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COMMUNITY-BASED PHILOSOPHY AND DIALOGUE: TOWARD A NEW UNDERSTANDING OF THE PLANNER-COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIP

Karie Jo Peralta, PhD, and John W. Murphy, PhD

Abstract:

The relationship between the planner¹ and community in a community-based project is a well-documented concern (Atfield et al., 2012; Minkler, 2004; Stoecker, 2003). Often noted is the need for grassroots work to be carried out ‘with,’ rather than ‘on’ or ‘for,’ a community (Butcher, 2007; Israel et al., 1998). Although this notion implies partnership, how the planner-community relationship is conceived depends largely on how the community is defined. From a community-based perspective (Murphy, 2014), action is critical to the development of a community’s identity. This outlook suggests that participation determines community membership. Accordingly, conventional community limits may be transformed.

The purpose of this article is to offer an understanding of how community-based planners may be viewed to be community members. The focus is the various perspectives on community and their respective implications for membership. To begin, the traditional perspective of community that is grounded in realism is presented. A community-based outlook based on participation is then provided. Subsequently recognized is the importance of dialogue, which is an underdeveloped and, at times, overlooked strategy in community-based practice. The connection between the planner and community is later described, followed by an examination of the issue of power. To conclude, an emphasis is placed on the possibility for a planner to become a community member when a project follows community-based philosophy.

Keywords: dialogue, community-based, planner-community relationship

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¹ The term, “planner,” is used to promote inclusivity and can represent any individual who participates in a project such as those who identify primarily as a researcher, student, or community member.

CONCEPTUALIZING COMMUNITY

The Traditional View

The typical rendition of community is supported by realism (Delanty, 1997), which suggests that this group's reality, or realities, exists independent of its members (Murphy, 2012). With respect to epistemology, the belief is that a community can be understood in unbiased terms (Delanty, 1997). Such possibility is grounded in 'first philosophy,' which facilitates a view that value-free knowledge exists in a realm detached from human influence (Levinas, 1969). From this outlook, community members do not have accurate insight into their community, because all real knowledge exists independent of them.

Access to this knowledge base, however, is presumed to be possible by overcoming the human condition (Levinas, 1969). Thus, a neutral process of discovery is needed. What is required is that the mind be a 'blank slate' (Kant, 1965), and therefore devoid of past experiences, beliefs, or interests that would otherwise taint information. Richard Rorty (1979) offers the metaphor of the "mirror" (p. 12) to capture this portrayal of the mind, given that both are capable only of reflecting reality. The underlying logic is Cartesian dualism, which maintains a distinction between objective and subjective elements (Bordo, 1987).

Accordingly, a community is identified by observable traits such as school district boundaries. To be consistent with dualism, such spaces are delimited by geographic and demographic data. A statistic that describes, for example, the number of households in the area would be deemed valid. On the other hand, an opinion about how many families live in the district would be considered unreliable information and dismissed. A main reason that persons may have confidence in the household statistic is that such data are verifiable. Founded on the basic tenet of empiricism (Delanty, 1997), this stance suggests that a community may be defined by observations that are made using scientific procedures. Thus, the key is the link made between observation and the corroboration of any information that is gathered.

Along these lines, the use of empirical indicators supports the traditional view of communities (Wallerstein et al., 2005). A community may thus be conceptualized spatially, for example, because street signs establish visual boundaries. For the realist, these markers correspond directly to a community's limits. And the insight derived from the everyday experience of a person who resides in this so-called community would be disregarded, without any empirical corroboration.

When defined in this manner, an exclusive approach is adopted to specify who is, or may become, a community member. For example, a black male who moves into a predominately white neighborhood may be treated as an outsider for the same reason that a white male may be unquestionably accepted into the same area – that basis is skin color. Thus, the membership of persons who do not display readily their connection to the community is suspect.

The main assumption is that a community is homogenous (Day, 2006). Similar to realist notions of social order², the cohesion of a community relies on uniformity (Murphy, 2014). Therefore, being part of a community is determined by the extent to which persons conform to a particular stereotype. As a result, defining who belongs to a community is a straightforward affair, that is, persons either have a particular trait or do not.

