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BASIC1: INTRODUCTION TO PPL - THEORETICAL FUNDAMENTALS AND PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

1. Short description

The module *BASIC1: Introduction to PPL - Theoretical fundamentals and practical implications* shall aim at offering a comprehensive exploration of participatory planning, emphasizing its theoretical foundations, historical development, and practical applications. It shall begin by situating public participation as an essential yet contested element in contemporary policymaking and spatial planning. While heralded as a democratic imperative, public participation is criticized for being at times tokenistic, co-opted by neoliberal ideals, or reduced to a legitimizing tool for pre-determined agendas. Arnstein seminal 'ladder of participation' shall be introduced, underscoring the inherent challenges of redistributing power, highlighting the persistent dominance of professional and political actors over citizens in decision-making processes. This theoretical framework sets the stage for a critical examination of participatory practices, highlighting the importance of power dynamics and ethical considerations. The module shall then delve into the evolution of participatory planning models, tracing its journey from top-down blueprint planning to contemporary collaborative approaches. It describes how early models prioritized technocratic expertise, relegating public input to minimal, often symbolic roles. The shift toward advocacy and equity planning introduced a focus on disadvantaged groups, challenging the notion of a unified public interest. Transactive and radical planning further emphasized direct engagement and grassroots participation. Collaborative planning, emerging in the 1990s, sought to reconcile diverse stakeholder interests through dialogue and consensus-building. However, critiques reveal that these models often fail to address power imbalances, exposing limitations in achieving genuine inclusivity and transformative outcomes.

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Drawing on this consideration, the interplay between power, ethics, and participatory planning shall then become central to the module. Planning is framed as an inherently power-laden practice, with actors ranging from politicians and developers to citizens and academics navigating complex and often contested terrains. Power dynamics manifest in various spaces of participation–closed, invited, or claimed–shaped by global, national, and local contexts. The document underscores the necessity for planners to critically engage with these dynamics, leveraging concepts of power to understand and ethically navigate the challenges of inclusion and exclusion in planning processes. Such critical engagement aligns with the philosophical concept of 'phronesis', or practical wisdom, emphasizing context-sensitive, value-based judgments. This opens the way to conclude the module by advocating for planners as reflective practitioners who continuously scrutinize their assumptions, methods, and roles in participatory processes. Drawing on Donald Schön's theories of reflective practice, it argues that planners must embrace both tacit knowledge and explicit critical inquiry to navigate the uncertainties and value conflicts inherent in their work. Reflective practice serves as a tool to interrogate and potentially transform reified power structures, fostering more equitable and meaningful participatory outcomes. Ultimately, the document presents participatory planning not merely as a procedural exercise but as an ethical endeavour requiring deep reflection, adaptability, and an unwavering commitment to democratic principles.

2. Keywords

Participatory Planning; Public Participation; Democratic governance; Decision-making Processes; Theoretical Foundations; Ethical Matters

3. Content

3.1. Public participation and planning. An introduction

The concept of public participation is a central theme in contemporary policy discussions in Western societies, influencing policymaking across various public sectors (Cornwall 2008). The impetus for citizen involvement arises from a combination of ideologies (Cornwall 2008; Tahvilzadeh 2015), ranging from human rights advocacy for power-sharing and equality to neoliberal strategies aimed at fostering active and accountable citizens. Despite differing motivations, there is broad consensus on the value of participation. In academic circles, participatory practices have been both endorsed (Healy 1997; Forester 1999) and critically analyzed (Monno and Khakee 2012; Inch 2015), while political theorists have explored the potential tensions between these models and representative democracy (Amnå 2006; Vestbro 2012; Parvin 2018).

In the field of spatial planning, the focus on public engagement has grown significantly since Arnstein's (1969) foundational work. This evolution spans participatory approaches (Smith 1973) and collaborative planning theories (Healy 1997), culminating in their widespread acceptance among scholars and practitioners (Healy

2002). In many countries, participation in planning is now mandated by law and is often framed as a mechanism for enhancing democracy through deliberative practices (Forester 1999; Amnå 2006). Consequently, public participation is frequently portrayed as a hallmark of contemporary planning, contrasting with traditional top-down approaches.

At the same time, some scholars contest the idea that public participation is unique to modern planning, suggesting instead that it has always played a role in planning practices (Thorpe 2017). What distinguishes contemporary planning, they argue, is the institutionalization of citizen participation (Monno and Khakee 2012, p. 86). Today, participation is a routine process, implemented through structured methods as part of governmental organizational frameworks. This can be viewed as a step toward democratizing planning, enhancing government efficiency, and empowering local communities (Fung 2006; Smedby and Neij 2013). However, institutionalization within the context of new public management raises concerns, as the theoretical ideals of participatory planning often clash with neoliberal motivations for public involvement (Sager 2009). Institutionalized participation risks becoming tokenistic, serving primarily to legitimize authority without granting citizens meaningful influence (Amnå 2006; Monno and Khakee 2012). Furthermore, under the neoliberal paradigm, participatory practices risk 'depoliticizing' planning by reframing inherently ideological issues as administrative tasks (White 1996; Allmendinger and Haughton 2012).

