Answering the Call - Participation & (Re) Legislation:

A critical analysis of the contemporary applications of public participation within architecture and its relationship to the legislation that guides it.

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Abstract

This paper is a critical analysis of contemporary approaches to participatory theory within architecture and an investigation into the role that architects will need to fulfil to answer the legislative requirement for an 'engagement' of the public. Throughout this paper, I contrast current applications of participatory techniques in relation to the statutory guidelines that enforce them to assess new means of including the public more efficiently and productively within architectural design. The ambition of this paper is to promote the need for a critique of participation and in so doing, reinvigorate the practical application of participatory methods amongst architects and fellow professionals.

The foundation of this paper revolves around concepts relating to a distinction occurring between 'public consultation' and 'public engagement' and the seeming lack of such differentiation found within legislative guidelines. This lack of legislative clarity combined with an investigation into the resolution in which architects have involved the 'public' since 1969, will form a framework to explore contemporary attitudes and methodological strategies embedded within the current design climate.

This paper goes on to explore how public participation has been deployed historically and subsequently to critically analyse the efficacy of current modes of implementation. These discussions I believe are necessary, as without an honest assessment of the synthesis of its application, the mere inclusion of the public within a design process can devolve into tokenism and manipulation. With current legislation calling for participation to rise to the level of engagement, I conclude on steps that architects need to fulfil for this to be achieved.

Key Words

Public Participation, Planning, Legislation, Architecture, Consultation, Engagement

Methodology

Within this paper, I cover several differing methodologies devised to capture public opinion. Through an assessment of the forums in which the public are currently engaged within the realisation of architectural projects, I hope to attain a means of critiquing best practise in both a historic and contemporary sense. This is supported in part by the use of contemporary case studies, which, when contrasted against participatory theory at the time of conception will aid in evaluating the variability in the approach that has been employed by architects, thus allowing me to determine their legacy upon the current state of public participation with design.

Contemporary articles of legislation produced by the UK Government along with peer-reviewed articles and literature published by professional bodies, e.g. The Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA), will guide in defining the context in which design professionals currently operate and seek to contrast their approach against. I have choose to focus the analysis within this paper on the legislation of the UK. The reasoning for this is due to the historic and expansive scope that planning and legislation have over the built environment within Britain. The legislative frameworks of the UK's planning procedures along with the body of the existing literature surrounding the British application of participatory theory provide a robust framework to assess my analysis against.

The work of advocates for the involvement of the public will also be analysed throughout; often the work of architects seeking to reflect their values inwardly towards fellow professionals, these perspectives assist in charting the velocity of attitude towards an increasing mainstream acceptance for the necessity of participatory design. To assist in my analysis of the current state of participation within architecture and to aid in highlighting the discrepancies found between theory and practical application; I chose to conduct some primary research, through interviews conducted with leading practitioners within the fields of planning, participatory urbanism, architecture and architectural journalism. These interviews (see appendix), although anecdotal in content, assist in giving an analytical overview as to how the aspirations of a participatory theory are implemented in practise, and raise some thought-provoking questions as to how legislation shapes professionals perceptions as to how we can raise participation to a state of public *engagement*.

This paper additionally looks outside the field of architecture to consider criteria critical to the conversation of the role of the public but found within subjects that are usually external to the traditional requirements of architectural consideration. The use of cross-disciplinary source material and theories from fields such as human behavioural science, philosophy, economics and urbanism, provides a broader bank of knowledge to support the high degrees of nuance and bureaucracy that can envelop many of the streams that public participatory theory seeks to employ.

Table of Contents

SECTION

01

01: THE CURRENT STATE OF INVOLVEMENT

i. Literary Review

The point of commencement, from which this paper explores the mainstream promotion of public participation, is 1969. With modernist principles of design in decline, this period-boundary saw a proliferation of new ideas as to how the public could be involved in the authorship of the built environment. This year provides key pieces of literature in which participatory theory has relied upon in furthering its societal ambitions. A notable example is architect Giancarlo De Carlo's essay *Architecture's Public*, a seminal text on how the public should be incorporated democratically within the architectural process. Sherry Arnstein's *Ladder of Participation*, another product of 1969, provides a model that participatory theory has continued to be measured against contemporarily. With these theories introduced to the architectural community, there was an emergence in the 1970s of architects seeking to distance themselves from authoritarian models of master planning with efforts made to transition to designing 'with the public', (De Carlo, 2005, see p.15). With this as a lower limit of scope, this paper looks to examine how the theory and application of public participation have developed from then up until the present day.

One of the main features of the existing body of literature that surrounds the subject is the publications in which contemporary discussions on participation are found. The distribution of much of the research is confined within professional publications for the consumption by professionals. This, I propose, is antithetical to the initial ambitions of participatory theory, as the insulation of new approaches can lead to methodologies becoming procedural and limited to best-practice. I argue throughout this paper that participation should not be beyond critique as a subject, precisely because if applied without thorough methodological understanding, its inclusion can be of a more significant detriment than not including the public at all.

Since its provocation in 1969, what remains evident is that a large percentage of participatory theory within architecture is described procedurally by architects; without a critical perspective as to why its inclusion warrants merit. Many peer-reviewed articles and publications look predominantly to discuss participation as necessary, with a desire to increase its acceptance and use as a method (e.g. Innes & Booher, 2004; Petrescu, 2005). With prominent architectural voices seeking to convey values of best-practise to fellow professionals, the literature surrounding the subject provides opinions on what is required to achieve an inclusion of the public. Although such discussions are positive in many respects, what is less evident, is a clear direction within architecture as to how to ensure that

participation is not only completed but is both active and beneficial to the design process. This lack of critical discourse I believe stems from a lack of methodological frameworks provided to architects within legislative guidance. Legislation consistently promotes participation as necessity but it is this insistence that places architects in a compromising position, as a compulsion to these tasks often perpetuates uncritical discussion as to why, how and when architects should pursue the involvement of the public.

ii. Context and Syntax

Since 1969 (see: De Carlo, 2005; Till, 2005; Arnstein, 1969), contemporary examples in which professionals (architects, planners, and civil servants) have sought to include public desires in the formulation of their work has quantitatively increased. Moreover, many local authorities and developers have attempted to provide authorship to actors previously excluded from the shaping of the urban environment (Lane, 2005). Despite this increase in uptake, I suggest that the practical realisation of the ideologically presented by De Carlo and Arenstein has be misinterpreted. In 2019, despite fifty years of best-practise, the role in which the public should play remains ambiguous within the creation of architectural outcomes.

Prior to 1969, the progressive acceptance that participation was of benefit to architectural projects had already found traction within examples of projects such as Giancarlo De Carlo's housing schemes for Urbino (1955) (see Fig. 01) and Dutch architect Herman Hertzberger's Diagoon Housing (1967-70) (see Fig. 02-03). These projects, however, were motivated by a self-initiated belief that the inclusion of the public - in this instance the user- would provide design outcomes responsive to the desires of inhabitants. This I suggest is not the primary motivation for many contemporary examples of involving the public within the architectural discipline. As suggested by architect and educator Jeremy Till in his paper *The Negotiation of Hope* (2005) many current forms of participation limit involvement to 'pseudo-participatory' practises such as *consultation*. The reasoning behind this Till defines as the need to convey that participation has 'deemed to have happened' which once completed allows a project to 'move on' (2005, p.1). This regression of participation to criteria to be satisfied remains a far cry from the motivations that propelled De Carlo to utilise the public within his architectural process. The difference, I propose, is due to the shift in motivation for inviting the public to engage within the process; it is no longer for the improvement for design outcomes, it is to fulfil legislative requirements. This state of affairs is driven in part by the lack of guidance and uncritical perceptions within the legislation as to what qualifies as participation (Section 02). Too often legislation supplants one piece of jargon for another similarly ambiguous term in an attempt to convey a sense of progression to practitioners. These continued legislative demands, coupled with a persistent omission of detailed steps to implement

Fig.

Fig.

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Figure 01: Social Housing designed by Giancarlo
De Carlo, achive photo, 1976

Figure 02: Interior photograph of a Diagoon
House, Delft

Figure 03: Exterior photograph of a Diagoon
House, with its infill system of completion, Delft

them, has left participatory methods failing to provide the transformative outcomes that is founding principles outlined (Innes & Booher, 2004). It makes little sense therefore to evaluate public participation and its role within architecture without analysing it in terms that are not shared by the legislative model that it is being applied within (Lane, 2005).

Throughout this paper, I look to explore the overarching expectation for the use of public participation as a method of value within public projects. This expectation should be considered critically, as an quantitative increase of participation within architecture should not be conflated with success. For dependant on which definition of 'participation' is applied by practitioners has major implications as to whose desires are prioritised within outcomes. With the bulk of legislations ambition being to inform professionals of changes in verbiage, there arises a need to explore these topics away from forums which frequently avoiding entering discourse with the lay-man (Brunetta & Voghera, 2008). In critically analysing factors outside the current application of critique, the ambition of this paper is to determine how the vagary of language provided by legislative bodies translates into application and evaluate the implications this has had on practitioners.

a.   A New Call for Engagement

These issues become increasingly relevant to architects with the newest iterations of legislation and guidance calling for an 'engagement' of the public (Ministry of Housing, 2019). With the prevailing method of the involving the public within the UK residing principally at the level of *consultation,* the opportunity to realise a methodological progression to *engagement* requires an investigation into both the steps necessary to do so, along with clear understanding within architecture as to what the objectives of such *engagement* should be. Through this methodology, there arises the possibility to propose the future of discourse concerning the *engagement* (not solely the *consultation*) of the public, that current legislation is so eager to support.

The first section of this paper looks to define the difference between what legislation demands of professionals and what the real-world applications of those terms have meant. Furthermore, I suggest that issues of compulsion can lead to a sense of dread and resentment for both the public and professionals. This is underlined by an acknowledgement that as a reactive process, legislation does not have the capacity to respond the newest approaches to encouraging the advocacy of the disenfranchised actors within the process. This paper is founded upon a fear that this call for *engagement* may become a by-proxy for the limited practice of *consultation* if there is not a critical analysis into its aims and a framework in which to distance itself methodologically.

Secondly, through contrasting the embedded values of engagement against established measures for participation, there will arise the moment to determine what is required to separate the future application of the participatory methods by architects. I will, therefore, demonstrate that although the influence that the language of legislation is touched upon in similar pieces of research, their assessments are either tentative or superficial to what I believe is the most significant contributor to the future of participation, namely the role that rebranding participation has and will continue to play in shaping how architects view participation. This paper is underpinned by the belief that these calls for *engagement* within legislation should not be overlooked. But in such instances, a clarity in what *engagement* means in application allows for an evolution of consistent channels of communication and a deterritorializing of the roles in which architects are confined.