For this reason, community planners³ are considered often to be 'outsiders' (Eng et al., 2005). With this insider-outsider dichotomy, planners, who often are trained professionals, may maintain disinterested views of the community. In this way, planners may be dedicated to a project without being committed to the community. After all,

² Mainstream sociologists have been concerned about social order. Based on realism, individuals are conceived to be independent atoms that are unable to coordinate themselves (Stark, 1963). The work of Durkheim (1974) and others promotes the idea that an autonomous base of values, beliefs, and morals is needed to control persons. In the same way, the stability of a community requires this absolute foundation, which is often portrayed by an abstract image that assists community members to recognize their common bond (Murphy, 2014).

³ Planners may be community members due to previous affiliation. The challenges of this position are well-documented (See Humphrey, 2012; Taylor, 2011). From a dualistic orientation, overcoming bias of being an insider would be critical.

such commitment would result in bias. Consequently, the relationship between a planner and a community falls short of being mutual and “equalitarian”⁴ (Eisler, 2013, p. 47), which are the popular hallmarks of community-based efforts (Israel et al., 1998). In order to conceptualize this relationship in this communal light, a perspective that transcends dualism is necessary.

A Community-based Perspective of Community

Community-based philosophy promotes an understanding of community that is predicated on anti-dualism (Murphy, 2014). In light of this view, persons may be recognized to be participants in the creation of their reality, or realities (Gergen, 2009). And given the communicative abilities of individuals (Habermas, 1970) to intersubjectively engage one another, a community may be understood to be social construction (Day, 2006). Communal life is thus arranged according to negotiated principles, and is experienced as what phenomenologists call the “life-world,” or *lebenswelt* (Schutz & Luckmann, 1973, p. 3). The commitments of community members to these principles in the life-world portray the community as a stable entity (Murphy, 2014), in such a way that any definition should take into account the merging of objectivity with subjectivity (Merleau-Ponty, 1968).

Yet, this rejection of dualism has led to extremely subjective interpretations of community. For example, because modernity makes difficult the maintenance of communities through face-to-face encounters, they may be “imagined,” (Anderson, 1991, p. 6). However, some critics maintain that all communities are, to an extent, imagined with symbolic referents (Delanty, 2010), while others point out that this conceptualization is too abstract to convey the real effort put forth to support a community (Murphy, 2014). Moreover, this subjective treatment underemphasizes the interactive component that is not only necessary in community building, but facilitates, although perhaps temporarily, a community’s existence.

⁴ This term is consistent with ‘partnership language’ (Eisler, 2013; Mercanti, 2014).

Indeed, most community-based planners would agree that the importance of participation is difficult to overstate. Ideally, this element pervades all aspects of a grassroots project, including how, and by whom, a community is defined (Israel et al., 1998; Montoya & Kent, 2011). In fact, all of the individuals who demonstrate actively their interest in a community can be considered members, and thus play a role in this group's creation (Sullivan et al., 2003).

Conventional strategies, however, employ a “monological” (Bakhtin, 1984, p. xxi) perspective of a community's reality. For Bakhtin (1984), monologism undermines the belief that community knowledge can be created dialogically - that is, understood to emerge at a point of “contact among various consciousnesses” (p. 81). Fals Borda (1988), nevertheless, notes that grassroots projects are guided by an epistemology that is ‘participatory,’ which emphasizes that human action is necessary for initiatives to become truly community-based (Murphy, 2014).

A community, therefore, can no longer be viewed to be an object detached from human influence and designated by empirical referents (Cohen, 1985). This shift is based on a significant change in thinking about language. Specifically, given the ‘linguistic turn’ (Lyotard, 1984), language is not neutral but shapes reality, including the identity of any community. This theoretical insight supports the awareness raised by partnership scholars of the need for language that facilitates the ability to perceive greater possibilities for communal life (Eisler, 2013; Mercanti, 2014). With this appreciation of language, boundaries that are viewed typically to be exclusive and static can no longer be objective (Cohen, 1985). Because language mediates everything that is known, objectivity is never more than a linguistic determination (Barthes, 1977).