The materials provided below aims at guiding teachers to develop 4,5 hours of lectures to introduce participatory planning theoretical foundations, historical development and practical implications to students. In doing so, a critical approach is proposed, that positions power at the centre of the picture, as a key element permeating all processes, hence raising ethical concerns in relation to participatory planning practices. After this brief introduction, Section 3.2 presents an historical overview of the development of participatory planning, in other words discussing how the concept of participation has been evolving in relation to different planning models. Then in Section 3.2 some key questions are raised concerning participatory planning, and in particular (i) who to involve, (ii) through what means, (iii) for that production of what outcomes and (iv) how can then these outcomes translated into practice. Aiming at unfolding those questions, section 3.4 explores the interrelations and tensions between planning and power, shedding some light on the ethical concerns that these interrelations and tensions raises for participatory planning. Finally, section 3.5 opens a window on the participatory practices, introducing the figure of the reflecting practitioner and discussing its role in the face of power.

3.2. An historical overview of participatory planning

Arnstein's seminal article on "ladders of citizen participation" is often used as a starting point in analyzing participatory planning practices due to its systematic clarity (Arnstein, 1969). More importantly, Arnstein focuses on an essential pre-condition and purpose of participation: the power re-distribution to enable citizens to exercise control over their lives. The ladder metaphor was employed to illustrate typical levels of citizen participation, ranging from non-participation to real civic power in decision-making

(Figure 1). Although the article has recently celebrated its fiftieth anniversary (Lauria and Slotterback, 2020), it is still considered one of the most influential works for both planning theory and practice across different geographical scales.

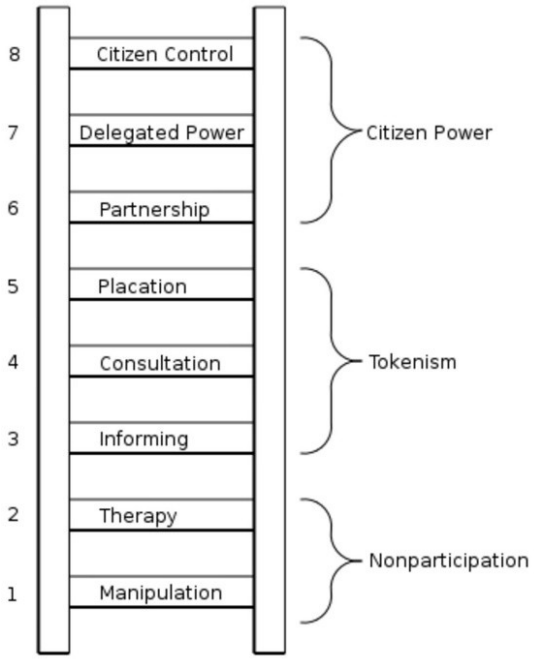

Figure 1: Arnstein's ladder of participation (Source: Arnstein, 1969)

Modern Western society's cultural and technological sophistication was accompanied by a demand for "refinement" and "expertization" in decision-making. However, in the second half of the twentieth century, a parallel need emerged: decision-making should be infused with a more democratic expression (Fagence, 1997). Notably, Arnstein's metaphor of public engagement has been used for decades as a powerful tool for fostering debate on the role of citizens in making informed planning decisions.

In the aftermath of WWII, the production of blueprints or fixed master plans was widely pursued to cope with the need for massive urban reconstruction (Taylor, 1999). Such an approach was already reflected in the so-called Athens Charter, adopted in 1933. The charter served as a manifesto of the early post-war urbanism across the Western world and beyond. Under such conditions, planning was a tool for economic and spatial growth led by planners as technocrats within hierarchically dominated institutional environments (Fischer, 1992). As a result, giving citizens a voice in determining the products and a means of planning was contrary to the fundamental conceptions of blueprint planning (Lane, 2005).

In the mid-1950s, planning thought experienced a shift from a blueprint-led to rational planning, encompassing some other models (e.g., systems view of planning and synoptic planning) as experienced later in the 1960s and 1970s (McLoughlin, 1969; Hudson et al., 1979). The rational planning model provided precise steps for planning

action, hence with no room for improvisation and flexibility. The systems viewpoint meant relating planning means and outputs using mathematical modelling, while synoptic planning brought important elements of participatory planning, such as the involvement of actors from outside the formal policymaking arena and institutionalization of public consultation (Faludi, 1973; Levine, 1960). However, two central concepts of the rational comprehensive paradigm remained embedded: planning as distinct from politics and the unitary public interest model. Consequently, the idea of instrumental rationality still dominated planning conduct (Faludi, 1973) As a result, the role of public participation was reduced to legitimization and validation of planning goals (Lane, 2005).