The challenge that faces architects is that within its contemporary guise, most of the success found in *engagement* has been confined to projects that step beyond the legislative framework that guides them. It is easier to focus on projects that have done this well, but what remains lacking from the discourse is a critique on when *engagement* has been misapplied. The assessment of case studies allows for a focus into how, if not critically understood, the best-intentions of architects could fall short in achieving transformative *engagement* of the public. These misacreditations as good examples of *engagement* derive from a lack of critical discourse within architecture as to why public participation has been determined to be a necessary stage to development. What also continues to remain unclear, is to what extent the overarching acceptance of participation as a positive contributor to architecture is understood by practitioners, whether their work to include it is due to a compulsion stemming from legislation or a progression of its founding ideals. I suggest that the lack of precision utilised within articles of legislation can lead architects into completing what they informed is participation but deploying practises that are only pseudo-participative in reality.

iii. Architecture and the Legislative Framework

There is an awareness amongst public officials of the pressures that a lack of criticality within legislation can impose upon professionals. This mainly consists of an acceptance that 'guidance on this scale flirts with the absurd: there's no way a practitioner can keep it all in mind. Let alone the poor non-expert' (Greg Clark MP, 2010). Despite these admissions, there seems to be a persistent lack of a viable course of action to resolve this situation as legislation looks to provide solely new descriptors and amendments to previous approaches. The resulting downsides of these changes in lexicon, without a definitive explanation as to how they inform practice, is highlighted by architect Jeff Bishop in *Participation in Planning in England: The jury is still out*. He echos the frustrations that 'the majority of local authorities, are faced with guidance and legislation that fail to highlight the key features of a new approach' (2012).

This assessment by Bishop, brings to the forefront the question as to how the legislative definition for *engagement* can be synthesised currently, considering that legislative process is inherently referential to past ideas due to its formulation of long periods of time. With legislation not able to provide a pro-active methodology, it seems that a change in terminology has sufficed in legislators' attempts to describe a new means of social-authorship for the built environment. In 2019, architects are obligated to *engage*.

a.   The Localism Act 2011

This use of the word *engagement* may be new to legislative dictionary but it has established roots with the working definitions of practitioners. Within the last decade there has been varied discussion amongst prominent voices within the architectural community to re-establish engagement. Architect Sunand Prasad, spoke at length in a series of BBC radio segments about a need to 'be actively engaging citizens in the forward planning for the future of their districts and neighbourhoods' (2010, p. 3) This directive, in his eyes, was to be guided by a freedom implemented at a policy level not from the architect. Prasad promoted the concept that 'planning should be like a framework that provides guidance on what sort of development is welcomed, and where. When applications are made and found to be in line with the plans, they should generally be approved.' (ibid.)

Such calls for a delegation of authority was met within the language of the 2011 Localism Act the following year. The language within this legislation conformed to broader social issues of 'Big Society' and increased awareness of that the requirement to involve the public politically was not only preferred but obligatory. Introducing a 'Duty to Consult', the legislation ensured that the public had to be informed for comment on certain types of proposals and through *consultation* the option to object to projects 'counterintuitive to local requirements for need'. This shift in lexicon however was mired by a distinct lack of guidance as to how this would be achieved or where the boundaries for privileged and non-privileged actors lay. Richard Summers the President of the Royal Town Planning Institute, stated that 'the real test of the Localism Act will be its implementation and the resources made available to enable the planning system to deliver it' (2011). This implementation was to be lacklustre, because as I will make evident throughout this paper, legislation tends to specify what is required but not what is required to achieve these aims. Furthermore, what is uncertain is whether changes within this legislative stance were driven by a legitimate desire to see change within the process or a procedural approach to update the wording of the documentation to reflect wider ideas of social inclusion. These amendments signified a destruction of existing channels of participation, as despite the appearance, the introduction of Neighbourhood Plans within the act did not provide full autonomous freedom in practical application, nor a full delegation of control for the veto of an unpopular proposal which remained a right

reserved solely to the local authority that reviewed them (Colenutt, 2012). The Localism Act 2011 demonstrates that changes at a legislative level do not automatically translate into the intended application, if there is not the motivation or sufficient guidance to do so. It is evident that a change in label unfortunately can mask actual provisions for change.

b.   Current Legislative Drivers

To analyse legislation calls into question why, as professionals, participation is as Jeremy Till states, 'so willingly, and uncritically, accepted as being for the common good.' (2005). The 2019 National Planning Policy Framework is the most current piece of legislation at the time of writing. The document states that:

> 128. Applications that can demonstrate early, proactive and effective engagement with the community should be looked on more favourably than those that cannot.
>
> National Planning Policy Framework (Feb 2019)

This explicit stance of favourability to projects that can demonstrate engagement is worrying, for once again the documentation does not outline methods to achieve it. With this bias in mind, it questions what steps professionals will take to address concepts of engagement or if this will perpetuate the trend that in a shift in language is insufficient in prompting a shift in practice. The hegemony that is imposed by legislative language is already subtly shaping our current perceptions as professionals as to what participation is and how it should be utilised. This idea was reflected in my interview with Alan Perch. Upon asking what his definition of public consultation was his response was: 'I'm sure the Localism Pack defines it' (see appendix). In that,Perch sought to default to the legislative definition to ensure a clarity in what is expected of professionals in practical application is telling. It not only denotes that such changes to buzzwords is difficult to remain cognisant of, but it additionally enforces that too frequently professionals have uncritically modified the terminology that they associate with the public without assessing how this change in word may affect the application of their outreach. This lack of critique I will argue (in Section 02) is due to participation's rise as a panacea to all questions of democracy within the built environment. Participation, and its current derivative 'engagement', have become an inescapable expectation. This leads me to propose the need to define a coherent professional approach within architecture to aid in implementing a version of participation that consistently satisfies the legislative demands for *engagement*.

SECTION

02

02: THE COMPULSION OF LEGISLATION

i. Universally Applicable

The integration of participatory design within the architectural profession began to appear en masse in the mid 1960s in response to the disenfranchisement of the public within top-down approaches as to how the needs of the society were realised within architecture. In the wake of Modernist schemes of 'Blueprint Planning' (Lane, 2005) architects began to align themselves with broader political ideas that participation was a means to democratise the authorship of the built environment (ibid.). Legislation was slow to respond. These issues are underscored by urban historian Dr Peter Shapely in his paper *Planning, housing, and participation in Britain, 1968–1976* (2011). Shapely notes that prior to the implementation 'the collective knowledge of professionals, architects, planners, and developers rendered extensive participation and consultation as unnecessary and wasteful'. Consequently, legislation reflected these ideals with the Town and Country Planning Act of 1968. Despite an acknowledgement of involving the public the 'detail about how this [participation] was to be achieved was vague and the definition relatively limited' (ibid.).

As seen in the Localism Act (2011) any push to integrate the credible means of *engaging* the public was, and continues to be, reflected poorly within UK legislation. This has not prevented it from being presented consistently as a means to improve the built environment. It remains to be seen within architecture whether this institutional guidance alone *has* (and more relevant to this paper, *can*) provide practitioners with the tools to implement public *engagement* in practice. In contemporary application, senior planning consultant Alan Perch suggests that even amongst those who seek value from *consultation*, that 'in this form, it's still a massive chore' (see appendix). I would suggest, that the reasoning behind current methods being perceived as a 'chore' is due to the misconception that participation is counterproductive to the ambitions of those who are seeking to realise projects. This, I suggest, is not due to participation being methodologically flawed, rather these pitfalls are encountered when prescriptive *consultation* is implemented as the dominant interpretation. I argue this situation can find resolution in a movement of practitioners away from the dilatory guidance provided by legislation and allow architects the freedom to challenge criteria that *consultation* fails to address.

The failures found within a process of compulsion is that within attempts to satisfy criteria architects are placed in a compromised position. In such circumstances, as conceded by architect Johann Albrecht, 'there is the temptation to use control increasingly as a substitute for consensus' (1988). As Jeff Bishop states, proposals can proceed even if

their documentation 'includes all the correct words about consensus but does not list any consensus-building methods' (2012, p. 25). It seems that if professionals appear to be doing the right thing from a legislative standpoint, they are. The focus on completion is detracting from the transformative value that can be gained through prioritising the needs of the public and accepting that these values may not conform to a defined mandate to proceed that *consultation* processes demand.

These misgivings surrounding legislative compulsion arose throughout my discussions with Alan Perch; a feeling that in the practical application, the current legislative environment in which professionals have to adhere to, was that of compulsion to include the public without a critical analysis into whether their inclusion would be beneficial to the desired outcomes. Perch lamented that,

'you have to do it. It's not that it's become such an essential part of the design process in that it will make a development so much better if you do it. It's become a situation that if you do not do it and you turn up to a Planning Committee and local people say they haven't been consulted you are shooting yourself in the foot.'

(see appendix.)

This state of affairs has to be considered critically when you incorporate architect and educator Doina Petrescu's argument that 'control can be exerted through participative approaches as well, and this is one of the problems with compulsory participative programmes' (2005 p.5). There is still a reluctance within professional work to embrace participation, with any stumbling-block to completion circumnavigated through either control or placation. In such a climate of 'box-ticking' without a clear framework for deployment from a legislative sense, the fears expressed by De Carlo of architects employing participatory methods 'without believing it', will lead to an environment of tokenism, and a placating of the public in order 'to turn their frustration into populistic jubilation' (2005). Furthermore, despite *consultation* being embedded within the system, many who put it into practice experience *consultation* as a tool that only serves to garner the opinion of those vehemently opposed to a proposal (Prasad, 2010), thus enforcing perceptions amongst some planning authorities that the involvement of the public is detrimental to progress (Innes & Booher, 2004).

ii. An Acceptance that *Consultation* is Participation

When De Carlo announced his stance on the public's role within architecture in 1969, the comprentaneous legislative framework in the UK was highly reflective of an institutionalised perception that the public's role was to comment and validate predetermined outcomes (Shapely, 2011). I wish to explore therefore the notion that within the Planning Departments of the UK, there is a continued acceptance that *consultation* is participation. This default to *consultation* within the process is highlighted by urbanist and activist Marcus B. Lane in his article *Public Participation in Planning: An Intellectual History* (2005). Lane proposes that in the act of involving the public within a process, Planning Departments 'often prefer to describe the opportunities afforded to relevant publics as 'consultation'. Consultation has for many years been the dominant approach used by government agencies to gather advice from the public about draft proposals'. *Consultation* I propose is incompatible with the recent call for *engagement* due to the implicit methodological differences between the approaches. The legislative definition in since 1969 details 'that the 'public' referred to the 'community as a whole', not just organized groups' (Shapely, 2011). This lack of criticality in who the public are and what they want remains unclear still within the contemporary context. *Consultation* with its focus on defining universal public desire places it as a method 'only required to validate and legitimise the goals of planning'. As seen in Section 04, an acceptance that there can be pluralism in input is a criterion both critically challenged by *engagement*, and refuted as counterproductive by *consultation*. Lane affirms that consultation is a procedure with embedded goals that look 'to de-legitimise and stigmatise objections to planning proposals as parochial' (Lane 2005). An underlying theme that arises is that *consultation* is deemed by many, as noted by urbanists and academics Judith Innes and David E. Booher, in their article *Reframing public participation: strategies for the 21st Century* as a procedure that 'appear[s] to be nothing more than rituals designed to satisfy legal requirements' (2004 p. 419). *Consultation* and *engagement* have highly disparate motives.

Sociologist Sarah C. White recognises, when discussing a transition to *engagement,* the importance distinct participatory definitions have dependent on the actor who is invoking them, as though we may 'use the same words, the meaning that we give them can be very different' (1996, p.7). I would broaden this further and suggest 'participation' as an umbrella is ultimately misleading. I believe that such interpretations have had serious ramifications for how the thoughts of the public are synthesised into architectural outcomes. *Consultation* as a method is limited by several factors, primarily within the forums in which the public is approached and the scope in which the public's involvement ceases to be heard. The danger in extending participation only as far as *consultation* is that there runs the risk of 'planning for the public' (De Carlo, 2005) and excluding the opportunities to plan with them.

iii. Consultation vs Engagement

A state of heteroglossia, with the definition and subsequent application of terminology being exercised differently by different actors within the architectural process, suggests that a critical assessment of the jargon of legislation is important. With this in mind, how can the architectural profession separate *consultation* and *engagement*?

