Pedagogy of Oppressed Community Engagement: Socially inclusive visioning of urban change

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Abstract

It is generally accepted that good practice in policy making and urban change initiatives requires community engagement; where community-based approaches are emphasised as a means of socially inclusive visioning. Communities expect greater transparency, accountability and engagement. This expectation is not always met, with many studies focusing on the perceived tickbox effect – where engagement is a process that has to be undertaken rather than being welcomed and embraced as an integral part of planning for urban change.

This paper explores multi-disciplinary concepts and looks at ways these can be linked to community engagement in planning, particularly in larger urban Councils. In this brief glimpse at the wide variety of disciplines that could be drawn on, the paper uses information systems, teaching models, organisational theory and public policy to highlight the potential for altering concepts of community engagement.

It concludes that, from these particular examples: the use of double-loop learning could help to empower the community (from organisational theory); collaboration and participation necessitate the co-ordination and exchange of information and knowledge within and between organisations (information systems); the preconception that the authority holds all the knowledge ready to be handed out to the community (teaching models) needs to be challenged; and partnerships are important in empowering people (public policy).

Introduction

Community engagement is widely recognised as being integral to good practice in policy making and urban change initiatives; where community-based approaches are well documented as a means of socially inclusive visioning. Citizens themselves, and for that matter all community members, expect greater transparency, accountability and engagement. This paper explores multi-disciplinary concepts and looks at ways these can be linked to community engagement in planning, particularly in larger urban Councils.

Current community engagement practices can be perceived as somewhat archaic (e.g. Gibson and Jagger, 2009; Jones *et al*, 2005), using traditional methods as a blanket 'tool' for delivering engagement strategies in large scale urban change schemes. This is not to say that they are not effective to an extent. They are tried, tested and legitimised, but are there alternative techniques and philosophies that can add to the community engagement debate? For example, looking to organisational learning concepts, information systems, teaching models and public policy research.

"For there to be real benefits from citizen engagement, consultation about public policy needs to move beyond the piecemeal and haphazard process which is evident in Australia today" (Aulich, 2009). This paper discussed community engagement in Australia, in large urban Councils, and the extent to which the process is a political 'tick box' exercise as opposed to being an essential and integral part of urban change. It examines contemporary multi-disciplinary sources to explore alternative methods for engaging people in the process of urban change. This paper takes urban change to incorporate regeneration efforts, new developments and proposed alterations to the use of the urban area.

What is community engagement?

Engagement comprises a range of activities that allow community members to be informed of Council activities, to be involved with Council in improving the community and to enable citizens to provide input to the Council on local issues. The process for community engagement usually begins when a Council, or other government organisation, looks to make a change to existing provision of environment, space, accessibility, convenience, or the actual provision of a service to the community.

Engagement is not just about discussion and relationships, it is a process that has the potential to not only culminate in real outcomes such as better services, enhanced strategic policies and resilient infrastructures, but that can also build on or help create community/Council links. It engages and negotiates with legislation, standards, economies, representation, expectations, assumptions and government policy at regional, state, national and international levels.

It is difficult to successfully capture the essence of what community is; it is elusive and changeable in form and definition (Banathy & Jenlink, 2005; Ladd, 1998). Accordingly, no one says that engagement is an easy process. Communities are diverse, with complex and varied issues, differing opinions and end goals. Engagement activities therefore require an approach that explores and embraces the diversity and dynamics of individual communities, helps groups deliberate issues constructively, and manages potential conflicts in a constructive and positive manner. It is important that the practice of community engagement is not clouded by the simplistic assumption of social cohesion. As noted by Howitt (1993), interactions within communities, and between communities and authorities must be conceptualised as occurring *"simultaneously and multi-directionally, with and between various scales."* This complex web of internal and external interactions, even if examined and catalogued, understood and modelled, changes over time. Therefore, in any engagement process geared towards planning, it is important to periodically re-examine the web, questioning which parts have been left out and which have changed or adapted over time.

