible equity planning policies. Planners should expect opposition both politically and socially for their often idealistic planning solutions. Politics should not be avoided but instead met head on and assimilated with the help of negotiation and conflict resolution behavior.

The use of facts and rules is the best weapon for planner to back up their decisions and they often can use their influence of understanding complexities of planning processes to push forward the case for public interest. Encouraging dialogue between residents and developers often keeps planners out of the dock and instead helps them maintain the role of a facilitator or an adjudicator in case of disagreements. Not taking sides (with developers or residents) yet pursuing a general social objectives for implementing planning solutions is the best possible strategy a planner can hope to implement. Planners can help disadvantaged communities better by working more with them to anticipate arguments and preparing a defense especially when they face a developer who has an ample supply of resources.

The strategies proposed by Forester (1989) are not neutral in the strict sense of the word but in fact work toward “challenging existing inequalities of information, expertise, political access, and opportunity.” Planners although remaining neutral have an additional responsibility toward disadvantaged section of the population in order to level the playing

field. Such an approach however places the onus on planners to seek out their ideological and value beliefs before working with the community. It requires planners to exercise personal opinions on political and ethical grounds to approach the planning processes.

Similarly Davidoff (1965) argues for a pluralist model for implementing planning decisions. Bordering on activist and advocacy planning methods, Davidoff's methods implied empowering the underclass and disadvantaged populations as well. The ill-effects of planning are felt most by these sections of the society and their conditions are exacerbated due to lack of a potent voice in the planning processes. This again begs the question of values in the process and the importance of value-neutrality. Planners should thus not only declare their value affiliations but also reaffirm them through their actions and be an advocate in cementing their place in the society through planning. Although this might lead to politicization of planning process, this move should be worked with rather than ignored and planners should in fact actively participate in the political processes. In fact, planners get mutually reinforcing assistance in their advocacy from due process and political debates. Spreading out the decision-making process in light of clearly expressed values strengthen the advocacy process and bring much clarity to potential solutions. Exposing planners to political deliberations and democratic processes will only enrich the planning outcomes and spread the responsibilities among relevant stakeholders.

The Public Interest

To the People, For the People, By the Planners?

City planning has always been a social affair and although it directly affects the community's residents, rarely has their opinion mattered much. Right from the age of erudite sociologists, architects, and planners began laying out ideas for *their* concept of an ideal city; the citizens that actually use the space have been routinely ignored. Not until Jane Jacobs managed to shake the foundations of traditional planning through her path-breaking book, *The Death and Life of American Cities* (1961). She protested or rather galvanized activist-like movements against then New York's commissioner Robert Moses' moves to redevelop New York City. Although the infrastructural changes that Moses implemented benefited New York tremendously, his blatant disregard for disadvantaged

communities had serious socio-economic repercussions later on. This heralded the age of public participation and civic deliberations in the process of city planning. There have been skeptics who have thought that direct citizen participation is not only infeasible but also unrealistic (Dahl, 1989). But in recent times thanks to the growth in information technology, citizens have the ability and knowledge to participate fully in the political, administrative, and technical decisions that affect them. Rise in number of stakeholders participating in the decision-making however has only complicated the case for public interest as more and more individuals attempt to push their case.

Now, we'll ask for your opinion

Right up till the end of World War II, modernism held sway over the 'civilized' world in the fields of architecture and planning. Planners like Corbusier created grand visions that departed from traditional models of cities and imposed a new order that radically altered people's vision for societal communication. Public interest in the modernist era was imposed by erudite scholar who envisioned need for regularity and order in cities so that behavior could be monitored and controlled. However, after increased role of the government in urban redevelopment took over, post-modernists added participatory models to the city planning processes.

I believe that no individual can have a complete understanding of the socio-economic realities of a city no matter how much investment is made into social research processes. The decision-making process is incremental (Lindblom, 1959) and subject to social and political pressures. Sometimes the residents may act in their own self-interest causing NIMBY-ism but overall, 'wisdom of the crowds' or collective thinking can lead to efficient and accurate decisions (Surowiecki, 2005). Decisions forcing consensus often leads to the best form of conflict resolution within the community instead of being imposed by the planners which could cause discontent and disobedience.