From the mid-1960s, the rational comprehensive paradigm gave way to a theoretically pluralist tradition of planning thought. Different approaches subsequently emerged with a unifying view of planning as an element of policymaking rather than a separate technical field (Lane, 2005). According to the advocacy planning model, planners should step out of the central planning boards, councils, and committees in order to represent the disadvantaged social groups and their interests objectively. The advocacy model rejected the notion of a unitary and predefined public interest, arguing that it must be unveiled by assessing the needs of weaker parties (Davidoff and §Reiner, 1962). It opposed the view on planning as value-neutral, making participation the fundamental objective (Davidoff, 1965). Similarly, equity planning highlighted the need for planners to be aware of double customers–politicians as employers and enablers of the planner's services, and citizens ("the disadvantaged") affected by the implementation of the official planning proposals. As a response, neo-Marxist critiques of planning regarded it as a "servant" of the capitalist state. The planners' technical approaches as seemingly "anti-political ideologies" allowed planners to sidestep the fundamental issues of distributing public values (Kiernan, 1983). However, although focused on criticizing the system and advocating grassroots actions, neo-Marxist approaches did not deliver practical recommendations for citizen participation through state institutions, including spatial planning (Lane, 2005).

Referring to the practical dimension, transactive planning proposed face-to-face contact between the planning community and the public, relying upon interpersonal dialogue in which ideas are validated through action, with mutual learning being a key objective (Friedman, 1973), The radical model went one step further: planners became freelancers, acting outside the system and identifying themselves with the underprivileged social groups, usually living and working in the deprived areas (Heskin, 1980). On the contrary, the liberal planning model emphasized the role of the market as the primary regulator of spatially relevant activities; therefore, market-oriented instruments could be seen as a means of informal planning conducted by private-sector actors. Such dominance of private self-interests through the developer-led planning system diminished the role of planning as state intervention in the market; consequently, the room for public voices to be heard was limited.

Finally, the most significant effect of Arnstein's contribution to planning was embodied in the numerous approaches supported by the so-called "argumentative turn in planning" (Fischer and Forester, 1993) of the 1990s, focused on communication, discussion, discourse, consensus-building, collaboration, deliberation, reflection, and

practical judgment (Healey 1992, 1997; Innes, 1995; Forester, 1999). Fostering debate among different stakeholders, recognizing their various interests, needs, positions, and aspiration toward conflict resolution and consensus-building highlighted the principle of equity among the participants in the planning process. Consequently, as the main power became the power of the better argument, all the parties had the same chance to fulfill their self-interests and, more importantly, achieve the common interest. Both the theoretical underpinning and the practicalities of such a collaborative planning approach have been criticized (Allmendinger, 2002; Huxley and Yftachel, 2000; Flyvbjerg, 1998). Briefly, the objections addressed the following: exchange of knowledge among stakeholders is relatively low; various parties differ significantly in their opinions of how to solve problems; some stakeholders are incapable of protecting their interests; the transparency required for unhampered communication is poor; and debate reveals the stakeholders with real power (Peric and Miljus, 2021). Nevertheless, the effect of collaborative planning theory on the evolution of planning thought strongly considering citizens' input cannot be neglected. The overview of participatory ideas within different planning traditions is given in Table 1.

Table 1: Evolving understanding of participatory planning through time (Source: Own elaboration on Blagojevic and Paric, 2021)

Years	Planning Model	Participatory ideas
1950s	Blueprint planning	None
1960s	Rational planning	Actors from outside the formal policymaking arena involved public consultation institutionalized, but serving to legitimate and validate the planning goals
1960s-1970s	Advocacy planning	The needs of weaker parties assessed by planners
1960s-1970s	Neo-Marxist planning	Critique to the traditional planning, with no practical recommendations for citizen participation
1970s	Equity planning	Planners engaged with "the disadvantaged," but still part of a system
1970s	Transactive planning	Social learning between experts and citizens
1970s-1980s	Radical planning	Planners as part of the underprivileged social groups
1980s	Liberal planning	Limited public voices
1990s	Collaborative planning	Intrinsic consideration of citizens' input based on the power of the better argument

3.3. Some key questions: Who, how and to what end?

Participatory practices in planning often fall short of genuine power-sharing with citizens (Tahvilzadeh 2015; Arnstein 1969). Instead, decisive authority tends to remain with professionals, politicians, or other influential actors (Bickerstaff and Walker 2005; Vestbro 2012). Power is a vital theoretical tool for understanding participatory planning (Flyvbjerg 2004), as it reveals disparities between citizens, planners, and politicians.