Phillips, writing over two decades ago, noted that *"...neither community nor solidarity … come …readymade; both have to be constructed through the active involvement of people trying to sort out their differences for themselves"* (1993: 20). Community engagement should use meaningful and effective communication to engage and integrate all sectors of the community as an input to the decision making process. This is particularly so when focusing on urban change, where the practice of planning involves a range of processes and outcomes, occurs from a variety of spatial bases, across different scales, and is underpinned by a wide array of regulations. Dale (1992: 201) noted that *"the common characteristics of community-based planning should be that they belong to the community and are conducted under community control …"*. Obviously not all large-scale urban change projects are underpinned by a movement towards community-based planning, however, the same theoretical concept should apply to all engagement linked to a change of space. Indeed, many, if not most, local Council policies regarding engagement implicitly, and in some cases explicitly, point towards the need for significant community involvement in the planning process.

Levels of Engagement

The International Association of Public Practitioners (IAP3) was founded in 1990 as The International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) to respond to the rising global interest in public participation. The IAP2 proposed a public participation model based upon three basic principles – 1. Values-based; 2. Decision-oriented; and 3. Goal-driven (Appendix A). It provides a consistent approach to community engagement which enables a common understanding and approach between local Councils and communities. The model is adaptable to a range of circumstances and by local Councils of differing sizes. It works on getting the basics right. Essentially this involves planning effectively for community engagement rather than enthusiastically searching for interesting or new engagement techniques without proper planning.

Community engagement is undertaken on a daily basis by local Councils, project managers and community groups. Each event, or series of events, is, or rather should be tailored to the specific goal of the engagement. The engagement strategy is undertaken at different levels on a spectrum of increasing engagement (Figure 1).
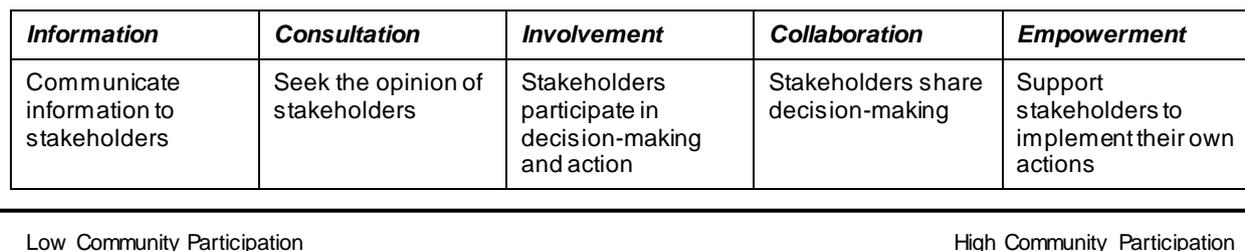
Information	*Consultation*	*Involvement*	*Collaboration*	*Empowerment*
Communicate information to stakeholders	Seek the opinion of stakeholders	Stakeholders participate in decision-making and action	Stakeholders share decision-making	Support stakeholders to implement their own actions

Low Community Participation   High Community Participation

Figure 1: Stakeholder Engagement Spectrum (shortened) – IAP2

By looking at each of these levels of engagement in turn we can see that rarely are the community, as a whole, seen as the driving force behind the outcomes of the engagement process. Aulich concludes that *"…while most states and many local governments have developed policies or protocols to facilitate this higher level of consultation, as well as signalling to their communities that such consultations are valued, there are few examples where effective engagement has been established and accepted as a citizen's right"* (Aulich, 2009). The scale of engagement employed ranges from:

- *information sharing* - a one-way relationship in which information is disseminated rather than discussed;
- through *consultation* - where citizens are generally provided with options to choose from;
- *involvement* - limited community feed-in to the final decision making process;
- *collaboration* - a 'partnership' between stakeholders and Council where ultimately the final decision may be determined by Council); and
- finally the highest level of community engagement - *empowerment*, support for a community action, where power is a truly shared phenomena and Councils/government agencies act in more of a supportive role to facilitate communities to take action.

While local Councils are increasingly required to involve communities and community leaders, they are often begrudging in doing so, creating a sense that community opinions are *"not sought after but their support needed"* (Purdue *et al.*, 2000: 32). In a dynamic speech given in the 1940s Randolf spoke of communities only being truly democratic when *"…the humblest and weakest person can enjoy the highest civil, economic, and social rights that the biggest and most powerful possess"* (Randolph 1942). In the context of community engagement in urban planning, this is still relevant. Engagement strategies determine the extent to which communities participate, they also create 'open' and 'closed' forums for participation. They identify the parameters of negotiable and non-negotiable elements, and encourage the documentation of these in transparent practices. They also determine who is deemed a 'stakeholder' and the role that they will play in the process. So given the above, do all members of the community have the same rights in expressing their opinions on change?