To provide effective *engagement*, one has to separate it ideologically and methodologically from a *consultation*. Only through the formation of a working definition to adhere to, can architects critically respond to legislations call to 'proactively' and 'effectively' *engage* the public within architecture. I aspire to determine what engagement is and subsequently what it means to the different actors that seek to apply it. This is important because a conflation of terms in practise, I argue, can perpetuate a stagnation in the involvement of the public as a tool for design.

<p style="text-align:center;">MASTER-PLANNING / CONSULTATION / ENGAGEMENT</p>

The two words are often employed to have synonymous meanings within the context of inviting the participation of the public. In spite of this, the implications these words enact is highly disparate to the commonality of their interchangeability.

As demonstrated, to complete a *consultation* is to only consider the public's desires in 'the conception of the plan but not its subsequent use' (De Carlo, 2005 p. 15). The current model of *consultation* does not, as critiqued by Alan Perch (see appendix), allow for those who have the similar positions to communicate interpersonally nor does the forum in which *consultation* is enacted allow them to propose an alternative. In a pursuit for a mandate to proceed, *consultation* provides the public with limited opportunity to reflect on changes in condition that may prevail in perpetuity once a project is commence. *Consultation* enacts a D.A.D (Decide - Announce - Defend) set of parameters in which the public are afforded solely the opportunity to give binary opinions of whether they support or oppose a professionals vision for the future. Consultation imposes division among participants, often seeking to pit opposing opinions and their holders against one another in any attempt to contradict a perceived assessment of need. This is amplified by a recognition that 'Planners use knowledge abstracted from the social world and manipulated by scientific theory and method, while clients work with personal knowledge drawn directly from experience' (Albrecht, 1988). *Engagement* critically incorporates this pluralism in perspective. As urbanist and architect Steve McAdam, whom I interviewed, recognises, 'engagement can be richer and deeper, because in a sense it is no longer just

conversations about a pre-selected and therefore pre-defined topic, often at the behest of a developer' (see appendix). The conversation is not confined to a singular instance, within *engagement* the dialogue is constantly informing each step of the process. As described by architect and researcher Jeff Bishop, this becomes more important when combined with, that 'recent informal evaluations have shown that consultées may still rate an involvement process highly even if they did not secure the specific outcomes they had sought at the outset' (2012). With an acceptance that the public are 'willing and able to separate quality of process from quality of outcome' (ibid), there arises an opportunity to for *engagement* to better reflect that desires of the public through a sustained and interwoven means of collaboration.

iv. Summary

Within this Section I have introduced the need to define the role legislation continues to play in influencing participatory practises and bring to the forefront of the discourse of the lack of clear direction applied to *consulting* the public. With *consultation* lacking the imbedded criteria to inform design, I have demonstrated the need to separate it from practices of *engagement;* to prevent the recent calls to include it, being limited to only a change in lexicon. I have shown that legislation fails to provide the required steps for architects to consistently implement what they request. I will go on methodologically differentiate both consultation and engagement by contrasting them against Arnstein's Ladder of Participation. With that established I look to analyse casestudies in which an architect's interpretations of what engagement is was misinformed and therefore determine what role the architect should perform within a process of engagement.

SECTION

03

03: DEFINING ENGAGEMENT

i. Up the Ladder of Participation

'Tokenism' is a term used in association with participatory practises such as *consultation* and derives from Sherry Arnstein's *'Ladder of Participation'* (see Fig.04). Published in *Journal of the American Institute of Planners* in 1969, this model, despite being fifty years old, remains popular within current participatory theory as a gauge to measure different forms of public inclusion. The model provides a means to measure participation that legislation up to this point has not provided. The Ladder of Participation allows for architects to contrast how effective their approach will be applied and thus avoid going through 'empty ritual[s] of participation' (Arnstein, 1969).

Consultation is listed by Arnstein as only a mid-tier level of pseudo-participation and is characterised as a tokenistic procedure. As defined with Section 02, consultation is founded upon target-driven attitudes to inform and gain approval, not as a method to improve design or provide transformative outcomes. If the call for an *engagement* at a legislative level is to be met then practical application of participatory theory need to move up the ladder. But to what rung should *engagement* be associated with?

Jeremy Till proposes that any movement to further the potency of publicly informed design is not 'achieved through the disavowal of expert knowledge' (2005). With this in mind, I believe that architectural design should not be fully relinquished to the level of 'citizen control' as such delegations of responsibility that would be tantamount to manipulation. My reasoning is that with such movements to give communities unbridled freedom would not promote a scenario in which non-privileged actors would have the ability to actualise their desires. For a rejection of the expert in such scenarios renders the act of promoting the public to the centre of the process impotent. *Engagement* implies an exchange of ideas and expertise that work symbiotically, and to place citizens solely in this role may impose even greater legislative illiteracy and systemic exclusion to high quality design. I would closely correlate engagement with what Arnstein describe as 'delegated power'. Where defined roles and expectations are established, and the power equalised in appropriate applications, the ability to *engage* becomes a viable procedure. Now, with the values of engagement defined, I now look to assess how to best implement such methods.
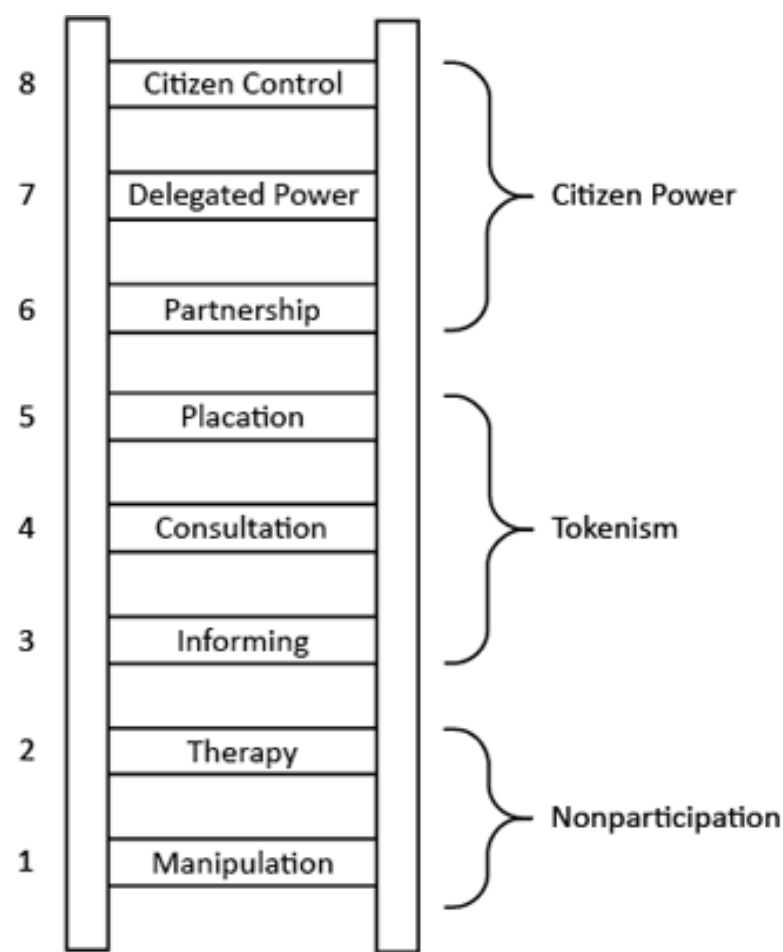
04

Figure 04:   Sherry Arnstein's Ladder of Participation, 1969

ii. Beyond Best-Practise

In seeking to satisfy the criteria for *engagement* laid out by legislation, I wish to introduce the idea that the issue of scale is a considerable mitigating factor when assessing participatory theory, one that neither legislation nor a discussion on *consultation* can fully challenge. To critically analyse scale it must be approached from two streams of input; firstly, what is the scale in which architects should seek to engage and consequently at what scale should this be implemented? As seen with the Town and Country Planning Act of 1968, the lack of resolution applied to the public participation can limit their involvement to lower-tier pseudo-participatory practices (Till, 2005), as to *consult* the public as a single entity lacks realistic or representational goals within the context of an architectural project.

Continually, I have observed that a key feature within how the participation is perceived publically; is closely related to the motivations of both the architect and the intended function of the proposition. If the public's role is not established within the formulation of a proposal, they have little inclination to defend its underlying principles in its failure to reflect their desires. The growth of urban community gardens within cities such as New York (see Fig. 05), formulated in early 1970 reflect such issues. GrowNYC and similar non-profit organisations have sought to 'transform communities block by block' (2019) through an injection of community gardens throughout the city. The widespread acceptance, that these gardens are both positive and democratically structures, has remained possible due to gardens being created in conjunction with public desires. These types of project facilitate the *engagement* of the public as informal projects such community gardens; are a medium flexible enough to reflect the inputs and desires of their users. Architect and journalist Jack Self suggests that such presentations of has led architects to 'have developed a preoccupation with informality, which we confuse with transparency and equality' (2013). Steve McAdam reinforces this idea that '*Meanwhile*' projects that have the ability to respond quickly and directly are those that are 'more closely supported' due to the impact that these outcomes can have on their everyday lives but do not challenge the issues entrenched in the creation of housing. I propose, therefore, that the presentation of successful examples of best-practice within temporary or civilian architecture is a distraction from deeper methodological discussions, as such examples manipulate the public into believing participation is a method confined to instances of 'folk architecture'.

The resolutions that I look evaluate are the scale of 'the building' and 'the urban'. This variance in scale and typology will demonstrate the different stressors that function can apply to the participatory process and aid in determining how participation can assist in informing the design process.

Figure 05:   Creation of a community garden by
GrowNYC, Staten Island, circa. 2010

a. Balfron Tower

01 // Micro _ Balfron Tower _ Residential

Poplar, London, UK

Ernő Goldfinger

To commence an analysis of how scale and function can have implications on public participation's application, I turn to the scale of a 'building' and a project that was conceived prior to a shift in legislative perceptions as to the role the public play within the built environment. Balfron Tower (see Fig. 06) is a residential high-rise block in Poplar, East London and was designed by architect Ernő Goldfinger in 1963.

The requirement to *consult* had not yet been established, with many legislators still subscribing to ideas that the 'whole process of slum clearance, new building and tenure was [to be] dictated from above.' (Shapely, 2011, p. 77). Notwithstanding, Goldfinger sought to step beyond the conventional métier of the architect's role that legislation historically suggested. In so doing, Goldfinger completed an extended stay within the tower to fully encompass the ramifications his design had upon its users (Warburton, 2003). Frequent correspondences with fellow residents suggested a desire on the part of the architect to engage the public in a critique of his design. What limits this approach however, is that this aspiration to engage was only applied post-completion. Its ambition to provide a voice for the marginalised - the recipients of social housing- is a characteristic that the contemporary call for engagement should evoke. Goldfinger's methodology to ascertain these desires post-fact, meant his findings lacked the possibility to be reconstituted as a more reflective outcome within the tower block, due to the feedback having no place within the building to be applied. Publically, Goldfinger saw his role as the architect and expert questioned, this manifested itself in suggestions that his efforts to engage where tokenistic and driven by hubris. The forums for public disapproval, such as newspapers, broadcast such sentiments of condemnation, with the architect not seen to be the one to prescribe the solutions for such issues of social progression. These sentiments can be found in the statements of a disgruntled member of the public Alan Fox, Fox queries:

'why can't the sociologists, in preference to the architects, ask the families who have already spent several years in high blocks of flats and are likely to remain there for many years to come? Does

Figure 06: Balfron Tower, Poplar, 2012

Mr Goldfinger really think that his perception of living is so much

finer than a few weeks for him can sum up a lifetime for others?'

