Ted Grossardt and Keiron Bailey, **Transportation Planning and Public Participation: Theory, Process, and Practice**, New York, NY: Elsevier, 2018, 352 pp., $87.50 (paperback).

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Ted Grossardt and Keiron Bailey have been toiling in the fields of transportation planning for more than 18 years, and although they do not even include "communication" in the index of **Transportation Planning and Public Participation: Theory, Process, and Practice**, communication is really what this important new book is essentially about. While much of what they write about fits well under the heading of public deliberation, and deliberative democracy, it is their engagement with the challenges involved in facilitating communication between members of the public, project professionals, and public officials that make the critical decisions about how public funds are to be expended for transportation projects that shapes our understanding of the work of public participation professionals.
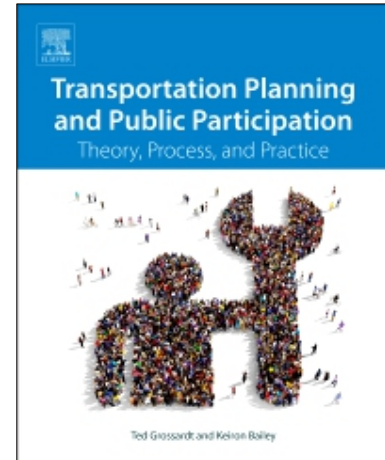
It is fair to say that their determination to transform public participation in planning is something of a mission, so much so that they devote an entire chapter to their responses to many of the "peer reviews" of their work that they have received over the years in order to identify areas in which progress has been made, and areas in which there is still a failure to understand the potential and importance of what they refer to as Structured Public Involvement (SPI).

They begin their introduction to this mission with a fictional story about a bridge design project that includes the sorts of characters, strategies, and consequences that are all too familiar to participants and observers of transportation projects. Of course, this story has a happy ending, because it includes features of a public participation process that meets the requirements that they have defined as essential, and that they illustrate in their presentation of a host of different projects throughout the book.

With chapter 1, Grossardt and Bailey begin a formal presentation of their approach to the development of SPI with a discussion of the role that the so-called Arnstein gap plays in the measurement of the impact of the communications strategies they have developed and put to use in multiple projects in which they served as public participation professionals. The gap is the difference between what members of the public currently experience, and what they actually desire from public participation activities, as measured by eight levels of control or influence that Arnstein (1969) characterized as a "ladder of citizen participation."

Their approach, and their perspective, is elaborated further with the identification of the variety of kinds of people who might be participants in different transportation design projects. They begin with an identification of the qualities of the publics, or citizens who may be participants in these projects. The

attributes they use to describe these participants are quite positive, and as they illustrate in the great majority of the cases they present, public officials and project professionals tend not to hold members of the public with the same high regard.

An important, and to some degree controversial, feature of their approach to gathering preferences and evaluative assessments at different stages in a planning process is that they use digital recording devices or keypads that allow all the participants to "vote" anonymously. They ensure that all the participants have the opportunity to see the scores and their distribution before any public meeting ends. Although there may be concerns about how the questions for these polls are developed or "framed," there appear to be clear benefits to allowing members of the traditionally underserved and underrepresented members of the public to express their opinions without having to overcome concerns about how their comments will be perceived by others.

Chapter 2 goes into greater detail about the uses to which Arnstein's ladder can be put, including the wealth of data being generated about participants' views at different stages of projects with different kinds of problems to be overcome. Although the book is focused primarily on transportation projects, this chapter also explores the lessons that are being learned as more government agencies implement public engagement or public participation requirements for the projects that they support. It is here that the authors emphasize their commitment to addressing each of the different aspects of John Rawls' theory of justice: distributional and procedural justice, as well as expectations regarding who has access to justice, through their being included in these kinds of deliberations.

In chapter 3, they turn more directly into discussion of the variety of methods that they identify as being especially applicable to particular kinds of projects. Here again, Grossardt and Bailey are not at all shy about expressing their preferences for, as well as their reservations about, particular techniques for gathering the values, preferences, and opinions of various "publics," including their frequently stated belief that these processes, when well designed, can accommodate far larger numbers of participants than is commonly thought.

Part of the choices they make about the structural character of the communicative interactions they recommend are shaped by their rejection of a search for "consensus" as a meaningful project goal. They suggest that consensus is really not something that is attainable with regard to complex projects, and a large number of participants with "diverse preferences, tastes, training, and values" (p. 64). They go on to oppose attempts to define the results of such efforts as representing any kind of informed consent. This chapter is also used to provide examples of the kinds of measures that are appropriate to evaluate participatory activities in terms of quality, inclusion, clarity, and efficiency, which they then refer to as their QICE evaluative framework. While all elements of this framework are treated as being important, they devote special attention to the need to ensure that inclusion is both comprehensive and meaningful throughout the process. They raise important concerns about who actually chooses "credible representatives" from among both "stakeholders" and members of the public whose taxes actually finance these projects.

The next chapter continues on in an effort to identify the factors, including the levels of trust that the sponsoring agencies may have earned in the past, that often turn out to be important determinants of the levels of success projects are likely to achieve. They identify other experiences from the past, including those relating to frequent conflicts between agencies and public officials across political and administrative boundaries.

Chapter 5 is more closely focused on the approaches, tools, and mechanics that are used to gather information from participation activities and events. It is here where they again emphasize the differences among focus groups, charrettes, town halls, and the kinds of interactions James Fishkin and his colleagues provide as models of "deliberative democracy," such as a proposal to have days set aside across the nation to explore issues of importance to political parties and their candidates. The kinds of communicative interactions and information gathering strategies making use of public participation geographic information systems, telephone surveys, and social media are also described, and special attention is paid to the challenge of identifying and evaluating the levels and quality of participation experienced by members of different sociodemographic population groups. The chapter ends with examples of the ways in which the evaluations of these projects reflect the differences in the populations, interests, and experiences that can be measured and represented, both to the participants, as well as to the sponsors of the projects.

The following chapter focuses on the variety of ways in which the data generated through these participatory activities can be used at different stages of the process, including the vitally important moment when decisions have to be made public and justified to all concerned. A variety of ways that these comparative analytics can be developed for presentation are described and illustrated in considerable detail. Chapter 7 is focused on even more "advanced multicriteria applications" that are illustrated in several different projects varying in complexity and uniqueness in terms of the weights assigned to particular goals favored more by some participants than others.

Chapter 8 focuses on the development and use of what they refer to as their Casewise Visual Evaluation methodology for scenario modeling and evaluation, which is followed by that unusual but quite informative chapter on their engagements with peer reviews over time, before they turn to famous last thoughts in chapter 10, about how we might turn what we have learned into an expansion of social capital, with special focus on the necessity of addressing the distributional aspects of justice following Clinton's executive order on environmental justice.

Communications scholars are uniquely prepared to support the advancement of public participation in a variety of policy areas, and this book will help to lead the way.

Reference

Arnstein, S. R. (1969). A ladder of citizen participation. *Journal of the American Institute of Planners*, *35*, 216–224.