Additionally, market-driven logics frequently influence planning projects, granting corporate entities significant sway over the processes (Swyngedouw 2005; Andersen and Pløger 2007; Inch 2015). The question of *who participates* is central (Fung 2006; Cornwall 2008), with research indicating that marginalized groups are often absent (White 1996; Parvin 2018) or deliberately excluded (Dekker and Van Kempen 2009; Monno and Khakee 2012).

Another critical issue is *how participatory interactions are structured* (White 1996; Fung 2006). Scholars emphasize the importance of sound methodologies (Healy 1997; Forester 1999) and innovative participation formats (Nyseth, Ringholm, and Agger 2019). Participatory processes can take many forms, including dialogue meetings, surveys, panels, consultations, art interventions, open labs, and mental mapping (Nyseth, Ringholm, and Agger 2019; Bickerstaff and Walker 2005). While legislative requirements often mandate minimum levels of participation, such as public consultations (Monno and Khakee 2012), more interactive methods aim to capture diverse perspectives. However, the consensus-driven nature of contemporary policymaking (Mouffe 2002) can suppress dissent, obscure power imbalances, and reinforce the status quo (White 1996; Bond 2011; Allmendinger and Haughton 2012). Dialogue organizers must be adept at eliciting and managing conflicting viewpoints (Forester 1999). Digital tools have expanded participatory options, with innovations like interactive maps and smart devices facilitating detailed input (Nyseth, Ringholm, and Agger 2019; Wilson, Tewdwr-Jones, and Comber 2019). While these tools simplify engagement, they also pose challenges regarding accessibility and the erosion of dialogue and community interaction.

Evaluating participatory processes involves examining *outputs*: how public input influences final plans and projects (Fung 2006; Faehnle and Tyrväinen 2013; Nyseth, Ringholm, and Agger 2019). Without tangible outcomes, participatory efforts risk being perceived as manipulative or tokenistic (Tahvilzadeh 2015; Cornwall 2008). Despite planners' intentions to create meaningful participation, substantial public influence on outcomes is often limited (Bickerstaff and Walker 2005, 2132; Monno and Khakee 2012). A lack of perceived impact can erode trust and reduce future engagement (Bickerstaff and Walker 2005). Effective citizen influence depends on various factors, including the structure of activities (Fung 2006; Dekker and Van Kempen 2009), the quality of communication and collaboration (Healy 2002, 112), organizational capacity for change (Bickerstaff and Walker 2005), and power dynamics (White 1996; Flyvbjerg 2004; Bond 2011). For instance, officials may use their authority to enable or hinder public influence (Eriksson 2015), while strong public opinion can lead to substantial planning outcomes (Nguyen Long, Foster, and Arnold 2019). In this light, a largely overlooked aspect of participatory planning is how planners process citizen input (Healy 1997; Bickerstaff and Walker 2005). Experiential knowledge from citizens often cannot be directly utilized in political contexts; instead, it must be systematized and abstracted by officials. Demszky and Nassehi (2012) describe this as translating complex experiential knowledge into manageable texts, reducing its original intricacies. This translation serves to organize disparate contributions into coherent and accessible formats, a preparatory step crucial for integrating public input into planning processes (Demszky and Nassehi 2012).

3.4. Participatory planning, power and ethics

Scholars widely recognize that power is a key concept in understanding planning. Flyvbjerg's (2004, p. 293) provocative claim, “There can be no adequate understanding of planning without placing the analysis of planning within the context of power,” highlights its crucial role. However, to fully acknowledging power's importance requires a more thorough exploration of *why* planners need to factor power logics in their action (cf. Hayward and Lukes, 2008; Morriss, 2002). More in detail, planning inherently involves making decisions about places and societies (Campbell, 2012). These decisions require a power structure that organizes social positions and actions, allowing various actors (politicians, planners, citizens, activists, developers etc.) to exert differing levels of influence (Haugaard, 2003).

In some instances, actors collaborate towards common goals, reflecting Arendt’s (1970, p. 44) concept of consensual power: “the human ability not just to act but to act in concert.” However, planning often entails high stakes and conflicting interests, leading to contested processes and outcomes (Campbell, 2006). Therefore, planning processes serve as arenas in which power dynamics unfold. Planners interact with diverse actors whose identities, worldviews, and objectives may align to varying degrees. In multicultural societies, citizens with different lived experiences share spaces and participate in planning in different ways. Experts with specialized knowledge also play key roles, while developers, particularly in deregulated systems, exert substantial power through resources and execution (Berisha et al., 2021). Politicians, representing various parties, contribute to decision-making, often navigating contentious issues. Other stakeholders, such as academics, may advocate for specific values or offer knowledge contributions.