Although participation introduces interpretive dynamics that may make the parameters of a community difficult to locate in a traditional sense, this matter is not considered to be problematic from a non-dualistic standpoint. Because participation is valued, rather than viewed to be a hindrance, the process of defining a community involves confirmation by its members. For this reason, studies conducted through a community-

based lens often ask persons to identify their communities (Maiter et al., 2008). Accordingly, portrayals of a group that do not go beyond the use of empirical indicators, and involve the community's interpretation, are difficult to justify.

Despite differences within communities, participation may lead to connections between members, and in turn, indicate a common ground for projects (Warr, Mann, & Williams, 2012). This communal base, however, may be negotiated as members come and go, and while different persons use their talents on various occasions. In this sense, a community is understood to be a realm that reflects various levels of commitment (Lune, 2010).

Recent community-based studies promote the view that a community is a "unit of identity" (Israel et al., 1998, p. 178). While this understanding of community incorporates the various types of bonds needed for a community-based project, such as relationships and commitments (Sullivan et al., 2003), participation is overlooked. In other words, an individual may have a particular association to a community, but active engagement is necessary to realize fully this tie (Murphy, 2014). In fact, all persons must exhibit their affiliation through participation. No-one, therefore, should be presumed to be part of a community

DIALOGUE IN COMMUNITY-BASED PROJECTS

Dialogue is recognized widely to be important in community-based work (Banks, 2007; Fals Borda, 1988; Freire, 1970). In fact, there are numerous accounts that describe the ways in which this practice facilitates a project (Gómez & Sordé Marti, 2012; Johnson, Ali, & Shipp et al., 2009; Montoya & Kent, 2011). And when not mentioned directly, dialogue often tends to be present implicitly, or becomes apparent by being the obvious missing factor.

Despite this general appreciation, most treatments of dialogue lack depth. To be certain, dialogue is always necessary for practical purposes. However, the present

concern is the use of theoretically informed dialogue in community-based projects. The purpose of this section is twofold. First, a definition of dialogue that is philosophically grounded is offered. And second, how dialogue makes possible the discovery of community issues is discussed.

What Is Dialogue?

A recent review of the literature on psychotherapy, education, community development, and social transformation identifies that dialogue may be described in three central ways: *ontological*, *transformative*, and *everyday* (Cooper et al., 2013). Dialogue that is ontological is based on Heidegger's (1962) phenomenological understanding of the human being, or *Dasein*, which recognizes the preexisting relationship that persons have to the world. The key is not communication, but the awareness that everyone is always connected. Transformative dialogue, however, is considered to be interaction that results in solidarity between persons with seemingly incompatible realities. Characterized as open and honest, such relationships facilitate new possibilities for social development (Gergen, McNamee, & Barrett, 2001). And everyday dialogue is nothing more than mundane discussion.

Community-based philosophy (Murphy, 2014) offers an understanding of dialogue that takes into account each of these previously mentioned forms. Specifically, dialogue is embodied through ordinary conversation, but also has transformative prospects. For the purpose of this article, dialogue is defined to be the following:

Interpersonal engagement that establishes and validates the meaning of biographies, which is made possible through a constant bond that is based on awareness, respect, and commitment. This bond is an important component of the ontological standpoint that affirms how the reality of a community is created via the negotiation, interaction, and coordination of all members who are in "living mutual relation with one another" (Buber, 1970, p. 45). According to Buber (1970), persons share in a community's reality when immersed in the *I-Thou* relation, which requires openness, listening, reciprocity

and the recognition of others. The key to such a relationship is avoiding the tendency to view the other as instrumental for personal gains.

Genuine dialogue occurs in an intersubjective sphere of the “between” (Buber, 1955, p. 204) that is generated when individuals view one another as subjects acting together, rather than as objects. Participation in this relationship involves individuals who are fully present and accept others in their entirety (Buber, 1970). Provided this *I-Thou* encounter, or as Levinas (1969) says “face to face” (p. 79) discourse, a community may be found in the inter-subjective space that unites all members through action that is grounded in the responsibility that they have to one another.