Determining the stakeholders

Many Australian local Council policies, linked to the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2 and 3) note that the people who should contribute to engagement are the 'right' people. For example, the Community Engagement Guidelines and Toolkit from the City of Greater Bendigo states that practitioners should *"… focus on the people who are contributing their time; give them your full attention and value their input"* (2011: 20). Is this really the case? If we look at literature on participation it can be seen that people contribute, or fail to contribute, their time for a number of reasons. These can be linked to the methods of engagement employed, the potential perceived influence from their contributions, trust of the governance, and the extent to which they feel free to express their opinions, to name a few.

Stakeholder analysis tools are generally used to determine the local stakeholders (Figure 2). It highlights the authorities, communities and community leaders, determining which are interested and which are not, which have a high level of influence and which do not.
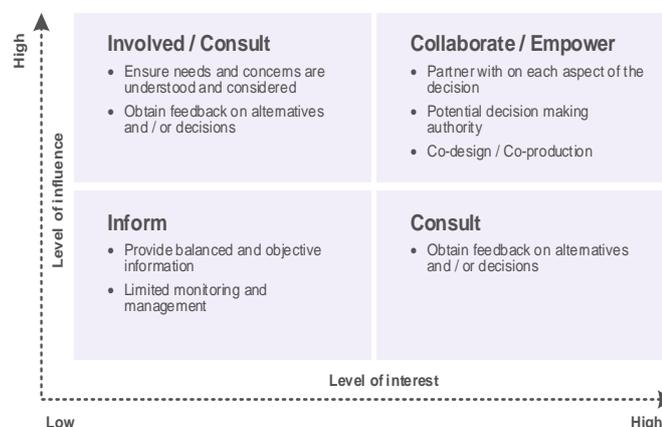
Figure 2: Stakeholder analysis tool. Source – www.eduweb.vic.gov.au

Generally it is community leaders who are called on to contribute to engagement in planning. The literature predominantly defines community leaders as those who commonly sit on recognizable organizations such as tenants associations or change boards (e.g. Anastacio *et al.*, 2000; Purdue, 2005), and have a history of community action (Barnes *et al.*, 2003; Lowndes *et al.*, 2001), but it is often in fact these individuals who marginalise others from the rest of society. While considered legitimate mouthpieces for their local communities (e.g. Sullivan & Skelcher, 2002; Thake & Zadek, 2000) and by the state and other governance with which they interact (Purdue, 2001), their involvement lies at the heart of the 'polity' archetype, with the actors serving as a link which has the potential to reconnect increasingly divorced citizens with Councillors and Council officers (Klijn & Koppenjan, 2000).

This paper questions the analysis tool's effectiveness. By focusing the majority of efforts on those with influence and interest the model is targeting the 'civic core', those who account for the majority of current involvement. However, this group is already engaged. They feel a civic responsibility and enthusiasm to improve their local area. They have a tendency to come from specific educational, social, financial and cultural groups. The tried and tested methods of engaging people are proven to work for this group. However, this group comprises a small proportion of the overarching community, and focusing solely on this group may create a sense of tokenism, a tick-box exercise, responding to dominant voices and ignoring the broader community.

Why do people participate?

By historic standards today's communities appear to lack solidarity. They rarely, if ever, physically act together. This contrast between the ancient world and modern society has often been studied by sociologists, who note a presumed 'solidarity' past and a presumed 'unsolidarity' present, postulating the decay in strength of communities. The decay theory is linked to the rising scale, complexity and mobility of social life. Communication itself has adjusted to incorporate the use of improved technology - social media sites such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram etc; digital communication through email, texting, Whatsapp, Google+ etc; information dissemination facilities such as websites, increased media representation and an increased availability of global news, information and up-to-date communication on new innovations etc. The world has become a global community, with less need for physical proximity in order to maintain contact.