This variety of actors reflects the complexity of planning practices designed to improve places and societies (Campbell, 2012). However, actors often have divergent views on what constitutes improvement. As a result, planning issues are contested both in process and in outcome. Participatory planning, where “different knowledge and lived experiences rub up against one another,” raises fundamental questions about what knowledge is valid and whose knowledge takes precedence (Campbell, 2012). Planning necessarily involves the exclusion of certain knowledge, values, and ideas, a process shaped by power relations (Connelly and Richardson, 2004; Mouffe, 1999). Power relations manifest in various spaces within planning, including closed spaces where decisions are made by insiders without broader participation, invited spaces where participants are formally included, and claimed spaces where less powerful actors create new platforms for engagement (Gaventa, 2006). Participation occurs across global, regional, national, and local levels, with overlapping and at times conflicting frameworks that influence power dynamics in participatory planning (cf. Armitage et al., 2010).

Understanding power relations is therefore crucial for planners to navigate participatory spaces and systems. Flyvbjerg and Richardson (2002, p. 14) emphasize that “Understanding how power works is the first prerequisite for action, because action is the exercise of power.” Moreover, planners must critically evaluate power

dynamics to ensure their actions are ethically informed. Actions in planning are never free of values, and ethical considerations should be explicitly addressed in planning processes and outcomes (Campbell, 2012).

In the context of plural politics, planners face competing demands from stakeholders while aiming to serve the public interest. Planning affects constituencies differently, presenting significant ethical challenges (Lauria and Long, 2017). Power concepts, by facilitating an understanding and assessment of power dynamics, are essential tools for reflection and action in participatory planning practices.

3.5. Participatory planning practice

The above considerations place planners at the heart of environments shaped by complex power dynamics involving numerous actors. Depending on the context, level, and type of planning processes, planners may take on a variety of roles, which may be more or less significant (Nadin et al., 2021; Hossu et al., 2022). Their responsibilities range from providing expert input during various planning stages to facilitating dialogues among citizens, developers, activists, academics, and other stakeholders. While most planners work within the public sector, it is important to recognize that they can also perform their roles from positions within civil society and the private sector.

In their work, planners are often viewed as impartial experts who contribute their objective expertise to make planning more rational. This perception plays a crucial role in the legitimacy of the planning profession. However, it is overly simplistic, as it fails to acknowledge the diverse tasks planners undertake or the potential for planners to influence political matters - an aspect that motivates many to enter the profession (Grange, 2013). On the contrary, when considering power relations and values, planning must be understood as a practice deeply influenced by power and values. This perspective leads to an alternative understanding of the knowledge planners need. Rather than relying solely on conventional expert knowledge, this approach suggests that planners make context-specific judgments, drawing from both their extensive expertise and ethical considerations.

The judgment involved in selecting from various planning options depends on the interaction between universal understandings of what is better or worse and the specific characteristics of a given place (Campbell, 2012). In this context, planners must cultivate "an appropriate basis for ethical judgment in planning based on a relational understanding of society that acknowledges both difference and the common good" (Watson, 2003, p. 404). Thus, effective planners embody practical wisdom, or “phronesis”, a concept Aristotle defined as the intellectual virtue that is "reasoned and capable of action with regard to things that are good or bad for man" (Flyvbjerg, 2004, p. 284).

Phronesis goes beyond scientific (episteme) and technical (techne) knowledge, as it involves making value-based judgments (Bornemark, 2017). It requires an understanding of both the context at hand and universal theories and ethical principles. As Gadamer (1975, p. 40) explains, in practical wisdom, “the meaning of any universal,

or any norm, is only justified and determined in and through its concretisation." Therefore, practical wisdom is about knowing the right course of action in a particular situation, understanding what is occurring, and making normative judgments about the stakes involved. It is about determining what is right in the here and now. This blend of deep understanding of both universal principles and particular circumstances (Flyvbjerg, 2004) aligns with the ability to discern what a situation demands. McCourt (2012, p. 36) echoes this idea, stating that while abstract theoretical knowledge of political institutions is important, it must be coupled with a nuanced understanding of the political context and the ability to make informed judgments about the best course of action.

If we accept the relevance of "practical wisdom" in planning practice, it is important to reflect on how such wisdom can be developed. Flyvbjerg (2001) suggests that practice is key to acquiring phronesis. Drawing on the phenomenological studies of Dreyfus and Dreyfus (1986), he argues that developing complex, context-specific knowledge, such as phronesis, requires emotionally engaging practical experiences. This aligns closely with the concept of reflective practice, a key element developed in relation to participatory planning, as discussed below.

3.6. Planners as reflective practitioners

The tradition of reflective practice offers a valuable framework for understanding the learning process through which practical wisdom can be cultivated (Fischler, 2012; Forester, 2013; Schön, 1983; Yanow, 2009). This approach is particularly useful for conceptualizing how planners might critically examine their assumptions about power in order to learn from their experiences.