(Guardian Manchester, 17 Feb. 1968)

Contemporarily, with the hindsight as to how Goldfinger's design has matured into a Grade II* building arises the feeling that such critiques of Goldfinger's methods are overplayed. Architect and activist David Roberts presents that these methods, ones that were deployed in a scenario devoid of legislative guidance, should have been seen as a form of best-practise but ultimately become conflated as a hubristic idea that the failures of architecture are associated with the architect themselves (2015). I would contest this, as in this instance both the method and the outcome came from a preconceived position. Contemporarily, it is notable that the redevelopment of the block by Studio Egret West (see Fig. 07) has seen pushback for a number of reasons. Although I assume this was not malicious on the part of Egret West, interest in this case, is found in a resistance to a perceived lack of consultation in the formation of their scheme. Roberts emerged as a prominent objector to Egret West's plan for redevelopment and cited legislation in his letter of objection (2005) to enforce the stance that there is an obligation for architects to *engage*. Working as an advocate for the residents he embodied the stress that conflicting interpretation of guidelines places on not only the public and professionals, but within the architectural profession itself.

Existing

Proposed

Figure 07: Egret West Studios visualisation of their proposed redevelopment of Balfron Tower. Before and After

b. Superkilen

02 // Macro _ Superkilen _ Public Space

Nørrebro, Copenhagen, Denmark

BIG Architects / Topotek 1 / Superflex

A case study from outside the UK provides an important insight into the role that architects can perform in activating the public and in distinguishing the variation in the approach that can occur within specific typologies. Opening in 2012, Superkilen is a fantastical 'bricolage' (Petrescu, 2005) of cultures composed as a public park within the Nørrebro district of Copenhagen (see Fig. 08-9). Completed by BIG Architects it was conceived as a project to typify 'urban best practise' (B.I.G, 2012).

The effects of this project is pushing the conversation of the role that a public can play as a methodological driver for design is highlighted in an article by the practises founder and principal Bjarke Ingels. *PUBLIC PARTICIPATION EXTREME* by Ingels, published in 2012 within an issue of Perspecta Magazine focused on the issues of 'agency' afforded to the public by professionals.

Superkilen aspired to create an architecture that was to truly represent the community that informed it. As Ingels provoked, 'wouldn't it be strange if the Danes had invented the best bench, the best lamppost, the best sewer grill or the best manhole cover?' (2012). Yet what is not considered within his argument is the context in which the project was procured and delivered. As presented within the architectural press, Superkilen proposed an environment aspiring to reflect 'the true nature of the local neighbourhood – rather than perpetuating a petrified image of homogenous Denmark' (ArchDaily, 2012). I would argue however that as a public space with implied public authorship, this project fell into the 'jubilistic populism' that De Carlo (2005) forewarned against. These concerns are regarding the formation of public space are observed by architect Doina Petrescu in *Losing control, keeping desire* (2005). Petrescu presents the concept that for public space to fulfil its function as truly that of the public, it cannot be composed as a fixed outcome. Petrescu states that 'real' public spaces contain elements that are 'newly composed again and again within diverse and fragile communities". This places Superkilen as reflective of its context but ultimately a 'petrified image' of a different kind, a tokenistic representation of a condition that will no longer remain relevant. BIG Architects consulted up to 60 different groups within the project (Ingels, 2012) yet in determining Israel's involvement the design rationale capitulated to including a solution designed for 'resisting physical expressions of frustration: a one-inch thick manhole cover made of cast iron' (see Fig. 10) This regression in design
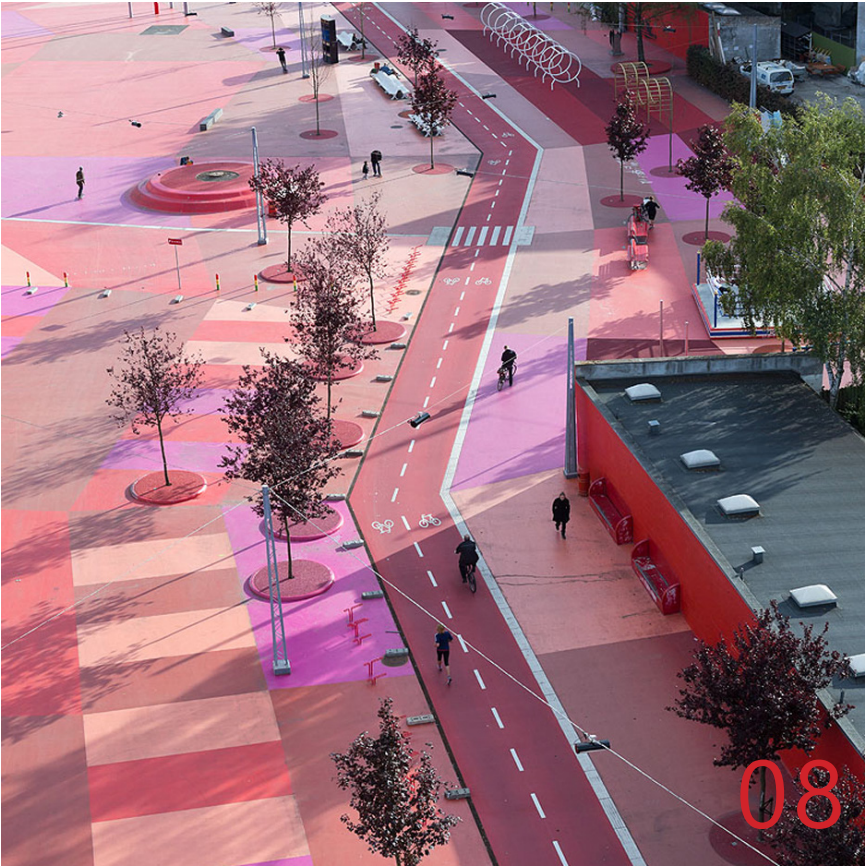
Figure 08: Superkilen, cycle highway and urban-landscaping

Figure 09: Superkilen, public space and a collection of internationally inspired follies

Figure 10: Manhole cover within Superkilen,
replica of a design utilised in Israel.

equality is found because as architects BIG 'retreated to the role of curators, reviewing and editing a multitude of proposals from all across the neighborhood and the world' (Ingels, 2012). The reasoning behind taking a stance like this is enlightened by Jeremy Till (2005) in his analysis of the theories of political theorist Carole Pateman. Till expounds upon Pateman's theory that participation is bound to gaining architectural acceptance only if it is seen to provide 'palliative stability'. This is reflected within Superkilen as the project was geared towards providing appeasement of a socially tumultuous context. This is openly discussed by Ingel's 'having just gone through the design of a Danish Mosque in Downtown Copenhagen, [he] did recognize the anxiety of stepping on someone's toes, and out of carelessness or ignorance, ending up with a fatwa on your head'. Ingel's light-hearted description of the fear of public disapproval seems to mask a much more malignant issue of retribution for not adhering to the desires of certain sectors of the public.

With the creation of such large-scale projects Jack Self states that 'the sliding scale between collective and individual ambitions becomes frozen in structure' (2015). The 1982 formulation of Canary Wharf is reflective of a 'snapshot of the a political context' (Self,2015) with the legislative creation of Urban Enterprise Zone. These legislative measures highlight the consequences of presenting large-scale proposals, drawn up without any *consultation* with the elected political bodies responsible for planning in the area nor with local residents (Brindley et al. 2005) (see Fig.11). Within Superkilen an awareness of such scenarios, I believe had distanced the architects from the roles and values that foster engagement and pushed the project into a non-participatory state of 'therapy' (see. Fig 04).

iii. Summary

From vilified to lionised Goldfinger's approach has divided opinion. What can be taken forward from his approach however is despite an intensive and deeply self-motivated approach, without the correct sequencing and deployment engagement can revert to a state of 'late-consultancy'. Architects themselves have several opinions on such matters, but in the case of Balfron Tower it is how and where such opinions are presented and received that will truly impact the outcomes of attaining an engaged public. Superkilen teaches us that the role of the architect must be deeply considered and remain integrated within a design process. The mass inclusion of the public lacked the criticality to provide nuanced and proactive outcomes. Drawing identity down national lines did not provide a reflective outcome nor were the needs of users equally considered. The outcome remains fun and appealing but not a product of engagement that Ingels had aspired.

Figure 11: Protests to the LDDC development staged near Tower Bridge, London, 1991

SECTION

04

04: ROLES AND REMIT

i. Architects and Architecture

The Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) Codes of Conduct, is a document designed to guide architects in performing their professional duties. With a consistent focus on the architects relationship to their clients well established, a clause within the latest re-publication has shifted to place the public interest to the forefront of architects' practice, it goes on to outline that;

> '11. Where two or more principles of the Code come into conflict, the
> one which takes precedence is the one which best serves the public
> interest in the particular circumstances.'

RIBA: Code of Professional Conduct (2019) p.3

To prioritise the public's interest above both the interests of the client and the architect, places them in a position that they are traditionally unaccustomed to. The significance of what impact will have upon the role of the architecture is as of now unknown. But to speculate I turn to the case study of Superkilen and the role adopted by Ingels. Superkilen provided an example to consider whether architects should enter a design process with an outcome in mind. As Ingels stated 'retreated to the role of a curator' (2005) in his aspiration to allow for the engagement of the public at a design level, he had gone above the *consultation* stage but in so doing relinquished his professional expertise in the process. I question therefore, what role should architects perform to best serve the public and still retain a position of creative value? Steve MacAdam stressed to me 'people understand their own neighbourhood better than anyone but to take them through design you need to lead them through a process to give them that structure. They are not designers themselves and that is a difference, I would never claim they are' (see appendix).