Compatible with this ontological view is the idea that dialogue is a way of being-in-the-world and involves a “process of coming to an understanding” (Gadamer, 1975, p. 385). Central to this thought is Gadamer’s (1975) notion of a “fusion of horizons” (p. 306), which draws from Edmund Husserl’s (1960) phenomenological concept of “horizon” (p. 44). Gadamer (1975) notes that everyone has a particular horizon, or perspective, that is limited by one’s position. Contrary to the interpretation of critics, such as E.D. Hirsch (1967), this horizon is not fixed, but may develop as other standpoints become known (Gadamer, 1975).

From a social constructionist framework, the possibility that persons may engage with others in order to understand their views is important for grasping the significance of Gadamer’s (1975) idea of dialogue. Specifically, individuals may share with one another relevant background information that provides the necessary context for understanding a distinct point of view. This process, nevertheless, occurs while retaining one’s own historically and culturally informed perspective. In other words, persons can learn where others are coming from, which helps everyone to see why persons think about something in the way that they do. Interpretation, therefore, does not entail the abandonment of personal perspective in order to take that of the other, which, as Gadamer notes, is an impossible feat.

A fusion of horizons thus occurs through dialogue when persons recognize that they may understand a subject in a manner that is different from their original interpretation. When social processes are emphasized in this outcome, what should be noted is the need for interpersonal openness (Buber, 1970). After all, the prospect of understanding different viewpoints depends on the willingness of the others to share this information.

Compatible with Gadamer's (1975) theory of interpretation is the concept of biography (Berger & Luckman, 1966). As mentioned previously, a community's biography contains the norms and principles that are pertinent to the reality of this group. This information grounds the dialogical process that is needed to develop an understanding that is intelligible from a community's perspective. Obtaining such a viewpoint is what matters in a community-based approach (Hacker, 2013).

The transformative possibility of dialogue (Cooper et al., 2013) is inspired by the work of Paulo Freire (1970) and critical theorists such as Jürgen Habermas (1984). Freire (1970) was concerned primarily with power relationships that hinder the personal and collective development of the poor. His belief is that revolutionary changes can be achieved through dialogue, whereby the oppressed employ "conscientização" (p. 67), or critical consciousness, that facilitates an awareness of their social conditions. According to Freire, this form of dialogue involves humility, hope, "faith in human kind" (p. 90), and critical thinking.

For Habermas (1984, 1987), dialogue is similar to "communicative action." This concept represents purposeful discourse intended to reach agreement, shared understanding, and consensus related to the actions considered to be appropriate within the present situation. Within the "public spheres" (Habermas, 1996, p. 148) that are shaped by communicative action, persons are believed to be able to engage freely in dialogue about their interests and modes for action. While argument and persuasion are important in this version of dialogue, other forms place emphasis on relating to the subject at hand in order to reach an understanding (Gadamer, 1975).

Because talk is a common medium for interacting with others (Gadamer, 1975), language is an important part of dialogue. For Bakhtin (1981), who was influenced by Buber, language is more than verbal or written expression, but is a worldview with particular intentions that are shaped by context. When this perspective is expressed in conversation, differences may become apparent. Yet, what is needed for dialogue to begin is the suspension of beliefs and assumptions (Bohm, 1996). Nevertheless, persons should not let go of their own viewpoint, but maintain openness to others and refrain from judging (Buber, 1970).