Postmodernism places citizen participation at the heart of its process and that may be in part due to its cultural and historic underpinnings. Since most of post-modern planning relates to identifying a city's character and preserving its historic linkages, reaching out to the people for planning opinions is only natural. The human scale and pedestrian-friendly

high density development that postmodernism also encourages places the citizen in the centre of the planning process, rather than catering to the business or the technological needs of a city.

However, citizen participation especially in terms of public interest needs to be examined at face value and as Arnstein (1969) describes, the process can be arbitrary and mean different actions for different sections of the population. At the heart of the matter, participatory process has an emotional appeal for the people. Its lofty requirements are a “sense of responsibility and civic devotion to one’s commonwealth and a dedication to human and environmental betterment throughout the world” (Dimock, 1990). However, complete responsibility should not be imposed on citizens who may not have adequate skills or resources for effective decision-making. Planners instead can meet them midway and share power with the citizens in the planning process. This in turn helps define or reinforce public interest better simply because it indicates reflection of the people’s wishes even if it was a select few who chose to participate.

A New Public Interest Value

The modernism-postmodernism debates have actually largely been about who gets to make the decision on public interest in planning. The largely stripped-down version of functional modernist version of planning best exemplified in Corbusier’s Radiant city lost its sheen when the award-winning Pruitt-Igoe housing project was dynamited as its former residents cheered. The rational deliberation and positivist approach to decision-making did not seem to work for planning. The postmodernist perspective moved the primary responsibility from a state-directed prescriptive approach to a people-centric collaborative continuous process (Sandercock, 1998).

Also, there has been a significant shift in world politics and since the fall of the Soviet Union, we have moved from socialist governments to an increasingly globalized world. Globalization has brought forth different cultures and peoples together within cities making the need for reaching out to the citizens even more important. As Sandercock rightly describes our today’s cities as being melting pots of variety of ethnicities and cultures with differing interests and aspirations making it even more important to cater to a

whole new set of perspectives earlier unexplored. This has further pushed planning towards being a normative practice as opposed to a scientific endeavor that modernism presupposed. However, everything cannot be done at community level and we may still need assistance especially financial from the central agencies. For e.g. *Habitat for Humanity* successfully manages to provide housing at a community level, one house at a time but at times still requires federal grants for administrative and procedural tasks.

However multiple cultures and peoples lead to diminishing of an overarching public interest and it has to be thus redefined and not completely rejected, as Sandercock does. There are instances of consensus and common values even where there are “multiple interests and aspirations.” Overarching values of justice, enhanced dialogue, and greater participation to achieve common ground would in fact boost public interest values rather than undermine them. Every society seeks a middle ground rather than be mired in endless conflict and subsequent stalemate. Postmodernism however succeeds in bringing a diversity of experiences and understanding and lends credibility to the opinion of the common folk on the street rather than the erudite theories of those in the ‘ivory towers’ of academics and government.

In recent times with the advent and growth of information technology (IT), new public management and government reinvention theories (Osborne & Gaebler, 1992) have advocated for easier citizen participation and increased feedback for public programs. The government (and planners) has found IT useful in their efforts to reach the public and solicit feedback but this has also altered the public value and subsequently public interest. The still-persistent digital divide has only increased the gap between disadvantaged people and the elite section of the population. Efforts should be made to go beyond merely using IT as yet another fancy tool in citizen participation but should in fact be used to enhance participation not replace it. The new public management approaches have been like new wine in an old bottle – keeping standards of hierarchy and control within the controls of the government and bureaucracy. In their efforts to “steer not row”, planners have often ended up deciding what is best for the people instead of actually listening to them. IBM’s recent effort, *The Habitat Jam* (habitatjam.com) brings together academicians, professionals,

students, and ordinary citizens on a cyber realm to brainstorm on the future of the city with respect to conservation and sustainability. Hundreds of ideas will be floated and at the end of an intensive 4-day period, computer technology will be used to recognize and aggregate common topics discussed and this will be compiled into an easy reference guide for future use.

Efforts have also been afoot to mold government like a business in terms of accountability, transparency, and efficiency. Although the intentions are noble, the fact of the truth remains that the government is not a business and cannot be treated as thus. Public goods by definition are provided due to the fact that the market has failed to provide for them and the society would be benefited by its provision.