Broadly speaking there are five different types of communities:

- *Interest*: Communities of people who share a common interest or passion.
- *Action:* Communities of people looking to bring about change.
- *Place:* Communities of people brought together by geographic boundaries.
- *Practice:* Communities of people in the same profession or who undertake the same activities.
- *Circumstance:* Communities of people brought together through external events or situations.

About 90% of community projects, especially those linked to a specific community brand or concept (Harley Davidson clubs, online gaming community etc), try to develop a community of interest when looking to bring about change. However, a community of interest competes with people's mental leisure time. Communities of interest are the hardest type of community to develop, and frequently those that are willing to contribute to planning engagement are from a community of action – one that is there to facilitate or block change.

People experience being part of a community in a wide variety of ways. Some feel compelled to engage and interact, others to lock themselves away and lead a more secluded life. The optimal configuration of a community would allow for, and facilitate these processes and align with its key orientations. When looking at engagement in the planning process it is important to ensure that the community feels able, willing and valued in their engagement. As stated by Porter and Onyach-Olaa (1999: 57) *"…the key is not participation in planning, but rather creating an accountable, inclusive process within the broader framework of political representation at all levels and stages in the service planning and delivery cycle."* Thereby creating a learning process where communities feel valued, respected and have a desire to become a part of the engagement process: a community of interest, one willing to give up their mental leisure time. So, in the light of this, can governance structures learn from other disciplines to better facilitate the engagement journey?

Approaches to engagement

Beneficiary participation and the methods used vary from country to country, state to state, local Council to local Council and even from project to project. Some examples of individual Council

community engagement policies and strategies in Australia can be seen in Appendix B. Engagement ranges from token consultation with elected Councillors to many weeks of household survey and focus groups. An example of the breakdown of participation levels can be seen in Figure 3.

	Peripheral to the decisions and actions of the community	*Directional,* relevant, linked to the directions and actions of the community
Centralised, involving only a small section of the community, usually elites and leaders	**RITUALISTIC** (going through the motions: 'top down' with token consultation only)	**AUTOCRATIC** (Decisions made by an individual, elected Council or interest group)
Participatory, involving the whole community (Council, elders, women, youths, etc.)	**PLACATORY** ('Wish list': not linked to action, implementation and decision making)	**DEVELOPMENTAL** (Non-manipulative participatory process involving whole community, linked to community action and decisions)

Figure 3: Types of Indigenous Planning according to Beneficiary Participation (Source: Davies, 1995:44 after Boothroyd, 1986:19)

Learning from organizational theory and practice

If we look to the root of community engagement, and the absolute bare minimum that is sought after to achieve this aim, it is a process of information dissemination and retrieval; a learning process whereby the community and governance structures glean information from each other (to a greater or lesser extent). In organizational theory and practice, 'learning' is defined as the detection and correction of errors, and 'error' as any feature of knowledge that makes action ineffective. The detection and correction of error produces learning and the lack of either or both inhibits learning. It is assumed that the more complex a problem, the higher the probability of ambiguity, and alongside this the probability of errors also increases. In other words, as problems become increasingly complex and ill-structured, the need for learning increases, but so does the difficulty in achieving effective learning. Two important sets of variables can be altered to increase the effectiveness of learning. One is the degree to which interpersonal, group, intergroup and bureaucratic factors produce valid information for the decision makers to use, and the other is the receptivity of the decision-makers to the feedback. When taken in the context of community engagement in urban change, the relevance of this becomes clear. In order for urban change/future planning to be successful the information gathered from the local community must not only be correct and useful, but it must be well received by the body seeking the feedback.

Organizational theory looks to single and double-loop learning to suggest methods for increased organizational learning. Can this be effectively manipulated into community engagement models for planning cities? Engagement is effectively a process of collaboration, as seen in the IAP2 model above. The extent to which the collaboration is facilitated differs between models, but essentially the engagement process is collaboration between the local Council/government body to work towards an end goal; be it changing the local urban environment or adapting policies etc. Collaboration and community engagement are both processes which require constant attention and development. They are not simply working practices or structures (Mattessich, 2003). The concept of continued learning is echoed throughout organisational theory and is directly relevant to community learning. The ability to create knowledge and solve problems is a core competency in many organisations, and is especially important in those with responsibility for governance (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995). Senge (1990) discussed five key principles which he states are necessary for an organisation to learn and grow; these are *Systems Thinking*, *Personal Mastery*, *Mental Models*, *Building Shared Vision* and *Team Learning* (as cited in Stacey, 2005). While accepting that not all these principles are relevant to community engagement in urban change, it is interesting to note that each of these has the potential to facilitate the opportunity for strategic engagement, *Building Shared Vision* and *Team Learning* being the most obvious links to enhanced community engagement.

