Afterword

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EDITORS' NOTE: At the invitation of this issue's guest editors, Randy Hester, Professor Emeritus of Landscape Architecture at the University of California, Berkeley, reflected upon the contents of the preceding articles in light of his lengthy record of teaching, practicing and writing about participatory planning and design. We offer an edited version of the letter he sent to *Landscape Jounal* as an afterword.

Thank you for the opportunity to read and reflect on the articles. They are provocative, informing, unearthing, rediscovering, discouraging, exhilarating, and full of insight. They will disappoint those who wish for similar conceptual framing, methods, statistical generalizations, and coherent dialogue across all articles. This is a potluck, often participatory and transdisciplinary, sometimes empowering and deeply democratic; and there is not a feel-good-do-gooder in the pot.

I was asked to compare these articles and the projects they present to the literature and practice of community design 50 years ago. In that context, there are tidbits of wisdom sprinkled throughout that make deep mining of the content of these articles worthwhile. Here are a few points that strike me. Some make me realize that if we had known this then, we would have taken significantly different actions.

1. You have to find the right jurisdiction of government. Small California watersheds require a countywide perspective while obesity is a statewide matter in Pennsylvania. These findings opened my eyes to a serious mistake we made a generation ago. Yes, we need transjurisdictional cooperation, but problems have a home place in various and distinct levels of government. Had we understood this, we would have created a different solution for the 1954 Supreme Court decision in Brown Versus the Board of Education. Irresistible incentives to integrate residential areas would have accompanied school busing. This would have avoided many problems that entangled the society when the school was lost as a center of local life and transportation replaced neighborhoods as the unit of democratic action. Transdisciplinary thinking would likely have made the neighborhood the homeplace for equal access to education making a dramatically different landscape than the one we see today.
2. Duration matters. One-off projects with one site visit, a community charrette, or a few workshops fit into a semester are but token participation compared to collaborations of ten years or so. Some of these present articles are so time-bound that I am suspicious of claimed outcomes. We need evidence that the approaches grew more sophisticated as volunteers' skills developed. The enduring cases recognize the importance of knowing the place intimately and developing personal relationships, especially in contentious settings. Shared experience, shared place, shared mission require on-going face-to-face interaction. The designer must be present. Otherwise, we reinforce Melvin Webber's (1964) unfortunate diction that we desire "community without propinquity." That claim haunted community designers in my youth, and superficial engagement with people and place undermines the basis of landscape architecture today.
3. Academic participatory projects, evaluation and research follow funding. Money begets transdisciplinarity. As a generalization, the funded research fifty years ago attended to environmental injustices. Little besides Davidoff (1965) and Gans (1962, 1968) informed us. Today the underlying theory is far more devised, richer, and confusing. Pick among environmental medicine or psychology, landscape ecology or urbanism, free or social capitalism, cultural diversity or geography just to mention a few ways the articles herein are framed. This makes transdisciplinary frameworks more essential, comparative evaluation more difficult and the need for precise grounding in landscape more critical.
4. Transactional design teaches all participants who have open ears. These cases highlight the successful intent of transdisciplinary participation to generate new knowledge. Joint fact-finding, databases, and citizen science nurture mutual learning and empathy for the "other." For my generation, empathy

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often partnered with racial quiet. This resulted in advocating for more resources for the poor. It was after all a war on poverty. In some cases this rectified past environmental injustices, but it also fueled status-seeking to achieve the life style of the next highest class —the American dream. The present writers understand what we did not. Much status seeking behavior is unsustainable and must be reversed.

5. It is easier to collaborate with white suburbanites and rural residents than minorities. Participation continues to take this easier street even, as in one case presented, when minorities have a higher rate of obesity than those asked to be involved. The ASLA understood that fifty years ago because Karl Linn (1986) was an effective critic of the gentleman's club mentality. One might have expected more progress in this end.
6. Participation requires attention to the most mundane patterns of daily life. Farm-harvest schedules, meeting on neutral turf, organizing trash cleanups or bus tours can make or break a democratic undertaking.
7. The image is power. It can startle people out of complacency. Visioning can get people to see things that are not there and move forward as if they were realities. Drawing is a research tool. Drawing can create a lingering gestalt that crosses boundaries of disciplines, scales, and languages. In two of the cases such a gestalt helped reknit community fabric and revived a city. Interestingly the most dramatic social innovations rely on traditional, even nostalgic imagery. It seems that aesthetic invention that so enamored the profession has little to do with radical and meaningful social change.
8. Listening is key to collaboration. In the cases it was employed, listening changed the entire processes. It is surprising how little the articles in this issue discuss the significance of listening.