Denhardt and Denhardt (1999) offer a new model – New Public Service – that I closely identify with. They place their theory within roots of citizen participation and democratic citizenship. Citizens are seen more than just voters, clients, or customers and they are capable of looking beyond self-interest to the larger public-interest that is essential for consensual governance. In spite of diversity, common values such as an enhanced sense of living, greater role of community, encouraging an environment of safety and friendliness is common among all sections of the population. With respect to planning, the New Public Service model can be an effective tool for decision-making and implementation. Planners would be more inclined to help citizens articulate and meet their shared interests rather than attempt to control or steer society in new directions. The public authority i.e. the planner is only an equal partner in the planning process offering guidance and help wherever needed and delegating control to the people. Planners can assist in building coalitions of public, private, and nonprofit agencies to deliberate upon mutually agreed needs. The central thesis of the process is public interest and planners strive mostly to understand the features of public interest and thereafter leave the process of deriving planning objectives to the community. *Think Strategically, Act Democratically* – is a mantra best suited to the collaborative process that the New Public Service approach encourages. Albeit a slower process, but identifying and honoring people and citizenship goes a long way in harboring trust within communities and lead to better planning decisions. Respect for the

community ideals and not pooh-pooing their not-so-lofty ideals for better living helps foster relationships between the government and the public.

Lippman (1955) defines public interest as “what people would choose if they saw clearly, thought rationally, and acted disinterestedly and benevolently”. However, the basic premise is objectively, which I believe is not possible in the planning process wherein as observed earlier values are not only part of the process but in fact central to the decision-making process. The general assumption for the state to intervene in defining public interest is the lack of information and skill on part of the people to define what is good for them. However, recent advances in IT is making information asymmetry a thing of the past as it lends disadvantaged sections of the population easier access to information that was earlier beyond reach. Access to the technology that can access the information is still beyond reach of some people and examining the causes or solutions for ameliorating that problem may be beyond the purview of this paper.

Communitarianism, a public-interest theory advocated by Sandel (1996) purports the “shared consciousness that arises from the identification with the traditions of one’s own political and cultural community.” According to this theory, market-based forces or political-inspired collaborations are secondary to the sense of community and plays a central role in defining public interest regards to implementation. Thus, we see a general trend shifting back to empowering the community and placing the onus of defining the public interest rightly where it belongs – with the people. Public interest is thus, molded largely by public values which in turn are susceptible to change (Bozeman, 2002). In a largely pluralist society like United States or India, public values are fuzzy at best and determining public interest becomes even more challenging. The accommodation of conflict and acceptance of lack of consensus in fact makes the pluralist society stronger and lends voices to all possible alternatives as in the rational process of planning. However, the ultimate determination of the core public interest values finally depends on the quality and length of deliberation between different sections of the population.

Conclusion

While working on my undergraduate design dissertation, I conducted an informal survey among the town's residents. I was surprised to see the extent of identifying characteristics they tend to associate with the town they lived in. However, the need to find a unifying characteristic that they could easily identify with and also give them an enhanced sense of living was unanimous. Christopher Alexander has pointed out the complexities and diversities of connections in urban space that sharply differs from the traditional thought of hierarchy of services and facilities. Urban space, as we have seen, is an assortment of myriad people and their cultures, intermingling and forever in conflict with the natural surroundings. The conflict although cannot be resolved but it can be lessened by adopting sustainable living trends. Creation of a city in a natural habitat be it the obvious intrusion into wetland the New Orleans way or the subtle encroaching on grasslands the Brasilia way, is bound to affect the environment negatively. Balancing the need between economic growth and sustainability is a task still not perfected. Using already developed but derelict areas like brownfields can prevent despoiling greenfields and checking sprawl. Urban design can contribute by advocating for denser cities and closely connecting urban spaces like homes, schools, market, and parks. It might be useful to establish an urban boundary not by forcefully delineating no-growth bands around the city (green belts around London and other English cities) but by encouraging health living in concentrated densities that ultimately reduces sprawl and diminishes dependency on automobiles. Encouraging the propensity of people to live near the services they regularly use might create compact living spaces that ultimately boosts infrastructural efficiency and reduces energy consumption.

Urban design plays an important role by emphasizing on community spaces i.e. the public square, the streets, and prominent buildings and in turn helps the city to achieve an identity. Planning using urban design creates not only a pleasing habitable environment but also brings forth social justice through participatory processes and advocacy efforts. Value-neutrality is a myth that planners live under and early identification of their 'public-service' values can greatly ease their transition from the utopian academic environs to the harsh

world of urban reality where juggling between conflicting political interests and rational planning solutions is expected.