My thoughts, therefore align closer with the terms *Expert Citizen* and *Citizen Expert* derived from Jeremy Till's article *The Negotiation of Hope* (2005). While considering the importance of defining this role, Till highlights it becomes apparent that 'the challenge, therefore, is how to move architectural participation from the pseudo to the transformative' (2005). He goes on to propose that this is only viable if there is a dismissal of 'any notions of participation as a threat and to see it as a process that is transformative for all parties – the architect included' (ibid.) Within this approach, he acknowledges the regression that can occur if participation is not accepted fully into the

working methods of architects. But Till does not suggest a retreat away from the key tenets of design but to re-establish the holistic position that architects can perform to devise solutions and responsive outcomes. This idea that an architect's role within a process is of vital importance in relation to the legislation that shapes their development was evident in the paper *Towards a Strong Urban Renaissance* (1998) which was chaired by Lord Richard Rogers. The paper details that despite a rise in the legislator shaping of scheme these 'strict design codes, such as those used for planning layouts, are no replacement for well-informed design professionals.' (p.5). The architect is still very important to an *engagement* process, there must be a critical position taken to not become an external exerciser of legislation but an embedded facilitator of engagement. With the commoditization of many forms of architecture in the current context, most notable residential projects, in conjunction to the vehement opposition that can be associated with propositions that challenge financial interests (see Alan Perch interview), the situation becomes highly challenging. But architects have consistently had to deal with the demands of various disciplines external to their education, the facilitator of public desires I propose should be no different.

ii. Advocacy and Accessibility to Information

For architects to perform the role of a facilitator of public desires then an enlightenment of the lay-man must occur. If users are to be engaged at all they have to be able to understand the consequences of what they are participating within. With a focus of the position that the architect should inhabit examined, it is beneficial to the discussion to acknowledge that a process of *engagement* would be fruitless without the 'Expert Citizens' being present. An educated public is necessary, as unlike *consultation* participatory methods of *engagement* implicitly not only looks to democratise the architectural output but democratise the process to achieve it. The trend within the legislation, stemming from the 1968 Town and Country Planning Act is to invite the opinions of all members of the public in as large a sample as possible under the belief that it provides the most agreeable result. In doing so, I believe there is a conflation a belief that increasing the volume of participation is correspondent to a more democratic outcome. As clarified by Steve McAdam (see appendix.) this process should aim to liaise with parties both relevant and representational of the contextual demographics. Engagement is strengthened through a process of advocacy. As described by Sunand Prasad in *Architecture: The Fourth R* (2010), if public participation is to be determined as necessary, then we as professionals need to ensure we 'get it right', yet implying that this is only possible if we as architects are engaging a public with the 'tools needed to make sound and well-informed decisions'. Thus, if legislation not only suggests but gives preference to engagement within a design, we should as architects look to inform the public of where they can be involved to allow for the potential for outcomes that facilitate 'differences in interests, values, and tastes, need not lead to decisions based on unprincipled or low-level compromise' (Albrecht,

1988). Prasad acknowledges that in doing so, there needs to be a conscious acceptance amongst professionals that 'architecture is inevitably political… [where] powerful interests, of both private and state sectors, compete to control cities.' (2010). Political drivers are a considerable contributor to the formation of new legislation, communications professor Nico Carpentier touches on this in his paper *Beyond the Ladder of Participation: An Analytical Toolkit for the Critical Analysis of Participatory Media Processes* (2016). Carpentier outlines the politically 'participation becomes defined as the equalisation of power relations between privileged and non-privileged actors in formal or informal decision-making processes.' Notably, this is equality in power, not equality in skills or knowledge.

The inclusion of advocates within the participatory process allows for concepts of pluralism in both desires and agenda. Most importantly, the use of advocates eliminates any notion of a singular public interest or preferred outcome (Lane, 2005). One of the failings that current legislation falls into is a lack of focus on the role in which the public would have to play, seeking to place the onus on professionals to elevate the current state of participation. As described by Alan Perch, it is often the 'angriest and also the most articulate' that push agendas to the forefront. The use of advocacy planning accepts that there can be pluralistic ideals embodied in the final outcome. This involves a constant calibration and recalibration on the part of the architect to ensure that those around the table are reflective of an the context in which the proposal will exist. As seen with the work of David Roberts for the residents of Balfron Tower, an advocate who understands a framework can in turn present those who lack such knowledge to inform a process that affects them. Robert's critique of Studio Egret West's proposal demonstrated that often the greatest critics of proposed projects tend to be fellow architects, this should come as no surprise, as architects are the ones with the access to the encryption of images presented to the public in the form of the architectural drawing. Architects thus should transfer these skills into educating a more critical audience, an audience that understands both what they are viewing and where their inputs are needed and feasible. This skill building allows the public to form autonomous and democratic 'liaison groups', a self-structured and progressive voice of public concerns and views. A benefit of facilitating the public's involvement to be self-structured is as Steve McAdam notes, 'you do not want to be expelling people yourself or marginalising them, but if that liaison group is the one who decides these people are troublesome and not contributing anything of value, then they will be edited out democratically!' (see appendix). An educated public results in an educated opinion, which in turn I hope results in well-considered outcomes.

Projects such as *Constructive Collaboration*, the brainchild of architect Andrew Wright, have sought to demystify the stages that are involved within the process of realising and architectural project (see Fig. 12). Wright's model allows for all actors within the process to simultaneously view the relevant information within a digestible format. Transparency in this form allows for the public to see opportunities or omissions in a proposal that would not be

Figure 12:   A cross-disciplinary workshop designed to engage different actors within a design process, created by Constructive Collaboration.

outlined or discussed within a process of *consultation*. The success of this method is found in continued symbiotic feedback from all relevant parties to engage on issues throughout the process of construction. Steve McAdam, has implemented a means of involving the public prior to the contraction of an architect for a project, the engagement of the public was completed on a set of guideline principles that once determined were contrasted against the proposals of architectural firms, this therefore allowed a truer fluency of engagement to place the needs of the public before the design ambitions of the architect.

iv. Planners and the Public

I look to build upon Till's research within *The Negotiation of Hope* (2005), as although he excellently unpacks the ideologies behind the devolution of participation, he provides minimal guidance as to how a the current *consultancy* process could be amended. Till outlines that 'full participation is an ideal, but an impossible one to achieve in architecture. It depends on each party being in possession of the requisite knowledge and in there being transparent channels of communication.' (Till, 2005) as he goes on to suggest, both criteria of knowledge and communication are clouded by 'codes, conventions and authority' (ibid.). Significant steps can be taken however if we supplant Till's assumptions on 'full participation' with the concepts of a 'full engagement'. As already outlined within this paper, participation is a term with several connotation and professional interpretations. A pursuit to revitalise participation to a state of *engagement* as journalist Paul Barker reminds us, is to be cognisant of 'how little planning and the accompanying architecture have changed... and if something good emerges, it remains a bit of a bonus' (Hughes & Sadler, 1999). I will not challenge in this paper the role that professionals such as planners should fulfil, despite it being a subject worthy of further critique in additional studies. What I will confront however is the forum in which professionals and the public pursue consultancy.

v. A Change in Venue

The town hall meeting is an environment that is primarily the domain of what Steve McAdam diplomatically describes as 'grumpy people'. Planning has tended to focus on principles of consensus, a state that can be shattered with the introduction of those who are 'not willing to see any impact made on their lives' (see appendix). The language of how planning and the public's relationship is metered in practice is a language of conflict. Articles such as *How to do a Public Consultation - and Survive*, published on Building.com in 2005 reflect the limitations that must be overcome to transform *consultation* to *engagement*. The general tone is that *consultation* has become a professional *chore* to be completed in. Words such as 'winning' and 'hijack' are prevalent throughout the article and this is reflective of how

the *consultation* limits the activation of the public. If a member of the public does not believe they will have a further opportunity to be heard again within this process, it seems obvious why in such scenarios 'they cannot afford polite, speech which may be misinterpreted' (Innes & Booher, 2004) as such speech would fail to dissuade a counsellor who is adjudicating upon a seemingly predetermined outcome. Town Hall meetings typify the consultancy of the public rather than the engagement of them (see Fig. 13). Currently, the means of connecting with the public are implicitly inseparable to the method of *consultancy*, as all actors involved within the process are aware 'all the power lay outside this church hall' (Till, 2005). If we are to move to a state of *engagement* as recent legislation suggests, then a change of venue is required consequently. Such forums of participation enforce that 'rigid discussion spaces produce rigid conclusions' (Petrescu, 2005, p.5).

vi. Summary

To actualise the changes needed to encourage credible public engagement within architecture, the Town Hall meeting has to be removed from the process. Its inherent nature is heavily associated with consultation practises and a lack of open discourse. A move to a 'facilitated workshop' model (Fitzgerald et al. 2016) would help to allow discussions to be consistent throughout the process and instigate procedures of setting targets that can be modified and debated. Architects can gain from a process in which 'people will engage and then continue to engage if they see some positive benefit coming from their efforts' (Bishop, 2012). This positive reinforcement to move away from mistrust on all sides as to a preconceived notion as to how these events will unfold is important if we are to be critical of legislation and take a critical perspective as professionals into how and why we are looking to involve users within the authorship of their immediate environment. With regard to advocacy, there are several design benefits to be achieved with a more educated but not necessarily larger pool of committed citizens. As Steve McAdam made very clear, there needs to be a consideration of who is attending these workshops, and facilitate a place for those that consultation neglected, to be welcomed back into the fray in a new dawn of engagement.

Fig.

Figure 13: Town Hall meeting in Selfton, UK

Discussion

A comprehension that there are several areas of critique that can be applied to participatory theory will benefit its progression from a legislative perspective. It is the architect however, that provides the conduit to transcend the omissions of application found within the guidance to involve the public. Through considering participation from a cross-disciplinary perspective, it has been shown that its core values are informed by wider discussions of politics, democracy and citizen-rights, all contributory topics but too broad to be covered within this paper. These factors are highlighted by Alan Perch's references to a change in perception towards professionals in the wake of Brexit. Then again, it is this uncertainty that is precisely why architects need to respond to fluidity in the role and contemplate concepts of 'otherness' within the profession. Architecture's permanence and life cycle require not only careful consideration of *engagement* in its formation but the continued recalibration to its context. One of the more interesting factors when reviewing current literature is that the vast majority of the theory revolves around speaking about the architect as a single entity and an individual. The architects that De Carlo refers to as 'heroes' (2005) are no longer of relevance. In consideration to the body of literature the underpins the subject, the topic would benefit from a move away from discussing new methods and approaches within professional publication. As seen with Sunand Prasad, discussion of such issues in a public forum can allow for greater comprehension of a subject matter that legislation compels them to be involved in thus promoting greater usefulness within a process of *engagement*.

Conclusion

There has and will continue to be a constant amendment to the verbiage within legislative guidelines. Despite these evolutions, the mainstream application of principles remain without guidance or critical reflection of the outcome. With the most recent pieces of legislation calling for both planners and architects to *engage* the public as their primary aim, I have looked to show that an unmodified application of former methods is not compatible with the new legislative directive. What is now evident is that a transition within architecture from public *consultation* to a state of consistent and credible public *engagement* within projects; has to derive from a source external to the legislation that contextualises it. I propose that this source is and contemporarily has been the architect.