Donald Schön (1983) initially developed the concept of reflective practice, which was later applied and expanded by numerous scholars and practitioners (e.g., Fischler, 2012; Forester, 2013; Yanow, 2009). His ideas were shaped by his own practical experiences and a close study of how practitioners approach their work. Notably, some of Schön's most influential work was conducted in collaboration with planners. Drawing on Dewey's (1933, 1938) ideas, Schön advanced key concepts, particularly Dewey's belief that learning emerges from personal experiences of puzzling, surprising, or challenging situations that prompt reflection on habitual ways of thinking and acting.

In essence, reflective practice involves learning by doing and learning from doing, often pushing the boundaries of one's field and critically questioning one's role within it. Reflective practitioners intentionally seek to improve their practice by analysing their experiences. By continually questioning the causes, meanings, and consequences of their actions, they refine their professional behaviour and enhance its impact (Fischler, 2012, p. 314).

Schön (1983) contrasted reflective practice with technical rationality, a framework in which professional practice is centered around instrumental problem-solving using scientific theories and techniques. This approach involves selecting optimal models and tools for addressing a problem. In contrast, Schön emphasized how skilled

practitioners demonstrate "artful competence" by not necessarily selecting tools ahead of time but rather applying their "knowing in action" intuitively as situations unfold.

In everyday tasks, we often display knowledge in ways that are difficult to articulate. As Schön (1983, p. 49) explains, "Our knowing is ordinarily tacit, implicit in our patterns of action and in our feel for the stuff with which we are dealing." Even though we may have the ability to verbalize the underlying logic of our actions, we rarely do so in the moment of performing them. For example, a competent planner may facilitate a challenging conversation with a citizen but may struggle to immediately explain how they are able to do so.

Schön (1983, p. 50) emphasizes how professionals, prompted by surprise or difficulty, reflect on their actions and the implicit knowledge behind them. For instance, if a planner notices that a citizen seems troubled, they might pause their routine behaviour and reflect on their approach, considering whether their language is too technical and potentially excluding the citizen. This moment of reflection-in-action allows planners to become more attuned to the specific needs of a situation, a key component of practical wisdom (Bornemark, 2017). Schön distinguishes between reflection-in-action, which occurs during the action, and reflection-on-action, which happens afterward as practitioners review and analyse their experiences.

The concepts of framing and frames are central to reflective practice, used to describe the tacit mental models that shape practitioners' understanding. As Rein and Schön (1996, p. 88) describe, these frames form a foundation beneath the visible surface of language and behaviour, determining what we focus on and helping us make sense of our experiences. Framing, like a picture frame, sets boundaries on what is highlighted and what is excluded, shaping the way we interpret situations (Raitio, 2008).

For Schön, a practitioner’s artistry, which is akin to practical wisdom and phronesis, arises from their ability to recognize surprises and reflect on the relevance of the frames embedded in their practices. These moments of difficulty reveal misalignments between the practitioner's tacit understanding and the situation at hand, prompting reflection and adjustment of their frames to improve their responses.

Schön (1983, p. 50) asserts that it is this critical reflection–both in and on action–that is central to the "art" of dealing effectively with uncertainty, instability, uniqueness, and value conflicts. In this regard, it is possible to assess the frames that shape planners' understanding of power in participatory planning, examining how these assumptions influence their approach and outcomes.

3.7. Reflective practice and power

Power dynamics are often implicit in participatory planning processes. As research on meaning-making suggests, actors tend to rely on their personal views of “the order of things”, frequently without making these underlying assumptions explicit to themselves or others (Schön, 1983; Yanow & Tsoukas, 2009). These unspoken differences in understanding can lead to ambiguity regarding the purpose of participation and planners' roles within power relations. Such ambiguity might result in what Schön

(1983, p. 289) describes as “unreflective practice,” which can be both “limited and destructive,” regardless of whether practitioners follow established practices or see themselves as actively striving to transform their approach.

An unreflective planning practice can be harmful whether it is framed in terms of participation or technical expertise. The universal pursuit of participation or technical rationality is incompatible with a practice that requires context-specific judgment. Assuming that certain understandings and normative goals are always applicable may prevent planners from recognizing the dynamics of power in any given situation.

From the literature on power, we understand that unreflective practice can serve to solidify power relations by presenting them as self-evident. This process, known as "reification," sees certain power dynamics as fixed and objective. Reification is a key concept in power theory, representing one of the mechanisms through which power is entrenched by structuring and stabilizing social relationships (Haugaard, 2003). Critical power analysis warns that when reification remains unexamined and implicit, the likelihood of dominance by powerful actors increases (Lukes, 2005).

This line of reasoning suggests that reflective participatory planning practice has the potential to ‘unmask’ taken-for-granted power dynamics. Reflective practice allows for the clarification and critical scrutiny of how reification sustains power relations. By exposing the process of reification to scrutiny, there is an opportunity to assess the legitimacy of these power relations and, if necessary, to transform them.