Few of these insights are new, but the articles strike me as adding significantly to our knowledge, in some cases reconfirming with authority and in other cases they making me rethink implicit assumptions.

The articles also stir some questions. The first is about intent. These cases are not primarily about participation. They are about visual simulation, affordable housing, changing economies, obesity, small towns, watershed stewardship, streetscaping, mining, and teaching. Is participation a means, an end, or both? What are the implications when participation is primarily a means to some other end? Is deep democracy served well when participation is a tool for other ends? Frances Moore Lappe (2007) has presented a compelling case that we now take democracy so much for granted that the citizen's role is little more than voting occasionally, consuming voraciously, and enhancing our private lives at public expense. She shows how placeless corporations with virtual capital destroy landscapes and endanger living democracy. To address these threats participatory designers must sharpen their intentions.

Second, landscape architecture, and sustainable design more broadly do seem "destined" for transdisciplinary action as well as transjurisdictions and transscales for the exact reasons the authors call out. Is landscape architectural education preparing professionals to be transleaders? We always say we are because we are generalists, but I worry that curricula overhauls to support this endeavor continue to retread worn out tires. How do we educate versatility and rambunctious adventuring beyond limits while integrating grading, drainage and construction simultaneously? Few of the cases presented explicitly tie participation to environmental planning and built landscapes. How does the landscape shape participation and vice versa? How are cultural idiosyncrasies expressed in form? In contrast to these articles, the Democratic Designers in the Pacific Rim (for example, Hou, Francis, and Brightbill 2005) have produced a decade of proceedings with numerous cases of how participation uncovers social nuances that directly inspire design form. It is difficult to test theory with words, but theory can be evaluated in carefully documented process and built work.

Third, is the emphasis on consensus misplaced? Why do we avoid conflict at great expense? Is it a fear of being ostracized, defeated, or different? Is retreating from the fear of conflict now life threatening? Participation must make a place for conflict where different views can be safely contested. We should not be too quick to make peace. Forcing agreement before its time undermines democratic action. Better solutions evolve from the tension of conflict as well as an understanding that some values are not to be compromised. Did we forget about civil disobedience and a letter from a Birmingham jail? An eagerness to agree voids versatile power.

Fourth, does participation have an inherent limitation to small-scale projects? Does the large scale render plural design impractical? These claims seem unfounded. Many of these cases are regional in scope. Participatory designers start out small; if skilled, they receive larger scale projects. This is not different from other landscape designers who migrate across scale from residential gardens to corporate campuses and regional open space systems. This requires trans-scalar skill in form making and process.

Fifth, these papers confirm, some more painfully than others, the utility of transdisciplinary design, action research, and collaboration. For this special issue, it was a useful organizing device. But is democratic design better framed by Gunderson and Holling's (2002) panarchy approach to adaptive cycles and dynamic systems, John Forester's (1989) planning in the face of power, Paulo Freire's (1970) pedagogy of the oppressed, John Friedmann's (1973) face-to-face transactive planning, Saul Alinsky's (1971) confrontational strategies or Robert Schön's (1983) reflective practitioner? Which approach provides better theoretical grounding? Which offers better guidance for practitioners? To answer this latter question requires direct engagement with professionals employing participation in the day-to-day practice of landscape architecture.

Thank you to the authors for preparing these jewels. Analyzing these papers convinces me that plural design is pregnant with a new wave of democratic design. Good midwives should take the next step and organize a series of workshops that include authors of these articles as well as leading practitioners of participatory design, trans-thinkers, allied scholars, deep democracy advocates, select elected officials, citizen scientists, and trouble makers. The agenda could begin with show and tell, aggressive listening and advance to ways to develop democratic design frames and coherent dialogue. I am happy to help.

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