The foundation of public participation was driven by actors who sought to involve the public due to a self-propelled sense of purpose, fostered in concepts of re-democratising the authorship of the built environment. What I have learnt is that within a contemporary context, I would suggest that it has been shown much of the participatory work is completed in response to the call from legislators to 'do more'. Through an assessment of the case studies, a direction to be observed is not that architects should abandon their critical design skills, but accept that not every issue is a problem to be solved, that there is room to allow a delegated agency to inform outcomes. This being said, the role that an architect needs to perform is more crucial now than previously, as shown the architect is required to add the skill of 'facilitator' to their already extensive arsenal of skills. The *engagement* of the public can have considerable benefits for not only architects but clients alike, as Jeff Bishop explains, 'we now know that consensus-based work can save considerable time and resources because there is, at best, a widely agreed-upon end outcome' (2012). This rationale is replicated in practical application as expressed in my discussions with Steve McAdam on his project for the Chelsea Barracks. This lack of criticality in relation to its efficacy as a tool can lead to many feeling constrained by the guidelines that are designed to support them. Jack Self in an article *Battle of Ideas: Master Planning the Future* for the *Architectural Review* suggests that the sentiments towards non-participation are rooted in a sense of mistrust towards what designers seek to add to the existing built environment. This, he suggests, manifests itself in 'a profound distrust of any monumental, utopian or wilful project larger in scale than the Boris bikes' (2013). Trust is a prerequisite that both Alan Perch and Steve McAdam (see appendix) determine critical to finding usefulness in participation. This trust is undermined however, if the completion of engagement derives from a state of compulsion and universal acceptance of necessity. What can be taken forward from this research, is an awareness that instead of looking at practitioners to utilise best-practise as a means of pushing the method forward, there should be a constant recalibration as to what the language provided actually means and what steps need to be taken to distance it from pseudo-participatory practises. An understanding within architecture that because the public has not expressed an

interest in engaging, does not imply there is a universal sentiment that engagement is not a worthwhile endeavour. It suggests, that in the use of *consultation* 'they have no confidence that they can be achieved' (White, 1996). Through a re-evaluation by architects there can be room for the 'messy, complex lives of users' (Till, 2005) that legislation fails to address. As presented by De Carlo in 1969, 'architecture is too important to be left to architects' (2005) and whilst this is true, what is evident throughout this paper is that we as professionals cannot leave it to legislation to define the methods that we employ or the language we utilise. A critical perspective on what participation *is* too important to be left to legislators. Architects should position themselves to demonstrate what it *is*.

With the newest iteration of guidance still in the process of being released, it is not possible to tell the implications that a legislative call for 'engagement' might entail. But I feel it clear, that greatest impact will not be found in guidance, but through a step that we as architects take to convert engagement from 'best-practise' to 'standard-practise'.

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Figure List

Figure 01: A pedestrian street immediately after its completion (Projects Archive of Iuav University in Venice, photo by Gabriele Basilico, 1976) Available at: www.docomomoitalia.it/register/MF_37.pdf

Figure 02: Diagoon House. Herman Hertzberger. Delft Online digital image. Available at:

www.ahh.nl/index.php/en/projects2/14-woningbouw/79-diagoon-experimental-housing

Figure 03: Diagoon House. Herman Hertzberger. Delft Online digital image. Available at: www.ahh.nl/index.php/en/projects2/14-woningbouw/79-diagoon-experimental-housing

Figure 04: The Ladder of Participation. Sherry Arnstein, 1969. Online digital image. Available at: www.open.edu/openlearn/ocw/mod/oucontent/view.php?id=21024&section=4.1

Figure 05: Community Garden, GrowNYC. West Brighton, Staten Island, New York. Online digital image. Available at: www.grownyc.org/openspace/gardens/si/west-brighton-garden

Figure 06: Balfron Tower, before the refurb Source: The Twentieth Century Society Online digital image. Available at: https://www.architectsjournal.co.uk/news/studio-egret-wests-balfron-tower-overhaul-slammed-as-tragic-missed-opportunity/10040878.article

Figure 07: Balfron Tower. Egret West Studios. Online digital image. Available at: https://www.egretwest.com/projects/balfron-tower

Figure 08: Superkilen. BIG Architects. Photograph by Iwan Baan, 2012 Online digital image. Available at: www.dezeen.com/2012/10/24/superkilen-park-by-big-topotek1-and-superflex/

Figure 09: Superkilen. BIG Architects. Online digital image. Available at: www.big.dk/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/SUK20KLAVIKA20UK.pdf

Figure 10: Israeli Manhole Cover. Superkilen, Copenhagen Online digital image. Available at: www.designboom.com/architecture/superkilen-urban-park-by-big-architects-topotek1-superflex/

Figure 11: Protest opposite the 10th anniversary dinner. Docklands, 1991 Online digital image. Available at: philmaxwell.org/?p=4172

Figure 12: Presentation Board. Collective Collaboration. Online digital image. Available at: www.constructivecollaboration.com/our-story.html

Figure 13: Big turn-out of protesting residents at tonight's Sefton Council Planning Committee meeting in Bootle Town Hall. Tony Robertson Online digital image. Available at: https://tonyrobertson.mycouncillor.org.uk/tag/june-avery/

Appendix

Interview Talking Points

I.	How do you define Public Consultation? Do you think this definition is typical for others in your profession?
II.	What demands does legislation put on how and where you engage the Public?
III.	How do you view the Public as an entity, and do you believe you are viewing a true cross section of the Public during consultancy?
IV.	How - if ever - is your role as an expert in your field questioned when you instigate public consultation?
V.	Do you recognise a difference between Public Consultation and Public Engagement?
VI.	What are your thoughts on the forums in which the Public are engaged? What is your experience on the means of discourse and interaction?
VII.	Have you seen a change in attitude to Public Consultation over the course of your career?
VIII.	When do you typically engage the Public and do you think this is the optimum time to do so?
IX.	Does the architecture profession harness Public Participation to its full potential? If so how?
X.	Can you recall a premier example of where the Public has been integrated into a built project?
XI.	Does discourse breakdown when personal or hyperlocal issues are presented in juxtaposition to a greater regional plan?
XII.	When is there too much Public consultation? Can there be too much? Is there a point in which opinions should be excluded to deal with the practicalities of completion?
XIII.	Do you think that the advocacy is a solution to engaging minority groups or those who are not engaged with the consultation of how their built environment should be shaped?
XIV.	Do you witness a difference between the views of the public when being consulted on domestic projects in contrast to civic or corporate architecture?
XV.	Does architectural education provide a sufficient base for practitioners to deal with Public Consultation?
XVI.	Do you feel the Public can be consulted?
XVII.	What could be improved in the current methods of consulting the Public?

Transcript between Emilio Sullivan and Alan Perch* a Senior Planning Consultant for a major London Planning Consultancy

Semi-formal interview conducted via phone

15/02/2019 13:02

(*A pseudonym provided at the interviewee's request)

ES: *Thanks again for your time.*

AP: Not a problem.

ES: *Shall we begin?*

AP: Let's start.

ES: *So Alan, the first question I wanted to ask you in regard to public consultation is how you define it, as a planner and consultant, what is public consultation and how you generally go about consulting the public?*

AP: Well, okay, trying to define it, I'm sure the Localism Pack defines it but I wouldn't be able to reach for that definition.

ES: *Oh no, it's fine.*

AP: I suppose it's the general process of going out and speaking to a community about gauging their views on a proposed development and getting their input on the design process. That's a pretty general definition I suppose, but it throws up some interesting ideas, the main one being what is 'the community'. I'm sure we will touch on this through the course of the conversation, but when you consult, you end up talking to a certain cross-section of a community.

ES: *Yes definitely.*

AP: It's extremely rare, if ever, that you really get the entire community's view on anything.

ES: *Yes.*

AP: That's just democracy isn't it? But that's always, as we can talk about more, one of the main issues with it. You get the opinions of those most interested, and research, not that I can

quote it verbatim, shows that it's usually the people that are upset about something that engage with that process. That would be my general definition for it.

ES: *Perfect, well I would like to ask then what your experience and subsequent opinion is on advocacy, having a formal advocate for potentially a marginalised group, to help present the views of a demographic to the planners?*

AP: Yeh, I think that's a very good idea. For if you look at the demographic of the people that attend these things, you can almost predict that if you go out to a consultation and get say 100 people turning up - *which would be quite a result by the way* - you know, 60-70% of those would be over the age of 40, white, middle-class people. That is not very often a very representative cross-section of the community. It tends to be those from lower-socioeconomic backgrounds who are underrepresented at public consultations, I am sure that there are fascinating reasons for that, partly being that they may simply not have the appetite or wherewithal to engage.

I expect there is quite a lot of apathy as well, I expect that people from those socio-economic groups have experience of being ignored and through being trodden on their attitude their attitude becomes 'why should I bother?'

ES: *For you how has this manifested itself?*

AP: On a particular project, not so much with the development we are trying to do, they are just *so* cross, they're just so fed up of being trodden on by everybody, including their local authority that they take consultation as an opportunity to vent. I am sure that there is an interesting discussion that Brexit has emboldened and mobilised these people to be heard, as for the first time in a long time these people are being heard.

ES: *Yes.*

AP: For me in the last 12 months that has been really fascinating, I may be going a bit off topic, but is it right that these people can and could use some advocacy during the process, *absolutely*. There are cross-sections that have been left behind and they are a cross-section that are more likely, in my view to see the good in development, because they may be able to see the benefits that development may bring. They are less likely to be paranoid about the effects on property values, which I've found motivates a lot of people to object to developments, as they probably don't own property. They're in a place of seeing development as a positive due to it bringing something new to their community that they currently don't have, including affordable housing, including Section 106 improvements

I've been to Public Consultations, where a White Middle-Class homeowner has *blatantly* and openly objected to affordable housing, on the basis that they don't want that kind of riff-raff

in their neighbourhood. That's pretty shocking really. But people say these kind of things and that means a person's view on a development can be quite negative *because* it's also delivering affordable housing. And if that person has a louder voice than the person who needs the affordable housing, then something's gone a bit wrong.

ES: *So for you is about the sway that the angriest voice has to be able to push to the front of an argument?*

AP: Yes, I would say it's the angriest *and* also the most articulate. I would urge you to speak to Engagement Consultants, those who have done the research and have found that the likelihood that someone to attend an event, go home, write an objection, turn up to a planning committee, you know people have busy lives. In order for someone to be motivated to do all of those things, it normally means they are motivated by anger or fear or paranoia. If someone supports a development is much less likely to ever say 'this is [a] great idea' and put pen to paper or write on a website as they are not motivated to do so.

Generally speaking, and I'm absolutely convinced of this, when a planning application goes out and it gets 15 objections, or you do a Public Consultation and 80 people turn up, 70 of whom are opposed, there is a great, great, many more people who either think, [that] they don't care, as its completely inconsequential to them or they would support it if they were forced to have a vote. If they were forced to come to the table and answer "do you like this or not?" at worst they would say "I'm not bothered" at best "I support it". And I think a lot of best engagement consultants I use - excuse me if this sounds cynical - work to harvest input and comment from the 'Silent Majority' and those that could support it if they could be bothered to. They therefore go out and try and make it as easy as possible for people to register their support for schemes, as people who do support them are not going to write a 5 page letter, anyone writing a 5 page letter is angry.

These people usually live very nearby and they have concerns about things such as parking, and the construction impacts, which in the grand scheme of things should not be a significant issue that stops development.

You would be amazed about how often a bit of fear about a bit of dust during construction can cloud and colour the entire objective profile of a development. Now development is a dirty business, in order build stuff you've got to knock things down, you will make some noise. Lorries, diggers and cranes is all nasty messy stuff and this is common to *all* development and therefore becomes a common objection to *all* developments. It is fascinating how much of the body of objections is made up from that single issue.

ES: *So do you think that the modes of engagement, such as having to write a letter or attend a meeting these consultation meetings, slants the way in which consultation is perceived by*

developers and planners? And could a new means of consultancy in a digital sense affect the cross-section of you're dealing with?

AP: That's a rather leading question there but if that's the topic of your thesis there, well, the short answer is *absolutely* yes, I am convinced of that. Yet you've asked this in a very curious way, you've questioned whether it would change the development industries perception of consultation but I feel it would change it in terms of outcome. Most importantly, it would encourage more responses of support or at least passive responses and therefore begin to dwarf the number objections to development. If we cut to the chase here, our industries seem to take a pretty dim view to the practise of consultation processes, because very rarely yields anything positive.