Senge (1990) describes two systems of learning that this paper postulates could highlight potential areas of development for organizational and individual mental models: single and double-loop learning (Figure 4). Single-loop learning is the process by which groups of people review and learn from the action they have taken, this sustains group learning and enables individuals/organisations/local Councils to move towards the realisation of a shared vision or goal, in this case a potential plan for urban change or design. When considering the *Mental Models* discussed above, in the case of engagement these could be seen as the stereotypes and preconceptions that need to be broken

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down, a slow and often difficult process. Without changing these mental models, barriers remain in place and the outputs of the design process may not be accepted by the community as their own. As seen in Figure 4 this process involves a simple 'act' and 'react' culture, which Strichman *et al* (2008) found hindered organisational growth and individual satisfaction. In double-loop learning, learning from actions is crucial, however there is also a process of questioning assumptions; a revolutionary and destabilising process, but one which is seen as essential for innovation and learning (Senge, 1990 as cited in Stacey, 2003; Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995; Strichman *et al*, 2008). In community engagement terms, this could be related to old policies or accepted methods for engaging people. Are these still relevant? Is it possible to question the assumptions and look to achieve a new model? Not just that of the Council or authority, but also that of the community.
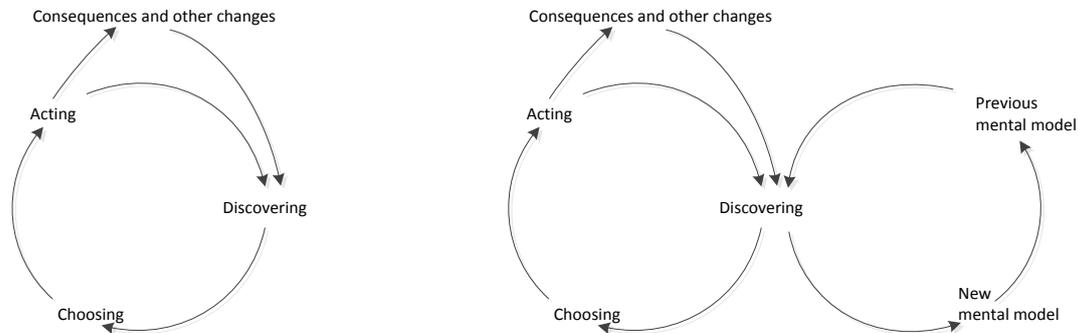

Figure 4: Single and Double-loop learning, Senge, 1990, as cited in Stacey, 2003

Taking note of information systems

Community engagement, as stated above is a process of collaboration, a commitment from the local Council and local community to work together to achieve a shared goal. While collaboration can be mutually beneficial for all those involved, it can often be complicated to maintain and to initiate (Andrew, 2005). Collaboration requires attention and continued commitment, a dedication to supporting and monitoring the interactions of the member organisations and to ensuring that all participants share a vision and common goal (Andrews, 2005; Mattessich, 2005). If we look to information system research here, it can be seen that this requires the capacity to co-ordinate the exchange of information and knowledge within and between organisations (Boschma, 2005; Cooke & Morgan, 1998). It should be noted that significant resources (and possibly expertise) are required to maintain and initiate these processes; however, once in place the benefits of a 'knowledge system' far outweigh the initial effort. Information sharing is often highlighted as one of the fundamental weaknesses in any community engagement effort, with residents not feeling able to place trust in those in power.