4. Classroom discussion topics / case studies

Beside ex-cathedra teaching the course shall stimulate discussion among the course attendees, concerning a number of discussion topics. Here is a possible list:

- **Evolution of Participatory Planning:** How has participatory planning evolved from blueprint to collaborative planning? Discuss the merits and challenges of various models, such as advocacy, equity, transactive, and collaborative planning. Reflect on Arnstein's "ladder of participation" and its relevance today.
- **Power Dynamics in Planning:** How do power relations shape participatory planning processes? Explore the concepts of closed, invited, and claimed spaces in participation. Debate the ethical responsibilities of planners in addressing power imbalances.
- **Ethical Implications of Participatory Planning:** What ethical dilemmas arise in balancing stakeholder interests? Examine the role of planners as reflective practitioners in addressing these dilemmas.
- **Tokenism vs. Genuine Participation:** Debate the difference between meaningful engagement and tokenistic practices in participatory planning. How can planners ensure that citizen input genuinely influences decision-making?
- **Global and Local Perspectives:** Discuss how participatory planning is practiced differently in various cultural and regulatory contexts. Compare global examples to local applications in students’ regions.

At the same time, the course instructor may want to introduce and briefly sketch out one or more case studies, to stimulate discussion and the students' critical reflections. Below a number of potentially interesting case studies are listed:

- **Participatory Budgeting in Porto Alegre, Brazil:** Examines how participatory budgeting empowered citizens to make decisions on municipal budgets. https://www.local.gov.uk/case-studies/case-study-porto-alegre-brazil
- **Community Land Trusts in the United States:** Analyzes how community land trusts address affordable housing issues through participatory decision-making. https://www.fhfund.org/report/case-study-bloomington-community-land-trust/ | https://www.lincolninst.edu/publications/working-papers/community-land-trusts-low-income-multifamily-rental-housing/
- **Participatory Urban Planning in Malmö, Sweden:** Malmö transformed the Augustenborg neighborhood into an eco-city through resident involvement, focusing on sustainable urban living. The Bo01 district further exemplifies sustainable development with participatory planning. https://use.metropolis.org/case-studies/city-of-tomorrow
- **Lisbon's Participatory Urban Planning:** Lisbon's urban development plan incorporates participatory approaches, engaging citizens in decision-making to enhance urban spaces. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/09654313.2021.1973379
- **Suburban Regeneration in France and Denmark:** Case studies from France and Denmark explore participatory planning in suburban regeneration, highlighting community engagement strategies. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/09654313.2021.1873249
- **Participatory Planning in Prague, Czech Republic:** Prague's participatory projects showcase strategic urban development through citizen involvement. https://iprpraha.cz/page/4219
- **Participatory Approach to Urban Resilience in Italy:** Italian case studies demonstrate participatory planning for urban resilience, focusing on sustainable urban drainage systems. https://www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/16/5/2170

5. Assignments

The course instructor is suggested to engage the students with the preparation of a scientific essay. The essay shall focus on how participatory planning is practiced in a selected country, discussing the formal framework for PPL vis-à-vis the actual practices, and critically highlighting good practices and challenges - ideally to be delivered at the end of the Curriculum, hence drawing also on the knowledge acquired through other modules. An alternative may be to ask students to work in couples, and deliver an essay that compares how participatory planning is practices in two different country contexts.

6. Summary of Learning

Q1: What are the theoretical foundations of participatory planning, and how do they relate to democratic ideals?

A: Participatory planning is grounded in theories advocating for citizen involvement in decision-making processes, such as Arnstein's "ladder of participation" and collaborative planning models. These theories link participation to democratic values by emphasizing inclusivity, transparency, and power redistribution.

Q2: How have participatory planning models evolved historically, and what are their key characteristics?

A: Participatory planning has shifted from top-down blueprint planning to advocacy, equity, and collaborative models. Each model introduces varying degrees of citizen involvement, with collaborative planning emphasizing dialogue and consensus-building among stakeholders.

Q3: What are the ethical challenges and power dynamics inherent in participatory planning practices?

A: Ethical challenges include addressing power imbalances among stakeholders and avoiding tokenism. Power dynamics often privilege certain actors (e.g., professionals or corporate interests) over citizens, requiring planners to critically engage with and balance these inequalities.

Q4: What role do planners play as reflective practitioners in participatory planning?

A: Planners act as facilitators of inclusive dialogue, mediators of conflicting interests, and critical analysts of power structures. Reflective practice enables planners to learn from experience, adapt methods, and make value-based decisions that align with democratic and ethical principles.

Q5: How do participatory tools and methods influence the outcomes of planning processes?

A: Tools like digital platforms, public forums, and innovative engagement techniques can enhance participation by making processes more accessible. However, their design and application must account for potential barriers to inclusivity, such as digital divides or inadequate representation of marginalized groups.

7. Quiz

Q1: What is the top level of Arnstein's "Ladder of Participation"?