When I go to one of these meetings, I feel like I'm just going to be shouted at, whilst people stand before me and tell me how cross they are. Nobody likes to do that and no developer likes that either. It can be an unpleasant process which is one perception of it. Time to time however you get some nuggets, where people who may not necessarily support a proposal give you examples of how if it did this or this, then there can be very positive changes to a plan.

There are examples where schemes have evolved from positive inputs from a community but in those instances as you well know Emilio, the architectural aspects are not for the faint of heart. It's really what they intend to be used for and what can be delivered in terms of Section 106, that really provides use and information through consultation.

ES: *Okay well that being said, have you noticed a change in attitude to Public Consultation over the course of your career?*

AP: Let me think about that...

(Pause)

Yes, I have. The most influential change [is the change] in energy towards it; is that it is now essential. You *have* to do it. It's not that it's become such an essential part of the design process in that it will make a development so much better *if* you do it. It's become a situation that if you *do not* do it and you turn up to a Planning Committee and local people say they haven't been consulted you are shooting yourself in the foot.

In terms of has the attitude towards it changed with regard to liking it more or less, then the answer is probably no not really. I feel that it's been universally disliked by the development industry and I can't think of many example where me or my colleagues would say it's really any different honestly.

ES: *Really, that's interesting, okay.*

AP: Well the best companies that I work with in consultation, they approach it with great gusto and endeavour but even the most committed in that business would say in this form it's still a massive chore.

ES: *I can see where you're coming from in that sense, from the battle type language and confrontation in the engagement of the public. I have a question, you mentioned Brexit previously in the conversation and I would like to know how -if ever- has your role as an expect been questioned when instigating these types of consultations with the Public? How have the issues of hyper-local or personal sentiments affected the implementation of Regional Development Plans or Government led schemes?*

AP: There's an awful lot to unpack in that. To the first part, my questioning as the role of the expert, I am questioned on that all the time. Whether there has been a rise in that since Brexit and the famous "we're sick of experts" quote, I don't believe there has been. A change though is that the downtrodden masses are starting to turn up and that's really struck me, I think that may have a Brexit tinge to it. But in general no, my position as an 'expert' is questioned because I don't live on the street its happening on. I get that *all* the time. I'm very often asked, "Where do you live?" to which I respond, "I live in Wandsworth" and I do not live around the corner from here.

It's a slightly nonsense question. For it suggests that the only people who should be involved are those who live in the same postcode, it can be a bit daft, but it's this lack of local experience that is brought into question. Occasionally you get questions more of the technical and professional aspects, doubting what I know, but I feel that comes from scepticism and a mistrust. For if I go to them with what sound Town Planning tells you in relation to a certain issue, there comes an accusation that "well you are only saying that because you are being told to say that, as you are being paid by the developer". It leads to an automatic mistrust.

ES: *The final thing I would like to as then Alan, is do you see a difference in both the process and the reaction of the public when consulting of domestic and housing projects in contrast to say civil or commercial developments?*

AP: Let me think about that one...

(Pause)

No, I don't think so. That's the short answer. It's a curious one, partially because most of what we do in this business is residential, that's just how our business works or it's

mixed-use, so there is commercial mixed up with it. So I don't do a lot of say, straight office development for example.

But I cannot get through a conversation like this without giving you an example of a project. I've been working on a synagogue project, for about 8 years now, and it has - it's a synagogue in a nice part of London - and the synagogue has been there for 60 years and they're redeveloping it. They're redeveloping it because it's completely knackered, and it's nearly completed. The level and the ferocity and the downright dirtiness of the object on that has been absolutely off the scale, more than I've seen on any project, anywhere, ever. And it is a synagogue and that raises all kinds of horrible questions about anti-Semitism and all kinds of things around it. But really, it has been absolutely extraordinary the ways in which this local group have assembled themselves and campaigned and campaigned against it for 8 solid years. You would have thought, well most people think, community project; that will be nice and soft nice and easy. But there are other schools project - you know other community uses - yet overall, those are the ones that have delivered the most strong objections.

ES: *Really? That's interesting and unexpected.*

AP: Well yeh, the school project, a school project was in very sensitive and beautiful part of London, and it had a big basement under it, people were terrified of that, as people are scared of a basement.

ES: *Wow, well that has been insightful, good, thank you Alan, I am going to end the interview there. Thank you.*

AP: Thank you.

Transcript between Emilio Sullivan and Steve McAdam,

Founder and Director of Fluid - Architecture | Urbanism | Participation

Semi-formal interview conducted in person

18/02/2019 16:04

ES: *Steve, the first question I would like to ask you is, how do you personally define public consultation?*

SM: I define it as an interactive process, a process of dialogue between several parties including the design team, trying to arrive at an agreement, a broad agreement about the direction of travel of a project. As iterative stages progress that broad agreement can get better and better refined I think, so we see it as a very extended conversation, we don't see it as a one-off thing, it takes time. Some of our projects, Chelsea Barracks, have been going for ten years, and that's the main thing, that's an awful lot of conversation.

ES: *And I think the question that leads on from that is do you think this is typical of others in the profession, the viewpoint in which you've-*

SM: No, I don't think so, it's what we have always done, it's what we have always aspired to, it's to involve the public in all his process of design, and we started twenty-two, twenty-three years ago with Fluid, that practise is still here and it still works.

We're more interested in large scale urban strategies than one-off building, although we do do buildings, if they are buildings then they tend to have a connection with public realm or some sort of social principle within housing or education or health. So, there's a kind of connection between all of those things. And then Soundings came along sometime later, focusing purely on consultation. So that means we can plug into other master planning teams, we can work with other architects and essentially, it's our job just to make sure they're

connecting with and interfacing effectively if you like, with the public and as you rightly say that's a very big term.

ES: *That is a very large term yes. I would like to ask how you as a practise collect your data, whether it's through face-to-face consultation which I'm sure and I've seen you've done, but also on a larger scale with means such as data collection for things such as transport or demographic statistics.*

SM: So, there's a number of different means, obviously conversation is one of them and in a funny way it remains the most important. Direct eyeball to eyeball contact with a human being is *very* difficult to replace I think. Because this is when you really can build up trust, I think, it's very difficult to do that if you're just using digital tools, because of the remoteness of digital tools. And without trust, you won't get conversations that are meaningful, you won't get people really signing up to the process and contributing thoughts, so the face-to-face conversation is important.

We use all manner of websites, some highly interactive. We're developing our own digital stuff here as well, to collect information and we're trying to move it now into a place where it's not ours, we would like it to be utilised by the community, so when we've gone it's still there and they're still using it, so we're opening it up beyond just pure consultation and masterplan issues, into things like where there could be crowdfunding to help with other projects, parallel projects, could be there be '*Meanwhile*' strategies as well, could there be an upload section where the communities could send videos and pictures or whatever. So we're working in that sort of manner to make it a collection of things and not just a pure professional repository or depositary as it were for thoughts.

In terms of statistical analysis, we do quite a lot of that, there's a lot of desk-based research that we get involved in, quantitative stuff and qualitative, but we tend to always check on the ground, because if you're looking at ONS *(Office of National Statistics)* data for instance, I mean that's from a census from 2011, eight years old, which in terms of London that's a huge period of time, and we look at abstracts from that data (say super output area data) we then we check it on the ground and very often there's quite considerable differences, even in terms

of say demographics of an area. Then having compared what we've found on ground with all three, you can sort of adjust some of that and get a more accurate picture if you like.

We work with consultants in the team, so many of the consultants will also provide us with other statistical analysis, for instance transport consultants directly will be telling us about transport models and projections and policies and so on. EIS - the Environmental Impact Assessment - has to be carried out and they'll be telling us a lot of environmental data, so there's an enormous amount of information there really, that is pertinent to the whole process of planning, and it's important that we think the public, the people who [are] participating in the process understand planning, what these documents mean, what significance they have, so we invest a fair bit of time I would say to educate people about those sorts of things. Planning can be really obscure for some people and it's worth the exercise to just go to a local authority website, have a look at one of their larger planning applications and see how you get on.

(Pause)

It's a nightmare, it's a nightmare and you will have, some documents will be split into maybe fourteen different sections, you don't know as a member of the public which documents really you should be looking for in the first place, very often you'll find critical data is in the appendix of a document. The Environmental Impact Assessment appendices can say most of the crucial stuff that people need to know, or the Design and Access Statement, or our Community Involvement or Participatory Statements. In those documents you'll get a really good idea, but there are probably, I would say, fifteen to twenty different types of documentation that will be in the Planning Application. It confuses the life out of people.

ES: *So, it's about getting the legibility of the intent across to the public, so that they can make an informed decision?*

SM: Exactly. So, what we did in the case of Chelsea Barracks was we - with the local authorities' permission - we did a parallel website which gave access to all their planning application documents from when they went in, just in a very legible way, so people could go onto our

site and we could say so what sort of things are you interested in, if you're interested in [the] environment then we suggest these documents, if you're interested in transport or if it's about work and the economy, those documents. And then they can go directly there and link to a website, and it saved a lot of time and a lot of disconnection, because ultimately, we're told all the time by ministers of the state, by anyone who represents planning, that people are important and to be involved. But the planning process itself has not made it any easier I think for the public to get involved, I think if anything it's made it more difficult because of the complexity and number of documents that are there.

ES: *That links nicely into questions about expertise, how if ever has your role as an expert been questioned when instigating public consultation?*

SM: Well that's where it comes down to trust. I think without trust, you can't really have a conversation, and when you believe that you've won trust and people do come along and they're honest with you about things, then I think that sort of qualifies you in that direct sense I think. What will tend to happen is, from time to time there will be people who are angry about things or they're campaigning about things. Sometimes they have every right to do that, sometimes not.

What we do is to set ourselves up as an independent consultant, we say to the clients we will record exactly what's said, you know, that our publications in the end will reflect what the public mood is about your scheme. If that's bad, then tough, that's what it's going to be. We get interim documents done, so people can see that's been done, again that helps to build up trust in people, people can see that actually you're reflecting what they're saying, and we think what's the point of a Statement of Community Involvement that doesn't dig down and reveal the truth? If it just a piece of puff then it shouldn't be a planning document.

ES: *The next question I would care to ask, going on from that, do you believe that you've been getting a true cross-section of the public? And what are your thoughts in relation to advocacy, in helping to break down some of these issues of professional jargon and different ways in which planning is communicated to the public?*

SM: Okay, so first and foremost, the first thing we do in a project is a pretty intensive, pretty forensic stakeholder map. And that's desk space to begin with, and that will go across all sectors, so whether you're talking about businesses or retail or residential groups, ethnicity groups, whatever it is we map them all out. And we would either put them on layers or colour code them so you can see which sector they're coming from. And then we set up what we call a liaison group, which is representatives to be drawn from that mapping, to come and meet on a regular basis, as a kind of sounding board for the project. We talk to that group, to ask if there is there anyone missing, we obviously talk about demographics as closely as we can model it, to see whether that's reflected.

Even in Brixton I've seen consultation exercises carried out with very few black people for instance in the room, it's kind of, it's almost shocking that could be allowed to happen. So, we take quite a lot of care to make sure that demographics [are represented] there. We measure it all the time. In all the feedback forms that we use, there's a pretty full on set of questions, that allows us to carry out what's known as an Equalities Impact Assessment, so that is everything about somebody's age, and whether they're economically active, about their gender and they've got optional areas where they can respond further if they want to discuss religion or if they want to discuss gender and orientation, all these are sort of options but they're very helpful, and if people want to contribute that, that helps.