Drawing on teaching models

A brief glimpse at literature on teacher/student relationships and learning principles also provides insights into means encouraging improved community engagement practices. If we take education as an act of depositing information, in which students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor, information is provided for the student to patiently receive, memorize, and repeat. When translated to community engagement practices, the teacher becomes the local Council/governance structure, and the student, the community at large. In practice the local Council naturally takes on a role of information provider, disseminator of information rather than learning and growing alongside the community. In this concept of education the teacher is seen as presenting themself to their students as their necessary opposite; considering their ignorance absolute, and as such justifying their own existence.

> *"In the banking concept of education, knowledge is a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider to know nothing"* (Freire, 1993: ch.2).

There is, notably, a 'banking' concept of education, in which the scope of action allowed to the students extends only as far as receiving, filing, and storing the deposits. In parallel to the concepts presented in organizational learning theory, knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the continuing, hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other (Freire, 1993). In the case of urban change those in power, or (self) selected

'leaders' of the community, are also seen to justify their existence by placing their knowledge above that of the local community. Through making changes for the people who live, work and play in urban areas without at least a cursory engagement process they are ultimately stating that they know what is good for the community.

Learning, however, dictates that these preconceptions are questioned, reconciling the poles of the contradiction so that both are simultaneously teachers and students.

Public policy literature as insights to engagement

There are obvious links between public policy and community engagement literature; indeed the two are often synonymous. Each talks of the effectiveness of partnership working, the need for strong direction, issues of trust and the relevance of stakeholders in the process of developing policies for social change.

An additional concept from public policy literature that adds to the debate surrounding engagement in planning is that of community leaders and public managers as 'dual intermediaries' between formal institutional designs of partnership governance and its wider political constituency of citizens, service users and stakeholders. Partnerships bring together various combinations of public, private, not-for-profit (NGOs) and community actors in 'new collaborative spaces', especially important in arenas such as planning where public policy is determined and implemented (Skelcher *et al.*, 2005; Munro *et al.*, 2008).

By comparing engagement practices to three partnership design archetypes – club, agency and polity – it can be theorized how these have the potential to shape the roles of community leaders, local Council/government agencies and public managers. Partnership as a concept has a very broad reach, containing at least three competing ideas deriving from different theories of public governance. Munro *et al* (2008) talk of these competing models in terms of M-partnerships, E-partnerships and I-partnerships.

M-Partnerships: These are derived from the ideology of managerialism: arenas occupied by public managers and their colleagues from the private and non-profit sector. They provide a stable regime from which to implement public policy using the powers delegated to public officials and elected politicians. The achetypal institutional design associated with this partnership is that of 'agency' – where any public engagement will be limited and constrained to the peripheral settings outside the core decision-making arena.

E-Partnerships: Based on the idea of strategic cooperation between elite decision makers, the rationale is that the development and implementation of public policy requires a neo-corporatist form of negotiation between the leadership of the key sectoral bodies. The institutional design is the 'club' – engagement being through open forums and consultation meetings that will inform but not bind the authorities.

I-Partnerships: This concept reflects an ideology of inclusion and participatory democracy that privileges democratic engagement in public policy making by affected citizens, service users and other publics. The institutional design here is 'polity' - partnerships are considered important in this model as they foster a spirit of co-operation rather than competition and contribute to consensually setting values and goals.

If we take these theories in the context of community engagement in planning for cities it can be seen that while many policies across Australia advocate public engagement they do not necessarily push towards active partnerships or 'polity' in design. Although the IAP2 model discusses various levels of engagement, rarely is the idea of the community as a partner explored. They are referred to as users, participants, etc.

Conclusion

As William Shakespeare wrote in *The Tragedy of Coriolanus*, "what is the city but its people?" (I.1605-1608). The same remains true over 400 years later. People create and maintain the economy, shape the areas they live, work and play in, and define the physical and social environment. Communities, and the people that they are made up of, are a defining factor in how those within and externally view areas. This paper looks at the extent to which these individuals, and communities, are included in the process of working towards cities through processes of change. Aulich, for example, states that

"*…in few instances has the practice [of engagement] yet been accepted as a fundamental right of communities…*" (Aulich, 2009, p57).

Another point raised here is the need for appropriate, relevant, strategic and consistent community engagement to be undertaken. This is highlighted in several local government and Council documents referenced in this paper.