Extending one's perspective to include the other is not necessarily a goal of dialogue, but may be a result. In fact, there are a range of possible outcomes. But contrary to the traditional view of dialogue, differences can be preserved. What is important is that persons become aware of the limits of their viewpoints (Burbules & Rice, 1991). This awareness, however, is obtained through dialogue via reflexivity, that is, a process whereby persons examine their own assumptions, the impact of their behaviors, and possibilities for engagement (Cunliffe & Easterby-Smith, 2004). This activity allows individuals to recognize themselves "as the other through and in the other" while being "the other to and for the other" (Nikulin, 2006, p. 244). Accordingly, persons 'get to' others by overcoming and simultaneously retaining themselves, which is essential for dialogue. In Gadamerian terms, reflexivity opens the possibility to see beyond the perspective that is imposed by a particular viewpoint in order to see other perspectives (Gadamer, 1975).

According to G. H. Mead (1934), reflexivity occurs in a "conversation of gestures" (p. 240). This process of recognizing other viewpoints entails "taking the role of the other." As a result, persons are able to anticipate the actions of other's and engage in "joint action" (Blumer, 1969). For symbolic interactionists, such as Blumer (1969), this activity has important implications for how social order is conceived. Specifically, values and norms no longer need to be shared nor internalized, because role-taking allows persons to coordinate themselves.

From a postmodern perspective, however, society is a linguistic construction (Lyotard, 1984). In light of this view, critics contend that traditional theories of roles promote realism, because the pervasiveness of language is overlooked. Moreover, this process is not always accompanied with reflection. Typically, roles are portrayed to be objective things that are encountered, which is consistent with the realist view that reality is confronted. Instead, roles should be understood to be linguistically and inter-subjectively created, interpreted, made relevant, and contested (Murphy, 1993). In this way, roles are made, and given meaning, through dialogue.

Burbules and Rice (1991) promote various “communicative virtues” (p. 411) that are needed to have a disposition for dialogue. These qualities include respecting differences, allowing others an opportunity to express themselves, having patience, being sincere, and communicating clearly. Such virtues are grounded philosophically in reflection, and contribute to the development of a “dialogic consciousness” (Jenlink & Banathy, 2005, p. 10) that facilitates intersubjectivity.

Although mundane discussion may not involve pure intersubjectivity, this seemingly simplistic type of engagement should not be underestimated to be a step towards dialogue. Most planners would attest that the trust needed for mutual exchange (Israel et al., 1998; Maiter et al., 2008), especially if new to a community, takes time to develop (Hacker, 2013). Everyday conversation, however, may ease persons into having confidence in one another, which in turn may lead to dialogue.

Accessing Community Knowledge through Dialogue

Conventional approaches to accessing community knowledge are based on the idea that communities are empirically located (Wallerstein et al., 2005). The assumptions are that spending a certain amount of time in the community, participating in communal life, and talking with the right individuals will provide accurate information. Being in a community long enough, for example, allows for a chance to “see things as they really are” (Wolcott, 2010, p. 92), because members will eventually let down their guard. Along these lines, participating in group activities facilitates an experiential, yet

disinterested, view (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2002). And discussion with key informants, such as community leaders, supplies insight that is merely assumed to be consistent with the group's vision (McKenna et al., 2011).

Although typically these strategies are qualitatively oriented, dualism continues to operate. In light of this recognition, the participation of the planner in community events and interaction with members are important strategies (El-Askari et al., 1998), but may not be sufficient to develop a project that is truly community-based. Until dialogue is put into practice, there is little likelihood of coming to know how communities understand themselves. The problem is that without engaging other perspectives, the planner is limited by his or her own perspective, and blinded from seeing other possible reality constructions. Dialogue (Gadamer, 1975), however, gives the ability to transcend personal viewpoints.

When approaches are based on dualism, dialogue is viewed to be an obstacle to identifying problems. Particularly, the action that is required of persons to participate in dialogue (Buber, 1970) is problematic for obtaining objective knowledge. Because dialogue is not a neutral process, any insight that is acquired is tainted by bias. Moreover, engaging multiple standpoints is often thought to result in a muddled and, thereby, useless information for establishing sound grounds for action.

In terms of community-based philosophy (Murphy, 2014), however, dialogue is crucial for community entrée. The “communicative virtues” presented by Burbules and Rice (1991) are important for creating conditions for open communication, which may encourage persons to share information that creates the community's biography (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). Although these qualities, and other technical procedures, may facilitate interaction, they do not guarantee interpersonal exchange.

