

Resource Architecture –

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Forum 6: Socially Inclusive Cities - Emerging Concepts and Practice

Experience from Planning with People *Questions for Reflection*

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Social inclusion policies and methods have been promoted for many years in the development field, and recently have gained momentum around the world. Known by various names representing variety in use and function - community participation, action planning, and more recently demand-driven development - all are essentially a form of power-sharing. It is rare to find any development program or project without due difference to community participation.

Is it time for reflection? Where is inclusionary policy and practice heading? Three futures could be hypothesized:

- 1 - Inclusion is a fundamental imperative; it is a vital, driving force in development.
- 2 - Inclusion is good; it is very useful but in specific situations.
- 3 - Inclusion is not necessary; there are other options available.

If inclusion is a fundamental, why is the perception that it is slow in being adopted? Is it more of an 'outsider push' than an 'insider desire'? Or is it just a function of social change which tends to be deliberate and very slow in spreading? Furthermore, how does one recognize if there is inclusion when one sees it? Is it a 'free for all' in definition or just an indication of the flexibility of use? A simple matrix charting stages of a program/project and degree of participation may provide a useful tool to position and understand variations. All the options are a form of participation, but are there degrees aiming toward an ideal, or fundamental imperative?

An effective interface between government and community participation is rarely seen. The loss of power and the lack of an organizational model appear to mitigate widespread acceptance and use. Related is the dilemma of 'getting it done' vs 'inclusionary process': in some examples inclusion clearly contributed toward an effective project, but in others it became a constraint. What effect is the mantra of 'competitive cities' on inclusion? Will this marginalize inclusion in the search for economic success?

Inclusion can have profound affects on society. The recent practice of broadening inclusion to include children in development seems a positive direction, while the unnuanced gender approaches seem too often to just transfer power from one group to another.

And in the future, will inclusion be seen as a useful fad, and will development thinking shift to other interests? For example five years ago (more or less) NGOs was often seen as the key factor in development projects but this no longer seems the case.

But perhaps all this is irrelevant: the majority in cities in the developing world are very poor - representing up to 70-80% of the population - and the bulk of new housing is informally constructed. Who then is excluding whom? Are we as development planners the excluded and irrelevant? Or more likely, will there be a convergence, resulting in a new development model yet to be invented, and a form of inclusion that is unlike what we know today?

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