Community engagement is not a magic wand that can be waved to make all parties happy. If community engagement is not conducted in good faith and does not fully engage the entire community, then it is perceived as a manipulative and cynical process. Community engagement is seen by many as a tokenistic tick-box exercise, responding to dominant voices and ignoring the broader community, a means of co-opting groups or defusing opposition, of falsely raising public expectations, or as a substitute for good government and sound policy making.

This paper looks to multidisciplinary research to explore various learning concepts, and to discuss whether community engagement practices can learn from information systems, public policy literature, teaching systems and organizational theory and practice. Messages include:

- *Learning from organisational theory*
  Use of double-loop learning, where the focus is on questioning assumptions and learning from the new information gathered. For example, questioning assumptions and bringing new ideas to the table can help empower the community to feel that change is not just a tickbox exercise; authorities accepting previous weaknesses or mistakes and looking to the future can also add to this feeling of ownership.

- *Taking note of information systems*
  Information systems necessitate a capacity to co-ordinate the exchange of information and knowledge within and between organisations. The same is true of communities, especially in times of change, where information dissemination and sharing is often highlighted as one of the fundamental weaknesses in any community engagement effort.

- *Drawing on teaching models*
  A brief look at effective learning models, highlights a need for the preconception that the teacher, or in this case the authority, holds all the knowledge ready to be handed out to the student, community, as a finished piece of knowledge, be questioned. The poles of the contradiction need to be reconciled so that both are simultaneously teachers and students.

- *Insights from public policy literature*
  Many policies across Australia advocate public engagement, however they do not necessarily push towards active partnerships or 'polity' in design. Public policy literature emphasises the need for partnerships although, while the IAP2 model discusses various levels of engagement, rarely is the idea of the community as a partner explored. Local communities and the people they are composed of are generally referred to as users, participants, etc.

The scope of this paper allows for only a brief look at this subject. It suggests the need for a change in the way that community engagement practices are viewed and implemented. There is a need to break away from the stereotypical model of engaging communities. Communities are not identical, the processes used to engage them should be equally diverse. They should take into account all sections of the community and endeavour to produce an engagement strategy specific to the needs of that community; taking into account the changeable nature of places and people, and allowing for this in the strategy created.

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Appendix A: Community Engagement – Table of Techniques 1

Consider techniques for **Inform** level	Always Think It Through	What Can Go Right	What Can Go Wrong
Printed Materials: - Fact Sheets - Newsletter - Media Advertising – "Advertiser", local messenger - Brochures - Issue Papers	- Keep it short and simple - Make it visually interesting and engaging but not too busy or slick - Proof-read all documents - Engage at least 5 randomly selected staff members to trial material & provide feedback before distribution to the public - Use language that is inclusive and jargon free - Always include opportunities for comment and include reply paid forms or envelopes to encourage two-way communication - Explain public role and how comments have affected project decisions - Offer interpretation services	- Can reach a large target audience - Public look for information in regular format, e.g. Newsletter, Media column - Allows for technical and legal reviews - Written comments returned in reply paid format - Documentation of public involvement facilitated - Mailing list development	- Distribution planning inadequate - Materials do not reach the mark - Materials not read - Limited capacity to communicate complicated concepts - Information misinterpreted
Displays: - Council offices - Libraries - Community centres - Shopping centres - Schools - Childcare centres	- Establish regular sites if possible to build on community culture - Develop a distribution list - Make sure personnel at locations know what materials are about & where they are located & who to contact for further information - Consider electronic displays, e.g. touch screens, TV video loop presentations - Make sure materials are removed when past their use by date	- Information is accessible to the public at relatively little cost - Public use of the distribution locations to look for materials - Public visit Council facilities & may learn more about service provision - Public ask for further information at Council distribution sites	- Distribution sites are overcrowded with information & the materials get lost among the collection of materials - There is no active promotion of the materials - Upkeep of information at sites is not well managed
Website: Information directly into the household	- Needs to be visible & easy to navigate - Keep information updated	- Capable of reaching a large audience at low cost - Popular information resource	- People without access disadvantaged - Technical difficulties - Hard to navigate