From a community-based perspective (Murphy, 2014), sharing is viewed to be a moral imperative rather than an objective of a project. Because persons are ethically bound to each other prior to any community laws or rules for engagement (Lévinas, 1969),

dialogue is based on the principles of responsibility to others and respect for uniqueness (Lévinas, 1985). According to Lévinas (1985), all interpersonal relationships are asymmetrical, and thus individuals should not withhold insight merely because others have not disclosed similarly their information. From this point of view, community-based projects can never achieve complete reciprocity (Maiter et al., 2008). Nevertheless, this outlook does not undermine the “partnership moral sensitivity” (Loye, 2014, p. 5) or the commitment that members should have toward one another.

DIALOGUE AND THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN A PLANNER AND COMMUNITY

With participation now as the key factor for establishing community membership, the relationship between the planner and community member needs to be rethought. What is needed is an awareness of how intersubjectivity transforms all individuals, who participate in a community, into group members. The purpose of this section is to provide an understanding of how the community-based planner is a community member.

From a community-based perspective, the basic problem with previous portrayals of the planner-community relationship is the divide between outsider and insider statuses, because this conceptualization retains elements of dualism and essentialism (Gilroy, 1993). Moreover, this dichotomy perpetuates exclusionary and nondemocratic beliefs, which sustain structures of domination rather than equal relations (Eisler, 2014). Yet, from a traditional perspective, a view that is objective, and thereby reliable, can be obtained only by an outsider. On the other extreme, when subjectivity is valued, the insider’s culturally-informed standpoint is most important. However, in both cases, solidarity is undermined by the tendency to elevate one viewpoint over another. For example, subjectivity is individualistic, while objectivity is disconnected from human contact.

Both dualism and utilitarianism are embedded in various portrayals of the planner-community relationship. Beginning with Lewin (1946), the planner is described to be a

guide in the problem-solving process who relates to community members through observing them in experiments. In this approach, community members are transformed into objects and dehumanized. According to Greenwood and Levin (1998), the planner is a “friendly outsider” (p. 104) who remains distant enough to be critical of community issues, and navigates community conditions by knowing when, and how, to offer insight. What is suggested is that the planner has a ‘bird’s eye’ view of the community, and therefore the knowledge of the precise time to reveal information. Huzzard et al. (2010), for example, identify the planner as a “boundary subject” (p. 295) whose task is to mediate the different perspectives of participants. Implied is that participants are not capable of engaging each other, and the planner serves as the transcendent intermediary.

Perhaps the most inclusive and democratic conceptualizations of the planner’s position in relation to the community to date are provided by Fals Borda (1973; 1988) and Evans and Loomis (2009). For Fals Borda (1988), there is a need for the planner to be deeply committed to the situations and obstacles present in a community in order to comprehend these issues. Such understanding can be acquired through the technique of “insertion” (Fals Borda, 1973, p. 50), that is, the process of grasping local perspectives through accompanying members in daily activities and engaging their thoughts on various aspects of communal life. Although community members are recognized to be subjects, rather than objects, this process may undercut dialogical efforts when members are reduced to ‘cultural brokers’ (Jezewski, 1990), who link planners to groups by initiating contact and mediating cultural differences. Evans and Loomis’ (2009) notion of the “critical friend” (p. 387) is grounded in the dialogical elements of respect for the other, sincerity, and equality. Furthermore, the critical friend engages different perspectives and fosters shared understandings. Despite the recognition of participation, the authors fall short of considering this involvement to be enough to change “external agents” (p. 387) into community members.

But why is the perception that planners are community members important? First, the idea that language shapes the social world (Wittgenstein, 1958) suggests that

individuals may act towards one another differently if planners are considered to be community members. Specifically, this view, when based on “equalitarian” (Eisler, 2013, p. 47) principles, may promote the recognition that tasks reserved typically for planners may be carried out by the average community member.