We map that out so each time, each stage of the project we'll then look to see, okay if the feedback forms we have, are they reflecting this demographic effectively or not, and very often you'll find that there's a gap somewhere to do with ethnicity, certainly to do with ages groups, we'll then go and target that group, try and get the balance right. So by half way through the process you've got the balance about right I think, but it takes a lot of effort to do that, and I don't believe many people do do it, I don't believe local authorities really do it as they should.

ES: *Another question that has come up looking through the research I've been doing is, do you find any difference in both how the public is consulted and the reception or outreach that the public gives back to you depending on the type of project, whether it's domestic or as you refer to it on your website 'Interim Projects'?*

SM: Yes, it depends on the nature of the project, when we're seeking to do *Interim Projects* or *Meanwhile Projects*, we're very often responding to people on the ground and what they're saying is missing. If it's a long development project, it's not unusual ten years or so to be in the making, that's ten years without something being fully complete. So, for instance if you're in an area where there's some retail and that's going to get wiped out, that's going to cause stresses and strains locally, so what we seek to do is work with local people to find out what *Meanwhile* things they would want and put them back. So, if that means pop-up shops then it'll be pop-up shops. If it's something more to do with work-based activities then we'll do that too.

Increasingly, also, we're seeing what cultural things can be done, so lots of arts groups, there's one called Outset, which is Arts Council funded, and it's their job to find temporary accommodation for artists groups of all sorts. They could be theatre groups, they could be individual artists, sculptors, whatever, and they will keep a database of places that could accommodate the *Meanwhile* proposition. The hope is once they're embedded in the place that they'll stay there, they'll continue to be accommodated as that development comes out of the ground. So, they can have quite a fundamental importance to the people because, generally it emanates from them, so *Meanwhile* tend to be much more closely supported projects.

In a way you could almost say we're fielding their projects, we're helping them to get some of their things done. It's very important, I'll give you an example where we, we're working for a group called Argent in Brent Cross South, which is a very large development of over seven thousand homes, there will be employment for nearly twenty thousand people, there will be [a] new above ground Thameslink station, so massive, very long periods of time before I gets delivered. We have a liaison group that's been going, and what they've been saying to us the last three months, is there's been "an interest in talking about the masterplan, it's fine (they say), we can still talk about design, but what we're more interested in doing is agreeing with you some small scale *Meanwhile* things that we can do that will impact on our everyday lives - not something in ten year or fifteen- or twenty-years' time." So, we've been working with them to do that, to get a crowdfunding thing sorted out.

The council, I don't know if this is confidential...

Well, they have their own crowdfund, and they're going to try and ring-fence elements of that, that could work with our project, if we can find another way of contributing to it as well, so again it's much of content if you like, that is generated by the user. They're the people who are driving these sorts of things. It's quite curious and obvious both that development generally gets a negative reaction, across all spectra, it's because people perceive it's going to come along and impact on them negatively, and that's the case even when we were doing consultation on major social projects such as the Royal Brompton Hospital extension, even though these are critical facilities for very sick children, [with] Spina Bifida for instance. Even so, people could be complaining that it's going to be creating more fuss, that there's going to be noisy ambulances coming, I can't believe it. You know' you have to, if you're living as part of society you're expected to contribute, not just take, but people are quite willing to be that selfish about their own needs, and their own requirements. You can see that it's sometimes going to be a battle to get the right thing done. People are sometimes not prepared to see any impact on their life at all.

ES: *And in relation to that, do you feel that there is sufficient means at the moment to garner the opinion of those who would approve, if consulted, as opposed to a development. If you're only hearing from a disgruntled minority, is there a sufficient means to garner the opinion of those who would either support or at best be neutral to the –*

SM: Yes, one of the beauties of a liaison group is - well it depends on the size of the project - but having thirty to fifty members would not be unusual, and they are all representing groups themselves, whether that's residents groups or health groups etc., but it's they (this group) in fact, through conversation that will reach a balance themselves. They will hear the residents say a particular thing and although business may well disagree with that, stating if that element of the development went ahead it would be good for the economy and jobs etc. Then the residents will starting hearing these issues from that perspective and say 'well, you may be right, and that may improve our quality of life'. So, it is not so much us trying to convince them, it's them debating and discussing. Of course they won't always agree with everything,

and in some cases heavily disagree, but it leads to a much more rounded perspective on things from hearing all those voices.

What tends to happen, to what I will call *"grumpy people",* which do most certainly exist, those that tend to have only one agenda item which they bang on about again and again, with an unchanging opinion - it doesn't matter if the facts change, their opinions do not. Well, what therefore tends to happen with liaison groups, is that liaison groups tend to slowly but surely ostracise them and push them to the edges. Now, when that happens it can be said that it's the community that is looking out for itself in a way. And that is ideal, you do not want to be expelling people yourself or marginalising them, but if that liaison group is the one who decides these people are troublesome and not contributing anything of value, then they will be edited out democratically!

ES: *So does that become the natural progression of matters, when somebody is in a state where they only opposing ideas? In other words, you cannot only be against a solution, you have to be 'for' something else?*

SM: Exactly, exactly, and then, you may have a conversation, when individuals are only saying no to everything it becomes greatly unproductive.

ES: *I have a couple more questions if that is okay?*

SM: Sure, please go on.

ES: *Do you recognise a difference therefore between Public Consultation and Public Engagement?*

SM: I think engagement can be richer and deeper, because in a sense it is no longer just conversations about a pre-selected and therefore pre-defined topic, often at the behest of a developer. Engagement can then go much wider, and can go on to settle much more interesting issues that are occurring. That is why you may see the use of youth involvement

programmes, running of educational things or providing cultural services and wider opportunities to come aboard.

So engagement, for me, I think goes beyond but can include consultation.

ES: *So going forward then, how does that impact public engagement as a design methodology, more in the sense - as you've touched upon during the conversation - how as a practise and yourself as an Architect, synthesise the opinions of the public into a built form? For phrases such as 'a camel is a horse designed by committee' poses the question as to what is the granularity and resolution can the public be broken into, to give designing a direction? For there is a seeming outreach by both the public and the design professions, to find a means of synthesising opinion into a building.*

SM: Sure, let me go through then how we as an office would stage a process like that, again I shall refer to the Chelsea Barracks, as that is ten years now and you can see things coming out the ground. So when we started, we started when the previous scheme had failed, a scheme by Rogers and Partners. A scheme that came to be greatly disliked, causing local people to band together along with Prince Charles intervening on their behalf. So, Prince Charles had spoken to the Emir of Qatar and explained that they did not like the building and please could they reconsider another option.

We were then approached by the Qatari Diar, to see if we could assist in Public Consultation, we said yes we could, leading to us having the luxury of having about five months before a master planning team was appointed to get into the community and get to know people. In period of time, we did all the usual forms of research, and got to know the area really well, which is important. Soon we began to understand the social morays and know the particular aspects of a place and what is seen to be precious.

So then, about three months into the process we began to look at very high level master planning options, which was then split into about six to seven topics. One would be public open space, we would have simple diagrams to say one very large space - there would be an accompanying narrative about it - which would be very formal, and the Royal Hospital

Chelsea is across the road so you create a layline. Or would you have lots of smaller informal spaces with different characteristics, with the positives for that being x, y and z. I cannot recall all the options but there were quite a few each with accompanying diagrams, and narratives, along with an OS map showing the site and the analysis that we had carried out (height, density, prime connections, views, history etc.)

We would similarly ask, where would you place height in the scheme and where wouldn't you. We asked where would you put the non-residential uses and why. Which for instance sparked a discussion in which it was said it might be good to have those on the edge as that will glue existing neighbourhoods with this new piece of the city. There is a lot of logic in it and we discussed topics of links and transport. You end up with therefore around seven layers that don't necessarily sit together, but it begins to guide you as what would go down well locally and it definitely helps include things such as local views. There was a church with a newly refurbished spire, there was a wonderful view that you got from the Royal Chelsea Hospital that the Richard Roger's scheme had ignored. So just that visual connection to history, pinning that down on a masterplan, already began to give local people the confidence that we were concerned in what they were thinking.

From this we produced the diagrams that synthesised these things and used those diagrams to assist in selecting from the long-list of ten architects who had been asked to come up with their own proposals.

Using ours as a template to select [we chose] what I believe to be three firms. So it really went deep that process. When the master planning team came on board we were well set up, we worked with them the whole way through about a two year process and when it finally went in, the Chair of the Planning Committee said, that the 'hallmark' of the project was the public consultation.

ES: *That is fascinating, that you reversed it, with the architects applying blind whilst you had a criteria that you were looking to see if they had fulfilled. Amazing, that seems to be the inverse, with the normative situation being the architect is appointed and they ask what*

they want, in this case you already had what the public wanted prior to the architect
coming on board.

SM: Exactly! Now I am not saying that happens on every project.

ES: No no, I am aware of that!

SM: But when we do, it is applied in quite a robust manner, because in this case, the Qataris were embarrassed by how the previous scheme went and they wanted to get a positive result and avoid having Prince Charles phoning them again. Once this was done, we worked with the local community to put a design code together and worked out parameter plans with them and moved onto detail considerations so each phase would work cyclically through what's called Reserved Matters Applications where we would work through the detailed architecture with consultation carrying all the way through.

One other example was a masterplan, this time in Brixton, which won't see the light of day. But in this example, what we did there was use a number of cards for a different land-uses, giving each card a value from five to minus five. These numbers related to both the finances and the community value, not entirely scientific but you could give you a sense that housing let's say, is commercially viable but doesn't contribute directly to community value. Then a school you can see what that costs and how it gives back, with the cards helping further to further visualise and understand what land-uses were compatible with housing not being placed next to heavy or noisy industry for instance. With people around tables they would have to arrange these cards into patterns with positive scores in both [categories] meaning there had to be compromises.

ES: *That methodology relates strongly to a previous project I was working on, a discrete kit of parts, it was a housing project, very similar based on a Settlers of Catan model.*

SM: Really? Interesting, sounds good.

Well the short answer to this is that people understand their own neighbourhood better than anyone but to take them through design you need to lead them through a process to give them that structure. They are not designers themselves and that is a difference, I would never claim they are.

ES: *I final thought then with regard to concepts of 'the decision' whether that relates to design decisions or planning decisions, and therefore looking at ideas of Soft-Landings and Post-Occupancy Assessments. How do you feedback those assessments into the ongoing decisions you make in your design process?*

SM: I think that when you are involved in a project long enough, the loops are already in many ways built in. In a chapel project we are working on for Chelsea Barracks (again); it is ready to begin being occupied. Therefore we are helping to put a Trust together that will have a big part in maintaining issues of public realm, culture, education and such things from a local (and perhaps wider) perspective. So we try to put in place people and systems that continue to involve people in the making of decisions in developing that neighbourhood.

I think for us, these types of project are never really complete, as different neighbours will move in and different characteristics will accrue over time, so capturing the needs and desires as we go means that the feedback loops are already built in. The one anomaly however is that those moving into these developments have not been involved in these conversations for many residential schemes. We will know everyone who surrounds the development but not those who are moving in, so we are always working hard to provide portals and shared spaces to allow interaction between the new community and the surrounding old community. It's about systems and understanding.

ES: *I think I will end the interview there, I've taken far too much of your time.*

SM: *(chuckles)*
        It's been a pleasure.