In this manifesto, I have attempted to crystallize my thoughts and beliefs in the planning process and attempted to flesh out the role of the planner in continuously evolving times. In my personal exploration, the public interest is deeply rooted in my beliefs in social equity, sustainable development, and participatory processes. I hope to further refine my ideologies and beliefs in my continuing quest for understanding the relationships of people and the spaces that they occupy. Defining the urban spaces and creating an enhanced living environment makes planning fun.

References:

- Alexander, Christopher (1977) *A Pattern Language: Towns, Buildings, Construction*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Appleyard, D. and A. Jacobs. (1987) "Toward an Urban Design Manifesto", *Journal of the American Planning Association*, Volume 5 Number 3: 112-120
- Arnstein, S.R. (1969) "A ladder of citizen participation". *Journal of American Institute of Planners*, Volume 35: 216-224.
- Bolan, R. (1983) 'The structure of ethical choice in planning practice', *Journal of Planning Education and Research*, Volume 3, 23-34.
- Bozeman, Barry (2002). Public-Value Failure: When Efficient Markets May Not Do. *Public Administration Review*, Volume 62 Number 2, 145-161.
- Bruegmann, Robert (forthcoming) *Sprawl: A Compact History*, Reviewed by Witold Rybczynski accessed on November 10th 2005 from <http://www.slate.com/id/2129636/>
- Campbell, Heather. (2002) Planning and Values: A British Perspective, Town and Gown Inaugural Lecture, Sheffield, UK: University of Sheffield.
- Dahl, R. A. (1989). *Democracy and its critics*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Davidoff, P. (1965). "Advocacy and Pluralism in Planning", *Journal of the American Institute of Planners*. Volume 31, Number 4: 331-338
- Denhardt, Robert B. and Denhardt, Janet V. (2000). The New Public Service: Serving Rather Than Steering. *Public Administration Review*, Volume 60 Number 6, 549-559
- Dimock, M. (1990). The restorative qualities of citizenship. *Public Administration Review*, Volume 50 Number 1, 21-25.
- Fainstein, N.I. and Fainstein, S.S. (1979) 'New Debates in Urban Planning: The Impact of Marxist Theory Within The United States', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, Volume 3, 381-403.
- Forester, J. (1989) *Planning in the face of power*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA:

- University of California Press.
- Hall, Peter G. (2002) *Cities of Tomorrow: An Intellectual History of Urban Planning and Design in the Twentieth Century*, Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers; 3rd rev ed.
- Jacobs, Jane. (1961) *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. New York, NY: Vintage Books.
- Krumholz, Norman and John Forester. (1990) *Making Equity Planning Work: Leadership in the Public Sector*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press
- Le Corbusier (1947) *The City of Tomorrow and its Planning*. London: Architectural Press (Translated from 'Urbanisme', first published in 1924)
- Lindblom, C. (1959) 'The science of muddling through', *Public Administration Review*, 19, 79-99.
- Lippman, Walter (1955). *The Public Philosophy*. London: Hamish Hamilton.
- Lynch, Kevin. (1960) *The Image of the City*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press
- Madanipour, Ali (1996) *Design of Urban Space*. Chichester: Wiley
- Osborne, David and Gaebler, Ted (1992). *Reinventing Government*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Sandercock, Leonie (1998). *Towards Cosmopolis: Planning for Multicultural Cities*. Chichester: John Wiley.
- Sandel, Michael J. (1996). *Democracy's Discontent: America in Search of a Public Philosophy*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Sitte, Camillo (1965) *City Planning According to its Artistic Principles*. New York: Random House (Translated from 'Der Städtebau nach seinen künstlerischen Grundsätzen', first published in 1889)
- Stein, Nicolai (2001) *The Process of Urban Design*. Denmark: Aarhus School of Architecture
- Sternberg, RJ (2000). *Handbook of Intelligence*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Surowiecki, James (2004). *The Wisdom of Crowds: Why the Many Are Smarter Than the Few and How Collective Wisdom Shapes Business, Economies, Societies and Nations*, New York, NY: Doubleday Publishers.
- Wates, Nick & Charles Knevitt (1987) *Community Architecture: How People are Creating Their Own Environment*. London: Penguin Books.