Appendix A: Community Engagement – Table of Techniques 2

Consider techniques for **Consult** level	**Always Think It Through**	**What Can Go Right**	**What Can Go Wrong**
Printed Materials, Displays, Website	Refer to Table 1	Refer to Table 1	Refer to Table 1
Briefings: - Council staff - Elected members - Technicians - Consultants - Key stakeholders - Community groups (including marginalised groups)	- Keep it short & simple - Use clear, jargon free, inclusive language - Use easy to read diagrams and visuals that are consistent with the verbal & written content	- Control of information/presentation - Opportunities to clarify misinformation - Reach a wider variety of people - Build community capacity - Evaluate & readjust approach	- Some groups may be left out of briefings - Inaccurate information may be passed on to community - Expectations may be raised - Information may be used inappropriately
Mailed Surveys/Questionnaires/ Response Sheets: - Blanket distribution - Random distribution - Selected distribution	- Surveys/questionnaires should be developed using specific guidelines and trialled before distribution - Collection and method of analysis to be considered & clarified - Level of engagement & parameters need to be clear	- Can gather information from people other than those with special interest - Gather information from people who might not attend meetings - Can gather specific information - Statistically tested results have more creditability	- Response rate can be poor - Communities over surveyed - Can be labour intensive - Questions may be misinterpreted - Results not trusted - Results not fed back to communities effectively
Technical Assistance: Attendance at – - Briefings - Meetings - Workshops	- Technical resource persons must be perceived as credible by communities - Ensure technical resource persons have access to information about the communities attitudes	- Build credibility & address public concerns about equity - Facts in dispute can be debated & consensus reached	- Resource availability may be limited - Technicians may not be prepared for working too closely with communities & may lack empathy with community concerns
Open House: - Communities engage at their own pace in a comfortable environment - Drop in to individually view plans, ask questions, give opinions, have an informal chat & a coffee/tea etc.	- Be there when you say you are going to be - Consider the demographics of the area & time sessions accordingly - Greet people at the door & explain the format, provide comments sheets - Give people a task, e.g. "good/bad" dots to place on the displays to record their preferences	- Facilitates a wide variety of people - Break down perceived barriers - Fosters communication - More convenient for people - Engages people more effectively - Minimise aggressive approach to Council staff	- Special interest groups may boycott or disrupt - Groups may use "dots" to lobby for special interests - Staff resource intensive - May not be accessible to people who rely on public transport
Feedback Register Resident pool for feedback	- Check the register content is relative to your purpose	- Gather input from a broad range of people	- Register maintenance can be resource intensive

Source: Community Engagement Handbook, A Model framework for leading practice in Local Government in South Australia. 2008. Adapted from the IAP2 Toolbox, 2006 & Maroochy Shire Council toolbox, 2003

Appendix B: Examples of individual Council community engagement policies and strategies

New South Wales

- City of Canada Bay Community Engagement Policy (2010)
- Sutherland Shire Community Engagement Policy (2009)
- Manly Council Community Engagement Policy (2009)
- Rockdale Community Engagement Strategy and Policy (2006)

Victoria

- City of Bendigo Community Engagement Policy, Guidelines and Toolkit (2011) Surf Coast Shire Community Engagement Policy (2010)
- Colac Ottway Shire Community Engagement Policy (2010)
- Latrobe City Community Engagement Policy and Strategy (2005)

South Australia

- The City of Onkaparinga Community Engagement Framework (n.d.)
- City of Holdfast Bay Community Consultation and Engagement Policy (2010)
- Prospect City Council Community Engagement Policy (2007)
- City of Marion Community Consultation and Engagement Policy (2010)

Northern Territory

- Central Desert Shire Community Engagement Strategy and Policy (2011)

Tasmania

- Glenorchy City Council Community Engagement Policy (n.d.)
- Huon valley Council Community Consultation and Communication Strategy (n.d.)

Queensland

- City of Townsville Community Engagement Policy (2010)
- Gladstone Regional Council Community Engagement Policy (2010)
- Sunshine Coast Regional Council Community Engagement policy (2009)
- Logan City Council Community Engagement Policy (2009)
- Mackay Regional Council Community Engagement Policy (2009)

Western Australia

- Freemantle community Engagement Framework (2010)

*Please note: This is by no means a comprehensive list of policies that are held by Australian Councils, simply a sample of those that are readily available online.