Second, this perspective is consistent with solidarity, particularly the idea that everyone can contribute in different, yet equally important, ways in a unified effort. When planners are conceived to be outsiders, their ability to contribute to a project may be seen as more, or less, important than that of community members. Hence, an undertaking can never be truly democratic.

Community-based philosophy (Murphy, 2014), however, opens the possibility to move beyond the insider-outsider distinction, so that the views of all persons who exhibit their bond to a community may be equally respected. In this way, persons committed to a community may begin to work together on equal ground, while all rationality and meaning are achieved through intersubjectivity (Husserl, 1960).

While engagement is pivotal, participation in dialogue is what transforms the relationship between the planner and community by allowing entry. Particularly, dialogue allows the planner and community to encounter each other wholly and as equals (Buber, 1970). By exhibiting concern for community issues, being committed to community progress, and participating in community-related activities, the planner may initiate this relationship. However, only through the acceptance obtained through dialogue is the planner able to be recognized fully as part of the community.

The idea that planners are community members may seem implausible, particularly when the traditional perspective of community is employed. In fact, conventional approaches make this shift in membership difficult, if not impossible. Yet, within a community-based framework (Murphy, 2014), a community is nothing but dialogue. Thus, through dialogue, membership, by anyone, is possible. In this sense, becoming a

member is not something mythical or magical, because all persons have the ability to engage in this process.

THE ISSUE OF POWER

Understanding how community-based philosophy contributes to new conceptualizations of community membership would not be complete without addressing the concern for power differences. While participation and dialogue are affirmed usually as approaches to counter power issues, they have also been viewed to perpetuate subtlety dominance and control (Arieli, Friedman, & Agbaria, 2009; Ellsworth, 1989).

For example, planners who intend to initiate a community-based project by having secured funding should recognize the paradox of creating plans without the community's involvement (Ospina et al., 2004). For Ospina et al. (2004), this approach to initiating a project resulted in community distrust. In an attempt to make the project more participatory, and regain the community's confidence, they employed a democratic strategy that involved allowing the community to choose a method for developing a set of different options. However, in a truly community-based project, the planner should not restrict the possibilities of the community.

Arieli, Friedman, and Agbaria (2009) note the tendency of community members going along with the ideas of planners, so that they may "benefit from the advantages of being connected with them" (p. 270). The problem is that this passivity results in the opinions of community members being overlooked. When trying to identify relevant community issues, this consequence can undermine the purpose of a community-based project.

For Ellsworth (1989), conventional dialogue is a practice that reproduces power imbalances and is, in actuality, impossible to achieve. This result is due to how unjust power dynamics "distort communication" (p.316). The major problem that is overlooked is how dialogue presumes that persons are unbiased, and that there is a universal source of morality that is acceptable to all persons. Nevertheless, she recognizes the possibility of relying on intersubjectivity to overcome this issue. With

participation and dialogue having the potential to maintain unequal relationships, how can the belief that the planner is a community member be upheld? This effort begins with minimizing the often privileged status of the planner, and the power that stems from this position, in order to promote shared authority and democratic relations within a community (Ospina et al., 2004). In practice, adhering to this idea involves demystifying the planner's position while recognizing that all relationships occur within a web of power dynamics at various societal levels (Wallerstein & Duran, 2003). The point is not to overlook differences between the planner and community. After all, the idea that a community is homogenous does not hold (Day, 2006). Rather, recognition and acceptance are the goals. What is needed, therefore, is discussion that exposes, and then diminishes, power differentials that hinder participation. But even when attention is given to this issue, every manifestation of power could not possibly be addressed during the planning process.

CONCLUSION

The overall message is that anyone who participates in community affairs can become a community member, including those who have been considered traditionally to be outsiders. With the availability of a general philosophy, the rise of inequalities, based on knowledge and skill, can be challenged. Particularly, dialogue undermines traditional views that technical or professional expertise has greater legitimacy than local knowledge (Fischer, 2009). Accordingly, community members should not only be certain of their personal ability to contribute by, for example, offering their insight, but should also be convinced that they can act jointly together with planners (Chávez et al., 2003).

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