A) Economic efficiency in planning

B) Power redistribution to citizens

C) Technological advancements in planning

D) Aesthetic design of urban areas

A: B

Q2: Which planning model emphasizes dialogue and consensus-building among stakeholders?

A) Advocacy planning

B) Collaborative planning

C) Radical planning

D) Rational planning

A: B

Q3: What does the concept of "phronesis" refer to?

A) Technical expertise

B) Practical wisdom

C) Political authority

D) Economic theory

A: B

Q4: Which of the following is a critique of institutionalized participation in planning?

A) It is always inclusive

B) It can serve as a tool for tokenism

C) It eliminates the need for expert input

D) It increases costs without benefits

A: B

Q5: What is a common challenge of collaborative planning?

A) Exclusion of technical expertise

B) Failure to address power imbalances

C) Lack of legal frameworks

D) Over-reliance on digital tools

Answer: B

Q6: Public participation is often institutionalized to:

A) Reduce planning costs

B) Enhance democracy and government efficiency

C) Promote the private sector's interests

D) Limit citizen input in decision-making

A: B

Q7: Which of the following participatory methods focuses on face-to-face dialogue and mutual learning?

A) Radical planning

B) Transactive planning

C) Blueprint planning

D) Equity planning

A: B

Q8: What is the main criticism of the neoliberal approach to participatory planning?

A) It completely removes public participation

B) It depoliticizes planning processes

C) It relies heavily on grassroots activism

D) It overcomplicates planning with too many stakeholders

A: B

Q9: Public participation has always been a central component of planning practices. True or false?
A: False

Q10: Reflective practice involves analysing and learning from one's experiences to improve planning methods. True or false?

A: True

Q11: The rational planning model primarily focuses on flexibility and adaptability in decision-making. True or false?
A: False

Q12: Ethical considerations in participatory planning are optional and depend solely on the planner's discretion. True or false?
A: False

Q13: Match the planning model with its characteristic.

A) Blueprint planning
i) Top-down, no public input

B) Advocacy planning
ii) Focus on disadvantaged groups

C) Radical planning
iii) Planners work outside systems

D) Collaborative planning
iv) Consensus-building among stakeholders

A: A-i, B-ii, C-iii, D-iv

Q14: Match the concept with its definition.

A) Phronesis
i) Practical wisdom for ethical judgment

B) Tokenism
ii) Minimal or symbolic participation

C) Reflective practitioner
iii) Planner who learns from experience

D) Power dynamics
iv) Interplay of influence among stakeholders

A: A-i, B-ii, C-iii, D-iv

Q15: Match the planning concept with its challenge or critique.

A) Collaborative planning
i) Fails to address power imbalances effectively

B) Tokenistic participation
ii) Minimal impact on decision-making

C) Neo-Marxist planning
iii) Lack of practical recommendations for participation

D) Digital tools in participatory planning
iv) Accessibility issues and digital divides

A: A-i, B-ii, C-iii, D-iv

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9. Glossary

Advocacy Planning. A planning model advocating for the interests of marginalized or disadvantaged groups. It challenges the idea of a unified public interest and prioritizes social equity in planning decisions.

Collaborative Planning. A participatory model that focuses on dialogue, consensus-building, and integrating diverse stakeholder interests. It aims to create inclusive, negotiated solutions to planning challenges.

Ethical Judgment in Planning. The process of making decisions based on ethical principles, considering power imbalances, equity, and the public good. It emphasizes transparency and accountability in participatory practices.

Institutionalized Participation. Structured methods of public involvement integrated into organizational frameworks, often mandated by law. While it aims to democratize planning, it risks being tokenistic under neoliberal paradigms.

Ladder of Participation. A conceptual framework illustrating levels of public participation, ranging from tokenism (non-participation) to full citizen control. It highlights the redistribution of power as a critical goal of participatory processes.

Participatory planning. A planning approach that actively involves citizens, stakeholders, and communities in decision-making processes. It emphasizes

inclusivity, dialogue, and collaboration to achieve democratic outcomes and address diverse interests.

Power Dynamics. The interplay of influence among stakeholders, including planners, politicians, and citizens. Understanding power dynamics is essential to address imbalances and foster equitable participatory processes.

Practical Wisdom (Phronesis). The capacity to make informed, context-sensitive decisions by integrating theoretical understanding with ethical considerations. It is essential for planners navigating complex and contested terrains.

Reflective Practitioner. A professional who learns from experience by critically analyzing their actions and decisions. Reflective practice involves adapting to new situations with ethical and context-sensitive judgments.

Tokenism. A superficial form of participation where citizens are given minimal input, often to legitimize predetermined decisions. Tokenism fails to empower participants or effect meaningful change.

Transactive Planning. A participatory model emphasizing face-to-face interactions and mutual learning between planners and citizens. It prioritizes social learning and dialogue for context-specific solutions.